

Sociological Footprints

Introductory Readings in Sociology

Cargan and Ballantine

Fourth Edition



SOCIOLOGICAL FOOTPRINTS

INTRODUCTORY READINGS IN SOCIOLOGY
FOURTH EDITION

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PREFACE

The primary objective of this anthology is to provide a link between theoretical, textbook sociology and classroom material by presenting actual samples of both classic and current sociological studies. If students are to grasp the full meaning of sociological terms and topics, they must be able to translate the jargon of textbooks into real and useful concepts that are applicable to everyday life. To this end, *Sociological Footprints* presents viewpoints that demonstrate the broad range of sociological applications and the value of sociological research.

Selecting the articles involved a number of important steps. As with the three previous editions, we constantly received feedback from more than a thousand students. We were pleased that most of the articles were approved overwhelmingly by the students. We then conducted an exhaustive search of the literature for additional articles that were interesting and highly readable, that presented concepts clearly, that represented both recent and classic sociology, and that featured authors of diverse backgrounds. Meeting these criteria meant that many times popular articles were replaced with more comprehensive and up-to-date ones. Finally, we worked with manuscript reviewers' comments to make other aspects of the anthology relevant and useful.

The process, though complex, was valuable. *Sociological Footprints* includes readings from such classics as Kingsley Davis's "Final Note on a Case of Extreme Isolation," Raymond Hull's "The Peter Principle," Paul Lazarsfeld's "The American Soldier," and Horace Miner's "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema." While presenting a wide spectrum of classic sociological issues, the anthology also covers such contemporary topics as what it's like to be single ("Being Single on Noah's Ark"), problems in modern American education ("A Nation At Risk"), religious fundamentalism ("Christian Politics and the New Right"), the effects of poverty ("No, Poverty Has Not Disappeared"), the role of political action committees (PACs) ("Political Pac-Man"), and a new chapter on such current issues as sex education ("The Impact of Sex Education on Sexual Activity . . ."), AIDS ("The Social Meaning of AIDS"), and catastrophic illness ("When Miracle Cures Don't Cure: Long Time Dying"). Woven throughout the anthology are articles dealing with such important social variables as gender (articles 7, 10, 11, 20, 23, 49) and aging (articles 39, 45, 56). Even the light side of sociology is accounted for in such articles as James Skipper's "Stripteasers: A Six-Year History of Public Reaction to a Study." In sum, this anthology contains a balance of articles in each section that, according to students, instructors, and reviewers, makes the collection sociologically sound and highly readable.

Our major concern, however, was to make this anthology as valuable for teachers as it is enjoyable for students—an intention reflected in the book's organization.

First, each section has an introduction that covers the major themes of that topic area, noting how each article relates to those themes. Second, although anthologies do not usually define the concepts used in their articles, we include a glossary of important concepts at the end of each article of the text. We urge students to preview the glossary for each article before they begin to read; this will give them a basic understanding of any special terminology used.

For the convenience of the instructor, the instructor's manual cross-lists chapters in major sociology texts with corresponding sections in this anthology. This list will facilitate the use of *Sociological Footprints* in conjunction with most of the major introductory texts. This valuable aid also summarizes the theme, findings, and conclusions of each article; offers both multiple-choice and essay questions; suggests appropriate films by subject matter; and includes a section on games, simulations, and alternative classroom activities.

Both the anthology and the instructor's manual can be used in several ways to aid the instruction process: to expand students' comprehension of main topics, to illustrate lecture materials, and to provide a basis for class discussion. Those articles that deal with controversial issues can be used for debate or as the basis for small-group activities.

Several of the articles have been condensed, but the original material in them has in no way been altered. To emphasize key points we omitted digressions, repetitions, and detailed descriptions of quantitative data.

We wish to thank all those who made this fourth edition of *Sociological Footprints* possible. We thank the reviewers: Benigno Aguirre, Texas A & M University; Philip Burk, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse; John Campbell, University of Wisconsin; Lawrence A. Clark, Shoreline Community College; Virginia Kemp Fish, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point; Joe Floyd, Eastern Montana University; Kathryn Grzelkowski, University of Maine-Orono; Duane Monette, Northern Michigan University; Kathryn Mueller, Baylor University; Virgil Noack, University of Northern Iowa. Our appreciation extends also to the many students who took the time to give us their opinions. The departmental secretaries and aides who helped to assemble and type the material were all invaluable. To all we give a most heartfelt "Thank you!"

Leonard Cargan
Jeanne Ballantine

TO THE STUDENT

The purpose of this anthology is to introduce you, the beginning student in sociology, to a wide range of sociological perspectives and to demonstrate their relevance to real-life situations. As you apply sociological perspectives to everyday events, you will begin to realize that sociology is more than jargon, more than dry statistics, more than endless terminology to be memorized. It is an exciting and useful field of study. Unfortunately, no textbook can fully describe the many applications of sociology. This anthology should help to fill the gap by supplying classical articles balanced with reports on current research.

From our experience in teaching introductory sociology, we know some of the problems that anthologies can present to the student: unexplained terms, articles seemingly unrelated to the text, and different emphases from those of the instructor's lectures. Therefore, to enjoy and benefit fully from *Sociological Footprints*, you should take the following steps:

1. Read and study the related textbook chapter and lecture materials. You must be familiar with the concepts and perspectives before you can clearly observe their daily application.
2. Read the introductions to the assigned sections in the anthology. They are designed to summarize the primary themes of the topic area and relate them to specific articles. In fact, the introductions will not only make the articles easier to understand, they will facilitate their application to other class materials and real-life situations.
3. Review the "What to Look For" points at the beginning of each article and use them as a reading guide.
4. Use the glossary before you read each article. Knowing the terms will make the articles more interesting and understandable.
5. Read each article through. Note the problem or issue being discussed, the evidence the author supplies in support of his or her contentions, and the conclusions drawn from this evidence.
6. Summarize the main ideas of each article in your own terms, relating them to other material in the course and to your own everyday experiences.

Step 6 is particularly important. Many of the articles address topics of current interest: the political role of fundamentalist religion, the desires of college students, corporate crime, population problems, environmental issues, the women's movement, and more. Because these are contemporary problems, you will see related materials in newspapers and magazines and on television. By applying what you have learned

from the lectures and this anthology, you should develop a clearer understanding of current issues and of how sociology has aided you in this understanding.

We feel strongly that sociology is a field of study highly relevant to your world and that it can give you a fuller comprehension of day-to-day living. Our aim has been to provide you with a readable, understandable, and enlightening anthology that will convey this relevance.

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INTRODUCTION: WHY STUDY SOCIOLOGY?

What is this subject called sociology? What will I learn from studying sociology? Why should I take sociology? What work do sociologists do? How is sociology useful to me or to the world? If I major in sociology, what can I do when I graduate? These are some of the questions that may be in the back of your mind as you approach your study of sociology. Perhaps you are reading this because you are curious about the subject, or because sociology is a required course, or because you had sociology in high school and wanted to find out more about it, or because your instructor assigned the book and this article. Whatever the reasons, you will find an introduction to the field of sociology in the discussion that follows.

What you read in the next few pages will only begin to answer the questions just posed. As you learn more about sociology, pieces that at first seemed fragmentary will start to come together like pieces in a puzzle. These pages provide the framework into which those pieces can be placed to answer the opening question: Why study sociology?

WHAT IS THIS SUBJECT CALLED SOCIOLOGY?

First questions first: Sociology is the study of people in groups, of people interacting with each other, even of nations interacting in peacetime or war. Sociologists' interests are sparked when they see two or more people with a common interest talking or working together. They are interested in how groups

work and in how nations of the world relate to each other. When two or more people are interacting, sociologists have the tools to study the process. It could be a married couple in conflict or a teacher and students in a classroom situation; it could be individuals interacting in a work group, sports teams on a playing field, or negotiating teams discussing nuclear disarmament.

Sociology shares a common bond with other social sciences. All are concerned with human behavior in society; they share the perspective of the scientific method and some of the same data collection methods to study their subject matter. Sociology is the broadest of the social sciences; its main concern is with predicting human group behavior.

"That's a lot to be interested in," you may be saying. In fact, most sociologists specialize. No one sociologist is likely to be an expert in everything from studies of a few people or small group interaction (*micro-level* sociology), to large numbers of people in big groups like organizations or nations (*macro-level* sociology). Consider the following examples of sociological specializations:

determining the factors that lead to marital longevity

identifying effective teachers by classroom observation

examining public attitudes about the Reagan presidency and its policies

locating satisfaction and problems in certain jobs

The results of these diverse interests lead sociologists into many different areas. Some sociologists specialize in *social psychology*, a field that considers such questions as how individuals behave in groups, who leaders are and what types of leaders are effective, why some groups accomplish more than other groups, why individuals usually conform to group expectations, and many other topics involving individuals as functioning members of groups. Another area of specialization is *political sociology*, which studies political power, voting behavior, bureaucracy, and political behavior of individuals and groups. *Anthropology* examines the culture of different groups; so does sociology. But the methods of study and primary focus differ. Anthropologists often study preliterate groups, whereas sociologists focus primarily on modern groups. Another area that concerns sociologists is *social history*, which emphasizes the use of history to understand social situations. These are but a few examples of the diverse interests of sociologists and how sociology shares its interests with some other social sciences.

WHAT WILL I LEARN FROM STUDYING SOCIOLOGY?

Consider that in some societies premarital sex is not only allowed but expected; in others premarital sex is cause for banishment and death. Even though sociologists like everyone else have personal opinions, the task of the sociologist is not to judge which social attitude is right or wrong but to understand *why* such divergent practices have evolved. We all have opinions. Usually they come from our experiences, common sense, and family teaching. Some opinions are based on stereotypes or prejudices, some on partial information about an issue. Through systematic scientific study, sociologists gain insight into human behavior in groups, insight not possible through common sense alone. They attempt to understand all sides of an issue; they refrain from making judgments on issues

of opinion, but try instead to deal objectively with human behavior.

Consider the person who is going through the anguish of a divorce. Self-blame or hostility toward the spouse are often reactions to this personal crisis. Sociology can help us move beyond "individual" explanations to consider the social surroundings that influence the situation: economic conditions, disruptions caused by changing sex roles, and pressures on the family to meet the emotional needs of its members. Thus, sociology teaches us to look beyond individual explanations of our problems to group explanations for behavior; this practice broadens our world view and gives us a better understanding of why events take place.

A typical college sociology program starts with a basic course introducing the general perspective of sociology; sociological terminology and areas of study; how sociologists get their information, that is, their methods; and the ideas, or theories, that lay the foundations for sociological study. Further sociology courses deal in greater depth with the major components of all societies: family, religion, education, politics, and economics. The sociology department may also offer courses on social processes such as social problems, deviance and corrections, stratification, socialization, and change; or on other areas of social life such as medical, community, urban, sports, or minority sociology.

Family sociology, for instance, usually considers the family social life cycle: young people breaking away from their parents' home, forming a home of their own by selecting a spouse through the courtship process, marrying, selecting a career, making parenting decisions, raising a family, having their children leave home, retiring, and moving into old age.

Students who major in sociology generally take courses in *theory*—the basic ideas of the field—and *methods*—how sociologists approach the social world objectively and do their research. Some sociology departments

offer practical experiences where students can use their sociological skills in a job setting.

These are a few examples of what you will learn from the study of sociology and how you will learn it. There is much more to the field of sociology than this, however.

WHY SHOULD I TAKE SOCIOLOGY?

Whether you take a number of sociology courses or only one, you will profit in a number of ways. You will gain personal knowledge; new perspectives; skills needed by employers; background training useful in entering other fields; personal growth and development; new perspectives on the world; and a new way of looking at your relations with others and your place in the society. You will gain tolerance for and fascination with the variety of people in the world around you and their cultural systems. You will be able to understand your interactions with your family and friends better; you will be able to watch the news or read the paper with keener perception. You will have an understanding of how to obtain information to answer questions you or your boss need answered. And the more sociology you take, the more ability you will have to express your thoughts logically, objectively, and coherently.

It is nice to know that the subjects you take in college will have some personal relevance and professional usefulness. Sociology should provide you with a number of "life skills," such as:

1. Ability to view the world more objectively
2. Tools to solve problems by designing studies, collecting data, and analyzing results
3. Ability to understand group dynamics
4. Ability to understand and evaluate problems
5. Ability to understand our personal problems in a broader social context

We know from studies that employers value those applicants with the broad training of such

fields as sociology because of the skills they provide. The following are a list of skills employers look for, in order of importance:

1. Ability to work with peers
2. Ability to organize thoughts and information
3. Self-motivation
4. Ability to plan effectively
5. Willingness to adapt to the needs of the organization
6. Ability to interact effectively in group situations
7. Self-confidence about job responsibilities
8. Ability to handle pressure
9. Ability to conceptualize problems clearly
10. Effective problem-solving skills
11. Effective leadership skills
12. Ability to listen to others

Though a college graduate in engineering, computer sciences, or business may enter the job market with a higher salary, the sociology liberal arts major is more likely to rise through the managerial and professional ranks to positions of responsibility and high pay; businesses and organizations value the skills listed here. In today's rapidly altering society, many of us will change jobs or careers several times during a lifetime. Sociological skills can help us adapt to the expectations of new situations.

Because of the knowledge and skills learned in sociology courses, study in this area provides excellent preparation for other undergraduate and graduate fields. From nursing, business, and education to law and medicine, the knowledge of sociology can be applied to a wide variety of group situations. For instance, a current concern of sociologists who study educational settings is what characteristics make schools effective; by singling out certain characteristics, sociologists can make recommendations to improve schools. Teachers and educational administrations profit from this information.

If we are curious about understanding ourselves and our interactions with others and

about why our lives take certain directions, sociology can help us understand. For instance, sociologists are interested in how our social class standing affects how we think, how we dress, how we speak, what our interests are, whom we are likely to marry, what religion (if any) we belong to, and what our "life chances" are, including how long we will live and what we are likely to do in life. Sociologists have even examined how individuals from different social class backgrounds raise their children, and implications of childrearing techniques for our life-styles. Some use physical punishment, others moral chastisement, but the end result is likely to be a perpetuation of the social class in which we are born.

WHAT WORK DO SOCIOLOGISTS DO?

The most obvious answer is that sociologists *teach*; this is primarily at the higher education level, but high school sociology courses are also offered as part of the social science curriculum. There would be nothing to teach if sociologists were not actively engaged in learning about the social world. Their second major activity is to conduct *research* about questions concerning the social world.

Many sociologists work in business organizations, government agencies, and social service agencies. *Practicing sociologists* are engaged in a variety of activities. Some do family counseling with the whole family group; some conduct market research for companies or opinion polls for news or other organizations; some do surveys for the government to determine what people think or need; some work with juvenile delinquents, prison programs and reforms, and police; some predict how population changes will affect schools and communities.

Applied sociologists use their sociological knowledge to help organizations. They assess organizational needs, plan programs to meet those needs, and evaluate the effectiveness of programs. For instance, a community may want to know how many of its elderly citizens need

special services to remain at home rather than be moved to nursing institutions. Sociologists assess this need, help plan programs, and evaluate whether programs are meeting the needs they set out to meet.

The position a sociology major ultimately gets depends in part on the degree he or she holds in sociology. The following are some examples of jobs students have got with a B.A. or B.S. degree: Director of county group home; Research assistant; Juvenile probation officer; Data processing project director; Public administration/district manager; Public administration/health coordinator; Law enforcement; Labor relations/personnel; Police commander/special investigations; Trucking dispatcher; Administrator/social worker; Counselor; Child case worker; Substance abuse therapist; Medical social worker; Data programming analyst; Activities director at senior citizens center; Director of student volunteer program; Area sales manager; Jury verdict research editor; Insurance claims adjustor; Employment recruiter; Tester for civil service; Unemployment office manager; Child services house parent; Crisis worker volunteer; Advertising copywriter; Probate officer; Travel consultant; Recreation therapist; Public TV show hostess; Adult education coordinator; Research and evaluation specialist; Neighborhood youth worker.

Sociologists holding an M.A. or Ph.D. degree are more skilled in sociological theory and methods than B.A. degree holders. They are often involved in research, teaching, or clinical work with families and other clients.

HOW IS SOCIOLOGY USEFUL TO ME AND TO THE WORLD?

Technology is rapidly changing the world. New policies and programs are being implemented in government and private organizations, policies that affect every aspect of our lives. Because sociologists study *social* processes, they are able to make concrete contributions to the planning of orderly change. Sociological

knowledge can also be useful to legislators and courts in making policy decisions. For example, sociologists can assist a juvenile facility to design programs to help young people convicted of crime redirect their energies; how successful such programs are in achieving their goals can be studied by evaluation research.

In summary, sociology is the broadest of the social sciences and, unlike other disciplines, can give us an understanding of the social world. The knowledge and tools make the student of sociology valuable in a number

of settings, from business to social service to government to education. As you embark on this study, keep in mind that sociology helps us have a deeper understanding of ourselves and our place in the world as well.

Sociology is a study of all people, for all people. To enjoy your encounter with the field and to make the most use of your time in sociology, try to relate the information you read and hear to your own life and relationships with others within the broader context of your social world.

