

# Essentials of Sociology



David B. Brinkerhoff  
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# Preface

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*Essentials of Sociology* is a short, but complete introduction to the field of sociology. Our goal is to provide a book that is shorter and less expensive than the standard comprehensive text, while still offering a solid and balanced introduction to the field of sociology.

Perhaps more than any other discipline, sociology deals with the stuff of people's ordinary lives. This poses a challenging opportunity for an introductory textbook: To give students a framework that will allow them to understand better their own lives and contemporary social issues. This requires theory to provide perspective, applications to show how theory can be used, and data to clarify understandings of the contemporary world. This careful blend of theory and data is provided in *Essentials of Sociology*, a theoretically-sound, research-based text that will provide a solid introduction to the field while giving the one-time-only sociology student a new perspective.

*Essentials of Sociology* offers a solid foundation for instructors who wish to supplement their text with readers, literature, or activities. It will be especially helpful for instructors who teach short academic terms and have difficulty covering the material of a comprehensive text.

*Essentials of Sociology* is an updated and condensed version of *Sociology*, 2nd edition by David Brinkerhoff and Lynn White. In condensing the book, our goal was to eliminate relatively peripheral areas while retaining central sociological concepts, theories, and findings. This glossary, for example, contains 95 percent of the entries included in the comprehensive text. At the same time, we wanted to avoid reducing the book to an encyclopedic listing of facts and concepts. We believe that case studies and illustrations are not just "fluff," but are often the chief means of communicating with students and making the material accessible to them. Thus we avoided the easy strategy of simply cutting out all the examples and case studies. To keep the core of the discipline while simultaneously keeping the book lively and readable, we combined substantive areas governed by similar concepts and theories (for example, race, gender, and age stratification) and eliminated substantive areas (such as sport and medicine) that are applications of the sociological imagination rather than central to the development of that imagination. *Essentials of Sociology* retains the liveliness and readability of its parent text, while getting down to the bare bones of the discipline.

This volume is an *updated* revision and not simply a condensation of the comprehensive text. Recent monographs as well as all of the major sociological journals have been reviewed for major new studies and theories and their findings have been incorporated into *Essentials*. Although the core of the field changes less than the periphery, the text has been revised to take into account the findings and ideas of nearly 100 new references.

## Plan of the Book

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This condensed edition retains the pedagogical features that make the comprehensive text a success: there is one high-interest boxed insert per chapter and clearly identified concepts, concept summaries, and chapter summaries aid students in mastering the material. The following features are designed to present an introduction to sociology in a format students will enjoy and that will enable them to master the material:

### Focus On

One boxed insert is used in each chapter to introduce provocative and interesting issues. The Focus Ons fall in three different formats: Focus on Research, Focus on Application, and Focus on Yesterday. Because we believe that the practice of social research can be provocative and interesting, some of these cover measurement issues, such as Jensen, Perman, and Rainwater's new research on "What's a good job" and the operationalization of self esteem. The Focus on Applications deal with social research relating to social policy, for example, Weitzman's research on no-fault divorce. The Focus on Yesterday series includes interesting historical examples such as the Black Death.

### Chapter Summaries

A short point-by-point summary lists the chief points made in each chapter. This will aid the beginning student in studying the text and discriminating the central from the supporting points.

### Vocabulary

Learning new concepts is vital to developing a new perspective. In *Essentials of Sociology* this learning is facilitated in three ways.

- When new concepts first appear in the text, they are bold-faced and complete definitions are set out clearly in the margin.
- Whenever a group of related concepts is introduced (for example, power, coercion, and authority), a concept summary is included in a text figure to summarize the definitions, give examples, and clarify the differences.
- A glossary is included at the end of the book for handy reference.

## Supplemental Materials

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Although *Essentials of Sociology* is smaller than a standard comprehensive text, it includes the full complement of supplementary materials to ease the tasks of teaching and learning: a large and revised test bank, a unique instructor's manual, a study guide, and an exciting new software package that will bring sociology alive for students.

### Test Bank

The authors have constructed 100 multiple choice and 10 essay questions for each chapter. The test bank is available in hard copy, and as WesTest on micro-computer diskettes for use with Apples and IBM or IBM compatibles.

### Instructor's Resource Manual

The authors have developed a unique instructor's manual that provides innovative and absorbing classroom activities—for the instructor with 350 students as well as the instructor with 35. In addition to chapter outlines, the instructor's resource manual provides at least one fully-developed class exercise and several major discussion topics for each text chapter. Copy-ready versions of these exercises are included in a separate packet so that instructors can easily prepare handouts and instruction sheets.

A unique feature of the resource manual is the inclusion of a questionnaire that may be used to collect sociological data from students. Many of the questions on this instrument are identical to those discussed in the text. We have found the comparison of class data to national data an invaluable aid for engaging student interest and for teaching about the merits and pitfalls of survey research. Suggested uses for the questionnaire are presented in the Instructor's Resource Manual on a chapter-by-chapter basis. An exciting software package is also available to enhance the use of these data.

### Student Study Guide

The student study guide, written by Charles O'Connor (Bemidji State University) and Charles M. Mulford (Iowa State University), will be invaluable in helping students master the material. The study guide contains an outline of each chapter, practice questions in matching, completion, multiple-choice, and essay form. A computerized form of the study guide, is available for use by students with personal computers as well as by departments that provide micro labs for their undergraduates.

### Software

Danny Hoyt (Iowa State University) has developed an exciting software package for instructors and students who like to play with data. The package provides an easy data-entry program for the class questionnaire (suitable for direct student entry) as well as a data analysis program that provides frequency distributions, cross tabulations, and graphic displays, all with full labels.

A unique and exciting aspect of this is the Student Data Networking program. Because students are keenly interested in themselves and especially how they compare to others, a data exchange service has been set up for adopters: Instructors who submit a diskette with their students' data will receive in exchange copies of the student data sets from two other schools. This exciting feature will allow students to see how they differ from students in other regions of the country or other types of schools.

This innovative software package has been developed for IBM (and IBM compatible) micros and for Apple IIe micros. A major goal has been to make the package easy to use. The resulting package is suitable for direct student use in those settings where micro labs are available to students. If instructors choose to do the analysis themselves, they will find it remarkably easy to use—and enjoyable too. One of the reasons most people take up sociology is that they are curious about people's behavior. The Student Data Set and Data Networking programs provide this enjoyment for students and their instructors.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# The Study of Society

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### Outline

What is Sociology?  
The Emergence of Sociology  
Current Perspectives in  
Sociology  
The Science of Society  
Three Strategies For  
Gathering Data  
Sociologists: What Do They  
Do?