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Sociology In Our Times

THE ESSENTIALS 12e DIANA KENDALL

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SOCIOLOGY
In Our Times
The Essentials 12e

Diana Kendall
Baylor University

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Australia • Brazil • Mexico • Singapore • United Kingdom • United States

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Brief Contents

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FEATURES

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Sociology in Global Perspective

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Sociology & **Social Policy**

You Can **Make a Difference**

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Preface

Welcome to the twelfth edition of *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials*! This best-selling text has been extensively used for more than two decades in college and university classrooms across the United States, Canada, and other nations. However, *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* continues to live up to its name, remaining highly current and relevant to today's students and professors and reflecting the latest available data and new insights on what is going on in our nation and world from a sociological perspective.

The twelfth edition focuses on social change and ways in which media, particularly social media, and various other forms of technology inevitably bring about new ways of living, interacting with others, or doing some activity or task.

Like previous editions, the twelfth edition highlights topics ranging from popular culture icons and social networking to far more serious issues of our times, such as the social effects of massive natural and human disasters, gun violence, political unrest, terrorism, war, and the individual and social consequences of problems such as growing inequality between the wealthiest and the poorest people and nations, persistent unemployment, migration concerns worldwide, and other persistent issues and problems.

The second decade of the twenty-first century offers unprecedented challenges and opportunities for each of us as individuals and for our larger society and world. In the United States, we can no longer take for granted the peace and economic prosperity that many—but far from all—people were able to enjoy in previous decades. However, even as some things change, others remain the same, and among the things that have not changed are the significance of education and the profound importance of understanding how and why people act the way they do. It is also important to analyze how societies grapple with issues such as economic hardship and the threat of terrorist attacks and war and to gain a better understanding of why many of us seek stability in our social institutions—including family, religion, education, government, and media—even if we believe that some of these institutions might benefit from certain changes.

As with previous editions, the twelfth edition of *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* highlights the relevance of sociology to help students connect with the subject and the full spectrum of topics and issues that it encompasses. It achieves this connection by providing a meaningful, concrete context within which to learn. Specifically, it presents the stories—the *lived experiences*—of real individuals and the social issues they face while discussing a diverse array of classical and contemporary theories and examining interesting and relevant research. The first-person commentaries that begin each chapter in "Sociology & Everyday Life" show students how sociology can help them understand the important questions and social issues that not only these other individuals face but that they themselves may face as well.

Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials includes the best work of classical and established contemporary sociologists, and it weaves an inclusive treatment of *all* people—across lines of race/ethnicity, class, gender, age, ability/disability, and other social attributes—into the examination of sociology in *all* chapters. It does not water down the treatment of sociology for students! *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* provides students with the most relevant information about sociological thinking and helps them to consider contemporary social issues through the lens of diversity. While guiding students to appreciate how sociology can help them better understand the world, this text also encourages them to see themselves as *members of their communities* and shows them what can be done in responding to social issues. As a result, students learn how sociology is not only a collection of concepts and theories but also a field that can make a difference in their lives, their communities, and the world at large.

What's New to the Twelfth Edition?

The twelfth edition builds on the best of previous editions but places more emphasis on pressing social and political issues facing the United States and other nations of the world in the 2020s. Like previous editions, I have tried to offer professors and students alike new insights, learning tools, and opportunities to apply the content of each chapter to relevant sociological issues and major concerns of the twenty-first century. It is my top priority as an author to make each edition better than the previous one by revising and updating all chapters thoroughly, providing new discussions about contemporary issues and the embattled political climate in the nation, and most important of all, sharing the latest scholarship in sociological theory and research. For example, all statistics included in the twelfth edition, such as data relating to crime, demographics, health, and the economy, were the latest available at the time of this writing.

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To assist your students in learning about sociology and reflecting their knowledge on tests, I have continued to revise the learning objectives at the beginning of each chapter and offer students a study guide at the end of each chapter. The learning objectives have been carefully conceived to help the reader focus on the most crucial concepts of the chapter.

Changes by Chapter

CHAPTER 1: The Sociological Perspective and Research Process

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated chapter-opening lived experience to show continued linkages among social media, bullying, and suicide regarding young people in the United States
- Updated "Sociology & Everyday Life: The Sociology of Suicide Trends Today"
- Updated "Sociology & Everyday Life" quiz: "How Much Do You Know About Suicide?"
- Updated "Sociology in Global Perspective: Durkheim's Classical Study of Suicide Applied to Twenty-First-Century India"
- Updated "The Importance of a Global Sociological Imagination"
- Updated Figure 1.3: "Using Our Global Sociological Imagination to Understand Suicide"
- Updated discussion of contemporary relevance of Auguste Comte's focus on science relating to sociology as a STEM discipline
- Updated Figure 1.8: "Age-Adjusted U.S. Suicide Rates by Race and Sex"
- Updated "Understanding Statistical Data Presentations"
- Updated Table 1.1, "Rates (per 100,000 U.S. Population) for Homicide, Suicide, and Firearm-Related Deaths of Youths Ages 15–19, by Gender, 2017"
- Revised and updated "Sociology and Social Policy: Establishing Policies to Help Prevent Military Suicides"
- Updated Figure 1.14: "National Suicide Statistics by State at a Glance"

CHAPTER 2: Culture

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Revised and updated opening lived experience about the relationship between food and cultural diversity
- Revised and updated "Cultural Universals"
- Updated discussion of "Symbols"
- Updated section on "Language," including "Language and Gender," and "Language, Race, and Ethnicity"
- Updated Figure 2.6: "States with Official English Laws"
- Updated Figure 2.7: "Languages Spoken at Home, Other Than English?"
- Updated discussion about "Cultural Diversity"
- Updated Figure 2.11: "Heterogeneity of U.S. Society" regarding religious affiliation, household income, and racial and ethnic distribution
- Updated "Culture Shock" regarding the Yanomamö
- Revised and updated "High Culture and Popular Culture"

CHAPTER 3: Socialization

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated and revised Figure 3.4: "Types of Maltreatment Among Children Under Age 18"
- Updated discussion of "The Family"
- Updated "Mass Media"
- Revised and updated "Sociology in Global Perspective: Open Doors: Study Abroad and Global Socialization"
- Revised "Looking Ahead: Socialization, Social Change, and Your Future"—regarding digital natives and digital immigrants in higher education

CHAPTER 4: Social Structure and Interaction in Everyday Life

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Revised and updated "Sociology & Everyday Life: Does Social Structure Contribute to Homelessness?" to include how eviction affects poor people and can contribute to homelessness
- Updated "Status" and "Master Status" discussions
- Deleted former Figure 4.4: "Causes of Family Homelessness in 22 Cities"
- Changed Figure 4.5: "Role Expectation, Performance, Conflict, and Strain" to Figure 4.4
- Changed Figure 4.6 to Figure 4.5 and updated caption
- Changed Figure 4.8: "Who Are the Homeless?" to Figure 4.7 and revised figure
- Updated "Sociology and Social Policy"
- Updated "You Can Make a Difference: Offering a Helping Hand to Homeless People"

CHAPTER 5: Groups and Organizations

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated opening lived experience to include examples of attachment to digital devices and face time.
- Revised "Sociology & Social Policy: Technological and Social Change in the Workplace: BYOD?"
- Added new "You Can Make a Difference: Can Websites and Social Media Help You Become a More Helpful Person?"

CHAPTER 6: Deviance and Crime

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated "Sociology & Everyday Life: The Carnage from Mass Shootings Just Keeps Going On"
- Updated discussion and examples throughout theories of deviance and crime section
- Updated crime statistics throughout chapter

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- Updated "What Causes Deviance, and Why Is It Functional for Society?" to include information about the 2018 Women's March
- Updated "Sociology in Global Perspective: Gangs Around the World: A Growing Problem"
- Updated "Deviance and Power Relations" to include the stereotyping of African American perpetrators
- Updated Figure 6.10: "Distribution of Arrests by Type of Offense, 2018"
- Updated Figure 6.11: "The FBI Crime Clock, 2018"
- Updated "Occupational and Corporate Crime"
- Updated "Internet Crime"
- Updated Figure 6.13: "Top Reported Internet Crime Types, 2018"
- Updated Figure 6.18: "Arrest Rates by Gender, 2018"
- Updated Figure 6.19: "Arrest Rates by Race, 2018"
- Revised and updated discussion of "The Police"
- Revised "Juvenile Courts" to include the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
- Updated Figure 6.24: "Death Row Census, May 31, 2019"
- Updated "Sociology & Social Policy: The Eternal Political War over Gun Control"
- Updated "Questions for Critical Thinking"

CHAPTER 7: Class and Stratification in the United States

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated opening lived experience about the "American Dream"
- Updated statistics on income, poverty, health insurance, and other issues pertaining to inequality throughout the chapter
- Updated "Sociology in Global Perspective: A Day in Your Life: How Are You Touched by Modern Slavery?"
- Updated discussion of "The Upper (Capitalist) Class"
- Updated "The Upper-Middle Class" to include the consumer class
- Updated "The Middle Class" to include a discussion of erosion of upward mobility and achievement of the American Dream
- Revised "The Working Class" to include more about pink collar occupations
- Updated content under "The Underclass"
- Updated Figure 7.12: "Distribution of Aggregate Income in the United States, 2018"
- Updated Figure 7.13: "Mean Household Income in the United States, 2018"
- Updated Figure 7.14: "Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity in the United States, 2018"
- Updated "Wealth Inequality" to include closing the racial wealth gap
- Updated Figure 7.15: "Racial Divide in Net Worth, 2017"
- Updated Figure 7.16: "Rate of Uninsurance by Household Income, 2018"
- Revised "Physical Health, Mental Health, and Nutrition" to include a discussion about "lunch shaming" in schools
- Updated Figure 7.18: "U.S. Poverty Rates by Age, 1959–2018"
- Updated Figure 7.19: "Poverty Rates by Age and Sex, 2018"
- Revised "Solving the Poverty Problem" to include issues regarding reducing or solving the poverty problem
- Updated "Looking Ahead: U.S. Stratification in the Future"
- Updated "You Can Make a Difference: Students Helping Others through The Campus Kitchen"

CHAPTER 8: Global Stratification

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated "Sociology & Everyday Life" quiz: "How Much Do You Know About Global Wealth and Poverty?"
- Updated statistics on income, poverty, and other issues pertaining to inequality throughout the chapter
- Updated "Wealth and Poverty in Global Perspective"
- Deleted Figure 8.1: "Wealth and Population by Region, 2015"
- Updated Figure 8.3: "High-, Middle-, and Low-Income Economies in Global Perspective" (now Figure 8.2)
- Updated "Concept: Quick Review: Classification of Economies by Income"
- Updated "Global Poverty and Human Development Issues"
- Updated Figure 8.6: "Indicators of Human Development" (now Figure 8.5)
- Updated "Education and Literacy" to include expected years of schooling and definition of *literate person*
- Updated information on *maquiladora* plants
- Revised "Looking Ahead: Global Inequality in the Future"

CHAPTER 9: Race and Ethnicity

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated opening lived experience about the persistence of racism and police discrimination against persons of color
- Updated data and other information on all racial and ethnic categories throughout the chapter
- Revised "Sociology & Social Policy: Racist Incidents on College Campus Versus First Amendment Right to Freedom of Speech"
- Updated "Racism" to include newer examples of overt racism and beliefs regarding the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech
- Updated "WASPs and Sports"
- Updated "Discrimination Against White Ethnics" to include examples of stereotypes of white ethnics offered in film and television and information about anti-Semitism
- Revised and updated discussions of "Indochinese Americans," "Korean Americans," and "Japanese Americans"
- Revised and updated discussion of "Mexican Americans or Chicanos/as" to include effects of Trump Administration policies

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- Updated discussion of "Puerto Ricans" to include effects of Hurricane Maria and living conditions of Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland
- Updated "Cuban Americans"
- Revised and updated "Latinx and Sports"
- Revised and updated "Middle Eastern Americans and North African Americans" to include North African Americans and Trump Administration policies
- Revised "Iranian (Persian) Americans"
- Updated "Discrimination" to include Trump Administration policies
- Updated "Middle Eastern Americans and Sports"
- Added research by Demographer William H. Frey under "Growing Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Hostility in the United States"
- Revised "You Can Make a Difference: Working for Racial and Gender Harmony on College Campuses"

CHAPTER 10: Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated discussion of "Measuring Sexual Orientation"
- New discussion of "The Great Divide That Doesn't Stop"
- Revised and updated discussion of LGBTQ issues throughout the chapter
- Updated sections on socialization
- Updated "Mass Media and Gender Socialization"
- Updated Table 10.3: "Percentage of the Workforce Represented by Women, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans in Selected Occupations"
- Updated Figure 10.11: "The Wage Gap, 2019"
- Updated Figure 10.12: "Women's Median Annual Earnings as a Percentage of Men's Median Annual Earnings in Same Racial/Ethnic Category, 2018"
- Updated discussion of "The Human Capital Model" regarding the "motherhood penalty"
- Deleted former Figure 10.13: "Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's Earnings by State, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, 2014"
- Revised "Multicultural Feminism"

CHAPTER 11: Families and Intimate Relationships

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated chapter opening lived experience and quiz about "Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About Contemporary Trends in U.S. Family Life?"
- Revised statistics on families throughout chapter
- Updated discussion of "Extended and Nuclear Families"
- Updated "The Contemporary Family—Family Diversity in the Twenty-first Century"
- Updated data on cohabitation and domestic partnerships throughout chapter
- Added content about matriarchal societies under "Power and Authority in Families"
- Replaced previous Figure 11.7 with new Figure 11.7, "Percentage of U.S. Households by Type, 1947 to 2019"
- Revised "Marriage" to include new discussion of the downward trend in the number of married U.S. households and the upward swing in the age of many first marriages
- Updated content about same-sex marriage and LBTQ rights throughout chapter
- Updated "Sociology in Global Perspective: Wombs-for-Rent: Commercial Surrogacy in India"
- Updated "Deciding to Have Children"
- Updated Figure 11.10: "U.S. Birth Rates per 1,000 Females Ages 15–19, by Race/Ethnicity, 1990–2018"
- Updated Figure 11.12: "Living Arrangements of Children Under 18 Years Old for Selected Years, 1970–2019"
- Updated "Children in Foster Care" to include reasons for children's removal from their own homes
- Updated Figure 11.14: "U.S. Divorce Rate by State, 1990–2017"
- Revised "Looking Ahead: Family Issues in the Future"

CHAPTER 12: Education and Religion

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated the "Sociology & Everyday Life: How Much Do You Know About the Effects of Religion on U.S. Education?"
- Updated statistics for education and religion throughout the chapter
- Updated Figure 12.7: "Percentage Distribution of Total Public Elementary–Secondary School System Revenue, 2017–2018"
- Updated Figure 12.8: "Status Dropout Rates for 16- to 24-Year-Olds, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity, 2017-2018"
- Updated "Racial Segregation and Resegregation"
- Updated "Homeschooling"
- Updated "School Safety and Violence at All Levels"
- Revised and updated "Four-Year Colleges and Universities"
- Updated "The High Cost of a College Education"
- Revised "Racial and Ethnic Differences in Enrollment" to include a new study by Chun and Feagin
- Revised and updated Figure 12.13: "Highest Level of Educational Attainment of the U.S. Population Ages 25 and Over by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2018"
- Revised Figure 12.15: "Original Locations of the World's Major Religions"
- Updated "Sociology & Social Policy: Fighting It Out on the Football Field: Prayer in Public Schools and the Issue of Separation of Church and State"
- Updated Figure 12.19: "U.S. Religious Traditions' Membership"
- Revised and updated "Looking Ahead: Education and Religion in the Future"

CHAPTER 13: Politics and the Economy in Global Perspective

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Revised "Sociology & Everyday Life" to include the 2016 Election of President Donald Trump

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- Updated "Politics, Power, and Authority"
- Updated Figure 13.4: "Outside Spending Including Super PACS in the 2016 Presidential Election"
- Updated Figure 13.6: "Major U.S. Political Parties"
- Updated "Discontent with the Current Political System and Parties" to include the 2016 election of President Donald Trump and projections for the 2020 presidential elections
- Updated "Voter Turnout and Political Preferences"
- Updated Figure 13.8: "Voter Participation in the 2016 Presidential Election by Race and Ethnicity"
- Revised "Voter Turnout in Swing ("Battleground") States"
- Updated Figure 13.9: "2016 Presidential Election: State by State"
- Revised "Voter Apathy or Something Else?"
- Updated Figure 13.10: "The 'Typical' Federal Civilian Employee, 2018"
- Updated Table 13.1: "*Forbes* List of the World's 15 Largest Public Companies Based on Market Capitalization"
- Updated Table 13.2: "The Music Industry's Big Three"
- Updated Figure 13.13: "The General Motors Board of Directors"
- Revised and updated "Sociology in Global Perspective: China's Economic Slowdown and the Fate of Factory and Office Workers"
- Updated data and statistics about unemployment, labor unions, worker activism throughout the chapter
- Updated "You Can Make a Difference: Keeping an Eye on the Media"
- Updated "Looking Ahead: Politics and the Global Economy in the Future"

CHAPTER 14: Health, Health Care, and Disability

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated "Sociology & Everyday Life: Medicine as a Social Institution"
- Updated "Sociology & Everyday Life" quiz: "How Much Do You Know About Health, Illness, and Health Care?"
- Updated information and statistics on illness and health care throughout the chapter
- Updated discussions about life expectancy, drug use, STDs, health insurance, and disability throughout the chapter
- Revised "Health in Global Perspective"
- Updated "Sociology in Global Perspective: Medical Crises and Response in the Aftermath of Natural Disasters"
- Updated "Alcohol" and problems associated with alcohol abuse
- Updated Figure 14.5: "Percentage of Adults Who Binge Drink"
- Updated "Illegal Drugs," particularly marijuana use and changes in state laws on illegal drug use
- Updated Figure 14.8: "Chlamydia—Rates of Reported Cases by Age Group and Sex, United States, 2018"
- Updated Figure 14.9: "Prevalence of Self-Reported Adult Obesity in the United States, 2018"
- Updated Figure 14.11: "Increase in Cost of Health Care, 1993–2018"
- Revised and updated information on the Affordable Care Act and its implementation throughout the chapter
- Updated Figure 14.13: "Percentage of Children Under the Age of 19 by Without Health Insurance Coverage by Selected Characteristics: 2017 and 2018"
- Updated "Holistic Medicine and Alternative Medicine"
- Revised "Mental Disorders"
- Updated Table 14.2: "Percentage of Noninstitutionalized Adults Age 18 and Older with Disabilities in the United States"
- Updated "Looking Ahead: Health Care in the Future"

CHAPTER 15: Population and Urbanization

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated "Sociology & Everyday Life: The Immigration and Deportation Crisis in the United States"
- New Figure 15.1: "Projected Global Population Growth between 2019 and 2050"
- Updated information and statistics on population, fertility, mortality, and migration throughout the chapter
- Revised "Mortality" to include how educational attainment affects life expectancy
- Updated Table 15.1: "The Ten Leading Causes of Death in the United States, 1900 and 2019"
- Updated discussion of "Migration"
- Updated Figure 15.5: "Population Pyramids for Mexico, Iran, the United States, and France, 2020"
- Updated "Sociology in Global Perspective: Global Diaspora and the Migrant Crisis in India and Other Countries"
- Revised "Cities and Persons with a Disability" to include new content on the Americans With Disabilities Act
- Updated Figure 15.14: "The World's Fifteen Largest Agglomerations"
- Updated "The Continuing Fiscal Crises of the Cities"
- Updated "Looking Ahead: Population and Urbanization in the Future"

CHAPTER 16: Collective Behavior, Social Movements, and Social Change

- Updated Learning Objectives
- Updated the "Sociology & Everyday Life: Collective Behavior, Climate Activism, and Environmental Issues"
- Updated the "Sociology & Everyday Life" quiz: "How Much Do You Know About Collective Behavior and Environmental Issues?"
- Revised "Collective Behavior" to include new Pew Research Center study
- Updated "Conditions for Collective Behavior"

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- Revised "Protest Crowds"
- Updated "Convergence Theory" to include climate activists
- Updated "Emergent Norm Theory" to include new content about crimes committed in disaster areas
- Updated "Rumors and Gossip"
- Revised Table 16.1: "Top 6 Problems and Policy Priorities of the U.S. Public, 2019"
- Updated Table 16.1, "Public Opinion"
- Updated "Revolutionary Movements"
- Updated "Religious Movements" to include people identifying themselves as "nones" on Pew Research Surveys
- Updated "Sociology in Global Perspective; "Change Does Occur: Activist Cleans Up Environmental Pollution at Some Chinese Factories"
- Updated "Political Opportunity Theory"
- Revised "New Social Movement Theory" to include climate change activism
- Updated "The Physical Environment and Change"
- Revised and updated "Social Institutions and Change"

Overview of the Text's Contents

Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials, twelfth edition, contains sixteen high-interest, up-to-date, clearly organized chapters to introduce students to the best of sociological thinking. The length of the text makes full coverage of the book possible in the time typically allocated to the introductory course so that all students are purchasing a book that their instructors will have the time and desire to cover in its entirety.

Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials is divided into five parts.

Part 1 establishes the foundation for studying society and social life. **Chapter 1** introduces students to the sociological imagination and traces the development of sociological thinking. The chapter sets forth the major theoretical perspectives used by sociologists in analyzing compelling social issues and shows students how sociologists conduct research. This chapter provides a thorough description of both quantitative and qualitative methods of sociological research, and shows how these approaches have been used from the era of Emile Durkheim to the present to study social concerns such as suicide. In **Chapter 2** culture is spotlighted as either a stabilizing force or a force that can generate discord, conflict, and even violence in societies. Cultural diversity is discussed as a contemporary issue, and unique coverage is given to popular culture and leisure and to divergent perspectives on popular culture. **Chapter 3** looks at the positive and negative aspects of socialization, including a lived experience of learning the socialization cues of medical school. This chapter presents an innovative analysis of gender and racial–ethnic socialization and issues associated with recent immigration.

Part 2 examines social groups and social control. **Chapter 4** applies the sociological imagination to an examination of society, social structure, and social interaction, using homelessness as a sustained example of the dynamic interplay of structure and interaction in society. Unique to this chapter are discussions of the sociology of emotions and of personal space as viewed through the lenses of race, class, gender, and age.

Chapter 5 analyzes groups and organizations, including innovative forms of social organization and ways in which organizational structures may differentially affect people based on race, class, gender, and age. **Chapter 6** examines how deviance and crime emerge in societies, using diverse theoretical approaches to describe the nature of deviance, crime, and the criminal justice system. Key issues are dramatized for students through an analysis of recent mass shootings and the consequences of violence on individuals and society.

Part 3 focuses on social differences and social inequality, looking at issues of class, race/ethnicity, and sex/gender, while also touching on issues relating to social inequality based on age. **Chapter 7** focuses on class and stratification in the United States, analyzing the causes and consequences of inequality and poverty, including a discussion of the ideology and accessibility of the American Dream. **Chapter 8** addresses the issue of global stratification and examines differences in wealth and poverty in rich and poor nations around the world. Explanations for these differences are discussed.

The focus of **Chapter 9** is race and ethnicity, including an illustration of the historical relationship (or lack of it) between sports and upward mobility by persons from diverse racial–ethnic groups. A thorough analysis of prejudice, discrimination, theoretical perspectives, and the experiences of diverse racial and ethnic groups is presented, along with global racial and ethnic issues. **Chapter 10** examines sex, gender, and sexuality, with special emphasis on gender stratification in historical perspective. Linkages between gender socialization and contemporary gender inequality are described and illustrated by lived experiences and perspectives on body image.

Part 4 offers a systematic discussion of social institutions, building students' awareness of the importance of these foundational elements of society and showing how a problem in one often has a significant influence on others. Families and intimate relationships are explored in **Chapter 11**, which includes both U.S. and global perspectives on family relationships, a view of families throughout the life course, and a discussion of diversity in contemporary U.S. families. Education and religion are presented in **Chapter 12**, which highlights important sociological theories pertaining to these social institutions and integrates the theme of the influence of religion on education and life. In the process, the chapter highlights issues of race, class, and gender inequalities in current U.S. education. The chapter also provides a thorough discussion of religion in global perspective, including a survey of world

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religions and an analysis of how religious beliefs affect other aspects of social life. Current trends in U.S. religion are explored, including various sociological explanations of why people look to religion to find purpose and meaning in life.

Chapter 13 discusses the intertwining nature of politics, economy, and media in global perspective, highlighting the international context in which contemporary political and economic systems operate. The chapter emphasizes the part that social media are increasingly playing in politics and the economy throughout the world.

Chapter 14 analyzes health, health care, and disability from both U.S. and global perspectives. Among the topics included are social epidemiology, lifestyle factors influencing health and illness, health care organization in the United States and other nations, social implications of advanced medical technology, and holistic and alternative medicine. This chapter is unique in that it contains a thorough discussion of the sociological perspectives on disability and of social inequalities based on disability. The Affordable Care Act and its ramifications are explored in detail.

Part 5 surveys social dynamics and social change. **Chapter 15** examines population and urbanization, looking at demography, global population change, and the process and consequences of urbanization. Special attention is given to race- and class-based segregation in urban areas and the crisis in health care in central cities. **Chapter 16** concludes the text with an innovative analysis of collective behavior, social movements, and social change. The need for persistence in social movements, such as the continuing work of environmental activists over the past sixty years, is used as an example to help students grasp the importance of collective behavior and social movements in producing social change.

Distinctive, Classroom-Tested Features

The following special features are specifically designed to demonstrate the relevance of sociology in our lives, as well as to support students' learning. As the preceding overview of the book's contents shows, these features appear throughout the text, some in every chapter and others in selected chapters.

Unparalleled Coverage of and Attention to Diversity

From its first edition, I have strived to integrate diversity in numerous ways throughout this book. The individuals portrayed and discussed in each chapter accurately mirror the diversity in society itself. As a result, this text speaks to a wide variety of students and captures their interest by taking into account their concerns and perspectives. Moreover, the research used includes the best work of classical and established contemporary sociologists—including many white women and people of color—and it weaves an inclusive treatment of *all* people into the examination of sociology in *all* chapters. Therefore, this text helps students consider the significance of the interlocking nature of individuals' class, race, and gender (and, increasingly, age) in all aspects of social life.

Personal Narratives That Highlight Issues and Serve as Chapter-Length Examples

Authentic first-person commentaries appear in the "Sociology & Everyday Life" features that open each chapter and personalize the issue that unifies the chapter's coverage. These lived experiences provide opportunities for students to examine social life beyond their own experiences and for instructors to systematically incorporate into lectures and discussions an array of interesting and relevant topics that help demonstrate to students the value of applying sociology to their everyday lives. Topics include "Does Social Structure Contribute to Homelessness?," which discusses sociologist Matthew Desmond's touching book, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City,* describing the plight of people living in some of the poorest neighborhoods in the United States (Chapter 4); updated research by sociologist Sherry Turkle on "Social Media in the Classroom and the Real World" (Chapter 5); a discussion of gun violence during the Trump administration in "The Carnage from Mass Shootings Just Keeps Going On" (Chapter 6); "The Endless Controversy in Schools," new lived experiences about how people argue over issues pertaining to the teaching of creationism and evolution in public schools (Chapter 12); "The Immigration and Deportation Crisis in the United States," with new lived experiences and information about immigration and population problems affecting the United States (Chapter15); and "Collective Behavior, Climate Activism, and Environmental Issues," which describes the role of young activists in calling attention to climate change and the environmental crisis (Chapter 16).

Focus on the Relationship Between Sociology and Everyday Life

Each chapter has a brief quiz in the opening "Sociology & Everyday Life" feature that relates the sociological perspective to the pressing social issues presented in the vignette. (Answers are provided at the end of the chapter.)

Emphasis on the Importance of a Global Perspective

The global implications of all topics are examined throughout each chapter and in the "Sociology in Global Perspective" features, which highlight our interconnected world and reveal how the sociological imagination extends beyond national borders.

Emphasis on Social and Global Change

The twelfth edition also strives to relate the importance of social and global change in its many forms and how this change affects not only our everyday lives but also our communities and the entire nation and world.

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Applying the Sociological Imagination to Social Policy

The "Sociology & Social Policy" features in selected chapters help students understand the connection between law and social policy issues in society.

Focus on Making a Difference

Designed to help students learn how to become involved in their communities, the "You Can Make a Difference" features look at ways in which students can address, on a personal level, social issues and problems raised by the chapter themes.

Effective Study Aids

In addition to basic reading and study aids such as learning objectives, key terms, and a running glossary, *Sociology in Our Times* includes the following pedagogical aids to aid students' mastery of the course's content:

- **Concept Quick Review.** These tables categorize and contrast the major theories or perspectives on the specific topics presented in a chapter.
- **Questions for Critical Thinking.** Each chapter concludes with a set of questions to encourage students to reflect on important issues, to develop their own critical-thinking skills, and to highlight how ideas presented in one chapter often build on those developed previously.
- **Feature-Concluding Reflect & Analyze Questions.** From activating prior knowledge related to concepts and themes to highlighting main ideas and reinforcing diverse perspectives, this text's questions encourage students to reflect on issues and to analyze content rather than to simply memorize and recall course content.
- **End-of-Chapter Summaries in Question-and-Answer Format.** Chapter summaries provide a built-in review for students by reexamining material covered in the chapter in an easy-to-read question-and-answer format to review, highlight, and reinforce the most important concepts and issues discussed in each chapter.

Comprehensive Supplements Package

Products for Blended and Online Courses

MindTap™ *MindTap Sociology for Kendall's Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials,* twelfth edition, from Cengage Learning, represents a new approach to a highly customizable, online learning platform. A fully online learning solution, MindTap combines all of a student's learning tools—readings, multimedia, activities, and assessments—into a learning path that guides the student through the introduction to sociology course. Instructors can customize the experience to suit the learning needs of their students, even seamlessly introducing their own content into the learning path via apps that integrate into the MindTap platform. Learn more at **www.cengage.com/mindtap**.

MindTap for Kendall's *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials,* twelfth edition, is easy to use and saves instructors time by allowing them to do the following:

- Seamlessly deliver appropriate content and technology assets from a number of providers to students, as needed.
- Break course content down into movable objects to promote personalization, encourage interactivity, and ensure student engagement.
- Customize the course—from tools to text—and make adjustments "on the fly," making it possible to intertwine breaking news into your lessons and incorporate today's teachable moments.
- Bring interactivity into learning through the integration of multimedia assets (apps from Cengage Learning and other providers) and numerous in-context exercises and supplements.
- Track students' use, activities, and comprehension in real time, which provides opportunities for early intervention to influence progress and outcomes. Grades are visible and archived so students and instructors always have access to current standings in the class.
- Assess knowledge throughout each section: after readings and in activities, homework, and quizzes.
- Automatically grade homework and quizzes.

Resources for Customizing Your Textbook

Cengage Learning is pleased to offer three modules that help you tailor *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials,* twelfth edition, to your course. In addition, you can choose to add your own materials or reorganize the table of contents. Work with your local Cengage Learning consultant to find out more.

Teaching Aids for Instructors A broad array of teaching aids is available to make course planning faster and easier, giving you more time to focus on your students. All of these resources can be accessed with a single account. Go to **login.cengage.com** to log in.

Online Instructor's Resource Manual This text's *Online Instructor's Resource Manual* is designed to maximize the effectiveness of your course preparation. Beginning with a list of "What's New in Each Chapter" and the Key Terms, it offers brief chapter outlines correlated to student learning objectives, creative lecture and teaching ideas, student active learning activities, Internet activities, video suggestions, and additional resources.

Online Test Bank The twelfth edition's test bank consists of revised and updated multiple-choice questions and true/false questions for each chapter of the text, along with an answer key and text references for each question. Each multiple-choice item has the question type (fact, concept, or application) indicated. Also included are essay questions

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for each chapter. All test bank questions are aligned to learning objectives for each chapter.

Online PowerPoint® Slides Helping you make your lectures more engaging while effectively reaching your more visually oriented students, these Microsoft® PowerPoint® slides outline the chapters of the main text in classroom-ready presentations that include tables, selected figures, image-based "Consider This" questions, and a "Quick Quiz." The PowerPoint slides are updated to reflect the content and organization of the new edition of the text.

Cengage Learning Testing Powered by Cognero This is a flexible online system that allows you to do the following:

- Import, edit, and manipulate test bank content from the *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* test bank or elsewhere, including your own favorite test questions
- Create multiple test versions in an instant
- Deliver tests from your LMS, your classroom, or wherever you want

Acknowledgments

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I invite you to send your comments and suggestions about this book to me in care of:

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About the Author

DIANA KENDALL is Professor of Sociology at Baylor University, where she was named an Outstanding University Professor. She has taught a variety of courses, including Introduction to Sociology; Sociological Theory (undergraduate and graduate); Sociology of Medicine; Sociology of Law; and Race, Class, and Gender. Previously she enjoyed many years of teaching sociology and serving as chair of the Social and Behavioral Science Division at Austin Community College.

Dr. Kendall received her Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin, where she was invited to membership in the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society. Her areas of specialization and primary research interests are sociological theory and the sociology of medicine. Dr. Kendall is the author of *Sociology in Our Times* (Cengage Learning, 2017), *Sociology in Our Times: The Essentials* (Cengage, 2018), *Social Problems in a Diverse Society* (Pearson, 2019), *The Power of Good Deeds: Privileged Women and the Social Reproduction of the Upper Class* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), *Members Only: Elite Clubs and the Process of Exclusion* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), and *Framing Class: Media Representations of Wealth and Poverty in America*, Second Edition (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012). Much of Dr. Kendall's research focuses on the intersectionality of race, class, and gender, including her publication "Class: Still Alive and Reproducing in the United States," a book chapter in *Privilege: A Reader,* Fourth Edition, 2016, edited by Michael S. Kimmel and Abby L. Ferber and published by Westview Press. Dr. Kendall is also the author of the forthcoming book, *Rich Woman, Poor Woman: The Plight of Women during the Trump Era,* and she is a coauthor of the recently published scholarly publication, "Religious Conservatives and TV News: Are They More Likely to be Religiously Offended?" *Social Problems,* November, 2019 (with coauthors Robert Thomson and Jerry Z. Park). Dr. Kendall is actively involved in numerous national and regional sociological associations, including the American Sociological Association, the Society for the Study of Social Problems, and the Southwestern Sociological Association.

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The **Sociological Perspective** and **Research Process**

1

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Discuss** how sociology can contribute to our understanding of social life.
2. **Explain** the sociological imagination and importance of a global sociological imagination.
3. **Describe** the historical context in which sociological thinking developed, emphasizing the ideas of early social thinkers.
4. **Discuss** how the views of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel on social change influenced modern sociology.
5. **Compare** the functionalist, conflict, symbolic interactionist, and postmodern perspectives on social life in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
6. **Explain** how sociologists and other social scientists question ordinary assumptions and use specific research methods to find out more about the social world.
7. **Distinguish** between a quantitative research model and a qualitative research model.
8. **Describe** survey research and the types of surveys.
9. **Compare** field research, experiments, and secondary analysis of existing data.
10. **Discuss** the ethical concerns involved in sociological research and the professional codes that protect research participants.

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SOCIOLOGY & **Everyday Life**

Social Media and the Teen Bullying and Suicide Crisis

"Her actions consisted of starting rumors of the victim having sexually transmitted diseases, vulgar name-calling… and threats to 'expose' personal and sensitive details of the victim's life."

—Statement from a Panama City Beach, Florida, police report describing the law enforcement investigation into a middle-school student's social media account after the suicide death of a 12-year-old young woman who had routinely been cyberbullied by this person and other students at her school (Lynch, 2018).

"A police officer stood outside [her front door], demanding her daughter's phone. A day earlier, [this mother] had spoken at the funeral of her 15-year-old daughter . . . who had committed suicide that week. [The mother] knew little about what caused the teen to take her own life, beyond a strange stream of apologetic Facebook messages from friends chiming from [the daughter's] open laptop." . . . . "I don't think [my daughter] thought she could start over . . . ."

—A mother describes what happened when Phoenix, Arizona, police officers came to her home late on a Sunday night shortly after her 15-year-old daughter had taken her own life following being raped at a Labor Day party and others had shared a photo of the violent event online (Mensik, 2019).

One of the things that law enforcement officials often do in their investigation after a young person's suicide is to look at the victim's cellphone and social

AP Images/Marcio Jose Sanchez

The tragic loss of many young people to suicide has brought about some new state laws aimed at deterring bullying, cyberbullying, and sexual assault. Shown here, the District Attorney of Santa Clara County, California, introduces "Audrie's Law," named in honor of Audrie Pott, a high school student whose life tragically ended in suicide allegedly linked to bullying and sexual assault.

Suicides committed by young people who have been the victims of cyberbullying deeply touch the lives of their families, friends, and others who have not even met them. Although we will never know the full story of what happened to the young people described earlier, these tragic occurrences bring us to larger sociological questions: Why does anyone commit suicide? Is suicide purely an individual phenomenon, or is it related to our social interactions and the social environment and society in which we live? How have technologies such as smartphones and social media affected our communication—both positively and negatively—with others?

As you are well aware, social media use among teens and college students continues to grow rapidly. You are engulfed by smartphones, tablets, and computers. Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other networking sites are all taken for granted. You enjoy the positive effects of social media, but the digital age has also produced some harmful outcomes, particularly when people harass others, cause psychological and physical harm, and sometimes even contribute to suicide because of cyberbullying and other forms of aggressive behavior.

Although suicide may seem like a depressing discussion for starting your study of sociology, I have chosen this topic as a beginning point because suicide is one of the first social topics that some early sociologists studied. These thinkers believed that identifying the *social causes* of such behavior sets sociology apart from psychology, philosophy, and other areas of inquiry. These early sociologists also wanted to show others how many acts we think of as purely *individual* in nature are also social in their origin and consequences.

In Chapter 1, we examine how sociological theories and research can help all of us to better understand social life, including such seemingly individualistic acts such as attempting or committing suicide. We hope you will see how sociological theory and research methods are used to answer complex questions and give you a chance to wrestle with some of the problems sociologists experience as they study human behavior. Before reading on, please test your knowledge about suicide by taking the "Sociology and Everyday Life" quiz. ●

Putting Social Life into Perspective

Sociology is the systematic study of human society and social interaction. It is a *systematic* study because sociologists apply both theoretical perspectives and research methods

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media accounts, as well as all other persons who might have cyberbullied or otherwise threatened their well-being. This approach is one way to learn about possible motivations for the individual's death because social media is a prime way in which today's young people may be psychologically harmed by friends or acquaintances who can anonymously verbally attack them. Cyberbullying as a social phenomenon contributes to problems of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and a general feeling of helplessness that may make some young people feel like living is not worthwhile.

How Much Do You Know About Suicide?

TRUE	FALSE		
T	F	1	Suicide primarily occurs in high-income nations of the world.
T	F	2	Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death overall in the United States.
T	F	3	More than twice as many suicides occur in the United States each year as there are homicides.
T	F	4	Although females are more likely to attempt suicide, males are more likely to complete suicide (take their own life).
T	F	5	Each year about 500,000 suicide deaths occur worldwide.
T	F	6	Firearms are the most commonly used method of suicide among males and females.
T	F	7	Among males, the U.S. suicide rate is highest for men aged 65 and older.
T	F	8	The prevalence of suicide attempts typically is highest each year among adults between the ages of 18 and 25.

Answers can be found at the end of the chapter.

(or orderly approaches) to examinations of social behavior. Sociologists study human societies and their social interactions to develop theories of how human behavior is shaped by group life and how, in turn, group life is affected by individuals. Sociologists often examine social institutions and social relationships among people. This helps us understand how the social institutions and larger societal structures, such as government, religion, education, health care, and law, influence our lives and the groups of which we are a part on a daily basis.

Why Should You Study Sociology?

Sociology helps you gain a better understanding of yourself and other people, cultures, and environments we encounter in our larger social world. It enables you to see how the groups to which you belong and the society in which you live largely shape behavior. A ***society*** is a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations, such as the United States, Mexico, or Nigeria. Many rapid changes continue to occur in the twenty-first century. Many societies have not only dominant cultural groupings and expectations but also many smaller groupings that have their own unique cultural identities. Global migration and interdependence of various nation-states have shifted the meaning of *society* in the twenty-first century where we tend to look at issues on a more international basis.

Examining the world order helps us understand that each of us is affected by *global interdependence*—a relationship in which the lives of all people are closely intertwined and any one nation's problems are part of a larger global problem. Environmental problems are an example: People throughout

sociology
the systematic study of human society and social interaction.

society
a large social grouping that shares the same geographical territory and is subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations.

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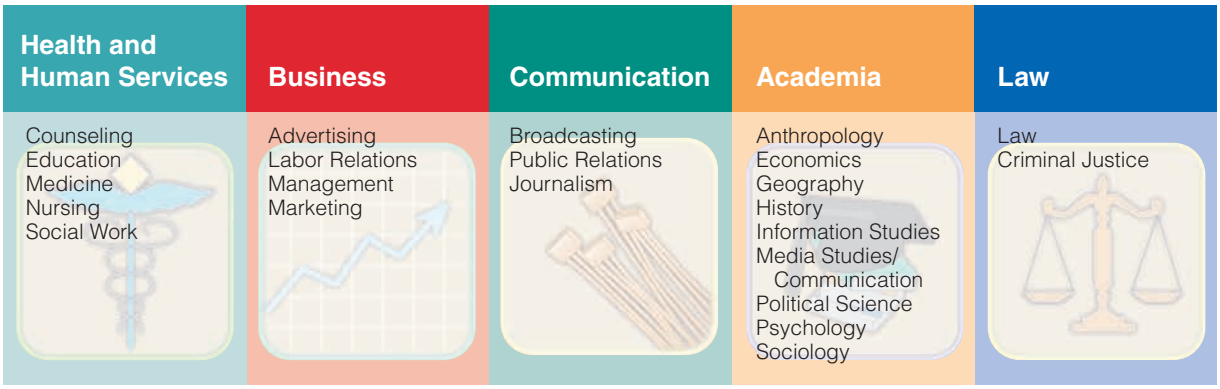

FIGURE 1.1 Fields That Use Social Science Research

In many careers, including jobs in health and human services, business, communication, academia, and law, the ability to analyze social science research is an important need.

Source: Based on Katzer, Cook, and Crouch, 1991.

the world share the same biosphere. When environmental degradation, such as removing natural resources or polluting the air and water, takes place in one region, it may have an adverse effect on people around the globe. Consider, for example, the effects of the recent forest fires in the Amazon rainforest in Brazil, which produces an estimated 20 percent of the world's oxygen. Devastation from these fires will affect regions worldwide with regard to wildlife, natural resources, health, and our oxygen supply. In addition to affecting the global ecosystem, disasters such as this will also deeply affect not only the indigenous people who live in the area but also the health and well-being of individuals worldwide.

What are some ways that you might personally benefit from studying sociology? You can benefit from studying sociology because sociology enables us to move beyond established ways of thinking and allows us to gain new insights into ourselves. It also helps us develop a greater awareness of the connections between our own personal "world" and that of other people. According to sociologist Peter Berger (1963: 23), sociological inquiry helps us see that "things are not what they seem." Sociology provides new ways of approaching social problems and making decisions in everyday life. For this reason, people with knowledge of sociology are employed in a variety of fields that apply sociological insights to everyday life (see ▪ Figure 1.1).

Sociology promotes understanding and tolerance by enabling each of us to look beyond intuition, common sense, and our personal experiences. Many of us rely on intuition or common sense gained from personal experience to help us understand our daily lives and other people's behavior. *Commonsense knowledge* guides ordinary conduct in everyday life. However, many commonsense notions are actually myths. A *myth* is a popular but false notion that may be used, either intentionally or unintentionally, to perpetuate certain beliefs or "theories" even in the light of conclusive evidence to the contrary.

By contrast, sociologists strive to use scientific standards, not popular myths or hearsay, in studying society and social interaction. They use systematic research techniques and are accountable to the scientific community for their methods and the presentation of their findings. Whereas some sociologists argue that sociology must be completely value free—free from distorting subjective (personal or emotional) bias—others do not think that total objectivity is an attainable or desirable goal when studying human behavior. However, all sociologists attempt to discover patterns or commonalities in human behavior. When they study suicide, for example, they look for recurring patterns of behavior in individuals and groups. Consequently, we seek the multiple causes and effects of social issues and analyze the effect of the problem not only from the standpoint of the people directly involved but also from the standpoint of the effects of such behavior on all people.

The Sociological Imagination

Do you wonder how your daily life compares to what other people are doing? Our interest in Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media sites reflects how fascinated we are by what other people are thinking and doing. But how can you really link your personal life with what is going on with other people in the larger social world? You can make an important linkage known as the sociological imagination.

Sociological reasoning is often referred to as the ***sociological imagination***—the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society (Mills, 1959b). The sociological imagination is important to each of us because having this awareness enables us to understand the link between our personal experiences and the social contexts in which they occur. Think for a minute about some of the problems you face. Are these problems totally individualistic in nature or do they have their roots in the larger society? What about the high cost of college and university education? At a personal level, you and your family are the ones who have to figure out how to meet these economic demands and sometimes financial hardships caused by the cost of your education. However, what you must pay to attend college and how the costs of your overall education

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SOCIOLOGY IN **Global Perspective**

Durkheim's Classical Study of Suicide Applied to Twenty-First-Century India

> The bond attaching [people] to life slackens because the bond which attaches [them] to society is itself slack.
> —Emile Durkheim, *Suicide* (1964b/1897)

Although this statement described social conditions accompanying the high rates of suicide found in late-nineteenth-century France, Durkheim's words ring true today as we look at contemporary suicide rates for young people in India. The suicide rate among young people aged 15–29 is more than three times the national average for all suicides. Ironically, these rates are high among persons living in the wealthier and more educated regions of the nation (*Times of India*, 2019).

Doesn't this seem unlikely? Many people think rural farmers facing poor harvests and high debt would have the greatest risk of suicide; however, this has not proven true in India. At first glance, we might think that economic success and a good education would provide insurance against suicide because of the greater happiness and job satisfaction among individuals in cities such as New Delhi, as these individuals have gained new opportunities and higher salaries in recent years. However, this economic boom—including the more open markets of India in the twenty-first century—has not only created new opportunities for people; but these changes have also contributed to rapid urbanization and weakened social ties.

The result of all this change? Intensified job anxiety, higher expectations, and more pressure for individual achievement. Social bonds have been weakened or dissolved as people move away from their families and their community. Ironically, newer technologies such as cellphones and social networking sites have contributed to the breakdown of traditional family units as communication has become more impersonal and fragmented.

In addition, life in the cities moves at a much faster pace than in the rural areas, and many individuals experience loneliness, sleep disorders, family discord, and major health risks such as heart disease and depression. In fact, Durkheim's sociology of suicide remains highly relevant to finding new answers to the question of why there is such a rash of suicides among young people in urban areas and villages of India. In India and globally, concern about reducing high rates of suicide is often linked to diagnosis and treatment of mental illness. However, social analysts also have learned that in addition to medications and psychiatric care, human contact with other individuals through suicide hotlines or personal encounters where people have someone available to talk with them may be able to curb more suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts (*Times of India,* 2019). What do you think?

JeremyRichards/Shutterstock.com

Durkheim's words about suicide still ring true today in India, where suicide rates for young people in cities such as New Delhi are high, particularly among those in the 15–29 age category. Why might an economic boom not only create new opportunities but also intensify social problems such as high rates of suicide when social change is linked to rapid urbanization and weakening social ties?

Reflect & Analyze

How does sociology help us examine seemingly private acts such as suicide within a larger social context? Why are some people more inclined to commit suicide if they are not part of a strong social fabric and have, at the same time, high job anxiety and intensive pressure to achieve?

are funded (through savings, part-time jobs, family contributions, grants, scholarships, or other economic means) are embedded in the larger structures of higher education and the politics and economics of our larger society.

The sociological imagination will enable you to grasp the relationship between economic and social arrangements, such as the cost of higher education, at the societal

sociological imagination
C. Wright Mills's term for the ability to see the relationship between individual experiences and the larger society.

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level and your own biography at the individual level. This way of looking at social life also helps you distinguish between personal troubles and social (or public) issues. *Personal troubles* are private problems that affect individuals and the networks of people with whom they regularly associate. As a result, individuals within their immediate social settings must solve those problems. For example, one person being unable to afford a college education or being unemployed may be viewed by some other people as a personal trouble. But, by contrast, *public issues* are problems that affect large numbers of people and often require solutions at the societal level. To pay for a college education, many students must rely on loans that may follow them many years after college. Some estimates suggest that more than 44 million people in the United States have a combined total of more than $1.4 trillion in student debt. This is a societal problem, not just an individual one!

The sociological imagination helps us place seemingly personal troubles, such as having difficulty paying for a college education, losing one's job, or thinking about taking one's own life (referred to as "suicidal ideation"), into a larger social context, where we can distinguish whether and how personal troubles may be related to public issues. Let's compare the two perspectives by looking at suicide.

Suicide as a Personal Trouble Have you ever heard someone say, "They have no one to blame but themselves" regarding some problem? In everyday life, we often blame other people for "creating" their own problems. Although individual behavior can contribute to social problems, our individual experiences are often largely beyond our own control. They are determined by society as a whole—by its historical development and its organization. In everyday life, we often blame individuals for creating or contributing to their own problems. If a person commits suicide, many people consider it to be strictly the result of that individual's own personal problems, not the social world in which the person lived.

Suicide as a Public Issue Using the sociological imagination to look at the problem of suicide, we can see that it is often a public issue—a societal problem. Early sociologist Emile Durkheim refused to accept popular explanations of suicide. In what is probably the first sociological study to use scientific research methods, he related suicide to the issue of cohesiveness (or lack of it) in society instead of viewing suicide as an isolated act that could be understood only by studying individual personalities or inherited tendencies. In *Suicide* (1964b/1897), Durkheim documented his contention that a high suicide rate indicated large-scale societal problems.

The Importance of a Global Sociological Imagination

How is it possible to think globally when you live in one location and have been taught to think a certain way? Although we live in one country and rely heavily on Western sociological theory and research, we can access the world beyond the United States and learn to develop a more comprehensive *global* approach for the future. One way we can do this is to reach beyond studies that have focused primarily on the United States to look at the important challenges we face in a rapidly changing world and develop a more comprehensive *global* approach for the future (see ▪ Figure 1.2). These issues range from political and economic instability to environmental concerns, natural disasters, and terrorism. We can also examine the ways in which nations are not on equal footing when it comes to economics and politics.

The world's ***high-income countries*** are nations with highly industrialized economies; technologically advanced industrial, administrative, and service occupations; and relatively high levels of national and personal income. Examples include the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and the countries of Western Europe.

As compared with other nations of the world, many high-income nations have a high standard of living and a lower death rate because of advances in nutrition and medical technology. However, not everyone living in a so-called high-income country has these advantages.

In contrast, ***middle-income countries*** are nations with industrializing economies, particularly in urban areas, and moderate levels of national and personal income. Examples of middle-income countries include the nations of Eastern Europe and many Latin American countries.

Low-income countries are primarily agrarian nations with little industrialization and low levels of national and personal income. Examples of low-income countries include many of the nations of Africa and Asia, particularly India and the People's Republic of China, where people typically work the land and are among the poorest in the world. However, generalizations are difficult to make because there are wide differences in income and standards of living within many nations (see Chapter 8).

If we look at the problem of suicide from a global perspective, we find that it is a major concern: Worldwide, more than 800,000 people die by suicide every year. In addition, many more people attempt suicide. Based on what you have read earlier about high-, middle-, and low-income countries, it is important for us to think about the fact that about 79 percent of global suicides occur in low- and middle-income countries. Risk factors are shown in ▪ Figure 1.3.

Throughout this text, we will continue to develop our sociological imaginations by examining social life in the United States and other nations. The future of our nation is deeply intertwined with the future of all other nations of the world on economic, political, environmental, and humanitarian levels.

Whatever your race/ethnicity, class, sex, or age, are you able to include in your thinking the perspectives of people who are quite different from you in experiences and points of view? Before you answer this question, a few definitions are in order. *Race* is a term used by many people to specify groups of people distinguished by physical characteristics

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FIGURE 1.2 The World's Economies in the Early Twenty-First Century

High-, middle-, and low-income countries.

Photos, left to right: John Berry/Syracuse Newspapers/The Image Works; Gable/Alamy Stock Photo; Philipbigg/Alamy Stock Photo

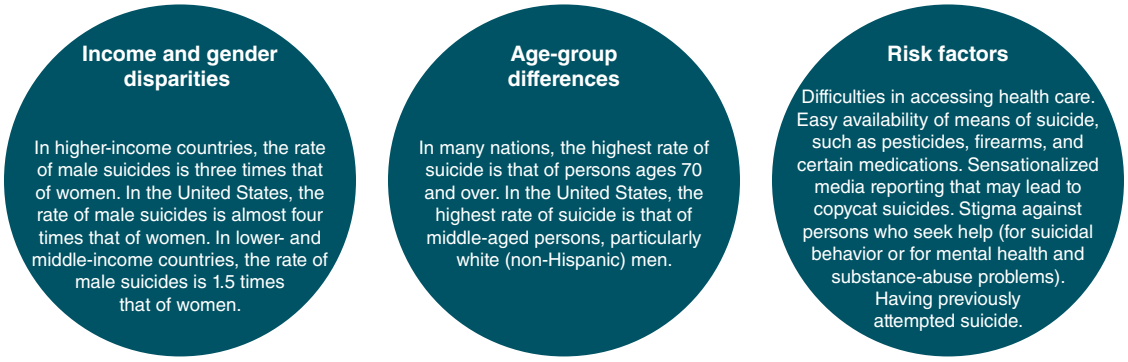

FIGURE 1.3 Using Our Global Sociological Imagination to Understand Suicide

Sources: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2015a; World Health Organization, 2015a.

such as skin color. *Ethnicity* refers to the cultural heritage or identity of a group and is based on factors such as language or country of origin. *Class* is the relative location of a person or group within the larger society, based on wealth, power, prestige, or other valued resources. *Sex* refers to the biological and anatomical differences between females and males. By contrast, *gender* refers to social and/or cultural distinctions associated with being male or female. Historically,

high-income countries
nations with highly industrialized economies; technologically advanced industrial, administrative, and service occupations; and relatively high levels of national and personal income.

middle-income countries
nations with industrializing economies, particularly in urban areas, and moderate levels of national and personal income.

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Everett Collection/Newscom

FIGURE **1.4** As the Industrial Revolution swept through the United States beginning in the nineteenth century, children employed in factories became increasingly common. Social thinkers soon began to explore such new social problems brought about by industrialization.

gender has referred to the meanings, beliefs, and practices associated with sex differences, often thought of as *femininity* and *masculinity*. More recently, the meanings associated with gender have become much more flexible, as discussed in Chapter 10. Although terms such as masculinity and femininity sound precise, they do not have a precise meaning and are, instead, *social constructions* that people often use to justify social differences and inequalities. When we refer to something as a "social construction," we mean that race, ethnicity, class, and gender do not really indicate anything apart from the social meaning that people in a given society confer on them. However, the result is that we may—either intentionally or unintentionally—privilege some categories of people over others who are relegated to disadvantaged or subordinate positions in society. In sum, a "social construction of reality" occurs when large numbers of people act and respond as if these categories exist in reality rather than having been socially created by others.

The Development of Sociological Thinking

Where did sociological thinking come from? Throughout history, social philosophers and religious authorities have made countless observations about human behavior. However, the idea of observing how people lived, finding out what they thought, and doing so in a systematic manner that could be verified did not take hold until the nineteenth century and the social upheaval brought about by industrialization and urbanization.

Industrialization is the process by which societies are transformed from dependence on agriculture and handmade products to an emphasis on manufacturing and related industries. This process occurred first during the Industrial Revolution in Britain between 1760 and 1850, and was soon repeated throughout Western Europe. By the mid-nineteenth century, industrialization was well under way in the United States. Massive economic, technological, and social changes occurred as machine technology and the factory system shifted the economic base of these nations from agriculture to manufacturing: textiles, iron smelting, and related industries. Many people who had labored on the land were forced to leave their tightly knit rural communities and sacrifice well-defined social relationships to seek employment as factory workers in the emerging cities, which became the centers of industrial work.

Urbanization is the process by which an increasing proportion of a population lives in cities rather than in rural areas. Although cities existed long before the Industrial Revolution, the development of the factory system led to a rapid increase in both the number of cities and the size of their populations. People from very diverse backgrounds worked together in the same factory (see ▪ Figure 1.4). At the same time, many people shifted from being *producers* to being *consumers*. For example, families living in the cities had to buy food with their wages because they could no longer grow their own crops to eat or barter for other resources. Similarly, people had to pay rent for their lodging because they could no longer exchange their services for shelter.

These living and working conditions led to the development of new social problems: inadequate housing, crowding, unsanitary conditions, poverty, pollution, and crime. Wages were so low that entire families—including very young children—were forced to work, often under hazardous conditions and with no job security. As these conditions became more visible, a new breed of social thinkers tried to understand why and how society was changing.

The Origins of Sociology as We Know It

At the same time that urban problems were growing worse, natural scientists had been using reason, or rational thinking, to discover the laws of physics and the movement of the planets. Social thinkers started to believe that by applying the methods developed by the natural sciences, they might discover the laws of human behavior and apply these laws to solve social problems. Historically, the time was ripe because the Age of Enlightenment had produced a belief in reason and humanity's ability to perfect itself.

Early Thinkers: A Concern with Social Order and Stability

Early social thinkers—such as Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, Herbert Spencer, and Emile Durkheim—were interested in analyzing social order and stability, and many of their ideas have had a dramatic and long-lasting influence on modern sociology.

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Auguste Comte The French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857) coined the term *sociology* from the Latin *socius* ("social, being with others") and the Greek *logos* ("study of") to describe a new science that would engage in the study of society. Even though he never actually conducted sociological research, Comte is considered by some to be the "founder of sociology." Comte's theory that societies contain *social statics* (forces for social order and stability) and *social dynamics* (forces for conflict and change) has been used throughout the history of sociology.

Auguste Comte (1798–1857) (oil on canvas), Etex, Louis Jules (1810–1889)/Temple de la Religion de l'Humanite, Paris, France/ The Bridgeman Art Library

Comte stressed that the methods of the natural sciences should be applied to the objective study of society. His philosophy became known as ***positivism***—a belief that the world can best be understood through scientific inquiry. He believed that positivism had two dimensions: (1) methodological—the application of scientific knowledge to both physical and social phenomena, and (2) social and political—the use of such knowledge to predict the likely results of different policies so that the best one might be chosen.

Today, sociology is recognized as a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) field that is actively involved in the American Academy for the Advancement of Science, the largest general science organization worldwide. Sociology is also a core part of what we refer to as "applied science" and has been incorporated into the MCAT (Medical College Admissions Test), an exam that includes questions on basic sociology as well as other medically related sciences (Hillsman, 2015). The advocacy of Comte and other early social thinkers about the scientific contributions of sociology continues into the twenty-first century, many years beyond their initial endeavors.

Harriet Martineau Comte's works were made more accessible for a wide variety of scholars through the efforts of the British sociologist Harriet Martineau (1802–1876). Until fairly recently, Martineau received no recognition in the field of sociology, partly because she was a woman in a male-dominated discipline and society. Not only did she translate and condense Comte's works, but she was also an active sociologist in her own right. Martineau studied the social customs of Britain and the United States, analyzing the consequences of industrialization and capitalism. In *Society in America* (1962/1837), she examined religion, politics, child rearing, slavery, and immigration, paying special attention to social distinctions based on class, race, and gender. Her works explore the status of women, children, and "sufferers" (persons who are considered to be criminal, mentally ill, handicapped, poor, or alcoholic).

Spencer Arnold/ Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Martineau was an advocate of social change, encouraging greater racial and gender equality. She was also committed to creating a science of society that would be grounded in empirical observations and widely accessible to people. She argued that sociologists should be impartial in their assessment of society but that it is entirely appropriate to compare the existing state of society with the principles on which it was founded. Martineau believed that a better society would emerge if women and men were treated equally, enlightened reform occurred, and cooperation existed among people in all social classes (but led by the middle class).

Herbert Spencer Unlike Comte, who was strongly influenced by the upheavals of the French Revolution, the British social theorist Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) was born in a more peaceful and optimistic period in his country's history. Spencer's major contribution to sociology was an evolutionary perspective on social order and social change. Evolutionary theory helps to explain how organic and/or social change occurs in societies. According to Spencer's Theory of General Evolution, society, like a biological organism, has various interdependent parts (such as the family, the economy, and the government) that work to ensure the stability and survival of the entire society.

Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Spencer believed that societies develop through a process of "struggle" (for existence) and "fitness" (for survival), which he referred to as the "survival of the fittest." Because this phrase is often attributed to Charles Darwin, Spencer's view of society is known as ***social Darwinism***—the

low-income countries
primarily agrarian nations with little industrialization and low levels of national and personal income.

industrialization
the process by which societies are transformed from dependence on agriculture and handmade products to an emphasis on manufacturing and related industries.

urbanization
the process by which an increasing proportion of a population lives in cities rather than in rural areas.

positivism
a belief that the world can best be understood through scientific inquiry.

social Darwinism
Herbert Spencer's belief that those species of animals, including human beings, best adapted to their environment survive and prosper, whereas those poorly adapted die out.

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belief that those species of animals, including human beings, best adapted to their environment survive and prosper, whereas those poorly adapted die out. Spencer equated this process of *natural selection* with progress because only the "fittest" members of society would survive the competition.

Critics believe that Spencer's ideas are flawed because societies are not the same as biological systems; people are able to create and transform the environment in which they live. Moreover, the notion of the survival of the fittest can easily be used to justify class, racial–ethnic, and gender inequalities.


Bettmann/Getty Images

Emile Durkheim French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) stressed that people are the product of their social environment and that behavior cannot be understood fully in terms of *individual*, biological, and psychological traits. He believed that the limits of human potential are *socially* based, not *biologically* based.

In his work *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1964a/1895), Durkheim set forth one of his most important contributions to sociology: the idea that societies are built on social facts. ***Social facts*** are patterned ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that exist outside any one individual but that exert social control over each person. Durkheim believed that social facts must be explained by other social facts—by reference to the social structure rather than to individual attributes.

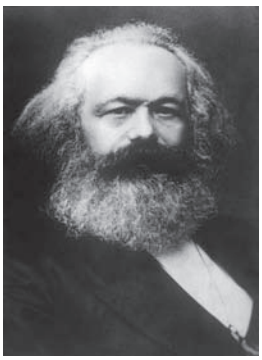
Durkheim observed that rapid social change and a more specialized division of labor produce *strains* in society. These strains lead to a breakdown in traditional organization, values, and authority, and to a dramatic increase in ***anomie***—a condition in which social control becomes ineffective as a result of the loss of shared values and a sense of purpose in society. According to Durkheim, anomie is most likely to occur during a period of rapid social change. In *Suicide* (1964b/1897), he explored the relationship between anomic social conditions and suicide, a concept that remains important in the twenty-first century. For example, studies of high rates of suicide in India have found that young people living in large cities are more prone to suicide than those living in rural areas. Why is this true? Researchers have concluded that social bonds among people, particularly younger individuals, have become weakened or even dissolved after they moved away from their families and communities to find better jobs and earn higher incomes in cities. Are similar problems likely in the United States? Why or why not?

Durkheim's contributions to sociology are so significant that he is one of the crucial figures in its development as an academic area of study. He is one of the founding figures in the functionalist theoretical tradition, but he also made important contributions to other perspectives, particularly symbolic interactionism. Later in this chapter, we look at these theoretical approaches.

Although critics acknowledge Durkheim's important contributions, some argue that his emphasis on societal stability, or the "problem of order"—how society can establish and maintain social stability and cohesiveness—obscured the *subjective meanings* that individuals give to religion, work, and suicide. From this view, overemphasis on *structure* and the determining power of "society" resulted in a corresponding neglect of *agency* (the beliefs and actions of the actors involved) in much of Durkheim's theorizing.

Differing Views on the Status Quo: Stability or Change?

Together with Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel, Durkheim established the direction of modern sociology. We will look first at Marx's and Weber's divergent thoughts about conflict and social change in societies and then at Simmel's microlevel analysis of society.


Everett Historical/Shutterstock.com

Karl Marx In sharp contrast to Durkheim's focus on the stability of society, German economist and philosopher Karl Marx (1818–1883) stressed that history is a continuous clash between conflicting ideas and forces. He believed that conflict—especially class conflict—is necessary to produce social change and a better society. For Marx, the most important changes are economic. He concluded that the capitalist economic system was responsible for the overwhelming poverty that he observed in London at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (Marx and Engels, 1967/1848).

In the Marxian framework, *class conflict* is the struggle between the capitalist class and the working class. The capitalist class, or *bourgeoisie,* is those who own and control the means of production—the tools, land, factories, and money for investment that form the economic basis of a society. The working class, or *proletariat,* is those who must sell their labor because they have no other means to earn a livelihood. From Marx's viewpoint, the capitalist class controls and exploits the masses of struggling workers by paying less than the value of their labor. This exploitation results in workers' *alienation*—a feeling of powerlessness and estrangement from other people and themselves. Marx predicted that the working class would become aware of its exploitation, overthrow the capitalists, and establish a free and classless society.

Marx is regarded as one of the most profound sociological thinkers; however, his social and economic analyses have also inspired heated debates among generations of social scientists. Central to his view was the belief that society should not just be studied but should also be changed, because the status

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quo involved the oppression of most of the population by a small group of wealthy people. Those who believe that sociology should be value free (see later) are uncomfortable with Marx's advocacy of what some perceive to be radical social change. As well, scholars who examine society through the lens of race, gender, and class believe that his analysis places too much emphasis on class relations.

Charles Mitchell/Icon Sportswire/Getty Images

FIGURE **1.5** According to sociologist Georg Simmel, society is a web of patterned interactions among people. If we focus on the behavior of individuals only, we miss the underlying forms that make up the "geometry of social life."

Max Weber German social scientist Max Weber (pronounced VAY-ber) (1864–1920) was also concerned about the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Although he disagreed with Marx's idea that economics is *the* central force in social change, Weber acknowledged that economic interests are important in shaping human action. Even so, he thought that economic systems were heavily influenced by other factors in a society.

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Unlike many early analysts who believed that values could not be separated from the research process, Weber emphasized that sociology should be *value free*—research should be done scientifically, excluding the researcher's personal values and economic interests. However, Weber realized that social behavior cannot be analyzed by purely objective criteria. Although he recognized that sociologists cannot be totally value free, Weber stressed that they should employ *verstehen* (German for "understanding" or "insight") to gain the ability to see the world as others see it. In contemporary sociology, Weber's idea is incorporated into the concept of the sociological imagination (discussed earlier in this chapter).

Weber was also concerned that large-scale organizations (bureaucracies) were becoming increasingly oriented toward routine administration and a specialized division of labor, which he believed were destructive to human vitality and freedom. According to Weber, rational bureaucracy, rather than class struggle, is the most significant factor in determining the social relations between people in industrial societies. From this view, bureaucratic domination can be used to maintain powerful (capitalist) interests. As discussed in Chapter 5 ("Groups and Organizations"), Weber's work on bureaucracy has had a far-reaching effect.

Weber also provided important insights on the process of rationalization, bureaucracy, religion, and many other topics. In his writings, Weber was more aware of women's issues than many of the scholars of his day. Perhaps his awareness at least partially resulted from the fact that his wife, Marianne Weber, was an important figure in the women's movement in Germany.

Georg Simmel At about the same time that Durkheim was developing the field of sociology in France, German sociologist Georg Simmel (pronounced ZIM-mel) (1858–1918) was theorizing about the importance of social change in his own country and elsewhere. Simmel was also focusing on how society is a web of patterned interactions among people (▪ Figure 1.5). In *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (1950/1902–1917), he described how social interactions are

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social facts
Emile Durkheim's term for patterned ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that exist outside any one individual but that exert social control over each person.

anomie
Emile Durkheim's term for a condition in which social control becomes ineffective as a result of the loss of shared values and of a sense of purpose in society.

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different based on the size of the social group. According to Simmel, interaction patterns differ between a *dyad* (a social group with two members) and a *triad* (a group with three members) because the presence of an additional person often changes the dynamics of communication and the overall interaction process. Simmel also developed *formal sociology,* an approach that focuses attention on the universal social forms that underlie social interaction. He referred to these forms as the "geometry of social life."

Like the other social thinkers of his day, Simmel analyzed the effect of industrialization and urbanization on people's lives. He concluded that class conflict was becoming more pronounced in modern industrial societies. He also linked the increase in individualism, as opposed to concern for the group, to the fact that people now had many cross-cutting "social spheres"—membership in a number of organizations and voluntary associations—rather than the singular community ties of the past.

Simmel's contributions to sociology are significant. He wrote more than thirty books and numerous essays on diverse topics, leading some critics to state that his work is fragmentary and piecemeal. However, his thinking has influenced a wide array of sociologists, including the members of the "Chicago School" in the United States.

The Origins of Sociology in the United States

From Western Europe, sociology spread in the 1890s to the United States, where it thrived as a result of the intellectual climate and the rapid rate of social change. The first departments of sociology in the United States were located at the University of Chicago and at Atlanta University, then an African American school.

The Chicago School The first department of sociology in the United States was established at the University of Chicago, where the faculty was instrumental in starting the American Sociological Society (now known as the American Sociological Association). Robert E. Park (1864–1944), a member of the Chicago faculty, asserted that urbanization has a disintegrating influence on social life by producing an increase in the crime rate and in racial and class antagonisms that contribute to the segregation and isolation of neighborhoods. George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), another member of the faculty at Chicago, founded the symbolic interaction perspective, which is discussed later in this chapter.

AP Photo

Jane Addams Jane Addams (1860–1935) is one of the best-known early women sociologists in the United States because she founded Hull House, one of the most famous settlement houses, in an impoverished area of Chicago. Throughout her career, she was actively engaged in sociological endeavors: She lectured at numerous colleges, was a charter member of the American Sociological Society, and published a number of articles and books. Addams was one of the authors of *Hull-House Maps and Papers,* a groundbreaking book that used a methodological technique employed by sociologists for the next forty years. She was also awarded a Nobel Prize for her assistance to the underprivileged. In recent years, Addams has received greater recognition from contemporary sociologists because of her role as an early theorist of social change who influenced later feminist theorists and activists.

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W. E. B. Du Bois and Atlanta University The second department of sociology in the United States was founded by W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) at Atlanta University. He created a laboratory of sociology, instituted a program of systematic research, founded and conducted regular sociological conferences on research, founded two journals, and established a record of valuable publications. His classic work, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1967/1899), was based on his research into Philadelphia's African American community and stressed the strengths and weaknesses of a community wrestling with overwhelming social problems. Du Bois was one of the first scholars to note that a dual heritage creates conflict for people of color. He called this duality *double-consciousness*—the identity conflict of being both a black and an American. Du Bois pointed out that although people in this country espouse such values as democracy, freedom, and equality, they also accept racism and group discrimination. African Americans are the victims of these conflicting values and the actions that result from them. The influence of Du Bois continues to grow in contemporary studies of inequality, social justice, and the need for change in racial/ethnic and class relations in the United States and worldwide.

Theoretical Perspectives in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

Given the many and varied ideas and trends that influenced the development of sociology, how do contemporary sociologists view society? Some see it as basically a stable and ongoing entity; others view it in terms of many groups competing for scarce resources; still others describe it based on the everyday, routine interactions among individuals. Each of these views represents a method of examining the same phenomena. Each is based on general ideas about how social life is organized and represents an effort to link specific observations in a meaningful way. Each uses a ***theory***—a

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set of logically interrelated statements that attempts to describe, explain, and (occasionally) predict social events. Each theory helps interpret reality in a distinct way by providing a framework in which observations may be logically ordered. Sociologists refer to this theoretical framework as a *perspective*—an overall approach to or viewpoint on some subject. Three major theoretical perspectives have been predominant in U.S. sociology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: the functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist perspectives. Other perspectives, such as postmodernism, have also emerged and gained acceptance among some social thinkers. Before turning to the specifics of these perspectives, we should note that some theorists and theories do not fit neatly into any of these perspectives. Although the categories may be viewed as oversimplified by some people, most of us organize our thinking into categories and find it easier for us to compare and contrast ideas if we have a basic outline of key characteristics associated with each approach.

Functionalist Perspectives

Also known as *functionalism* and *structural functionalism,* ***functionalist perspectives*** are based on the assumption that society is a stable, orderly system. This stable system is characterized by *societal consensus,* whereby the majority of members share a common set of values, beliefs, and behavioral expectations. According to this perspective, a society is composed of interrelated parts, each of which serves a function and (ideally) contributes to the overall stability of the society. Societies develop social structures, institutions that persist because they play a part in helping society survive. These institutions include the family, education, government, religion, and the economy. If anything adverse happens to one of these institutions or parts, all other parts are affected, and the system no longer functions properly.

Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton Talcott Parsons (1902–1979), perhaps the most influential contemporary advocate of the functionalist perspective, stressed that all societies must meet social needs to survive. Parsons (1955) suggested, for example, that a division of labor (distinct, specialized functions) between husband and wife is essential for family stability and social order. The husband/father performs the *instrumental tasks,* which involve leadership and decision-making responsibilities in the home and employment outside the home to support the family. The wife/mother is responsible for the *expressive tasks,* including housework, caring for the children, and providing emotional support for the entire family. Parsons believed that other institutions, including school, church, and government, must function to assist the family and that all institutions must work together to preserve the system over time (Parsons, 1955).

Pictorial Parade/Getty Images

Functionalism was refined further by Robert K. Merton (pictured; 1910–2003), who distinguished between manifest and latent functions of social institutions. ***Manifest functions*** are intended and/or overtly recognized by the participants in a social unit. In contrast, ***latent functions*** are unintended functions that are hidden and remain unacknowledged by participants (▪ Figure 1.6). For example, a manifest function of education is the transmission of knowledge and skills from one generation to the next; a latent function is the establishment of social relations and networks. Merton noted that all features of a social system may not be functional at all times; *dysfunctions* are the undesirable consequences of any element of a society. A dysfunction of education in the United States is the perpetuation of gender, racial, and class inequalities. Such dysfunctions may threaten the capacity of a society to adapt and survive.

Applying a Functionalist Perspective to Suicide Functionalism emphasizes the importance to a society of shared moral values and strong social bonds. It also highlights the significance of social support from others. When rapid social change or other disruptive conditions occur, moral values may erode, and people may become more uncertain about how to act and about whether or not their life has meaning. Social disruption and war are events that produce such feelings of anomie and suicidal ideation—suicidal thoughts or an unusual preoccupation with suicide.

One study that examined the functions of social support in reducing or preventing suicidal ideation in Air Force personnel during U.S. combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan found that all forms of social support were not equally important in protecting individuals against suicidal thoughts or actions. One form of social support is belonging, or companionship support, where we feel like we belong or fit in with others. Tangible support involves material issues, such as having someone willing to lend money or provide assistance with specific tasks. Appraisal support refers to someone providing useful information that helps us

theory
a set of logically interrelated statements that attempts to describe, explain, and (occasionally) predict social events.

functionalist perspectives
the sociological approach that views society as a stable, orderly system.

manifest functions
functions that are intended and/or overtly recognized by the participants in a social unit.

latent functions
unintended functions that are hidden and remain unacknowledged by participants.

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FIGURE **1.6** Shopping malls are a reflection of a consumer society. A manifest function of a shopping mall is to sell goods and services to shoppers; however, a latent function may be to provide a communal area in which people can visit friends.

evaluate our situation and provide emotional validation for our thoughts and feelings. Esteem support involves having other people show a concern for our well-being or express confidence in us and our ability to overcome the problems we face. Of these four types of social support, the researchers found that esteem support was the most important factor in whether the Air Force personnel in their study had experienced severe suicidal ideation (Bryan and Hernandez, 2013).

Conflict Perspectives

According to ***conflict perspectives***, groups in society are engaged in a continuous power struggle for control of scarce resources. Conflict may take the form of politics, litigation, negotiations, or family discussions about financial matters. Simmel, Marx, and Weber contributed significantly to this perspective by focusing on the inevitability of clashes between social groups. Today, advocates of the conflict perspective view social life as a continuous power struggle among competing social groups.

Max Weber and C. Wright Mills As previously discussed, Karl Marx focused on the exploitation and oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. Max Weber recognized the importance of economic conditions in producing inequality and conflict in society, but he added *power* and *prestige* as other sources of inequality. Weber (1968/1922) defined *power* as the ability of a person within a social relationship to carry out his or her own will despite resistance from others, and *prestige* as a positive or negative social estimation of honor (Weber, 1968/1922) (▪Figure 1.7).

C. Wright Mills (1916–1962), a key figure in the development of contemporary conflict theory, encouraged sociologists to get involved in social reform. Mills encouraged everyone to look beneath everyday events to observe the major resource and power inequalities that exist in society. He believed that the most important decisions in the United States are made largely behind the scenes by the *power elite*—a small clique of top corporate, political, and military officials. Mills's power elite theory is discussed in Chapter 13.

The conflict perspective is not one unified theory but one with several branches. One branch is the neo-Marxist approach, which views struggle between the classes as inevitable and as a prime source of social change. A second branch focuses on racial–ethnic inequalities and the continued exploitation of members of some racial–ethnic groups. A third branch is the feminist perspective, which focuses on gender issues.

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The Feminist Approach A feminist theoretical approach (or "feminism") directs attention to women's experiences and the importance of gender as an element of social structure. This approach is based on a belief in the equality of women and men and the idea that all people should be equally valued and have equal rights. According to feminist theorists, we live in a *patriarchy,* a system in which men dominate women and in which things considered to be "male" or "masculine" are more highly valued than those considered to be "female" or "feminine." The feminist perspective assumes that gender is socially created and that change is essential for people to achieve their human potential without limits based on gender. Some feminists argue that women's subordination can end only after the patriarchal system becomes obsolete. However, feminism is not one single, unified approach; there are several feminist perspectives, which are discussed in Chapter 10.

Mike Coppola/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images

FIGURE **1.7** As one of the wealthiest and most-beloved entertainers in the world, Oprah Winfrey is an example of Max Weber's concept of prestige—a positive social estimation of honor.

Applying Conflict Perspectives to Suicide How might we use a conflict approach to explain suicide?

Social Class Although many other factors may be present, social-class pressures may affect rates of suicide among young people from lower-income families when they perceive that they have few educational or employment opportunities and little hope for the future. However, class-based inequality alone cannot explain suicides among young people.

Gender In North America, females are more likely to *attempt* suicide, whereas males are more likely to actually take their own life. Despite the fact that women's suicidal behavior has traditionally been attributed to problems in their interpersonal relationships, feminist analysts believe that we must examine social structural pressures on young women and how these may contribute to their behavior—for example, cultural assumptions about women and what their multiple roles should be in the family, education, and the workplace.

Race/Ethnicity Racial and ethnic subordination may be a factor in some suicides. (▪Figure 1.8 displays age-adjusted

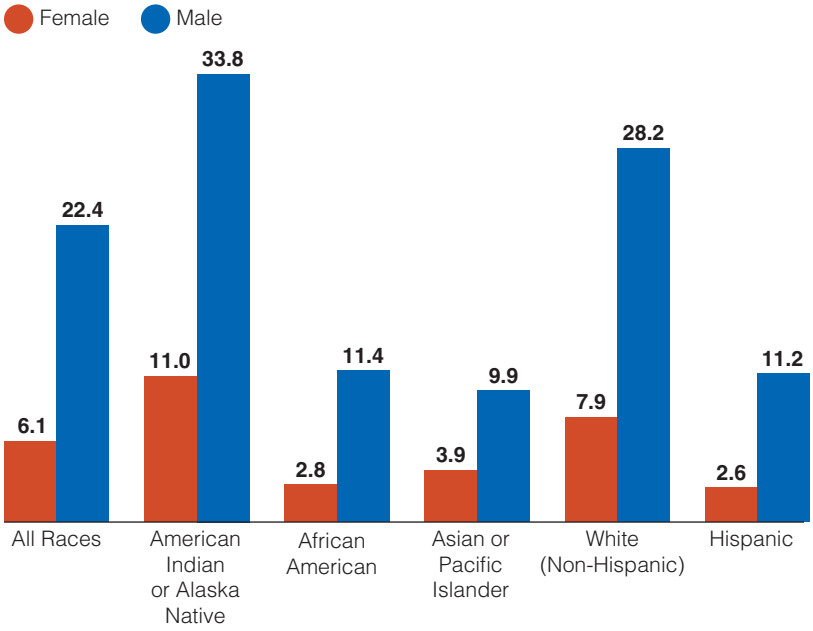

FIGURE **1.8** **Age-Adjusted U.S. Suicide Rates by Race and Sex**

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2019.

Notes: Age-adjusted rates are rates that would have existed if the population under study had the same age distribution as the United States "standard" population.

Rates are for U.S. suicides and indicate the number of deaths by suicide for every 100,000 people by race and sex.

conflict perspectives
the sociological approach that views groups in society as engaged in a continuous power struggle for control of scarce resources.

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suicide rates in terms of race and sex.) For example, this fact is reflected in the high rate of suicide among Native Americans and Alaska Natives, who constitute about 2 percent of the U.S. population. On reservations in the northern plains (in states such as North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, Wyoming, and Utah), parts of the Southwest, and in Alaska, Native American teens and young adults have suicide rates more than three times as high as those for other youths in the United States. Although some research has focused on individualistic reasons why young Native Americans commit suicide, sociologists focus on the effects of social inequalities and racial–ethnic discrimination on suicidal behavior. Many Native American young people reside in homes and communities characterized by extreme poverty, hunger, alcoholism, substance abuse, and family violence.

Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives

The conflict and functionalist perspectives have been criticized for focusing primarily on macrolevel analysis. A ***macrolevel analysis*** examines whole societies, large-scale social structures, and social systems instead of looking at important social dynamics in individuals' lives. Our third perspective, symbolic interactionism, fills this void by examining people's day-to-day interactions and their behavior in groups. Thus, symbolic interactionist approaches are based on a ***microlevel analysis***, which focuses on small groups rather than large-scale social structures.

We can trace the origins of this perspective to the Chicago School, especially George Herbert Mead and the sociologist Herbert Blumer (1900–1986), who is credited with coining the term *symbolic interactionism.* According to ***symbolic interactionist perspectives***, society is the sum of the interactions of individuals and groups. Theorists using this perspective focus on the process of *interaction*—defined as immediate reciprocally oriented communication between two or more people—and the part that symbols play in communication. A *symbol* is anything that meaningfully represents something else. Examples include signs, gestures, written language, and shared values. Symbolic interaction occurs when people communicate through the use of symbols—for example, a ring to indicate a couple's engagement. But symbolic communication occurs in a variety of forms, including facial gestures, posture, tone of voice, and other symbolic gestures (such as a handshake or a clenched fist).

Symbols are instrumental in helping people derive meanings from social interactions. In social encounters, each person's interpretation or definition of a given situation becomes a *subjective reality* from that person's viewpoint. We often assume that what we consider to be "reality" is shared by others; however, this assumption is often incorrect. Subjective reality is acquired and shared through agreed-upon symbols, especially language. If a person shouts "Fire!" or "Active Shooter!" in a crowded movie theater, for example, that language produces the same response (attempting to escape) in all of those who hear and understand it. When people in a group do not share the same meaning for a given symbol, however, confusion results: People who do not know the meaning of the word *fire* or *active shooter* may not immediately know what the commotion is about. How people *interpret* the messages they receive and the situations they encounter becomes their subjective reality and may strongly influence their behavior.

Applying Symbolic Interactionist Perspectives to Suicide Social analysts applying a symbolic interactionist framework to the study of suicide focus on a microlevel analysis of the people's face-to-face interactions and the roles they play in society. We define situations according to our own subjective reality. From this point of view, a suicide attempt may be a way of garnering attention—a call for help—rather than wanting to end one's life. People may attempt to communicate in such desperate ways because other forms of communication have failed.

Postmodern Perspectives

According to ***postmodern perspectives***, existing theories have been unsuccessful in explaining social life in contemporary societies characterized by postindustrialization, consumerism, and global communications. Postmodern social theorists reject the theoretical perspectives we have previously discussed, as well as how those theories were created.

Postmodern theories are based on the assumption that large-scale and rapid social change, globalization, and technology are central features in the postmodern era. Moreover, these conditions tend to have a harmful effect on people because they often result in ambiguity and chaos. One evident change is a significant decline in the influence of social institutions such as the family, religion, and education on people's lives. Those who live in postmodern societies typically pursue individual freedom and do not want the structural constraints imposed by social institutions. As social inequality and class differences increase, people are exposed to higher levels of stress that produce depression, fear, and ambivalence. Problems such as these are found in nations throughout the world.

Postmodern (or "postindustrial") societies are characterized by an *information explosion* and an economy in which large numbers of people either provide or apply information, or are employed in professional occupations (such as attorneys and physicians) or service jobs (such as fast-food servers and health care workers). There is a corresponding *rise of a consumer society* and the emergence of a *global village* in which people around the world instantly communicate with one another.

Jean Baudrillard, a well-known French social theorist, has extensively explored how the shift from production of goods to consumption of information, services, and products has created a new form of social control. According to Baudrillard's approach, capitalists strive to control people's shopping habits, much like the output of factory workers in industrial economies, to enhance their profits and to

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keep everyday people from rebelling against social inequality (1998/1970). How does this work? When consumers are encouraged to purchase more than they need or can afford, they often sink deeper in debt and must keep working to meet their monthly payments. Consumption comes to be based on factors such as our "wants" and our need to distinguish ourselves from others. We will return to Baudrillard's general ideas on postmodern societies in Chapter 2. Postmodern theory opens up broad new avenues of inquiry by challenging existing perspectives and questioning current belief systems. However, postmodern theory has also been criticized for raising more questions than it answers.

Applying Postmodern Perspectives to Suicide Although most postmodern social theorists have not addressed suicide as a social issue, some sociologists believe that postmodern theory can help us because it reminds us that social life is made up of real people with self-identities and lived experiences to share with others. Behind the groups, organizations, classes, and political parties that social scientists study are human beings who participate in the social construction of everyday life.

Looked at from this perspective, the relationship between suicide and race is important to consider. Although youths across ethnic categories share certain risk factors for suicide, young American Indian and Native American males appear to be at greater risk for suicide because people in this statistical category lack educational and employment opportunities. This problem is combined with other concerns, such as the systemic oppression that persons of color have experienced throughout U.S. history. In other words, the personal biographies of individuals are intertwined with the social worlds that they and others have helped create.

Each of the four sociological perspectives we have examined involves different assumptions. Consequently, each leads us to ask different questions and to view the world somewhat differently. (Concept Quick Review 1 summarizes all four of these perspectives.) Throughout this book, we will be using these perspectives as lenses through which to view our social world.

CONCEPT Quick Review 1

The Major Theoretical Perspectives

Perspective	Analysis Level	View of Society
Functionalist	Macrolevel	Society is composed of interrelated parts that work together to maintain stability within society. This stability is threatened by dysfunctional acts and institutions.
Conflict	Macrolevel	Society is characterized by social inequality; social life is a struggle for scarce resources. Social arrangements benefit some groups at the expense of others.
Symbolic Interactionist	Microlevel	Society is the sum of the interactions of people and groups. Behavior is learned in interaction with other people; how people define a situation becomes the foundation for how they behave.
Postmodernist	Macrolevel/ Microlevel	Societies characterized by postindustrialization, consumerism, and global communication bring into question existing assumptions about social life and the nature of reality.

The Sociological Research Process

Most of us rely on our own experiences and personal knowledge to help us form ideas about what happens in everyday life and how the social world works. However, there are many occasions when this personal knowledge is not enough. This is why sociologists and other social scientists learn to question ordinary assumptions and use specific research methods to find out more about the social world.

Research is the process of systematically collecting information for the purpose of testing an existing theory or generating a new one. What is the relationship between sociological theory and research? This relationship has been referred to as a continuous cycle, as shown in ▪ Figure 1.9 (Wallace, 1971).

Not all sociologists conduct research in the same manner. Some researchers primarily engage in quantitative research, whereas others engage in qualitative research. With ***quantitative research***, the goal is scientific objectivity,

macrolevel analysis
an approach that examines whole societies, large-scale social structures, and social systems instead of looking at important social dynamics in individuals' lives.

microlevel analysis
an approach that focuses on small groups rather than large-scale social structures.

symbolic interactionist perspectives
the sociological approach that views society as the sum of the interactions of individuals and groups.

postmodern perspectives
the sociological approach that attempts to explain social life in contemporary societies characterized by postindustrialization, consumerism, and global communication.

quantitative research
sociological research methods based on the goal of scientific objectivity and that focus on data that can be measured numerically.

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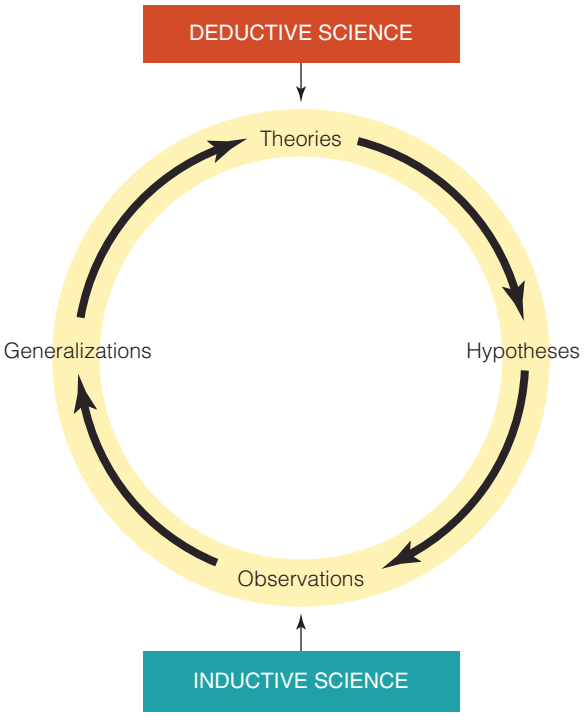

FIGURE **1.9** **The Theory and Research Cycle**

The theory and research cycle can be compared to a relay race; although all participants do not necessarily start or stop at the same point, they share a common goal—to examine all levels of social life.

and the focus is on data that can be measured numerically. Quantitative research typically emphasizes complex statistical techniques. Most sociological studies on suicide have used quantitative research. They have compared rates of suicide with almost every conceivable variable, including age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, and even sports participation. For example, in one quantitative study, researchers found that Latinos/as (Hispanics) consistently had lower suicide rates than whites (non-Hispanics), particularly when they remained strongly attached to others in their own culture. Latinos/as who maintained shared belief systems, rituals, and social networks of friends and relatives that provided them with strong communities and intense feelings of group solidarity were much less likely to commit suicide, much as Durkheim had predicted (Wadsworth and Kubrin, 2007). However, the study also found that just as cultural assimilation (adopting another culture and leaving one's own culture behind) increases the rate of suicide for Hispanics, having higher income and social standing decreases the rate of suicide (Wadsworth and Kubrin, 2007). In quantitative research, these data are reported in a series of tables that summarize the findings of the researchers. ("Understanding Statistical Data Presentations" explains how to read numerical tables and how to interpret the data and draw conclusions.)

With ***qualitative research***, interpretive descriptions (words) rather than statistics (numbers) are used to analyze underlying meanings and patterns of social relationships. An example of qualitative research is a study in which the researchers systematically analyzed the contents of suicide notes to look for recurring themes (such as feelings of despair or failure) to determine if any patterns could be found that would help in understanding why people kill themselves (Leenaars, 1988).

The Quantitative Research Model

Research models are tailored to the specific problem being investigated and the focus of the researcher. Both quantitative research and qualitative research contribute to our knowledge of society and human social interaction, and involve a series of steps, as shown in ▪ Figure 1.10. We will now trace the steps in the "conventional" research model, which focuses on quantitative research. Then we will describe an alternative model that emphasizes qualitative research.

1. *Select and define the research problem.* Sometimes, a specific experience such as knowing someone who committed suicide can trigger your interest in a topic. Other times, you might select topics to fill gaps or challenge misconceptions in existing research or to test a specific theory (Babbie, 2016). Emile Durkheim selected suicide because he wanted to demonstrate the importance of *society* in situations that might appear to be arbitrary acts by individuals. Suicide was a suitable topic because it was widely believed that suicide was a uniquely individualistic act. However, Durkheim emphasized that *suicide rates* provide better explanations for suicide than do *individual* acts of suicide. He reasoned that if suicide were purely an individual act, then the rate of suicide (the number of people who kill themselves in a given year) should be the same for every group regardless of culture and social structure. Moreover, Durkheim wanted to know why there were different rates of suicide—whether factors such as religion, marital status, sex, and age had an effect on social cohesion.
2. *Review previous research.* Before beginning the research, it is important to analyze what others have written about the topic. You should determine where gaps exist and note mistakes to avoid. When Durkheim began his study, very little sociological literature existed to review; however, he studied the works of several moral philosophers, including Henry Morselli (1975/1881).
3. *Formulate the hypothesis* (if applicable). You may formulate a ***hypothesis***—a statement of the expected relationship between two or more variables. A ***variable*** is any concept with measurable traits or characteristics that can change or vary from one person, time, situation, or society to another. The most fundamental relationship in a hypothesis is between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables (see ▪ Figure 1.11). The ***independent variable***

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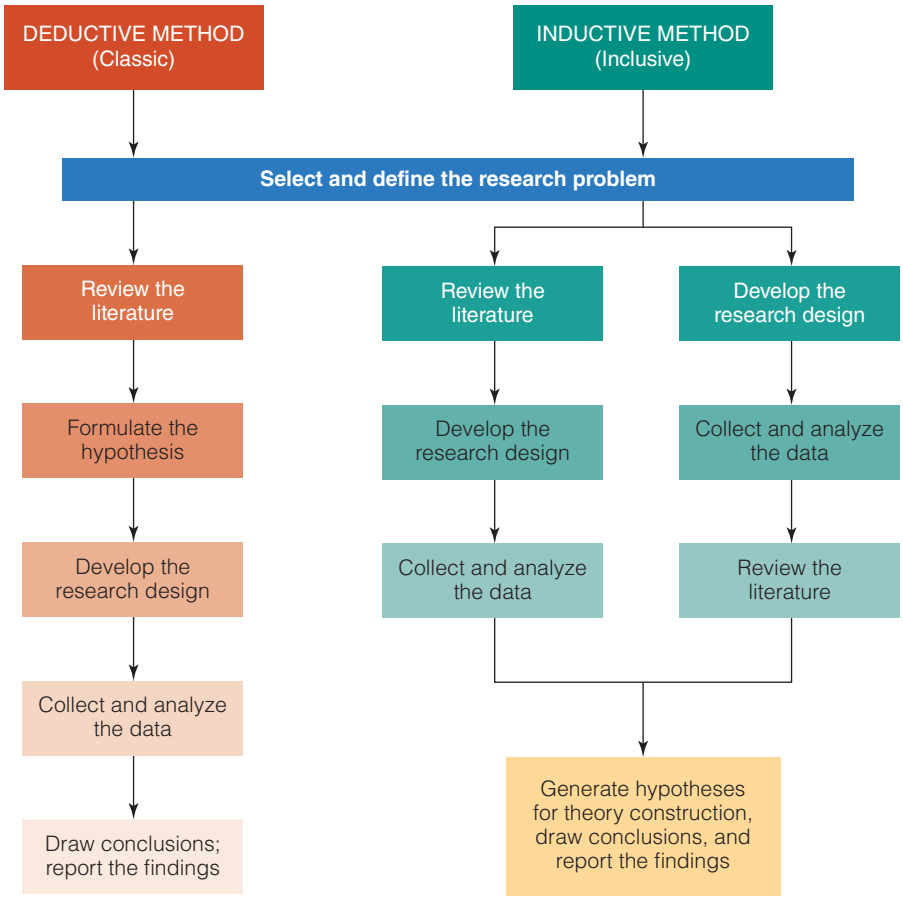

FIGURE **1.10** **Steps in Sociological Research**

is presumed to be the cause of the relationship; the ***dependent variable*** is assumed to be caused by the independent variable(s) (Babbie, 2016). Durkheim's hypothesis stated that the rate of suicide varies *inversely* with the degree of social integration. In other words, a low degree of social integration (the independent variable) may "cause" or "be related to" a high rate of suicide (the dependent variable).

Not all social research uses hypotheses. If you plan to conduct an explanatory study (showing a cause-and-effect relationship), you will likely want to formulate one or more hypotheses to test theories. If you plan to conduct a descriptive study, however, you will be less likely to do so because you may desire only to describe social reality or provide facts.

4. *Develop the research design.* You must determine the unit of analysis to be used in the study. A *unit of analysis* is *what* or *whom* is being studied (Babbie, 2016). In social science research, individuals, social groups (such as families, cities, or geographic regions), organizations (such as clubs, labor unions, or political parties), and social artifacts (such as books, paintings, or weddings) may be units of analysis. As mentioned, Durkheim's unit of analysis was social groups, not individuals.

5. *Collect and analyze the data.* You must decide what population will be observed or questioned and then carefully select a sample. A *sample* is the people selected from the population to be studied; the sample should accurately represent the larger population. A *representative sample* is a selection from a larger population that has the essential characteristics of the total population. For example, if you interviewed five

qualitative research
sociological research methods that use interpretive descriptions (words) rather than statistics (numbers) to analyze underlying meanings and patterns of social relationships.

hypothesis
a statement of the expected relationship between two or more variables.

variable
any concept with measurable traits or characteristics that can change or vary from one person, time, situation, or society to another.

independent variable
in an experiment, the variable assumed to be the cause of the relationship between variables.

dependent variable
in an experiment, the variable assumed to be caused by the independent variable(s).

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UNDERSTANDING **Statistical Data Presentations**

Are young males or females more likely to die violently? How do homicide, suicide, and firearm death rates (per 100,000 population) compare for males and females ages 15 to 19 in the United States? Sociologists use statistical tables as a concise way to present data in a relatively small space; • Table 1.1 gives an example. To understand a table, follow these steps:

1. *Read the title*. From the title, "Rates (per 100,000 U.S. Population) for Homicide, Suicide, and Firearm-Related Deaths of Youths Ages 15–19, by Gender, 2017" (the latest data available at the time of this writing), we learn that the table shows relationships between two variables: gender and three causes of violent deaths among young people in a specific age category.
2. *Check the source and other explanatory notes*. In this case, the source is Child Trends, 2019. This data bank is a nonprofit research and policy center that researches issues pertaining to children and young people. The explanatory note in this table states that firearm deaths, which constitute a majority of teen homicides and suicides, may also include accidental deaths that are firearm related. This distinction is made in Table 1.1 because it is possible for "Firearm-Related Death" to occur accidentally.
3. *Read the headings for each column and each row*. The main column headings in Table 1.1 are "Method," "Males," and "Females." The columns present information (usually numbers) arranged vertically. The rows present information horizontally. Here, the row headings indicate homicide, suicide, and firearm-related death. Based on the explanation regarding "Firearm-Related Death," we know that some overlap exists between the first two categories—homicide and suicide—and the third, deaths that are firearm related.
4. *Examine and compare the data*. To examine the data, determine what units of measurement have been used. In Table 1.1, the figures are rates per 100,000 males or females in a specific age category. For example, the suicide rate is 17.9 per 100,000 population of males between the ages of 15 and 19 as compared with only 5.4 per 100,000 population of females in the same age category.
5. *Draw conclusions*. By looking for patterns, some conclusions can be drawn from Table 1.1:
   a. *Determining differences by gender*. Males between the ages of 15 and 19 are about three times more likely than females to die from suicide (17.9 compared with 5.4 per 100,000 in 2017). Males in this age category are about six times more likely to die from homicide than females (14.7 compared with 2.4 per 100,000). And even more noteworthy, males are about seven times more likely to die from any firearm-related incident (either intentional or unintentional) than females of this age. As shown in Table 1.1, 23.9 per 100,000 males ages 15–19 died by firearms in 2017, compared with 3.2 per 100,000 females in that same age category.
   b. *Drawing appropriate conclusions*. Males between the ages of 15 and 19 are much more likely than females in their age category to die violently, and many of those deaths are firearm related. Although not indicated in this table, it is important to note that differences by race and Hispanic origin are also significant to consider in any sociological analysis of suicide rates. For more information, visit childtrends.org.

TABLE 1.1 Rates (per 100,000 U.S. Population) for Homicide, Suicide, and Firearm-Related Deaths of Youths Ages 15–19, by Gender, 2017

Method	Males	Females
Homicide	14.7	2.4
Suicide	17.9	5.4
Firearm-Related Death[a]	23.9	3.2

[a]Firearm deaths, which constitute a majority of teen homicides and suicides, also include accidental deaths that are firearm related.

Source: Child Trends, 2019.

students selected haphazardly from your sociology class, they would not be representative of your school's student body. By contrast, if you selected five students from the student body by a random sample, they would be closer to being representative (although a random sample of five students would be too small to yield much useful data).

Validity and reliability may be problems in research. ***Validity*** is the extent to which a study or research instrument accurately measures what it is supposed to measure. A recurring issue in studies that analyze the relationship between religious beliefs and suicide is whether "church membership" is a valid indicator of a person's religious beliefs. In fact, one person may be very religious yet not belong to a specific church, whereas another person may be a member of a church yet not hold very deep religious beliefs. ***Reliability*** is the extent to which a study or research instrument yields consistent results when applied to different individuals at one time or to the same individuals over time. Sociologists have found that different interviewers get different answers from the people being interviewed. For example, how might the interviewers themselves influence interviews with college students who have contemplated suicide?

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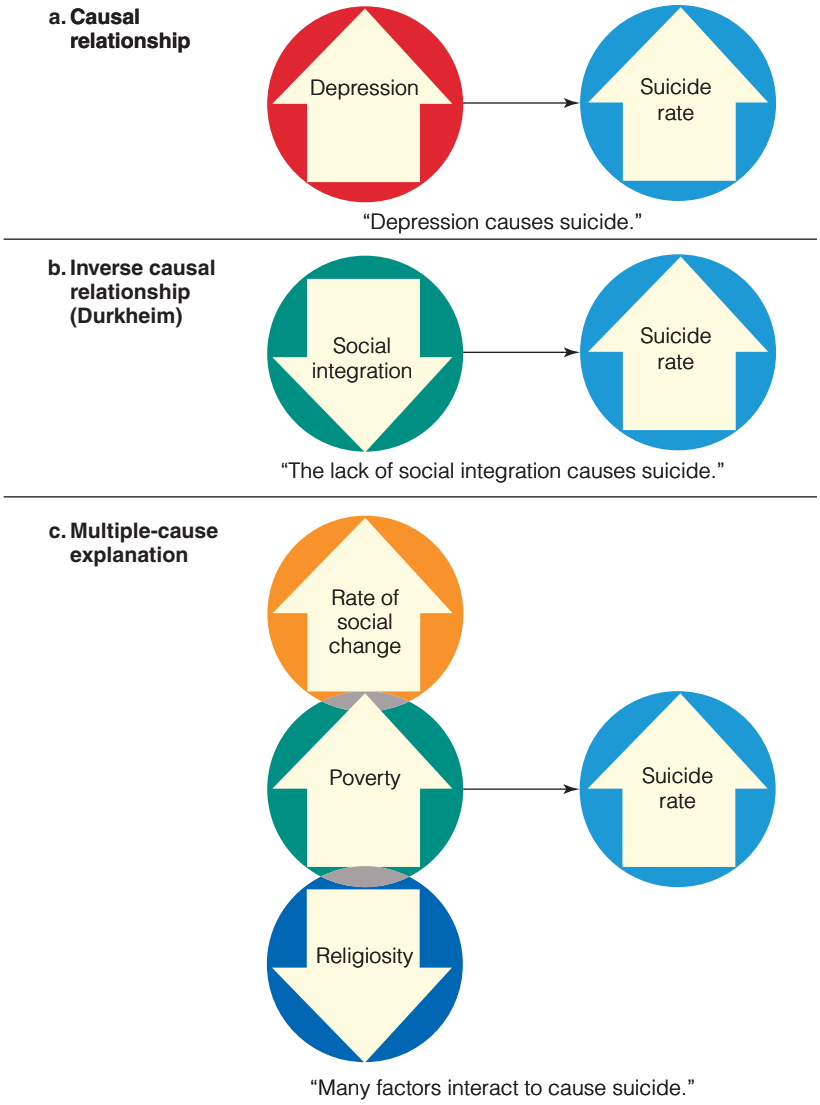

FIGURE 1.11 Hypothesized Relationships Between Variables

A causal hypothesis connects one or more independent (causal) variables with a dependent (affected) variable. The diagram illustrates three hypotheses about the causes of suicide. To test these hypotheses, social scientists would need to operationalize the variables (define them in measurable terms) and then investigate whether the data support the proposed explanation.

Once you have collected your data, the data must be analyzed. *Analysis* is the process through which data are organized so that comparisons can be made and conclusions drawn. Sociologists use many techniques to analyze data. For his study of suicide, Durkheim collected data from vital statistics for approximately 26,000 suicides. He classified them separately according to age, sex, marital status, presence, or absence of children in the family, religion, geographic location, calendar date, method of suicide, and a number of other variables. As Durkheim analyzed his data, four distinct categories of suicide emerged: egoistic, altruistic, anomic, and fatalistic. *Egoistic suicide* occurs among people who are isolated from any social group. For example, Durkheim concluded that suicide rates were relatively high in Protestant countries in Europe because Protestants believed in individualism and were more loosely tied to the church than were Catholics.

validity
the extent to which a study or research instrument accurately measures what it is supposed to measure.

reliability
the extent to which a study or research instrument yields consistent results when applied to different individuals at one time or to the same individuals over time.

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Single people had proportionately higher suicide rates than married persons because they had a low degree of social integration, which contributed to their loneliness. In contrast, *altruistic suicide* occurs among individuals who are excessively integrated into society. An example is military leaders who kill themselves after defeat in battle because they have so strongly identified themselves with their cause that they believe they cannot live with defeat. Today, other factors such as extended periods of military service or lengthy wars may also contribute to relatively high rates of suicide among U.S. military personnel (see "Sociology and Social Policy"). According to Durkheim, people are more likely to commit suicide when social cohesion is either very weak or very strong, and/or when nations experience rapid social change.

6. *Draw conclusions and report the findings.* After analyzing the data, your first step in drawing conclusions is to return to your hypothesis or research objective to clarify how the data relate both to the hypothesis and to the larger issues being addressed. At this stage, you note the limitations of the study, such as problems with the sample, the influence of variables over which you had no control, or variables that your study was unable to measure.

   Reporting the findings is the final stage. The report generally includes a review of each step taken in the research process to make the study available for *replication*—the repetition of the investigation in substantially the same way that it was originally conducted. Social scientists generally present their findings in papers at professional meetings and publish them in technical journals and books. In reporting his findings in *Suicide* (1964b/1897), Durkheim concluded that the suicide rate of a group is a social fact that cannot be explained in terms of the personality traits of individuals. Instead, his findings suggested that social conditions in a society are a more significant influence on rates of suicide.

We have traced the steps in the "conventional" research process (based on deduction and quantitative research). But what steps might be taken in an alternative approach based on induction and qualitative research?

A Qualitative Research Model

Although the same underlying logic is involved in both quantitative and qualitative sociological research, the *styles* of these two models are very different. Qualitative research is more likely to be used when the research question does not easily lend itself to numbers and statistical methods. As compared to a quantitative model, a qualitative approach often involves a different type of research question and a smaller number of cases. Researchers using a qualitative approach may engage in *problem formulation* to clarify the research question and formulate questions of concern and interest to people participating in the research.

In a qualitative approach, reviewing the literature and developing the research design often happen simultaneously. Typically, the next step is collecting and analyzing data to assess the validity of the starting proposition. Data gathering is the foundation of the research. Researchers pursuing a qualitative approach tend to gather data in natural settings, such as where the person lives or works, rather than in a laboratory or other research setting. Data collection and analysis frequently occur concurrently, and the analysis draws heavily on the language of the persons studied, not the researcher. Additional review of the literature may occur later in the process after data have been gathered and further insights are needed to help describe, explain, or make predictions from the data that have been analyzed. Finally, the researchers draw conclusions from their research and report their findings to others.

How would qualitative research work for the study of suicide? One Canadian study examined suicide among twenty-two older men who had previously experienced depression, and the study found important relationships between societal expectations about masculinity, depression, and suicide (Oliffe et al., 2011). To find out more about linkages between depression and suicide, researchers interviewed the men to learn more about how cumulative losses had contributed to their depression and lack of desire to live. The loss of social bonds, through deaths of family members and friends, was a major factor in their depression and thoughts about suicide. Other factors that contributed to their depression and suicidal tendencies were feelings that they were a failure as a breadwinner and/or beliefs that they had other shortcomings that their older age prevented them from overcoming. However, the qualitative study revealed that many of the participants would not commit suicide because of the stigma associated with this act and their guilt about the pain this act would bring to their family and friends (Oliffe et al., 2011).

From qualitative studies such as this one, we learn information that we might not find when using quantitative research. We find answers to questions such as "why" people might or might not engage in a specific behavior. Qualitative and quantitative research methods are often used in combination with each other in a research design to provide a more holistic view of the social world.

Research Methods

How do sociologists know which research method to use? Are some approaches best for a particular problem? ***Research methods*** are specific strategies or techniques for systematically conducting research. We will look at four of these methods: survey research, secondary analysis of existing data, field research, and experiments.

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Survey Research

A ***survey*** is a poll in which the researcher gathers facts or attempts to determine the relationships among facts. Surveys are the most widely used research method in the social sciences because they make it possible to study things that are not directly observable—such as people's attitudes and beliefs—and to describe a population too large to observe directly (Babbie, 2016) (■Figure 1.12). Researchers frequently select a representative sample from a larger population to answer questions about attitudes, opinions, or behavior. *Respondents* are people who provide data for analysis through interviews or questionnaires. The Gallup and Harris polls are among the most widely known large-scale surveys; however, government agencies such as the U.S. Census Bureau conduct a variety of surveys as well.

Paul Conklin/PhotoEdit

FIGURE **1.12** Conducting surveys and polls is an important means of gathering data from respondents. Some surveys take place on street corners; increasingly, however, such surveys are done by telephone, Internet, and other means.

Unlike many polls that use various methods of gaining a representative sample of the larger population, the Census Bureau attempts to gain information from all persons in the United States. The decennial census occurs every ten years, in the years ending in "0." The purpose of this census is to count the population and housing units of the entire nation. The population count determines how seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are apportioned; however, census figures are also used in formulating public policy and in planning and decision making in the private sector. The Census Bureau attempts to survey the *entire* U.S. population by using two forms—a "short form" of questions asked of all respondents and a "long form" that contains additional questions asked of a *representative sample* of about one in six respondents. Statistics from the Census Bureau provide information that sociologists use in their research.

Types of Surveys Survey data are collected by using self-administered questionnaires, face-to-face interviews, and telephone or computer surveys. A ***questionnaire*** is a printed research instrument containing a series of items to which subjects respond. Items are often in the form of statements with which the respondent is asked to "agree" or "disagree." Questionnaires may be administered by interviewers in face-to-face encounters or by telephone, but the most commonly used technique is the *self-administered questionnaire,* which is either mailed to the respondent's home or administered to groups of respondents gathered at the same place at the same time. For example, in a now-classic study of suicide, race, and religion, sociologist Kevin E. Early (1992) used survey data collected through questionnaires to test his hypothesis that suicide rates are lower among African Americans than among white Americans because of the influence of black churches. Data from questionnaires filled out by members of six African American churches in Florida supported Early's hypothesis that the church buffers some African Americans against harsh social forces—such as racism—that might otherwise lead to suicide.

Survey data may also be collected by interviews. An ***interview*** is a data-collection encounter in which an interviewer asks the respondent questions and records the answers. Survey research often uses *structured interviews,* in which the interviewer asks questions from a standardized questionnaire. Structured interviews tend to produce uniform or replicable data that can be elicited time after time by different interviews. For example, in addition to surveying congregation members, Early (1992) conducted interviews with pastors of African American churches to determine the pastors' opinions about

research methods
specific strategies or techniques for systematically conducting research.

survey
a poll in which the researcher gathers facts or attempts to determine the relationships among facts.

questionnaire
a printed research instrument containing a series of items to which subjects respond.

interview
a data-collection encounter in which an interviewer asks the respondent questions and records the answers.

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SOCIOLOGY & **Social Policy**

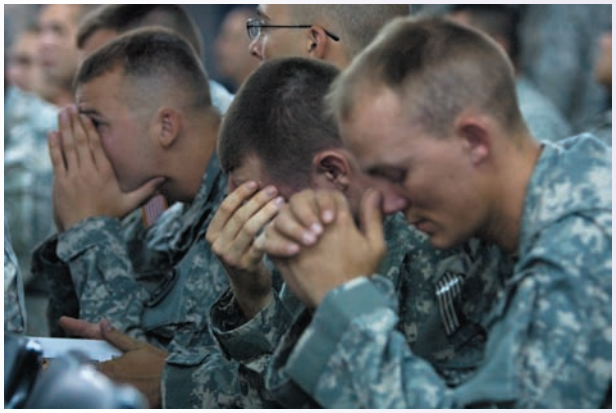
Establishing Policies to Help Prevent Military Suicides

- "Breaking News!" Shocking Headlines and TV News Stories in Recent Years Have Reported that Suicide Rates Are Increasing in the U.S. Military
- Military Leaders and Politicians Are Looking for Ways to Help Active Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families

Television news, social media, and Internet publications such as military.com have been using terms such as "highest rates" and "record highs" to describe the number of suicides that have occurred in recent years in the U.S. Military. Certainly, suicide is a problem nationwide, but it is a special problem in the military. Despite new policies implemented in the past decade and increased efforts to reduce military suicides through prevention programs and other mental health initiatives, it has seemed impossible to permanently reduce the number of military suicides (military.com, 2019a).

Shocked by relatively high rates of both suicide and suicide attempts among military service members, the U.S. Department of Defense and the executive branch of the U.S. government have encouraged all branches of the military to learn more about the sociological causes of suicide and to develop comprehensive suicide-prevention initiatives to help reduce the problem and support military service members around the globe. A 2012 executive order, "Improving Access to Mental Health for Veterans, Service Members, and Military Families," set forth initiatives designed to improve mental health resources and intervention tools, such as increasing the number of crisis lines, peer-to-peer counselors, and mental health professionals available to service members and veterans. The Durkheim Project (named for sociologist Emile Durkheim) was started by the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs in an effort to help veterans in distress. However, many people have become concerned that this issue is not a priority in contemporary politics. Clearly, a variety of sociological issues is central in dealing with suicidal ideation and behavior in the military. In the words of a U.S. Army (2012: 51) report, "Each potential suicide or attempted suicide is different with respect to contributing factors and triggering events. Each victim responds differently to pre-suicide stressors based on protective factors such as personal resilience, coping skills, and whether or not they are help-seeking. . . ."

Studies have been conducted to gain a better understanding of why suicides were happening and what might be done to prevent this pressing problem, but no single cause has been identified for suicide. Factors such as financial worries, relationship issues, legal trouble, substance abuse, medical problems, frequent deployment, and posttraumatic stress are all thought to be associated with suicidal behavior among military personnel (military.com, 20019b). The fact remains that we must do better in the future. Consider, for example, that in 2018 (the latest year for which data are available), a total of 325 active-duty members took their lives, including 58 marines, 68 sailors, 60 airmen, and 139 soldiers, which was an increase over the previous year (military.com, 2019b). Services members are now provided with Military OneSource, which is a free service provided by the Department of Defense to service members and their families to help with mental health problems and other concerns. The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) provides information and resources about psychological health, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and traumatic brain injury. Each of these centers is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (mentalhealth.gov, 2019). Can you think of types of outreach to active military and retired service personnel that might help reduce this current U.S. crisis, the highest rate of military suicides since record-keeping began after the 9/11 terrorist attack?



Fabrizio Bensch/Reuters

What unique social conditions do military personnel face that might contribute to suicide or other conditions such as depression and alcoholism?

Reflect & Analyze

How might lengthy deployments away from home contribute to suicidal behavior among troops? Why do some military personnel commit suicide after they return home?

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the extent to which African American churches reinforce values and beliefs that discourage suicide.

Interviews have specific advantages such as being more effective in dealing with complicated issues and providing an opportunity for face-to-face communication between the interviewer and the respondent. Although interviews provide a wide variety of useful information, a major disadvantage is the cost and time involved in conducting the interviews and analyzing the results.

A quicker method of administering questionnaires is the *telephone* or *computer survey*. Telephone and computer surveys give greater control over data collection and provide greater personal safety for respondents and researchers than do personal encounters (▪ Figure 1.13). In *computer-assisted telephone interviewing* (sometimes called CATI), the interviewer uses a computer to dial random telephone numbers, reads the questions shown on the video monitor to the respondent, and then types the responses into the computer terminal. The answers are immediately stored in the central computer, which automatically prepares them for data analysis. However, the respondent must answer the phone before the interview can take place, and many people screen their phone calls. In the past few years, online survey research has increased dramatically as software packages and online survey services have made this type of research easier to conduct. Online research makes it possible to study virtual communities, online relationships, and other types of computer-mediated communications networks around the world.

Masterfile

FIGURE **1.13** Computer-assisted telephone interviewing is an easy and cost-efficient method of conducting research. However, the widespread use of cellphones, voice mail, and caller ID is making this form of research much more difficult in the twenty-first century.

Survey research is useful in describing the characteristics of a large population without having to interview each person in that population. In recent years, computer technology has enhanced researchers' ability to do *multivariate analysis*—research involving more than two independent variables. For example, to assess the influence of religion on suicidal behavior among African Americans, a researcher might look at the effects of age, sex, income level, and other variables all at once to determine which of these independent variables influences suicide the most or least and how influential each variable is relative to the others. However, a weakness of survey research is the use of standardized questions; this approach tends to force respondents into categories in which they may or may not belong. Moreover, survey research relies on self-reported information, and some people may be less than truthful, particularly on emotionally charged issues such as suicide.

Secondary Analysis of Existing Data

In ***secondary analysis***, researchers use existing material and analyze data that were originally collected by others. Existing data sources include public records, official reports of organizations or government agencies, and *raw data* collected by other researchers. For example, Durkheim used vital statistics (death records) that were originally collected for other purposes to examine the relationship among variables such as age, marital status, and the circumstances surrounding the person's suicide. Today, many researchers studying suicide use data compiled by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). For example, look at ▪ Figure 1.14, "National Suicide Statistics by State at a Glance," based on data compiled by the CDC, and try to develop several plausible sociological explanations for why suicide rates are higher in some states and regions of the United States. Can you provide an explanation why rates might be higher or lower in certain areas such as the state where you live?

Secondary analysis also includes ***content analysis***—the systematic examination of cultural artifacts or various

secondary analysis
a research method in which researchers use existing material and analyze data that were originally collected by others.

content analysis
the systematic examination of cultural artifacts or various forms of communication to extract thematic data and draw conclusions about social life.

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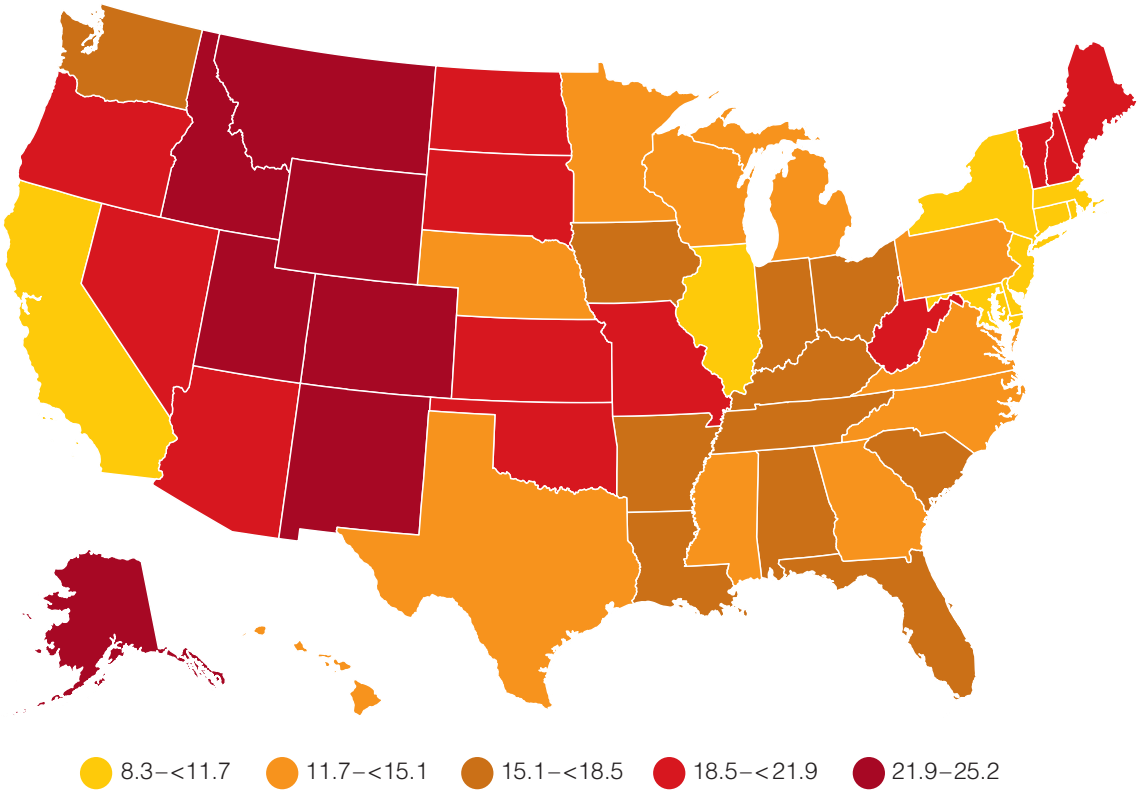

FIGURE 1.14 National Suicide Statistics by State at a Glance

Suicide rate per 100,000 total population by state for all races and ethnicities, both sexes, and all ages, 2018, United States.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019. https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/suicide-mortality/suicide.htm.

forms of communication to extract thematic data and draw conclusions about social life. Among the materials studied are written records (such as books, diaries, poems, and graffiti), narratives and visual texts (such as movies, television programs, advertisements, and greeting cards), and material culture (such as music, art, and even garbage). In content analysis, researchers look for regular patterns, such as the frequency of suicide as a topic on television talk shows. They may also examine subject matter to determine how it has been represented, such as how the mass media frame presentations of suicide.

One strength of secondary analysis is that data are readily available and inexpensive. Another is that because the researcher often does not collect the data personally, the chances of bias may be reduced. In addition, the use of existing sources makes it possible to analyze longitudinal data (things that take place over a period of time or at several different points in time) to provide a historical context within which to locate original research. However, secondary analysis has inherent problems. For one thing, the researcher does not always know if the data are incomplete, unauthentic, or inaccurate.

Field Research

Field research is the study of social life in its natural setting: observing and interviewing people where they live, work, and play. Some kinds of behavior can be best studied by "being there"; a fuller understanding can be developed through observations, face-to-face discussions, and participation in events. Researchers use these methods to generate qualitative data: observations that are best described verbally rather than numerically.

Sociologists who are interested in observing social interaction as it occurs may use ***participant observation***—the process of collecting systematic observations while being part of the activities of the group that the researcher is studying. Participant observation generates more "inside" information than simply asking questions or observing from the outside. For example, to learn more about how coroners make a ruling of "suicide" in connection with a death and to analyze what (if any) effect such a ruling has on the accuracy of "official" suicide statistics, sociologist Steve Taylor (1982) engaged in participant observation at a coroner's office over a six-month period. As he followed

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