



You

An Introduction
to Thinking Like
a Sociologist



May



**Ask
Yourself**



Second Edition



**DALTON
CONLEY**



2nd Edition

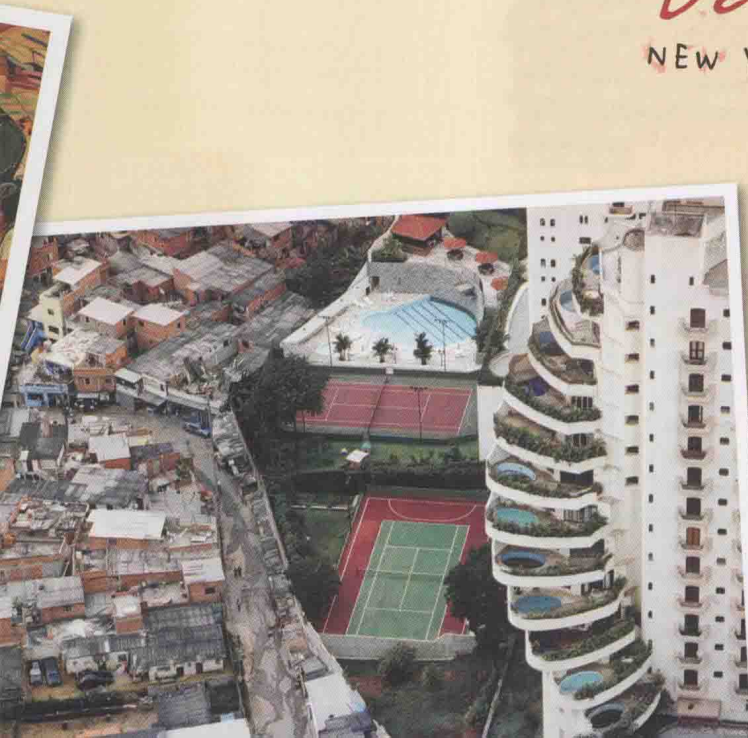


You May Ask Yourself

AN INTRODUCTION TO THINKING LIKE A SOCIOLOGIST

Dalton Conley

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY



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What students* **ARE SAYING** about **You May Ask Yourself**

*"For once, I was actually excited
about reading a textbook. It seemed
as if the author was talking
directly to me at times."*

—LaToya, social work major, SUNY Brockport

"Honestly, I loved this book. It was so much more interesting than the other assigned readings, and reading *You May Ask Yourself* was the only assignment I always had done." —MELISSA, SOCIOLOGY MAJOR, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

*"It was like reading magazines
with images of my favorite actors
and politicians. I loved looking
at the book and reading it."*

—Abigail, nursing major,
Queensborough Community College

*"It was less dry than most texts. I enjoyed it and will
add it to the collection of sociology books that I
intend to keep for future reference."*

—dion

—Dion, sociology major, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

**"The textbook connected concepts and topics
with everyday situations that students could
relate to, which made reading the chapters
less grueling and more involved."**

—Alex, elementary education major,
Madison Area Technical College

* In spring 2009, Norton contacted instructors who assigned *You May Ask Yourself* in their courses and invited their students to fill out an online survey. Number of student replies: 157.

THE "untextbook" that teaches students to think like a sociologist

You May Ask Yourself emphasizes the "big ideas" of the discipline and encourages students to ask meaningful questions. Instructors and students love Conley's "untextbook" strategy of explaining complex concepts through personal examples and storytelling. His irreverent style presented in a portable design and priced at an unbeatable price has made *You May Ask Yourself* one of the most popular introductory sociology books available today.

"I admit I assigned *You May Ask Yourself* mostly because of the cost to my students. However, after teaching from it, I find it is better than any text I have ever used. Dalton Conley does a great job of integrating race and gender into every chapter. He covers a great deal of material, reflects important and recent research, and presents it in ways that students can understand."

—Joan E. Manley, Florida Gulf Coast University

"Dalton Conley's *You May Ask Yourself* is a refreshingly different nontextbook book that I'd strongly encourage others to explore."

—Brian Powell, Indiana University

"Your students will be captured by Conley's conversational style and drawn into reading the text before they know what hit them. Conley provides a thorough discussion of theory with relevant past and contemporary examples. Furthermore, he challenges the students to question what they've taken for granted most of their lives."

—Cheryl Maes, University of Nevada, Reno

"Rather than bombarding students with lots of statistics, Dalton Conley seems more concerned with getting the 'big ideas' of the discipline across and encouraging them to ask meaningful questions."

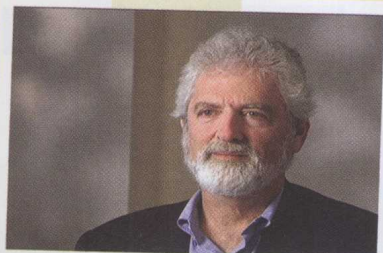
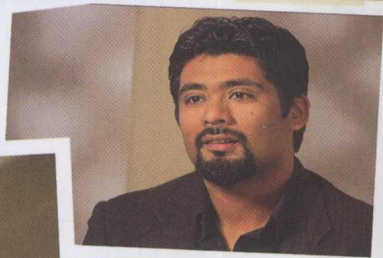
—Michael Nofz, University of Wisconsin-Fond du Lac

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HOW SOCIOLOGISTS USE THEIR
SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATIONS TO
"MAKE THE FAMILIAR STRANGE."

**SOCIAL SCIENTISTS
INTERVIEWED BY
DALTON CONLEY
INCLUDE:**

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PAULA ENGLAND
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Dalton Conley interviewed social scientists about how they approached a topic or research question. He integrates quotes from the interviews throughout the book (and posts video online) to make the second edition even more lively and to reinforce how sociologists use contemporary research methods to question conventional wisdom.



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- 2) **Instructor's Resource Disc**, featuring:

- **Enhanced Lecture PowerPoints.** These visually dynamic PowerPoints feature instructor-only lecture notes that will be particularly helpful to first-time teachers. While the slides are easy to customize, they are also a "lecture-ready" solution for instructors who have limited preparation time.

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INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL BY

Robin Rogers, Queens College
and the Graduate Center,
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EverydaySociologyBlog.com

Designed for a general audience, the Everyday Sociology blog is an exciting and unique online forum that encourages visitors to actively explore sociology's relevance to popular culture, mass media, and everyday life.

Moderated by Karen Sternheimer (University of Southern California), the blog features postings on topical subjects, video interviews with well-known sociologists, as well as contributions from special guests during the academic year.

EVERYDAY SOCIOLOGY BLOG

September 23, 2010

The Educational Equality Debate in Wake County

By: Michael Guido

Doctoral Student, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

In Raleigh, North Carolina, the last year has been fraught with turmoil over a school desegregation plan that has been in place since 2000. The Wake County economic integration plan redistributed the socioeconomic mix of students in schools by busing students to other schools. The goal of the plan was to strike a better balance in the districts, so that poor children were not attending schools with high percentages of other poor children. Some parents were upset because the plan placed their children in schools outside their immediate neighborhoods and resulted in longer bus rides. However, the data indicated that the plan was working to improve test scores for some groups of students, including black and Hispanic students.

Although the plan may seem unusual, it stems from sociological research conducted by James Coleman and other researchers in the 1960s on educational inequality. The research team undertook what was then the largest experiment of students and schools in the U.S. They examined the effects of school resources and other school-level variables on student outcomes and found that "the social composition of the student body is more highly related to achievement, independent of the student's own social background, than is any other school factor." These findings suggested that black students would perform better in more integrated schools than they would in the mostly segregated schools that existed at the time. This research inspired the implementation of desegregation busing in school districts across the United States.

By the 1960s case of *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education*, just three years after the adoption of the Coleman Report, the mandate was clear that state and local governments must work to integrate schools and the racial composition of schools began to change. From the mid-1960s to the early-1970s, the percentage of black students in overachieving majority (90-100%) non-white schools, dropped by nearly 50%. However, subsequent court cases began to dismantle integration programs and black parents were left with limited legal options just as "white flight" began to take hold and large numbers of white families moved to the suburbs.

In 2000, the decision to integrate students in Wake County on the basis of economic status instead of race was essentially a new way of looking at an old problem. However, when a 2007 court case ruled that school districts could no longer assign students to schools for the singular purpose of racial integration, the few districts using an integration plan like Raleigh's garnered a lot of national attention, if integration

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PREFACE

I came to sociology by accident, so to speak. During the 1980s, there were no sociology courses at the high-school level, so I entered college with only the vaguest notion of what sociology—or even social science—was. Instead, I headed straight for the pre-med courses. But there was no such thing as a pre-med major, so I ended up specializing in the now defunct “humanities field major.” This un-major major was really the result of my becoming a junior and realizing that I was not any closer to a declared field of study than I had been when arriving two years earlier. So I scanned a list of all the electives I had taken until then—philosophy of aesthetics, history of technology, and so on—and marched right into my advisor’s office, declaring that it had always been my lifelong dream to study “art and technology in the twentieth century.” I wrote this up convincingly enough, apparently, because the college allowed me to write a senior thesis about how the evolution of Warner Brothers’ cartoon characters from the stuttering, insecure Porky Pig to the militant Daffy Duck to the cool, collected, and confident Bugs Bunny reflected the self-image of the United States on the world stage during the Depression, World War II, and the postwar period, respectively. Little did I know, I was already becoming a sociologist.

After college, I worked as a journalist but then decided that I wanted to continue my schooling. I really was drawn to the critical stance and reflexivity that I had learned in my humanities classes.

But I knew that I didn’t want to devote my life to arcane texts. What I wanted to do was take those skills—that critical stance—and apply them to everyday life, to the here and now. I also was rather skeptical of the methods that humanists used. What texts they chose to analyze always seemed so arbitrary. I wanted to systematize the inquiry a bit more; I found myself trying to apply the scientific method that I gotten a taste of in my biology classes. But I didn’t want to do science in a lab. I wanted to be out in the proverbial real world. So when I flipped through a course catalog with these latent preferences somewhere in the back of my head, my finger landed on the sociology courses.

Once I became a card-carrying sociologist, the very first course I taught was Introduction to Sociology. I had big shoes to fill in teaching this course at Yale. Kai Erikson, the world-renowned author of *Wayward Puritans and Everything in Its Path* and son of the psychologist Erik Erikson, was stepping down from his popular course, The Human Universe, and I, a first-year assistant professor, was expected to replace him.

I had a lot of sociology to learn. After all, graduate training in sociology is spotty at best. And there is no single theory of society the same way one might learn, for example, micro and macro as core courses in economics or the biochemistry of DNA translation and transcription as the central dogma of molecular biology. We talk about the sociological imagination as an organizing principle. But even that is almost a poetic notion, not

so easily articulated. Think of sociology as more like driving a car than learning calculus. You can read the manual all you want, but that isn't going to teach you how to do it. Only by seeing sociology in action and then trying it yourself will you eventually say, "Hey, I've got the hang of this!"

Hence the title of this book. In *You May Ask Yourself*, I show readers how sociologists question what most others take for granted about society, and I give readers opportunities to apply sociological ways of thinking to their own experiences. I've tried to jettison the arcane academic debates that become the guiding light of so many intro books in favor of a series of contemporary empirical (gold) nuggets that show off sociology (and empirical social science more generally) in its finest hour. Most students who take an introductory sociology class in college will not end up being sociology majors, let alone professional sociologists. Yet I aim to speak to both the aspiring major and the student who is merely fulfilling a requirement. So rather than having pages filled with statistics and theories that will go out of date rather quickly, *You May Ask Yourself* tries to instill in the reader a way of thinking—a scientific approach to human affairs that is portable, one that students will find useful when they study anything else, ranging from history to medicine.

To achieve that ambitious goal, I tried to write a book that was as "un-textbook"-like as possible, while covering all the material that a student in sociology needs to know. In this vein, each chapter is organized around a motivating paradox, meant to serve as the first chilling line of a mystery novel that motivates the reader to read on to find out (or rather, figure out, because this book is not about spoon-feeding facts) the nugget, the debate, the fundamentally new way of looking at the world that illuminates the paradox. Along with a paradox, each chapter begins with a profile of a relevant "person" who speaks to the core theme of the chapter. These range from myself to a leading

Egyptian feminist to a guy who declared himself king of an offshore platform, battling the British government for sovereignty. In addition, in order to show the usefulness of sociological knowledge in shaping the world around us, each chapter also culminates in a policy discussion and Practice section where the reader gets a chance to show his or her sociological imagination in action (rather than just regurgitate facts).

You May Ask Yourself originated in the Introduction to Sociology course that I have taught for the past 13 years at New York University, Yale University, and Columbia University. However, the process of writing it made me feel as if I were learning to be a sociologist all over again. For example, I never taught religion, methodology, or the sociology of education. But instructors who reviewed the manuscript requested that we cover these topics here, so with the assistance of an army of graduate students who really ought to be recognized as coauthors, I got to work. That was four years ago. The experience was invaluable, and in a way, I finally feel like a card-carrying sociologist, having acquired at last a bird's-eye view of my colleagues' work. I consider it a great honor to be able to put my little spin (or filter) on the field in this way, to be able not just to influence the few hundred Intro students I teach each year, but to excite (I hope) and instill the enthusiasm I didn't get to experience until graduate school in students who may even be just a few months out of high school (if that).

I mentioned that the graduate students who helped me create this book were really more like coauthors, ghost writers, or perhaps law clerks. Law clerks do much of the writing of legal opinions for judges, but only a judge's name graces a decision. I asked Norton to allow more coauthors, but they declined—perhaps understandably, given how long such a list would be—so I will take this opportunity to thank my students and hope that you are still reading this preface.

The original transcribing of my lectures that formed the basis of this text was completed by Carse Ramos, who also worked on assembling the glossary and drafted some parts of various chapters, such as sections in the economic sociology chapter, as well as some text in the chapters on authority and deviance. She also served as an all-around editor. Ashley Mears did the heavy lifting on the race, gender, family, and religion chapters. Amy LeClair took the lead on methods, culture, groups and networks, socialization, and health. Jennifer Heerwig cobbled together the chapter on authority and the state and deviance (a nice combo), while her officemate Brian McCabe whipped up the chapter on science, technology, and the environment and the one on social movements. Melissa Velez wrote the first draft of the education chapter (and a fine one at that). Michael McCarthy did the same for the stratification chapter. Devyani Prabhat helped revise the social movements chapter. My administrative assistant Amelia Branigan served as fact checker, editor, and box drafter while running a department, taking the GREs, and writing and submitting her own graduate applications. When Amelia had to decamp for Northwestern University to pursue her own doctorate, Lauren Marten took over the job of chasing down obscure references, fact-checking, and proofreading. Alexandre Frenette drafted the questions and activities in the Practice sections at the end of each chapter.

For this second edition, I have more thanks to offer. First of all, I need to give shouts out to all the top-notch scholars who found time in their busy schedules to sit down with me and do on-camera interviews. These include Andrew Cherlin, Mitchell Duneier, Paula England, John Evans, Michael Hout, Jennifer Lee, Douglas McAdam, Stephen Morgan, Alondra Nelson, Devah Pager, C. J. Pascoe, Frances Fox Piven, Jen'nan Read, Victor Rios, Jeffrey Sachs, and Duncan Watts. And the filmmaking, editing, and postproduction were

done by Erica Rothman at Nightlight Productions with the assistance of Saul Rouda, Dimitriy Khavin, and Arkadiy Ugorskiy. This was no easy task since we wanted a bunch of cuts ranging from 30-second sound bites through to 3 minutes on the way up to 22-minute, television-show length. While a bunch of interviews with academic social scientists on topics ranging from estimating the effects of Catholic schools on student outcomes to occupational mobility in twentieth-century Ireland to the “hooking-up” culture on contemporary college campuses are not likely to win any Emmys or rock the Nielsens (with the possible exception of the last one on college sex), it was certainly one of the most exciting moments of my sociological career to host this makeshift talk show of sorts on this wide range of interesting topics. (If only more of our public discourse would dig into issues in a way that we did in these interviews, our society and governance would be in better shape—if I do say so myself!)

Meanwhile, many thanks to Kendall and Annie Madden, who did the transcriptions of the interviews so that they could seamlessly migrate from video to the pages herein. The task of integrating these interview texts into the book—along with many other updates to the first edition based on our own reading as well as valuable feedback from users and reviewers alike—fell to a great extent on the shoulders of Laura Norén, a fantastic New York University graduate student who has worked on topics as far ranging as public toilets (with my colleague Harvey Molotch) to how symphonies and designers collaborate (as part of her dissertation). I hope Laura will find her crash-course overview of sociology useful at some point in what promises to be a productive and exciting scholarly career. In addition to Laura and the other students who helped me write *You May Ask Yourself*, I relied on a number of scholars who generously read chapters of this book and offered valuable feedback, criticisms, and suggestions:

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 Richard Zamoff, George Washington University

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As you can see, it took a village to raise this child. But that's not all. At Norton, I need to thank, first and foremost, Karl Bakeman, the editor into whose lap this project landed (after having passed through the hands of Steve Dunn and Melea Seward). He deserves even more credit for this second edition—brainstorming with me how to do something novel for this edition (hence the videos) and then convincing the Norton board to dive headfirst into this multimedia experiment of sorts. (Now we have to get to work thinking about what we will do for edition three to top this!) I am also indebted to the keen eye of Beth Ammerman, who served as development editor. Her help ranged from pointing out lapses in grammar and logic to challenging my assumptions on everything from Matthew Arnold's vision of culture to historical accounts of how George Washington died. For further editing, I have to thank Ellen Lohman. In addition, I am grateful to editorial assistant Becky Charney, project editors Rebecca Homiski and Carla Talmadge, and production manager Jane Searle, who handled every stage of the manuscript and managed to keep the innumerable pieces of the book moving through production. If you like the fabulous un-textbook design of this book that you hold in your hands, major kudos go to designer Rubina Yeh and photo researchers Junenoire Mitchell, Stephanie Romeo, and Ramón Rivera Moret.

WHAT'S NEW IN THE SECOND EDITION?

New Table of Contents

Based on feedback from reviewers and adopters, I reordered the chapters of the second edition to introduce chapters on social inequality before the chapters on social institutions.

Chapter 1: Sociological Imagination: An Introduction

Chapter 1 has been updated with the most recent statistics and trends pertaining to the rising costs of education and their impact on educational attainment. A new section on W. E. B. DuBois's theory of double consciousness has been included.

Chapter 2: Methods

Chapter 2 opens with a new introduction featuring Sudhir Venkatesh and his research in Chicago's Robert Taylor Homes. A new interview with urban ethnographer Mitchell Duneier elaborates on the challenges of developing a respectful working relationship with the people who are part of a study. The discussion of experimental methods includes a new interview with Duncan Watts about his Music Lab project.

Chapter 3: Culture and Media

Chapter 3 has been updated with contemporary examples of culture and media, including the viral YouTube video of Jill Peterson and Kevin Heinz's wedding procession to hip-hop artist Chris Brown's "Forever."

Chapter 4: Socialization and the Construction of Reality

The chapter includes a number of new examples of recent research, such as a new study by Ebonya Washington, which showed that members of Con-

gress who had daughters were more likely to vote for feminist measures. In a new interview, C. J. Pascoe describes her research on how teens enforce gender norms at high schools. The Policy section features a new discussion of the Harlem Children's Zone.

Chapter 5: Groups and Networks

The social network chapter begins with a new profile of Kate Rich, an Australian artist, who founded Feral Trade, a multinational trading company that distributes products via social networks. In a new interview, Duncan Watts explains Stanley Milgram's "Six Degrees of Separation." Watts describes setting up a similar worldwide experiment using e-mail and statistical models to estimate global connectedness and found that Milgram was not quite right.

Chapter 6: Social Control and Deviance

In addition to updating the data throughout the chapter, the deviance chapter begins with a new story about Victor Rios, who grew up in an impoverished neighborhood surrounded by gang violence and became a sociologist who studies the criminalization of inner-city boys. The section on suicide has been expanded with examples of feminism and women's roles. Ernesto "Che" Guevara is used as a new example of a rebel, as Bernie Madoff is a new example of a white-collar criminal. In a new interview, Devah Pager describes her study to determine the effects of race and a criminal record on employment opportunities. In the second edition, the deviance chapter also features a discussion of research on the community effects of incarceration by sociologists and geographers.

Chapter 7: Stratification

The revised chapter begins with the story of Carlos Slim Helú, one of the richest men in the world. The chapter also includes an interview with Jeffrey

Sachs of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, where Sachs explores whether Africa is facing a Malthusian population trap. The chapter features a new discussion on modern human trafficking. Figures for America's socioeconomic levels have been updated. Sociologist Michael Hout explains in an interview that even though there has been stagnation in the number of people receiving bachelor's degrees, the value of those degrees is increasing, with costs falling onto the individual and their family versus the state. The data in the figures on income ratios and executive earnings have been updated, as well as all the data throughout the text.

Chapter 8: Gender

A new discussion of *hijras* in India has been added as an example of a “third gender,” challenging the norm of a gender binary that is common in Western culture. Data on the number of men and women working as teachers or principals has been revised. Paula England also discusses research on “hooking up” in a new interview about teenage sexuality.

Chapter 9: Race

An interview with Jen'nan Read explores the racialization of Arabs in the wake of the attacks on September 11, 2001. The section on American Indians has been expanded with information about their contributions to World War II and their current challenges. An interview with sociologist Jennifer Lee explores the shifting black-white racial divide in America. All the figures and data have been updated throughout the chapter, and the Supreme Court case *Ricci v. DeStefano* is the new topic of the Policy section at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 10: Poverty

The revised chapter includes a revised discussion of Edward Banfield's *The Unheavenly City*. Figures for income have been updated.

Chapter 11: Health and Society

The health chapter begins with a new introduction featuring Paul Farmer, cofounder of Partners in Health, and his work to provide health care to the poor through his medical practice, writing, teaching, and lobbying. The section on the U.S. health care system has been updated with the recent passing of the health care bill into law. Prescription drug figures have been updated. An interview with Jeffrey Sachs is included, where he talks about the effects of malaria in different developing countries. The new Policy section focuses on policies aimed at reducing obesity.

Chapter 12: Family

The concept of the traditional family has been expanded to include research exploring monogamous coupling in animals. Adoption statistics have been updated to reflect current changes of international adoption policies. A new discussion of spousal, sibling, and elderly violence has been added to the chapter. In a new interview, sociologist Andrew Cherlin discusses marriage in the United States and his research for the book *The Marriage-Go-Round*.

Chapter 13: Education

In a new interview, sociologist Stephen Morgan discusses the research contrasting the academic achievement of private school versus public school students. A revised discussion of intelligence and IQ tests has also been added to the chapter. The latest statistics for graduation and poverty rates have been updated.

Chapter 14: Capitalism and the Economy

The new introduction to the chapter on work begins with a discussion of our first BlackBerry president, Barack Obama, and the ways he and