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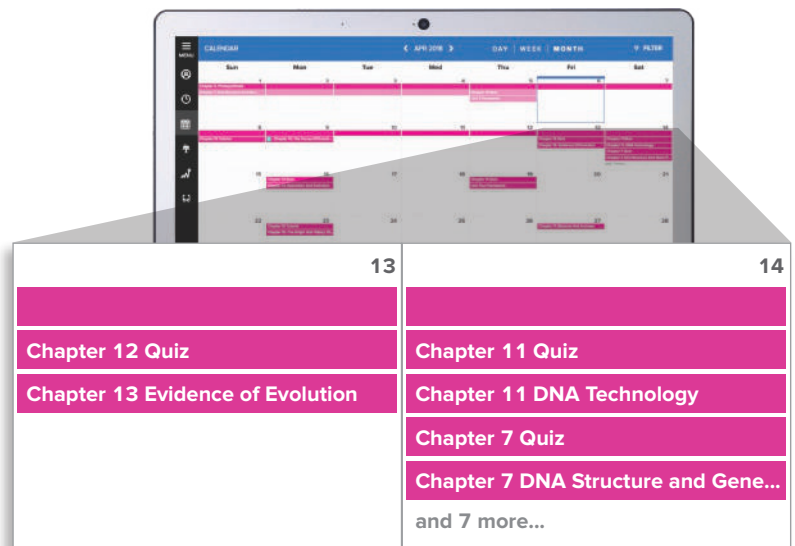
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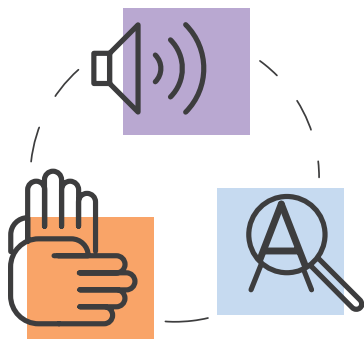
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WILLIAM HOYNES

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EXPERIENCE SOCIOLOGY, FOURTH EDITION

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DEDICATION

To all the dedicated instructors of introductory sociology courses and to the students who inspire them.

—DAVID CROTEAU

To Ben and Nick Hoynes, who have taught me more about sociology than they know.

—WILLIAM HOYNES

About the AUTHORS



©David R. Croteau

DAVID R. CROTEAU

earned a BA in sociology from Brandeis University and a PhD in sociology from Boston College. Over the years he has taught a diverse range of students at Boston College, Clark University,

Keene State College, and the University of Mary Washington. He is an Associate Professor Emeritus in the Sociology Department at Virginia Commonwealth University, where he taught introductory sociology as well as both undergraduate and graduate courses on theory, methods, stratification, social movements, and media. He also worked as an online learning specialist in VCU's Academic Learning Transformation Lab (ALT Lab) helping faculty to develop online courses. In addition to various journal articles and book chapters, David Croteau is the author of *Politics and the Class Divide*, a finalist for both the C. Wright Mills Award from the Society for the Study of Social Problems and the Transformational Politics Book Award from the American Political Science Association.



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WILLIAM HOYNES

earned a BA in history and political science from Tufts University and a PhD in sociology from Boston College. He is Professor of Sociology at Vassar College, where he teaches

introductory sociology as well as courses on media, culture, research methods, and social theory. During his more than 25 years at Vassar, Professor Hoynes has served as chair of the Sociology Department and director of both the Media Studies Program and the American Studies Program.

In addition to various journal articles and book chapters on public broadcasting in the United States, Professor Hoynes is the author of *Public Television for Sale: Media, the Market, and the Public Sphere*, which was awarded the Goldsmith Book Prize from the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

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CROTEAU and HOYNES are coauthors of *Media/Society*, which was published in a revised sixth edition in 2019; *The Business of Media: Corporate Media and the Public Interest*, which won the Robert Picard Award for best new book in media economics by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication; and *By Invitation Only: How the Media Limit Political Debate*. They are also coeditors, with Charlotte Ryan, of *Rhyming Hope and History: Activists, Academics, and Social Movement Scholarship*.



Dear Colleagues

Now more than ever, we want to help a diverse range of students grasp the basic concepts of the discipline, see the relevance of those concepts to their everyday lives, and apply what they learn to the world around them. We want students to see the familiar in a new way and realize that sociology's tools can help them better understand their rapidly changing social world. In other words, we want students to see the world from a sociological perspective and to actively use their sociological imagination. We want them to experience sociology.

What's unique about *Experience Sociology*?

CULTURE. STRUCTURE. POWER. *Experience Sociology* engages students with a clear framework for understanding their world based on three familiar terms at the heart of sociology: culture, structure, and power. Through the lenses of these three concepts, students learn from their first class to see the world from a sociological perspective and to grasp the significance of sociology for their own lives. For every topic in the book—from the family to the economy to the environment—they learn to recognize the effects of the culture they have been taught, see the structures that constrain or empower them, and notice how power operates at every level of society.

How is theory covered?

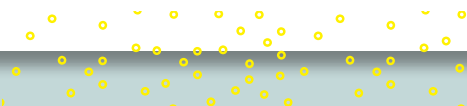
Theory has a role in every chapter in *Experience Sociology*. We know how important it is for students not only to be able to apply concepts to their lives, but also to understand and be able to apply sociological theory. With its innovative organization around primary sociological concepts, *Experience Sociology* emphasizes the common ground that informs a basic sociological perspective. But every chapter also addresses the way differing theoretical perspectives illuminate various facets of these key sociological concepts, letting instructors and students go beyond conventional theoretical boundaries and the either-or framing of theoretical perspectives to see how each can contribute to our understanding of the social world.

What's the full Experience?

The fourth edition of *Experience Sociology* is much more than this text alone. Incorporating the work of many sociology instructors, it is instead a comprehensive instructional program that combines digital and print resources to promote student learning. Integrated with McGraw-Hill's Connect Sociology, including SmartBook's adaptive technology and learning resources, *Experience Sociology* helps you manage assignments and makes learning and studying more engaging and efficient for your students.

We wrote *Experience Sociology* because we want students to be able to experience their world differently through the insights of sociology. We hope these resources will help you in introducing your students to the excitement of sociology.

Sincerely,



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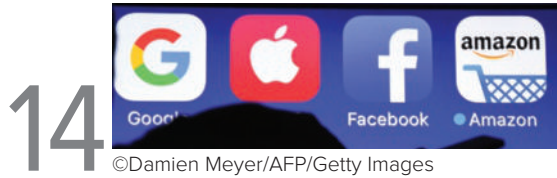
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Give your students a clearer picture of their world

WHY THE GLASSES?

We want students to see their familiar world in a clearer and deeper way.

Experience Sociology, Fourth Edition, uses the lenses of culture, structure, and power to encourage students to move beyond an individual perspective while developing their own sociological imagination.



How were you
socialized into
your society's
culture?

How do agents
of socialization
reproduce social
structure?

How does **power**
shape your daily life
and your sense of self?

Using the lenses of **CULTURE**,
STRUCTURE, and **POWER**,
Experience Sociology shows
students the significance of
sociology for their own lives.

CULTURE, **STRUCTURE**, and **POWER** help
students explore sociological theory in ways that
go beyond conventional theoretical boundaries.

EXPERIENCE SOCIOLOGY includes a variety of boxed features and in-text learning aids to help students appreciate the range of sociology's insights and their relevance to today's fast-changing social world, and to apply sociology's concepts and theories to their own lives.

BOXED FEATURES



Sociology in Action boxes highlight the contributions of sociological research to public policy and to the efforts of public interest organizations, social movements, and others to effect social change.



Sociology Works boxes profile people who studied sociology in college and are now using sociology's insights in diverse work settings. These high-interest stories feature people working in fields such as health care, criminal justice, social work, labor unions, business, mass media, government, and the military.



Through a Sociological Lens boxes demonstrate how sociology can provide distinctive insights into contemporary social issues. Students can see how sociological research reveals information that can both surprise and empower them in their everyday lives.

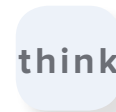


Fast-Forward boxes illuminate the ever-evolving nature of our social world. These brief, engaging features—illustrated with photographs, advertisements, or other images—show students how change has been a constant feature of social life.



A Changing World sections conclude each chapter with a look at the influence of changing social conditions on some aspect of the chapter topic. Examples include culture and globalization, increasing inequality in the United States, social structure and privacy, and convergence in gender and sexuality.

IN-TEXT LEARNING AIDS



Thinking About notes help students connect chapter content to their own experience. These brief notes, found at the bottom of text pages, prompt students to consider how the three core concepts of **culture**, **structure**, and **power** apply to their own lives and views on issues, thus encouraging students to think sociologically.



Core Concepts Challenge questions encourage students to apply their sociological imagination to what they are learning. Appearing with selected figures, tables, and photographs, these questions prompt students to apply **culture**, **structure**, and **power** in thinking about an issue as well as to think critically about the graphic, table, or image.



Spotlight notes prompt students to consider social theories that are discussed within the text. These notes help students use the three concepts to apply theory to their own lives.

Help Your Students Succeed with *Connect*

McGraw-Hill Education Connect® is an integrated educational platform that includes assignable and assessable quizzes, exercises, and interactive activities, all associated with learning objectives for *Experience Sociology*, Fourth Edition. Videos, interactive assessments, links to news articles about current issues with accompanying questions (“NewsFlash”), and scenario-based activities engage students and add real-world perspective to the introductory sociology course. In addition, printable, exportable reports show how well each student or section is performing on each course segment.

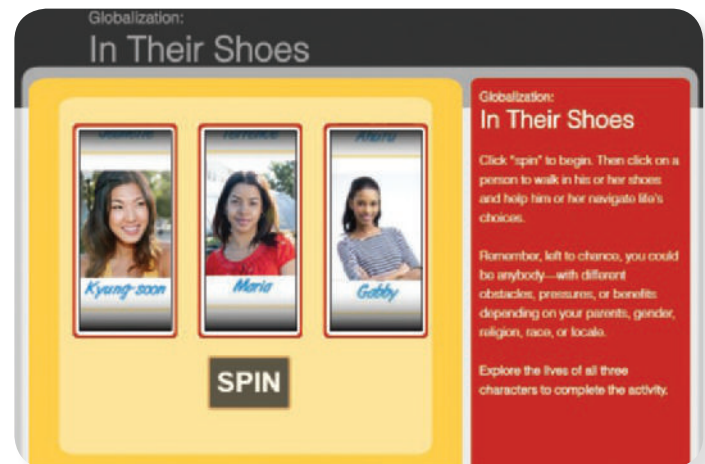
Here are some of the media-rich activities that will help your students succeed in the introductory sociology course:

In Their Shoes. In Their Shoes develops students’ sociological imagination by walking them through the situation, challenges, and crises in the character’s life. Covering topics such as “Deviance and Social Control,” “Racial and Ethnic Inequality,” and “Socialization and the Life Course,” these activities prompt students to explore and navigate life choices in another’s shoes.

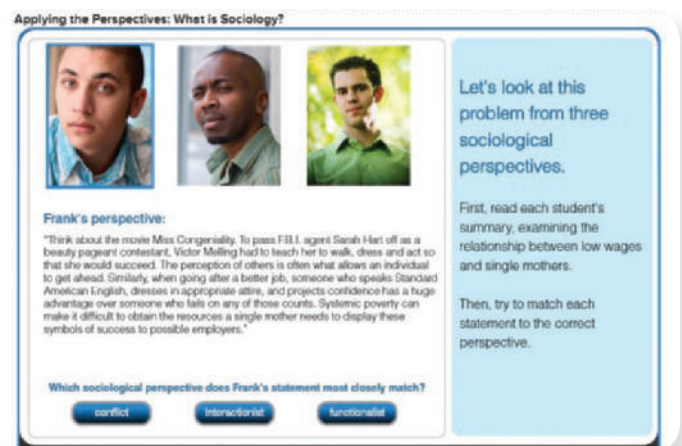
Applying the Perspectives. In Applying Their Perspectives, students examine a problem—global inequality, gender stratification, or family and intimate relationships—from three sociological perspectives and apply their critical-thinking skills to align theories with the appropriate perspective.

Concept Clips. Concept Clips are animations designed to engage students and walk them through some of the more complex concepts in the course. Each clip concludes with assessment questions to test student understanding. Topics include research variables, functions of religion, and power and authority.

Put students first with Connect’s intuitive mobile interface, which gives students and instructors flexible, convenient, anytime-anywhere access to all components of the Connect platform. It provides seamless integration of learning tools and places the most important priorities up front in a new “to-do” list with a calendar view across all Connect courses. Enjoy on-the-go access with the new mobile interface designed for optimal use of tablet functionality.



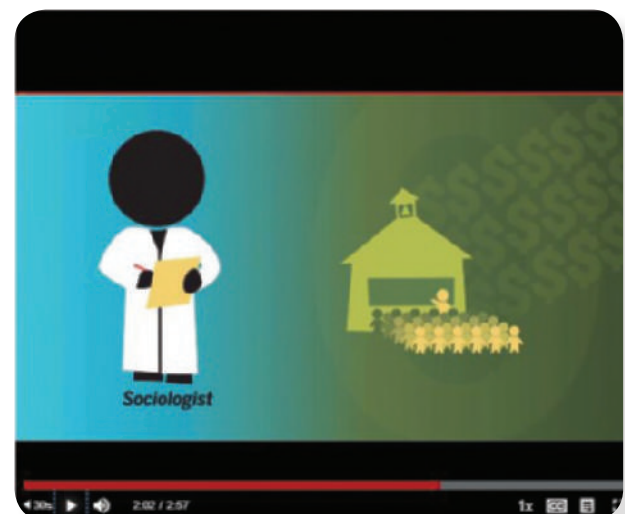
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Concept Clip: Sociology as a Science

Watch the Concept Clip and then respond to the following questions.



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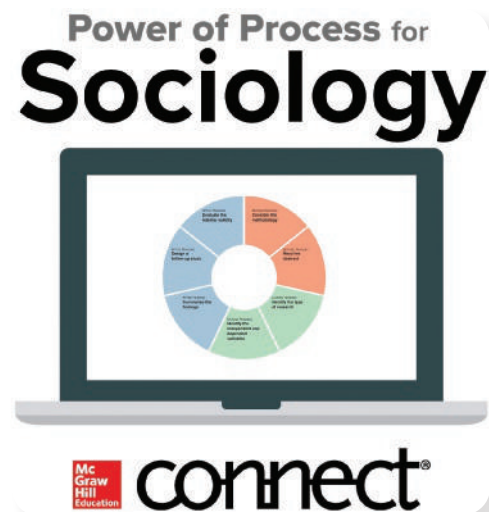
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New to this edition, SmartBook is now optimized for phones and tablets and accessible for students with disabilities using interactive features. Just like our new ebook and ReadAnywhere app, SmartBook is available both online and offline.

Prepare Students for Higher-Level Thinking

Aimed at the higher level of Bloom's taxonomy, **Power of Process for Sociology** helps students improve critical thinking skills and allows instructors to assess these skills efficiently and effectively in an online environment. Available through Connect, preloaded readings are available for instructors to assign. Using a scaffolded framework that includes synthesizing and analyzing, Power of Process moves students toward higher-level thinking.



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Access Performance Data Just in Time



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

A Revision Informed by Student Data

Ever since students began using it, Connect Sociology's SmartBook for *Experience Sociology*, has been collecting anonymous data on students' performance on specific learning objectives. This aggregated data, displayed in the form of **heat maps**, graphically identifies challenging "hot spots" in the text, helping guide the revision of both core content and assessment activities for the Fourth Edition. This heat-map-directed revision is reflected primarily in Chapters 5, 14, and 16.

Highlights of the Fourth Edition

The text has been refreshed throughout with references to recent scholarship, and figures, maps, and tables have been updated throughout with the most recent available data. Revisions in response to heat-map data are indicated by ✓.

CHAPTER 1

- New chapter-opening vignette on bilingual education
- Clearer explanation of the concept of sociological theory
- Revised discussion of postmodern society, with updates reflecting current events, such as the Trump presidency and the global economy
- Significantly updated Sociology in Action box, “Working to Reduce Homelessness”

CHAPTER 2

- New chapter-opening vignette on research into urban violence “hot spots”
- New data on voting rates in the 2016 election
- Revised discussion of qualitative research methods, utilizing new study on homeless young adults
- Revised discussion on explaining data, referencing new study on “tagging” ✓
- Up-to-date analysis of Pew Research Center’s 2017 American Trends Panel survey
- Revised discussions of focus groups and research utilizing existing sources, including new examples ✓
- Updated Sociology in Action box, “The U.S. Census Bureau,” addressing proposal to include citizenship question on 2020 questionnaire
- Updated Changing World feature, “Technology and Social Research,” discussing research into massively multiplayer online games

CHAPTER 3

- Updated discussion of the means through which values change over time ✓
- New Map 3.1, “The 2016 Election: Red and Blue or Purple?”
- New example of attempts to preserve culture by revitalizing dying languages
- Updated Fast Forward feature, incorporating a new graphic antismoking ad
- Updated coverage of the criticisms of multiculturalism ✓

CHAPTER 4

- Revised introduction to social structure, utilizing the aftermath of Hurricane Maria as an example ✓
- New example of parent-teacher conferences in discussion of conversation analysis

- Updated Through a Sociological Lens box on organizational structure and school violence
- Updated section “Globalization and the Structure of Work” to reflect current events ✓
- Updated Sociology in Action box featuring Ruth Milkman
- Updated discussion of mobile phones in Africa
- Revised Changing World section on loneliness and the changing structure of friendship ✓

CHAPTER 5

- New chapter-opening vignette on the power struggle between the movement for gun control and the National Rifle Association
- Expanded discussions of feminist approach to understanding power and intersectionality ✓
- Revised discussion of class in capitalist systems ✓
- Rewritten Fast Forward feature, “Social Change and Class Segregation” ✓
- New Sociology Works box, “Leveraging Power for Economic Justice”
- New Changing World feature, “Algorithms and the Power of Tech Companies” ✓

CHAPTER 6

- Updated chapter-opening vignette on Melanie Matchett Wood and the gender gap in mathematics
- Revised discussion of “media” as an agent of socialization ✓
- Updated discussion of adolescence and adulthood ✓
- New information in epigenetics section ✓

CHAPTER 7

- Discussion of the Thomas Theorem revised for clarity ✓
- Discussion of the partisan divide as an example of an in-group/out-group dynamic
- Revised section on social network analysis ✓
- Revised and updated discussion of networks and groups in the digital age
- Updated and revised “A Changing World” section on privacy and social media

CHAPTER 8

- Updated material on the impact of contact with the police on middle school students

- Significantly rewritten section on “Surveillance and Social Control in the Digital Age,” addressing current topics such as digital tracking on Facebook and through GPS, the use of “scraping” to link data about online and offline activities, the 2018 revelations regarding Cambridge Analytica’s use of Facebook data, government use of digital surveillance, and recent discussions regarding privacy concerns ✓
- New figure, “Personal Data Likely Collected and Stored about You (a partial list)”
- Updated data on crime rates, incarceration rates, and capital punishment in the United States
- New coverage of the popularity and impact of “deviant leisure” ✓

CHAPTER 9

- Updated statistics on social classes in the United States
- Updated data and new figure on the distribution of income and wealth in the United States
- Updated list of occupations with the largest projected job growth
- Revised Through a Sociological Lens box on growing inequality among African Americans
- Comprehensively revised and updated discussion of the relationship between class and education ✓
- Updated discussion of U.S. poverty rates, including new statistics ✓
- Revised and updated discussion of wages, labor laws, and labor union decline, including a new figure ✓

CHAPTER 10

- New chapter-opening vignette on the Trump presidency and race relations in the United States
- Updated data on racial and ethnic diversity in the U.S. population
- Updated data on the foreign-born population in the United States
- Revised discussion of unauthorized immigration ✓
- Revised and updated coverage of racial and ethnic inequality today ✓
- Expanded discussion of implicit bias
- Significantly revised section on multiracial and multi-ethnic identities

CHAPTER 11

- Updated data on gender stratification in leadership positions in the United States, college graduation rates by gender, and women in the workforce
- New coverage of #MeToo movement

- Updated coverage of human trafficking and globalization
- Updated coverage of same-sex relationships, including new map, “Sexual Orientation Laws around the World”

CHAPTER 12

- New chapter-opening vignette on a minister who left his religion
- Updated data on marriage and cohabitation rates, the average age of first marriage, and the U.S. divorce rate
- Revised discussion of unmarried and single parents ✓
- New figure, “U.S. Fertility Rate (Total Births Per Woman)”
- Updated data on the religious composition of the United States
- Updated discussion of secularism in the United States

CHAPTER 13

- Updated data on global literacy rates, educational attainment and median income, graduation rates, and college cost and student debt
- Revised discussion of the effects of cultural capital ✓
- Updated discussion of the increasing segregation of U.S. schools ✓
- Updated coverage of standardized testing, including new map, “Common Core in the United States”
- Updated discussions of charter schools, online learning, for-profit colleges, and cyberbullying
- New coverage of 2018 teacher strikes in various states
- Updated coverage of emotional labor in the U.S. workplace
- Updated discussions of outsourcing, the sharing economy, and precarious work

CHAPTER 14

- New chapter-opening vignette on the data Facebook gathers from its users
- Significant revisions for clarity throughout, including new organizational structure, clearer and more logical headings, and new figures and tables ✓
- New figures include “Daily Time Spent with Select Media by Generation,” “Racial and Ethnic Representation on Prime-Time Broadcast TV Networks by Season,” “Digital Divide: U.S. Adults Who Do Not Use the Internet, 2018,” and “Global Internet Usage, 2018” ✓
- New tables include “Types of Media and Their Usual Characteristics” and “Select Media-Related Companies by Revenue, 2017” ✓
- Updated discussion of college students’ credit card debt

- Expanded and updated coverage of product integration and stealth advertising ✓
- Significantly revised and updated Changing World section, “Targeting Consumers in the Digital Age” ✓

CHAPTER 15

- Clarifying revisions made to the sections on nomadic life and rural life
- New material on the “urban renaissance”
- Updated material in the sections on suburban and rural life ✓
- Updated material on environmental threats

CHAPTER 16

- New chapter-opening vignette on filling low-paid teaching jobs with foreign workers
- Clarified explanation of what sociologists mean when they use the terms *politics* and *power* ✓
- Updated coverage of the Democracy Index, including updated map and discussion of falling ratings worldwide
- Updated and clarified explanation of the “spiral of silence,” including discussion of its relation to the 2016 presidential election ✓

- New section, “Cultural Values and Political Ideologies” ✓
- Updated coverage of campaign contributions to the 2016 presidential election
- New coverage of 2017 tax cut, including new figure “Average Annual Federal Tax Savings by Income Group, 2017 Tax Cuts and Job Act”
- New material on the effects of cynicism and alienation on a democracy ✓
- Updated coverage of U.S. military spending and military engagements around the world
- New Through a Sociological Lens box on what motivated people to vote for Trump
- New “A Changing World” section on populism ✓

CHAPTER 17

- New data on world population structures and international migration
- Updated coverage of changing U.S. demographics, including the effects of immigration and an aging population
- New material on the documented decline in internet freedom

Teaching and Learning with *Experience Sociology*

TEACHING RESOURCES

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

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Cawo Abdi, University of Minnesota—Minneapolis
Wesley Abercrombie, Midlands Technical College
Donna Abrams, Georgia Gwinnett College
Doug Adams, University of Arkansas—Fayetteville
Isaac Addai, Lansing Community College
Adansi Amankwaa, Albany State University
Trudy Anderson, Texas A&M—Kingsville
Robert Aponte, Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis
David Arizmendi, South Texas College
Bryan Auld, Indiana University—Purdue University Fort Wayne
Robert Baker, Sandhills Community College
Sergio Banda, Fullerton College
Baishakhi Banerjee Taylor, University of Kentucky—Lexington
Carlin Barmada, Burlington County College—Pemberton
Nadine Barrett, University of Central Florida
Joshua Bass, Portland State University
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James Becker, Pulaski Tech College
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Terry Besser, Iowa State University
Gary Bittner, York College of Pennsylvania
Amy Blackstone, University of Maine
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Adriana Bohm, Delaware County Community College
Carolyn Bond, Boston University
Christine Borden-King, Minot State University
Karyn Boutin, Massasoit Community College
Christopher Bradley, Indiana University—Purdue University Fort Wayne
Judith Brake, Ozarks Technical Community College
John Brenner, York College of Pennsylvania
Helen Brethauer-Gay, Florida A&M University
Daniel Brewster, West Virginia University—Morgantown
David L. Briscoe, University of Arkansas—Little Rock
Rebeca Brittenham, College of Southern Nevada—West Charles
Scott Brooks, University of California—Riverside
Richard Bucher, Baltimore City Community College
Jonathan Bullinger, Camden County College
Mary L. Burns, Michigan State University—East Lansing
Andrew Butz, Portland Community College
Paul Calarco, Hudson Valley Community College
Farrah Cambrice, Prairie View A&M University

Allison Camelot, Saddleback College
Roberta Campbell, Miami University
Elaine Cannon, El Camino College
Gina Carreno-Lukasik, Florida Atlantic University
Marketa Cawood, Hopkinsville Community College
Edwin Chambless, El Paso Community College—Valle Verde
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- Rhett Davy, North Central Texas College
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 Rohan De Silva, Milwaukee Area Technical College—Milwaukee
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 John Gannon, College of Southern Nevada—North Las Vegas
 Beverly Gartland, Youngstown State University
 David Gay, University of Central Florida
 Marie L. Germain, City College—Miami
 Steve Glennon, Iowa Western Community College—Council Bluffs
 Sergio Gomez, Chaffey College
 Natasha Gouge, Cape Fear Community College
 Kyra Greene, San Diego State University
 Mike Greenhouse, Middlesex County College
 Sara Grineski, University of Texas at El Paso
 Elke Grogg, Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana
 Heather Guevara, Portland Community College—Sylvania
 Jeffrey Hall, University of Alabama at Birmingham
 Bram Hamovitch, Lakeland Community College
 Carl Hand, Valdosta State University
 Sara Hanna, Oakland Community College—Highland Lakes
 Peggy Hargis, Georgia Southern University
 Terri Hardy, Indiana University East
 Kalynn Heald, Northwest Arkansas Community College
 Nina Heckler, University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa
 Garrison Henderson, Tarrant County College Southeast
 Kimberly Hennessee, Ball State University
 Marta T. Henriksen, Central New Mexico Community College
 Pablo Hernandez, Lansing Community College
 Teresa Hibbert, University of Texas at El Paso
 Carmon Weaver Hicks, Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana
 Tonya Hilligoss, Sacramento City College
 Candace Hinson, Tallahassee Community College
 Carol Hodgson, Rowan-Cabarrus Community College
 Donna Holland, Indiana University—Purdue University
 Kathleen Holmes, Darton College
 Mark Horowitz, University of Texas at Brownsville
 Nils Hovik, Lehigh Carbon Community College
 Erica Hunter, State University of New York at Albany
 Ronald Huskin, Del Mar College
 Creed Hyatt, Lehigh Carbon Community College
 Peter Iadicola, Indiana University—Purdue University Fort Wayne
 Denise Ingram, Mercer County Community College
 Michael Itagaki, Fullerton College
 Jennifer Jackson, Cincinnati State Technical & Community College
 Ron Jacobs, State University of New York at Albany
 Timothy Jacobs, Naugatuck Valley Community College
 Jennifer Jacobson, Yavapai College
 Laura Jamison, Parkland College
 Randy Jarvis, South Texas College
 J. Craig Jenkins, Ohio State University—Columbus
 Mark Jepson, University of California—Los Angeles
 Dennis Johnson, Craven Community College
 Jim Jones, Mississippi State University
 Ali Kamali, Missouri Western State University
 Irwin Kantor, Middlesex County College
 Michael Kaune, Saint Francis College
 Henry Keith, Delaware Technical Community College
 Margaret Kelly, University of Minnesota—Minneapolis
 Paul Ketchum, University of Oklahoma—Norman
 Steve Keto, Kent State University
 William Kimberlin, Laini County Community College
 Brian Klocke, State University of New York at Plattsburgh
 James Knapp, Southeastern Oklahoma State University
 Michelle Knoles, Cowley County Community College
 Jamee Kristen, University of Nebraska—Lincoln
 Lorien Lake, University of Arizona
 Judy Lasker, Lehigh University
 Terina Lathe, Central Piedmont Community College
 Jodie Lawston, DePaul University
 Rebecca Leichtfuss, Moraine Park Tech College
 Jason Leiker, Utah State University
 Joe Lengermann, University of Maryland—College Park
 Troy Lepper, Colorado State University
 David Liu, Harrisburg Area Community College
 David Locher, Missouri Southern State University
 William Lockhart, McLennan Community College
 Nicole Loftus, Saddleback College
 Royal Loresco, South Texas College
 Joleen Loucks, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
 Michael Loukinen, Northern Michigan University
 Gregory Lukasik, Florida Atlantic University—Boca Raton

Bradford Lyman, Baltimore City Community College	Jacob Oni, Cape Cod Community College	Christina Ryder, Missouri State University
Jean Lynch-Brandon, Lansing Community College	Takamitsu Ono, Anne Arundel Community College	Ivanka Sabolich, Kent State University
Joanna Maata, Pennsylvania State University	Robert Orrange, Eastern Michigan University	George Saunders, Ball State University
Anne MacLellan, Community College of Baltimore County—Catonsville	Diane Owsley, Elizabethtown Community College	Peter Sawyer, Hudson Valley Community College
I. Ross Macmillan, University of Minnesota—Minneapolis	Bruce Pabian, Delaware Technical Community College—Stanton	David Schall, Milwaukee Area Technical College
Sherry Mader, Western Technical College	Frank Page, University of Utah—Salt Lake City	Jon Schlenker, University of Maine— Augusta
M. Wilbrod Madzura, Normandale Community College	Chris Papaleonardos, Ohio State University—Columbus	Andreas Schneider, Texas Tech University
Cheryl Maes, University of Nevada—Reno	Elizabeth Pare, Oakland University	Rachel Schneider, University of Akron
Lori Maida, Westchester Community College	Caroline Parham, Craven Community College	David Schjott, Northwest Florida State College
Farshad Malek-Ahmadi, Naugatuck Valley Community College	Kathrin Parks, Loras College	Sarah Bill Schott, North Central College— Naperville
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Deborah McCarthy, College of Charleston	Jane Penney, Eastfield College	Megan Seely, Sierra College
Dorothy McCawley, University of Florida	Narayan Persaud, Florida A&M University	Lystra Seenath, Palm Beach State College—Lake Worth
Karen McCue, Central New Mexico Community College	Nancy Pietroforte, Rockland Community College	Barbara Seiter, Raritan Valley Community College
Victor McCullum, Triton College	Peggy Preble, Thomas Nelson Community College	Patricia Seitz, Central New Mexico Community College
Marian McWhorter, Houston Community College—Central College	Paul C. Price, Pasadena City College	Charles Selengut, County College of Morris
Ronald Meneses, University of Florida	William Price, North Country Community College	Monissa Shackelford, Pensacola Junior College
Chadwick L. Menning, Ball State University	Ariane Prohaska, University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa	Robert Shelly, Ohio University—Athens
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Janet Michello, LaGuardia Community College	Todd Rasner, Hudson Valley Community College	Anson Shupe, Indiana University—Purdue University Fort Wayne
Harvest Moon, University of Texas at Arlington	Roblyn Rawlins, College of New Rochelle	Denise Shuster, Owens Community College
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Marcillino Morales, East Los Angeles College	Nancy Reeves, Gloucester County College	Edward Silva, El Paso Community College—Valle Verde
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Sepandar Mossadeghi, Palm Beach State College—Eissey Campus	Christine Rodriguez, East Los Angeles College	Michelle Smith, Southwestern Illinois College
Dan Muhwezi, Bulter Community College	Fatima Rodriguez, Rutgers University	Karrie Snyder, Northwestern University
Lynn Newhart, Rockford College	Robyn Rodriguez, Reedley College	Tomecia Sobers, Fayetteville Technical Community College
Bruce Nicometo, Northwest Arkansas Community College	Luis Rodriguez-Abad, University of Texas at Brownsville	Stephanie Southworth, Clemson University
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Nelda Nix, Community College of Baltimore County—Essex	Olga Rowe, Oregon State University	Johnnie Spraggins, University of Texas at San Antonio
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Kwaku Obosu-Mensah, Lorain County Community College	Amy Ruedisueli, Tidewater Community College	Barbara Stauffer, Lehigh Carbon Community College
Patricia O'Brien, Elgin Community College	Igor Ryabov, Ohio University—Athens	Rachael Stehle, Cuyahoga Community College Western—Parma
Bob O'Neil, Louisiana State University— Baton Rouge	Charlotte Ryan, University of Massachusetts—Lowell	

Lawrence Stern, Collin County Community College–Plano	Timothy Tuinstra, Kalamazoo Valley Community College	Gordon Whitman, Tidewater Community College–Norfolk
Terrence Stewart, Mott College	Toby Vance, El Paso Community College–Valle Verde	Cindy Whitney, Kansas State University, College of Technology & Aviation
Michelle Stewart Thomas, Mt. San Antonio College	Melinda Vandervis, Orange Coast College	Linda Wicks, Stony Brook University
Jill Stiemsma, Moraine Park Tech College	Steven Vassar, Minnesota State University–Mankato	Cleon Wiggins, Kansas City Kansas Community College
Beverly Stiles, Midwestern State University	Ray Von Robertson, Lamar University	Marion Willetts, Illinois State University
Randolph Ston, Oakland Community College–Auburn Hills	Vu-Duc Vuong, De Anza College	Gerald Williams, Camden County College
Michael Stupak, Milwaukee Area Technical College	Sally Vyain, Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana	L. Sue Williams, Kansas State University
Holly Suarez, University of North Carolina–Charlotte	Florence Wakoko, Columbus State University	Bryan Williamson, Lorain County Community College
Rose Suggett, Southeast Community College	Glenda D. Walden, University of Colorado–Boulder	Beate Wilson, Western Illinois University
Deborah Sullivan, Arizona State University–Tempe	Marie L. Wallace, Pima Community College–West	Charles Wilson, Kansas City Kansas Community College
Richard Sweeny, Modesto Junior College	Suzan Waller, Franklin University	Rowan Wolf, Portland Community College–Sylvania
Diana Sweigert, Lehigh Carbon Community College	Gina Walls, Parkland College	Amy Wong, San Diego State University
John Szivos, Mount Wachusett Community College	Sheryl Walz, Citrus College	Peter Wood, Eastern Michigan University
Margaret Taylor, Greenville Technical College	Martha Warburton, University of Texas at Brownsville	Robert E. Wood, Rutgers University
Sara Thompson, Laredo Community College	Elizabeth Watts Warren, Gordon College	Timothy Woods, Manchester Community College
Ruth Thompson-Miller, Texas A&M University	Sandra Way, New Mexico State University–Las Cruces	Diane Wysocki, University of Nebraska–Kearney
Lorna Timmerman, Indiana University East	Sharon Wettengel, Tarrant County College Southeast	Marik Xavier-Brier, Houston Community College
Gary Titchener, Des Moines Area Community College	Shonda Whetstone, Blinn College	Erica Yeager, Anne Arundel Community College
Bob Transon, Milwaukee Area Technical College	Amanda White, St. Louis Community College–Meramec	Pat Yeager, Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana–Evansville
	Debbie White, Citrus College	Andrew Ziner, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
	Gailynn White, Citrus College	John F. Zipp, University of Akron



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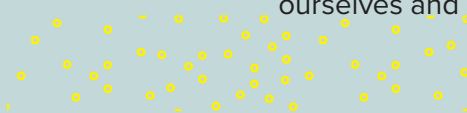
Sociology in a Changing World

looking AHEAD

How can sociology and the sociological perspective help us understand society and our place in it?

How can three of sociology's core concepts—culture, structure, and power—and its diverse theories help us understand ourselves and our world?

How can sociology, which emerged in a period of revolutionary change, help us understand our own rapidly changing world?





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As a child growing up in Van Nuys, California, Daniel Miramontez spoke Spanish at home, like most of his older relatives. However, the 19-year-old sociology student notes, “When I started going to school, I started losing my Spanish and speaking more English” (Castanada 2017).

His is a common experience. Families that emigrate to the United States bring with them the culture and customs of their homeland,

Growing up, Daniel and other children of immigrants learn one of the basic insights of sociology: to understand the lives of individuals, we need to understand the broader social context in which they live. Growing up in a different society than your parents or grandparents means you become a different person. A different language takes priority, a different worldview develops from your experiences, and different opportunities present themselves because of where you live. In short, the society in which

including their language. One in five U.S. residents speaks a language other than English at home (U.S. Census Bureau 2017). However, for each succeeding generation in the United States, English proficiency increases while proficiency in their parents’ language declines. This pattern is as old as immigration itself. A century ago, the immigrants’ language was more likely to be Italian, German, or Russian; today it might be Tagalog, Urdu, or Mandarin. Regardless of the era, though, the children of immigrants have always adopted English, the dominant language of their society.

There are practical reasons for this. English is the primary language of schooling and employment, so succeeding fully in these social arenas requires being able to speak the language well. Often, a lack of English skills has hampered immigrant parents in the labor market. They understand the importance of English for their children’s future success and insist their children learn it. However, this can be a bittersweet process. Immigrant children may lose the ability to fluently speak the language of their parents and grandparents, and thus be cut off from a part of their heritage. That is one reason why bilingual education is highly prized in many communities. Bilingual education enables students to become proficient in English while simultaneously cultivating their native language skills, helping them to embrace their bicultural identities.

You do not have to be sentimental about culture, though, to appreciate the value of a second language. Research shows that knowing multiple languages can be a major asset on the job market. A wide range of employers are looking for people who can speak Chinese, French, Korean, Arabic, and, most of all, Spanish (New American Economy 2017).

you live helps shape your life, while your actions—like those of millions of recent immigrants—can help change society.

Change—and its effects on people’s lives—has long been one of sociology’s major concerns. Indeed, sociology was born during a period of breathtaking change—the late 1800s—when Europe and the United States were shifting from a rural agricultural economy to an urban industrial economy. Early sociologists grappled with the impact of those changes on people’s

families, their living conditions, and the way they supported themselves.

Sociologists today are grappling with a similar period of rapid change arising from many sources, including a global economy, the expansion of media and technology, a fast-changing population, and enduring cultural conflicts, to name just a few. *Experience Sociology* introduces you to sociology's insights into this shifting social landscape. This chapter introduces you to sociology itself, its unique perspective, and its early development as a discipline. It examines some of sociology's diverse theories and the core concepts that unite the field, along with a number of key concerns of sociology—indeed, of all of us today. We will see how sociology offers insight into the forces that are shaping our lives and, at the same time, how it helps us recognize our own capacity to bring about change.

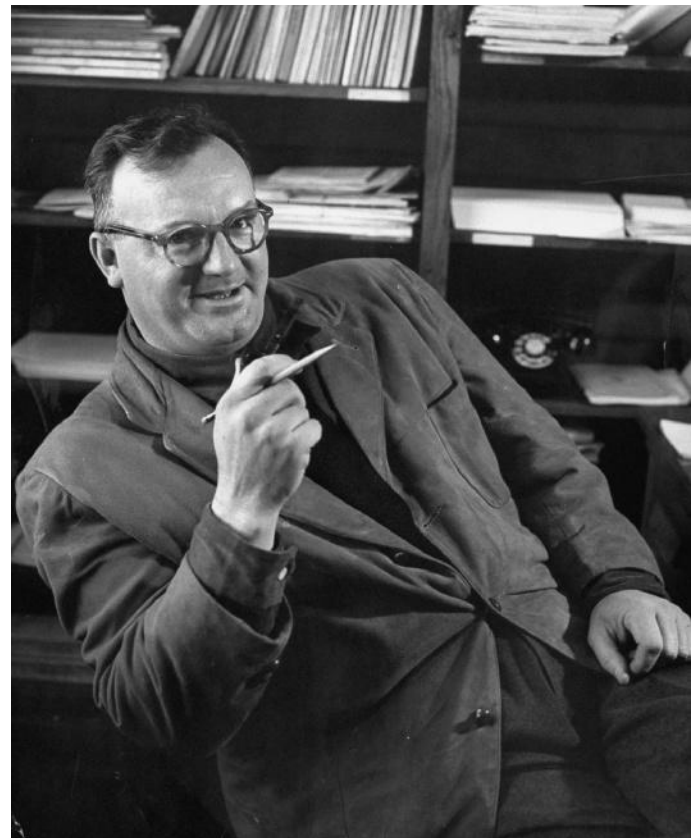
What Is Sociology?

Sociology is the systematic study of the relationship between individuals and society. The approach used in sociology can be thought of as a perspective, a way of looking at the world. To take a **sociological perspective** is to see and understand the connections between individuals and the broader social contexts in which they live. You can understand your own life—including the forces that have shaped your current daily routines and the options you have in your future—only by considering the broader social contexts within which you live. Your identity (including your race, ethnicity, class, gender, and nationality) as well as the social environment in which you live (including your family, neighborhood, country, culture, and historical period) influence who you are and who you can be. Understanding those connections is at the heart of a sociological perspective.

The Sociological Perspective

Writing in 1959, U.S. sociologist C. Wright Mills provided the best-known description of the sociological perspective (or, as he called it, the *sociological imagination*). According to Mills, “The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within a society” (6). In other words, our individual condition (what Mills calls “biography”) depends, in part, upon larger forces in society (“history”).

Do you live in a prosperous, peaceful society with democratic freedoms or in one where survival is a challenge, violence is a constant threat, and people's basic civil rights are suppressed? Is your mother or father a retail clerk, an auto worker, a schoolteacher, an engineer, in the military, a business executive, or unemployed? Are you African American, Latino, Asian, white? Are you male, female, or transgender? Are you gay or straight? Are you from a rural community, the suburbs, or a major city? Were you raised as a Christian, a Jew, a Muslim, a Hindu, or a nonbeliever? Although we often like to think of ourselves as rugged individuals responsible for our own lives, characteristics and circumstances like these influence who we are and the



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C. Wright Mills wrote a classic description of the sociological perspective called *The Sociological Imagination* (1959) and a series of books focused on social class and power in the United States (1948, 1952, 1956). He taught at Columbia University from 1946 until 1962, when he died of a heart attack at age 45. Mills's critique of the concentration of power in the United States inspired a generation of activists in the 1960s to promote a more inclusive and democratic society, themes that continue to resonate today.

options we have. And as Mills (1959) points out (using “man” instead of “person” in the convention of his day), as social conditions change, so do the lives of individuals:

When a society is industrialized, a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman. When classes rise or fall a man is employed or unemployed; when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher; a store clerk, a radar man; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a father. Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both. (3)

We need only consider the 2007–2009 economic recession, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the rapid growth of technology, and accompanying social developments to see that Mills's observations are as relevant today as they were more than half a century ago.



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Personal choices—especially deciding to volunteer for the armed forces—contributed to this veteran's current situation. But those decisions were made in the context of broader social conditions, including economic pressures to earn a living, a culture of popular patriotism, key decisions made by those with political power, and events that transformed international relations. The connections between individual lives and larger social processes are rarely so explicit or so poignant.

However, Mills and other sociologists do not argue that people are simply the passive victims of their social circumstances. Rather, as the sociological perspective reveals, interaction exists between the social conditions that shape our lives and the actions we take as individuals. We don't get to choose the conditions under which we live, the opportunities we enjoy, or the barriers we face, but we do have choices about how we respond to those circumstances, both individually and collectively. Deciding to join the military, have children, attend college, or move to another city are among the many individual decisions a person can make that have a major impact on his or her future. Mills himself was a strong advocate for collective action to strengthen democracy and help change the difficult and often unequal conditions that people face in society. That idea, too, is as relevant today as ever.

Sociology and Common Sense

You do not have to be a professional sociologist to look at the world from a sociological perspective. Indeed, many popular expressions reflect a kind of commonsense folk wisdom that assumes a sociological perspective. You have probably heard some version of the expression “You’ve got to play the cards you’re dealt in life.” The card game metaphor makes the point that from the beginning, our options in life have been shaped by social conditions that we did not get to pick ourselves. Such factors can heavily influence the opportunity people have for good health, education, material comfort, and overall well-being.

You don’t get to choose the cards you are dealt, but you do get to decide how you will play them. For example, you no doubt decided to go to college with the hope that doing so could

positively influence your future. Others may have had the option of attending college but chose not to exercise it. Many more people, of course, never had the option of attending college in the first place; they were dealt a very different hand in life.

The idea that people must play the cards they are dealt in life is consistent with a sociological perspective. But the problem with relying on commonsense folk wisdom to understand the world is that, however insightful it may sometimes be, it can produce a bewildering array of contradictory claims. One popular saying, “Life is what you make of it,” suggests that individuals have total control over their fate. In contrast, “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree” suggests that our social origins largely predetermine our character and fate. Without some way of gauging their accuracy, such wildly contradictory claims provide no insight at all.

In addition, an understanding of the world based only on our own individual experience may not be helpful in unfamiliar circumstances. This is especially true in a world in which communications, media, immigration, and international travel are bringing together people of vastly different backgrounds as never before. To operate in such a diverse society we need to understand not only how *we* make sense of the world, but how other people do so as well.

If we are to understand our connection to the social world beyond our own limited experience and be able to sort through competing claims about that world, we need a more systematic way to comprehend the patterns of behavior and the processes that make up social life. We need the discipline of sociology.

Sociology as a Discipline

Sociologists combine the sociological perspective with a variety of research methods (discussed in Chapter 2) to study in a systematic way how our actions shape, and are shaped by, broader social forces. Because the sociological perspective can apply to any aspect of people’s lives and any social issue, the discipline of sociology addresses an especially broad array of topics, as we will see throughout this book.

Sociology is one of the *social sciences*, a group of research-based disciplines that gather and evaluate evidence to study human society. This focus on human society distinguishes the social sciences from the *natural sciences*, which focus on the physical aspects of nature.

In addition to sociology, the social sciences include political science, economics, psychology, and anthropology. Each of these disciplines highlights different aspects of social life. Take crime, for example.

- *Political scientists* might study how politicians use the issue of crime in their campaigns.
- *Economists* might examine the financial impact of crime on society.



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These children's life chances—their opportunities for good health, education, material comfort, and overall well-being—are significantly influenced by the social environment into which they were born. What differences are evident from these photographs? What elements of your social environment influenced your development?

- *Psychologists* might look at the individual features of criminals, perhaps suggesting personality traits associated with certain types of criminal behavior.
 - *Anthropologists* might compare how different societies define crime and respond to it.
- Sociologists*, in contrast, emphasize the interrelationship between individuals and larger social forces, as well as the interactions between various social institutions such as government, economy, media, schools, and family. The result is a broad range of research interests. Sociologists, for example, might
- explore why crime rates vary over time and are often linked to social trends such as changes in the age of the population (since younger people commit crimes at a higher rate than older ones).
 - examine the role of media in helping shape people's perception of crime and the criminal justice system through both news coverage and entertainment dramas.
 - examine the effectiveness of government efforts to reduce crime.

Sociologists have many interests, and the discipline as a whole has many areas of specialization, including medical sociology,

sociology of the family, sociology of religion, political sociology, the sociology of race and ethnicity, the sociology of work, the sociology of gender, the sociology of media, and the sociology of social movements. As a result, sociology courses can provide a foundation for further study in any of these fields. As the Sociology Works box suggests, the study of sociology can also provide valuable skills for many careers, including some that may seem completely unrelated to sociology itself.

Sociology's Historical and Social Context

Imagine a time in which scientific discoveries alter our understanding of the world, political unrest sparks calls for social change, and economic crises and new technologies transform daily life. You might suspect this was a description of the world today, but similar upheavals disturbed Europe leading up to the 1800s, which is where and when the formal discipline of

SOCIOLOGY WORKS

The Sociology Major and the Job Market

People, culture, social problems, social change—these fascinating topics help explain why students often enjoy sociology. However, practical concern about the future might lead some to ask, “What can I do with a degree in sociology?”

The answer is, “Plenty.” By majoring in sociology you not only learn to better understand yourself and your world, but you also develop important skills that can prepare you for entry-level positions in a variety of employment settings, including business, education, social services, health care, government, media, and criminal justice. Sociology can also be an excellent choice for students who plan to go on to graduate school.

Here are four key advantages of majoring in sociology:

1. *A sociology degree is flexible.* Because sociology can be applied to virtually any aspect of social life, you can major in sociology with an eye toward your own particular interests. For example, if you are interested in health and medicine, you can take a course in medical sociology; if you are interested in social work, you can take courses related to the social problems you wish to address or the populations you wish to serve. Sociology can help you understand the issues related to your field of interest.
2. *Sociology focuses on the critical use of information.* As part of a liberal arts education, a sociology degree prepares you to find, understand, analyze, use, and communicate information. These fundamental critical-thinking skills apply to an array of work settings and will not become obsolete; they are highly valuable in today’s rapidly changing, information-based job market. Since most people change jobs—and even careers—during their lives, mastering such information-based skills is crucial for success. The ability to work with social science data found in

Majoring in sociology allows you to study a subject area that interests you *and* helps you prepare for your future.

government reports, marketing surveys, and other information sources is particularly important.

3. *Sociology provides insights into diversity.* Success in many fields of employment requires understanding people from different backgrounds. Sociology majors have an advantage in understanding diversity. As a result, they are more likely to work effectively in multicultural workplaces such as schools, hospitals, and businesses as well as in any field in which the players may be from diverse social backgrounds.
4. *Sociology explores the source of social problems.* Are you interested in a field that addresses social problems, such as social work, criminal justice, or health care? Do you plan to work with community organizations, international aid agencies, or social movements to bring about social change? If so, studying sociology can be particularly relevant. By focusing on the relationship between individuals and their social context, sociology helps you understand the roots of social problems.

The Sociology Works boxes throughout this book highlight how former sociology students are using the insights of sociology in a variety of fields. If you are considering majoring in sociology, talk with your instructor, who can tell you about the programs available at your school.

think about it

1. *Do you have any tentative ideas about the kind of work you’d like to do when you complete school? What kinds of classes do you think will help you prepare for the future? Why?*
2. *Take a look at your school’s course listings. Do you see any sociology courses that you think you may want to take? What interests you about the topics covered in these courses?*



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Sociology majors in many occupations have made contributions to their professional fields. A few well-known majors have had an impact across society. Pictured here, from left to right, are former U.S. president Ronald Reagan, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., former First Lady Michelle Obama, celebrity chef Stephanie Izard, and actor Kal Penn.

TABLE 1.1 **SOCIOLOGY AND REVOLUTION**

SOCIOLOGY AROSE IN THE CONTEXT OF REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE

Cultural Revolution	Political Revolution	Economic and Social Revolution
The declining influence of religion	Declining power of monarchies; American and French revolutions	Decline of agricultural life; industrialization and rise of consumer society
The rise of scientific thought	Uprisings of 1848	Capitalism
The Age of Enlightenment	Growth in democracy and individual rights	Urbanization

sociology first emerged. To better understand the origins of the discipline, we need to consider that historical and social context.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European society entered a new historical era marked by revolutionary cultural, political, economic, and social change (Table 1.1). This period, known as **modernity**, was *characterized by the growth of democracy and personal freedom, increased reliance on reason and science to explain the natural and social worlds, and a shift toward an urban industrial economy*. Early sociologists sought to understand these dramatic changes and to suggest what might be done to deal with the social problems that resulted from them.

Cultural Revolution: Science and the Enlightenment

During the Middle Ages the Church and its clergy dominated European intellectual life, controlling the era's limited number of books, libraries, and schools. Because religious doctrine formed the basis for acceptable social thought, heretics—those who held beliefs contrary to Church teaching—were often persecuted and even killed for questioning the accepted order. This intellectual climate was not hospitable to the open and free inquiry required for **science**, which *uses logic and the systematic collection of evidence to support its claims about the world*.

The Church slowly lost its dominance, however, as scientific research exposed the shortcomings of religious explanations of the natural world. For example, proof that the earth orbited the sun contradicted Church doctrine that the earth was at the center of the universe. Writers and philosophers seized on these advances in the natural sciences to promote the *Enlightenment*, an eighteenth-century intellectual movement that combined a belief in individual freedom and respect for individual rights with the logic of the natural sciences. These Enlightenment thinkers,



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The rise of modernity introduced rapid social change. Work life shifted from fields to factories. Home and community life was transformed as people moved from small rural villages to rapidly expanding urban centers. What effect do you think the shift from rural village life based on farming to urban life based on wage labor had on family life?

who were among the first intellectuals independent of the Church, argued that neither the physical nor the social world should be taken on faith. Instead, both should be open to questioning and examined through reason; claims to knowledge should be subject to testing through the collection of evidence, and explanations should be based in natural causes and events. German philosopher Immanuel Kant summed up this revolutionary way of thinking in the motto “Dare to know” ([1784] 1999). This new emphasis on reason and science created the cultural conditions needed for the emergence of sociology.

Political Revolution: The Rise of Democracy

Enlightenment thinkers believed that the open debate of ideas and the application of reason and science to questions of social significance would promote tolerance, freedom, individual rights, equality, and democracy. Enlightenment ideas provided the intellectual basis for both the American (1775–1783) and French (1789–1799) revolutions, as well as for a series of uprisings that swept through Europe in 1848, challenging traditional rulers and promoting democratic ideals. These revolutions stimulated much interest in achieving a more equal society and improved living conditions, but they provoked condemnation from conservatives who saw them as a threat to stability, traditional values, and social order. Thus controversies about the nature and desirability of social order versus social change were among the first topics addressed by early sociologists.

Economic and Social Revolution: Industrial Capitalism and Urbanization

The term *Industrial Revolution* refers to a collection of major developments that transformed rural agricultural societies into urban industrial societies. This process began in Great Britain and spread through Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century.

The practical application of scientific developments, such as the creation of the steam engine, paved the way for **industrialization**, *the use of large-scale machinery for the mass manufacture of consumer goods*. Industrialization required a major investment in factories and mills with complex machinery—such as mechanized looms—at a cost that was often beyond the reach of a single owner. Thus industrialization became linked to the rise of *capitalists*, people who pursued profits by investing in and owning businesses. Mass manufacturing relied on a new type of relationship between workers and owners in which the workers sold their labor for a wage. They used their wages to buy food, clothing, and shelter, unlike rural peasants who produced many of their own material goods and met their basic needs by farming. The result was the birth of both wage labor and *consumerism*, a way of life that depends on the purchase and use of commercial goods and services. These developments fueled the rapid expansion of *capitalism*, an economic system in which the machinery used for production is owned privately, workers are paid a wage, and markets facilitate the exchange of goods and services.

Economic changes fueled changes in social life. In the agricultural economy of the Middle Ages, peasants worked the fields and were spread out in tiny rural villages among people mostly like themselves. Children could expect to grow up and live in the village they were born in and to do the same sort of work their parents and grandparents did.

In contrast, an industrial economy requires many workers to live close to each other near large factories and mills. As the Industrial Revolution took hold, many people left their rural homes and traveled to newly emerging cities for entirely new types of jobs they hoped would mean a better life.

This migration contributed to **urbanization**, *the growth of cities*. Before 1800, more than 90 percent of Europeans lived in rural areas; by the 1890s, more than half lived in cities. These bustling cities featured considerable diversity and rapid social change, some of which contributed to growing social problems.

Early industrial capitalism was highly productive, but it also created great inequalities, generating tremendous profits for a few wealthy owners from the labor of many overworked and underpaid workers. Disease (linked to poor sanitation), overcrowded and unsafe housing, inadequate transportation, and crime plagued the rapidly growing cities. Staggering inequality and growing social problems caused great concern among political and social thinkers, inspiring calls for reform and igniting revolutionary movements.

The rise of modernity produced rapid and immediately visible changes that showed traditional ways of life were not inevitable; the fate of individuals was tied to broader social changes beyond their control; and human action could transform the world through new ideas, political reform, and technological innovation. Faced with the challenge of understanding these dramatic transformations, social thinkers began applying reason and scientific techniques to study social life systematically and to suggest ways that society might be improved. The resulting ideas became the foundation of sociology.

Foundations of Sociological Thought

Sociology today has its roots in the ideas developed by early sociologists more than a century ago. Some of these thinkers asked profound questions of enduring relevance and are still widely read (Calhoun et al. 2012; Ritzer and Stepnisky 2014). Their work on the rapidly changing world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries continues to provide insight into our own social world today.

Defining the Terrain of Sociology: Comte and Spencer

Auguste Comte (1798–1857) and Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) helped establish the idea that the social world could be the subject of systematic, scientific investigation.

EARLY SOCIOLOGICAL THINKERS



©Popperfoto/Getty Images

Karl Marx



©Bettmann/Getty Images

Emile Durkheim



©AKG Images/Newscom

Max Weber

Biography	1818–1883	1858–1917	1864–1920
	German	French	German
	Writer and activist	Academic	Academic
Key issues and key work	The nature of capitalism	The nature of social solidarity	Decline of tradition
	Conflict and inequality	Shared values and morals	Rationalization of society
	<i>Capital</i>	<i>Suicide</i>	<i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i>

Auguste Comte: Stability and Change

Auguste Comte, a French intellectual with wide-ranging interests, coined the term *sociology* in the early nineteenth century. Comte sought to establish sociology as a rigorous science of society—modeled on the natural sciences—that would identify the laws that govern human behavior.

At the core of Comte's new field of study were two fundamental questions about social life: "How and why do societies change?" (social dynamics) and "What is the basis of social stability at a specific historical moment?" (social statics). Comte was interested in how society had developed from humanity's earliest small-scale bands of hunters and gatherers to his own nineteenth-century European society. He theorized that throughout history societies progressed through several stages: the theological (ruled by religion), the metaphysical (ruled by philosophy), and the positivist (ruled by science). For Comte, **positivism**, a belief that accurate knowledge must be based on the scientific method, enabled a deeper understanding of human life and was the key to solving persistent social problems.

Herbert Spencer: Society as a Social Organism

The British intellectual Herbert Spencer was another early adopter of the term *sociology*. Taking a cue from the biological sciences, Spencer argued that society is a "social organism," much like a human organism. He theorized that, like its biological equivalent, society is made up of separate parts, each with a unique function, that work together to sustain the entire organism. Thus Spencer's theory emphasized the overall structure of society, the functions served by the various elements of society, and the interactions among these elements. Spencer

also theorized that when societies evolve, their component parts—and the functions they serve—change as well.

Spencer believed that society progresses as it evolves. Therefore, evolution should be allowed to take place without interference from government. Rather than intervene with reforms in the face of the growing inequality created by unregulated industrial capitalism, Spencer believed in the "survival of the fittest," a phrase he devised before Charles Darwin's work on natural selection and the theory of evolution was published. Spencer's application of the survival of the fittest to human society is today known as *social Darwinism*. Spencer later recanted some of his more extreme views, but in recent years, those who wish to minimize the role of government in social and economic affairs have revived some of Spencer's ideas.

The Key Founders: Marx, Durkheim, and Weber

Spencer and Comte helped define the terrain of sociology in its earliest years. But the thinkers who are widely seen as the founders of sociology and who set the agenda for the next century of sociological theory were Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber.

Karl Marx: The Effects of Capitalism

The German-born Karl Marx (1818–1883) is best known as a revolutionary thinker who advocated radical change to advance the interests of workers. Marx combined writing with political activism, and much of his life was spent escaping political repression. Because of his writings, Marx was expelled from France (twice!) and Belgium. In Germany he was arrested, tried,

acquitted, and also expelled. Finally, in 1849 he went to London, where he spent the rest of his life in exile. He lived in poverty while he wrote his greatest works, including *Capital*, his comprehensive analysis of the history and dynamics of capitalism.

Marx recognized that industrial capitalism was remarkably productive and thus capable of doing away with hunger and poverty for all. But instead, industrial capitalism was used to produce huge fortunes for a few owners, while leaving workers to labor in dangerous conditions and often live in poverty. In much of his work, Marx sought to explain how and why so much wealth and productivity could coexist with such widespread poverty and misery.

For Marx, the answer could be found in the relationship between capitalists, who owned the means of production, and workers (the proletariat), who sold their labor to the capitalists. The dynamics of capitalism, said Marx, encouraged owners to pay the lowest wages possible because lower labor costs mean higher profits. This dynamic explained the simultaneous creation of enormous fortunes and devastating poverty. Capitalists accumulated great wealth precisely because they were able to exploit the workers who toiled in their factories. This wealth gave owners great power, which they used to control governments and cultural institutions (Marx [1867] 1976).

To Marx, conflict between owners and workers was an inevitable feature of capitalism. As a result, he argued that capitalism—like earlier economic forms based on inequality—had within it the seeds of its own destruction. He theorized that the exploitation of workers would eventually become so extreme, wage laborers would rise up and overthrow the capitalist system. In its place, they would adopt *socialism*, a system in which ownership of the major means of production—such as factories, utilities, and railways—is in public, rather than private, hands, and government directs the use of the productive forces of industry for the public good. The goal of socialism would be a society without the extreme inequalities that characterized capitalism. (We explore the nature of capitalism and socialism more closely in Chapter 16.)

Marx's analysis of industrial capitalism was insightful in specifying the connection between wealth and poverty. He accurately predicted that the search for cheap labor would lead to the expansion of capitalism around the globe. He also correctly predicted the growth of labor movements demanding an end to unregulated capitalism. But he failed to appreciate the ability of capitalism to accommodate reform or the important role markets play in stimulating innovation and efficiency. The revolutionary worker movements Marx supported in recently industrialized countries like Great Britain, France, and Germany ultimately reformed, rather than overthrew, capitalism. Meanwhile, the socialist revolutions that did occur, most notably in Russia and China, took place in primarily agricultural societies that did not have the capacity to produce an abundance of material goods. Even though the brutal totalitarian states that emerged after these revolutions invoked Marx's name in their official ideology, they bore almost no resemblance to the humanist egalitarian vision that Marx had promoted.

Beyond his specific analysis of capitalism, Marx highlighted what became a core concept in sociology: power. Economic power, he argued, could be used to influence other aspects of

social life, including government and cultural institutions such as schools and the media. Marx also stressed how people both create the societies they live in and are in turn influenced by them, an insight that is at the heart of the sociological perspective. “Men make their own history,” he wrote, “but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past” (Marx [1852] 1978, 595).

The issues Marx explored continue to be important today. Questions about the nature and direction of our economy are among the most significant ones addressed by sociologists. Examples include

- How has globalization changed our economy?
- How is extreme economic inequality linked to the dynamics of capitalism?
- How has the nature of work been changing?
- How have the labor movement and social welfare programs—both examples of attempts to moderate the excesses of capitalism—affected the lives of workers?

Emile Durkheim: Social Solidarity Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), who lived a generation after Marx, was also concerned with understanding social change in the modern world, but Durkheim's life could hardly have been more different from Marx's. The descendant of a long line of rabbinical scholars in France, Durkheim studied to be a rabbi but rejected religion in his teens, believing there was no way to know whether or not God existed. However, he retained a lifelong interest both in the role of religion in social life and in the scientific study of morality.

Durkheim is perhaps the single individual most responsible for establishing sociology as an academic discipline. He held the first academic position in sociology; wrote a book laying out the methods of the discipline, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (Durkheim [1895] 1982); and established a well-respected academic journal devoted to the new field.

Like many social thinkers who witness dramatic change, Durkheim was concerned with how to maintain social order. He was particularly interested in the question of **social solidarity**, *the collective bonds that connect individuals*. At the core of his theory was the proposition that society is held together by shared cultural values, promoted informally through custom and tradition, and spelled out more systematically in laws. When internalized by individuals, shared values and morals become the foundation for social solidarity.

Durkheim observed that traditional agricultural societies were often tight-knit communities. They shared social bonds across generations because people did the same sort of work, shared a common religion, and followed similar customs. These similar experiences resulted in *mechanical solidarity*—social cohesion based on shared experience and a common identity with limited individuality. As societies grew and became urbanized and industrialized, however, people increasingly differed from one another. A more complex economy required an increasing **division of labor**, in which *people specialize in different tasks, each requiring specific skills*. As cities developed, a diverse array

Explaining the Social Basis of Suicide

Why do people intentionally kill themselves? At first glance, suicide seems to be the ultimate example of a private individual act, best explained by psychologists, not sociologists. But sociologist Emile Durkheim broke new ground when he made suicide the subject of the first sociological study to use large-scale data analysis. After examining official government records of suicide cases, Durkheim found that people committed suicide at higher rates in some groups than in others. Suicide, he theorized, was therefore not a purely individual act, but rather people were more or less likely to commit suicide because of the nature of their relationship to society within those groups.

Durkheim's study, *Suicide*, showed that a sociological perspective could help explain how individuals are affected by the quality of their relationship with larger social groups, even to the extent of taking their own lives. His research revealed, for example, that unmarried adults had higher rates of suicide than married adults, and Protestants had higher rates than Catholics or Jews. Durkheim explained these differences through an analysis of social *integration*, the strength of social ties that allow people to feel they belong to a group, and social *regulation*, the strength of social norms that control people's behavior. Too much or too little of either would increase the likelihood of suicide. Thus Durkheim identified four types of suicide—egoistic, anomic, altruistic, and fatalistic.

Egoistic suicides result from too little social integration and are committed by people who feel isolated and detached from society. For example, married couples are likely to have a strong bond with one another, whereas divorced, widowed, and unmarried people are more likely to lack a strong social connection; thus suicide rates among these latter groups are higher. Protestants lack the intense communal rituals associated with Catholicism and Judaism, which helps explain their

higher rates of suicide. At the other extreme, *altruistic* suicides result from too much social integration, leading individuals to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the collective. Examples might include today's Islamic extremist suicide bombers or the Japanese kamikaze pilots who volunteered to fly suicide missions for their country during World War II.

The absence of regulation in the form of social norms and boundaries is also associated with higher suicide rates. *Anomic* suicide often results from a sudden and dramatic change in the level of social regulation, which leaves the individual without clear rules about how to adapt. These changes can be negative, such as those that occur after a natural disaster or the loss of a job. Ironically, the changes can also be positive, as when entertainers become "overnight successes" and suddenly have access to endless amounts of money and attention. The self-destructive behavior and suicides of many celebrities, such as musician Kurt Cobain and actor and reality television star Gia Marie Allemand, fit into this category. Conversely, too much regulation can result in *fatalistic* suicide, as in the case of slaves, prisoners, or those with terminal diseases who see no hope or way to escape their desperate conditions.

Today, the issue of suicide remains a poignant one, and Durkheim's work remains a touchstone. News outlets have been filled with stories about the alarmingly high suicide rate among returning U.S. veterans. In 2013, medical researchers launched a suicide prevention study that monitors Facebook profile content and Twitter posts of veterans who have volunteered to share their social media activity, with the aim of providing clinicians with real-time assessments of risk factors for suicide and other dangerous behaviors. The study's name? The Durkheim Project.

think about it

1. *The suicide rate among whites in the United States is more than double that of blacks or Hispanics. Using Durkheim's insights, speculate about why this might be so.*
2. *Based on Durkheim's analysis, what positive steps could be taken to help reduce the risk of suicide for any particular individual?*

Suicide and Social Integration

	TOO LITTLE	TOO MUCH
Integration	Egoistic	Altruistic
Regulation	Anomic	Fatalistic

of people coexisted, often with different religions and cultural traditions. Given this increasing social complexity and diversity, how could social solidarity be maintained?

Durkheim's answer was *organic solidarity*, a new form of social cohesion, characteristic of modern industrial societies, that is based on interdependence. In the tradition of Spencer's "social organism," Durkheim argued that the social glue that holds together modern societies mirrors the way living organisms depend on multiple, specialized components operating in unison. Social cohesion is possible because we are different from

and dependent on one another. With its increased division of labor, modern urban industrialized society requires doctors, construction workers, salesclerks, police officers, factory workers, janitors, and thousands of other specialists to keep operating. Durkheim's theory helped explain why rapid growth and social differentiation in European societies did not lead to the breakdown of social solidarity, but instead produced a new and, Durkheim thought, even stronger form of solidarity that would permit a balance between individuality and a commitment to the group. In short, mechanical solidarity is based on the similarity

found in small communities, while organic solidarity is based on the diversity and differentiation found in larger communities.

Much of Durkheim's sociological work builds upon his central concern with social solidarity. Indeed in *Suicide*, one of his most influential works and one of the first to show the potential of the sociological perspective combined with systematic research, Durkheim argued that suicide rates could be explained by the strength of the social ties people have with larger social groups (Durkheim [1897] 1951). (See the Through a Sociological Lens box.)

Durkheim also argued that crime and punishment are fundamentally about solidarity (see Chapter 8). Crimes, for Durkheim, are acts that offend the **collective conscience**, or *the shared norms, beliefs, and values in a community*. Punishment serves as a means to reinforce social solidarity in the face of such antisocial actions. Without the moral constraints provided by the collective conscience, Durkheim argued, people—and society as a whole—would descend into a chaotic state of **anomie**, or *social normlessness, without moral guidance or standards*.

Today, close to a century later, people are still debating the proper role of values and religion in public and private life, and Durkheim's theories continue to be relevant to such twenty-first-century questions as these:

- What explains the resurgence of traditional religious belief?
- Can the increasing diversity of our society serve as a source of strength rather than division?
- How can people maintain healthy social ties in a world where they regularly move from one community to another?
- How can we affirm people's individuality while maintaining a sense of common identity?

Max Weber: The Protestant Ethic and the Rationalization of Modern Life

Like Durkheim, German theorist Max Weber (pronounced "VAY-ber") (1864–1920) was also trying to make sense of the shift from traditional to modern society. The son of a high-ranking government bureaucrat, Weber took a series of university positions as a young man, carried out major research projects, and served as a consultant for government agencies. By his mid-thirties, Weber was in a state of exhaustion and suffered a nervous breakdown that left him incapacitated for nearly seven years. When he was able to return to his writing full time, Weber produced his best-known work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber [1905] 1958).

In *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber argued that culture—in the form of Protestantism—had helped promote the early development of capitalism in northern Europe. Traditionally, the Catholic Church had encouraged the rejection of worldly affairs and wealth, promising everlasting life to those who were faithful and participated in the Church's defining rituals such as baptism and communion. However, after the Protestant Reformation, some sects—particularly Calvinists—rejected this approach to salvation and instead maintained that people's fate in the afterlife was predetermined before birth and could not be changed by actions they took on earth. But how could a person know whether he or she was going to heaven or hell? Some believers thought

that wealth, accumulated through diligent work, was a sign of God's favor, indicating likely salvation. This cultural belief encouraged hard work, investment, and the accumulation of wealth—the essential requirements for success in a capitalist economy. Marx had focused on the economy's role in influencing other aspects of social life—including culture. With *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber argued that cultural beliefs could influence economic development.

As *The Protestant Ethic* illustrates, Weber sometimes tried to understand social action by viewing it from the perspective of the actor, an approach known by the German word *verstehen*, which means "understanding." Understanding why someone behaves the way he or she does also provides insight into the broader culture in which the action is taking place. As we will see, this approach was an important precursor to later sociological theory that focused precisely on how people make meaning of the social world.

Weber also contributed to sociological theory through his effort to explain the shift from traditional to rational action. One of his central theoretical propositions was that, in earlier societies, *tradition*—beliefs and customs often charged with emotional significance that are passed on from generation to generation—primarily influenced the actions of people. However, in newly industrialized capitalist societies, *rationality*—the use of reason and logical calculation to achieve a goal as efficiently as possible—was much more likely to influence people's actions.

Weber argued that the **rationalization of society**—*the long-term historical process by which rationality replaced tradition as the basis for organizing social and economic life*—propelled the social change of his day. The influence of rationalization went beyond individual human action to include broader social institutions. For example, Weber argued that whereas rulers had previously claimed authority based solely on their claim to descent from previous rulers, the authority of government officials now rests increasingly on such rational-legal foundations as elections or specific training and certification. In addition, Weber argued that the principle of rationality was responsible for the formation of bureaucracies within large organizations—government agencies, political parties, industrial companies—that manage economic and political life.

Weber could see that rationalization might be productive for society, since it focused on specifying procedures, training officials, and pursuing efficiency. But he also saw that as rationalization permeated all aspects of social life it would create cold and impersonal societies. Weber believed that bureaucracy was self-perpetuating and becoming the dominant type of social organization. He worried it would constrain human action and imprison us in an "iron cage of bureaucracy."

Ultimately, Weber feared that in modern society humans could engage in meaningful action only in large organizations, in which they were allotted narrowly defined tasks and sacrificed their personal goals to the impersonal goals of the whole. And although he agreed with much of Marx's critique of industrial capitalism, Weber's theory of rationalization led him to predict that postcapitalist societies would not produce the kind of egalitarian future that Marx predicted, but would instead be even more highly rationalized, with more layers of bureaucracy. In this way, Weber was perhaps the most prophetic of the three major founders of sociology. He did not share in the pure

optimism for science and rational thought that emerged from the Enlightenment. Instead, he saw the early signs of a dark side to rationality that has now become a cautionary element of contemporary sociological thought.

Weber's sociological theory applies to a wide range of contemporary concerns. Rationalization continues to pervade our lives at home, school, and work in a variety of ways. For example:

- Do large university lecture courses and the even larger online courses represent the rationalization of higher education?
- How do the bureaucracies of governments and corporations assist in—and interfere with—the work of those organizations?
- Are such bureaucracies a threat to our privacy and freedom?

Weber gives us valuable tools for analyzing the role of rational thought and practice in many areas of our lives.

Recovered Voices: Harriet Martineau, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Jane Addams

Because of the prevailing racism and sexism during the early years of sociology, a variety of social thinkers were excluded from or marginalized in the academic world. Instead of writing for a strictly academic audience, they wrote for popular publications, authored novels, and spoke out as activists advocating social change. In many ways, they were ahead of their time. Although often at the margins of academic sociology while they were alive, these thinkers are now appreciated more widely for the contributions they made to our understanding of social life. Among these voices are Harriet Martineau, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Jane Addams.

Harriet Martineau: Gender Discrimination

Many consider Harriet Martineau (1802–1876), born into an affluent English family, to be the first female sociologist. Her work delved into issues of gender discrimination and slavery that many of the white male sociologists of her time had largely ignored. She also agitated for women's suffrage and the expansion of women's rights in England.

Self-taught and—like other women at the time—excluded from an academic appointment, Martineau began by writing magazine articles and then a series of books on economics and politics that were geared toward the general public rather than an academic audience. Her books were highly successful, making her wealthy as well as a literary celebrity. After traveling in the United States for two years, she wrote two books based on her observations, most notably *Society in America* (Martineau [1837] 2009), a forceful critique of the failure of the United States to live up to its democratic promise in its treatment of both enslaved



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people and women. At this time, she also wrote about the methods of social research in *How to Observe Morals and Manners* ([1838] 2009). Finally, Martineau made an important contribution to sociology by translating the work of Auguste Comte for English-speaking audiences.

W. E. B. Du Bois: Racial Inequality

W. E. B. Du Bois (pronounced “doo-BOYS”) (1868–1963) made important contributions to sociology with his groundbreaking research on race in America as well as with his efforts to promote racial justice. Du Bois, a descendant of African, French, and Dutch ancestors, came from a comfortable middle-class Massachusetts family that provided him with a solid early education and insulated him from the worst effects of racism. When he traveled south to Nashville to study at Fisk University in the 1880s, however, he encountered a rigidly segregated world in which African Americans were frequently the targets of beatings and lynchings. This injustice strengthened his interest in race as a subject of sociological study. In 1895, Du Bois became the first African American to obtain a PhD from Harvard University. He went on to teach sociology and to write a series of studies that elevated race to a place of prominence in sociology. Du Bois published the first sociological study of a black community, *The Philadelphia Negro* ([1899] 1996), followed by the widely read *The Souls of Black Folk* ([1903] 2005). Both works explored the complexity of race relations in turn-of-the-century American society.

Throughout his life, Du Bois combined scholarship with activism. He played an important role in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), arguably the leading civil rights organization of the twentieth century. He founded—and for a quarter century edited—the NAACP's influential magazine, *The Crisis*, which is still published today (thecrisismagazine.com). He also nurtured efforts to promote unity among people of African descent worldwide.

RECOVERED VOICES: MARTINEAU, DU BOIS, AND ADDAMS



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	Harriet Martineau	W. E. B. Du Bois	Jane Addams
Biography	1802–1876 English Writer and activist	1868–1963 American Scholar and activist	1860–1935 American Scholar and activist
Key issues and work	Gender, slavery, and discrimination <i>Society in America</i>	Race and discrimination NAACP cofounder <i>The Philadelphia Negro</i> ; <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i>	Urban social problems Hull House founder <i>Hull House Maps and Papers</i>

As an agent of change, he faced opposition from powerful forces. During the Cold War anticommunist hysteria of the 1950s, the U.S. Justice Department accused Du Bois of being an agent of the Soviet Union because of his peace activism and promotion of nuclear disarmament. Although he was acquitted, the FBI continued to harass him and the government revoked his passport. Eventually, he was allowed to travel abroad and he moved to Ghana, where he became a citizen. He died there at the age of 95 on August 27, 1963, the day before the civil rights march on Washington, D.C., where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

Jane Addams: Urban Social Problems

Jane Addams (1860–1935) is best known as a social reformer and the founder of Hull House, which provided a wide range of social services in the poor immigrant communities of Chicago and served as a model for later similar establishments, known as settlement houses, in other cities. Addams was the first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, awarded to her in 1931 for her longstanding work in building an international women’s coalition to promote peace and prevent war. But Addams also made an important contribution to the development of sociology. Her social reform work and her research on social life on Chicago’s South Side had a significant influence on the development of urban sociology at the University of Chicago, the home of the first sociology department in the United States.

However, unlike some University of Chicago sociologists, who limited their work to understanding urban life, Addams

believed that social theory and research should be linked to action promoting social change. Working to address social problems enabled her to contribute to social reform while developing and testing theories about how society worked. In doing so, she often challenged those in power, advocating for the poor and others at the margins of society.

In *Hull House Maps and Papers* ([1895] 2007), Addams chronicled life in the immigrant communities around Hull House, producing data that were used to promote reform. In *Democracy and Social Ethics* ([1902] 2002), she linked democracy with diversity, explaining that a well-functioning democratic society requires an understanding of a wide range of experiences and perspectives, something that early sociology was well equipped to provide. In addition, Addams foreshadowed the development of feminist social theory by critiquing the way male sociologists often based their generalizations about society on men’s experiences only. She argued that for researchers to fully understand social problems, they needed to have a sympathetic connection with the people affected by those problems. Her collaboration with poor immigrants informed her sociological understanding that people actively seek to improve their conditions, even when facing great odds in extremely difficult situations.

Although the works of Martineau, Du Bois, Addams, and others may have been underappreciated when they wrote them, those works have since had a significant impact on sociology, encouraging sociologists to pay careful attention to the social complexities of gender, race, class, and power.

Sociology's Diverse Theories

The work of early sociologists served as the source for the development of later sociological theory. In the chapters to come, we consider different theories regarding specific social phenomena. In this section, we examine some of the general approaches to theory that have developed over the years. First, though, we consider what theory is and examine some basic ways that sociological theories vary.

Understanding Theory

A national survey of adults in the United States conducted in 2015 by the Pew Research Center found that more than two-thirds of young respondents—those between 18 and 34, known as millennials—favored the legalization of marijuana. In contrast, only about half of respondents 35 or older favored marijuana legalization (Pew Research Center 2015a).

Why do you think young adults are more supportive of marijuana legalization than their older counterparts? Perhaps it's because young people in any era are typically more open to change than older adults. Alternately, perhaps there was something unique about the historical period in which millennials grew up that encouraged their favorable attitude toward marijuana legalization.

Each of these explanations is, in effect, a *theory* because it tries to explain an observation. Attributing the observed difference in attitudes toward marijuana legalization to the characteristics of age groups generally reflects a life-course theory. Attributing it to the experience of growing up in a particular historical period, in contrast, reflects a generational theory.

Accurate data—such as a national survey showing that younger adults are more supportive of marijuana legalization than are older adults—describes the world and helps us see “what” has occurred. Theories answer “why?” questions and help explain the data: “Why is this so?” “Why did this happen?” More formally, a **social theory** is *a set of principles and propositions that explains the relationships among social phenomena*. Through their explanations, theories also alert us to the sorts of questions we should be asking in future research.

Sociological theories address broad questions, such as “Why don't complex societies fall apart?” and “Why do wealth and poverty coexist?” as well as more narrowly defined questions, such as “Why do some schools succeed while others fail?” or even “Why do students who sit in the back of the class tend to have lower grades than those who sit up front?” When we speak of approaches to sociological theory, therefore, we are referring to broad explanations sociologists have for why society operates the way it does. Although thinking about theory can seem intimidating at first, it actually is fairly straightforward and involves answering the most interesting question of all: Why?

A few other characteristics of theories are important to remember:

- **A theory is not just a hunch or personal opinion.** It may start off that way, but to be useful, theories have to be put to the

test to see if they are consistent with the evidence; that's the nature of science. Sociological theory is linked to research and evidence in ways that we explore in Chapter 2.

- **Theories evolve and are sometimes rejected, leaving the most useful to survive.** When evidence repeatedly contradicts a theory, the theory is either revised or discarded. The most useful theories are those that endure, some of which we discuss later in this chapter.
- **Multiple theories often give us a more complete picture than any single one.** Many factors contribute to most aspects of social life. Considering different theories can alert us to a variety of possible explanations for a social phenomenon and to a range of factors that can contribute to it.

Finally, theories tend to vary along a few key dimensions, which we now consider.

Key Dimensions of Theory

How do professional football teams vary? Some focus on offense, others on defense. Some rely on skilled veteran players, whereas others groom the abilities of younger team members. Some teams get most of their points by running the ball, whereas others generate most of their offense by passing. These are among the key dimensions on which teams vary.

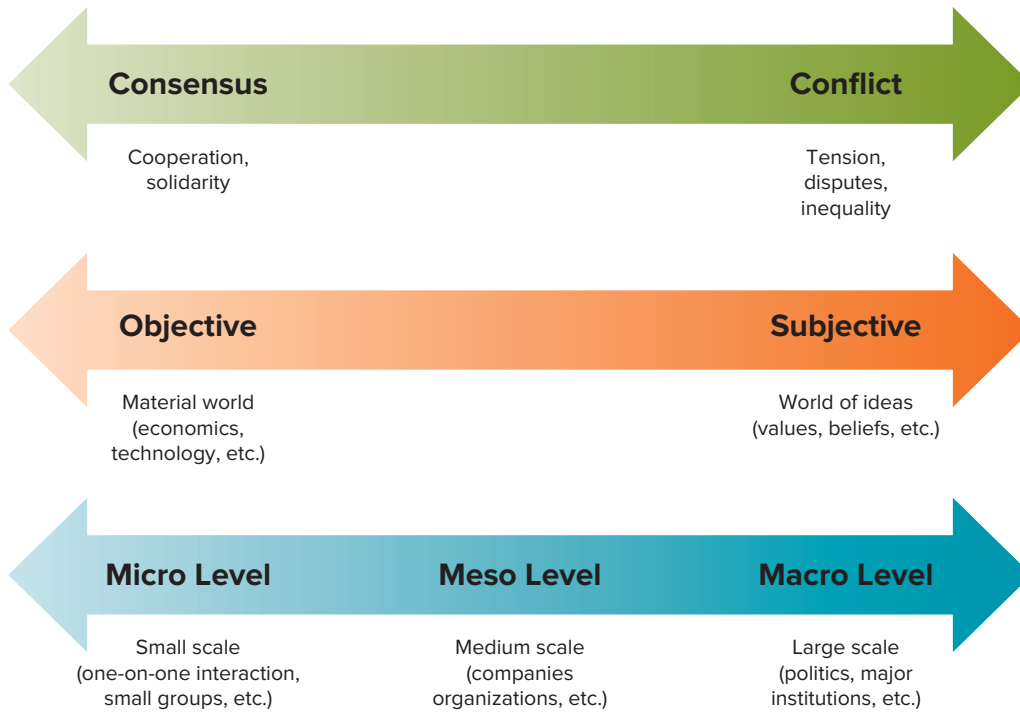
Sociological theories, too, vary along key dimensions, including consensus and conflict, subjective and objective reality, and micro-level and macro-level analyses (see Figure 1.1). Think of each dimension as a continuum rather than an either-or division. Knowing where a theory lies on each continuum can help you understand how it fits into the larger picture of sociological thought.

Consensus and Conflict *Conflict* refers to tensions and disputes in society, often resulting from the unequal distribution of scarce resources, which can contribute to social change. *Consensus* refers to solidarity and cooperative interaction, often due to shared values and interests, which can contribute to social stability. Although different theories focus more on one or the other, both consensus and conflict coexist in every society, institution, and organization—indeed, in all social life.

In some instances, conflict can produce certain kinds of consensus (Coser 1956). When countries go to war, a dramatic example of conflict, citizens in each nation often feel a renewed sense of solidarity, which they express through increased patriotism and nationalism. On the other hand, sometimes apparent consensus masks simmering tensions that become evident only when they erupt into full-blown conflict. For example, the ordinary daily routines of some cities have sometimes concealed underlying racial tensions, such as longstanding conflict between local police and the African American community in Ferguson, Missouri; Baltimore, Maryland; and other cities that exploded after high-profile cases of police shootings.

Objective and Subjective Reality *Objective conditions* are the material aspects of social life, including the physical environment, social networks, and social institutions. All of these exist outside of us, and collectively they make up the

FIGURE 1.1 | DIMENSIONS OF SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY



■ Different sociological theories focus on various dimensions of social life.

objective dimension of social life. In contrast, the *subjective dimension* of social life involves the world of ideas, including our sense of self, social norms, values, and belief systems. These all exist “in our head,” so to speak, and are part of the cultural aspect of social life.

Both the objective physical world we live in and our subjective interpretations of that world have a significant impact on our lives and our society. For example, we have seen that Marx emphasized the impact of economic life (an objective factor) whereas Weber’s theory regarding the Protestant ethic highlighted the role of cultural beliefs (a subjective factor).

Micro-Level and Macro-Level Analyses

The third dimension of sociological theory relates to different levels of analysis—as well as to different levels of society itself. Theories that focus on small-scale, usually face-to-face, social interaction are operating at the **micro level of analysis**. (*Micro* means “small.”) Theories that focus on large-scale social systems and processes such as the economy, politics, and population trends operate at the **macro level of analysis**. (*Macro* means “large.”) Theories that focus somewhere between very large and very small social phenomena—on organizations or companies, for example—are using a **meso level of analysis**. (*Meso* means “middle.”) Often, sociological work focuses on the interaction between these various levels of social life.

Now that you are equipped with a better understanding of what theory is and how theories vary, let’s take a closer look at some major theoretical traditions. Since the mid-twentieth century, sociologists have sometimes grouped varied sociological theories into three broad categories: *structural-functionalist theories*, *conflict theories*, and *symbolic interactionist theories*.

Structural-Functionalist Theories

Structural-functionalist theories focus on consensus and cooperative interaction in social life, emphasizing how the different parts of a society contribute to its overall operation. The roots of this tradition can be found in the work of Spencer and Durkheim. Structural-functionalist theories—often referred to simply as **functionalist theories**—were dominant in the United States in the middle of the twentieth century, when their leading proponent was Talcott Parsons (1902–1979). Parsons saw societies as complex systems made up of interdependent parts—for example, families, courts, schools, the economy—that work together to produce social stability. Because the systems are balanced, they tend to move toward normal states of equilibrium; a change in one part of the system results in a change in another part to compensate. Individuals are integrated into the social structure through culture, especially in the form of shared values. These shared values in turn promote a moral commitment to the society among its members that contributes to the society’s smooth functioning.

To endure, a social institution must meet a need of the system as a whole; institutions that do not contribute either adapt or disappear. Parsons argued that any social organization—whether a small group or a large and diverse society—must perform several key functions to survive, including teaching group members core community values, integrating members into productive participation in social life, defining and attaining community goals, and adapting to a changing environment.

In an important contribution to functionalist theory, Robert K. Merton (1910–2003) distinguished between **manifest functions**,



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Individuals are embedded within larger social structures that correspond to different levels of sociological analysis. For example, these Swedish gold medal-winning athletes brought their individual talents to the competition (micro level), but their curling matches were coordinated by the organization behind the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics in South Korea (meso level), which was, in turn, one project of the global International Olympic Committee (macro level).

the recognized and intended consequences of social phenomena, and latent functions, their largely unrecognized and unintended consequences. A manifest function of schools, for example, is to help prepare people for future employment, whereas a latent function is to serve as a dating pool or marriage market. Merton also reminds us that even though some phenomena are long-standing and seem permanent, they can be **dysfunctional**, *inhibiting or disrupting the working of a system as a whole*. For example, persistent classroom overcrowding is dysfunctional and can undermine the educational effectiveness of schools.

Consider how one might study the family as a social institution using functionalist theories. Families serve a number of functions, including the raising of children (though some societies raise children communally outside of the family and many families do not include children). In recent decades, a changing economy (another part of the social system) and changes in cultural values have contributed to changes in the family, including the rise of two-wage-earner families, single-parent families, blended families, and families with same-sex parents. Despite such changes, shared values continue to tell us how to raise children and maintain family life. Families can be dysfunctional, too—for example, by harboring child abuse or domestic violence.

Conflict Theories

Conflict theories *focus on issues of contention, power, and inequality, highlighting the competition for scarce resources.* This approach has its roots in the work of Marx and Weber. And through the work of others, such as Martineau, Du Bois, and Addams, it often finds expression in studies of class, race, gender, and other forms of inequality. The conflict approach emphasizes that, to meet common needs, people attempt to acquire scarce and valuable

resources. These include material goods—such as food, housing, and good jobs—as well as less tangible resources, such as social respect and freedom. Because these resources are often limited, people compete for them, bringing different groups into conflict. Even when conflict is not visible, it is often present but repressed by the dominance of the powerful over the less powerful.

Conflict theories, then, see power at the core of social life. Power enables some people to gain an advantage over others and acquire more resources; more resources, in turn, give them more power. In this ongoing struggle, different groups use culture's values and ideas as weapons to advance their own positions. The dominant culture supports and justifies existing inequalities. Various countercultures articulate different values in their challenge to the existing condition.

How would one study the family with conflict theory? Conflict theories explain that tension and disagreement within families are routine and ordinary. Some of this discord emerges because of differences in power

between women and men. Historically, the extensive legal, economic, and social inequalities between women and men reflected the different amounts of power each possessed. This inequality had been justified by a dominant culture that viewed men as naturally superior to women. Such cultural beliefs traditionally kept women in restricted family roles and prevented them from pursuing ambitions they might have had for themselves, topics we explore in Chapter 12. Inequalities continue to exist around family life today, both within families, where power may not be shared evenly, and within broader society, where some forms of family such as gay and lesbian couples, continue to face discrimination, even though same-sex marriage is legally recognized in the United States.

Symbolic Interactionist Theories

Symbolic interactionist theories *focus on how society emerges from people's use of shared symbols in the course of their everyday interactions.* Weber's approach of *verstehen*, in which the researcher tries to understand action from the perspective of the actor, laid some groundwork for these theories, as did early work by Georg Simmel (1858–1918), who wrote insightful essays on the dynamics of daily life. However, symbolic interactionist theories were fully developed in the United States, building on work by social psychologists in the early and mid-twentieth century. George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), for example, wrote about how we develop a sense of self through our interaction with others and by self-reflection (see Chapter 6). In his dramaturgical theory, Erving Goffman (1922–1982) showed how social life was very much like a play, with people adopting roles, complete with props and scripts (see Chapter 7).

Symbolic interactionist theories are strongly associated with the subjective and micro-level dimensions of social life. They explain social life by highlighting that the social world is based on interaction between people using cultural symbols, such as words and nonverbal body language. Through interaction, individuals develop a sense of self and create a shared understanding of reality with others. People with more power are typically better able to influence this interpretation of reality. This common interpretation of reality leads to patterns of social interaction within groups that form the basis of social structure. But everyday interaction is also constantly re-creating or changing these patterns, so society itself is inherently unstable and constantly in flux. Always under construction, the social world is therefore always capable of change. In this way, the symbolic interactionist theories explain social life by highlighting the active role people take in constructing shared understandings of social reality and creating society.

Applied to the family, the symbolic interactionist approach directs our attention to micro-level interactions between family members. As they interact, they develop an understanding of who they are and what their role is within the family. What does it mean to be a “good parent” today? Who will work to earn money? Who will care for children? What responsibility does a child have for an aging parent? Family members must come to some mutual understanding about what is expected from each of them. This shared interpretation of reality produces patterns of behavior that provide a routine structure to family life. But these interpretations and arrangements are not static; they are continuously reexamined and thus subject to change. The changes in family structure over the past half century illustrate the cumulative effect of individual-level decisions. People in different types of family—including two-parent families, one-parent families, childless couples, families with same-sex parents, and step-families—actively interpret the meaning of “family” and act accordingly.

Feminist Theories and Theoretical Diversity

As we see throughout this book, sociological theory has developed considerably since the mid-twentieth century, when some sociologists grouped the field’s varied theories into the categories of functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist perspectives. Newer perspectives often do not fit neatly into these older categories. Among the most important contemporary perspectives is feminist theory. Feminist theories focus on inequality between women and men and could be considered in the tradition of conflict theories. But feminist theories also provide insight into how those inequalities are created and reinforced in daily interactions, placing these insights squarely in the tradition of symbolic interactionism (see Chapter 11).

As with other theoretical traditions, there is no single feminist theory. Instead, a variety of feminist theories emphasize the importance of women’s experience, analyze gender inequality, and advocate gender equality (Anderson 2015; Taylor, Rupp, and Whittier 2012). As we saw earlier in the chapter, feminist ideas from Harriet Martineau, Jane Addams, and others were present during the early years of sociology but were often marginalized in the male-dominated world of academia. The women’s movement

of the 1960s and 1970s, however, helped create a space for the emergence of feminist scholars who transformed many academic fields, including sociology. Often working across disciplinary boundaries and in newly established women’s studies departments, feminist theorists challenged male assumptions about the world and about how social research should be done (Harding 1991; Reinharz 1992).

Historically, men had dominated the analyses of social life and often assumed that their understanding and perspective applied to everyone. Feminist “standpoint theory” rejected this notion, instead emphasizing that all knowledge is constructed from a particular perspective and that women’s different experiences need to be included to produce an accurate understanding of social life (Harding 2004; Smith 1974, 1989). In the years that followed, this basic insight was extended to include the recognition that women’s experiences vary depending on their class, race, and sexual orientation (Collins 2009; hooks 2000). This understanding has contributed to a wider recognition of “intersectionality”—that the effects of gender, class, race, and sexual orientation intersect in shaping social life (Anderson and Collins 2013; Collins and Bilge 2016; Rothenberg 2014) and that women’s lives vary across different societies (Mohanty 2003). Feminist theory has also contributed to a focus on women’s bodies as a site of social struggles involving sexuality, beauty norms, violence, reproductive rights, and health (Lorber and Moore 2010). Finally, feminist theory has informed work on men, gender, and sexuality, revealing how our ideas about masculinity are socially constructed (Kimmel and Messner 2013; Pascoe 2011).

In addition, various recent theories—under the umbrella term *postmodernism*—have highlighted how shared meanings and assumptions about the world have fragmented, as different groups in society come to understand social reality differently (Dasgupta and Kivisto 2014). Meanwhile, rational choice theories have introduced a sort of economic analysis, suggesting that social interaction be understood as exchanges between rational individuals. And queer theory challenges the stability of basic identity categories—such as straight or gay, male or female—highlighting the fluidity and complexity of identity in contemporary society.

One of the great strengths of sociology is that it contains a variety of theories about the workings of social life that reach well beyond the three traditional approaches. But what unites sociology? What is the common ground that enables people using such disparate theories to identify as sociologists? That common ground is the sociological perspective and the core concepts that are at its heart.

Sociology’s Common Ground: Culture, Structure, and Power

Diverse sociological theories are united by the core concepts that are central to a sociological perspective, including culture, structure, and power. As we have already seen, these concepts

TABLE 1.2 CORE CONCEPTS AND APPROACHES TO SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

	Functionalist Theories	Conflict Theories	Symbolic Interactionist Theories
Key questions	How is society held together? What function do the parts of society serve?	How is inequality structured in society? How are power relations maintained; how can they be changed?	How do people interpret and understand the social world in their interactions? How do they help shape the reality they experience?
Culture	Culture represents the consensus values and norms of a society into which individuals are socialized.	Conflicting parties use culture to advance their interests. Those in power perpetuate their privilege by socializing people into dominant values and norms. Those who are oppressed develop countercultures that challenge the dominant worldview.	Through the use of symbols, people create culture based on their interpretation of social reality. They pass on these ideas and values in the socialization process.
Structure	Society is a stable system made up of interconnected structures. People act within structural constraints so that change is typically gradual and temporary, returning societies to a stable equilibrium.	Structure is the social order maintained by dominant groups primarily through coercion and the threat of force. Collective action challenging the existing order is often the source of structural change.	Social structure is produced through recurring individual actions that create a pattern. Structure is inherently unstable and changeable since it must be reproduced continually through individual action.
Power	Power is the ability of a social system to achieve its collective goals. Inequalities between groups serve a positive function in society by motivating the most qualified to fill the most important positions.	Power is often concentrated in the hands of a dominant group that uses it to exploit or oppress others. Inequality is the result of struggle between groups for scarce resources.	Power is rooted in the social relationships between people. Inequality results from the actions of individuals and therefore can be changed.

were used extensively by sociology’s early thinkers and they have been at the heart of sociology ever since.

To varying degrees, all theoretical approaches rely on sociology’s core concepts. For example, functionalism highlights culture’s role in providing society with common values, such as love of family. Conflict theory emphasizes how competing groups can manipulate cultural ideas and symbols to their advantage, as when politicians attach the idea of “family values” to their legislative initiatives and suggest opponents are antifamily. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the process by which individuals create culture, as when people redefine “family” to incorporate a broader range of relationships. Although these approaches differ in their interpretations and emphases, they all agree that culture is a significant feature of social life worthy of close attention. Similarly, structure and power are important to all sociological theories. Table 1.2 summarizes how these core concepts provide the common ground that links the major approaches to sociological theory.

This section presents a brief overview of sociology’s three core concepts. Each concept is later covered in depth in a separate chapter. By learning to use these three concepts to analyze and understand social life, you will succeed in developing a sociological perspective.

Culture

Culture is the collection of values, beliefs, knowledge, norms, language, behaviors, and material objects shared by a people and socially transmitted from generation to generation. Culture operates at all levels of society: through everyday interactions between individuals; through organizational norms in schools, businesses, and other groups; and through society-wide mechanisms such as the media and religion. At its broadest, culture is a way of life.

We tend to take our own culture for granted since we have internalized its basic customs and assumptions. For example, most of us, most of the time, have a fairly good understanding of what to expect from routine social interactions and what is considered appropriate behavior in those settings. We know when we are expected to be more formal and polite (perhaps with authority figures) and when we can relax and be casual (perhaps with close friends and family). We know that raising a hand to speak when hanging out with friends is unnecessary and that cracking open a beer in class is unwise. These unwritten “rules”—and the ideas about courtesy and respect that inform them—are part of our culture that we have learned.

Consider, for example, the simple matter of where to look when speaking with someone. Most Americans look people in the eye since in American culture direct eye contact signals honesty and forthrightness, whereas avoiding eye contact suggests that one has something to hide. But in some Asian societies, extended direct eye contact is often considered rude and impertinent, whereas averting one's gaze is a sign of deference and respect. Imagine the potential miscommunication if, say, an Asian and an American business executive, unaware of these cultural differences, were assessing each other as potential business partners. The American might think her Asian colleague had something to hide, whereas the Asian executive might think his American colleague was being rude and disrespectful. Understanding the concept of culture helps us interact in a world of diversity and allows us to critically examine beliefs and behaviors we might otherwise view as “natural.”

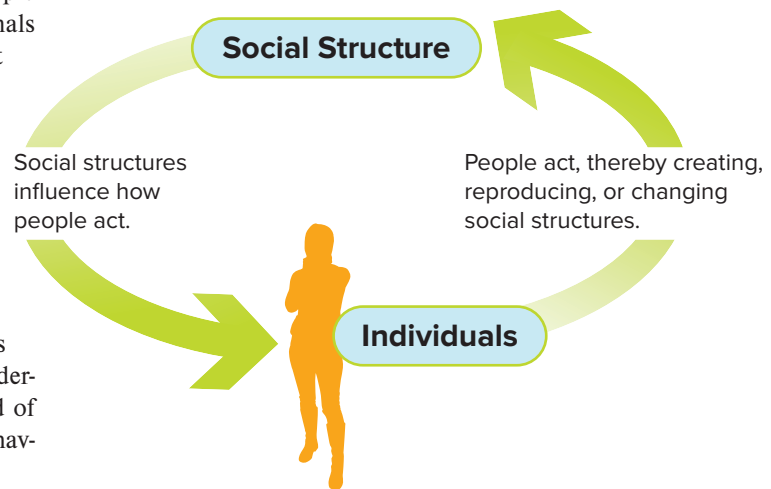
Culture is not “natural” or biologically based because it must be taught and learned through the process of socialization (see Chapter 6). Since people must reproduce culture for it to survive, people can also change culture by adopting new values, beliefs, and behaviors and abandoning older ones. This process of cultural evolution can create conflict as some people seek to hold on to more traditional values and ways of life, while others embrace new ideas and behaviors. As a result, cultural conflicts are common. Clashes in values, beliefs, and ways of life help fuel conflict, sometimes even contributing to warfare. On the other hand, culture is often something to celebrate, and our identity comes, in part, from the elements of culture that we choose to embrace. Our tastes in music, our dress and appearance, our religious beliefs or nonbeliefs, our language, our family's ancestry, among other things, are all cultural features that help make us who we are.

Structure

Structure refers to *the recurring patterns of behavior in social life*. These patterns occur at all levels of society, from our daily interactions with others to the global economy. Structures range from highly informal patterns, such as where and when we routinely meet up with friends, to much more formal organizations and institutions, such as schools and government.

People create structures to help them accomplish their goals, but, in turn, structures come to constrain what they can do (see Figure 1.2). For example, imagine that you and your friends decide to form a new group to advocate for better student life, including more parking spaces on campus. In establishing your group, you have to decide things like: Will there be formal leadership positions, such as president and secretary? If so, how will those be chosen? How do you become a member? How will decisions be made? How you answer such questions will determine the structure for your organization. You would hope that the

FIGURE 1.2 | THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN PEOPLE AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE



structure you create will help the group function smoothly and promote its goal effectively. But the rules that define the structure will also constrain the behavior of group members because they regulate how members are supposed to behave. As new members join your group, they will experience the rules as an already-existing reality that constrains their actions. They may choose to comply with the rules, thereby reproducing the structure of your group, or work to change them in some way, thereby modifying the structure.

Daily life tends to be ordered by various informal patterns of behavior, or *social structures*. We can talk about “family structure,” for example, even though there are no formal organizational by-laws that regulate the behavior of such groups. There are, however, legal standards, social norms, and common practices that establish the “rules” of family life, something we explore later in the book.

Similar to how culture must be reproduced—and can be changed—structures must be reproduced through continuing patterns of behavior or they can be changed through changes in that behavior. History provides examples of how people can act collectively to change social structure. In the nineteenth century, six-day workweeks were the norm in industrial societies, and workers usually labored for 10 or 12 hours a day. By the early twentieth century, however, a growing number of people joined the labor movement, which promoted the then-radical ideas of an eight-hour workday and a five-day workweek. With great difficulty, labor unions struggled successfully to establish this new standard, thus creating the much-beloved weekend with its two-day reprieve from work. This resulted in a fundamental change in the social structuring of time in our society. (See the Sociology in Action box for an example of the role sociology can play in helping address the structures that contribute to a persistent social problem.)

thinking about the core concepts

Review the description of sociology's early thinkers. What roles did culture, structure, and power play in their work?

SOCIOLOGY in ACTION

Working to Reduce Homelessness

In 2017, more than half a million people were homeless in the United States—an enduring, but solvable, social problem. Compared to other states, Rhode Island has done well in both reducing homelessness and sheltering those who are homeless. The rate of homelessness in the state ticked down by 8 percent between 2010 and the 2017, and only 5.8 percent of those who were homeless in Rhode Island in 2017 were without shelter, the fifth lowest rate in the country (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2017). But major challenges remain—homelessness went up in 2017, for example—and a broad coalition of researchers and advocates continues to work together to fight homelessness and protect the rights of those who are homeless.

For many years, Providence College sociologist Eric Hirsch has been an important figure in that effort, applying his sociological insight and research skills. Hirsch has coordinated data collection for an annual point-in-time “homeless census” that gives advocates important data to help them better serve homeless people. The census data are distributed to state and local government officials and then compiled with other state data in a national report, which informs policymakers about the issue.

Hirsch also serves on the board of the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless, a group that played a key role in passing a 2012 Homeless Bill of Rights in Rhode Island. The first statewide legislation of its kind in the United States, it protects those without a permanent address from discrimination in areas such as employment and voting.

As a sociologist, Hirsch is well aware that homelessness results from social forces more than individual shortcomings. While mental health issues and substance abuse have long been a reality among the homeless, Hirsch (2016) writes, “Rates of homelessness in the United States were quite low

in the post–World War II period until a dramatic rise in income inequality in the late 1970s. With a lot of income and wealth concentrated at the top, developers began to build only expensive suburban homes and luxury downtown apartments and condos. Restricting the supply of low- and moderate-income housing has meant higher and higher rents for poor households.”

Hirsch and his colleagues (Glasser, Hirsch, and Chan 2014) argue that the increase in the United States homelessness was caused by (1) the reduction in affordable housing, (2) policy changes that reduced or eliminated financial assistance for single unemployed individuals, and (3) long-term stagnant or falling incomes for low-wage workers. In responding, though, many municipalities have taken an individualistic “out-of-sight out-of-mind” approach, for example, making it illegal to panhandle. Hirsch warns that, too often, “We have criminalized extreme poverty and homelessness. We refuse to address the root causes” (Carini 2016).

In recognition of his many years of scholarship and advocacy in support of Rhode Island’s homeless, the political blog *RI Future* named Hirsch a winner of its annual award given to people who “work to improve the human condition.” Because of his efforts “on the streets, in the classroom, and in the statehouse,” they described Hirsch as “a tireless advocate for the poor and homeless” (Plain 2015).

think about it

1. How do you think regular data collection on a community’s homeless population can help advocates and policymakers address homelessness?
2. How does taking a sociological perspective help us to understand homelessness as a social problem?

Power

Power is the ability to bring about an intended outcome, even when opposed by others. Power, too, operates at all levels of society, including in families (parents have power over their children), in organizations (managers have power over the people who report to them), and in national and international relations (leaders exercise military and economic power to achieve national goals). Sometimes people *empower* themselves to achieve a goal (as when a student completes a degree to qualify for a particular career). Other times power is used to influence the thinking and behavior of others and even to dominate others. For example, an employer can dictate the rules that employees must follow during work hours.

Power is commonly used to allocate resources (economic power), make rules and decisions (political power), and help define reality (cultural power). It is thus closely tied to *inequality*, the systematic and unequal distribution of resources among various groups of people. All societies have some form of inequality; it just varies by type and degree. Those who have more economic, political, and cultural resources have a better chance to achieve their goals and overcome hurdles and opposition. In other words, they have more power.

Paying attention to power allows us to see connections and similarities between different forms of inequality, which coexist and interact. Considering the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality has proven to be especially important in understanding power and inequality.



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FAST-FORWARD

Social Change and Urbanization

Social change influences the lives of individuals and communities alike. These photos show the rapid development that has occurred in a portion of Shanghai, China, between 1987 (*top*) and 2017 (*bottom*). Just as the fast growth of industrial cities more than a century ago prompted early sociologists to study urbanization, the incredibly fast growth of Shanghai directs contemporary sociologists to examine the impact of such rapid change on the lives of local residents.

Culture, structure, and power are not unchanging features of social life; they are part of ongoing social processes. Culture is reproduced and changed through socialization. Structures are created and altered through action. Power can be used to produce or reduce inequalities, which in turn can alter the distribution of power. These dynamics are at the heart of a sociological analysis that recognizes the ever-changing nature of social life.

A Changing World

FROM MODERN TO POSTMODERN SOCIETY

Sociology arose over a century and a half ago during a period of transition that marked the emergence of modernity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Early sociologists, drawing on the core concepts of culture, structure, and power, sought to explain that transition and the social turmoil that often accompanied it. Today, we are living through another period of transition, this time from modernity to an as-yet-uncertain postmodernity, and sociologists are studying the nature and consequences of these changes.

Modernity was a period associated with the rise of industrialization, democracy, and science. In contrast, **postmodernity** is *a historical period beginning in the mid-twentieth century characterized by the rise of information-based economies and the fragmentation of political beliefs and ways of knowing*. Because we are in the midst of this transition, it is difficult to summarize neatly what postmodernity will look like or what long-term impact it will have. Nonetheless, we can point to certain features of this transition to the postmodern world (see Table 1.3).

Classical theorists were concerned with the rise of an industrial economy; today's sociologists are interested in the relationship between so-called postindustrial economies, in which information-based and service-sector jobs predominate, and the developing industrial economies that now produce the bulk of the world's manufactured goods. Classical sociologists studied the rise of urban life that accompanied industrialization; contemporary sociologists have examined the emergence of suburban life as a new social reality in advanced economies while documenting continued urbanization in the developing world and the growth of "mega-cities." The modern era was marked by a great faith in democratic governments as a means to human progress; in postmodern times, distrust of government and a loss of faith in political ideologies have often led to stalemated conflicts, political disengagement, and widespread cynicism. Finally, classical theorists highlighted the declining influence of religion, the rise of science, and the rationalization of modern life. Contemporary sociologists have studied our highly fragmented culture, which includes everything from the rise of multiculturalism and rejection of universal truths to a resurgence of fundamentalist religions and reaffirmation of universal truths.

Ten Features of Postmodern Society

Beyond such broad changes, a number of significant developments are transforming our way of life. These changes tend to affect the wealthier societies of the world most. Throughout this book, we use a sociological perspective to better understand these aspects of postmodern society. As you read the list try to

TABLE 1.3

KEY FEATURES OF
PREMODERN, MODERN, AND
POSTMODERN SOCIETIES

	Premodern	Modern	Postmodern
Economy	Agricultural	Industrial	Information based Service oriented
Social life	Rural	Urban	Suburban Mega-cities
Politics	Religiously sanctioned leaders	Democracy	Disengagement Cynicism
Dominant culture	Religion	Rationality and science	Fragmented Multicultural

use a sociological perspective to imagine how your individual life might be affected by these broader social changes. Consider, too, how you might work with others to effect change in one or more of these areas:

1. **The expansion of media and commercial culture.** In postmodern society, media technologies have dramatically expanded into all aspects of social life, creating new opportunities for communication and new dilemmas. The boundaries between the internet, television, smartphones, video games, and other media continue to blur, resulting in the all-encompassing and commercialized media environment in which we live. Closely connected to this expansion has been unprecedented growth in advertising and the promotion of consumption. How is the saturation of society by the media influencing social life? How often do you check or send texts or check Facebook? How many advertisements have you seen today? (See especially Chapter 14.)
2. **The threat to the natural environment.** The ever-increasing production and consumption of consumer goods have taken a serious toll on the environment in the form of resource depletion, pollution, climate change, and an ever-growing accumulation of waste. How can we balance the desire for material comfort with the need to protect diminishing resources? How are environmental changes potentially affecting our health and our way of life? (See Chapter 15.)
3. **The decline of U.S. cities and the rise of suburbs.** In the postmodern era, corporations have moved many industrialized manufacturing jobs to developing nations with lower-wage workers. As industrial jobs in U.S. cities disappeared, the economic base of major urban areas crumbled, leaving behind unemployment, poverty, and crime in many inner cities. Meanwhile, a lengthy period of suburban growth permitted people to own homes in relatively safe and tranquil surroundings. But suburban life can leave people feeling socially isolated and require lengthy commutes to work

in heavy traffic. The recent resurgence of some cities has produced new challenges associated with gentrification. How can U.S. cities remain vital in postmodernity? How have the suburbs changed the rhythms of daily life, and what is their effect on people's sense of community? How will the expansion of urban life in developing nations affect those societies? (See Chapter 15.)

4. **The global economy.** You need only consider the route traveled by the components of your smartphone—from its designers at a high-tech company in Silicon Valley in the United States to mineral mining in Africa, to parts suppliers in Japan, South Korea, and Europe to production in China and distribution all around the world—to realize that we are inextricably part of a global system of production and consumption. The global economy is transforming societies around the world, and the debate over the nature of this change has been an important topic in sociology. How does a global economy affect the inequality between rich and poor nations? How has the growth of a global economy impacted employment patterns, educational requirements, and family life? (See Chapters 9, 16, and 17.)
5. **The aging population.** We are living longer and healthier lives thanks to advances in health information and medical technology. Now society must adjust to the new reality of an aging population. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that the number of Americans aged 90 and over increased from 720,000 in 1980 to 1.9 million in 2010, and projects the 90+ population to grow to more than 10 million by 2050 (He and Muenchrath 2011). How will the need to care for aging parents and grandparents affect future American families? How will social services and the health care system cope with an aging population? (See Chapter 17.)
6. **The changing family.** Effective contraception, divorce, blended families, two-wage-earner families, single-parent families, same-sex marriage, and surrogate parenting, among other developments, have changed the definition of the family and its role in society. How does today's family differ from yesterday's? How have recent social changes affected the nature and function of the family? What is in store for the family in the future? (See Chapter 12.)
7. **Troubled political institutions.** In many parts of the world the prospect of democracy holds great promise as a substitute for repressive political regimes. But long-established democracies often seem to have their own troubles with declining trust in government, growing public cynicism, and partisan gridlock. Why do some well-established democracies stagnate? What threats challenge the vitality of our democratic institutions? (See Chapter 16.)
8. **Increased diversity and multiculturalism.** A recent influx of immigrants has been a catalyst for change as well as conflict in the United States, just as was a previous wave of immigrants who arrived in the early twentieth century. In addition, the global economy and the relative ease of modern travel have begun to erode the significance of national boundaries. However, President Trump's calls for

“America First,” border walls, travel bans, and reduced immigration reflect a very different—and controversial—direction. Do the fragmentation and juxtaposition of cultural experiences—in music, food, film, and more—point to a new cultural mash-up? Does the presence of such cultural diversity threaten societies with fragmentation? How can the distinct contributions of different cultures be preserved in a world in which cultural traits are increasingly blended? (See Chapters 3, 10, and 14.)

9. **The changing nature of violence and warfare.** Powerful and wealthy countries, including the United States, possess advanced weapons that can destroy humanity many times over. Some smaller nations and various nonstate actors have developed low-tech but deadly weapons and tactics. The result is a world bristling with arms, threatened by violence, and locked in political and military stalemates. How can societies reduce violence? What factors contribute to the recent rise in terrorist activity? Why is the United States locked in seemingly endless wars it can’t seem to win? What is the future of warfare? (See Chapter 16.)
10. **The changing role of religion.** To varying degrees, the world’s wealthy industrialized nations have become increasingly secular—that is, religion plays a much less significant role in public and daily life in those nations than it once did. But in other parts of the world, religious beliefs continue to inform and drive many aspects of social life. Because of the increased contact among cultures, differences in religious beliefs now fuel some of the world’s major conflicts, as well as divisive political issues at home. Will secularization continue to expand, or will religious revivals spread? Can different cultures coexist even with fundamental religious differences? (See Chapter 12.)

The Challenge and Hope of Sociology

Sociology holds great promise. As C. Wright Mills pointed out, it can help us understand the connections between ourselves and the larger social world. In studying society, we learn more about who we are as individuals, why we face the conditions that we

do, and how we are connected to others. At its best, sociology promotes an understanding of the social world and our place in it and suggests ways that we might act to improve our lives, our community, and our world.

But sociology comes with some challenges, too. Because it addresses serious problems that face society, sociology can lead us to some disturbing discoveries about society and ourselves. Issues such as how to care for an aging population, how to balance human needs with environmental concerns, how to address persistent poverty, how to combat racism and sexism, and how to respond to extremist violence are not easy to think about, but they are important and must be faced. Also, looking at our experiences in a broader social context sometimes reveals disconcerting insights about our relative privilege, or lack of it, due to the effects of class, race, gender, sexual orientation, or nationality. Achieving a better understanding of our place in the world’s hierarchy of privilege can be enlightening, but also unsettling.

As you will see throughout this book, sociology can force us to move outside our comfort zone and challenge us to think in new ways about things that we take for granted. If we live in relative comfort and freedom, we might find it easy to ignore difficult issues that face society, and hope they won’t affect us personally. If we are struggling to get by, we might prefer to focus solely on taking care of our private lives, hoping that eventually we can insulate ourselves from economic upheaval, crime, and other social problems. But sociology reminds us that in taking either position we are, by default, helping reproduce the society in which we live, with all its problems. Whether we realize it or not, whether we like it or not, we are part of the broader social world.

In the face of our changing world, sociology offers hope. It is not a fearful hope that we can somehow manage individually to escape the world’s problems. Instead, it is the hopeful realization that societies—and the issues that confront them—are largely created by human beings. That means people working together also have the capacity to change and improve those societies, as well as their own lives. We invite you to take up the challenge to use sociology to better understand the world and your place in it. And we hope that from this understanding, you’ll be inspired and better equipped to act—in whatever way you see fit—to make a positive difference in your life and in our rapidly changing world.

Looking Back

1. The sociological perspective is a way of looking at the world that focuses on the relationships between individuals and larger forces in society. Sociology as a discipline couples this perspective with systematic study and research using the methods of social science.
2. The discipline of sociology emerged in the late 1800s, in part as a response to the dramatic economic, political, cultural, and social changes taking place in the modern world.
3. Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber were the three most influential classical sociological thinkers. Marx is best known for his work on capitalism and on the role of conflict in society. Durkheim's work focused on social solidarity. Weber is best known for his work on the rationalization of society, including the rise of bureaucracy.
4. Because of the sexism and racism of the day, the contributions of other social thinkers such as Harriet Martineau, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Jane Addams were not fully recognized or accepted within the discipline of sociology in their time. However, they made a major contribution, especially in spotlighting issues of gender- and race-based inequality.
5. Sociological theories seek to explain the workings of society by explaining why things happen as they do. These theories vary along three key dimensions: consensus and conflict, subjective and objective reality, and micro-level and macro-level analyses. Diverse theories are sometimes grouped into the functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist approaches.
6. The foundational work in sociology highlighted a number of core concepts that still serve as sociology's common ground. Among these enduring concepts are culture, structure, and power. These concepts are used throughout the book to help analyze social issues and phenomena.
7. Today, sociologists continue to study the social changes taking place as modernity gives way to the postmodern era. In many respects, the postmodern world is distinctly different from the one studied by the classical sociologists. But the enduring core concepts and theoretical insights of those early sociological thinkers—combined with new ideas and theories—can help us better understand our contemporary society. That is the focus of this book.

Critical Thinking: Questions and Activities

1. What is sociology and what is the sociological perspective? How does the sociological perspective apply to your own life?
2. The use of indiscriminate deadly violence against civilians, often referred to as terrorism, is a topic of intense interest to social scientists. What sorts of issues and questions would someone using a sociological perspective focus on in addressing this topic? What sorts of questions might researchers in other social science disciplines—such as economics, psychology, anthropology, and political science—focus on when considering this phenomenon?
3. What do you see as some of the advantages and disadvantages of the rise of modernity?
4. Of the 10 changes in contemporary society listed on pages 23–24, which one do you think is the most significant? Why?
5. What important changes, if any, would you add to the list? Why do you feel they should be included?
5. What cards have you been dealt? Consider, for example, these questions about your childhood: Did you regularly have access to adequate food and clean drinking water? Did you live in a neighborhood that was relatively safe and free of crime? Did you have access to a good education? If you answered no to one or more of these questions, you no doubt had to overcome some hurdles while growing up. If you answered yes to these questions, you have enjoyed privileges that are unavailable to others. Using your sociological imagination, list 10 more questions that could help determine whether people have enjoyed access to privileges in their lives.

Key Terms

anomie (p. 12) social normlessness, without moral guidance or standards.

collective conscience (p. 12) the shared norms, beliefs, and values in a community.

conflict theories (p. 17) social theories that focus on issues of contention, power, and inequality, highlighting the competition for scarce resources.

culture (p. 19) the collection of values, beliefs, knowledge, norms, language, behaviors, and material objects shared by a people and socially transmitted from generation to generation.

division of labor (p. 10) the way people specialize in different tasks, each requiring specific skills.

dysfunctional (p. 17) inhibiting or disrupting the working of a system as a whole.

functionalist theories (p. 16) see “structural-functionalist theories.”

industrialization (p. 8) the use of large-scale machinery for the mass manufacture of consumer goods.

latent functions (p. 17) the largely unrecognized and unintended consequences of social phenomena.

macro level of analysis (p. 16) a focus on large-scale social systems and processes such as the economy, politics, and population trends.

manifest functions (p. 16) the recognized and intended consequences of social phenomena.

meso level of analysis (p. 16) a focus somewhere between very large and very small social phenomena—on organizations or institutions, for example.

micro level of analysis (p. 16) a focus on small-scale, usually face-to-face social interaction.

modernity (p. 7) a historical era in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries characterized by the growth of democracy and personal freedom, increased reliance on reason and science to explain the natural and social worlds, and a shift toward an urban industrial economy.

positivism (p. 9) a belief that accurate knowledge must be based on the scientific method.

postmodernity (p. 22) a historical period beginning in the mid-twentieth century characterized by the rise of information-based economies and the fragmentation of political beliefs and ways of knowing.

power (p. 21) the ability to bring about an intended outcome, even when opposed by others.

rationalization of society (p. 12) the long-term historical process by which rationality replaced tradition as the basis for organizing social and economic life.

science (p. 7) a method of inquiry that uses logic and the systematic collection of evidence to support claims about the world.

social solidarity (p. 10) the collective bonds that connect individuals.

social theory (p. 15) a set of principles and propositions that explains the relationships among social phenomena.

sociological perspective (p. 3) a view of the social world that focuses on discovering and understanding the connections between individuals and the broader social contexts in which they live; what C. Wright Mills called the “sociological imagination.”

sociology (p. 3) the systematic study of the relationship between individuals and society.

structural-functionalist theories (p. 16) theories that focus on consensus and cooperative interaction in social life, emphasizing how the different parts of a society contribute to its overall operation. Often referred to simply as “functionalist theories,” or “functionalism.”

structure (p. 20) the recurring patterns of behavior in social life.

symbolic interactionist theories (p. 17) social theories that focus on how society emerges from people’s use of shared symbols in the course of their everyday interactions.

urbanization (p. 8) the growth of cities.