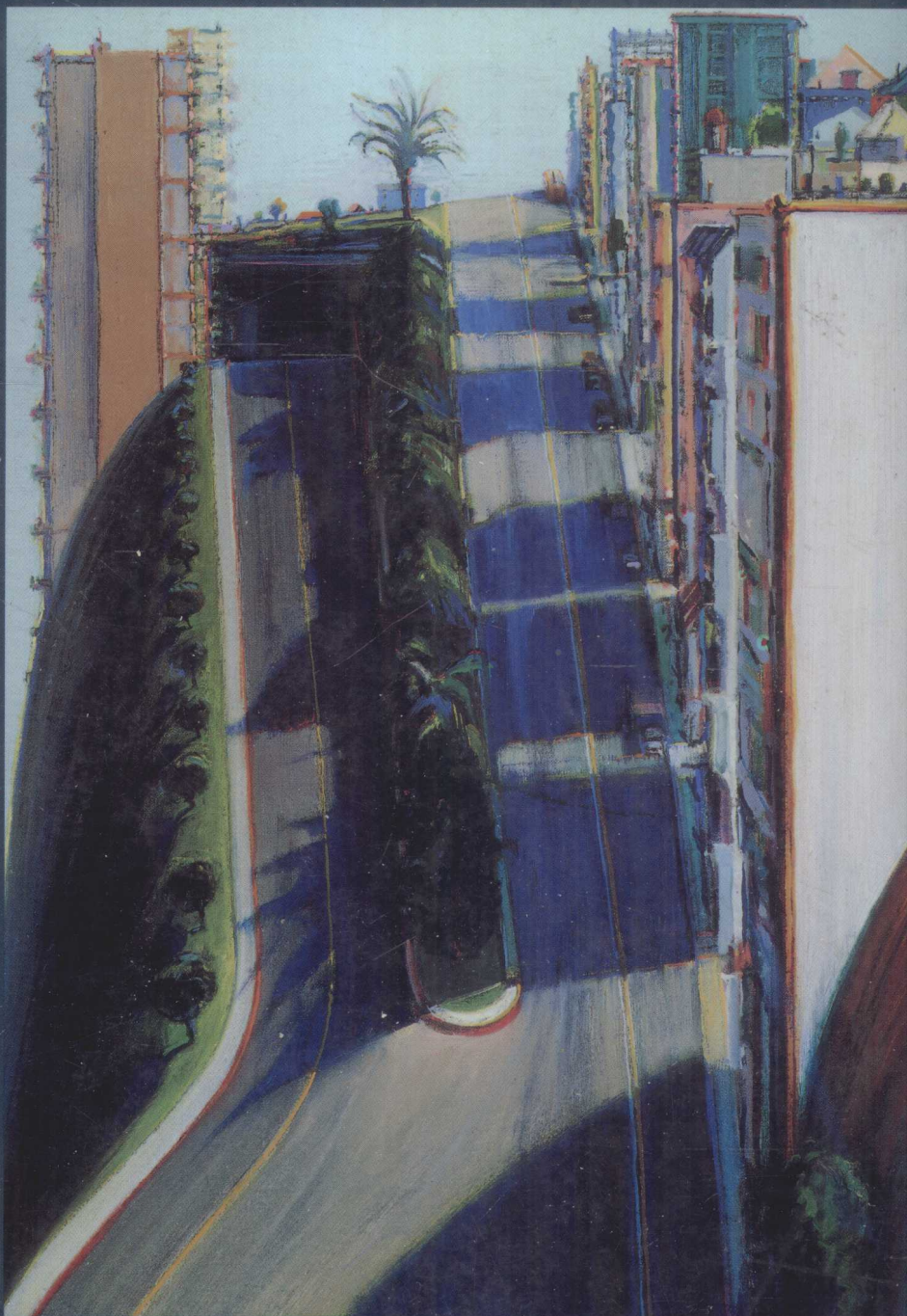


SOCIOLOGICAL IDEAS

Third Edition



William C. Levin

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Sociological Ideas

CONCEPTS AND APPLICATIONS

Third Edition

William C. Levin

Bridgewater State College

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*For Alice, Dan, Doug, and Joann,
my brothers and sisters; and for Flea and
Jack, who are not, but might just as well
have been.*

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PREFACE

Since publication of the second edition of *Sociological Ideas*, I have had dozens of contacts with other teachers of introductory sociology, either by mail or in conversation at regional and national meetings. Their ideas about teaching this first course have led to a variety of changes to the readings and the material on data collection for this third edition. I want to thank them for their generous help and for their confirmation of an idea I was taught early in my professional training—that we are richer as a field for our differences. Though the overall approach of the text seems to work well for students at a wide range of schools, it appears that no two instructors use this book the same way or even present the chapters in the same order. I hope that the changes in this edition improve on the previous editions without changing the book's character or usefulness.

The Concepts Approach

Sociology is an abstract discipline that uses the basic concepts of the field as building blocks. Once understood, these concepts have wide application to the analysis of social behavior. Each chapter (called a concept) in *Sociological Ideas* focuses on one of these basic sociological concepts and on its related ideas. This approach is suited to the conceptual nature of the discipline and has the advantage of giving the instructor the freedom to use his or her special interests and expertise to enliven and clarify the material. In addition, the concepts approach allows more time and money to be spent on additional materials in an introductory course. Inexpensive paperbacks, reprints, special readings, and other sources of information can provide the current, topical, and

regionally pertinent materials normally made prohibitive by large, expensive introductory texts.

Organization

Each concept consists of three parts: (1) Definition, (2) Illustration, and (3) Application. This organization is intended to teach the concepts not only by explaining them but also by showing how they have been used by sociologists and how they can be used by students. Concepts that might otherwise be mere abstractions to be memorized for exams become useful tools for the analysis of human behavior.

Definitions

The first part of each concept is a definition of the concept and its related ideas. For example, the discussion of role includes treatment of role sets, role conflict, and role strain. Definition sections emphasize the work of the classic theorists and researchers associated with specific concepts. Throughout, the writing is as direct and free of unnecessary jargon as possible. In the Definition sections, the key concepts printed in **bold-face** are also briefly defined in a Glossary at the end of the text.

Illustrations

Following the Definition section is an Illustration of the concept. Illustrations are intended to provide examples of how specific concepts have been used in social research. Because original studies are often difficult for the beginning student to understand or are too long to fit into the demanding schedule of an introductory course, the original research studies have been paraphrased and written in the style and at the level of the Definition sections.

Applications

The last part of each concept is an Application section, which gives students firsthand experience in using the concepts in research. Employing a variety of research techniques, such as participant observation and survey and content analysis, the Applications provide step-by-step instructions for the collection and analysis of data by the student. In this way, each student is given the tools to independently conduct small-scale studies, in which various concepts are central. The data analysis sheets from these studies are perforated so they may be turned in to the instructor as assignments.

Applications are designed to be completed by students with minimal assistance from instructors. As a result, the concepts become more meaningful and concrete to students because conducting empirical re-

search on their own shows the concepts "at work." In practice, not all of the twenty-one Applications (one for each concept) can reasonably be assigned in one semester. In choosing which Applications to assign, instructors can tailor selections to their own areas of interest and expertise, special interests of students, and events of current and regional concern. In addition, some Applications, such as the observation of the workings of formal organizations (Concept 15), may be extended to cover several weeks, or even an entire semester.

What's New in the Third Edition

Those data collection exercises (Applications) that presented some problems for students or instructors have been replaced. I also have broadened the range of sociological methods that sociologists actually use and have taken into account the varying characteristics of students who use this book, such as differences by age, region, and campus residency. A number of the summarized readings (Illustrations) have been replaced by studies with more recent data on the same topic, or by studies of more timely topics. The replacement of Illustrations was also influenced by a teaching issue that has come up repeatedly over the years: what sorts of readings, and at what level, should be assigned in introductory courses.

In working on each edition of this book, I have had many conversations about the importance of using original readings in an introductory course. (This subject also starts lively discussions among my friends in other disciplines. We sociologists are hardly alone.) Clearly, there is great value in having students read original sociological work, and no summary can capture the richness and complexity of the original work on which it is based. However, given the different characteristics of introductory students across the country, how much of the original work can the readers grasp, especially when they have, by definition, no training in the methods and vocabulary of the field? In addition, unless we are willing to include an unedited collection of original readings within a text, we authors face an impossible sampling problem. What portion of published studies should be included to maintain the meaning of the original?

My approach is to rely on summaries of original studies in the text and also to assign some carefully chosen original material that students have already read in summarized form. Thus, new summarized readings for the third edition of *Sociological Ideas* have been taken from sources that are likely to be available in any college library in the country. Although a great deal of fine work is published in smaller, more specialized journals, the research summarized here is typically from journals such as the *American Sociological Review* and *Social Science Quarterly*. After reading a given summary of a published article, students can go on to read the original, which is referenced at the beginning of each Illustration section.

Finally, in preparing this edition of *Sociological Ideas*, I have included discussion of a range of methodological issues not already covered in the chapters on quantitative and qualitative methods in sociology. For example, the data collection Applications include brief treatments of issues such as content and secondary analysis, spuriousness, multiple regression, use of census data, and operationalization of variables. Discussions of such topics are not comprehensive; they are meant to introduce each issue and explain it adequately to allow the reader to understand the research in which it is used. To help instructors find where these methodological topics are discussed, a separate methods index has been included.

Acknowledgments

I would like to give credit to those people who have contributed so importantly to the completion of this book. Careful reviews of the manuscript were provided for the first edition by Jeanne Ballantine, Wright State University; Walter Clark, St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley; James Dedic, Fullerton College; Vaughan Grisham, University of Mississippi; Michael Leming, St. Olaf College; and Craig Little, State University of New York at Cortland; for the second edition by Robert J. Dunne, Colorado College; Douglas McDowell, Pennsylvania State University, Ogontz Campus; James Owens, University of Idaho; and Robert E. Wood, Rutgers University; and for the third edition by Peter Adler, University of Denver; C. Dan Danou, University of Wisconsin Center, Marshfield; Barbara Johnson, Augsburg College; George T. Martin Jr., Montclair State College; Ted P. McNeilsmith, Green River Community College; Harriet Miller, Framingham State College; and Kathryn Talley, North Central College. The suggestions made in these reviews led, in large measure, to the overall shape of the final manuscript, and in many instances, to the specific material included in it.

Lastly, I would like to thank those friends and colleagues whose knowledge, advice, and support have been given so generously. I can't count the times I called on friends with questions about a reference, the date of a film, the name of a character in fiction, or one of a thousand other bits of hard fact or whimsical trivia. I am particularly grateful, then, for the friendship and assistance of Charles Angell, Arnie Arluke, Evelyn Brodtkin, Walter Carroll, Ratna Chandrasekhar, Jackie Crews, Charles Fanning, Curtiss Hoffman, Don Johnson, Carol Kryzanek, Mike Kryzanek, Flea Levin, Jack Levin, Joyce Leung, Howard London, Betty Mandell, Joyce Marcus, Jim Scroggs, Janet Stubbs, Phil Sylvia, and Cynthia Webber. And to my friends and colleagues at Wadsworth, Andrew, Bill, Marla, Serina, Sheryl, and Vicki, thanks again.

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“We murder to dissect.”

WORDSWORTH

Introduction

I was one very bored nine-year-old on that rainy Saturday morning, and my grandfather's pocket watch seemed to beg for investigation, so I pried it open. For as long as I could remember it had hung from a hook in the back of my father's bureau, its ticking so quiet I had to lean in to hear it. But now, with its intricate innards exposed, the magic of its operation would be made plain to me. With care, I placed the parts in a long row in the exact order in which I had removed them (the better to reconstruct the movement later). Tiny screws and pins so small they stuck to my skin, toothed wheels, and thin mounting plates all lifted out so cleanly they seemed to have agreed to fit together just so. As I pulled it apart, it all seemed so sensible. Watching it tick and whirr, I found the shape and interplay of the parts perfectly obvious, so very normal. It stopped running when the first screw was out.

It is still hanging in my parents' home, but in the living room now. My mother arranged the more attractive parts, the case, the front, the engraved back, some gears, and some jeweled pins, on a background of dark blue velvet and framed it all behind glass. Very pretty, I think, but certainly not a watch anymore.

You might think I would have learned my lesson, but as you will see in this book, I'm still at it. Only now, instead of a pocket watch, it's society that I'm pulling apart. And, like the watch, once dissected, it may seem hard to fit together again even mentally. It is true that “we murder to dissect.” But, as students of anatomy, literature, economics, and a host of other fields can confirm, there seems to be no other way.