

Essentials of Sociology



Anthony Giddens
Mitchell Duneier
Richard P. Appelbaum
Deborah Carr

6th Edition

SIXTH EDITION



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SIXTH EDITION



Essentials of Sociology

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Preface



We believe that sociology plays an essential role in modern intellectual culture and occupies a central place within the social sciences. We have aimed to write a book that merges classic sociological theories with up-to-the-minute social issues that interest sociologists today. We also believe that sociologists must use rigorous research methods in order to study and understand human behavior. We highlight findings from ethnographic studies to document the hows and whys of social behavior, and also present current statistical data to document important social trends. We aim to present material in a “fair and balanced” way. Although each of the authors has his or her own perspective on social theories, methods, and social policy, we have worked hard to ensure that our treatment is unbiased and non-partisan. We strive to present the most complete picture of sociology possible. Given the vast array of topics encompassed by sociology, however, we made difficult choices about what the most essential topics in sociology are today. We hope readers are engaged, intrigued, and occasionally inspired by the ideas presented in this book.

About the Essentials Edition

The Sixth Edition of *Essentials of Sociology* is based on the Tenth Edition of our best-selling text *Introduction to Sociology*. We created the Essentials Edition for instructors and students who are looking for a briefer book that can fit into a compressed academic schedule. We have reduced the length of the book by roughly one-third, and we reduced the number of chapters from twenty to sixteen. We cut selected topics to focus the chapters on the core ideas of sociology, while still retaining the themes that have made the text a successful teaching tool.

Major Themes

The book is constructed around four basic themes that provide its character. The newest theme is applying sociology to everyday life. Sociological thinking enables self-understanding, which in turn can be focused back on an improved understanding of

the social world. Studying sociology can be a liberating experience: It expands our sympathies and imagination, opens up new perspectives on the sources of our own behavior, and creates an awareness of cultural settings different from our own. Sociological ideas challenge dogma, teach appreciation of cultural variety, and allow us insight into the working of social institutions. At a more practical level, the text shows how technology affects our daily experiences (new “Digital Life” sections) and how countries across the globe compare on key metrics such as incarceration rate, maternity leave benefits, and gender inequality (full-page “Globalization by the Numbers” infographics).

Our second theme is inequalities. Throughout the text, we highlight that important resources—whether education, health, income, or social support—are not fairly or evenly distributed to all individuals. We highlight the ways that gender, race, social class, and age shape our daily lives in the United States. We also pay keen attention to global inequalities, and reveal how differences in economic and natural resources throughout the world powerfully influence even very personal experiences—including health, religion, and relationships.

A third theme of the book is that of social and historical context. Sociology was born of the transformations that wrenched the industrializing social order of the West away from the lifestyles characteristic of earlier societies. The pace of social change has continued to accelerate, and it is possible that we now stand on the threshold of transitions as significant as those that occurred in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sociology has the prime responsibility for charting the transformations of our past and for grasping the major lines of development taking place today. Our understanding of the past also contributes to our understanding of institutions in the present and future.

The fourth fundamental theme of the book is globalization. For far too long, sociology has been dominated by the view that societies can be studied as independent entities. But even in the past, societies never really existed in isolation. Today we can see a clear acceleration in processes of global integration. This is obvious, for example, in the expansion of international trade across the world. The emphasis on globalization also connects closely with the weight given to the interdependence of the industrialized and developing worlds today.

Despite these interconnections, however, societies have their own distinctive attributes, traditions, and experiences. Sociology cannot be taught solely by understanding the institutions of any one particular society. While we have slanted our discussion toward the United States, we have also balanced it with a rich variety of materials drawn from other regions—especially those undergoing rapid social change, such as the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Eastern Europe. The book also includes much more material on developing countries than has been usual in introductory texts.

All of the chapters in the book have been updated and revised to reflect the most recent available data. Each chapter opens with a contemporary news event or social trend—ranging from the most local and seemingly trivial (like an email from Yale University administrators about Halloween costumes) to the most global and profound (such as the catastrophic earthquakes in Haiti and Japan). These events are used to motivate and explain the key sociological concepts, themes, and studies that are elaborated throughout the text. Other substantive changes include:

Chapter 1 Sociology: Theory and Method

The chapter opener has been updated with more current data on cyberbullying and also includes the findings of a new school climate study focused on the experiences of LGBT students. The Digital Life box, “Bullying Goes Viral,” has been reworked to reflect the recent use of anonymous messenger apps like Yik Yak as a medium for cyberbullying, highlighting the controversies the app has caused on multiple college campuses. The chapter also features a new discussion of the work of Herbert Spencer. The discussion of conflict theories in sociology has been expanded. A new full-page Globalization by the Numbers infographic, titled “Opinion of the United States,” captures the considerable differences among nations in the proportion of the population that holds favorable attitudes toward the United States—and how these attitudes have changed over time. This data is also now presented in a new table.

Chapter 2 Culture and Society

A new chapter opener takes readers through a recent controversy at Yale University over a series of emails written by administrators about Halloween costumes that ultimately led to two faculty members stepping down from their posts in early 2015. The authors use this series of events to introduce readers to the concept of cultural appropriation, which has been added as a key term. Data on current rates of cigarette smoking have been updated. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic on Internet connectivity throughout the world has been updated with the most recent data. The section titled “Does the Internet Promote a Global Culture?” now considers how ISIS rose to power through the Internet.

Chapter 3 Socialization, the Life Course, and Aging

A new chapter opener uses two recent events—Caitlyn Jenner receiving the Arthur Ashe Courage Award and transgender first-grader Coy Mathis successfully suing her Colorado school district for the right to use the girls’ restroom—to explore the importance and complexities of socialization in everyday life. Data on media consumption have been updated. The section on gender socialization highlights how stores like Target are starting to move away from dividing sections by gender. A new discussion of race socialization, and the messages that are transmitted regarding the meaning and significance of race, has been added. A new graph looks at how the transition to adulthood is being delayed today by comparing the proportion of young adults who had hit certain benchmarks in 1975 versus 2015. A new Digital Life box, titled “Apps for Successful Aging,” discusses how app developers are adapting their programs to the needs and capacities of older adults. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic, “Life Course Transitions,” has been updated with the most current data, and a new data point on life expectancy has been added. Data related to the graying of U.S. society, including the size and growth of the elderly population and the sex ratio among older adults, have been updated. Data on the proportion of older adults who live alone and the proportion who are married have also been updated.

Chapter 4 Social Interaction and Everyday Life in the Age of the Internet

A new discussion of Internet “trolling” has been added in the section on interactional vandalism. The section on race in the public sphere has been expanded with a new discussion

of Elijah Anderson's recent work *The Cosmopolitan Canopy*. A new Digital Life box, titled "Turning Away from Face-to-face Interaction," explores how technology is changing the nature of face-to-face communication by making it possible to hold simultaneous conversations online and in real life. The box draws on a 2015 Pew Research Center study on how often people use their phones during social activities as well as MIT researcher Sherry Turkle's recent work on how smartphone usage has detrimental effects on our ability to experience empathy. A new full-page Globalization by the Numbers infographic compares the rates of smartphone ownership in different countries across the globe to provide a picture of this new digital divide. The section on women and men in public now includes a discussion of a recent video demonstration conducted on the streets of New York City that brought attention to the issue of street harassment.

Chapter 5 Groups, Networks, and Organizations

The chapter opener on the hazing case that rocked Florida A&M University has been updated to account for recent developments in the case. The Digital Life Box, retitled "Crowdfunding and the Strength of Weak Ties," has been updated with more recent data on crowdfunding and also highlights new examples of projects funded via platforms like Indigogo and Medstartr. Data related to the digital divide and telecommuting have been updated. The graph depicting the proportion of women CEOs at Fortune 500 companies has also been updated. A more current survey on trust in government has been added.

Chapter 6 Conformity, Deviance, and Crime

A brand new chapter opener discusses the 2014 shooting of eighteen-year-old Michael Brown by police officer Darren Wilson and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. The chapter has been updated with the most current data on incarceration rates and prison populations; hate crimes; crime rates by gender, age, and race; cost of imprisonment; and numbers and rates of violent crime and property crime in the United States. The discussion of trends in drug use now considers the results of the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. The authors have added a discussion of the use of capital punishment in the United States and a new graph that illustrates how support for the death penalty has changed over time. The section on policing includes a new discussion of Victor Rios's book *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, which documents the strain that policies like stop and frisk place on heavily policed communities. There is also a new discussion of legal scholar Michelle Alexander's work *The New Jim Crow*. A new Digital Life Box, "Using Cameras to Police the Police," explores how the proliferation of smartphones is enabling people to document police-civilian interactions and call attention to police brutality in new ways. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic has been updated with the most recent data on global incarceration rates.

Chapter 7 Stratification, Class, and Inequality

A new chapter opener tells the story of Viviana Andazola Marquez, a young woman who was able to beat the odds and rise out of poverty and homelessness to become a student at Yale University. Drawing on an excerpt from her college essay, the authors use Viviana's inspiring story to introduce the concepts of social stratification and social mobility. The discussion of interracial marriage has been updated with the most recent data. Data on income

distribution, mean household income by income group and race, and racial disparities in wealth have all been updated. The discussion of poverty in the United States has been updated with more current statistics, including poverty rates by age and race. The figure on the relative social prestige of U.S. occupations has been updated. The new edition explores how the 2008 recession and slow economic recovery have affected Americans' perceptions of whether they consider themselves to be middle class or lower class, whether poverty is a result of circumstances beyond one's control or the fault of individuals, and feelings regarding the U.S. economic climate. A new Digital Life box, titled "Does the Digital Divide Still Matter?" provides an up-to-date look at the state of the digital divide in 2015. The box looks at gaps in smartphone ownership and highlights a new Pew Research Center report on how people of varying socioeconomic backgrounds use technology to search and apply for jobs. The full-page Globalization by the Numbers infographic on income inequality now reflects the most recent data. The discussion of homelessness has been updated with more current statistics, including the number of homeless, the demographic breakdown of the homeless population, and the proportion of renters who spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent.

Chapter 8 Global Inequality

The chapter opener, which compares the global responses to the disasters that devastated Haiti and Japan in recent years, has been updated with more current data on key quality-of-life indicators in the respective countries. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic, now titled "An Unequal World," has been completely revamped with the most recent data on gross national income per capita, population, population growth, life expectancy, fertility rate, and infant mortality rate. Global Map 8.1, "Rich and Poor Countries: The World by Income in 2015," has been updated to reflect the new World Bank country classifications. The chapter's section on health now includes a discussion of the 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa. The section on hunger and malnutrition further explores the link between conflict and hunger, highlighting the current situation in Syria. Data on global literacy rates and participation in secondary education have been updated. The discussion of child labor has been expanded. The Digital Life box in this chapter, which asks, "Can Apps Heal Global Inequalities?" now details how smartphones apps are helping to reduce maternal mortality rates and bring vision care to developing nations.

Chapter 9 Gender Inequality

The chapter opener now introduces the concept of intersectionality, a theme that is further developed throughout the chapter. A discussion of Sandra Lipsitz Bem's classic *The Lenses of Gender* has been added, along with the key term *biological essentialism*. The discussion of West and Zimmerman's classic theory "doing gender" has been expanded to include the example of Nikki Jones's study of young inner-city African American women. A new section on blurring the boundaries between the genders discusses how growing numbers of young adults are challenging the male-female dichotomy and embracing both genders. The authors introduce the term *intersex* and provides examples of countries that are officially sanctioning diverse genders through their censuses and birth records. Data on women's participation in the labor force and the gender pay gap have been updated. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic on gender inequality shows countries' most up-to-date ratings on the Gender Inequality Index as well as current statistics on women's labor force

participation, representation in government, and participation in secondary school. A new section on gender inequalities in entrepreneurship provides statistics on women-owned business firms and discusses Sarah Thébaud's 2015 experimental research on perceptions of female business owners. Global data on women's labor force participation have been updated. The section on balancing work and child care now includes the term *motherhood penalty*, introduces the topic of public policies that can be effective in counteracting employers' stereotypical views of mothers in the workplace, and references Michelle Budig's 2012 cross-cultural study of public attitudes toward working mothers in twenty-two countries. The section on housework and the second shift now includes a discussion of a 2015 study of young adults and how they would like to share earning and household/caregiving responsibilities as well as a 2015 study on how same-sex couples share household responsibilities. The data in the section on gender inequality in politics have been updated. Data on intimate partner violence have been updated. The section on rape now discusses recent protests against sexual assault on college campuses, highlighting Emma Sulkowicz's 2015 protest at Columbia University. A new "Theories of Intersectionality" section includes a discussion of transnational feminism, which has been added as a key term.

Chapter 10 Ethnicity and Race

The chapter opener on the controversial Cheerios commercial that featured a mixed-race family now includes a reference to shows like *Blackish* and *Fresh Off the Boat* and features up-to-date statistics on the multiracial population in the United States and rates of interracial marriage. The discussion of institutional racism now references recent police killings of unarmed black men in cities across the United States. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic has been updated to reflect the most up-to-date racial and ethnic populations in a number of countries. Data in the section on Hispanics and Latinos in the United States, including data on Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans, have been updated. The discussion of Puerto Ricans has been updated in light of the island's decade-long recession. Data on racial differences in educational attainment, occupational attainment, income, health, residential segregation, and political power have been updated. The section on health now documents how the racial gap in infant mortality and life expectancy has actually decreased in recent years. Data on gender and race, including the wage gap between black women and white women, have been updated. The section on Asian Americans has been broadened to discuss how the idea of the "model minority" is problematic as it often-times masks discrepancies within different Asian groups, and also discusses Jennifer Lee's 2012 study on the experience of "stereotype promise."

Chapter 11 Families and Intimate Relationships

The chapter opener has been updated to reflect the June 2015 Supreme Court ruling that guaranteed individuals the right to same-sex marriage nationwide. Discussions of polygamy, child-free families, single-parent households, and nonmarital childbearing have all been updated with the most recent research, as have data on age at first marriage, patterns of childbearing, remarriage rates, the number of Americans living in multigenerational households, and living situations of black and white children. In the "Race, Ethnicity, and American Families" section, birth rates by racial group, nonmarital fertility, and black and white family patterns have all been updated, and the section on social class and American families has been augmented with a discussion of new research on middle-class black

families and the rise of single-person households. The discussion of divorce has been reworked and now includes coverage of recent research. The section on child abuse has been updated with more current research. The section on intimate partner violence now includes a discussion of the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. The discussion of cohabitation now includes coverage of research into men's and women's differing reasons for cohabitating as well as cohabitation as a "stage in the process." The section on same-sex-parent families has been updated with the most recent data and now introduces the terms *second-parent adoption* and *joint adoption*. The discussion of same-sex-parent families now discusses the controversial Regnerus study of children of same-sex parents. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic for this chapter, titled "Maternity Leave," has been updated with new data on countries' current leave policies. The Digital Life box, titled "Dating and Mating Online," has been updated with references to new dating apps and now discusses Kevin Lewis's research on the preferences of dating site users.

Chapter 12 Education and Religion

The chapter opener on Malala Yousafzai has been updated, along with the data about girls' education in Pakistan. This chapter's treatment of sociological theories of education has been broadened and now includes a discussion of the differences between functionalist theory and conflict theory. Additionally, survey data on parents' reasons for home schooling and statistics on global literacy have been updated. The discussion of school funding now includes 2013 data on school funding from two different districts in Chicago. The section on between-school effects features research and statistics from a new report on the growing resegregation of schools. The Globalization by the Numbers infographic, titled "Educational Attainment," now shows the proportion of school-age populations enrolled in secondary schools in ten countries, along with mean years of schooling. The section on the global rise of religious nationalism now considers recent developments in Iran, including the election of Rouhani. The discussion of trends in religious affiliation has been bolstered by statistics from a 2015 Pew Research Center study on the "rise of the nones"—Millennials who are religiously unaffiliated. The discussion of Protestantism has been updated to reflect the recent growth of evangelical and conservative Protestant churches. The section on Catholicism includes current data on Mass attendance and now references a more recent poll on Church members' beliefs. The discussion of Judaism and Islam has been updated with more current data. Data on global religious populations as well as religious affiliation in the United States have all been updated. A new table looks at how religious affiliation in the United States changed between 2007 and 2014.

Chapter 13 Politics and Economic Life

A new chapter opener examines the recent "Fight for 15" strikes orchestrated by minimum wage laborers across the United States and highlights employers and states that have raised their minimum wages in response. A new figure in the opener provides demographic data on Americans who currently earn less than \$15 per hour. The discussion of the welfare state now considers the refugee crisis and the subsequent anti-immigrant backlash. The number of democratic nations across the globe has been updated according to data from Freedom House. In the section on the Internet and democratization, data

on where Americans receive their news have been updated. In the section on voting, the authors have added more current data on party identification. The discussion of interest groups now highlights a statistical analysis of nearly 1,800 policy issues and the role of money in politics. Data on incumbents was updated to consider the 2014 elections, and data on women's participation in politics were updated. The discussion of military spending, as well as the accompanying figure, were updated with 2015 data. A new discussion of terrorism considers ISIS and Boko Haram as well as hate groups in the United States. The section on labor unions includes updated statistics on labor union membership and public opinion of unions as well as a new discussion of why labor unions have confronted difficulties in the past few decades. The figure showing work stoppages has been updated. The coverage of types of corporate capitalism now features a new discussion of global capitalism, whereby giant transnational entities are becoming increasingly stateless. The new Digital Life box, titled "Will a Robot Take Your Job?" looks at how American companies are employing fewer workers thanks to advances in technology and how rapid advances in software hold the promise of automating occupations that currently require college degrees. It also discusses strides in additive manufacturing, or 3D printing. Data on unemployment, as well as the number of people who have given up looking for work, have been updated.

Chapter 14 The Sociology of the Body: Health, Illness, and Sexuality

The discussion of obesity now considers new research on eating disorders in boys and includes updated statistics on obesity rates in the United States. A new Globalization by the Numbers infographic compares obesity rates worldwide. The section on complementary and alternative medicine has been updated with more current statistics on usage and a new figure looks at the use of CAM by educational attainment. The discussions of race-based and gender-based inequalities in health have been revamped with more current data on life expectancy, rates of hypertension, and cigarette smoking. The section on malaria has been updated with more current data on malaria cases and deaths. Figures related to global HIV/AIDS diagnoses and deaths, as well as data on HIV/AIDS in the United States, have all been updated with more current data. A new discussion in the sexuality section explores recent trends in sexual behavior among high school-age students, referencing a 2016 National Center for Health Statistics study, and also provides overviews of Hamilton and Armstrong's and Paula England's recent studies of hookup culture on college campuses. Additionally, the section on homophobia references an extensive study by the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network on the prevalence of bullying and harassment faced by LGBT students. The Digital Life box, titled "Can Wearable Tech Keep You Healthy?" now discusses popular fitness trackers like Fitbit and Jawbone, and how individuals can use apps to monitor sleep patterns and health habits such as caffeine consumption.

Chapter 15 Urbanization, Population, and the Environment

The chapter opener has been broadened to include not only a close look at China's population growth, economic growth, and pollution issues but also details and compares these trends in India as well. A new graph detailing the proportions of countries whose populations live in urban areas by income group has been added, and the Globalization by the Numbers infographic on urbanization has been updated with new data. Data on

urbanization have been updated and the discussion of the environmental challenges of urbanization now considers climate-related problems in Pakistan, including the country's water woes. The discussion of possible consequences of demographic changes has been expanded to include a discussion of widespread migration, referencing the Syrian civil war and Syrian refugee crisis. A new table detailing the five countries with the oldest and youngest populations in 2015 has been added. Data on birth rates, death rates, and infant mortality rates across the globe have been updated. The global map detailing population growth rates around the world has been updated with new data, and a new figure on the demographic transition has been added. The section on the demographic transition now includes a discussion of what the United Nations have deemed the "least developed countries." The discussion of global warming and climate change now includes a comparison of China and the United States, summaries of recent IPCC reports on global warming, and a discussion of the 2015 Paris agreement. A new section, titled "A New Ecological Paradigm?" has been added that details the historical treatment of environmental issues within the field of sociology, introducing the terms *human exceptionalism paradigm*, *new ecological paradigm* and *Anthropocene*. The new Digital Life box, titled "Tracking Your Ecological Footprint," encourages readers to think critically about their current energy consumption and to visit a site whereby they can learn how many Earths would be required if every person were to achieve that same lifestyle.

Chapter 16 Globalization in a Changing World

The chapter opener now discusses the Syrian civil war as well as the outcomes of the Arab Spring protests. This chapter includes contemporary examples of social unrest, movements, and protests, including new discussions of Black Lives Matter, the Fight for 15, the countermovement against transgender equality in the form of "bathroom bills," terror attacks in Paris and Brussels, and the growing awareness of global warming. The discussion of technology and social movements now considers the Chinese government's "Great Firewall." The Digital Life Box, titled "Online Activism Trends Upwards," now points to Black Lives Matter as an example of a social movement that has effectively used technology to spread its message and garner support. The section on political changes driving globalization now explores the recent challenges the United Nations and European Union have faced, including new discussions of the refugee crisis and Brexit. New examples of IGOs have been added. Data on transnational corporations and the revenues of the top 500 corporations have been updated. Data on global poverty and global trade have also been updated. The section on the campaign for global justice now considers recent criticism against free trade agreements levied by Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump. The section on manufactured risk now references a 2014 report on the recovery of the ozone layer. Data on farm subsidies in the United States have been updated. A new Globalization by the Numbers infographic paints a picture of wealth inequality around the world.

Organization

There is very little abstract discussion of basic sociological concepts at the beginning of this book. Instead, concepts are explained when they are introduced in the relevant chapters, and we have sought throughout to illustrate them by means of concrete examples.

While these are usually taken from sociological research, we have also used material from other sources (such as newspaper or popular magazine articles). We have tried to keep the writing style as simple and direct as possible, while endeavoring to make the book lively and full of surprises.

The chapters follow a sequence designed to help achieve a progressive mastery of the different fields of sociology, but we have taken care to ensure that the book can be used flexibly and is easy to adapt to the needs of individual courses. Chapters can be skipped or studied in a different order without much loss. Each has been written as a fairly autonomous unit, with cross-referencing to other chapters at relevant points.

Study Aids

Every chapter in the Sixth Edition of *Essentials of Sociology* features:

- **“Digital Life” boxes** in every chapter get students thinking critically about how the Internet and smartphones are transforming the way we date, manage our health, and even practice religion.
- **“Globalization by the Numbers” infographics** transform raw numbers into visually interesting displays that put the United States in a global context. Interactive versions in the ebook make the data dynamic and include integrated assignments that engage students with the data.
- **“Big Picture” Concept Maps** at the end of every chapter, which integrate the “Big Questions,” key terms, and “Concept Checks” into a handy and visually interesting study tool, serve as both a pre-reading guide to the chapter as well as a post-reading review.
- **“Concept Checks”** throughout each chapter help students assess their understanding of the major topics in the chapter. Each “Concept Check” has at least three questions that range from reading comprehension to more advanced critical thinking skills.
- **Learning Goals** are outlined at the start of the chapter and then recur throughout the chapter in marginal notations at the beginning of the relevant sections to promote active learning.

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SIXTH EDITION



Essentials of Sociology

1

Sociology: Theory and Method

Opinion of the United States

p. 9



THE BIG QUESTIONS

What is the “sociological imagination”?

Learn what sociology covers as a field and how everyday topics like love and romance are shaped by social and historical forces. Recognize that sociology involves developing a sociological imagination and a global perspective, and understanding social change.

What theories do sociologists use?

Learn about the development of sociology as a field. Be able to name some of the leading social theorists and the concepts they contributed to sociology. Learn the different theoretical approaches modern sociologists bring to the field.

What kinds of questions can sociologists answer?

Be able to describe the different types of questions sociologists address in their research.

What are the steps of the research process?

Learn the steps of the research process and be able to complete the process yourself.

What research methods do sociologists use?

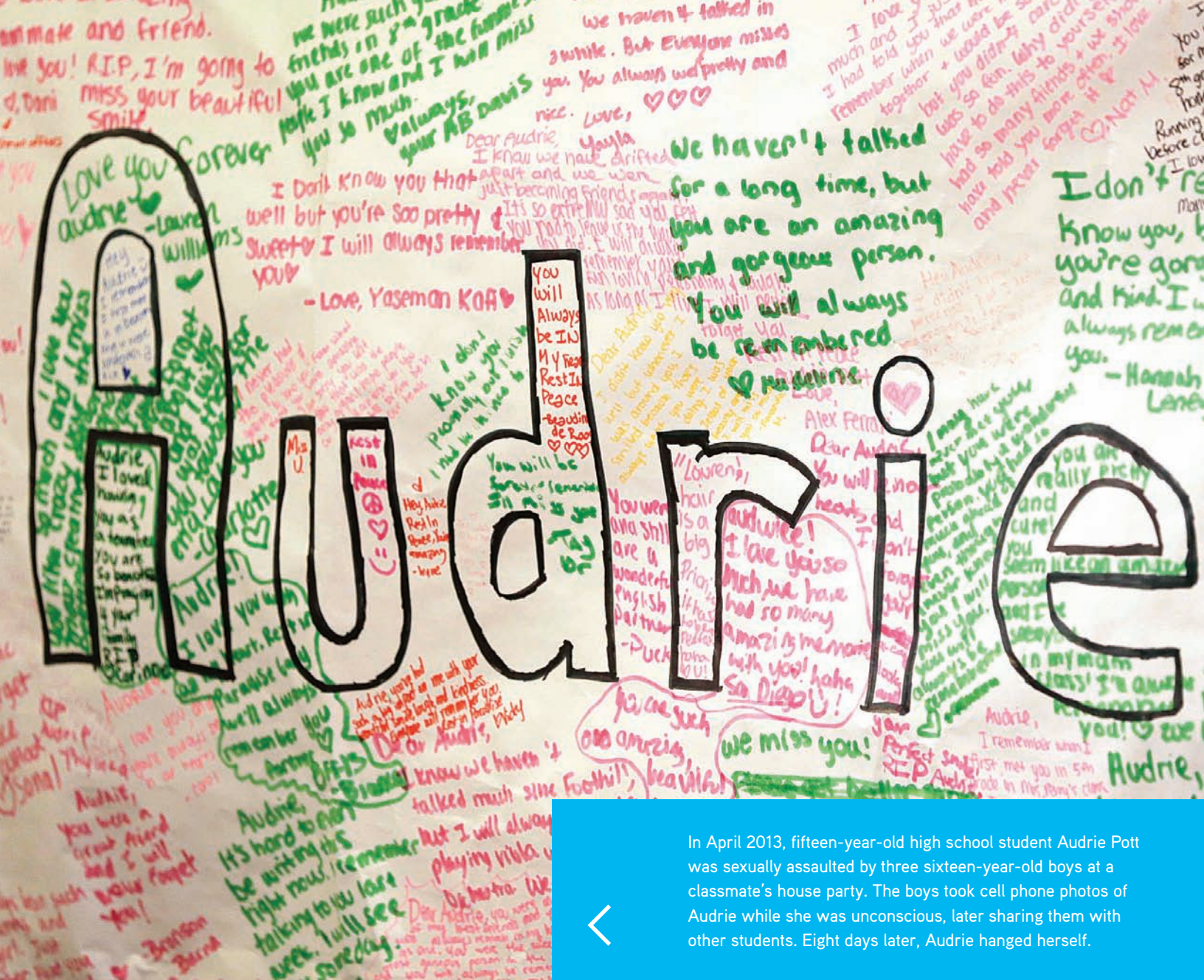
Familiarize yourself with the methods available to sociological researchers, and know the advantages and disadvantages of each. See how researchers use multiple methods in a real study.

What ethical dilemmas do sociologists face?

Recognize the ethical problems researchers may face, and identify possible solutions to these dilemmas.

How does the sociological imagination affect your life?

Understand how adopting a sociological perspective allows us to develop a richer understanding of ourselves, our significant others, and the world.



In April 2013, fifteen-year-old high school student Audrie Pott was sexually assaulted by three sixteen-year-old boys at a classmate’s house party. The boys took cell phone photos of Audrie while she was unconscious, later sharing them with other students. Eight days later, Audrie hanged herself.

Sociology is the scientific study of human social life, groups, and societies. It is a dazzling and compelling enterprise, as its subject matter is our own behavior as social beings. The scope of sociological study is extremely wide, ranging from the analysis of how people establish social connections with one another to the investigation of global social processes such as the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

Sociology teaches us that what we regard as natural, inevitable, good, or true may not be such and that the “givens” of our life—including things we assume to be genetic or biological—are strongly influenced by historical, cultural, social, and even technological forces. Understanding the subtle yet complex and profound ways in which our individual lives reflect the contexts of our social experience is central to the sociological outlook. A brief example will provide a taste of the nature and objectives of sociology.

Anyone who has attended middle school or high school knows that bullying is a common occurrence. Through much of history, teachers, principals, and parents turned a blind eye, often

sociology

The study of human groups and societies, giving particular emphasis to analysis of the industrialized world. Sociology is one of a group of social sciences, which include anthropology, economics, political science, and human geography. The divisions among the various social sciences are not clear-cut, and all share a certain range of common interests, concepts, and methods.

personal troubles

Difficulties that are located in individual biographies and their immediate milieu, a seemingly private experience.

public issues

Difficulties or problems that are linked to the institutional and historical possibilities of social structure.

believing that “boys will be boys.” In recent years this cavalier attitude toward bullying has been called into question by students, teachers, and policymakers alike. A recent spate of suicides by teenagers subjected to merciless bullying has raised awareness that bullying is no longer “kid stuff” and in nearly all states is grounds for suspension, expulsion, or even more serious punishment. Over the past decade, bullying-related tragedies have been documented throughout the United States, involving teenagers of all backgrounds—male and female, black and white, Asian and Latino, gay and straight, cisgender and transgender, rich and poor, rural and suburban.

For Devin Brown, the bullying began shortly after he started at Rothschild Middle School. Things escalated after he reported another student for carrying a knife and threatening a teacher. Rather than being regarded as a hero by his classmates, he was derided as a “snitch” and was regularly threatened and beaten up at school. In April 2013, after months of relentless harassment, Brown hanged himself at home in his closet.

That same month, fifteen-year-old high school student Audrie Pott hanged herself in her San Jose, California, home. Eight days earlier, Pott had been sexually assaulted at a classmate’s house party by three sixteen-year-old boys. She woke up to find her clothes pulled off and her body covered in lewd markings. The trauma didn’t end there, though. The boys took pictures of Pott while she was unconscious and shared them with other students. Just days before she took her life, a devastated Pott posted messages on Facebook that read, “My life is over” and “The whole school knows.”

It’s not just American teens who are killing themselves as a desperate reaction to intolerable bullying. In Japan, teen suicide rates spike each year on September 1, the nation’s first day of school; experts say the specter of going back to school and facing mistreatment by their peers (along with intense academic pressure) is enough to trigger suicide among depressed teens (Wright 2015).

Brown and Pott are just two of hundreds of teenagers who have committed suicide after being bullied and humiliated by their classmates. Today, anti-bullying laws exist in all 50 states; Montana was the last state to enact such laws in 2015 (Baumann 2015). In 2011, New Jersey passed the nation’s toughest anti-bullying legislation, triggered in part by the high-profile suicide of Tyler Clementi. In 2010, the eighteen-year-old Rutgers University freshman committed suicide by jumping off the George Washington Bridge, just two weeks after he started his first semester in college. The suicide came days after his roommate used a webcam to spy on Clementi during an intimate encounter with a man in his dorm room and then posted on social media about it.

Sociology helps us to understand and analyze scientifically social phenomena like bullying and suicide. American sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) observed that social sciences enable people to “translate private troubles into public issues.” What Mills meant is that individuals often believe that the problems that they (and others) face are personal, perhaps resulting from their own traits or decisions. But social scientists recognize that these seemingly “**personal**” troubles, if occurring in patterned ways to large numbers of individuals, reflect important “**public issues**,” or consequences of social structures.

For example, Devin Brown, Audrie Pott, and Tyler Clementi all committed suicide shortly after being tormented by their peers. Some observers might think that the suicides were an isolated problem, perhaps the reaction of three teens who were depressed or emotionally unstable. However, a sociologist would look at the social context and try to understand just how common such events are and to understand whether some subgroups are particularly vulnerable to such problems. Sociologists might look at historical data to track the timing of

these suicides, as researchers did in Japan. This analysis showed that teen suicides weren't spread evenly across the year but rather clustered in early September (Wright 2015).

Sociologists might also consult data from national surveys, such as a 2014 survey by the Pew Research Center, which found that four in ten Internet users have experienced online harassment. Young Internet users are the most likely to be harassed online: Fully 65 percent of Internet users between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine have been the target of online harassment; the proportion rises to 70 percent for users between eighteen and twenty-four. The study also detected strong gender differences: Young women (like Audie Pott) are much more likely than their male counterparts to experience certain forms of online harassment, including stalking (26 percent vs. 7 percent) and sexual harassment (25 percent vs. 13 percent) (Duggan 2014).

Other sociologists have studied bullying “off-line” and found that gay and lesbian teens are far more likely than their straight peers to be harassed at school. One survey of more than 7,500 high school students found that nearly 44 percent of gay and 40 percent of lesbian teens said they had been bullied in the previous year, compared with just 26 and 15 percent of heterosexual boys and girls, respectively (Berlan et al. 2010). A 2013 study of LGBT students found that nearly three-quarters of LGBT students had been verbally harassed and more than a third (36 percent) had been physically harassed within the past year (Kosciw et al. 2014). Studies such as these help us recognize that the anguish experienced by Clementi, Pott, and Brown is hardly an isolated incident and instead reflects pervasive social problems that require far-reaching solutions. Sociology can help us understand the questions of what, why, and how public issues and personal troubles arise.



Rutgers freshman Tyler Clementi committed suicide days after his roommate posted on social media about Clementi's intimate encounter with a man in his dorm room.



What Is the “Sociological Imagination”?

When we learn to think sociologically, we can also better understand the most personal aspects of our own lives. For instance, have you ever been in love? Almost certainly you have. Most people who are in their teens or older know what being in love is like. Love and romance provide some of the most intense feelings we ever experience. Why do people fall in love? The answer may seem obvious: Love expresses a mutual physical and personal attachment between two individuals. These days, we might not all think that love is “forever,” but falling in love, we may agree, is an experience arising from universal human emotions. It seems natural for a couple in love to want personal and sexual fulfillment in their relationship, perhaps through marriage.

Yet this pattern whereby love leads to marriage is in fact very unusual. Romantic love is not an experience all people across the world have—and where it does happen, it is rarely connected to marriage. The idea of romantic love did not become widespread until fairly recently in our society, and it has never even existed in many other cultures.

Only in modern times have love and sexuality become closely connected. In the Middle Ages and for centuries afterward, men and women married mainly to keep property in the hands of the family or to raise children to work the family farm—or, in the case of royalty, to seal political alliances. Spouses may have become close companions after marriage, but not before. People sometimes had sexual affairs outside marriage, but these inspired few



Learn what sociology covers as a field and how everyday topics like love and romance are shaped by social and historical forces. Recognize that sociology involves developing a sociological imagination and a global perspective, and understanding social change.



What is the origin of romantic love? Originally, romantic love was limited to affairs for medieval aristocrats such as Tristan and Isolde, the subjects of a thirteenth-century court romance that inspired poems, operas, and films.



sociological imagination

The application of imaginative thought to the asking and answering of sociological questions. Someone using the sociological imagination “thinks himself away” from the familiar routines of daily life.

of the emotions we associate with love today. Romantic love was regarded as a weakness at best and a kind of sickness at worst.

Romantic love developed in courtly circles as a characteristic of extramarital sexual adventures by members of the aristocracy. Until about two centuries ago, it was confined to such circles and kept separate from marriage. Relations between husband and wife among aristocratic groups were often cool and distant. Each spouse had his or her own bedroom and servants; they may have rarely seen each other in private. Sexual compatibility was not considered relevant to marriage. Among both rich and poor, the decision of whom to marry was made by one’s immediate and extended family; the individuals concerned had little or no say in the matter.

This remains true in many non-Western countries today. (Social scientists typically define “Western” countries as economically rich nations, including most in North America and Europe, as well as Japan and Australia.) For example, in Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban, men were prohibited from speaking to women they were not related or married to, and marriages were arranged by parents. The Taliban government saw romantic love as so offensive that it outlawed all nonreligious music and films. Like many in the non-Western world, the Taliban believed Afghanistan was being inundated by Hollywood movies and American pop music and videos, which are filled with sexual images.

Neither romantic love, then, nor its association with marriage can be understood as a natural or universal feature of human life. Rather, such love has been shaped by social and historical influences. These are the influences sociologists study.

Most of us see the world in terms of the familiar features of our own lives. Sociology demonstrates the need for a much broader view of our nature and our actions. It teaches that what we regard as “natural” in our lives is strongly influenced by historical and social forces. Understanding the subtle yet profoundly complex ways in which our individual lives reflect the contexts of our social experience is basic to the sociological outlook.

Learning to think sociologically means cultivating what sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959), in a famous phrase, called the **sociological imagination**. As sociologists, we need to imagine, for example, what the experience of sex and marriage is like for people who consider the ideals of romantic love to be unfamiliar or absurd. Sociology is not just a routine process of acquiring knowledge; it requires breaking free from the immediacy of personal circumstances and putting things in a wider context.

The sociological imagination requires us, above all, to “think ourselves away” from our daily routines in order to look at them anew. Consider the simple act of drinking a cup of coffee. What might the sociological point of view illuminate about such apparently uninteresting behavior? An enormous amount. First, coffee possesses symbolic value as part of our daily social activities. Often the ritual associated with coffee drinking is much more important than the act itself. Two people who arrange to meet for coffee are probably more interested in getting together and chatting than in what they actually drink. Drinking and eating in all societies, in fact, promote social interaction and the enactment of rituals—rich subject matter for sociological study.

Second, coffee contains caffeine, a drug that stimulates the brain. In Western culture, coffee addicts are not regarded as drug users. Like alcohol, coffee is a socially acceptable

drug, whereas cocaine and opium, for instance, are not. Yet some societies tolerate the recreational use of opium or even cocaine but frown on coffee and alcohol. Sociologists are interested in why these contrasts exist.

Third, an individual who drinks a cup of coffee is participating in a complicated set of social and economic relationships stretching across the world. The production and distribution of coffee require continuous transactions among people who may be thousands of miles away from the coffee drinker. Studying such global transactions is an important task of sociology because many aspects of our lives are now affected by worldwide social influences and communications.

Finally, the act of sipping a cup of coffee presumes a process of past social and economic development. Widespread consumption of coffee—along with other now-familiar items of Western diets like tea, bananas, potatoes, and white sugar—began only in the late 1800s under Western colonial expansion. Virtually all the coffee we drink today comes from areas (South America and Africa) that were colonized by Europeans; it is in no sense a “natural” part of the Western diet.

Studying Sociology

The sociological imagination allows us to see that many behaviors or feelings that we view as private and individualized actually reflect larger social issues. Try applying this sort of outlook to your own life. Consider, for instance, why you are attending college right now. You may think that you worked hard in high school, or that you have decided to go to college so that you have the academic credential required to find a good job; yet other, larger social forces may also have played a role. Many students who work hard in high school cannot attend college because their parents cannot afford to send them. Others have their schooling interrupted by large-scale events like wars or economic depressions. The notion that we need college to find a good job is also shaped by social context. In past eras, when most people worked in agricultural or manufacturing rather than professional jobs, college attendance was rare—rather than an expected rite of passage.

Although we are all influenced by the social contexts in which we find ourselves, none of us is simply determined in his or her behavior by those contexts. We possess and create our own individuality. It is the goal of sociology to investigate the connections between what society makes of us and what we make of ourselves. Our activities structure—give shape to—the social world around us and at the same time are structured by that social world.

Social structure is an important concept in sociology. It refers to the fact that the social contexts of our lives do not just consist of random assortments of events or actions; they are structured, or patterned, in distinct ways. There are regularities in the ways we behave and in the relationships we have with one another. But social structure is not like a physical structure, such as a building, which exists independently of human actions. Human societies are always in the process of **structuration**. They are reconstructed at every moment by the very “building blocks” that compose them—human beings like you.

Developing a Global Perspective

As we just saw in our discussion of the sociological dimensions of drinking a cup of coffee, all our local actions—the ways in which we relate to one another in face-to-face

structuration

The two-way process by which we shape our social world through our individual actions and by which we are reshaped by society.

globalization

The economic, political, and social interconnect-
edness of individuals
throughout the world.

contexts—form part of larger social settings that extend around the globe. These connections between the local and the global are quite new in human history. They have accelerated over the past forty or fifty years as a result of dramatic advances in communications, information technology, and transportation. The development of jet planes; large, speedy container ships; and other means of rapid travel has meant that people and goods can be continuously transported across the world. And our worldwide system of satellite communication, established only some fifty years ago, has made it possible for people to get in touch with one another instantaneously.

U.S. society is influenced every moment of the day by **globalization**, the growth of world interdependence—a social phenomenon that will be discussed throughout this book. Globalization should not be thought of simply as the development of worldwide networks—social and economic systems that are remote from our individual concerns. It is a local phenomenon, too. For example, in the 1950s and 1960s, most Americans had few culinary choices when they dined out at restaurants. In many U.S. towns and cities today, a single street may feature Italian, Mexican, Japanese, Thai, Ethiopian, and other types of restaurants next door to one another. In turn, the dietary decisions we make can affect food producers who may live on the other side of the world.

Do college students today have a global perspective? By at least one measure, the answer is yes. According to a survey of 141,189 first-year college students in 2015, 82 percent reported that they had discussed politics “frequently” or “occasionally” in the last year. More than one-third (40 percent) of students also reported that keeping up with political issues is “very important” or “essential,” while nearly three in five students (59 percent) said “improving my understanding of other countries and cultures” was very important or essential. More than one-third (36 percent) of students said there was a “very good chance” that they would study abroad while in college (Eagan et al. 2015). These data reflect a pervasive awareness among college students today that globalization has a direct effect on our daily, private lives.

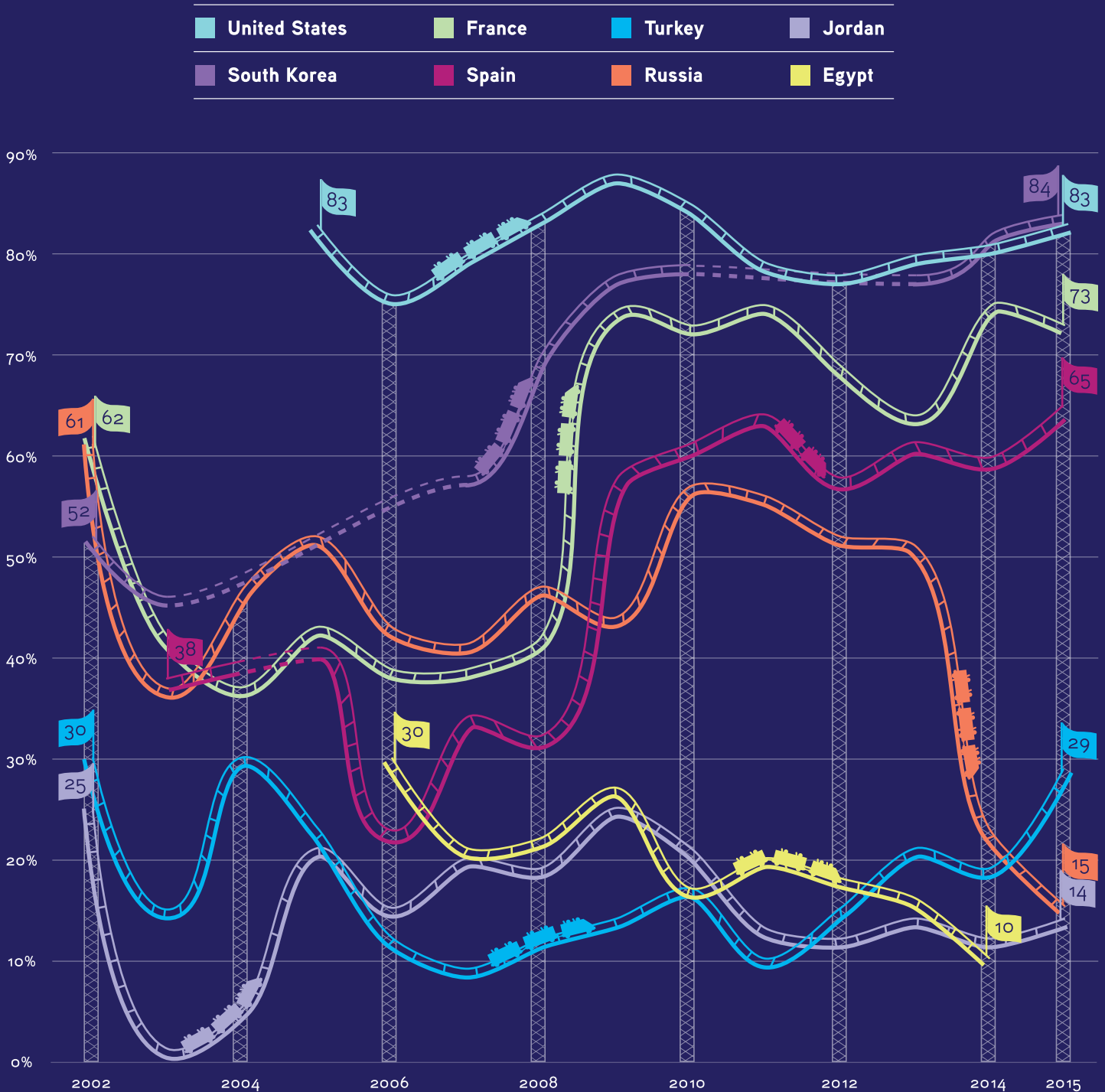
A global perspective not only allows us to become more aware of the ways that we are connected to people in other societies, it also makes us more aware of the many problems the world faces at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The global perspective opens our eyes to the fact that our interdependence with other societies means that our actions have consequences for others, and that the world’s problems have consequences for us.

Understanding Social Change

The changes in human ways of life in the last 200 years, such as globalization, have been far reaching. We have become accustomed, for example, to the fact that most of the population lives in towns and cities rather than in small agricultural communities. But this was not the case until the middle of the nineteenth century. For most of human history, the vast majority of people had to produce their own food and shelter and lived in tiny groups or in small village communities. Even at the height of the most developed traditional civilizations—such as ancient Rome or pre-industrial China—less than 10 percent of the population lived in urban areas; everyone else was engaged in food production in a rural setting. Today, in most industrialized societies, these proportions

The extent to which people hold favorable attitudes toward the United States varies considerably across nations, highlighting how macrosocial factors—migration patterns, economic factors, religion, history of military conflict—can shape individual-level attitudes. Although there are strong national and regional patterns of support for the United States, we also see considerable historical variation, with some countries, like Egypt, demonstrating a steady decline over time, and others, like Russia, showing a precipitous drop.

Population reporting favorable views of the United States (%), 2002–2015



Source: Pew Research Center 2015