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JOAN FERRANTE

SEEING SOCIOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTION

3RD EDITION

Edition 3

Seeing Sociology

AN INTRODUCTION

Joan Ferrante
Northern Kentucky University

With contributions from
Chris Caldeira
University of California, Davis

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***Seeing Sociology, An Introduction*, 3rd Edition**
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About the Author

JOAN FERRANTE is a professor of sociology at Northern Kentucky University (NKU). She received her PhD from the University of Cincinnati in 1984. Joan decided early in her career that she wanted to focus her publishing efforts on introducing students to the discipline of sociology. She believes it is important for that introduction to cultivate an appreciation for the methods of social research and for sociological theory beyond the three major perspectives. As a professor, she teaches sociology from an applied perspective so that students come to understand the various career options that the serious student of sociology can pursue. Joan is the author of "Careers in Sociology" (a Wadsworth sociology module), a guide to making the most of an undergraduate degree in sociology. She also teaches sociology in a way that emphasizes the value and power of the sociological framework for making a difference in the world. With the support of the Mayerson Family Foundations, Joan designed the curriculum for a student philanthropy project at NKU in which students, as part of their course work, must decide how to use $4,000 in a way that addresses some community need. That curriculum has now been adopted by dozens of universities across the United States. For the past decade, she has also supported a study abroad scholarship called "Beyond the Classroom" for which any NKU student who has used her sociology texts (new or used) can apply. Joan's university has twice recognized her as an outstanding professor with the Frank Milburn Sinton Outstanding Professor Award and the Outstanding Junior Faculty Award.

Doug Hume

To Dr. Horatio C Wood, IV, MD

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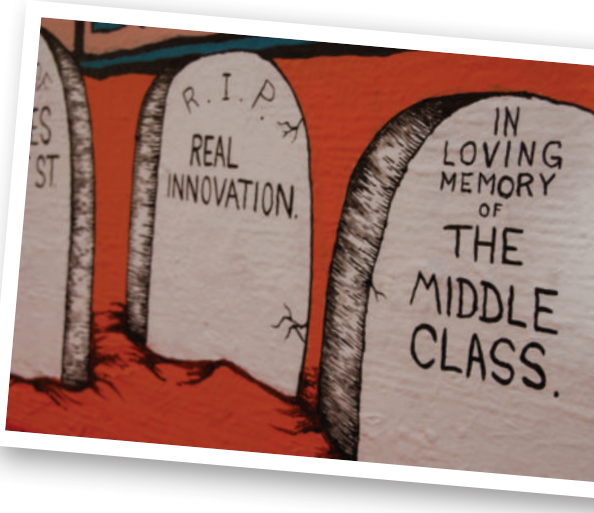

Chris Caldeira


Photo by Chris Caldeira: Mural by Paul Ygartua/www.ygartua.com


Chris Caldeira

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Chris Caldeira


David Kamm, NSRDEC photographer

Preface

This is the third edition of *Seeing Sociology*—my third attempt at writing a visually oriented introduction to the discipline. As I went about doing the work of this revision, I gave much thought to students who are new to sociology—the primary audience for this book. I thought about all the conversations over the course of my teaching career where I overheard students proclaiming they can get by without reading a textbook. And, of course, being an author, I don't want this to be my book's fate. But I also know reading is challenging; in fact, it is very hard work. As Professor Jeffrey Davis (2014) at Wheaton University describes it, "Reading takes effort: you have to be alert and force your eyes across a page, back and forth, back and forth, hundreds of times. It is tiring. It is brain-draining. It is tough on the eyes and neck. It requires concentration, recall, and synthesis. You can't zone out." Reading is made even more challenging because we live in an age where the discipline and dedication required to read seems out of place as digital technologies distract us and lure us to move on and forget what we have just read. Recognizing these pressures, I tried to write in a clear and concise way to support the challenges of reading. In addition, *Seeing Sociology* is structured to support the reading experience. Specifically, the book has two signature qualities:

- *Seeing Sociology* contains 13 chapters, each broken into about seven self-contained modules, four to eight pages in length. The modular format gives readers focused and manageable "chunks" of reading. It also gives instructors the flexibility to assign all or selected modules within a chapter. Each module begins by posing a question that prompts readers to recall an experience or that elicits a reaction priming them mentally for the material to come.
- *Seeing Sociology* capitalizes on the instructional value of photographs as a tool for provoking thought, clarifying abstract concepts, and conveying sociology's significance as a perspective. Photographs, seamlessly integrated into the flow of the surrounding text, are presented as objects of analysis to demonstrate how sociologists see, interpret, and analyze all that is going on in the world around them.

Major Changes to This Edition

In revising *Seeing Sociology*, my strategy was simple: I tried to make the third edition better than the second. As I revised, I read each word, sentence, paragraph, module, and chapter. I imagined the eyes of the first-year student looking at the text. I think back to a time when I was a first-year student reading my textbooks and simply lost about what I should take away from the reading. I also remember being overwhelmed with so much to know and wondering why I should know it. I became sidetracked and frustrated when I could not

understand exactly what the author was seeking to convey. Often, instead of reading on, I stopped. While some may argue that writing with the first-year student in mind means dumbing down the discipline, that is not how I see it. I believe writing guided by these kinds of remembered experiences actually helped strengthen the way I present the discipline and convey its conceptual power. These remembered experiences motivated me to carefully choose words, to evaluate the effectiveness of each sentence, and to pay close attention to flow. At first glance, someone comparing this third edition to the second or first may conclude that large sections are "the same." A close reading shows that my revisions are aimed not simply at updating—adding new and removing outdated examples and concepts. My revisions involve revising words so they say what I need them to convey. For those readers who make the effort to concentrate on my words, I want to deliver a polished product.

I also reviewed every photograph used in the second edition, asking: "Can I find a more effective photograph to represent a given sociological idea?" In the end, I replaced 439 of 711 photos with new, hopefully more effective ones. The adage "a picture is worth a thousand words" helps to explain the photograph's pedagogical value. Let me be clear about that value: while pictures offer a subject for analysis and a tool to illustrate social dynamics, we must also realize that a photograph by itself does not convey some fixed meaning. Meaning changes depending on the point of view of the person viewing it. The point of view this book cultivates is sociological and the accompanying captions explain how sociologists "see" the freeze-frames of activity. Placing such high pedagogical value on photographs is especially appropriate given that we live in an age in which photographs have assumed a tsunami-like force as billions of photographs (most notably selfies) travel the Internet. Sociology offers tools for thinking about what photographs capture about the society in which we live; how they shape our sense of self, our interactions and relationships; and the ways an event occurring locally is shared on a potentially global scale.

In addition to revising my writing and photographic choices, I made a number of other major changes. Earlier editions of *Seeing Sociology* included an Applying Theory module at the close of each chapter. Initially, those modules were written with the purpose of highlighting and applying a variety of micro-, meso-, and macro-level theories in sociology including, but also going beyond, the big three—functionalism, conflict, and symbolic interaction. Applying Theory modules in the first and second editions focused on global society theories, phenomenology, post-structural theories, critical theory, world system theory, and more. For this edition I took seriously reviewer suggestions that this was too much for new sociology students to absorb. Thus, for the third edition I limited the Applying Theory modules to the big three plus one. That one is the feminist perspective.

The Applying Theory modules focus on comparing how sociologists inspired by each of the four perspectives might think about targeted issues related to each chapter topic. As a result, the target of the comparative analysis is something very specific. To illustrate further, instead of addressing how sociologists inspired by each of the four perspectives present an impossibly large and abstract force (e.g., culture, social structure, race, or socialization), I address how each perspective describes the sociological significance of something very specific such as blue jeans as an item of material culture, the social structure of Vietnamese nail salons, race categories as identity-building tools, and interactive games as agents of socialization. I believe this kind of focused and

comparative analysis sends the message that the four perspectives are powerful conceptual tools that can be used to think about any area of life and not just the most abstract forces in our lives, important as they are.

The Write a Caption feature that was at the end of each module in the first and second editions has been dropped and replaced with a new feature: What Do Sociologists See? As the reviewers noted, the Write a Caption features seemed too difficult for students to do and too difficult for professors to implement and assess. Now each module still ends with a photo, but there is an accompanying description detailing what sociologists might see when they gaze at the photograph. This new feature serves to further demonstrate and reinforce the sociological perspective as an interpretive guide to routine, and sometimes extraordinary, happenings in our lives and world around us.

Of course, there are also other changes. Those that I consider most significant are listed below by chapter and module.

Chapter 1: The Sociological Perspective

Module 1.1 (What Is Sociology?)—the module that opens the book—is for all practical purposes new. I revised this critical module thinking about the power of first impressions and that these first pages have the potential to set the tone for the class and the reading to come. Module 1.5 (Sociological Perspectives) and Module 1.6 (Methods of Research) are now organized around social robotics, or robots programmed to interact with humans. Most of us have encountered social robots when we have tried to carry on a conversation with a robotic telemarketer or phone tree operator. This topic is used as a vehicle to demonstrate how sociologists inspired by each of the four perspectives think about social robots (Module 1.5) and also to demonstrate how sociologists design a research study, in this case a research study about a cutting-edge societal transformation integrating robots in into the workplace.

Chapter 2: Culture

Module 2.6 (Applying Theory: Blue Jeans as Material Culture) focuses on how sociologists inspired by each of the four perspectives analyze what is arguably the most popular item of clothing on the planet.

Chapter 3: Socialization

Module 3.6 (Applying Sociology: Interactive Technologies as Agents of Socialization) considers what sociologists from each of the four perspectives would make of interactive digital technologies designed to allow children to imitate animated characters, to role play, and to engage in games. What lessons do these digital technologies convey about the self, its relationships to others, and its place in the world?

Chapter 4: Social Structures

Social structure is arguably sociology's signature concept. The concept directs sociologists to think about the largely invisible system that coordinates human activity. This chapter has been revised to showcase the power of social structure

to shape and constrain interactions, relationships, and experiences but also to showcase the power of human agency to change social structures. Module 4.1 (Institutions and Social Structures), Module 4.2 (Levels of Social Structure), and Module 4.3 (Social Structure and Human Agency) seek to present this invisible system in all its levels and complexity and to showcase the analytic power of this concept to assess and change how human activity is organized. Module 4.9 (Applying Theory: The Social Structure of Nail Salons) applies the four perspectives to an analysis of the social structure of nail salons in the United States and how Vietnamese immigrants came to dominate this industry and shape the experience of going to a nail salon.

Chapter 5: The Social Construction of Reality

Module 5.1 (Definition of the Situation) has been revised to systematically describe the social dynamics that influence how people see and make sense of what is going on around them. This module places emphasis on the shared and learned "knowledge" people draw upon to create a reality upon which they act. Module 5.6 (Applying Theory: Language and Reality Construction) compares how each of the four perspectives presents the power of language to both constrain and empower thinking about our selves, others, and the larger society.

Chapter 6: Deviance

Module 6.8 (Applying Theory: Laws) reminds us that people who violate laws are not always "criminals." Each of the four perspectives alerts us to situations in which laws are enacted to control behavior that by any definition cannot be called criminal (at least in the popular way we think of criminals). As one example, feminists direct our attention toward laws that maintain and perpetuate gender ideals and inequalities and that regulate behavior and opportunities based on gender.

Chapter 7: Social Inequalities

Module 7.1 (Assigning Social Worth) and Module 7.4 (Unearned "Failures") now include discussions on unearned failures and unearned successes, both of which are derived from sources unrelated to individual merit or effort. Taken together these modules examine how people can become unemployed and earn poverty-level wages through no fault of their own (e.g., economic restructuring, a capitalist system that destroys as it creates, and an economy that depends on poverty-wage labor). Module 7.6 (Applying Theory: The World's Billionaires) asks: What does it mean to be one of the world's billionaires—one of 1,645 people in the world with this vast amount of wealth? We consider the answers sociologists from each of the four perspectives offer as explanations.

Chapter 8: Race and Ethnicity

Module 8.8 (Applying Theory: Racial Classification) examines how each of the four theoretical perspectives helps us think about the meaning and purpose of racial classification.

Chapter 9: Gender and Sexualities

Module 9.7 (Applying Theory: Sex Testing) gives attention to sex testing *in utero* and presents how sociologists from each of the theoretical perspectives see the purpose of sex testing.

Chapter 10: Economics and Politics

Chapter 10 places greater emphasis on how the economy and politics intertwine to shape job opportunities and income. Simply consider that governments enact tens of thousands of laws that affect income and wealth. Module 10.2 (The U.S. Economy and Jobs) includes a heavily revised analysis of the two-tier labor market, broadly polarized into privileged and disadvantaged workers. This module is organized around the long-standing forces supporting the two-tier system. Module 10.7 (Applying Theory: The Power and Reach of the U.S. Military) considers the U.S. military—the largest military in the world—from the point of view of each of the four perspectives.

Chapter 11: Families

Every module of the family chapter was revised with a focus on understanding why new forms of family and intimate relationships once thought of as odd, dysfunctional, or deviant are now experiencing some acceptance and even becoming accepted as "normal." In particular, it places new emphasis on social movements and demographic changes as vehicles of change ushering in the rise and increased visibility of new family forms. These social movements and demographic changes are responses to the challenges of our time (e.g., increased life expectancy, lower fertility, female empowerment, economic restructuring). From a sociological perspective, family is not unchanging or "static"; it is a dynamic response to shifting relational contexts.

Chapter 12: Education and Religion

Module 12.3 (Education in a Knowledge Economy) examines education in the context of revolutionary changes to the U.S. economy and the global economy of which it is a part. The new economy is knowledge-dominated and symbolized by smart technologies. This transformation raises questions about which school systems are best at preparing their students to compete in a knowledge economy. Module 12.7 (Applying Theory: Private Schools) considers how sociologists inspired by each of the four perspectives view private school education, specifically in what ways, if any, this educational experience advantages or disadvantages its students.

Chapter 13: Social Change and the Pressing Issues of Our Time

This chapter covers a variety of interrelated issues that are among the most compelling of our time, shaping the lives of every individual on the planet. Those issues relate to technology (Module 13.2), globalization (Module 13.3), social movements (Module 13.4), aging societies (Modules 13.5 and 13.6), the changing

environment (Module 13.7), and health care (module 13.8). The Applying Theory module focuses attention on the criteria sociologists from each the four perspectives employ to evaluate a major change.

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Ancillary Materials

I believe that a textbook is only as good as its supplements. For this reason, I have written the Test Bank, PowerPoint Slides, and Instructor's Manual, with assistance from Kristie Vise, my colleague at NKU, to accompany *Seeing Sociology*. We have tried to create ancillary materials that support the vision of this textbook.

Instructor's Manual

The Instructor's Manual includes standard offerings such as Learning Objectives video recommendations and activity suggestions a Key Terms glossary. It also includes sample answers to Critical Thinking questions: each module ends with a Critical Thinking question, the purpose of which is to get students to reflect on key ideas, concepts, and theories covered. Typically, the questions can be answered in 250 to 400 words. The Instructor's Manual includes a sample answer from an actual sociology student to each Critical Thinking question.The sample answer can serve as an example to share with the students as a way of

stimulating thoughts about how to answer these questions. Instructors may also want to read sample answers as a way to prepare for questions students may have about them.

Test Bank

Like most textbooks, the ancillary materials for instructors include a Test Bank with multiple-choice and true-false questions. In addition to test questions about the textbook material, there are several multiple-choice questions relating to the short film clips. These questions can be found at the end of the multiple-choice questions for each chapter and are labeled by topic ("TOP").

PowerPoint® Lecture Slides

These slides highlight key ideas and points covered in each module. They are useful if instructors want to give students a quick overview of material covered or post online as a review.

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Acknowledgments

The acknowledgment section—the place to recognize and give credit to those who have influenced the ideas in this book and its creation—is the most difficult part of the book to write. I have always struggled to find the words to capture the essence and depth of the various relationships that are special to my intellectual and, by extension, personal life. I find myself using clichés like "This book could not have been written without . . . ," "I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to . . . ," "I acknowledge the profound influence of . . . ," and so on. I am never satisfied with the words I use to convey the colloboration I value so highly. Here I will simply state the names and collaborations for which I am most thankful and leave it at that.

Chris Caldeira, my former editor and now a graduate student at the University of California–Davis, conceived the book's structure and approach. She is the lead photographer, contributing 120 photographs to this edition, and she is the person with whom I talk most about this book. Her role is so large that her intellectual and photographic contributions are acknowledged on the title page of this text.

Phillip (deceased) and Annalee Ferrante, my parents, whom I most admire for their work ethic, their optimism and perseverance in the face of difficulties, and their belief that the best effort matters.

Missy Gish, who manages the overwhelming number of details associated with writing a textbook and preparing it for production, including taking 67 photographs.

Robert K. Wallace, my husband and colleague, who offers unwavering support.

There are also the colleagues and students (former and current) who contributed one or more photographs to this edition. They include Leslie Ackerson (5), Tabitha Adams (1), Prince Brown, Jr. (1), Katie Caputo (2), Rachel Ellison (27), Katie Englert (2), Jeremiah Evans (2), Rudy Garns (20), Mark Gish (1), Aleena Ferrante (5), Sharyn Jones (21), Boni Li (5), Tony Rotundo (14), Billy Santos (1), Terra Schultz (1), Lisa Southwick (25), Tom Zaniello (1) Jibril McCaster (2), and the Asia and Pacific Transgender Network (1). It is important to note that photos set in Fiji taken by Sharyn Jones are based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 1156479 awarded to Dr. Sharyn Jones. I must also mention that photos taken by Rachel Ellison were funded by a Northern Kentucky University Undergraduate Research Grant. I would like to thank four students who have written many of the sample critical thinking question responses that are included in the instructor's manual. Those students are Joshua Blackaby, Caitlin Harrah, Jibril McCaster, and Meredith Sparkes.

Behind the scenes there is a team of people who worked to make this book a reality. You can find their names listed in an unassuming manner on the copyright page of this book. As one measure of the human effort expended, consider that there were dozens of people reading, copyediting, designing, and proofing the pages of the book for at least six months before it reached the market. All of this human effort was coordinated by Jill Traut, the project manager, who I have had the pleasure of working with on this and other editions of my text. I stand in awe of the seeming ease by which she manages all the details to guide a book through production to press.

I dedicate this book to Dr. Horatio C. Wood IV, MD. Our relationship goes back to my days in graduate school. Over the decades I have always made a point of formally acknowledging the tremendous influence he has had on my intellectual life, academic career, and philosophy of education. Dr. Wood died on May 28, 2009, but his influence remains as important and strong as ever today.

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Seeing Sociology

AN INTRODUCTION

Chapter

1

The Sociological Perspective

NKU Philosophy, Rudy Garns

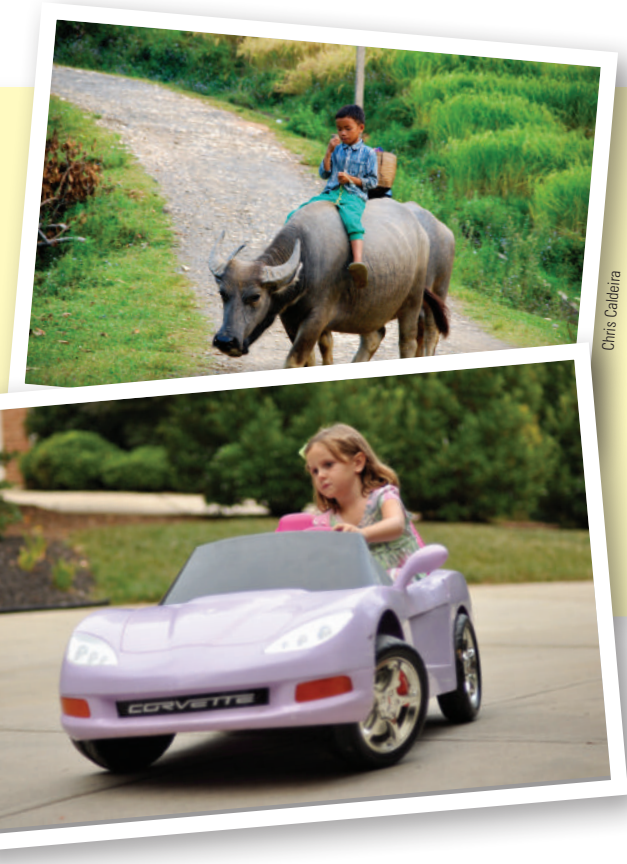
Sociology is a field of study that invites you to see the world around you in new ways, to be open to new experiences, to be curious about what is taking place around you, and to wonder and care about those who live nearby and beyond. The sociological perspective allows you to see how the time you are born in history, the place you live, and how countless numbers of people known and unknown, living and dead, profoundly shape what you think and do. As a student of sociology, you will come to understand that "things are not what they seem" (Berger 1963, 21).

Module 1.1 What Is Sociology?

Objective

You will learn that sociologists focus their attention on the social forces that shape the way people think, interact, and organize activities.

Do you ever wonder what kind of person you would be if you grew up in another place or at another time? If you answered yes to this question, then you will most certainly appreciate the sociological perspective.



Chris Caldeira

Lisa Southwick

Sociology: A Definition

Sociology is the systematic and scientific study of society. To put it another way, sociologists work to understand how human activities, including social interactions and relationships, are organized, with a goal of analyzing how that organization affects people's lives, thinking, and responses to others and to the world around them. Simply consider the two photos above. Each depicts one of many ways children's play can be organized. The little boy on the water buffalo lives in rural Vietnam and the little girl in the motorized car lives in a suburb in North Carolina. There is no doubt that each child's sense of self, thought, and behavior is profoundly shaped in different ways by the way each is playing.

As a second example, consider that the way people organize food production affects what people eat, the way they eat, how they think about food, and the ways they relate to others to secure meals.

Imagine a small island society of 400 people where as a rule people eat fish daily and most know how to catch (often by hand), kill, and prepare it. Compare that island society to the United States, where most people put much less, even no effort, into finding and preparing food. In the island society people have built a way of life around catching the fish that will make each day's meal. When it comes time to eat, these islanders do not have the option to place an order at a drive-thru and have it handed to them within 60 seconds.

NKU Anthropology, Sharyn Jones

Chris Caldeira

Sociologists are especially interested in identifying and understanding the social forces that shape the ways people organize activities, whether it be to secure food, engage in play, form friendships, earn a livelihood, or anything else. For example, in explaining how an island lifestyle is organized around catching fish, sociologists would certainly consider as critical forces the geographic remoteness of the island, the surrounding waters where fish are plentiful, and small islands' marginalized status in the world economy.

This textbook introduces readers to some of the social forces that shape our lives and relationships to people around us and beyond. Those forces relate to culture, socialization, family, technology, religion, education, race, gender, class, the economy, and much more.

The culture of which we are a part gives us a language that acts as a social force broadly shaping what we think and how we convey meaning. Most English-speaking people living in the United States tend to think of this bird as singing, whereas most Korean-speaking people living in Korea think of it as weeping. For those who are Korean, the language elicits feelings of sadness; for English-speaking Americans, the feeling elicited is joy.

NKU Philosophy, Rudy Garns

As a final example, when sociologists consider how the forces of gender shape human activity, they look for any established pattern where men and women are segregated into distinct occupations such as engineers or child care workers, or they look to see if one gender disproportionately occupies positions of power or influence relative to another gender. Consider something as commonplace as team mascots.

NKU Philosophy, Rudy Garns

Sociologists maintain it is no accident that these little girls are posing with a mascot considered male. Virtually every high school, college, and professional team in the United States employs a male-appearing mascot to represent its teams, even the women's teams. Some schools may refer to their female athletes as "Lady . . ." followed by the team name (e.g., Lady Norse), but the team mascot remains male. Consider that there is only one college whose men's and women's teams are represented by a mascot considered female (the Fightin' Blue Hens of Delaware).

Why Study Sociology

In time you will learn that sociology offers a framework for analyzing the social forces that shape the way life around us is organized. That framework allows sociologists to think about that organization in terms of (1) the shared, often competing, meanings held by those involved; (2) anticipated and unanticipated consequences on thought, interaction, and relationships; and (3) patterns of inequality. This sociological framework is especially relevant today, if only because the most pressing issues we face are rooted in the ways in which activities have been organized. Change agents understand that there are many ways to organize human activities and that each way has advantages and disadvantages. Change agents also recognize when the way something is organized needs to change and they take the necessary steps to make change.

Chris Caldeira

One might see the owners of this Laundromat as change agents because they have created a solar-powered, instead of a fossil fuel-powered service. No doubt those millions of people worldwide who earn a living extracting, refining, delivering, selling, and profiting from fossil fuels will find fault with solar power. Regardless, the owners recognize that the current way we use energy is unsustainable and has to change, and they have chosen to be part of that change.

The sociological perspective supports social innovation. To be a social innovator one must (1) grasp how current ways of organizing our lives are problematic, (2) recognize barriers to change, (3) think carefully about how to make change, and (4) be ready for change by anticipating the advantages and disadvantages change can bring. Two examples of how social innovators address organizational shortcomings follow.

- Many high-skilled women who care for children, elderly, and disabled need to work but only have time to work part-time. Part-time work, however, tends to be low-skilled and low-paying, with few benefits. As a result, many high-skilled women accept employment below their ability and worth. In doing so they unwittingly fill the only kinds of jobs low-skilled applicants are qualified for. A nonprofit, Women Like Us, partners with employers and recruiting agencies to match this hidden pool of high-skilled talent with employers who need employees to fill higher-paying and skilled part-time positions. Each day, Women Like Us posts 180 such jobs for women to review (European Social Innovation Competition 2014).
- At least 22 cities in the United States have instituted innovation in transportation by offering fare-free public transportation. The key to successful fare-free transportation is to offer high-quality service to attract riders of all social classes. Chapel Hill, North Carolina, did just that. In the 10 years following a decision to make public transportation fare-free for all, ridership increased from 3 million to 7 million passengers a year. As a result, the city's highways are less crowded, pollution was reduced, and all workers (but especially low-income workers) have reliable transportation to work (Jaffe 2013).

What Do Sociologists See?

Sociologists see this advertisement as one business owner's effort to respond to, even resist, the social forces ushering a dramatic change in how people share information. As the percentage of the population using digital forms of communication increases, a corresponding decrease in customers who print copies of photos and other documents is inevitable. This sign represents a desperate effort to preserve paper in an increasingly paperless environment.

Chris Calderira

Critical Thinking

Write about some social force that shapes your life and relationships to people around you and beyond.

Key Term

sociology

Module 1.2 The Emergence of Sociology

Objective

You will learn about a major historical event that triggered the birth of sociology.

NKU Anthropology, Sharyn Jones

Chris Caldeira

What would it be like to live in a society where there are no machines to carry loads or power boats and other vehicles?

Throughout much of history, human and animal muscle were the key sources of power. The key source of power changed to fossil fuels with the Industrial Revolution, the name given to the dramatic changes in manufacturing, agriculture, transportation, and mining that transformed virtually every aspect of society from the 1300s on. The defining feature of the Industrial Revolution was mechanization, the process of replacing human and animal muscle with machines powered by burning wood and fossil fuels (e.g., coal, oil, and natural gas). The new energy sources eventually replaced hand tools with power tools, sailboats with steamships and then freighters, and horse-drawn carriages with trains. Mechanization changed how goods were produced and how people worked. It turned workshops into factories, skilled workers into machine operators, and handmade goods into machine-made products.

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Consider the effort required to make bread before mechanization. Bakers plunged their fists into gluey dough and massaged it with their fingers until their muscles hurt (Zuboff 1988).

People also took their dough to small local bakeries, where it was shaped and baked in wood- or coal-heated brick ovens. This baker and his apprentice used long-handled wooden shovels to move bread in and out of the oven (Advameg, Inc. 2007).

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division [LC-DIG-nclc-05178]

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division[LC-USF34-035069-D]

With mechanization, the effort workers once exerted to make bread was largely eliminated. Moreover, bakers no longer spent seven or more years in apprenticeships. Now people with little or no skill could do the skilled baker's work, but at a faster pace. Before mechanization, customers knew the person who baked their bread. With mechanization, they came to depend on "strangers" to sustain them.

Changes to Society

Bread baking eventually moved out of the home and small bakery shops, and by the 1940s commercial bakeries were stocking grocery shelves. While this may seem unimportant, it is just one example of the way the Industrial Revolution weakened people's ties to others in their community, their workplace, and their home. Other innovations (social forces) that changed the ways people related to each other included the railroad, the steamship, running water, central heating, electricity, and the telegraph. Month-long trips by stagecoach, for example, became daylong

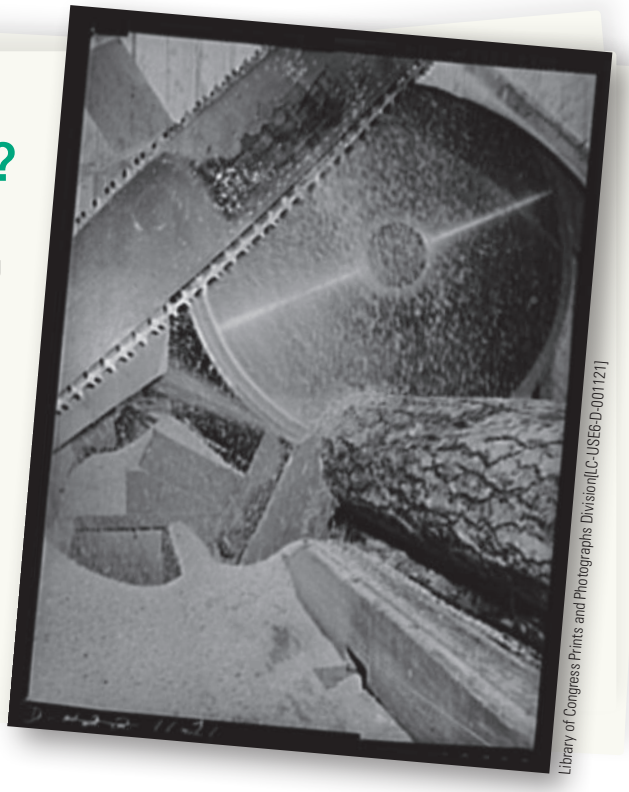
trips by coal-powered trains. These trains permitted people and goods to travel day and night—in rain, snow, or sleet—and to previously unconnected areas.

The railroad and other subsequent innovations in transportation (airplane, freighter, trucks) facilitated economic competition and interdependence. Now people in one area could be priced out of a livelihood if people in another area could provide lower-cost labor, goods, and/or materials (Gordon 1989). Bread, for example, could now be made outside the community and then shipped long distances for sale to strangers. The nature of bread also changed to accommodate this new reality; over time, dozens of additives gave commercial bread a standard texture, shape, taste, and most importantly, a shelf life that allowed it to be shipped long distances and sit on a store shelf for weeks.

The Industrial Revolution, centered in Europe and the United States, also pulled together, often by force, people from even the most remote parts of the planet into a global-scale division of labor. People who did not know one another became interconnected and dependent upon one another. (Tire makers in the United States depended on rubber tappers in Brazil to supply the material they needed to produce tires.) In sum, the Industrial Revolution changed everything including how goods were produced, relationships, the kinds of job people held, the density of human populations, and the importance and influence of the home. It ushered in a consumption-driven economy and made the accumulation of wealth a valued pursuit. In *The Wealth of Nations,* Adam Smith (1776) argued that the invisible hand of the free market, via private ownership and self-interested competition, held the key to progress and prosperity. These unprecedented changes caught the attention of the early sociologists. In fact, sociology emerged out of their effort to understand the effects of the Industrial Revolution on society.

What Do Sociologists See?

Sociologists see mechanization—specifically, they see a power saw replacing axes "powered" by human muscle. Mechanization substantially reduced the labor once needed to cut wood (saving cost and time). Now more trees could be sawed into wood at a faster pace. In addition, mechanization brought new health risks (severed fingers and limbs) and it also brought an "uncomplaining" machine that could run 24/7 without need of lunch or bathroom breaks.



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Critical Thinking

Look around your home and take an inventory of some of the products in your life made by the labor of those working in a foreign country.

Module 1.3 Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

Objective

You will learn about the ideas of six early theorists who are considered the giants of the discipline.

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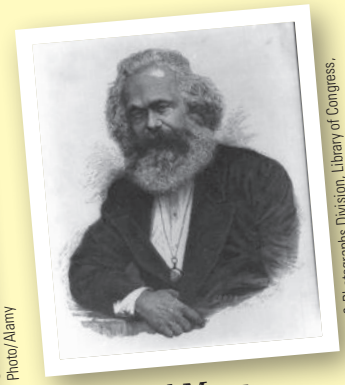
Auguste Comte



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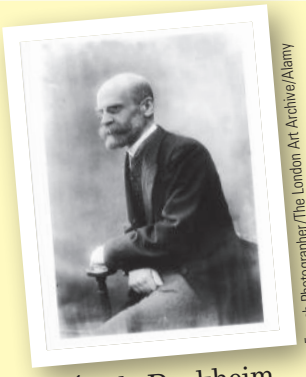
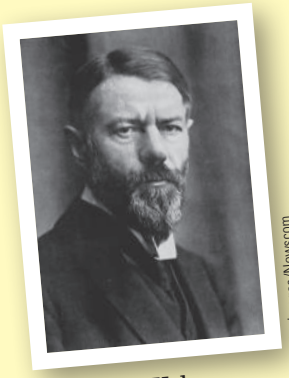
Karl Marx



French Photographer/The London Art Archive/Alamy

Émile Durkheim



akg-images/Newscom

Max Weber

George Grantham Bain Collection. Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ggbain-07435

W.E.B. DuBois

George Grantham Bain Collection. Prints & Photographs Division, Library of Congress, LC-DIG-ggbain-12065

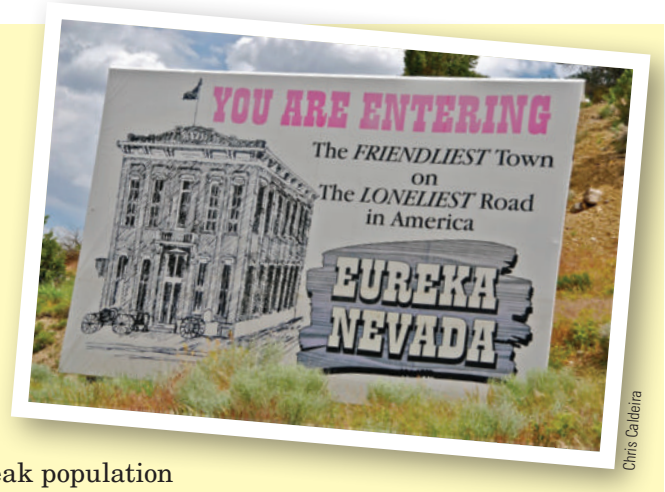
Jane Addams

Have you ever read something that changed the way you look at the world? If so you will understand why the six people pictured are celebrated as "giants" in the field of sociology.

In this module we consider the transforming ideas of six early theorists. Three of the six—Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber—are nicknamed the "big three" because their writings form the heart of the discipline. We also consider three other central figures: Auguste Comte because he gave sociology its name, Jane Addams for her efforts to apply sociological knowledge to change people's lives, and W.E.B. DuBois for his thoughts on the color line.

Auguste Comte (1798–1857)

The French philosopher Auguste Comte gave sociology its name in 1839. Comte argued that sociology is a science and that only those sociologists who follow the scientific method should expect to have a voice in guiding human affairs. The scientific method (also known as **positivism**) rejects personal opinion and political agendas as a basis for analysis and encourages disciplined thought and objective research. Comte identified four methods to guide analysis of human activities: (1) direct observation, (2) experimental design, (3) comparative analysis, and (4) historical research (looking at the past to understand the present).



Chris Caldeira

Historical research, one of the methods of analysis Comte recommended, can be applied to Eureka, Nevada. This method of inquiry directs us to consider how Eureka's past informs the town's present and future. Eureka is the friendliest town on the loneliest road for a reason. Eureka was established as a mining town in 1864. It reached its peak population in 1878 (10,000 pop.), and today is home to about 700 people. From the beginning, the town's identity centered on global demand for its gold, silver, and lead. As the value of those ores declined in the marketplace, the residents in Eureka and surrounding towns moved away. Eureka's identity still centers on its now-closed mines as tourist attractions and its location along the "Loneliest Road in America."

Karl Marx (1818–1883)

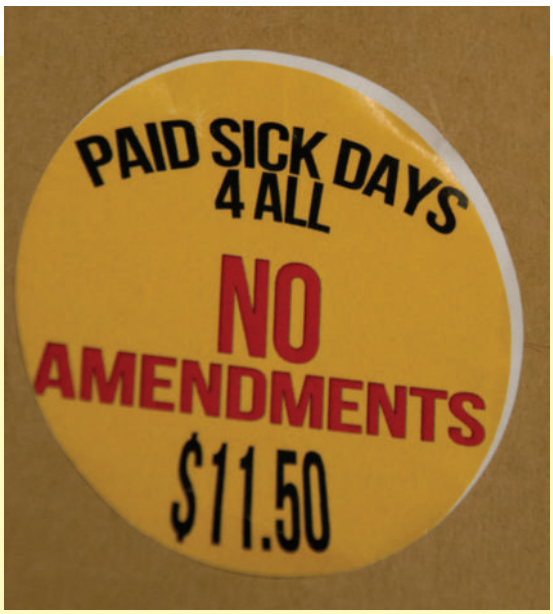
Karl Marx was born in Germany but spent much of his professional life in London working and writing in collaboration with Friedrich Engels. He is best known for *The Communist Manifesto*, a 23-page pamphlet issued in 1848 and translated into more than 30 languages (Marcus 1998). Upon reading it today, one is "struck by the eerie way in which its 1848 description of capitalism resembles the restless, anxious and competitive world of today's global economy" (Lewis 1998, A17).

Marx made it his mission to analyze and explain **conflict**, the major force that drives social change. Specifically, Marx saw **class conflict** as the vehicle that propelled society from one historical epoch to another. He described class conflict

as an antagonism growing out of the opposing interests held by exploiting and exploited classes. The nature of that conflict is shaped by the relationship of each class to the **means of production**—the resources such as land, tools, equipment, factories, transportation, and labor that are essential to the production and distribution of goods and services. To illustrate: Marx maintained that the Industrial Revolution was accompanied by the rise of two distinct classes: the **bourgeoisie**, the owners of the means of production; and the **proletariat**, those individuals who must sell their labor to the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie have an interest in making a profit. To maximize profit, the bourgeoisie seek to employ the lowest-cost workers, to find the cheapest materials to make products, and to create technologies that replace human labor. The bourgeoisie's profit-making goals clash with the great interest of the proletariat, which is to increase their wages.

Marx believed that this drive to make a profit drove the explosion of technological innovation and the production for which the Industrial Revolution is known. Marx felt that capitalism was the first economic system capable of maximizing human ingenuity and productive potential. He also maintained that capitalism ignored too many human needs, that too many workers could not afford to buy the products of their labor, and that relentless efforts to reduce labor costs left the worker vulnerable and insecure. Marx called the drive for profit a "boundless thirst—a werewolf-like hunger—that takes no account of the health and the length of life of the worker unless society forces it to do so" (Marx and Engels 1887, 142). Marx argued that if this economic system were in the right hands—the hands of the workers, or the proletariat—public wealth would be abundant and distributed according to need.

The source of class conflict for Marx was between employers' interests in keeping wages low and the workers' interests in increasing wages. This campaign button speaks to the clash between the two classes: workers' demand for paid sick days and at least $11.50 per hour clashes with employers' drive to increase profits.



Rachel Ellison

Émile Durkheim (1858–1918)

To describe the Industrial Revolution and its effects, the Frenchman Émile Durkheim focused on the division of labor and solidarity. Durkheim noticed that the Industrial Revolution had a profound effect on the division of labor, or the way a society divided up tasks needed to make a product or to accomplish some other goal. Durkheim was particularly interested in how this change affected

solidarity, the system of social ties that acts as a cement bonding people to one another and to the wider society. Durkheim observed that the nature of solidarity had been changed from mechanical to organic.

Preindustrial societies are characterized by **mechanical solidarity**, a system of social ties based on uniform thinking and behavior. Durkheim believed that uniformity is common in societies with a simple division of labor, where just about everyone knows how to perform tasks critical to support the group's way of life. This shared knowledge gives rise to common experiences, skills, and beliefs. In preindustrial societies, religion and family are extremely important, and the social ties that bind people to each other are grounded in tradition, obligation, and duty. These societies do not have the technology or resources to mass produce a variety of products that people can buy to distinguish themselves from others.

The Industrial Revolution ushered in a complex division of labor where the workers needed to manufacture a product did not have to know or live near one another; in fact, they could live in different parts of a country or the world. In addition, the materials needed to make products came from many locations around the globe. This new way of dividing labor gave rise to **organic solidarity**, a system of social ties in which people became known for their specialized role in the division of labor. Under this new arrangement, few people possessed the knowledge, skills, and resources to be self-sufficient. Consequently, social ties are still strong, not because people know one another, but because they came to depend on strangers to survive. In industrial societies most day-to-day interactions are short-lived, impersonal, and instrumental (i.e., we interact with strangers for a specific reason). For example, we interact with others as "customers" or "clients." Customers can buy tires from any dealer, travel in airplanes flown by a pilot they might never see, and drink coffee made from beans harvested and roasted by people they've never met.

NKU Philosophy, Rudy Garns

The solidarity that binds team members together is mechanical—the players are united by a shared purpose, know each other on and off the court very well, wear uniforms to show they are part of a team, and sacrifice individual desires to achieve success. Still the players are connected to a global division of labor because they depend on strangers to, among other things, build the stadiums in which they play and to make their uniforms and shoes. Simply consider that by one estimate it takes 200 pairs of hands to make and deliver shoes to players' feet (Chang 2009, 98). The solidarity that binds the players to these "strangers" is organic.

Max Weber (1864–1920)

The German scholar Max Weber made it his task to analyze and explain how the Industrial Revolution affected **social action**—actions people take in response to others—with emphasis on the larger forces and settings that motivate people to act in certain ways. Weber suggested that sociologists should focus on the meanings guiding thought and action. He believed that social action is motivated in one of four ways. In reality, motives are not so clear-cut but involve some mixture of the four.

1. *Traditional*—a goal is pursued because it was pursued in the past (i.e., "that is the way it has always been").
2. *Affectional*—a goal is pursued in response to an emotion such as revenge, love, or loyalty (a soldier throws him- or herself on a grenade out of love and sense of duty for those in the unit).
3. *Value-rational*—a desired goal is pursued with a deep and abiding awareness that there can be no shortcuts or compromises made in reaching it. Instead, the actions taken to reach a desired goal are guided by a set of standards or codes of conduct (Weintraub and Soares 2005).
4. *Instrumental rational*—a valued goal is pursued by the most efficient means, irrespective of the consequences. Since the Industrial Revolution ushered in a system with profit-making as THE valued goal, instrumental rational action was rewarded. Instrumental rational action, with its focus on efficiency at any cost, leaves no time to adhere to a code of conduct, to adhere to tradition, or to feel affection. One might equate instrumental rational action with the behavior of an addict who will seek a drug at any cost to self or to others. There is an inevitable self-destructive quality to this form of action (Henrik 2000).

Weber believed that instrumental rational action could lead to **disenchantment**, a great spiritual void accompanied by a crisis of meaning in which the natural world becomes less mysterious and revered and becomes the object of human control and manipulation. The industrial model for raising chickens for human consumption applies. Note that disenchantment results when the goal of profit outweighs any moral responsibility to treat animals with kindness and when the means used to turn a profit are such that "we no longer recognize the animals in a factory farm as living creatures capable of feeling pain and fear" (Angier 2002, 9).

Regis Lefebure, USDA

Disenchantment is an outcome of instrumental rational action. This kind of action is embodied in the way factory farms raise pigs for eventual slaughter. Pigs are destined to live in a space where there may not be enough room to turn around. This treatment is the result of the most extreme cost-containing measures, with the goal of making a profit. It ignores any code of good animal husbandry involving an obligation to care for animals' well-being by providing food, protection, and shelter and the chance to be "pigs" that can move around freely (Scully 2002).

W.E.B. DuBois (1868–1963)

A voice that was initially ignored but later "discovered" as important to sociology is that of American-born W.E.B. DuBois. In trying to describe the Industrial Revolution and its effects on society, DuBois offered the concept of the **color line**, a barrier supported by customs and laws separating nonwhites from whites, especially with regard to their roles in the division of labor. That is, the positions considered high status were reserved for whites. DuBois (1919 [1970]) traced the color line's origin to the scramble for Africa's resources, beginning with the slave trade, upon which the British Empire and American Republic were built, costing black Africa "no less than 100,000,000 souls" (246). The end of the slave trade was followed by the colonial expansion that accompanied the Industrial Revolution. That expansion involved rival European powers competing to secure labor and natural resources. By 1914 virtually all of Africa had been divided into European colonies. DuBois maintained that the world was able "to endure this horrible tragedy by deliberately stopping its ears and changing the subject in conversation" (246). He felt that an honest review of Africa's history could only show that Western governments and corporations coveted Africa for its natural resources and for the cheap labor needed to extract them. The color line reflects the deep social divisions between Europeans and Africans that were solidified by the slave trade and by colonization.

Courtesy of Urbain Ureel

U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Spc. 2nd Class Felicito Rustique

DuBois' observations are supported by scenes of African labor (top) moving resources out of the continent for export to Europe and the United States around the turn of the 20th century. If DuBois were alive today, he would call attention to U.S. military presence around the Horn of Africa to ensure the safe passage of oil, uranium, cobalt, titanium, diamonds, gold, bauxite, copper, and other minerals considered strategic to U.S. economic security. Here members of Gabon's navy are aboard a U.S. ship as part of joint military exercises aimed at securing the movement of goods out of the Atlantic oil- and mineral-bearing basin.

Jane Addams (1860–1935)

In 1889 Jane Addams (with Ellen Gates Starr) cofounded one of the first settlement houses in the United States, Hull House. Settlement houses were community centers that served the poor and other marginalized populations. Wealthy donors supported them, and university faculty and college students lived with the clients, serving and learning from them. The Chicago Hull House was one of the largest and most influential settlements in the United States. At the time of its founding, immigrants constituted almost half of Chicago's population. In addition, the city was industrializing and experiencing unprecedented population growth. These dramatic changes were accompanied by a variety of social problems, including homelessness, substandard housing, and unemployment.

Hull House facilities contained a school, boys' and girls' clubs, recreation facilities, a library, and much more. Hull House had strong ties with the University of Chicago School of Sociology. Jane Addams was a forerunner of what is today called public sociology because she demonstrated an "unwavering commitment to social improvement," whether it be aimed at child labor, worker safety, or other social concerns (Hamington 2007). Addams maintained that the settlement houses were equivalent to an applied university where theories about how to change people's situations could be tested. Addams advocated for **sympathetic knowledge**, firsthand knowledge gained by living and working among those being studied, because knowing others increases the "potential for caring and empathetic moral actions" (Addams 1912, 7). Addams made a point of never addressing an audience about the clients Hull House served without bringing a member who knew their conditions more intimately than she "to act as an auditor" of her words (Addams 1910, 80). Addams believed that firsthand, lived experiences acted as a test of theory and that the voices of those marginalized—the people sociologists and other theorists write about—must be included in the community of ideas (Hamington 2010).

Jane Addams believed that anyone who theorizes about or makes decisions that affect the lives of marginalized groups, including low-wage workers, has the responsibility to actively know the people they are trying to help—to establish sympathetic understanding so they know what it means to be among the ranks of the lowest paid.

Lisa Southwick

What Do Sociologists See?

DoD photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, North Dakota National Guard

The interpretation a sociologist makes depends on which theorist inspires their analysis. Sociologists inspired by Durkheim see organ donation as a way to establish deep ties between a deceased donor and as many as 50 patients. Organ donation is also a way to deepen ties between living donors and patients (who may be relatives, friends, or strangers). Sociologists inspired by Marx see organ donation (as practiced in the United States) as a process whereby a living donor or the family of deceased donor earn no income for organs while hospitals and surgeons profit. Sociologists inspired by Weber would consider motives that shape policies governing organ procurement. Given the revenue-generating potential associated with transplants ($1.2 million for intestine transplants, $977,000 for heart transplant), medical facilities may be motivated to secure organs at any cost (instrumental rational action).

Critical Thinking

Which one of the six theorists' ideas best reflects how you tend to think? Explain.

Key Terms

bourgeoisie
class conflict
color line
conflict
disenchantment
means of production
mechanical solidarity
organic solidarity
positivism
proletariat
social action
solidarity
sympathetic knowledge

Module 1.4 The Sociological Imagination

Objective

You will learn that the sociological imagination allows us to see how human life—even the most intimate details—is shaped by the time and place in which we live.

When you shower do you leave the water running while you lather and scrub your hair or do you turn it off?

NKU Sociology, Missy Gish

If you live in the United States, you would likely keep the water running as you shampoo your hair. If you live in Germany, you would likely wet your hair, then turn the water off while you lather and scrub your hair. Sociologists ask, "What is it about the United States society that encourages water *consumption*?" "What is it about German society that encourages water *conservation*?" If these kinds of questions interest you, then you will appreciate sociologist C. Wright Mills' (1963) writings on the **sociological imagination**, a perspective that allows us to consider how outside forces, especially the time and place we were born and live, shape our life story or biography. A **biography** consists of all the significant, and even seemingly insignificant, events and day-to-day interactions from birth to death that make up a person's life. If you live in Germany, your biography includes personal efforts to conserve resources—that is, to not let water run while brushing teeth or until it gets warm. If you live in Germany, you are surrounded by national, local, and personal efforts to achieve sustainability and to make renewable resources THE source of power. "Going Green" in Germany isn't defined as simply buying "green" products; it is a serious and long-standing policy. The Germans are working to become a world leader in conservation and sustainability.

As this example suggests, the forces of history and society affect our most personal experiences. We should not be surprised, then, to learn that the forces of time and place shape expressions of affection and closeness as well. It seems that the rules governing touch in the United States dictate that "one must be in a romantic relationship to get much touch, that touch has sexual connotations, and that daily interpersonal interaction tends not to involve touch" (Traina 2005).

Katie Englert (left), Chris Caldeira (right)

Many societies such as Papua New Guinea (left) allow men and women to walk arm-in-arm in public without onlookers assuming romantic involvement. Not so in the United States, where for the most part such physical contact assumes sexual involvement (right).

The sociological imagination is empowering because it allows those who possess it to distinguish between what sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) called **troubles** and issues. Mills (1959) defined troubles in individual terms, as caused by personal shortcomings related to motivation, attitude, ability, character, or bad judgment. The resolution of a trouble, if it can indeed be resolved, lies in changing the person in some way. For example, Mills states that when only one person is unemployed in a city of 100,000, that situation is likely a trouble. For its relief, we can focus on that person's shortcomings—"She is lazy," "He has a bad attitude," "He didn't try very hard in school," or "She had the opportunity but didn't take it."

An **issue**, on the other hand, is a societal matter that affects many people and that can only be explained by larger social forces that are bigger than those affected. When 24 million men and women are unemployed or underemployed in a nation with a workforce of 156 million, that situation is an issue. Clearly, we cannot hope to solve widespread unemployment by focusing on the character flaws of 24 million individuals. A constructive assessment of this crisis requires us to think beyond personal shortcomings and to consider the underlying social forces that created it. For example, the economy is structured so that corporate success is measured by ever-increasing profit margins. Under such an arrangement, profits are increased by lowering labor costs, which can be achieved

through laying off employees, downsizing, transferring jobs from high-wage to low-wage areas, and otherwise reducing, even eliminating, human labor needed to produce a product or deliver a service.

When you see a "going out of business" sign, do you think about the technological innovations that made renting videos and DVDs go out of fashion? Do you think about the people who will lose their jobs not because they were lazy or unmotivated but because they were caught up in forces beyond their control? If you see job loss in these terms, you are framing unemployment as an issue.

NKU Sociology, Missy Gish

The ability to distinguish between troubles and issues allows us to think more deeply about the cause of and potential solutions to problems that seem, on the surface, to be entirely personal. Arguably the best-known effort to connect personal troubles to larger social issues was that of sociologist Émile Durkheim, who wrote *Suicide* in 1897 and who is still regarded as an authority on that subject today.

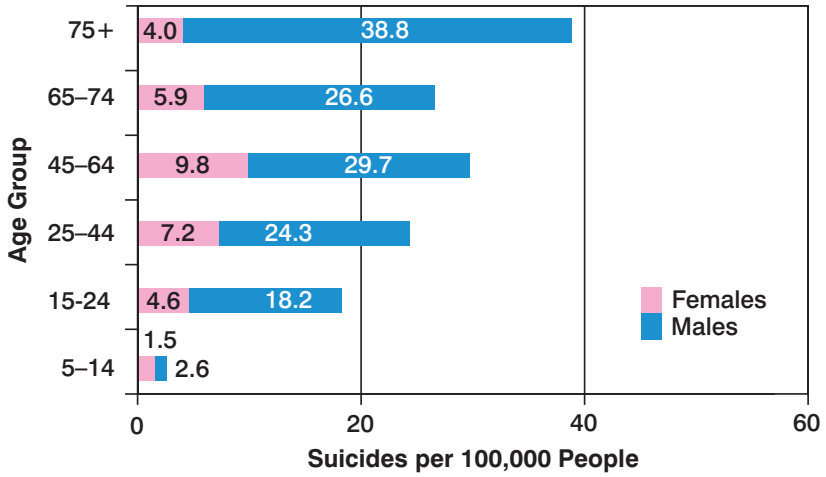
Suicide

When we think about who commits suicide, we often think of people who are deeply and personally troubled. In *Suicide*, Durkheim argued that to understand this act, it is futile to think in uniquely personal terms about the circumstances that lead people to kill themselves. For example, one person may kill herself in the midst of newly acquired wealth, whereas another kills herself in the midst of poverty. One person may kill himself because he is unhappy in his marriage and feels trapped, whereas another kills himself because his unhappy marriage has just ended in divorce. We can find cases of people who kill themselves after losing a business; in other cases a lottery winner kills herself because she cannot tolerate family and friends fighting one another to share in the newfound fortune. Because almost any personal circumstance served as a context for suicide, we must look beyond the personal.

Durkheim offered a sociological vision of suicide that goes beyond its popular meaning (the act of intentionally killing oneself). He drew attention to suicide as an act that ultimately severs relationships. Durkheim's vision takes the spotlight off the victim and points it outward toward relationships or the social ties severed. To make his case, Durkheim argued that every group has a greater or lesser propensity for suicide. The suicide rates by age, sex, and race in the

United States show that suicide is more prevalent for males in general, and especially males considered white, age 65 and older. Durkheim believed that comparing suicide rates across groups yields important insights about the larger social forces that push people to take their own lives. In this case Durkheim would ask: What do the different rates suggest about men's and women's social ties to one another and the society of which they are a part?

Chart 1.4a: Male-Female Differences in Suicide Rates (per 100,000), United States
The chart shows the annual number of suicides per 100,000 people for 6 age and sex groups. Note that males age 75 and over have the highest suicide rate—each year 38.8 of every 100,000 men commit suicide. Females in that age category have a suicide rate of 4 of every 100,000 suicides. Is there any age category where females have the higher rate relative to males?



Source: Curtin, Sally C., et al (2016)

In reviewing these rates, it is important to point out that women attempt suicide about three times more often than men. In addition, the most common method of suicide among women is poisoning with drugs or other chemicals, a method that is more likely to fail; suicide among men most commonly involves firearms (Centers for Disease Control 2013). Durkheim would maintain that the different attempted and successful suicide rates reflect the pressures a society places on men to succeed at suicide and not use it as a cry for help as women are allowed to do. The rates also reflect males' greater access to guns and knowledge of how to use them (guns are viewed as an expression of masculinity and as something males, and not females, are expected to possess and know how to use).

In thinking about the character of relationships, Durkheim identified four types of relationships or social ties that bind the individual too weakly or strongly to others. Two types relate to problems of integration—too much (altruistic) and too little (egoistic). Another two types describe problems of regulation—too little (anomic) or too much (egoistic).

Tony Rotundo

Tony Rotundo

Durkheim maintained that the key to understanding suicide rates lay with issues of integration and regulation. Individuals connected to a group such as bikers are protected from suicide by their ties to this group. In other words, the group acts as an integrating force in members' lives. Those individuals whose social ties to a partner have been broken by a decision to divorce or a breakup lose a source of regulation or stability in their life and are thus more vulnerable to suicide. In this sense marriage acts as a regulatory force protecting the married from taking their own lives.

Egoistic describes a state in which the ties integrating the individual to others in society are weak. When individuals are weakly integrated, they encounter less resistance to suicide. Relative to men, society offers women more opportunities to form meaningful relationships with others; women are disproportionately assigned nurturing roles and men are disproportionately assigned roles that connect them less directly to others. These differences in the ties that bind men and women to others, and by extension to society, offer insights about why suicide rates differ for males and females.

Altruistic describes a state in which the individual is excessively integrated into the group. In other words, the ties attaching the individual to the group are such that a person's sense of self is lost to the group. When such people commit suicide, it is on behalf of a group they love more than themselves. The classic example is soldiers willing to sacrifice their lives to advance the ideals and cause of their unit.

Anomic describes a state in which the forces that regulate social ties are disrupted by dramatic changes in circumstances. Durkheim gave particular emphasis to the economy, which functions as a regulatory force. When the economy is turbulent—that is, in recession, depression, or economic boom—the social ties that bind the individual to the group are disrupted. To put it another way, the turbulence casts many individuals into lower or higher statuses. Those who lose

jobs or money are cast into a lower status, forcing them to reduce their desires, restrain their needs, and practice self-control. Those who find themselves suddenly at a higher status after winning a lottery or other financial windfall must adjust to increased prosperity. Aspirations and desires may be unleashed, and an insatiable thirst to acquire more goods and services, and even to feel that one needs still more, may arise.

Fatalistic describes a state in which ties regulate lives too tightly. The ties attaching the individual to the group are so oppressive that there is no hope of release. Under such conditions, individuals see their futures as permanently blocked. Durkheim asked, "Do not the suicides of slaves, said to be frequent under certain conditions, belong to this type?" (1897, 276).

What Do Sociologists See?

Sociologists see the sign announcing crisis counseling and emergency phone as an effort to prevent suicidal people from jumping off this bridge to their death. Sociologists would recommend special vigilance when unemployment rates are dramatically high or low, when a major employer in the area downsizes, or when new laws tightening illegal drug use go into effect such that the addicted have harder time fueling their habit.

Chris Caldeira

Critical Thinking

Describe a time in your life when you were aware that your social ties to some group or person were problematic—that is, they were too weak, too strong, broken, or oppressively restrictive.

Key Terms

altruistic
anomic
biography
egoistic
fatalistic
issue
sociological imagination
troubles

Module 1.5 Sociological Perspectives

Objective

You will learn how sociological perspectives provide questions to guide analysis of any topic.

How will humans relate to social robots in workplaces, classrooms, and other settings?

U.S. Navy photo by John F. Williams

Imagine you decided to do research on the topic of social robots, the kind of robots capable of interacting with humans. The search engine Google Scholar yields about *325,000 hits* for "social robots." As you browse though the titles, you wonder how to select and organize all that information. This research can be less complicated and stressful if it is informed by at least one of the four major sociological perspectives. This is because each perspective offers a vision of society, key questions that guide readings and analysis, as well as a vocabulary to answer those questions.

A **sociological perspective** is a framework for thinking about, describing, and explaining how human activities are organized and how people relate to one another and respond to their surroundings. In sociology there are four major sociological perspectives, each of which focuses our attention on different slices of reality. The perspectives are functionalist, conflict, symbolic interaction, and feminist. Sociologists use the perspectives to guide analysis. Each offers a central question to direct thinking and key concepts to organize answers. Keep in mind that, taken alone, no single perspective can offer a complete picture of a situation. But we can acquire the most complete picture by applying all four.

Functionalist Perspective

Functionalists are known for the focus they give to order and stability. They define society as a system of interrelated, interdependent parts. To illustrate this vision, functionalists use the human body as an analogy for society. The human body is composed of parts including bones, cartilage, ligaments, muscles, a brain, a spinal cord, hormones, blood, blood vessels, a heart, kidneys, and lungs. All of these body parts work together in impressive harmony. Each part functions in a unique way to maintain the entire body, but it cannot be separated from other body parts that it affects and that in turn help it function.

Society, like the human body, is made up of an incalculable number of parts such as schools, cars, sports teams, funeral rituals, holidays, religious rituals, laws, and robots. Like body parts, society's parts are interdependent and *function* to maintain social order. A **function** is the contribution a part makes to an existing social order. The **social order** refers to the way people have organized interaction and other activities to achieve some valued goal—whether it be to take care of the sick, to pass on knowledge, to raise a family, and so on. A part's function or contribution to the social order can be manifest or latent.

When a part's effect on the social order is something that is expected, anticipated, or intended, that effect is a **manifest function**. When that part's effect is unintended, not anticipated, or unexpected, that effect is a **latent function**. Functionalists recognize that parts do not always contribute to order and stability—they can cultivate *dysfunctions*; that is, they can have disruptive consequences to a social order. Like functions, dysfunctions can be either manifest or latent. **Manifest dysfunctions** are a part's anticipated disruptions to a social order. **Latent dysfunctions** are unanticipated or unintended disruptions to a social order. The application that follows clarifies how a part can serve both to maintain order and stability and to disrupt it.

The Functionalist Perspective Applied to Social Robots

To analyze social robots functionalists ask: How do social robots contribute to social order and stability? In what ways might social robots disrupt order and stability? Three of the most often-stated reasons for developing social robots speak to their manifest or anticipated functions: (1) to provide assistive care to those with disabilities, including children with autism and the growing number of elderly in need of care; (2) to do jobs that are repetitive, boring, dangerous, and prone to human error; and (3) to reduce labor costs.

What might be some possible unanticipated (latent) functions associated with social robots? For one, if social robots are developed to the point where they can assume caregiving roles, risks of inappropriate sexual contact and abuse of children and other clients are eliminated. Second, social robots will not suffer from caregiver burnout or become impatient with their clients. Robots are also even-tempered, predictable, nonjudgmental, and always available and responsive.

In addition to a part's functions, functionalists also consider the expected or anticipated disruptions (manifest dysfunctions) a part may have on the stability of an existing social order. One obvious dysfunction relates to employment. Programmers are writing artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms that direct social robots in roles as housekeepers, butlers, bartenders, receptionists, prison guards, and pharmacy assistants (Heater 2012). So we might predict that the number of people working in such jobs will decline.

Josh Ellingson, Courtesy of Chris Calderia

A latent or unexpected dysfunction relates to the emotional attachment humans may come to feel toward devoted and uncomplaining social robots, such that people may actually prefer the company of robots over that of humans.

Conflict Perspective

In contrast to functionalists, who focus on social order, conflict theorists focus on conflict as an inevitable fact of social life and as the most important agent for social change. Conflict can take many forms including physical confrontations, exploitation, disagreements, and direct competition. In any society, advantaged and less disadvantaged groups compete for scarce and valued resources (access to material wealth, education, health care, well-paying jobs, and so on). Those who gain control of and access to these resources strive to protect their own interests against the competing interests of others. Conflict theorists ask this basic question: Who benefits from a particular social arrangement, and at whose expense? In answering this question, conflict theorists seek to describe the social arrangements that advantaged groups have established, consciously or unconsciously, to promote and protect their privileged position. Exposing these practices helps explain inequalities that exist in society.

Conflict theorists work to expose the **façade of legitimacy**—an explanation to justify the existing social arrangement that downplays or dismisses charges that the arrangement advantages some and disadvantages others. On close analysis, the justifications are often based on unsupported assertions and faulty assumptions but nevertheless are presented as credible explanations (Carver 1987). In general, conflict theorists dismiss any altruistic justifications as camouflaging the real motives, most notably earning a profit.

The Conflict Perspective on Social Robots

In analyzing social robots, conflict theorists ask: Who benefits from social robots, and at whose expense? In answering this question, they would point out an obvious fact: The creation of social robots is driven by a desire to create a "social arrangement" that maximizes profit by eliminating human labor and its associated costs (wages, benefits packages).

Autoscript III is prescription-filling robot. From a conflict point of view, this robot can replace the labor of pharmacy technicians who prepare medications under the direction of a pharmacist. The average salary of pharmacy technicians working full-time is $30,410 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2017). Assuming the robot costs $50,000, it would pay for itself in less than four months because it can work 24/7 shifts and it can do the work of five or six technicians.

U.S. Navy photo by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Seth Rossman

Conflict theorists view any professed altruistic motives for developing social robots such as to assist the growing numbers of disabled elderly as a façade to cover up the real motives. From a conflict point of view, which emphasizes profit-making as the ultimate force driving innovation, the elderly represent a huge market to sell social robots. One can easily envision the endless number of add-on apps to be offered at extra cost beyond the basic social robot—it might be an app for moving around in cluttered indoor environments, or an app for specific types of physical assistance such as opening doors, turning water in showers on and off, carrying laundry, and so on. "Incrementally new" versions of social robots could be released every six months (Blackman 2013).

Conflict theorists predict that social robot technologies will usher in a new divide separating advantaged populations with the money to acquire social robots from those disadvantaged populations without the financial resources to do so. The divide will create advantaged and disadvantaged individuals, households, and communities. That divide will also exist on a global scale, separating the richest countries with disproportionately greater access to social robots from the poorest countries with significantly less or no access.

Symbolic Interaction Perspective

Symbolic interactionists focus on **social interaction**, everyday encounters in which people communicate, interpret, and respond to one another's words and actions. These theorists ask: How, when interacting, do people "take account of what [the] other is doing or is about to do" and then direct their conduct accordingly (Blumer 1969)? The process depends on (1) self-awareness, (2) shared symbols, and (3) negotiated order.

Self-awareness occurs when a person is able to observe and evaluate the self from another's viewpoint. People are self-aware when they imagine how others are viewing, evaluating, and interpreting their words and actions. Through this imaginative process, people become objects to themselves; they come to recognize that others see them, for instance, "as being a man, young in age, a student, in debt, trying to become a doctor, coming from an undistinguished family, and so forth" (Blumer 1969, 172). In imagining others' reactions, people respond and make adjustments (apologize, change facial expressions, lash out, and so on).

A **symbol** is any kind of object to which people assign a name, meaning, or value (Blumer 1969). Objects can be classified as physical (smartphones, cars, a color, a facial expression), social (a friend, a parent, a celebrity, a bus driver), or abstract (freedom, greed, justice, empathy). Objects can take on different meanings depending on audience and context: a tree can have different meanings to an urban dweller, a farmer, a poet, a homebuilder, an environmentalist, or a lumberjack (Blumer 1969). Freedom can have different meanings to prisoners, teenagers, and older adults. People learn shared meanings that their culture attaches to objects. That is, they learn that a wave of the hand means good-bye, that letters of the alphabet can be selected and arranged to make countless words, and that dogs are considered as pets but crickets are not.

Robert K. Wallace

Look at the expression on the two children's faces. Their seemingly blank expressions suggest that they have no idea what to do even with prompting from their mothers. That is because they lack self-awareness—the ability to think about how others see them and what others expect of them in a particular situation.

When we enter into interaction with others—whether it is with a store clerk, a professor, friends, or colleagues—we take for granted that a system of expected behaviors and shared meanings is already in place to guide the course of interaction. Still we are generally aware that we should behave and talk in a certain way. In most interactions, room for negotiation exists; that is, the parties involved have the option of negotiating other expectations and meanings. For example, students know that class is to end at set time but they