SOCIOLOGY
A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

14e

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RICHARD T. SCHAEFER

sociology

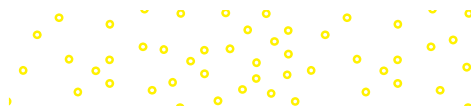## a brief introduction

14th edition

Richard T. Schaefer
DePaul University

McGraw Hill

dedication

To my grandchildren, Matilda and Reuben. May they enjoy exploring life's possibilities.
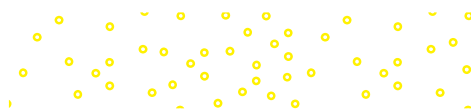
about the author
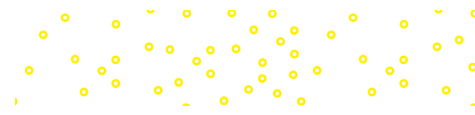
Courtesy of Richard T. Schaefer

Richard T. Schaefer: Professor Emeritus, DePaul University
BA, Northwestern University,
MA, PhD, University of Chicago

Growing up in Chicago at a time when neighborhoods were going through transitions in ethnic and racial composition, Richard T. Schaefer found himself increasingly intrigued by what was happening, how people were reacting, and how these changes were affecting neighborhoods and people's jobs. His interest in social issues caused him to gravitate to sociology courses at Northwestern University, where he eventually received a BA in sociology.

"Originally as an undergraduate I thought I would go on to law school and become a lawyer. But after taking a few sociology courses, I found myself wanting to learn more about what sociologists studied, and fascinated by the kinds of questions they raised." This fascination led him to obtain his MA and PhD in sociology from the University of Chicago. Dr. Schaefer's continuing interest in race relations led him to write his master's thesis on the membership of the Ku Klux Klan and his doctoral thesis on racial prejudice and race relations in Great Britain.

Dr. Schaefer went on to become a professor of sociology at DePaul University in Chicago. In 2004 he was named to the Vincent DePaul professorship in recognition of his undergraduate teaching and scholarship. He has taught introductory sociology for over 35 years to students in colleges, adult education programs, nursing programs, and even a maximum-security prison. Dr. Schaefer's love of teaching is apparent in his interaction with his students. "I find myself constantly learning from the students who are in my classes and from reading what they write. Their insights into the material we read or current events that we discuss often become part of future course material and sometimes even find their way into my writing."

Dr. Schaefer is the author of *Sociology in Modules,* fifth edition (McGraw Hill, 2020), the seventh edition of *Sociology Matters* (McGraw Hill, 2019), and, with Robert Feldman, *Sociology and Your Life with P.O.W.E.R. Learning* (2016). He is also the author of *Racial and Ethnic Groups,* now in its fifteenth edition update (2021) and *Race and Ethnicity in the United States* (ninth edition, 2019), both published by Pearson. Together with William Zellner, he coauthored the ninth edition of *Extraordinary Groups,* published by Waveland Press in 2015. Dr. Schaefer served as the general editor of the three-volume *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society,* published by Sage in 2008. These books have been translated into Chinese (long and short forms), Sinhalese. Indonesian, Turkish, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish, as well as adapted for use in Canadian colleges.

Dr. Schaefer's articles and book reviews have appeared in many journals, including *American Journal of Sociology; Phylon: A Review of Race and Culture; Contemporary Sociology; Sociology and Social Research; Sociological Quarterly; Patterns of Prejudice;* and *Teaching Sociology.* He served as president of the Midwest Sociological Society in 1994–1995.

Dr. Schaefer's advice to students is to "look at the material and make connections to your own life and experiences. Sociology will make you a more attentive observer of how people in groups interact and function. It will also make you more aware of people's different needs and interests—and perhaps more ready to work for the common good, while still recognizing the individuality of each person."

brief contents

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contents

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chapter opening excerpts

Every chapter in this textbook begins with an excerpt from one of the works listed here. These excerpts convey the excitement and relevance of sociological inquiry and draw readers into the subject matter of each chapter.

Chapter 1
Outcasts United by Warren
T. St. John   2

Chapter 2
*"Anytime, Anywhere': Vaping as
Social Practice"* by Helen Keane,
Megan Weier, Doug Fraser, and
Coral Gartner   28

Chapter 3
"Body Ritual among the Nacirema" by
Horace Miner   51

Chapter 4
*"Forging Selfhood: Social
Categorisation and Identity in
Arizona's Prison Wildfire Programme"*
by Lindsey Raisa Feldman   73

Chapter 5
"The Psychology of Imprisonment" by
Philip Zimbardo   94

Chapter 6
*Reclaiming Conversation: The Power
of Talk in a Digital Age* by Sherry
Turkle   122

boxed features

🔍 RESEARCH TODAY

Ingram Publishing

SOCIOLOGY IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Don Hammond/Design Pics

OUR WIRED WORLD

Eric Audras/ONOKY/Superstock

SOCIOLOGY ON CAMPUS

Andersen Ross/Blend Images

Ingram Publishing

social policy sections

Last Resort/PhotoDisc/Getty Images

maps

tracking sociological perspectives tables

summing up tables

Taking Sociology with You . . . Wherever You Go

Why Does Sociology Matter?

Whether you're a first-time student, someone who is returning to the classroom, or even an instructor leading a discussion, you've probably thought about that question. Sociologists examine society, from small-scale interactions to the broadest social changes, which can be daunting for any student to take in. *Sociology: A Brief Introduction,* Fourteenth Edition, bridges the essential sociological theories, research, and concepts and the everyday realities we all experience. The program highlights the distinctive ways in which sociologists explore human social behavior—and how their research findings can be used to help students think critically about the broader principles that guide their lives. In doing so, it helps students begin to think sociologically, using what they have learned to evaluate human interactions and institutions independently.

What do a police officer, a nurse, and a local business owner need to know about the community that they serve? It turns out quite a lot. And *Sociology: A Brief Introduction* is poised to give students the tools they need to take sociology with them as they pursue their studies and their careers, and as they get involved in their communities and the world at large. Its emphasis on real-world applications enables students to see the relevance of sociological concepts to contemporary issues and events as well as students' everyday lives. In addition, the digital tools in Connect foster student preparedness for a more productive and engaging experience in class and better grades on exams.

Help Your Students Succeed with Connect

McGraw Hill Connect is an integrated educational platform that includes assignable and assessable quizzes, exercises, and interactive activities, all associated with learning objectives for *Sociology: A Brief Introduction,* Fourteenth 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:

Application-Based Activities. At the higher level of Bloom's, McGraw Hill's Application-Based Activities are highly interactive, automatically graded, online learn-by-doing exercises that provide students a safe space to apply their knowledge and problem-solving skills to real-world scenarios. Each scenario addresses key concepts and skills that students must use to work through and solve course-specific problems, resulting in improved critical thinking and development of relevant workplace skills. Topics for Sociology include "Deviance and Social Control," "Racial and Ethnic Inequality," and "Socialization and the Life Course," where students explore and navigate life choices and challenges.

Applying the Perspectives. In Applying the 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.

icons from left to right: Shutterstock/Tati Nova photo Mexico; Ingram Publishing/SuperStock; Glow Images; Hero/Corbis/Glow Images; Marc Romanelli/Blend Images LLC; large photo (Maria): Shutterstock/Tati Nova photo Mexico

(Left): bholland/Getty Images; (Middle): azndc/Getty Images; (Right): TriggerPhoto/Getty Images

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

Mobile Interface. 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.

Concept Clip: Sociology as a Science

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

Writing Assignment

McGraw Hill's new Writing Assignment Plus tool delivers a learning experience that improves students' written communication skills and conceptual understanding with every assignment. Assign, monitor, and provide feedback on writing more efficiently and grade assignments within McGraw Hill Connect®. Writing Assignment Plus gives you time-saving tools with a just-in-time basic writing and originality checker.

Features include:

- Grammar/writing checking with McGraw Hill learning resources

- Originality checker with McGraw Hill learning resources
- Writing stats
- Rubric building and scoring
- Ability to assign draft and final deadline milestones
- Tablet ready and tools for all learners

Provide a Smarter Text and Better Value with SmartBook 2.0

SMARTBOOK®

Available within Connect, **SmartBook® 2.0** makes study time as productive and efficient as possible by identifying and closing knowledge gaps. SmartBook 2.0 identifies what an individual student knows and doesn't know based on the student's confidence level, responses to questions, and other factors.

SmartBook 2.0 builds an optimal, personalized learning path for each student, so students spend less time on concepts they already understand and more time on those they don't. As a student engages with SmartBook 2.0, the reading experience continuously adapts by highlighting the most impactful content a student needs to learn at that moment in time. This ensures that every minute spent with SmartBook 2.0 is returned to the student as the most value-added minute possible. The result? More confidence, better grades, and greater success.

SmartBook 2.0 is optimized for cell phones and tablets and accessible for students with disabilities using interactive features. Just like our eBook and ReadAnywhere App, SmartBook 2.0 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. Through Connect, preloaded readings are available for instructors to assign. Using a scaffolded framework such as understanding, synthesizing, and analyzing, Power of Process moves students toward higher-level thinking and analysis.

Chapter Changes

Changes to the Fourteenth Edition reflect new research findings, updated statistics, and hot topics and issues. In addition, a new feature added to every chapter is the "Writing Sociology" question included in the Mastering This Chapter summary-and-review section.

Chapter 1: Understanding Sociology

- chapter-opening photo illustrating environmental cleanup
- extensive discussion of how different social sciences would address the issue of climate change
- cartoon illustrating why different people have different attitudes to climate change
- "Thinking Critically" question about Marx's influence on current thinking
- photo illustrating an interactionist study of new patterns of facial coverings and social distancing during the coronavirus pandemic
- Research Today box, "The Third Place," including impact of coronavirus on behavior in public places
- example highlighting male vs. female acceptable behavior on the tennis court

- example and photo highlighting how conflict theory focuses on issues of long-term social and racial inequality
- Sociology in the Global Community box, "Influencers Worldwide"

Chapter 2: Sociological Research

- chapter-opening vignette drawn from a sociological study of why teenagers use vaping products
- photo and text example to illustrate how sociologists control for various biases in study subjects
- Figure 2-2, "Educational Level and Household Income in the United States," extensively updated
- explanation of new Census relationship questions and how they relate to sociological research
- coverage of research on parental involvement in children's education during the coronavirus pandemic
- extensive example of how content analysis reveals how men are portrayed in country music
- discussion of how the study of effects of education on income can be broadened to include race and gender factors
- discussion of how being gay influences racial attitudes

Chapter 3: Culture

- chapter-opening photo emphasizing the effects of technology on culture
- discussion of the #MeToo movement in the context of changing norms
- enhanced and updated discussion of the culture of cheating in college admissions
- Figure 3-3, "Values: Acceptance of Government Efforts to Reduce Income Inequality"
- photo of neo-Nazi group to illustrate culture shock
- discussion of use of sanctions for failure to comply with orders to social distance and wear face coverings during the coronavirus pandemic
- Sociology in the Global Community box: "Culture Encapsulated on an Island"
- discussion of the culture of vaping as an emerging subculture
- Figure 3-4, "Most Commonly Spoken Language, Other than English or Spanish, by State"
- update of Figure 3-5, "Percentage of People Who Speak a Language Other than English at Home, by State"
- coverage of the impact of COVID-19 on globalization
- discussion of the need for bilingual health care workers during the coronavirus pandemic

Chapter 4: Socialization and the Life Course

- chapter-opening photo illustrating the role of family in socialization
- chapter-opening vignette focusing on how people navigate between different cultures
- updated discussion of the importance and findings of twin studies
- photo illustrating role taking in childhood
- enhanced discussion of face-work, with example drawn from *American Idol*
- discussion of ZOOM and impression management
- extended discussion of young children and media use
- Wired World box, "Teens Controlling Access to Their Social Media," including figure
- enhanced discussion of employment by older workers
- coverage of childcare during the coronavirus pandemic
- Figure 4-1, "Support for Increased Government Spending on Retirement"

Chapter 5: Social Interaction, Groups, and Social Structure

- chapter-opening photo featuring female athletes
- updated discussion of the Zimbardo Prison Experiment featuring recent criticisms
- enhanced discussion of ascribed and achieved statuses focusing on the elderly in China

- Research Today box, "Decision Making in the Jury Room"
- discussion of the impact on social reality caused by the wearing of face coverings, with focus on Black men
- coverage of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on union organizing
- likening of Gemeinschaft to contemporary sharing economy
- discussion of privacy concerns during the pandemic
- updated and expanded Our Wired World box, "Twitter Networks: From Wildfires to Hurricanes," with new figure

Chapter 6: Mass Media and Social Media

- chapter-opening photo highlighting the international reach of U.S. media
- updated chapter-opening excerpt from new edition of *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*
- discussion of sociological study of media usage by young Muslims in Australia
- photo of a Donald Trump tweet, with discussion of his use of Twitter for presidential communications
- discussion of dissemination of false reports by political parties and governments
- coverage of the use of telecom data and apps to trace the spread of the coronavirus pandemic
- enhanced discussion of online stereotyping
- discussion of facial recognition software and its interactionist implications
- major revisions to Figure 6-2, "Who Uses Social Media?"
- expanded discussion of audience targeting in elections campaigns
- enhanced discussion of influencers, with Key Term treatment
- revision of Social Policy feature, "Censorship," to focus on misinformation in social media
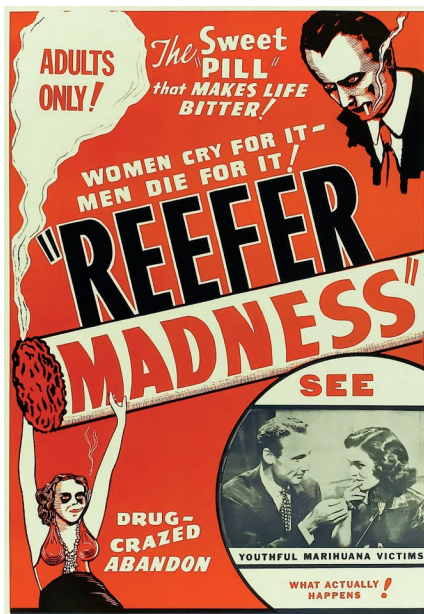
Chapter 7: Deviance, Crime, and Social Control

- chapter-opening image: movie poster for the 1939 film *Reefer Madness*
- discussion of attitudes toward policing and race
- subsection, "Obedience and Virtual reality," updating coverage of Milgram's classic experiment, with photo
- image of crowded beaches during the COVID-19 pandemic as an example of deviance
- enhanced and updated coverage of the effects of child abuse
- Research Today box, "Gun Control"
- updated discussion of the bail system in the Research Today box, "Debtors' Jails in the Twenty-First Century"
- image of Bansky's "The Flower Thrower in Jerusalem" to illustrate labeling theory
- enhanced discussion of the feminist perspective to include coverage of domestic violence during the coronavirus pandemic
- updated discussion of disadvantages experienced by Blacks in the justice system

- Figure 7-3, "State Hate-Crime Laws: The Fifty States Vary in What They Categorize as Hate Crimes," with expended discussion of hate crime
- Key Term treatment for "racial profiling"

Chapter 8: Stratification and Social Mobility in the United States

- chapter-opening image showing a celebrity serving in a soup kitchen
- chapter-opening vignette based on a speech about inequality by Jerome Powell, chair of the Federal Reserve board of governors
- revised material on the shrinking middle class, with Research Today box, "Precarious Work"
- complete revision of section on class warfare, focusing on recent tax changes that benefit the rich
- coverage of the differential impact of the coronavirus pandemic on different classes and on racial and ethnic minorities
- enhanced coverage on women's unpaid labor and efforts to measure its economic value
- updated coverage of differences in wealth between racial and ethnic groups
- expanded treatment of intergenerational mobility, focusing on the Millennials
- discussion of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on unemployment rates
- enhanced discussion of poverty, including new focus on geographic distribution of both poverty and affluence
- discussion of aspects of COVID-19 related to stratification and mobility: impact on life chances, on occupational prestige, and CEO salaries
- Key Term treatment for "precarious work," with discussion of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic

Chapter 9: Global Inequality

- chapter-opening photo showing a squatter settlement in the developing world
- discussion of the coronavirus pandemic's likely effects on recent progress in reducing poverty
- chapter-opening vignette excerpted from the updated United Nations Millennium Development Goals
- Sociology on Campus box, "International Students," with figure showing countries of origin for international students in the United States
- Sociology in the Global Community box, "Social Stratification in Japan," with photo
- major revisions to Social Policy section, "Rethinking Welfare in Europe and North American," focusing on current research into effectiveness of various programs and the impact of the pandemic
- Taking Sociology with You question on the impact of the pandemic
- Key Term treatment for "conspicuous consumption"

Chapter 10: Racial and Ethnic Inequality

- discussion of inclusion of triracial categories in recent census questions
- Research Today box on prejudice and discrimination, "Avoiding Interracial Relationships Online," with photos
- coverage of 2020 racial justice protests, white privilege, and the role of institutional discrimination
- discussion of voting requirements as an example of institutional discrimination
- enhanced and expanded section on racial profiling, with photo
- Sociology in the Global Community box, "The Maori of New Zealand," with photo
- updated discussion of Asian Americans as a "model minority," with Research Today box, "Is There a Model Minority?" including anti-Asian sentiment during the coronavirus pandemic
- updated and enhanced discussion of Chinese Americans, Indian Americans, effects of Hurricane Maria and COVID-19 on Puerto Rican Americans, and recent antisemitic incidents
- updated and expanded discussion of recent attempts to limit immigration and their social effects
- Key Term treatment for "double consciousness" and "model minority"

Chapter 11: Stratification by Gender and Sexuality

- updated and expanded coverage of gender roles, with photo
- revised and updated Sociology in the Global Community box, "No Gender, Please, It's Preschool"
- enhanced coverage of gender fluidity in text and in Research Today box, "Measuring Discrimination Based on Gender Identity"
- coverage of the 2020 Supreme Court ruling that the Civil Rights Act protects gays and transgender people in the workplace
- discussion of interactionist perspective on increased domestic violence during the coronavirus pandemic
- Table 11-3, "The Global Gender Gap," with Think About It question
- Sociology in the Global Community box, "The Gender Gap in Japan," with photo
- Figure 11-3, "Women's Participation in the Labor Force, 1975–2018"
- Research Today box, "Who Does the Housework?" with figure
- updated coverage of women's activism, including recent efforts to revive the ERA
- updated Social Policy section, "Workplace Sexual Harassment," with cartoon

Chapter 12: The Family and Household Diversity

- chapter-opening photo showing large family reunion
- enhanced coverage of interactionist perspective on step-parenting and online dating, with updates to Our Wired World box, "Love in in the Air and on the Web"

- coverage of increased online messaging and dating during the coronavirus pandemic
- expanded discussion of couples in which the female partner earns more than the male
- discussion of tendency to marry later in life
- Sociology in the Global Community box, "Arranged and Hybrid Marriage," with figure
- Figure 12-4, "Grandparents Who Support Grandchildren, 2018"
- expanded discussion of married people living apart and dual-income couples
- Research Today box, "Challenges to LGBTQ Adoptions"
- updated and expanded discussion of cohabitation
- expanded discussion of remaining single and childlessness, including 2020 statistics showing all-time low marriage rate
- Key Term treatment of "arranged marriage" and "hybrid marriage"

Chapter 13: Education and Religion
- Figure 13-2, "Annual Earnings by Degree Level, 2018"
- updated discussion of racial isolation in public schools
- updated discussion of credentialism
- updated Box 13-1, "The Debate Over Title IX," to include research on negative effects of sports and the #MeToo movement
- updated discussion of the teaching profession
- updated and expanded coverage of homeschooling
- Research Today box, "The Growth of None of the Above"
- discussion of religion and social support and religious ritual updated to include effects of coronavirus pandemic
- Figure 13-7, "Religion Is Very Important in My Life"
- Research Today box, "Wicca: Religion or Quasi-Religion?" with photo
- Social Policy section: "Religion in the Schools," with cartoon
- Key Term treatment of "creationism" and "intelligent design"

Chapter 14: Government and the Economy
- chapter-opening photo focusing on coronavirus pandemic
- capitalism coverage updated to include government measures passed during the coronavirus pandemic
- updated and expanded discussion of political influence, with Key Term treatment of "influencers"
- photos to illustrate Arab Americans in Congress and the influence of the power elite
- updated and expanded coverage of the global power elite
- Our Wired World box, "Politicking Online," updated to include recent developments in use of social media in elections
- discussion of online misinformation about COVID-19 during the pandemic

- discussion of recent classification of white supremacist groups as terrorists
- Social Policy section, "The Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic," with photo and cartoon
- Key Term treatment for "influencer," "obedience," and "precarious work"

Chapter 15: Health, Population, and the Environment
- chapter-opening photo showing the effects of the coronavirus lockdown on pollution
- chapter-opening vignette featuring Greta Thunberg's 2019 address to the UN
- updated Figure 15-1, "Infant Mortality Rates in Selected Countries," and Figure 15-2, "AIDS by the Numbers Worldwide"
- updated discussion of health insurance coverage, including impact of the pandemic
- enhanced discussion of the medical profession as an agent of social control
- revised and updated discussion of differences in mortality among racial and ethnic groups
- expanded discussion of *curanderismo*
- Research Today box, "The Color of COVID-19"
- discussion of racial and ethnic differences in access to mental health care
- photo illustrating reliance of people with mental health issues on telemedicine during the pandemic
- updated Figure 15-4, "Total Health Care Expenditures in the United States, 1960-2028 (Projected)"
- expanded discussion of air pollution in the United States and worldwide; updated discussion of water pollution
- cartoon highlighting insufficient efforts to curb carbon emissions
- Key Term treatment for "comorbidity"
- Thinking Critically questions about the U.S. government's role in health care and why societies find it difficult to address climate change

Chapter 16: Social Change in the Global Community
- chapter-opening photo illustrating pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong
- updated Figure 16-1, "Declining Drive-Ins, 1954–2019," and Figure 16-2, "Walking to Work, 1980–2019"
- discussion of implications of coronavirus pandemic, social change in Dubai, artificial intelligence
- photo of recent teacher protest to illustrate section on Social Movements
- refocused discussion of feminist perspective on social movement
- updated and expanded coverage of communication and social movements

- Figure 16-3, "The Changing U.S. Economy, 2018-2028 (Projected)"
- updated and expanded discussions of resistance to technology and artificial intelligence
- updated Figure 16-4, "Estimated Annual Global Sale of Industrial Robots, 2010-2022," and Figure 16-5, "Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Select Occupations"
- Figure 16-6, "Origin and Destination of Transnationals, 2019," with Think About It question
- Thinking Critically question about social change resulting from the coronavirus pandemic
- discussion of misreporting of health data with reference to coronavirus pandemic

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.

PowerPoint Slides. Now accessibility compliant, PowerPoint Slides include bulleted lecture points, figures, and maps. They can be used as is or modified to meet the instructor's individual needs.

Test Bank. The Test Bank includes multiple-choice, true-false, and essay questions for every chapter. The Test Builder tool allows the instructor to create customized exams using either publisher-supplied test items or the instructor's own questions.

Test Builder. New to this edition and available within Connect, Test Builder is a cloud-based tool that enables instructors to format tests that can be printed and administered within a Learning Management System. Test Builder offers a modern, streamlined interface for easy content configuration that matches course needs, without requiring a download.

Test Builder enables instructors to:

- Access all test bank content from a particular title
- Easily pinpoint the most relevant content through robust filtering options
- Manipulate the order of questions or scramble questions and/or answers
- Pin questions to a specific location within a test
- Determine your preferred treatment of algorithmic questions
- Choose the layout and spacing
- Add instructions and configure default settings

Remote Proctoring. New remote proctoring and browser-locking capabilities are seamlessly integrated within Connect to offer more control over the integrity of online assessments. Instructors can enable security options that restrict browser activity, monitor student behavior, and verify the identity of each student. Instant and detailed reporting gives instructors an at-a-glance view of potential concerns, thereby avoiding personal bias and supporting evidence-based claims.

McGraw Hill create®

McGraw Hill Create is a self-service website that allows you to create customized course materials using McGraw Hill comprehensive, cross-disciplinary content and digital products. You can even access third-party content such as readings, articles, cases, videos, and more.

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Tina Villareal, *Texas State University*
Gregory Zachrison, *Massosoit Community College*

Understanding Sociology

South_agency/Getty Images

One of the things sociologists study is how people organize themselves into groups to perform tasks necessary to society. Volunteers pick up garbage in a local woodlands park for eventual recycling.

▶ INSIDE

> Have you ever reacted totally differently from the people around you because of different life experiences?
>
> Journalist Warren St. John shows how people with varied backgrounds struggle to adjust to their new environment and to each other.

Ira C. Roberts
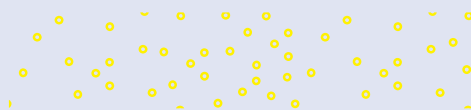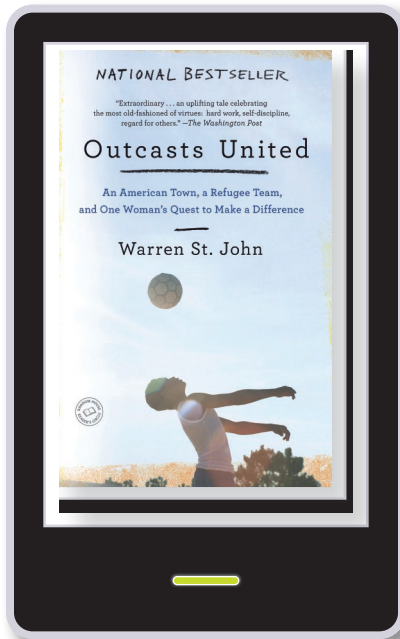
❝ On a cool spring afternoon at a soccer field in northern Georgia, two teams of teenage boys were going through their pregame warm-ups when the heavens began to shake. The field had been quiet save the sounds of soccer balls thumping against forefeet and the rustling of the balls against the nylon nets that hung from the goals. But as the rumble grew louder, all motion stopped as boys from both teams looked quizzically skyward. Soon a cluster of darts appeared in the gap of sky between the pine trees on the horizon and the cottony clumps of cloud vapor overhead. It was a precision flying squadron of fighter jets, performing at an air show miles away in Atlanta. The aircraft banked in close formation in the direction of the field and came closer, so that the boys could now make out the markings on the wings and the white helmets of the pilots in the cockpits. Then with an earthshaking roar deep enough to rattle the change in your pocket, the jets split in different directions like an exploding firework, their contrails carving the sky into giant wedges.

On the field below, the two groups of boys watched the spectacle with craned necks, and from different perspectives.

On the field below, the two groups of boys watched the spectacle with craned necks, and from different perspectives. The players of the home team—a group of thirteen- and fourteen-year-old boys from the nearby Atlanta suburbs playing with the North Atlanta Soccer Association—gestured to the sky and wore expressions of awe.

The boys at the other end of the field were members of an all-refugee soccer team called the Fugees [as in "reFugees"]. Many had actually seen the machinery of war in action, and all had felt its awful consequences firsthand. There were Sudanese players on the team whose villages had been bombed by old Russian-made Antonov bombers flown by the Sudanese Air Force, and Liberians who'd lived through barrages of mortar fire that pierced the roofs of their neighbors' homes, taking out whole families. As the jets flew by the field, several members of the Fugees flinched.

This was the first time I'd ever seen the Fugees play. I'd shown up knowing little about the team other than that the players were refugees and the coach a woman, and that the team was based in a town called Clarkston. In a little more than a decade, the process of refugee resettlement had transformed Clarkston from a simple southern town into one of the most diverse communities in America. And yet few in Atlanta, let alone in the world beyond, had taken notice. **❞**

Source: St. John 2009, pp. 1–2, 6.

In *Outcasts United,* journalist Warren St. John takes us into the social world of a soccer team, a world composed of refugees who find themselves in a suburban Georgia town of 13,000, located about ten miles from Atlanta, that annually receives 1,500 refugees. Many of the "Fugees" have escaped violence in their home countries. Now they are making the United States their home, with all the adjustments that radical change entails. While they adapt to their new environment, their neighbors must adapt to having the refugees among them. And their competitors on the soccer field must learn what it means to live in a diverse, changing society.

We cannot assume that everyone we meet or communicate with, even when we are young, will be just like ourselves. Today, we learn to work together with people who are very different, and we sometimes struggle to create a sense of community despite our differences. In Clarkston, one-third of the population is foreign born, and residents represent over 40 nationalities. While the town's diversity may be greater than that in many other communities, learning to work in new and changing social environments is critical to an individual's and the entire society's success (Carnes 2019).

As a field of study, sociology is extremely broad in scope. You will see throughout this book the range of topics sociologists investigate—from immigration to suicide, from Amish society to global economic patterns, from peer pressure to genetic engineering. Sociology looks at how others influence our behavior; how major social institutions like the government, religion, and the economy affect us; and how we ourselves affect other individuals, groups, and even organizations.

How did sociology develop? In what ways does it differ from other social sciences? This chapter will explore the nature of sociology as both a field of inquiry and an exercise of the "sociological imagination." We'll look at the discipline as a science and consider its relationship to other social sciences. We'll meet four pioneering thinkers—Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and W. E. B. DuBois—and examine the theoretical perspectives that grew out of their work. We'll note some of the practical applications for sociological theory and research. Finally, we'll see how sociology helps us to develop a sociological imagination. For those students interested in exploring career opportunities in sociology, the chapter closes with a special appendix.

What Is Sociology?

"What has sociology got to do with me or with my life?" As a student, you might well have asked this question when you signed up for your introductory sociology course. To answer it, consider these points: Are you influenced by what you see on television? Do you use the Internet? Did you vote in the last election? Are you familiar with binge drinking on campus? Do you use alternative medicine? These are just a few of the everyday life situations described in this book that sociology can shed light on. But as the opening excerpt indicates, sociology also looks at large social issues. We use sociology to investigate why thousands of jobs have moved from the United States to developing nations, what social forces promote prejudice, what leads someone to join a social movement and work for social change, how access to computer technology can reduce social inequality, and why relationships between men and women in Seattle differ from those in Singapore.

Sociology is, simply, the scientific study of social behavior and human groups. It focuses on social relationships; how those relationships influence people's behavior; and how societies, the sum total of those relationships, develop and change.

The Sociological Imagination

In attempting to understand social behavior, sociologists rely on a particular type of critical thinking. A leading sociologist, C. Wright Mills, described such thinking as the **sociological imagination**—an awareness of the relationship between an individual and the wider society, both today and in the past (Mills [1959] 2000a). This awareness allows all of us (not just sociologists) to comprehend the links between our immediate, personal social settings and the remote, impersonal social world that surrounds and helps to shape us.

A key element in the sociological imagination is the ability to view one's own society as an outsider would, rather than only from the perspective of personal experiences and cultural biases. Consider something as simple as sporting events. On college campuses in the United States, thousands of students cheer well-trained football players. In parts of South America and the Caribbean, spectators gather around two cages, each holding a finch. The covers are lifted, and the owner of the first bird to sing 50 songs wins a trophy, a cash prize, and great prestige. In speed singing as in football, eager spectators debate the merits of their favorites and bet on the outcome of the events. Yet what is considered a normal sporting event in one part of the world is considered unusual in another part (Rueb 2015).

The sociological imagination allows us to go beyond personal experiences and observations to understand broader public issues. Divorce, for example, is unquestionably a personal hardship for a husband and wife who split apart. However, C. Wright Mills advocated using the sociological imagination to view divorce not as simply an individual's personal problem but rather as a societal concern. Using this perspective, we can see that an increase in the divorce rate actually redefines a major social institution—the family. Today's households frequently include stepparents and half-siblings whose parents have divorced and remarried. Through the complexities of the blended family, this private concern becomes a public issue that affects schools, government agencies, businesses, and religious institutions.

The sociological imagination is an empowering tool. It allows us to look beyond a limited understanding of human behavior to see the world and its people in a new way and through a broader lens than we might otherwise use. It may be as simple as understanding why a roommate prefers country music to hip-hop, or it may open up a whole different way of understanding other populations in the world. For example, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, many citizens wanted to understand how Muslims throughout the world perceived their country, and why. From time to time this textbook will offer you the chance to exercise your sociological imagination in a variety of situations.

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use your sociological *imagination*

You are walking down the street in your city or hometown. In looking around you, you can't help noticing that half or more of the people you see are overweight. How do you explain your observation? If you were C. Wright Mills, how do you think you would explain it?

Sociology and the Social Sciences

Is sociology a science? The term **science** refers to the body of knowledge obtained by methods based on systematic observation. Just like other scientific disciplines, sociology involves the organized, systematic study of phenomena (in this case, human behavior) in order to enhance understanding. All scientists, whether studying mushrooms or murderers, attempt to collect precise information through methods of study that are as objective as possible. They rely on careful recording of observations and accumulation of data.

Of course, there is a great difference between sociology and physics, between psychology and astronomy. For this reason, the sciences are commonly divided into natural and social sciences. **Natural science** is the study of the physical features of nature and the ways in which they interact and change. Astronomy, biology, chemistry, geology, and physics are all natural sciences. **Social science** is the study of the social features of humans and the ways in which they interact and change. The social sciences include sociology, anthropology, economics, history, psychology, and political science.

These social science disciplines have a common focus on the social behavior of people, yet each has a particular orientation. Anthropologists usually study past cultures and preindustrial societies that continue today, as well as the origins of humans. Economists explore the ways in which people produce and exchange goods and services, along with money and other resources. Historians are concerned with the peoples and events of the past and their significance for us today. Political scientists study international relations, the workings of government, and the exercise of power and authority. Psychologists investigate personality and individual behavior. So what do *sociologists* focus on? They study the influence that society has on people's attitudes

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Sociology is the scientific study of social behavior and human groups.

and behavior and the ways in which people interact and shape society. Because humans are social animals, sociologists examine our social relationships scientifically. The range of the relationships they investigate is vast, as the current list of sections in the American Sociological Association suggests (Table 1-1).

Let's consider how different social scientists might study the issue of climate change. Psychologists would look at the impact on the well-being of individuals who live and work in the areas most vulnerable to the impact of climate change, such as flood-prone areas along the coasts. Political scientists would consider the differences between countries, states, and cities that take steps to combat climate change. They would also consider how increasingly politicians are unable to avoid being questioned about their own position on climate change at election time. And economists would consider how, through climate change, the unintended effects of human activity affect long-term economic growth and well-being.

What approach would sociologists take? They would be interested in why a relatively large number of Americans deny that climate change is occurring or feel human activities are not responsible. In 2019, nearly 20 percent of the U.S. public held those views, compared to less than 5 percent in Germany, Great Britain, or China. Sociology moves us past viewing individuals as the primary agents producing carbon emissions and instead sees that individual actions are embedded in the workings of society as a whole. How individuals confront climate change is constrained by social, economic, and political dynamics.

Similarly, sociology considers how the impact of climate change is not evenly felt and demonstrates that the poor are among the most vulnerable, both in the United States and around the world. Poor people often live in low-lying areas most vulnerable to floods and storms, and poor nations lack the means to build protective infrastructure. Social protests and movements to try to mobilize people to confront the human contribution to climate change would also be a prime focus of sociological analysis (Dunlap and Brulle 2019; Milman and Harvey 2019).

Sociologists would take a similar approach to studying episodes of extreme violence and hatred. In 2017, the nation was shocked by the open display of pro-Nazi and pro–Ku Klux Klan sympathy by marchers in Charlottesville, Virginia, at a "Unite the Right" rally protesting the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Months earlier, a lone gunman with leftist leanings opened fire at a Republican congressional baseball practice, shooting four members of Congress. Observers struggled to
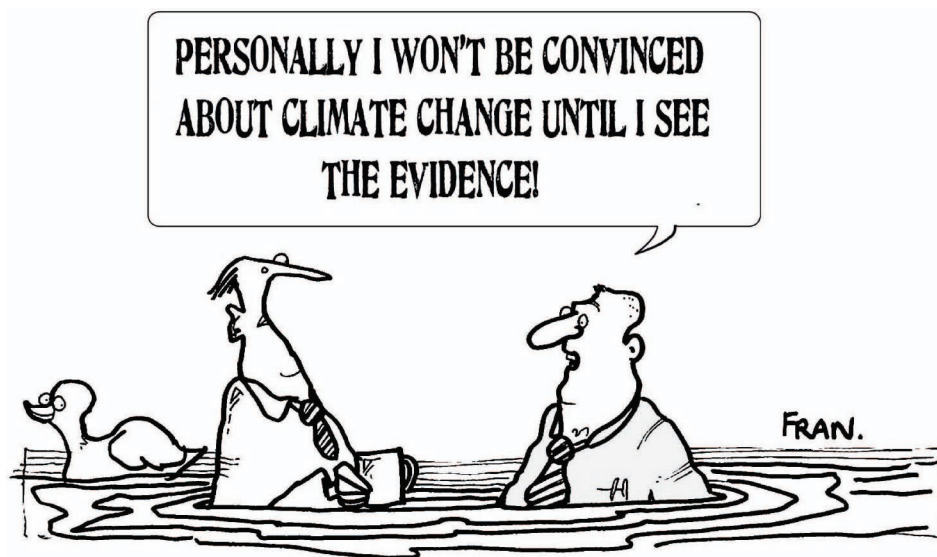
Fran/Cartoon Stock

As the world considers issues related to climate change, sociologists use a variety of insights, including why people differ in their willingness to accept that human activity affects the global environment.

TABLE 1-1   SECTIONS OF THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Aging and the Life Course	History of Sociology	Sociological Practice and Public Sociology
Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco	Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility	Sociology of Body and Embodiment
Altruism, Morality, and Social Solidarity	International Migration	Sociology of Consumers and Consumption
Animals and Society	Labor and Labor Movements	Sociology of Culture
Asia and Asian America	Latina/o Sociology	Sociology of Development
Children and Youth	Marxist Sociology	Sociology of Education
Collective Behavior and Social Movements	Mathematical Sociology	Sociology of Emotions
Communication, Information Technologies, and Media	Medical Sociology	Sociology of Human Rights
Community and Urban Sociology	Methodology	Sociology of Law
Comparative-Historical Sociology	Organizations, Occupations, and Work	Sociology of Mental Health
Crime, Law, and Deviance	Peace, War, and Social Conflict	Sociology of Population
Disability in Society	Political Economy of the World-System	Sociology of Religion
Economic Sociology	Political Sociology	Sociology of Sex and Gender
Environmental Sociology	Race, Gender, and Class	Sociology of Sexualities
Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis	Racial and Ethnic Minorities	Teaching and Learning
Evolution, Biology, and Society	Rationality and Society	Theory
Family	Science, Knowledge, and Technology	
Global and Transnational Sociology	Social Psychology	

Think about It   Which of these topics do you think would interest you the most? Why?

Source: American Sociological Association 2020a.

The range of sociological issues is very broad. For example, sociologists who belong to the Animals and Society section of the ASA may study the animal rights movement; those who belong to the Sociology of Sexualities section may study global sex workers or the gay, bisexual, and transgender movements. Economic sociologists may investigate globalization or consumerism, among many other topics.

explain these individual and collective events by placing them in a larger social context. For sociologists in particular, these events raised numerous issues and topics for study, including the role of social media as a platform for extremist thought, growing anger against government and people in authority, the gun control debate, and the inadequacy of the nation's mental health system.

Besides doing research, sociologists have a long history of advising government agencies on how to respond to disasters. Certainly the poverty of the Gulf Coast region complicated the challenge of evacuating New Orleans in 2005. With Hurricane Katrina bearing down on the Gulf Coast, thousands of poor inner-city residents had no automobiles or other means of escaping the storm. Added to that difficulty was the high incidence of disability in the area. New Orleans ranked second among the nation's 70 largest cities in the proportion of people over age 65 who were disabled—56 percent. Moving wheelchair-bound residents to safety requires specially equipped vehicles, to say nothing of handicap-accessible accommodations in public shelters. Clearly, officials must consider these factors in developing evacuation plans (Bureau of the Census 2005b).

Sociological analysis of the disaster did not end when the floodwaters receded. Indeed, several steps were taken that improved the response to hurricanes Harvey and Irma, which hit Texas and Florida in 2017. These included:

- Requiring communities to develop workable disaster response plans in advance.
- Delivering emergency supplies to secure holding areas before the storms struck.

- Permitting prior approval for taking action rather than requiring plan submission after the disaster.
- Identifying emergency shelters that take pets to avoid people remaining at home to safeguard their pets.
- Ending federal prohibition against accepting volunteer responders, especially when the scope of the disaster increases.

Tragically, many Katrina victims had relocated to Houston, where they then had to be sheltered again after Harvey struck in 2017, but they often expressed the realization that disaster response had improved. However, just a month later the slow response in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria on Puerto Rico, with most of the island left without clean water, power, or cell phone service for weeks, left many scholars looking for still further ways to improve both disaster preparedness and response (Carey 2017; Philips 2017).

Throughout this textbook, you will see how sociologists develop theories and conduct research to study and better understand societies. And you will be encouraged to use your sociological imagination to examine the United States (and other societies) from the viewpoint of a respectful but questioning outsider.

Sociology and Common Sense

Sociology focuses on the study of human behavior. Yet we all have experience with human behavior and at least some knowledge of it. All of us might well have theories about why people become homeless, for example. Our theories and opinions typically come from common sense—that is, from our experiences

and conversations, from what we read, from what we see on television, and so forth.

In our daily lives, we rely on common sense to get us through many unfamiliar situations. However, this commonsense knowledge, while sometimes accurate, is not always reliable because it rests on commonly held beliefs rather than on systematic analysis of facts. It was once considered common sense to accept that the earth was flat—a view rightly questioned by Pythagoras and Aristotle. But incorrect commonsense notions are not just a part of the distant past; they remain with us today.

Contrary to the common notion that women tend to be chatty compared to men, for instance, researchers have found little difference between the sexes in terms of their talkativeness. Over a five-year period they placed unobtrusive microphones on 396 college students in various fields, at campuses in Mexico as well as the United States. They found that both men and women spoke about 16,000 words per day (Mehl et al. 2007).

Similarly, common sense tells us that today, violent crime holds communities on the border between the United States and Mexico in a kind of death grip, creating an atmosphere of lawlessness reminiscent of the old Wild West. Based on televised news stories and on concerns expressed by elected officials, this assertion may sound reasonable; however, it is not true. Although some communities in Mexico have fallen under the control of drug cartels, the story is different on the U.S. side of the border. All available crime data—documented by the FBI—show that all the counties along the U.S.–Mexico border have crime rates at least 2 percent lower than that in the rest of the United States. Furthermore, the crime rate has been dropping faster near the border than in other similar-size U.S. communities for at least the last 15 years (Nowrasteh 2019).

Like other social scientists, sociologists do not accept something as a fact because "everyone knows it." Instead, each piece of information must be tested and recorded, then analyzed in relation to other data. Sociologists rely on scientific studies to describe and understand a social environment. At times, the findings of sociologists may seem like common sense because they deal with familiar facets of everyday life. The difference is that such findings have been *tested* by researchers. Common sense now tells us that the earth is round, but this particular commonsense notion is based on centuries of scientific work that began with the breakthroughs made by Pythagoras and Aristotle.

thinking CRITICALLY

What aspects of the social and work environment in a fast-food restaurant would be of particular interest to a sociologist? How would the sociological imagination help in analyzing the topic?

What Is Sociological Theory?

Why do people die by suicide? One traditional commonsense answer is that people inherit the desire to kill themselves. Another view is that sunspots drive people to take their lives. These explanations may not seem especially convincing to contemporary researchers, but they represent beliefs widely held as recently as 1900.

Sociologists are not particularly interested in why any one individual dies by suicide; they are more concerned with identifying the social forces that systematically cause some people to take their own lives. To undertake this research, sociologists develop a theory that offers a general explanation of suicidal behavior.

We can think of theories as attempts to explain events, forces, materials, ideas, or behavior in a comprehensive manner. In sociology, a **theory** is a set of statements that seeks to explain problems, actions, or behavior. An effective theory may have both explanatory and predictive power. That is, it can help us to see the relationships among seemingly isolated phenomena, as well as to understand how one type of change in an environment leads to other changes.

The World Health Organization (2018a) estimates that 800,000 people die from suicide every year. More than a hundred years ago, a sociologist tried to look at suicide data scientifically. Émile Durkheim ([1897] 1951) developed a highly original theory about the relationship between suicide and social factors. Durkheim was primarily concerned not with the personalities of individual suicide victims, but rather with suicide rates and how they varied from country to country. As a result, when he looked at the number of reported suicides in France, England, and Denmark in 1869, he also noted the total population of each country in order to determine the rate of suicide in each nation. He found that whereas England had only 67 reported suicides per million inhabitants, France had 135 per million and Denmark had 277 per million. The question then became "Why did Denmark have a comparatively high rate of reported suicide?"

Durkheim went much deeper into his investigation of suicide rates. The result was his landmark work *Suicide,* published in 1897. Durkheim refused to accept unproved explanations regarding suicide, including the beliefs that inherited tendencies or cosmic forces caused such deaths. Instead, he focused on social factors, such as the cohesiveness or lack of cohesiveness of religious, social, and occupational groups.

Durkheim's research suggested that suicide, although it is a solitary act, is related to group life. He found that people without religious affiliations had a higher suicide rate than those who were affiliated; the unmarried had much higher rates than married people; and soldiers had a higher rate than civilians. In addition, there seemed to be higher rates of suicide in times of peace than in times of war and revolution, and in times of economic instability and recession rather than in times of prosperity. Durkheim concluded that the suicide rates of a society reflected the extent to which people were or were not integrated into the group life of the society.

use your sociological *imagination*

If you were Durkheim's successor in his research on suicide, how would you investigate the factors that may explain the increase in suicide rates among people age 55 and older in the United States today?

Émile Durkheim, like many other social scientists, developed a theory to explain how individual behavior can be understood within a social context. He pointed out the influence of groups and societal forces on what had always been viewed as a highly personal act. Clearly, Durkheim offered a more *scientific* explanation for the causes of suicide than that of inherited tendencies or sunspots. His theory has predictive power, since it suggests that suicide rates will rise or fall in conjunction with certain social and economic changes.

Of course, a theory—even the best of theories—is not a final statement about human behavior. Durkheim's theory of suicide is no exception. Sociologists continue to examine factors that contribute to differences in suicide rates around the world and to a particular society's rate of suicide. In Las Vegas, and Nevada as a whole, for example, sociologists have observed that the chances of dying by suicide are strikingly high—about 45 percent higher than those in the United States as a whole. Noting Durkheim's emphasis on the relationship between suicide and social isolation, researchers have suggested that Las Vegas's rapid growth and constant influx of tourists have undermined the community's sense of permanence, even among longtime residents. Although gambling—or more accurately, losing while gambling—may seem a likely precipitating factor in suicides there, careful study of the data has allowed researchers to dismiss that explanation. What happens in Vegas may stay in Vegas, but the sense of community cohesiveness that the rest of the country enjoys may be lacking (Bekker 2019).

Digital Vision/Getty Images

conquer Europe. Amid this chaos, philosophers considered how society might be improved. Auguste Comte (1798–1857), credited with being the most influential of the philosophers of the early 1800s, believed that a theoretical science of society and a systematic investigation of behavior were needed to improve society. He coined the term *sociology* to apply to the science of human behavior.

Writing in the 1800s, Comte feared that the excesses of the French Revolution had permanently impaired France's stability. Yet he hoped that the systematic study of social behavior would eventually lead to more rational human interactions. In Comte's hierarchy of the sciences, sociology was at the top. He called it the "queen," and its practitioners "scientist-priests." This French theorist did not simply give sociology its name; he presented a rather ambitious challenge to the fledgling discipline.

Harriet Martineau Scholars learned of Comte's works largely through translations by the English sociologist Harriet Martineau (1802–1876). But Martineau was a pathbreaker in her own right: she offered insightful observations of the customs and social practices of both her native Britain and the United States.

thinking CRITICALLY

Can you think of any other explanation for the high suicide rate in Las Vegas? Does that explanation agree with Durkheim's theory?

The Development of Sociology

People have always been curious about sociological matters—how we get along with others, what we do for a living, whom we select as our leaders. Philosophers and religious authorities of ancient and medieval societies made countless observations about human behavior. They did not test or verify those observations scientifically; nevertheless, their observations often became the foundation for moral codes. Several of these early social philosophers correctly predicted that a systematic study of human behavior would emerge one day. Beginning in the 19th century, European theorists made pioneering contributions to the development of a science of human behavior.

Early Thinkers

Auguste Comte The 19th century was an unsettling time in France. The French monarchy had been deposed in the revolution of 1789, and Napoleon had suffered defeat in his effort to

Alonzo Chappel/Georgios Kollidas/Alamy Stock Photo

Harriet Martineau, a pioneer of sociology who studied social behavior both in her native England and in the United States. Martineau proposed some of the methods still used by sociologists, including systematic observation.

Martineau's book *Society in America* ([1837] 1962) examined religion, politics, child rearing, and immigration in the young nation. It gave special attention to social class distinctions and to such factors as gender and race. Martineau ([1838] 1989) also wrote the first book on sociological methods.

Martineau's writings emphasized the impact that the economy, law, trade, health, and population could have on social problems. She spoke out in favor of the rights of women, the emancipation of slaves, and religious tolerance. Later in life, deafness did not keep her from being an activist. In Martineau's ([1837] 1962) view, intellectuals and scholars should not simply offer observations of social conditions; they should *act* on their convictions in a manner that will benefit society. That is why Martineau conducted research on the nature of female employment and pointed to the need for further investigation of the issue (Deegan 2003; Hill and Hoecker-Drysdale 2001).

Herbert Spencer Another important early contributor to the discipline of sociology was Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). A relatively prosperous Victorian Englishman, Spencer (unlike Martineau) did not feel compelled to correct or improve society; instead, he merely hoped to understand it better. Drawing on Charles Darwin's study *On the Origin of Species,* Spencer applied the concept of evolution of the species to societies in order to explain how they change, or evolve, over time. Similarly, he adapted Darwin's evolutionary view of the "survival of the fittest" by arguing that it is "natural" that some people are rich while others are poor.

Spencer's approach to societal change was extremely popular in his lifetime. Unlike Comte, Spencer suggested that since societies are bound to change eventually, one need not be highly critical of present social arrangements or work actively for social change. This viewpoint appealed to many influential people in England and the United States who had a vested interest in the status quo and were suspicious of social thinkers who endorsed change.

Émile Durkheim

Émile Durkheim made many pioneering contributions to sociology, including his important theoretical work on suicide. The son of a rabbi, Durkheim (1858–1917) was educated in both France and Germany. He established an impressive academic reputation and was appointed one of the first professors of sociology in France. Above all, Durkheim will be remembered for his insistence that behavior must be understood within a larger social context, not just in individualistic terms.

To give one example of this emphasis, Durkheim ([1912] 2001) developed a fundamental thesis to help explain all forms of society. Through intensive study of the Arunta, an Australian tribe, he focused on the functions that religion performed and underscored

the role of group life in defining what we consider to be religion. Durkheim concluded that like other forms of group behavior, religion reinforces a group's solidarity.

Another of Durkheim's main interests was the consequences of work in modern societies. In his view, the growing division of labor in industrial societies, as workers' tasks became more and more specialized, led to what he called "anomie." **Anomie** refers to the loss of direction felt in a society when social control of individual behavior has become ineffective. Often, the state of anomie occurs during a time of profound social change, when people have lost their sense of purpose or direction. In a period of anomie, people are so confused and unable to cope with the new social environment that they may resort to death by suicide.

Durkheim was concerned about the dangers that alienation, loneliness, and isolation might pose for modern industrial societies. He shared Comte's belief that sociology should provide direction for social change. As a result, he advocated the creation of new social groups—mediators between the individual's family and the state—that would provide a sense of belonging for members of huge, impersonal societies. Unions would be an example of such groups.

Like many other sociologists, Durkheim did not limit his interests to one aspect of social behavior. Later in this book we will consider his thinking on crime and punishment, religion, and the workplace. Few sociologists have had such a dramatic impact on so many different areas within the discipline.

Max Weber

Another important early theorist was Max Weber (pronounced vay-ber). Born in Germany, Weber (1864–1920) studied legal and economic history, but gradually developed an interest in sociology. Eventually, he became a professor at various German universities. Weber taught his students that they should employ **verstehen** (pronounced fair-shtay-en), the German word for "understanding" or "insight," in their intellectual work. He pointed

Gary Conner/Getty Images

FIGURE 1-1   CONTRIBUTORS TO SOCIOLOGY
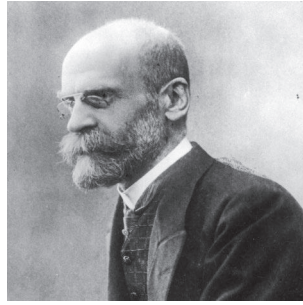
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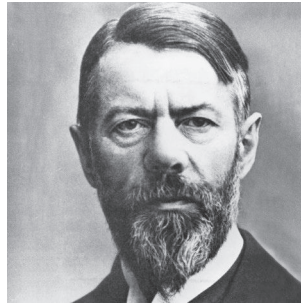
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Stock Photo
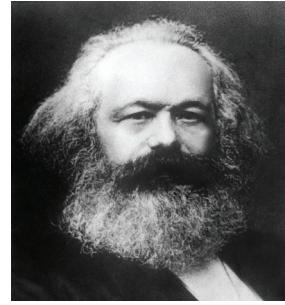
Everett
Historical/Shutterstock
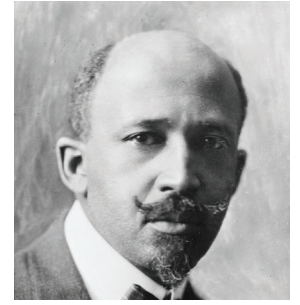
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and Photographs Division
[LC-DIG-ppmsca-38818]

	Émile Durkheim 1858–1917	**Max Weber 1864–1920**	**Karl Marx 1818–1883**	**W. E. B. DuBois 1868–1963**
Academic training	Philosophy	Law, economics, history, philosophy	Philosophy, law	Sociology
Key works	1893—*The Division of Labor in Society* 1897—*Suicide: A Study in Sociology* 1912—*Elementary Forms of Religious Life*	1904–1905—*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* 1921—*Economy and Society*	1848—*The Communist Manifesto* 1867—*Das Kapital*	1899—*The Philadelphia Negro* 1903—*The Negro Church* 1903—*Souls of Black Folk*

out that we cannot analyze our social behavior by the same type of objective criteria we use to measure weight or temperature. To fully comprehend behavior, we must learn the subjective meanings people attach to their actions—how they themselves view and explain their behavior.

For example, suppose that a sociologist was studying the social ranking of individuals in a fraternity. Weber would expect the researcher to employ *verstehen* to determine the significance of the fraternity's social hierarchy for its members. The researcher might examine the effects of athleticism or grades or social skills or seniority on standing within the fraternity. He or she would seek to learn how the fraternity members relate to other members of higher or lower status. While investigating these questions, the researcher would take into account people's emotions, thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes (L. Coser 1977).

We also owe credit to Weber for a key conceptual tool: the ideal type. An **ideal type** is a construct or model for evaluating specific cases. In his works, Weber identified various characteristics of bureaucracy as an ideal type (discussed in detail in Chapter 5). In presenting this model of bureaucracy, Weber was not describing any particular organization, nor was he using the term *ideal* in a way that suggested a positive evaluation. Instead, his purpose was to provide a useful standard for measuring how bureaucratic an actual organization is (Gerth and Mills 1958). Later in this book, we will use the concept of *ideal type* to study the family, religion, authority, and economic systems, as well as to analyze bureaucracy.

Although their professional careers coincided, Émile Durkheim and Max Weber never met and probably were unaware of each other's ideas. Such was not true of the work of Karl Marx. Durkheim's thinking about the impact of the division of labor in industrial societies was related to Marx's writings, while Weber's concern for a value-free, objective sociology was a direct response to Marx's deeply held convictions. Thus, it is not surprising that Karl Marx is viewed as a major figure in the development of sociology, as well as several other social sciences (Figure 1-1).

Karl Marx

Karl Marx (1818–1883) shared with Durkheim and Weber a dual interest in abstract philosophical issues and the concrete reality of everyday life. Unlike them, however, Marx was so critical of existing institutions that a conventional academic career was impossible. He spent most of his life in exile from his native Germany.

Marx's personal life was a difficult struggle. When a paper he had written was suppressed, he fled to France. In Paris, he met Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), with whom he formed a lifelong friendship. The two lived at a time when European and North American economic life was increasingly dominated by the factory rather than the farm.

While in London in 1847, Marx and Engels attended secret meetings of an illegal coalition of labor unions known as the Communist League. The following year they prepared a platform called *The Communist Manifesto,* in which they argued that the masses of people with no resources other than their labor (whom they referred to as the *proletariat*) should unite to fight for the overthrow of capitalist societies. In the words of Marx and Engels:

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. . . .
> The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.
> WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE! (Tucker 1978:473, 500)

After completing *The Communist Manifesto,* Marx returned to Germany, only to be expelled. He then moved to England, where he continued to write books and essays. Marx lived there in extreme poverty; he pawned most of his possessions, and several of his children died of malnutrition and disease. Marx clearly was an outsider in British society, a fact that may well have influenced his view of Western cultures.

In Marx's analysis, society was fundamentally divided between two classes that clashed in pursuit of their own interests. When he examined the industrial societies of his time, such as Germany, England, and the United States, he saw the factory as

the center of conflict between the exploiters (the owners of the means of production) and the exploited (the workers). Marx viewed these relationships in systematic terms; that is, he believed that a system of economic, social, and political relationships maintained the power and dominance of the owners over the workers. Consequently, Marx and Engels argued that the working class should overthrow the existing class system. Marx's writings inspired those who would later lead communist revolutions in Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam, and elsewhere.

Even apart from the political revolutions that his work fostered, Marx's significance is profound. Marx emphasized the *group* identifications and associations that influence an *individual's* place in society. This area of study is the major focus of contemporary sociology. Throughout this textbook, we will consider how membership in a particular gender classification, age group, racial group, or economic class affects a person's attitudes and behavior. In an important sense, we can trace this way of understanding society back to the pioneering work of Karl Marx.

thinking CRITICALLY

What influences do Marx's ideas have on current social and political issues?

W. E. B. DuBois

Marx's work encouraged sociologists to view society through the eyes of those segments of the population that rarely influence decision making. In the United States, some early Black sociologists, including W. E. B. DuBois (1868–1963), conducted research that they hoped would assist in the struggle for a racially egalitarian society. DuBois (pronounced doo-boyss) believed that knowledge was essential in combating prejudice and achieving tolerance and justice. Sociologists, he contended, needed to draw on scientific principles to study social problems such as those experienced by Blacks in the United States. To separate opinion from fact, he advocated research on the lives of Blacks. Through his in-depth studies of urban life, both white and Black, in cities such as Philadelphia and Atlanta, DuBois ([1899] 1995) made a major contribution to sociology.

Like Durkheim and Weber, DuBois saw the importance of religion to society. However, he tended to focus on religion at the community level and on the role of the church in the lives of its members (DuBois [1903] 2003). DuBois had little patience with theorists such as Herbert Spencer, who seemed content with the status quo. He believed that the granting of full political rights to Blacks was essential to their social and economic progress.

Through what became known as the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, DuBois also promoted groundbreaking research by other scholars. While investigating religion, crime, and race relations, these colleagues trained their students in sociological research. The extensive interviews conducted by students in Atlanta still enrich our understanding of human behavior (Earl Wright II 2012).

Because many of his ideas challenged the status quo, DuBois did not always find a receptive audience within either the government or the academic world. As a result, he became increasingly involved with organizations whose members questioned the established social order. In 1909 he helped to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, known today as the NAACP (Morris 2015, Wortham 2008).

DuBois's insights have been lasting. In 1897 he coined the term **double consciousness** to refer to the division of an individual's identity into two or more social realities. He used the term to describe the experience of being Black in white America. African Americans have held the highest offices in the land, including President of the United States. Yet for millions of African Americans, the reality of being Black in the United States typically is not one of power (DuBois [1903] 1961).

Twentieth-Century Developments

Sociology today builds on the firm foundation developed by Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx, and W. E. B. DuBois. However, the field certainly has not remained stagnant over the past hundred years. While Europeans have continued to make contributions to the discipline, sociologists from throughout the world and especially the United States have advanced sociological theory and research. Their new insights have helped us to better understand the workings of society.

Charles Horton Cooley Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929) was typical of the sociologists who came to prominence in the early 1900s. Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Cooley received his graduate training in economics but later became a sociology professor at the University of Michigan. Like other early sociologists, he had become interested in this new discipline while pursuing a related area of study.

Cooley shared the desire of Durkheim, Weber, and Marx to learn more about society. But to do so effectively, he preferred to use the sociological perspective to look first at smaller units—intimate, face-to-face groups such as families, gangs, and friendship networks. He saw these groups as the seedbeds of society, in the sense that they shape people's ideals, beliefs, values, and social nature. Cooley's work increased our understanding of groups of relatively small size.

Jane Addams In the early 1900s, many leading sociologists in the United States saw themselves as social reformers dedicated to systematically studying and then improving a corrupt society. They were genuinely concerned about the lives of immigrants in the nation's growing cities, whether those immigrants came from Europe or from the rural American South. Early female sociologists, in particular, often took active roles in poor urban areas as leaders of community centers known as *settlement houses.* For example, Jane Addams (1860–1935), a member of the American Sociological Society, co-founded the famous Chicago settlement house called Hull House.

Addams and other pioneering female sociologists commonly combined intellectual inquiry, social service work, and political activism—all with the goal of assisting the underprivileged and creating a more egalitarian society. For example, working with the Black journalist and educator Ida Wells-Barnett, Addams successfully prevented racial segregation in the Chicago public schools. Addams's efforts to establish a juvenile court system and a women's trade union reveal the practical focus of her work (Addams 1910, 1930; Deegan 1991; Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley 1998).

on individual behavior that has been influenced by society's approved goals and means, it has wider applications. His theory helps to account for the high crime rates among the nation's poor, who may see no hope of advancing themselves through traditional roads to success. Chapter 7 discusses Merton's theory in greater detail.

Merton also emphasized that sociology should strive to bring together the *macro-level* and *micro-level* approaches to the study of society. **Macrosociology** concentrates on large-scale phenomena or entire civilizations. Harriet Martineau's study of religion and politics in the United States is an example of macro-level research. More recently, macrosociologists have examined international crime rates (see Chapter 7) and the stereotype of Asian Americans as a "model minority" (see Chapter 10). In contrast, **microsociology** stresses the study of small groups, often through experimental means. Sociological research on the micro level has included studies of how divorced men and women disengage from significant social roles (see Chapter 5) and of how a teacher's expectations can affect a student's academic performance (see Chapter 13).

While Merton intended to be inclusive of all research, over the past 50 years sociologists have identified two additional levels of research: *mesosociology* and *global sociology.* **Mesosociology** is an intermediate level of analysis embracing study of formal organizations and social movements. Max Weber's analysis of bureaucracies (see Chapter 5) and the study of environmentalism (see Chapter 15) illustrate mesosociology. **Global sociology** makes comparisons among nations, typically using entire societies as the units of analysis. Émile Durkheim's cross-cultural study of suicide is an example of global sociology, as is the study of international crime rates (Smelser 1997).

Pierre Bourdieu Increasingly, scholars in the United States have been drawing on the insights of sociologists in other countries. The ideas of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) have found a broad following in North America and elsewhere. As a young man, Bourdieu did fieldwork in Algeria during its struggle for independence from France. Today, scholars study Bourdieu's research techniques as well as his conclusions.

Bourdieu wrote about how capital in its many forms sustains individuals and families from one generation to the next. To Bourdieu, *capital* included not just material goods, but cultural and social assets. **Cultural capital** refers to noneconomic goods, such as family background and education, which are reflected in a knowledge of language and the arts. Not necessarily book knowledge, cultural capital refers to the kind of education that is valued by the socially elite. Though a knowledge of Chinese cuisine is culture, for example, it is not the prestigious kind of culture that is valued by the elite. In the United States, immigrants—especially those who arrived in large numbers and settled in ethnic enclaves—have generally taken two or three generations to develop the same level of cultural capital enjoyed by more established groups.

In comparison, **social capital** refers to the collective benefit of social networks, which are built on reciprocal trust. Much has been written about the importance of family and friendship networks in providing people with an opportunity to advance. Social bonds and capital have great value in health, happiness, educational achievement, and economic success. In his emphasis on

Jane Addams was a pioneer both in sociology and in the settlement house movement. She was also an activist for many causes, including the worldwide campaign for peace.

By the middle of the 20th century, however, the focus of the discipline had shifted. Sociologists for the most part restricted themselves to theorizing and gathering information; the aim of transforming society was left to social workers and activists. This shift away from social reform was accompanied by a growing commitment to scientific methods of research and to value-free interpretation of data. Not all sociologists were happy with this emphasis. A new organization, the Society for the Study of Social Problems, was created in 1950 to deal more directly with social inequality and other social problems.

Robert Merton Sociologist Robert Merton (1910–2003) made an important contribution to the discipline by successfully combining theory and research. Born to Slavic immigrant parents in Philadelphia, Merton won a scholarship to Temple University. He continued his studies at Harvard, where he acquired his lifelong interest in sociology. Merton's teaching career was based at Columbia University.

Merton (1968) produced a theory that is one of the most frequently cited explanations of deviant behavior. He noted different ways in which people attempt to achieve success in life. In his view, some may deviate from the socially approved goal of accumulating material goods or the socially accepted means of achieving that goal. For example, in Merton's classification scheme, *innovators* are people who accept the goal of pursuing material wealth but use illegal means to do so, including robbery, burglary, and extortion. Although Merton based his explanation of crime

cultural and social capital, Bourdieu's work extends the insights of early social thinkers such as Marx and Weber (Bourdieu and Passerson 1990; Poder 2011; Putnam 2015:207).

Today sociology reflects the diverse contributions of earlier theorists. As sociologists approach such topics as divorce, drug addiction, and religious cults, they can draw on the theoretical insights of the discipline's pioneers. A careful reader can hear Comte, Durkheim, Weber, Marx, DuBois, Cooley, Addams, and many others speaking through the pages of current research. Sociology has also broadened beyond the intellectual confines of North America and Europe. Contributions to the discipline now come from sociologists studying and researching human behavior in other parts of the world. In describing the work of these sociologists, it is helpful to examine a number of influential *theoretical perspectives,* also known as *approaches* or *views.*

thinking CRITICALLY

What kinds of social and cultural capital do you possess? How did you acquire them? What keeps you from acquiring more?

Major Theoretical Perspectives

Sociologists view society in different ways. Some see the world basically as a stable and ongoing entity. They are impressed with the endurance of the family, organized religion, and other social institutions. Other sociologists see society as composed of many groups in conflict, competing for scarce resources. To still other sociologists, the most fascinating aspects of the social world are the everyday, routine interactions among individuals that we sometimes take for granted. These three views, the ones most widely used by sociologists, are the functionalist, conflict, and interactionist perspectives. Together, these approaches will provide an introductory look at the discipline.

Functionalist Perspective

Think of society as a living organism in which each part of the organism contributes to its survival. This view is the **functionalist perspective**, which emphasizes the way in which the parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability. In examining any aspect of society, then, functionalists emphasize the contribution that it makes to overall social stability.

Talcott Parsons (1902–1979), a Harvard University sociologist, was a key figure in the development of functionalist theory. Parsons was greatly influenced by the work of Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and other European sociologists. For more than four decades, he dominated sociology in the United States with his advocacy of functionalism. Parsons saw any society as a vast network of connected parts, each of which helps to maintain the system as a whole. His approach, carried forward by German sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1927–1998), holds that if an aspect of social life does not contribute to a society's stability or survival—if it does not serve some identifiably useful function or promote value consensus among members of society—it will not be passed on from one generation to the next (Joas and Knöbl 2009; Knudsen 2010).

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Functionalists would see the family, as shown here in Panama City, Panama, as important to contributing to the stability of the society.

Let's examine an example of the functionalist perspective. Many Americans have difficulty understanding the Hindu prohibition against slaughtering cows (specifically, zebu). Cattle browse unhindered through Indian street markets, helping themselves to oranges and mangoes while people bargain for the little food they can afford. What explains this devotion to the cow in the face of human deprivation—a devotion that appears to be dysfunctional?

The simple explanation is that cow worship is highly functional in Indian society, according to economists, agronomists, and social scientists who have studied the matter. Cows perform two essential tasks: plowing the fields and producing milk. If eating beef were permitted, hungry families might be tempted to slaughter their cows for immediate consumption, leaving themselves without a means of cultivation. Cows also produce dung, which doubles as a fertilizer and a fuel for cooking. Finally, cow meat sustains the neediest group in society, the *Dalit,* or untouchables, who sometimes resort to eating beef in secrecy. If eating beef were socially acceptable, higher-status Indians would no doubt bid up its price, placing it beyond the reach of the hungriest.

Manifest and Latent Functions A college catalog typically states various functions of the institution. It may inform you, for example, that the university intends to "offer each student a broad education in classical and contemporary thought, in the humanities, in the sciences, and in the arts." However, it would be quite a surprise to find a catalog that declared, "This university was founded in 1895 to assist people in finding a marriage partner." No college catalog will declare this as the purpose of the university. Yet societal institutions serve many functions, some of them quite subtle. The university, in fact, *does* facilitate mate selection.

MikeDotta/Shutterstock

Interactionists studied the new patterns of everyday behavior during the coronavirus pandemic as people wore gloves and facial coverings and maintained distances between themselves and others.

Robert Merton (1968) made an important distinction between manifest and latent functions. **Manifest functions** of institutions are open, stated, and conscious functions. They involve the intended, recognized consequences of an aspect of society, such as the university's role in certifying academic competence and excellence. In contrast, **latent functions** are unconscious or unintended functions that may reflect hidden purposes of an institution. One latent function of universities is to hold down unemployment. Another is to serve as a meeting ground for people seeking marital partners.

Dysfunctions   Functionalists acknowledge that not all parts of a society contribute to its stability all the time. A **dysfunction** refers to an element or process of a society that may actually disrupt the social system or reduce its stability.

We view many dysfunctional behavior patterns, such as homicide, as undesirable. Yet we should not automatically interpret them in this way. The evaluation of a dysfunction depends on one's own values, or as the saying goes, on "where you sit." For example, the official view in prisons in the United States is that inmate gangs should be eradicated because they are dysfunctional to smooth operations. Yet some guards have come to view prison gangs as a functional part of their jobs. The danger posed by gangs creates a "threat to security," requiring increased surveillance and more overtime work for guards, as well as requests for special staffing to address gang problems (G. Scott 2001).

Conflict Perspective

Where functionalists see stability and consensus, conflict sociologists see a social world in continual struggle. The **conflict perspective** assumes that social behavior is best understood in terms of tension between groups over power or the allocation of resources, including housing, money, access to services, and

political representation. The tension between competing groups need not be violent; it can take the form of labor negotiations, party politics, competition between religious groups for new members, or disputes over the federal budget.

Throughout most of the 1900s, the functionalist perspective had the upper hand in sociology in the United States. However, the conflict approach has become increasingly persuasive since the late 1960s. The widespread social unrest resulting from battles over civil rights, bitter divisions over the war in Vietnam, the rise of the feminist and gay liberation movements, the Watergate political scandal, urban riots, confrontations at abortion clinics, and shrinking economic prospects for the middle class have offered support for the conflict approach—the view that our social world is characterized by continual struggle between competing groups. Currently, the discipline of sociology accepts conflict theory as one valid way to gain insight into a society.

The Marxist View   As we saw earlier, Karl Marx viewed struggle between social classes as inevitable, given the exploitation of workers that he perceived under capitalism. Expanding on Marx's work, sociologists and other social scientists have come to see conflict not merely as a class phenomenon but as a part of everyday life in all societies. In studying any culture, organization, or social group, sociologists want to know who benefits, who suffers, and who dominates at the expense of others. They are concerned with the conflicts between women and men, parents and children, cities and suburbs, whites and Blacks, to name only a few. Conflict theorists are interested in how society's institutions—including the family, government, religion, education, and the media—may help to maintain the privileges of some groups and keep others in a subservient position. Their emphasis on social change and the redistribution of resources makes conflict theorists more radical and activist than functionalists (Dahrendorf 1959).

Building upon the work of the conflict perspective, sociologists today have drawn greater attention to social inequality as it dramatically impacts people of color. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva grew up in Puerto

Photo permission, Duke University

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, president of the American Sociological Association in 2018, has drawn upon conflict theory to focus on issues of long-term social and racial inequality.

Rico, where his mother was a sociologist who authored a book focusing on domestic abuse. Proud of his family and ethnic background, Bonilla-Silva's scholarship asks us to rethink racism as it occurs subtly by outwardly tolerant people as well as violently in everyday life. Significant change is required to overcome this centuries old, long-standing pattern of inequality (Bonilla-Silva 2019; Silva-Bonilla 1985).

The Feminist Perspective Sociologists began embracing the feminist perspective only in the 1970s, although it has a long tradition in many other disciplines. The **feminist perspective** sees inequity in gender as central to all behavior and organization. Because it focuses clearly on one aspect of inequality, it is often allied with the conflict perspective. Proponents of the feminist view tend to focus on the macro level, just as conflict theorists do. Drawing on the work of Marx and Engels, contemporary feminist theorists often view women's subordination as inherent in capitalist societies. Some radical feminist theorists, however, view the oppression of women as inevitable in *all* male-dominated societies, whether capitalist, socialist, or communist (Ferguson 2017).

An early example of this perspective (long before the label came into use by sociologists) can be seen in the life and writings of Ida Wells-Barnett (1862–1931). Following her groundbreaking publications in the 1890s on the practice of lynching Black Americans, she became an advocate in the women's rights campaign, especially the struggle to win the vote for women. Like feminist theorists who succeeded her, Wells-Barnett used her analysis of society as a means of resisting oppression. In her case, she researched what it meant to be Black, a woman in the United States, and a Black woman in the United States (Giddings 2008; Wells-Barnett 1970).

A more recent contribution that continues to spark discussion is the notion of the *intersectionalities,* or the interlocking matrix of domination. In all societies, privilege or lack of privilege is determined by multiple social factors, such as gender, age, race, sexual orientation, and religion. Patricia Hill Collins (2000), among other feminist theorists, drew attention to these interlocking factors, demonstrating that it is not just wealth that influences how we navigate our daily lives in any society.

Smithsonian Libraries/Science Source

Ida Wells-Barnett explored what it meant to be female and Black in the United States. Her work established her as one of the earliest feminist theorists.

Queer Theory Traditionally, sociologists and other researchers have assumed that men and women are heterosexual. They either ignored other sexual identifications or treated them as abnormal.

Yet as French social theorist Michel Foucault (1978) has pointed out, what is regarded as normal or even acceptable human sexuality varies dramatically from one culture to another, as well as from one time period to another. Today, in *queer theory,* sociologists have moved beyond narrow assumptions to study sexuality in all its forms.

Historically, the word *queer* was used in a derogatory manner, to stigmatize a person or behavior. Beginning in the early 1970s, however, gay and lesbian activists began to use the word as a term of empowerment. They dismissed the notion of heterosexuality as the only normal form of sexuality, along with the belief that people must be either heterosexual or homosexual. Instead, they recognized multiple sexual identities, including bisexuality. **Queer theory** is the study of society from the perspective of a broad spectrum of sexual identities, including heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality.

Queer theorist Eve Sedgwick (1990) argues that any analysis of society is incomplete if it does not include the spectrum of sexual identities that people embrace. Consider, for example, the reelection of President Obama in 2012. Political scientists have often noted the overwhelming support the president received from African Americans, Latinos, and women voters. Yet most have ignored the huge support—76 percent—that the president enjoyed among gay, lesbian, and bisexual voters. In comparison, heterosexual voters split evenly (49 percent to 49 percent nationwide) between Obama and his opponent, Mitt Romney. In the three battleground states of Florida, Ohio, and Virginia, support from gay, lesbian, and bisexual voters alone was enough to put Obama over the top. If Romney had carried just 51 percent of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual vote nationwide, he would have become the next president of the United States (Gates 2012).

use your sociological *imagination*

You are a sociologist who takes the conflict perspective. How would you interpret the practice of prostitution? How would your view of prostitution differ if you took the functionalist perspective? The feminist perspective? The perspective of queer theory?

Interactionist Perspective

Workers interacting on the job, encounters in public places like bus stops and parks, behavior in small groups—all these aspects of microsociology catch the attention of interactionists. Whereas functionalist and conflict theorists both analyze large-scale, society-wide patterns of behavior, theorists who take the **interactionist perspective** generalize about everyday forms of social interaction in order to explain society as a whole.

Today, given concern over traffic congestion and commuting costs, interactionists have begun to study a form of commuter behavior called "slugging." To avoid driving to work, commuters gather at certain preappointed places to seek rides from complete strangers. When a driver pulls into the parking area or vacant lot and announces his destination, the first slug in line who is headed for that destination jumps in. Rules of etiquette have emerged to

🔍 RESEARCH TODAY

1-1   The Third Place

For a generation, sociologists have spoken of the "**third place**," a social setting in addition to the "first place" of home and the "second place" of work. People gather routinely in the third place, typically restaurants or recreation centers or health clubs, to see familiar faces or make new friends. Will this social pattern persist? Sociologists have identified forces that both encourage and discourage it.

Free wi-fi encourages people to seek out such establishments, but do laptops truly enhance social interactions? And though talking among friends may be easy in the living-room settings that coffeehouses provide, proprietors don't always welcome these social gatherings. Some enforce anti-littering regulations or require patrons to make purchases at regular time intervals.

Still, as the second place (the workplace) becomes less relevant to growing numbers of telecommuters, the third place appears to have been growing in social significance. Yet the coronavirus pandemic may cause some people to think twice about socializing in crowded indoor places.

In 2018, the third place dramatically came to the forefront of discussions of racism as the be-

> *As the second place (the workplace) becomes less relevant to growing numbers of telecommuters, the third place may continue to grow in social significance.*

havior of people who gathered there was called into question. At Yale University, a white graduate student called campus police when she found a Black female graduate student napping in her dormitory's common room. In Philadelphia, two Black men were arrested at a Starbucks when they asked to use the bathroom while waiting for a third person to arrive for a meeting. Observers of these instances question whether police would have been summoned if the napping student or waiting men had been white. This differential behavior seemed to hearken back seventy years to a time when overt discrimination in public spaces was the norm. Because of these and other instances, organizations have sought to teach students and employees how to navigate the third place without engaging in discriminatory behavior.

LET'S DISCUSS

1. Think about acceptable third-place behavior. In what types of situations do people tend to separate by race, class, or gender in third places?
2. What third places do you visit regularly? Are some more public places than really third places?

Sources: Butler and Diaz 2016; Finlay 2020; Oldenburg 1999, 2000; Pomrenze and Simon 2018; Putnam 1995.

smooth the social interaction between driver and passenger: neither the driver nor the passenger may eat or smoke; the slug may not adjust the windows or radio or talk on a cell phone. The presence of the slugs, who get a free ride, may allow the driver to use special lanes reserved for high-occupancy vehicles (Slug-Lines.com 2020).

Interactionism (also referred to as *symbolic interactionism*) is a sociological framework in which human beings are viewed as living in a world of meaningful objects. Those "objects" may include material things, actions, other people, relationships, and even symbols. Interactionists see symbols as an especially important part of human communication (thus the term *symbolic* interactionism). Symbols have a shared social meaning that is understood by all members of a society. In the United States, for example, a salute symbolizes respect, while a clenched fist signifies defiance. Another culture might use different gestures to convey a feeling of respect or defiance. These types of symbolic interaction are classified as forms of **nonverbal communication**, which can include many other gestures, facial expressions, and postures (Hall et al. 2019).

Manipulation of symbols can be seen in dress codes. Schools frown on students who wear clothes displaying messages that appear to endorse violence or drug and alcohol consumption. Businesses stipulate the attire employees are allowed to wear on the job in order to impress their customers or clients. In 2018, U.S. Tennis Open officials gave a violation to a tennis player who briefly removed her shirt and revealed her sports bra on the court, after realizing the shirt was on backwards. Yet male tennis players frequently change shirts without incident. After an outcry about the differential treatment, professional tennis organizations revised their policies to be more equitable.

While the functionalist and conflict approaches were initiated in Europe, interactionism developed first in the United States. George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) is widely regarded as the founder of the interactionist perspective. Mead taught at the University of Chicago from 1893 until his death. As his teachings have become better known, sociologists have expressed greater interest in the interactionist perspective. Many have moved away from what may have been an excessive preoccupation with the macro (large-scale) level of social behavior and have redirected their attention toward behavior that occurs on the micro (small-scale) level.

Erving Goffman (1922–1982) popularized a particular type of interactionist method known as the **dramaturgical approach**, in which people are seen as theatrical performers. The dramaturgist compares everyday life to the setting of the theater and stage. Just as actors project certain images, all of us seek to present particular features of our personalities while we hide other features. Thus, in a class, we may feel the need to project a serious image; at a party, we may want to look relaxed and friendly.

Interactionists give special intention to everyday behavior that occurs in what has come to be called "the third place," as described in Box 1-1.

The Sociological Approach

Which perspective should a sociologist use in studying human behavior? Functionalist? Conflict? Interactionist? Feminist? Queer theorist? We simply cannot squeeze all sociological thinking into 4 or 5 theoretical categories—or even 10, if we include several other productive approaches. However, by studying the three major frameworks, we can better grasp how sociologists seek to explore social behavior. Table 1-2 summarizes these three broad approaches to sociological study.

Although no one approach is correct by itself, and sociologists draw on all of them for various purposes, many sociologists tend

TABLE 1-2   MAJOR SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Tracking Sociological Perspectives

	Functionalist	Conflict	Interactionist
View of Society	Stable, well integrated	Characterized by tension and struggle between groups	Active in influencing and affecting everyday social interaction
Level of Analysis Emphasized	Macro Meso Global	Macro Meso Global	Micro, as a way of understanding the larger social phenomena
Key Concepts	Manifest functions Latent functions Dysfunctions	Inequality Capitalism Stratification	Symbols Nonverbal communication Face-to-face interaction
View of the Individual	People are socialized to perform societal functions	People are shaped by power, coercion, and authority	People manipulate symbols and create their social worlds through interaction
View of the Social Order	Maintained through cooperation and consensus	Maintained through force and coercion	Maintained by shared understanding of everyday behavior
View of Social Change	Predictable, reinforcing	Change takes place all the time and may have positive consequences	Reflected in people's social positions and their communications with others
Example	Public punishments reinforce the social order	Laws reinforce the positions of those in power	People respect laws or disobey them based on their own past experience
Proponents	Émile Durkheim Talcott Parsons Robert Merton	Karl Marx W. E. B. DuBois Ida Wells-Barnett	George Herbert Mead Charles Horton Cooley Erving Goffman

to favor one particular perspective over others. A sociologist's theoretical orientation influences his or her approach to a research problem in important ways—including the choice of what to study, how to study it, and what questions to pose (or not to pose). Box 1-2 shows how researchers would study sports from different sociological perspectives.

Whatever the purpose of sociologists' work, their research will always be guided by their theoretical viewpoints. For example, sociologist Elijah Anderson (1990) embraces both the interactionist perspective and the groundbreaking work of W. E. B. DuBois. For 14 years Anderson conducted fieldwork in Philadelphia, where he studied the interactions of Black and white residents who lived in adjoining neighborhoods. In particular, he was interested in their public behavior, including their eye contact—or lack of it—as they passed one another on the street. Anderson's research tells us much about the everyday social interactions of Blacks and whites in the United States, but it does not explain the larger issues behind those interactions. Like theories, research results illuminate one part of the stage, leaving other parts in relative darkness.

thinking CRITICALLY

Relate the toys on display in your local store to issues of race, class, and gender.

RESEARCH TODAY

1-2   Looking at Sports from Five Sociological Perspectives

We watch sports. Talk sports. Spend money on sports. Some of us live and breathe sports. Because sports occupy much of our time and directly or indirectly consume and generate a great deal of money, it should not be surprising that sports have sociological components that can be analyzed from various theoretical perspectives. In this section we will look at sports from five major sociological perspectives.

Functionalist View

In examining any aspect of society, functionalists emphasize the contribution it makes to overall social stability. Functionalists regard sports as an almost religious institution that uses ritual and ceremony to reinforce the common values of a society. For example:

- Sports socialize young people into such values as competition and patriotism.
- Sports help to maintain people's physical well-being.
- Sports serve as a safety valve for both participants and spectators, who are allowed to shed tension and aggressive energy in a socially acceptable way.
- Sports bring together members of a community (who support local athletes and teams) or even a nation (during World Cup matches and the Olympics) and promote an overall feeling of unity and social solidarity.

Conflict View

Conflict theorists argue that the social order is based on coercion and exploitation. They emphasize that sports reflect and even exacerbate many of the divisions of society:

- Sports are a form of big business in which profits are more important than the health and safety of the workers (athletes).
- Sports perpetuate the false idea that success can be achieved simply through hard work,

Sergei Bachlakov/Shutterstock

Professional golfer Brooke Henderson of Canada won $1.7 million in 2019, making her the fourth most successful woman on the pro golf circuit that year. Among men, her winnings would have put her in 64th place.

• As a group, professional athletes are highly reluctant to display any sexual identity other than heterosexuality in public, for fear of damaging their careers and losing their fans and commercial sponsors.

• Parents who are not heterosexual encounter hostility when they try to register their children for sports or scouting programs, and are often rejected from coaching and other support roles.

Interactionist View

In studying the social order, interactionists are especially interested in shared understandings of everyday behavior. Interactionists examine sports on the micro level by focusing on how day-to-day social behavior is shaped by the distinctive norms, values, and demands of the world of sports:

• Sports often heighten parent–child involvement; they may lead to parental expectations for participation, and sometimes unrealistically, for success.

• Participation in sports builds the friendship networks that permeate everyday life.

• Despite class, racial, and religious differences, teammates may work together harmoniously and may even abandon common stereotypes and prejudices.

• Relationships in the sports world are defined by people's social positions as players, coaches, and referees—as well as by the high or low status that individuals hold as a result of their performances and reputations.

Despite their differences, functionalists, conflict theorists, feminists, queer theorists, and interactionists would all agree that there is much more to sports than exercise or recreation. They would also agree that sports and other popular forms of culture are worthy subjects of serious study by sociologists.

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while failure should be blamed on the individual alone (rather than on injustices in the larger social system).

• Professional athletes' behavior can promote violence and the use of performance-enhancing drugs.

• Communities divert scarce resources to subsidize the construction of professional sports facilities.

• Sports maintain the subordinate role of Blacks and Latinos, who toil as athletes but are less visible in supervisory positions as coaches, managers, and owners.

• Team logos and mascots (like the Washington Redskins) disparage American Indians.

Feminist View

Feminist theorists consider how watching or participating in sports reinforces the roles that men and women play in the larger society:

• Although sports generally promote fitness and health, they may also have an adverse effect on participants' health. Men are more likely to resort to illegal steroid use (among bodybuilders and baseball players, for example); women, to excessive dieting (among gymnasts and figure skaters, for example).

• Gender expectations encourage female athletes to be passive and gentle, qualities that do not support the emphasis on competitiveness in sports. As a result, women find it difficult to enter sports traditionally dominated by men, such as Indy or NASCAR.

• Although professional women athletes' earnings are increasing, they typically trail those of male athletes.

Despite their differences, functionalists, conflict theorists, feminists, queer theorists, and interactionists would all agree that there is much more to sports than exercise or recreation.

Queer Theory

Proponents of queer theory emphasize the ways in which sports promote heterosexuality as the only acceptable sexual identity for athletes:

• Coaches and players routinely use slurs based on negative stereotypes of homosexuals to stigmatize athletes whose performance is inadequate.

LET'S DISCUSS

1. Have you experienced or witnessed discrimination in sports based on gender, race, or sexual identity? If so, how did you react? Has the representation of Blacks, women, or gays on teams been controversial on your campus? In what ways?
2. Which of the five sociological perspectives seems most useful to you in analyzing sports? Why?

Sources: Acosta and Carpenter 2001; Eitzen 2009; Fine 1987; Sefiha 2012; Sharp et al. 2013; Young 2004; Zirin 2008.

Taking Sociology with You

You've seen how sociologists employ the major sociological perspectives in their research. How does sociology relate to *you,* your own studies, and your own career? In this section you'll learn about *applied* and *clinical sociology,* two growing fields that allow sociology majors and those with advanced degrees in sociology to apply what they have learned to real-world settings. You'll also see how to develop your sociological imagination, one of the keys to thinking like a sociologist. See the appendix at the end of this chapter for more information on careers in sociology.

Applied and Clinical Sociology

Many early sociologists—notably, Jane Addams, W. E. B. DuBois, and George Herbert Mead—were strong advocates for social reform. They wanted their theories and findings to be relevant to policymakers and to people's lives in general. For instance, Mead was the treasurer of Hull House, where he applied his theory to improving the lives of those who were powerless (especially immigrants). He also served on committees dealing with Chicago's labor problems and public education. DuBois led the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory from 1895 to 1924, supporting scholars in their applied research on business, criminal justice, health care, and philanthropy (Earl Wright II 2012).

Today, **applied sociology** is the use of the discipline of sociology with the specific intent of yielding practical applications for human behavior and organizations. By extension, Michael Burawoy (2005), in his presidential address to the American Sociological Association, endorsed what he called *public sociology,* encouraging scholars to engage a broader audience in bringing about positive outcomes. In effect, the applied sociologist reaches out to others and joins them in their efforts to better society.

Often, the goal of applied or public sociology is to assist in resolving a social problem. For example, in the past 50 years, eight presidents of the United States have established commissions to delve into major societal concerns facing our nation. Sociologists are often asked to apply their expertise to studying such issues as violence, pornography, crime, immigration, and population. In Europe, both academic and government research departments are offering increasing financial support for applied studies.

One example of applied sociology is the growing interest in learning more about local communities. Since its founding in 1994, the Northeast Florida Center for Community Initiatives (CCI), based at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, has conducted several community studies, including a homeless census and survey, an analysis of the economic impact of the arts in Jacksonville, and a long-term survey of the effects of Hurricane Katrina. Typical of applied sociology, these outreach efforts are collaborative, involving faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, volunteers, and community residents (Center for Community Initiatives 2014).

Another of CCI's applications of sociology, the Magnolia Project, is based in a storefront clinic in an underprivileged area of Jacksonville. Part of the federal Healthy Start initiative, which aims to decrease high infant mortality rates, the project serves

Ian Hooton/SPL/Alamy Stock Photo

The Center for Community Initiatives's Magnolia Project, an example of applied sociology, aims to decrease high rates of infant mortality.

women of childbearing age who have little or no regular access to health care. CCI's responsibilities include (1) interviewing and surveying key community participants, (2) coordinating data collection by the project's staff, (3) analyzing data, and (4) preparing progress reports for funding agencies and community partners. Through June 2014, not a single infant death had occurred among the 662 participants in the program (Center for Community Initiatives 2014).

Growing interest in applied sociology has led to such specializations as *medical sociology* and *environmental sociology.* The former includes research on how health care professionals and patients deal with disease. To give one example, medical sociologists have studied the social impact of the AIDS crisis and the coronavirus pandemic on families, friends, and communities (see Chapter 15). Environmental sociologists examine the relationship between human societies and the physical environment. One focus of their work is the issue of "environmental justice" (see Chapter 15), raised when researchers and community activists found that hazardous waste dumps are especially likely to be situated in poor and minority neighborhoods (M. Martin 1996).

The growing popularity of applied sociology has led to the rise of the specialty of clinical sociology. Louis Wirth (1931) wrote about clinical sociology almost 90 years ago, but the term itself has become popular only in recent years. While applied sociology may simply evaluate social issues, **clinical sociology** is dedicated to facilitating change by altering social relationships (as in family therapy) or restructuring social institutions (as in the reorganization of a medical center).

Applied sociologists generally leave it to policymakers to act on their evaluations. In contrast, clinical sociologists take direct responsibility for implementation and view those with whom they work as their clients. This specialty has become increasingly attractive to graduate students in sociology because it offers an opportunity to apply intellectual learning in a practical way. A shrinking job market in the academic world has made such alternative career routes appealing.

Applied and clinical sociology can be contrasted with **basic sociology** (also called *pure sociology*), which seeks a more profound knowledge of the fundamental aspects of social phenomena. This type of research is not necessarily meant to generate specific applications, although such ideas may result once findings are analyzed. When Durkheim studied suicide rates, he was not primarily interested in discovering a way to eliminate suicide. In this sense, his research was an example of basic rather than applied sociology.

Developing a Sociological Imagination

In this book, we will be illustrating the sociological imagination in several different ways—by showing theory in practice and in current research; by noting the ways in which electronic devices and apps are changing our social behavior; by thinking globally; by exploring the significance of social inequality; by speaking across race, gender, and religious boundaries; and by highlighting social policy throughout the world.

Theory in Practice We will illustrate how the major sociological perspectives can be helpful in understanding today's issues, from capital punishment to abortion. Sociologists do not necessarily declare, "Here I am using functionalism," but their research and approaches do tend to draw on one or more theoretical frameworks, as will become clear in the pages to follow.

Research Today Sociologists actively investigate a variety of issues and social behavior. We have already seen that research can shed light on the social factors that affect suicide rates. Sociological research often plays a direct role in improving people's lives, as in the case of increasing the participation of African Americans in diabetes testing. Throughout the rest of the book, the research performed by sociologists and other social scientists will shed light on group behavior of all types.

Our Wired World "What is the news today?" For many people, "the news" means the latest comments, pictures, and videos posted online by friends and acquaintances. For some, such up-to-the-minute connectivity has become addictive. Sociologists see the "third place" as reflecting both face-to-face social interaction *and* as a place where people gather together, each with his or her face buried in a smartphone or laptop.

Thinking Globally Whatever their theoretical perspective or research techniques, sociologists recognize that social behavior must be viewed in a global context. **Globalization** is the worldwide integration of government policies, cultures, social movements, and financial markets through trade and the exchange of ideas. Although public discussion of globalization is relatively recent, intellectuals have been pondering both its negative and positive social consequences for a long time. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels warned in *The Communist Manifesto* (written in 1848) of a world market that would lead to production in distant lands, sweeping away existing working relationships.

In the chapter-opening excerpt from *Outcasts United,* Warren St. John might have been focusing on a small Georgia town, but the key players on the team he described were from Liberia, Iraq, Sudan, Burundi, Congo, and Jordan. Such diversity is increasingly common throughout the United States. Locally, this diversity serves to globalize local communities; it also reflects major societal events and movements throughout the world (Fiss and Hirsch 2005).

Another aspect of the world landscape is the growing role of influencers, as described in Box 1-3.

The Significance of Social Inequality Who holds power? Who doesn't? Who has prestige? Who lacks it? Perhaps the major

YESTERDAY — FINISH YOUR DINNER— THERE ARE PEOPLE IN CHINA AND INDIA WHO ARE STARVING...

TODAY — FINISH YOUR HOMEWORK— THERE ARE PEOPLE IN CHINA AND INDIA WHO ARE STARVING FOR YOUR JOB...
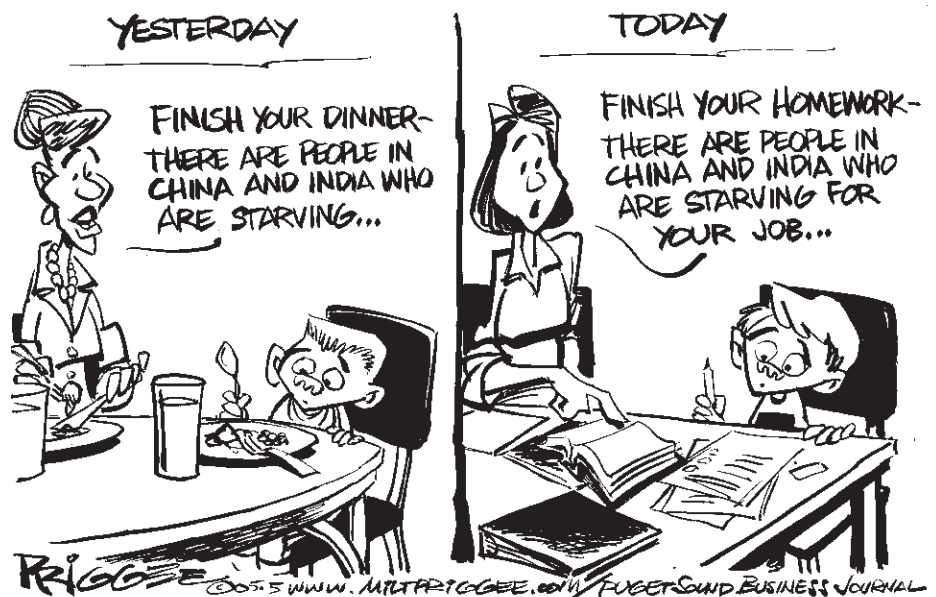
Source: ©Milt Priggee, Puget Sound Business Journal, June 27, 2005.

The interconnectedness across the world makes globalization increasingly important to many aspects of daily life.

⊕ SOCIOLOGY IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

1-3   Influencers Worldwide

Generations ago people such as Winston Churchill and Mahatma Gandhi came to mind as individuals whose worldviews reached millions. Today it is the likes of Ryan, a U.S. elementary school student who demonstrates and evaluates toys, football (soccer) star Crisrtian Ronaldo, and Australian personal trainer Kayla Isines.

An **influencer** is a social media user who has established credibility in a specific industry, has access to a huge audience, and can persuade others to act based on his or her recommendations. Unlike most world leaders, influencers churn out content 24/7 on such platforms as YouTube, TikTok, or Instagram.

Influencers achieve their world mark by different means. Some are brilliant thinkers who offer insights into a broad range of issues or use their celebrity status to bring attention to selected social causes. Others are conventionally attractive, good at video games, excel at sports, or set fashion trends.

Typically they begin by posting content and trying to create a group following; for some online users, they become significant influencers in their own niche, whether cooking Greek dishes or attempting to scale climbing walls. As their numbers of followers grow, they become entrepreneurs, hiring staff and managing budgets. This does not go unnoticed by corporations: soon consumer brands sponsor them to highlight products. In some respects, these social media stars achieve the kind of celebrity that movie stars had in the past.

Sociologists acknowledge that influencers, like all leaders, can produce negative consequences, such as those who espouse prejudicial views or incite violence against some group. Another quite different concern is the

Today global influencers reach across societies and are increasingly being monetized by commercial enterprises, at the same time they are becoming more and more entrenched in our daily interactions.

creation of nonhuman, digitally created influencers. Sometimes it is good fun, as viewers typically are aware they are interacting with a digital creation, but some nonhuman influencers are made to mislead and misinform the online community. After two years of concealing "her" nonhuman origins, Lil Miquela, a Brazilian American, became such an online celebrity that Prada and Nike sponsored.

LET'S DISCUSS

1. Who do you consider to be important influencers? In what fields do they exercise influence?

Oupa Bopape/Gallo Images via Getty Images

Influencers, including South African designer Paledi Segapo, are now integral to global social media.

2. What are the potential consequences if an influencer sponsors a company's products? Can this happen without followers' being aware of the sponsorship?

Sources: Grygiel 2016; Guttman 2019; Roose 2019.

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theme of analysis in sociology today is **social inequality**, a condition in which members of society have differing amounts of wealth, prestige, or power. The impact of Hurricane Katrina on residents of the Gulf Coast drew attention to social inequality in the United States. Predictably, the people who were hit the hardest by the massive storm were the poor, who had the greatest difficulty evacuating before the storm and have had the most difficulty recovering from it.

Some sociologists, in seeking to understand the effects of inequality, have made the case for social justice. W. E. B. DuBois ([1940] 1968:418) noted that the greatest power in the land is not "thought or ethics, but wealth." As we have seen, the contributions of Karl Marx, Jane Addams, and Ida Wells-Barnett also stressed this belief in the overarching significance of social inequality, and by extension, social justice. In this book, social inequality will be the central focus of Chapters 8

and 9, and sociologists' work on inequality will be highlighted throughout.

Speaking across Race, Gender, and Religious Boundaries
Sociologists include both men and women, who come from a variety of ethnic, national, and religious origins. In their work, sociologists seek to draw conclusions that speak to all people—not just the affluent or powerful. Doing so is not always easy. Insights into how a corporation can increase its profits tend to attract more attention and financial support than do, say, the merits of a needle exchange program for low-income inner-city residents. Yet today more than ever, sociology seeks to better understand the experiences of all people.

Sociologists have noted, for example, that the huge tsunami that hit South Asia in 2004 affected men and women differently. When the waves hit, mothers and grandmothers were

at home with the children; men were outside working, where they were more likely to become aware of the impending disaster. Moreover, most of the men knew how to swim, a survival skill that women in these traditional societies usually do not learn. As a result, many more men than women survived the catastrophe—about 10 men for every 1 woman. In one Indonesian village typical of the disaster area, 97 of 1,300 people survived; only 4 were women. The impact of this gender imbalance will be felt for some time, given women's primary role as caregivers for children and the elderly (BBC News 2005).

Social Policy throughout the World One important way we can use a sociological imagination is to enhance our understanding of current social issues throughout the world. Beginning with Chapter 2, each chapter will conclude with a discussion of a contemporary social policy issue. In some cases we will examine a specific issue facing national governments. For example, government funding of child care centers will be discussed in Chapter 4, Socialization and the Life Course; global immigration in Chapter 10, Racial and Ethnic Inequality; and religion in the schools in Chapter 13, Education and Religion. These Social Policy sections will demonstrate how fundamental sociological concepts can enhance our critical thinking skills and help us to better understand current public policy debates taking place around the world.

In addition, sociology has been used to evaluate the success of programs or the impact of changes brought about by

policymakers and political activists. For example, Chapter 9, Global Inequality, includes a discussion of research on the effectiveness of welfare programs. Such discussions underscore the many practical applications of sociological theory and research.

Sociologists expect the next quarter century to be perhaps the most exciting and critical period in the history of the discipline. That is because of a growing recognition—both in the United States and around the world—that current social problems must be addressed before their magnitude overwhelms human societies. We can expect sociologists to play an increasing role in government by researching and developing public policy alternatives. It seems only natural for this textbook to focus on the connection between the work of sociologists and the difficult questions confronting policymakers and people in the United States and around the world.

thinking CRITICALLY

What issues facing your local community would you like to address with applied sociological research? Do you see any global connections to these local issues?

APPENDIX Careers in Sociology

For the past two decades the number of U.S. college students who have graduated with a degree in sociology has risen steadily. In this appendix we'll consider some of the options these students have after completing their education.

How do students first learn about the sociological perspective on society? Some may take a sociology course in high school. Others may study sociology at community college, where 40 percent of all college students in the United States are enrolled. Indeed, many future sociology majors first develop their sociological imaginations at a community college.

An undergraduate degree in sociology doesn't just serve as excellent preparation for future graduate work in sociology. It also provides a strong liberal arts background for entry-level positions in business, social services, foundations, community organizations, not-for-profit groups, law enforcement, and many government jobs. A number of fields—among them marketing, public relations, and broadcasting—now require investigative skills and an understanding of the diverse groups found in today's multiethnic and multinational environment. Moreover, a sociology degree requires accomplishment in oral and written communication, interpersonal skills, problem solving, ability to work in a team, organizational skills, data analysis, and critical thinking—all job-related skills that may give sociology graduates

an advantage over those who pursue more technical degrees (Hecht 2016).

Consequently, while few occupations specifically require an undergraduate degree in sociology, such academic training can be an important asset in entering a wide range of occupations. To emphasize this point, a number of chapters in this book highlight a real-life professional who describes how the study of sociology has helped in his or her career. For example, in Chapter 6 a Taking Sociology to Work box explains how a college graduate uses her training in sociology as a social media manager for nonprofit organizations. And in Chapter 14, another Taking Sociology to Work box shows how a recent graduate uses the skill set he acquired as a sociology major in his role as a government analyst.

Figure 1-2 summarizes the sources of employment for those with BA or BS degrees in sociology. It shows that fields including nonprofit organizations, education, business, and government offer major career opportunities for sociology graduates. Undergraduates who know where their career interests lie are well advised to enroll in sociology courses and specialties best suited to those interests. For example, students hoping to become health planners would take a class in medical sociology; students seeking employment as social science

FIGURE 1-2   OCCUPATIONS OF GRADUATING SOCIOLOGY MAJORS

Social science research 4.6%

Management 3.8%

IT, PR, and other 7.9%

Social services and counseling 23.7%

All other 8.0%

Sales and marketing 14.2%

Teaching 11.9%

Services 11.9%

Administration and support 14.0%
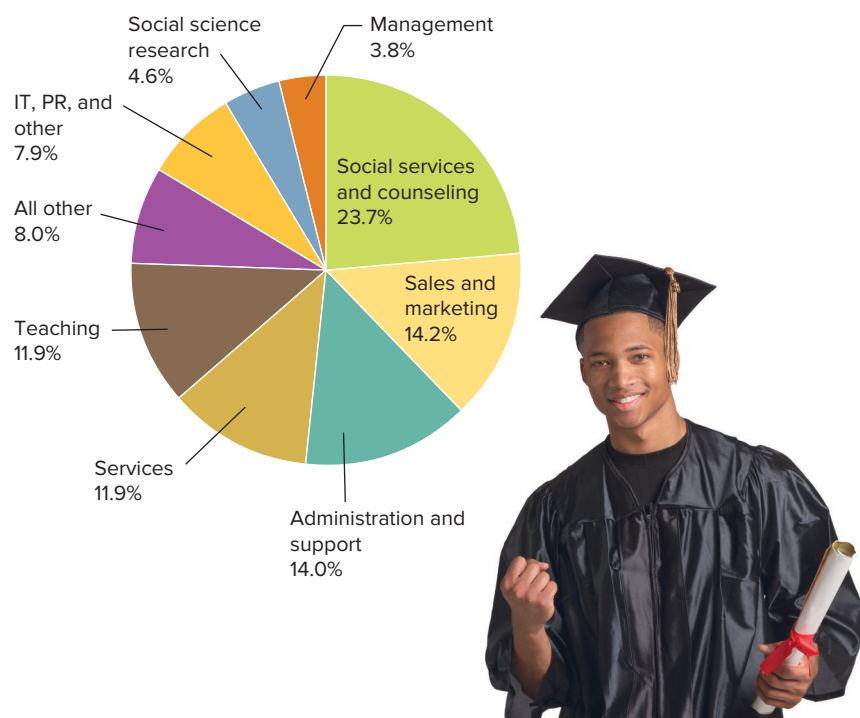
Note: Based on a national survey of current occupation in 2013 of 759 graduates with a sociology major in the Class of 2012.
Source: Spalter-Roth et al. 2013. *Photo:* Flashon Studio/Shutterstock

research assistants would focus on courses in statistics and methods. Internships, such as placements at city planning agencies and survey research organizations, afford another way for sociology students to prepare for careers. Studies show that students who choose an internship placement have less trouble finding jobs, obtain better jobs, and enjoy greater

Aleksei Ivanov/123RF

One year after graduation, one out of four sociology majors was employed in the social services as a counselor, child advocate, forensic interviewer, program director, or caseworker.

job satisfaction than students without internship placements. Finally, students should expect to change fields during their first five years of employment after graduation—for example, from sales and marketing to management (American Sociological Association 2013; Salem and Grabarek 1986).

Many college students view social work as the field most closely associated with sociology. Traditionally, social workers received their undergraduate training in sociology and allied fields such as psychology and counseling. After some practical experience, social workers would generally seek a master's degree in social work (MSW) to be considered for supervisory or administrative positions. Today, however, some students choose (where it is available) to pursue a bachelor's degree in social work (BSW). This degree prepares graduates for direct service positions, such as caseworker or group worker.

Many students continue their sociological training beyond the bachelor's degree. More than 190 universities in the United States have graduate programs in sociology that offer PhD and/or master's degrees. These programs differ greatly in their areas of specialization, course requirements, costs, and the research and teaching opportunities available to graduate students. About 61 percent of doctoral graduates are women (American Sociological Association 2020b).

Higher education is an important source of employment for sociologists with graduate degrees. Recently, 85 percent of recent PhD recipients in sociology have sought employment in colleges and universities. These sociologists teach not only majors who are committed to the discipline but also students hoping to become doctors, nurses, lawyers, police officers, and so forth (National Science Foundation 2019).

Sociologists who teach in colleges and universities may use their knowledge and training to influence public policy. For example, sociologist Andrew Cherlin (2003) commented on the debate over whether to provide federal funding to promote marriage among welfare recipients. Citing the results of two of his studies, Cherlin questioned the potential effectiveness of such a policy in strengthening low-income families. Because many single mothers choose to marry someone other than the father of their children—sometimes for good reason—their children often grow up in stepfamilies. Cherlin's research shows that children who are raised in stepfamilies are no better off than those in single-parent families. He sees government efforts to promote marriage as a politically motivated attempt to foster traditional social values in a society that has become increasingly diverse.

For sociology graduates who are interested in academic careers, the road to a PhD (or doctorate) can be long and difficult. This degree symbolizes competence in original research; each candidate must prepare a book-length study known as a dissertation. Typically, a doctoral student in sociology will engage in four to seven

years of intensive work, including the time required to complete the dissertation. Yet even this effort is no guarantee of a job as a sociology professor.

The demand for college instructors is projected to grow 15 percent from 2016 to 2026, faster than the average for all occupations, but the majority of this employment growth is likely to be part-time positions. Anyone who launches an academic career must be prepared for considerable uncertainty and competition in the college job market (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019a).

Of course, not all people who work as sociologists teach or hold doctoral degrees. Take government, for example. The Census Bureau relies on people with sociological training to interpret data for other government agencies and the general public. Virtually every agency depends on survey research—a field in which sociology students can specialize—in order to assess everything from community needs to the morale of the agency's workers. In addition, people with sociological training can put their academic knowledge to effective use in probation and parole, health sciences, community development, and recreational services. Some people working in government or private industry have a master's degree (MA or MS) in sociology; others have a bachelor's degree (BA or BS).

Currently, about 15 percent of the members of the American Sociological Association use their sociological skills outside the academic world, whether in social service agencies or in marketing positions for business firms. Increasing numbers of sociologists with graduate degrees are employed by businesses, industry, hospitals, and nonprofit organizations. Studies show that many sociology graduates are making career changes from social service areas to business and commerce. For an undergraduate major, sociology is excellent preparation for employment in many parts of the business world (Spalter-Roth et al. 2013).

Whether you take a few courses in sociology or complete a degree, you will benefit from the critical thinking skills developed in this discipline. Sociologists emphasize the value of being able to analyze, interpret, and function within a variety of working situations—an asset in virtually any career. Moreover, given rapid technological change and the expanding global economy, all of us will need to adapt to substantial social change, even in our own careers. Sociology provides a rich conceptual framework that can serve as a foundation for flexible career development and assist you in taking advantage of new employment opportunities.

MASTERING THIS CHAPTER

Summary

Sociology is the scientific study of social behavior and human groups. This chapter examines the nature of sociological theory, the founders of the discipline, theoretical perspectives in contemporary sociology, practical applications for sociological theory and research, and ways to exercise the *sociological imagination.*

1. The **sociological imagination** is an awareness of the relationship between an individual and the wider society. It is based on the ability to view our own society as an outsider might, rather than from the perspective of our limited experiences and cultural biases.

2. In contrast to other **social sciences**, sociology emphasizes the influence that groups can have on people's behavior and attitudes and the ways in which people shape society.

3. Knowledge that relies on common sense is not always reliable. Sociologists must test and analyze each piece of information they use.

4. Sociologists employ **theories** to examine relationships between observations or data that may seem completely unrelated.

5. Nineteenth-century thinkers who contributed sociological insights included Auguste Comte, a French philosopher; Harriet Martineau, an English sociologist; and Herbert Spencer, an English scholar.

6. Other important figures in the development of sociology were Émile Durkheim, who pioneered work on suicide; Max Weber, who taught the need for insight in intellectual work; Karl Marx, who emphasized the importance of the economy and social conflict; and W. E. B. DuBois, who advocated the usefulness of both basic and applied research in combating prejudice and fostering racial tolerance and justice.

7. In the 20th century, the discipline of sociology was indebted to the U.S. sociologists Charles Horton Cooley and Robert Merton, as well as to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

8. **Macrosociology** concentrates on large-scale phenomena or entire civilizations; **microsociology** stresses the study of small groups. **Mesosociology** is an intermediate level of analysis that focuses on formal organizations and social movements. **Global sociology** compares nations or entire societies.

9. The **functionalist perspective** emphasizes the way in which the parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability.

10. The **conflict perspective** assumes that social behavior is best understood in terms of conflict or tension between competing groups.

11. The **feminist perspective**, which is often allied with the conflict perspective, sees inequity in gender as central to all behavior and organization.

12. **Queer theory** stresses that to fully understand society, scholars must study it from the perspective of a range of sexual identities, rather than exclusively from a "normal" heterosexual point of view.

13. The **interactionist perspective** is concerned primarily with fundamental or everyday forms of interaction, including symbols and other types of **nonverbal communication**.

14. Sociologists make use of all five perspectives, since each offers unique insights into the same issue.

15. **Applied** and **clinical sociology** apply the discipline of sociology to the solution of practical problems in human behavior and organizations. In contrast, **basic sociology** is sociological inquiry that seeks only a deeper knowledge of the fundamental aspects of social phenomena.

16. This textbook makes use of the sociological imagination by showing theory in practice and in current research; by noting the ways in which electronic devices and apps are changing our social behavior; by thinking globally; by focusing on the significance of social inequality; by speaking across race, gender, and religious boundaries; and by highlighting social policy around the world.

Key Terms

Anomie Durkheim's term for the loss of direction felt in a society when social control of individual behavior has become ineffective. (page 8)

Applied sociology The use of the discipline of sociology with the specific intent of yielding practical applications for human behavior and organizations. (18)

Basic sociology Sociological inquiry conducted with the objective of gaining a more profound knowledge of the fundamental aspects of social phenomena. Also known as *pure sociology.* (19)

Clinical sociology The use of the discipline of sociology with the specific intent of altering social relationships or restructuring social institutions. (19)

Conflict perspective A sociological approach that assumes that social behavior is best understood in terms of tension between groups over power or the allocation of resources, including housing, money, access to services, and political representation. (13)

Cultural capital Noneconomic goods, such as family background and education, which are reflected in a knowledge of language and the arts. (11)

Double consciousness The division of an individual's identity into two or more social realities. (10)

Dramaturgical approach A view of social interaction, popularized by Erving Goffman, in which people are seen as theatrical performers. (15)

Dysfunction An element or process of a society that may disrupt the social system or reduce its stability. (13)

Feminist perspective A sociological approach that views inequity in gender as central to all behavior and organization. (14)

Functionalist perspective A sociological approach that emphasizes the way in which the parts of a society are structured to maintain its stability. (12)

Global sociology A level of sociological analysis that makes comparisons between entire nations, using entire societies as units of analysis. (11)

Globalization The worldwide integration of government policies, cultures, social movements, and financial markets through trade and the exchange of ideas. (19)

Ideal type A construct or model for evaluating specific cases. (9)

Influencer   A social media user who has established credibility in a specific industry, such as fashion or electronics or toys. (20)

Interactionist perspective A sociological approach that generalizes about everyday forms of social interaction in order to explain society as a whole. (14)

Latent function An unconscious or unintended function that may reflect hidden purposes. (13)

Macrosociology Sociological investigation that concentrates on large-scale phenomena or entire civilizations. (11)

Manifest function An open, stated, and conscious function. (13)

Mesosociology An intermediate level of sociological analysis that focuses on formal organizations and social movements. (11)

Microsociology Sociological investigation that stresses the study of small groups, often through experimental means. (11)

Natural science The study of the physical features of nature and the ways in which they interact and change. (3)

Nonverbal communication The sending of messages through the use of gestures, facial expressions, and postures. (15)

Queer theory The study of society from the perspective of a broad spectrum of sexual identities, including heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality. (14)

Science The body of knowledge obtained by methods based on systematic observation. (3)

Social capital The collective benefit of social networks, which are built on reciprocal trust. (11)

Social inequality A condition in which members of society have differing amounts of wealth, prestige, or power. (20)

Social science The study of the social features of humans and the ways in which they interact and change. (3)

Sociological imagination An awareness of the relationship between an individual and the wider society, both today and in the past. (3)

Sociology The scientific study of social behavior and human groups. (3)

Theory In sociology, a set of statements that seeks to explain problems, actions, or behavior. (6)

Third place A social setting in addition to the "first place" of home and the "second place" of work where people routinely gather. (15)

Verstehen The German word for "understanding" or "insight"; used by Max Weber to stress the need for sociologists to take into account the subjective meanings people attach to their actions. (8)

TAKING SOCIOLOGY with you

1. Research! Time your daily activities. How much time do you spend communicating with others via electronic media, compared to speaking with them directly? How many different people do you converse with in person and how many via digital devices?

2. In what ways have you and your family been affected by climate change? Have you felt any social pressure to do something about it personally?

3. **Writing Sociology.** Consider some group or organization that you participate in. Using Robert Merton's concepts, list its manifest and latent functions.

4. How do sociology's varied theoretical approaches tend to emphasize the study of groups that are economically poor or otherwise marginalized?

5. What specific issues could be best studied using a meso level of analysis? Which are best approached through global sociology?

Self-Quiz

Read each question carefully and then select the best answer.

1. Sociology is
   a. very narrow in scope.
   b. concerned with what one individual does or does not do.
   c. the systematic study of social behavior and human groups.
   d. the study of interactions between two individuals at a time.

2. Which of the following thinkers introduced the concept of the sociological imagination?
   a. Émile Durkheim
   b. Max Weber
   c. Karl Marx
   d. C. Wright Mills

3. Émile Durkheim's research on suicide suggested that
   a. people with religious affiliations had a higher suicide rate than those who were unaffiliated.
   b. suicide rates seemed to be higher in times of peace than in times of war and revolution.
   c. civilians were more likely to take their lives than soldiers.
   d. suicide is a solitary act, unrelated to group life.

4. Max Weber taught his students that they should employ which of the following in their intellectual work?
   a. anomie
   b. *verstehen*
   c. the sociological imagination
   d. microsociology

5. Robert Merton's contributions to sociology include
   a. successfully combining theory and research.
   b. producing a theory that is one of the most frequently cited explanations of deviant behavior.
   c. an attempt to bring macro-level and micro-level analyses together.
   d. all of the above

6. Which sociologist made a major contribution to society through his in-depth studies of urban life, including both Blacks and whites?
   a. W. E. B. DuBois
   b. Robert Merton
   c. Auguste Comte
   d. Charles Horton Cooley

7. In the late 19th century, before the term "feminist view" was even coined, the ideas behind this major theoretical approach appeared in the writings of
   a. Karl Marx.
   b. Ida Wells-Barnett.
   c. Charles Horton Cooley.
   d. Pierre Bourdieu.

8. Thinking of society as a living organism in which each part of the organism contributes to its survival is a reflection of which theoretical perspective?
   a. the functionalist perspective
   b. the conflict perspective
   c. the feminist perspective
   d. the interactionist perspective

9. Karl Marx's view of the struggle between social classes inspired the contemporary
   a. functionalist perspective.
   b. conflict perspective.
   c. interactionist perspective.
   d. dramaturgical approach.

10. Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach, which postulates that people present certain aspects of their personalities while obscuring other aspects, is a derivative of which major theoretical perspective?
    a. the functionalist perspective
    b. the conflict perspective
    c. the feminist perspective
    d. the interactionist perspective

11. Within sociology, a(n) _____ is a set of statements that seeks to explain problems, actions, or behavior.

12. In _____ _____'s hierarchy of the sciences, sociology was the "queen," and its practitioners were "scientist-priests."

13. In *Society in America*, originally published in 1837, English scholar _____ _____ examined religion, politics, child rearing, and immigration in the young nation.

14. _____ _____ adapted Charles Darwin's evolutionary view of the "survival of the fittest" by arguing that it is "natural" that some people are rich while others are poor.

15. Sociologist Max Weber coined the term _____ _____ in referring to a construct or model that serves as a measuring rod against which actual cases can be evaluated.

16. In *The Communist Manifesto*, _____ _____ and _____ _____ argued that the masses of people who have no resources other than their labor (the proletariat) should unite to fight for the overthrow of capitalist societies.

17. _____ _____ , an early female sociologist, cofounded the famous Chicago settlement house called Hull House and also tried to establish a juvenile court system.

18. The university's role in certifying academic competence and excellence is an example of a(n) _____ function.

19. The _____ _____ draws on the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in that it often views women's subordination as inherent in capitalist societies.

20 Looking at society from the broad spectrum of sexual identity, including heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality, is called _____ theory.

Sociological Research

Mario Tama/Getty Images

A volunteer interviews a man who is homeless on a New York City subway in the early morning hours. Surveys are just one of the methods sociologists use to collect data.

▶ INSIDE
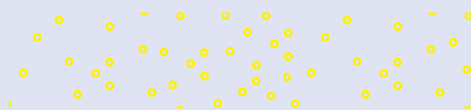
AleksandrYu/iStockphoto/Getty Images

How do sociologists provide useful information about public health concerns?

Sociologist Helen Keane and her colleagues explore the reasons why people engage in the use of e-cigarettes or vaping. Read on to see what they learned.

" The use of e-cigarettes has increased dramatically over the past decade. . . .

Two opposing discourses characterise this debate. The currently dominant view is that e-cigarettes present a threat to health both through their ability to produce and/or maintain addiction in users and their potential to undermine the denormalisation of smoking tobacco. Their appeal to children is frequently invoked, and the fact that tobacco companies are buying into the e-cigarette market exacerbates these concerns. On the other hand, e-cigarettes have also been incorporated into a discourse of tobacco harm reduction, including discussions of 'endgame' strategies for smoking. From this perspective, e-cigarettes represent an opportunity to improve health by providing a less harmful way of consuming nicotine, which is appealing to smokers who have failed to quit using conventional methods.

The researchers monitored an online vaper forum and then asked vapers to 'tell us anything you would like to about personal vaporisers' (PVs). There were 705 responses used in their final analysis, and 97 percent of respondents reported that they had been daily smokers before using e-cigarettes.

The survey provided insights into the transmission of vaping as a social practice. The survey responses suggested that vaping is being spread efficiently through word of mouth or personal contact. Many respondents mentioned being introduced to vaping by a friend or family member. Several respondents received a gift of a PV starter kit as a form of intervention by a concerned non-vaping friend or family member. Others mentioned curiosity, piqued by seeing people vaping or hearing about the new technology, as the precursor to vaping.

Other people were talking about it so I thought I would give it a try. Wasn't really thinking about giving up smoking as such.

From the dominant public health perspective this kind of spread through social contacts is readily interpreted as the spectre of contagion and proof of vaping's capacity to renormalise nicotine consumption. But to these vapers it is understood as a positive process in which useful knowledge is shared, friendship and care communicated, and the social elements of the practice reinforced. . . .

Vapers expressed a sense of liberation which was not just about escape from an unwanted habit but from a depressing pattern of repeated experiences of failure.

Since using these devices and quitting smoking, I don't get out of bed and cough till I wretch. I am no longer short of breath with a feeling of doom that lung cancer will destroy my life . . . I can now enjoy the pleasant effects of nicotine without the fear that it is killing me. I can still have the punctuation marks of the day but without the stink, ill health, burns in the carpet, dirty ashtrays etc. . . .

For some, the devices had an almost magical quality in that they transformed the sick, guilty and unhappy smoker into the healthy happy vaper without the suffering and struggle associated with previous quit attempts. "

For some, the devices had an almost magical quality in that they transformed the sick, guilty and unhappy smoker into the healthy happy vaper without the suffering and struggle associated with previous quit attempts.

Source: Keane et al. 2017.

By engaging users of e-cigarettes, the researchers were able to inform public health discussions by showing that many vapers see their practice as healthy or at least as healthier than reliance on tobacco products. The researchers found that users see vaping as somehow more socially acceptable and "cleaner." As public health concerns about vaping grow, and efforts increase to discourage the practice, public health officials will need research such as this from sociologists to better understand what motivates vaping.

Among the insights that such sociological research has revealed is that young people, especially teens, do not recognize that using e-cigarette products from Juul Labs is vaping. When asked whether they use nicotine products or vape, many use the term "Juuling" to describe what they are doing, and may not even recognize that they are vaping (Edney 2019).

Effective sociological research can be quite thought-provoking. It may suggest many new questions that require further study, such as why we make assumptions about people who engage in atypical behaviors like self-injury. In some cases, rather than raising additional questions, a study will simply confirm previous beliefs and findings. Sociological research can also have practical applications. For instance, research results that disconfirm accepted beliefs about marriage and the family may lead to changes in public policy.

This chapter will examine the research process used in conducting sociological studies. How do sociologists go about setting up a research project? How do they ensure that the results of the research are reliable and accurate? Can they carry out their research without violating the rights of those they study?

We will look first at the steps that make up the scientific method used in research. Then we will look at various techniques commonly used in sociological research, such as experiments, observations, and surveys. We will pay particular attention to the ethical challenges sociologists face in studying human behavior, and to the debate raised by Max Weber's call for "value neutrality" in social science research. We will also examine feminists' and queer theorists' methodologies and the role technology plays in research today.

Though sociological researchers can study almost any subject, in this chapter we will concentrate on two in particular. The first is the relationship of education to income, which we will use as an example in the section on the scientific method. The second is the controversial subject of human sexual behavior. Like self-injury, sexual behavior is private and personal, and therefore hard to study. The Social Policy section that closes this chapter describes the difficulties and challenges of researching closely guarded sexual behaviors.

Whatever the area of sociological inquiry and whatever the perspective of the sociologist—whether functionalist, conflict, feminist, queer theorist, interactionist, or any other—there is one crucial requirement: imaginative, responsible research that meets the highest scientific and ethical standards.

What Is the Scientific Method?

Like all of us, sociologists are interested in the central questions of our time: Is the family falling apart? Why is there so much crime in the United States? Can the world feed a growing population? Such issues concern most people, whether or not they have academic training. However, unlike the typical citizen, the sociologist has a commitment to use the **scientific method** in studying society. The scientific method is a systematic, organized series of steps that ensures maximum objectivity and consistency in researching a problem.

Many of us will never actually conduct scientific research. Why, then, is it important that we understand the scientific method? The answer is that it plays a major role in the workings of our society. Residents of the United States are constantly bombarded with "facts" or "data." A television news report informs us that "one in every two marriages in this country now ends in divorce," yet as Chapter 12 will show, that assertion is based on misleading statistics. Almost daily, advertisers cite supposedly scientific studies to prove that their products are superior. Such claims may be accurate or exaggerated. We can better evaluate such information—and will not be fooled so easily—if we are familiar with the standards of scientific research.

These standards are quite stringent, and they demand as strict adherence as possible. The scientific method requires precise preparation in developing research. Otherwise, the research data collected may not prove accurate. Sociologists and other researchers follow five basic steps in the scientific method: (1) defining the problem, (2) reviewing the literature, (3) formulating the hypothesis, (4) selecting the research design and then collecting and analyzing data, and (5) developing the conclusion (Figure 2-1). After reaching the conclusion, researchers write a report on their study. Often the report will begin with an *executive summary* of the method they followed and their conclusion. In the sections that follow, we'll use an actual example to illustrate the scientific method.

Defining the Problem

Does it "pay" to go to college? Some people make great sacrifices and work hard to get a college education. Parents borrow money

FIGURE 2-1   THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD
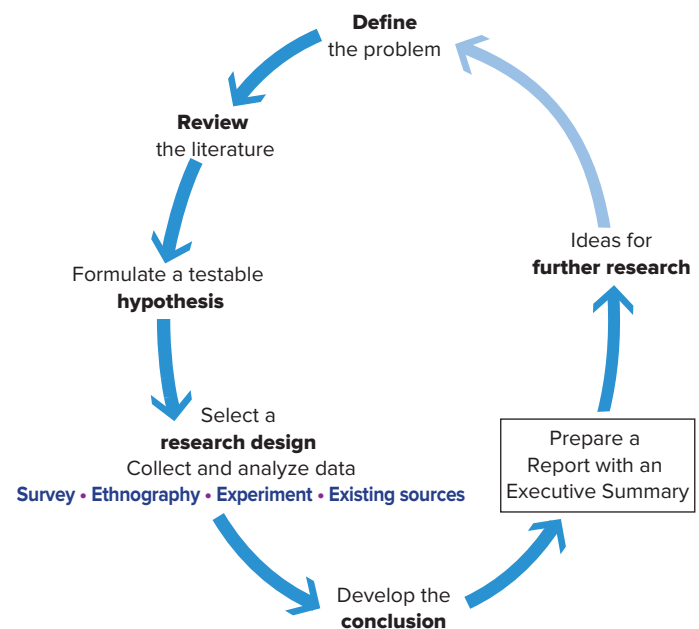
The scientific method allows sociologists to objectively and logically evaluate the data they collect. Their findings can suggest ideas for further sociological research.

for their children's tuition. Students work part-time jobs or even take full-time positions while attending evening or weekend classes. Does it pay off? Are there monetary returns for getting that degree?

The first step in any research project is to state as clearly as possible what you hope to investigate—that is, *define the problem.* In this instance, we are interested in knowing how schooling relates to income. We want to find out the earnings of people with different levels of formal schooling.

Early on, any social science researcher must develop an operational definition of each concept being studied. An **operational definition** is an explanation of an abstract concept that is specific enough to allow a researcher to assess the concept. For example,

a sociologist interested in status might use membership in exclusive social clubs as an operational definition of status. Someone studying prejudice might consider a person's unwillingness to hire or work with members of minority groups as an operational definition of prejudice. In our example, we need to develop two operational definitions—education and earnings—in order to study whether it pays to get an advanced educational degree. We'll define *education* as the number of years of schooling a person has achieved and *earnings* as the income a person reports having received in the past year.

Reviewing the Literature

By conducting a *review of the literature*—examining relevant scholarly studies and information—researchers refine the problem under study, clarify possible techniques to be used in collecting data, and eliminate or reduce avoidable mistakes. In our example, we would examine information about the salaries for different occupations. We would see if jobs that require more academic training are better rewarded. It would also be appropriate to review other studies on the relationship between education and income.

The review of the literature would soon tell us that many factors besides years of schooling influence earning potential. For example, we would learn that the children of rich parents are more likely to go to college than those of poor parents, so we might consider the possibility that rich parents may later help their children to secure better-paying jobs.

We might also look at macro-level data, such as state-by-state comparisons of income and educational levels. In one macro-level study based on census data, researchers found that in states whose residents have a relatively high level of education, household income levels are high as well (Figure 2-2). This finding suggests that schooling may well be related to income, though it does not speak to the micro-level relationship we are interested in. That is, we want to know whether *individuals* who are well educated are also well paid.

Formulating the Hypothesis

After reviewing earlier research and drawing on the contributions of sociological theorists, the researchers may then *formulate the hypothesis.* A **hypothesis** is a speculative statement about the relationship between two or more factors known as variables. Income, religion, occupation, and gender can all serve as variables in a study. We can define a **variable** as a measurable trait or characteristic that is subject to change under different conditions.

Researchers who formulate a hypothesis generally must suggest how one aspect of human behavior influences or affects another. The variable hypothesized to cause or influence another is called the **independent variable.** The other variable is termed the **dependent variable** because its action *depends* on the influence of the independent variable. In other words, the researcher believes that the independent variable predicts or causes change in the dependent variable. For example, a researcher in sociology might anticipate that the availability of affordable housing (the independent variable, x) affects the level of homelessness in a community (the dependent variable, y).

Our hypothesis is that the higher one's educational degree, the more money one will earn. The independent variable that is to be

Jason Lindsey/Alamy Stock Photo

It seems reasonable that these graduates of Fort Bethold Community College on the Fort Bethold Reservation, North Dakota, will earn more income than high school graduates. How would you go about testing that hypothesis?

measured is the level of education. The variable that is thought to depend on it—income—must also be measured.

Identifying independent and dependent variables is a critical step in clarifying cause-and-effect relationships. As shown in Figure 2-3, **causal logic** involves the relationship between a condition or variable and a particular consequence, with one leading to the other. For instance, being less integrated into society may be directly related to, or produce a greater likelihood of, suicide. Similarly, the time students spend reviewing material for a quiz may be directly related to, or produce a greater likelihood of, getting a high score on the quiz.

A **correlation** exists when a change in one variable coincides with a change in the other. Correlations are an indication that causality *may* be present; they do not necessarily indicate causation. For example, data indicate that people who prefer to watch televised news programs are less knowledgeable than those who read newspapers and news magazines. This correlation between people's relative knowledge and their choice of news media seems to make sense, because it agrees with the common belief that television dumbs down information. But the correlation between the two variables is actually caused by a third variable, people's relative ability to comprehend large amounts of information. People with poor reading skills are much more likely than others to get their news from television, while those who are more educated or skilled turn more often to the print media. Though television viewing is *correlated* with lower news comprehension, then, it does not *cause* it. Sociologists seek to identify the *causal* link between variables; the suspected causal link is generally described in the hypothesis (Neuman 2009).

Collecting and Analyzing Data

How do you test a hypothesis to determine if it is supported or refuted? You need to collect information, using one of the