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Second Edition

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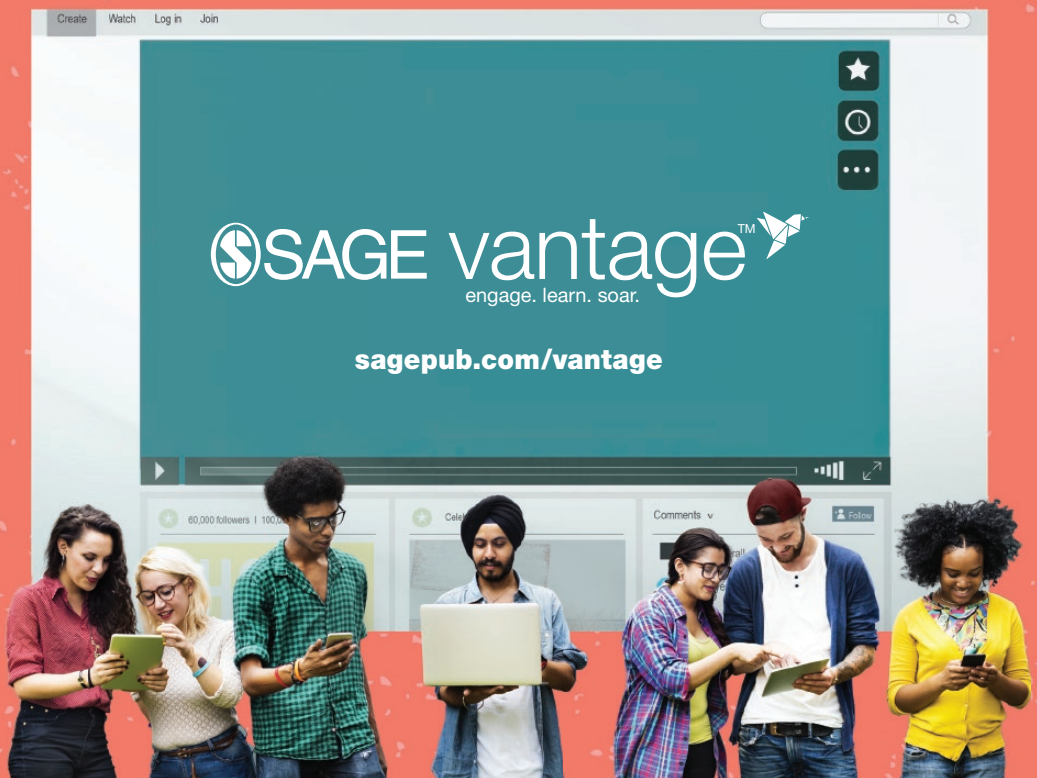

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Discover Sociology: Core Concepts

The Core Concepts edition of Discover Sociology *is dedicated to my colleagues at The George Washington University. It is a privilege to work in a rigorous intellectual environment that also offers fulfilling academic collaborations and friendships.*

As always, I am grateful for the support of my family: my patient and wonderful husband, Joe, and my two children, Niklavs and Anna, who have grown into thoughtful and amazing young adults.
—DSE

Discover Sociology: Core Concepts

Second Edition

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PREFACE

The German physicist Albert Einstein wrote that "the important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing." Indeed, *curiosity* is the bedrock of all scientific inquiry because curiosity underlies the motivation and passion to seek answers to challenging questions. But curiosity is not enough. To be a component of good sociology, curiosity must be disciplined: Answers must be sought within the scientific tradition of gathering data through systematic observations and then shared with careful empirical and theoretical explanation of the findings. A key goal of *Discover Sociology: Core Concepts* is to pique students' curiosity about the social world—and then give them the academic tools to study that world, analyze it, and maybe even change it.

There are many introductory sociology textbooks, some of which are very good. We believe that our contribution to the marketplace of sociological texts and ideas is a book that engages the sociology student's curious mind—and then offers him or her the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical tools to analyze and understand the issues that affect our world, both local and global.

We have written this book in a way that we hope will encourage students to keep reading, not only because of assigned pages but also because, with the encouragement of the instructor and the text, they have a desire to know more! We also endeavor to show the discipline of sociology as a source of critical skills valued in the job market and in graduate and professional education. We are delighted that previous editions of *Discover Sociology* have been well received, and it is our goal in this edition to continue to engage students with timely and interesting openers, the newest available data on important social phenomena, and carefully constructed theoretical and empirical discussions. We hope that this edition will also expand the reach of *Discover Sociology: Core Concepts* with a new and innovative technological platform that is instructor and student friendly.

CHAPTER OPENERS THAT SPEAK TO STUDENTS

In this book, you will find chapters that begin with openers drawn from contemporary issues and events and that endeavor to speak to readers and to the kinds of experiences or concerns they have as students, as well as in other roles in the family or at work. The beginning of each chapter also features "What Do You Think?" questions intended to engage students' curiosity and give a preview of interesting issues that will be covered in the chapter.

SOCIOLOGY IS A SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINE

Every chapter in the book integrates empirical research from sociology, highlighting the point that sociology is about the *scientific understanding* of the social world—rigorous research can illuminate the sociological roots of diverse phenomena and institutions, ranging from poverty and deviance to capitalism and the nuclear family. Research may also result in conflicting or ambiguous conclusions. Students learn that social life is complex and that sociological research is an ongoing effort to explain why things are as they are—and how they might change.

KEY THEMES AND BOXED FEATURES

Each chapter has a mix of boxed features that highlight key themes in this book.

- The sociological imagination, of course, is a foundational concept in the discipline. It is important throughout the book, and we also feature "Private Lives, Public Issues" boxes that illustrate the

relationship between our individual lives and the social forces that shape them.

- Second, power is a key theme in sociology—and in this text. Sociologists want to know how power is distributed, how it is reproduced, and how it is exercised in social relationships and institutions. The unequal distribution of power is one important topic of sociological inquiry, and this text offers "Inequality Matters" boxes that probe manifestations of and explanations for power and resource disparities.
- Third, we emphasize the importance of being a critical consumer of information. We are surrounded by sources of data that stream into our lives from the Internet, newspapers, peers and colleagues, friends and family, and academic studies. Sociology asks us to look carefully at information and to understand its sources and assumptions in order to ascertain what it illuminates and what it obscures. To this end, we include "Behind the Numbers" boxes to give students the opportunity to look critically and carefully at statistical information on social problems such as unemployment and poverty, among others.
- Fourth, contemporary life, from politics to popular culture to personal interactions, is increasingly structured and influenced by social media. Social science is only beginning to grasp the significance of these dramatic developments. The book's "Social Life, Social Media" boxes endeavor to provide a sociological perspective on social media's functions, contributions, and consequences.
- Finally, the book highlights global as well as national issues in an effort to help students develop a fuller understanding of the place of their lives, their communities, and their country in an interconnected, interdependent, and multicultural international environment—and to enable them to see how other countries around the world are experiencing societal changes and challenges. The book's "Global Issues" boxes are part of this effort.

All of the boxed features include questions for students to help them reflect on the material and link it back to the chapter's larger themes.

NEW IN THIS CORE CONCEPTS EDITION

An important goal of the second edition of *Discover Sociology: Core Concepts* is to retain the effective features of prior editions while responding to the ideas and requests of reviewers and faculty for expanded coverage of issues such as intersectionality, popular culture, and changes in the contemporary population of college students in the U.S. This edition features updated social indicators, bringing in the latest data available from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Pew Research Center, among others, to ensure that discussions and figures remain timely.

DISCOVER INTERSECTIONS

We are excited to introduce the feature "Discover Intersections" to the second edition of *Core Concepts*. In recent decades, sociologists have increasingly sought to identify ways in which achieved and ascribed characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, and sexuality intersect with one another in social practices and institutions and, significantly, how these intersections affect access to, for instance, education, occupational status, and political voice. Put another way,

> When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. (P. H. Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 2)

Each chapter in the book offers students an opportunity to consider intersections between a key sociological topic covered in the chapter and forms of inequality that might otherwise be overlooked in the discussion of that topic. A goal of this feature is to encourage broad, analytical thinking about complex issues of inequality by drawing attention to specific relationships between topics covered across the text.

CONNECTING SOCIOLOGY AND CAREER SUCCESS

As an instructor of introductory sociology, you are probably frequently asked by students, "What can I do with a sociology degree?" This is an important question for students and instructors. This book offers a unique feature that speaks directly and specifically to this question.

In *Discover Sociology: Core Concepts*, all of the chapters, beginning with Chapter 2, feature an essay that accomplishes two major tasks. First, every essay highlights specific skills students learn as sociology majors and describes those skills in ways that provide students a vocabulary that they can use in the job market. Second, each essay profiles a graduate with a degree in sociology who is putting his or her skills to work in an interesting occupation or workplace. Graduates share, in their own words, what they learned from sociology and how it has contributed to their skills, knowledge, and career.

We are delighted that the second edition of *Discover Sociology: Core Concepts* offers readers an updated array of career profiles: Eight fully new profiles of sociology majors provide students with insights into how sociology can prepare them for a spectrum of diverse and fulfilling careers.

It is important to note that this feature is not only for sociology majors! Sociology is often among the general education courses completed by students across a variety of disciplines, and it can help all students develop important skills—such as critical thinking, data literacy, and written communication—that they will need in the workplace. A *Washington Post* report on technology jobs, for instance, notes,

> As tech jobs evolve at the pace of light through fiber-optic cable . . . leaders of tech firms such as Mozilla, Reddit and Tumblr say students should consider schools that not only will teach them traditional skills like coding, but also the softer skills that aren't listed in the course guide but are essential to the 21st-century workplace: working with others, problem-solving, the ability to pick up enough from disciplines other than their own to create products users believe are indispensable to their lives. (Lednicer, 2014)

Clearly, for students across disciplines, there is value in understanding and naming the skills that they gain when they study sociology. We encourage all students to take advantage of this valuable feature.

PHOTOS AND GRAPHICS

The photographs in this edition have been carefully selected to help students put images together with ideas, events, and phenomena. A good photo can engage a student's curiosity and give him or her a visual vehicle for remembering the material under discussion. This has been our goal in choosing the photos included here. We have also carefully prepared visually appealing graphics, including tables, figures, and maps, to attract students' attention and enhance learning.

GLOSSARIES FOR LEARNING

This book features marginal glossaries, offering students easy access to definitions of key concepts, phenomena, and institutions. Additionally, key terms are bolded in the text, and a comprehensive glossary is available at the end of the book.

CHAPTER REVIEW

Every chapter ends with a summary of key learning points and a set of discussion questions to review what students have learned and to foster critical thinking about the materials.

DIGITAL RESOURCES

Discover Sociology includes a comprehensive ancillary package that utilizes new media and a wide range of instructional technologies designed to support instructor course preparation and student learning.

SAGE vantage™

Engage, *Learn*, *Soar* with **SAGE vantage**, an intuitive digital platform that delivers *Discover Sociology: Core Concepts* textbook content in a learning experience carefully designed to ignite student engagement and drive critical

thinking. With evidence-based instructional design at the core, SAGE vantage creates more time for engaged learning and empowered teaching, keeping the classroom where it belongs—in your hands.

Easy to access across mobile, desktop, and tablet devices, SAGE vantage enables students to engage with the material you choose, learn by applying knowledge, and soar with confidence by performing better in your course.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **eReading Experience.** Makes it easy for students to study wherever they are—students can take notes, highlight content, look up definitions, and more!
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- **Honest Value.** Affordable access to easy-to-use, quality learning tools students will appreciate.

FAVORITE SAGE VANTAGE FEATURES

- **3-step course setup** is so fast you can complete it in minutes!
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- **Auto-graded assignments** include:
  - formative **knowledge checks** for each major section of the text that quickly reinforce what students have read and ensure they stay on track;
  - dynamic, hands-on **multimedia activities** that tie real world examples and motivate students to read, prepare for class;
  - summative **chapter tests** that reinforce important themes; and
  - **helpful hints and feedback** (provided with all assignments) that offer context and explain why an answer is correct or incorrect, allowing students to study more effectively.
- **Compelling polling questions** bring concepts to life and drive meaningful comprehension and classroom discussion.
- **Short-answer questions** provide application and reflection opportunities connected to key concepts.
- **Instructor reports** track student activity and provide analytics so you can adapt instruction as needed.
- **A student dashboard** offers easy access to grades, so students know exactly where they stand in your course and where they might improve.
- **Honest value** gives students access to quality content and learning tools at a price they will appreciate.

STUDENT STUDY SITE

An open-access student study site, available at edge.sagepub.com/eglitis2e, provides a variety of additional resources to build students' understanding of the book content and extend their learning beyond the classroom. Students will have access to the following features:

- **Learning objectives** reinforce the most important material
- Mobile-friendly **eFlashcards** strengthen understanding of key terms and concepts, and make it easy to maximize your study time, anywhere, anytime.
- Mobile-friendly practice **quizzes** allow you to assess how much you've learned and where you need to focus your attention.

- **MCAT Guide:** This guide summarizes the content in each chapter, highlighting the relevant topics tested on the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test). Each chapter entry also contains links to resources that allow students to understand and explore specific topic areas in more detail.

And much more!

INSTRUCTOR TEACHING SITE

A password-protected instructor teaching site, available at edge.sagepub.com/eglitis2e, provides integrated sources for all instructor materials, including the following key components for each chapter:

- The test bank, available in Word and Exam View, contains multiple-choice, true/false, short-answer, and essay questions for each chapter. The test bank provides you with a diverse range of prewritten options as well as the opportunity to edit any question and/or insert your own personalized questions to assess students' progress and understanding effectively.
- Editable, chapter-specific Microsoft PowerPoint slides offer you complete flexibility in easily creating a multimedia presentation for your course. Highlight essential content, features, and artwork from the book.
- Lecture notes summarize key concepts on a chapter-by-chapter basis to help with preparation for lectures and class discussions.
- Sample course syllabi for semester and quarter courses provide suggested models for use in the creation of syllabi for your courses.
- Chapter-specific discussion questions can help you launch classroom interaction by prompting students to engage with the material and by reinforcing important content.
- Lively and stimulating ideas for class activities can be used to reinforce active learning. The activities apply to individual or group projects.

And much more!

SAGE COURSEPACKS

SAGE coursepacks makes it easy to import our quality instructor and student resource content into your school's learning management system with minimal effort. Intuitive and simple to use, SAGE coursepacks gives you the control to focus on what really matters: customizing course content to meet your students' needs. The SAGE coursepacks, created specifically for this book, are customized and curated for use in Blackboard, Canvas, Desire2Learn (D2L), and Moodle.

In addition to the content available on the SAGE Edge site, the coursepacks include the following:

- Pedagogically robust assessment tools that foster review, practice, and critical thinking and offer a better, more complete way to measure student engagement. These include the following:
    - Diagnostic chapter quizzes that identify opportunities for student improvement, track student progress, and ensure mastery of key learning objectives.
    - **Test banks** built on Bloom's taxonomy that provide a diverse range of test items.
    - **Activity and quiz** options that allow you to choose only the assignments and tests you want.
- Editable, chapter-specific **PowerPoint®** slides that offer flexibility when creating multimedia lectures so you don't have to start from scratch but can customize to your exact needs.
- **Instructions** on how to use and integrate the comprehensive assessments and resources provided.

Integrated links to the eBook version that make it easy to access the mobile-friendly version of the text, which can be read anywhere, anytime.

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Finally, I thank all of the reviewers listed subsequently, who contributed to *Discover Sociology* with excellent suggestions, creative insights, and helpful critiques.

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Daina S. Eglitis (PhD, University of Michigan–Ann Arbor) is an associate professor of sociology and international affairs and the director of undergraduate studies in the Department of Sociology at The George Washington University (GWU). Her scholarly interests include class and social stratification, historical sociology, contemporary theory, gender, and culture. She is the author of *Imagining the Nation: History, Modernity, and Revolution in Latvia* (Penn State Press, 2002), as well as numerous articles on collective memory and history, social inequality, and demographic change in Eastern Europe. She has held two Fulbright awards in Latvia and is a past recipient of research fellowships and awards from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the American Council of Learned Societies, the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, the International Research and Exchanges Board, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Dr. Eglitis is the author of "The Uses of Global Poverty: How Economic Inequality Benefits the West," an article widely used by undergraduate students. At GWU, she teaches courses on contemporary sociological theory, class and inequality, and introductory sociology, among others. She presents and writes on the topic of teaching and learning and is the author of the *Teaching Sociology* articles "Performing Theory: Dramatic Learning in the Theory Classroom" (2010) and "Social Issues and Problem-Based Learning in Sociology: Opportunities and Challenges in the Undergraduate Classroom" (2016). Outside the classroom, Dr. Eglitis is an avid reader of fiction (recent discoveries include *The Book of Night Women*, *The Thing Around Your Neck*, and *Where the Crawdads Sing*) and loves to travel to new places.

William J. Chambliss (PhD, Indiana University) was a professor of sociology at The George Washington University from 1986 to 2014. During his long and distinguished career, he wrote and edited close to two dozen books and produced numerous articles for professional journals in sociology, criminology, and law. The integration of the study of crime with the creation and implementation of criminal law was a central theme in his writings and research. His articles on the historical development of vagrancy laws, the legal process as it affects different social classes and racial groups, and his efforts to introduce the study of state-organized crimes into the mainstream of social science research are among the most recognized achievements of his career. Dr. Chambliss was the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including a doctorate of laws *honoris causa*, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, Canada, 1999; the 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award, Sociology of Law, American Sociological Association; the 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award, Law and Society, Society for the Study of Social Problems; the 2001 Edwin H. Sutherland Award, American Society of Criminology; the 1995 Major Achievement Award, American Society of Criminology; the 1986 Distinguished Leadership in Criminal Justice, Bruce Smith Sr. Award, Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences; and the 1985 Lifetime Achievement Award, Criminology, American Sociological Association. Professor Chambliss also served as president of the American Society of Criminology and the Society for the Study of Social Problems.

Sara Miller McCune founded SAGE Publishing in 1965 to support the dissemination of usable knowledge and educate a global community. SAGE publishes more than 1000 journals and over 600 new books each year, spanning a wide range of subject areas. Our growing selection of library products includes archives, data, case studies and video. SAGE remains majority owned by our founder and after her lifetime will become owned by a charitable trust that secures the company's continued independence.

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1 DISCOVER SOCIOLOGY

What Do You Think?

1. Can societies be studied scientifically? What does the scientific study of societies entail?
2. What is a theory? What role do theories play in sociology?
3. In your opinion, what social issues or problems are most interesting or important today? What questions about those issues or problems would you like to study?

A CURIOUS MIND

A goal of this book is to take you on a sociological journey. But let's begin with a basic question: *What is sociology?* First of all, sociology is a discipline of and for curious minds. Sociologists are deeply committed to answering the question, "Why?" Why are some people desperately poor and others fabulously wealthy? Why does racial segregation in housing and public education exist, and why does it persist more than half a century after civil rights laws were enacted in the United States? What accounts for the decline of marriage

Learning Objectives

1.1 Describe the sociological imagination.

1.2 Understand the significance of critical thinking in the study of sociology.

1.3 Trace the historical development of sociological thought.

1.4 Identify key theoretical paradigms in the discipline of sociology.

1.5 Identify the three main themes of this book.

John Su / Getty Images

Sociology will take you on a journey to understanding and generating new knowledge about human behavior, social relations, and social institutions on a larger scale.

Filadendron/Getty Images

Sociology seeks to construct a body of scientific and rigorous knowledge about social relations, groups, and societies. A new area of interest is the way social media is changing the way we interact with our social environment and with one another.

among the poor and the working class—as well as among the millennial generation? Why is the proportion of women entering and completing college rising while men's enrollment has fallen? Why, despite this, do men as a group still earn higher incomes than do women as a group? And how is it that social media is simultaneously praised as a vehicle of transformational activism and criticized as a cause of social alienation and civic disengagement? Take a moment to think about some *why* questions you have about society and social life: As you look around you, hear the news, and interact with other people, what strikes you as fascinating but perhaps difficult to understand? What are you curious about?

Sociology is an academic discipline that takes a scientific approach to answering the kinds of questions our curious minds imagine. When we say that sociology is **scientific**, we mean that it is *a way of learning about the world that combines logically constructed theory and systematic observation*. The goal of sociological study and research is to base answers to questions, like those we just posed, on careful examination of the roots of social phenomena, such as poverty, segregation, and the wage gap. Sociologists do this with *research methods*—surveys, interviews, observations, and archival research, among others—which yield data that can be tested, challenged, and revised. In this text, you will see how sociology is done—and you will learn how to do sociology yourself.

Concisely stated, **sociology** is *the scientific study of human social relations, groups, and societies*. Unlike *natural sciences*, such as physics, chemistry, and biology, sociology is one of several *social sciences*

Scientific A way of learning about the world that combines logically constructed theory and systematic observation.

Sociology The scientific study of human social relations, groups, and societies.

engaged in the scientific study of human beings and the social worlds they consciously create and inhabit. The purpose of sociology is to understand and generate new knowledge about human behavior, social relations, and social institutions on a larger scale. The sociologist adheres to the principle of **social embeddedness**: *the idea that economic, political, and other forms of human behavior are fundamentally shaped by social relations*. Thus, sociologists pursue studies on a wide range of issues occurring within, between, and among families, communities, states, nations, and the world. Other social sciences, some of which you may be studying, include anthropology, economics, political science, and psychology.

Sociology is a field in which students have the opportunity to build strong core knowledge about the social world with a broad spectrum of important skills, ranging from gathering and analyzing information to identifying and addressing social problems to effective written and oral communication. Throughout this book, we draw your attention to important skills you can gain through the study of sociology and the kinds of jobs and fields in which these skills can be put to work.

Doing sociology requires that you build a foundation for your knowledge and understanding of the social world. Some key foundations of sociology are the *sociological imagination* and *critical thinking*. We turn to these next.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

1.1 Describe the sociological imagination.

As we go about our daily lives, it is easy to overlook the fact that large-scale economic, political, and cultural forces shape even the most personal aspects of our lives.

Social embeddedness The idea that economic, political, and other forms of human behavior are fundamentally shaped by social relations.

Sociological imagination The ability to grasp the relationship between individual lives and the larger social forces that help to shape them.

When parents divorce, for example, we tend to focus on individual explanations: A father was devoted more to his work than to his family; a mother may have felt trapped in an unhappy marriage but stuck with it for the sake of young children. Yet while personal issues are inevitable parts of a breakup, they can't tell the whole story. When many U.S. marriages end in divorce, forces larger than incompatible personalities or marital discord are at play. But what are those greater social forces, exactly?

As sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916–1962) suggested half a century ago, uncovering the relationship between what he called *personal troubles* and *public issues* calls for a **sociological imagination** (Mills, 1959/2000b). The sociological imagination is *the ability to grasp the relationship between individual lives and the larger social forces that shape them*—that is, to see where biography and history intersect.

In a country such as the United States, where individualism is part of the national heritage, people tend to believe that each person creates his or her life's path and largely disregards the social context in which this happens. When we cannot get a job, fail to earn enough to support a family, or experience marital separation, for example, we tend to see it as a personal trouble. We do not necessarily see it as a public issue. The sociological imagination, however, invites us to make the connection and to step away from the vantage point of a single life experience to see how powerful social forces—for instance, changes in social norms, racial or gender discrimination, large shifts in the economy, or the beginning or end of a military conflict—shape the obstacles and opportunities that contribute to the unfolding of our life's story. Among Mills's (1959/2000b) most often cited examples is the following:

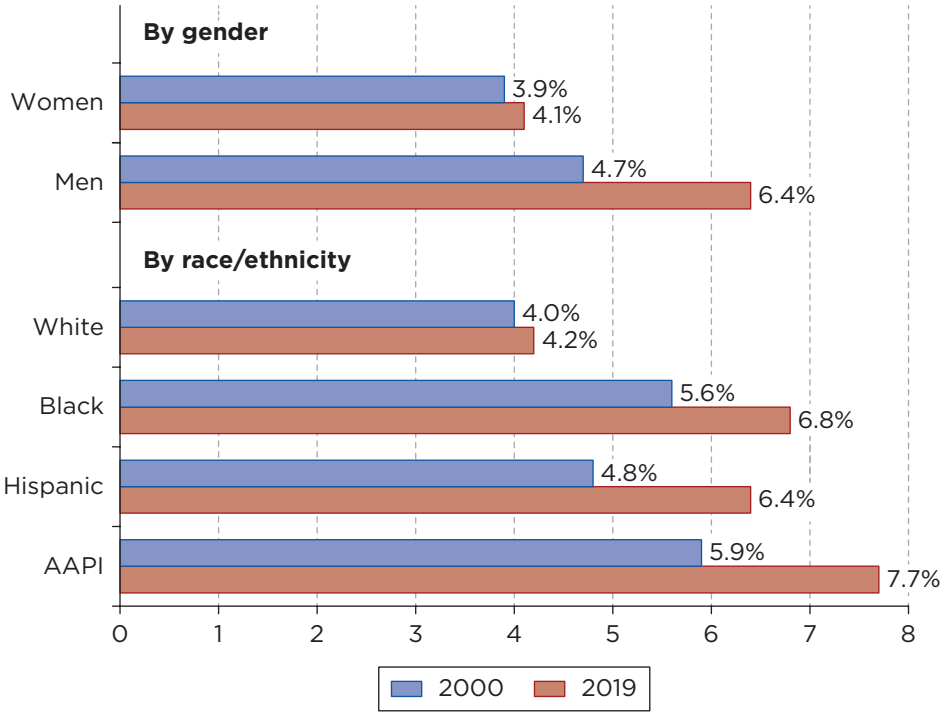
> When, in a city of 100,000, only one man is unemployed, that is his personal trouble, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the man, his skills, and his immediate opportunities. But when in a nation of 50 million employees, 15 million men are unemployed, that is an issue, and we may not hope to find its solution within the range of opportunities open to any one individual. The very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions

> require us to consider the economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of a scatter of individuals. (p. 9)

To apply the idea to contemporary economic conditions, we might look at recent college graduates. If many of the young adults graduating from college today are finding employment in fields of interest to them, they may account for their success by citing personal effort and solid academic qualifications. These are, of course, very important! The sociological imagination, however, suggests that there are also larger social forces at work. The recent economic recovery in the United States has manifested in the form of growing job creation and more hiring: The official unemployment rate for all college graduates with a bachelor's degree or higher in 2018 ranged between just 2.0% and 2.3% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). Early 2019 figures show that the rate of unemployment of young college graduates (ages 21–24) was higher, at about 6.4% for men and 4.1% for women, although this represents a significant drop after the postrecession high of nearly 10% (Figure 1.1). If your friends or relatives who graduated during the economic recession of 2007 to 2009, or even the first years following that period, encountered challenges securing a job after graduation, this suggests that personal

FIGURE 1.1

Unemployment Rate of Young College Graduates (Ages 21–24), by Gender and Race/Ethnicity, 2000 and 2019



SOURCE: "The Class of 2019," by Elise Gould, Zane Mokhiber, and Julia Wolfe. May 14, 2019. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute. https://www.epi.org/publication/class-of-2019-college-edition. Reprinted with permission.

NOTES: AAPI stands for Asian American/Pacific Islander. Data for 2000 and 2019 use pooled data from January 1998-December 2000 and March 2016-February 2019, respectively. Data sample includes only college graduates who have not obtained an advanced degree and are not enrolled in further schooling.

effort and qualifications are only part of the explanation for the success of one class of college completers and the frustration of another.

Understanding this relationship is particularly critical for people in the United States, who often regard individuals as fully responsible for their social, educational, and economic successes and failures. For instance, it is easy to fault the poor for their poverty, assuming they only need to work harder and pull themselves up by their bootstraps. We may neglect the powerful role of social forces such as racial or ethnic discrimination, the outsourcing or automation of manufacturing jobs that used to employ those with less education, or the dire state of public education in many economically distressed rural and urban areas. The sociological imagination implores us to seek the intersection between private troubles, such as a family's poverty, and public issues, such as lack of access to good schooling and jobs paying a living wage, to develop a more informed and comprehensive understanding of the social world and social issues.

It is useful, when we talk about the sociological imagination, to bring in the concepts of *agency* and *structure*. Sociologists often talk about social actions—individual and group behavior—in these terms. **Agency** can be understood as *the ability of individuals and groups to exercise free will and to make social changes on a small or large scale*. **Structure** is a complex term but may be defined as *patterned social arrangements that have effects on agency and are, in turn, affected by agency*. Structure may enable or constrain social action. For example, sociologists talk about the class structure, which is composed of social groups who hold varying amounts of resources, such as money, political voice, and social status. They also identify normative structures—for instance, they might analyze patterns of social norms regarding "appropriate" gender behaviors in different cultural contexts.

Agency The ability of individuals and groups to exercise free will and to make social changes on a small or large scale.

Structure Patterned social arrangements that have effects on agency and are, in turn, affected by agency.

Robert Nickelsberg/Getty Images

Homelessness is one of many public issues that sociologists seek to understand more fully.

Sociologists take a strong interest in the relationship between structure and agency. Consider that, on one hand, we all have the ability to make choices—we have free will, and we can opt for one path over another. On the other hand, the structures that surround us impose obstacles on us or afford us opportunities to exercise agency: We can make choices, but they may be enabled or constrained by structure. For instance, in the early 1900s, we could surely have found bright young women in the U.S. middle class who wanted to study law or medicine. The social norms of the time, however, held that young women of this status were better off marrying and caring for a husband, home, and children. There were also legal constraints to women's entry into higher education and the paid labor force. So although the women in our example might have individually argued and pushed to get an education and have professional careers, the dreams of this group were constrained by powerful normative and legal structures that identified women's place as being in the home.

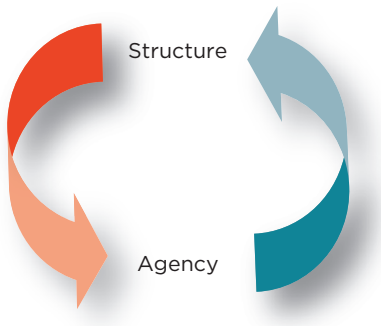
Consider also the relationship between the class structure and individual agency as a way of thinking about social mobility in U.S. society. If, for instance, a young man today whose parents are well educated and whose family is economically prosperous wishes to go to college and study to be an architect, engineer, or college professor, his position in the class structure (or the position of his family) is *enabling*—that is, it raises the probability that he will be able to make this choice and realize it. If, however, a young man from a poor family with no college background embraces these same dreams, his

position in the class structure is likely to be *constraining*: Not only does his family have insufficient economic means to pay for college but he also may be studying in an underfunded or underperforming high school that cannot provide the advanced courses and other resources he needs to prepare for college. A lack of college role models also may be a factor. This does not mean that the first young man will inevitably go to college and realize his hopes and the second will not; it does, however, suggest that structural conditions favor the first college aspirant over the second.

To understand why some students go to college and others do not, sociologists would say that we cannot rely on individual choice or will (agency) alone—structures, whether subtly or quite obviously, exercise an influence on social behavior and outcomes. At the same time, we should not see structures as telling the whole story of social behavior because history shows the power of human agency in making change, even in the face of obstacles. Agency itself can transform structures. For example, think about the ways women's historical activism helped to transform gender norms for women today. Sociologists weigh both agency and structure and study how the two intersect and interact. For the most part, sociologists understand the relationship as *reciprocal*—that is, it goes in both directions, as structure affects agency and agency, in turn, can change the dimensions of a structure (Figure 1.2).

FIGURE 1.2

Structure and Agency



Discover Intersections

An Introduction

In this book, you will find short features titled "Discover Intersections." In recent decades, sociologists have increasingly endeavored to identify ways in which achieved and ascribed characteristics, such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, sexuality, and others, overlap with one another in social practices and institutions and, importantly, how these overlapping characteristics affect access to resources, such as power and political voice. Put another way, "when it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 2).

Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, holds that the classical modes of status determination in society do not act independently of one another. Instead, people's experiences are shaped by overlapping modes of oppression and privilege. For example, when looking at inequalities experienced by women on the basis of gender, it is also imperative to recognize particular ways in which class status, sexuality, and race, among others, affect how women are perceived and received in the job market.

Each chapter provides an opportunity to consider intersections that exist between the sociological topics that we cover separately in the chapters but that are deeply linked in the foundations of social life.

CRITICAL THINKING

1.2 Understand the significance of critical thinking in the study of sociology.

Taking a sociological perspective requires more than an ability to use the sociological imagination. It also entails **critical thinking**, *the ability to evaluate claims about truth by using reason and evidence*. In everyday life, we often

Critical thinking The ability to evaluate claims about truth by using reason and evidence.

accept things as true because they are familiar, feel right, or are consistent with our beliefs. Critical thinking takes a different approach—recognizing weak arguments, rejecting statements not supported by empirical evidence, and questioning our assumptions. One of the founders of modern sociology, Max Weber, captured the spirit of critical thinking in two words when he said that a key task of sociological inquiry is to acknowledge "inconvenient facts."

Critical thinking requires us to be open-minded, but it does not mean that we must accept all arguments as equally valid. Those supported by logic and backed by evidence are clearly preferable to those that are not. For instance, we may passionately agree with Thomas Jefferson's famous statement, "That government is best that governs least." Nevertheless, as sociologists we must also ask, "What evidence backs up the claim that less government is better under all circumstances?"

To think critically, it is useful to follow six simple rules (adapted from Wade & Tavris, 1997):

1. **Be willing to ask any question, no matter how difficult.** The belief in small government is a cherished U.S. ideal. But sociologists who study the role of government in modern society must be willing to ask whether there are circumstances under which more—not less—government is better. Government's role in areas such as homeland security, education, and health care has grown in recent decades—what are the positive and negative aspects of this growth?

2. **Think logically, and be clear.** Logic and clarity require us to define concepts in a way that allows us to study them. "Big government" is a vague concept that must be made more precise and measurable before it provides for useful research. Are we speaking of federal, state, or local government, or all of these? Is "big" measured by the cost of government services, the number of agencies or offices within the government, the number of people working for it, or something else? What did Jefferson mean by "best," and what would that "best" government look like? Who would have the power to define this notion?

3. **Back up your arguments with evidence.** Founding Father Thomas Jefferson is a formidable person to quote, but quoting him does not prove that smaller government is better in the 21st century. To find evidence, we need to seek out studies of contemporary societies to see whether there is a relationship between a population's well-being and the size of government or the breadth of services it provides. Because studies may offer contradictory evidence, we also need to be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of arguments on different sides of the issue.

4. **Think about the assumptions and biases—including your own—that underlie all studies.** You may insist that government has a key role to play in modern society. On the other hand, you may believe with equal passion that big government is one root of the problems in the United States. Critical thinking requires that we recognize our beliefs and biases. Otherwise, we might unconsciously seek out only evidence

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Another well-known quote from Thomas Jefferson is, "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants." Taking a critical perspective, how might we evaluate the meaning and applicability of the quote to the U.S. today?

DISCOVER & DEBATE

What Is "Discover & Debate"?

"Discover & Debate" essays, which appear in every chapter, offer more than discussion questions for instructors and students. Instead, they provide a robust discussion model for instructors and students that takes the form of debate. A basic understanding of debating and, in particular, of the construction and evaluation of reasoned arguments is vital to civic life, civil interaction, and even social change. In a society that often addresses vital issues in sound bites and tweets, it is particularly challenging but important to develop the skills and knowledge to evaluate issues critically and to build evidence-based arguments.

What Is a Debate?

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* ("Debate," 2010), debate is a "formal discussion on a particular matter in a public meeting or legislative assembly, in which opposing arguments are put forward and which usually ends with a vote." Although most commonly associated with electoral politics, debates are also used in high schools and colleges to help students learn to gather and evaluate information and to build strong evidence-based positions on issues of social, political, economic, and cultural importance.

Debate is a form of public speaking; it is a formal, oral contest between teams or individuals on an assigned proposition or "motion." It is an idea, statement, or policy that teams formally argue. A typical debate comprises two teams—the affirmative side and the opposition side. The affirmative side speaks *for* the motion, meaning they advocate and speak in favor of it, whereas the opposition speaks *against* the motion.

What is the difference between a debate and an argument? Debates are structured arguments, where each participant is given a specific amount of time to present and defend his or her arguments. The motion is announced prior to the debate, and each team is randomly assigned a side. This aspect of academic debate is notable because it underscores the importance of understanding and recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of *both* sides of an issue. Debaters are given preparation time to develop arguments using empirical data. The first speakers on each team introduce their side of the argument and present the order in which team members will discuss the motion. The opening opposition speaker rebuts the argument presented by the opening affirmative speaker. This format continues throughout the debate. The affirmative side presents its argument, whereas the opposition side following them rebuts it and presents its side.

In competitive debating, a panel of judges evaluates speakers on the substantive content of arguments, time management, style, and delivery and determines a winner. The judges' goal is not to label one side as right or wrong—assigned issues are normally too complex to categorize with such simple labels. This is important because it highlights the point that on a significant number of controversial and frequently debated issues, a strong supporting argument can be made for both (or all) sides of an issue. Being a good debater does not mean choosing a "right" side and labeling the opposing side as "wrong." Rather, it means constructing a well-reasoned argument based on empirical evidence and an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of all sides of the debate.

A serious debate is fundamentally about presenting, defending, and challenging ideas with reasoned arguments. Constructing a strong argument is dependent on information literacy and on the ability to discern facts from opinions, and evidence from ideology—skills from which we as engaged citizens and as sociologists benefit. Our goal with this feature is to help you develop skills to engage in well-informed and well-reasoned debate, whether that debate takes place in an academic or a political setting or in a less formal setting.

Each chapter offers a "Discover & Debate" feature that presents a motion for debate, basic background on a current social issue, and an introduction to key arguments from two sides. It also includes questions to consider when evaluating each position and a debate tip to help you build debate skills and develop a winning argument.

that supports our argument, ignoring evidence to the contrary. Passion has a role to play in research: It can motivate us to devote long hours to studying an issue. But passion should not play a role when we are weighing evidence and drawing conclusions.

5. **Avoid anecdotal evidence.** It is tempting to draw a general conclusion from a single experience or anecdote, but that experience may illustrate the exception rather than the rule. For example, you may know someone who just yesterday received a letter mailed two years ago, but that is not evidence that the U.S. Postal Service is inefficient or does not fulfill its mandates. To determine whether this government agency is working well, you would have to study its entire mail delivery system and its record of work over time.

6. **Be willing to admit when you are wrong or uncertain about your results.** Sometimes, we expect to find support for an argument only to find that things are not so clear. For example, consider the position of a sociologist who advocates small government and learns that Japan and Singapore initially became economic powerhouses because their governments played leading roles in promoting growth or a sociologist who champions an expanded role for government but learns from the downturn of the 1990s in the Asian economies that some societal needs can be better met by private enterprise. Empirical evidence may contradict our beliefs: We learn from recognizing erroneous assumptions and having a mind open to new information.

Critical thinking also means becoming critical consumers of the information that surrounds us—news, social media, surveys, texts, magazines, and scientific studies. To be a good sociologist, it is important to look beyond the commonsense understanding of social life and develop a critical perspective. Being critical consumers of information entails paying attention to the sources of information we encounter and asking questions about how data were gathered. In this text, "Behind the Numbers" boxes will look critically at data on issues such as unemployment, poverty, and high school dropouts, helping us to understand what is illuminated and what is obscured by these commonly cited social indicators.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIOLOGICAL THINKING

1.3 Trace the historical development of sociological thought.

Humans have been asking questions about the nature of social life as long as people have lived in societies. Aristotle and Plato wrote extensively about social relationships more than 2,000 years ago. Ibn Khaldun, an Arab scholar writing in the 14th century, advanced several sociological concepts we recognize today, including ideas about social conflict and cohesion. Yet modern sociological concepts and research methods did not emerge until the 19th century, after the industrial revolution, and then largely in those European nations undergoing dramatic societal changes, such as industrialization and urbanization.

THE BIRTH OF SOCIOLOGY: SCIENCE, PROGRESS, INDUSTRIALIZATION, AND URBANIZATION

We can trace sociology's roots to four interrelated historical developments that gave birth to the modern world: *the scientific revolution*, *the Enlightenment*, *industrialization*, and *urbanization*. Since these developments initially occurred in Europe, it is not surprising that sociological perspectives and ideas evolved there during the 19th century. By the end of the 19th century, sociology had taken root in North America as well; somewhat later, it gained a foothold in Central and South America, Africa, and Asia. Sociology throughout the world initially bore the stamp of its European and North American origins, although recent decades have brought a greater diversity of perspectives to the discipline.

THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION The rise of modern natural and physical sciences, beginning in Europe in the 16th century, offered scholars a more advanced understanding of the physical world. The success of natural

science contributed to the belief that science could be fruitfully applied to human affairs, thereby enabling people to improve society or even perfect it. Auguste Comte (1798–1857) coined the term *sociology* to characterize what he believed would be a new "social physics"—that is, the scientific study of society.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT Inspired in part by the success of the physical sciences, French philosophers in the 18th century, such as Voltaire (1694–1778), Montesquieu (1689–1755), Diderot (1719–1784), and Rousseau (1712–1778), promised that humankind could attain lofty heights by applying scientific understanding to human affairs. Enlightenment ideals such as equality, liberty, and fundamental human rights found a home in the emerging social sciences, particularly sociology. Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), considered by many to be the first modern sociologist, argued that sociological understanding would create a more egalitarian, peaceful society, in which individuals would be free to realize their full potential. Many of sociology's founders shared the hope that a fairer and more just society would be achieved through the scientific understanding of society.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION The industrial revolution, which began in England in the mid- to late 18th century and soon spread to other countries, dramatically changed European societies. Traditional agricultural economies and the small-scale production of handicrafts in the home gave way to more efficient, profit-driven manufacturing based in factories. For instance, in 1801 in the English city of Leeds, there were about 20 factories manufacturing a variety of goods. By 1838, Leeds was home to 106 woolen mills alone, employing 10,000 people.

Small towns, including Leeds, were transformed into bustling cities, showcasing extremes of wealth and poverty, as well as opportunity and struggle. In the face of rapid social change and growing inequality, sociologists sought to gain a social scientific perspective on what was happening and how it had come about. German theorist and revolutionary Karl Marx (1818–1883), who had an important impact on later sociological theory concerning modern societies and economies, predicted that industrialization would make life increasingly intolerable for the masses. He believed that private property ownership by the wealthy allowed for the exploitation of working people and that its elimination would bring about a utopia of equality for all.

Industrialization brought new workers to cities, and urban populations grew dramatically in a short period of time. Sociologists such as Émile Durkheim theorized the normative effects of moving from small, traditional communities to diverse, unfamiliar, populous cities.

URBANIZATION: THE POPULATION SHIFT TOWARD CITIES Industrialization fostered the growth of cities as people streamed from rural fields to urban factories in search of work. By the end of the 19th century, more than 20 million people lived in English cities. The population of London alone exceeded 7 million by 1910.

Early industrial cities were often fetid places, characterized by pollution and dirt, crime, and crowded housing tenements. In Europe, sociologists lamented the passing of communal village life and its replacement by a savage and alienating urban existence. Durkheim, for example, worried about the potential breakdown of stabilizing beliefs and values in modern urban society. He argued that whereas traditional communities were held together by shared culture and **norms**, or *accepted social behaviors and beliefs*, modern industrial communities were threatened by **anomie**, or a *state of normlessness that occurs when people lose sight of the shared rules and values that give order and meaning*

Norms Accepted social behaviors and beliefs.

Anomie A state of normlessness that occurs when people lose touch with the shared rules and values that give order and meaning to their lives.

to their lives. In a state of anomie, individuals often feel confused and anxious because they do not know how to interact with each other and their environment. Durkheim raised the question of what would hold societies and communities together as they shifted from homogeneity and shared cultures and values to heterogeneous masses of diverse cultures, norms, and occupations.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY FOUNDERS

Despite its largely European origins, early sociology sought to develop universal understandings that would apply to other peoples, times, and places. The discipline's principal acknowledged founders—Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber— left their marks on sociology in different ways.

AUGUSTE COMTE Auguste Comte (1798–1857), a French social theorist, is credited with founding modern sociology, naming it, and establishing it as the scientific study of social relationships. The twin pillars of Comte's sociology were the study of **social statics**, *the way society is held together*, and the analysis of **social dynamics**, *the laws that govern social change*. Comte believed that social science could be used effectively to manage the social change resulting from modern industrial society but always with a strong respect for traditions and history.

Comte proclaimed that his new science of society was **positivism**. This meant that it was to be *based on facts alone*, which should be determined scientifically and allowed to speak for themselves. Comte argued that this purely factual approach was the proper method for sociology. He argued that all sciences—and all societies—go through three stages. The first stage is a theological one, in which key ways of understanding the world are framed in terms of superstition, imagination, and religion. The second stage is a metaphysical one, characterized by abstract speculation but framed by the basic belief that society is the product of natural rather than of supernatural forces. The third and last stage is one in which knowledge is based on scientific reasoning from the "facts." Comte saw himself as leading sociology toward its final positivist stage.

Social statics The way society is held together.

Social dynamics The laws that govern social change.

Positivism An approach to research that is based on scientific evidence.

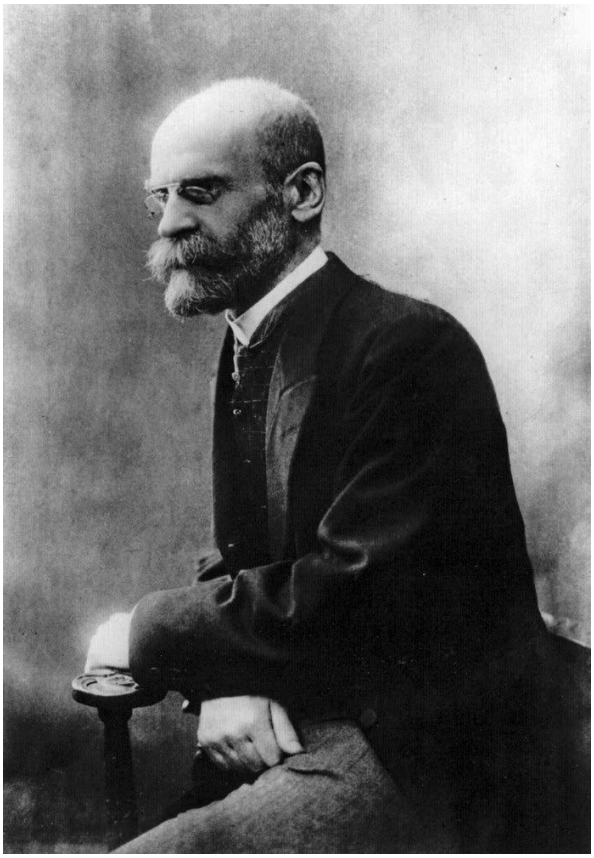
As a founding figure in the social sciences, Auguste Comte is associated with positivism, *the belief that the study of society must be anchored in facts and the scientific method.*

Comte left a lasting mark on modern sociology. The scientific study of social life continues to be the goal of sociological research. His belief that social institutions have a strong impact on individual behavior—that is, that our actions are the products of personal choices and the surrounding social context—remains at the heart of sociology.

HARRIET MARTINEAU Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) was an English sociologist who, despite deafness and other physical challenges, became a prominent social and historical writer. Her greatest handicap was being a woman in male-dominated intellectual circles that failed to value female voices. Today, she is frequently recognized as the first major woman sociologist.

Deeply influenced by Comte's work, Martineau translated his six-volume treatise on politics into English. Her editing helped make Comte's esoteric prose accessible to the English-speaking world, ensuring his standing as a leading figure in sociology. Martineau was also a distinguished scholar in her own right. She wrote dozens of books, more than 1,000 newspaper columns, and 25 novels, including a three-volume study, *Society in America*

Interestingly, Harriet Martineau translated into English the work of Auguste Comte, who dismissed women's intellect, saying, "Biological philosophy teaches us that . . . radical differences, physical and moral, distinguish the sexes . . . biological analysis presents the female sex . . . as constitutionally in a state of perpetual infancy, in comparison with the other" (Kandal, 1988, p. 75).



Émile Durkheim pioneered some of sociology's early research on such topics as social solidarity and suicide. His work continues to inform sociological study and understanding of social bonds and the consequences of their unraveling.

(Martineau, 1837), based on observations of the United States that she made during a tour of the country.

Martineau, like Comte, sought to identify basic laws that govern society. She derived three of her four laws from other theorists. The fourth law, however, was her own and reflected her progressive (today we might say *feminist*) principles: For a society to evolve, it must ensure social justice for women and other oppressed groups. In her study of U.S. society, Martineau treated slavery and women's experience of dependence in marriage as indicators of the limits of the moral development of the United States. In her view, the United States was unable to achieve its full social potential while it was morally stunted by persistent injustices, such as slavery and women's inequality. The question of whether the provision of social justice is critical to societal development remains a relevant and compelling one today.

ÉMILE DURKHEIM Auguste Comte founded and named the discipline of sociology, but French scholar Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) set the field on its present course. Durkheim established the early subject matter of sociology, laid out rules for conducting research, and developed an important theory of social change.

For Durkheim, sociology's subject matter was **social facts**, *qualities of groups that are external to individual members yet constrain their thinking and behavior.*

Social facts Qualities of groups that are external to individual members yet constrain their thinking and behavior.

Durkheim argued that such social facts as religious beliefs and social duties are external—that is, they are part of the social context and are larger than our individual lives. They also have the power to shape our behavior. You may feel compelled to act in certain ways in different contexts—in the classroom, on a date, at a religious ceremony—even if you are not always aware of such social pressures.

Durkheim also argued that only social facts can explain other social facts. For example, there is no scientific evidence that men have an innate knack for business compared with women, but in 2012, women headed only 18 of the *Fortune* 500 companies. A Durkheimian approach would highlight women's experience in society—where historically they have been socialized into more domestic values or restricted to certain noncommercial professions—and the fact that the social networks that foster mobility in the corporate world today are still primarily male to help explain why men dominate the upper ranks of the business world.

Durkheim's principal concern was explaining the impact of modern society on **social solidarity**, *the bonds that unite the members of a social group*. In his view, in traditional society, these bonds are based on similarity—people speak the same language, share the same customs and beliefs, and do similar work tasks. He called this *mechanical solidarity*. In modern industrial society, however, bonds based on similarity break down. Everyone has a different job to perform in the industrial division of labor, and modern societies are more likely to be socially diverse. Nevertheless, workers in different occupational positions are dependent on one another for things such as safety, education, and the provision of food and other goods essential to survival. The people filling these positions may not be alike in culture, beliefs, or language, but their dependence on one another contributes to social cohesion. Borrowing from biology, Durkheim called this *organic solidarity*, suggesting that modern society functions as an interdependent organic whole, like a human body.

Yet organic solidarity, Durkheim argued, is not as strong as mechanical solidarity. People no longer necessarily share the same norms and values. The consequence, according to Durkheim, is anomie. In this weakened condition, the social order disintegrates and pathological behavior increases (Durkheim, 1922/1973a).

Consider whether the United States, a modern and diverse society, is held together primarily by organic solidarity or whether the hallmark of mechanical solidarity, a **collective conscience**—*the common beliefs and values that bind a society together*—is in evidence. Do public demonstrations of patriotism on nationally significant anniversaries such as September 11 and July 4 indicate mechanical solidarity built on a collective sense of shared values, norms, and practices? Or do the deeply divisive politics of recent years suggest that social bonds are based more fully on practical interdependence?

Social solidarity The bonds that unite the members of a social group.

Collective conscience The common beliefs and values that bind a society together.

Class conflict Competition between social classes over the distribution of wealth, power, and other valued resources in society.

Proletariat The working class; wage workers.

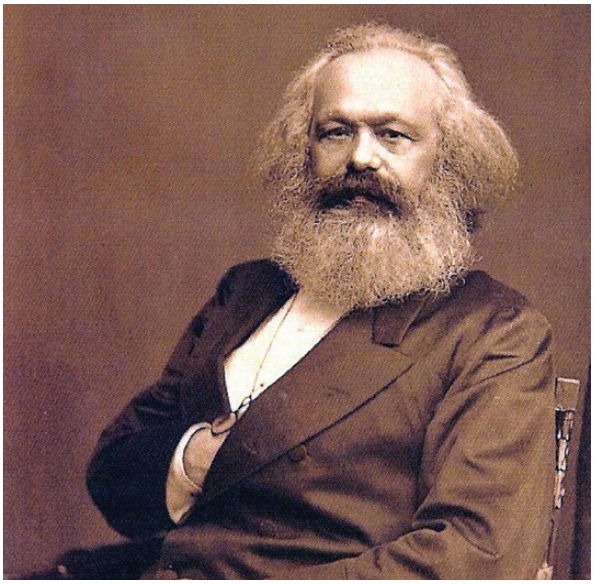
Bourgeoisie The capitalist (or property-owning) class.

KARL MARX

The extensive writings of Karl Marx (1818–1883) influenced the development of economics and political science as well as sociology. They also shaped world politics and inspired communist revolutions in Russia (later the Soviet Union), China, and Cuba, among others.

Marx's central idea was deceptively simple: Almost all societies throughout history have been divided into economic classes, with one class prospering at the expense of others. All human history, Marx believed, should be understood as the product of **class conflict**, *competition between social classes over the distribution of wealth, power, and other valued resources in society* (Marx & Engels, 1848/1998).

In the period of early industrialization in which he lived, Marx condemned capitalism's exploitation of *working people*, the **proletariat**, by the *ownership class*, the **bourgeoisie**. As we will see in later chapters, Marx's



Karl Marx was a scholar and critic of early capitalism. His work has been thoroughly studied and critiqued around the world.

views on conflict and inequality are still influential in contemporary sociological thinking, even among sociologists who do not share his views on society.

Marx focused his attention on the emerging capitalist industrial society (Marx, 1867/1992a, 1885/1992b, 1894/1992c). Unlike his contemporaries in sociology, however, Marx saw capitalism as a transitional stage to a final period in human history in which economic classes and the unequal distribution of rewards and opportunities linked to class inequality would disappear and be replaced by a utopia of equality.

Although many of Marx's predictions have not proved to be correct, his critical analysis of the dynamics of capitalism proved insightful. Among other things, Marx argued that capitalism would lead to accelerating technological change, the replacement of workers by machines, and the growth of monopoly capitalism.

Marx also presciently predicted that ownership of the **means of production**, *the sites and technology that produce the goods* (and sometimes services) *we need and use*, would come to be concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. As a result, he believed, a growing wave of people would be thrust down into the proletariat, which owns only its own labor power. In modern society, large corporations have progressively swallowed up or pushed out smaller businesses; where small lumberyards and pharmacies used to serve many communities, corporate giants, such as Home Depot, CVS, and Best Buy, have moved in, putting locally owned establishments out of business.

In many U.S. towns, small business owners have joined forces to protest the construction of "big box" stores such as Walmart (now the largest private employer in the United States), arguing that these enormous establishments, although they offer cheap goods, wreak havoc on local retailers and bring only the meager economic benefit of masses of entry-level, low-wage jobs. From a Marxist perspective, we might say that the local retailers, in resisting the incursion of the big-box stores into their communities, are fighting their own proletarianization. Even physicians, many of whom used to own their own means of production in the form of private medical practices, have increasingly been driven by economic necessity into working for large health maintenance organizations (HMOs), where they are salaried employees.

Unlike Comte and Durkheim, Marx thought social change would be revolutionary, not evolutionary, and would be the product of oppressed workers rising up against a capitalist system that exploits the many to benefit the few.

MAX WEBER Max Weber (1864–1920), a German sociologist who wrote at the beginning of the 20th century, left a substantial academic legacy. Among his contributions are an analysis of how Protestantism fostered the rise of capitalism in Europe (Weber, 1904–1905/2002) and insights into the emergence of modern bureaucracy (Weber, 1919/1946). Weber, like other founders of sociology, took up various political causes, condemning injustice wherever he found it. Although pessimistic about capitalism, he did not believe, as did Marx, that some alternative utopian form of society would arise. Nor did he see sociologists enjoying privileged insights into the social world that would qualify them to wisely counsel rulers and industrialists, as Comte (and, to some extent, Durkheim) had envisioned.

Means of production The sites and technology that produce the goods we need and use.

PRIVATE LIVES, PUBLIC ISSUES

Why Do Couples Get Divorced?

Until about the middle of the 20th century, most marriages were "'til death do us part." In 1940, the rate of divorce in the United States was 2.0 per 1,000 population. In 1960, it was still 2.2 per 1,000, but it rose consistently through the 1970s, peaking in 1981 at 5.3 per 1,000 before dropping back to 2.9 per 1,000 in 2017 (Figure 1.3). What accounts for the shifting landscape of marital breakup in the United States?

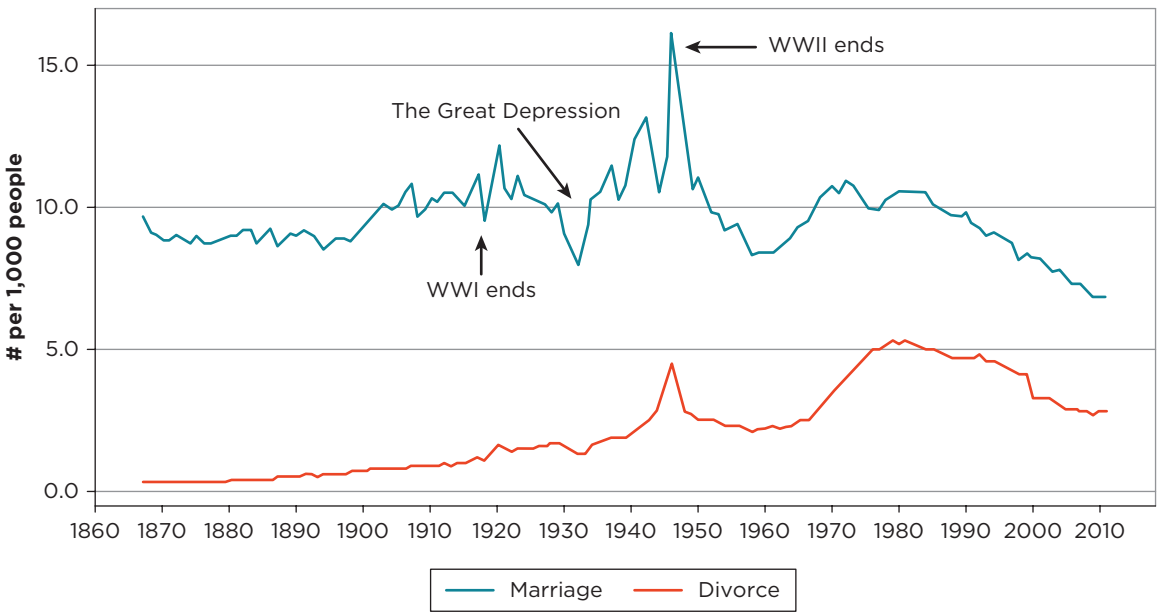
The sociological imagination suggests to us that marriage and divorce, seemingly the most private of matters, are public issues as well as personal ones. Certainly, the end of a marriage is a profoundly personal experience and rooted in disagreements, conflicts, or crisis faced by a couple. At the same time, researchers recognize that there are structural and normative shifts that are important for understanding the context in which marriages are made, experienced, and ended.

Consider the fact that when wages for the working class began to stagnate in the mid-1970s, growing numbers of women went to work to help their families make ends meet. More women also went to college and pursued careers as a path to financial stability and personal fulfillment, a path enabled, in part, by the 1972 passage of Title IX, a federal law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex in any educational program receiving federal financial support. In fact, today more women than men finish undergraduate degrees, and women have a higher measure of economic independence than ever before.

The combination of educational attainment and satisfying careers reinforces women's autonomy,

FIGURE 1.3

144 Years of Marriage and Divorce in the United States



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making it easier for those who are in unhappy marriages to leave them. Greater social acceptance of divorce has also removed much of the stigma once associated with a failed marriage.

After rising to its peak in 1981, the divorce rate in the United States began to decline again, falling to and staying below 4.0 per 1,000 in 2000. Can we find the roots of this shift in sociological phenomena as well? Arguably, several more recent societal changes could be implicated in a dropping divorce rate. For example, as we will see in Chapter 10, fewer people today are marrying at all: The decline has been particularly notable among millennials as well as among the poor and the working class, shrinking the pool from which divorced couples could emerge. More couples today are also cohabiting: Some break up before marriage, whereas others may discover compatibility that translates into a durable marriage. Furthermore, a trend toward later marriage, when careers have already been established, may mean that couples are likely to marry for love rather than for economic stability and are more likely to stay together. Economic stability, in fact, continues to be an important variable in the sociological picture: One demographic category where divorce remains high is among less educated, low-income couples.

Societal changes can be implicated in the rise—and decline—of divorce in the United States. The sociological imagination helps us to see that this

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private trouble is, in many respects, influenced by public issues, including women's growing economic independence, the dynamism of cultural norms related to marriage and divorce, and financial stresses experienced by less educated and lower income couples. Social research methods, which we will discuss in the next chapter, can help us learn to ask and study the kinds of sociological questions that will help us understand these trends more fully.

Think It Through

- What other private troubles might sociologists identify as public issues? Can you use the sociological imagination to discuss any of the social issues and problems of interest to you?

Weber believed that an adequate explanation of the social world begins with the individual and takes into account the meaning of what people say and do. Although he argued that research should be scientific and value free, Weber also believed that to explain what people do, we must use a method he termed **Verstehen**, *the German word for interpretive understanding. This methodology*, rarely used by sociologists today, *sought to explain social relationships by having the sociologist/observer imagine how the subjects being studied might have perceived and interpreted the situation*. Studying social life, Weber felt, is not the same as studying plants or chemical reactions because human beings act on the basis of meanings and motives.

Weber's theories of social and economic organization have also been highly influential (Weber, 1921/2012). Weber argued that the modern Western world showed an ever-increasing reliance on logic, efficiency, rules, and reason. According to him, modern societies are characterized by the development and growing influence of **formal rationality**, a context in which people's pursuit of goals is increasingly shaped by rules, regulations, and larger social structures. One of Weber's most widely known illustrations of formal rationality comes

Verstehen The German word for interpretive understanding; Weber's proposed methodology for explaining social relationships by having the sociologist imagine how subjects might perceive a situation.

Formal rationality A context in which people's pursuit of goals is shaped by rules, regulations, and larger social structures.

from his study of **bureaucracies**, *formal organizations characterized by written rules, hierarchical authority, and paid staff, intended to promote organizational efficiency*. Bureaucracies, for Weber, epitomized formally rational systems: On the one hand, they offer clear, knowable rules and regulations for the efficient pursuit of particular ends, such as obtaining a passport or getting financial aid for higher education. On the other hand, he feared, the bureaucratization of modern society would also progressively strip people of their humanity and creativity and result in an iron cage of rationalized structures with irrational consequences.

Weber's ideas about bureaucracy were remarkably prescient in their characterization of our bureaucratic (and formally rationalized) modern world. Today, we are also confronted regularly with both the incredible efficiency and the baffling irrationality of modern bureaucratic structures. Within moments of entering into an efficiently concluded contract with a wireless phone service provider, we can become consumers of a cornucopia of technological opportunities, with the ability to chat on the phone or receive text messages from almost anywhere, post photographs or watch videos online, and pass the time on social-media platforms. Should we later be confused by a bill and need to speak to a company representative, however, we may be shuttled through endless repetitions of an automated response system that never seems to offer us the option of speaking with another human being. Today, Weber's presciently predicted irrationality of rationality is alive and well.

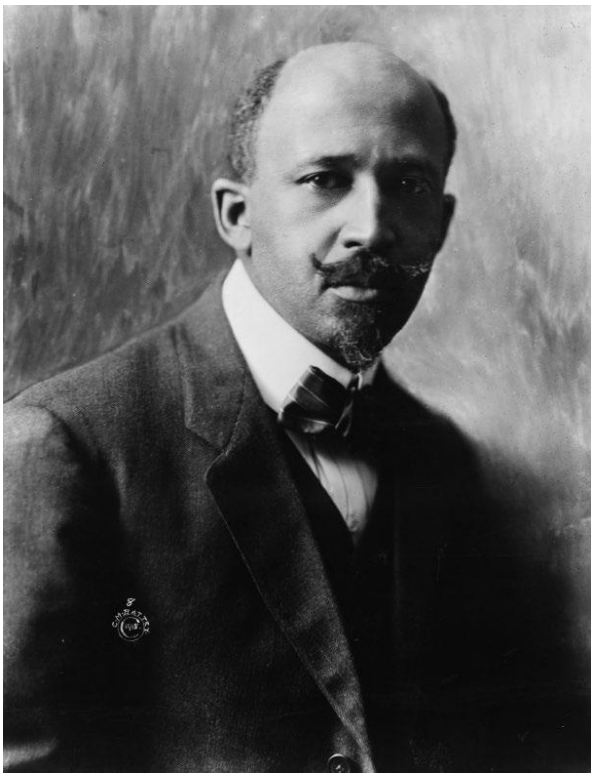
SIGNIFICANT FOUNDING IDEAS IN U.S. SOCIOLOGY

Sociology was born in Europe, but it took firm root in U.S. soil, where it was influenced by turn-of-the-century industrialization and urbanization, as well as by racial strife and discrimination. Strikes by organized labor, corruption in government, an explosion of European immigration, racial segregation, and the growth of city slums all helped mold early sociological thought in the United States. By the late 1800s, numerous universities in the United States were offering sociology courses. The first faculties of sociology were established at the University of Kansas (1889), the University of Chicago (1892), and Atlanta University (1897). Next, we look at a handful of sociologists who have had an important influence on modern sociological thinking in the United States. Throughout the book, we will learn about more U.S. sociologists who have shaped our perspectives today.

Bureaucracies Formal organizations characterized by written rules, hierarchical authority, and paid staff, intended to promote organizational efficiency.

Max Weber made significant contributions to the understanding of how capitalism developed in Western countries and its relationship to religious beliefs. His work on formal rationality and bureaucracy continues to influence sociologists' study of modern society.

ROBERT EZRA PARK The Sociology Department at the University of Chicago, which gave us what is often known as the "Chicago School" of sociology, dominated the new discipline in the United States at the start of the 20th century. Chicago sociologist Robert Ezra Park (1864–1944) pioneered the study of urban sociology and race relations. Once a muckraking journalist, Park was an equally colorful academic, reportedly coming to class in



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W. E. B. Du Bois, the first African American to receive a PhD from Harvard, wrote 20 books and more than 100 scholarly articles on race and race relations. Today, many of his works are classics in the study of African American lives and race relations in the United States.

disheveled clothes and with shaving soap still in his ears. But his students were devoted to him, and his work was widely recognized. His 1921 textbook, *An Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, coauthored with his Chicago colleague Ernest Burgess, helped shape the discipline. The Chicago School studied a broad spectrum of social phenomena, from hoboes and flophouses (inexpensive dormitory-style housing) to movie houses, dance halls, and slums, and from youth gangs and mobs to residents of Chicago's ritzy Gold Coast.

Park was a champion of racial integration, having once served as personal secretary to the African American educator Booker T. Washington. Yet racial discrimination was evident in the treatment of Black sociologists, including W. E. B. Du Bois, a contemporary of many of the sociologists working in the Chicago School.

W. E. B. DU BOIS A prominent Black sociologist and civil rights leader at the African American Atlanta University, W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) developed ideas that were considered too radical to find broad acceptance in the sociological community. At a time when the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled that segregated "separate but equal" facilities for Blacks and Whites were constitutional and when lynching of Black Americans had reached an all-time high, Du Bois condemned the deep-seated racism of White society. Today, his writings on race relations and the lives of U.S. Blacks are classics in the field.

Du Bois sought to show that racism was widespread in U.S. society. He was also critical of Blacks who had "made it" and then turned their backs on those who had not. One of his most enduring ideas is that in U.S. society, African Americans are never able to escape a fundamental awareness of race. They experience a **double consciousness**, as he called it—*an awareness of themselves as both Americans and Black, never free of racial stigma*. He wrote, "The Negro is sort of a seventh son . . . gifted with second-sight . . . this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (Du Bois, 1903/2008, p. 12). Today, as in Du Bois's time, physical traits such as skin color may shape people's perceptions and interactions in significant and complex ways.

CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935) was a well-known novelist, feminist, and sociologist of her time. Because of her family's early personal and economic struggles, she had only a few years of formal schooling in childhood, although she would later enroll at the Rhode Island School of Design. She read widely, however, and she was influenced by her paternal aunts, who included suffragist Isabella Beecher Stowe and writer Harriet Beecher Stowe (1852), author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, an antislavery novel.

Gilman's (1892) most prominent publication was her semiautobiographical short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," which follows the decline of a married woman shut away in a room (with repellent yellow wallpaper) by her husband, ostensibly for the sake of her health. Gilman used

Double consciousness Among African Americans, an awareness of themselves as both American and Black, never free of racial stigma.