

theory · homelessness · **CHANGE** · family · methods · hunger · justice · education · racism · civic engagement · violence · social movements · diversity · pollution · **POSITIVE IMPACT** · child labor · culture · **TRANSFORM** · discrimination · sexuality · globalization · public sociology · crime · community · sociological imagination · war · challenge · economy · inequality · solutions · ethnicity · unemployment · **INSPIRE** · environment · volunteer · aids · **LEARN** · poverty · theory · homelessness · change · family · methods · hunger · justice · education · racism · civic engagement · violence · **SOCIAL MOVEMENTS** · diversity · pollution · positive impact · child labor · culture · transform · discrimination · sexuality · globalization · **PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY** · crime · **COMMUNITY** · sociological imagination · war · challenge · economy · inequality · solutions · ethnicity · unemployment · inspire · environment · **VOLUNTEER** · aids · learn · poverty · theory · homelessness · change · family · methods · hunger · justice · education · racism · civic engagement · violence · social movements · diversity · pollution · positive impact · child labor · culture · transform · discrimination · sexuality · globalization · public

2ND EDITION

SOCIOLOGISTS

IN *Action*

SOCIOLOGY, SOCIAL CHANGE,
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



EDITORS

Kathleen Odell Korgen

Jonathan M. White

Shelley K. White



2
EDITION

SOCIOLOGISTS IN *Action*

SOCIOLOGY, SOCIAL CHANGE, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

EDITORS

Kathleen Odell Korgen

Wilfrid Laurier University

Jonathan M. White

Bentley University

Shelley K. White

Worcester State University



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

FOR INFORMATION:

SAGE Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

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

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

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Acquisitions Editor: David Repetto
Editorial Assistant: Lauren Johnson
Production Editor: Eric Garner
Copy Editor: Diane DiMura
Typesetter: Hurix Systems Pvt. Ltd.
Proofreader: Sally Jaskold
Indexer: Jeanne Busemeyer
Cover Designer: Gail Buschman
Marketing Manager: Erica DeLuca
Permissions Editor: Karen Ehrmann

Copyright © 2014 by SAGE Publications, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America.

A catalog record of this book is available from the Library of Congress.

978-1-4522-0311-9

This book is printed on acid-free paper.



13 14 15 16 17 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

2
EDITION

SOCIOLOGISTS IN *Action*

This book is dedicated with deep love and admiration to the memory of Eleanor D. and Allen D. Willard. We are forever grateful for the unwavering support you gave us, the pride you expressed in us, the dreamer you nurtured in us, the ways you challenged us to think more deeply, your gift for filling our gatherings with humor, the stories and heritage you shared so generously, your quiet appreciation, your gratitude for all of the gifts that life and love bring, and most particularly, for providing us with the most remarkable example of true, joyful, thankful, enduring love.

Sail on!

Acknowledgments

We are enormously grateful for the unwavering and enthusiastic support of David Repetto. As well as being an exceptionally gifted acquisitions editor, he is truly a great guy with whom it is wonderful to work. We know how fortunate we are to have him as our editor. We are also very appreciative of the organizational work, constant support, and guidance of our original editorial assistant, Maggie Stanley. Eric Garner, the production editor for the 2nd edition, also deserves our thanks and praise. Diane DiMura expertly copyedited the 2nd edition and it was a pleasure to work with her. It is always enjoyable to work with the SAGE team.

Shelley would like to thank her parents and siblings for their constant, loving support. I am also especially grateful to my nieces and nephews for keeping me playful even as I pursue my research and action on social injustices in the world. I am ever indebted to my grandparents for lending me the perspective and appreciation that long lives well lived afford. I also must thank my mentors who have supported and guided me on my path to understanding the marriage of scholarship and activism, including Charlie Derber, Eve Spangler, Bill Wiist, Pauline Hamel, Kris Heggenhougen, Monica Onyango, Bill Bicknell, Lucy Honig, and Bob Woods. I am also grateful to the many inspiring young activists I have met through Free The Children, who in many ways teach me more than I could ever teach them! Finally, I feel so fortunate that my life partner is also my partner in changing the world. Thank you, Jonathan, for supporting me and journeying with me every day!

Jonathan owes a special debt of gratitude to his mentors and colleagues Charlie Derber, Eve Spangler, David Karp, Gordie Fellman, Irv Zola, Morrie Schwartz, Karen Hansen, Sue Dargan, Lucille Lawless, Joe Bandy, Terry Arendell, Craig Kielburger, Marc Kielburger, Fintan Kilbride, and his students at Bridgewater State University for their incredible guidance and support on his journey as a sociologist in action. I am especially grateful to my students and to the Free The Children and Me to We staff and youth,

past and present, who have and continue to inspire me with their deep commitment to social change and social justice. I am eternally grateful to my family for their constant support and unconditional love. Especially, I could never express deeply enough how lucky I feel to have my wife Shelley by my side as my best friend and partner in life. Thank you, Shelley, for inspiring me with your passion for social justice and equity, and for this incredible journey we are on together!

Kathleen is grateful to have earned her PhD in sociology at Boston College, where she learned that sociology can and should make a positive impact on the world. She thanks her family for their love, support, and patience. Mom, you will always be my #1 editor. Thanks for all you do. Julie and Jessica, the stories in this book will help you to understand more fully why your mom loves being a sociologist. You two make me so very proud to be your mom. Jeff, thanks for being such a wonderful motivator, source of inspiration, and all around incredible partner (and excellent dad).

Finally, we are enormously indebted to our contributors—an incredible array of inspiring Sociologists in Action, and gifted writers. They make us proud to be sociologists!

Introduction

Have you ever wondered . . .

- How you can make a positive impact on the world?
- What sociologists do and what *you* can do with a sociology degree?
- How you can use sociological tools to help create social change?
- Why some of the most amazing people are sociologists?

If so, you have started reading the right book! In the following pages, you will learn how sociologists are using sociological tools in a wide variety of social justice efforts in the United States and across the globe. In each chapter, inspiring sociologists share stories of how they have used sociology to understand and influence the world around them.

As outlined in the Table of Contents, the chapters cover the key topics in sociology courses. The discussion questions at the end of every chapter will spark interesting and nuanced discussions, grounded in the “real world” work of sociologists. We also have provided great web-based resources at the end of each chapter and on the *Sociologists in Action: Sociology, Social Change, and Social Justice* website for those who want to delve further into the topics covered.

As sociologists, we are always on the lookout for patterns and there are some key patterns that one can find right here in this book! As *public* sociologists, all of the sociologists in action featured in this book use sociological tools to make a tangible impact on society. They each fulfill what Randall Collins (1998) calls the two core commitments of sociology: developing and using the sociological eye and engaging in social activism. They (1) use their “sociological eyes” to see beneath the surface of society to notice and examine patterns of injustice *and* (2) actively confront and alleviate those injustices. All, too, use what C. Wright Mills (1959) described as the “sociological imagination” to connect personal troubles to public issues. Many describe in their pieces how their own experiences

with inequality made them notice patterns of inequality across society and become eager to use sociological tools to address them.

After recruiting the contributors for *Sociologists in Action*, the three editors of this book are more convinced than ever that many of the most amazing people in the world are, indeed, sociologists. We are sure that you will feel the same way after reading their stories. We also hope that you will become inspired to follow in their footsteps and become a Sociologist in Action yourself. Sociology is an exciting discipline that contains the tools for tackling many of the social issues facing us today. We know you will gain inspiration from the examples in this book of how sociology can be used for social change and social justice, and we urge you to use the sociological tools *you* are learning in your course to make a positive impact on society!

References

- Collins, R. 1998. The sociological eye and its blinders. *Contemporary Sociology*, 27(1), 2–7.
- Mill, C. W. 1959. *The sociological imagination*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	xi
Chapter 1 The Sociological Perspective	1
Cheryl Joseph, “Sociology: Promise and Potential Through Praxis”	2
Mayra Gómez, “Human Rights and the Sociological Imagination: How Sociologists Can Help Make the World a Better Place”	6
Judith Wittner, “Stand Up and Speak Out”	11
Georgette F. Bennett, “Getting Behind the Headlines and Going Where the Action Is: My Career as A Sociologist in Non-Academic Settings”	14
Discussion Questions	19
Resources	20
Chapter 2 Theory	21
Andrew Jolivet, “Critical Mixed-Race Studies: The Intersections of Identity and Social Justice”	22
Menah Pratt-Clarke, “Doing Sociology: Creating Equal Employment Opportunities”	26
Laura Nichols, “Using Sociology for College Success”	30
Discussion Questions	34
Resources	35
Chapter 3 Research Methods	36
Thomas L. Van Valey, “The Michigan Alcohol and Other Drugs School Survey”	37
Bruce Nissen, “Using Sociological Skills for Movements to Confront Power: The Genesis of the Research Institute on Social and Economic Policy (RISEP)”	41

Samuel R. Friedman, “Positive Deviance Research as a Way to Help People”	45
Discussion Questions	49
Resources	50
Chapter 4 Culture	51
Juliet Schor, “Academic as Social Entrepreneur: Creating Organizations for Social Change”	52
Corey Dolgon, “Excerpt From ‘The Diary of a Mad Social Scientist’”	56
Nilda Flores-González and Michael Rodríguez-Muñiz, “Youth Culture, Identity, and Resistance: Participatory Action Research in a Puerto Rican Barrio”	60
Discussion Questions	65
Resources	66
Chapter 5 Socialization	67
Michele Wakin, “Socialization, Stereotypes, and Homelessness”	68
Shelley White, “Reengaging Activism in the Socialization of Undergraduate Students”	73
Susan Guarino-Ghezzi, “Dangerous Behaviors? Police Encounters With Juvenile Gang Offenders”	78
Discussion Questions	82
Resources	83
Chapter 6 Deviant Behavior	84
Jack Levin, “Reducing Hate and Prejudice on Campus: A Sociologist’s Contributions”	86
David S. Kirk, “Using Evidence-Based Research to Inform Public Policy: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina”	90
Alex S. Vitale, “The Politics of Protest Policing”	95
Adina Nack, “From <i>Damaged Goods</i> to Empowered Patients”	99
Discussion Questions	104
Resources	105
Chapter 7 Social Movements	106
Ellen J. Kennedy, “ <i>Never Again</i> Must Mean <i>Never</i> ”	108
Mikaila Mariel Lemonik Arthur, “Change the World—Start at School”	112
Rob Benford, “A Campus Gun-Free Zone Movement”	117
Charles Derber, “Social Movements and Activist Sociology”	121
Discussion Questions	126
Resources	127

Chapter 8 Stratification and Social Class	128
Joe Bandy and Craig McEwen, "Housing and Homelessness in Maine: A Case of Public Sociology in Practice"	129
James D. Wright, "Relocating the Homeless—or Not!"	135
Jonathan White, "Sociology Is Action: Using Sociology for Children's Rights"	140
Discussion Questions	145
Resources	146
Chapter 9 Race and Ethnic Relations	147
C. N. Le, "Bridging the Campus and the Community: Blogging About the Asian American Experience"	149
Barbara Gurr, "The Responsibilities of Relationships: Using Sociology to Build Meaningful Alliances"	153
Mark Patrick George, "Putting Sociology to Work in Winnersville, USA"	157
David Cunningham, "Methods of Truth and Reconciliation"	162
Discussion Questions	167
Resources	168
Chapter 10 Sex, Gender, and Sexuality	169
Rebecca Plante, "Sex in Some Cities: Explorations of AIDS/HIV Education and Hooking Up"	171
Michael Kimmel, "A Public Sociology of Gender and Masculinity"	175
Shannon Elizabeth Bell, "The Southern West Virginia Photovoice Project: Community Action Through Sociological Research"	178
Susan Stall, "Getting the Message Out"	183
Discussion Questions	189
Resources	190
Chapter 11 Globalization and Immigration	191
Joe Bandy, with Elspeth Benard (Dennison), "Interracial Conflict and Attempts at Reconciliation in Auburn, Maine"	193
Becky Hsu, "How Culture Matters in Poverty Alleviation Efforts: Microcredit and Confucian Ideas in Rural China"	197
Jackie Smith, "Localizing International Human Rights: Engaging with the World Social Forum Process"	200
Irene Bloemraad, "Informed Debate in a Political Minefield"	206

Leah Schmalzbauer, “Community-Based Research and Immigrant Rights”	210
Discussion Questions	214
Resources	216
Chapter 12 Environmental Justice	217
(Hanna-) Andrea Rother, “Reducing Pesticide Exposure Risks: An Environmental Sociologist’s Role”	218
Lou Jacobson, “Using a Sociological Tool Kit to Make Energy Efficiency Happen”	223
David Naguib Pellow, “Activist Scholarship for Environmental Justice”	227
Daniel Faber, “The Sociology of Environmental Justice: Merging Research and Action”	232
Discussion Questions	237
Resources	238
Chapter 13 Social Institutions (Family, Economy)	240
Yvonne Vissing, “Sociological Advocacy for Children”	241
Patrick J. Carr and Maria J. Kefalas, “From Hollowing Out the Middle to Reimagining Small Towns”	245
Leslie Hossfeld, “‘Why Don’t We Do Something About It?’ Response to Job Loss in Rural Communities”	249
Discussion Questions	254
Resources	255
Chapter 14 Social Institutions, Continued (Education, Government, Religion)	256
Sigal Alon, “A Sociologist as a Social Seismographer: Understanding the Earthquake in Class Inequality in U.S. Higher Education”	258
Dadit Hidayat, Randy Stoecker, and Heather Gates, “Promoting Community Environmental Sustainability Using a Project-Based Approach”	263
John O’Brien and Besheer Mohamed, “Using Sociology to Counter Stereotypes: The Case of American Muslims”	269
Charity A. Schmidt, “Out of the Tower and Into the Capitol: How Sociology Students Helped Spark the Wisconsin Uprising”	273
Joan D. Mandle, “Democracy Matters: Giving Students a Political Voice”	277
Discussion Questions	281
Resources	283
Index	285
About the Editors	304

Chapter 1

The Sociological Perspective

In this chapter, four very different Sociologists in Action pieces provide examples of how the sociological perspective can be used to understand society and make a positive impact upon it. Each of the four stories illustrates the two core commitments of sociology, using the sociological eye to notice social patterns and utilizing social activism to address social issues. The authors also describe how they used their sociological imaginations to relate their personal experiences to larger social issues and to their work as sociologists.

Starting off this chapter with “Sociology: Promise and Potential Through Praxis,” Cheryl Joseph vividly describes how her childhood experience of temporarily moving to Los Angeles and falling from a comfortable working class to a lower-class lifestyle “forced [her] to remove the blinders of familiarity and look past a way of life [she] had assumed was normal.” This new perspective allowed her to start developing a sociological eye and notice patterns in society of which she had been unaware. It also gave her the drive to use her sociological imagination to critically analyze the world around her and to find ways to “put sociology into action” and address inequities in society.

In the second piece in this chapter, “Human Rights and the Sociological Imagination: How Sociologists Can Help Make the World a Better Place,” Mayra Gomez’s work as a human rights advocate illustrates how the tools and perspective of sociology can both illuminate and help efforts to alleviate injustice. Gomez uses her sociological background, to great effect, in her work with the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other human rights organizations. In doing so, she has helped create “concrete policy change” and a “more socially just world.”

“Stand Up and Speak Out,” Judith Wittner discusses how she enabled her students to “look beyond the information given out by news sources . . . to

question the motives of people in positions of authority, to learn why society operates as it does, and to *act* on it.” In ceding the traditional power of the professor in the classroom, she revealed that the individual “classroom experience . . . [is] part of a politics of knowledge affecting subordinate groups more generally.” She argues that such awareness “is a critical first step toward building a citizenry liberated from mainstream media’s control of political ideas and actions.”

In the final piece of this first chapter, Georgette Bennett shows how she has used sociological tools “as a change agent and ‘action’ sociologist” during the course of her life. Throughout her many successful careers, Bennett has utilized her sociological background to make innumerable important, positive impacts on our society. Her body of impressive work includes: helping to create the first sex crime unit (now popularized on “Law and Order: SVU”) and changing the systematic unequal treatment of women in the NYPD; successful careers in broadcast journalism, public relations, and marketing; and founding the Tannenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding. In every venue, Bennett has used “the unique tools of our trade to make an impact on the world.”

SOCIOLOGY: PROMISE AND POTENTIAL THROUGH PRAXIS

Cheryl Joseph

Notre Dame de Namur University, Belmont, California

Sociology professor Cheryl Joseph received her doctoral degree from Wayne State University in Detroit where she was born and raised. There, Dr. Joseph began her advocacy against racism, sexism, poverty, militarism, urban demise, and environmental degradation. Her 20-year position with a major airline taught her about corporate operations in the global economy, as well as different cultures throughout the world. A faculty member of Notre Dame de Namur University (NDNU) near San Francisco since 1988, her proudest contribution is the Animals in Human Society concentration that she created within the sociology major at NDNU. Dr. Joseph recently published *Dealing With Difficult People: It's a Zoo Out There* (2010) and contributed a chapter to *Teaching the Animal: Human-Animal Studies Across the Disciplines* (2010), edited by Margaret DeMello.

Until the age of 13 (in 1961), I lived in a comfortable working-class neighborhood of Detroit, surrounded by factory-working fathers and stay-at-home mothers with their flocks of postwar babies. Included in this lifestyle was a stellar educational system and excellent health care benefits made possible by the struggles of the labor union to which my dad belonged. All this changed suddenly, however, during what Dr. Phil might call a “defining moment.” My father, deadened by the stultifying effects of assembly-line work and lured by his brother’s offer of a new start as a small businessman, unceremoniously quit his job and uprooted the family to begin a seemingly promising life in Los Angeles, California.

After selling the family home and driving cross-country, we arrived in Los Angeles to begin our new lives. Regrettably, however, my uncle abruptly backed out of the deal immediately upon our arrival. This left my parents and me in an environment where we knew no one, had less than one year’s saving to live on, and had only my dad’s skill as a television repairman to depend on. Being more of a socialist than an entrepreneur, my father had no ability to run a business. As such, our lives quickly spiraled downward. We had moved from a spacious Cape Cod home with a sizeable yard to a cramped apartment, from a neighborhood where children played safely outside after dark to one where streets were lined with porno houses and derelicts.

After a summer spent exploring this new city by bus (rather than the bike I was accustomed to) with a cousin 2 years younger and 10 years more mature than I, junior high school beckoned. I found myself, sans cousin, in a friendless setting without my familiar clique. I resolved to take the initiative and make friends. I was more lucky than adroit in this venture as there were dozens of kids just like me—new to Los Angeles because their families sought a better life and desperate for friends. I recall one girl I met that first day before classes had even begun. In those first moments, “Pamela” told me she and her family, originally from rural Arkansas, were living in their car until she could “make it” in the movie industry. I saw Pamela only sporadically after that first day and after a few months, not at all. Each time, she looked dirtier, gloomier, and more stressed. As far as I know, she never did make it to the silver screen. We were joined that first day by “Kathleen,” who told us she was put on a bus in Idaho and sent to live with relatives in Los Angeles because her mother could no longer afford her. Later, I met “Sandy,” whose mother and siblings depended on the income she derived from prostituting herself after school. Occasionally, “Sandy” would show me the bruises she incurred from an abusive john.

On the other hand, the same school that served this underclass also attracted students from the wealthier side of the city. I became friends with “Rachel,” who would be delivered to school each day by the family’s driver. Rachel would invite me to her home in the sumptuous canyons where her

family “dressed” for dinner, and I learned to enjoy foods I had never heard of before. I became accustomed to hearing my classmates discussing the movie stars who were living in their neighborhoods.

At the same time, the meager savings on which my own family depended were dwindling quickly. After two years, we returned to Detroit with \$60, my dog, and whatever we could fit into the back of the station wagon. We ate at truck stops instead of the family-style restaurants where we had dined on the trip west. Instead of Holiday Inns with swimming pools, we slept in places that can only generously be described as “dives.”

Back in Detroit, we were forced to live with relatives in a very small house. With 10 of us and the family dog in tight confines, tensions were inevitable. My family soon separated until we could afford a place of our own. My dad stayed with his sister, my mom with a good friend, and I got farmed out to whoever would take a 15-year-old and her dog. I moved a lot that summer. I did not know at that time that my family was, by definition, homeless. Life improved, however, when my father was hired back at his previous job. With all the limitations of factory work, it nonetheless (thanks to a strong union) provided my family the benefits of home ownership and a college education for me.

I tell my story not because I enjoyed this trip down memory lane, but because all of these experiences laid the foundation for my life as a sociologist and for the kind of sociology I practice. These encounters forced me to remove the blinders of familiarity and look past a way of life I had assumed was normal. In order to understand the lives of my new-found friends, I had to critically examine their worlds and my own. I learned to appreciate and empathize rather than criticize. These life events helped me develop my sociological perspective. At the same time, I found the ability to connect personal troubles to public issues, what C. Wright Mills termed the “sociological imagination,” invaluable to understanding the connections between such social structures as the economy and the individual problems that my friends, family, and I incurred.

It was these lessons, in addition to the sociology-as-action approach, that I wanted to convey to my students when I began teaching sociology. Students in my Social Problems classes, for example, spent time in soup kitchens and homeless shelters engaged in participant observation. As part of a county-wide census, one project took them to the streets of San Francisco after midnight to count those individuals sleeping in doorways and cars, and on park benches or pavement. In another class, students were required to simulate a day in the life of a mother on welfare. With only \$5 and a doll that represented an infant-in-arms, they had to navigate the neighborhood using only public transportation. They were instructed to find the nearest welfare office, buy groceries for the day, and go to the elementary school