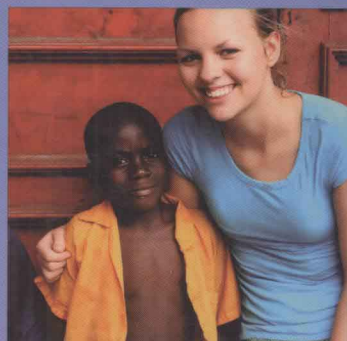


THIRD EDITION

THE ENGAGED SOCIOLOGIST

Connecting the Classroom to the Community



Kathleen Odell Korgen ■ Jonathan M. White



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Bridgewater State College



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
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For information:



Pine Forge Press
A Sage Publications Company
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks,
California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/I 1 Mohan Cooperative
Industrial Area
Mathura Road,
New Delhi 110 044
India

Sage Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

Sage Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
33 Pekin Street #02-01
Far East Square
Singapore 048763

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Korgen, Kathleen Odell

The engaged sociologist: connecting the classroom to the community/Kathleen Odell Korgen, Jonathan M. White.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-4129-7949-8 (pbk.)

1. Service learning—United States. 2. Sociology—Study and teaching (Higher)—United States. I. White, Jonathan M. (Jonathan Michael) II. Title.

LC221.K68 2011

301.071'173—dc22

2009043868

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

10 11 12 13 14 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Preface

A Note From the Authors to the Students Reading This Book

Sociology is the coolest academic discipline. Seriously, what other area of study is better at helping you figure out how society operates and how you can use that knowledge to create social change? Both of us were drawn to sociology because we wanted to figure out how to fight injustice and promote democracy more effectively. It has also guided us with everyday life tasks, such as figuring out how to get policies passed on campus, deciding whom to vote for, and learning why it's vital to earn a college degree in a service-based economy. This book is part of our efforts to get students hooked on sociology and, in the process, help them to become engaged and effective citizens who can strengthen our democratic society.

This book is also part of a larger, national effort to “educate citizens” by encouraging students to participate in civic engagement exercises that connect the classroom to the community. Organizations like The Democracy Imperative, Campus Compact, and the American Democracy Project are establishing movements to make civic engagement a part of the college experience for all undergraduates. College leaders all across the country realize that we are obligated to give students the tools they will require to be effective citizens as well as the skills they will need in the workforce. Leaders in *all* sectors of society understand that higher education, when connected to the larger society, benefits everyone, on *and* off campus.

We believe, as leaders of the American Sociological Association have noted when promoting public sociology, that sociology is particularly suited to teaching students what they need to become effective and full members of our society. As prominent sociologist Randall Collins has pointed out, the two core commitments of sociology are (a) to understand how society works

and (b) to use that knowledge to make society better. We believe that helping students learn how to think sociologically and use sociological tools is, in effect, enabling them to become better citizens. No doubt, the professors who assigned this book to you also share this belief. They will gladly tell you why *they* think sociology is an incredibly useful and practical academic discipline.

We also know that sociology is fun to learn and to teach. That's why we created a book that we hope will be enjoyable to use for both students and teachers. The exercises throughout the chapters allow students to connect the sociological knowledge they are learning to their campus and the larger community. So, as soon as you develop your sociological eye, you will make use of it! *Please note that you will need to make sure you follow the rules for research on human subjects and get approval from the Internal Review Board (IRB) on your campus before carrying out some of these exercises.* (Your professor will tell you how to do so.) This book will also help you to connect your own life to the larger society, as you learn about the “sociological imagination” and the power it has to positively affect your community. The Sociologist in Action sections in each chapter will show you powerful examples of how sociology students and professional sociologists (both professors and applied sociologists) use sociology in myriad ways in efforts to improve society. By the end of the book, you can create your own Sociologist in Action section, in which you'll show how you used sociological tools in efforts to influence society.

We look forward to seeing your Sociology in Action pieces and featuring many of them in future editions of this book and on the Web site for *The Engaged Sociologist*. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy the book and use the knowledge and skills you gain from it to make yourself a more effective citizen, strengthen our democracy, and work for a more just and civil society. We think that you will discover what we discovered when we began our journey as sociologists—that sociology is a cool and powerful tool. And, of course, we hope that you have a lot of fun in the process!

Acknowledgments

This third edition would not have been possible without the very able assistance of many people. We would first like to thank David Repetto, who brings a commitment to connecting the classroom to the community, wonderful insight, and a wealth of good judgment to this project. We are delighted to be working with him. We would also like to thank Ben Penner, our original editor, for his excellent work and for believing in the vision of this book. His enthusiasm for *The Engaged Sociologist* and public sociology, in general, inspired us as we conceptualized and wrote this book. We remain indebted to him for his good humor and his passion and insight regarding the powerful connections between sociology and student engagement. We also are indebted to Karen Wiley, our Production Editor, and to Nancy Scrofano, our Editorial Assistant, for their strong support and ability to guide us throughout the course of this project. We would particularly like to thank Teresa Herlinger for her exceptionally astute and thoughtful work copyediting the book. We owe a special debt of gratitude to our colleague, Howard Lune, for his contributions to this book.

Finally, we would both like to thank the following reviewers whose thoughtful and excellent suggestions helped us make this book so much better than it otherwise would be: Beverly L. Stiles, Midwestern State University; Stephen Light, SUNY Plattsburgh; Ronda Copher, University of Minnesota; Kooros M. Mahmoudi, Northern Arizona University; Amy Holzgang, Cerritos College; Peter J. Stein, William Paterson University; Eric K. Leung, Los Angeles Valley College; and John Lynxwiler, The University of Central Florida.

The following reviewers helped us make the second edition of this book even better than the first: Jack Estes, Borough of Manhattan Community College, City University of New York; Werner Lange, Edinboro University of Pennsylvania; Rachel Bandy, Simpson College; Beverly L. Rogers, Collin County Community College District; Chiquita D. Howard-Bolstic, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; and Janice K. Purk, Mansfield University.

Kathleen would like to thank her encouraging, accommodating, and overall wonderful husband, Jeff; daughters Julie and Jessica; and mother, Patricia Odell, for putting up with the many late nights, early mornings, and weekends this project consumed. Jeff and Patricia also read innumerable early drafts with good cheer and made many helpful suggestions. This book would never have been completed on time if we didn't live together, Mom. Thank you! Thanks also to Judy and Ben Korgen, Ann Odell, Mike Odell, John Odell, Nancy Baffa, and Conor Odell.

Jonathan would like to thank his wife and best friend, Shelley, for her incredible friendship, love, and support. Our amazing partnership continues to energize me to be able to continue moving forward as a public sociologist and scholar-activist. I also want to thank the many students who have inspired me with their energy, intellect, and unwavering belief that social change is indeed possible. A huge thanks also goes to my family, who provide me with unwavering support, love, and happiness and who inspire me to continuously work toward creating a stronger civil society. And a very special group of people, my 13 nephews and nieces, deserve a special debt of gratitude because they are particularly inspirational in so many ways!

Contents

Preface: A Note From the Authors to the Students Reading This Book	vii
Acknowledgments	ix
1. The Engaged Sociologist: The Sociological Perspective and the Connections Among Sociology, Democracy, and Civic Engagement	1
2. Founders and Foundations of Sociology: Theory	15
3. How Do We Know What We Think We Know? Sociological Methods	31
4. Creating Civic Engagement Versus Creating Apathy: Culture	47
5. Learning How to Act in Society: Socialization	63
6. Deviant Behavior and Social Movements	81
7. Big Money Doesn't <i>Always</i> Win: Stratification and Social Class	102
8. What Does a "Typical American" Look Like Today? Race and Ethnicity	123
9. Sex, Gender, and Power	140
10. Social Institutions: Family and Economy	161
11. Social Institutions, Continued: Education, Government, and Religion	182
12. The Engaged Sociologist in Action	200
Index	212
About the Authors	225

The Engaged Sociologist

The Sociological Perspective and the Connections Among Sociology, Democracy, and Civic Engagement

Have you ever wanted to change society? Do you want to have a voice in how things work throughout your life? If so, you've come to the right discipline. Sociology helps you to understand how society operates and, in turn, how to make society better.

As sociologists, we see how individuals both shape and are shaped by larger social forces. By developing what is called a *sociological eye* (Collins 1998; Hughes 1971), we are able to look beneath the surface of society and see how it really works. For example, with a sociological eye, we can recognize the tremendous influence of culture on individuals. Imagine how different you might be if you had grown up in Sweden, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, or another country with a culture very different from our own.¹ You would still look about the same (though you'd have different mannerisms, speak a different language, and have a different haircut and clothes), but your values, norms, and beliefs would be different. Your view of the proper roles of men and women, your religious or secular values, career goals, education, and so forth are shaped by the society in which you grew up.

Look at the differences between your immediate family and some of your relatives who may have much more or much less money. Does social class

cause the differences, or do the differences help to determine the social class to which we will belong?²² Consider the varying perspectives that your male relatives and your female relatives bring to the same questions. They all live in the same world, in close proximity perhaps, but they have had such different experiences of it that some people even joke that men and women come from different planets (Gray 1992). By using the sociological eye, we can look at the world from a unique angle, notice what is often unobserved, and make connections among the patterns in everyday events that the average person might not notice. In doing so, we can understand how different organizations, institutions, and societies function; how social forces shape individual lives and ideas; and, in turn, how individuals shape organizations and institutions.

By viewing society through the perspective of a *social world model*, we can study different levels of social units, from small- to large-scale parts of the world, that interact with one another. For example, we could study participation in the democratic process through examining *interpersonal and local organizations* (e.g., political activism among students on your campus and your school's College Democrats and College Republicans clubs); *larger organizations and institutions* (e.g., national Democratic and Republican Parties and state boards of elections); and *nations or global communities* (e.g., the U.S. presidential electoral process and the UN Millennium Declaration implementation). Depending on the social unit we are interested in studying, we would utilize different levels of analysis. We would use *micro* for interpersonal and local organizations, *meso* for larger organizations and institutions, and *macro* for nations and the global community. At all times, however, we would notice the connections between the varying social groups. For example, using the social world model would help us to see that individuals are impacted by and can influence their classmates, their political party, their nation, and their global community.

The social world model also enables us to recognize persistent patterns that work to create disadvantages for certain groups in society, resulting in institutional discrimination (intentional or unintentional structural biases). For example, U.S. society functioned in such a way for over 200 years that there were no female Supreme Court justices before President Ronald Reagan appointed Sandra Day O'Connor in 1981. Sociologists, using the sociological eye, recognize that the long-standing all-male makeup of the Supreme Court was part of a larger pattern of sex discrimination. Some of the discrimination was deliberate and based on people's ideas about gender. Some of it was political, based on a calculation of how the public would respond to the nomination of a woman to such a post. Some of it even had to do with the fact that our culture tends to use similar language and ideas to describe both *leadership qualities* and *masculinity*. Thus, when people think of leadership, they tend to associate it with the qualities that men often

bring to the table (Schein 2001).³ Social science research on the connections among gender roles, socialization, and sex discrimination, such as Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which shattered the myth that women could only find fulfillment as wives and homemakers, became part of public knowledge and was used to make the case for the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Ultimately, this movement paved the way for a political environment conducive to the appointment of Sandra Day O'Connor and, eventually, Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Sonia Sotomayor.

Use of the sociological eye also helps efforts to persuade government office holders to initiate social policies addressing social inequities. By looking beneath the surface of government operations, we can answer the following questions: To whom do office holders tend to respond the most? Why? How can we use this information to make sure that they respond to us? What social forces compelled Ronald Reagan, one of our most conservative presidents and not known as a women's rights advocate, to choose a female Supreme Court justice?

According to Randall Collins (1998), using the sociological eye is one of two "core commitments" of sociology. The second is *social activism*. Once we understand how society operates, we are obligated to participate actively in efforts to improve it. The sociological eye and social activism go hand-in-hand. The sociological eye helps us to become effective, engaged citizens. It is something we gain with training—much as muscles are gained with weight lifting and working out. The more you train yourself as a sociologist, the stronger your sociological eye and ability to practice effective and constructive social activism will become. This book is filled with examples of *sociologists in action*, those who have honed their sociological eye and successfully used their skills to create social change.

The Sociological Imagination

To understand how we might influence society, we must first understand how we are affected by it. C. Wright Mills (1967) described this ability as the "sociological imagination." When we begin to relate personal troubles to public issues, connecting our individual lives to what's happening in our society, we are using the sociological imagination.

For instance, both of the authors of this book experienced their parents divorcing. As individuals, this was a personal trouble for each of us. Using the sociological imagination, we see that we were a part of a cohort of American children who lived through the great rise in the divorce rate in the 1970s. If we had been children during the 1870s, our parents would most likely have remained married. However, the changes that our society went

through in the 1960s and 1970s (legal rights and protections for women that enabled more women to exit relationships, the decline of religiosity, cost of living increases that required more women to join the workforce, etc.) resulted in an increase in the divorce rate and, in turn, our own parents' divorces. Our personal troubles (the divorces of our parents) were directly related to a public issue (the societywide rise in the divorce rate).

Today, one of us is having a difficult time finding clothes for her young daughters that do not resemble those in Paris Hilton's closet. As a mother, she's horrified that anyone would expect little girls to wear such skimpy outfits (particularly *her* little girls!). As a sociologist, she can look at a sample of clothing stores and advertisements in the United States and quickly realize that her experience is part of a societywide pattern of sexualizing girls—even very young girls. She can then start to research why a society like ours, with such a long history of public activism around “standards of moral decency,” is so consistent—almost aggressive—in the sexualizing of girls. One hypothesis she might test is that this social behavior is related to the relative absence of mothers in the highest positions of fashion design and marketing. If she were to discover this to be true, she could use her findings to work for social change, trying to make these workplaces more open and inviting for fashion designers and marketers who are mothers.

One of the functions of sociology, as C. Wright Mills (1959/2000) defined it, should be to “translate personal troubles into public issues” (p. 187). Once you start using your sociological imagination and looking at the world through the sociological eye and the social world model, it's impossible not to notice the connections between ourselves as individuals and larger societal patterns. Consider the kind of job you hope to get after leaving college. Will you make an annual salary or an hourly wage? Will you have full health care coverage, or will you live without insurance and hope for the best? And if you get a “good” job, will your good fortune depend somehow on the fact that others do not have what you seek? Are the private troubles of sweatshop workers around the world connected to a global public problem?

Sweatshops are production sites where workers face near-slavery conditions with few or no protections from unsafe work environments or arbitrary punishments, and where they work at pay rates that are less than what one needs for basic survival. Sweatshop jobs do not come with insurance, sick days, retirement plans, or protection against arbitrary termination. On the surface, colleges and sweatshops seem to have nothing to do with one another. However, if you look underneath the surface (or, perhaps, at what you or your classmates are wearing), you may see a connection. The students at Duke University did: When they learned of the horrible sweatshop conditions in which most of their Duke-labeled clothes were being manufactured,

they mobilized and established a United Students Against Sweatshops group on campus. Their efforts, and those of several administrators at Duke (particularly the director of Duke Store Operations), sparked a campuswide discussion about sweatshops and the university's responsibility to ensure that clothing with a Duke label is "sweat-free." In 1997, Duke was the first institution of higher education in the United States to adopt a code of conduct mandating that the apparel companies with which they do business must submit to independent monitoring of the conditions in their factories. The following year, Duke established an independent Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) to assist in the enforcement of the codes of conduct established between colleges and universities and those who manufacture clothes for them.⁴ As of 2009, a total of 186 institutions of higher education have joined the movement sparked by Duke students and have become WRC affiliates.⁵

Sociology and the Critical Consumption of Information

In addition to having a trained sociological eye and making use of the sociological imagination, sociologists are informed and critical consumers of the barrage of information coming at us from all directions. Sociological research methods guide how we conduct research and how we interpret information relayed by others. By understanding how good research is done, we can evaluate the information disseminated throughout society and know what news sources are trustworthy. These skills help us in our efforts to both understand and change society. In Chapter 3, we outline in greater detail how sociological research methods can be used in this way.

Sociology and Democracy

Through reading this book and carrying out the exercises within it, you will learn how to look beneath the surface of social events, connect personal troubles to public issues, and know what information sources are trustworthy. You can then use these sociological tools to strengthen our society, make our nation more democratic, and work toward ensuring the rights and well-being of people all around the world. Although democracy is defined in different ways by a multitude of scholars, all point out that it is a system of governance that instills state power in citizenship rather than in government. This book shows how sociology can enable citizens (like you!) to become knowledgeable, active, and effective participants in our democratic society.

Exercise 1.1**How Is Higher Education Related to Democracy?**

If you live in a democracy, then you have inherited certain social obligations. What do you think they are? Is voting one of them? How about going to college? Think about the connection between democracy and higher education and answer the following questions:

1. What do you think is the purpose of higher education?
2. Why did you decide to go to college?
3. Do you think your college education will help you become a better citizen? Why or why not?
4. Now go to the Campus Compact Web page at www.compact.org/resources-for-presidents/presidents-declaration-on-the-civic-responsibility-of-higher-education and read the "Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education."
5. Did your answer to Question 1 relate to the presidents' description of the purpose of public higher education? Why do you think it did or did not?
6. Why is an educated public necessary for a strong democratic society?
7. Is a public higher education attainable for all Americans? Why or why not? If not, what are the ramifications of this situation for our democracy? How can you, using what your sociological eye has uncovered, work to make public higher education more attainable and realizable for more people?

Exercise 1.2**Walking Billboards**

You occupy many *social roles* in your life: You are a student; somebody's friend; somebody's child; and maybe you are a parent, sibling, employee, teammate, boss, neighbor, girlfriend/boyfriend, or mentor. To many thousands of companies out there, your main role is that of *consumer*. How do apparel companies market themselves, specifically, to men, women, and different racial/ethnic groups? How do members of each of these groups act as "walking billboards" for the apparel companies that make the clothing they wear?

Next time you are in one of your other classes, note the following:

1. How many students are there? How many are male and how many are female?
2. How many of each sex are wearing visible product or company logos on their clothing, including footwear, baseball caps, etc.? (Include yourself in your answers.)
3. Are there any logos that occur more than once throughout the class?
4. Are there any logos or brands that are considered “in” on your campus?
5. Using your newly trained “sociological eye,” analyze the results you have gathered. What institutional and societal forces might be at work? Do you notice any specific trends along race or gender lines? Do people from certain sex or racial/ethnic groups, teams, or cliques exhibit trends in their dress? How about the faculty? Do you detect any trends among your teachers? What does all of this tell you about consumerism, values, norms, and the culture of your campus?

Exercise 1.3

What's the Connection Between College Students and Sweatshops?

1. Watch clips of the online video *Behind the Labels* from the Human Rights Video Project at www.humanrightsproject.org/vid_detail.php?film_id=1&asset=clip.
2. Determine if your campus belongs to the Fair Labor Association (FLA). You can find this out at www.fairlabor.org/fla_affiliates_d1.html or the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) at www.workersrights.org/about/as.asp.
3. If your campus does not belong to FLA or WRC, find out what vendors your campus bookstore uses to obtain the clothes it sells.
4. Ask the campus bookstore manager if he or she is aware of the conditions under which the vendors' employees work.
5. Do some research to find information about the vendors. The United Students Against Sweatshops' Sweatfree Campus Campaign Web site that

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you can access through www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org is one useful site. You should also check out the Web sites for the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre at www.business-humanrights.org/Categories/Individualcompanies and Green America's Responsible Shopper at www.greenamericatoday.org/programs/responsibleshopper.

6. Listen to the following stories on NPR: "Student Protests" at www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1127377 and "Made in a Sweatshop? Clues for Consumers" at www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=17358785.
7. What did you learn from these stories that can help you determine actions you and your college might take regarding the use of sweatshop labor?
8. Write a four-page report on the results of your research. Be sure to make clear the connection between campus consumerism and the workers who make the apparel sold in the campus bookstore.

Extra Credit: Find out where your school's sports teams get their jerseys, and repeat the exercises above, or find out where your Community Service Office gets its jerseys and repeat the exercises above.

Exercise 1.4

Worried About the Increasingly High Cost of Tuition?

You are not alone. According to the College Board (2007, 2009), *after adjusting for inflation*, from 1997–1998 to 2007–2008, tuition and fees increased by 54% at 4-year state colleges and universities, 17% at 2-year colleges, and 33% at 4-year private institutions. In 2008–2009, the average cost for tuition and fees was \$25,143 (up 5.9% from 2007–2008) at private 4-year colleges, \$6,585 (up 6.4% from 2007–2008) at 4-year public institutions, and \$2,402 (up 4.7% from 2007–2008) at public 2-year institutions.

1. How would strategies to deal with the increase in tuition vary depending on whether it is viewed as (a) a personal trouble or (b) a public issue?
2. What are some of the actions you could take to convince state legislators to increase funding for public higher education in your state?

3. Choose one of the actions you've listed in Question 2 that is a manageable action for you to take. Now, carry out the plan you devised and write a report that describes (a) what you did and (b) the outcome of your actions. Note that you might have to wait a while to complete (b), so you should start (a) right away.

SOCIOLOGIST IN ACTION: JOE BANDY

In recent decades, changes in the global economy have presented momentous possibilities and problems for everyone in the developing and developed world. On the one hand, greater transnational flows of capital and technology have opened some opportunities for economic development. On the other, the global economy faces persistent inequalities, economic instability, and environmental crisis, bringing great suffering and protest. Joe Bandy's research has addressed these complexities and has sought to engage with working people and their social movements to arrive at effective solutions to the worst of these impacts. This work has taken place in two very different settings. One is northern Mexico's export processing zones where he has studied workers' movements to ensure labor rights. The other is the rapidly changing economy of the communities surrounding Maine's North Woods, which reveal many class-based conflicts around development and natural resource use. In both settings, he has used participatory action methods to help guarantee his research is relevant to both scholarly sociology and the efforts of working people as they attempt to address social problems. His work has been published widely in journals and books, and he has edited a book with Jackie Smith, *Coalitions Across Borders* (Bandy and Smith 2004).

In his teaching at Bowdoin College, he has encouraged students to be publicly engaged in important social issues through community-based research projects. To date, Bandy has led 50 different community research projects in a variety of courses on environmental injustice, class inequality, and poverty, in addition to independent studies and honors projects. Through these projects, students have had the opportunity to conduct original research designed in a collaborative process with faculty, students, and a community organization. The projects typically have studied some dimension of a social problem or policy, yielding information that will assist the organization to better understand and respond to the community's needs.

For example, two groups of students in two successive offerings of his course "Class, Labor, and Power" worked with Tedford Housing in Brunswick, Maine, to conduct a local public opinion survey regarding homelessness, which assisted Tedford in orienting itself more effectively to public concerns regarding housing policy. One overarching finding was that the local public, while sympathetic to

(Continued)