THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

A SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS

NINTH EDITION

Jeanne H. Ballantine, Jenny Stuber and Judson G. Everitt

The Sociology of Education

The ninth edition of *The Sociology of Education* examines the field in rare breadth by incorporating a diverse range of theoretical approaches and a distinct sociological lens in its overview of education and schooling.

Education is changing rapidly, just as the social forces outside of schools are, and to present the material in a meaningful way, the authors of this book provide a unifying framework—an open systems approach—to illustrate how the issues and structures we find in education are all interconnected. Separate chapters are devoted to how schools help shape who has access to educational opportunities and who does not; issues of race, class, and gender; the organization of schools and the roles that make up educational settings, and more. Throughout the book, readers will have an opportunity to engage with theories and issues that are discussed and to apply their newly obtained understanding in response to emerging and persistent problems in the educational system.

The new edition continues to be a critical point of reference for students interested in exploring the social context of education and the role education has in shaping our society. It is perfect for sociology of education and social foundations of education courses at the undergraduate or early graduate level.

Jeanne H. Ballantine is Emerita Professor of Sociology at Wright State University. She has taught at several four-year colleges over her career, as well as in international programs in universities abroad. Dr. Ballantine has written several textbooks in addition to this one; her most recent is the new edition of *Our Social World: An Introduction to Sociology* (SAGE 2019). In her distinguished career, Dr. Ballantine has been awarded by the American Sociological Association and the North Central Sociological Association for her outstanding contributions to teaching and her commitment and impact on the field of sociology.

Jenny Stuber is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of North Florida. She is the author of *Aspen and the American Dream*, forthcoming in 2021 (University of California Press), and *Exploring Inequality: A Sociological Approach* (Oxford University Press 2015). With co-author Jeanne Ballantine and Joan Z. Spade, Dr. Stuber is also co-editor of the reader *Schools and Society* (SAGE 2017). Her research has appeared in *Sociological Forum*, *The Journal of Contemporary Sociology*, *The International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, and *Teaching in Higher Education*.

Judson G. Everitt is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Loyola University Chicago. His book, *Lesson Plans: The Institutional Demands of Becoming a Teacher* (Rutgers University Press 2018), chronicles the complexities and dilemmas teacher candidates confront in their training. His research has appeared in *Symbolic Interaction*, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, as well as in an edited volume on teachers' work, entitled *Assessing Teacher Quality* (Teachers College Press 2012).

"Ballantine, Stuber, and Everitt's *The Sociology of Education* textbook examines education through a systemic description of how structural, cultural, and individual factors intersect to shape educational design for communities and their future as well as individual expectations and learning outcomes. Theoretically progressive, the authors' go beyond traditional sociological descriptions and innovatively include post-modern, feminists, and critical perspectives that enable bottom-up perspectives and margin-to-center discussions. Over many years of use in both online and traditional courses the book has always provided an innovative 'out-of-the-box' teaching—and learning alternative to sociological descriptions of education."

Jesse Garcia, *Lamar University*

"I have used this book since its first edition and it remains one of the top comprehensive texts on the market in sociology of education. The 'open system model' provides a clear context for a sociological analysis of schooling that is accessible to students and yet complex enough to lay the ground work for the extensive education policy discussions that fill each chapter. Since my course focuses on inequalities in schooling, this edition is even stronger in that gender and racial disparities are given full treatment in separate chapters and are not collapsed into one as in the past. This is my go-to resource whenever I address educational issues in any sociology course."

William A. Mirola, *Marian University*

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PREFACE

Integrating the important and diverse topics in the field of sociology of education by showing how they are related to one another is the main goal of this text. It emphasizes the diversity of theoretical approaches and issues in the field, and the application of this knowledge to the understanding of education and schooling. Education is changing rapidly; it is no easy task to present the excitement of a dynamic field with diverse and disparate topics. To present the material to students in a meaningful way, a unifying framework—an open systems approach—is used. It is meant to provide a coherent structure to the field of education, not to detract from the theory, empirical, and practical content of sociology of education.

In the ninth edition of the text, discussions of new studies and current topics replace and supplement older topics, while retaining classical foundational work in the field. All tables and figures, new and existing, present the latest data available at the time of revision. This edition also presents three chapters on inequality in educational access and experiences, where class, race and ethnicity, and gender are presented as separate (though intersecting) vectors of educational inequality. Each chapter combines qualitative and quantitative approaches and relevant theory, classics and emerging research, and micro- and macro-level perspectives.

We are pleased to introduce our new co-author, Dr. Judson Everitt, a sociologist of education from Loyola University of Chicago. He brings new ideas, content, organization, and additional student-friendly content to the book, making this an exciting and extensive revision. His research to date focuses on teachers' work conditions, teacher training, and how schools function as organizations. Recently he has begun new research examining the interconnections between education and healthcare. He is engaged in a study of medical education, and how new doctors make sense of changing institutional arrangements in healthcare. You will enjoy his perspectives and contributions!

After teaching sociology of education to many undergraduate and graduate students and using a variety of materials, we were concerned that the materials available, though excellent in quality, were not reaching undergraduate and graduate students from sociology, education, and other majors. The level of many texts is quite advanced, the themes and theoretical approaches of some books make their coverage or approach limited, and the books present research in such depth that they are often too detailed and abstract for many undergraduate and beginning graduate students to take away the main messages. This makes it difficult for students to apply to their work in educational settings. During work with the Project on Teaching Undergraduate Sociology, one author developed a guide for teaching sociology of education and focused on presentation of materials to undergraduates. These materials and ideas have been incorporated into this text. The book is best suited for sociology of education and social foundations/cultural context of education courses at the undergraduate or beginning graduate level.

Several goals guided the writing of this book:

1. To make the book comprehensible and useful to students. Realizing that most students are interested in how the field of education can help them deal with issues they will face, we emphasize the usefulness of research findings. Choices had to be made concerning which studies and topics to cover. Those chosen should have high interest and usefulness, and should help as readers work in and interact with school systems.
2. To present material in a coherent framework. The authors present key ideas in the sociology of education by utilizing an open systems framework. The instructor has leeway within the open systems approach to add topics, exclude sections of the text, and rearrange the order of topics without losing the continuity and integration present in this framework.
3. To present diverse theoretical approaches in sociology of education. Several valuable perspectives in the field are influential today; the book gives examples throughout of traditional and new theories and how they approach current issues.
4. To include topics that are important, current or of emerging interest to students. Separate chapters are devoted to how schools help shape who "makes it" and who doesn't; issues of race, class and gender; organization of schools and roles in schools; informal education ("climate" and the "hidden curriculum"); the school environment; higher education; education around the world, and educational movements and alternatives. These chapters present relevant and recent studies in the field.
5. To indicate how change takes place and what role sociologists play in both understanding and bringing about change. With the increasing emphasis on applied sociology, more courses are including information on how knowledge can help us bring about needed change and reform. This is the focus of the final chapter but is also covered throughout the text.
6. To stimulate students to become involved with educational systems where they can use the knowledge available in this and other textbooks. This text can be used to stimulate discussion and encourage other topics of interest to be introduced into the course. Useful features of the book that can help enhance teaching effectiveness include "Applying Sociology to Education" features; projects at the end of each chapter; the coverage of current issues; a glossary of key terms; and the Instructor's Manual, complete with classroom teaching aids, techniques, and test questions.

The book does not attempt to use one theoretical approach to the exclusion of others. Rather, it focuses on the value of several different approaches and their emphases in dealing with major issues facing education. Because the book is meant as an overview, it surveys the field rather than providing comprehensive coverage of a few topics. This allows instructors the flexibility to expand where desired.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Instructor's Manual and Test Bank: The Instructor's Manual and Test Bank are provided to assist teachers in their efforts to prepare lectures and evaluate student learning. For each chapter of the text, the Instructor's Manual offers different types of resources, including detailed chapter summaries and outlines, learning objectives, discussion questions, classroom activities, and much more.

Also included in this manual is a Test Bank offering short and longer essay questions, multiple-choice, true/false and fill-in-the-blank questions for each chapter. The Instructor's Manual and Test Bank are available to adopters at http://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/instructor_downloads/.

PowerPoint Presentations: Lecture PowerPoints are available for this text. The Lecture PowerPoint slides outline each chapter to help you convey sociological principles in a visual and exciting way. They are available to adopters at http://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/instructor_downloads/.

Thanks go to many people for suggestions on early drafts: for reviews of the manuscript for the eighth edition, we are grateful to Harriet J. Hartman, Rowan University; Christopher Donoghue, Montclair State University; Victoria Rankin Marks and Danielle Lewis, University of Southern California; Joseph Rosher, Alabama A&M University; Jesus Garcia, Lamar University; Dana Mitra, Penn State University; Ariana Steck, California State University—San Marcos; and William A. Mirola, Marian College. Finally, our interest in this field is constantly stimulated by the diverse and ever-changing experiences of our children and students as they have passed through the stages of schooling and shared their experiences with us. Jeanne thanks Hardy, whose knowledge and creative ideas in the field of education gave original impetus and continuing support and encouragement to this work, and her children and their spouses, several of whom are in education. Jenny gives special thanks to her students who, over the years, continue to renew her faith that the next generations will be as curious as their predecessors. Judson thanks his students past and present as well, who routinely impress him with their excellence as well as their compassion.

<div align="right">Jeanne H. Ballantine, Jenny Stuber, and Judson Everitt</div>

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAUP	American Association of University Professors
ACTs	American College Tests
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AFT	American Federation of Teachers
AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
AP	advanced placement
ASCA	American School Counselor Association
AYP	adequate yearly progress
CAI	computer–assisted instruction
CLA	Collegiate Learning Assessment
CMO	Charter Management Organization
CoP	community of practice
CRS	culturally responsive schooling
CUFBA	College and University Food Bank Alliance
DACA	Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
DARE	Drug Abuse Resistance Education
DREAM Act	Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ELLs	English language learners
EMI	effectively maintained inequality
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESSA	Every Student Succeeds Act
ETS	Educational Testing Service
EU	European Union
FERPA	Federal Educational Records and Privacy Act
GDP	gross domestic product
GED	General Education Development
GPA	grade point average
GPI	gender parity index
HBCUs	Historically Black Colleges and Universities
HERI	Higher Education Research Institute
HHS	Health and Human Services
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
IB	International Baccalaureate
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement
IEP	individualized educational plan
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPEDS	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
IQ	intelligence quotient

KIPP   Knowledge is Power Program
MIT   Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MMI   maximally maintained inequality
MSIs   Minority-Serving Institutions
MWYF   MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation
NAEP   National Assessment of Educational Progress
NBA   National Basketball Association
NCAA   National Collegiate Athletic Association
NCLB   No Child Left Behind
NEA   National Education Association
NES   National Evaluation Series
NYGS   National Youth Gang Survey
OECD   Organization for Economic Coooperation and Development
PIRLS   Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA   Programme for International Student Assessment
PWIs   predominantly White institutions
SATs   Scholastic Aptitude Tests
SES   socioeconomic status
SET   student evaluations of teaching
SRO   school resource officer
SSL   Start School Later
STEM   Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math initiative
TCUs   tribal colleges and universities
TERCE   Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study
TIMSS   Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UDI   universal design

PROLOGUE

At the time this edition of our book went into production (fall 2020), the biggest issue in education was the national Covid-19 pandemic and its varied effects on schools across the country. We discuss various elements of what the pandemic has meant for education in the chapters to come, but we want to devote some attention to it here at the outset. The reasons for this opening discussion are threefold. First, the pandemic continues to have a profoundly disruptive impact on all aspects of education; virtually everyone reading these pages has had their schooling affected in some way. Second, there will no doubt be lasting effects on education from the pandemic for years to come and we feel it is important in this moment to look ahead, even amidst great uncertainty in the present. Third, examining the impact of the pandemic on educational institutions foregrounds the utility of the "open systems" approach that frames our analysis of education throughout this book.

As of November 2020, only 38 percent of all public school students were attending school in person five days per week (NPR, 2020a). Many school districts did not reopen in person at all in late summer of 2020, choosing instead to start the school year remotely with virtual learning. Many others implemented so-called "hybrid" schedules with different groups of students attending on alternating days to reduce class sizes and promote distancing. Others still reopened in-person full time despite concerning local positivity rates of infection (we discuss the haphazard nature of school reopening plans in more detail in Chapter 10). Likewise, reopening plans also varied among colleges and universities: some opted for mostly or fully online instructional formats with limited campus activity while others brought students back to campus with new policies on class size, distancing, mask wearing, single-occupancy residency, frequent testing, and facilities set aside for quarantines. And none of these plans were set in stone; many schools and universities pivoted between plans as local infection rates rose or fell.

The most immediate concerns about the negative consequences of so much disruption to in-person schooling are regarding the learning losses students are suffering (Barnum, 2020). Going back to the spring of 2020 and extending into the fall, the lack of access to in-person instruction has meant many students have fallen behind in their educational trajectories as virtual learning has been largely unable to replicate face-to-face instruction. The losses are particularly troubling for younger students who often have more difficulties with online instruction. As an example, after Chicago Public Schools announced they would begin the school year fully online, they saw a massive enrollment decline that was most pronounced in elementary grades: over 8,000 of the district's elementary students simply did not enroll in school (Issa, 2020). Even for students who remain enrolled, the lack of meaningful interaction with a skilled professional will likely result in learning losses. These losses are likely worse for students of color and lower-income students. We devote much analysis to the structural conditions in education that already contribute to educational inequalities by race and social class throughout the book, as well as analysis of how White and middle-class students often secure advantages in education. These same

types of inequality are at play in pandemic-related learning, and they are likely worsening (Burke and Calarco, 2020). Lastly, the losses are not just academic. Experts are deeply concerned about the loss of social and emotional learning, as well as related mental health concerns for youth of all ages (NPR, 2020b).

Whatever the magnitude of learning losses and mental health concerns, these consequences are likely to be lasting ones. Falling behind academically can be extremely difficult to rectify, especially among students facing other risk factors, even if schools get back to relatively normal in-person operations by the academic year 2021–2022. Again, while this is bad for students of all grade-levels, it could be debilitating for the future success of the youngest students who have had their early transitions into schooling disrupted (Corsaro, 2018). Indeed, many cite experts in their fears that we are facing a "lost generation" of students, so to speak, who may never fully regain what they have missed during the pandemic (New York Times Editorial Board, 2020).

Clearly, we face daunting challenges in education going forward. But we do not want to begin this book by only lamenting the current state of affairs in education. In fact, we believe there are evidence-based reasons to hope for and expect reinvestment in education going forward; that will go a long way in effectively responding to current challenges and potentially improving upon them in the future. First, while the virus is currently spreading unchecked in the United States, a vaccine will likely be ready for use by the time this book is published, and hopefully it will be widely available to the public prior to the start of the next school year. Schools in other countries—namely Denmark and Singapore—have shown how to reopen safely when virus spread is under control (Melnick and Darling-Hammond, 2020). Second, there is the impending change of federal leadership in January 2021. Regardless of one's political philosophy or affiliation, it is a statement of fact that the Trump administration took a relatively laissez faire approach to the federal pandemic response, especially concerning education, leaving the lion's share of decision making to state and local leaders. The prospective Biden administration currently proposes much more federal guidance, along with another substantial infusion of federal resources for both controlling virus spread and providing schools the funding they need to reopen and stay open safely for on-site instruction.

If such funding materializes, it will need to be used to address the learning losses we discussed previously and go toward programs that provide targeted instructional support to students who need it the most. Such investment could help schools address head on the many problems of educational inequality we examine in this book. But there will be more problems to address as well. Approximately one million educators have been laid off in the pandemic recession (NPR, 2020a). Not only will school districts need to hire back teachers and support staff, they will need to do so beyond what personnel has been lost in order to reduce class sizes to make them safer in the pandemic context. And new investments may not stop at simply making schools Covid-safe. There is potential for broader federal investment in public education that could make teaching a more attractive profession overall (we discuss teachers' work in detail in Chapters 6 and 7). Smaller class sizes are a start, but providing better salaries and work conditions would also help attract teachers

while also addressing demands that teachers themselves have been making over the last three years in a number of large work stoppages across the country. Indeed, reinvestment in public education that serves to reinvigorate and expand a beleaguered teaching profession would be broadly beneficial to schools and their students. All of this, of course, depends on the exact details of what new education policies may lie ahead, but it is possible that we are on the verge of a new era in education. We shall see, but we remain hopeful.

Finally, the pandemic has put in sharp relief the highly interdependent relationships between schools and other arenas of social life. In the United States, schools depend on governance structures at the local, state, and federal levels for guidance as well as resources. Families depend on schools for educating their children, but also for child care. Businesses, civic organizations, and schools themselves depend on adults who can participate in the paid labor market, and many of those adults depend on their children being in school so they can work. People depend on their employers for health insurance to pay for medical care for their families, and again, many adults depend on their kids' schools in order to work. Attention to the complex relationships between education and the rest of society is the central premise of the open systems approach that guides our analysis in the coming pages. Neither schools nor the people who inhabit them operate in a social vacuum. They influence, and are influenced by, the social world around them. We cannot fully understand the causes or consequences of what happens in education without attention to these wider relationships that the open systems approach examines directly. Given the historic challenges and possibilities in education created by the Covid–19 pandemic, we believe the open systems approach that guides this book—now in its *ninth* edition—is as relevant and important as it has ever been.

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CHAPTER 1
A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE FOR UNDERSTANDING SCHOOLS

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This little boy works at a market in his refugee camp;
This little rural girl stays home to help on the farm;
This little boy goes to an elite nursery school;
This little girl has no schooling, and was beaten for trying to attend;
And this teenager escaped her country, a target for transgender hatred, only to be
    locked up in a detention camp with no family or educational opportunities.

Each of these children arrived on planet Earth, possessing the same potential biologically—
but their life chances and opportunities to learn are dramatically different. Consider their
situations one by one!

Child #1: Mohib lives in Kutupalong Refugee Camp in Bangladesh and works in a
camp market in exchange for one meal a day. Those family members and neighbors
who are left, along with hundreds of thousands of other Rohingya Muslim minority
group members, were driven out of their homes in northern Myanmar; these are the
ones lucky enough to survive the killing and burning of their villages. The 500,000
children in the refugee camps lack access to food, a roof over their heads, and anything
resembling sanitation. Education is far down the list of needs when survival is the
priority. These vulnerable children, some with no parent, are more likely to be
trafficked for child labor than they are to go to school. International organizations try
to meet the population's basic needs, but few children go to school (World Migration
Report, 2020).

Child #2: Ava lives in a rural county in North Carolina. It is not easy to get to school,
as is true in many rural areas of the U.S. where one in five U.S. students live. Yet around
one-half of school districts, one-third of schools, and one-fifth of students in the U.S. are
in rural areas (NCES, 2016). For Ava, the bus ride is long and she is needed to do chores
around the small family farm, she misses many days of school (Lavalley, 2018). Ava and
many other rural children live in areas with deep and persistent poverty; in fact, one in six
children in rural areas of the U.S. live below the poverty line. The high cost for busing
rural students takes away from the already limited budget, and the low salaries make it
difficult to find good teachers. Rural teachers make 40–50 percent less than their urban
counterparts. In terms of educational outcomes, expenditures, graduation rates, and college
readiness, rural kids lose out (Showalter and Hartman, 2019).

Child #3: This little boy lives in a wealthy neighborhood of Los Angeles (could be
Chicago, New York, or any large city in the world) and is driven to nursery school each
morning by the chauffer. William is learning how to be a member of the elite class, as are
his wealthy peers in his select nursery school. Most will go to elite elementary schools,
private preparatory high schools, and top universities. Money is not an obstacle, and the
goal is a prestigious job and high salary. William was born into this position—as were most
of the other children in his school. Private education, beginning with nursery schools and
continuing through college, is largely reserved for the wealthy. While Catholic private
schools once served both wealthy and less advantaged children, they are becoming fewer
(Murnane, et al., 2018; Wong, 2018).

Child #4. In the rural male-centered culture of Pakistan, where the Taliban control much of the countryside, girls' education is a low priority. Nearly 32 percent of primary-age girls are not in school; this number is 59 percent by grade 6. Women are generally married off as child brides, and women who disobey face the threat of acid attacks and honor killings (Human Rights Watch, 2018). Attention was brought to these girls when Malala Yousafzai, a young Pakistani girl, demanded the right to education for girls and was shot by the Taliban. She recovered in England and has become an international spokesperson for girls' education, winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 at the age of 17. She has written an autobiography and started a fund for girls' education, The Malala Fund for Education (Yousafzai and Lamb, 2013).

Child #5: Alejandra, a teenage transgender migrant from Central America, lives in a U.S. detention center for unaccompanied minors, with 3,000 other children (Dickerson, 2019). Although U.S. law says the children must be provided with basic essentials, including education, many facilities struggle to provide adequate food and mats for sleeping, much less education (Ujifusa and Mitchell, 2020). Migrant transgender teens are at particular risk for exploitation, rape, and sex trafficking (Cheatham, 2020). Not only is adequate education scarce, mental health services are rare. Alejandra cries for her family and her uncertain life.

Five children—five very different life experiences and educational outcomes. The children's surroundings, the family into which they are born, political and economic circumstances, the opportunity structure, cultural norms and expectations all influence the *life chances* of children—and there is little most children can do about it! Education has a big impact on each child's life chances. If the educational opportunities available are poor to non-existent, the child is unlikely to attain school knowledge, a good job, and wealth. In this book, you will be introduced to many of the variables that influence a child's chances in life, especially educational opportunity. Keep this in mind as you read about the subject matter that makes up *The Sociology of Education*.

Education is a lifelong process. It begins the day we are born and ends the day we die. It is found in every society and comes in many forms, ranging from the "school of hard knocks," or learning by experience, to formal institutional learning; it engages very young children as well as adult learners. Sociologists of education ask questions like: Who has access to schooling? Do schools simply perpetuate the country's stratification system, rich versus poor? How can teachers increase academic achievement? Are children who have access to technology in schools better prepared for the future? What moral or religious impact should schools have on young people? While sociologists try not to make value judgments about what is right and wrong or good and bad when it comes to education, they do research the state of education and the outcomes that result from policies and practices.

SOCIOLOGY AND EDUCATION

Sociologists study interactions between people in small to large groups. Within this broad framework are many specialties; these can be divided into studies of institutions in
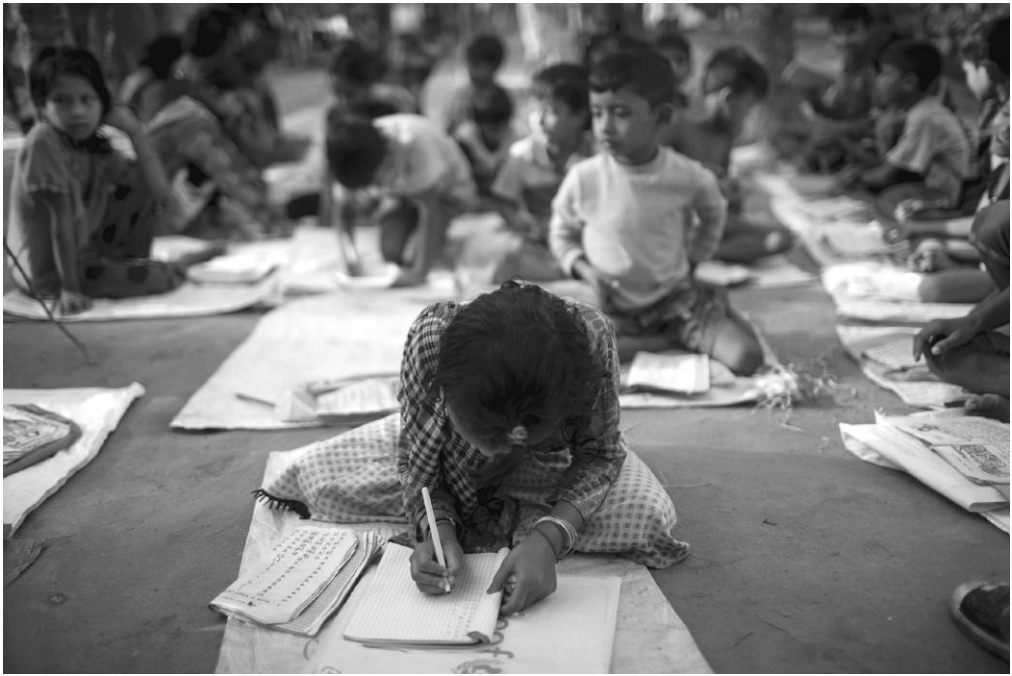
Figure 1.1 Education Takes Different Forms in Different Countries

Source: b) Farooq Naeem/AFP via Getty Image; c) Office of Inspector General/Department of Homeland Security via Getty Images

Figure 1.1 (Continued)

societies (those addressing common needs of people, such as education, family, economics, and healthcare); studies of *processes* (actions taking place, such as teaching, learning, communicating); and studies of interactions between individuals and groups (relationships between teachers, students, peers). The *structure* of societies—meaning patterns of behavior and interactions—is represented by six major institutions: family, religion, education, politics, economics, and health. Formal, complex organizations, such as schools, are part of the institutional *structures* that make up "society."

Processes, the action part of society, bring educational structures alive. Through the process of *socialization*, people learn how to fit into society and what roles are expected of them. The process of *stratification* determines where people fit into the social structure (as illustrated in our opening examples); that, in turn, affects their lifestyles and life chances. *Change* is an ever-present, and constantly forces schools and other organizations to adjust to new demands.

Not all children in the world receive a formal school education, as seen in the opening examples, but they all experience processes that prepare them for adult roles. *Learning* takes place both formally in school settings and informally in schools and family, with peers, through media, and from other influences in our lives. The *institution of education*—formal schooling or informal learning by experience—is interdependent with each of the other institutions. For instance, the family's interest and involvement in education will affect the child's achievement in school, as will the political and economic systems of the child's society.

Sociology of education focuses on understanding educational systems—their *structures and processes*. Sociologists study everything from micro-interactions within individual classrooms to national systems of education. By studying education systematically, sociologists offer insights to help guide policies for schools and national education systems. This research is grounded in sociological theories and uses scientific methods.

Although sociology provides unique and powerful tools to explore the educational systems of societies, it may disappoint those who have an axe to grind or whose goal is to proselytize rather than objectively understand. The goal of sociology of education is to objectively consider educational practices, sometimes controversial topics, and even unpopular beliefs to gain an understanding of a system that affects us all.

As you read this book, please ask questions. Challenge ideas. Explore findings—but do so with the intent of opening new avenues for thought, discussion, and research. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to acquaint you with the unique perspective of the sociology of education: the questions it addresses, the open systems approach used in this book, and the theoretical and methodological approaches used to study educational systems. We begin our discussion with an overview of sociology of education.

WHY STUDY SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION?

There are several answers to this question. Someday you may be a professional in the field of education or in a related field; you will be a taxpayer, if you aren't already; or you may be a parent with children in the school system. Right now, you, yourself, are a student.

Why are you taking this class? If you are a sociology major, you are studying education to explore one of the major institutions that make up society; if you are an education major, sociology may give you a new or different perspective as you prepare to enter the classroom. You may be at college in pursuit of knowledge; or this course may be required, you may need the credit, perhaps the teacher is supposed to be good, or maybe it just fit into your schedule. Let's consider some reasons for studying sociology of education.

Teachers and Other Professionals

Teachers in U.S. public and private schools from grades kindergarten through high school, in year 2019–2020, number 3.7 million (3.2 million in public schools, .5 in private schools). Median pay per year, with great variations between cities, rural areas, and regions of the country, averages $61,660 (Occupation Outlook Handbook, 2020). Job growth in public and private K–12 schools is predicted to be between 4 and 5 percent (about the average) due to projected increases in student enrollments and retirements of current teachers (Educationdata.org, 2020).

Other college graduates become involved with counselling, healthcare, special education, library science, and other aspects of schools. Professionals in such fields as social work and business have regular contact with schools when dealing with clients and employees. For

teachers and these other professionals, understanding the educational system is important knowledge for effective functioning in their positions.

Taxpayers

Almost 100 percent of the money used to pay for physical plants, materials, salaries, and other essentials in the U.S. *public* educational system is from taxes collected at the local, state, and federal levels; in turn, taxpayers play a major role in financing schools at every level. Taxpayers benefit from having an educated citizenry. For these reasons, taxpayers should understand how this money is being spent, and with what results.

Local property taxes account for approximately 44 percent of total public school funding, states 48 percent, and federal support 8 percent (Chen, 2020; Skinner, 2019). Average spending per student in the United States is $10,314 (McCann, 2016), with low-income areas receiving less than high-income areas. This is because the tax base for local schools varies greatly depending on the property wealth of the community (see Map 1.1).
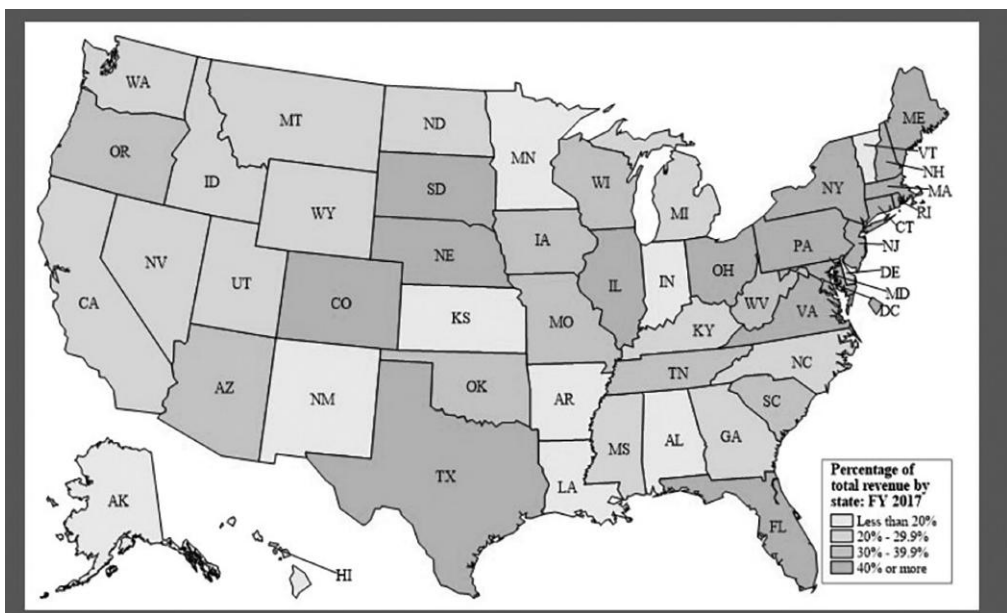
Map 1.1 Percentage of Total Revenue from Property Taxes and Parent Government Contributions for Public Elementary and Secondary School Districts, by State: Fiscal Year 2017

Note: Property taxes include the tax revenues of "independent" school districts that are not fiscally and administratively dependent on another government entity. Parent government contributions include revenues for a dependent school system sourced from monies appropriated to that school system by its parent government. Most of these revenues are usually derived from property tax and other tax collections of the parent government; however, there are often nontax revenue contributions that parent governments transfer to their dependent school systems that cannot be isolated and reported separately from tax revenue contributions.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, 2017

Parents

Many of you are or will be parents. To understand why this book is relevant to you, consider the following: In the U.S., there are approximately 74 million children between the ages of 0 and 17. From 6 to 17, typical school ages, there are about 50 million children (ChildStats.gov, 2020). Approximately 19 percent of U.S. households consist of married couples with children; another 9 percent are single parents with children (Vanorman and Jacobsen, 2020). Most of those children go to school, with a small portion being home schooled. Parents with children in schools understandably want to know what is happening during the six to seven hours a day their child is away from home.

Parents have concerns about the schools that care for and educate their children; parents' major concerns focus on the lack of financial support for some schools, lack of discipline, overcrowding, fighting and gang violence, and drugs. Sixty-four percent of parents agree that there is too much emphasis on standardized testing, and 41 percent say parents should be able to have their children opt out of standardized testing. Ninety-five percent of respondents feel quality of teachers is important to improve public schools and 84 percent support mandatory vaccinations (NEA, 2016).

Every year the Gallup Poll publishes results of their survey of public attitudes toward education. It summarizes the last 20 years of surveys on "Satisfaction with K–12 Education in U.S." In 2019, 51 percent of respondents felt satisfied, while 47 percent were dissatisfied with

Figure 1.2 Students and Teachers Have Reciprocal Roles in Schools, Each Interacting with the Other

Source: SBraun/iStock

the performance of their schools. (To learn more about the reasons for each figure, visit the Gallup Poll site at news.gallup.com/poll/1612/education.aspx.)

Students
Children spend many hours a day in school. They are concerned about good and "bad" teachers, nice classmates and bullies, and the easy and hard classes they have. The knowledge that researchers provide can help educators understand students' concerns and make the road smoother and more successful for students.

In 2019, 35 percent of the U.S. population had completed four-year college degrees, and some had masters, professional, or PhD degrees (Educationdata.org, 2020). Yet the U.S. ranks 13th in the world (in proportion to size of population) in degrees awarded; at the same time, the world is more and more dependent on "knowledge industries" (Baumhardt and Julin, 2019). Within the United States and other economically advanced countries, many citizens have the higher levels of education needed, but in both the Global North and Global South, many citizens lack opportunity to compete in today's world economy.

QUESTIONS ASKED BY SOCIOLOGISTS OF EDUCATION

The sociology of education is a diverse field of inquiry, with researchers looking at a range of topics, using a range of research methods. Their research sheds light on educational issues, and thus helps teachers, citizens, and policy makers with the decision-making process. Some of the questions asked by researchers in this field are profiled as follows.

Are Children Safe in Schools?
Let us consider this from three perspectives: parents' attitudes, teachers' and administrators' concerns, and student behavior.

One in three parents express concern about their children's safety at school, especially given the recent shootings in schools and media exposure surrounding such events (Minke, 2019; Richmond, 2018). According to surveys of administrators and teachers, the most serious school problems are bullying, negative student attitudes and behaviors, and, in some schools, gang activity (Chen, 2019).

The 2019 annual survey of U.S. 8th, 10th, and 12th graders shows a decline in binge alcohol drinking and illicit drug use among 10th and 12th graders (excluding marijuana) (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2019). Although vaping seemed to be an emerging epidemic, recent studies indicate that concerns about youth vaping were overblown. Cigarette use decreased, down 20 to 30 percent compared to the mid-1990s. More than 80 percent of youth do not use any tobacco products and over 86 percent do not vape; among those who do vape, most are not regular users (NYU, 2020). However, there appears to be a decrease in the perceived harm of marijuana use (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2019).

Should Minimum Competency in Key Subjects Such As Reading and Math Be Required For High School Graduation?
In many countries and in some parts of the United States, students are required to take reading and math exams in order to enter high school and subsequently graduate. Federal

policies in the United States require all students to be tested at various times throughout their school years on Common Core standards. Standardized tests are viewed by many as one way to hold schools accountable for students' progress. Yet, some educators, researchers, and parents question the value of requiring competency tests because they have little benefit for students who score well on them and can harm students who do not do well.

The "Student First" budget submitted to Congress for approval by the Trump administration places decision making about academic standards in the hands of each state. The federal funding comes in the form of block grants, with states having the control over how it is allocated and spent (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Compared to the policies under President Obama, Trump's plan eases rules on uniform curriculum standards across states. The year 2020 became significant for studying the impact of standardized tests because of the coronavirus pandemic. Most colleges did not require test scores for admissions during the 2020 year, largely because testing was limited by the Covid-19 pandemic. This change in policy may provide answers to the question: What are some implications of requiring—or not requiring—standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT? This question will be discussed in later chapters.

How Should Education Be Funded?

Many countries have centralized governmental educational funding and decision making. Across the United States, however, local taxpayers vote on local tax levies that provide, on average, over 40 percent of school funding. The problem with this funding model is that local school districts vary dramatically in the value of local property; this funding model inevitably favors wealthy districts. Some schools are forced to curtail programs and cut the number of teachers because there is limited local tax money.

Failure of local school levies is setting some districts farther behind. This failure could be the result of poorer family resources in a district, dissatisfied parents, competition for resources, a bid for more community control, or rebellion against higher taxes. The federal government contributes only a small percent of its total budget to schools, and that is often allocated to support special initiatives. Some of these difficult funding issues will be addressed in the following chapters.

What Types of Teachers and Classroom Environments Provide the Best Learning Experience?

Educators debate the effectiveness of lecture versus experiential learning, cooperative learning versus individualized instruction, and online versus in-class learning. Studies of effective teaching strategies can help educators carry out their roles effectively. For example, research on the most effective size of classes and schools attempts to provide policy makers with data to inform decision making (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Some of the most common questions asked by sociologists of education are included in Box 1.1.

BOX 1.1 CURRENT RESEARCH IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

The following sampling of current research questions gives an idea of the wide range of subject matter:

1. If parents are involved in their children's schooling, are children more successful?
2. How can knowledge of different teaching techniques, styles of learning, student learning abilities, classroom organizations, and school and classroom size help educators be more effective?
3. What are some community influences on the schools, and how do these influences affect decision making in schools, especially as it relates to the school curriculum and socialization of the young?
4. Do teacher proficiency exams increase teaching quality? Do student achievement exams improve students' education?
5. Can minority students learn better or more in an integrated school?
6. Do schools perpetuate inequality?
7. Should religion be allowed in public schools? What are the practices around the world?
8. Does tracking (ability grouping) help or hurt student learning?
9. Did the U.S. government policies under President Obama—No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and Common Core—have positive or negative effects overall? What about President Trump's Students First policies?
10. Do schools prepare students for the transition to work?
11. Who are the world's best performing students according to international tests, and why?
12. Are some students around the world overeducated or undereducated for the employment opportunities available to them?
13. How does education affect income potential?
14. Does school choice produce better schools?
15. Do summer school, after school, and other added learning opportunities available to some students increase student learning? How?
16. Does cultural capital of students affect academic achievement?

(Note: These and other topics are from articles that appear in sociology journals.)

Applying Sociology to Education: *From what you have read so far, what topics in sociology of education interest you? Do a quick search to see what has been done on your topic.*

U.S. SCHOOLS IN THE EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Some kids see little advantage to completing high school. They feel alienated from school, have few role models who have "made it," receive little encouragement, and see little reward or reason to struggle through. These attitudes toward education have a history, addressed in books such as Jonathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* (1991), Jay MacLeod's *Ain't No Makin' It* (2018), and Bowen Paulle's *Toxic Schools* (2013), as documented in the inequalities between rich and poor school districts and life in poor neighborhoods and schools. Yet hope also springs eternal, as charter schools, virtual schools, and other policy interventions promise to improve learning and equity. Alongside some consistent patterns, the educational system is also in a constant state of flux. Planning for social and institutional change assumes knowledge of educational systems. Information collected by sociologists, other social scientists, and educators provides an overview of schools in the twenty-first century, and samples of predictions for the future based on research data. Proposals for reform and innovation come both from within the educational organization and from outside—political, economic, and technological dimensions as well as national and world trends. In this next section, we provide examples of some trends, projections, and implications that affect education.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Demographers provide relevant information for school planning: population projections, migration patterns, and social trends. The rapid population growth through the 1960s in the United States and many other countries created a boom mentality: there was an expansion of teacher training programs in universities; new schools were built; and when funds became available, innovations were implemented. However, education has cycles, and with the end of the boom came a bust; this caused the closing of schools, loss of jobs, and dropping financial support for schools.

Population trends again impacted schools as increases in births in the United States peaked in 1990; enrollments were also affected by children from immigrant families entering schools. Public school K–12 enrollments in 2020 topped 50.8 million students, with 5.8 million more in private schools (Educationdata.org, 2020), with the largest increases in the western United States. Demographers projected change in school enrollments (as shown in Map. 1.2) between 2017 and 2029 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019, Table 203.20).

FAMILY AND SOCIAL TRENDS

Change in the social class composition of the school-age population is taking place, largely because minority groups are the fastest-growing populations in the United States—and they have the highest percentage of children living in poverty. More than 11.9 million children in the United States today are poor; that is nearly one in six. "A disproportionate number are Black and Latino … They are often less healthy, can trail in emotional and intellectual development, and are less likely to graduate from high school" (Children's
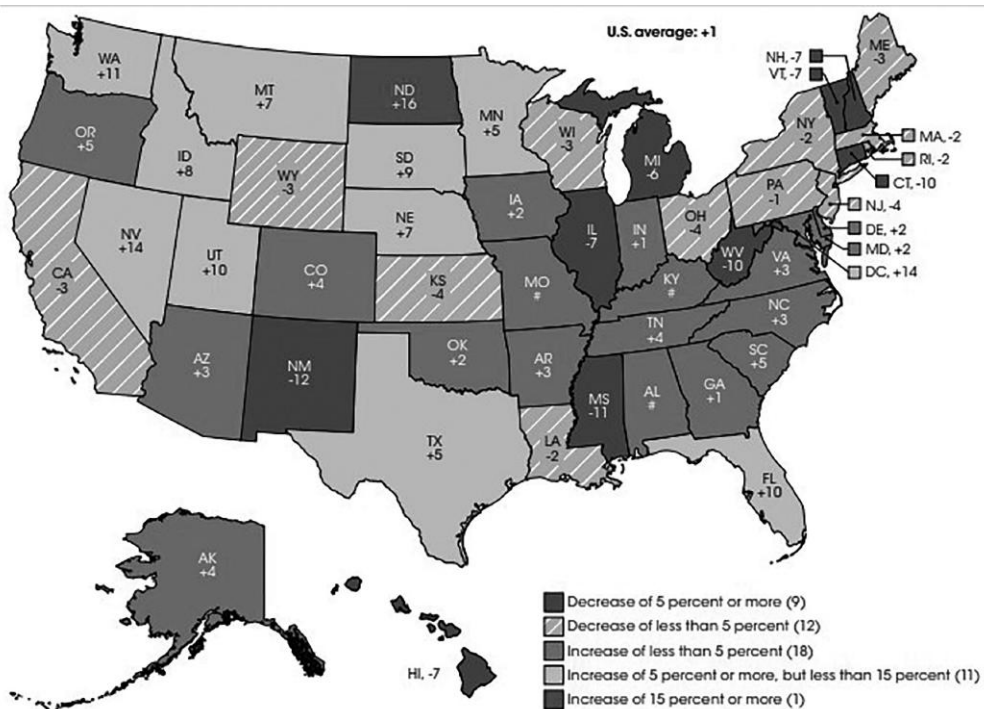
Map 1.2 Projected Percentage Change in Public Elementary and Secondary School
        Enrollment, by State: Fall 2017 to Fall 2029

Note: * Rounds to zero.

Categorizations are based on unrounded percentages. Prekindergarten enrollments for California and Oregon were imputed for fall 2017.

Source: U.S. Department of Education 2017–2018; and State Public Elementary and Secondary Enrollment Projection Model, 1980 through 2029. See U.S. Department of Education, 2019, Table 203.20.

Defense Fund, 2020). White students, by contrast, have disproportionately left the public system and entered the private system.

Consider the Hispanic population, the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States. Hispanics surpassed African Americans as the largest minority in 2005. In fall 2017, public schools were composed of 24.1 million White students, 7.7 million Black students, 13.6 million Hispanic students, and 2.6 million Asian students. By 2029, Hispanics are projected to make up 28 percent of the U.S. public school student population (NCES, 2020); the rise in school enrollments is due in part to increasing numbers of Hispanic children entering schools.

Less than half (46 percent) of U.S. children live in a home with two heterosexual parents, compared to 73 percent in 1960; 35 percent live in single parent families (Kids Count Data Center, 2016). By 2020, 80 percent of single parent families were headed by single mothers, and nearly a third of those live in poverty (Single Mother Statistics, 2020). Why does this matter? Too many students in poverty fail to graduate, as they struggle with lack of access or funds to continue their education and high dropout rates. At the same time, the number of

service sector and skilled high-tech jobs in society is increasing, but the skills needed change frequently because of new technologies, in turn requiring re-education. Those who have not finished high school will lack the required skills and have difficulty training for the new jobs.

ECONOMIC TRENDS AFFECTING EDUCATION

As Global North societies move further into the postindustrial information age, knowledge creation and processing becomes a primary skill. Service sector jobs in health, education, and other areas are growing rapidly, and white-collar jobs are outstripping blue-collar jobs in terms of demand and earnings. Jobs in fishing, forestry, agriculture, and manufacturing are declining. Although private sector jobs have increased slowly since the 2008 recession, many have been lost to outsourcing. The growth sectors of the economy require information-processing skills, especially the ability to use computers and related technologies. Thus, job growth will be in areas requiring high levels of education and technological knowledge. High school dropouts and less educated citizens will have increasing difficulty competing. Yet researchers question whether this means everyone needs to and should complete a college degree or whether technical training is a viable option for getting ahead.

SCHOOLS OF *THE* FUTURE

Predictions are always problematic. Technologies are changing at such a rapid rate that tomorrow is uncertain. However, a number of futurologists have attempted to draw scenarios

Figure 1.3 Modern School Buildings Represent New Forms of Education

Source: CynthiaAnnF/iStock

for the schools of tomorrow using knowledge of socioeconomic conditions, predicted new technologies, recommendations from more than 30 commission and task force reports, knowledge of demographics, comparisons with other highly educated countries, and other sources. Predictions of changes for schools of the future include increasing school choice, more small neighborhood schools, reduced class sizes, more technology in schools, changed missions including new curricula, reconfigured classrooms, 24/7 schools, less use of paper and more screen time, mainstreamed special education students, more early childhood education, and more home schooling and distance learning using computer technology, as demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic. Electronic classrooms and distance learning will be essential ingredients in successful schools. From social distancing to sanitizing and temperature checks, the new norm that started in fall 2020 brought about many changes in the ways education is delivered (Camera, 2020; Education World, 2016).

Predictions are that teachers will become more involved with their students, in classrooms and online; more class time will be devoted to group discussions; field trips may be virtual; demonstrations, investigative projects, and hands-on lab experiences will change dramatically, at least for a time; and education for many will become more individualized, with at-home components. Lifelong learning will be a regular part of the adult experience and will take place in many settings. Structures of schools may also change to include smaller schools; more private schools, especially if voucher systems are enacted; and more hours of operation, including after-school and evening programs.

Most of these plans sound plausible, but we must keep several factors in mind. First, money. Most of the suggestions for school changes require money, and at a time when many districts are struggling to hold on to the programs and teachers they have without making major cutbacks, this appears problematic. So far, the public record on passage of tax levies for additional monies has not been promising.

In addition, some poorer socioeconomic groups in American society may not be prepared to participate in the new educational and economic status. The knowledge and skill gap that exists today is likely to widen the gap between socioeconomic groups and leave an even more pronounced underclass.

REFORM AND POLICY IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

Throughout this book we discuss issues facing education today. In some cases, policies have been formulated and programs implemented to deal with problems. In other cases, such as global systems of education and inequalities between boys' and girls' education, solutions to problems are still being researched, tested, and implemented.

In the United States, the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind policy, passed in 2001, called for increased accountability, more choice for parents and students, greater flexibility for educational systems, putting reading first, and other mandates aimed at improving educational performance. The Obama administration's Race to the Top and other plans such as Common Core transformed many areas of education, including

how teachers are promoted and compensated. The Every Student Succeeds plan aimed to see appropriate education for each child, addressing individual needs and abilities. In the Trump administration, the emphasis was on Students First plans, block grants to states, support for school choice for parents, and support of private and charter schools (Whitehouse.gov, 2020). Emphasis was on less government control and more local control, making nationwide coordination of curriculum and standards less of a priority. These reform plans will be discussed throughout this text.

Sociologists have a role to play in research, policymaking, and the change process. Every organization needs to have built-in, ongoing data-collection mechanisms in order for the organization to determine if it is meeting its goals. For example, programs often require evaluation to determine whether goals are being met, and sociologists are frequently called on to provide program evaluations and develop procedures for collecting and analyzing data. A number of sociologists of education work in the U.S. Department of Education, contributing to our understanding of the current state of educational systems and what programs are most successful.

Sources of tension, strain, and change from both inside and outside educational organizations provide impetus for change; yet many reformers are pessimistic about changing educational systems in more than a superficial way. If those with the power to implement change want educational change, reform is possible. To bring about reform, one should have an understanding of individuals, organizations, and environments that make up the total educational system. That is where this book can help!

Figure 1.4 A One-Room Schoolhouse

Source: John Vachon (1940) Library of Congress

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Initially, the motivation of sociologists of education in the United States was to reform the education system. Lester Frank Ward, one of the founding fathers of American sociology and the first president of the American Sociological Association, argued in 1883 that education is a principal source of human progress and an agent of change that can foster moral commitment and cognitive development to better society (Bidwell, 1979). The field was referred to as *educational sociology*, and it focused on practical issues and the formulation of policy recommendations. The *sociology of education* was introduced in the late 1920s by Robert Angell (1928). Angell and others believed that research in educational institutions would produce reliable scientific data, but that sociology could not and should not promise to solve school problems. Today, however, there is a need for sociologists with both emphases: to both carry out objective research and to work with schools in interpreting and implementing scientific findings. For both emphases, sociologists of education need to have special training in scientific methodology and practical knowledge of how schools work in order to apply sociological findings.

This book deals both with theoretical studies of schools and with the practical application of theory and research in schools and classrooms. The latter aspect is important because most of you will be using this knowledge in your roles as parents or professionals. To present a coherent picture of educational organizations—from local and state to national and international—this book uses an open systems approach to organize topics. At any point in your reading you should be able to pinpoint what in the overall education system you are studying—like a roadmap. Let's dive into the system of education using the open systems approach.

THE OPEN SYSTEMS APPROACH IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Our goal in this book is to understand complex educational systems, how the parts fit into the larger organizational system, and the relationship that individual school systems have with larger educational and community systems. To help picture these ideas, our book is organized around an **open systems model**, *a framework for understanding how educational systems work and what influences them.* Variations of this model are used in many disciplines—economics, political science, social work, and other sciences—to visualize and study interdependent parts of systems (Banathy, 1991). Using this model, we can break the complex educational system into its component parts and visualize how each part fits into the whole system. The model illustrates the interconnections and points of strain and conflict between school systems and their surroundings. It also helps sociologists of education to determine which theory and research methods are most appropriate for studying these systems (Bozkus, 2014).

Consider the following description of this general open systems model:

> It is not a particular kind of social organization. It is an analytical model that can be
> applied to any instance of the process of social organization, from families to nations ...
> Nor is [it] a substantive theory—though it is sometimes spoken of as a theory in
> sociological literature. This model is a highly general, content-free conceptual
> framework within which any number of different substantive theories of social
> organizations can be constructed.
>
> (Olsen, 1978, p. 228)

Figure 1.5 shows the basics of the open systems model and can be applied to most
organizations, including education.
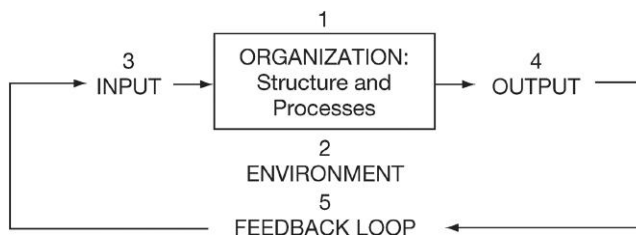
Figure 1.5 Systems Model Shows the Basic Components of Any Social System

Source: Adapted from Von Bertalantly, 1962.

SYSTEMS THEORY AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

> Interdisciplinary approaches expand our view of a topic and allow us to see that topic
> from different perspectives. Understanding educational organizations is no exception.
> Viewing topics from an interdisciplinary perspective enlarges our knowledge base,
> adding relevant information from other disciplines and real life experience to our
> sociological understanding. The first signs of these interdisciplinary open systems
> approaches are usually the development of hybrid disciplines such as social work which
> draws on sociology, psychology, economics, and much more. " ... one of the main
> objectives of General Systems Theory (is) to develop these generalized areas, and
> (develop) ... a framework of general theory to enable one specialist to catch relevant
> communications from others".
>
> (Boulding, 1956, p. 197)

Several social scientists have pointed to the value of an open systems approach in
organizational analysis. David Easton, for example, writes: "A systems analysis promises a
more expansive, more inclusive, and more flexible theoretical structure ... " (Easton, 1965,
p. 20). Sociology of education is enriched by contributions from other fields, all placed
within a systems context.

> What would happen if science would be redefined by crossing disciplinary boundaries
> and forge a general theory that would bring us together in the service of humanity ...

> Throughout the years, many of us in the systems movement have continued to ask the question: How can systems science serve humanity?
>
> (Banathy, 1991, p. 39).

Consider the following topics that compose the total sociology of education picture using information from related fields: economics and school financing; political science, politics, and educational policy issues; the family and the school child; church–state separation controversies in education; health fields and medical care for children; psychology and children's development, educational motivation and aspirations; humanities and the arts role in education; and the school's role in early childhood education, to name a few.

For our study of educational systems, the model does not refer to one particular educational system, nor does it imply that one part of the system is more important than another. Rather, it provides a framework to consider the common characteristics of many educational settings. Any school system can be visualized in the framework, and selected parts of the system then become the focus of a research study—always keeping in mind the context of the larger system. Figure 1.6 shows the open systems model as it applies to educational systems.

> Applying Sociology to Education: *Try placing parts of a school system with which you are familiar with in the model framework.*

There are five parts in the open systems model diagrammed in Figure 1.6. An example for each part, taken from an educational organization, is included to help illustrate the content of each major part of an educational system.

Part 1 The Organization:

Direct your attention to the *educational organization* box. Here is the center of activity, often the central concern for those studying the educational system. This box represents the focus of our interest in the educational system of a society (such as the United States). That focus can be the overall system of education in a country, a particular school district, or a subsystem such as a classroom. Whatever our focus for study, the *educational organization* includes the *structure* (like classrooms and administrative hierarchy), the *positions* (like teachers and administrators), the *roles* (what people DO), and the *activities or processes* that take place in the organization. Thus, within the organization there are parts and subparts, positions and roles, and activities, any of which can be the focus of a research study.

The *processes* in the educational system are what brings the organization alive, where activities like teaching are carried out. Decision making by key personnel, communication and interaction among members of the organization, and socialization (learning one's

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                        ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                        │          EDUCATIONAL            │
                        │         ORGANIZATION            │
                        │   1. Structure:                 │
                        │         Formal vs. informal     │
                        │         Role relationships      │
      INPUT ─────────→  │         Alternative structures  │ →  OUTPUT ─────
                        │   2. Goals (functions)          │
   1. Students:         │   3. Program:                   │  1. Graduates
        Demographic     │         Content, curriculum     │  2. New knowledge
          variables     │         Program                 │  3. Obsolete
        Subcultures     │         Testing                 │       information
        Peer groups     │   4. Processes within system:   │  4. Emerging culture
        Class           │         Socialization           │
        Family          │         Teaching and learning   │
   2. Staff: teachers,  │         Decision making         │
      administrators,   │         Communication systems   │
      support staff     │         Discipline              │
        Training        │         Change, adaptation      │
        Class background│   5. Informal                   │
        Affiliations    │         Structure               │
                        └─────────────────────────────────┘
```

ENVIRONMENT

Immediate   Secondary

School board   Technology
PTA   Political-economic
Teachers' union   Religious
Bonds, levies   Cultural values and ideology
Community pressure groups   Social movements and fads
Government regulations   Population changes

FEEDBACK LOOP ◄─────

Figure 1.6 Open Systems Model of Education

position in the organization) are among the many processes constantly taking place in order to carry out the purposes of the organization.

Formal relationships between holders of positions (teachers, administrators, students) within educational organizations make up only part of this dynamic system. Capturing the *informal relationships* in the school—who eats lunch with whom, who cuts classes, the subtle cues teachers transmit to students, and the gossip in the teachers' lounge—can tell us as much about the school's functioning as observing formal roles and structure.

Some studies of education focus primarily on what takes place within the school organization without regard for what takes place around or outside the organization. This

is referred to as a *closed system*. However, what takes place in the organization does not occur in a vacuum. For example, the decision makers—principals, teachers, and others—are constantly responding to demands from both inside and outside the school organization— new laws from the government, complaints from parents, problematic student interactions, an international pandemic! The boundaries of the organization are not solid, but remain flexible and pliable. We call this an *open system*. There is constant interaction with the *environment*, the next part of the system.

Part 2 The Environment:

An *open system* implies that there is interaction between the organization and the *environment* surrounding the organization. The **environment** *includes everything that influences the organization in some way*, typically other surrounding organizations and people who interact with the educational system. For a country, these would include international organizations that set educational standards, like the United Nations, and other countries of the world that compete on international exams. For a local educational system, the environment would include district and state regulators, the school board, parents, and other competing or cooperating organizations such as religious or civic organizations. In addition, there is the technological environment, with new developments that affect the operation of the system; the political environment, which affects the system through legal controls; the economic environment, from which the system gets its financing; the surrounding community and its prevailing attitudes; the values, norms, and changes in society, which are often reflected in social movements; population changes taking place in the community or society that affect school planning; and so forth.

The crucial environment for each individual educational organization will differ and can change over time, depending on the issues it faces. The importance of the environment, however, does not change. The organization depends on the environment for meeting many of its resource requirements, for obtaining information, and for so much more. The interaction of the school with the environment takes place in our systems model in the form of *inputs* and *outputs*.

> Applying Sociology to Education: *Pick an educational organization. Describe key parts of its environment and how they affect the organization.*

Part 3 Inputs:

The organization receives **inputs** from the environment such as *educational information; raw materials (supplies, directives from the state); students; teachers and other personnel; finances; government mandates; and new technology and ideas.* Furthermore, those who are members of an educational organization belong to other organizations in the environment, and bring into the educational organization influences from these outside organizations.

Some of the *inputs* from the environment are mandatory for the organization's survival (finances, human resources [teachers and students], and technology). Other inputs vary in

degree of importance. For most organizations, some inputs are undesirable, but unavoidable, such as new legal restrictions, competition, complaints, or financial pressures.

Usually the organization can exert some control over the inputs. For instance, schools select new teachers, textbooks, other curricular materials, and sometimes students. Certain positions in the organization are held by personnel who act as *buffers* or liaisons between the organization and its environment. The secretary who answers the phone and controls who enters the school, for example, has a major protecting and controlling function; classroom aides, social workers, school nurses, special education teachers, and counselors are additional beneficial links with the environment.

Part 4 Outputs:
Outputs refer to the material items and the nonmaterial ideas that leave the organization— for example, school graduates, research findings, and new technology. There may be school personnel in *boundary-spanning positions*, bridging the gap between the organization and its environment. Personnel with responsibility for counselling and placing high school students in college or work settings serve as boundary spanners between school graduates and the hiring organization or placement office for college graduates.

Part 5 Feedback:
A key aspect of the systems model is the process of **feedback**. This step implies that *an organization constantly adapts to changes in the environment based on new information.* Your college may be providing new curricula, sports facilities, menus in the dining hall, and suite-style dorms to meet the needs of the changing college student population, as learned through *feedback*. School administrators compare the current state of affairs with desired goals and environmental feedback to determine new courses of action. The positive or negative feedback requires different responses.

These five parts of the educational organization provide the framework for this text. Each chapter fits into one or more of the parts of the *open system model* of education. As you read each chapter, picture this model to see how and where the content fits into the model. After you have read each chapter, you will be able to envision one more part that makes up the whole educational system.

Although this model shows the component parts of a total system, it does not suggest which methodology or theory is best to use in studying any part of the system. It does allow us to visualize the parts we study in relation to the whole system, to see where they fit and what relationship they bear to the whole. Then we can select the most appropriate theory and methods for our study problem.

For our book, the open systems approach helps give unity to a complex field. Each chapter in this book describes some part or process in the educational system. If you get lost, check out the model, like a map, to see where you are.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

So many questions, so many topics for research, so much important information! To guide research studies, sociologists use **theories**, *statements regarding how and why facts are related to each other and the connections between these facts.* This section provides an overview of the major theoretical paradigms to guide sociological thinking about education. Having this background will help you understand current theories stemming from these roots, which are used in research studies cited throughout this book. One theoretical approach may be more applicable than another for the study of an educational system or educational problem, and some sociologists prefer one theory over another. To understand an educational system as a whole, dynamic entity, we are faced with a problem. Most research studies focus on parts of the whole system. The open systems model can help us conceptualize a whole system, and as in making a puzzle, visualize how each piece fits into the whole, how the small pieces fit together, see which pieces do not fit, and determine how important pieces from outside the system influence the organizational system (Hoy, Tarter, and Kottkamp, 1991).

Although sociology of education is a fairly new field of inquiry, it has roots in classical sociological theory. In the latter part of the nineteenth century and twentieth century, education came to be seen as a unique institution and an objective field of study. Scientists use theoretical perspectives to provide logical explanations for why things happen the way they do. In the twenty-first century, work in the sociology of education can be divided into different *levels of analysis*, from the large-scale *macro-level* studies that consider education systems of countries and world trends in education, as well as the role of large-scale policies, to the small-scale *micro-level* studies of classroom interactions.

A theoretical point of view also influences what the researcher sees and how research findings are interpreted. Just as our individual experiences influence our interpretations of events in our everyday lives, sociologists have several theoretical perspectives to help explain why things happen the way they do. Just as each individual interprets situations differently depending on his or her background, theorists focus on different aspects of a research problem. A theoretical approach can help to determine the questions researchers ask and the way to organize research in order to get answers.

Sociologists using each theory have made major contributions in the field of sociology of education, and we will discuss many of them throughout the text. The first two approaches concern differing views of the way societies and educational systems work at the large-scale *macro-level*. The next two deal with interactions in social situations—the *micro-level*. The functional and conflict approaches tend to focus on macro-level (large-scale) institutions of education in societies, whereas the interaction approaches focus on micro-level (small-scale) interaction between individuals and small groups. Because sociology of education had its

LEVELS OF ANALYSIS	THEORETICAL APPROACHES
MACRO-LEVEL	**FUNCTIONAL THEORY**
	CONFLICT THEORY
MESO-LEVEL	**FEMINIST THEORIES**
MICRO-LEVEL	**INTERACTION/INTERPRETIVE THEORIES**
	FEMINIST THEORIES

Macro-level theories focus on large organizations, countries, even global issues.

Meso-level theories fall between macro and micro-levels, and often focus on issues that overlap levels.

Micro-level theories focus on interactions between individuals and small groups.

Figure 1.7 Theoretical Approaches and Levels of Analysis

foundations in structural functionalism, we discuss its beginning and more recent critiques in more detail than the other major more recent theoretical approaches.

FUNCTIONALIST THEORY

Just as a functioning heart and brain are necessary for the survival of a human being, an educational system is necessary for the survival of society. This analogy reflects one major theoretical approach in sociology, *functionalism* (also referred to as structural functionalism, consensus, or equilibrium theory). This theory sometimes compares the functioning of society to the biological functioning of the human body: each part of the society's system—family, education, religion, politics and economics, healthcare—plays a role in a total working society, and all parts are dependent on each other for survival, just as all organs of the body work together to keep us functioning. A sociologist using this approach starts with the assumption that society and institutions within society, such as education, are made up of interdependent parts all working together, each contributing some necessary activity to the functioning of the whole; the outcome is to maintain order and consensus among individuals in the group. Functionalists see change in systems as helping the system continually adapt to new circumstances; change is generally viewed as a slow evolutionary process that does not disrupt the ongoing system. Ultimately, the educational system is seen as a crucial site for integrating society into a cohesive, functioning whole.

DURKHEIM'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO FUNCTIONALISM AND EDUCATION

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) set the stage for the functional approach to education. As professor of pedagogy at the Sorbonne University in Paris (before sociology was "admitted" as a major field), he was the first person to recommend that a sociological

approach be used to study education. He was awarded the Sorbonne's professorship of sociology combined with education in 1906 and held that post for most of the following years until his death in 1917. Thus, sociology came into France as a part of education. Because Durkheim taught all students graduating in education, many were exposed to his ideas.

Durkheim's sociological approach was his unique contribution to studies of education. His ideas centered on the relationship between society and its institutions, all of which he believed were interdependent and therefore resulted in social cohesion. He was concerned with the breakdown of community, and with the maintenance of solidarity and cohesion, as societies moved from traditional to modern.

Many of the issues about which Durkheim spoke in the late 1800s are as real today as they were then: the needs of different segments of society in relation to education, discipline in the schools, and the role of schools in preparing young people for society. Most importantly, Durkheim attempted to understand *why* education took the forms it did, rather than judging those forms as good or bad, as had been done so often.

Durkheim's major works included *Moral Education* ([1925] 1961), *The Evolution of Educational Thought* (1977-posthumous), and *Education and Sociology* ([1925] 1956) (dates indicate when published in English). In these works, he outlined a definition of education from a sociological viewpoint, and stressed the importance of education in creating moral values as the foundation of society. He wrote:

> Education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and to develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded of him by both the political society as a whole and the special milieu for which he is specifically destined.
> (Durkheim, [1925] 1956, p. 28)

Education takes different forms at different times and places; we cannot separate the educational system from the society in which it is embedded. In Durkheim's *The Evolution of Educational Thought*, he described the history of education in France, combining ideas from some of his other works into an historical-sociological analysis of the institution of education. Always he stressed that in every time and place education is closely related to other institutions and to current values and beliefs of the society.

In *Moral Education*, Durkheim outlined his beliefs about the function of schools and their relationship to society. Moral values are, for Durkheim, the foundation of the social order, and society is perpetuated through the teaching of moral values in its educational institutions. He analyzed classrooms as "small societies," or agents of socialization. The school serves as an intermediary between the emotional ties and affective morality of the family and the rigorous morality of life in wider society. Discipline, he contended, is the morality of the classroom, and without it the class, and by extension society, behaves like a mob.

Durkheim was concerned primarily with rituals that provide meaning, cohesion, and value transmission for stability of society; he did not consider the possible conflict between this stable view and the values and skills necessary for changing, emerging industrial societies. He did, however, recognize that new forms of social control emerge as societies modernize; therefore, education should be under the control of the state, free from special-interest groups.

Today we recognize that most governments are subject to influence from interest groups and to trends and pressures affecting society. Pressures on curriculum content, for instance, are very real. Some aspects of education that are of great concern today—the function of selection and allocation of adult roles and the gap between societal expectations of schools and actual school performance—were not dealt with by Durkheim.

FUNCTIONAL THEORY TODAY

Education is one institution of an interdependent system in which each part contributes to the whole, according to functionalist thought. These parts include groups, organizations, and institutions of society—family, religion, politics, economics, healthcare, sports, military. The consensus and common bond between members of society, taught and reinforced in schools through socialization into shared norms, unite groups working toward common goals and keep society from disintegrating (Cookson and Sadovnik, 2002, p. 267).

Functional theorists, the dominant sociological theory in the mid–twentieth century, conceive of institutions as parts of total societies or social systems. The parts of the system are discussed in terms of their *functions*, or purposes, in the whole system. A primary function of schools, according to Talcott Parsons (1937), is the passing on of the knowledge and behaviors necessary to maintain order in society. Following Durkheim, modern functionalists see the transmission of education, discipline, morals, and values as necessary for the survival of society, and education plays a major role in this transmission.

Functionalist research focuses on questions concerning the structure and functioning of organizations. For instance, sociologists using this theoretical approach would likely focus attention on the structural parts of the organization, such as subsystems (schools and classrooms) and positions within the structure (teachers, administrators, and students), and on how they function together (Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore, 1982; Dreeben, 1968). Another important functionalist research topic has been how schools sort students into groups based on merit, and the *status attainment* of students as a key factor in their occupational mobility (Blau and Duncan, 1967). Key reports based on studies, such as the famous *A Nation at Risk* (United States National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), assumed a connection between education, occupational mobility, and the economic state of the nation.

You may be wondering at this point how functional theorists explain conflict and upheavals in societies such as protests, riots, wars, or other disruptions. Conflict theory