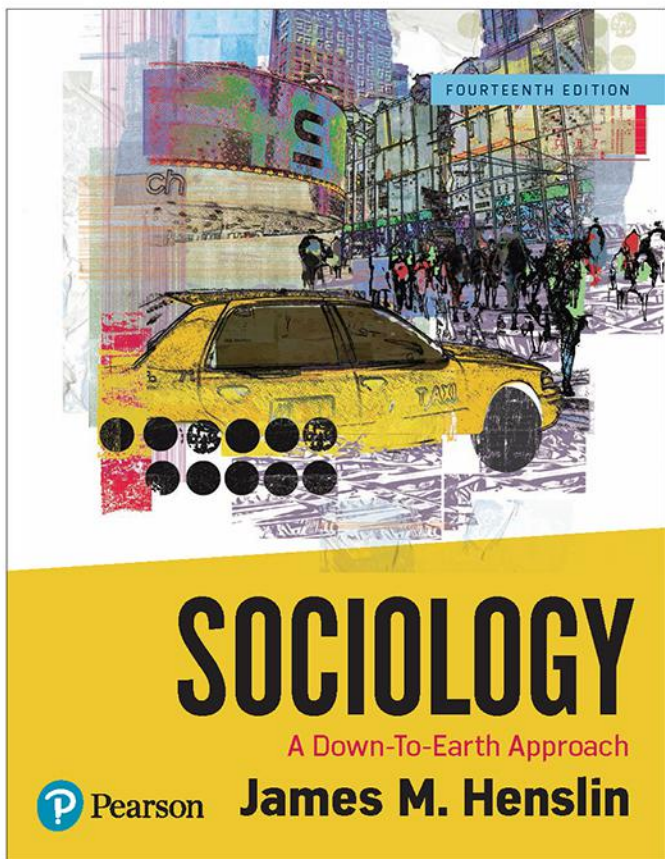


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# Sociology

A Down-to-Earth Approach

**Fourteenth Edition**

**James M. Henslin**

*Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville*



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**To my fellow sociologists,**

who do such creative research on social life and  
who communicate the sociological imagination  
to generations of students. With my sincere  
admiration and appreciation.

Jim Henslin

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# To the Student ... from the Author

**W**ELCOME TO SOCIOLOGY! I've loved sociology since I was in my teens, and I hope you enjoy it, too. Sociology is fascinating because it is about human behavior, and many of us find that it holds the key to understanding social life.

If you like to watch people and try to figure out why they do what they do, you will like sociology. Sociology pries open the doors of society so you can see what goes on behind them. *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* stresses how profoundly our society and the groups to which we belong influence us. Social class, for example, sets us on a particular path in life. For some, the path leads to more education, more interesting jobs, higher income, and better health, but for others it leads to dropping out of school, dead-end jobs, poverty, and even a higher risk of illness and disease. These paths are so significant that they affect our chances of making it to our first birthday, as well as of getting in trouble with the police. They even influence our satisfaction in marriage, the number of children we will have—and whether or not we will read this book in the first place.

When I took my first course in sociology, I was “hooked.” Seeing how marvelously my life had been affected by these larger social influences opened my eyes to a new world, one that has been fascinating to explore. I hope that you will have this experience, too.

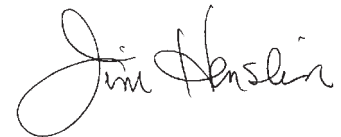
From how people become homeless to how they become presidents, from why people commit suicide to why women are discriminated against in every society around the world—all are part of sociology. This breadth, in fact, is what makes sociology so intriguing. We can place the sociological lens on broad features of society, such as social class, gender, and race-ethnicity, and then immediately turn our focus on the smaller, more intimate level. If we look at two people interacting—whether quarreling or kissing—we see how these broad features of society are being played out in their lives.

We aren't born with instincts. Nor do we come into this world with preconceived notions of what life should be like. At birth, we have no concepts of race-ethnicity, gender, age, or social class. We have no idea, for example, that people “ought” to act in certain ways because they are male or female. Yet we all learn such things as we grow up in our society. Uncovering the “hows” and the “whys” of this process is also part of what makes sociology so fascinating.

One of sociology's many pleasures is that as we study life in groups (which can be taken as a definition of sociology), whether those groups are in some far-off part of the world or in some nearby corner of our own society, we gain new insights into who we are and how we got that way. As we see how *their* customs affect *them*, the effects of our own society on us become more visible.

This book, then, can be part of an intellectual adventure, for it can lead you to a new way of looking at your social world—and in the process, help you to better understand both society and yourself.

I wish you the very best in college—and in your career afterward. It is my sincere desire that *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* will contribute to that success.



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P.S. I enjoy communicating with students, so feel free to comment on your experiences with this text. You can write me at [henslin@aol.com](mailto:henslin@aol.com)



# To the Instructor ... from the Author

**R**EMEMBER WHEN YOU FIRST GOT “HOOKED” on sociology, how the windows of perception opened as you began to see life-in-society through the sociological perspective? For most of us, this was an eye-opening experience. This text is designed to open those windows onto social life, so students can see clearly the vital effects of group membership on their lives. Although few students will get into what Peter Berger calls “the passion of sociology,” we at least can provide them the opportunity.

To study sociology is to embark on a fascinating process of discovery. We can compare sociology to a huge jigsaw puzzle. Only gradually do we see how the smaller pieces fit together. As we begin to see the interconnections, our perspective changes as we shift our eyes from the many small, disjointed pieces to the whole that is being formed. Of all the endeavors we could have entered, we chose sociology because of the ways in which it joins the “pieces” of society together and the challenges it poses to “ordinary” thinking. It is our privilege to share with students this process of awareness and discovery called the sociological perspective.

As instructors of sociology, we have set ambitious goals for ourselves: to teach both social structure and social interaction and to introduce students to the sociological literature—both the classic theorists and contemporary research. As we accomplish this, we would also like to enliven the classroom, encourage critical thinking, and stimulate our students’ sociological imagination. Although formidable, these goals *are* attainable. This book is designed to help you reach them. Based on many years of frontline (classroom) experience, its subtitle, *A Down-to-Earth Approach*, was not proposed lightly. My goal is to share the fascination of sociology with students and in doing so to make your teaching more rewarding.

Over the years, I have found the introductory course especially enjoyable. It is singularly satisfying to see students’ faces light up as they begin to see how separate pieces of their world fit together. It is a pleasure to watch them gain insight into how their social experiences give shape to even their innermost desires. This is precisely what this text is designed to do—to stimulate your students’ sociological imagination so they can better perceive how the “pieces” of society fit together—and what this means for their own lives.

Filled with examples from around the world as well as from our own society, this text helps to make today’s multicultural, global society come alive for students. From learning how the international elite carve up global markets to studying the intimacy of friendship and marriage, students can see how sociology is the key to explaining contemporary life—and their own place in it.

In short, this text is designed to make your teaching easier. There simply is no justification for students to have to wade through cumbersome approaches to sociology. I am firmly convinced that the introduction to sociology should be enjoyable and that the introductory textbook can be an essential tool in sharing the discovery of sociology with students.

## What’s New in This 14th Edition?

Because sociology is about social life and we live in a changing global society, this new edition of *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* reflects the national and global changes that engulf us, as well as presents new sociological research. An indication of the thoroughness of the preparation that went into this 14th edition is the text’s 385 new citations (of a total of 1,750). This edition also has about 525 instructional photos, of which 280 are new. I have either selected or taken each of these photos, as well as written each caption. By tying the photos and their captions directly into the text, they become part of the students’ learning experience.

I am especially pleased with **Applying Sociology to Your Life**, a new feature introduced in this edition. Although *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* is well-known for how it shows students how sociology is relevant to their lives, this emphasis has been amplified in this edition. This new feature focuses explicitly on how sociology applies to the student’s life. It is one thing to say to students that sociological research on bureaucracy is relevant because they might work in a bureaucracy, but quite another to show students how they can use impression management to get ahead in a bureaucracy. It is also one thing to review with students the average salaries according to college major, but quite another to show students how they can use sociology to increase their own salaries. We can point out what sociologists have found when they studied the glass ceiling, but sociology is much more relevant for our students if we can show them how they can use sociology to break through the glass ceiling. These three examples are part of the eighteen items that make up this new feature, *Applying Sociology to Your Life*.

And updates? As with previous editions, you can expect that they run throughout this new edition. The updates are too numerous to mention, but to give you an indication of how extensively this edition is revised, following is a list of the new topics, boxed features, tables, and figures.



# New to This Edition

## Chapter 1

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** The Sociological Perspective and Your Life Course

**Figure 1.1** Suicide of Americans ages 18 to 24

**Figure 1.7** Western Marriage: Husband–Wife Relationship

**Topic:** William Graham Sumner taught the first course in sociology in the United States (Yale 1872)

## Chapter 2

**Sociology and Technology: The Shifting Landscape:** The End of Human Culture? Artificial Intelligence and Super-Smart Computers

**Topic:** In the 1600s, killing cats was part of festive celebrations

## Chapter 3

**Topic:** Ekman's conclusions on the universality of the expression of human emotions is challenged by research among the Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea.

**Topic:** Negative effects of day care depend on the age at which children are placed in day care

## Chapter 4

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** Getting Promoted: Making Impression Management Work for You

**Topic:** *Transgender* as a master status

**Topic:** Students learn more from attractive teachers

## Chapter 6

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** The New World of Work: How to Keep a Paycheck Coming in the New Global Marketplace

**Topic:** Explaining the conformity of the Asch experiments: people feel less agency when they do something they have been ordered to do

**Topic:** Investigation of JonBenet Ramsey as an example of groupthink

## Chapter 7

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** Using Mirroring to Improve Popularity and Open the Doors to Success

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** “So You Want That Job. What about Your Past?”

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** How to Humanize Your Work Setting

**Sociology and Technology: The Shifting Landscape:** Virtual Reality and Diversity Training

**Topic:** The experience and perspective of white males are being added to diversity training

**Topic:** As a warning to Russia, NATO has stationed token troops in the Baltics

**Topic:** Strengths-based management as a way to make work teams more effective

## Chapter 8

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** How Does Social Control Theory Apply to You?

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** How Do You Use Techniques of Neutralization to Protect Your Self Concept?

**Topic:** In murder trials, if the victim is white and the accused is black, juries are more likely to impose the death penalty than if the accused is white and the victim is black

## Chapter 9

**Topic:** Face-recognition software can turn the police's body cameras into surveillance machines, able to identify everyone an officer passes on the sidewalk

## Chapter 10

**Figure 10.7** Physical Health, by Income: People Who Have Difficulty with Everyday Physical Activities

**Figure 10.8** Mental Health, by Income: Feelings of Sadness, Hopelessness, or Worthlessness

**Figure 10.10** An Overview of Poverty in the United States

**Figure 10.13** Poverty and Family Structure

**Figure 10.14** Poverty and Race-Ethnicity

**Figure 10.15** Poverty and Age

**Topic:** The 20 richest Americans have more wealth than the bottom half of the U.S. population combined

**Topic:** Before they turn 65, about 60 percent of the U.S. population will experience a year of poverty

**Topic:** The Jardin in Las Vegas sells a \$10,000 cocktail and a weekend Valentine package for \$100,000

## Chapter 11

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** How to Get a Higher Salary  
**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** Breaking through the Glass Ceiling

**Figure 11.10** Women in U.S. Congress

**Figure 11.7** Master's degree was added to this figure

**Topic:** The effects of testosterone differ with the situation: Women given testosterone in a competitive situation grow suspicious and less trusting, but given testosterone in a situation where they are being trusted, they become more responsible and generous.

**Topic:** Many minority women feel that the feminist movement represents "white" experiences. Their attempt to change emphases has led to a clash of perspectives.

**Topic:** Among the CEOs of the largest U.S. companies, a reverse pay gap has emerged, with women outearning men by several million dollars a year.

**Topic:** The rate of sexual assault on boys and men is about one-tenth that of girls and women.

## Chapter 12

**Down-to-Earth Sociology:** Exploring Racism

**Table 12.3** Race–Ethnicity and Income Extremes

**Topic:** Arizona has agreed that the police will not stop people solely to determine if they are in the country illegally.

**Topic:** Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada became the first Latina senator.

**Topic:** Native Americans operate their own embassy in Washington, D.C.

**Topic:** The *bamboo curtain*: Asian Americans claiming they are discriminated against in college admissions

## Chapter 13

**Topic:** In Japan, more adult diapers are sold than baby diapers.

**Topic:** The Social Security dependency ratio has dropped to 3.6 (current workers to one beneficiary)

**Topic:** Of the world's 44 supercentenarians whose age has been confirmed, 43 are women.

## Chapter 14

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** How to Network

**Figure 14.1** How Networks Can Create Opportunities and Build Sources of Knowledge

**Topic:** Technology is leading to a *mobile shift*, executives without offices, more mobile in the corporation.

## Chapter 15

**Sociology and Technology: The Shifting Landscape:** How Could the Polls Get It So Wrong?

**Topic:** From President Obama to President Trump used as an example of the transition of authority in a rational–legal structure even when a newly elected leader represents ideas extremely different from the predecessor

**Topic:** Kim Jong-un of North Korea had his vice premier for education shot for slouching during a meeting of parliament

## Chapter 16

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** What Are *Your* Chances of Getting Divorced? The Misuse of Statistics

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** What Kind of Parent Will You Be?

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** Finding Quality Daycare  
**Cultural Diversity around the World:** Arranged Marriage in India: Probing beneath the Surface

**Figure 16.5** The Remarkable Change in Two- and Four-Children Families

**Figure 16.16** Today's Newlyweds: Their Marital History

**Topic:** One-third of Americans who marry met online.

**Topic:** The latest research on children reared by same-sex parents

**Topic:** For the first time since 1880, the percentage of young adults who live with their parents is larger than those who live with a spouse or partner in a separate household.

**Topic:** "Adulthood" is also known as "waithood."

**Topic:** The average age of those who are cohabiting is 39.

**Topic:** Helicoptering, parents' hovering over their children to be certain they make the right decisions and have the right experiences, increasingly common in the upper-middle class

**Topic:** Implications for human evolution of Crispr (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats)

## Chapter 17

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** You Want to Get Through College? Let's Apply Sociology

**Applying Sociology to Your Life:** You Really Want to Get Through College? Let's Apply More Sociology (Experiment that changed self-expectations, leading to higher completion of the first year of college)

**Topic:** To increase graduation rates, community colleges are developing *guided pathways*.

**Topic:** A major change is occurring in Japan's higher education—a shift to job training in its lower tier universities and more research in its top tier.

**Topic:** University salaries in Russia are so low that tens of thousands of academics have left Russia.

**Topic:** Tucson, Arizona, runs a "Teenage Parent High School," where pregnant girls and those who have already given birth learn parenting skills as well as traditional subjects

**Topic:** What does an A mean? High school teachers give *twenty times* more A's than C's.

## Chapter 18

**Sociology and Technology: The Shifting Landscape:** Changing Religious Practices in the Digital Age

**Topic:** Roman Catholics use Confessor Go to locate priests to hear confessions, and WhatsApp to discuss moral dilemmas with priests.

## Chapter 19

**Topic:** To whitewash international relations, China made a law prohibiting the harvesting of organs from executed prisoners, but the practice continues.

**Topic:** In Holland, there are about 6,000 medically assisted suicides a year.

**Topic:** Each of the half million U.S. patients on dialysis costs \$88,000 per year.

**Topic:** Americans spend more on alcoholic beverages than they spend on beef, fish, and eggs combined.

**Topic:** The average smoker dies ten years younger than the average non-smoker.

**Topic:** Nanorobots are being developed to travel down a patient's bloodstream to deliver drugs that target a tumor's cancer cells.

## Chapter 20

**Topic:** The United States has 40 million immigrants.

**Topic:** The world now has thirty-one megacities.

**Topic:** Japan's population is shrinking by a million people a year.

**Topic:** Update on Monsanto subverting GMO research.

**Topic:** Tomorrow's suburb: Attempts of suburbs to transform themselves into cities.

## Chapter 21

**Down-to-Earth Sociology:** The True Believer: The Nazis and ISIS

**Figure 21.2** The Participants in a Crowd

**Topic:** Bringing emotions back in: the study of crowd behavior

**Topic:** Pokemon Go and fidget spinners added to crazes

**Topic:** The demonstrations of "the dreamers" added as an example of relative deprivation theory

## Chapter 22

**Topic:** The United States withdrew from G7's Paris Accord on Climate Change.

**Topic:** Global warming threatens the Earth's coral reefs, which hold chemicals to cure diseases. Venom from the cone snail, fifty times more potent than morphine, is being used as a painkiller.

**Topic:** In coming distance learning classes, the simultaneous translation of speech will allow students from different cultures to talk and to understand one another.

**Topic:** In coming distance learning classes, artificial intelligence will enable students to go on virtual field trips in other cultures that immerse them in different realities.

**Topic:** The Pentagon operates a Cyber Command with nine "National Mission Teams" of sixty military personnel each

**Topic:** An Italian company sells "off-the-shelf" programs that allow someone to insert malicious code in computers and mobile devices

## The Organization of This Text

The text is laid out in five parts. Part I focuses on the sociological perspective, which is introduced in the first chapter. We then look at how culture influences us (Chapter 2), examine socialization (Chapter 3), and compare macrosociology and microsociology (Chapter 4). After this, we look at how sociologists do research (Chapter 5). Placing research methods in the fifth chapter does not follow the usual sequence, but doing so allows students to first become immersed in the captivating findings of sociology—then, after their interest is awakened, they learn how sociologists gather their data. Students respond very well to this approach, but if you prefer the more traditional order, simply teach this chapter as the second chapter. No content will be affected.

Part II, which focuses on groups and social control, adds to the students' understanding of how far-reaching

society's influence is—how group membership penetrates even our thinking, attitudes, and orientations to life. We first examine the different types of groups that have such profound influences on us and then look at the fascinating area of group dynamics (Chapter 6). We then examine the impact of bureaucracy and formal organizations (Chapter 7). After this, we focus on how groups "keep us in line" and sanction those who violate their norms (Chapter 8).

In Part III, we turn our focus on social inequality, examining how it pervades society and how it has an impact on our own lives. Because social stratification is so significant, I have written two chapters on this topic. The first (Chapter 9), with its global focus, presents an overview of the principles of stratification. The second (Chapter 10), with its emphasis on social class, focuses on stratification in the United States. After establishing this broader context of social stratification, we examine gender, the most

global of the inequalities (Chapter 11). Then we focus on inequalities of race-ethnicity (Chapter 12) and those of age (Chapter 13).

Part IV helps students to become more aware of how social institutions encompass their lives. We first look at economy, the social institution that has become dominant in U.S. society (Chapter 14) and then at politics, our second overarching social institution (Chapter 15). We then place the focus on marriage and family (Chapter 16) and education (Chapter 17). After this, we look at the significance of religion (Chapter 18) and, finally, that of medicine (Chapter 19). One of the emphases in this part of the book is how our social institutions are changing and how their changes, in turn, have an impact on our own lives.

With its focus on broad social change, Part V provides an appropriate conclusion for the book. Here we examine why our world is changing so rapidly, as well as catch a glimpse of what is yet to come. We first analyze trends in population and urbanization, those sweeping forces that affect our lives so significantly but that ordinarily remain below our level of awareness (Chapter 20). Our focus on collective behavior and social movements (Chapter 21) and social change and the environment (Chapter 22) takes us to the “cutting edge” of the vital changes that engulf us all.

## Themes and Features

Six central themes run throughout this text: down-to-earth sociology, applying sociology to your students’ life, globalization, cultural diversity, critical thinking about social life, and the new technology. The theme of how sociology applies to the lives of your students is new to this edition. For each of these themes, except globalization, which is incorporated throughout the text, I have written a series of boxed features. These boxed features are one of my favorite components of the book. They are especially useful for introducing the controversial topics that make sociology such a lively activity.

Let’s look at these six themes.

### Down-to-Earth Sociology

As many years of teaching have shown me, all too often textbooks are written to appeal to the adopters of texts rather than to the students who will learn from them. In writing this book, my central concern has been to present sociology in a way that not only facilitates understanding but also shares its excitement. During the course of writing other texts, I often have been told that my explanations and writing style are “down-to-earth,” or accessible and inviting to students—so much so that I chose this phrase as the book’s subtitle.

This *Down-to-Earth Sociology* theme explores sociological processes that underlie everyday life. The topics that we

review in this feature are highly diverse. Here are some of them:

- the experiences of W. E. B. Du Bois in studying U.S. race relations (Chapter 1)
- what applied sociologists do (Chapter 2)
- how gossip and ridicule enforce adolescent norms (Chapter 3)
- how football can help us understand social structure (Chapter 4)
- beauty and success (Chapter 4)
- fraudulent social research (Chapter 5)
- serial killers (Chapter 8)
- sexting (Chapter 8)
- the lifestyles of the super-rich (Chapter 10)
- the American dream and social mobility (Chapter 10)
- college dorms and contact theory (Chapter 12)
- sex in nursing homes (Chapter 13)
- women navigating male-dominated corporations (Chapter 14)
- terrorism in the name of God (Chapter 18)
- the international black market in human body parts (Chapter 19)
- the true believers at the core of the Nazis and ISIS (Chapter 21)
- mass hysteria (Chapter 21)
- the coming Star Wars (Chapter 22)

This first theme is actually a hallmark of the text, as my goal is to make sociology “down to earth.” To help students grasp the fascination of sociology, I continuously stress sociology’s relevance to their lives. To reinforce this theme, I avoid unnecessary jargon and use concise explanations and clear and simple (but not reductive) language. I also use student-relevant examples to illustrate key concepts, and I base several of the chapters’ opening vignettes on my own experiences in exploring social life. That this goal of sharing sociology’s fascination is being reached is evident from the many comments I receive from instructors and students alike that the text helps make sociology “come alive.”

## Applying Sociology to Your Life

As mentioned, this second theme is being introduced in this edition. There were a lot of challenges to overcome in producing this feature, and I am eager to find out how it works in your classroom. Please share the results with me.



Here is a partial list of the topics included in *Applying Sociology to Your Life*:

- applying the sociological perspective to your life course (Chapter 1)
- making impression management work for you: getting promoted (Chapter 4)
- keeping a paycheck coming in the new global marketplace (Chapter 6)
- using mirroring to improve popularity and open the doors to success (Chapter 7)
- how you can humanize your work setting (Chapter 7)
- how techniques of neutralization protect your self concept (Chapter 8)
- how to get a higher salary by applying sociology (Chapter 11)
- applying sociology to break through the glass ceiling (Chapter 11)
- using networks to get ahead at work (Chapter 14)
- applying sociology to parenting (Chapter 16)
- applying divorce statistics to your marriage (Chapter 16)
- finding quality daycare (Chapter 16)
- applying sociology to get through college (Chapter 17)

I hope you have as much pleasure using this new feature in your classroom as I had in developing it.

## Globalization

In the third theme, globalization, we explore the impact of global issues on our lives and on the lives of people around the world. All of us are feeling the effects of an increasingly powerful and encompassing global economy, one that intertwines the fates of nations. The globalization of capitalism influences the kinds of skills and knowledge we need, the types of work available to us—and whether work is available at all. Globalization also underlies the costs of the goods and services we consume and whether our country is at war or peace—or in some uncharted middle ground between the two, some sort of perpetual war against unseen, sinister, and ever-threatening enemies lurking throughout the world. In addition to the strong emphasis on global issues that runs throughout this text, I have written a separate chapter on global stratification (Chapter 9). I also feature global issues in the chapters on social institutions and the final chapters on social change: population, urbanization, social movements, and the environment.

What occurs in Russia, Germany, and China, as well as in much smaller nations such as Afghanistan and Iraq, has far-reaching consequences on our own lives. Consequently, in addition to the global focus that runs throughout the text, the next theme, cultural diversity, also has a strong global emphasis.

## Cultural Diversity around the World and in the United States

The fourth theme, cultural diversity, has two primary emphases. The first is cultural diversity around the world. Gaining an understanding of how social life is “done” in other parts of the world often challenges our taken-for-granted assumptions about social life. At times, when we learn about other cultures, we gain an appreciation for the life of other peoples; at other times, we may be shocked or even disgusted at some aspect of another group’s way of life (such as female circumcision) and come away with a renewed appreciation of our own customs.

To highlight this first subtheme, I have written a series called *Cultural Diversity around the World*. Among the topics with this subtheme are

- food customs that shock people from different cultures (Chapter 2)
- why the dead need money (Chapter 2)
- where virgins become men (Chapter 3)
- human sexuality in Mexico and Kenya (Chapter 8)
- how blaming rape victims protects India’s caste system (Chapter 8)
- female circumcision (Chapter 11)
- the life of child workers (Chapter 14)
- the globalization of capitalism (Chapter 14)
- probing beneath the surface to understand arranged marriage in India (Chapter 16)
- female infanticide in China and India (Chapter 20)
- the destruction of the rain forests and indigenous peoples of Brazil (Chapter 22)

In the second subtheme, *Cultural Diversity in the United States*, we examine groups that make up the fascinating array of people who form the U.S. population. In this subtheme, we review such topics as

- the language of race (Chapter 2)
- the controversy over the use of Spanish or English (Chapter 2)
- how the Amish resist social change (Chapter 4)
- how our social networks produce social inequality (Chapter 6)
- the upward social mobility of African Americans (Chapter 10)
- the author’s travels with a Mexican who transports undocumented workers to the U.S. border (Chapter 12)
- Pentecostalism among Latino immigrants (Chapter 18)
- human heads, animal sacrifices, and religious freedom (Chapter 18)
- our shifting racial-ethnic mix (Chapter 20)

Seeing that there are so many ways of “doing” social life can remove some of our cultural smugness, making us more aware of how arbitrary our own customs are—and how our taken-for-granted ways of thinking are rooted in culture. The stimulating contexts of these contrasts can help students develop their sociological imagination. They encourage students to see connections among key sociological concepts such as culture, socialization, norms, race–ethnicity, gender, and social class. As your students’ sociological imagination grows, they can attain a new perspective on their experiences in their own corners of life—and a better understanding of the social structure of U.S. society.

## Critical Thinking

In our fifth theme, critical thinking, we focus on controversial social issues, inviting students to examine various sides of those issues. In these sections, titled *Thinking Critically about Social Life*, I present objective, fair portrayals of positions and do not take a side—although occasionally I do play the “devil’s advocate” in the questions that close each of the topics. Like the boxed features, these sections can enliven your classroom with a vibrant exchange of ideas. Among the social issues we tackle are

- whether rapists are sick (Chapter 5)
- our tendency to conform to evil authority, as uncovered by the Milgram experiments (Chapter 6)
- how labeling keeps some people down and helps others move up (Chapter 8)
- how vigilantes fill in when the state breaks down (Chapter 8)
- the three-strikes-and-you’re-out laws (Chapter 8)
- bounties paid to kill homeless children in Brazil (Chapter 9)
- children in poverty (Chapter 10)
- emerging masculinities and femininities (Chapter 11)
- medically assisted suicide (Chapter 19)
- abortion as a social movement (Chapter 21)
- cyberwar and cyber defense (Chapter 22)

These *Thinking Critically about Social Life* sections are based on controversial social issues that either affect the student’s own life or focus on topics that have intrinsic interest for students. Because of their controversial nature, these sections stimulate both critical thinking and lively class discussions. *Thinking Critically about Social Life* also provides provocative topics for in-class debates and small discussion groups, effective ways to enliven a class and present sociological ideas. In the *Instructor’s Manual*, I describe the nuts and bolts of using small groups in the classroom, a highly effective way of engaging students in sociological topics.

## Sociology and Technology: The Shifting Landscape

In the sixth theme, *sociology and technology*, we explore an aspect of social life that has come to be central in our lives. We welcome our technological tools, for they help us to be more efficient at performing our daily tasks, from making a living to communicating with others—whether those people are nearby or on the other side of the globe. The significance of technology extends far beyond the tools and the ease and efficiency they bring to our lives. We can more accurately envision our new technology as a social revolution that will leave few aspects of our lives untouched. Its effects are so profound that it even changes the ways we view life.

This theme is introduced in Chapter 2, where technology is defined and presented as a major aspect of culture. The impact of technology is then discussed throughout the text. Examples include how technology is related to cultural change (Chapter 2), the control of workers (Chapter 7), the maintenance of global stratification (Chapter 9), social class (Chapter 10), and social inequality in early human history (Chapter 14). We also look at the impact of technology on dating (Chapter 16), family life (Chapter 16), education (Chapter 17), religion (Chapter 18), medicine (Chapter 19), and war (Chapter 22). The final chapter (Chapter 22) on social change and the environment concludes the book with a focus on the effects of technology.

To highlight this theme, I have written a series called *Sociology and Technology: The Shifting Landscape*. In this feature, we explore how technology affects our lives as it changes society. Among the topics we examine are how technology

- artificial intelligence and super-smart computers may bring the end of human culture (Chapter 2)
- affects our body images (Chapter 4)
- blurs the distinction between reality and fantasy (Chapter 6)
- through virtual reality can be applied to diversity training (Chapter 7)
- is allowing the creation of an overwhelming security state (Chapter 7)
- is having an impact on women in Iran (Chapter 11)
- allowed pollsters to get the presidential projections so wrong (Chapter 15)
- is changing the way people find mates (Chapter 16)
- is leading to a future where we order babies with specific characteristics (Chapter 16)
- is changing education through distance learning (Chapter 17)
- is having an impact on religion (Chapter 18)
- leads to dilemmas of rationing medical care (Chapter 19)

## Visual Presentations of Sociology

**SHOWING CHANGES OVER TIME** In presenting social data, many of the figures and tables show how data change over time. This allows students to see trends in social life and to make predictions on how these trends might continue—and even affect their own lives. Examples include

- Figure 1.6 *U.S. Marriage, U.S. Divorce*
- Figure 3.2 *Transitional Adulthood: A New Stage in the Life Course*
- Figure 6.1 *The Social Transformations of Society*
- Table 8.2 *Women and Crime: What a Change*
- Figure 8.2 *How Much Is Enough? The Explosion in the Number of U.S. Prisoners*
- Figure 10.3 *The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same: Dividing the Nation's Income*
- Figure 11.2 *Changes in College Enrollment, by Sex*
- Figure 11.4 *Gender Changes in Professional Degrees*
- Figure 11.8 *The Gender Gap over Time: What Percentage of Men's Income Do Women Earn?*
- Figure 16.2 *In Two-Paycheck Marriages, How Do Husbands and Wives Divide Their Responsibilities?*
- Figure 16.4 *The Number of Children Americans Think Are Ideal*
- Figure 16.5 *The Remarkable Change in Two- and Four-Children Families*
- Figure 16.9 *The Decline of Two-Parent Families*
- Figure 16.11 *Cohabitation in the United States*
- Figure 17.1 *Educational Achievement in the United States*
- Figure 20.5 *World Population Growth, 1750–2150*
- Figure 20.11 *How the World Is Urbanizing*

**THROUGH THE AUTHOR'S LENS** Using this format, students are able to look over my shoulder as I experience other cultures or explore aspects of this one. These eight photo essays should expand your students' sociological imagination and open their minds to other ways of doing social life, as well as stimulate thought-provoking class discussion.

**VIENNA: SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SOCIAL INTERACTION IN A VIBRANT CITY** appears in Chapter 4. The photos I took in this city illustrate how social structure surrounds us, setting the scene for our interactions, limiting and directing them.

**WHEN A TORNADO STRIKES: SOCIAL ORGANIZATION FOLLOWING A NATURAL DISASTER** When a tornado hit a small town just hours from where I lived, I photographed the aftermath of the disaster. The police let me in to view the neighborhood where the tornado had struck,

destroying homes and killing several people. I was impressed by how quickly people were putting their lives back together, the topic of this photo essay (Chapter 4).

**COMMUNITY IN THE CITY**, in Chapter 6, is also from Vienna. This sequence of four photos focuses on strangers who are helping a man who has just fallen on the sidewalk. This event casts doubt on the results of Darley and Latané's laboratory experiments. This short sequence was serendipitous in my research. One of my favorite photos is the last in the series, which portrays the cop coming toward me to question why I was taking photos of the accident. It fits the sequence perfectly.

**THE DUMP PEOPLE OF PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA** Among the culture shocks I experienced in Cambodia was not to discover that people scavenge at Phnom Penh's huge city dump—this I knew about—but that they also live there. With the aid of an interpreter, I was able to interview these people, as well as photograph them as they went about their everyday lives. An entire community lives in the city dump, complete with restaurants amidst the smoke and piles of garbage. This photo essay reveals not just these people's activities but also their social organization (Chapter 9).

**WORK AND GENDER: WOMEN AT WORK IN INDIA** As I traveled in India, I took photos of women at work in public places. The more I traveled in this country and the more photos I took, the more insight I gained into gender relations. Despite the general dominance of men in India, women's worlds are far from limited to family and home. Women are found at work throughout the society. What is even more remarkable is how vastly different "women's work" is in India than it is in the United States. This, too, is an intellectually provocative photo essay (Chapter 11).

**SMALL TOWN USA: STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE** To take the photos for this essay, on a road trip from California to Florida, I went off the beaten path. Instead of following the interstates, I followed those "little black lines" on the map. They took me to out-of-the-way places that the national transportation system has bypassed. Many of these little towns are putting on a valiant face as they struggle to survive, but, as the photos show, the struggle is apparent, and, in some cases, so are the scars (Chapter 14).

**HOLY WEEK IN SPAIN**, in Chapter 18, features processions in two cities in Spain, Malaga, a provincial capital, and Almuñecar, a smaller city in Granada. The Roman Catholic heritage of Spain runs so deeply that the *La Asunción de María* (The Assumption of Mary) is a national holiday, with the banks and post offices closing. City streets carry such names as (translated) Conception, Piety, Humility, Calvary, Crucifixion, The Blessed Virgin. In large and small towns



throughout Spain, elaborate processions during Holy Week feature *tronos* that depict the biblical account of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. I was allowed to photograph the preparations for one of the processions, so this essay also includes "behind-the-scenes" photos.

During the processions, the participants walk slowly for one or two minutes; then because of the weight of the *tronos*, they rest for one or two minutes. This process repeats for about six hours. As you will see, some of the most interesting activities occur during the rest periods.

**A WALK THROUGH EL TIRO IN MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA** One of the most significant social changes in the world is taking place in the Least Industrialized Nations. In the search for a better life, people are abandoning rural areas. Fleeing poverty, they are flocking to the cities, only to be greeted with more poverty. Some of these settlements of the new urban poor are dangerous. I was fortunate to be escorted by an insider through a section of Medellin, Colombia, that is controlled by gangs (Chapter 20).

**OTHER PHOTO ESSAYS** To help students better understand subcultures, I have retained the photo essay *Standards of Beauty* in Chapter 2. I have also kept the photo essay in Chapter 12 on ethnic work, as it helps students see that ethnicity doesn't "just happen." Because these photo essays consist of photos taken by others, they are not a part of the series, *Through the Author's Lens*. I think you will appreciate the understanding these two photo essays can give your students.

**PHOTO COLLAGES** Because sociology lends itself so well to photographic illustrations, this text also includes photo collages. In Chapter 1, the photo collage, in the shape of a wheel, features some of the many women who became sociologists in earlier generations, women who have largely gone unacknowledged as sociologists. In Chapter 2, students can catch a glimpse of the fascinating variety that goes into the cultural relativity of beauty. The collage in Chapter 6 illustrates categories, aggregates, and primary and secondary groups, concepts that students sometimes wrestle to distinguish. The photo collage in Chapter 11 lets students see how differently gender is portrayed in different cultures.

**OTHER PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR** Sprinkled throughout the text are photos I took in Austria, Cambodia, India, Latvia, Spain, Vietnam, and the United States. These photos illustrate sociological principles and topics better than photos available from commercial sources. As an example, while in the United States, I received a report about a feral child who had been discovered living with monkeys. The possibility of photographing and interviewing that child who had been taken to an orphanage was one of the reasons

I went to Cambodia. That particular photo is at the beginning of Chapter 3.

**OTHER SPECIAL PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES** In addition to chapter summaries and reviews, key terms, and a comprehensive glossary, I have included several special features to help students learn sociology. *In Sum* sections help students review important points within the chapter before going on to new material. I have also developed a series of *Social Maps*, which illustrate how social conditions vary by geography. All of the maps in this text are original.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES** I have written learning objectives for the main points of each chapter. These learning objectives, which provide a guiding "road map" for your students, are presented three times: in a list at the beginning of the chapter, at the point where that specific material is presented, and again at the chapter's Summary and Review.

**CHAPTER-OPENING VIGNETTES** These accounts feature down-to-earth illustrations of a major aspect of each chapter's content. Some of these vignettes are based on my research with the homeless, the time I spent with them on the streets and slept in their shelters (Chapters 1, 10, and 19). Others recount sociological experiences in Africa (Chapters 2 and 11) and Mexico (Chapters 16 and 20). I also share my experiences when I spent a night with street people at DuPont Circle in Washington, D.C. (Chapter 4). For other vignettes, I use current and historical events (Chapters 5, 7, 9, 12, 17, 18, 21, and 22), composite accounts (Chapter 14), classical studies in the social sciences (Chapters 3, 8, and 13), and even scenes from novels (Chapters 6 and 15). Many students have told their instructors that they find these vignettes compelling, that they stimulate interest in the chapter.

**THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT THE CHAPTERS** I close each chapter with critical thinking questions. Each question focuses on a major feature of the chapter, asking students to reflect on and consider some issue. Many of the questions ask the students to apply sociological findings and principles to their own lives.

**ON SOURCES** Sociological data are found in a wide variety of sources, and this text reflects that variety. Cited throughout this text are standard journals such as the *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Problems*, *American Sociological Review*, and *Journal of Marriage and Family*, as well as more esoteric journals such as the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, *Chronobiology International*, and *Western Journal of Black Studies*. I have also drawn heavily from standard news sources, especially the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*, as well as more unusual sources such as *El País*. In addition, I cite unpublished research and theoretical papers by sociologists.

# Acknowledgments

The response from both instructors and students to this text's earlier editions indicates that my efforts at making sociology down to earth have succeeded. The years that have gone into writing this text are a culmination of the many years that preceded its writing—from graduate school to that equally demanding endeavor known as classroom teaching. No text, of course, comes solely from its author. Although I am responsible for the final words on the printed page, I have received excellent feedback from instructors who have taught from the first thirteen editions. I am especially grateful to

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I want to thank Billy Grieco and Jeff Marshall for coordinating the many tasks that were necessary to produce this new edition; Jenn Auvil and Mary Donovan who coordinated so many integrating tasks; and Kate Cebik for her photo research.

Since this text is based on the contributions of many, I would count it a privilege if you would share with me your teaching experiences with this book, including suggestions for improving the text. Both positive and negative comments are welcome. This is one way that I continue to learn.

I wish you the very best in your teaching. It is my sincere desire that *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach* contributes to your classroom success.



James M. Henslin

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I welcome your correspondence. You can reach me at [henslin@aol.com](mailto:henslin@aol.com)

P.S. With changing technology, I am now able to discuss various aspects of sociology with your students. This new feature, called *Hearing from the Author*, is described in the publisher's overview of Revel, which follows this note.

## Revel™ for *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*

Revel is an interactive learning environment that deeply engages students and prepares them for class. Media and assessment integrated directly within the author's narrative lets students read, explore interactive sociology 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.

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- **Hearing from the Author Audio Clips** are a new Revel feature in which Jim further personalizes the content of this edition by opening each chapter and commenting on sociological concepts, photo essays, individual photos of particular significance, tables, figures, and topics. This feature gives students additional context for understanding more difficult topics, while the author's interweaving of observations and personal experiences reinforces how sociology is part of the student's everyday life.

This is a hallmark of the instructional design, as Jim's goal is to make sociology "down to earth." To help students grasp the fascination of sociology, Jim continuously stresses sociology's relevance to their lives. As both instructors and students have commented, this helps make sociology "come alive." And after all, as Jim emphasizes throughout *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*, sociology is a fascinating endeavor.

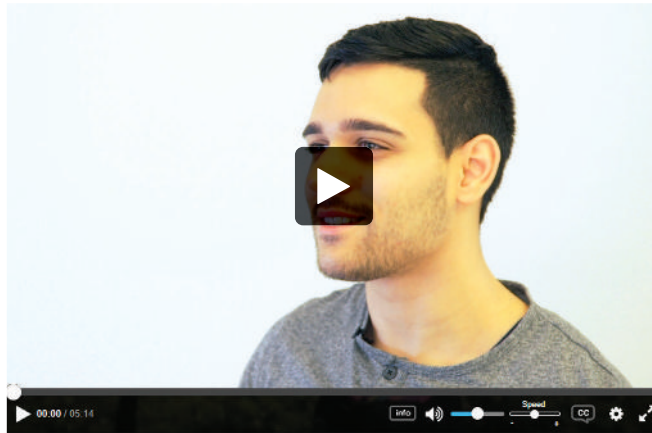
- **Videos** support the down-to-earth approach with news footage and stories that reflect real-life examples of sociology. Students can revisit major historical events including critical points in the Civil Rights movement and view videos through a sociological lens.



An original set of videos, including the **Hearing from Students** video series, is unique to *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*. These exclusive video interviews feature students discussing the highlights of each chapter. These videos give students the opportunity to hear from their peers who are sharing their thoughts on chapter topics and reflecting on how they can apply the sociological perspective of the chapter to their own lives.

- **Pearson Originals** The Pearson Originals 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





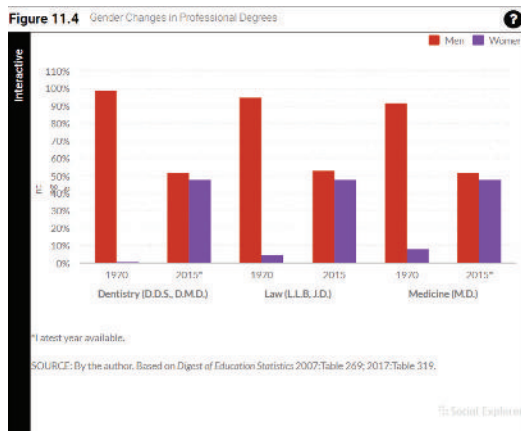
for students while creating opportunities to further develop their understanding of sociology. Therefore, students not only connect with the people and stories on a personal level, but also view these stories and individuals with greater empathy while contextualizing core course concepts.

- Interpreting the First Amendment: Regulating Protest in Minnesota
- Gender Identity: Meant to Be Maddie
- Domestic Violence in Rural America: Survivors' Stories
- The American Working Class: Voices from Harrisburg, IL
- Taking a Stand Against Environmental Injustice

Videos can be easily accessed from the instructor Resources folder within the Revel product.



- **Interactive figures and tables** feature the technology of Social Explorer, which shows data in interactive graphs with rollover information. Examples include Figure 11.4 Gender Changes in College Degrees, Table 15.1 Who Votes for

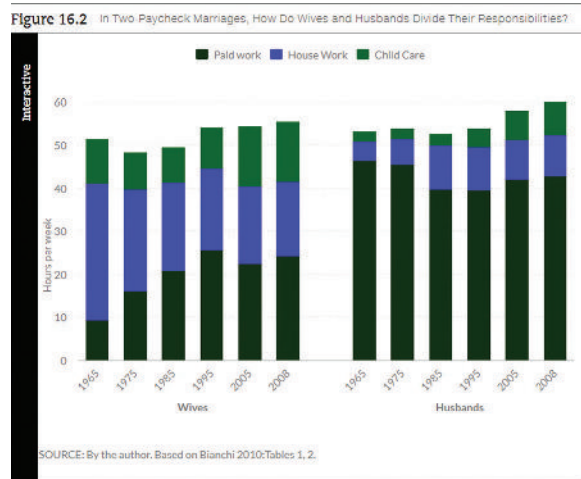


**Table 15.1** Who Votes for President?

|                     | 1988 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | 2004 | 2008 | 2012 | 2016 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| <b>Overall</b>      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Americans Who Voted | 57%  | 61%  | 54%  | 55%  | 58%  | 58%  | 57%  | 61%  |
| <b>Age</b>          |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 18-20               | 33%  | 39%  | 31%  | 28%  | 41%  | 41%  | 35%  | 39%  |
| 21-24               | 46%  | 48%  | 33%  | 35%  | 43%  | 47%  | 40%  | 46%  |
| 25-34               | 48%  | 53%  | 43%  | 44%  | 47%  | 49%  | 46%  | 53%  |
| 35-44               | 61%  | 64%  | 55%  | 55%  | 57%  | 55%  | 53%  | 60%  |
| 45-64               | 68%  | 70%  | 64%  | 64%  | 67%  | 65%  | 63%  | 65%  |

The primary source changed the income categories in 2004, making the data from earlier presidential election years incompatible.

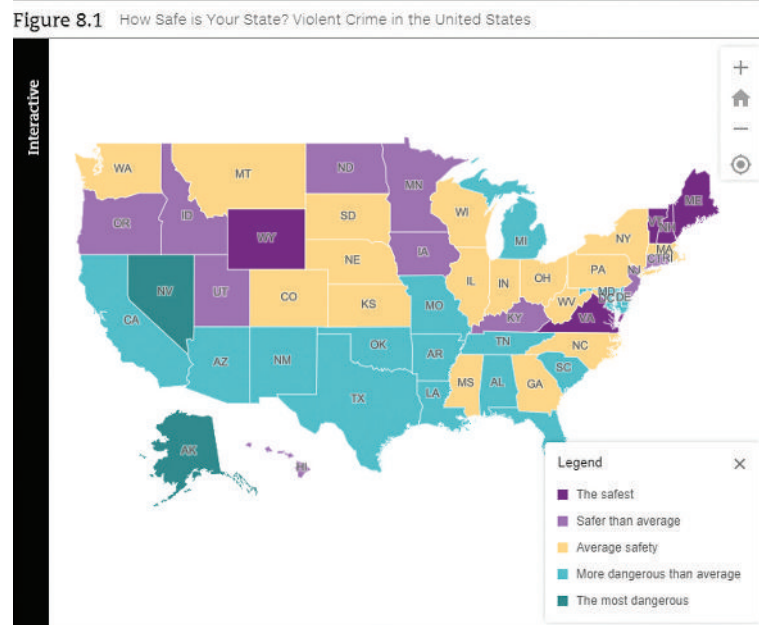
SOURCE: By the author. Based on Casper and Bass 1998; Jamieson et al. 2002; Holder 2006; Current Population Survey; Voting and Registration Supplement, 2012; Statistical Abstract of the United States 1991: Table 450; 1997: Table 462; 2014: Table 418; U.S. Census Bureau 2017b: Tables 1, 5, 6, 7, 9.



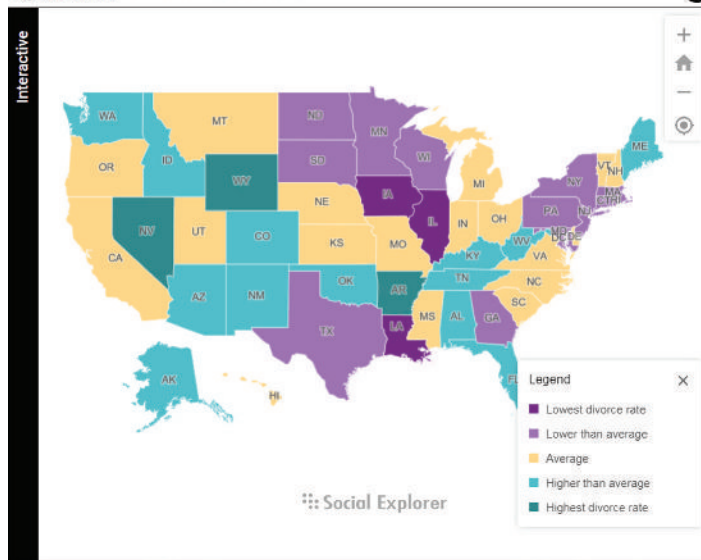
President?, Figure 16.2 In Two-Paycheck Marriages, How Do Husbands and Wives Divide their Responsibilities?

- Interactive Maps** are based on the Social Maps Jim has created for *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*. These Social Maps illustrate how social conditions vary among the states and by regions of the country. Students can click through these maps and can hover over their own state, and consider how it compares with the rest of the country. Examples include Figure 8.1 How Safe Is Your State? Violent Crime in the United States and Figure 16.14 The “Where” of U.S. Divorce. Jim has also prepared global maps that give students a visual representation of how the United States compares with countries around the world. These Social Maps are original with *Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*.

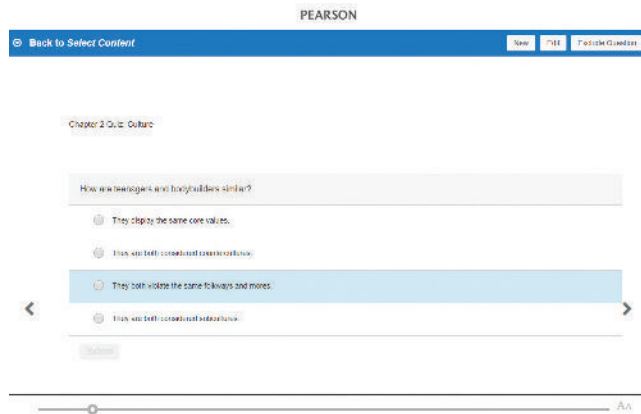
Visit the instructor Resources folder within Revel to access LiveSlide Powerpoint presentations that contain every Social Explorer visualization, making it easy to use these in class.



**Figure 16.14** The "Where" of U.S. Divorce



- **Make a Guess** interactive graphs invite students to interact with social data. Many of the figures and tables show how data change over time. This feature utilizes Social Explorer’s predictive graphing which allows students to see trends in social life and to make predictions on how these trends might continue—and how they might even affect their own lives.
- Interactive **Review the Chapter**, which uses flashcards that feature key terms and definitions, help students review and reinforce the chapter’s content.
- **Assessments**, which are tied to each chapter’s major sections, allow instructors and students to track progress and get immediate feedback. It is the same with the full chapter tests.



- **Integrated Writing Opportunities** help students reason and write more clearly. Each chapter offers the following writing prompts:
  - **Journal prompts** invite students to reflect on a chapter's content and to consider how the sociological perspective applies in a variety of scenarios. There are two types of journal prompts: *Apply It to Your Life* and *Apply the Sociological Perspective*.
  - **Shared writing prompts** invite students to reflect on and consider issues related to major features of each chapter. Many of the questions ask the students to apply sociological findings and principles to their own lives.





- **Additional Interactive Assets** engage students and invite them to interact with text, figures, and photos. **Enhanced Images** of historic photos and documents allow students to zoom in to gain different perspectives of the image. **Simulations** guide students through charts and graphs, helping them to see how the many parts of a topic are related.
- **Writing Space** allows you to develop and assess your students' 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. 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.

And here's another feature of Writing Space that you might find very helpful: Writing Space can also check your students' work for improper citation or plagiarism by comparing it against the world's most accurate text comparison database available from Turnitin.

# A Note from the Publisher on the Supplements

## Instructor's Supplements

Unless otherwise noted, the instructor's supplements are available at no charge to adopters—in electronic formats through the Instructor's Resource Center ([www.pearsonhighered.com/irc](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/irc)). Instructors can also access these teaching tools from the instructor Resources folder within the Revel product.

### Instructor's Resource Manual

For each chapter in the text, the *Instructor's Resource Manual* provides chapter summaries, chapter outlines, learning objectives, lecture suggestions, and suggested assignments. Also, this edition of the Instructor's Resource Manual features many Revel-only components including the Journal Prompts and Shared Writing Prompts and a list of all Revel-specific interactive assets, such as the Pearson Originals docuseries videos.

### Test Bank

The *Test Bank* contains approximately 55 questions for each chapter in multiple-choice and essay formats. The questions are correlated to each chapter's in-text learning objectives.

### MyTest Computerized Test Bank

The printed *Test Bank* is also available online through Pearson's computerized testing system, MyTest. The user-friendly interface allows you to view, edit, and add questions, transfer questions to tests, and print tests in a variety of fonts. Search and sort features allow you to locate questions quickly and to arrange them in whatever order you prefer. The *Test Bank* can be accessed anywhere with a free MyTest user account. There is no need to download a program or file to your computer.

### PowerPoint® Presentation 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.

# About the Author

**Jim Henslin** was born in Minnesota, graduated from high school and junior college in California and from college in Indiana. Awarded scholarships, he earned his master's and doctorate degrees in sociology at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. After this, he won a postdoctoral fellowship from the National Institute of Mental Health and spent a year studying how people adjust to the suicide of a family member. His primary interests in sociology are the sociology of everyday life, deviance, and international relations. Among his many books are *Down-to-Earth Sociology: Introductory Readings*, and *Social Problems*, now in its 12th edition. He has also published widely in sociology journals, including *Social Problems* and *American Journal of Sociology*.

While a graduate student, Jim taught at the University of Missouri at St. Louis. After completing his doctorate, he joined the faculty at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, where he is Professor Emeritus of Sociology. He says, "I've always found the introductory course enjoyable to teach. I love to see students' faces light up when they first glimpse the sociological perspective and begin to see how society has become an essential part of how they view the world."

Jim enjoys reading and fishing, and he also does a bit of kayaking and weight lifting. His two favorite activities are writing and traveling. He especially enjoys visiting

and living in other cultures, for this brings him face to face with behaviors and ways of thinking that challenge his perspectives and "make sociological principles come alive." A special pleasure has been the preparation of *Through the Author's Lens*, the series of photo essays that appear in this text, and *Applying Sociology to Your Life*, original with this author and first appearing in this edition.

Jim moved to Latvia, an Eastern European country formerly dominated by the Soviet Union, where he had the experience of becoming an immigrant. There he observed firsthand how people struggle to adjust to capitalism. While there, he interviewed aged political prisoners who had survived the Soviet gulag. He then moved to Spain, where he was able to observe how people adjust to a declining economy and the immigration of people from contrasting cultures. (Of course, for this he didn't need to leave the United States.) To better round out his cultural experiences, Jim recently visited South Korea, Vietnam, and again India. He hopes to travel extensively in South America, where he expects to do more photo essays to reflect their fascinating cultures. Jim is grateful to be able to live in such exciting social, technological, and geopolitical times—and to have access to portable broadband Internet while he pursues his sociological imagination.





*untitled*, 2007, Marie Bertrand, (acrylics on paper)



# Chapter 1

# The Sociological Perspective



## Learning Objectives

*After you have read this chapter, you should be able to:*

- 1.1** Explain why both history and biography are essential for the sociological perspective.
- 1.2** Know the focus of each social science.
- 1.3** Trace the origins of sociology, from tradition to Max Weber.
- 1.4** Summarize the arguments in the debate about values in sociological research.
- 1.5** State what *Verstehen* is, and why it is valuable.
- 1.6** Trace the development of sociology in North America, and explain the tension between objective analysis and social reform.
- 1.7** Explain the basic ideas of symbolic interactionism, functional analysis, and conflict theory.
- 1.8** Explain how research versus social reform and globalization are likely to influence sociology.

*I quickly scanned the room filled with 100 or so bunks. I was relieved to see that an upper bunk was still open. I grabbed it, figuring that attacks are more difficult in an upper bunk. Even from the glow of the faded red-and-white exit sign, its faint light barely illuminating this bunk, I could see that the sheet was filthy. Resigned to another night of fitful sleep, I reluctantly crawled into bed.*

*I kept my clothes on.*

*The next morning, I joined the long line of disheveled men leaning against the chain-link fence. Their faces were as downcast as their clothes were dirty. Not a glimmer of hope among them.*

*No one spoke as the line slowly inched forward.*

*When my turn came, I was handed a cup of coffee, a white plastic spoon, and a bowl of semiliquid that I couldn't identify. It didn't look like any food I had seen before. Nor did it taste like anything I had ever eaten.*

*My stomach fought the foul taste, every spoonful a battle. But I was determined. "I will experience what they experience," I kept telling myself. My stomach reluctantly gave in and accepted its morning nourishment.*

*The room was strangely silent. Hundreds of men were eating, each one immersed in his own private hell, his mind awash with disappointment, remorse, bitterness.*

*As I stared at the Styrofoam cup that held my coffee, grateful for at least this small pleasure, I noticed what looked like teeth marks. I shrugged off the thought, telling myself*

---

The room was strangely silent. Hundreds of men were eating, each immersed in his own private hell, . . .

---



*that my long weeks as a sociological observer of the homeless were finally getting to me. "It must be some sort of crease from handling," I concluded.*

*I joined the silent ranks of men turning in their bowls and cups. When I saw the man behind the counter swishing out Styrofoam cups in a washtub of murky water, I began to feel sick to my stomach. I knew then that the jagged marks on my cup really had come from another person's mouth.*

*How much longer did this research have to last? I felt a deep longing to return to my family—to a welcome world of clean sheets, healthy food, and "normal" conversations.*

## The Sociological Perspective

### 1.1 Explain why both history and biography are essential for the sociological perspective.

Why were these men so silent? Why did they receive such despicable treatment? What was I doing in that homeless shelter? After all, I hold a respectable, professional position, and I have a home and family.

You are in for an exciting and eye-opening experience. Sociology offers a fascinating view of social life. The *sociological perspective* (or imagination) opens a window onto unfamiliar worlds—and offers a fresh look at familiar ones. In this text, you will find yourself in the midst of Nazis in Germany and warriors in South America. Sociology is broad, and your journey will even take you to a group that lives in a city dump. (If you want to jump ahead, in Chapter 9 you can see the photos I took of the people who live—and work and play—in a garbage dump in Cambodia.) You will also find yourself looking at your own world in a different light. As you view other worlds—or your own—the sociological perspective enables you to gain a new perception of social life. In fact, this is what many find appealing about sociology.

The sociological perspective has been a motivating force in my own life. Ever since I took an introductory course in sociology as a freshman in college, I have been enchanted by the perspective that sociology offers. I have enjoyed both observing other groups and questioning my own assumptions about life. I sincerely hope the same happens to you.

### Seeing the Broader Social Context

The **sociological perspective** stresses the social contexts in which people live. It examines how these contexts influence people's lives. At the center of the sociological perspective is the question of how groups influence people, especially how people are influenced by their **society**—a group of people who share a culture and a territory.

To find out why people do what they do, sociologists look at **social location**, the corners in life that people occupy because of their place in a society. Sociologists look at how jobs, income, education, gender, race–ethnicity, and age affect people's ideas and behavior. Consider, for example, how being identified with a group called *females* or with a group called *males* when you were growing up has shaped *your* ideas of who you are. Growing up as a female or a male or as a transgender individual has influenced not only how you feel about yourself but also your ideas of what you should attain in life and how you should relate to others. Even your gestures and the way you laugh come from your identifying with one of these groups.

Sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) put it this way: "The sociological imagination [perspective] enables us to grasp the connection between history and biography." By *history*, Mills meant that each society is located in a broad stream of events. This gives each society specific characteristics—such as its ideas about what roles are proper for men and women. By *biography*, Mills referred to your experiences within a specific historical setting, which gives you your orientations to life. In short, you don't do what you do because you inherited some internal mechanism, such as instincts.

**sociological perspective**  
understanding human behavior by placing it within its broader social context

**society**  
people who share a culture and a territory

**social location**  
the group memberships that people have because of their location in history and society



We all learn our basic views of the world from the group in which we grow up. Just as this principle applies to this girl of the Txukahamai tribe of Brazil, so it applies to you. You and she are likely to have little in common in how you perceive the world.

Rather, *external* influences—your experiences—become part of your thinking and motivation. Or we can put it this way: At the center of what you do and how you think is the society in which you grow up and your particular location in that society.

Consider a newborn baby. As you know, if we were to take the baby away from its U.S. parents and place it with the Yanomamö Indians in the jungles of South America, his or her first words would not be in English. You also know that the child would not think like an American. The child would not grow up wanting credit cards, for example, or designer clothes, a car, a smartphone, an iPad, video games, and a virtual reality headset. He or she would take his or her place in Yanomamö society—perhaps as a food gatherer, a hunter, or a warrior—and would not even know about the world left behind at birth. And whether male or female, the child would grow up assuming that it is natural to want many children, not debating whether to have one, two, or three children.

People around the globe take their own views of the world for granted. Something inside us Americans tells us that hamburgers are delicious, small families desirable,

and designer clothing attractive. Yet something inside some of the Sinai desert Arab tribes tells them that warm, fresh camel's blood makes a fine drink and that everyone should have a large family and wear flowing robes (Murray 1935; McCabe and Ellis 1990). That "something" certainly isn't an instinct. As sociologist Peter Berger (1963) phrased it, that something is *society within us*.

Although obvious, this point frequently eludes us. We often think and talk about people as though their behavior were caused by their sex ("men are like that"), their race ("those people are like that"), or some other factor transmitted by their genes. The sociological perspective helps us escape from this cramped, personal view by exposing the broader social context that underlies human behavior. It helps us see how social settings shape people's behavior.

If you have been thinking along with me—and I hope you have—you should be thinking about how *your* social groups have shaped *your* ideas and desires. Over and over in this text, you will see that the way you look at the world is the result of your exposure to specific human groups. I think you will enjoy the process of self-discovery that sociology offers.

## The Global Context—and the Local

How life has changed! Our predecessors lived on isolated farms and in small towns. They grew their own food and made their own clothing, buying only sugar, coffee, and a few other items that they couldn't produce. Beyond the borders of their communities lay a world they perceived only dimly.

To see why sociologists use the term *global village* to describe life today, look at the labels on your clothing. You are likely to see China, Mexico, Brazil, Hong Kong, Brunei, or Macau. It is the same with the many other imported products that have become part of your daily life.

And communications? It is difficult to believe how slow they used to be. I am still amazed at what happened in the War of 1812, a war between the United States and Great Britain. Although the two countries signed a peace treaty in December 1814, *two weeks later* their armies fought a major battle at New Orleans. Neither the American nor the British forces there had heard that the war was over (Volti 1995).

Today, news flashes from around the world are part of our everyday life. We can grab our cell phone and use the Internet to communicate instantly with people anywhere on the planet. Although we are engulfed in instantaneous global communications, we also continue to occupy our own little corners of life. Like those of our predecessors, our worlds, too, are marked by differences in family background, religion, job, age, gender, race-ethnicity, and social class. In these smaller corners of life, we continue to learn distinctive ways of viewing the world.

One of the beautiful—and fascinating—aspects of sociology is that it enables us to look at *both* parts of our current reality: being part of a global network *and* having unique experiences in our smaller corners of life. This text reflects both of these worlds, each vital in understanding who we are.

## Sociology and the Other Sciences

### 1.2 Know the focus of each social science.

Just as humans today have an intense desire to unravel the mysteries around them, so did people in ancient times. Their explanations were based not only on observations, but were also mixed with magic and superstition.

To satisfy their basic curiosity about the world, humans gradually developed **science**, systematic methods for studying the social and natural worlds and the knowledge obtained by those methods. *Sociology*, the study of society and human behavior, is one of these sciences.

A useful way of comparing these sciences—and of gaining a better understanding of sociology's place—is to divide them into the natural and the social sciences.

#### science

the application of systematic methods to obtain knowledge and the knowledge obtained by those methods

### The Natural Sciences

The **natural sciences** are the intellectual and academic disciplines that are designed to explain and predict the events in our natural environment. The natural sciences are divided into specialized fields of research according to subject matter, such as biology, geology, chemistry, and physics. These are further subdivided into even more highly specialized areas. Biology is divided into botany and zoology; geology into mineralogy and geomorphology; chemistry into its organic and inorganic branches; and physics into biophysics and quantum mechanics. Each area of investigation examines a particular “slice” of nature.

#### natural sciences

the intellectual and academic disciplines designed to comprehend, explain, and predict events in our natural environment

### The Social Sciences

People have also developed the **social sciences**, which examine human relationships. Just as the natural sciences attempt to objectively understand the world of nature, the social sciences attempt to objectively understand the social world. Just as the world of nature contains ordered (or lawful) relationships that are not obvious but must be discovered through controlled observations, so the ordered relationships of the human or social world are not obvious and must be revealed by means of repeated observations.

Like the natural sciences, the social sciences are divided into specialized fields based on their subject matter. These divisions—anthropology, economics, political science, psychology, and sociology—are, like the natural sciences, subdivided into specialized fields. Anthropology includes cultural and physical anthropology; economics has macro (large-scale) and micro (small-scale) specialties; political science has theoretical and applied branches; psychology may be clinical or experimental; and sociology has its quantitative and qualitative branches. Since our focus is sociology, let's contrast sociology with each of the other social sciences.

#### social sciences

the intellectual and academic disciplines designed to understand the social world objectively by means of controlled and repeated observations

**ANTHROPOLOGY** Anthropology, which traditionally focuses on tribal peoples, is closely related to sociology. The chief goal of anthropologists is to understand *culture*, a people's total way of life. Culture includes a group's (1) *artifacts*, such as its tools, art, and weapons; (2) *structure*, the patterns that determine how its members interact with one another, such as positions of leadership; (3) *ideas and values*, the ways the group's beliefs affect its members' lives; and (4) *forms of communication*, especially language.

Students working on their doctorates in anthropology used to spend a year or two living with a tribal group. In their reports, they emphasized the group's family (kin) relationships. As there are no "undiscovered" groups left in the world, this focus on tribal groups has given way to the study of groups in agricultural settings and, increasingly, in industrialized society. When anthropologists study the same groups that sociologists do, they place more emphasis on artifacts, authority (hierarchy), and language, especially kinship terms.

**ECONOMICS** Economics concentrates on a single social institution. Economists study the production, distribution, and consumption of the material goods and services of a society. They want to know what goods are being produced, what they cost, and how those goods are distributed. Economists are also interested in the choices that determine production and consumption; for example, they study what motivates people to buy one item instead of another item.

**POLITICAL SCIENCE** Political science focuses on politics and government. Political scientists examine how governments are formed, how they operate, and how they are related to the other institutions of society. Political scientists are especially interested in how people attain ruling positions, how they maintain those positions, and the consequences of the leaders' actions for the people they govern.

**PSYCHOLOGY** The focus of psychology is on processes that occur *within* the individual, inside what they call the "skin-bound organism." Experimental psychologists do research on intelligence, emotions, perception, memory, even sleep and dreams. Some study how personality is formed and the causes and treatment of mental illness. Clinical psychologists work as therapists, helping people resolve personal problems, such as recovering from abuse or addiction to drugs. Others work as counselors in school and work settings, where they give personality tests, intelligence tests, and vocational aptitude tests.

**SOCIOLOGY** Sociology overlaps these other social sciences. Like anthropologists, sociologists also study culture; they, too, do research on group structure and belief systems, as well as on how people communicate with one another. Like economists, sociologists do research on how a society's goods and services are distributed, especially how that distribution results in inequality. Like political scientists, sociologists study how people govern one another, especially how those in power affect people's lives. And like psychologists, sociologists also study how people adjust to the difficulties of life.

With such similarities, what distinguishes sociology from the other social sciences? Unlike anthropologists, sociologists focus primarily on industrialized and postindustrialized societies. Unlike economists and political scientists, sociologists do not concentrate on a single social institution. And unlike psychologists, sociologists stress factors *external* to the individual to determine what influences people and how they adjust to life. These differences might not be entirely clear, so let's go to a *Down-to-Earth Sociology* and, in an updated ancient tale, consider how members of different academic disciplines might perceive the same subject matter.



## Down-to-Earth Sociology

### An Updated Version of the Old Elephant Story

It is said that in the recent past, five wise men and women, all blindfolded, were led to an elephant and asked to explain what they “saw.” The first, an anthropologist, tenderly touching the trunk and the tusks, broke into a huge grin and said, “This is really primitive. I feel very comfortable here. Concentrate on these.”

The second, an economist, feeling the mouth, said, “This is what counts. What goes in here is distributed throughout the body. Concentrate your research on what goes in here and how it is distributed.”

The third, a political scientist, feeling the gigantic ears, announced, “This is the power center. What goes in here controls the entire beast. Concentrate your studies here.”

The fourth, a psychologist, stroking the top of the elephant’s head, smiled contentedly and said, “This is the only thing that counts. All feeling and thinking take place inside here. To understand this beast, we’ll study this part.”

Then came the sociologist (of course!), who, after feeling the entire body, said, “You can’t understand the beast by concentrating on only one part. Each is part of the whole. The trunk and tusks, the mouth, the ears,

the head—all are important. But so are the parts of the beast that you haven’t mentioned. We must remove our blindfolds so we can see the larger picture. We have to see how everything works together to form the entire animal.”

Pausing for emphasis, the sociologist added, “And we also need to understand how this creature interacts with similar creatures. How does its life in groups influence its behavior?”

I wish I could conclude this tale by saying that the anthropologist, the economist, the political scientist, and the psychologist were dazzled on hearing the wisdom of the sociologist, and, amidst gasps of wonderment, they tore off their blindfolds, joined together, and began to examine the entire animal. But, alas and alack! On

hearing this sage advice, the specialists stubbornly bound their blindfolds even tighter so they could concentrate all the more on their particular part. And if you listened very, very carefully, you could even hear them mutter, “Don’t touch the tusks.” “Stay away from the mouth—that’s my area.” “Take your hands off the ears.” “The top of the head is mine—get away from it.”



The traditional version of the blind men and the elephant does not include social scientists.

## The Goals of Science

The first goal of each science is to *explain* why something happens. The second goal is to make **generalizations**, that is, to go beyond the individual case and make statements that apply to a broader group or situation. For example, a sociologist wants to explain not only why Mary went to college or became an armed robber but also why people with her characteristics or social location are more likely than others to go to college or to become armed robbers. To achieve generalizations, sociologists look for *patterns*, recurring characteristics or events. The third scientific goal is to *predict*, to specify in the light of current knowledge what will happen in the future.

To attain these goals, scientists do not rely on magic, superstition, or common beliefs but, instead, they do systematic research. They explain exactly how they did their research so it can be reviewed by others. Secrecy, biases, and “trying to prove the way you want something to be” go against the grain of science.

Sociologists and other scientists also move beyond **common sense**—the prevailing ideas in a society, the things that “everyone knows” are true. “Everyone” can be as misguided today as everyone was when common sense dictated that the world was flat or that no human could ever walk on the moon. As sociologists do their research, their findings may confirm or contradict commonsense notions about social life.

How would you like to test your own common sense? Here is a little *Down-to-Earth Sociology* quiz for you.

### generalization

a statement that goes beyond the individual case and is applied to a broader group or situation

### common sense

those things that “everyone knows” are true



## Down-to-Earth Sociology

### Enjoying a Sociology Quiz—Testing Your Common Sense

Some findings of sociology support commonsense understandings of social life, and others contradict them. Can you tell the difference?

Answer *all* questions before turning the page to see the answers.

1. **True/False** More U.S. students are killed in school shootings now than ten or fifteen years ago.
2. **True/False** The earnings of U.S. women have just about caught up with those of U.S. men.
3. **True/False** With life so rushed and more women working for wages, today's parents spend less time with their children than parents of previous generations did.
4. **True/False** It is more dangerous to walk near topless bars than fast-food restaurants.
5. **True/False** Most rapists are mentally ill.
6. **True/False** A large percentage of terrorists are mentally ill.
7. **True/False** Most people on welfare are lazy and looking for a handout. They could work if they wanted to.
8. **True/False** Compared with women, men make more eye contact in face-to-face conversations.
9. **True/False** Because bicyclists are more likely to wear helmets now than a few years ago, their rate of head injuries has dropped.
10. **True/False** As measured by their divorce rate, couples who live together before marriage are usually more satisfied with their marriages than couples who did not live together before marriage.

(For the answers to this quiz, turn the next page.)

## The Risks of Being a Sociologist

Sometimes the explorations of sociologists take them into nooks and crannies that people would prefer remain unexplored. For example, a sociologist might study how mug-gers choose their victims or how people make decisions to cheat on their spouses. Since sociologists are intrigued with understanding social life, they don't stop doing research because people disapprove of it or feel uncomfortable about it. Sociologists consider all realms of human life legitimate avenues to explore, and they research both the respectable and the downright disreputable.

When sociologists do research on organizations, they sometimes face pressure to keep things secret. Every group, it seems, nourishes some ideal image that it presents to others. Because sociologists are interested in knowing what is *really* going on, they peer behind the scenes to get past those sugar-coated images (Berger 1963). An objective report can threaten a group's image, leading to pressure and conflict—all part of the adventure, and risk, of being a sociologist.

## Origins of Sociology

### 1.3 Trace the origins of sociology, from tradition to Max Weber.

So when did sociology begin? Even ancient peoples tried to figure out how social life works. They, too, asked questions about why war exists, why some people become more powerful than others, and why some are rich but others are poor. This was not science, however, because they often based their answers on superstition, myth, or even the positions of the stars. They did not *test* their assumptions.

*Science, in contrast, requires theories that can be tested by research.* Measured by this standard, sociology emerged about the middle of the 1800s, when social observers began to use scientific methods to test their ideas. Let's look at three events that set the stage for the challenge to tradition and the emergence of sociology.

### Tradition versus Science

The first event that set the stage for sociology was the social upheaval of the Industrial Revolution. As agriculture gave way to factory production, masses of people moved to cities in search of work. The city's greeting was harsh: miserable pay, long hours, and

dangerous work. To help their family survive, even children worked in these miserable conditions, some of them chained to machines to keep them from running away. With their ties to the land broken and their world turned upside down, no longer could people count on tradition to provide the answers to the difficult questions of life.

The second was the social upheaval of political revolution. The American and French revolutions swept away the existing social orders—and with them the answers they had provided. Before this period, tradition had ruled. The reply to questions of “why” was “We do this because it has always been done this way.” A new social order challenges traditional answers and ushers in new ideas. The ideas that emerged during this period challenged tradition even further. Especially powerful was the new idea that each person possesses inalienable rights. This idea caught fire to such an extent that people were willing to die for it, forcing many traditional Western monarchies to give way to more democratic forms of government.

The third was the imperialism (empire building) of the time. The Europeans had conquered so many countries that their new colonies stretched across the world, from Asia and Africa to North and South America. This exposed them to radically different ways of life, and they began to ask why cultures differ.

The industrial revolution, political revolution, and imperialism, then, led to a questioning of traditional answers. At this same time, **the scientific method**—using objective, systematic observations to test theories—was being tried in chemistry and physics. This revealed many secrets that had been concealed in nature. With traditional answers failing, the next step was to apply the scientific method to questions about social life. The result was the birth of sociology.

Let’s take a quick overview of some of the main people in this development.

## Auguste Comte and Positivism

France was still recovering from the bloody upheavals of its revolution when Auguste Comte was born. Comte (1798–1857) knew that the crowds had cheered at the public execution of the king and queen of France, and he began to wonder what holds society together. Why do we have social order now, instead of the anarchy and chaos of the French Revolution?, he wondered. When society is set on a particular course, what causes it to change?

These were pressing questions, and Comte suggested that we apply the scientific method to understand the social world, a process known as **positivism**. Just as the scientific method had revealed the law of gravity, so, too, it would uncover the laws that underlie society. Comte called this new science **sociology**—“the study of society” (from the Greek *logos*, “study of,” and the Latin *socius*, “companion,” or “being with others”). The purpose of this new science, he said, would be not only to discover social principles but also to apply them to social reform. Comte developed a grandiose view: Sociologists would reform society, making it a better place to live.

Applying the scientific method to social life meant something quite different to Comte than it does to sociologists today. To Comte, it meant a kind of “armchair philosophy”—drawing conclusions from informal observations of social life. Comte did not do what we today call research, and his conclusions have been abandoned. But because he proposed that we observe and classify human activities to uncover society’s fundamental laws and coined the term *sociology* to describe this process, Comte often is credited with being the founder of sociology.

## Herbert Spencer and Social Darwinism

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), who grew up in England, is sometimes called the second founder of sociology. Spencer disagreed sharply with Comte. He said that sociologists



Upsetting the entire social order, the French Revolution removed the past as a sure guide to the present. This stimulated Auguste Comte to analyze how societies change. Shown here are women marching to Versailles in 1791 to confront the king and queen of France.

### scientific method

the use of objective, systematic observations to test theories

### positivism

the application of the scientific approach to the social world

### sociology

the scientific study of society and human behavior

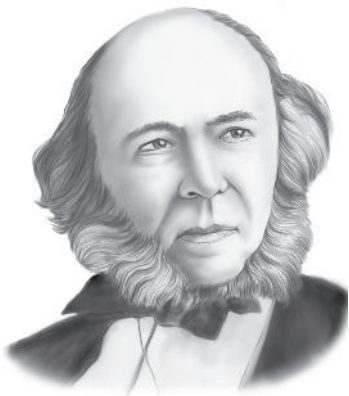


Auguste Comte (1798–1857), who is credited as the founder of sociology, began to analyze the bases of the social order. Although he stressed that the scientific method should be applied to the study of society, he did not apply it himself.

# Down-to-Earth Sociology

## Testing Your Common Sense—Answers to the Sociology Quiz

1. **False.** More students met violent deaths at U.S. schools in the 1990s than now. (See Chapter 17, Table 17.2.)
2. **False.** Over the years, the wage gap has narrowed, but only slightly. On average, full-time working women earn about 72 percent of what full-time working men earn. This low figure is actually an improvement over earlier years. (See Chapter 11, Figures 11.7 and 11.8.)
3. **False.** Today's parents spend more time with their children (Bianchi 2010). To see how this could be, see Chapter 16, Figure 16.2.
4. **False.** The crime rate outside fast-food restaurants is considerably higher. The likely reason is that topless bars hire private security and parking lot attendants (Linz et al. 2004).
5. **False.** Sociologists compared the psychological profiles of prisoners convicted of rape and prisoners convicted of other crimes. Their profiles were similar. Like robbery, rape is learned behavior. (See Chapter 5.)
6. **False.** Extensive testing of Islamic terrorists shows that they actually tend to score more "normal" on psychological tests than most "normal" people do. As a group, they are in better mental health than the rest of the population (Sage-man 2008b:64). (See suicide terrorists in Chapter 15.)
7. **False.** Most people on welfare are children, young mothers with few skills, or are elderly, sick, mentally challenged, or physically handicapped. Less than 2 percent fit the stereotype of an able-bodied man. (See Chapter 10.)
8. **False.** Women make considerably more eye contact (Henley et al. 1985).
9. **False.** Bicyclists today are more likely to wear helmets, but their rate of head injuries is *higher*. Apparently, the helmets make them feel safer and they take more risks (Barnes 2001; Izaac 2016).
10. **False.** Until recently, the divorce rate of couples who cohabited before marriage was higher than those who did not cohabit. Now the divorce rate seems to be about the same (Kuperberg 2014). Neither divorce rate indicates that the couples who previously cohabited are more satisfied with their marriage.



Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), sometimes called the second founder of sociology, coined the term “survival of the fittest.” Spencer thought that helping the poor was wrong, that this merely helped the “less fit” survive.

should *not* guide social reform. If they did, he said, it would interfere with a natural process that improves societies. Societies are evolving from a lower form (“barbarian”) to higher (“civilized”) forms. As generations pass, a society’s most capable and intelligent members (“the fittest”) survive, while the less capable die out. These fittest members produce a more advanced society—unless misguided do-gooders get in the way and help the less fit (the lower classes) survive.

Spencer called this principle *the survival of the fittest*. Although Spencer coined this phrase, it usually is credited to his contemporary, Charles Darwin. Where Spencer proposed that societies evolve over time as the fittest people adapt to their environment, Darwin applied this idea to organisms. Because Darwin is better known, Spencer’s idea is called *social Darwinism*. History is fickle, and if fame had gone the other way, we might be speaking of “biological Spencerism.”

Spencer’s idea that it was wrong to help the poor offended many. Some people, however, liked the concept of the survival of the fittest: They saw themselves as “the fittest”—and therefore superior. I’m sure that Spencer’s views also helped some wealthy businessmen of the time avoid feeling guilty for living like royalty while people around them went hungry.

Like Comte, Spencer did armchair philosophy instead of conducting scientific research. His ideas about society became popular, and he was sought after as a speaker in both England and the United States. Eventually, social Darwinism was discredited, and few today remember Spencer.

The next sociologist, in contrast, has a name that is recognized around the world.

## Karl Marx and Class Conflict

Karl Marx (1818–1883) not only influenced sociology, but he also left his mark on world history. Marx’s influence has been so great that even the *Wall Street Journal*, that staunch advocate of capitalism, has called him one of the three greatest modern thinkers (the other two being Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein).



Like Comte, Marx thought that people should try to change society. His proposal for change was radical: revolution. This got him thrown out of Germany, and he settled in England. Marx believed that the engine of human history is **class conflict**. He said that society is made up of two social classes, and they are natural enemies of one another: the **bourgeoisie** (boo-shwa-ZEE) (the *capitalists*, those who own the means of production—the money, land, factories, and machines) and the **proletariat** (the exploited workers, who do not own the means of production). Eventually, the workers will unite and break their chains of bondage. The workers' revolution will be bloody, but it will usher in a classless society, one free of exploitation. People will work according to their abilities and receive goods and services according to their needs (Marx and Engels 1848/1967).

Marxism is not the same as communism. Although Marx proposed revolution as the way for workers to gain control of society, he did not develop the political system called communism. This is a later application of his ideas. Marx himself felt disgusted when he heard debates about his insights into social life. After listening to some of the positions attributed to him, he shook his head and said, "I am not a Marxist" (Dobriner 1969:222; Gitlin 1997:89).

Unlike Comte and Spencer, Marx did not think of himself as a sociologist—and with his reputation for communism and revolution, many sociologists wish that no one else did either. Marx spent years studying in the library of the British Museum in London, where he wrote widely on history, philosophy, economics, and political science. Because of his insights into the relationship between the social classes, Marx is generally recognized as a significant early sociologist. He introduced conflict theory, one of today's major perspectives in sociology. Later, we will examine this perspective in detail.

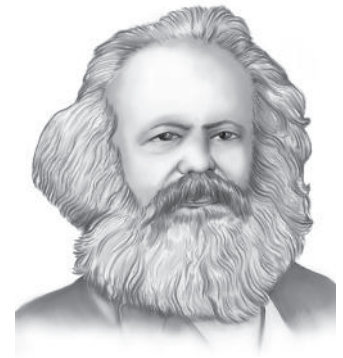
## Emile Durkheim and Social Integration

Until the time of Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), sociology was a part of history and economics. Durkheim, who grew up in France, wanted to change this, and his major professional goal was to get sociology recognized as a separate academic discipline (Coser 1977). He achieved this goal in 1887 when the University of Bordeaux awarded him the world's first academic appointment in sociology.

Durkheim's second goal was to show how social forces affect people's behavior. To accomplish this, he conducted rigorous research. Comparing the suicide rates of several European countries, Durkheim (1897/1966) found that each country has a different suicide rate—and that these rates remain about the same year after year. He also found that different groups within a country have different suicide rates and that these, too, remain stable from year to year. Males are more likely than females to kill themselves, Protestants more likely than Catholics or Jews, and the unmarried more likely than the married. From these observations, Durkheim concluded that suicide is not what it appears—simply a matter of individuals here and there deciding to take their lives for personal reasons. Instead, *social factors* underlie suicide, which is why a group's rate remains fairly constant year after year.

In his search for the key social factors in suicide, Durkheim identified **social integration**, the degree to which people are tied to their social groups: He found that people who have weaker social ties are more likely to commit suicide. This, he said, explains why Protestants, males, and the unmarried have higher suicide rates. This is how it works: Protestantism encourages greater freedom of thought and action; males are more independent than females; and the unmarried lack the ties and responsibilities that come with marriage. In other words, members of these groups have fewer of the social bonds that keep people from committing suicide. In Durkheim's term, they have less social integration.

Although strong social ties help protect people from suicide, Durkheim noted that strong bonds can also encourage suicide. An example is people who, torn apart by grief,



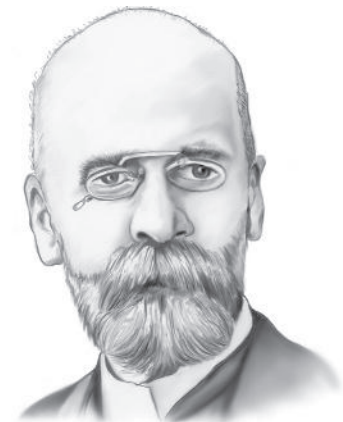
Karl Marx (1818–1883) believed that the roots of human misery lay in class conflict, the exploitation of workers by those who own the means of production. Social change, in the form of the workers overthrowing the capitalists was inevitable from Marx's perspective. Although Marx did not consider himself a sociologist, his ideas have influenced many sociologists, particularly conflict theorists.

### class conflict

Marx's term for the struggle between capitalists and workers

### bourgeoisie

Marx's term for capitalists, those who own the means of production



The French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) contributed many important concepts to sociology. His comparison of the suicide rates of several countries revealed an underlying social factor: People are more likely to commit suicide if their ties to others in their communities are weak. Durkheim's identification of the key role of social integration in social life remains central to sociology today.



Durkheim believed that modern societies produce feelings of isolation, much of which comes from the division of labor. In contrast, members of traditional societies, who work alongside family and neighbors and participate in similar activities, experience a high degree of social integration. The photos show women in Burundi preparing soil to plant beans and U.S. information workers in their cubicles.

### proletariat

Marx's term for the exploited class, the mass of workers who do not own the means of production

### social integration

the degree to which members of a group or a society feel united by shared values and other social bonds; also known as social cohesion

### patterns of behavior

recurring behaviors or events

kill themselves after the death of a spouse. Their own feelings are so integrated with those of their spouses that they prefer death rather than life without the one who gave it meaning. Another is the suicide terrorists who so often dominate today's headlines. Motivated by loyalty to their group, they blow themselves (and others) up.

Despite the many years that have passed since Durkheim did his research, the principle he uncovered still applies: People who are less socially integrated have higher rates of suicide. Even today, more than a century later, those same groups that Durkheim identified—Protestants, males, and the unmarried—are more likely to kill themselves.

It is important for you to understand the principle that was central in Durkheim's research: *Human behavior cannot be understood only in terms of the individual; we must always examine the social forces that affect people's lives.* Suicide, for example, appears to be such an intensely individual act that psychologists should study it, not sociologists. As Durkheim stressed, however, if we look at human behavior only in reference to the individual, we miss its *social* basis.

### APPLYING DURKHEIM

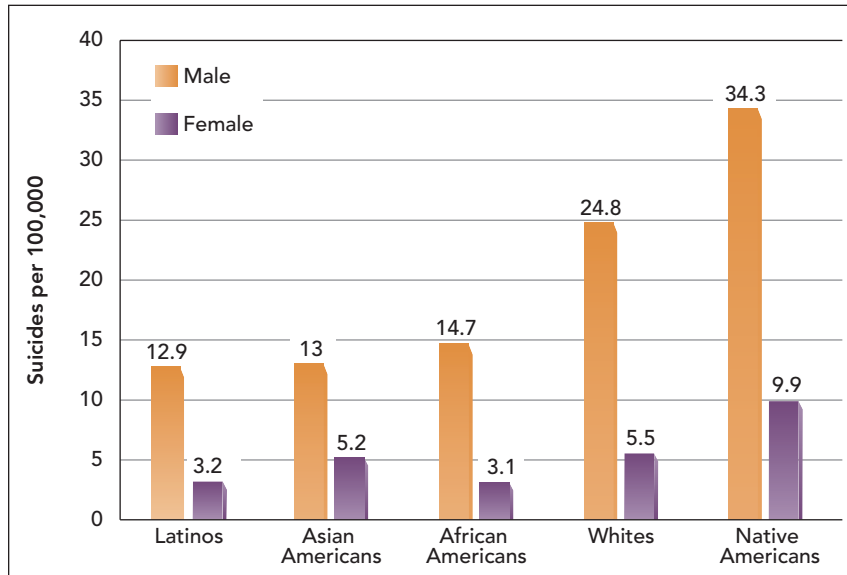
*Did you know that next year more women than men will attempt suicide? And did you know that despite this, more men will kill themselves? And did you know that this will happen the following year, too? More women will attempt suicide, but more men will die by suicide.*

You probably didn't know this, but these things will happen. Sociologists can make these predictions—and be accurate about them—because of what are called **patterns of behavior**, recurring characteristics or events.

Just as Durkheim found patterns of suicide in the groups he studied in Europe, so the groups that make up the United States have their own patterns of suicide. Because these patterns recur year after year, we can predict future rates with accuracy. Look at Figure 1.1. A couple of things should strike you immediately. You can see that regardless of their racial-ethnic group, men are much more likely to kill themselves. You can also see that the racial-ethnic groups have different rates of suicide. Because these patterns show up year after year, they give us a picture of the future.

You might be wondering why men are more “successful” than women when they attempt suicide. We don't know all the answers, but apparently men are more determined. Men also are more likely than women to use guns while women are more likely to use pills. Obviously, guns don't allow the time for intervention that pills do.



**Figure 1.1** Suicide of Americans Ages 18–24

SOURCE: By the author. Based on CDC 2015a:Figure 1.

As Durkheim stressed, when patterns of suicide recur year after year, it indicates something beyond the individuals who kill themselves. The patterns reflect conditions in society and how people react to those conditions. There is much about this that we don't understand, and I am hoping that one day this textbook will pique a student's interest enough to investigate these patterns.

## Max Weber and the Protestant Ethic

Max Weber (Mahx VAY-ber) (1864–1920), a German sociologist and a contemporary of Durkheim, also held professorships in the new academic discipline of sociology. Like Durkheim and Marx, Weber is one of the most influential of all sociologists, and you will come across his writings and theories in later chapters. For now, let's consider an issue Weber raised that remains controversial today.

**RELIGION AND THE ORIGIN OF CAPITALISM** Weber disagreed with Marx's claim that economics is the central force in social change. That role, he said, belongs to religion. Weber (1904/1958) theorized that the Roman Catholic belief system encouraged followers to hold on to their traditional ways of life, while the Protestant belief system encouraged its members to embrace change. Roman Catholics were taught that because they were Church members, they were on the road to heaven, but Protestants, those of the Calvinist tradition, were told that they wouldn't know if they were saved until Judgment Day. You can see why this made them uncomfortable. Calvinists began to look for a "sign" that they were in God's will. They found this "sign" in financial success, which they took as a blessing that indicated that God was on their side. To bring about this "sign" and receive spiritual comfort, they began to live frugal lives, saving their money and investing it in order to make even more. This accumulation and investment of capital, said Weber, brought about the birth of capitalism.

Weber called this self-denying approach to life the *Protestant ethic*. He termed the desire to invest capital in order to make more money the *spirit of capitalism*. To test his theory, Weber compared the extent of capitalism in Roman Catholic and Protestant countries. In line with his theory, he found that capitalism was more likely to flourish in Protestant countries. Weber's conclusion that religion was the key factor in the rise of capitalism was controversial when he made it, and it continues to be debated today (Kotz 2015). We'll explore these ideas in more detail in Chapter 7.



Max Weber (1864–1920) was another early sociologist who left a profound impression on sociology. He used cross-cultural and historical materials to trace the causes of social change and to determine how social groups affect people's orientations to life.

# Values in Sociological Research

## 1.4 Summarize the arguments in the debate about values in sociological research.

### value free

the view that a sociologist's personal values or beliefs should not influence social research

### values

the standards by which people define what is desirable or undesirable, superior or inferior, good or bad, beautiful or ugly

### objectivity

value neutrality in research

### replication

the repetition of a study in order to test its findings

Weber raised another issue that remains controversial among sociologists. He said that sociology should be **value free**. By this, he meant that a sociologist's **values**—beliefs about what is good or desirable in life and the way the world ought to be—should not affect his or her research. Weber wanted **objectivity**, value neutrality, to be the hallmark of social research. If values influence research, he said, they will bias sociological findings.

That bias has no place in research is not a matter of debate. All sociologists agree that no one should distort data to make them fit preconceived ideas or personal values. It is equally clear, however, that because we sociologists—like everyone else—are members of a particular society at a given point in history, we, too, are infused with values of all sorts. Our values do play a role in our research. For example, values are part of the reason that one sociologist chooses to do research on how poverty affects life chances while another turns a sociological eye on violence against women.

Because values can lead to unintended distortions in research, sociologists stress the need of **replication**, repeating a study in order to compare the new results with the original findings. If an individual's values have distorted research findings, replication by other sociologists should uncover the bias and correct it.

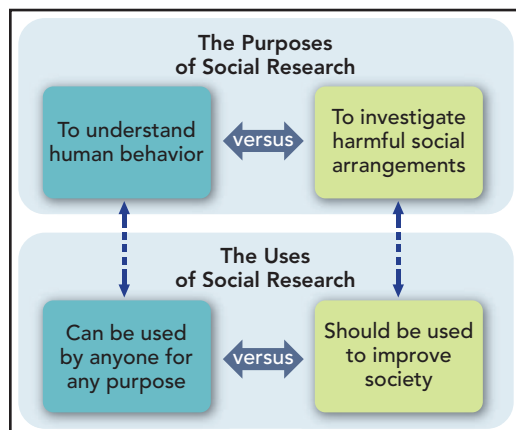
Despite this consensus, however, values remain a hotly debated topic in sociology (Burawoy 2007; Morris 2017). As summarized in Figure 1.2, the disagreement centers on the proper purposes and uses of sociology. Regarding its *purpose*, some sociologists take the position that their goal should be simply to advance understanding of social life. Sociologists should gather data on any topic that interests them and then use the best theory available to interpret their findings. Others are convinced that sociologists have the moral responsibility to investigate social arrangements that harm people—the causes of poverty, crime, racism, war, and other forms of human exploitation.

There is also disagreement over the *uses* of sociology. Those who say that sociology's purpose is to understand human behavior take the position that the knowledge gained by social research belongs to both the scientific community and the world. It can be used by anyone for any purpose. In contrast, those who say that sociologists should focus on harmful social conditions take the position that the purpose of their research should be to alleviate human suffering and improve society. Some also say that sociologists should spearhead social reform.

Although few sociologists take such one-sided views and this debate is more complicated than the argument summarized here, this sketch does identify its major issues. Here is how sociologist John Galliher (1991) expressed today's majority position:

*Some argue that social scientists, unlike politicians and religious leaders, should merely attempt to describe and explain the events of the world but should never make value judgments based on those observations. Yet a value-free and nonjudgmental social science has no place in a world that has experienced the Holocaust, in a world having had slavery, in a world with the ever-present threat of rape and other sexual assault, in a world with frequent, unpunished crimes in high places, including the production of products known by their manufacturers to cause death and injury as has been true of asbestos products and continues to be true of the cigarette industry, and in a world dying from environmental pollution by these same large multinational corporations.*

**Figure 1.2** The Debate over Values in Sociological Research



SOURCE: By the author.

# Verstehen and Social Facts

## 1.5 State what *Verstehen* is, and why it is valuable.

Weber and Durkheim, two of the earliest sociologists, each introduced a term that may seem strange, but that is important to learn. Let's introduce them.

### Weber and *Verstehen*

Max Weber stressed that to understand human behavior, we should use *Verstehen* (vare-shtay-in) (a German word meaning "to understand"). Perhaps a better translation of this term is "to grasp by insight." By emphasizing *Verstehen*, Weber meant that the best interpreter of human behavior is someone who "has been there," someone who can understand the feelings and motivations of the people being studied. In short, we must pay attention to what are called **subjective meanings**—how people interpret their situation in life, how they view what they are doing and what is happening to them.

To better understand this term, let's return to the homeless in our opening vignette. Why were the men so silent at breakfast? Why were they so unlike the noisy, sometimes boisterous college students who swarm dorms and cafeterias?

*Verstehen* can help explain this. When I interviewed men in the shelters (and, in other settings, homeless women), they revealed their despair. Because you know—at least on some level—what the human emotion of despair is, you can do *Verstehen*; that is, you can apply your knowledge of despair to understand their situation. You know that people in despair feel a sense of hopelessness. The future looks bleak, hardly worth plodding toward. Consequently, why is it worth talking about? Who wants to hear another hard-luck story?

By applying *Verstehen*—your understanding of what it means to be human and to face some situation in life—you gain insight into other people's behavior. In this case, you can understand these men's silence, their lack of communication in the homeless shelter.

### *Verstehen*

a German word used by Weber that is perhaps best understood as "to have insight into someone's situation"

### subjective meanings

the meanings that people give their own behavior

### Durkheim and Social Facts

In contrast to Weber's emphasis on *Verstehen* and subjective meanings, Durkheim stressed what he called **social facts**. By this term, he meant a group's recurring patterns of behavior. Examples of social facts in the United States include June being the most popular month for weddings and suicide rates being higher among the elderly. You probably knew both of these social facts, but did you know this one, that more births occur on Tuesdays than on any other day of the week?

Durkheim said that we must use social facts to interpret social facts. In other words, each pattern reflects some condition of society. People all over the country don't just coincidentally decide to do similar things, whether that is to get married or to commit suicide. If this were the case, in some years, middle-aged people would be the most likely to kill themselves, in other years, young people, and so on. *Patterns that hold true year after year indicate that as thousands and even millions of people make their individual decisions, they are responding to conditions in their society.* It is the job of the sociologist, then, to uncover social facts and to explain them through other social facts. To see how this works, let's look at how the social facts I mentioned—weddings, suicides, and births—are explained by other social facts.

### social facts

Durkheim's term for a group's patterns of behavior



Silence is common in homeless shelters. An optimistic view of life and exciting things to talk about are not part of the world of the homeless.

## How Social Facts and *Verstehen* Fit Together

Social facts and *Verstehen* go hand in hand. As a member of U.S. society, you know how June weddings are related to the end of the school year and how this month, now locked in tradition, common sentiment, and advertising, carries its own momentum. As for suicide among the elderly (see Chapter 13), you probably already have a sense of the greater despair that many older Americans feel.

But do you know why more Americans are born on Tuesday than on any other day of the week? You would expect Tuesday to be no more common than any other day, and that is how it used to be. But no longer (Hamilton et al. 2015:Table I-3). To understand this change, we need to combine social facts and *Verstehen*. Four social facts are relevant: First, technology has made the hospital a dominating force in the U.S. medical system. Second, medical technology has made births by cesarean section safer. Third, as discussed in Chapter 19, doctors have replaced midwives in the delivery of babies. Fourth, medicine in the United States is a business, with profit a major goal. These four social facts have coalesced to make an operation that used to be a last resort for emergencies now so routine that one-third (33 percent) of all U.S. babies are now delivered in this manner (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Table 91).

If we add *Verstehen* to these social facts, we gain insight that goes far beyond the cold statistics. Let's try it. You know that in the United States most mothers-to-be prefer to give birth in a hospital. You can also understand how influential physicians can be at such an emotionally charged and vulnerable moment and how alternatives can appear so slim. Finally, you can also understand that physicians would schedule births for a time that is most convenient for them, which happens to be Tuesdays. (Mondays are filled with appointments, as well as sniffles and fevers from the weekend, and a Tuesday delivery provides enough time to take care of the new mother and child to best assure that the weekend will be free.) Combine *Verstehen* with social facts and you have the answer.

## Sociology in North America

### 1.6 Trace the development of sociology in North America, and explain the tension between objective analysis and social reform.

Transplanted to U.S. soil, sociology first took root at Yale University, where in 1872 William Graham Sumner taught the first course in sociology. In the 1890s, sociology courses were taught at the University of Kansas (1890), the University of Chicago (1892), Catholic University (1895), and Atlanta University, then an all-black school (1897). From there, sociology spread rapidly throughout North America (Lengermann and Niebrugge 2007; Wright 2012; university catalogs 2017).

Some universities were slow to adopt sociology. Not until 1922 did McGill University establish Canada's first department of sociology. Harvard University did not open its sociology department until 1930, and it took until 1946 for the University of California at Berkeley to do so.

The University of Chicago initially dominated North American sociology. Albion Small (1854–1926), who founded this department, also launched *The American Journal of Sociology* and was its editor from 1895 to 1925. Members of this sociology faculty whose ideas continue to influence today's sociologists include Robert Park (1864–1944), Ernest Burgess (1886–1966), and George Herbert Mead (1863–1931). Mead developed the symbolic interactionist perspective, which we will examine later.

## Sexism at the Time: Women in Early Sociology

As you may have noticed, all the sociologists we have discussed are men. In the 1800s, sex roles were rigid, with women assigned the roles of wife and mother. In the classic German phrase, women were expected to devote themselves to the four K's: *Kirche*,