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## *in Modules*

Fifth Edition

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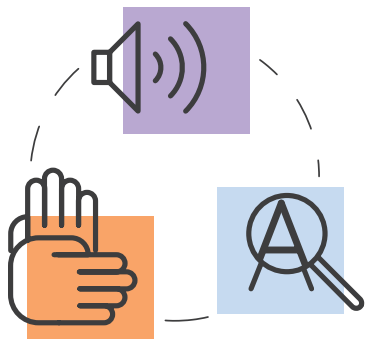
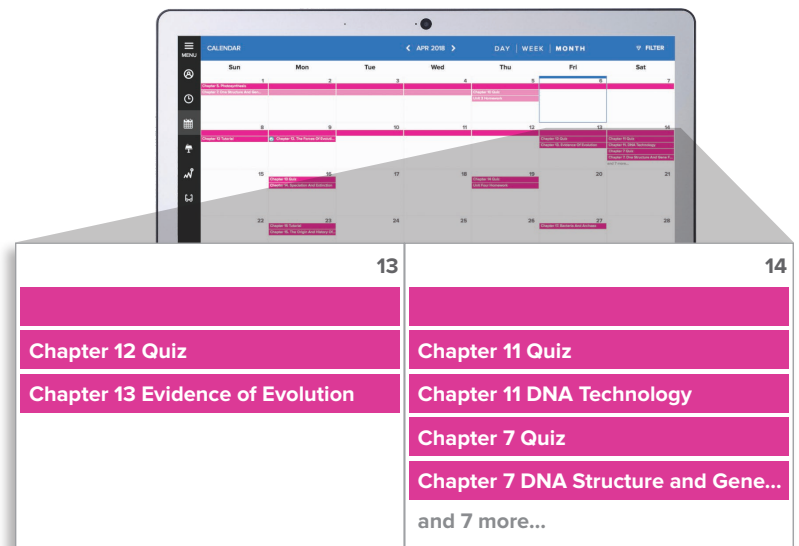
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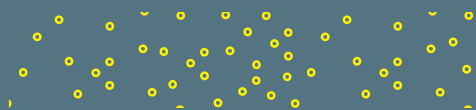
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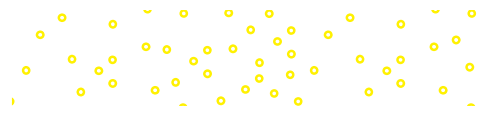
sociology

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# sociology

in modules



*fifth edition*

Richard T. Schaefer

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY





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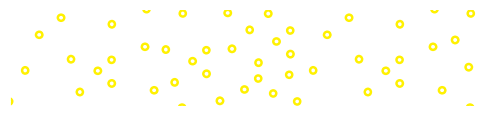
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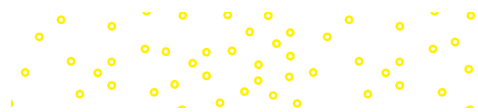
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# dedication

To my grandchildren, Matilda and Reuben. May they enjoy exploring life's possibilities.





# about the author



**Richard T. Schaefer** Professor, DePaul University  
BA Northwestern University; MA, PhD University of Chicago



Courtesy of Richard T. Schaefer

Growing up in Chicago at a time when neighborhoods were going through transitions in ethnic and racial composition, Richard T. Schaefer found himself increasingly intrigued by what was happening, how people were reacting, and how these changes were affecting neighborhoods and people's jobs. His interest in social issues caused him to gravitate to sociology courses at Northwestern University, where he eventually received a BA in sociology.

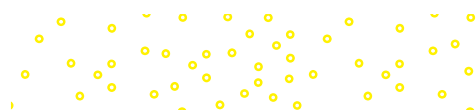
"Originally as an undergraduate I thought I would go on to law school and become a lawyer. But after taking a few sociology courses, I found myself wanting to learn more about what sociologists studied, and fascinated by the kinds of questions they raised." This fascination led him to obtain his MA and PhD in sociology from the University of Chicago. Dr. Schaefer's continuing interest in race relations led him to write his master's thesis on the membership of the Ku Klux Klan and his doctoral thesis on racial prejudice and race relations in Great Britain.

Dr. Schaefer went on to become a professor of sociology at DePaul University in Chicago. In 2004 he was named to the Vincent DePaul professorship in recognition of his undergraduate teaching and scholarship. He has taught introductory sociology for over 35 years to students in colleges, adult education programs, nursing programs, and even a maximum-security prison. Dr. Schaefer's love of teaching is apparent in his interaction with his students. "I find myself constantly learning from the students who are in my classes and from reading what they write. Their insights into the material we read or current events that we discuss often become part of future course material and sometimes even find their way into my writing."

Dr. Schaefer is the author of the thirteenth edition of *Sociology* (McGraw-Hill, 2019), the seventh edition of *Sociology Matters* (McGraw-Hill, 2018), and, with Robert Feldman, *Sociology and Your Life with P.O.W.E.R. Learning* (McGraw-Hill, 2016). He is also the author of *Racial and Ethnic Groups*, now in its fifteenth edition (2018), *Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the USA* (first edition, 2014), and *Race and Ethnicity in the United States*, eighth edition (2018), all published by Pearson. Together with William Zellner he coauthored the ninth edition of *Extraordinary Groups* (Waveland Press, 2015). Dr. Schaefer served as the general editor of the three-volume *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society*, published by Sage in 2008. These books have been translated into Chinese (both short- and long-form), Indonesian, Japanese, Sinhalese, Portuguese, Spanish, and Turkish, as well as adapted for use in Canadian colleges.

Dr. Schaefer's articles and book reviews have appeared in many journals, including *American Journal of Sociology*; *Phylon: A Review of Race and Culture*; *Contemporary Sociology*; *Sociology and Social Research*; *Sociological Quarterly*; and *Teaching Sociology*. He served as president of the Midwest Sociological Society in 1994–1995.

Dr. Schaefer's advice to students is to "look at the material and make connections to your own life and experiences. Sociology will make you a more attentive observer of how people in groups interact and function. It will also make you more aware of people's different needs and interests—and perhaps more ready to work for the common good, while still recognizing the individuality of each person."







# brief contents

Chapter Opening Excerpts xviii | Boxed Features xviii | Social Policy Sections xx | Maps xx | Tracking Sociological Perspectives Tables xxi | Summing Up Tables xxi | Preface xxii

## 1 Understanding Sociology 1

- 1 What Is Sociology? 3
- 2 The Development of Sociology 8
- 3 Major Theoretical Perspectives 13
- 4 Taking Sociology with You 19

## 2 Sociological Research 28

- 5 What Is the Scientific Method? 30
- 6 Major Research Designs 35
- 7 Ethics of Research 41
- 8 Developments of Methodology 43

## 3 Culture 52

- 9 What Is Culture? 54
- 10 Elements of Culture 57
- 11 Development of Culture around the World 65
- 12 Cultural Variation 68

## 4 Socialization and the Life Course 75

- 13 The Role of Socialization 77
- 14 The Self and Socialization through the Life Course 81
- 15 Agents of Socialization 86

## 5 Social Interaction, Groups, and Social Structure 97

- 16 Social Interaction and Social Structure 99
- 17 Social Structure in Global Perspective 107
- 18 Understanding Groups 113
- 19 Understanding Organizations 116

## 6 Mass Media and Social Media 127

- 20 Sociological Perspectives on the Media 129
- 21 The Audience 141
- 22 The Media's Global Reach 142

## 7 Deviance, Crime, and Social Control 150

- 23 Social Control 152
- 24 What Is Deviance? 158
- 25 Crime 166

## 8 Stratification and Social Mobility in the United States 178

- 26 Systems of Stratification 180
- 27 Stratification by Social Class 190
- 28 Poverty and Social Mobility 194

## 9 Global Inequality 206

- 29 Stratification in the World System 208
- 30 Stratification within Nations: A Comparative Perspective 217

## 10 Racial and Ethnic Inequality 225

- 31 Minority, Racial, and Ethnic Groups 227
- 32 Sociological Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity 236
- 33 Race and Ethnicity in the United States 241

## 11 Stratification by Gender and Sexuality 258

- 34 Social Construction of Gender 260
- 35 Labeling and Human Sexuality 268
- 36 Women: The Oppressed Majority 271

## 12 Stratification by Age 281

- 37 Aging and Society 283
- 38 Aging Worldwide 287
- 39 Age Stratification in the United States 292

## 13 The Family and Household Diversity 302

- 40 Global View of the Family 304
- 41 Marriage and Family 310

- 42 Alternatives to Traditional Families 318

## 14 Education 327

- 43 Sociological Perspectives on Education 329
- 44 Schools as Formal Organizations 336

## 15 Religion 347

- 45 The Sociological Approach to Religion 349
- 46 World Religions 353
- 47 Religious Organization 357

## 16 Government and the Economy 365

- 48 Government, Power, and Authority 367
- 49 Political Behavior and Power in the United States 373
- 50 Economic Systems 380
- 51 Changing Economies 383

## 17 Health, Population, and the Environment 393

- 52 Sociological Perspectives on Health and Illness 395
- 53 Social Epidemiology and Health Care in the United States 399
- 54 What Is Mental Illness? 406
- 55 Population 408
- 56 Sociological Perspectives on the Environment 415

## 18 Social Change in the Global Community 426

- 57 Collective Behavior 428
- 58 Social Movements 437
- 59 Social Change 443
- 60 Global Social Change 449

Glossary 462 | References 470 | Name Index 511 | Subject Index 518

# contents

Chapter Opening Excerpts xviii | Boxed Features xviii | Social Policy Sections xx | Maps xx | Tracking Sociological Perspectives Tables xxi | Summing Up Tables xxi | Preface xxii

## 1 Understanding Sociology 1



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### 1 What Is Sociology? 3

The Sociological Imagination 3  
Sociology and the Social Sciences 3  
Sociology and Common Sense 6  
What Is Sociological Theory? 6

### 2 The Development of Sociology 8

Early Thinkers 8  
Auguste Comte 8  
Harriet Martineau 8  
Herbert Spencer 8  
Émile Durkheim 9  
Max Weber 9  
Karl Marx 10  
W. E. B. DuBois 11  
Twentieth-Century Developments 11  
Charles Horton Cooley 11  
Jane Addams 11  
Robert Merton 12  
Pierre Bourdieu 12

### 3 Major Theoretical Perspectives 13

Functionalist Perspective 13  
Manifest and Latent Functions 14  
Dysfunctions 14  
Conflict Perspective 15  
The Marxist View 15  
The Feminist Perspective 15  
Queer Theory 15  
Interactionist Perspective 16  
The Sociological Approach 16

### 4 Taking Sociology with You 19

Applied and Clinical Sociology 19  
Developing a Sociological Imagination 20  
Theory in Practice 20  
Research Today 21  
Our Wired World 21  
Thinking Globally 21  
The Significance of Social Inequality 21  
Speaking across Race, Gender, and Religious Boundaries 21  
Social Policy throughout the World 22

Appendix: Careers in Sociology 23  
*Mastering This Chapter* 25

## 2 Sociological Research 28



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### 5 What Is the Scientific Method? 30

Defining the Problem 31  
Reviewing the Literature 31  
Formulating the Hypothesis 31  
Collecting and Analyzing Data 33  
Selecting the Sample 33  
Ensuring Validity and Reliability 33  
Developing the Conclusion 33  
Supporting Hypotheses 34  
Controlling for Other Factors 34  
In Summary: The Scientific Method 34

### 6 Major Research Designs 35

Surveys 35  
Ethnography 37  
Experiments 39  
Use of Existing Sources 39

### 7 Ethics of Research 41

Confidentiality 41  
Conflict of Interest 41  
Value Neutrality 42

### 8 Developments of Methodology 43

Feminist Methodology 43  
Queer Theory and Methodology 44  
The Data-Rich Future 44

### Social Policy and Sociological Research: Studying Human Sexuality 45

Appendix I: Using Statistics and Graphs 45

*Using Statistics* 47  
*Reading Graphs* 48

Appendix II: Writing a Research Report 48

*Finding Information* 48  
*Writing the Report* 49

*Mastering This Chapter* 49

## 3 Culture 52



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### 9 What Is Culture? 54

Cultural Universals 55  
Ethnocentrism 55  
Cultural Relativism 55  
Sociobiology and Culture 55

- 10 Elements of Culture 57**  
 Role of Language 57  
 Language: Written and Spoken 57  
 Nonverbal Communication 58  
 Norms and Values 59  
 Norms 60  
 Values 61  
 Global Culture War 63  
 Sociological Perspectives on Culture 63

- 11 Development of Culture around the World 65**  
 Innovation 65  
 Globalization, Diffusion, and Technology 65

- 12 Cultural Variation 68**  
 Subcultures 68  
 Countercultures 68  
 Culture Shock 69

**Social Policy and Culture: Bilingualism 70**

*Mastering This Chapter 73*

**4 Socialization and the Life Course 75**



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- 13 The Role of Socialization 77**  
 Social Environment: The Impact of Isolation 77  
 Extreme Isolation: Isabelle 77  
 Extreme Neglect: Romanian Orphans 78  
 Primate Studies 78  
 The Influence of Heredity 79

- 14 The Self and Socialization through the Life Course 81**  
 Sociological Approaches to the Self 81  
 Cooley: Looking-Glass Self 81  
 Mead: Stages of the Self 81  
 Mead: Theory of the Self 81  
 Goffman: Presentation of the Self 82

- Psychological Approaches to the Self 83  
 Socialization throughout the Life Course 84  
 The Life Course 84  
 Anticipatory Socialization and Resocialization 85

- 15 Agents of Socialization 86**  
 Family 86  
 School 89  
 Peer Group 89  
 Mass Media and Technology 89  
 Workplace 90  
 Religion and the State 92

**Social Policy and Sociological Research: Child Care around the World 92**

*Mastering This Chapter 94*

**5 Social Interaction, Groups, and Social Structure 97**



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- 16 Social Interaction and Social Structure 99**  
 Social Interaction and Reality 99  
 Elements of Social Structure 100  
 Statures 100  
 Social Roles 102  
 Groups 103  
 Social Networks 103  
 Social Institutions 104

- 17 Social Structure in Global Perspective 107**  
 Durkheim's Mechanical and Organic Solidarity 107  
 Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* 107  
 Lenski's Sociocultural Evolution Approach 109  
 Preindustrial Societies 109  
 Industrial Societies 110  
 Postindustrial and Postmodern Societies 110

- 18 Understanding Groups 113**  
 Types of Groups 113  
 Primary and Secondary Groups 113  
 In-Groups and Out-Groups 114  
 Reference Groups 114  
 Coalitions 115

- 19 Understanding Organizations 116**  
 Formal Organizations and Bureaucracies 116  
 Characteristics of a Bureaucracy 116  
 Bureaucratization as a Process 120  
 Oligarchy: Rule by a Few 120  
 Bureaucracy and Organizational Culture 120

**Social Policy and Organizations: The State of the Unions Worldwide 121**

*Mastering This Chapter 124*

**6 Mass Media and Social Media 127**



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- 20 Sociological Perspectives on the Media 129**  
 Functionalist Perspective 129  
 Agent of Socialization 129  
 Enforcer of Social Norms 129  
 Promotion of Consumption 130  
 Dysfunction: The Narcotizing Effect 132  
 Conflict Perspective 132  
 Gatekeeping 132  
 Media Monitoring 134  
 Dominant Ideology: Constructing Reality 134  
 Dominant Ideology: Whose Culture? 135  
 The Digital Divide 136  
 Feminist Perspective 136  
 Interactionist Perspective 137

- 21 The Audience 141**  
 Who Is in the Audience? 141  
 The Segmented Audience 141  
 Audience Behavior 142



## 22 The Media's Global Reach 142

### Social Policy and the Media: Censorship 144

Mastering This Chapter 147

## 7 Deviance, Crime, and Social Control 150



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### 23 Social Control 152

- Conformity and Obedience 153
  - The Milgram Experiment 153
  - Reflecting on the Milgram Experiment 153
- Informal and Formal Social Control 154
- Law and Society 155

### 24 What Is Deviance? 158

- Deviance and Social Stigma 158
- Deviance and Technology 159
- Sociological Perspectives on Deviance 159
  - Functionalist Perspective 159
  - Interactionist Perspective 161
  - Labeling Perspective 163
  - Conflict Perspective 164
  - Feminist Perspective 164

### 25 Crime 166

- Types of Crime 166
  - Victimless Crimes 166
  - Professional Crime 167
  - Organized Crime 167
  - White-Collar and Technology-Based Crime 167
  - Hate Crime 168
  - Transnational Crime 168
- Crime Statistics 169
  - Index Crimes and Victimization Surveys 169
  - Crime Trends 170
  - International Crime Rates 171

### Social Policy and Social Control: Gun Control 172

Mastering This Chapter 175

## 8 Stratification and Social Mobility in the United States 178



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### 26 Systems of Stratification 180

- Four Forms of Stratification 182
  - Slavery 182
  - Castes 182
  - Estates 183
  - Social Classes 183

#### Sociological Perspectives on Stratification 185

- Karl Marx's View of Class Differentiation 185
- Max Weber's View of Stratification 186
- Interactionist Perspective 187
- Is Stratification Universal? 187
  - Functionalist Perspective 187
  - Conflict Perspective 187
  - Lenski's Viewpoint 188

### 27 Stratification by Social Class 190

- Objective Method of Measuring Social Class 190
  - Gender and Occupational Prestige 191
  - Multiple Measures 191
  - Income and Wealth 192

### 28 Poverty and Social Mobility 194

- Studying Poverty 195
  - Who Are the Poor? 196
  - Feminization of Poverty 196
  - The Underclass 196
  - Explaining Poverty 197
- Life Chances 197
- Social Mobility 199
  - Open versus Closed Stratification Systems 199
  - Types of Social Mobility 199
  - Social Mobility in the United States 200

### Social Policy and Stratification: Executive Compensation 201

Mastering This Chapter 203

## 9 Global Inequality 206



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### 29 Stratification in the World System 208

- The Global Divide 208
- The Legacy of Colonialism 209
- Poverty Worldwide 212
- Millennium Development Goals 212
- Multinational Corporations 214
  - Functionalist Perspective 214
  - Conflict Perspective 214
- Modernization 216

### 30 Stratification within Nations: A Comparative Perspective 217

- Distribution of Wealth and Income 217
- Social Mobility 218
  - Mobility in Industrial Nations 218
  - Mobility in Developing Nations 218
  - Gender Differences in Mobility 218

### Social Policy and Global Inequality: Rethinking Welfare in Europe and North America 220

Mastering This Chapter 223

## 10 Racial and Ethnic Inequality 225



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### 31 Minority, Racial, and Ethnic Groups 227

- Minority Groups 227
- Race 228
  - Social Construction of Race 228
  - Recognition of Multiple Identities 229

- Ethnicity 229
- Prejudice and Discrimination 230
  - Prejudice 230
  - Color-Blind Racism 231
  - Discriminatory Behavior 232
  - The Privileges of the Dominant 233
  - Institutional Discrimination 235

### 32 Sociological Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity 236

- Functionalist Perspective 236
- Conflict Perspective 237
- Labeling Perspective 237
- Interactionist Perspective 238
- Spectrum of Intergroup Relations 238
  - Genocide 238
  - Segregation 239
  - Amalgamation 240
  - Assimilation 240
  - Pluralism 240

### 33 Race and Ethnicity in the United States 241

- African Americans 241
- Native Americans 242
- Asian Pacific Americans 244
  - Chinese Americans 244
  - Asian Indians 244
  - Filipino Americans 245
  - Vietnamese Americans 245
  - Korean Americans 245
  - Japanese Americans 246
- Arab Americans 246
- Latinos 247
  - Mexican Americans 248
  - Puerto Ricans 248
  - Cuban Americans 249
  - Central and South Americans 249
- Jewish Americans 249
- White Ethnics 250
- Immigration and Continuing Diversity 251

### Social Policy and Racial and Ethnic Inequality: Global Refugee Crisis 252

Mastering This Chapter 255

## 11 Stratification by Gender and Sexuality 258



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### 34 Social Construction of Gender 260

- Gender Roles in the United States 260
  - Gender-Role Socialization 260
  - Women's Gender Roles 260
  - Men's Gender Roles 261
- Cross-Cultural Perspective 262
- Sociological Perspectives on Gender 264
  - Functionalist Perspective 265
  - Conflict Perspective 265
  - Feminist Perspective 266
  - Intersections with Race, Class, and Other Social Factors 266
  - Interactionist Perspective 267

### 35 Labeling and Human Sexuality 268

- Gender and Human Sexuality 268
- Labeling and Identity 268

### 36 Women: The Oppressed Majority 271

- Sexism and Sex Discrimination 271
- The Status of Women Worldwide 271
- The Workforce of the United States 272
  - Labor Force Participation 272
  - Compensation 273
  - Social Consequences of Women's Employment 274
- Emergence of a Collective Consciousness 275

### Social Policy and Gender Stratification: Workplace Sexual Harassment 276

Mastering This Chapter 279

## 12 Stratification by Age 281



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### 37 Aging and Society 283

- Age Stratification 283
- Sociological Perspectives on Aging 283
  - Functionalist Perspective 284

- Interactionist Perspective 284
- Labeling Perspective 285
- Conflict Perspective 286

### 38 Aging Worldwide 287

- Role Transitions throughout the Life Course 288
  - The Sandwich Generation 288
  - Adjusting to Retirement 289
  - Death and Dying 290

### 39 Age Stratification in the United States 292

- The "Graying of America" 292
  - Wealth and Income 293
  - Ageism 294
  - Competition between Generations in the Labor Force 294
- The Elderly: Emergence of a Collective Consciousness 295

### Social Policy and Age Stratification: The Right to Die Worldwide 297

Mastering This Chapter 299

## 13 The Family and Household Diversity 302



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### 40 Global View of the Family 304

- Universal Principles 304
  - Composition: What Is the Family? 304
  - Kinship Patterns: To Whom Are We Related? 305
  - Authority Patterns: Who Rules? 306
- Sociological Perspectives on the Family 306
  - Functionalist Perspective 306
  - Conflict Perspective 308
  - Interactionist Perspective 308
  - Feminist Perspective 308

### 41 Marriage and Family 310

- Courtship and Mate Selection 310
  - Aspects of Mate Selection 310
  - The Love Relationship 311



- Variations in Family Life and Intimate Relationships 312
  - Social Class Differences 312
  - Racial and Ethnic Differences 312
- Child-Rearing Patterns 313
  - Parenthood and Grandparenthood 314
  - Adoption 314
  - Dual-Income Families 316
  - Single-Parent Families 316
  - Stepfamilies 317

## 42 Alternatives to Traditional Families 318

- Divorce 318
  - Statistical Trends in Divorce 318
  - Factors Associated with Divorce 318
  - Impact of Divorce on Children 318
- Lesbian and Gay Relationships 319
- Diverse Lifestyles 319
  - Cohabitation 320
  - Remaining Single 320
  - Married without Children 320

## Social Policy and the Family: Family Leave Worldwide 321

Mastering This Chapter 324

## 14 Education 327



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## 43 Sociological Perspectives on Education 329

- Functionalist Perspective 329
  - Transmitting Culture 329
  - Promoting Social and Political Integration 330
  - Maintaining Social Control 330
  - Serving as an Agent of Change 330
- Conflict Perspective 332
  - The Hidden Curriculum 332
  - Credentialism 332
  - Bestowal of Status 333
- Feminist Perspective 334
- Interactionist Perspective 334

- 44 Schools as Formal Organizations 336
  - Bureaucratization of Schools 336
  - Teachers: Employees and Instructors 337
  - Student Subcultures 338
  - Homeschooling 341

## Social Policy and Education: Charter Schools 342

Mastering This Chapter 344

## 15 Religion 347



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## 45 The Sociological Approach to Religion 349

- Durkheim and the Importance of Religion 349
- Sociological Perspectives on Religion 349
  - The Integrative Function of Religion 349
  - Religion and Social Support 350
  - Religion and Social Change 351
  - Religion and Social Control: A Conflict Perspective 352
  - Feminist Perspective 352

## 46 World Religions 353

- Components of Religion 355
  - Belief 355
  - Ritual 355
  - Experience 356

## 47 Religious Organization 357

- Four Basic Forms of Organization 357
  - Ecclesiae 357
  - Denominations 357
  - Sects 358
  - New Religious Movements or Cults 358
- Comparing Forms of Religious Organization 358

## Social Policy and Religion: Religion in the Schools 360

Mastering This Chapter 362

## 16 Government and the Economy 365



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## 48 Government, Power, and Authority 367

- Power 367
- Types of Authority 368
  - Traditional Authority 368
  - Rational-Legal Authority 368
  - Charismatic Authority 368
- Types of Government 368
  - Monarchy 369
  - Oligarchy 369
  - Dictatorship and Totalitarianism 369
  - Democracy 369
- War and Peace 369
  - War 369
  - Peace 370
  - Terrorism 372

## 49 Political Behavior and Power in the United States 373

- Participation and Apathy 373
- Race and Gender in Politics 374
- Models of Power Structure in the United States 376
  - Power Elite Models 376
  - Pluralist Model 378

## 50 Economic Systems 380

- Capitalism 380
- Socialism 382
- The Informal Economy 383

## 51 Changing Economies 383

- The Changing Face of the Workforce 383
- Deindustrialization 385
- The Sharing Economy 385
- The Temporary Workforce 386
- Offshoring 386

## Social Policy and the Economy: Microfinancing 387

Mastering This Chapter 390

## 17 Health, Population, and the Environment 393



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- 52 Sociological Perspectives on Health and Illness 395**
  - Functionalist Perspective 395
  - Conflict Perspective 396
    - The Medicalization of Society 396
    - Inequities in Health Care 397
  - Interactionist Perspective 397
  - Labeling Perspective 398
- 53 Social Epidemiology and Health Care in the United States 399**
  - Social Epidemiology 399
    - Social Class 400
    - Race and Ethnicity 400
    - Gender 401
    - Age 401
    - Gender Identity 401
  - Health Care in the United States 402
    - A Historical View 402
    - Physicians and Patients 403
    - Alternatives to Traditional Health Care 404
    - The Role of Government 406
- 54 What Is Mental Illness? 406**
  - Theoretical Models of Mental Disorders 406
  - Patterns of Care 407
- 55 Population 408**
  - Demography: The Study of Population 408
    - Malthus's Thesis and Marx's Response 409

- Studying Population Today 409
- Elements of Demography 410
- World Population Patterns 410
  - Demographic Transition 410
  - The Population Explosion 411
- Fertility Patterns in the United States 412
  - The Baby Boom 412
  - Stable Population Growth 413
- Migration 414
  - International Migration 414
  - Internal Migration 414

- 56 Sociological Perspectives on the Environment 415**
  - Human Ecology 415
  - Conflict Perspective on the Environment 416
  - Ecological Modernization 416
  - Environmental Justice 417
  - Environmental Issues 417
    - Air Pollution 418
    - Water Pollution 418
    - Climate Change 419

### Social Policy and the Environment: Environmentalism 420

*Mastering This Chapter 423*

## 18 Social Change in the Global Community 426



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- 57 Collective Behavior 428**
  - Theories of Collective Behavior 428
    - Emergent-Norm Perspective 428
    - Value-Added Perspective 429
    - Assembling Perspective 430

- Forms of Collective Behavior 430
  - Crowds 430
  - Disaster Behavior 431
  - Fads and Fashions 433
  - Panics and Crazes 434
  - Rumors 434
  - Publics and Public Opinion 435

### 58 Social Movements 437

- The Emergence of Social Movements 437
  - Relative Deprivation Approach 438
  - Resource Mobilization Approach 438
  - Gender and Social Movements 439
  - New Social Movements 440
- Communications and the Globalization of Social Movements 441

### 59 Social Change 443

- Theories of Social Change 443
  - Evolutionary Theory 445
  - Functionalist Perspective 445
  - Conflict Perspective 446
- Resistance to Social Change 446
  - Economic and Cultural Factors 447
  - Resistance to Technology 448

### 60 Global Social Change 449

- Anticipating Change 449
- Social Change in Dubai 449
- Technology and the Future 450
  - Computer Technology 451
  - Artificial Intelligence 453
  - Privacy and Censorship in a Global Village 453
  - Biotechnology and the Gene Pool 454

### Social Policy and Globalization: Transnationals 455

*Mastering This Chapter 459*

*Glossary 462*

*References 470*

*Name Index 511*

*Subject Index 518*



# chapter opening excerpts

Every chapter in this textbook begins with an excerpt from one of the works listed here. These excerpts convey the excitement and relevance of sociological inquiry and draw readers into the subject matter of each chapter.

## Chapter 1

*Outcasts United* by Warren St. John 2

## Chapter 2

*The Tender Cut: Inside the Hidden World of Self-Injury* by Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler 29

## Chapter 3

“Body Ritual among the Nacirema” by Horace Miner 53

## Chapter 4

*The Wolfpack* by Crystal Moselle 76

## Chapter 5

“The Psychology of Imprisonment” by Philip Zimbardo 98

## Chapter 6

*Reclaiming Conversation* by Sherry Turkle 128

## Chapter 7

*Cop in the Hood: My Year Policing Baltimore’s Eastern District* by Peter Moskos 151

## Chapter 8

“Perspectives on Inequality and Opportunity” by Janet Yellen 179

## Chapter 9

*Portfolios of the Poor: How the World’s Poor Live on \$2 a Day* by Daryl Collins, Jonathan Morduch, Stuart Rutherford, and Orlanda Ruthven 207

## Chapter 10

*Asian American Dreams* by Helen Zia 226

## Chapter 11

*Everyday Sexism* by Laura Bates 259

## Chapter 12

*Aging and the Life Course: An Introduction to Social Gerontology*, 6th edition, by Jill Quadagno 282

## Chapter 13

*The Accordion Family: Boomerang Kids, Anxious Parents, and the Private Toll of Global Competition* by Katherine S. Newman 303

## Chapter 14

*The Death and Life of the Great American School System* by Diane Ravitch 328

## Chapter 15

*Toying with God: The World of Religious Games and Dolls* by Nikki Bado-Fralick and Rebecca Sachs Norris 348

## Chapter 16

*Who Rules America? The Triumph of the Corporate Rich*, 7th edition, by G. William Domhoff 366

## Chapter 17

*Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves* by Andrew Szasz 394

## Chapter 18

*Social Movements and New Technology* by Victoria Carty 427

# boxed features

## Research Today

- 3-1** Looking at Sports from Five Sociological Perspectives 17
- 6-2** Visual Sociology 38
- 12-1** How Millennials View the Nation: Racial and Ethnic Vantage Points 69
- 15-1** *Rum Springa*: Raising Children Amish Style 87
- 15-2** The Changing Third Place 90
- 15-3** Parental Monitoring of the Digital World 91
- 16-1** Disability as a Master Status 101
- 16-2** Twitter Networks: From Wildfires to Hurricanes 105
- 23-2** Debtors’ Jails in the 21st Century 157
- 24-1** Does Crime Pay? 161
- 26-1** The Shrinking Middle Class 184
- 26-2** Taxes as Opportunity 189
- 28-1** Calculating Your Risk of Poverty 194
- 33-2** Hurricane Maria and the Puerto Rican Community 248
- 35-1** Measuring Discrimination Based on Sexual Identity 270
- 37-1** Elderspeak 285
- 38-2** Native Americans and Death 291
- 39-1** Cautiously Good News: Declining Poverty among the Aged 295
- 39-2** Hard and Soft Discrimination Experienced by the Aged 296
- 40-1** An Extraordinary Patriarchy: The Oneida Community 307
- 41-2** Transracial Adoption: The Experience of Children from Korea 315
- 44-1** Violence in the Schools 339
- 47-1** The Church of Scientology: Religion or Quasi-Religion? 359
- 49-1** The Latino Political Voice 375
- 51-1** Affirmative Action 384
- 53-1** Health Care, Retail Style 403

## Sociology in the Global Community

- 4-1** Your Morning Cup of Coffee 22
- 10-1** Symbolizing 9/11 59
- 11-1** Life in the Global Village 66
- 11-2** Cultural Survival in Brazil 67
- 17-2** Disney World: A Postmodern Theme Park 111
- 19-1** McDonald's and the Worldwide Bureaucratization of Society 119
- 20-2** The Global Disconnect 137
- 29-1** It's All Relative: Appalachian Poverty and Congolese Affluence 209
- 29-2** Walking the Last Mile in Uganda: The Avon Approach 213
- 30-1** Getting Ahead Globally 219
- 33-1** The Aboriginal People of Australia 243
- 34-1** Women in Combat Worldwide 263
- 34-2** No Gender, Please: It's Preschool! 264
- 36-1** The Head Scarf and the Veil: Complex Symbols 272
- 38-1** Aging, Japanese Style 288
- 55-1** Population Policy in China 412
- 56-1** Environmental Refugees 418
- 58-2** Women's Social Movements in South Korea, India, and Bangladesh 441

## Our Wired World

- 6-1** Surveying Cell Phone Users 38
- 17-1** Becoming Social in a *Gesellschaft* 108
- 20-1** Inside the Bubble: Internet Search Filters 133
- 20-3** Apps for Global Refugees 139
- 41-1** Love Is in the Air and on the Web 311
- 49-2** Politicking Online 379
- 58-1** #Social Movements and Resource Mobilization 439
- 58-3** Organizing for Controversy via Computer-Mediated Communication 442
- 60-1** The Internet's Global Profile 452

## Sociology on Campus

- 10-2** A Culture of Cheating? 62
- 14-1** Impression Management by Students 83
- 23-1** Binge Drinking 155
- 25-1** Packing Firearms on Campus 166
- 28-2** Student Debt 198
- 31-1** Bias in Awarding Scholarship Money 231
- 43-1** The Debate over Title IX 335

## Taking Sociology to Work

- Dave Eberbach, Associate Director, Iowa Institute for Community Alliances 42
- Rakefet Avramovitz, Program Administrator, Child Care Law Center 88
- Sarah Levy, Owner, S. Levy Foods 114
- Lindsey Wallem, Social Media Consultant 135
- Stephanie Vezzani, Special Agent, U.S. Secret Service 171
- Jennifer Michals, Program Assistant, Center for Native American and Indigenous Research, Northwestern University 234
- Diane Belcher Gray, Assistant Director of Volunteer Services, New River Community College 338
- Joseph W. Drummond, Management Analyst, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command 371

# social policy sections

## Chapter 2

Social Policy and Sociological Research:  
*Studying Human Sexuality* 45

## Chapter 3

Social Policy and Culture:  
*Bilingualism* 70

## Chapter 4

Social Policy and Sociological Research: *Child  
Care around the World* 92

## Chapter 5

Social Policy and Organizations: *The State  
of the Unions Worldwide* 121

## Chapter 6

Social Policy and the Media:  
*Censorship* 144

## Chapter 7

Social Policy and Social Control: *Gun  
Control* 172

## Chapter 8

Social Policy and Stratification: *Executive  
Compensation* 201

## Chapter 9

Social Policy and Global Inequality: *Rethinking  
Welfare in Europe and North America* 220

## Chapter 10

Social Policy and Racial and Ethnic Inequality:  
*Global Refugee Crisis* 252

## Chapter 11

Social Policy and Gender Stratification:  
*Workplace Sexual Harassment* 276

## Chapter 12

Social Policy and Age Stratification:  
*The Right to Die Worldwide* 297

## Chapter 13

Social Policy and the Family:  
*Family Leave Worldwide* 321

## Chapter 14

Social Policy and Education: *Charter  
Schools* 342

## Chapter 15

Social Policy and Religion: *Religion in the  
Schools* 360

## Chapter 16

Social Policy and the Economy:  
*Microfinancing* 387

## Chapter 17

Social Policy and the Environment:  
*Environmentalism* 420

## Chapter 18

Social Policy and Globalization:  
*Transnationals* 455

# maps

## MAPPING LIFE NATIONWIDE

Educational Level and Household Income in  
the United States 32

Percentage of People Who Speak  
a Language Other than English  
at Home, by State 71

Labor Union Membership by State, 2018 121

The Status of State Legalization of  
Marijuana 156

The 50 States: Contrasts in Income  
and Poverty Levels 181

Minority Population by County 242

Twenty-Eight Floridas by 2030 294

Physician-Assisted Suicide by State 298

Average Salary for Teachers 340

Charter Schools 342

Percentage without Health Insurance 401

## MAPPING LIFE WORLDWIDE

Countries with High Child Marriage Rates 56

Branding the Globe 131

Freedom on the Internet 145

Gross National Income Per Capita 210

Global Peace Index 370

Global Terrorism Index 372

# tracking sociological perspectives tables

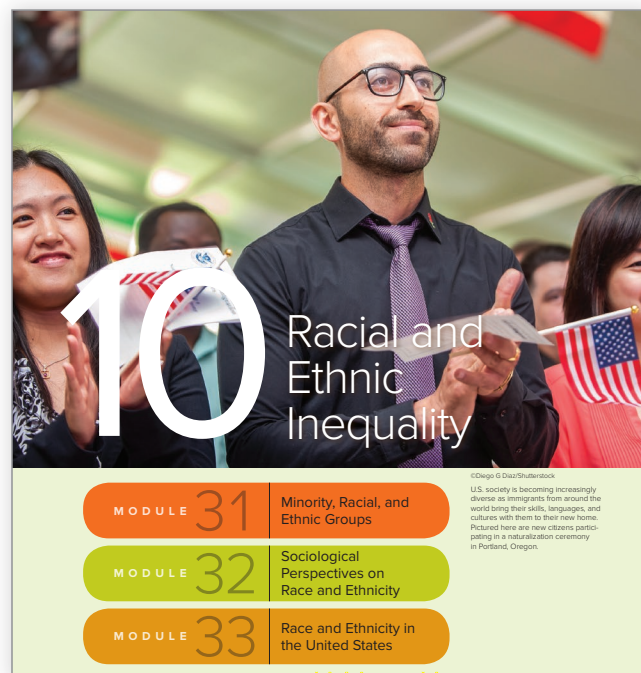
Major Sociological Perspectives	17	Sociological Perspectives on Social Stratification	188	Sociological Perspectives on the Family	309
Sociological Perspectives on Culture	64	Sociological Perspectives on Global Inequality	216	Sociological Perspectives on Education	335
Theoretical Approaches to Development of the Self	84	Sociological Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity	238	Sociological Perspectives on Religion	353
Sociological Perspectives on Social Institutions	106	Sociological Perspectives on Gender	267	Sociological Perspectives on Health and Illness	399
Sociological Perspectives on the Media	138	Sociological Perspectives on Aging	286	Sociological Perspectives on Social Change	446
Sociological Perspectives on Deviance	165				

# summing up tables

Existing Sources Used in Sociological Research	39	Stages of Sociocultural Evolution	110	Components of Religion	357
Major Research Designs	40	Comparison of Primary and Secondary Groups	113	Characteristics of Ecclesiae, Denominations, Sects, and New Religious Movements	359
Norms and Sanctions	60	Characteristics of a Bureaucracy	118	Characteristics of the Three Major Economic Systems	382
Mead's Stages of the Self	82	Merton's Deviance Theory	160	Contributions to Social Movement Theory	440
Comparison of the <i>Gemeinschaft</i> and <i>Gesellschaft</i>	109	Major World Religions	354		

# Modules Work for Instructors and Students

*Sociology in Modules* allows you to assign the content you want in the order you prefer, and the format promotes student learning and success by presenting content in small, manageable chunks.



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# Why Does Sociology Matter?

Whether you're a first-time student, someone who is returning to the classroom, or even an instructor leading a discussion, you've probably thought about that question. Sociologists examine society, from small-scale interactions to the broadest social changes, which can be daunting for any student to take in. *Sociology in Modules*, fifth edition, bridges the essential sociological theories, research, and concepts and the everyday realities we all experience. The program highlights the distinctive ways in which sociologists explore human social behavior—and how their research findings can be used to help students think critically about the broader principles that guide their lives. In doing so, it helps students begin to think sociologically, using what they have learned to evaluate human interactions and institutions independently.

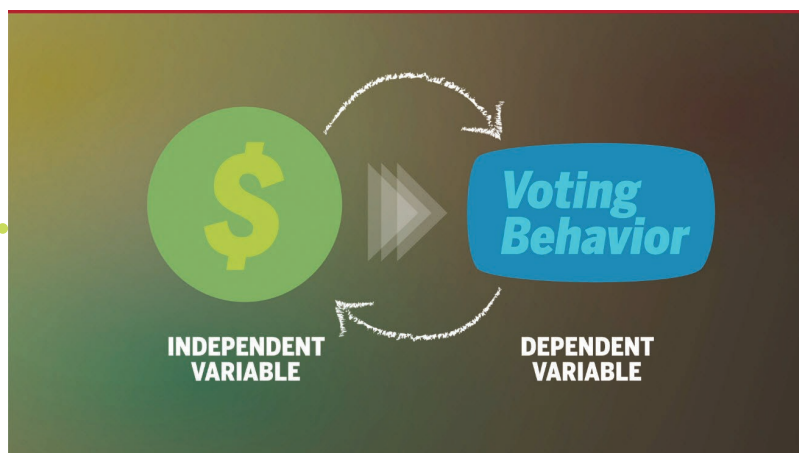
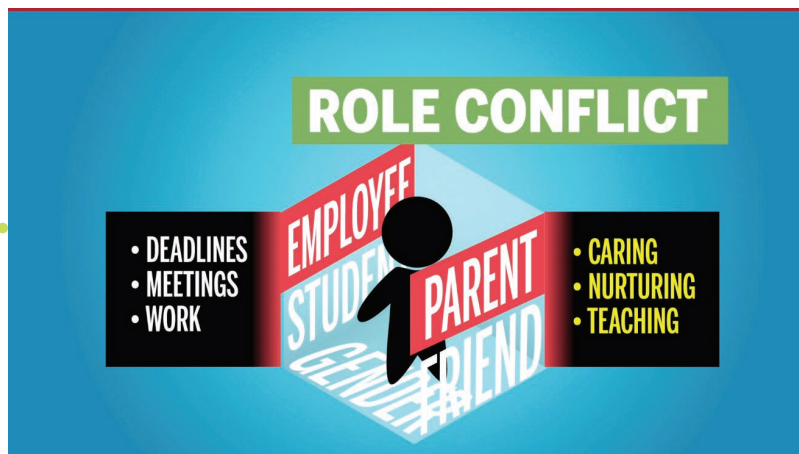
What do a police officer, a nurse, and a local business owner need to know about the community that they serve? It turns out quite a lot. And *Sociology in Modules* is poised to give students the tools they need to take sociology with them as they pursue their studies and their careers, and as they get involved in their communities and the world at large. Its emphasis on real-world applications enables students to see the relevance of sociological concepts to contemporary issues and events as well as students' everyday lives. In addition, the digital tools in Connect foster student preparedness for a more productive and engaging experience in class and better grades on exams.

## Help Your Students Succeed with Connect



Connect® is a digital teaching and learning environment that improves performance over a variety of critical outcomes; it is easy to use; and it is proven effective. Connect includes assignable and assessable quizzes, exercises, and interactive activities, all associated with learning objectives for *Sociology in Modules*, fifth edition. Videos, interactive assessments, links to news articles about current issues with accompanying questions (“NewsFlash”), and scenario-based activities engage students and add real-world perspective to the introductory sociology course. In addition, printable, exportable reports show how well each student or section is performing on each course segment.

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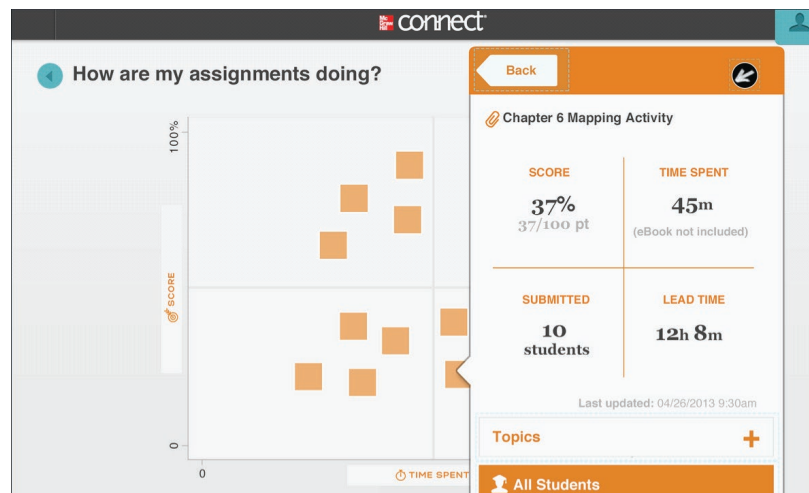


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**Connect Insight®** is Connect's one-of-a-kind visual analytics dashboard, available for both instructors and students, that provides at-a-glance information regarding student performance, which is immediately actionable. By presenting assignment, assessment, and topical performance results, together with a time metric that is easily visible for aggregate or individual results, Connect Insight gives the user the ability to take a just-in-time approach to teaching and learning, which was never before available. Connect Insight presents data that empowers students and helps instructors improve class performance in a way that is efficient and effective.





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Aimed at the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy, **Power of Process for Sociology** helps students improve critical thinking skills and allows instructors to assess these skills efficiently and effectively in an online environment. Power of Process is available through Connect and includes a set of preloaded classic Sociology readings for instructors to use in creating assignments. Using a scaffolded framework such as understanding, synthesizing, and analyzing, Power of Process moves students toward higher-level thinking and analysis.

## Power of Process for Sociology



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## Content Changes

### Chapter 1: Understanding Sociology

- Chapter-opening excerpt based on *Outcasts United*, a sociological study about a youth soccer team made up of immigrants in suburban Georgia
- Cartoon illustrating the increasing importance of globalization
- Enhanced discussion of sociological study of episodes of violence and hatred, based on Charlottesville march
- Expanded and updated discussion of sociological study of the aftermath of hurricanes and other natural disasters

### Chapter 2: Sociological Research

- “Thinking Critically” questions about the effect of operational definitions on research results and value neutrality
- “Taking Sociology with You” question about developing a research project
- Extensive discussion of the use of sociological data to help the children of incarcerated adults

### Chapter 3: Culture

- Chapter-opening photo illustrating a unique custom of the Mursi tribe in Ethiopia
- Photo and caption of Confederate statue being removed, showing the conflicting meaning of symbols
- “Thinking Critically” question about communication as cultural capital
- “Research Today” box: “How Millennials View the Nation: Racial and Ethnic Vantage Points”

### Chapter 4: Socialization and the Life Course

- Extensive discussion of a recent sociological experiment involving gender roles and expectations

- “Thinking Critically” questions about public policy implications of early childhood research, comparison of Mead’s and Piaget’s cognitive stages, and anticipatory socialization
- “Research Today” box: “Parental Monitoring of the Digital World,” including bar graph, “Parental Monitoring of Teenagers’ Online Activity”
- Enhanced and updated comparison of child care in the United States vs. other countries
- Cartoon about senior citizens’ attitudes toward aging

### Chapter 5: Social Interaction, Groups, and Social Structure

- Enhanced discussion of Zimbardo prison experiment in chapter-opening vignette, with a connection to #BlackLivesMatter
- “Research Today” box: “Twitter Networks: From Wildfires to Hurricanes,” with photo, on the use of social media networks for disaster preparedness
- Discussion of the role of humor in social interaction
- Figures 16-2, “The Elements of Social Structure: An Overview”; and 19-1, “Mapping Life Nationwide: Labor Union Membership by State, 2018”
- Enhanced and expanded discussion of the influence of race and gender on achieved status, using the James Blake case as an example
- Cartoon illustrating hierarchy of authority in bureaucracies

### Chapter 6: Mass Media and Social Media

- Chapter-opening excerpt from *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*, a study of the effects of the overuse of social media
- Enhanced discussion of infiltration of the social media “bubble” for political purposes

- Table 20-1, “Celebrity Status, as Measured by Number of Global Google Searches”
- Expanded discussion of suppression of the media in authoritarian regimes
- Enhanced and updated discussion of the digital divide, with photo
- Updated discussion of feminist perspective on access to cell phones
- Updated and expanded “Our Wired World” box, now titled “Apps for Global Refugees”
- Revised and expanded Figure 20-3: “Who Uses Social Media?” and Figure 22-1, “Internet and Social Media Penetration in Selected Countries”
- Social Policy section: “Censorship”

## Chapter 7: Deviance, Crime, and Social Control

- Images to illustrate the relationship between deviance and celebrity status, how the definition of deviance varies widely in different places, and the prevalence of white-collar crime (cartoon)
- Enhanced discussion of cybercrime in reference to the 2016 election
- Expanded discussion of public perception of crime as a growing threat, despite statistics to the contrary
- Social Policy section: “Gun Control,” including cartoon

## Chapter 8: Stratification and Social Mobility in the United States

- Cartoon illustrating struggles of the middle class
- “Research Today” box, “Calculating Your Risk of Poverty”
- Enhanced discussion of calculating the effects of unpaid women’s work on determining poverty rate
- Revised and expanded discussion of net worth, race, and ethnicity
- Expanded discussion of the longevity gap between the affluent and the poor
- Enhanced and updated discussion of intergenerational mobility
- Cartoon in Social Policy section on differences of perception between rich and poor

## Chapter 9: Global Inequality

- “Sociology in the Global Community” box, “Getting Ahead Globally”
- Updated and expanded overview of global poverty
- Updated discussion of United Nations Millennium Development Goals
- In Social Policy section, updated and expanded discussion of corporate welfare and the social safety net in European countries
- Revised Self-Quiz with new question and distractors

## Chapter 10: Racial and Ethnic Inequality

- Chapter-opening excerpt from *Asian American Dreams*, a memoir about discrimination against Asian Americans
- “Taking Sociology to Work” box: Jennifer Michals, Program Assistant, Center for Native American and Indigenous Research, Northwestern University
- “Sociology on Campus” box, “Bias in Awarding Scholarship Money”
- Discussion of discrimination within the sharing economy
- Discussion and photo illustrating the effects of the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar
- “Research Today” box, “Hurricane Maria and the Puerto Rican Community”
- Enhanced discussion of Jewish American assimilation, with photo

## Chapter 11: Stratification by Gender and Sexuality

- Chapter-opening excerpt from *Everyday Sexism: The Project That Inspired a Worldwide Movement*, a study of the preponderance of sexism in daily life
- Key term treatment for *intersectionality* and expanded discussion of the concept
- “Research Today” box, “Measuring Discrimination Based on Sexual Identity”
- Social Policy section on workplace sexual harassment

## Chapter 12: Stratification by Age

- Chapter-opening photo showing a multigenerational family playing tug of war in the park
- Expanded discussion of conflict theory of aging
- Discussion of effects of voter ID laws on the elderly
- Enhanced discussion of the “silver collar” economy and the effects of recent changes in pensions on the elderly
- Expanded discussion of conflict theory and queer theory
- Survey data on age discrimination
- “Research Today” box, “Hard and Soft Discrimination Experienced by the Aged”
- Photo of the cover of *AARP The Magazine* showing actor Dr. Dre
- Updated “Social Policy” section on the right to die, including material on labeling theory
- Two “Taking Sociology with You” questions

## Chapter 13: The Family and Household Diversity

- Expansion of coverage of interactionist perspective to emphasize the growing diversity of family styles

- Updated coverage of online dating as a part of courtship and mate selection
- “Thinking Critically” questions about mate selection and family leave policies

## Chapter 14: Education

- Enhanced discussion of LGBT student subcultures
- Updated and expanded “Research Today” box on school violence
- “Thinking Critically” question about the social implications of rising tuition costs

## Chapter 15: Religion

- Photo illustrating religion’s function of providing social support
- “Research Today” box, “The Church of Scientology: Religion or Quasi-Religion?”
- Key Term treatment for *quasi-religion*
- “Thinking Critically” question about why the number of adherents to a religion might change

## Chapter 16: Government and the Economy

- Updated and enhanced background information about world inequality and people’s reactions to it
- Figure 51-1, “Increasing Diversity in the U.S. Labor Force”
- Revised and updated discussion of use of social media in politics
- Expanded and updated coverage of political participation in the United States
- Expanded discussion of use of militarized drones, with new photos
- Updated discussion of deindustrialization and its effects on politics
- Photo of André Carson, second Muslim House member

## Chapter 17: Health, Population, and the Environment

- Enhanced coverage of relationship between health insurance and income level
- Major section on Gender Identity under Social Epidemiology and Health Care
- Updated information about the Affordable Care Act
- Coverage of water pollution updated to include contamination of water in Flint, Michigan, with photo

- Expanded coverage of race and pollution
- Discussion of the Paris Climate Accords

## Chapter 18: Social Change in the Global Community

- Photos of January 2018 Power to the Polls march to illustrate political participation, women attending a soccer match in Saudi Arabia to illustrate social change, military and civilian drones to illustrate effects of new technology, 3-D printer to illustrate the future of technology
- Key Term treatment for *artificial intelligence* and *digitalization*
- “Sociology in the Global Community” box expanded to include women’s social movements in Bangladesh
- #SocialMovements and Resource Mobilization
- Extended example of introduction of the HPV vaccine to illustrate culture lag
- Figures 60-1, “Digital Skill Levels of Select Occupations”; 60-3, “Average Willingness to Migrate Abroad Permanently, 2009 and 2016”; 60-4, “Migrants as a Percentage of Total Population in Selected Countries, 2015”
- Major section on Artificial Intelligence and its effects on society

## Teaching Resources

**Instructor’s Manual.** The Instructor’s Manual includes detailed chapter outlines and chapter summaries; learning objectives; a chapter-by-chapter bulleted list of new content; key terms; essay questions; and critical thinking questions.

**PowerPoint Slides.** Now accessibility compliant, the PowerPoint Slides include bulleted lecture points, figures, and maps. They can be used as is or modified to meet the instructor’s individual needs.

**Test Bank.** The Test Bank includes multiple-choice, true-false, and essay questions for every chapter. TestGen software allows the instructor to create customized exams using either publisher-supplied test items or the instructor’s own questions.

These instructor resources can be accessed through the Library tab in Connect.

# Take Sociology with You

*Sociology in Modules* highlights the distinctive ways in which sociologists examine human social behavior, as well as the ways in which research findings contribute to our understanding of society. In doing so, it helps students to think like sociologists and to apply sociological theories and concepts to human interactions and institutions. In other words, *Sociology in Modules* gives students the tools they need to take sociology with them when they graduate from college, begin to pursue careers, and become involved in their communities and the world at large.



**Thinking Critically:** These questions, appearing at the end of each module, prompt students to review and reflect on the content.



**Sociology on Campus:** These boxes apply a sociological perspective to issues of immediate interest to students.



**Use Your Sociological Imagination:** These short, thought-provoking exercises encourage students to apply the sociological concepts they have learned to the world around them.



**Taking Sociology with You:** These critical thinking questions and reflection prompts at the end of each chapter encourage students to apply the material they have just read to their daily lives.



**Taking Sociology to Work:** These boxes underscore the value of an undergraduate or community college degree in sociology by profiling individuals who studied sociology and now use its principles in their work.



**Research Today:** These boxes present new sociological findings on topics such as sports, social networks, and transracial adoption.



**Careers in Sociology:** This appendix to Chapter 1 presents career options for students who have their undergraduate degree in sociology and explains how this degree can be an asset in a wide variety of occupations.



**Our Wired World:** These boxes describe the Internet's effect on social activities such as lying, love, and politicking.



**Sociology in the Global Community:** These boxes provide a global perspective on topics such as stratification, marriage, and the women's movement.



**Social Policy Sections:** The end-of-chapter social policy sections apply sociological concepts and theories to important social issues currently being debated by policymakers and the general public.



**Maps:** Mapping Life Nationwide and Mapping Life Worldwide maps show social trends in the United States as well as in the global community.

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## Acknowledgments

### Author Acknowledgments

The Fifth Edition of *Sociology in Modules* reflects the input of many talented individuals.

Since 2010, Elaine Silverstein has played a most significant role in the development of my introductory sociology books. Fortunately for me, in this fifth edition, Elaine has once again been responsible for the smooth integration of all changes and updates.

As is evident from the number of professionals listed on the back of the title page, the preparation of a textbook is truly a team effort. The most valuable member of this effort continues to be my wife, Sandy. She provides the support so necessary in my creative and scholarly activities.

I have had the good fortune to introduce students to sociology for many years. These students have been enormously helpful in spurring on my sociological imagination. In ways I can fully appreciate but cannot fully acknowledge, their questions in class and queries in the hallway have found their way into this work.

Richard T. Schaefer  
schaefer@aol.com

### Academic Reviewers

This project has benefited from constructive and thorough evaluations provided by sociologists from both two-year and four-year institutions.

Adriana Bohm, *Delaware County Community College*

Tammie Foltz, *Des Moines Area Community College*

Claire Giesen, *Delgado Community College*

Mehdi Haghshenas, *University of Texas*

Lucy Hurston, *Manchester Community College*

Margaret Jendrek, *Miami University-Oxford*

Laurie J. Linhart, *Des Moines Area Community College*

Joseph Oaster, *Harcum College*

Andrew Rochus, *Western Virginia University at Parkersburg*

Amy Ruedisueli, *Tidewater Community College, Virginia Beach*

Okori Uneke, *Winston-Salem State University*

Amanda Vandivier, *Frostburg State University*

Gregory Zachrisson, *Massosoit Community College*



sociology



in modules







# Understanding Sociology

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One of the things sociologists study is how people organize themselves into groups to perform tasks necessary to society. In California, volunteers pick up debris for eventual recycling.

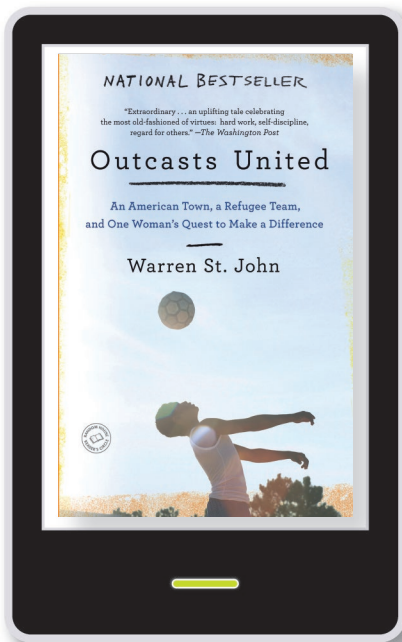
MODULE 1 What Is Sociology?

MODULE 2 The Development of Sociology

MODULE 3 Major Theoretical Perspectives

MODULE 4 Taking Sociology with You





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from the goals. But as the rumble grew louder, all motion stopped as boys from both teams looked quizzically skyward. Soon a cluster of darts appeared in the gap of sky between the pine trees on the horizon and the cottony clumps of cloud vapor overhead. It was a precision flying squadron of fighter jets, performing at an air show miles away in Atlanta. The aircraft banked in close formation in the direction of the field and came closer, so that the boys could now make out the markings on the wings and the white helmets of the pilots in the cockpits. Then with an earthshaking roar deep enough to rattle the change in your pocket, the jets split in different directions like an exploding firework, their contrails carving the sky into giant wedges.

In *Outcasts United*, journalist Warren St. John takes us into the social world of a soccer team, a world composed of refugees who find themselves in a suburban Georgia town of under 8,000 people about 10 miles from Atlanta. Many of the “Fugees” have escaped violence in their home countries. Now they are making the United States their home, with all the adjustments that radical change entails. While they adapt to their new environment, their neighbors must adapt to having the refugees among them. And their competitors on the soccer field must learn what it means to live in a diverse, changing society.

We cannot assume that everyone we meet or communicate with, even when we are young, will be just like ourselves. Today, we learn to work together with people who are very different, and we sometimes struggle to create a sense of community despite our differences. While the diversity in Clarkston may be greater than that in

Have you ever reacted totally differently from the people around you because of different life experiences?

Journalist Warren St. John shows how people with varied backgrounds struggle to adjust to their new environment and to each other.

“On a cool spring afternoon at a soccer field in northern Georgia, two teams of teenage boys were going through their pregame warm-ups when the heavens began to shake. The field had been quiet save the sounds of soccer balls thumping against forefeet and the rustling of the balls against the nylon nets that hung

*On the field below, the two groups of boys watched the spectacle with craned necks, and from different perspectives.*

On the field below, the two groups of boys watched the spectacle with craned necks, and from different perspectives. The players of the home team—a group of thirteen- and fourteen-year-old boys from the nearby Atlanta suburbs playing with the North Atlanta Soccer Association—gestured to the sky and wore expressions of awe.

The boys at the other end of the field were members of an all-refugee soccer team called the Fugees [as in “reFugees”]. Many had actually seen the machinery of war in action, and all had felt its awful consequences firsthand. There were Sudanese players on the team whose villages had been bombed by old Russian-made Antonov bombers flown by the Sudanese Air Force, and Liberians who’d lived through barrages of mortar fire that pierced the roofs of their neighbors’ homes, taking out whole families. As the jets flew by the field, several members of the Fugees flinched.

This was the first time I’d ever seen the Fugees play. I’d shown up knowing little about the team other than that the players were refugees and the coach a woman, and that the team was based in a town called

Clarkston. In a little more than a decade, the process of refugee resettlement had transformed Clarkston from a simple southern town into one of the most diverse communities in America. And yet few in Atlanta, let alone in the world beyond, had taken notice. ”

Source: St. John, Warren T. *Outcasts United*. New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau Trade Paperbacks, 2009. pp. 1–2, 6.

many towns, learning to work in new and changing social environments is critical to an individual’s and the entire society’s success.

As a field of study, sociology is extremely broad in scope. You will see throughout this book the range of topics sociologists investigate—from immigration to suicide, from Amish society to global economic patterns, from peer pressure to genetic engineering. Sociology looks at how others influence our behavior; how major social institutions like the government, religion, and the economy affect us; and how we ourselves affect other individuals, groups, and even organizations.

How did sociology develop? In what ways does it differ from other social sciences? These modules will explore the nature of sociology as both a field of inquiry and an exercise of the “sociological imagination.” In Module 1, we’ll look at the discipline as a science and consider its relationship to other social sciences. In



Modules 2 and 3, we'll meet four pioneering thinkers—Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and W. E. B. DuBois—and examine the theoretical perspectives that grew out of their work. We'll note some of the practical applications for sociological

theory and research. Finally, we'll see how sociology helps us to develop a sociological imagination. For those students interested in exploring career opportunities in sociology, the chapter closes with a special appendix.

## MODULE 1

### What Is Sociology?

“What has sociology got to do with me or with my life?” As a student, you might well have asked this question when you signed up for your introductory sociology course. To answer it, consider these points: Are you influenced by what you see on television? Do you use the Internet? Did you vote in the last election? Are you familiar with binge drinking on campus? Do you use alternative medicine? These are just a few of the everyday life situations described in this book that sociology can shed light on. But as the opening excerpt indicates, sociology also looks at large social issues. We use sociology to investigate why thousands of jobs have moved from the United States to developing nations, what social forces promote prejudice, what leads someone to join a social movement and work for social change, how access to computer technology can reduce social inequality, and why relationships between men and women in Seattle differ from those in Singapore.

**Sociology** is, simply, the scientific study of social behavior and human groups. It focuses on social relationships; how those relationships influence people's behavior; and how societies, the sum total of those relationships, develop and change.

## The Sociological Imagination

In attempting to understand social behavior, sociologists rely on a particular type of critical thinking. A leading sociologist, C. Wright Mills, described such thinking as the **sociological imagination**—an awareness of the relationship between an individual and the wider society, both today and in the past (Mills [1959] 2000a). This awareness allows all of us (not just sociologists) to comprehend the links between our immediate, personal social settings and the remote, impersonal social world that surrounds and helps to shape us.

A key element in the sociological imagination is the ability to view one's own society as an outsider would, rather than only from the perspective of personal experiences and cultural biases. Consider something as simple as sporting events. On college campuses in the United States, thousands of students cheer well-trained football players. In parts of South America and the Caribbean, spectators gather around two cages, each holding a finch. The covers are lifted, and the owner of the first bird to sing 50 songs wins a trophy, a cash prize, and great prestige. In speed singing as in football, eager spectators debate the merits of their favorites and bet on the outcome of the events. Yet what is considered a normal sporting event in one part of the world is considered unusual in another part (Rueb 2015).

The sociological imagination allows us to go beyond personal experiences and observations to understand broader public

issues. Divorce, for example, is unquestionably a personal hardship for a husband and wife who split apart. However, C. Wright Mills advocated using the sociological imagination to view divorce not as simply an individual's personal problem but rather as a societal concern. Using this perspective, we can see that an increase in the divorce rate actually redefines a major social institution—the family. Today's households frequently include stepparents and half-siblings whose parents have divorced and remarried. Through the complexities of the blended family, this private concern becomes a public issue that affects schools, government agencies, businesses, and religious institutions.

The sociological imagination is an empowering tool. It allows us to look beyond a limited understanding of human behavior to see the world and its people in a new way and through a broader lens than we might otherwise use. It may be as simple as understanding why a roommate prefers country music to hip-hop, or it may open up a whole different way of understanding other populations in the world. For example, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, many citizens wanted to understand how Muslims throughout the world perceived their country, and why. From time to time this textbook will offer you the chance to exercise your sociological imagination in a variety of situations.



### use your **sociological imagination**

You are walking down the street in your city or hometown. In looking around you, you can't help noticing that half or more of the people you see are overweight. How do you explain your observation? If you were C. Wright Mills, how do you think you would explain it?

## Sociology and the Social Sciences

Is sociology a science? The term **science** refers to the body of knowledge obtained by methods based on systematic observation. Just like other scientific disciplines, sociology involves the organized, systematic study of phenomena (in this case, human behavior) in order to enhance understanding. All scientists, whether studying mushrooms or murderers, attempt to collect precise information through methods of study that are as objective as possible. They rely on careful recording of observations and accumulation of data.

Of course, there is a great difference between sociology and physics, between psychology and astronomy. For this reason, the sciences are commonly divided into natural and social sciences. **Natural science** is the study of the physical features of nature and



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Sociology is the scientific study of social behavior and human groups.

the ways in which they interact and change. Astronomy, biology, chemistry, geology, and physics are all natural sciences. **Social science** is the study of the social features of humans and the ways in which they interact and change. The social sciences include sociology, anthropology, economics, history, psychology, and political science.

These social science disciplines have a common focus on the social behavior of people, yet each has a particular orientation. Anthropologists usually study past cultures and preindustrial societies that continue today, as well as the origins of humans. Economists explore the ways in which people produce and exchange goods and services, along with money and other resources. Historians are concerned with the peoples and events of the past and their significance for us today. Political scientists study international relations, the workings of government, and the exercise of power and authority. Psychologists investigate personality and individual behavior. So what do *sociologists* focus on? They study the influence that society has on people's attitudes and behavior and the ways in which people interact and shape society. Because humans are social animals, sociologists examine our social relationships scientifically. The range of the relationships they investigate is vast, as the current list of sections in the American Sociological Association suggests (Table 1-1).

Let's consider how different social scientists might study the impact of the global recession that began in 2008. Historians would stress the pattern of long-term fluctuations in world markets. Economists would discuss the roles played by government, the private sector, and the world monetary system. Psychologists would study individual cases of emotional stress among workers,

investors, and business owners. And political scientists would study the degree of cooperation among nations—or lack of it—in seeking economic solutions.

What approach would sociologists take? They might note a change in marital patterns in the United States. Since the recession began, the median age of first marriage has risen to 28.7 years for men and 26.7 years for women. Sociologists might also observe that today, fewer people are making that trip to the altar than in the past. If the U.S. marriage rate had remained the same as it was in 2006, about 4 million more Americans would have married by 2010.

Similarly, sociologists might evaluate the recession's impact on education. In the United States, private school enrollment from elementary through high school declined from 13.6 percent in 2006 to 12.8 percent in 2010 as families cut back on nonessential expenditures. Sociologists might even consider the

recession's effect on environmental actions, such as carpooling. In all but 1 of the 50 largest metropolitan areas in the United States (New Orleans), the percentage of working people aged 16 to 64 dropped significantly during the recession. When friends and co-workers are laid off, carpools shrink and more people end up driving to work alone (El Nasser and Overberg 2011).

Sociologists would take a similar approach to studying episodes of extreme violence and hatred. In 2017, the nation was shocked by the open display of pro-Nazi and pro-Ku Klux Klan sympathy by marchers in Charlottesville, Virginia, at a "Unite the Right" rally protesting the removal of a statue of Confederate leader General Robert E. Lee. Months earlier, a lone gunman with leftist leanings opened fire at a Republican congressional baseball practice, shooting four members of Congress. Observers struggled to explain these individual and collective events by placing them in a larger social context. For sociologists in particular, these events raised numerous issues and topics for study, including the role of social media as a new platform for extremist thought, growing anger against government and people in authority, the gun control debate, and the inadequacy of the nation's mental health system. Extensive sociological research is already under way concerning the effects of 2017 hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

Besides doing research, sociologists have a long history of advising government agencies on how to respond to disasters. Certainly the poverty of the Gulf Coast region complicated the challenge of evacuating New Orleans in 2005. With Hurricane



## TABLE 1-1 SECTIONS OF THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

The range of sociological issues is very broad. For example, sociologists who belong to the Animals and Society section of the ASA may study the animal rights movement; those who belong to the Sexualities section may study global sex workers or the gay, bisexual, and transgender movements. Economic sociologists may investigate globalization or consumerism, among many other topics.

Aging and the Life Course	Emotions	Organizations, Occupations, and Work
Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco	Environment and Technology	Peace, War, and Social Conflict
Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity	Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis	Political Economy of the World-System
Animals and Society	Evolution, Biology, and Society	Political Sociology
Asia and Asian America	Family	Population
Body and Embodiment	Global and Transnational Sociology	Race, Gender, and Class
Children and Youth	History of Sociology	Racial and Ethnic Minorities
Collective Behavior and Social Movements	Human Rights	Rationality and Society
Communication, Information Technologies, and Media	Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility	Religion
Community and Urban Sociology	International Migration	Science, Knowledge, and Technology
Comparative and Historical Sociology	Labor and Labor Movements	Sex and Gender
Consumers and Consumption	Latina/o Sociology	Sexualities
Crime, Law, and Deviance	Law	Social Psychology
Culture	Marxist Sociology	Sociological Practice and Public Sociology
Development	Mathematical Sociology	Teaching and Learning
Disability and Society	Medical Sociology	Theory
Economic Sociology	Mental Health	
Education	Methodology	

Source: "ASA Sections," American Sociological Association, 2017. (American Sociological Association 2017a)

Katrina bearing down on the Gulf Coast, thousands of poor inner-city residents had no automobiles or other available means of escaping the storm. Added to that difficulty was the high incidence

of disability in the area. New Orleans ranked second among the nation's 70 largest cities in the proportion of people over age 65 who are disabled—56 percent. Moving wheelchair-bound residents to safety requires specially equipped vehicles, to say nothing of handicap-accessible accommodations in public shelters. Clearly, officials must consider these factors in developing evacuation plans (Bureau of the Census 2005b).

Sociological analysis of the disaster did not end when the floodwaters receded. Indeed, several steps were taken that improve the response to hurricanes Harvey and Irma, which hit Texas and Florida in 2017. These included:

- Requiring communities to develop workable disaster response plans in advance.
- Delivering emergency supplies to secure holding areas before the storms struck.
- Permitting prior approval for taking action rather than requiring plan submission after the disaster.
- Identifying emergency shelters that take pets to avoid people remaining at home to safeguard their pets.



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As the nation struggled to recover from a deep and lengthy recession, recently laid-off workers jostled the long-term unemployed at a crowded job fair in San Francisco. Sociologists use a variety of approaches to assess the full impact of economic change on society.

- Ending federal prohibition against accepting volunteer responders, especially when the scope of the disaster grows greater.

Tragically, many Katrina victims had relocated to Houston, where they then had to be sheltered again after Harvey struck in 2017, but they often expressed the realization that disaster response had improved. However, just a month later the slow response in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria on Puerto Rico, with most of the island left without clean water, power, or cell phone service for weeks, left many scholars looking for still further ways to improve both disaster preparedness and response (Carey 2017; Philips 2017).

Throughout this textbook, you will see how sociologists develop theories and conduct research to study and better understand societies. And you will be encouraged to use your sociological imagination to examine the United States (and other societies) from the viewpoint of a respectful but questioning outsider.

## ■ Sociology and Common Sense

Sociology focuses on the study of human behavior. Yet we all have experience with human behavior and at least some knowledge of it. All of us might well have theories about why people become homeless, for example. Our theories and opinions typically come from common sense—that is, from our experiences and conversations, from what we read, from what we see on television, and so forth.

In our daily lives, we rely on common sense to get us through many unfamiliar situations. However, this commonsense knowledge, while sometimes accurate, is not always reliable because it rests on commonly held beliefs rather than on systematic analysis of facts. It was once considered common sense to accept that the earth was flat—a view rightly questioned by Pythagoras and Aristotle. Incorrect commonsense notions are not just a part of the distant past; they remain with us today.

Contrary to the common notion that women tend to be chatty compared to men, for instance, researchers have found little difference between the sexes in terms of their talkativeness. Over a five-year period they placed unobtrusive microphones on 396 college students in various fields, at campuses in Mexico as well as the United States. They found that both men and women spoke about 16,000 words per day (Mehl et al. 2007).

Similarly, common sense tells us that today, violent crime holds communities on the border between the United States and Mexico in a kind of death grip, creating an atmosphere of lawlessness reminiscent of the old Wild West. Based on televised news stories and on concerns expressed by elected officials throughout the southwestern United States, this assertion may sound reasonable; however, it is not true. Although some communities in Mexico have fallen under the control of drug cartels, the story is different on the U.S. side of the border. All available crime data—including murder, extortion, robbery, and kidnapping rates, whether reported or documented in victim surveys—show that in the hundred-mile-deep border area stretching from San Diego to Brownsville, Texas, crime rates are significantly lower than in

similar U.S. cities outside the area. Furthermore, the crime rate has been dropping faster near the border than in other similar-size U.S. communities for at least the last 15 years (Gillum 2011; Gomez et al. 2011).

Like other social scientists, sociologists do not accept something as a fact because “everyone knows it.” Instead, each piece of information must be tested and recorded, then analyzed in relation to other data. Sociologists rely on scientific studies in order to describe and understand a social environment. At times, the findings of sociologists may seem like common sense, because they deal with familiar facets of everyday life. The difference is that such findings have been *tested* by researchers. Common sense now tells us that the earth is round, but this particular commonsense notion is based on centuries of scientific work that began with the breakthroughs made by Pythagoras and Aristotle.

## ■ What Is Sociological Theory?

Why do people die by suicide? One traditional commonsense answer is that people inherit the desire to kill themselves. Another view is that sunspots drive people to take their lives. These explanations may not seem especially convincing to contemporary researchers, but they represent beliefs widely held as recently as 1900.

Sociologists are not particularly interested in why any one individual dies by suicide; they are more concerned with identifying the social forces that systematically cause some people to take their own lives. In order to undertake this research, sociologists develop a theory that offers a general explanation of suicidal behavior.

We can think of theories as attempts to explain events, forces, materials, ideas, or behavior in a comprehensive manner. In sociology, a **theory** is a set of statements that seeks to explain problems, actions, or behavior. An effective theory may have both explanatory and predictive power. That is, it can help us to see the relationships among seemingly isolated phenomena, as well as to understand how one type of change in an environment leads to other changes.

The World Health Organization (2010) estimates that almost a million people die from suicide every year. More than a hundred years ago, a sociologist tried to look at suicide data scientifically. Émile Durkheim ([1897] 1951) developed a highly original theory about the relationship between suicide and social factors. Durkheim was primarily concerned not with the personalities of individual suicide victims, but rather with suicide rates and how they varied from country to country. As a result, when he looked at the number of reported suicides in France, England, and Denmark in 1869, he also noted the total population of each country in order to determine the rate of suicide in each nation. He found that whereas England had only 67 reported suicides per million inhabitants, France had 135 per million and Denmark had 277 per million. The question then became “Why did Denmark have a comparatively high rate of reported suicide?”

Durkheim went much deeper into his investigation of suicide rates. The result was his landmark work *Suicide*, published in 1897. Durkheim refused to accept unproved explanations

regarding suicide, including the beliefs that inherited tendencies or cosmic forces caused such deaths. Instead, he focused on social factors, such as the cohesiveness or lack of cohesiveness of religious, social, and occupational groups.

Durkheim's research suggested that suicide, although it is a solitary act, is related to group life. He found that people without religious affiliations had a higher suicide rate than those who were affiliated; the unmarried had much higher rates than married people; and soldiers had a higher rate than civilians. In addition, there seemed to be higher rates of suicide in times of peace than in times of war and revolution, and in times of economic instability and recession rather than in times of prosperity. Durkheim concluded that the suicide rates of a society reflected the extent to which people were or were not integrated into the group life of the society.



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Émile Durkheim, like many other social scientists, developed a theory to explain how individual behavior can be understood within a social context. He pointed out the influence of groups and societal forces on what had always been viewed as a highly personal act. Clearly, Durkheim offered a more *scientific* explanation for the causes of suicide than that of inherited tendencies or sun-spots. His theory has predictive power, since it suggests that suicide rates will rise or fall in conjunction with certain social and economic changes.

Of course, a theory—even the best of theories—is not a final statement about human behavior. Durkheim's theory of suicide is no exception. Sociologists continue to examine factors that contribute to differences in suicide rates around the world and to a particular society's rate of suicide. In Las Vegas, for example, sociologists have observed that the chances of dying by suicide are strikingly high—twice as high as in the United States as a whole. Noting Durkheim's emphasis on the relationship between suicide and social isolation, researchers have suggested that Las Vegas's rapid growth and constant influx of tourists have undermined the community's sense of permanence, even among longtime residents. Although gambling—or more accurately, losing while gambling—may seem a likely precipitating factor in suicides there, careful study of the data has allowed researchers to dismiss that explanation. What happens in Vegas may stay in Vegas, but the sense of community cohesiveness that the rest of the country enjoys may be lacking (Wray et al. 2008, 2011).



### use your **sociological imagination**

If you were Durkheim's successor in his research on suicide, how would you investigate the factors that may explain the increase in suicide rates among people age 55 and older in the United States today?

## MODULE 1 | Recap and Review

### Summary

**Sociology** is the scientific study of social behavior and human groups. In this module, we examine the nature of sociological theory and the work of some of the founders of the discipline.

1. The **sociological imagination** is an awareness of the relationship between an individual and the wider society. It is based on the ability to view our own society as an outsider might, rather than from the perspective of our limited experiences and cultural biases.
2. In contrast to other **social sciences**, sociology emphasizes the influence that groups can have on people's behavior and attitudes and the ways in which people shape society.
3. Knowledge that relies on common sense is not always reliable. Sociologists must test and analyze each piece of information they use.
4. Sociologists employ **theories** to examine relationships between observations or data that may seem completely unrelated.

### Thinking Critically

1. How might sociology approach an issue such as gun control differently from the way economics or political science would study the same issue?
2. What aspects of the social and work environment in a fast-food restaurant would be of particular interest to a sociologist? How would the sociological imagination help in analyzing the topic?
3. Think about the sociologists profiled in this module, Mills and Durkheim. Whose work seems most relevant to today's social problems? Why did you choose that thinker, and which social problems were you thinking of?

### Key Terms

Natural science  
Science  
Social science

Sociological imagination  
Sociology  
Theory



People have always been curious about sociological matters—how we get along with others, what we do for a living, whom we select as our leaders. Philosophers and religious authorities of ancient and medieval societies made countless observations about human behavior. They did not test or verify those observations scientifically; nevertheless, their observations often became the foundation for moral codes. Several of these early social philosophers correctly predicted that a systematic study of human behavior would emerge one day. Beginning in the 19th century, European theorists made pioneering contributions to the development of a science of human behavior.

## Early Thinkers

### Auguste Comte

The 19th century was an unsettling time in France. The French monarchy had been deposed in the revolution of 1789, and Napoleon had suffered defeat in his effort to conquer Europe. Amid this chaos, philosophers considered how society might be improved. Auguste Comte (1798–1857), credited with being the most influential of the philosophers of the early 1800s, believed that a theoretical science of society and a systematic investigation of behavior were needed to improve society. He coined the term *sociology* to apply to the science of human behavior.

Writing in the 1800s, Comte feared that the excesses of the French Revolution had permanently impaired France’s stability. Yet he hoped that the systematic study of social behavior would eventually lead to more rational human interactions. In Comte’s hierarchy of the sciences, sociology was at the top. He called it the “queen,” and its practitioners “scientist-priests.” This French theorist did not simply give sociology its name; he presented a rather ambitious challenge to the fledgling discipline.

### Harriet Martineau

Scholars learned of Comte’s works largely through translations by the English sociologist Harriet Martineau (1802–1876). But Martineau was a pathbreaker in her own right: she offered insightful observations of the customs and social practices of both her native Britain and the United States. Martineau’s book *Society in America* ([1837] 1962) examined religion, politics, child rearing, and immigration in the young nation. It gave special attention to social class distinctions and to such factors as gender and race. Martineau ([1838] 1989) also wrote the first book on sociological methods.

Martineau’s writings emphasized the impact that the economy, law, trade, health, and population could have on social problems. She spoke out in favor of the rights of women, the emancipation of slaves, and religious tolerance. Later in life, deafness did not keep her from being an activist. In Martineau’s ([1837] 1962) view, intellectuals and scholars should not simply offer observations of social conditions; they should *act* on their convictions in a manner that will benefit society. That is why



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Harriet Martineau, an early pioneer of sociology who studied social behavior both in her native England and in the United States. Martineau proposed some of the methods still used by sociologists, including systematic observation.

Martineau conducted research on the nature of female employment and pointed to the need for further investigation of the issue (Deegan 2003; Hill and Hoecker-Drysdale 2001).

### Herbert Spencer

Another important early contributor to the discipline of sociology was Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). A relatively prosperous Victorian Englishman, Spencer (unlike Martineau) did not feel compelled to correct or improve society; instead, he merely hoped to understand it better. Drawing on Charles Darwin’s study *On the Origin of Species*, Spencer applied the concept of evolution of the species to societies in order to explain how they change, or evolve, over time. Similarly, he adapted Darwin’s evolutionary view of the “survival of the fittest” by arguing that it is “natural” that some people are rich while others are poor.

Spencer’s approach to societal change was extremely popular in his lifetime. Unlike Comte, Spencer suggested that since societies are bound to change eventually, one need not be highly critical

of present social arrangements or work actively for social change. This viewpoint appealed to many influential people in England and the United States who had a vested interest in the status quo and were suspicious of social thinkers who endorsed change.

## ■ Émile Durkheim

Émile Durkheim made many pioneering contributions to sociology, including his important theoretical work on suicide. The son of a rabbi, Durkheim (1858–1917) was educated in both France and Germany. He established an impressive academic reputation and was appointed one of the first professors of sociology in France. Above all, Durkheim will be remembered for his insistence that behavior must be understood within a larger social context, not just in individualistic terms.

To give one example of this emphasis, Durkheim ([1912] 2001) developed a fundamental thesis to help explain all forms of society. Through intensive study of the Arunta, an Australian tribe, he focused on the functions that religion performed and underscored the role of group life in defining what we consider to be religion. Durkheim concluded that like other forms of group behavior, religion reinforces a group's solidarity.

Another of Durkheim's main interests was the consequences of work in modern societies. In his view, the growing division of labor in industrial societies, as workers became much more specialized in their tasks, led to what he called "anomie." **Anomie** refers to the loss of direction felt in a society when social control of individual behavior has become ineffective. Often, the state of anomie occurs during a time of profound social change, when people have lost their sense of purpose or direction. In a period of anomie, people are so confused and unable to cope with the new social environment that they may resort to death by suicide.

Durkheim was concerned about the dangers that alienation, loneliness, and isolation might pose for modern industrial societies.

He shared Comte's belief that sociology should provide direction for social change. As a result, he advocated the creation of new social groups—mediators between the individual's family and the state—that would provide a sense of belonging for members of huge, impersonal societies. Unions would be an example of such groups.

Like many other sociologists, Durkheim did not limit his interests to one aspect of social behavior. Later in this book we will consider his thinking on crime and punishment, religion, and the workplace. Few sociologists have had such a dramatic impact on so many different areas within the discipline.

## ■ Max Weber

Another important early theorist was Max Weber (pronounced VAY-ber). Born in Germany, Weber (1864–1920) studied legal and economic history, but gradually developed an interest in sociology. Eventually, he became a professor at various German universities. Weber taught his students that they should employ *verstehen* (pronounced fair-SHTAY-en), the German word for "understanding" or "insight," in their intellectual work. He pointed out that we cannot analyze our social behavior by the same type of objective criteria we use to measure weight or temperature. To fully comprehend behavior, we must learn the subjective meanings people attach to their actions—how they themselves view and explain their behavior.

For example, suppose that a sociologist was studying the social ranking of individuals in a fraternity. Weber would expect the researcher to employ *verstehen* to determine the significance of the fraternity's social hierarchy for its members. The researcher might examine the effects of athleticism or grades or social skills or seniority on standing within the fraternity. He or she would seek to learn how the fraternity members relate to other members of higher or lower status. While investigating these questions, the researcher would take into account people's emotions, thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes (L. Coser 1977).

We also owe credit to Weber for a key conceptual tool: the ideal type. An **ideal type** is a construct or model for evaluating specific cases. In his works, Weber identified various characteristics of bureaucracy as an ideal type (discussed in detail in Chapter 5). In presenting this model of bureaucracy, Weber was not describing any particular organization, nor was he using the term *ideal* in a way that suggested a positive evaluation. Instead, his purpose was to provide a useful standard for measuring how bureaucratic an actual organization is (Gerth and Mills 1958). Later in this book, we will use the concept of *ideal type* to study the family, religion, authority, and economic systems, as well as to analyze bureaucracy.

Although their professional careers coincided, Émile Durkheim and Max Weber never met and probably were unaware of each other's existence, let alone ideas. Such was not true of the work of Karl Marx. Durkheim's



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