Chapter 1
The Sociological Perspective

Contents
Author’s Note
Additional Content in REVEL
Learning Objectives
Detailed Chapter Outline
REVEL Media
John’s Chapter Close-Up: Society and Personal Choice
John’s Personal Video Suggestion
Research for a Cutting-Edge Classroom
Supplemental Lecture Material
  • Sociology and Related Disciplines
  • Using the ASA Journal Teaching Sociology in Your Classroom
  • The Liberation Sociology Tradition
  • The Social Conflict Approach and the Sociology of Sport
Essay Topics

Author’s Note for Chapter 1

This first chapter is the most important chapter in the text. Why? Because this chapter presents the sociological perspective, the point of view that is the foundation for everything that follows. Students who “get it” at this early stage have excellent odds of doing well throughout your course.

How can you help them understand the sociological perspective? Giving clear definitions is important. But it is vital that you illustrate the perspective with lots of examples. Notice how the Power of Society Figure on page 2 of the text helps show that what we feel to be the personal force called “love” is guided by society. Here are additional examples found throughout the chapter:

• Page 4 explains how women’s expectations for a spouse are guided by their class position.
• Global Map 1–1 on page 5 explains how women’s decisions about childbearing are guided by the level of economic development of the society in which they live.
• Figure 1–1 on page 6 shows how the most personal choice about ending one’s life is guided by gender and race.
• National Map 1–1 on page 14 shows suicide rates are higher in states with low population density and lower in states with higher population density.
• The discussion on pages 12 and 13 also explains how the birth of sociology itself was the result of social forces—a breakdown in the traditional social order of the middle ages with the Industrial Revolution, the growth of cities, and a more individualistic political culture.
• The discussion of applying sociology’s theoretical approaches to sports also shows insights gained from looking at sports with the sociological perspective. The “stacking” figure on page 20 shows how African–American players are disproportionately playing the outfield and not the central positions of pitcher and catcher.

• Finally, use the Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life photo essay (at the end of each chapter) to highlight the power of society to shape personal choice and individual experience. The photo essay for this chapter, found on pages 23–24, explores popular culture to see how social forces guide celebrity couples to come together.

Additional Content in REVEL

REVEL is the electronic version of this text that provides interactive learning, student learning assessment, and additional readings and engaging video—at remarkably low cost. All of the REVEL content has been developed by John Macionis and is seamlessly integrated into the text. For each chapter, REVEL expands and deepens student learning with rich content including:

In Greater Depth—This interactive graphic allows students to go deeper into the Power of Society figure at the beginning of the chapter, in this case showing how social class position is linked to choice of a marriage partner.

Diversity—These interactive graphics focus on race, class, and gender, in this chapter linking college attendance to family income.

A Global Perspective—These interactive graphics focus on global patterns, in this case showing the share of global income for nations at various levels of economic development.

Interactive Comparison Maps—These interactive graphics allow students to manipulate social maps to link variables. In this chapter, a global comparison map links women’s childbearing around the world to a nation’s level of economic development. The national comparison maps link population density to suicide rates.

Social Explorer—An interactive exercise that uses social mapping to explore societal dynamics across the United States. This chapter’s exercise allows students to investigate the link between population density and suicide rates in their own communities.

Journals—These are short student writing exercises. This chapter’s journals encourage students to apply the sociology perspective, to identify personal benefits of seeing the world sociologically, and to assess the value of sociological thinking for society as a whole.

Video—These short videos present key concepts in engaging ways. In this chapter, students can access “The Basics: What is Sociology?” and also “The Big Picture: Sociological Theory and Research.”

Surveys—These interactive exercises ask students to assess the own attitudes and behavior and compare themselves to others in the United States or to populations in other countries. This
chapter’s surveys focus on equality in marriage and how readily the student is to work with socially diverse people.

**Read the Document**—These primary readings allow students to read important sociologists in their own words. All readings have been carefully chosen and edited to provide rich learning accessible to all students. This chapter’s reading is “Society in America” by Harriet Martineau, written in the 1830s to call attention to the oppression of women and people of color.

**Boxed Features**—Find additional boxed features not available in the printed book, in this case presenting the entire world as a small village to explore global social inequality.

**In Review**—These interactive “drag and drop” exercises allow students to assess their learning and also to have fun. In this chapter, In Review exercises focus on understanding theoretical orientations and applying them to the topic of sports.

**Learning Objectives**
- 1.1: Explain how the sociological perspective differs from common sense.
- 1.2: State several reasons that a global perspective is important in today’s world.
- 1.3: Identify the advantages of sociological thinking for developing public policy, for encouraging personal growth, and for advancing in a career.
- 1.4: Link the origins of sociology to historical social changes.
- 1.5: Summarize sociology’s major theoretical approaches.
- 1.6: Apply sociology’s major theoretical approaches to the topic of sports.

---

**Detailed Chapter Outline**

**I. The Sociological Perspective**

L.O. 1.1: Explain how the sociological perspective differs from common sense.

A. Sociology is the systematic study of human society.

1. *The Basics: What Is Sociology?* In this video, sociology is defined as the scientific study of human society. It differs from the natural sciences in important ways, but still relies on research to understand society.

B. The sociological perspective (Berger, 1963) helps us to see general social patterns in the behavior of particular individuals (*the general in the particular*).

C. It also encourages us to realize that society guides our thoughts and deeds—a strange idea in our individualistic culture, so that the sociological perspective can also be described as *seeing the strange in the familiar* (Berger, 1963).

D. Sociology also encourages us to see the effect of our larger society on personal choice.

1. For example, Emile Durkheim’s (1858–1917) research showed that the suicide rate was strongly influenced by the extent to which people were socially integrated with others.

2. WINDOW ON THE WORLD—Global Map 1–1 (p. 5): *Women’s Childbearing in Global Perspective*. A look around the world shows that
childbearing is not a personal choice. Women living in poor countries have many more children than women living in high-income nations.

3. SEEING SOCIOLOGY IN EVERYDAY LIFE BOX (p. 8): *The Sociological Imagination: Turning Personal Problems into Public Issues*. Mills (1959) argued that society, not people’s personal failings, is the cause of poverty and other social problems. The power of the sociological perspective lies not just in changing individual lives, but in transforming society.

E. The greater people’s social marginality, the better able they are to use the sociological perspective. Just as social change encourages sociological thinking, sociological thinking can bring about social change.

1. *The Promise*, by C. Wright Mills. Mills argues in this selection that the only way to truly understand people's behavior is to examine the social context in which people live—a quality of mind that he calls the sociological imagination.

II. The Importance of a Global Perspective
L.O. 1.2: State several reasons that a global perspective is important in today’s world.

A. Sociologists also strive to see issues in **global perspective**, defined as *the study of the larger world and our society’s place in it*.

1. THINKING GLOBALLY: *The Global Village: A Social Snapshot of Our World*. Think of the population breakdown as if the world were a village of one thousand people.

B. There are three different types of nations in the world.

1. The world’s **high-income countries** are industrialized nations that have the highest overall standard of living (seventy-six nations).
2. The world’s **middle-income countries** have limited industrialization and moderate personal income (seventy nations).
3. The world’s **low-income countries** have little industrialization and most people are poor (forty-eight nations).

4. Global thinking is an important component of the sociological perspective for five reasons:
   a. Where we live makes a great difference in shaping our lives.
   b. Societies throughout the world are increasingly interconnected, making traditional distinctions between “us” and “them” less and less relevant.
   c. What happens in the rest of the world affects life here in the U.S.
   d. Many human problems faced in the United States are far more serious elsewhere (e.g., poverty).
   e. Thinking globally is a good way to learn more about ourselves.

III. Applying the Sociological Perspective
L.O. 1.3: Identify the advantages of sociological thinking for developing public policy, for encouraging personal growth, and for advancing in a career.

A. Applying the sociological perspective is useful in many ways.

1. It helps guide many of the laws and policies that shape our lives.
2. It leads to important personal growth and expanded awareness.
3. It serves as excellent preparation for the world at work.
B. Sociologists have helped shape public policy.
C. Sociology influences personal growth.
   1. The sociological perspective helps us assess the truth of “common sense.”
   2. The sociological perspective helps us see both opportunities and constraints in our lives.
   3. The sociological perspective empowers us to be active participants in our society.
   4. The sociological perspective helps us to live in a diverse world.
D. The “sociology advantage.” A background in sociology is also good preparation for the working world. An increasing number of sociologists work in all sorts of applied fields.
   1. THINKING ABOUT DIVERSITY: RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER BOX (p. 10): Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America. Sociologist Barbara Ehrenreich (2001) took a low-wage job in order to find out more about life for people who hold these jobs.
E. Careers: The “Sociology Advantage.”
   1. Sociology on the Job: What Is Sociology? In this video, Professor Tracy Xavia Karner, Ph.D., explores the ways in which graduates use sociology in their employment. She explains the different fields of sociology and how understanding sociology more in-depth can help in all aspects of every day life.

IV. The Origins of Sociology
L.O. 1.4: Link the origins of sociology to historical social changes.
A. Three major social changes during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are important to the development of sociology.
   1. The rise of a factory-based industrial economy.
   2. The emergence of large, thriving cities in Europe.
   3. Political changes, including a rising concern with individual liberty and rights. The French Revolution symbolized this dramatic break with political and social tradition.
B. Auguste Comte (1798–1857) believed that the major goal of sociology was to understand society as it actually operates. Comte favored positivism—a way of understanding based on science. He saw sociology as the product of a three-stage historical development:
   1. The theological stage, in which thought was guided by religion.
   2. The metaphysical stage, a transitional phase.
   3. The scientific stage, using positivism to understand society.

V. Sociological Theory
L.O. 1.5: Summarize sociology’s major theoretical approaches.
A. A theory is a statement of how and why specific facts are related. The goal of sociological theory is to explain social behavior in the real world. For example, SEEING OURSELVES—National Map 1–1 (p. 14) shows suicide rates across the United States as they relate to population density.
1. Does Durkheim’s Theory on Suicide Rates Still Apply Today? In this activity, students participate in a discovery exercise to see if Durkheim's theories still apply today.

2. The Big Picture: Sociological Theory and Research. This video addresses sociological theory and research. It focuses on three perspectives: structural functionalism, social conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. Scientists use these three perspectives to conduct research to further understand our social world.

B. Theories are based on theoretical approaches, basic images of society that guide thinking and research. Sociologists ask two basic questions: “What issues should we study?” and “How should we connect the facts?” There are three major sociological paradigms:

1. The structural-functional approach is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability.
   a. It asserts that our lives are guided by social structures (relatively stable patterns of social behavior).
   b. Each social structure has social functions, or consequences, for the operation of society as a whole.
   c. Key figures in the development of this approach include Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, and Herbert Spencer.
   d. Robert Merton (1910–2003) introduced three concepts related to social function:
      1) Manifest functions, the recognized and intended consequences of any social pattern.
      2) Latent functions, largely unrecognized and unintended consequences.
      3) Social dysfunctions, undesirable consequences of a social pattern for the operation of society.
   e. Critical review: The influence of this approach has declined in recent decades.
      1) It focuses on stability, thereby ignoring inequalities of social class, race, and gender.

2. The social-conflict approach is a framework for building theory that sees society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict and change. Most sociologists who favor the conflict approach attempt not only to understand society, but also to reduce social inequality.
   b. One important type of conflict analysis is the gender-conflict approach: a point of view that focuses on inequality and conflict between males and females. The gender-conflict approach is closely linked to feminism, or support of social equality for women and men.
Burghardt Du Bois described race as the major problem facing the United States in the twentieth-century.

d. Another important type of social-conflict analysis is the race-conflict approach, a point of view that focuses on inequality and conflict between people of different racial and ethnic categories.

e. Critical review: This approach has developed rapidly in recent decades. Although popular, it has several weaknesses.
   1) It ignores social unity based on mutual interdependence and shared values.
   2) Because it is explicitly political, it cannot claim scientific objectivity.
   3) Like the structural-functional paradigm, it envisions society in terms of broad abstractions (a macro paradigm).

3. The symbolic-interaction approach is a framework for building theory that sees society as the product of the everyday interactions of individuals.
   a. The structural-functional and the social-conflict approaches share a macro-level orientation, meaning that they focus on broad social structures that shape society as a whole. In contrast, symbolic-interactionism has a micro-level orientation; it focuses on patterns of social interaction in specific settings.
   c. Critical review: Symbolic interactionism attempts to explain more clearly how individuals actually experience society. However, it has two weaknesses:
      1) Its micro orientation sometimes results in the error of ignoring the influence of larger social structures.
      2) By emphasizing what is unique, it risks overlooking the effects of culture, class, gender, and race.

VI. Applying the Approaches: The Sociology of Sports
L.O. 1.6: Apply sociology’s major theoretical approaches to the topic of sports.
   A. The functions of sports. A structural-functional approach directs attention to the ways sports help society to operate.
   B. Sports and conflict. A social-conflict analysis points out that sports are closely linked to social inequality.
   C. Sports as interaction. The symbolic-interaction paradigm views sports less as a system than as an ongoing process.
      1. CONTROVERSY & DEBATE BOX (p. 22): Is Sociology Nothing More than Stereotypes? In contrast to careless stereotypes, good sociology involves making generalizations, but with three important conditions.
         a. Sociologists do not indiscriminately apply any generalization to all individuals.
b. Sociologists are careful that a generalization is supported by available facts.
c. Sociologists offer generalizations fair-mindedly, with an interest in getting at the truth.

REVEL Media


VIDEO The Basics: What Is Sociology? This video focuses on sociology as the scientific study of human society and explains how sociologists use the scientific method when conducting research, found in Module 1.2.

DIVERSITY [graphic] College Attendance, by Family Income, 1975–2012, found in Module 1.3.

COMPARISON MAP Women’s Childbearing / Economic Development in Global Perspective, found in Module 1.4

JOURNAL Using the Sociological Perspective, found in Module 1.5.


A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE [graphic] Population Share versus Income Share, by Level of Economic Development, found in Module 1.7.

SURVEY Gender Equality in Marriage: Rate Yourself, found in Module 1.8.

SURVEY Working with Socially Diverse People: Rate Yourself, found in Module 1.9.

VIDEO Sociology on the Job: What Is Sociology? This video explores the ways in which a background in sociology is excellent preparation for college graduates seeking careers in many diverse fields, found in Module 1.10.

JOURNAL Benefits of the Sociological Perspective, found in Module 1.11.

VIDEO The Big Picture: Sociological Theory and Research This video explores how the three major sociological approaches offer different frameworks for building theories about the operation of society and how macro-level analysis differs from micro-level analysis, found in Module 1.12.

COMPARISON MAP Suicide Rates / Population Density across the United States, found in Module 1.13.

SOCIAL EXPLORER Explore the relationship between population density and suicide in your own community and across the United States, found in Module 1.14.

READ THE DOCUMENT Society in America by Harriet Martineau While praising some aspects of life in the United States in the 1830s, Martineau criticized as intolerable the condition of women and the system of slavery, found in Module 1.15.

IN REVIEW Sociological Theory, found in Module 1.16.

IN REVIEW The Sociology of Sports, found in Module 1.17.

SHARED WRITING The Value of Sociology, found in Module 1.18.

John’s Chapter Close-Up: Society and Personal Choice

This chapter close-up focuses on Figure 1–1, found on page 6 of Sociology, 16th edition. A reflection of our individualistic culture is the fact that most people respond to the act of suicide in psychological terms: Something must be wrong with people who end up taking their own lives?

Durkheim (the first professor of sociology in France) used suicide to help establish the discipline of sociology in his home country. Durkheim was trying to show that a psychological (or “skin in”) view of suicide could not explain broad patterns, such as why males were far more likely to take their own lives than females. So he picked a very “personal” issue to show that— even in the very private decision to take one’s own life—society is influencing people’s behavior.

Looking at Figure 1–1, notice first that among all racial and ethnic categories, male suicide rates are about four times higher than rates for females. Can we attribute this difference to personality disorder? Or, as Durkheim would say, is this difference a social fact? That is, is there something different in the social relations typical of males compared to females? Following Durkheim, men have a lower level of social integration, leading to a higher risk of suicide. In the same way, white people typically have a lower level of social integration than African–Americans or Hispanic–Americans. This difference is not racial per se, but reflects the importance of both class and culture. We see the effects of this difference by contrasting the higher white suicide rate with the lower African–American and Hispanic–American rates.

Notice, finally, that gender interacts with race and ethnicity in guiding suicide rates. Among all three categories of people, the gender differences noted earlier are evident.

One last suggestion: Link this discussion with National Map 1–1 on page 14 and the Social Explorer exercise for this chapter, which explores social causes of suicide, found in REVEL.

John’s Personal Video Suggestion

What makes something real? Is a kiss simply a kiss? Or is “reality” socially constructed? To see how what we see—and what we fail to notice—is guided by our social surroundings, share this short video with the class. Go to YouTube and search for Joshua Bell’s subway experiment. In that video you will see Joshua Bell, who ranks among the top violinists in the world, playing in public.

If this were the Kennedy Center or the Carnegie Hall, people would be paying big bucks to enjoy this artist’s talents. But Bell is playing in a subway station in Washington, D.C., as if he were a busker playing for coins. The man is the same, the music is the same, but the setting is different. How much of a difference does the social setting make? Watch how almost no one notices the extraordinary opportunity right in front of their eyes and ears.

Research for a Cutting-Edge Classroom

For each chapter of the text, I am happy to share a short, Power-Point based presentation informed by very recent research. These presentations deal with highly current and typically
controversial issues that are in the news and are part of the country’s political dialogue. Each presentation provides a clear statement of the issue, several slides that present recent research findings from organizations including Pew, Gallup, or other organizations, notes that help instructors develop the importance of the data, and questions for class discussion.

To access these PowerPoint presentations from REVEL, after creating a course with either Sociology 16/e or Society: The Basics 14/e, enter the course and hover over the left-hand navigation menu. The PowerPoints (as well as the Test Item File, Instructor's Manual, and other resources) can be found in the "Resources" tab.

From outside of REVEL, please go to www.pearsonbighed.com and navigate / search for Sociology 16e or Society: The Basics 14e. The PowerPoints can be found under the “Resources” tab.

In this chapter, the cutting-edge classroom presentation provides an analysis of factors that have contributed to decline of marriage in the United States.

**Supplemental Lecture Material**

**Sociology and Related Disciplines**

Sociology is only one of a family of related social sciences. The following discussion examines the character of these other disciplines and explores sociology’s relationship with each of them.

**Psychology** shares with sociology (and cultural anthropology) a broadly-based interest in understanding a wide variety of human behavior; the disciplines differ from each other in that psychology is principally concerned with the behavior of individuals, while sociologists more commonly study group behavior and the extent to which group membership (including factors such as race, class, and gender) influences individual behavior. Because psychology focuses on internal cognitive processes, it is sometimes characterized as a “skin in” approach to understanding humanity. Sociology’s focus on the surrounding social world makes our discipline a “skin out” approach.

Psychology has both academic and applied branches. Applied psychology is a therapeutic effort to help people understand their own behavior and cope with their problems. Academic psychology is closer to the work most sociologists do, placing its emphasis on understanding such phenomena as learning, thinking, personality formation and functioning, intelligence, memory, and motivation. Think of psychology as situated with biology on one side (natural-science psychology or biologically-oriented psychology) and sociology on the other (social psychology). All psychology shows its links to biology and other natural sciences in its orientation toward experimental research. Some more natural-science psychologists conduct research into animal behavior and the physiology of the brain; others concern themselves with variables such as gender and other environmental influences and ask much the same sort of questions as sociologists do. The two fields meet in the subdiscipline of social psychology, which is commonly taught in both psychology and sociology curricula and which focuses on how human personality and behavior are influenced by an individual’s social environment.

**Anthropology**, like psychology, has some concerns it shares with sociology but also studies some very different subjects. The two main subfields are physical anthropology and cultural anthropology, although some attention is also devoted to archaeology and linguistics. Physical anthropology uses natural science research methods to study such topics as the biological evolution of the human race and the differences between the races. Cultural anthropologists
study many of the same topics as sociologists, but there are two main differences between the fields: (1) anthropology tends to study small, preliterate, traditional societies, whereas most sociologists concentrate on modern industrial societies; and (2) anthropology generally studies cultures as a whole, while sociology commonly studies smaller systems (for example, groups or institutions) within complex societies. However, sociology and cultural anthropology are closer than the other social sciences. Furthermore, as the traditional societies that anthropologists have historically preferred to study have become increasingly scarce, more and more cultural anthropologists are studying such aspects of contemporary society as street gangs, immigrant life, and ethnic subcultures, which are indistinguishable from the subject matter usually studied by sociologists. Cultural anthropologists and sociologists use similar research methods, although anthropologists are more likely to develop elaborate descriptive ethnographies of the social scenes they observe by means of extended periods of participant observation, whereas sociologists more commonly collect narrower and more quantitative data using survey research methods.

**Economics** is a much more narrow and focused discipline than sociology, psychology, or anthropology, concerning itself with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Because economists restrict their attention to phenomena that can be precisely measured, such as interest rates, taxes, economic production rates, and unemployment, they have developed by far the most sophisticated statistical techniques for manipulating and presenting data of any of the social sciences. On the other hand, this precision may limit the ability of economists to deal effectively with the sorts of larger issues that many people find most interesting and important. Sociologists who study economic behavior, in contrast to economists, focus on the relationship between economics and other aspects of social reality—for example, on the way in which value orientations (such as support for the environmental movement) may affect consumption patterns, on the ways in which corporations are organized and changed, or on how human beings experience the world of work subjectively.

**Political science**, like economics, focuses on a relatively narrow segment of human social behavior, in this case the issues of power and authority. Traditionally, political science focused either on political philosophy or on relatively limited studies of the ways in which governments and political parties are organized and function. More recently, under the influence of the developing field of political sociology, political scientists have been increasingly interested in such topics as political socialization, the social forces influencing voting behavior, the structure of institutional and noninstitutional power in local communities, and the origin and development of movements of political protest, all of which are shared concerns with sociologists working in this area. The two disciplines use broadly similar research methods, with political scientists having played an especially important role in the development of opinion polling and related techniques of survey research.

Two additional disciplines deserve mention, though each is only marginally compatible with the basic definition of a social science.

**History** straddles the line between the humanities and the social sciences. Traditionally, the field studied historical developments as unique events, not as examples of general categories or patterns. More recently, however, many historians have become more interested in the social forces that shape historical events and in developing theories of broad patterns of sociohistorical change; they also have begun using more quantitative and precise data. To the extent that these trends continue, history is moving in the direction of becoming a true social science.
Social work is comparable to applied psychology in that, its central purpose is not to understand human behavior but rather to help people, groups, and communities cope more effectively with their personal and social problems. Of course, it is essential to understand the causes of these problems, and social workers rely heavily on sociological and psychological research and theory, but the fundamental thrust of the field is different from that of sociology and academic psychology because of its practical orientation.

Supplemental Lecture Material
Using the ASA Journal Teaching Sociology in Your Classroom

This feature will appear in every chapter of the Instructor’s Manual. In case you are unfamiliar with the journal Teaching Sociology, it is published quarterly by the American Sociological Association and is devoted to providing resources for academic sociologists who teach in college and university settings.

The October 1992 issue of Teaching Sociology (Vol. 20, No. 4) is entitled “GIFTS: A Special Issue, 20 Great Ideas for Teaching Sociology.” In this collection, a number of articles appear that are well suited to your introductory course and the opening chapter in the Macionis text. For example, R. Marie Bricher has contributed an article entitled “Teaching Introductory Sociology: Using Aspects of the Classroom as Sociological Events” (pp. 270–275). Bricher points out that the college classroom can function as a “strategic research site,” as students apply sociological insights and grow in their ability to recognize “social facts.”

Two articles deal with introducing students to the concept of the sociological imagination: John R. Brouillette and Ronny E. Turner’s “Creating the Sociological Imagination on the First Day of Class: The Social Construction of Deviance” (pp. 276–279), and Kathleen M. O’Flaherty’s “Introducing Students to the Concept of the Sociological Imagination: A Written Assignment” (pp. 326–328). Brouillette and Turner’s article offers unique suggestions for helping introductory students to understand sociology as a “way of seeing,” rather than with a body of information to be memorized and regurgitated on examinations. O’Flaherty’s article offers a student assignment that is designed to help students appreciate C. Wright Mills’s concept of the intersection between personal biography and history, as well as the sociological imagination.

There are other articles in this issue that may be helpful in your classroom.

Discussion Questions
1. What are the benefits of studying sociology? That is, in what ways does understanding the social world make us better people? Better citizens? Better prepared for our careers? (See the “Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life” essay in REVEL).
2. Which of the social sciences (for example, psychology, political science, economics, anthropology, gender studies) strikes you as closest to sociology? Which is most distinct? Why?
3. Sociologists and political scientists both study political behavior. Sociologists and economists both study economic behavior. Is this simply duplication of effort, or do sociologists, with their characteristic perspectives, have the ability to develop insights that might not occur to their colleagues in other departments?
4. Sociologists have in the past several decades developed and refined a specialization called applied sociology. Like applied psychology, it focuses on coping with problems rather than studying what causes those problems. In what ways can sociology contribute to the more effective resolution of social problems at the individual, group, and community levels? Should we promote development of this subdiscipline or would it be better left to the social workers?

**Supplemental Lecture Material**

**The Liberation Sociology Tradition**

Joe Feagin (University of Florida), in a 1997 plenary presentation, noted that there is a long liberation–sociology tradition in the discipline, which stretches back to Jane Addams and W. E. B. Du Bois in the late nineteenth century. He describes liberation sociology as “sociology from the bottom up.” From this perspective, the point of sociology is to enhance the lives of ordinary people, to bring changes in social systems of discrimination and oppression.

A major twentieth-century figure to accent this progressive tradition was Robert S. Lynd, with a focus on class oppression. He hypothesized that “Private capitalism does not know how to operate and probably cannot be made to operate, to assure the amount of general welfare to which the present stage of our technological skills and intelligence entitle us; and other ways of managing our economy, therefore, need to be explored.” Thus, the question that social science appears to face is “What kind of culture would be that which would use its full array of knowledge and productive resources to maximize the quantity, quality, and useful variety of daily living for the masses of American people?”

Another major figure of the progressive tradition in sociology is the African–American sociologist, Oliver C. Cox, who accented the importance of sociological research and passion in favor of change, particularly against racism. [See Oliver C. Cox: *Caste, Class & Race* (1948)].

The best known figure in twentieth-century progressive tradition is C. Wright Mills, who accented the importance of sociologists listening to those who are insurgent [See C. Wright Mills: *The Sociological Imagination* (1959)]. Alfred M. Lee [Sociology for Whom? (1978)] continued the criticism of mainstream sociology for its failure to deal with class and other oppressions.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, several feminist sociologists began to re-emphasize the maleness of traditional sociology and the need to incorporate a feminist perspective on gendered oppression in sociology. Jesse Bernard stated “without equivocation that sociology was a male science of society and that practically all sociology to date has been a sociology of the male world.” [Dale Spender: *Man Made Language* 1980].

**Source**

Discussion Questions

1. Oliver C. Cox wrote that “Clearly, the social scientist should be accurate and objective but not neutral; he should be passionately partisan in favor of the welfare of the people and against the interests of the few when they seem to submerge that welfare.” What’s your opinion of this position?

2. Explain how liberation sociology is related to the social conflict paradigm (cited in Chapter 1 of the text).

3. Explain the parallels that exist between contemporary liberation sociology and today’s feminist sociology.

Supplemental Lecture Material
The Social Conflict Approach and the Sociology of Sport

As noted in the textbook, each of the three major paradigms may be applied to a wide variety of topics. The conflict perspective has been especially popular among sports sociologists. In fact, Harry Edwards, who published the first major text in this area in 1973 while a member of the faculty at San Jose State University, is a strong adherent of the conflict perspective.

More recently, Richard Lapchick, the director since 1984 of Northeastern University’s Center for the Study of Sport in Society, has emerged as a second well-known conflict theory-oriented sports sociologist. Unlike Edwards, Lapchick is white and was heavily involved as a civil rights supporter and anti-apartheid activist in his youth; he has repeatedly received death threats and has also been physically attacked by opponents of his struggle for racial justice.

The Center began with an operating budget of $125,000, which has now grown to over a million dollars a year. Lapchick and his twenty-one person staff have collected a massive amount of data documenting the persistent discrimination against minorities and women in sports. Some examples: Lapchick points out that African-Americans have a substantial share of players in only five professional sports: boxing, track, basketball, football, and baseball. The share of black players in major league baseball shows a notable decline, falling from 19 percent in 1995 to 8 percent in 2015. In all professional sports, the vast majority of team owners, managers, and head coaches are white.

In a tradition established by Marx, conflict-oriented sociologists have commonly felt obliged to go beyond merely documenting the existence of injustice. They actually work to overcome it. Harry Edwards attempted to organize a boycott by African–American athletes of the 1968 Mexico City Summer Olympics as a protest over the lack of black coaches on the U.S. team and related issues. Although the boycott failed, Edwards was instrumental in encouraging sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos to publicize their political beliefs by bowing their heads and giving black power salutes during the awards ceremony for the 200-meter dash.

Like Edwards, Lapchick is also an activist. His center has spent over twelve million dollars in tuition assistance for students who have used up their athletic eligibility. The organization also sponsors outreach programs such as TEAMWORK, which encourages professional athletes to speak to schoolchildren about the realities of high-level sports. A favored theme: stay in school and get your degree, because while almost half of black professional athletes believe that they will make it in the pros, in actuality, only a small percentage actually do so.
Discussion Questions
1. Do you think it is appropriate for sociologists like Edwards and Lapchick to become involved in reform efforts or would they be wiser to concentrate merely on studying society? Develop arguments supporting each position.
2. Why do you think many people find Lapchick’s contention that African–Americans are widely discriminated against in sports hard to accept?

Essay Topics
1. What is a global perspective? How does it compare to the sociological perspective? How are societies all over the world increasingly connected and what are the consequences of these links?
2. After reviewing your text’s discussion of the social factors that influence a student’s decision regarding which college to attend, identify some of the social factors which might help explain why you selected your major or intended career.
3. Describe the experience of being a new member of a group or some setting. (For example, the first few days after you arrived on campus.) Explain how your marginality made it easier for you to observe something about that group of the setting that was not evident to those who had been in it longer.
4. List the various benefits of learning to use the sociological perspective for your own life.
5. What sociological insights about the U.S. educational system can you gain from applying sociology’s theoretical approaches? Consider structural-functional theory, symbolic-interaction theory, social-conflict theory, feminist theory, and race-conflict theory.
6. How have sociologists helped shape public policy and law?
7. Identify what you regard as some of the manifest and latent functions of attending a U.S. college or university?
8. This chapter of the text explains how society affects peoples’ selection of marriage partners. Using the sociological perspective, what can we say about peoples’ decisions to attend or not attend college? To become a physician or police officer? To end up in a profession or in jail?