

THINKING SOCIOLOGICALLY

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DISCIPLINE

William C. NesSmith



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PREFACE

For years, like other college teachers, I have been advising my students that the modern postindustrial society and the global economy pose special demands, especially for people just entering the labor market. Those who can comprehend, analyze, and manipulate sophisticated information will be at an advantage pursuing their goals, as well as better citizens. Today more than ever, teaching must go beyond merely transmitting knowledge. Sociology students must not only acquire knowledge of the discipline but also learn to apply it and to think sociologically. I hope this book will help toward that end.

This intention to help students think in a more sophisticated way is certainly not a new idea among textbook authors. But unlike most introductory textbooks, which present the discipline's concepts and theories in an encyclopedic form, *Thinking Sociologically* uses what might be called a context approach. Each section of a chapter focuses on a topic, usually framed as a question, that serves as a context or vehicle for applying sociological concepts and theories. The result is something closer to "sociology in action" rather than merely "sociology on display."

This book is organized around three goals:

1. Questions and topics *engage the reader's interest* and give her or him a sense of purpose: reading actively to discover, for example, What happens in the classroom, sociologically speaking? or Why do gangs get started?
2. Each chapter section introduces sociological *concepts and theories as useful, relevant tools*. For example, social change theories explore the question, Is change good for developing nations? Concepts such as diffusion, innovation, and social movements help students understand change in modernizing Japan. And demographic tools contrast the populations of Mexico and the United States. In this approach, students put sociology to use by answering practical questions and exploring specific issues.
3. In the end, I hope all this will provide the reader with a *model for thinking sociologically*. Also toward this end, each chapter features special boxes. The Research Boxes give students the chance to "look over the shoulder" of researchers as they use the tools of social science to investigate questions such as, Is a less satisfying marriage the price of parenthood? Who gets into Harvard? Critical Thinking Boxes encourage students to consider the intricacies underlying such questions as, What is human? What price equality? Do old people have a duty to die?

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND LEARNING RESOURCES

For the Instructor

Instructor's Manual A complete resource for more effective instruction using *Thinking Sociologically*, prepared by Linda Shelly. Includes learning objectives, chapter outlines, lecture suggestions, ideas for class discussions, audiovisual resources, and sections dealing with research methods and critical thinking skills.

Test Bank This comprehensive test item file prepared by James E. Floyd of Macon College includes over 2,000 multiple-choice, true–false, and essay questions, com-

pletely keyed to the text and learning objectives from the Study Guide and Instructor's Manual. Includes test items from the Study Guide for professors who wish to reinforce students' use of that learning resource.

Social Issues Quarterly Report Videos From the MacNeil/Lehrer PBS television series entitled *Social Issues*. Topics include: The Global Culture Clash, Crime and Social Justice, Health Care, and The State of American Schools. Contact your local Harcourt Brace representative for details.

The Sociological Imagination Video Segments Instructors may select from 12 video segments developed from the Dallas County Community College District telecourse in introductory sociology. All programs are 26 minute clips from the actual telecourse and highlight relevant subject matter.

Computerized Test Bank Available in IBM® and Macintosh® formats, EXAMaster™ software allows you to create tests using fewer keystrokes. Easy-to-follow screen prompts guide you step-by-step through test construction. EXAMaster™ gives you three ways to create tests:

EasyTest™ lets you create a test from a single screen. It compiles a test using questions you've chosen from the database, or randomly selects questions based on the parameters you specify.

FullTest™ gives you a whole range of options for test creation. With FullTest™, you may:

- select questions as you preview them on screen
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- link related questions, instructions, and graphics
- have questions randomly selected from a wider range of criteria
- create your own criteria on two open keys
- block specific questions from random selection
- print up to 99 different versions of the same test and answer sheet

RequesTest™ is for the instructor without access to a computer. You may call our Software Support Line and order tests that conform to your criteria. We'll compile the test and either mail or fax it to you within 48 hours.

Overhead Teaching Transparencies Classroom lectures will be enhanced with this collection of 54 full-color transparencies that illustrate sociological concepts. All contain information to supplement (not duplicate) material in the textbook.

Sociology Videodisc The videodisc addresses social issues, how behavior mandates social change, and explains the theories presented in the text.

For the Student

Study Guide Prepared by the text author, the Study Guide contains learning objectives, chapter overviews, key terms, and review tests, including multiple-choice,

matching, true–false, and short-answer questions. Many test items also appear in the test bank to reinforce student use of the study guide.

SimCity™ Software Introducing an educational version of SimCity™ software geared to sociology using environmental, economic, or geographical variables to teach the volatile nature of sociology. This software allows the user to create his or her own society, an experience instructors and students will find invaluable.

Socialstat Software A new program written by Dean Savage and Jesse Reichler of City University of New York, Queens College, that presents an easy-to-use introduction to data analysis. Clear graphics make running frequency distributions, histograms, and scatterplots an exciting endeavor.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although writing a textbook is a solitary task, it is one that cannot be accomplished without the assistance, advice, and input of others. I owe a debt of gratitude to my colleagues whose comments, criticisms, and suggestions helped to shape this work:

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Thinking Sociologically

1

Chapter



SOCIOLOGY AND SCIENCE

WHY STUDY SOCIOLOGY?

**HOW IS SOCIOLOGY DIFFERENT
FROM “COMMON SENSE”?**

**APPLYING THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION
TO SOCIOLOGY’S FOUNDERS**

CRITICAL THINKING BOX: HOW DO WE KID OURSELVES?

SOCIOLOGY’S THREE PERSPECTIVES

RESEARCH DESIGN

***RESEARCH BOX: MEASURING TELEVISION VIEWERSHIP:
THE DIFFICULTIES IN STUDYING HUMAN BEHAVIOR***

**ETHICS AND THE SPECIAL CASE
OF THE FEMINIST RESEARCHER**