



This book is offered to teachers of sociology in the hope that it will help our students understand their place in today's society and in tomorrow's world.

John J. Macdonald



Sociology

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Gender and Eating Disorders: A Report from Fiji
The Lingering Effects of China’s One-Child Policy

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Can People Lie with Statistics
The Bell Curve Debate: Are Rich People Really Smarter?

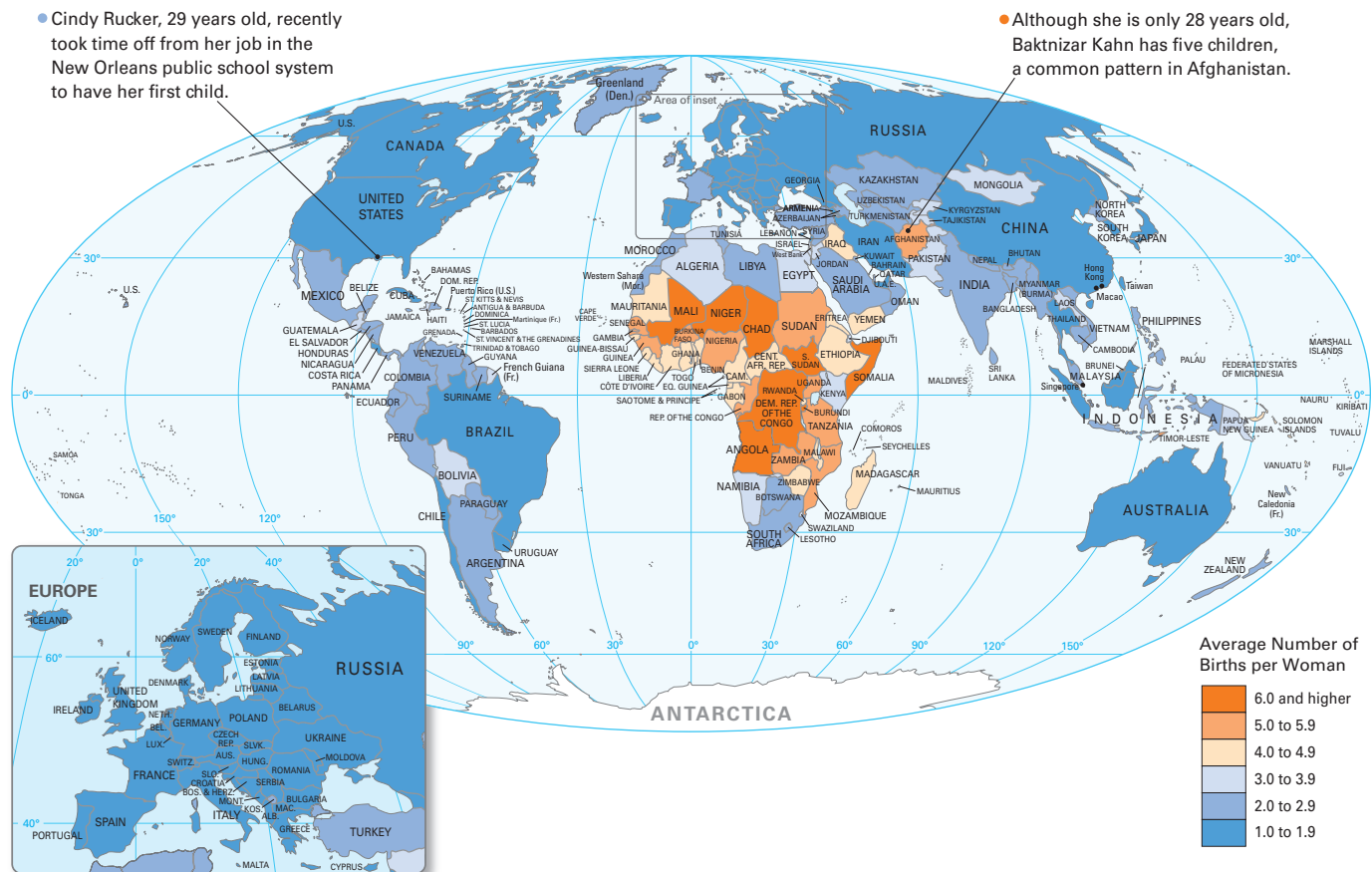
The Market: Does the “Invisible Hand” Lift Us Up or Pick Our Pockets?
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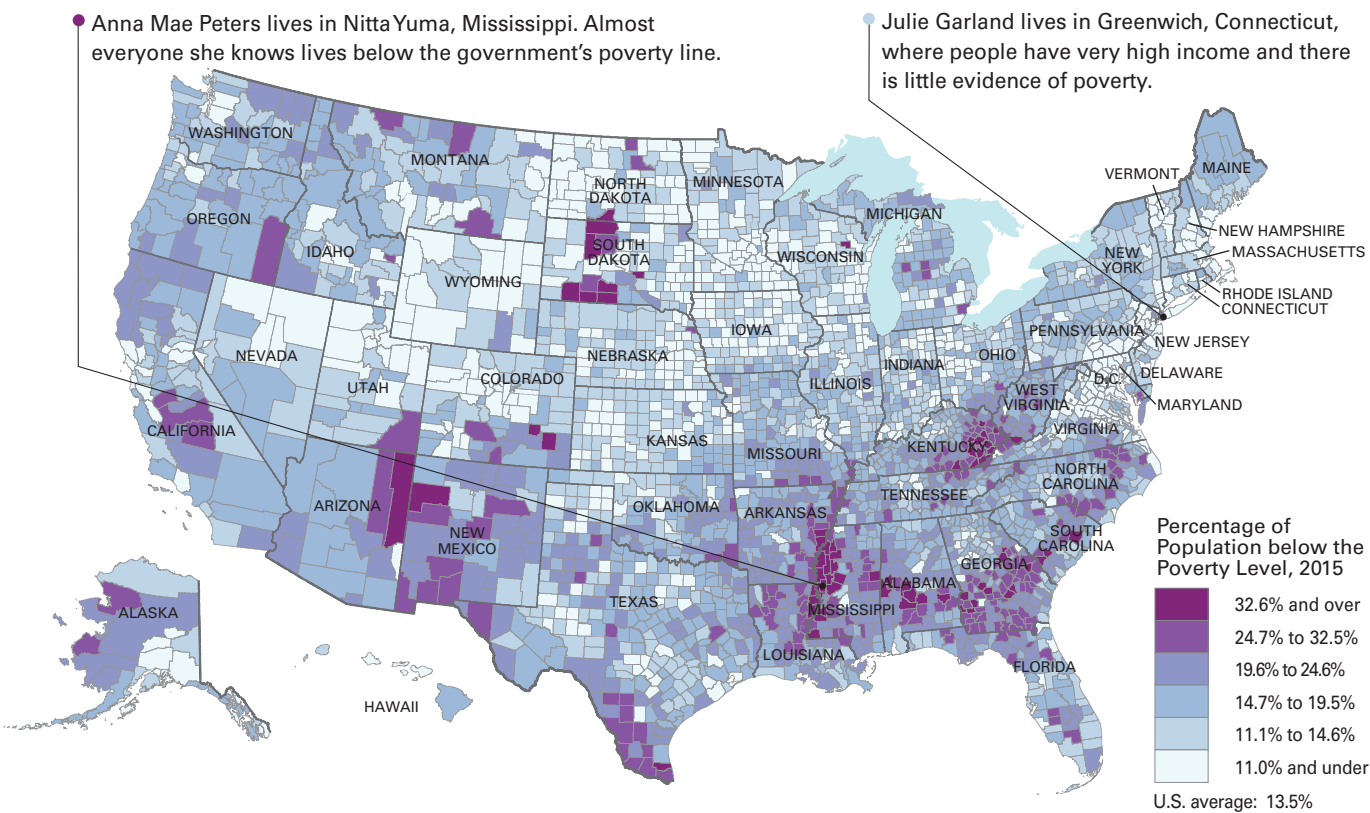
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Preface

Wow, what a difference a couple of years make. Never before in my lifetime (and I have been around the block more times than I care to admit) has there been so much debate and outright disagreement about the state of our society. People are lining up on one side or another regarding immigration, climate change, jobs, the role of government, health care, terrorism, foreign threats to democracy, reproductive rights, and the high cost of higher education.

If consensus seems elusive, keep in mind that even the idea of *truth* is under attack, with people disagreeing not only over the facts but also whether there is such a thing as objective truth and real news. Many of us feel angry, afraid, and overwhelmed.

In such a situation, what are we to do? To answer this question, we might turn for inspiration to the wisdom offered more than sixty years ago by C. Wright Mills. When we feel our lives spinning out of control, when we are caught up in changes and challenges that threaten to overwhelm us, Mills suggested that we recognize that our personal problems are rooted in social forces that are bigger than we are. By turning out attention to larger social patterns—in short, by making use of the sociological imagination—we gain a deeper understanding of what’s really going on and why. Using the sociological perspective, we draw insight and also gain power because we are now confronting the source of our distress. Focusing on how society operates, we are able to join together with others to change society and, in the process, we transform ourselves.

For more than 150 years, sociologists have been working to better understand how society operates. As sociologists, we do not arrogantly imagine that we have *all* the answers, but we are confident that we have learned quite a lot that we can share with others.

To our students, we offer an introduction to the fascinating and very practical study of the social world. Our invitation is to learn what we have learned and consider appropriate paths of action. After all, as we come to know our world we have the responsibility to do all we can to improve it.

Sociology, Seventeenth Edition, provides you with comprehensive understanding of how this world works. You will find this book to be informative, engaging, and even entertaining. Before you have finished the first chapter, you will discover that sociology is both enlightening and useful, and it is also a great deal of fun. *Sociology is a field of study that can change the way you see the world and open the door to many new opportunities.* What could be more exciting than that?

What’s New in This Edition

Here’s a quick summary of the new material found throughout *Sociology, Seventeenth Edition*.

- **A new chapter on social media.** Who can doubt that social media has changed our way of life? *Sociology, Seventeenth Edition*, now has the discipline’s first full chapter on the evolution of mass media with major emphasis on the recent development of social media and how social media has reshaped society.
- **Currency!** Examples are new in every chapter, from the 2016 presidential election and its aftermath to terrorism and international conflicts around the world in 2017. In addition, the scholarship is as current as possible—more than 850 new research citations are found in this revised edition! The photo and art programs have also been thoroughly reviewed and updated.
- **Updated Power of Society figures.** If you could teach your students only one thing in the introductory course, what would it be? Most instructors would probably answer, “to understand the power of society to shape people’s lives.” Each chapter begins with a Power of Society figure that does exactly that—forcing students to give up some of their cultural common sense that points to the importance of “personal choice” by showing them evidence of how society shapes our major life decisions. These figures have been updated for this edition, and the Revel electronic content provides additional data and analysis of the issue.
- **More scholarship dealing with race, class, and gender.** Just as this revision focuses on patterns that apply to all of U.S. society, it also highlights dimensions of social difference. This diversity focus includes more analysis of race, class, and gender throughout the text, including new scholarship. Other dimensions of difference include transgender and disability issues. “Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender” boxed features highlight specific diversity issues, and “Seeing Ourselves” national maps show social patterns in terms of geography, highlighting rural-urban and regional differences.
- This revision has all the **most recent data** on income, wealth, poverty, education, employment, and other important issues. *Sociology, Seventeenth Edition*, also explores the 2016 presidential election and how the Trump

administration has reshaped the national agenda on a host of issues, including immigration, climate change, health care, and tax policy.

Finally, *Sociology* includes many rich, interactive features that expand key themes. These interactive elements include the following types:

- **In Greater Depth.** These items accompany the Power of Society figure that begins each chapter. Each item provides deeper analysis using one or more additional variables to deepen students' understanding of an issue.
- **A Global Perspective.** These items provide international contrasts. In some cases, they highlight differences between high- and low-income nations. In other cases, they highlight differences between the United States and other high-income countries.
- **Diversity.** These items expand the focus on race, class, gender, and other dimensions of difference within the U.S. population.
- **Surveys.** These items ask students timely questions about policy and politics. Students are asked what they think, and they are able to assess their own attitudes against those of various populations.
- **Sociology in the Media.** The author suggests short, high-quality videos that are readily available on the Internet and current articles on sociological topics from respected publications.
- **Readings.** Short, primary-source readings by notable sociologists are provided to allow students to engage directly with analysts and researchers.
- **In Review.** Engaging "drag and drop" interactives offer a quick review of the insights gained by applying sociological theories to the issue at hand.

Here is a brief summary of some of the material that is new, chapter by chapter:

Chapter 1: The Sociological Perspective

The updated Power of Society figure shows how race, schooling, and age guide people's choice of marriage partners. The revised chapter contains more on social media and highlights the latest on same-sex marriage, including change following the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling. Find updates on suicide rates by race and gender; college graduation in global perspective; the link between college and family income; the number of children born to women in nations around the world; the number of high-, middle-, and low-income nations; and the changing share of minorities in major sports. As in every chapter, the photography program has been substantially revised and updated, with all captions written by the author. Nineteen new research references inform the revised chapter.

Chapter 2: Sociological Investigation

The updated Power of Society figure demonstrates how race shapes young men's odds of going to college or ending up in prison. The revised chapter contains new data on the number of multiracial people, how survey format shapes public response about various social problems, economic inequality, and the extent of extramarital relationships. As in every chapter, Revel provides numerous interactive learning items, all written by the author. Seventeen new research references support the revised chapter.

Chapter 3: Culture

The updated Power of Society figure contrasts high- and low-income nations in popular support for access to abortion. The discussion of cultural values has been revised and expanded. There is a new discussion of the diversity of cultural values throughout the U.S. population. The revised chapter has updates on popular culture, the income and wealth of the Asian American, Hispanic American, and African American communities; debate involving terrorism and cultural differences; new data on the number of languages spoken as a measure of this country's cultural diversity; the declining number of languages spoken around the world; the extent of global illiteracy; patterns of immigration; the debate over official English; the life goals for people entering college; the latest symbols used in texting language; and the share of all web pages written in English. Thirty-two new research citations support the revision of this chapter.

Chapter 4: Society

The updated Power of Society figure shows the expanding use of social networking sites over time throughout the U.S. population. The revised chapter has new facts and updates on social media, the extent of computer use, the growing list of rock stars who have taken their own lives, and various other measures of modernity. An increasing amount of popular culture has been incorporated into the discussions of classical theory. Nine new research citations support the revision of this chapter.

Chapter 5: Socialization

The updated Power of Society figure shows that class guides use of the mass media, documenting that people without a high school diploma spend much more time watching television than people with a college degree. There is heavily revised and expanded discussion of the issue of television and violence. Find the latest on the share of people who claim to be multiracial, time spent watching television and using smartphones, the share of households with televisions and computers, the television preferences of people voting Democratic and Republican in the 2016 presidential election, the demographic dominance of the millennial generation, and the share of the world's children who work for

income. Twenty new research citations support the revision of this chapter.

Chapter 6: Social Interaction in Everyday Life

The updated Power of Society figure shows how age guides the extent of networking via social media. The discussion of reality building addresses how films expand people's awareness of the challenges of living with various disabilities. The revised chapter has updates on use of networking sites by age in the United States, new statistics on the use of Facebook and Twitter around the world, the consequences of smartphone technology for everyday life, the share of married women in the United States who keep their last name, and some new and timely examples of jokes. Ten new research citations support this revised chapter.

NEW Chapter 7: Mass Media and Social Media

This **completely new chapter** on an important new dimension of social life has been added to *Sociology, Seventeenth Edition*. The Power of Society figure reveals how gender shapes people's choice of social-networking sites. The chapter-opening story explains how social media was instrumental in launching the Black Lives Matter movement. The chapter begins by differentiating mass media and social media and then explores media bias (including the role of media in the 2016 presidential election) and highlights the need for media literacy. The chapter traces the development of mass media, including newspapers, radio, and television, and describes some of the ways television and other mass media changes society. Then the chapter explores the emergence of interactive social media in the computer age and provides analysis of how social media affect individuals, including the development of self-image, our capacity for empathy, our tendency toward conformity, and individual attention span. There are also discussions of cyber-bullying and the risks of social media addiction. The chapter explores the effects of social media on relationships, including parenting and predatory behavior with additional analysis of social media's role in dating and the advantages and dangers of dating sites. Most broadly, social media also shape culture, affect the workplace, and shape politics. Finally, the chapter gains insights by applying sociology's major theoretical approaches to social media. The chapter includes a host of new maps, Revel interactive content, learning assessments, and writing assignments. More than sixty new research references inform this new chapter.

Chapter 8: Groups and Organizations

Following coverage of "leadership," there is a new discussion about "followers." There is a new National Map showing the extent of internet access for county populations across the United States. The updated Power of Society figure shows how class affects organizational affiliations. The revised chapter has updates on the size and global scope of

McDonald's, the increasing extent of Internet use around the world, the erosion of personal privacy, some of the fallout of the 2016 presidential election, the number of political incumbents who won reelection in 2016, the disproportionate share of managerial positions held by white males, and the increasing presence of computers in the U.S. workplace and camera in public places. More than twenty new references support this revised chapter.

Chapter 9: Sexuality and Society

The updated Power of Society figure tracks the trend toward the acceptance of same-sex marriage over time. There is new discussion of epigenetic theory of sexual orientation and also new discussion of the high risk of suicide among transgender people. Find updates on contraceptive use in global perspective, rates of teenage pregnancy across the country, the latest data on the share of high school students who report having had sexual intercourse, the latest research on sexual attraction and sexual identity, the extent of rape and "acquaintance rape" across the United States, and the increasing size of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. More than thirty new research citations have guided the revision of this chapter.

Chapter 10: Deviance

The updated Power of Society figure shows how race places some categories of the U.S. population at much higher risk of being incarcerated for a drug offense. Find the latest statistical information on the extent of gambling as well as legal marijuana use across the United States; the increasing number of states banning text messaging while driving; recent research on the cost of incarceration; the share of white-collar criminals who end up in jail; mining deaths as a reflection of corporate crime; and the number of serious crimes recorded for 2015. There is analysis of patterns of arrest for "person crimes" and "property crimes" by age, sex, race, and ethnicity for 2015. Attention is also given to the decreasing gender gap in crime rates. The chapter updates the number of police in the United States and the number of people in prison; it provides a statistically based exploration of the use of the death penalty and highlights recent legal challenges and changes to capital punishment laws. There is updated discussion of the gun control controversy and expanded discussion of U.S. crime rates in global context. Finally, there is greater attention paid to the increasing number of people who are incarcerated in the United States. Examples used to illustrate concepts have been updated with recent events. More than thirty-five new research references inform this revised chapter.

Chapter 11: Social Stratification

The updated Power of Society figure compares two communities in Florida—one affluent and one economically struggling—and finds striking effects of class on life expectancy. The

revised chapter has numerous updates on social inequality in Russia, China, and South Africa, and on the extent of economic inequality in selected nations around the world. The photo program has been refreshed. More than twenty new research citations reflect the content found in this revised chapter.

Chapter 12: Social Class in the United States

The updated Power of Society figure shows how race and ethnicity set the odds that a child in the United States will live in poverty. The revised chapter has the latest data for all measures of economic inequality in the United States, including income and wealth, the economic assets of the richest U.S. families, and the educational achievement of various categories of the population. The chapter has the most recent economic trends since the beginning of the recession in 2008. New data show the differences in life expectancy between the top-earning people in the country and those who make the least, the declining share of young people who grow up to earn more than their parents, the racial gap in home ownership, the odds of completing a four-year college degree for people at various class levels, and the latest in patterns of social mobility over time. There is updated discussion of the American dream in an age of economic recession as well as the increasing social segregation experienced by low-income families. There are 2015 data on the extent of poverty, the number of working poor, changes in the minimum wage, the rise in income inequality, and how poverty interacts with age, sex, race, and ethnicity. Forty-five new research citations support the revision of this chapter.

Chapter 13: Global Stratification

The updated Power of Society figure shows how the nation into which a person is born sets the odds of surviving to the age of five. The chapter has updates on the extent of global poverty, declining infant mortality in the world, garment factory work in Bangladesh, the distribution of global income and wealth, the average income for the world as a whole, the number and updated social profile of nations at different levels of development, the latest UN data on quality of life in various regions of the world, and the most recent data on global debt. Current data illuminate economic trends in various regions of the world and confirm the increasing economic gap between the highest- and lowest-income nations. There are updates on wealth and well-being in selected nations at each level of economic development and also on patterns of slavery in the world. Finally, find updated discussion of the extent of slavery in the world. Thirty-eight new research citations support the revision of this chapter.

Chapter 14: Gender Stratification

The updated Power of Society figure shows how gender shapes people's goals and ambitions. The revised chapter includes updates on life expectancy for U.S. women and

men; the share of degrees earned by each sex in various fields of study; the share of U.S. women and men in the labor force, the share working full-time, and the share in many sex-typed occupations; the closing pay gap among well-known entertainers of both sexes; the share of large corporations with women in leadership positions; the number of small businesses owned by women; unemployment rates for women and men; and the latest data on income and wealth by gender. Find the latest global rankings of nations in terms of gender equality. There are also new data on the share of the richest people in the country who are women. There are the most recent statistics on women in political leadership positions reflecting the 2016 elections, the latest data on women in the military, and updated discussion of violence against women and men. The coverage of intersection theory reflects the most recent income data. This revised chapter reflects the content of sixty-three new research sources.

Chapter 15: Race and Ethnicity

The updated Power of Society figure explores the importance of race and ethnicity in the 2016 presidential election. Find updates on the share and size of all racial and ethnic categories of the U.S. population; the increasing number of biracial people in this country; the share of households in which members speak a language other than English at home; the share of U.S. marriages that are interracial; the number of American Indian and Alaskan Native nations and tribal groups; and the income levels and poverty rates, extent of schooling, and average age for all major racial and ethnic categories of the U.S. population. The chapter now includes expanded coverage of immigration plus discussion of controversial police violence against African Americans updated right into 2017. New discussion highlights trends, including the increasing share of American Indians who claim to be of mixed racial background and the increasing share of African Americans who are within the middle class. Forty new research studies have guided the revision of this chapter.

Chapter 16: Aging and the Elderly

The revised Power of Society figure shows how gender shapes the process of caregiving for older people in the United States. The chapter has the latest data on the share of U.S. adults without any retirement savings, the latest on life expectancy and the gradual "graying" of the U.S. population, and the effect of class and race on how elderly people assess their health. Included are the latest figures on the income, wealth, and poverty rates of people in various age categories throughout the life course. There is also updated discussion of who provides care for aging parents, the extent of elder abuse, and the extent of physician-assisted suicide. Forty-four new research studies were consulted in the revision of this chapter.

Chapter 17: The Economy and Work

The updated Power of Society figure demonstrates how race and ethnicity guide the type of work people do. The revised chapter has updates on the increasing size of Walmart; the share of economic output in the private and public sectors for the United States and for other nations; the share of the U.S. population by race and ethnicity in the labor force; and the latest on the share of public and private sector workers in a union as well as the recent political controversy involving public service unions. There is updated discussion of the debate concerning “right-to-work” laws and an updated National Map shows which states have—and have not—enacted such laws. The latest on nations of the world that have moved toward socialism is included. There are new data indicating the share of women and men who are self-employed. The most recent data on union membership are included. The discussion of unemployment now points out the increasing problem of extended unemployment with updated discussion of the “jobless recovery.” Seventy-five new research references support the revision of this chapter.

Chapter 18: Politics and Government

The updated Power of Society figure shows the effect of age on voting preferences, revealing that people younger than age thirty were critical to the outcome of recent presidential elections, including the 2016 contest. A new chapter-opening story highlights the lack of public confidence in the political leadership of the United States. There is new coverage of the wealth of President Trump and members of his cabinet. Find updated discussion and analysis of the changing political landscape in regions around the world, including the war in Syria that has resulted in millions of refugees seeking protection in neighboring countries and in Europe. The revised chapter has updates on the number of people employed in government; the cost of operating the government; voter turnout and voter preferences involving race, ethnicity, and gender in the 2012 and 2016 elections; the number of lobbyists and political action committees in the country; the latest on the number of people barred from voting based on a criminal conviction; recent political trends involving college students; new data on the declining level of political freedom in the world; the latest data on the extent of terrorism and casualties resulting from such conflict; the latest nuclear disarmament negotiations, recent changes in nuclear proliferation, and changing support for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) as a peacekeeping policy; and the latest data on global and U.S. military spending as well as expanding opportunities for women in the U.S. military. There is expanded and updated discussion of the importance of income inequality as an issue in U.S. politics and updated discussion of the importance of “swing states” and how the Electoral College

may discourage voter turnout in most states. The “Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life” photo essay has been heavily revised. Nearly fifty new research citations have guided the revision of this chapter.

Chapter 19: Families

The updated Power of Society figure shows the effect of class on the likelihood that marriage will endure, documenting longer-term marriages among more socially privileged people and shorter-term marriages among disadvantaged people. There is updated discussion of the importance of grandparents in the process of childrearing, the experience of loneliness and families in later life, and the trend of moving in with relatives as a strategy to cut living expenses during the current recession. An updated National Map shows the divorce rate for states across the country. The revised chapter has updates on the number of U.S. households and families; the share of young women in low-income countries who marry before the age of eighteen; the cost of raising a child for parents at various class levels; the share of youngsters in the United States who are “latchkey kids”; the income gap that separates Hispanic and African American families from non-Hispanic white families; the rising average age at first marriage; the incidence of court-ordered child support and the frequency of nonpayment; and the rate of domestic violence against women and also children. Data for 2017 show the number of nations that permit same-sex marriage and recent political change in the United States leading up to the 2015 Supreme Court decision guaranteeing the right to same-sex marriage. There are also new data showing how income affects marital and family patterns, the increasing share of U.S. adults living alone, the child care arrangements for working mothers with young children, the relative frequency of various types of interracial marriage, and the divorce rate for people at various stages of life. Forty-four new research citations indicate the extent of updating in this revised chapter.

Chapter 20: Religion

The updated Power of Society figure shows how religious affiliation—or the lack of it—is linked to traditional or progressive family values. The revised chapter has updates on religiosity in the United States, and specifies the populations identifying with all world religions. The latest data show the extent of religious belief in the United States as well as the share of people favoring various denominations and the increasing share of people that claim no religious affiliation. There is updated discussion of a trend away from religious affiliation among young people and also more discussion of Islam in the United States. New discussion focuses on the origins and controversy surrounding the phrase “In God We Trust” on U.S. currency. There

is expanded discussion of the increasing share of seminary students who are women as well as the secularization debate. There is updated discussion of the use of electronic media to share religious ideas. Twenty-seven new research citations indicate material that informs this revised chapter.

Chapter 21: Education

The updated Power of Society figure shows the importance of race and ethnicity in shaping the opportunity to attend college. The revised chapter has new global data showing the relative academic performance of U.S. children, comparing them to children in Japan and other nations. There are updated statistical profiles of schooling in India, Japan, and other countries. New data identify the share of U.S. adults who have completed high school and college, how income affects access to higher education, and how a college education is linked to earnings later on. There are new statistics on the number of colleges and universities in the United States as well as the financial costs of attending them. The revised chapter includes the latest trends in dropping out of high school, performance on the SAT, high school grade inflation, and the spread of charter and magnet schools. Find the latest data on the gender imbalance on U.S. college and university campuses. More than twenty-five new research citations are found in this revised chapter.

Chapter 22: Health and Medicine

The updated Power of Society figure documents a key health trend—the high rate of obesity among all categories of the U.S. population. The revised chapter has updated discussion of prejudice against people based on body weight and also expanded discussion of body weight issues involving men. There are updates on global patterns of health including improvements in the well-being of young children, the rate of cigarette smoking, the use of smokeless tobacco, and the frequency of illness resulting from tobacco use. The revised chapter presents the latest patterns involving AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, explores the link between impoverished living conditions and lack of medical care demonstrated by the recent Ebola crisis, and tracks the ongoing debate involving euthanasia. The revised chapter reports that the government now pays for most health care in the United States and also explains how people pay the rest of their medical bills. Research reflected in more than forty new citations informs this revised chapter.

Chapter 23: Population, Urbanization, and Environment

The updated Power of Society figure shows that concern for environmental issues, while typically greater in

high-income nations than in low-income nations, remains low in the United States. The chapter has the most recent data on the size of the U.S. population as well as fertility and mortality rates for the United States and for various world regions; new data for infant mortality and life expectancy; new global population projections; and updated coverage of trends in urbanization. Find the latest data on the racial and ethnic populations of the nation's largest cities. A new section gives expanded coverage of social life in rural places. Expanded and updated discussions highlight the state of rural regions in the United States, the increasing global shortage of fresh water, and the declining size of the planet's rain forests. There is new discussion of environmental sexism. This revised chapter contains forty new research citations.

Chapter 24: Collective Behavior and Social Movements

The updated Power of Society figure shows in which nations people are more or less likely to engage in public demonstrations. The revised chapter offers updated examples of crowds, rumors, public opinion, moral panic, and other types of collective behavior. New chapter material illustrates important ideas, with current debates such as the share of political campaign ads that are deceptive, the ongoing conflict in Syria, and 2016 presidential election. The revised chapter highlights the recent controversy over allegedly “fake news,” and the latest data on the share of college students who report being politically active. A dozen new research studies inform this revised chapter.

Chapter 25: Social Change: Traditional, Modern, and Postmodern Societies

The updated Power of Society figure identifies nations in which people look more favorably—and less favorably—on scientific advances. The revised chapter has updates on life expectancy and other demographic changes to U.S. society. The discussion assessing social life in the United States has been reframed by the latest data on the well-being of the U.S. population, identifying trends that are positive and others that are troubling. More than thirty new research studies inform this revised chapter.

Revel™

Revel is an interactive learning environment that deeply engages students and prepares them for class. Media and assessment integrated directly within the authors' narrative lets students read, explore interactive content, and practice in one continuous learning path. Thanks to the dynamic

reading experience in Revel, students come to class prepared to discuss, apply, and learn from instructors and from each other.

Learn more about Revel

<http://www.pearsonhighered.com/revel>

Revel for *Sociology, Seventeenth Edition*

Sociology, Seventeenth Edition, presents a thorough revision of the discipline's leading title in an interactive learning program that is both powerful and enjoyable. As the fully involved author, I have been personally responsible for revising the content, as well as writing the Test Bank and updating the Instructor's Resource Manual. Now, convinced of the ability of computer technology to transform learning, *I have taken personal responsibility for all the content of the interactive Revel learning program*. To ensure the highest level of quality, I have written a series of interactive Social Explorer map exercises, authored all the questions that assess student learning, and personally selected all the readings and short videos that are keyed to each chapter. I have written all this content with two goals—to set the highest standard of quality for the entire learning program and also to ensure that all parts of this program are linked seamlessly and transparently. Even if you are familiar with previous editions of this text, please do your students the favor of reviewing all that is new with *Sociology, Seventeenth Edition*.

Our outstanding learning program has been constructed with care and directed toward both high-quality content and easy and effective operation.

- Each major section of every chapter has a purpose, which is stated simply and clearly in the form of a **Learning Objective**. All the learning objectives are listed on the first screen of each chapter; they guide students through their reading of the chapter, and they appear again as the organizing structure of the **Making the Grade** summary at the chapter's end. These learning objectives also involve a range of cognitive abilities. Some sections of the narrative focus on more basic cognitive skills—such as *remembering* the definitions of key concepts and *understanding* ideas to the point of being able to explain them in one's own words—while others ask students to *compare* and *contrast* theories and *apply* them to specific topics. Questions throughout the narrative provide students with opportunities to engage in *discovery*, *analysis*, and *evaluation*. In addition, **Assessments** tied to primary chapter sections, as well as full chapter exams, allow instructors and students to track progress and get immediate feedback.

Learning Objectives

- 1.1 Apply the sociological perspective to show how society shapes our individual lives.
- 1.2 State several reasons why a global perspective is important in today's world.
- 1.3 Identify the advantages of sociological thinking for developing public policy, for encouraging personal growth, and for advancing in a career.
- 1.4 Link the origins of sociology to historical social changes.
- 1.5 Summarize sociology's major theoretical approaches.
- 1.6 Apply sociology's major theoretical approaches to the topic of sports.

Making the Grade

Chapter 9 Sexuality and Society

◀ Listen to the Audio

Understanding Sexuality

9.1 Describe how sexuality is both a biological and a cultural issue.

Sex is biological, referring to bodily differences between females and males.

Gender is cultural, referring to behavior, power, and privileges a society attaches to being female or male.

Sexuality is a **biological issue**.

- Sex is determined at conception as a male sperm joins a female ovum.
- Males and females have different genitals (*primary sex characteristics*) and bodily development (*secondary sex characteristics*).

Worth 5 Points

A social group is defined as _____.

✗ ☒ a collection of people with the same social traits. > Social groups are casual and can include a wide variety of people. LO 7.1: Explain the importance of various types of groups to social life.

- ☐ people whose social interaction occurs outside of the workplace
- ☐ people who have known each other but interact little, if at all
- ☐ two or more people who identify with and interact with one another

2 attempts remaining

Submit

✗ Incorrect. Try again.

- **Current Events Bulletin** is a new feature showcasing author-written articles, updated or replaced twice each year, that put breaking news and current events into the context of sociology. Each chapter begins with a short

account of a very recent event that will be familiar to students and that is closely tied to the chapter at hand. These include recent movie releases, research reports, election results, and law and policy changes. These articles can also be easily accessed from the instructor’s Resources folder within Revel.

Current Events Bulletin

Interactive

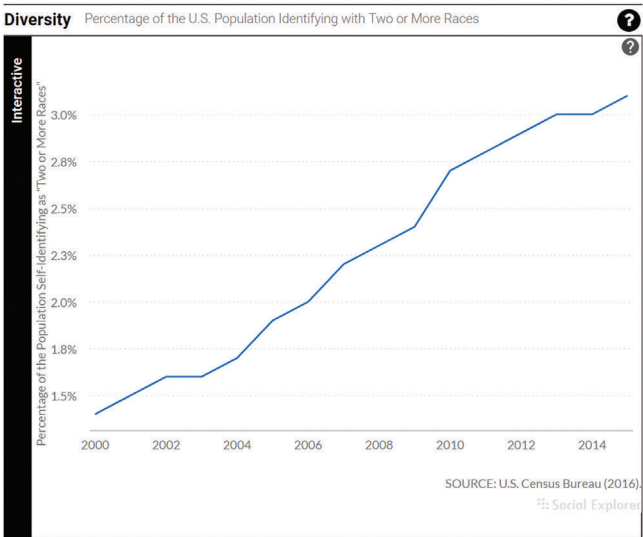
July 2017

Sociological Research

Dr. Ben Carson, who heads the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the Trump Administration, recently described a certain “mind-set” as the major cause of poverty. If you were to take everything from someone who benefits from the “right mind-set,” Carson explained, that person will climb right back out of poverty. By contrast, Carson claimed someone with the “wrong mind-set” could be given everything in the world but would soon slide right back down to the bottom. Carson, a highly successful African American physician and political leader who grew up in poverty, certainly deserves credit for his achievements. But critics were quick to say that, although attitudes and poverty are linked, Carson is wrong to say that attitudes cause poverty. Rather, critics claimed, poverty is the cause of attitudes that discourage people from achieving more. In fact, researchers tell us, being poor actually reduces mental functioning (Badger, 2017). Do you know how to tell which of two related variables is actually causing the other?

Source: Badger, Emily. “Does ‘Wrong Mind-Set’ Lead to Poverty, or Does Poverty Come First?” *The New York Times*. (May 31, 2017):A14.

- **Interactive maps, figures, and tables** feature Social Explorer technology which allows for real-time data updates and rollover information to support the data and show movement over time. PowerPoint presentations with every Social Explorer visualization can be easily accessed from the instructor’s Resources folder within Revel.



We also strive to get students writing.

- First, students will encounter **Journal Prompts** in various places within each chapter, where they’re encouraged to write a response to a short-answer question applying what they’ve just learned.

Journal: Personalizing Race and Ethnicity

At what age did you become aware of the social importance of race and ethnicity? Did any one event trigger this awareness? Describe how your own racial and ethnic identity shaped your life experiences.

The response entered here will appear in the performance dashboard and can be viewed by your instructor.

- A **Shared Discussion** question at the end of each chapter asks students to respond to a question and see responses from their peers on the same question. These discussions—which include moderation tools that must first be enabled by the instructor—offer students an opportunity to interact with each other in the context of their reading.

Worth 20 Points

Explain how the state of the natural environment reflects culture and the organization of society. Draw on ideas and facts from the chapter in support of your argument.

A minimum number of characters is required to post and earn points. After posting, your response can be viewed by your class and instructor, and you can participate in the class discussion.

0 characters | 140 minimum

Post

- Finally, I’ve also written a more comprehensive **Seeing Sociology in *Your Everyday Life*** essay, which serves as the inspiration for a Writing Space activity in Revel. These essays show the “everyday life” relevance of sociology by explaining how the material in the chapter can empower students in their personal and professional lives.

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

Can you spot “gender messages” in the world around you?

Interactive

As this chapter makes clear, gender is one of the basic organizing principles of everyday life. Most of the places we go and most of the activities we engage in as part of our daily routines are “gendered,” meaning that they are defined as either more masculine or more feminine. Understanding this fact, corporations keep gender in mind when they market products to the public. Take a look at the ads shown here. In each case, can you explain how companies use gender to sell these products?

Photo 1

Photo 2

Photo 3

Hint

Seeing Sociology in *Your Everyday Life*
Question 1

Look through some recent magazines and select three advertisements that involve gender. In each case, provide analysis of how gender is used in the ad.

Seeing Sociology in *Your Everyday Life*
Question 2

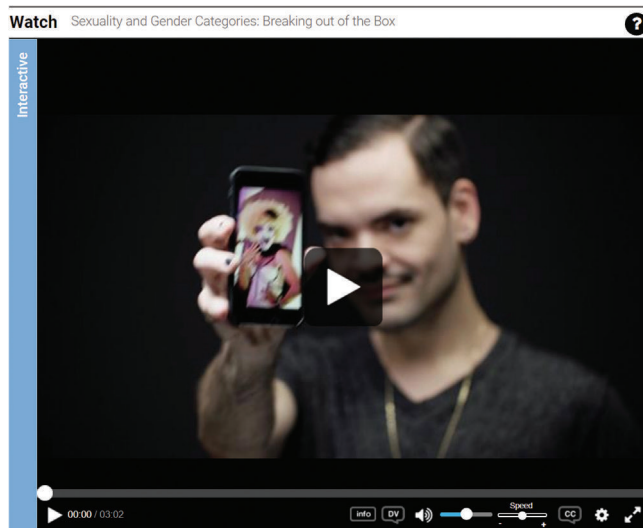
There's More to Discover Online

- **Writing Space** is the best way to develop and assess concept mastery and critical thinking through writing. Writing Space provides a single place within Revel to create, track, and grade writing assignments; access writing resources; and exchange meaningful, personalized feedback quickly and easily to improve results. For students, Writing Space provides everything they need to keep up with writing assignments, access assignment guides and checklists, write or upload completed assignments, and receive grades and feedback—all in one convenient place. For educators, Writing Space makes assigning, receiving, and evaluating writing assignments easier. It's simple to create new assignments and upload relevant materials, see student progress, and receive alerts when students submit work. Writing Space makes students' work more focused and effective, with customized grading rubrics they can see and personalized feedback. Writing Space can also check students' work for improper citation or plagiarism by comparing it against the world's most accurate text comparison database available from Turnitin.

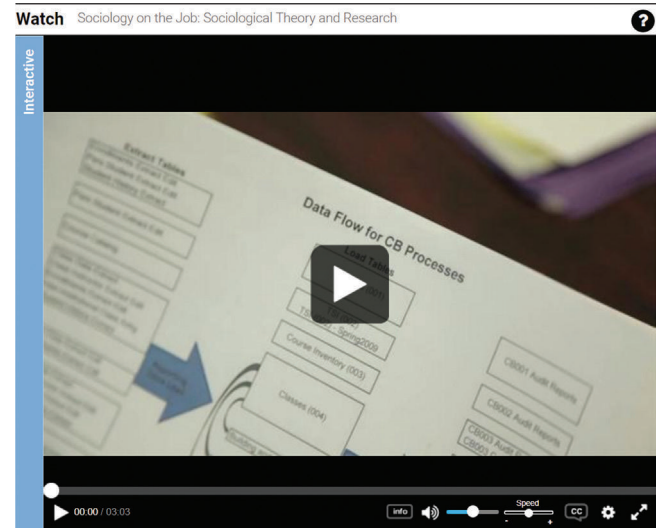
Finally, another key part of the Revel content is our video program.

- The *Pearson Original docuseries videos* highlight stories that exemplify and humanize the concepts covered in Sociology courses. These videos illustrate a variety of social issues and current events, bringing key topics to life for students while creating opportunities to further develop their understanding of sociology. Therefore, students not only connect with the people and stories on a personal level, but also view these stories and individuals with greater empathy all while contextualizing core course concepts.

These videos are incorporated into the chapters and can also be easily accessed from the instructor's Resources folder within Revel.



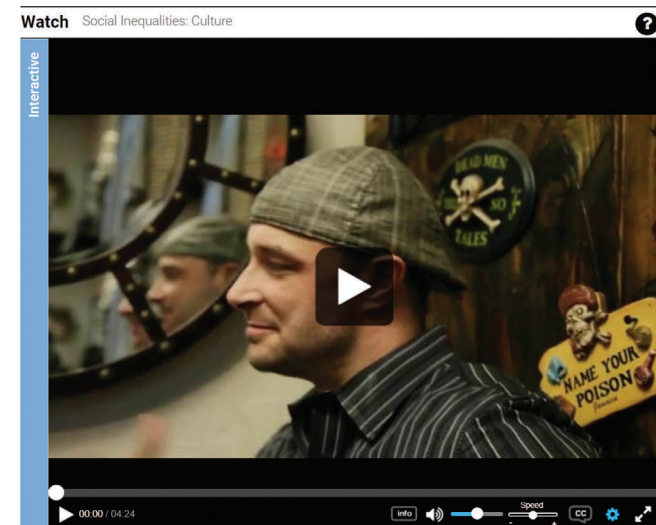
- **Sociology on the Job** videos, created by Professor Tracy Xavia Karner, connect the content of each chapter to the world of work and careers.



- **Sociology in Focus** videos feature a sociological perspective on today's popular culture.



- **Social Inequalities** videos, featuring Lester Andrist, introduce notable sociologists who highlight their own research emphasizing the importance of inequality based on race, class, and gender.



Supplements for the Instructor

Supplements are available to adopters at the Instructor's Resource Center at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc and also within the instructor's Resources folder within the Revel product.

Instructor's Resource Manual With Test Bank (0134674782) (0-13-415792-3) This learning program offers an Instructor's Resource Manual that will be of interest even to those who have never chosen to use one before. The manual—now revised by John Macionis—goes well beyond the expected detailed chapter outlines and discussion questions to provide summaries of important current events and trends, recent articles from *Teaching Sociology* that are relevant to classroom discussions, suggestions for classroom activities, and supplemental lecture material for every chapter of the material. Also, this edition of the Instructor's Resource Manual contains a listing of the Revel-specific media and interactive assets, including the Journal Prompts and Shared Writing Prompts, photo galleries, graphics, maps, and documents. The Revel Media section also includes the videos featured in each chapter of Revel, including the Pearson Originals docuseries videos.

The Test Bank—again, written by the author—reflects the material in the text—both in content and in language—far better than the testing file available with any other introductory sociology title. The file contains more than 100 items per chapter—in multiple-choice, true/false, and essay formats. For all of the questions, the correct answer is provided, as well as the Bloom's level of cognitive reasoning the question requires of the student, the learning objective that the question tests, and the difficulty level.

MYTEST (0134674839) This online, computerized software allows instructors to create their own personalized exams, to edit any or all of the existing test questions, and to add new questions. Other special features of this program include random generation of test questions, creation of alternative versions of the same test, scrambling question sequence, and test preview before printing.

POWERPOINT® SLIDES In order to support varied teaching styles while making it easy to incorporate dynamic Revel features in class, four sets of PowerPoint presentations are available for this edition: (1) A set of ADA-compliant lecture PowerPoint slides outline each chapter of the text. (2) A set of "art-only" PowerPoint slides feature all static images, figures, graphs, and maps from each chapter of the text. (3) An additional set of the lecture PowerPoint slides include LiveSlides, which link to each Social Explorer data visualization and interactive map within the Revel product. (4) Finally, a LiveSlides-only PowerPoint deck includes every Social Explorer data visualization and interactive map within the Revel product.

These presentations are available to adopters in electronic formats at the Instructor's Resource Center (www.pearsonhighered.com/irc) or in the instructor's Resources folder within the Revel product.

Recognizing Diversity: A Word about Language

This title has a commitment to describe the social diversity of the United States and the world. This promise carries with it the responsibility to use language thoughtfully. In most cases, the content uses the terms "African American" and "person of color" rather than the word "black." Similarly, we use the terms "Latino," "Latina," and "Hispanic" to refer to people of Spanish descent. Most tables and figures refer to "Hispanics" because this is the term the Census Bureau uses when collecting statistical data about our population.

Students should realize, however, that many individuals do not describe themselves using these terms. Although the word "Hispanic" is commonly used in the eastern part of the United States and "Latino" and the feminine form "Latina" are widely heard in the West, across the United States people of Spanish descent identify with a particular ancestral nation, whether it be Argentina, Mexico, some other Latin American country, or Spain or Portugal in Europe.

The same holds for Asian Americans. Although this term is a useful shorthand in sociological analysis, most people of Asian descent think of themselves in terms of a specific country of origin, say, Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, or Vietnam.

In this title, the term "Native American" refers to all the inhabitants of the Americas (including Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands) whose ancestors lived here before the arrival of Europeans. Here again, however, most people in this broad category identify with their historical society, such as Cherokee, Hopi, Seneca, or Zuni. The term "American Indian" refers to only those Native Americans who live in the continental United States, not including Native peoples living in Alaska or Hawaii.

On a global level, this title avoids the word "American"—which literally designates two continents—to refer to just the United States. For example, referring to this country, the term "the U.S. economy" is more precise than "the American economy." This convention may seem a small point, but it implies the significant recognition that we in this country represent only one society (albeit a very important one) in the Americas.

In Appreciation

The conventional practice of crediting a book to a single author hides the efforts of dozens of women and men who have helped create *Sociology, Seventeenth Edition*. I offer my deep and sincere thanks to the Pearson editorial team, including Dickson Musslewhite, vice-president of portfolio management; and Jeff

Marshall, portfolio manager for sociology, for their steady enthusiasm in the pursuit of both innovation and excellence.

Day-to-day work on the content is shared by various members of the “author team.” Kimberlee Klesner and Kelly Eitzen Smith work closely with me to ensure that all the data in this revision are the very latest available. Kimberlee and Kelly bring enthusiasm that matches their considerable talents, and I thank them for both.

I want to thank all the members of the Pearson sales staff, the men and women who have represented this title with such confidence and enthusiasm over the years. My hat goes off especially to Jeremy Intal and Brittany Pogue-Mohammed Acosta, who share responsibility for our marketing campaign.

Thanks, also, to Blair Brown and Kathryn Foot for managing the design, and to Kristin Jobe of Integra for managing the production process.

It goes without saying that every colleague knows more about a number of topics covered in this book than the author does. For that reason, I am grateful to the hundreds of faculty and the many students who have written to me to offer comments and suggestions. Thank you, one and all, for making a difference!

Finally, I dedicate this seventeenth edition of *Sociology* to McLean and Whitney Macionis, who have grown from wonderful children into caring and compassionate adults. You both have given me a new gear when it comes to understanding love.

With best wishes to my colleagues and with love to all,



About the Author

John J. Macionis (pronounced “ma-SHOWnis”) has been in the classroom teaching sociology for more than forty years. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, John earned a bachelor’s degree from Cornell University, majoring in sociology, and then completed a doctorate in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania.

His publications are wide-ranging, focusing on community life in the United States, interpersonal intimacy in families, effective teaching, humor, new information technology, and the importance of global education. In addition to authoring this best-seller, Macionis has also written *Society: The Basics*, the most popular paperback text in the field, now in its fifteenth edition. He collaborates on international editions of the titles: *Sociology: Canadian Edition*; *Society: The Basics, Canadian Edition*; and *Sociology: A Global Introduction*. *Sociology* is also available for high school students and in various foreign-language editions. All the Macionis titles are available as low-cost Revel editions that offer an interactive learning experience. John stands alone in the field for taking personal responsibility for writing all electronic content, just as he authors all the supplemental material. John proudly resists the trend toward “outsourcing” such material to non-sociologists.

In addition, Macionis edited the best-selling anthology *Seeing Ourselves: Classic, Contemporary, and Cross-Cultural Readings in Sociology*, which is also available in a Canadian edition. Macionis and Vincent Parrillo have written the leading urban studies title, *Cities and Urban Life*, soon available in a seventh edition. Macionis is also the author of *Social Problems*, now in its seventh edition and the leading title in this field. The latest on all the Macionis titles, as well as teaching materials and dozens of Internet links of interest to students and faculty in sociology, are found at the author’s personal website: www.macionis.com or www.TheSociologyPage.com. Follow John on this Facebook author page: John J. Macionis. Additional information and instructor resources are found at the Pearson site: www.pearsonhighered.com

John Macionis recently retired from full-time teaching at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, where he was Professor and Distinguished Scholar of Sociology. During that time, he chaired the Sociology Department, directed the college’s multidisciplinary program in humane studies, presided over the campus senate and the college’s faculty, and taught sociology to thousands of students.



In 2002, the American Sociological Association presented Macionis with the Award for Distinguished Contributions to Teaching, citing his innovative use of global material as well as the introduction of new teaching technology in his titles.

Professor Macionis has been active in academic programs in other countries, having traveled to some fifty nations. He writes, “I am an ambitious traveler, eager to learn and, through the texts, to share much of what I discover with students, many of whom know little about the rest of the world. For me, traveling and writing are all dimensions of teaching. First, and foremost, I am a teacher—a passion for teaching animates everything I do.”

At Kenyon, Macionis taught a number of courses, but his favorite classes have been Introduction to Sociology and Social Problems. He continues to enjoy extensive contact with students across the United States and around the world.

John lives near New York City, and in his free time, he enjoys tennis, swimming, hiking, and playing oldies rock-and-roll. He is an environmental activist in the Lake George region of New York’s Adirondack Mountains, where he works with a number of organizations, including the Lake George Land Conservancy, where he serves as president of the board of trustees.

Professor Macionis welcomes (and responds to) comments and suggestions about this book from faculty and students. Contact him at his Facebook pages or email: macionis@kenyon.edu.



Chapter 1

The Sociological Perspective



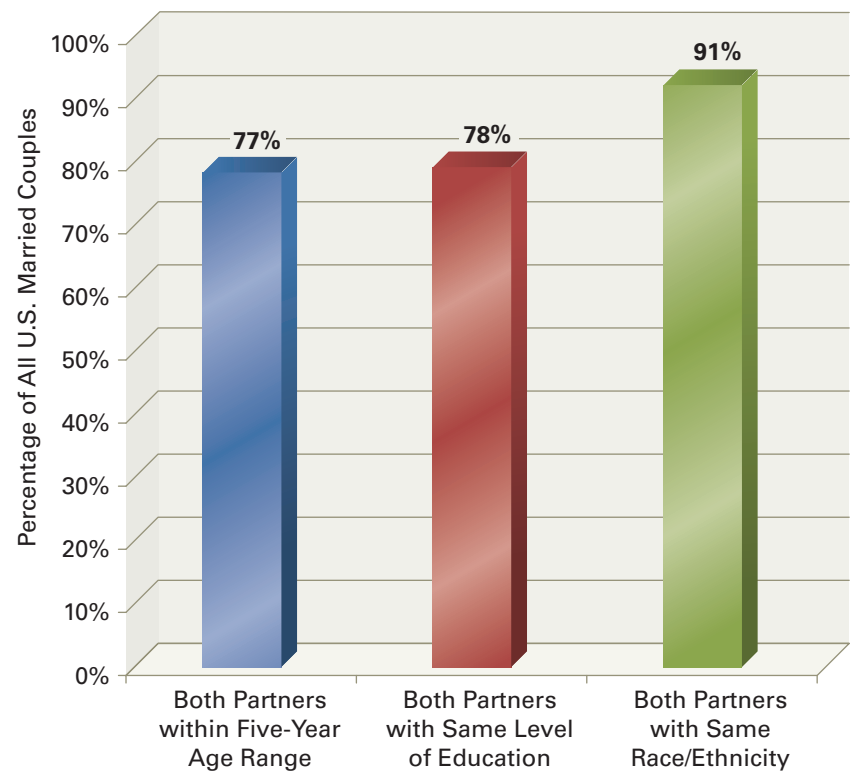
Learning Objectives

- 1.1** Apply the sociological perspective to show how society shapes our individual lives.
- 1.2** State several reasons why a global perspective is important in today's world.
- 1.3** Identify the advantages of sociological thinking for developing public policy, for encouraging personal growth, and for advancing in a career.
- 1.4** Link the origins of sociology to historical social changes.
- 1.5** Summarize sociology's major theoretical approaches.
- 1.6** Apply sociology's major theoretical approaches to the topic of sports.



The Power of Society

to guide our choices in marriage partners



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2016).

Do we simply “pick” our marriage partners? In 77 percent of all married couples in the United States, both partners are within five years of age of each other; in 78 percent, both partners have achieved the same level of schooling; and in 91 percent of married couples, both partners are of the same racial or ethnic category. Although we tend to think of love and marriage as very personal matters, it is clear that society guides the process of selecting a spouse.

Chapter Overview

You are about to begin a course that could change your life. Sociology is a new and exciting way of understanding the world. It will change what you see and how you think about our world, and it may well change how you think about yourself. Chapter 1 of the text introduces the discipline of sociology. The most important skill to gain from this chapter is the ability to use what we call the *sociological perspective*. This chapter also introduces *sociological theory*, which will help you build understanding from what you see using the sociological perspective.



The moment he first saw Tonya as she stepped off the subway train, Dwayne knew she was “the one.” Minutes later, as the two walked up the stairs to the street and entered the building where they were both taking classes, Dwayne tried to get Tonya to stop and talk. At first, she ignored him. But after class, they met again, and she agreed to join him for coffee. That was three months ago. Today, they are engaged to be married.

If you were to ask people in the United States, “Why do couples like Tonya and Dwayne marry?” it is a safe bet that almost everyone would reply, “People marry because they fall in love.” Most of us find it hard to imagine a happy marriage without love; for the same reason, when people fall in love, we expect them to think about getting married.

But is the decision about whom to marry really just a matter of personal feelings? There is plenty of evidence to show that if love is the key to marriage, Cupid’s arrow is carefully aimed by the society around us.

Society has many “rules” about whom we should, and should not, marry. Up until about a decade ago, all states had laws that ruled out half the population by banning people from marrying someone of the same sex, even if the couple was deeply in love. But there are other rules as well. Sociologists have found that people, especially when they are young, are likely to marry someone close in age, and people of all ages typically marry others in the same racial category, of similar social class background, of much the same level of education, and with a similar degree of physical attractiveness (Schwartz & Mare, 2005; Schoen & Cheng, 2006; Feng Hou & Myles, 2008; Shafer & Zhenchao, 2010; Schwartz, 2013; Shafer, 2013; see Chapter 19, “Families,” for details). In today’s online world where many people seek partners on websites such as Tinder and Match.com, women and men do make choices about whom to meet and marry. But society narrows the field long before they do. ■

When it comes to love, the decisions people make do not simply result from the process philosophers call “free will.” Sociology shows us the power of society to guide all our life decisions in much the same way that the seasons influence our choice of clothing.

The Sociological Perspective

1.1 Apply the sociological perspective to show how society shapes our individual lives.

Sociology is the systematic study of human society. **Society** refers to people who interact in a defined territory and share a culture. At the heart of sociology’s investigation of society is a special point of view called the *sociological perspective*.

Seeing the General in the Particular

One good way to define the **sociological perspective** is *seeing the general in the particular* (Berger, 1963). This definition tells us that sociologists look for general patterns in the behavior of particular people. Although every individual is unique, a society shapes the lives of people in patterned ways that are evident as we discover how various categories (such as children and adults, women and men, the rich and the poor) live differently. We begin to see the world sociologically by realizing how the general categories into which we fall shape our particular life experiences.

sociology the systematic study of human society

sociological perspective sociology’s special point of view that sees general patterns of society in the lives of particular people



We can easily see the power of society over the individual by imagining how different our lives would be had we been born in place of any of these children from, respectively, Kenya, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Peru, South Korea, and India.

For example, the Power of Society figure shows how the social world guides people to select marriage partners from within their own social categories. This is why the large majority of married couples are about the same age, have similar educational backgrounds, and share the same racial and ethnic identity. What about social class? How does social class position affect what women look for in a spouse? In a classic study of women's hopes for their marriages, Lillian Rubin (1976) found that higher-income women typically expected the men they married to be sensitive to others, to talk readily, and to share feelings and experiences. Lower-income women, she found, had different expectations and were looking for men who did not drink too much, were not violent, and held steady jobs. Obviously, what women expect in a marriage partner has a lot to do with social class position.

This text explores the power of society to guide our actions, thoughts, and feelings. We may think that marriage results simply from the personal feelings of love. Yet the sociological perspective shows us that factors such as age, schooling, race and ethnicity, sex, and social class guide our selection of a partner. It might be more accurate to think of love as a feeling we have for others who match up with what society teaches us to want in a mate.

Seeing the Strange in the Familiar

At first, using the sociological perspective may seem like *seeing the strange in the familiar*. Consider how you might react if someone were to say to you, "You fit all the right categories, which means you would make a wonderful spouse!" We are used to thinking that people fall in love and decide to marry based on personal feelings. But the sociological perspective reveals the initially strange idea that society shapes what we think and do.

Because we live in an individualistic society, learning to see how society affects us may take a bit of practice. If someone asked you why you "chose" to enroll at your particular college, you might offer one of the following reasons:

"I wanted to stay close to home."

"I got a basketball scholarship."

"With a journalism degree from this university, I can get a good job."

"My girlfriend goes to school here."

"I didn't get into the school I *really* wanted to attend."

Any of these responses may well be true. But do they tell the whole story?

Window on the World

- Cindy Rucker, 29 years old, recently took time off from her job in the New Orleans public school system to have her first child.

- Although she is only 28 years old, Baktizar Kahn has five children, a common pattern in Afghanistan.



Global Map 1-1 Women's Childbearing in Global Perspective

Is childbearing simply a matter of personal choice? A look around the world shows that it is not. In general, women living in poor countries have many more children than women in rich nations. Can you point to some of the reasons for this global disparity? In simple terms, such differences mean that if you had been born into another society (whether you are female or male), your life might be quite different from what it is now.

SOURCES: Data from Population Reference Bureau (2016), Martin et al. (2017).

Thinking sociologically about going to college, it's important to realize that only 7 out of every 100 adults in the world have earned a college degree, although the college graduation rate is about 35 percent of adults in high-income countries (Barro & Lee, 2010; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2016). A century ago, even in the United States, most people had little or no chance to go to college. Today, enrolling in college is within the reach of far more men and women. But a look around the classroom shows that social forces still have much to do with who ends up on campus. For instance, most U.S. college students are young, generally between eighteen and about thirty. Why? Because our society links college attendance to this period of life. But more than age is involved, because just 42 percent of men and women between eighteen and twenty-four actually end up on campus.

Another factor is cost. Because higher education is so expensive, college students tend to come from families with

above-average incomes. Families in the United States with at least one child in college are four times as likely to report having annual income of \$75,000 or more than they are to report income less than \$20,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Is it reasonable, in light of these facts, to ignore the power of society and say that attending college is simply a matter of personal choice?

Seeing Society in Our Everyday Lives

Another way to appreciate the power of society is to consider the number of children women have. As shown in Global Map 1-1, on average women in the United States have about two children (the actual average is 1.8) during their lifetimes. In the Philippines, however, the average is about three; in Zimbabwe, about four; in Afghanistan, five; in Uganda, six; and in Niger, the average woman has

more than seven children (Population Reference Bureau, 2016).

What accounts for these striking differences? Because poor countries provide women with less schooling and fewer economic opportunities, women's lives are centered in the home; such women also have less access to contraception. Clearly, society has much to do with the decisions women and men make about childbearing.

Another illustration of the power of society to shape even our most private choices comes from the study of suicide. What could be a more personal choice than the decision to end your own life? But Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), one of sociology's pioneers, showed that even here, social forces are at work.

Examining official records in France, his own country, Durkheim found that some categories of people were more likely than others to take their own lives. Men, Protestants, wealthy people, and the unmarried had much higher suicide rates than women, Catholics and Jews, the poor, and married people. Durkheim explained the differences in terms of *social integration*: Categories of people with strong social ties had low suicide rates, and more individualistic categories of people had high suicide rates.

In Durkheim's time, men had much more freedom than women. But despite its advantages, freedom weakens social ties and thus increases the risk of suicide. Likewise, more individualistic Protestants were more likely to commit suicide than more tradition-bound Catholics and Jews, whose rituals encourage stronger social ties. The wealthy have much more freedom than the poor, but once again, at the cost of a higher suicide rate.

A century later, Durkheim's analysis still holds true. Figure 1–1 shows suicide rates for various categories of people in the United States. Keep in mind that suicide is rare—a rate of 10 suicides for every 100,000 people is about the same as 6 inches in a mile. Even so, we can see some interesting patterns. In 2014, there were 17.6 recorded suicides for every 100,000 white people, a rate three times higher than for blacks (5.6) or Hispanics (5.9). For all categories of people, suicide was more common among men than among women. White men (27.6) were more than three times as likely as white women (7.9) to take their own lives. Among blacks, the rate for men (9.5) was almost five times higher than for women (2.1). Among Hispanics, the rate for men (9.2) was nearly four times higher than the rate for women (2.4) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). Applying Durkheim's logic, the higher suicide rate among white people and men reflects their greater wealth and freedom, just as the lower rate among women and African Americans reflects their limited social choices. As Durkheim did a century ago, we can see general patterns in the personal actions of particular individuals.

Diversity Snapshot

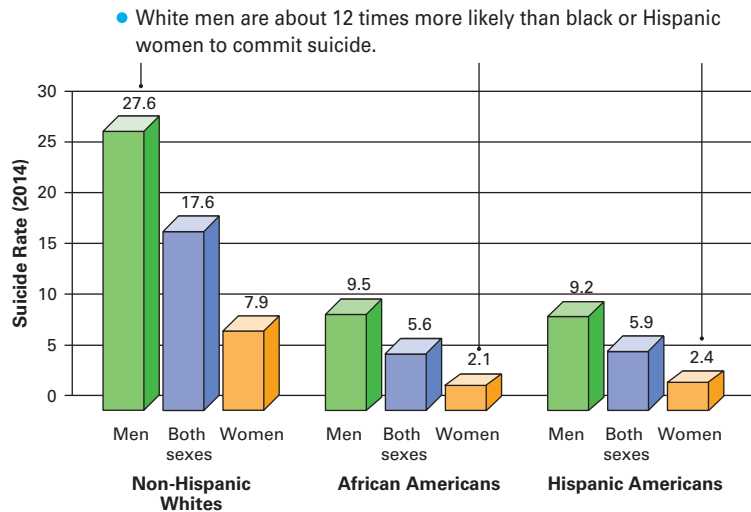


Figure 1–1 Rate of Death by Suicide, by Race and Sex, for the United States

Suicide rates are higher for whites than they are for blacks and Hispanics. Within each category, suicide rates are higher for men than for women. Rates indicate the number of deaths by suicide for every 100,000 people in each category for 2014.

SOURCE: Kochanek et al. (2016).

Seeing Sociologically: Marginality and Crisis

Anyone can learn to see the world using the sociological perspective. But two situations help people see clearly how society shapes individual lives—living on the margins of society and living through a social crisis.

From time to time, everyone feels like an outsider. For some categories of people, however, being an outsider—not part of the dominant group—is an everyday experience. The greater people's social marginality, the better they are able to use the sociological perspective.

For example, no black person grows up in the United States without understanding the importance of race in shaping people's lives. Songs by rapper Jay-Z express the anger he feels, not only about the poverty he experienced growing up but also about the many innocent lives lost to violence in a society with a great amount of social inequality based on race. His lyrics and those of many similar artists are spread throughout the world by the mass media as statements of how some people of color—especially African Americans living in the inner city—feel that their hopes and dreams are crushed by society. But whites, as the dominant majority, think less often about race, believing that race affects only people of color and not themselves, despite the privileges provided by being white in a multiracial society. All people at the margins of social



People with privileges tend to see individuals as responsible for their own lives. Those at the margins of society, by contrast, are quick to see how race, class, and gender can create advantages for some and hold back others. This insight has inspired a good deal of rap music by 50 Cent and other artists.

life—including not just racial minorities but also women, gays, people with disabilities, and the very old—are aware of social patterns that others rarely think about. To become better at using the sociological perspective, we must step back from our familiar routines and look at our own lives with a new curiosity.

Periods of change or crisis make everyone feel a little off balance, encouraging us to use the sociological perspective. The sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) illustrated this idea using the Great Depression of the 1930s. As the unemployment rate soared to 25 percent, people who were out of work could not help but see general social forces at work in their particular lives. Rather than saying, “Something must be wrong with me; I can’t find a job,” they took a sociological approach and realized, “The economy has collapsed; there are no jobs to be found!” Mills believed that using what he called the “sociological imagination” in this way helps people understand not only their society but also their own lives, because the two are closely related. The Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life box takes a closer look.

Just as social change encourages sociological thinking, sociological thinking can bring about social change. The more we learn about how “the system” operates, the more we may want to change it in some way. Becoming

aware of the power of gender, for example, has caused many women and men to try to reduce gender inequality in our society.

The Importance of a Global Perspective

1.2 State several reasons why a global perspective is important in today’s world.

As new information technology draws even the farthest reaches of the planet closer together, many academic disciplines are taking a **global perspective**, that is, *the study of the larger world and our society’s place in it*. What is the importance of a global perspective for sociology?

First, global awareness is a logical extension of the sociological perspective. Sociology shows us that our place in society shapes our life experiences. It stands to reason, then, that the position of our society in the larger world system affects everyone in the United States.

The world’s 194 nations can be divided into three broad categories according to their level of economic development (see Global Map 13–1). **High-income countries** are the *nations with the highest overall standards of living*. The seventy-nine countries in this category include the United States and Canada, Argentina, the nations of Western Europe, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Japan, and Australia. Taken together, these nations produce most of the world’s goods and services, and the people who live there own most of the planet’s wealth. Economically speaking, people in these countries are very well off, not because they are smarter or work harder than anyone else but because they were lucky enough to be born in a rich region of the world.

A second category is **middle-income countries**, *nations with a standard of living about average for the world as a whole*. People in any of these sixty-seven nations—many of the countries of Eastern Europe, some of Africa, and almost all of Latin America and Asia—are as likely to live in rural villages as in cities and to walk or ride tractors, scooters, bicycles, or animals as to drive automobiles. On average, they receive eight years of schooling. Most middle-income countries also have considerable social inequality within their own borders, so that some people are extremely rich (members of the business elite in nations across North Africa, for example), but many more lack safe housing and adequate nutrition (people living in the shanty settlements that surround Lima, Peru, or Mumbai, India).

The remaining forty-eight nations of the world are **low-income countries**, *nations with a low standard of living in which most people are poor*. Most of the poorest countries in the world are in Africa, and a few are in Asia. Here again, a few people are rich, but the majority struggle to get by with

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

The Sociological Imagination: Turning Personal Problems into Public Issues

As Mike opened the envelope, he felt the tightness in his chest. The letter he dreaded was in his hands—his job was finished at the end of the day. After eleven years! Years in which he had worked hard, sure that he would move up in the company. All those hopes and dreams were now suddenly gone. Mike felt like a failure. Anger at himself—for not having worked even harder, for having wasted eleven years of his life in what had turned out to be a dead-end job—swelled up inside him.

But as he returned to his workstation to pack his things, Mike soon realized that he was not alone. Almost all his colleagues in the tech support group had received the same letter. Their jobs were moving to India, where the company was able to provide telephone tech support for less than half the cost of employing workers in California.

By the end of the weekend, Mike was sitting in the living room with a dozen other ex-employees. Comparing notes and sharing ideas, they now realized that they were simply a few of the victims of a massive outsourcing of jobs that is part of what analysts call the “globalization of the economy.”

In good times and bad, the power of the sociological perspective lies in making sense of our individual lives. We see that many of our particular problems (and our successes, as well) are not unique to us but are the result of larger social trends. Half a century ago, sociologist C. Wright Mills pointed to the power of what he called the sociological imagination to help us understand everyday events. As he saw it, society—not people’s personal failings—is the main cause of poverty and other social problems. By turning *personal problems* into *public issues*, the sociological imagination also is the key to bringing people together to create needed change.

In this excerpt, Mills (1959:3–5) explains the need for a sociological imagination:*

When society becomes industrialized, a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman. When classes rise or fall, a man is employed or unemployed; when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher; a store clerk, a radar man; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a father. Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.

Yet men do not usually define the troubles they endure in terms of historical change ... The well-being they enjoy, they do not usually impute to the big ups and downs of the society in which they live. Seldom aware of the intricate connection between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history, ordinary men do not usually know what this connection means for the kind of men they are becoming and for the kinds of history-making in which they might take part. They do not possess the quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of men and society, of biography and history, of self and world...

What they need ... is a quality of mind that will help them [see] what is going on in the world and ... what may be happening within themselves. It is this quality ... [that] may be called the sociological imagination.

What Do You Think?

1. As Mills sees it, how are personal troubles different from public issues? Explain this difference in terms of what happened to Mike in the story above.
2. Living in the United States, why do we often blame ourselves for the personal problems we face?
3. How can using the sociological imagination give us the power to change the world?

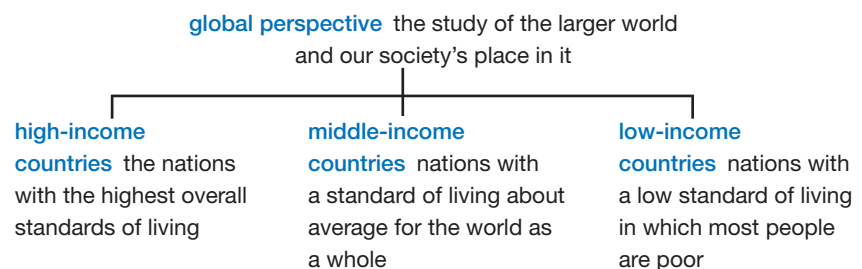
*In this excerpt, Mills uses “man” and male pronouns to apply to all people. As far as gender was concerned, even this outspoken critic of society reflected the conventional language of his time.

poor housing, unsafe water, too little food, and perhaps most serious of all, little chance to improve their lives.

Chapter 13 (“Global Stratification”) explains the causes and consequences of global wealth and poverty. But every chapter of this text makes comparisons between the United States and other nations for five reasons:

1. **Where we live shapes the lives we lead.** As we saw in Global Map 1–1, women living in rich and poor countries have different lives, as suggested by the number of children they have. To understand ourselves

and appreciate how others live, we must understand something about how countries differ, which is one good reason to pay attention to the global maps found throughout this text.



2. **Societies throughout the world are increasingly interconnected.** Historically, people in the United States took only passing note of the countries beyond our own borders. In recent decades, however, the United States and the rest of the world have become linked as never before. Electronic technology now transmits sounds, pictures, and written documents around the globe in seconds.

One effect of new technology is that people the world over now share many tastes in food, clothing, and music. Rich countries such as the United States influence other nations, whose people are ever more likely to gobble up our Big Macs and Whoppers, dance to the latest hip-hop music, and speak English.

But the larger world also has an impact on us. We all know the contributions of famous immigrants such as Arnold Schwarzenegger (who came to the United States from Austria) and Gloria Estefan (who came from Cuba). About 1.3 million immigrants enter the United States each year, bringing their skills and talents, along with their fashions and foods, greatly increasing the racial and cultural diversity of this country (Migration Policy Institute, 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

3. **What happens in the rest of the world affects life here in the United States.** Trade across national boundaries has created a global economy. Large corporations make and market goods worldwide. Stock traders in New York pay close attention to the financial markets in Tokyo and Hong Kong even as wheat farmers in Kansas watch the price of grain in the former Soviet republic of Georgia. Because most new jobs in the United States involve international trade, global understanding has never been more important.

In the last several decades, the power and wealth of the United States have been challenged by what some analysts have called “the rise of the rest,” meaning the increasing power and wealth of the rest of the world. As nations such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China have expanded their economic production, many of the manufacturing and office jobs that once supported a large share of the U.S. labor force have moved overseas. Globalization has not only reshaped the world’s economy, but it has held down wages for working people and caused the unemployment rate to remain high here in the United States.

4. **Many social problems that we face in the United States are far more serious elsewhere.** Poverty is a serious problem in the United States, but as Chapter 13 (“Global Stratification”) explains, poverty in Latin

America, Africa, and Asia is both more common and more serious. In the same way, although women have lower social standing than men in the United States, gender inequality is much greater in the world’s poor countries.

5. **Thinking globally helps us learn more about ourselves.** We cannot walk the streets of a distant city without thinking about what it means to live in the United States. Comparing life in various settings also leads to unexpected lessons. For instance, were you to visit a squatter settlement in Chennai, India, you would likely find people thriving in the love and support of family members despite desperate poverty. Why, then, are so many poor people in our own country angry and alone? Are material things—so central to our definition of a “rich” life—the best way to measure human well-being?

In sum, in an increasingly interconnected world, we can understand ourselves only to the extent that we understand others. Sociology is an invitation to learn a new way of looking at the world around us. But is this invitation worth accepting? What are the benefits of applying the sociological perspective?

Applying the Sociological Perspective

- 1.3 Identify the advantages of sociological thinking for developing public policy, for encouraging personal growth, and for advancing in a career.**

Applying the sociological perspective is useful in many ways. First, sociology is at work guiding many of the laws and policies that shape our lives. Second, on an individual level, making use of the sociological perspective leads to important personal growth and expanded awareness. Third, studying sociology is excellent preparation for the world of work.

Sociology and Public Policy

Sociologists have helped shape public policy—the laws and regulations that guide how people in communities live and work—in countless ways, from racial desegregation and school busing to laws regulating divorce. For example, in her study of how divorce affects people’s income, the sociologist Lenore Weitzman (1985, 1996) discovered that women who leave marriages typically experience a dramatic loss of income. Recognizing this fact, many states passed laws that have increased women’s claims to marital property and enforced fathers’ obligations to provide support for women raising their children.

Sociology and Personal Growth

By applying the sociological perspective, we are likely to become more active and aware and to think more critically in our daily lives. Using sociology benefits us in four ways:

1. **The sociological perspective helps us assess the truth of “common sense.”** We all take many things for granted, but that does not make them true. One good example is the idea that we are free individuals who are personally responsible for our own lives. If

we think we decide our own fate, we may be quick to praise very successful people as superior and consider others with fewer achievements personally deficient. A sociological approach, by contrast, encourages us to ask whether such common beliefs are actually true and, to the extent that they are not, why they are so widely held. The Thinking About Diversity box takes a look at low-wage jobs and explains how the sociological perspective sometimes makes us rethink commonsense ideas about other people and their work.

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

Nickel and Dime: On (Not) Getting By in the United States

All of us know people who work at low-wage jobs as waitresses at diners, clerks at drive-throughs, or sales associates at discount stores such as Walmart. We see such people just about every day. Many of us actually *are* such people. In the United States, “common sense” tells us that the jobs people have and the amount of money they make reflect their personal abilities as well as their willingness to work hard.

Barbara Ehrenreich (2001) had her doubts. To find out what the world of low-wage work is really like, the successful journalist and author decided to leave her comfortable middle-class life to live and work in the world of low-wage jobs. She began in Key West, Florida, taking a job as a waitress for \$2.43 an hour plus tips. Right away, she found out that she had to work much harder than she ever imagined. By the end of a shift, she was exhausted, but after sharing tips with the kitchen staff, she averaged less than \$6.00 an hour. This was barely above the minimum wage at the time and provided just enough income to pay the rent on her tiny apartment, buy food, and cover other basic expenses. She had to hope that she didn’t get sick because the job did not provide health insurance and she couldn’t afford to pay for a visit to a doctor’s office. Keep in mind, too, that Ehrenreich struggled to support herself as a single woman. How would her life have been different if she had young children?

After working for more than a year at a number of other low-wage jobs, including cleaning motels in Maine and working on the floor of a Walmart in Minnesota, she had rejected quite a bit of “common sense.” First, she now knew that tens of millions of people with low-wage jobs work very hard every day. If you don’t think so, Ehrenreich says, try one of these jobs yourself. Second, these jobs require not just hard work (imagine thoroughly cleaning three motel rooms per hour all day long) but also special skills and real intelligence (try waiting on ten tables in a restaurant at the same time and keeping everybody happy). She found that the people she worked with were, on average, just as smart, clever, and funny as those



she knew who wrote books for a living or taught at a college.

Why, then, do we think of low-wage workers as lazy or as having less ability? It surprised Ehrenreich to learn that many low-wage workers felt this way about themselves. In a society that teaches us to believe personal ability is everything, we learn to size up people by their jobs. Subject to the constant supervision, random drug tests, and other rigid rules that usually come along with low-wage jobs, Ehrenreich imagined that many people end up feeling unworthy, even to the point of not trying for anything better. Such beliefs, she concludes, help support a society of extreme inequality in which some people live very well thanks to the low wages paid to the rest.

What Do You Think?

1. Have you ever held a low-wage job? If so, would you say you worked hard? What was your pay? Were there any benefits?
2. Ehrenreich claims that most well-off people in the United States are dependent on low-wage workers. What does she mean by this?
3. How much of a chance do most people with jobs at Wendy’s or Walmart have to enroll in college and to work toward a different career? Explain.

2. **The sociological perspective helps us see the opportunities and constraints in our lives.** Sociological thinking leads us to see that in the game of life, society deals the cards. We have a say in how to play the hand, however, and the more we understand the game, the better players we become. Sociology helps us learn more about the world so that we can pursue our goals more effectively.
3. **The sociological perspective empowers us to be active participants in our society.** The more we understand how society works, the more active citizens we become. According to C. Wright Mills (1959), it is the sociological perspective that turns a personal problem (such as being out of work) into a public issue (a lack of good jobs). As we come to see how society affects us, we may support society as it is, or we may set out with others to change it.
4. **The sociological perspective helps us live in a diverse world.** North Americans represent just 5 percent of the world's people, and as the remaining chapters of this book explain, many of the other 95 percent live differently than we do. Still, like people everywhere, we tend to define our own way of life as “right,” “natural,” and “better.” The sociological perspective encourages us to think critically about the relative strengths and weaknesses of all ways of life, including our own.

Careers: The “Sociology Advantage”

Most students at colleges and universities today are interested in getting a good job. A background in sociology is excellent preparation for the working world.



Just about every job in today's economy involves working with people. For this reason, studying sociology is good preparation for your future career. In what ways does having “people skills” help police officers perform their job?

Of course, completing a bachelor's degree in sociology is the right choice for people who decide they would like to go on to graduate work and eventually become a secondary school teacher, college professor, or researcher in this field. Throughout the United States, tens of thousands of men and women teach sociology in universities, colleges, and high schools. But just as many professional sociologists work as researchers for government agencies or private foundations and businesses, gathering important information on social behavior and carrying out evaluation research. In today's cost-conscious world, agencies and companies want to be sure that the programs and policies they set in place get the job done at the lowest cost. Sociologists, especially those with advanced research skills, are in high demand for this kind of work (Deutscher, 1999; American Sociological Association, 2015).

In addition, a smaller but increasing number of professional sociologists work as clinical sociologists. These women and men work, much as clinical psychologists do, with the goal of improving the lives of troubled clients. A basic difference is that sociologists focus on difficulties not in the personality but in the individual's web of social relationships.

But sociology is not just for people who want to be sociologists. People who work in criminal justice—in police departments, probation offices, and corrections facilities—gain the “sociology advantage” by learning which categories of people are most at risk of becoming criminals as well as victims, assessing the effectiveness of various policies and programs at preventing crime, and understanding why

people turn to crime in the first place. Similarly, people who work in health care—including doctors, nurses, and technicians—also gain a sociological advantage by learning about patterns of health and illness within the population, as well as how factors such as race, gender, and social class affect human well-being.

The American Sociological Association (2002, 2011a, 2011b; 2015) reports that sociology is also excellent preparation for jobs in dozens of additional fields, including advertising, banking, business, education, government, journalism, law, public relations, and social work. In almost any type of work, success depends on understanding how various categories of people differ in beliefs, family patterns, and other ways of life. Unless you

plan to have a job that never involves dealing with people, you should consider the workplace benefits of learning more about sociology.

The Origins of Sociology

1.4 Link the origins of sociology to historical social changes.

Like the “choices” made by individuals, major historical events rarely just happen. The birth of sociology was itself the result of powerful social forces.

Social Change and Sociology

Striking changes took place in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Three kinds of change were especially important in the development of sociology: the rise of a factory-based industrial economy, the explosive growth of cities, and new ideas about democracy and political rights.

A NEW INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY During the Middle Ages in Europe, most people plowed fields near their homes or worked in small-scale *manufacturing* (a term derived from Latin words meaning “to make by hand”). By the end of the eighteenth century, inventors used new sources of energy—the power of moving water and then steam—to operate large machines in mills and factories. Instead of laboring at home or in small groups, workers became part of a large and anonymous labor force, under the control of strangers who owned the factories. This change in the system of production took people out of their homes, weakening the traditions that had guided community life for centuries.

THE GROWTH OF CITIES Across Europe, landowners took part in what historians call the *enclosure movement*—they fenced off more and more farmland to create grazing areas for sheep, the source of wool for the thriving textile mills. Without land, countless tenant farmers had little choice but to head to the cities in search of work in the new factories.

As cities grew larger, these urban migrants faced many social problems, including pollution, crime, and homelessness. Moving through streets crowded with strangers, they faced a new and impersonal social world.

POLITICAL CHANGE Europeans in the Middle Ages viewed society as an expression of God’s will: From the royalty to the serfs, each person up and down the social ladder played a part in the holy plan. This theological view of society is captured in

lines from the old Anglican hymn “All Things Bright and Beautiful”:

The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them high and lowly
And ordered their estate.

But as cities grew, tradition came under attack. In the writings of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), John Locke (1632–1704), and Adam Smith (1723–1790), we see a shift in focus from a moral obligation to God and king to the pursuit of self-interest. In the new political climate, philosophers spoke of *personal liberty* and *individual rights*. Echoing these sentiments, our own Declaration of Independence states that every person has “certain unalienable rights,” including “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

The French Revolution, which began in 1789, was an even greater break with political and social tradition. The French social analyst Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) thought the changes in society brought about by the French Revolution were so great that they amounted to “nothing short of the regeneration of the whole human race” (1955:13, orig. 1856).

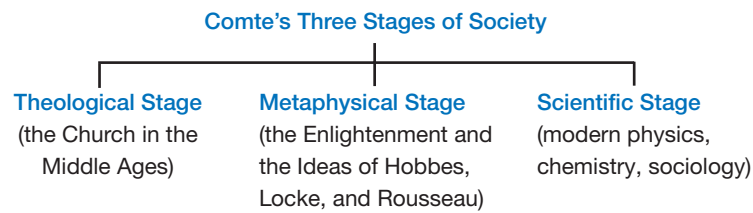
A NEW AWARENESS OF SOCIETY Huge factories, exploding cities, a new spirit of individualism—these changes combined to make people more aware of their surroundings. The new discipline of sociology was born in England, France, and Germany—precisely where the changes were greatest.

Science and Sociology

And so it was that the French social thinker Auguste Comte (1798–1857) coined the term *sociology* in 1838 to describe a new way of looking at society. This makes sociology one of



What we see depends on our point of view. When gazing at the stars, lovers see romance, but scientists see thermal reactions. How does using the sociological perspective change what we see in the world around us?



the youngest academic disciplines—far newer than history, physics, or economics, for example.

Of course, Comte was not the first person to think about the nature of society. Such questions fascinated many of the brilliant thinkers of ancient civilizations, including the Chinese philosopher K'ung Fu-tzu, or Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.), and the Greek philosophers Plato (c. 427–347 B.C.E.) and Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.).¹ Over the next several centuries, the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180), the medieval thinkers Saint Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) and Christine de Pisan (c. 1363–1431), and the English playwright William Shakespeare (1564–1616) wrote about the workings of society.

Yet these thinkers were more interested in imagining the ideal society than in studying society as it really was. Comte and other pioneers of sociology all cared about how society could be improved, but their major objective was to understand how society actually operates.

Comte (1975, orig. 1851–54) saw sociology as the product of a three-stage historical development. During the earliest, the *theological stage*, from the beginning of human history to the end of the European Middle Ages about 1350 C.E., people took a religious view that society expressed God's will.

With the dawn of the Renaissance in the fifteenth century, the theological approach gave way to a *metaphysical stage* of history in which people saw society as a natural rather than a supernatural system. Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), for example, suggested that society reflected not the perfection of God so much as the failings of a selfish human nature.

What Comte called the *scientific stage* of history began with the work of early scientists such as the Polish astronomer Copernicus (1473–1543), the Italian astronomer and physicist Galileo (1564–1642), and the English physicist and mathematician Isaac Newton (1642–1727). Comte's contribution came in applying the scientific approach—first

used to study the physical world—to the study of society.²

Comte's approach is called **positivism**, a *scientific approach to knowledge based on "positive" facts as opposed to mere speculation*. As a positivist, Comte believed that society operates according to its own laws, much as the physical world operates according to gravity and other laws of nature.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, sociology had spread to the United States and showed the influence of Comte's ideas. Today, most sociologists still consider science a crucial part of sociology. But as Chapter 2 ("Sociological Investigation") explains, we now realize that human behavior is far more complex than the movement of planets or even the actions of other living things. We are creatures of imagination and spontaneity, so human behavior can never be fully explained by any rigid "laws of society." In addition, early sociologists such as Karl Marx (1818–1883), whose ideas are discussed in Chapter 4 ("Society"), were troubled by the striking inequalities of industrial society. They hoped that the new discipline of sociology would not just help us understand society but also lead to change toward greater social justice.

Sociological Theory

1.5 Summarize sociology's major theoretical approaches.

The desire to translate observations into understanding brings us to the important aspect of sociology known as *theory*. A **theory** is a *statement of how and why specific facts are related*. The job of sociological theory is to explain social behavior in the real world. For example, recall Durkheim's theory that categories of people with low social integration (men, Protestants, the wealthy, and the unmarried) are at higher risk of suicide.

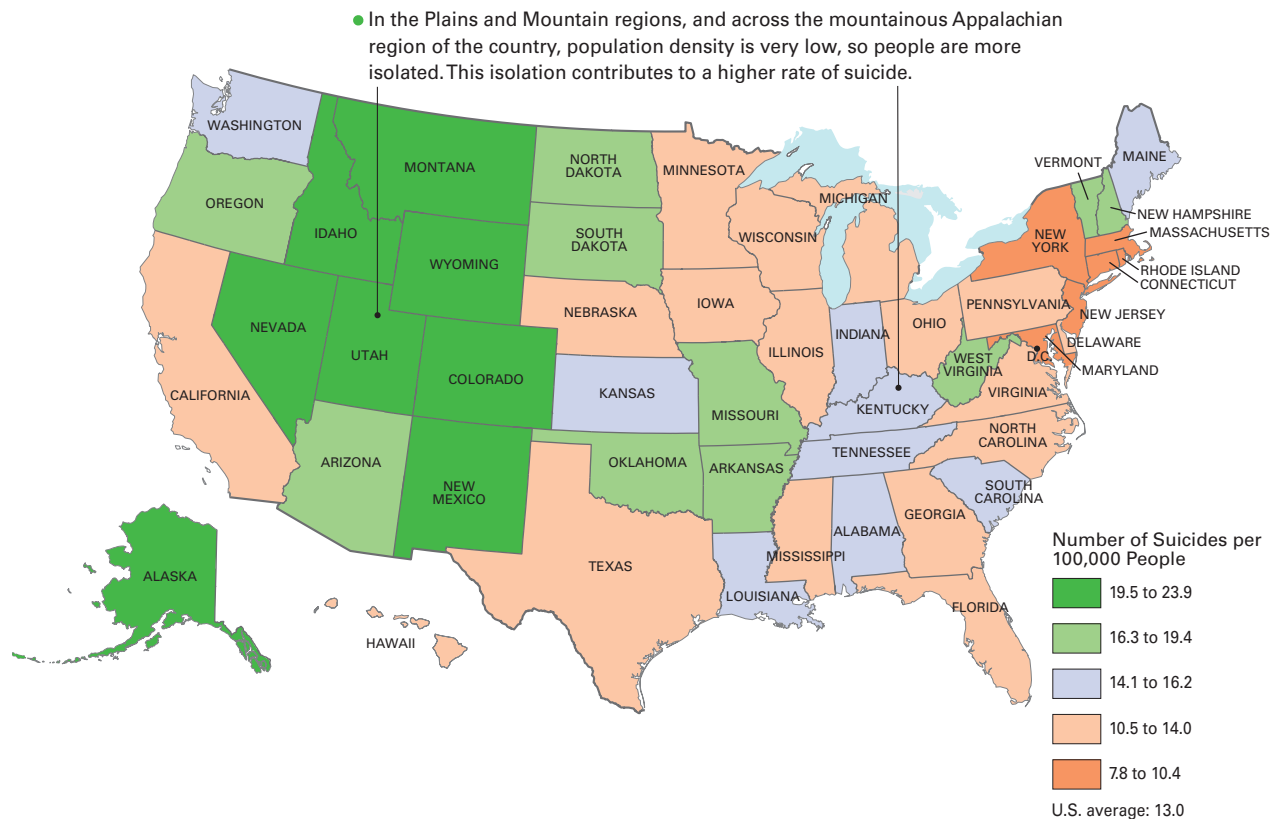
As the next chapter ("Sociological Investigation") explains, sociologists test their theories by gathering evidence using various research methods. Durkheim did exactly this, finding out which categories of people were more likely to commit suicide and which were less likely and then devising a theory that best squared with all available evidence. National Map 1–1 displays the suicide rate for each of the fifty states.

In deciding which theory to use, sociologists face two basic questions: What issues should we study? And how should we connect the facts? In the process of answering these questions, sociologists look to one or more theoretical approaches as "road maps." Think of a **theoretical approach** as a *basic image of society that guides thinking and research*. Sociologists make use of three major theoretical approaches: the *structural-functional approach*, the *social-conflict approach*, and the *symbolic-interaction approach*.

¹The abbreviation B.C.E. means "before the common era." We use this throughout the text instead of the traditional B.C. ("before Christ") to reflect the religious diversity of our society. Similarly, in place of the traditional A.D. (*anno Domini*, or "in the year of our Lord"), we use the abbreviation C.E. ("common era").

²Illustrating Comte's stages, the ancient Greeks and Romans viewed the planets as gods; Renaissance metaphysical thinkers saw them as astral influences (giving rise to astrology); by the time of Galileo, scientists understood planets as natural objects moving according to natural laws.

Seeing Ourselves



National Map 1-1 Suicide Rates across the United States

This map shows the suicide rate for the population living in each state across the country. Look for patterns.

By and large, higher suicide rates occur where people live far apart from one another. More densely populated states have lower suicide rates. Do these data support or contradict Durkheim's theory of suicide? Why?

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016).

The Structural-Functional Approach

The **structural-functional approach** is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. As its name suggests, this approach points to **social structure**, any relatively stable pattern of social behavior. Social structure gives our lives shape—in families, the workplace, the classroom, and the community. This approach also looks for a structure's **social functions**, the consequences of any social pattern for the operation of society as a whole. All social structures, from a simple handshake to complex religious rituals, function to keep society going, at least in its present form.

The structural-functional approach owes much to Auguste Comte, who pointed out the need to keep society unified at a time when many traditions were breaking down. Emile Durkheim, who helped establish the study of sociology in French universities, also based his work on this approach. A third structural-functional pioneer was the English sociologist Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). Spencer compared society to the human body. Just as the structural parts of the human body—the skeleton, muscles, and various internal organs—function interdependently to help the entire organism survive, social

structures work together to preserve society. The structural-functional approach, then, leads sociologists to identify various structures of society and investigate their functions.

Robert K. Merton (1910–2003) expanded our understanding of the concept of social function by pointing out that any social structure probably has many functions, some more obvious than others. He distinguished between **manifest functions**, the recognized and intended consequences of any social pattern, and **latent functions**, the unrecognized and unintended consequences of any social pattern. For example, the manifest function of the U.S. system of higher education is to provide young people with the information and skills they need to perform jobs after graduation. Perhaps just as important, although less often acknowledged, is college's latent function as a “marriage broker,” bringing together

social functions the consequences of a social pattern for the operation of society as a whole

manifest functions the recognized and intended consequences of any social pattern

latent functions the unrecognized and unintended consequences of any social pattern



The social-conflict approach points out patterns of inequality in everyday life. The TV series *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* takes a close-up look at the lives of extremely affluent women. In what ways do they depend on the work of people of lower social position?

young people of similar social backgrounds. Another latent function of higher education is to limit unemployment by keeping millions of young people out of the labor market, where many of them might not easily find jobs.

But Merton also recognized that not all the effects of social structure are good. Thus a **social dysfunction** is *any social pattern that may disrupt the operation of society*. Globalization of the economy may be good for some companies, but it also can cost workers their jobs as production moves overseas. Therefore, whether any social patterns are helpful or harmful for society is a matter about which people often disagree. In addition, what is functional for one category of people (say, high profits for Wall Street bank executives) may well be dysfunctional for other categories of people (workers who lose pension funds invested in banks that fail or people who cannot pay their mortgages and end up losing their homes).

EVALUATE

The main idea of the structural-functional approach is its vision of society as stable and orderly. The main goal of the sociologists who use this approach, then, is to figure out “what makes society tick.”

In the mid-1900s, most sociologists favored the structural-functional approach. In recent decades, however, its influence has declined. By focusing on social stability and unity, critics point out, structural-functionalism ignores inequalities of social class, race, and gender, which cause tension and conflict. In general, its focus on stability at the expense of conflict makes this approach somewhat conservative. As a critical response, sociologists developed the social-conflict approach.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING How do manifest functions differ from latent functions? Give an example of a manifest function and a latent function of automobiles in the United States.

The Social-Conflict Approach

The **social-conflict approach** is a framework for building theory that sees society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict and change. Unlike the structural-functional emphasis on solidarity and stability, this approach highlights inequality and change. Guided by this approach, which includes the gender-conflict and race-conflict approaches, sociologists investigate how factors such as social class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and age are linked to a society’s unequal distribution of money, power, education, and social prestige. A conflict analysis rejects the idea that social structure promotes the operation of society as a whole, focusing instead on how social patterns benefit some people while hurting others.

Sociologists using the social-conflict approach look at ongoing conflict between dominant and disadvantaged categories of people—the rich in relation to the poor, white people in relation to people of color, and men in relation to women. Typically, people on top try to protect their privileges while the disadvantaged try to gain more for themselves.

A social-conflict analysis of our educational system shows how schooling carries class inequality from one generation to the next. For example, secondary schools assign students to either college preparatory or vocational training programs. From a structural-functional point of view, such “tracking” benefits everyone by providing schooling that fits students’ abilities. But social-conflict analysis argues that tracking often has less to do with talent than with social background, with the result that well-to-do students are placed in higher tracks and poor children end up in the lower tracks.

Thus young people from privileged families get the best schooling, which leads them to college and later to high-income careers. The children of poor families, by contrast, are not prepared for college and, like their parents before them, typically get stuck in low-paying jobs. In both cases, the social standing of one generation is passed on to the next, with schools justifying the practice in terms of individual merit (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Oakes, 1982, 1985; Brunello & Checchi, 2007; Kohli, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Many sociologists use the social-conflict approach not just to understand society but also to bring about societal change that would reduce inequality. Karl Marx, whose ideas are discussed at length in Chapter 4 (“Society”), championed

the cause of the workers in what he saw as their battle against factory owners. In a well-known statement (inscribed on his monument in London's Highgate Cemetery), Marx asserted, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it."

Feminism and Gender-Conflict Theory

One important social-conflict theory is **gender-conflict theory (or feminist theory)**, *the study of society that focuses on inequality and conflict between women and men*. The gender-conflict approach is closely linked to **feminism**, *support of social equality for women and men, in opposition to patriarchy and sexism*.

The importance of gender-conflict theory lies in making us aware of the many ways in which our way of life places men in positions of power over women: in the home (where men are usually considered "head of the household"), in the workplace (where men earn more income and hold most positions of power), and in the mass media (where, for instance, more men than women are hip-hop stars).

Another contribution of feminist theory is making us aware of the importance of women to the development of

social-conflict approach a framework for building theory that sees society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict and change

gender-conflict theory (feminist theory) the study of society that focuses on inequality and conflict between women and men

race-conflict theory the study of society that focuses on inequality and conflict between people of different racial and ethnic categories

feminism support of social equality for women and men, in opposition to patriarchy and sexism

sociology. Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) is regarded as the first woman sociologist. Born to a wealthy English family, Martineau made her mark in 1853 by translating the writings of Auguste Comte from French into English. In her own published writings, she documented the evils of slavery and argued for laws to protect factory workers, defending workers' right to unionize. She was particularly concerned about the position of women in society and fought for changes in education policy so that women could have more options in life than marriage and raising children.



We can use the sociological perspective to look at sociology itself. All of the most widely recognized pioneers of the discipline were men. This is because in the nineteenth century, it was all but unheard of for women to be college professors, and few women took central roles in public life. But Jane Addams was an early sociologist in the United States, who founded Hull House, a Chicago settlement house where she spent many hours helping young people.

In the United States, Jane Addams (1860–1935) was a sociological pioneer whose contributions began in 1889 when she helped found Hull House, a Chicago settlement house that provided assistance to immigrant families. Although widely published—Addams wrote eleven books and hundreds of articles—she chose the life of a public activist over that of a university sociologist, speaking out on issues involving immigration and the pursuit of peace. Though her pacifism during World War I was the subject of much controversy, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

All chapters of this book consider the importance of gender and gender inequality. For an in-depth look at feminism and the social standing of women and men, see Chapter 14 (“Gender Stratification”).

Race-Conflict Theory

Another important type of social-conflict theory is **race-conflict theory**, *the study of society that focuses on inequality and conflict between people of different racial and ethnic categories*. Just as men have power over women, white people have numerous social advantages over people of color including, on average, higher incomes, more schooling, better health, and longer life expectancy.

Race-conflict theory also points out the contributions made by people of color to the development of sociology. Ida Wells Barnett (1862–1931) was born to slave parents but rose to become a teacher and then a journalist and newspaper publisher. She campaigned tirelessly for racial equality and, especially, to put an end to the lynching of black people. She

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

W. E. B. Du Bois: A Pioneer in Sociology

One of sociology’s pioneers in the United States, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois saw sociology as the key to solving society’s problems, especially racial inequality. Du Bois earned a Ph.D. in sociology from Harvard University and established the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, one of the first centers of sociological research in the United States. He helped his colleagues in sociology—and people everywhere—to see the deep racial divisions in the United States. White people can simply be “Americans,” Du Bois pointed out; African Americans, however, have a “double consciousness,” reflecting their status as people who are never able to escape identification based on the color of their skin.

In his sociological classic *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899), Du Bois explored Philadelphia’s African American community, identifying both the strengths and the weaknesses of people who were dealing with overwhelming social problems



on a day-to-day basis. He challenged the belief—widespread at that time—that blacks were inferior to whites, and he blamed white prejudice for creating the problems that blacks faced. He also criticized successful people of color for being so eager to win white acceptance that they gave up all ties with the black community that needed their help.

Despite notable achievements, Du Bois gradually grew impatient with academic study, which he felt was too detached from the everyday struggles experienced by people of color. Du Bois wanted change. It was the hope of sparking public action against racial separation that led Du Bois, in 1909, to participate in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an organization that has been active in supporting racial equality for more than a century. As the editor of the organization’s magazine, *Crisis*, Du Bois worked tirelessly to challenge laws and social customs that deprived African Americans of the rights and opportunities enjoyed by the white majority.

Du Bois described race as the major problem facing the United States in the twentieth century. Early in his career, he was hopeful about overcoming racial divisions. By the end of his life, however, he had grown bitter, believing that little had changed. At the age of ninety-three, Du Bois left the United States for Ghana, where he died two years later.

What Do You Think?

1. If he were alive today, what do you think Du Bois would say about racial inequality in the twenty-first century?
2. How much do you think African Americans today experience a “double consciousness”?
3. In what ways can sociology help us understand and reduce racial conflict?

SOURCES: Based in part on Baltzell (1967), Du Bois (1967, orig. 1899), Wright (2002a, 2002b), and personal communication with Earl Wright II.

wrote and lectured about racial inequality throughout her life (Lengerman & Niebrugge-Brantley, 1998).

An important contribution to understanding race in the United States was made by William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868–1963). Born to a poor Massachusetts family, Du Bois (pronounced doo-boyss) enrolled at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and then at Harvard University, where he earned the first doctorate awarded by that university to a person of color. Du Bois then founded the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, which was an important center of sociological research in the early decades of the twentieth century. Like most people who follow the social-conflict approach (whether focusing on class, gender, or race), Du Bois believed that sociologists should not simply learn about society’s problems but also try to solve them. He therefore studied the black communities across the United States, pointing to numerous social problems ranging from educational inequality to a political system that denied people their right to vote and the terrorist practice of lynching. Du Bois spoke out against racial inequality and participated in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (E. Wright, 2002a, 2002b). The Thinking About Diversity box takes a closer look at the ideas of W. E. B. Du Bois.

EVALUATE

The various social-conflict theories have gained a large following in recent decades, but like other approaches, they have met with criticism. Because any social-conflict theory focuses on inequality, it largely ignores how shared values and interdependence unify members of a society. In addition, say critics, to the extent that it pursues political goals, a social-conflict approach cannot claim scientific objectivity. Supporters of social-conflict theory respond that *all* theoretical approaches have political consequences.

A final criticism of both the structural-functional and the social-conflict approaches is that they paint society in broad strokes—in terms of “family,” “social class,” “race,” and so on. A third type of theoretical analysis—the symbolic-interaction approach—views society less in general terms and more as the everyday experiences of individual people.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Why do you think sociologists characterize the social-conflict approach as “activist”? What is it actively trying to achieve?

macro-level orientation a broad focus on social structures that shape society as a whole

structural-functional approach a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability

social-conflict approach a framework for building theory that sees society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict and change

micro-level orientation a close-up focus on social interaction in specific situations

symbolic-interaction approach a framework for building theory that sees society as the product of the everyday interactions of individuals

The Symbolic-Interaction Approach

The structural-functional and social-conflict approaches share a **macro-level orientation**, *a broad focus on social structures that shape society as a whole*. Macro-level sociology takes in the big picture, rather like observing a city from high above in a helicopter and seeing how highways help people move from place to place or how housing differs from rich to poor neighborhoods. Sociology also uses a **micro-level orientation**, *a close-up focus on social interaction in specific situations*. Exploring urban life in this way occurs at street level, where you might watch how children invent games on a school playground or how pedestrians respond to homeless people they pass on the street. The **symbolic-interaction approach**, then, is *a framework for building theory that sees society as the product of the everyday interactions of individuals*.

How does “society” result from the ongoing experiences of tens of millions of people? One answer, explained in Chapter 6 (“Social Interaction in Everyday Life”), is that society is nothing more than the shared reality that people construct for themselves as they interact with one another. Human beings live in a world of symbols, attaching *meaning* to virtually everything, from the words on a page to the wink of an eye. We create “reality,” therefore, as we define our surroundings, decide what we think of others, and shape our own identities.

The symbolic-interaction approach has roots in the thinking of Max Weber (1864–1920), a German sociologist who emphasized the need to understand a setting from the point of view of the people in it. Weber’s approach is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (“Society”).

Since Weber’s time, sociologists have taken micro-level sociology in a number of directions. Chapter 5 (“Socialization”) discusses the ideas of George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), who explored how our personalities develop as a result of social experience. Chapter 6 (“Social Interaction in Everyday Life”) presents the work of Erving Goffman (1922–1982), whose *dramaturgical analysis* describes how we resemble actors on a stage as we play our various roles. Other contemporary sociologists, including George Homans and Peter Blau, have developed *social-exchange analysis*. In their view, social interaction is guided by what each person stands to gain or lose from the interaction. In the ritual of courtship, for example, people seek mates who offer at least as much—in terms of physical attractiveness, intelligence, and social background—as they offer in return.

APPLYING THEORY

Major Theoretical Approaches

	Structural-Functional Approach	Social-Conflict, Gender-Conflict, and Race-Conflict Approaches	Symbolic-Interaction Approach
What is the level of analysis?	Macro-level	Macro-level	Micro-level
What image of society does the approach have?	Society is a system of interrelated parts that is relatively stable. Each part works to keep society operating in an orderly way. Members generally agree about what is morally right and morally wrong.	Society is a system of social inequalities based on class (Marx), gender (gender-conflict theory and feminism), and race (race-conflict theory). Society operates to benefit some categories of people and harm others. Social inequality causes conflict that leads to social change.	Society is an ongoing process. People interact in countless settings using symbolic communications. The reality people experience is variable and changing.
What core questions does the approach ask?	How is society held together? What are the major parts of society? How are these parts linked? What does each part do to help society work?	How does society divide a population? How do advantaged people protect their privileges? How do disadvantaged people challenge the system seeking change?	How do people experience society? How do people shape the reality they experience? How do behavior and meaning change from person to person and from one situation to another?

EVALUATE

Without denying the existence of macro-level social structures such as the family and social class, the symbolic-interaction approach reminds us that society basically amounts to *people interacting*. That is, micro-level sociology tries to show how individuals actually experience society. But on the other side of the coin, by focusing on what is unique in each social scene, this approach risks overlooking the widespread influence of culture, as well as factors such as class, gender, and race.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING How does a micro-level analysis differ from a macro-level analysis? Provide an illustration of a social pattern at both levels.

The Applying Theory table summarizes the main characteristics of sociology’s major theoretical approaches: the structural-functional approach, the social-conflict approach, feminism and the gender-conflict approach, the race-conflict approach, and the symbolic-interaction approach. Each of these approaches is helpful in answering particular kinds of questions about society. However, the fullest understanding of our social world comes from using all of them, as you can see in the following analysis of sports in the United States.

Applying the Approaches:
The Sociology of Sports

1.6 Apply sociology’s major theoretical approaches to the topic of sports.

Who doesn’t enjoy sports? Children as young as six or seven take part in organized sports, and many teens become skilled at three or more. Weekend television is filled

with sporting events for viewers of all ages, and whole sections of our newspapers are devoted to teams, players, and scores. In the United States, top players such as Tom Brady (football), Michael Phelps (swimming), LeBron James (basketball), and Serena Williams (tennis) are among our most famous celebrities. Sports in the United States are also a multibillion-dollar industry. What can we learn by applying sociology’s major theoretical approaches to this familiar part of everyday life?

The Functions of Sports

A structural-functional approach directs our attention to the ways in which sports help society operate. The manifest functions of sports include providing recreation as well as offering a means of getting in physical shape and a relatively harmless way to let off steam. Sports have important latent functions as well, which include building social relationships and also creating tens of thousands of jobs across the country. Participating in sports encourages competition and the pursuit of success, both of which are values that are central to our society’s way of life.

Sports also have dysfunctional consequences. For example, colleges and universities try to field winning teams to build a school’s reputation and also to raise money from alumni and corporate sponsors. In the process, however, these schools sometimes recruit students for their athletic skill rather than their academic ability. This practice not only lowers the academic standards of the college or university but also shortchanges athletes, who spend little time doing the academic work that will prepare them for later careers. The intense competition in sports may motivate people to perform, but it also encourages various

types of cheating, including use of steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs and may subject athletes to long-term health risks (including concussion among football players) (Upthegrove, Roscigno, & Charles, 1999; Borden, Gröndahl, & Ward, 2017).

Sports and Conflict

A social-conflict analysis of sports points out that the games people play reflect their social standing. Some sports—including tennis, swimming, golf, sailing, and skiing—are expensive, so taking part is largely limited to the well-to-do. Football, baseball, and basketball, however, are accessible to people at almost all income levels. Thus, the games people play are not simply a matter of individual choice but also a reflection of their social standing.

From a feminist point of view, we notice that throughout history men have dominated the world of sports. In the nineteenth century, women had little opportunity to engage in athletic competition, and those who did received little attention (Shaulis, 1999; Feminist Majority Foundation, 2015). For example, the first modern Olympic Games, held in 1896, barred women from competition. The 2016 Olympics, by contrast, included women competing in twenty-eight sports, including boxing, and U.S. women won more medals than U.S. men. Throughout most of the twentieth century, Little League teams barred girls based on the traditional ideas that girls and women lack the strength to play sports and risk losing their femininity if they do. Like the Olympics, Little League is now open to females as well as males. But even today, our society still encourages men to become athletes, and at the same time, expects women to be attentive observers and cheerleaders. At the college level, men's athletics attracts a greater amount of attention and resources compared to women's athletics, and men greatly outnumber women as coaches, even in women's sports (Welch & Sigelman, 2007). At the professional level, women also take a back seat to men, particularly in the sports with the most earning power and social prestige. In a recent listing of the world's one hundred highest-paid athletes, only two people were women (tennis stars Serena Williams was ranked fortieth and Maria Sharapova was ranked eighty-eighth) (*Forbes*, 2016).

Race also figures in sports. For decades, big league sports excluded people of color, who were forced to form leagues of their own. Only in 1947 did Major League Baseball admit the first black player when Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers. More than fifty years later, professional baseball honored Robinson's amazing career by retiring his number 42 on *all* of the teams in the league. In 2015, African Americans (12 percent of the U.S. population) accounted for 8 percent of

Major League Baseball players, 70 percent of National Football League (NFL) players, and 74 percent of National Basketball Association (NBA) players (Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, 2016).

One reason for the high number of African Americans in some professional sports is that athletic performance—in terms of batting average or number of points scored per game—can be precisely measured and is not influenced by racial prejudice. It is also true that some people of color make a particular effort to excel in athletics, where they see greater opportunity than in other careers (Steele, 1990; Edwards, 2000; Harrison, 2000). In recent years, in fact, African American athletes have earned higher salaries, on average, than white players. *Forbes* (2015) reports that three of the four highest-earning athletes are people who are racial or ethnic minorities.

But the race-conflict approach helps us to see that racial discrimination still exists in professional sports. For one thing, race is linked to the *positions* athletes play on the field, in a pattern called “stacking.” Figure 1–2 shows

Diversity Snapshot

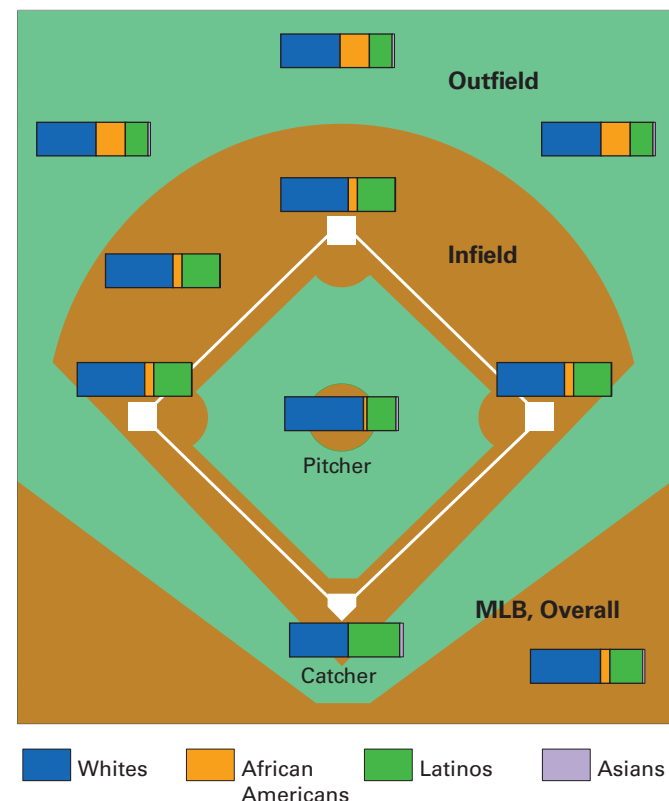


Figure 1–2 “Stacking” in Professional Baseball

Does race play a part in professional sports? Looking at the various positions in professional baseball, we see that white players are more likely to play the central positions in the infield, while people of color are more likely to play in the outfield. What do you make of this pattern?

SOURCE: Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, (2015).



Football quarterback Colin Kaepernick (center) has sparked a national debate over the importance of race in everyday life. He (literally) refused to stand up for the United States, kneeling during the playing of the National Anthem at the start of football games. His reason is simple: In his view, this country has not stood up for people of color. Do you think star athletes and other celebrities have a responsibility to speak out on social issues they consider vital to our way of life? Why or why not?

the results of a study of race in professional baseball. Notice that white athletes are more concentrated in the central “thinking” positions of pitcher (69 percent) and catcher (52 percent). By contrast, African Americans represent only 3 percent of pitchers and there are no black catchers at all. At the same time, 8 percent of infielders are African American, as are 25 percent of outfielders, positions characterized as requiring “speed and reactive ability” (Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, 2015).

More broadly, African Americans have a large share of players in only five sports: baseball, basketball, football, boxing, and track. In baseball, this share has been declining, from 19 percent in 1995 to 8.3 percent in 2016. And across all professional sports, the vast majority of managers, head coaches, and team owners are white (Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, 2016).

Who benefits most from professional sports? Although many individual players get sky-high salaries and millions of fans enjoy following their teams, the vast profits sports generate are controlled by a small number of people—predominantly white men. In sum, sports in the United States are bound up with inequalities based on gender, race, and wealth.

Sports as Symbolic Interaction

At the micro-level, a sporting event is a complex, face-to-face interaction. In part, play is guided by the rules of the game and each player’s assigned positions. Some games, such as hockey, define violence as acceptable; some games, such as golf, do not.

But players are also spontaneous and unpredictable. Following the symbolic-interaction approach, we

see sports less as a system and more as an ongoing process. From this point of view, too, we expect each player to understand the game a little differently. Some players enjoy a setting of stiff competition; for others, love of the game may be greater than the need to win.

In addition, the behavior of any single player may change over time. A rookie in professional baseball, for example, may feel self-conscious during the first few games in the big leagues but go on to develop a comfortable sense of fitting in with the team. Coming to feel at home on the field was slow and painful for Jackie Robinson, who knew that many white players, and millions of white fans, resented his presence. In time, however, his outstanding ability and his confident and cooperative manner won him the respect of the entire nation.

The major theoretical approaches—the structural-functional approach, the social-conflict approach, which includes gender-conflict/feminist theory and race-conflict theory; and the symbolic-interaction approach—provide different insights into sports, and none by itself presents the whole story. Applied to any issue, each approach generates its own interpretations. To appreciate fully the power of the sociological perspective, you should become familiar with all these approaches.

The Controversy & Debate box discusses the use of the sociological perspective and reviews many of the ideas presented in this chapter. This box raises a number of questions that will help you understand how sociological generalizations differ from the common stereotypes we encounter every day.

Controversy & Debate

Is Sociology Nothing More Than Stereotypes?

Jena: (*raising her eyes from her notebook*) Today in sociology class, we talked about stereotypes.

Marcia: (*trying to focus on her science lab*) OK, here's one: Roommates don't like to be disturbed when they're studying.

Jena: Seriously, my studious friend, we all have stereotypes, even professors.

Marcia: (*becoming faintly interested*) Like what?

Jena: Professor Chandler said today in class that if you're a Protestant, you're likely to kill yourself. And then Yannina—this girl from, I think, Ecuador—says something like, "You Americans are rich, you marry, and you love to divorce!"

Marcia: My brother said to me last week that "everybody knows you have to be black to play professional basketball." Now there's a stereotype!

College students, like everyone else, are quick to make generalizations about people. And as this chapter has explained, sociologists, too, love to generalize by looking for social patterns. However, beginning students of sociology may wonder if generalizations aren't really the same thing as stereotypes. For example, are the statements reported by Jena and Marcia true generalizations or false stereotypes?

Let's first be clear that a **stereotype** is a *simplified description applied to every person in some category*. Each of the statements made at the beginning of this box is a stereotype that is false for three reasons. First, rather than describing averages, each statement describes every person in some category in exactly the same way; second, even though many stereotypes often contain an element of truth, each statement ignores facts and distorts reality; and third, each statement seems to be motivated by bias, sounding more like a "put-down" than a fair-minded observation.



A sociology classroom is a good place to get at the truth behind common stereotypes.

What about sociology? If our discipline looks for social patterns and makes generalizations, does it express stereotypes? The answer is no, for three reasons. First, *sociologists do not carelessly apply any generalization to everyone in a category*. Second, *sociologists make sure that a generalization squares with the available facts*. And third, *sociologists offer generalizations fair-mindedly, with an interest in getting at the truth*.

Jena remembered her professor saying (although not in quite the same words) that the suicide rate among Protestants is higher than among Catholics or Jews. Based on information presented previously in this chapter, that is a true statement. However, the way Jena incorrectly reported the classroom remark—"If you're a Protestant, you're likely to kill yourself"—is not good sociology. It is not a true generalization because the vast majority of Protestants do no such thing. It would be just as wrong to jump to the conclusion that a particular friend, because he is a Protestant male, is about to end his own life. (Imagine refusing to lend money to a roommate who happens to be a Baptist, explaining, "Well, given the way people like you commit suicide, I might never get paid back!")

Second, sociologists shape their generalizations to the available facts. A more factual version of the statement Yannina made in class is that, on average, the U.S. population does have a high standard of living, almost everyone in our society does marry at some point in life, and although few people take pleasure in divorcing, our divorce rate is also among the world's highest.

Third, sociologists try to be fair-minded and want to get at the truth. The statement made by Marcia's brother, about blacks and basketball, is an unfair stereotype rather than good sociology for two reasons. First, although African Americans are overly represented in professional basketball relative to their share of the population, the statement—as made previously—is simply not true; second, the comment seems motivated by bias rather than truth-seeking.

The bottom line is that good sociological generalizations are *not* the same as harmful stereotypes. A college sociology course is an excellent setting for getting at the truth behind common stereotypes. The classroom encourages discussion and offers the factual information you need to decide whether a particular statement is a valid sociological generalization or a harmful or unfair stereotype.

What Do You Think?

1. Can you think of a common stereotype of sociologists? What is it? After reading this box, do you still think it is valid?
2. Do you think taking a sociology course can help correct people's stereotypes? Why or why not?
3. Can you think of a stereotype of your own that might be challenged by sociological analysis?