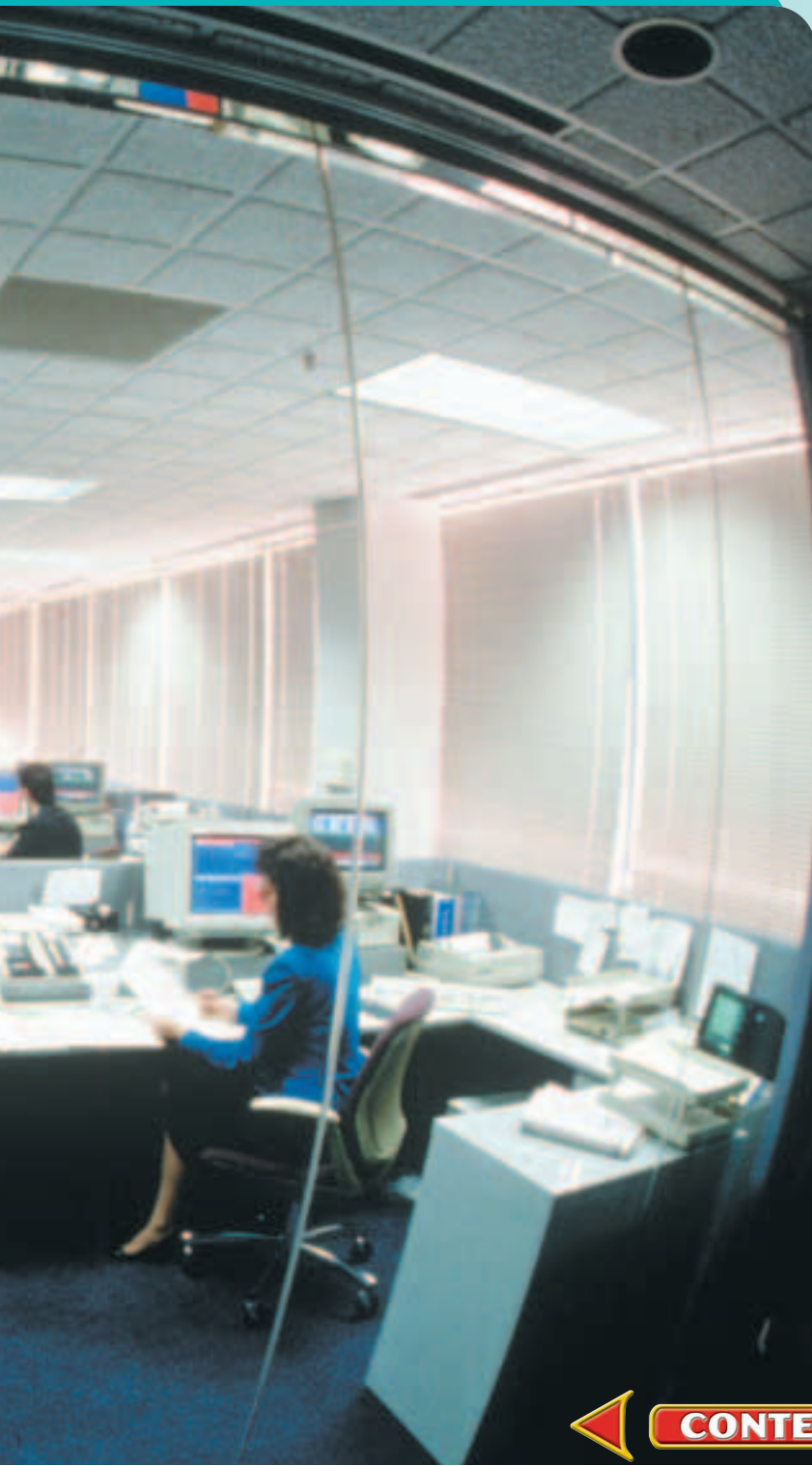


UNIT 1



CONTENTS

SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES



Chapter 1

An Invitation to Sociology

Chapter 2

Sociologists Doing Research



Enrichment Readings

Chapter 1 – Peter L. Berger
“Invitation to Sociology,”
page 35

Chapter 2 – Donna Eder
“School Talk,”
page 66



CHAPTER 1

An Invitation to Sociology



U S I N G Your Sociological Imagination

“Study shows juvenile delinquency increases as church attendance decreases”

If you saw this headline in your local paper, you might be tempted to think “Well, duh . . .” After all, applying a little common sense to this topic would probably lead you to draw exactly the same conclusion. If you assumed, however, that lower church attendance *causes* delinquency, you would be making a common mistake. Research shows that delinquency increases as church attendance decreases because of a third factor—age. Older adolescents go to church less often *and* they are also more likely than younger teens to be delinquents. What may seem to be a relationship between church attendance and delinquency is actually caused by a third factor—age—that affects both of the other two factors.

Questioning and researching assumptions is an important aspect of sociology. By learning to question *conventional wisdom* (what most people believe to be true) you will be in a better position to make decisions or judgments. Your decisions will be based on reality rather than on socially accepted false beliefs. (This does not mean that all conventional wisdom is false, of course. But it is important to know that the facts are accurate when policies affecting people’s lives are being made.)

Sociological research is relatively new. In fact, sociology is the “infant of the social sciences.” You will see this as you become acquainted with the founders of sociology. Before turning to these pioneers, however, you need an introduction to the unique perspective of sociology.

Sections

1. The Sociological Perspective
2. The Origins of Sociology
3. Theoretical Perspectives

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

- ❖ define *sociology*.
- ❖ describe two uses of the sociological perspective.
- ❖ distinguish sociology from other social sciences.
- ❖ outline the contributions of the major pioneers of sociology.
- ❖ summarize the development of sociology in the United States.
- ❖ identify the three major theoretical perspectives in sociology today.



Chapter Overview

Visit the *Sociology and You* Web site at soc.glencoe.com and click on **Chapter 1—Chapter Overviews** to preview chapter information.



Section 1

The Sociological Perspective

Key Terms

- perspective
- sociology
- sociological perspective
- social structure
- sociological imagination

Section Preview

Sociology studies human social behavior. It assumes a group, rather than an individual, perspective. Sociologists look for the patterns in social relationships. Individuals can benefit by using their sociological imaginations to look at events in their personal lives.

perspective
a particular point of view

sociology
the scientific study of social structure (human social behavior)

sociological perspective
a view that looks at behavior of groups, not individuals

These elephant tusks were burned to discourage trade in ivory. Whether you support this action depends upon your beliefs about conservation and national sovereignty.

The Nature of Sociology

A **perspective** is a particular point of view. Babies are usually brighter and better looking to their parents than they are to others. Newlyweds nearly always find their spouses much more attractive than do their friends. We all see what is happening around us through our own perspectives—our own points of view.

We normally do not realize how much of our attitudes and beliefs are determined by our perspectives. Sometimes, though, when our outlook is challenged, we may be jarred into realizing how much we take it for granted. As you will see, sociology has its own perspective. To understand it, you must have an idea of just what sociology is.

What is sociology? As a newcomer to the field, you may at first view sociology as the study of human social behavior. As you go along, however, you will acquire a more precise understanding of **sociology** as the scientific study of *social structure*. (Social structure is discussed later in this section.)


What is unique about sociology? Sociology, as stated earlier, has its own perspective. The **sociological perspective** never focuses on the individual. Psychologists may study the individual, but not sociologists. The view through the lens of sociology always remains at the social, or group, level.

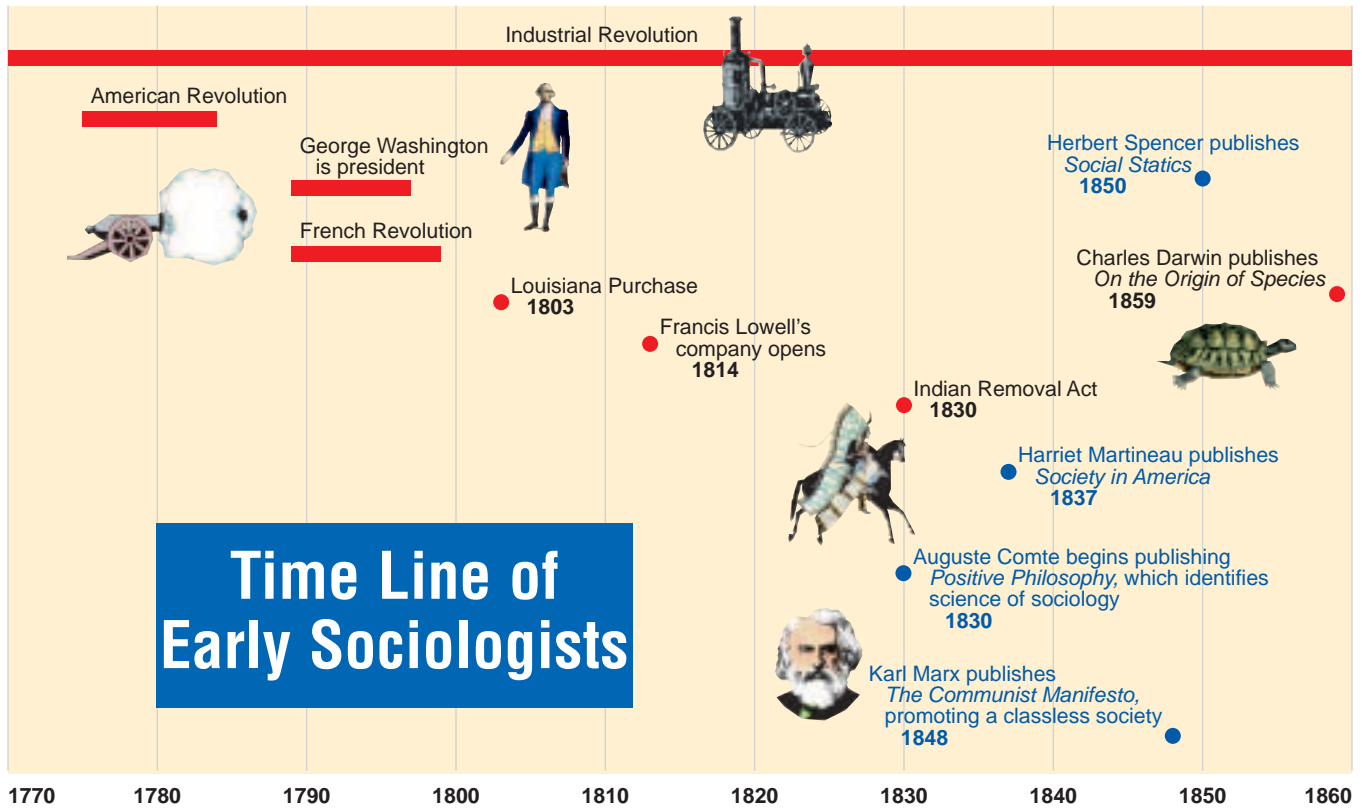


CONTENTS

The Social Sciences

Social science is a branch of learning that deals with human society. It includes a number of disciplines, which we generally refer to as the social sciences. These disciplines differ, but they share enough in common to overlap. Descriptions of the major social sciences are presented in this table.

Social Science	Description	Example
Sociology	Sociology investigates human social behavior from a group rather than an individual perspective. It concentrates on patterns of social relationships, primarily in modern societies.	Relationship between the employment of women and family size
Anthropology 	Anthropology investigates culture, the customary beliefs and material traits of groups. It is the social science most closely related to sociology. Anthropologists, however, concentrate on the study of preliterate societies (societies that do not use writing). Sociologists focus on modern, industrial societies.	Nature of the family in preliterate societies
Psychology	Psychology investigates human mental and emotional processes. While sociologists concentrate on the group, psychologists also study the development and functioning of the individual.	Effects of birth order on emotional development
Economics	Economics is the study of the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.	Annual income levels of American families
Political science 	Political science investigates the organization, administration, history, and theory of government. Political scientists are concerned, for example, with voting patterns and participation in political parties.	Relationship between a family's social class and voting behavior
History	History examines past events in human societies. Historians generally rely on newspapers, historical documents, and oral histories as sources of information.	Nature of family life in colonial society



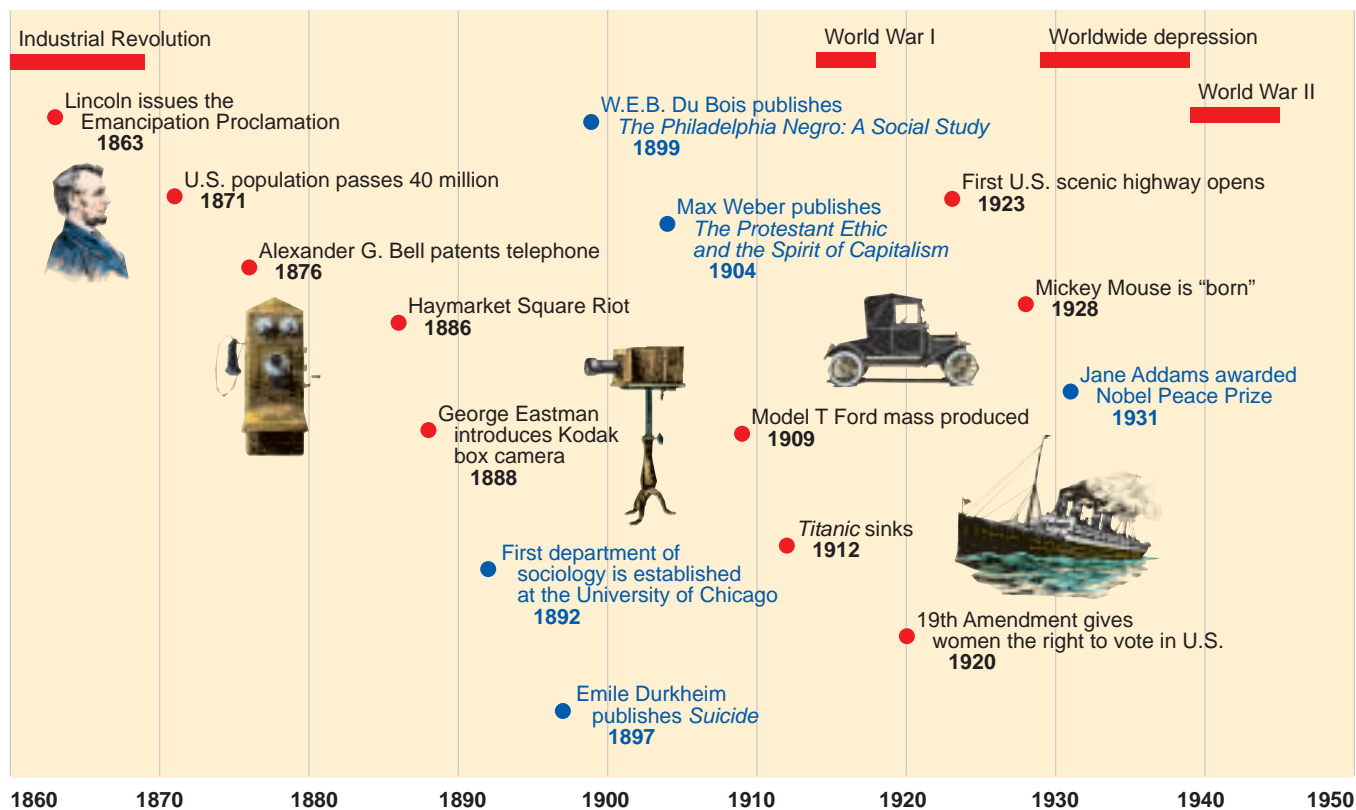
Joining a gang provides some young men—and women—with a sense of security and belonging they haven't found elsewhere.

Sociologists do not focus on the behavior of individuals but on the patterns of behavior shared by members of a group or society. The person on the street might explain human behavior in individualistic or personal terms—a young man joins a gang to prove his toughness; a woman divorces her husband to develop her potential; a teen commits suicide to escape depression.

Sociologists attempt to explain these same events *without* relying on personal factors. They look for social rather than personal explanations when they examine delinquency, divorce, or suicide. Sociologists might explain the events in the following ways:

- ❖ Young men join gangs because they have been taught by their society to be “masculine.”
- ❖ More women divorce because of the social trend toward sexual equality.
- ❖ Teens commit suicide because of peer group expectations of performance, material possessions, and physical appearance.

Sociologists do not speak of *a* young man, *a* married woman, or *a* teenager. They concentrate on *categories* of people—young men, married women, and teenagers.



The Importance of Patterns

As you well know, high school students in a classroom behave in different ways. Some students listen to everything their teacher says. Some tune in and out, and others spend much of the time daydreaming. Yet, if you visit almost any high school, you will find *patterned* relationships. Teachers walk around the room, work with students, lecture, and give tests. Students follow the teacher's lesson plan, make notes, and take tests. Although the personal characteristics of students and teachers may vary from school to school, students and teachers relate in similar patterned ways. It is the patterned interaction of people in social relationships—what sociologists call **social structure**—that captures the attention of sociologists.

How do group behavior and individual behavior differ? Sociologists assume that social relationships are not determined by the particular characteristics of the individuals involved. Emile Durkheim, a pioneering nineteenth-century sociologist, helped develop the sociological perspective. He argued, for example, that we do not attempt to explain bronze in terms of its separate parts (lead, copper, and tin). Instead, we consider bronze a totally new metal created by the combination of several other metals. We cannot even predict the characteristics of bronze from the traits of its parts. For example, bronze is hard, while lead, copper, and tin are soft and pliable. The mixing of the individual parts creates a new whole with new characteristics. Durkheim reasoned that a similar process happens with groups of people.

Indeed, people's behavior within a group setting cannot be predicted from their personal characteristics. Something new is created when individuals

This time line shows when important developments in sociology occurred in relation to well-known events in American history. Entries marked with a blue dot indicate important sociology landmarks (The sociologists on this time line are discussed in the next sections of this chapter.) How might the development of the box camera in 1888 have influenced the growth of sociology as a field of study?

social structure
the patterned interaction of people in social relationships



Student Web Activity

Visit the *Sociology and You* Web site at soc.glencoe.com and click on **Chapter 1—Student Web Activities** for an activity on social patterns.



come together. For example, in 1999 the Denver Broncos won the Super Bowl championship. Following the game, a few otherwise law-abiding Bronco fans, as a group, disrupted the peace and challenged the police in ways they would not have done as individuals.

Tragedy, as well as joy, can change group behavior. The intense rivalry between the Texas A&M Aggies and the University of Texas Longhorns was banished the year twelve Aggie students died while preparing for the traditional football pregame bonfire. During the halftime, the Longhorn band played the song “Amazing Grace” and taps, and saluted the victims and their families by removing their hats. At a joint Aggie-Longhorn candlelight vigil two nights before the football game, the A&M student body president said that the communal sharing of the grief changed the relationship between the two schools forever.

Why do people conform? Groups range in size from a family to an entire society. Regardless of size, all groups encourage conformity. We will study conformity in more detail later. For now, you need to know only that members of a group think, feel, and behave in similar ways. For example, Americans, Russians, and Nigerians have eating habits, dress, religious beliefs, and attitudes toward family life that reflect their group.

Another Time

A Native American's Speech

Virginia colonists had offered to “properly educate” some young Indian boys at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg. To the surprise of the colonists, the benefits of a white gentleman’s education were not highly valued by the tribal elders. Below is a Native American’s reply to the white men’s offer.

We know that you highly esteem the kind of learning taught in . . . [your] colleges. . . . But you, who are wise, must know that different nations have different conceptions of things; and you will not therefore take it amiss, if our ideas of this kind of education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some experience of it; several of our young people were formerly brought up at the colleges of the northern provinces; they were instructed in all your sciences; but, when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods, unable to bear either cold or hunger, knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, nor kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for hunters, warriors, nor councillors; they were totally good for nothing.

We are however not the less obligated by your kind offer, though we decline accepting it; and, to show our grateful sense of it, if the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take care of their education, instruct them in all we know, and make men of them.



Thinking It Over

1. Describe your reaction to this passage. What does it tell you about the importance of perspective in interpreting the social world?
2. Describe a social encounter where you personally experienced a “clash of perspectives” with someone from another culture.
3. Do you think your education is preparing you to succeed in the world outside school?



Conformity within a group occurs, in part, because members have been taught to value the group's ways. Members generally tend to conform even when their personal preferences are not the same as the group's. Some teens, for example, start smoking only to gain group acceptance.

Behavior within a group cannot be predicted simply from knowledge about its individual members. This could be because members truly value their group's ways or because they give in to social pressures. Like bronze, the group is more than the sum of its parts.

Acquiring the Sociological Imagination

The sociological perspective enables us to develop a sociological imagination. That is, knowing how social forces affect our lives can prevent us from being prisoners of those forces. C. Wright Mills (1959), an American sociologist, called this personal use of sociology the **sociological imagination**—the ability of individuals to see the relationship between events in their personal lives and events in their society.

What is gained by using our sociological imagination? People do not make decisions, big or small, in isolation. Historically, for example, American society has shown a strong bias against childless and one-child marriages. Couples without children have been considered selfish, and an only child has often been labeled “spoiled” (Benokraitis, 1999). These values date back to a time when large families were needed for survival. Most people lived on family farms, where children were needed to help with the work. Furthermore, many children died at birth or in infancy. People responded to society's needs by having large families. Now, as the need for large families is disappearing, we are beginning to read about benefits of one-child families—to the child, to the family, and to society. This change in attitude is reflected in the decrease in family size.

The sociological imagination helps us understand the effects of events, such as the social pressures just discussed, on our daily lives. With this understanding, we are in a better position to make our own decisions rather than merely conform (Erikson, 1997; Game and Metcalfe, 1996).

This social awareness permits us to read the newspaper with a fuller understanding of the events. Instead of interpreting a letter opposing welfare as an expression of someone with no compassion, we might instead see the writer as a person who places great importance on independence and self-help. The sociological imagination questions common interpretations of human social behavior. It challenges *conventional social wisdom*—ideas people assume are true.



To the outsider, these teenagers seem to be dressed alike. How does this photo show that a group is more than the sum of its parts?

sociological imagination
the ability to see the link
between society and self



Sociology Today

Job Opportunities in Sociology

In general, all employers are interested in four types of skills regardless of what specific career path you choose. These skills are:

- ❖ the ability to work with others
- ❖ the ability to write and speak well
- ❖ the ability to solve problems
- ❖ the ability to analyze information

Because computers have revolutionized the office, for example, information analysis skills are becoming much more important to managers in all types of organizations. The increasing complexity of work demands greater critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Knowledge is of limited use if you can't convey what you know to others.

The study of sociology helps students to develop these general skills, so it is a solid base for many career paths. For sociology majors, the following list of possibilities is only the beginning—many other paths are open to you.

- ❖ **Social services**—in rehabilitation, case management, group work with youth or the elderly, recreation, or administration
- ❖ **Community work**—in fund-raising for social service organizations, nonprofits, child-care or community development agencies, or environmental groups
- ❖ **Corrections**—in probation, parole, or other criminal justice work
- ❖ **Business**—in advertising, marketing and consumer research, insurance, real estate, personnel work, training, or sales
- ❖ **College settings**—in admissions, alumni relations, or placement offices
- ❖ **Health services**—in family planning, substance abuse, rehabilitation counseling, health planning, hospital admissions, and insurance companies
- ❖ **Publishing, journalism, and public relations**—in writing, research, and editing
- ❖ **Government services**—in federal, state, and local government jobs in such areas as transportation, housing, agriculture, and labor
- ❖ **Teaching**—in elementary and secondary schools, in conjunction with appropriate teacher certification; also in universities, with research opportunities.

Doing Sociology

1. Which of the above career paths is most interesting to you? What is it about this area that you find interesting?
2. Evaluate your current strengths and weaknesses in the four primary skill areas.
3. Look at the employment opportunities in the Sunday edition of your local paper. Clip out ads for jobs that you might qualify for with a sociology degree.

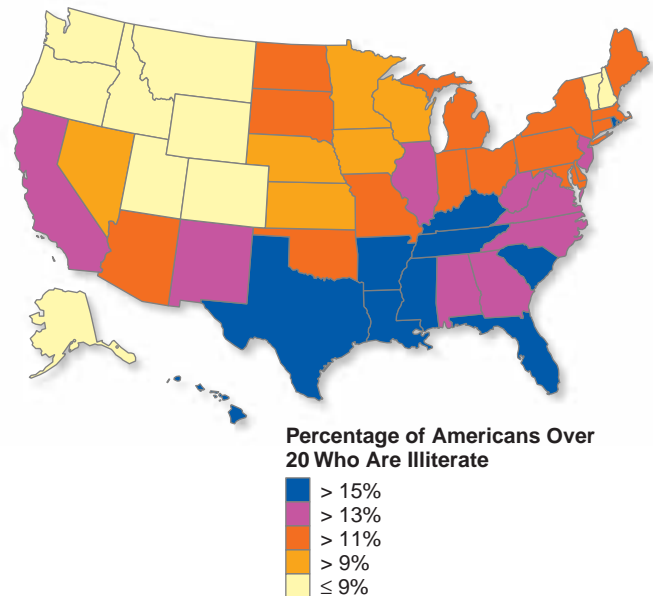
Adapted from *Careers in Sociology*, 4th ed., American Sociological Association, 1995.

Snapshot of America



Illiteracy Rates

One of the assumptions of conventional wisdom is that nearly all American adults know how to read and write. Research has shown, however, that a large percentage of adults are illiterate. Literacy is defined as the ability to read at a fourth-grade level. This map shows, by state, the percentage of Americans over twenty years old who are illiterate.



Interpreting the Map

1. List the states with highest and lowest literacy rates.
2. How does your state rate on literacy?
3. What might be some reasons for adult illiteracy?

Adapted from Doug Henwood. *The State of the U.S.A. Atlas*.

Section 1 Assessment

1. Define sociology.
2. Explain the significance of patterns for sociologists.
3. Give an example from your life that illustrates conformity within a group.
4. How does the sociological imagination help people to understand the effects of society on their personal lives?

Critical Thinking

5. **Making Comparisons** Examine the idea of perspectives by identifying an issue that you look at in one way and your parent(s) or other adults look at in a different way. Write about the issue from both perspectives.



It is doubtless impossible to approach any human problem with a mind free of bias.

Simone de Beauvoir
feminist author



Section 2

The Origins of Sociology

Key Terms

- positivism
- social statics
- social dynamics
- bourgeoisie
- capitalist
- proletariat
- class conflict
- mechanical solidarity
- organic solidarity
- verstehen
- rationalization

Section Preview

Sociology is a young science. It started with the writings of European scholars like Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. Jane Addams and W.E.B. DuBois helped to focus America's attention on social issues. After World War II, America took the lead in developing the field of sociology.

positivism
the belief that knowledge should be derived from scientific observation

social statics
the study of social stability and order

social dynamics
the study of social change

European Origins

Sociology is a relatively new science. It began in late nineteenth-century Europe during a time of great social upheaval. The social and economic effects of the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution were touching all aspects of life. People were moving from farms to factory life, losing a sense of community.

Some intellectuals were fascinated and troubled by the sudden changes. Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, and others began to grapple with ideas for bringing back a sense of community and for restoring order. These ideas led to the rise of the science of sociology. Examining the central ideas of the major pioneers of sociology will help you better understand what sociology is today.

What were Auguste Comte's major ideas?

Auguste Comte (1798–1857), a Frenchman, is recognized as the father of sociology. As a child he was often ill, but he proved early to be an excellent student. He had difficulty balancing his genuine interest in school and his rebellious and stubborn nature. In fact, he was expelled for protesting against the examination procedures at the elite *Ecole Polytechnique*.

As an adult, Comte's main concern was the improvement of society. If societies were to advance, Comte believed, social behavior had to be studied scientifically. Because no science of society existed, Comte attempted to create one himself. He coined the term *sociology* to describe this science.

Comte wanted to use scientific observation in the study of social behavior. He called this **positivism**. He meant that sociology should be a science based on knowledge of which we can be “positive,” or sure. Comte also distinguished between **social statics**, the study of social stability and order, and **social dynamics**, the study of social change. This distinction between social stability and social change remains at the center of modern sociology.



Auguste Comte is considered to be the founder of sociology. He was the first to advocate the scientific study of society.

Comte published his theories in a book titled *Positive Philosophy*, but he died before people generally came to appreciate his work. His belief that sociology could use scientific procedures and promote social progress, however, was widely adopted by other European scholars.

What were Harriet Martineau's contributions?

Harriet Martineau (1802–1876), an Englishwoman, is another important figure in the founding of sociology. She was born into a solidly middle-class home. Never in good health, Martineau had lost her sense of taste, smell, and hearing before reaching adulthood. Her writing career, which included fiction as well as sociological work, began in 1825 after the Martineau's family textile mill was lost to a business depression. Without the family income, and following a broken engagement, Martineau was forced to seek a dependable source of income to support herself. She became a popular writer of celebrity status, whose work initially outsold Charles Dickens's.

Martineau is best known today for her translation of Comte's great book. Her English translation remains even today the most readable one. Despite being severely hearing impaired, she also made original contributions in the areas of research methods, political economy, and feminist theory.

In *Society in America*, Martineau established herself as a pioneering feminist theorist. Because she saw a link between slavery and the oppression of women, she was a strong and outspoken supporter of the emancipation of both women and slaves. Martineau believed women's lack of economic power helped keep them dependent. By writing about the inferior position of women in society, she helped inspire future feminist theorists.

Why did Herbert Spencer oppose social reform? Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), the sole survivor of nine children, was born to an English schoolteacher. Spencer was taught exclusively by his father and uncle, mostly in mathematics and the natural sciences. He did not enjoy scholarly work or the study of Latin, Greek, English, or history, and therefore he decided not to apply to Cambridge University, his uncle's alma mater. As a result, his higher education was largely the result of his own reading. Spencer's career became a mixture of engineering, drafting, inventing, journalism, and writing.

To explain social stability, Herbert Spencer compared society to the human body. He explained that, like a body, a society is composed of parts working together to promote its well-being and survival. People have brains, stomachs, nervous systems, limbs. Societies have economies, religions, governments, families. Just as the eyes and the heart make essential contributions to the functioning of the human body, religious and educational institutions are crucial for a society's functioning.



Harriet Martineau emphasized sociology as a science and introduced feminism. Her profound deafness prevented her earning a living as a teacher so she became an author.



Herbert Spencer was an early proponent of Social Darwinism and evolutionary social change.



An unexamined idea, to paraphrase Socrates, is not worth having.

Mark Van Doren
American poet



Spencer also introduced a theory of social change called *Social Darwinism*, based on Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Spencer thought that evolutionary social change led to progress—provided people did not interfere. If left alone, natural social selection would ensure the survival of the fittest society. On these grounds, Spencer opposed social reform because it interfered with the selection process. The poor, he wrote, deserve to be poor and the rich to be rich. Society profits from allowing individuals to find their own social-class level without outside help or hindrance. To interfere with the existence of poverty—or the result of any other natural process—is harmful to society.

When Spencer visited America in 1882, he was warmly greeted, particularly by corporate leaders. After all, his ideas provided moral justification for their competitive actions. Later, public support for government intervention increased, and Spencer's ideas began to slip out of fashion. He reportedly died with a sense of having failed. His contribution in sociology was a discussion of how societies should be structured.

Who was Karl Marx? Karl Marx (1818–1883), a German scholar, did not consider himself a sociologist, but his ideas have had a major effect on the field. Marx felt great concern for the poverty and inequality suffered by the working class of his day. His life was guided by the principle that social scientists should try to change the world rather than merely study it. Marx's friend and coauthor Friedrich Engels helped put his ideas into writing.

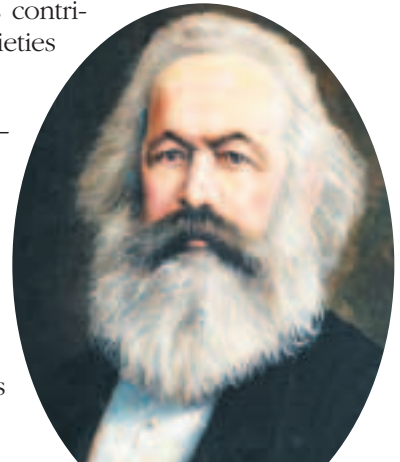
Marx identified several social classes in nineteenth-century industrial society. Among them were farmers, servants, factory workers, craftspeople, owners of small businesses, and moneyed capitalists. He predicted that at some point all industrial societies would contain only two social classes: the *bourgeoisie* and the *proletariat*. The **bourgeoisie**

(burzh-wa-zee) are those who own the means for producing wealth in industrial society (for example, factories and equipment). The means for producing wealth are called *capital*. Thus, those who own them are also called **capitalists**. The **proletariat** work for the bourgeoisie and are paid just enough to stay alive.

For Marx, the key to the unfolding of history was **class conflict**—a clash between the bourgeoisie, who controlled the means for producing wealth, and the proletariat, who labored for them. Just as slaves overthrew slave owners, wage workers would overtake capitalists. Out of this conflict would come a classless (*communistic*) society—one in which there would be no powerless proletariat.

Planned revolution, Marx was convinced, could speed up the change from capitalism to communism. His political objective was to explain the workings of capitalism in order to hasten its fall through revolution. He believed, though, that capitalism would eventually self-destruct anyway.

What were Emile Durkheim's greatest contributions? Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) was the son of a French rabbi. Durkheim was a brilliant student even during his early school years. In college, he was so intensely studious that his schoolmates nicknamed him “the metaphysician.”



Karl Marx was the social scientist who underscored the importance of conflict in social change. Parts of his writings were later used as a basis for communism.

bourgeoisie
class owning the means for producing wealth

capitalist
person who owns or controls the means for producing wealth

proletariat
working class; those who labor for the bourgeoisie

class conflict
the ongoing struggle between the bourgeoisie (owners) and the proletariat (working) classes

According to Durkheim, society exists because of broad *consensus*, or agreement, among members of a society. In preindustrial times, societies were based on what sociologists call **mechanical solidarity**. With these societies, there was widespread consensus of values and beliefs, strong social pressures for conformity, and dependence on tradition and family. In contrast, industrial societies are based on **organic solidarity**—social interdependency based on a web of highly specialized roles. These specialized roles make members of a society dependent on one another for goods and services. For example, instead of being self-sufficient, people need bankers and bankers need customers.

Although early sociologists emphasized the need to make sociology scientific, they did not have the research tools that are available today. Later sociologists developed the methods to replace speculation with observation, to collect and classify data, and to use data for testing social theories.

Durkheim was the most prominent of these later sociologists. He first introduced the use of statistical techniques in his groundbreaking research on suicide, which we will discuss in Chapter 2. In that study, Durkheim demonstrated that suicide involves more

than individuals acting alone and that suicide rates vary according to group characteristics. Durkheim showed that human social behavior must be explained by social factors rather than psychological ones.

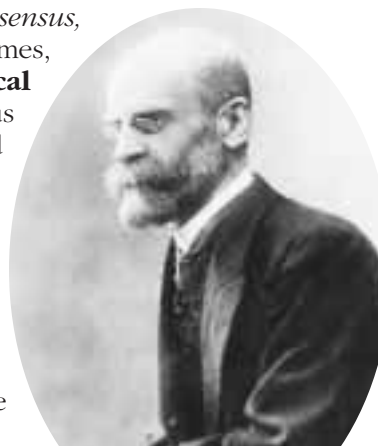
Who was Max Weber?

Max Weber (1864–1920) was the eldest son of a father who was a well-to-do German lawyer and politician. His mother, in stark contrast, was a strongly devout Calvinist who rejected the worldly lifestyle of her husband. Weber was affected psychologically by the conflicting values of his parents. Weber eventually suffered a complete mental breakdown from which he recovered to do some of his best work. As a university professor trained in law and economics, Weber wrote on a wide variety of topics, including the nature of power, the religions of the world, the nature of social classes, and the development and nature of bureaucracy. His most famous book is *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, published in 1906.

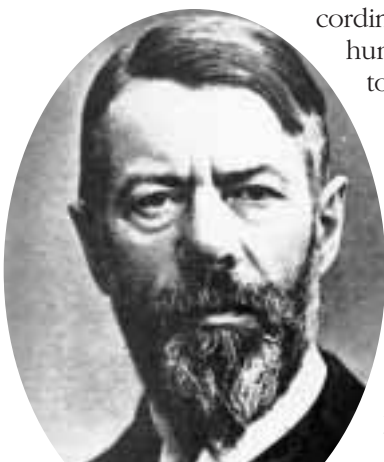
Through the quality of his work and the diversity of his interests, Weber has had the single most important influence on the development of sociological theory.

Human beings act on the basis of their own understanding of a situation, Weber said. Thus, sociologists must discover the personal meanings, values, beliefs, and attitudes underlying human social behavior. Weber believed that an understanding of the personal intentions of people in groups can be best accomplished through the method of **verstehen**—understanding the social behavior of others by putting yourself mentally in their places. Putting yourself in someone else’s “shoes” allows you to temporarily shed your values and see things from a different point of view.

Weber also identified *rationalization* as a key influence in the change from a preindustrial to an industrial society. **Rationalization** is the mind-set



Emile Durkheim was the first sociologist to use statistical methods in the study of human groups. He was also the first to teach a university sociology course.



Max Weber’s model of a bureaucracy reflected greatly increased efficiency in business and government. Today, however, bureaucratic is often used as a synonym for unimaginative, plodding, or despotic.

mechanical solidarity

social dependency based on a widespread consensus of values and beliefs, enforced conformity, and dependence on tradition and family

organic solidarity

social interdependency based on a high degree of specialization in roles

verstehen

understanding social behavior by putting yourself in the place of others

rationalization

the mind-set emphasizing knowledge, reason, and planning

that emphasizes the use of knowledge, reason, and planning. It marked a change from the tradition, emotion, and superstition of preindustrial society. For example, agriculture became grounded in science rather than belief in luck, fate, or magic. In stressing rationality and objectivity, Weber pioneered research techniques that helped prevent personal biases from unduly affecting the results of sociological investigations.

Sociology in America

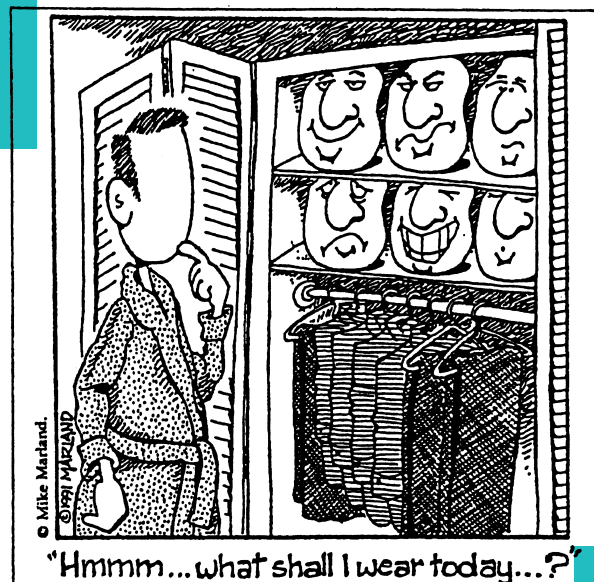
Although the early development of sociology occurred in Europe, the greatest development of sociology has taken place in the United States. Because sociology has become a science largely through the efforts of American sociologists, it is not surprising that the majority of all sociologists are from the United States. Sociological writings in English are used by sociologists throughout the world, reflecting the global influence of American sociologists.

In 1892, the first department of sociology was established at the University of Chicago. From its founding up to World War II, the sociology department at the University of Chicago stood at the forefront of American sociology. After World War II, sociology departments at eastern universities such as Harvard and Columbia, midwestern universities such as Wisconsin and Michigan, and western universities such as Stanford and the University of California at Berkeley emerged as leaders.

In later chapters we will be studying the works of major American sociologists. Two early contributors, however, who are often left out of the history of American sociology are Jane Addams and W.E.B. DuBois. Although

What is not good for the hive is not good for the bee.

Marcus Aurelius
Roman emperor



.....
Everyone manages his or her behavior to create a desired impression. What face have you put on today?



Jane Addams was a social reformer who spent her life working on the social problems created by the imbalance of power among social classes.

neither of these remarkable people were researchers or scientists, both were greatly concerned with social problems in America.

Why should we remember Jane Addams? The best known of the early women social reformers in the United States was Jane Addams (1860–1935). Although her mother died when she was two years old, Addams’s wealthy father provided a loving and comfortable home for her and her eight brothers and sisters. Addams was an excellent student. Her early education emphasized practical knowledge and the improvement of “the organizations of human society.” She attended the Women’s Medical College of Philadelphia but was compelled to drop out of the school because of illness.

When she was a child, Addams saw many examples of government corruption and business practices that harmed workers. She never forgot their suffering. While on one of her European trips, she saw the work being done to help the poor in London. With this example of social action, Addams began her life’s work seeking social justice. She co-founded Hull House in Chicago’s slums. Here, people who needed refuge—immigrants, the sick, the poor, the aged—could find help.

Addams focused on the problems caused by the imbalance of power among the social classes. She invited sociologists from the University of Chicago to Hull House to witness firsthand the effects of industrialism on the lower class. In addition to her work with the underclass, Addams was active in the woman suffrage and peace movements. As a result of her tireless work for social reform, Addams was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931—the only sociologist to receive this honor. The irony is that Addams herself suffered a sort of class discrimination. She was not considered a sociologist during her lifetime because she did not teach at a university. She was considered a social worker (then considered a less prestigious career) because she was a woman and because she worked directly with the poor.





Focus on Research

Secondary Analysis: The McDonalidization of Higher Education

Research is to sociology what lab experiments are to chemists. Through the research process sociologists gather information, or data, to help them understand how people behave in social settings. (In the next chapter, you will learn more about how sociologists do research.) The research project described below will give you some idea of how sociologists use already-collected data to study human social behavior.

In this study, George Ritzer investigated how Max Weber's process of *rationalization* (see pages 17–18) is being used by a popular fast-food company. Like Weber, Ritzer was interested in the movement of organizations toward ever-increasing efficiency, predictability, calculability, and control. After explaining each of these characteristics, Ritzer applies rationalization to the field of education in what he calls the “McDonaldization” of higher education.

According to George Ritzer, universities share some of the organizational characteristics of popular fast-food restaurants.

Efficiency refers to the relationship between effort and result. An organization is most efficient when the maximum results are achieved with minimum effort. For example, fast-food restaurants are efficient in part because they transfer work usually done by employees to customers. For example, self-service drink centers allow customers to get refills on drinks while disguising the fact they are waiting on themselves. *Calculability* involves estimation based on probabilities. High calculability exists when the output, cost, and effort associated with products can be predicted. A McDonald's manager trains employees to make *each* Big Mac within a rigid time limit. *Predictability* pertains to consistency of results. Predictability exists when products turn out as planned. Big Macs are the same everywhere. *Control* is increased by re-



placing human activity with technology. McDonald's drink machines stop after a cup has been filled to its prescribed limit.

Because Ritzer believes that McDonald's restaurants reflect the rationalization process, he refers to the "McDonaldization" of society (1998). His sources of information include newspapers, books, magazines, and industry publications. Since many of you are now thinking about attending college, Ritzer's findings on the "McUniversity" should be of interest.

Increasingly, students and parents view a college degree as a necessity to compete successfully in the job market. "Shopping" for the right college requires many of the consumer skills used in making any major purchase. This consumer orientation, Ritzer asserts, can be seen on most college campuses in the United States. For example, students want education to be conveniently located and they want it open as long as possible each day. They seek inexpensive parking, efficient service, and short waiting lines. Students want high-quality service at the lowest cost. A "best buy" label in national academic rankings catches the attention of parents and students.

Public colleges and universities, Ritzer contends, are responding to this consumer orientation. They are doing so in part because government funding for higher education is becoming more scarce. To meet reduced funding, colleges and universities are cutting costs and paying more attention to "customers." For example, Ritzer points to student unions. Many of them are being transformed into mini-malls with fast-food restaurants, video games, and ATMs.

Ritzer predicts that a far-reaching, customer-oriented tactic will be to "McDonaldize" through new technology. The "McUniversity" will still have a central campus, but it will also have convenient satellite locations in community colleges, high schools, businesses, and malls. "Students will 'drop by' for a course or two. Parking lots will be adjacent to McUniversity's satellites (as they are to fast-food restaurants) to make access easy" (Ritzer, 1998: 156).

McDonaldization, Ritzer contends, will dehumanize the process of education. Most instructors at satellites will be part-timers hired to teach one or more courses. They will come and go quickly, so students will not have the opportunity to form relationships as with more permanent faculty members. In order to make the courses alike from satellite to satellite, course content, requirements, and materials will be highly standardized, losing the flavor individual professors bring to their classes. Students will not be able to choose a particular instructor for a course because there will be only one per satellite. Often, there may be no teacher physically present at all. More courses will be delivered by professors televised from distant places.

In spite of these predictions, colleges and universities will not be a chain of fast-food restaurants or a shopping mall, Ritzer concludes. Institutions of higher education will retain many traditional aspects, but there will undoubtedly be a significant degree of McDonaldization.

Working with the Research

1. Do you think the benefits of the "McUniversity" outweigh the disadvantages? Why or why not?
2. What other industries or professions are being affected by McDonaldization? Give examples.



DuBois used science and sociology to disprove racist assumptions about African Americans.



W.E.B. DuBois focused on the question of race inside and outside the United States.



What were the contributions of W.E.B. DuBois? W.E.B.

DuBois (1868–1963), an African American educator and social activist, also influenced the early development of sociology in the United States. DuBois attended an integrated high school in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, and was the first black to receive a diploma there. He earned a doctorate degree from Harvard University in 1895 and taught at a number of predominantly black universities during his career.

DuBois learned firsthand about racial discrimination and segregation when he attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, as an undergraduate student. Partly from this experience, and from teaching in rural, all-black schools around Nashville, DuBois decided to attack the “Negro problem.” This racist policy was based on the assumption that blacks were an inferior race. DuBois analyzed the sophisticated social structure of black communities, first in Philadelphia and later in many other places.

DuBois’s concern for his race did not stop at the borders of the United States—he was also active in the *Pan African* movement, which was concerned with the rights of all African descendants, no matter where they lived. While documenting the experience and contributions of African people throughout the world, DuBois died in the African country of Ghana, at the age of ninety-five.

Section 2 Assessment

1. Define the term *positivism*.
2. Name and explain the theory of social change proposed by Herbert Spencer.
3. Give an example to illustrate Emile Durkheim’s idea of organic solidarity.

Critical Thinking

4. **Evaluating Information** Max Weber introduced the concept of *verstehen*. How would you use this approach to social research if you wanted to investigate the importance of money to your peers? Explain.

Section 3

Theoretical Perspectives

Key Terms

- theoretical perspective
- functionalism
- manifest functions
- latent functions
- dysfunction
- conflict perspective
- power
- symbol
- symbolic interactionism
- dramaturgy

The Role of Theoretical Perspectives

Perception is the way the brain interprets an image or event. Similarly, perspective is the way you interpret the *meaning* of an image or event. Your perspective is influenced by beliefs or values you hold. It draws your attention to some things and blinds you to others. This is demonstrated in two drawings psychologists often use to illustrate the concept of perception. (See Figure 1.1.) If you stare at the old woman long enough, she becomes a beautiful young woman with a feather boa around her neck. If you stare at Figure 1.1b, it alternates between two facing profiles and a vase. You cannot, however, see the old woman and the young woman or the faces and the vase at the same time.

Which image is real depends on your focus—your perspective influences what you see. One perspective emphasizes certain aspects of an event, while another perspective accents different aspects of the same event. When a perspective highlights certain parts of something, it must place other parts in the background.

What is a theoretical perspective? A **theoretical perspective** is a set of assumptions about an area of study—in this case, about the workings

Section Preview

Sociology includes three major theoretical perspectives. Functionalism views society as an integrated whole. Conflict theory looks at class, race, and gender struggles. Symbolic interactionism examines how group members use shared symbols as they interact.

theoretical perspective
a set of assumptions accepted as true



a.



b.

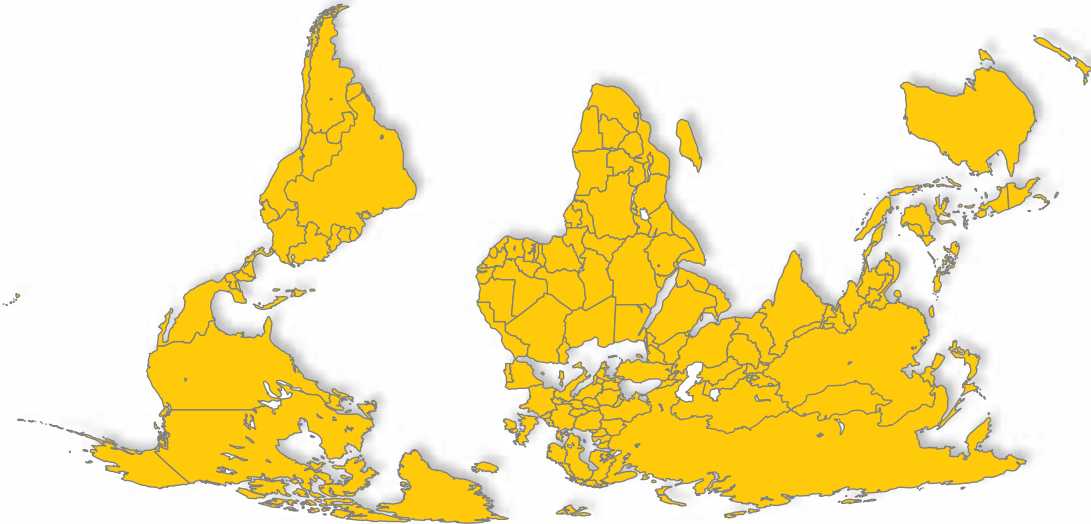
Fig. 1.1 These two famous images are used by psychologists to illustrate perception and perspective. What did you see first in Figure 1.1a—an old woman or a beautiful young lady? What did you see first in Figure 1.1b—a vase or two human faces?

World View



A World Turned Upside Down

Without turning this book upside down, try to locate the United States. If you find this view of the world disorienting because you are used to conventional maps, you may reject this new worldview. So it is with any perspective. In this book you will be asked to abandon the conventional or psychological perspective in favor of the sociological perspective.



Interpreting the Map

1. What does your reaction to this map tell you about the power of the perspective you bring to a situation?
2. Look at world maps in your various social studies classes as you progress through the day. Where are North America and Europe located on these maps? What does that tell you about the perspective of these map publishers and their customers?

of society. A theoretical perspective is viewed as true by its supporters and it helps them organize their research.

Competing, even conflicting, theories in science usually exist at the same time. Perhaps not enough evidence exists to determine which theory is accurate, or different theories may explain different aspects of the problem. This is even true in the so-called “hard” sciences like modern physics. Einstein’s theory of general relativity, for example, contradicts the widely accepted Big Bang theory of the origin of the physical universe. Einstein himself never accepted the quantum theory. Nonetheless, this theory has become the foundation of modern developments in such fields as chemistry and molecular biology (Hawking, 1998). Today theories are being put forth that hold promise for combining relativity and quantum theory. If theories still compete in physics, it should not be surprising that several major theoretical perspectives exist in sociology.

Sociology has three overarching theoretical perspectives: *functionalism*, *conflict theory*, and *symbolic interactionism*. Each of these perspectives provides a different slant on human social behavior. The exclusive use of any one of them prevents our seeing other aspects of social behavior, just as one cannot see the old woman and the young woman at the same time. All three perspectives together, however, allow us to see most of the important dimensions of human social behavior.

Functionalism

Functionalism emphasizes the contributions (functions) of each part of a society. For example, family, economy, and religion are “parts” of a society. The family contributes to society by providing for the reproduction and care of its new members. The economy contributes by dealing with production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Religion contributes by emphasizing beliefs and practices related to sacred things.

How does functionalism explain social change? Functionalists see the parts of a society as an integrated whole. A change in one part of a society leads to changes in other parts. A major change in the economy, for example, may change the family—which is precisely what happened as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Before the Industrial Revolution, when most people made their living by farming, a large farm labor force was needed. Families fulfilled this need by having many children. The need disappeared as industrialization proceeded, and smaller families became the norm.

Functionalism assumes that societies tend to return to a state of stability after some upheaval has occurred. A society may change over time, but functionalists believe that it will return to a stable state. It will do this by changing in such a way that society will be similar to what it was before. Student unrest and other protests during the late 1960s illustrate this. The activities of protesters helped bring about some changes:

- ❖ Many Americans became suspicious of the federal government’s foreign policy.
- ❖ Schools and universities became more responsive to students’ needs and goals.
- ❖ Environmental protection became an important political issue to many Americans.

These changes, however, have not revolutionized American society. They have been absorbed into it. As a result, our society is only somewhat different from the way it was before the student unrest. In fact, most of the student radicals are now part of the middle-class society they once rejected.

functionalism
approach that emphasizes
the contributions made by
each part of society



Because of social and economic changes, norms that dictate women’s roles have changed greatly over the years. Functionalists study how a change in one part of a society affects other parts.

Do all functions have a positive effect? Most aspects of a society exist to promote a society's survival and welfare. It is for this reason that all complex societies have economies, families, governments, and religions. If these elements did not contribute to a society's well-being and survival, they would disappear.

Recall that a function is a contribution made by some part of a society. According to Robert Merton (1996), there are two kinds of functions. **Manifest functions** are intended and recognized. **Latent functions** are unintended and unrecognized. One of the manifest functions of school, for example, is to teach math skills. A latent (and positive) function of schools is the development of close friendships.

Not all elements of a society make a positive contribution. Elements that have negative consequences result in **dysfunction**. Dysfunctions of bureaucracies, for example, include rigidity, inefficiency, and impersonality. When you go to the division of motor vehicles to register your car or get your driver's license, the clerk may treat you like a "number" rather than as an individual. You don't like his bureaucratic inflexibility and impersonality.

How does functionalism view values? Finally, according to functionalism, there is a consensus on values. Most Americans, for example, agree on the desirability of democracy, success, and equal opportunity. This consensus of values, say the functionalists, accounts for the high degree of cooperation found in any society.

manifest functions
intended and recognized
consequences of an aspect
of society

latent functions
unintended and unrecognized
consequences of an aspect of
society

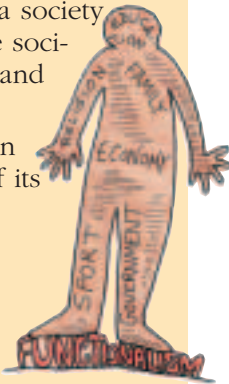


dysfunction
negative consequence of an
aspect of society



How does this photo emphasize the approach to studying society that is taken by the conflict perspective?

Figure 1.2 Focus on Theoretical Perspectives

Assumptions of the Major Theoretical Perspectives. This table compares the most important assumptions of the functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist perspectives. Do you believe, as the functionalists do, that society is relatively well integrated? Or do you support the conflict theorists' assumption that society experiences conflict on all levels?

Functionalism	Conflict Perspective	Symbolic Interactionism
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A society is a relatively integrated whole. 2. A society tends to seek relative stability. 3. Most aspects of a society contribute to the society's well-being and survival. 4. A society rests on the consensus of its members. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A society experiences inconsistency and conflict everywhere. 2. A society is continually subjected to change. 3. A society involves the constraint and coercion of some members by others. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People's interpretations of symbols are based on the meanings they learn from others. 2. People base their interaction on their interpretations of symbols. 3. Symbols permit people to have internal conversations. Thus, they can gear their interaction to the behavior that they think others expect of them and the behavior they expect of others. 

Conflict Perspective

The **conflict perspective** emphasizes conflict, competition, change, and constraint within a society (Giddens, 1987, 1997). Understanding the conflict perspective is easier when you understand functionalism, because the assumptions behind these two perspectives are the reverse of each other. This is shown in Figure 1.2 above.

What is the role of conflict and constraint? Functionalists see a basic agreement on values within a society. This leads them to emphasize the ways people cooperate to reach common goals. The conflict perspective, in contrast, focuses on the disagreements among various groups in a society or between societies. Groups and societies compete as they attempt to preserve and promote their own special values and interests.

Supporters of the conflict perspective, then, see social living as a contest. Their central question is “Who gets what?” It is those with the most **power**—the ability to control the behavior of others—who get the largest share of

conflict perspective approach emphasizing the role of conflict, competition, and constraint within a society

power the ability to control the behavior of others

Tech Trends

Sociology Looks at the Internet

The number of Americans paying for an on-line Internet service is skyrocketing. The Internet began as a way for military and scientific users to share information after a nuclear war. ARPAnet (the Internet's forerunner) was formed in 1969 with only four connected computers. By 2000, an estimated 55 percent of Americans had access to the Internet. According to some estimates, there will be more than 500 million users worldwide by the year 2003.

Because of its rapid spread through American society, cyberspace technology is a timely example for showcasing the usefulness of the three theoretical perspectives. The viewpoints of functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism contribute to an understanding of the social implications of this new technology in very different ways.

Functionalism. Functionalists see cyberspace technology as having both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, computer links bring advantages. Parents can work at home and spend more time with their children. Individuals with disabilities can do jobs at home that would be denied them otherwise, thus becoming more fully integrated into society. On the other hand, there are dysfunctions. Young people may have easy access to pornographic material, which can distort their view of the opposite sex. Hate groups can be formed by strangers who live hundreds or thousands of miles apart. Their anonymity may encourage them to engage in antisocial or violent behavior that they would otherwise avoid.

Conflict Theory. The Internet is clearly changing American society. The Internet, conflict theorists point out, is contributing to the increasing speed of technological change. An advocate of conflict theory might investigate the social instability created by this rapid change. Workers may be let go by corporations in increasing numbers as more tasks are performed by computers.

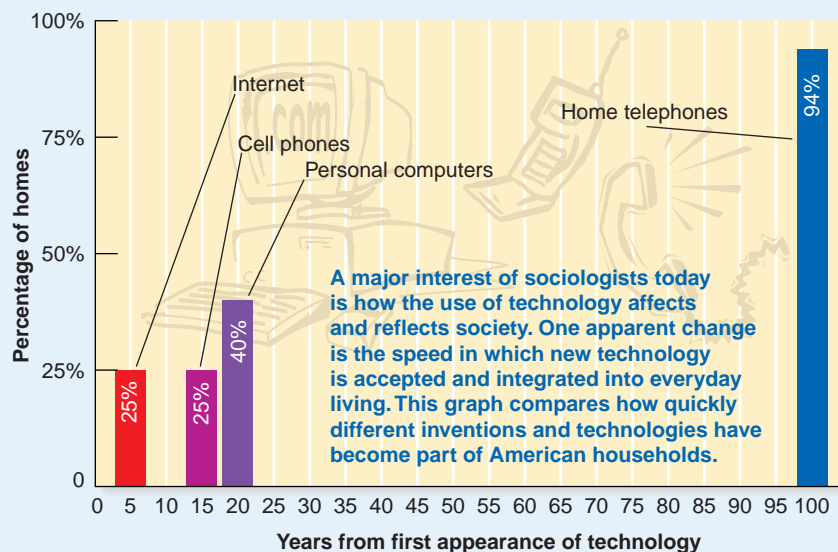
Conflict theory could guide an investigation comparing the numbers of computers used in school districts of varying socioeconomic levels. Computer literacy is becoming an essential skill for obtaining a well-paying job. Thus, students who attend wealthy schools with

whatever is considered valuable in a society. Those with the most power have the most wealth, prestige, and privileges. Because some groups have more power than others, they are able to constrain, or limit, the less powerful.

How does the conflict perspective explain social change? Many conflicting groups exist in a society. As the balance of power among these groups shifts, change occurs. For example, the women's movement is attempting to change the balance of power between men and women. As this movement progresses, we see larger numbers of women in occupations once limited to men. More women are either making or influencing decisions in business, politics, medicine, and law. Gender relations are changing in other ways as well. More women are choosing to remain single, to marry later in life, to have fewer children, and to divide household tasks with their husbands. According to the conflict perspective, these changes are the result of increasing power among women.

access to computers have an advantage over students in poorer schools.

Symbolic Interactionism. Symbolic interactionists are interested in how the Internet can affect a child's social development. The popularity of cartoon characters on television is reinforced by web pages that allow children to join fan clubs, interact with other fans, and view video clips of their favorite cartoon characters whenever they want. The popular cartoons *The Simpsons* and *South Park* feature children behaving in ways unacceptable in nearly all American homes. Television provides limited exposure to these characters, but the Internet allows them to become an important part of a child's daily life. What children come to accept as desirable behavior is being based increasingly on their interpretations of the symbols and behaviors represented by these characters. Symbolic interactionists might conclude that to the extent this occurs, the Internet lessens adult influence on children.



Analyzing the Trends

1. Which perspective would you choose to conduct an in-depth study of the Internet's effect on society? Explain why you chose this perspective.
2. Do you think that the Internet has some dysfunctions that Americans should consider? Consider the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet on society.

Which perspective is better? There is no “better” theoretical perspective. Each perspective highlights certain areas of social life. The advantages of one perspective are the disadvantages of the other. Functionalism explains much of the consensus, stability, and cooperation within a society. The conflict perspective explains much of the constraint, conflict, and change. Each chapter, throughout the text, will illustrate both perspectives, as well as the perspective discussed next—*symbolic interactionism*.

Symbolic Interactionism

Both functionalism and conflict theory deal with large social units, such as the economy, and broad social processes, such as conflict among social classes. At the close of the nineteenth century, some sociologists began to



According to conflict theory, the interests of groups will clash at times. If questioned, the men around the water cooler may offer a functionalist interpretation of their pastime—talking sports brings them together. Women who are not “sports savvy” may see their exclusion from such office talk more from a conflict perspective.

change their approach to the study of society. Instead of concentrating on large social structures, they began to recognize the importance of the ways people interact. Two sociologists, Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead, developed the insight that groups exist only because their members influence each other’s behavior. These early American sociologists, in short, created symbolic interactionism, a perspective that focuses on the actual *interaction* among people.

symbol

anything that stands for something else and has an agreed-upon meaning attached to it

symbolic interactionism

approach that focuses on the interactions among people based on mutually understood symbols

What is the significance of symbols in symbolic interactionism?

To understand social interactionism, we need to talk first about symbols. A **symbol** is something chosen to represent something else. It may be an object, a word, a gesture, a facial expression, a sound. A symbol is something observable that often represents something not observable, something that is abstract. For example, your school’s team mascot is often used as a symbol of school loyalty. The American flag is used as a symbol of the United States.

The meaning of a symbol is not determined by its own physical characteristics. Those who create and use the symbols assign the meanings to them. If people in a group do not share the same meanings for a given symbol, confusion results. For example, if some people interpreted the red light of a traffic signal to mean go, while others interpreted it to mean stop, chaos would result.

The importance of shared symbols is reflected in the formal definition of **symbolic interactionism**. It is the theoretical perspective that focuses on interaction among people—interaction based on mutually understood symbols.

What are the basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism?

Herbert Blumer (1969a, 1969b), who coined the term *symbolic interactionism*, outlined three assumptions central to this perspective. (Refer to Figure 1.2 on page 27.)

First, according to symbolic interactionism, we learn the meaning of a symbol from the way we see others reacting to it. For example, American musicians in Latin America soon learn that when audience members whistle at the end of a performance, they are expressing disapproval. In other words, their whistling is a symbol of disapproval, as booing is in the United States.

Second, once we learn the meanings of symbols, we base our behavior (interaction) on them. Now that the musicians have learned that whistling symbolizes a negative response, they will definitely avoid an encore if the crowd begins whistling. (They would likely have the opposite response in the United States, where the symbol of whistling has a very different meaning.)

Finally, we use the meanings of symbols to imagine how others will respond to our behavior. Through this capability, we can have “internal conversations” with ourselves. These conversations enable us to visualize how others will respond to us *before* we act. This is crucial because we guide our interactions with people according to the behavior we think others expect of us and we expect of others. Meanwhile, these others are also having internal conversations. The interaction (acting on each other) that follows is therefore *symbolic* interaction.

In an attempt to better understand human interaction, Erving Goffman introduced **dramaturgy**, which depicts human interaction as theatrical performance (Goffman, 1961a, 1963, 1974, 1979, 1983; Lemert and Branaman, 1997). Like actors on a stage, people present themselves through dress, gestures, tone of voice. Teenagers sometimes act in a particular way in order to attract the attention of someone they want to like them. Goffman calls this *presentation of self* or *impression management*.

dramaturgy
approach that depicts human interaction as theatrical performances



According to symbolic interactionism, social life can be likened to a theatrical performance. Don't we convey as much about ourselves in the way we dress as do the actors above?

Section 3 Assessment

1. What is a theoretical perspective?
2. Indicate whether the following statements represent functionalism (F), the conflict perspective (C), or symbolic interactionism (S).
 - a. Societies are in relative balance.
 - b. Power is one of the most important elements in social life.
 - c. Religion helps hold a society together morally.
 - d. Symbols are crucial to social life.
 - e. Many elements of a society exist to benefit the powerful.
 - f. Different segments of a society compete to achieve their own self-interest rather than cooperate to benefit others.
 - g. Social life should be understood from the viewpoint of the individuals involved.
 - h. Social change is constantly occurring.
 - i. Conflict is harmful and disruptive to society.
3. Does dramaturgy explain human interaction in a way that is meaningful to you? Why or why not?

Critical Thinking

4. **Analyzing Information** Think of an aspect of human social behavior (for example, dating or team sports) that you would like to know more about. Which of the three theoretical perspectives would you use to help you understand this aspect of behavior? Explain your choice.



A person gets from a symbol the meaning he puts into it, and what is one man's comfort and inspiration is another's jest and scorn.

William Shakespeare
English playwright



CHAPTER 1 ASSESSMENT

Summary

Section 1: The Sociological Perspective

Main Idea: Sociology studies human social behavior. It assumes a group, rather than an individual perspective. Sociologists look for the patterns in social relationships. Individuals can benefit by using their sociological imaginations to look at events in their personal lives.

Section 2: The Origins of Sociology

Main Idea: Sociology is a young science. It started with the writings of European scholars like Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber. Jane Addams and W.E.B. DuBois helped to focus America's attention on social issues. After World War II, America took the lead in developing the field of sociology.

Section 3: Theoretical Perspectives

Main Idea: Sociology includes three major theoretical perspectives. Functionalism views society as an integrated whole. Conflict theory looks at class, race, and gender struggles. Symbolic interactionism examines how group members use shared symbols as they interact.

CLICK HERE



Self-Check Quiz

Visit the *Sociology and You* Web site at soc.glencoe.com and click on **Chapter 1—Self-Check Quizzes** to prepare for the chapter test.

Reviewing Vocabulary

Complete each sentence using each term once.

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. mechanical solidarity | f. symbol |
| b. positivism | g. latent function |
| c. social structure | h. conflict perspective |
| d. bourgeoisie | i. presentation of self |
| e. sociology | j. theoretical perspective |

- _____ is a set of assumptions accepted as true by supporters.
- The perspective that emphasizes conflict is called _____.
- _____ is an unintended and unrecognized consequence of some element of a society.
- _____ is the way that people attempt to make a favorable impression of themselves in the minds of others.
- The patterned interaction of people in social relationships is called _____.
- _____ is the study of social structure from a scientific perspective.
- The use of observation, experimentation and other methods to study social life is known as _____.
- A _____ is something that stands for or represents something else.
- _____ is social unity based on a consensus of values and norms, strong social pressure to conform and a dependence on family and tradition.
- The _____ are members of an industrial society who own the means for producing wealth.

Reviewing the Facts

- According to C. Wright Mills, what is the sociological imagination?
- Explain "sociology" as defined in this chapter.

3. What did Herbert Spencer believe about the relationship between people, progress and social change?
4. List and explain the three sociological perspectives.
5. What are manifest functions and latent functions? Provide an example of each.
6. Using the chart below, give a major idea expressed by each of the sociologists listed. Briefly explain each idea. The first one has been completed. Use this as your model and complete the chart.

Sociologist	Major Idea	Brief Explanation
Karl Marx	class conflict	Struggle between bourgeoisie class (owners) and the proletariat class (workers)
Max Weber		
Auguste Comte		
Emile Durkheim		

Thinking Critically

1. **Applying Concepts** Give three examples of how the sociological perspective can be applied to your life.
2. **Analyzing Information** Using your own words, define the term sociology imagination. What is the relationship to the sociological perspective?
3. **Making Inferences** Select two early sociologists discussed in your text and construct a dialogue between them about the current social issue of homelessness.
4. **Summarizing Information** You have been selected to be on a panel to discuss illiteracy in your community. The panel also includes an economist, a psychologist, and an anthropologist. As a sociologist, what areas of this topic would be of most interest to you? Consider what aspects would be of interest to each of the other panel members. Complete the chart to summarize the aspects of interest to you and the other panel members.

Panel Member	Aspects of Interest
Sociologist (you)	
Economist	
Psychologist	
Anthropologist	

5. **Making Comparisons** Both a sociologist and a psychologist would be interested in the ACT (achievement) and SAT (assessment) test scores of high school students. Consider how the scientific interest of the sociologist would differ from that of the psychologist. Compare the similarities and contrast the differences.
6. **Categorizing Information** Merton's theory of manifest and latent functions (see page 26) could be easily applied to high schools. Using your particular school as a model, identify three manifest functions of high schools and three latent functions of high schools.
7. **Evaluating Information** You must select one of the job opportunities in sociology listed on page 12 for your career. Which one would you choose? Suggest ways in which the job fits your personality, abilities, interests, and ambitions.
8. **Analyzing Information** Spitting in public is not an appropriate behavior, but people "spit" all the time. When we drink soda, we usually leave a little spit in the can. When we kiss someone, we are transmitting spit. We don't think of it in these terms, because in some cases we call spit by a more scientific term—saliva. How would the sociologist perspective help to understand and explain why we flip back and forth between the two terms?

Sociology Projects

1. **Theoretical Perspectives** Based on what you read about the Internet from the functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist perspectives, how is each perspective useful in understanding the popularity of the Internet? Write a brief statement describing how each perspective would approach this issue. You might see

CHAPTER 1 ASSESSMENT

positive or negative effects, depending upon your interpretation. (For instance, the conflict perspective may focus on the fact that the underprivileged classes would not have full access because of the cost of the hardware and therefore decreased power.)

- 2. Developing a Commercial** Develop a commercial for sociology using a video camera. Think of the field of sociology as a product to sell. Market it as “a way to improve your understanding of the world around you.”
- 3. Observations** Go to a public place (such as a mass, school cafeteria, or restaurant) and discreetly observe people there for 15 minutes. It is important that you do not appear to be spying on individuals, both because it may be interpreted as being rude and also because it would probably affect their normal behaviors. Write down your observations, noting such details as the type of dress, general interactions, and level of activity. Do not assume any value judgments about your subjects; just make factual observations.
When you return home, rewrite your observations applying the sociological concepts in this chapter. Consider and list the ways your second analysis is different from the first. Compare and contrast them. How does sociology help to describe what you observed? What might you want to study from your observation?
- 4. Sociology and Careers** Research one of the career options for sociology majors that interest you. Look for such important information as the education requirements, income expectations,

and management opportunities. Write a short report on the advantages and disadvantages of that particular career in sociology.

Technology Activities



1. In this chapter, you learned about several of the founders of sociology and their contributions to the field. To learn more about these sociologists and others, go to the Dead Sociologists web page at <http://raven.jmu.edu/~ridenehr/DSS>. Select three sociologists named on the web site who were not included in the textbook and create a database including their year of birth, place of birth, and primary contributions they made to sociology.
2. Use the Internet to do further research on the pioneers of sociology. Design a poster representing the pioneers in sociology. Describe each one's basic ideas, including their theories and information attained through research. You may want to start your research at the Dead Sociologists web page listed above.
3. Write or use the Internet to contact the American Sociological Association and request the booklet “Majoring in Sociology.” Using standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation, prepare a report for your class from the information. (The address is American Sociological Association, 1722 N. Street NW, Washington, DC 20036. For Internet access, the URL is www.asanet.org.)



Chapter 1

Enrichment Reading

Invitation to Sociology by Peter L. Berger



The sociologist . . . is a person intensely, endlessly, shamelessly interested in the doings of men. His natural habitat is all the human gathering places of the world, wherever men come together. The sociologist may be interested in many other things. But his consuming interest remains in the world of men, their institutions, their history, their passions. And since he is interested in men, nothing that men do can be altogether tedious for him. He will naturally be interested in the events that engage men's ultimate beliefs, their moments of tragedy and grandeur and ecstasy. But he will also be fascinated by the commonplace, the everyday. He will know reverence, but this reverence will not prevent him from wanting to see and to understand. He may sometimes feel revulsion or contempt. But this also will not deter him from wanting to have his questions answered. The sociologist, in his quest for understanding, moves through the world of men without respect for the usual lines of **demarcation**. Nobility and **degradation**, power and obscurity, intelligence and folly—these are equally interesting to him, however unequal they may be in his personal values or tastes. Thus his questions may lead him to all possible levels of society, the best and the least known places, the most respected and the most despised. And, if he is a good sociologist, he will find himself in all these places because his own questions have so taken possession of him that he has little choice but to seek for answers. . . .

The sociologist moves in the common world of men, close to what most of them would call real. As a result, there is a deceptive simplicity and obviousness about some sociological investigations. One reads them, nods at the familiar scene, remarks that one has heard all this before and concludes that people have better things to do than to waste their time on truisms—until one

is suddenly brought up against an insight that radically questions everything one had previously assumed about this familiar scene. This is the point at which one begins to sense the excitement of sociology.

It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is this—things are not what they seem. This . . . is a deceptively simple statement. It ceases to be simple after a while. Social reality turns out to have many layers of meaning. The discovery of each new layer changes the perception of the whole.

People who feel no temptation before closed doors, who have no curiosity about human beings, who are content to admire scenery without wondering about the people who live in those houses on the other side of that river, should probably . . . stay away from sociology. And people whose interest is mainly in their own **conceptual constructions** will do just as well to turn to the study of little white mice. Sociology will be satisfying, in the long run, only to those who can think of nothing more entrancing than to watch men and to understand things human.

Source: Excerpted from *Invitation to Sociology*. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1963.

Read and React

How is this excerpt different in style from most articles by scientists? Why do you think the author chose this style to describe his field of study?

What Does It Mean?

conceptual construction
personal idea of reality

degradation
low esteem, corruption

demarcation
setting apart, separation