



# SOCIOLOGY

THE ESSENTIALS  
8th Edition

MARGARET L. ANDERSEN

HOWARD F. TAYLOR

WITH KIM A. LOGIO

# sociology 8

the essentials

Margaret L. Andersen  
*University of Delaware*

Howard F. Taylor  
*Princeton University*

*With*  
Kim A. Logio  
*Saint Joseph's University*



This is an electronic version of the print textbook. Due to electronic rights restrictions, some third party content may be suppressed. Editorial review has deemed that any suppressed content does not materially affect the overall learning experience. The publisher reserves the right to remove content from this title at any time if subsequent rights restrictions require it. For valuable information on pricing, previous editions, changes to current editions, and alternate formats, please visit [www.cengage.com/highered](http://www.cengage.com/highered) to search by ISBN#, author, title, or keyword for materials in your areas of interest.

**Sociology: The Essentials, Eighth Edition**  
Margaret L. Andersen, Howard F. Taylor, and  
Kim A. Logio

Vice President, General Manager: Erin Joyner  
Product Manager: Seth Dobrin  
Content Developer: Robert Jucha  
Content Coordinator: Naomi Dreyer  
Product Assistant: Coco Bator  
Media Developer: John Chell  
Market Development Manager:  
Michelle Williams  
Content Project Manager: Cheri Palmer  
Art Director: Caryl Gorska  
Manufacturing Planner: Judy Inouye  
Rights Acquisitions Specialist:  
Thomas McDonough  
Production Service: Jill Traut, MPS Limited  
Photo Researcher: Reba Frederics,  
PreMedia Global  
Text Researcher: Pinky Subi, PreMedia Global  
Copy Editor: Heather McElwain  
Illustration and Composition: MPS Limited  
Text Designer: Jeanne Calabrese  
Cover Designer: Lee Friedman  
Cover Image: Anthony Marsland/Stone/  
Getty Images

© 2015, 2013 Cengage Learning

WCN: 02-200-203

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. No part of this work covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced, transmitted, stored, or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including but not limited to photocopying, recording, scanning, digitizing, taping, Web distribution, information networks, or information storage and retrieval systems, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

For product information and technology assistance, contact us at  
**Cengage Learning Customer & Sales Support, 1-800-354-9706**

For permission to use material from this text or product,  
submit all requests online at [www.cengage.com/permissions](http://www.cengage.com/permissions)  
Further permissions questions can be emailed to  
[permissionrequest@cengage.com](mailto:permissionrequest@cengage.com)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013941761

Student Edition:

ISBN-13: 978-1-285-43132-1

ISBN-10: 1-285-43132-4

**Cengage Learning**

200 First Stamford Place, 4th Floor  
Stamford, CT 06902  
USA

Cengage Learning is a leading provider of customized learning solutions with office locations around the globe, including Singapore, the United Kingdom, Australia, Mexico, Brazil, and Japan. Locate your local office at [www.cengage.com/global](http://www.cengage.com/global)

Cengage Learning products are represented in Canada by Nelson Education, Ltd.

To learn more about Cengage Learning Solutions, visit [www.cengage.com](http://www.cengage.com)

Purchase any of our products at your local college store or at our preferred online store [www.cengagebrain.com](http://www.cengagebrain.com)

# Brief Contents

---

## PART I INTRODUCING THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

### **1** The Sociological Perspective 2

## PART II INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY

### **2** Culture and the Media 24

### **3** Doing Sociological Research 52

### **4** Socialization and the Life Course 72

### **5** Social Structure and Social Interaction 98

### **6** Groups and Organizations 122

### **7** Deviance and Crime 144

## PART III SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

### **8** Social Class and Social Stratification 170

### **9** Global Stratification 200

### **10** Race and Ethnicity 226

### **11** Gender 254

### **12** Sexuality 280

## PART IV SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

### **13** Families and Religion 304

### **14** Education and Health Care 336

### **15** Economy and Politics 360

## PART V SOCIAL CHANGE

### **16** Environment, Population, and Social Change 390



# Contents

## PART I INTRODUCING THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

### 1 The Sociological Perspective 2

#### What Is Sociology? 4

#### The Sociological Perspective 5

Discovering Unsettling Facts 7

Debunking in Sociology 8

Establishing Critical Distance 9

#### The Significance of Diversity 10

Defining Diversity 10

Society in Global Perspective 12

#### The Development of Sociological Theory 13

The Influence of the Enlightenment 13

Classical Sociological Theory 14

Sociology in the United States 16

#### Theoretical Frameworks in Sociology 18

Functionalism 18

Conflict Theory 19

Symbolic Interaction 19

Feminist Theory 21

#### Chapter Summary 22

#### KEY SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS 5

#### DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Debunking the Myths of Black Teenage

Motherhood 9

#### UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

Becoming a Sociologist 11

#### WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?

Suicide among Veterans 15

#### CAREERS IN SOCIOLOGY 21

## PART II INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY

### 2 Culture and the Media 24

#### Defining Culture 26

Characteristics of Culture 27

#### The Elements of Culture 31

Language 31

Norms 33

Beliefs 35

Values 35

#### Cultural Diversity 36

Dominant Culture 36

Subcultures 37

Countercultures 38

Ethnocentrism and Cultural

Relativism 39

The Globalization of Culture 40

#### The Mass Media and Popular Culture 41

The Organization of Mass Media 41

The Media and Popular Culture 42

Race, Gender, and Class in the Media 43

#### Theoretical Perspectives on Culture and the Media 45

Culture and Group Solidarity 45

Culture, Power, and Social Conflict 46

Symbolic Interaction and the Study of Culture 47

#### Cultural Change 48

Culture Lag 48

Sources of Cultural Change 49

#### Chapter Summary 51

#### DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Tattoos: Status Risk or Status Symbol? 30

#### UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

The Social Meaning of Language 34

#### WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?

Classical Theorists on Hip-Hop! 47

#### A SOCIOLOGICAL EYE ON THE MEDIA

Death of a Superstar 49

# 3

## Doing Sociological Research 52

### The Research Process 54

Sociology and the Scientific Method 54  
Research Design 55

### The Tools of Sociological Research 62

The Survey: Polls, Questionnaires,  
and Interviews 62  
Participant Observation 62  
Controlled Experiments 63  
Content Analysis 65  
Historical Research 67  
Evaluation Research 68

### Research Ethics: Is Sociology Value Free? 68

### Chapter Summary 70

A SOCIOLOGICAL EYE ON THE MEDIA  
Research and the Media 58

WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?  
The Person-on-the-Street Interview 62

STATISTICS IN SOCIOLOGY 64

DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH  
The “Baby Einstein” Program: A Farce? 67

DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH  
A Cop in the Hood: Participant Observation 69

# 4

## Socialization and the Life Course 72

### The Socialization Process 74

The Nature–Nurture Controversy 75  
Socialization as Social Control 76  
Conformity and Individuality 76  
The Consequences of Socialization 77

### Agents of Socialization 77

The Family 78  
The Media 79  
Peers 79  
Religion 81  
Sports 81  
Schools 82

### Theories of Socialization 83

Psychoanalytic Theory 83  
Social Learning Theory 83  
Functionalism and Conflict Theory 84  
Symbolic Interaction Theory 84

### Growing Up in a Diverse Society 86

### Aging and the Life Course 87

Childhood 87  
Adolescence 88  
Adulthood 89  
Age and Aging 90  
Rites of Passage 93

### Resocialization 94

The Process of Conversion 95  
The Brainwashing Debate 95

### Chapter Summary 96

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY  
International Adoption and Interracial  
Families 75

WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?  
Interaction in Cyberspace 80

DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH  
Race Socialization among Young Adults 89

# 5

## Social Structure and Social Interaction 98

### What Is Society? 100

Macro- and Microanalysis 100  
Social Institutions 101  
Social Structure 101

### What Holds Society Together? 102

Mechanical and Organic Solidarity 102  
Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft 103

### Types of Societies 103

Preindustrial Societies 104  
Industrial Societies 105  
Postindustrial Societies 107

### Social Interaction and Society 107

Groups 107  
Status 108



Roles 109  
Everyday Social Interaction 110  
Interpersonal Attraction 112  
**Theories About Analyzing Social Interaction 114**  
The Social Construction of Reality 115  
Ethnomethodology 115  
Impression Management and Dramaturgy 116  
Social Exchange and Game Theory 118

**Interaction in Cyberspace 119**  
**Chapter Summary 120**  
DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH  
Doing Hair, Doing Class 117  
WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?  
The Congress and Game Theory 118  
DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH  
The Prisoner's Dilemma Game 119

## 6 Groups and Organizations 122

**Types of Groups 124**  
Dyads and Triads: Group Size Effects 125  
Primary and Secondary Groups 125  
Reference Groups 127  
In-Groups and Out-Groups 128  
Social Networks 129

**Social Influence in Groups 131**  
The Asch Conformity Experiment 131  
The Milgram Obedience Studies 132  
The Iraqi Prisoners at Abu Ghraib: Research Predicts Reality? 133  
Groupthink 134  
Risky Shift 134

**Formal Organizations and Bureaucracies 135**  
Types of Organizations 136  
Bureaucracy 136

Bureaucracy's "Other Face" 137  
Problems of Bureaucracies 138  
The McDonaldization of Society 139  
Diversity in Organizations 140

**Functionalism, Conflict Theory, and Symbolic Interaction: Theoretical Perspectives 141**

**Chapter Summary 142**  
DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH  
Sharing the Journey 126  
WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?  
Finding a Job: The Invisible Hand 130

## 7 Deviance and Crime 144

**Defining Deviance 146**  
Sociological Perspectives on Deviance 146  
**Sociological Theories of Deviance 149**  
Functionalist Theories of Deviance 149  
Conflict Theories of Deviance 154  
Symbolic Interaction Theories of Deviance 155

**Forms of Deviance 159**  
Mental Illness 159  
Substance Abuse: Drugs and Alcohol 159

**Crime and Criminal Justice 160**  
Measuring Crime: How Much Is There? 160  
Corporate Crime and Deviance: Doing Well, Doing Time 163  
Organized Crime 164  
Race, Class, Gender, and Crime 164  
The Criminal Justice System: Police, Courts, and the Law 166  
Terrorism as International Crime: A Global Perspective 168

**Chapter Summary 168**

WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?  
Rampage Shootings **153**

A SOCIOLOGICAL EYE ON THE MEDIA  
Images of Violent Crime **162**

DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH  
The Rich Get Richer and the  
Poor Get Prison **165**

## PART III SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

# 8

## Social Class and Social Stratification **170**

### Social Differentiation and Social Stratification **172**

Estate, Caste, and Class **174**

### The Class Structure of the United States: Growing Inequality **175**

### The Distribution of Income and Wealth **177**

### Analyzing Social Class **181**

Diverse Sources of Stratification **185**

### Social Mobility: Myths and Realities **187**

Defining Social Mobility **187**

The Extent of Social Mobility **187**

Class Consciousness **188**

### Why Is There Inequality? **189**

Karl Marx: Class and Capitalism **189**

Max Weber: Class, Status, and Party **190**

Functionalism and Conflict Theory: The  
Continuing Debate **190**

### Poverty **192**

Who Are the Poor? **192**

Causes of Poverty **195**

Welfare and Social Policy **196**

### Chapter Summary **198**

WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?

Social Class and Sports **173**

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

The Student/Debt Crisis **179**

DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The Fragile Middle Class **180**

A SOCIOLOGICAL EYE ON THE MEDIA

Reproducing Class Stereotypes **188**

# 9

## Global Stratification **200**

### Global Stratification **202**

Rich and Poor **203**

Global Networks of Power  
and Influence **206**

Race and Global Inequality **208**

### Theories of Global Stratification **208**

Modernization Theory **208**

Dependency Theory **210**

World Systems Theory **210**

### Consequences of Global Stratification **212**

Population **212**

Health and Environment **213**

Education and Illiteracy **214**

Gender Inequality **214**

War and Terrorism **215**

### World Poverty **217**

Who Are the World's Poor? **218**

Women and Children in Poverty **218**

Poverty and Hunger **220**

Causes of World Poverty **222**

### Globalization and Social Change **222**

### Chapter Summary **224**

DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Servants of Globalization: Who Does the  
Domestic Work? **207**

WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?

Human Trafficking **219**

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

War, Childhood, and Poverty **221**

**Race and Ethnicity 228**

- Ethnicity 228
- Defining Race 229
- Minority and Dominant Groups 233

**Racial Stereotypes 233**

- Stereotypes and Saliency 233
- The Interplay among Race, Gender, and Class Stereotypes 234

**Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism 235**

- Prejudice 235
- Discrimination 235
- Racism 237

**Theories of Prejudice and Racism 239**

- Psychological Theories of Prejudice 239
- Sociological Theories of Prejudice and Racism 239

**Diverse Groups, Diverse Histories 240**

- Native Americans: The First of This Land 241
- African Americans 241
- Latinos 243

- Asian Americans 245
- Middle Easterners 246
- White Ethnic Groups 247

**Attaining Racial and Ethnic Equality: The Challenge 248**

- The White Immigrants Made It: Why Can't They? 248
- Segregation and the Urban Underclass 249
- The Civil Rights Movement 250
- A Radical Response: Black Power 251

**Chapter Summary 253****WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY? What Exactly Is "Race" Anyway? 232****DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH American Apartheid 237****UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY Race and Hurricane Katrina 251****THE "TAX" ON BEING A MINORITY IN AMERICA: Give Yourself a True-False Test (An Illustration of White Privilege) 252****The Social Construction of Gender 256**

- Defining Sex and Gender 257
- Sex Differences: Nature or Nurture? 257

**Gender Socialization 259**

- The Formation of Gender Identity 259
- Sources of Gender Socialization 260
- The Price of Conformity 262
- Race, Gender, and Identity 265
- Gender Socialization and Homophobia 265
- The Institutional Basis of Gender 265

**Gender Stratification 266**

- Sexism and Patriarchy 266
- Women's Worth: Still Unequal 268
- The Devaluation of Women's Work 271
- Balancing Work and Family 272

**Theories of Gender 272**

- The Frameworks of Sociology 272
- Feminist Theory 273

**Gender in Global Perspective 275****Gender and Social Change 276**

- Contemporary Attitudes 277
- Legislative Change 278

**Chapter Summary 279****A SOCIOLOGICAL EYE ON THE MEDIA Cultural Gatekeepers and the Construction of Femininity 259****DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH Eating Disorders: Gender, Race, and the Body 264****WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY? The End of Men? 276**

**Sex and Culture 282**

- Sex: Is It Natural? 282
- The Social Basis of Sexuality 283

**Contemporary Sexual Attitudes and Behavior 285**

- Changing Sexual Values 285
- Sexual Practices of the U.S. Public 286

**Sex and Inequality: Gender, Race, and Class 286****Sexuality: Sociological and Feminist Theory 288**

- Sex: Functional or Conflict-Based? 288
- Symbolic Interaction and the Social Construction of Sexual Identity 289
- Feminist Theory: Sex, Power, and Inequality 290
- A Global Perspective on Sexuality 291

**Understanding Gay and Lesbian Experience 293****Sex and Social Issues 294**

- Birth Control 295
- New Reproductive Technologies 295

- Abortion 296
- Pornography and the Sexualization of Culture 297
- Teen Pregnancy 298
- Sexual Violence 301

**Sex and Social Change 302**

- The Sexual Revolution: Is It Over? 302
- Technology, Sex, and Cybersex 302
- Commercializing Sex 302

**Chapter Summary 303****WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?****Sex and Popular Culture 288****DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH****Teens and Sex: Are Young People Becoming More Sexually Conservative? 290****DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH****Is Hooking Up Bad for Women? 292****UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY****Sexuality and Disability: Understanding “Marginalized” Masculinity 294**

## PART IV SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

**Defining the Family 307**

- Extended Families 308
- Nuclear Families 308

**Sociological Theory and Families 310**

- Functionalist Theory and Families 310
- Conflict Theory and Families 311
- Symbolic Interaction Theory and Families 311
- Feminist Theory and Families 311

**Diversity among Contemporary American Families 312**

- Female-Headed Households 312
- Married-Couple Families 313
- Stepfamilies 314
- Gay and Lesbian Households 314
- Single People 315

**Marriage and Divorce 316**

- Marriage 316
- Divorce 319

**Family Violence 319**

- Domestic Violence and Abuse 320
- Child Abuse 320
- Incest 320
- Elder Abuse 321

**Changing Families in a Changing Society 321**

- Global Changes in Family Life 321

**Families and Social Policy 322**

- Balancing Work and Family 322
- Child Care 322
- Elder Care 323

**Defining Religion 324****The Significance of Religion in the United States 326**

- The Dominance of Christianity 326
- Measuring Religious Faith 326
- Forms of Religion 326

**Sociological Theories of Religion 327**

Emile Durkheim: The Functions of Religion **327**

Max Weber: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism **328**

Karl Marx: Religion, Social Conflict, and Oppression **329**

Symbolic Interaction: Becoming Religious **329**

**Diversity and Religious Belief 329**

The Influence of Race and Ethnicity **330**

**Religious Organizations 331**

**Religion and Social Change 332**

**Chapter Summary 334**

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

Interracial Dating and Marriage **309**

A SOCIOLOGICAL EYE ON THE MEDIA

Idealizing Family Life **313**

DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Men's Caregiving **317**

WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?

The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism **333**

# 14

## Education and Health Care 336

**Schooling and Society 338**

The Rise of Education in the United States **338**

Education in Global Perspective **339**

**The Sociology of Education: Theoretical Perspectives 339**

Functionalist Theory **340**

Conflict Theory **340**

Symbolic Interaction Theory **341**

**Does Schooling Matter? 342**

Education Linked to Future Success **342**

Education and Social Mobility **343**

Testing and Accountability **344**

**Education and Inequality 345**

Segregation and Resegregation **346**

Intelligence Differences **346**

**Educational Reform 348**

**Health Care in the United States 349**

Health and Illness **349**

The Social Organization of Delivering Health Care **351**

**Health and Inequality 352**

Race and Health Care **352**

Social Class and Health Care **353**

Gender and Health Care **353**

Health and Disability **353**

Age and Health Care **354**

**Theoretical Perspectives of Health Care 354**

Functionalist Theory **354**

Conflict Theory **354**

Symbolic Interaction Theory **355**

**Health Care Reform 356**

The Cost of Health Care **356**

Health Care for All? **357**

**Chapter Summary 358**

DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Homeroom Security **341**

WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?

When Should Treatment Stop?: Issues for End-of-Life Care **351**

# 15

## Economy and Politics 360

**Economy and Society 362**

The Industrial Revolution **362**

Comparing Economic Systems **363**

**The Changing Global Economy 363**

A More Diverse Workplace **364**

Deindustrialization **364**

Technological Change **365**

Immigration **366**

**Social Organization of the Workplace 367**

The Division of Labor **367**

The Occupational System and the Labor Market **368**

- Diverse Groups/Diverse Work Experiences** 370
  - Unemployment and Joblessness 370
  - Sexual Harassment 371
  - Gays and Lesbians in the Workplace 372
  - Disability and Work 372
- Sociological Theories of Economy and Work** 373
  - Functionalism 373
  - Conflict Theory 374
  - Symbolic Interaction Theory 374
- Power, Politics, and the State** 374
  - The State and Social Order 375
  - Global Interdependence and the State 375
- Power, Authority, and Bureaucracy** 376
  - Types of Authority 376
  - The Growth of Bureaucracies 376
- Theories of Power** 377
  - The Pluralist Model 377
  - The Power Elite Model 378

- The Autonomous State Model 379
- Feminist Theories of the State 379
- Government: Power and Politics in a Diverse Society** 379
  - Diverse Patterns of Political Participation 379
  - Political Power: Who's in Charge? 380
  - Women and Minorities in Government 384
- The Military As a Social Institution** 385
  - Race and the Military 386
  - Women in the Military 386
  - Gays and Lesbians in the Military 387
  - Military Veterans 387
- Chapter Summary** 388
- DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH
- Precarious Work: The Shifting Conditions of Work in Society 366
- WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?
- The Tea Party and the American Dream 383
- UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY
- Diversity in the Power Elite 384

## PART V SOCIAL CHANGE

# 16 Environment, Population, and Social Change 390

- A Climate in Crisis? Environmental Sociology** 392
  - Society at Risk? Air, Water, and Energy 392
  - Disasters: At the Interface of Social and Physical Life 396
- Environmental Inequality and Environmental Justice** 396
- Are There Too Many People? Population Studies** 399
  - Counting People: Demographic Processes 399
- Diversity and Population Change** 403
- Theories of Population Growth** 404
  - Malthusian Theory 405
  - The "Population Bomb" 405
  - Demographic Transition Theory 405
- A Multidimensional Process** 406
  - Sources of Social Change 407
- Theories of Social Change** 411
  - Functionalist Theory 411
  - Conflict Theory 412
  - Symbolic Interaction Theory 412

- Globalization and Modernization: Shaping Our Lives** 413
  - From Community to Society 413
  - Urbanization 414
  - Social Inequality, Powerlessness, and the Individual 414
- Chapter Summary** 415
- UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY
- Black Women in the Environmental Justice Movement 398
- WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?
- The End of the White Majority? 404
- DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH
- Who Cares and Why? Fair Trade and Organic Food 409
- Glossary 417
- References 425
- Name Index 446
- Subject Index 456

# Boxes

## WHAT WOULD A SOCIOLOGIST SAY?

- Suicide among Veterans **15**
- Classical Theorists on Hip-Hop! **47**
- The Person-on-the-Street Interview **62**
- Interaction in Cyberspace **80**
- The Congress and Game Theory **118**
- Finding a Job: The Invisible Hand **130**
- Rampage Shootings **153**
- Social Class and Sports **173**
- Human Trafficking **219**
- What Exactly Is “Race” Anyway? **232**
- The End of Men? **276**
- Sex and Popular Culture **288**
- The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism **333**
- When Should Treatment Stop?: Issues for End-of-Life Care **351**
- The Tea Party and the American Dream **383**
- The End of the White Majority? **404**

## DOING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

- Debunking the Myths of Black Teenage Motherhood **9**
- Tattoos: Status Risk or Status Symbol? **30**
- The “Baby Einstein” Program: A Farce? **67**
- A Cop in the Hood: Participant Observation **69**
- Race Socialization among Young Adults **89**
- Doing Hair, Doing Class **117**
- The Prisoner’s Dilemma Game **119**
- Sharing the Journey **126**
- The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison **165**
- The Fragile Middle Class **180**
- Servants of Globalization: Who Does the Domestic Work? **207**
- American Apartheid **237**
- Eating Disorders: Gender, Race, and the Body **264**
- Teens and Sex: Are Young People Becoming More Sexually Conservative? **290**

- Is Hooking Up Bad for Women? **292**
- Men’s Caregiving **317**
- Homeroom Security **341**
- Precarious Work: The Shifting Conditions of Work in Society **366**
- Who Cares and Why? Fair Trade and Organic Food **409**

## UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

- Becoming a Sociologist **11**
- The Social Meaning of Language **34**
- International Adoption and Interracial Families **75**
- The Student/Debt Crisis **179**
- War, Childhood, and Poverty **221**
- Race and Hurricane Katrina **251**
- Sexuality and Disability: Understanding “Marginalized” Masculinity **294**
- Interracial Dating and Marriage **309**
- Diversity in the Power Elite **384**
- Black Women in the Environmental Justice Movement **398**

## A SOCIOLOGICAL EYE ON THE MEDIA

- Death of a Superstar **49**
- Research and the Media **58**
- Images of Violent Crime **162**
- Reproducing Class Stereotypes **188**
- Cultural Gatekeepers and the Construction of Femininity **259**
- Idealizing Family Life **313**

## ADDITIONAL TOPICS

- Key Sociological Concepts **5**
- Careers in Sociology **21**
- Statistics in Sociology **64–65**
- The “Tax” on Being a Minority in America: Give Yourself a True–False Test (An Illustration of White Privilege) **252**

# Maps

## MAPPING AMERICA’S DIVERSITY

- Map 1.1 A Changing Population **12**
- Map 2.1 English Language Not Spoken at Home **37**
- Map 5.1 Population Density **106**
- Map 7.1 Suicide Rates **151**
- Map 8.1 Poverty in the United States **194**
- Map 10.1 Foreign Born Population **242**
- Map 13.1 Religious Diversity in the United States **330**
- Map 15.1 and 15.2 Electoral Vote by State and County **382**

## VIEWING SOCIETY IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

- Map 3.1 Human Development Index **60**
- Map 4.1 Children as a Percentage of the Population **88**
- Map 9.1 Rich and Poor **204**
- Map 9.2 The Gini Coefficient **206**
- Map 9.3 World Poverty **217**
- Map 11.1 Women in Senior Management **277**
- Map 13.2 World Religions **334**
- Map 15.3 Women Heads of State **385**
- Map 16.1 Global Warming Predictions **393**





# Preface

*Sociology: The Essentials* is a book that teaches students the basic concepts, theories, and insights of the sociological perspective. With each new edition come new challenges—challenges that stem from new generations of students with different learning styles; challenges that stem from the diversity among students who will study this book; and challenges that stem from the changes that are taking place in society. One of the most important changes taking place today is how students learn and how they are engaged with their course material, often in the form of online learning resources. With that in mind, *Sociology: The Essentials*, eighth edition, takes full advantage of this revolutionary change by having a fully electronic version of the book available, which allows for personalized, fully online digital learning—a platform of content, assignments, and learning resources that will engage students in an interactive mode, while also offering instructors the opportunity to make individualized configurations of course work. Some will want to continue using the printed version of the book, still enhanced with various pedagogical features. But those who want to enhance their curriculum through online resources will be able to utilize the new MindTap Sociology in the way that best suits your course.

However the book is used, we have updated it to reflect the latest social changes and developments in sociological scholarship. Because we revise this book regularly, we are somewhat amazed, even as sociologists, to see how much can change even in the relatively short period of time between editions. Our book constantly adapts, not just to accommodate new scholarship that appears at an amazing pace, but also to recognize significant changes in society that occur.

In this edition, we have maintained the themes that have been the book's hallmark from the start: a focus on diversity in society, attention to society as both enduring and changing, the significance of social context in explaining human behavior, the increasing impact of globalization on all aspects of society, and a focus on the critical thinking and analysis of society that is fostered through sociological research and theory. We know that studying sociology opens new ways of looking at the world. As we teach our students, sociology is grounded in careful observation of social facts, as well as analyses of how society operates. For students and faculty alike, studying sociology can be exciting, interesting, and downright fun, even though it also deals with sobering social issues, such as the growing inequality that marks our time, as just one example.

In this book, we try to capture the excitement of the sociological perspective, while also introducing students to how sociologists do research and how they theoretically approach their subject matter. We know that most students in an introductory course will not become sociology majors, though we hope, of course, that our book and their teacher encourages them to do so. We want to give students, no matter their area of study, a way of thinking about the world around them that is not immediately apparent. This is especially reflected in a new feature of this edition—a short, boxed insert in every chapter entitled, “What Would a Sociologist Say?” Here, we take a common topic and, with informal writing, briefly discuss how a sociological perspective would approach understanding on that particular issue. We think this new feature will help students see the unique ways that sociologists view everyday topics—things as commonplace as the funeral of a superstar, finding a job, or sports in popular culture.

And, importantly, we want our book to be engaging and accessible to undergraduate readers, while also preserving the integrity of sociological research and theory. Our experience in teaching introductory students shows us that students can appreciate the revelations of sociological research and theory if presented in a way that engages them and connects to their lives. We have kept this in mind throughout this revision and have focused on material that students can understand and apply to their own social worlds.

## CRITICAL THINKING AND DEBUNKING

We use the theme of *debunking* in the manner first developed by Peter Berger (1963) to look behind the facades of everyday life, challenging the ready-made assumptions that permeate commonsense thinking. Debunking is a way for students to develop their critical thinking, and we use the debunking theme to help students understand how society is constructed and sustained. This theme is highlighted in the **Debunking Society's Myths** feature found throughout each chapter.

In this edition, we also include a feature to help students see the relevance of sociology in their everyday lives. The box feature **See for Yourself** allows students to apply a sociological concept to observations from their own lives, thus helping them develop their critical abilities and understand the importance of the sociological perspective.

*Critical thinking* is a term widely used but often vaguely defined. We use it to describe the process by which students learn to apply sociological concepts to observable events in society. Throughout the book, we ask students to use sociological concepts to analyze and interpret the world they inhabit. This is reflected in the **Thinking Sociologically** feature that is also present in most chapters.

Because contemporary students are so strongly influenced by the media, we also encourage their critical thinking through the box feature called **A Sociological Eye on the Media**. These boxes examine sociological research that challenges some of the ideas and images portrayed in the media. This not only improves students' critical thinking skills but also shows them how research can debunk these ideas and images.

## A FOCUS ON DIVERSITY

When we first wrote this book, we did so because we wanted to integrate the then new scholarship on race, gender, and class into the core of the sociological field. We continue to see race, class, and gender—or, more broadly, the study of inequality—as one of the core insights of sociological research and theory. With that in mind, diversity, and the inequality that sometimes results, is a central theme throughout this book. A boxed theme, **Understanding Diversity**, highlights this feature, but you will find that analysis of inequality, especially by race, gender, and class, is woven throughout the book.

## SOCIAL CHANGE

The sociological perspective helps students see society as characterized both by constant change and social stability. How society changes and the events—both dramatic and subtle—that influence change are analyzed throughout this book. New material is added throughout the text that comments on the impact of the economic recession that began in 2008 and shows students how their lives—seemingly individual—are greatly influenced by social structures beyond their control.

## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

One of the main things we hope students learn in an introductory course is how broad-scale conditions influence things within their everyday lives. Understanding this idea is a cornerstone of the sociological perspective and one of the main lessons learned in introductory courses. One way to see this is to help students understand how the increasingly global character of society affects day-to-day realities. Thus, we use a global perspective to examine how global changes are affecting all parts of life within the United States, as well as other parts of the world. This means more than including cross-cultural examples. It means, for example, examining phenomena such as migration and immigration or helping students understand that

their own consumption habits are profoundly shaped by global interconnections. The availability of jobs, too, is another way students can learn about the impact of an international division of labor on work within the United States. Our global perspective is found in the research and examples cited throughout the book, as well as in various chapters that directly focus on the influence of globalization on particular topics, such as work, culture, and crime. The map feature **Viewing Society in Global Perspective** also brings a global perspective to the subject matter.

## NEW TO THE EIGHTH EDITION

We have made various changes to the eighth edition to make it current and to reflect new developments in sociological research. Taken together, these changes should make the eighth edition easier for instructors to teach and even more accessible and interesting for students.

As in the previous edition, we include a separate chapter on sociological research methods (Chapter Three, “Doing Sociological Research”), but we place it after the chapter on culture as a way of capturing student interest early. *Sociology: The Essentials* is organized into five major parts: “Introducing the Sociological Imagination” (Chapter 1); “Studying Society and Social Structure” (Chapters 2 through 7); “Social Inequalities” (Chapters 8 through 12); “Social Institutions” (Chapters 13 through 15); and “Social Change” (Chapter 16).

**Part I, “Introducing the Sociological Imagination,”** introduces students to the unique perspective of sociology, differentiating it from other ways of studying society, particularly the individualistic framework students tend to assume. Within this section, **Chapter 1, “The Sociological Perspective,”** introduces students to the sociological perspective. The theme of debunking is introduced, as is the sociological imagination, as developed by C. Wright Mills. This chapter briefly reviews the development of sociology as a discipline, with a focus on the classical frameworks of sociological theory, as well as contemporary theories, such as feminist theory and postmodernism. The eighth edition adds examples from current events to capture student interest, including the impact of the recent recession, the high rate of suicide among veterans, the influence of social media, and the rise of the so-called “boomerang generation.”

In **Part II, “Individuals and Society,”** students learn some of the core concepts of sociology. It begins with the study of culture in **Chapter 2, “Culture and the Media,”** reflecting the significance of the media in the lives of our students. There is a new section on how the widespread availability of Internet-based blogs, chat groups, and social networks is changing how people communicate, including about current events. We include a discussion of social media as a

force shaping contemporary culture. The new box, “What Would a Sociologist Say?” asks students to think sociologically about why funerals and deaths of media superstars so captivate the public. We also include new data on television and computer habits and have added a discussion of blogging as an example of cultural change.

**Chapter 3, “Doing Sociological Research,”** contains a discussion of the research process and the tools of sociological research—the survey, participant observation, controlled experiments, content analysis, historical research, and evaluation research. New to this chapter are recent studies, such as Alice Goffman’s participant observation study of people on the run from the law; techniques new to this text such as the Solomon Four-Group Experimental Design; and concepts such as unobtrusive measurement.

**Chapter 4, “Socialization and the Life Course,”** contains material on socialization theory and research, including agents of socialization such as the media, family, and peers. Research on how families teach about race is presented, and theories of socialization are discussed. The chapter also includes information about aging and the life course. In addition to updated statistics about childhood, adolescence, and aging, there is added discussion about how socialization has changed. The “What Would a Sociologist Say?” box, for example, looks at online interaction and how the socialization process takes place in cyberspace.

**Chapter 5, “Social Interaction and Social Structure,”** emphasizes how changes in the macrostructure of society influence the microlevel of social interaction. We do this by focusing on technological changes that are now part of students’ everyday lives and making the connection between changes at the societal level in the everyday realities of people’s lives. New material is included on game theory, on interpersonal attraction, and on the demographic composition of Internet users. The material in this chapter gives attention to the influence of cyberspace on social interaction. Also new are a “Doing Sociological Research” box on the “Prisoner’s Dilemma” game interaction, and a “What Would a Sociologist Say?” box on congressional debates.

In **Chapter 6, “Groups and Organizations,”** we study social groups and bureaucratic organizations, using sociology to understand the complex processes of group influence, organizational dynamics, and the bureaucratization of society. In this edition, we have added a discussion of organizational culture, using the scandal at Penn State as an example. We have also added a new discussion of diversity in organizations, based on new scholarship on that topic.

**Chapter 7, “Deviance and Crime,”** includes the study of sociological theories and research on deviance with attention to labeling theory; modern-day corporate crime and deviance; and the effects of race, class, and gender on arrest rates. Deviance is seen

as caused by the combination or *intersection* of personality variables and social-structural variables. The core material is illustrated with contemporary events, such as the rampage shooting in Arizona and the horrific mass murders of first-grade children in Newtown, Connecticut. Included in this chapter is recent research on opinions on gun ownership, the mass racialized incarceration of Blacks and Hispanics in U.S. prisons, and a discussion of what it means to be “made.”

In **Part III, “Social Inequalities,”** each chapter explores a particular dimension of stratification in society. Beginning with the significance of class, **Chapter 8, “Social Class and Social Stratification,”** provides an overview of basic concepts central to the study of class and social stratification. The chapter has a substantial emphasis on the recent economic recession, including new material on the Occupy America movement. There is also a new discussion of the student debt crisis and new research on a wide range of topics, including the rise of the superrich, wealth differences by race, and concentrated poverty. Throughout, there is updated data on income, wealth, and poverty.

**Chapter 9, “Global Stratification,”** follows with a particular emphasis on understanding the significance of global stratification, the inequality that has developed among, as well as within, various nations. We have added a discussion of the influence of *global outsourcing*. In this edition, we connect inequality within the United States to worldwide inequality. And we offer new information on child labor, sex trafficking as part of global inequality, and how the Gini coefficient can be used to compare inequality across nations.

**Chapter 10, “Race and Ethnicity,”** is a comprehensive review of the significance of race and ethnicity in society, plus discussion of very recent studies of effects of Latino immigration, of skin color gradation in both Black and Hispanic communities, of different types of racism, and the relevance of net worth as opposed to annual income in Black communities. Also discussed is the new north-to-south “reverse” migration of some Blacks. We have added a section on multiracial identities, including a pro-and-con discussion of what has come to be called “multiracialism” and the 2010 census on multiracial identification. As well, we include new discussions of “whiteness” and of the effects of race versus social class. The chapter includes discussions of topics such as the new housing segregation, the disproportionate effects of the foreclosure crisis on minorities, the disproportionate exclusion of Blacks and Latinos from juries.

**Chapter 11, “Gender,”** focuses on gender as a central concept in sociology closely linked to systems of stratification in society. The chapter links the social construction of gender to homophobia, and then is followed by a separate chapter on sexuality. This edition adds a discussion of the so-called postfeminist movement and

discusses the controversial book, *The End of Men*. We revised the discussion of sociological and feminist theory. Throughout, we offered updated data on earnings, employment, and gender-based attitudes.

**Chapter 12, “Sexuality,”** treats sexuality as a social construction and a dimension of social stratification and inequality. We have put more emphasis on the influence of feminist theory on the study of sexuality. The chapter also includes new research on transgender people, as well as updated data on attitudes about sexuality, including same-sex marriage. The chapter has been reorganized to strengthen the discussion of power as well as to emphasize race/class/gender analyses of sexual stereotypes. We also provide a new box on sexuality and disability, and updated data throughout.

**Part IV, “Social Institutions,”** includes three chapters, each focusing on basic institutions within society. **Chapter 13, “Families and Religion,”** maintains its inclusion of important topics in the study of families, such as interracial dating, debates about same-sex marriage, fatherhood, gender roles within families, and family violence. But we have added material on important topics in family studies, including “boomerang families,” the “third shift” of women’s family care work, and child care. The section on religion has a new box on the rise of religious fundamentalism.

**Chapter 14, “Education and Health Care,”** has been substantially reorganized and updated to reflect these two important topics of public policy and public debate. The section on education includes new information that considers school tracking and individualized education plans (IEP), exploring how the education system attempts to meet the needs of all students. We have added material on the current policy debates about No Child Left Behind and the Race to the Top education initiatives. In the section on health, we have new material on the Affordable Care Act, with a discussion of the debates around health care reform. We also provide new research on obesity and the health consequences of poor nutrition.

**Chapter 15, “Economy and Politics,”** analyzes the state, power, and authority and bureaucratic government. It also contains a detailed discussion of theories of power in addition to coverage of the economy seen globally and characteristics of the labor force. For the eighth edition, we reorganized the chapter to put economy before politics, because the economy is driving so many contemporary issues. We then reorganized the material within the section on the economy, especially to emphasize diversity and the social organization of work. We provide new material on outsourcing, a new research box on precarious work, and more emphasis on the current economic crisis. We also include new research on myths about immigration and its effects on native-born workers. The section on politics includes a discussion of the influence of the Tea Party, as well as data on the 2012 elections. Also in this section is new material on democracy, authoritarianism, and

totalitarianism. In addition, we provide a new section on the military as a social institution.

**Part V, “Social Change,”** includes **Chapter 16, “Environment, Population, and Social Change.”** This chapter has been substantially revised for this edition so that a sociological analysis of environmental issues frames the chapters. Thus, the chapter focuses on sustainability and climate change. We also provide a new section on social dimensions of disasters. In the discussion of population processes, we include much more on the changes bringing more diversity into the U.S. population. To illustrate sociological theory, we’ve provided a new section on “Globalization and Modernization” to emphasize modernization as a social process.

## MindTap Sociology: The Personal Learning Experience

MindTap Sociology for *Sociology: The Essentials*, eighth edition, from Cengage Learning represents a new approach to a highly personalized, online learning platform. A fully online learning solution, MindTap Sociology combines all of a student’s learning tools—readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments—into a singular learning path that guides students through an introduction to sociology course. Instructors personalize the experience by customizing the presentation of these learning tools for 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 Sociology for *Sociology: The Essentials*, eighth edition, is easy to use and saves instructors time by allowing them to:

- Seamlessly deliver appropriate content and technology assets from a number of providers to students, as they need them.
- 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 their 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; student engagement will increase, leading to better student outcomes.
- 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, in activities, homework, and quizzes.
- Automatically grade all homework and quizzes.

- MindTap Sociology for *Sociology: The Essentials*, eighth edition features Aplia assignments, which help students learn to use their sociological imagination through compelling content and thought-provoking questions. Students complete interactive activities that encourage them to think critically in order to practice and apply course concepts. These valuable critical thinking skills help students become thoughtful and engaged members of society. Aplia for *Sociology: The Essentials*, eighth edition is also available as a standalone product. Login to CengageBrain.com for access.

## Aplia

Aplia™ is now a part of MindTap Sociology and available separately. Aplia™ is an online interactive learning solution that improves comprehension and outcomes by increasing student effort and engagement. Founded by a professor to enhance his own courses, Aplia provides automatically graded assignments that were written to make the most of the web medium and contain detailed, immediate explanations on every question. Our easy-to-use system has been used by more than 2,000,000 students at over 1,800 institutions.

## CourseReader for Sociology

*CourseReader for Sociology*, first edition, allows you to create a fully customized online reader in minutes. Access a rich collection of thousands of primary and secondary sources, readings, and audio and video selections from multiple disciplines. Each selection includes a descriptive introduction that puts concepts into context, and every selection is further supported by both critical thinking and multiple-choice questions designed to reinforce key points. This easy-to-use solution allows you to select exactly the content you need for your courses and is loaded with convenient pedagogical features like highlighting, printing, note taking, and downloadable MP3 audio files for each reading.

## FEATURES AND PEDAGOGICAL AIDS

The special features of this book flow from its major themes: diversity, current theory and research, debunking and critical thinking, social change, and a global perspective. The features are also designed to help students develop critical thinking skills so that they can apply abstract concepts to observed experiences in their everyday life and learn how to interpret different theoretical paradigms and approaches to sociological research questions.

### Critical Thinking Features

The feature **Thinking Sociologically** takes concepts from each chapter and asks students to think about

these concepts in relationship to something they can easily observe in an exercise or class discussion. The feature **Debunking Society's Myths** takes certain common assumptions and shows students how the sociological perspective would inform such assumptions and beliefs.

### See for Yourself

The feature **See for Yourself** provides students with the chance to apply sociological concepts and ideas to their own observations. This feature can also be used as the basis for writing exercises, helping students improve both their analytic skills and their writing skills.

### An Extensive and Content-Rich Map Feature

We use the map feature that appears throughout the book to help students visualize some of the ideas presented, as well as to learn more about regional and international diversity. One map theme is **Mapping America's Diversity** and the other is **Viewing Society in Global Perspective**. These maps have multiple uses for instructional value, beyond instructing students about world and national geography. The maps have been designed primarily to show the differentiation by county, state, and/or country on key social facts.

### High-Interest Theme Boxes

We use high-interest themes for the box features that embellish our focus on diversity and sociological research throughout the text. **Understanding Diversity** boxes further explore the approach to diversity taken throughout the book. In most cases, these box features provide personal narratives or other information designed to teach students about the experiences of different groups in society.

Because many are written as first-person narratives, they can invoke students' empathy toward groups other than those to which they belong—something we think is critical to teaching about diversity. We hope to show students the connections between race, class, and other social groups that they otherwise find difficult to grasp.

The box feature **Doing Sociological Research** is intended to show students the diversity of research questions that form the basis of sociological knowledge and, equally important, how the questions researchers ask influence the methods used to investigate the questions.

We see this as an important part of sociological research—that how one investigates a question is determined as much by the nature of the question as by allegiance to a particular research method. Some questions require a more qualitative approach; others, a more quantitative approach. In developing these box features, we ask: What is the central question sociologists are asking? How did they explore this question using sociological research methods? What did

they find? What are the implications of this research? We deliberately selected questions that show the full and diverse range of sociological theories and research methods, as well as the diversity of sociologists. Each box feature ends with **Questions to Consider** to encourage students to think further about the implications and applications of the research.

**What Would a Sociologist Say?** boxes take a topic of interest and examine how a sociologist would likely interpret this subject. The topics are selected to capture student interest, such as a discussion of veteran suicides, hip-hop culture, and sex and popular culture. We think this box brings a sociological perspective to commonplace events.

The feature **A Sociological Eye on the Media**, found in several chapters, examines some aspect of how the media influence public understanding of some of the subjects in this book. We think this is important because sociological research often debunks taken-for-granted points of view presented in the media, and we want students to be able to look at the media with a more critical eye. Because of the enormous influence of the media, we think this is increasingly important in educating students about sociology. In addition to the features just described, we offer an entire set of learning aids within each chapter that promotes student mastery of the sociological concepts.

## In-Text Learning Aids

**Learning Objectives.** We have added learning objectives to this edition, which appear near the beginning of every chapter. Matched to the major chapter headings, these objectives identify what we expect students to learn from the chapter. Faculty may choose to use these learning objectives to assess how well students comprehend the material. We tried to develop the learning objectives based on different levels of understanding and analysis, recognizing the various paths that students take in how they learn material.

**Chapter Outlines.** A concise chapter outline at the beginning of each chapter provides students with an overview of the major topics to be covered.

**Key Terms.** Key terms and major concepts appear in bold when first introduced in the chapter. A list of the key terms is found at the end of the chapter, which makes study more effective. Definitions for the key terms are found in the glossary.

**Theory Tables.** Each chapter includes a table that summarizes different theoretical perspectives by comparing and contrasting how these theories illuminate different aspects of different subjects.

**Chapter Summary in Question-and-Answer Format.** Questions and answers highlight the major points in each chapter and provide a quick review of major concepts and themes covered in the chapter.

A **Glossary** and complete **References** for the whole text are found at the back of the book.

# SOCIOLOGY: THE ESSENTIALS, EIGHTH EDITION SUPPLEMENTS

*Sociology: The Essentials*, eighth edition, is accompanied by a wide array of supplements prepared to create the best learning environment inside as well as outside the classroom for both instructors and students. All the continuing supplements for *Sociology: The Essentials*, eighth edition, have been thoroughly revised and updated. We invite you to take full advantage of the teaching and learning tools available to you.

## For Instructors

**Instructor's Resource Manual.** This supplement offers instructors brief chapter outlines, student learning objectives, American Sociological Association recommendations, key terms and people, detailed chapter lecture outlines, lecture/discussion suggestions, student activities, chapter worksheets, video suggestions, video activities, and Internet exercises. The eighth edition also includes a syllabus to help instructors easily organize learning tools such as Aplia and create lesson plans.

**Test Bank.** This instructor-reviewed test bank consists of a myriad of multiple-choice, true/false, short-answer, and essay questions for each chapter, all with page references to the text. Each multiple-choice item has the question type (factual, applied, or conceptual) indicated, and all test questions will be mapped to a learning objective for the chapter. All questions are also labeled as new, modified, or pickup so instructors know if the question is new to this edition of the test bank, modified but picked up from the previous edition of the test bank, or picked up straight from the previous edition of the test bank.

**Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero.** This flexible, online system allows teachers to author, edit, and manage test bank content from multiple Cengage Learning solutions, create multiple test versions in an instant, and deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want.

**PowerPoint Slides.** Preassembled Microsoft® PowerPoint® lecture slides with graphics from the text make it easy for you to assemble, edit, publish, and present custom lectures for your course.

**The Sociology Video Library Vol. I–IV.** These DVDs drive home the relevance of course topics through short, provocative clips of current and historical events. Perfect for enriching lectures and engaging students in discussion, many of the segments on this volume have been gathered from BBC Motion Gallery. Ask your Cengage Learning representative for a list of contents.

# Acknowledgments

We relied on the comments of many reviewers to improve the book, and we thank them for the time they gave in developing very thoughtful commentaries on the different chapters. Thanks to Thea Alvarado, College of the Canyons; Maria Bryant, College of Southern Maryland; Kenneth Colburn, Butler University; Craig Cook, Crown College; Jason Crockett, Kutztown University; Keri Diggins, Scottsdale Community College; Lori Guasta, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs; Jamie Gusrang, Community College of Philadelphia; Kenneth Melichar, Piedmont College; Rachael Neal, Coe College; Robert H. Oxley, Schoolcraft College; Nancy Reeves, Gloucester County College; and Victor Thompson, Rider University.

We appreciate the efforts of many people who make this project possible. Margaret Andersen especially thanks Dana Brittingham whose extraordinary organizational skills make it possible to keep up with the many daily demands of this book and her other work. All three of us are fortunate to be working with a publishing team with great enthusiasm for this project. We thank all of the people at Cengage Learning who have

worked with us on this and other projects. We especially thank Bob Jucha for shepherding this revision through, as he has done many times before. And we welcome our new editor Seth Dobrin to this project and thank him for his commitment to this work. We were also fortunate to work with Mark Kerr, executive editor during a transition to a new editor; we hope he sees some of his ideas reflected in the content of the book. Cheri Palmer is expert at overseeing the many aspects of production that are critical to the book's success. We especially thank Jill Traut of MPS Limited for her attention to the many aspects of production. We are appreciative of the fine eye of Heather McElwain for her careful copyediting of the manuscript, and Reba Frederics from Pre-Media Global for photographic research. Finally, our special thanks also go to our spouses Richard Morris Rosenfeld, Patricia Epps Taylor, and Jim Rau for their ongoing love and willingness to put up with us when we are frazzled by the project details! Finally, a special dedication goes to Olivia "Bunny" Pla, granddaughter of Howard F. and Patricia Epps Taylor.





# About the Authors



Courtesy of Margaret Andersen

**Margaret L. Andersen** is the Edward F. and Elizabeth Goodman Rosenberg Professor of Sociology at the University of Delaware where she also holds joint appointments in women's studies and Black American studies and currently serves as Associate Provost for Academic Affairs. She is the author of *On Land and On Sea: A Century of Women in the Rosenfeld Collection*; *Living Art: The Life of Paul R. Jones, African American Art Collector*; *Race and Ethnicity in Society: The Changing Landscape* (with Elizabeth Higginbotham); *Thinking about Women: Sociological Perspectives on Sex and Gender*; and *Race, Class and Gender* (with Patricia Hill Collins). She is a recipient of the American Sociological Association's Jessie Bernard Award and has received the Sociologists for Women in Society's Feminist Lecturer Award. She is the former vice president of the American Sociological Association, former president of the Eastern Sociological Society, and a recipient of the University of Delaware's Excellence in Teaching Award and the College of Arts and Sciences Award for Outstanding Teaching.



Courtesy of Howard Taylor

**Howard F. Taylor** was raised in Cleveland, Ohio. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Hiram College and has a Ph.D. in sociology from Yale University. He has taught at the Illinois Institute of Technology, Syracuse University, and Princeton University, where he is presently professor of sociology and former director of the Center for African American Studies. He has published over fifty articles in sociology, education, social psychology, and race relations. His books include *The IQ Game* (Rutgers University Press), a critique of hereditarian accounts of intelligence; *Balance in Small Groups* (Van Nostrand Reinhold), translated into Japanese; and the forthcoming *The SAT Triple Whammy: Race, Gender, and Social Class Bias*. He has appeared widely before college, radio, and TV audiences, including ABC's *Nightline*. He is past president of the Eastern Sociological Society, and a member of the American Sociological Association and the Sociological Research Association, an honorary society for distinguished research. He is a winner of the DuBois-Johnson-Frazier Award, given by the American Sociological Association for distinguished research in race and ethnic relations, and the President's Award for Distinguished Teaching at Princeton University. He lives in Pennington, New Jersey, with his wife, a corporate lawyer.



Courtesy of Kim A. Logio

**Kim A. Logio** received her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Delaware and is currently associate professor and chair of sociology at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She has been interviewed for local television and National Public Radio for her work on body image and race, class, and gender differences in nutrition and weight control behavior. She is a member of the American Sociological Association and the Eastern Sociological Society. She often teaches research methods and guides students through the completion of their undergraduate thesis projects. She has been awarded a teaching award at Saint Joseph's University. She lives in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, with her husband and three children.



# sociology

the essentials

# 8



# 1

## The Sociological Perspective





Andersen Ross/Blend Images/Corbis



## What Is Sociology?

### The Sociological Perspective

### The Significance of Diversity

### The Development of Sociological Theory

### Theoretical Frameworks in Sociology

### Chapter Summary

**Imagine that you** had been switched with another infant at birth. How different would your life be? What if your accidental family was very poor . . . or very rich? How might this have affected the schools you attended, the health care you received, and the possibilities for your future career? If you had been raised in a different religion, would this have affected your beliefs, values, and attitudes? Taking a greater leap, what if you had been born another sex or a different race? What would you be like now?

We are talking about changing the basic facts of your life—your family, social class, education, religion, sex, and race. Each has major consequences for who you are and how you will fare in life. These factors play a major part in writing your life script. Social location (meaning a person's place in society) establishes the limits and possibilities of a life.

#### Consider this:

- During economic recessions, families where the couple is less rigidly tied to traditional breadwinner/homemaker roles are less likely to experience family strain than is true for families with more traditional gender roles (Sherman 2009).
- The people least likely to attend college are those most likely to benefit from it (Brand and Xie 2010).
- During the housing foreclosure crisis in the recent recession, women of color were five times more likely than men of any color in the same income brackets to hold subprime mortgages—that is, mortgages with interest rates higher than the prime rate (Fishbein and Woodall 2006).
- Gender and racial diversity in for-profit business organizations is associated with increased sales revenues, more customers, and higher profits (Herring 2009).

These conclusions, drawn from current sociological research, describe some consequences of particular social locations in society. Although we may take our place in society for granted, our social location has a profound effect on our chances in life. The power of sociology is that it teaches us to see how society influences our lives and the lives of others, and it helps us explain the consequences of different social arrangements.

Sociology also has the power to help us understand the influence of major changes on people. Currently, rapidly developing technologies, increasing globalization, a more diverse population in the United States, and changes in women's roles are affecting everyone in society, although in different ways. How are these changes affecting your life? Perhaps you rely on social media to keep in touch with friends. Maybe your community is witnessing an increase in immigrants from other places. Or, maybe you see women and men trying hard to balance the needs of both work and family life. All of these are issues that guide sociological questions. Sociology explains some of the causes and consequences of these changes.

Although society is always changing, it is also remarkably stable. People generally follow established patterns of human behavior, and you can generally anticipate how people will behave in certain situations. You can even anticipate how different social conditions will affect different groups of people in society. This is what sociologists find so interesting: Society is marked by both change and stability. Societies continually evolve, creating the need for people to adapt to change while still following generally established patterns of behavior.

## learning objectives

- Illustrate what is meant by saying that human behavior is shaped by social structure
- Question individualistic explanations of human behavior
- Describe the significance of diversity in studying contemporary society
- Explain the origins of sociological theory
- Compare and contrast major frameworks of sociological theory

## WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY?

**Sociology** is the study of human behavior in society. Sociologists are interested in the study of people and have learned a fundamental lesson: Human behavior, even when seemingly “natural” or taken for granted, is shaped by social structures—structures that have their origins beyond the immediately visible behaviors of everyday life. In other words, *all human*



David Grossman/Alamy Limited

Sociology is the study of human behavior. What social behaviors do you see here?

*behavior occurs in a social context.* That context—the institutions and culture that surround us—shapes what people do and think. In this book, we will examine the dimensions of society and analyze the elements of social context that influence human behavior.

Sociology is a scientific way of thinking about society and its influence on human groups. Observation, reasoning, and logical analysis are the tools of sociologists, coupled with knowledge of the large body of theoretical and analytical work. Sociology is inspired by the fascination people have for observing people, but it goes far beyond casual observations. It builds from objective and accurate analyses that others can validate as reliable.

Every day, the media in their various forms (television, film, video, digital, and print) bombard us with social commentary. Media commentators provide endless opinion about the various and sometimes bizarre forms of behavior in our society. Sociology is different. Sociologists often appear in the media, and they study some of the same subjects that the media examine, such as crime, violence, or income inequality, but sociologists use specific research techniques and well-tested theories to explain social issues. Indeed, sociology can provide the tools for testing whether the things we hear about society are actually true. Much of what we hear in the media and elsewhere about society, although delivered with perfect earnestness, is misstated and sometimes completely wrong, as you will see in some of the “Debunking Society’s Myths” examples featured throughout this book.

## key sociological concepts

As you build your sociological perspective, you must learn certain key concepts to begin understanding how sociologists view human behavior. Social structure, social institutions, social change, and social interaction are not the only sociological concepts, but they are fundamental to grasping the sociological perspective.

**Social Interaction.** Sociologists see **social interaction** as behavior between two or more people that is given meaning. Through social interaction, people react and change, depending on the actions and reactions of others. Because society changes as new forms of human behavior emerge, change is always in the works.

**Social Structure.** We define **social structure** as the organized pattern of social relationships and social institutions that together constitute society. Social structure is not a “thing,” but refers to the fact that social forces not always visible to the human eye guide and shape human behavior. Acknowledging that social structure exists does not mean that humans have no choice in how they behave, only that those choices are largely conditioned by one’s location in society.

**Social Institutions.** In this book, you will also learn about the significance of **social institutions**, defined as established and organized systems of social behavior with a particular and recognized purpose. The family, religion, marriage, government, and the economy are examples of major social institutions. Social institutions confront individuals at birth and transcend individual experience, but they still influence individual behavior.

**Social Change.** As you can tell, sociologists are also interested in the process of **social change**, the alteration of society over time. As much as sociologists see society as producing certain outcomes, they do not see society as fixed, nor do they see humans as passive recipients of social expectations. Sociologists view society as stable but constantly changing.

As you read this book, you will see that these key concepts—social interaction, social structure, social institutions, and social change—are central to the sociological imagination.

### thinking SOCIOLOGICALLY

**Q:** What do the following people have in common?

First Lady Michelle Obama  
Robin Williams (actor, comedian)  
Ronald Reagan (former president)  
Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Regis Philbin (TV personality)  
Reverend Jesse Jackson  
Saul Bellow (novelist; Nobel Prize recipient)  
Joe Theismann (former football player and TV personality)  
Congresswoman Maxine Waters (from California)  
Senator Barbara Mikulski (from Maryland)

**A:** They were all sociology majors!

Source: Compiled by Peter Dreier, Occidental College. ●

The subject matter of sociology is everywhere. This is why people sometimes wrongly believe that sociology just explains the obvious. But sociologists bring a unique perspective to understanding social behavior and social change. Even though sociologists often do research on familiar topics, such as youth cultures or relations between women and men, they do so using particular research tools and specific frames of analysis (known as sociological theory). Psychologists, anthropologists, political scientists, economists, social workers, and others also study social behavior, although each has a different perspective or “angle” on people in society. Together,

these fields of study (also called disciplines) make up what are called the social sciences.

## THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Think back to the opening of this chapter where you were asked to imagine yourself growing up under completely different circumstances. Our goal in that passage was to make you feel the stirring of the *sociological perspective*—the ability to see the societal patterns that influence individual and group life. The beginnings of the sociological perspective can be as simple as the pleasures of watching people or wondering how society influences people’s lives. Indeed, many students begin their study of sociology because they are “interested in people.” Sociologists convert this curiosity into the systematic study of how society influences different people’s experiences within it.

**C. Wright Mills** (1916–1962) was one of the first to write about the sociological perspective in his classic book, *The Sociological Imagination* (1959). He wrote that the task of sociology was to understand the relationship between individuals and the society in which they live. He defined the **sociological imagination** as the ability to see the societal patterns that influence the individual as well as groups of individuals. Sociology should be used, Mills argued, to reveal how the context of society shapes our lives. He thought that to understand the experience of a given person

or group of people, one had to have knowledge of the social and historical context in which people lived.

Think, for example, about the time and effort that many people put into their appearance. You might ordinarily think of this as merely personal grooming or an individual attempt to “look good,” but there are significant social origins of this behavior. When you stand in front of a mirror, you are probably not thinking about how society is present in your reflection. But as you look in the mirror, you are seeing how others see you and are very likely adjusting your appearance with that in mind, even if not consciously. Therefore, this seemingly individual behavior is actually a very social act. If you are trying to achieve a particular look, you are likely doing so because of social forces that establish particular ideals, which are produced by industries that profit enormously from the products and services that people buy, even when they do so believing this is an individual choice.

Some industries suggest that you should be thinner or curvier, your pants should be baggy or straight, your breasts should be minimized or maximized—either way you need more products. Maybe you should have a complete makeover! Many people go to great lengths to try to achieve a constantly changing beauty ideal, one that is probably not even attainable (such as flawless skin, hair always in place, perfectly proportioned body parts). Sometimes trying to meet these ideals can even be hazardous to your physical and mental health.

The point is that the alleged standards of beauty are produced by social factors that extend far beyond an individual’s concerns with personal appearance. Beauty ideals, like other socially established beliefs and practices, are produced in particular social and historical contexts. People may come up with all kinds of personal strategies for achieving these ideals: They may buy more products, try to lose more weight, get a Botox treatment, or even become extremely depressed and anxious if they think their efforts are failing. These personal behaviors may seem to be only individual issues, but they have basic social causes. That is, the origins of these behaviors exist beyond personal lives. The sociological imagination permits us to see that something as seemingly personal as how you look arises from a social context, not just individual behavior.

Sociologists are certainly concerned about individuals, but they are attuned to the social and historical context that shapes the experiences of individuals and groups. A distinction made by the sociological imagination is that made between *troubles* and *issues*. **Troubles** are privately felt problems that spring from events or feelings in a person’s life. **Issues** affect large numbers of people and have their origins in the institutional arrangements and history of a society (Mills 1959). This distinction is the crux of the difference between individual experience and social structure, defined as



Spencer Platt/Getty Images

*Personal troubles* are felt by individuals who are experiencing problems; *social issues* arise when large numbers of people experience problems that are rooted in the social structure of society.

the organized pattern of social relationships and social institutions that together constitute society. Issues shape the context within which troubles arise. Sociologists employ the sociological perspective to understand how issues are shaped by social structures.

Mills used the example of unemployment to explain the meaning of troubles versus issues—an example that has particular resonance now, given the economic recession the United States has experienced and the personal troubles (including unemployment) that this has generated. When an individual person becomes unemployed—or cannot find work—he or she has a personal trouble. Think of the worry that many college graduates have experienced in trying to find work during the recession. In addition to financial problems that unemployment brings, a person may feel a loss of identity, may become depressed, may have to uproot a family and move, or—in the case of college students—may have to move back home with parents after graduation.

The problem of unemployment, however, is deeper than the experience of one person. Unemployment is rooted in the structure of society; this is what interests sociologists. What societal forces cause unemployment? Who is most likely to become unemployed at different times? How does unemployment affect an entire community (for instance, when a large plant shuts down) or an entire nation (such as during the economic downturn of recent years)? Sociologists know that unemployment causes personal troubles, but understanding unemployment is more than understanding one person’s experience. It requires understanding the social structural conditions that influence people’s lives.



### Troubles and Issues

Personal troubles are everywhere around us: alcohol abuse or worries about money or even being upset about how you look. At the individual level, these things can be deeply troubling, and people sometimes need personal help to deal with them. But most personal troubles, as C. Wright Mills would say, also have their origins in societal arrangements. Take the example of alcohol abuse.

What are some of the things about society—not just individuals—that might influence this personal trouble? Is there a culture of drinking on your campus that generates peer pressure to drink? Do people drink more when they are unemployed? Is drinking more common among particular groups or at different times in history? Who profits from people's drinking? Thinking about these questions can help you understand the distinction that Mills makes between personal troubles and social issues. ●

The specific task of sociology, according to Mills, is to comprehend the whole of human society—its personal and public dimensions, historical and contemporary—and its influence on the lives of human beings. Mills had an important point: People often feel that things are beyond their control, meaning that they are being shaped by social forces larger than their own individual lives. Social forces influence our lives in profound ways, even though we may not always know how. Consider this: Sociologists have noted a current trend, popularly labeled “the boomerang generation” or “accordion families” (Newman 2012). This refers to the pattern whereby many young people, after having left their family home to attend college, are returning home after graduation. Although this may seem like an individual decision to save money on housing or live “free” while paying off student loans, when a whole generation experiences this living arrangement, there are social forces at work that extend beyond individual decisions. In other words, people feel the impact of social forces in their personal lives, even though they may not always know the full dimensions of those forces. This is where sociology comes into play—revealing the social forces that shape the different dimensions of our day-to-day lives.

Sociology is an **empirical** discipline. This means that sociological conclusions are based on careful and systematic observations, as we will see in Chapter 3 on sociological research methods. In this way, sociology is very different from ordinary common sense. For empirical observations to be useful to other observers, they must be gathered and recorded rigorously. Sociologists are also obliged to

reexamine their assumptions and conclusions constantly. Although the specific methods that sociologists use to examine different problems vary, as we will see, the empirical basis of sociology is what distinguishes it from mere opinion or other forms of social commentary.

### Discovering Unsettling Facts

In studying sociology, it is crucial to examine the most controversial topics and to do so with an open mind, even when you see the most disquieting facts. The facts we learn through sociological research can be “inconvenient” because the data can challenge familiar ways of thinking. Consider the following:

- Even though many think of the Internet as promoting more impersonal social interaction, sociological research finds that people with Internet access are actually more likely to have romantic partners because of meeting people online (Rosenfeld and Thomas 2012).
- Despite the widespread idea promoted in the media that well-educated women are opting out of professional careers to become “stay-at-home moms,” the proportion of college-educated White women who stay home with children has actually declined; those who opt out of work do so more typically because of frustration with how they are treated at work (Stone 2007).
- The number of women prisoners has increased at almost twice the rate of increase for men; two-thirds of women and half of men in prison are parents (Glaze and Maruschak 2008; Sabol and Couture 2008).

These facts provide unsettling evidence of persistent problems in the United States, *problems that are embedded in society, not just in individual behavior*. Sociologists try to reveal the social factors that shape society and determine the chances of success for different groups. Some never get the chance to go to college; others are unlikely to ever go to jail. These divisions persist because of people's placement within society.

Sociologists study not just the disquieting side of society. Sociologists may study questions that affect everyday life, such as how young boys and men are affected by changing gender roles (Kimmel 2008), worker–customer dynamics in nail salons (Kang 2010), or the expectations that young women and men have for combining work and family life (Gerson 2010). There are also many intriguing studies of unusual groups, such as cyberspace users (Kendall 2002), strip clubs and dancers (Price-Glynn 2010; Barton 2006), or heavily tattooed people, known as collectors (Irwin 2001). The subject matter of sociology is vast. Some research illuminates odd corners of society; other studies address urgent problems of society that may affect the lives of millions.

## Debunking in Sociology

The power of sociological thinking is that it helps us see everyday life in new ways. Sociologists question actions and ideas that are usually taken for granted. Peter Berger (1963) calls this process “debunking.” **Debunking** refers to looking behind the facades of everyday life—what Berger called the “unmasking tendency” of sociology (1963: 38). In other words, sociologists look at the behind-the-scenes patterns and processes that shape the behavior they observe in the social world.

Take schooling, for example: We can see how the sociological perspective debunks common assumptions about education. Most people think that education is primarily a way to learn and get ahead. Although this is true, a sociological perspective on education reveals something more. Sociologists have concluded that more than learning takes place in schools; other social processes are at work. Social cliques are formed where some students are “insiders” and others are excluded “outsiders.” Young schoolchildren acquire not just formal knowledge but also the expectations of society and people’s place within it. Race and class conflicts are often played out in schools (Lewis 2003). Poor children seldom have the same resources in schools as middle-class or elite children, and they are often assumed to be incapable of doing schoolwork and are treated accordingly. The somber reality is that schools may actually stifle the opportunities of some children rather than launch all children toward success (Kozol 2006).

Debunking is sometimes easier to do when looking at a culture or society different from one’s own. Consider how behaviors that are unquestioned in one society may seem positively bizarre to an outsider. For a thousand years in China, it was usual for the elite classes to bind the feet of young girls to keep the feet from growing bigger—a practice allegedly derived from a mistress of the emperor. Bound feet were a sign of delicacy and vulnerability. A woman with large feet (defined as more than 4 inches long!) was thought to bring shame to her husband’s household. The practice was supported by the belief that men were highly aroused by small feet, even though men never actually saw the naked foot. If they had, they might have been repulsed, because a woman’s actual foot was U-shaped and often rotten and covered with dead skin (Blake 1994). Outside the social, cultural, and historical context in which it was practiced, footbinding seems bizarre, even dangerous. Feminists have pointed out that Chinese women were crippled by this practice, making them unable to move about freely and more dependent on men (Chang 1991).

This is an example of outsiders debunking a practice that was taken for granted by those within



William Thomas Cain/Getty Images News/Getty Images



Lindsay Hebbard/Corbis

Cultural practices that seem bizarre to outsiders may be taken for granted or defined as appropriate by insiders.

the culture. Debunking can also call into question practices in one’s own culture that may normally go unexamined. Strange as the practice of Chinese footbinding may seem to you, how might someone from another culture view wearing shoes that make it difficult to walk? Or piercing one’s tongue or eyebrow? Many take these practices of contemporary U.S. culture for granted, just as they do Chinese footbinding. Until these cultural processes are debunked, seen as if for the first time, they might seem normal.

# DOING **sociological research**

## Debunking the Myths of Black Teenage Motherhood

**Research Question:** Sociologist Elaine Bell Kaplan knew that there was a stereotypical view of Black teen mothers that they had grown up in fatherless households where their mothers had no moral values and no control over their children. The myth of Black teenage motherhood also depicts teen mothers as unable to control their sexuality, as having children to collect welfare checks, and as having families who condone their behavior. Is this true?

**Research Method:** Kaplan did extensive research in two communities in the San Francisco Bay area—East Oakland and Richmond—both communities with a large African American population and typical of many inner-city, poor neighborhoods. Once thriving Black communities, East Oakland and Richmond are now characterized by high rates of unemployment, poverty, inadequate schools, crime, drug-related violence, and high numbers of single-parent households. Having grown up herself in Harlem, Kaplan knew that communities like those she studied have not always had these problems, nor have they condoned teen pregnancy. She spent several months in these communities, working as a volunteer in a community teen center that provided educational programs, day care, and counseling to

teen parents, and “hanging out” with a core group of teen mothers. She did extensive interviews with thirty-two teen mothers, supplementing them when she could with interviews with their mothers and, sometimes, the fathers of their children.

**Research Results:** Kaplan found that teen mothers adopt strategies for survival that help them cope with their environment, even though these same strategies do not help them overcome the problems they face. Unlike what the popular stereotype suggests, she did not find that the Black community condones teen pregnancy; quite the contrary, the teens felt embarrassed and stigmatized by being pregnant and experienced tension and conflict with their mothers, who saw their pregnancy as disrupting the hopes they had for their daughters’ success. These conclusions run directly counter to the public image that such women do not value success and live in a culture that promotes welfare dependency.

**Conclusions and Implications:** Instead of simply stereotyping these teens as young and tough, Kaplan sees them as struggling to develop their own gender and sexual identity. Like other teens, they are highly vulnerable, searching for love and aspiring to create a meaningful

and positive identity for themselves. But failed by the educational system and locked out of the job market, the young women’s struggle to develop an identity is compounded by the disruptive social and economic conditions in which they live.

Kaplan’s research is a fine example of how sociologists debunk some of the commonly shared myths that surround contemporary issues. Carefully placing her analysis in the context of the social structural changes that affect these young women’s lives, Kaplan provides an excellent example of how sociological research can shed new light on some of our most pressing social problems.

### Questions to Consider

1. Suppose that Kaplan had studied middle-class teen mothers. What similarities and differences would you predict in the experiences of middle-class and poor teen mothers? Does race matter? In what ways does your answer debunk myths about teen pregnancy?
2. Make a list of the challenges you would face were you to be a teen parent. Having done so, indicate those that would be considered personal troubles and those that are social issues. How are the two related?

Source: Kaplan, Elaine Bell. 1996. *Not Our Kind of Girl: Unraveling the Myths of Black Teenage Motherhood*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

## debunking SOCIETY’S MYTHS

**MYTH:** Email scams promising to deliver a large sum of cash from some African bank if you contact the email deliverer prey on people who are just stupid or old.

**SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH:** Studies of such email scams indicate that Americans and Brits are especially susceptible to such scams because they play on widely held cultural stereotypes about Africa (that these are economically unsophisticated nations in which people are unable to manage money). These scams also exploit the American cultural belief that it is possible to “get rich quick”—reflecting a belief in individualism and the belief that anyone who tries hard enough can get ahead (Smith 2009). ●

## Establishing Critical Distance

Debunking requires critical distance—that is, being able to detach from the situation at hand and view things with a critical mind. The role of critical distance in developing a sociological imagination is well explained by the early sociologist **Georg Simmel** (1858–1918). Simmel was especially interested in the role of *strangers* in social groups. Strangers have a position both inside and outside social groups; they are part of a group without necessarily sharing the group’s assumptions and points of view. Because of this, the stranger can sometimes see the social structure of a group more readily than can people who are thoroughly imbued with the group’s worldview. Simmel suggests that the sociological perspective requires a combination of nearness and distance. One