



SOCIOLOGY

The United States

in a Global Community



Ferrante

FOURTH EDITION

SOCIOLOGY

The United States

JOAN
Ferrante

NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY



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SOCIOLOGY

*The United States
in a Global Community*

To my mother,

Annalee Taylor Ferrante

and in memory of my father,

Phillip S. Ferrante

(March 1, 1926–July 8, 1984)

Preface

As a professor who teaches undergraduates every semester, I am constantly reminded of our shared mission—to find the best way to introduce students to the discipline of sociology and to help them see that sociological concepts and theories are powerful tools for thinking about any issue. My research and writing are guided by the assumption that the introduction to sociology course must be an eye-opening experience that challenges readers to see their world in a new light. I will try to explain how this textbook offers such an experience.

Key Features of This Textbook

First, students will learn from this textbook that sociology offers a coherent perspective for analyzing any social event or issue. To illustrate this I use the concepts and theories covered in each chapter to address a central question or theme. For example, in Chapter 7, “Social Organizations,” I present the same concepts and theories covered in the mainstream introduction to sociology textbooks but instead of using an encyclopedia-like overview, I weave concepts and theories together to analyze the well-known organization McDonald’s, a U.S.-based multinational corporation with operations in 111 countries. I use the concepts and theories to specifically show how this organization coordinates the activities of over 1 million employees in corporate offices and franchises across the globe to serve an estimated 38 million customers per day or 14 billion customers a year in 111 countries. McDonald’s achieves this by not only coordinating its employees’ actions but also the activities of millions of people employed by the meat, potato, produce, bread, and condiment suppliers.

Second, students are exposed to *meaningful* examples to illustrate concepts and theories. This is the only way to grab the students’ interest and convince them that sociology is relevant to their lives. Just like any mainstream textbook, this textbook covers the ideas of

people considered important to the discipline’s development, such as Marx, Durkheim, Weber, DuBois, Martineau, and others. But it also is obligatory to show why ideas that are decades to centuries old have survived the test of time and are still relevant today. One such idea was voiced by W. E. B. DuBois in 1903 when he wrote about the “strange meaning of being ‘black’ in America at the dawning of the 20th century.” This phrase is brought to life when readers learn that DuBois’ interest in this concept was surely affected by his being both American-born and of Dutch, French, and African ancestry. Yet DuBois has always been labeled a “black” sociologist, and no one thinks to question why he is not labeled as a Dutch, French, or an American one. Student voices are used throughout the text to clarify ideas even further. For example, one student writes about “the strange meaning of being black”: “I can’t be anything but what my skin color tells people I am. I am ‘black in America’ because I look ‘black.’ It does not matter that my family has a complicated biological heritage and that I am mixture of Cherokee, French, and African descent.”

Third, like most mainstream textbooks, this textbook addresses issues central to American society. Not ignored, however, is the fact that the United States is part of a global community. I cannot pretend that people in the United States interact only with those inside its borders. I cannot act as if problems such as unemployment, inequality, disease, and illegal drug use can be understood and solved by reference only to domestic factors. I cannot forget that the United States has the world’s most powerful and diverse economy; that it has a military presence in at least 140 countries; or that it especially known around the world for its entertainment-related exports (films, television programs, videos, radio programming, and recorded music). Finally, I cannot pretend that the individual biographies of those who have come to live in the United States are unaffected by events and processes in foreign locations. Simply consider the number of people in the United States who are

descendants of immigrants who crossed paths with native-born people or other immigrants to produce offspring. The offsprings' existences depended on events in one or more countries "pushing" their parents together.

Because the United States is connected to and affected by its place in a global community, sociological concepts and theories are used to explore its global place. Specifically discussed are the transfer of labor-intensive manufacturing operations out of the United States to countries such as Mexico (Chapter 2); the meaning of and explanations for the U.S. trade deficit with Japan (Chapter 3); the influence of culture, especially as it relates to those influenced by more than one culture such as Korean students studying in the United States and U.S. servicemen and servicewomen stationed in South Korea (Chapter 4); the socialization mechanisms by which long-standing ethnic conflicts are passed from one generation to the next (Chapter 5); the connection between the HIV/AIDS problem and a complex set of intercontinental, international, and intrasocietal interactions (Chapter 6); changing conceptions of what constitutes conformity and deviance in two societies (Chapter 8); stratification systems and the massive effort it takes to dismantle inequality (Chapter 9); the U.S. system of racial classification as it compares with Germany's system (Chapter 10); the distinction between sex and gender and the role gender plays in affecting life chances in the United States and in American Samoa (Chapter 11); the political and economic systems of the largest and most diverse economy in the world (Chapter 12); the demographic events that shape the structure of family life in the United States and Brazil (Chapter 13); the U.S. system of public education and its standing in the international community (Chapter 14); the ways religion is and has been used to justify the best and worst behaviors (Chapter 15); and the Internet as a tool for connecting people on a global scale (Chapter 16).

You may wonder why the global emphasis is listed third especially when many consider it the key feature distinguishing my textbook from others. I do this purposely because I consider the other two features—(1) the coordinated and integrated presentation of sociological concepts and theories and (2) meaning and memorable examples—as more critical. At first glance the global nature of this book may seem intimidating to students, but I think sociology professors underestimate their familiarity with global issues and their knowledge of the countries covered in this text. Consider the emphasis on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire) in Chapter 6 (Social Interac-

tion and the Social Construction of Reality). The chapter is really not so much about the Congo but about larger social issues with which any sociologist is already familiar. I simply use the Congo as a vehicle for showing how sociological concepts and theories related to interaction and reality construction help us answer an important question: In light of the fact that the earliest sample of HIV-infected blood is an unidentified sample taken in 1959 and stored in a Congo blood bank, how is it that AIDS has grown from a few cases to a monumental health problem in the United States and around the globe? It is obvious that the transmission of HIV is connected to a complex set of intimate interactions (intimate enough to allow for the exchange of bodily fluids) between people from different nations. All sociologists know that the forces behind global-scale interactions are related to changes in the division of labor, colonization, industrialization, and to specific inventions such as the jet engine and advances in preserving and storing blood products. Similarly, all sociologists are familiar with the principles of reality construction and would not be surprised to learn that the unidentified blood sample is not necessarily that of a "black" African. The simple fact that the Congo was a Belgian colony opens up the possibility that the blood sample belonged to a "white" European.

An organizing principle is present in all chapters. If instructors or readers feel, however, that they need more information about the country emphasized, they can refer to the study guide, the instructor's manual, or to the Wadsworth Sociology homepage: <http://sociology.wadsworth.com>.

Several additional features help achieve the goals outlined above. Each chapter opens with a "Why Focus on" discussion as a way of showing how the chapter emphasis offers a good vehicle for integrating the concepts and theories covered in that chapter. For example, Chapter 2 (Theoretical Perspectives) opens with "Why Focus on U.S. Manufacturing Operations in Mexico?" In Chapter 2 special attention is given to Mexico because, although the United States shares a 1,952-mile border with Mexico (which millions cross each year to shop and visit vacation spots), most Americans know little about what binds the two countries together. In truth, few people know that 2,800 U.S.-headquartered corporations have manufacturing operations on the Mexican side of the border or understand their economic significance. The three major sociological perspectives offer us quite different ways to assess the relationship between Mexico and the United States

and to put what we hear, read, or experience about Mexico into a broader context. In addition, the three perspectives offer some constructive ways to think about not just this relationship but also a larger global trend: the transfer of labor-intensive manufacturing or assembly operations out of the United States to countries with lower wage rates.

Each chapter also contains “U.S. in Perspective” boxes that further illustrate the place of the United States in the global community. In Chapter 1, for example, a box titled “Top 20 Global Grossers of ’98” ranks U.S. films in terms of gross worldwide incomes. Students are reminded that the United States dominates the world’s film industry. Furthermore, U.S. films offer a vehicle by which people in other countries gain impressions of what life is like in the United States. Students are asked to study the list and determine what impressions of the United States someone might acquire from watching these films.

In each chapter, key concepts are boxed and highlighted on the pages where they are first introduced. This reinforces my goal of showcasing sociology as a discipline offering a powerful vocabulary for thinking about virtually any event or situation. I have also included Internet exercises at the end of each chapter. URL addresses were included in the Third Edition but most of them changed even as the book went to press. In this edition, I chose instead to give enough information so that students can search for the relevant Web sites.

New to This Edition

A number of *major* changes in the Fourth Edition strengthen the way the discipline of sociology is introduced and strengthen coverage of the United States as part of a global community.

- Chapter 1 includes new sections “Why Study Sociology?” and “The Importance of a Global Perspective.” The “why-study-sociology?” change is important because students, especially students thinking of majoring in sociology, are often asked to explain why sociology is a useful area of study. Understanding the meaning of a global perspective also is important because although *global* is a word students hear daily (e.g., global economy, global airlines, the Internet as a global connector, global problems, the U.S. as a global leader, global competition), it nevertheless is a vague term in need of elaboration.
- In Chapter 7, “Social Organizations,” the emphasis has changed from “The Multinational Corporation in India” to “McDonald’s, a U.S.-Based Multinational Corporation with Operations in 111 Countries.” In previous editions I gave emphasis to the U.S.-headquartered multinational corporation Union Carbide. I had chosen Union Carbide as a way of exploring the organizational failures behind the largest industrial accident in world history. That accident occurred in 1984 in Bhopal, India, and although the case against Union Carbide has yet to be resolved, few students remember this event. The focus on McDonald’s (its organizational successes and failures) highlights an organization with which almost every student is familiar.
- The emphasis of Chapter 11, “Gender,” has changed from “the former Yugoslavia” to “American Samoa.” It made sense to drop coverage of the former Yugoslavia because it is now four distinct countries. Using American Samoa as a replacement gives coverage to one of the many “geographic spaces” designated as a U.S. territory. American Samoa is a particularly good choice because, as we will learn, it has been used as a point of reference and comparison for thinking about gender in the United States since the 1920s.
- Chapter 12, “Economics and Politics: With Emphasis on the United States,” is new to the Fourth Edition. Although economic and political issues are covered in other chapters, this chapter offers a coherent overview of these key institutions and gives special attention to the United States, the country with the world’s largest and most diverse economy and the country considered to be the world’s only “superpower.”
- One of the new features to this edition for which I am most proud is the inclusion of student voices throughout. In the sociology classes that I teach I ask students to respond in writing to the concepts and examples I present. Many times their responses open my eyes to applications I would never have considered on my own. As an example, consider one student’s association upon learning that social facts are ideas, feelings, and ways of behaving that possess the remarkable property of existing outside the individual; that is, social facts do not originate with the people experiencing them. “After hearing this information about social facts, I remembered my experiences while

traveling in Africa. In the United States it is typically unacceptable for two men to hold hands; immediately the men would be labeled homosexual. I spent some time in Ghana, Africa, several years ago and one of the first cultural differences I noticed was that men, including the men I was with, hold hands. This cultural difference definitely hit home when one day one of the men I was with took my hand as we walked. In order not to offend him, I followed through with this until an appropriate opportunity allowed me to disengage our hands. Even though I was in a country where this was perfectly acceptable, I still felt extremely uneasy with this tradition.”

There are too many less dramatic changes to list here, of course. But I can say that I revised each chapter with an eye toward improving its clarity, updating information, and replacing outdated examples. As a case in point, since the publication of the Third Edition, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission has completed the bulk of its investigations into the human rights’ violations that occurred under apartheid. The South African government, under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a vehicle for dealing with the country’s past. The postapartheid government had taken the position that dealing with the past is uncomfortable and painful but it is essential for building a new future and that all South Africans, especially those who benefited, must confront the reality of apartheid, express remorse, and commit to a new multiracial system. Thus in Chapter 9 we consider the lessons the United States might learn from South Africa’s decision to confront its past head on. As with this chapter, every other chapter contains an important change of this nature.

Ancillary Materials

The *Study Guide*, which I also wrote, contains study questions, concept applications, applied research questions, Internet sites, InfoTrac College Edition sources, and movie recommendations. There is also a Web site that offers an interactive learning tool, including on-line quizzes and chapter-by-chapter links to related Internet sites. Visitors to the site are encouraged to participate in ongoing discussions on current hot topics in sociology and to take advantage of the additional sociology and Internet-related resources in Virtual Society, the Wadsworth Sociology Resource Center (<http://sociology.wadsworth.com>).

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ments, and statistics required to revise and update this book. I formulate the questions to guide the research; they search for the answers. Sometimes the searching is like trying to find a needle in a haystack. The working relationship I have with Leigh and Michael is one of the most satisfying, rewarding, and enjoyable aspects of my life as a professor (and I might add, there are many other rewarding aspects to my profession).

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