

OXFORD

third edition

ELEMENTS OF

SOCIO- LOGY

a critical
Canadian
introduction



JOHN STECKLEY
GUY KIRBY LETTS

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INTRODUCING ... ELEMENTS OF SOCIOLOGY

In preparing this new edition of *Elements of Sociology*, we have, from the start, kept in mind one paramount goal: to produce the most comprehensive yet dynamic and accessible introduction to sociology available to Canadian students.

This revision builds on the strengths of the highly acclaimed first and second editions, and incorporates new features and material designed to make the text even more engaging, more thought-provoking, and more relevant to students and instructors alike. We hope that as you browse through the pages that follow, you will see why we believe *Elements of Sociology* is the most exciting and innovative textbook available to Canadian sociology students today.

Six Things That Make This A One-of-a-Kind Textbook

A Canadian Textbook for Canadian Students

Written by Canadians for Canadians, *Elements of Sociology* highlights the stories of the figures and events at the heart of sociological inquiry in this country: Dawson and Clark, Porter and Goffman, Dorothy Smith and Daniel G. Hill, the “Famous Five” and Quebec’s “Quiet Revolution,” and much more.

Our Stories

Early Studies in Canadian Social Stratification

Sociology in Canada began as the study of social stratification. We get an excellent survey of stratification by examining the work of two Canadian sociology pioneers: Herbert Brown Ames and Colin McKay.

Herbert Brown Ames: A Businessman's Sociology

During the last half of the nineteenth century, the population of Montreal grew fourfold to over 270,000. With this growth came social problems—poverty, unemployment, homelessness. This led **Herbert Brown Ames** (1863–1954) to engage in Canada's first comprehensive urban sociological study, designed to promote the construction of affordable housing for the working-class people of Montreal's west end.

Montreal-born Ames had inherited a prosperous business that would guarantee him a lifetime of financial stability. But he wanted more than to earn easy money; he wanted to improve the city of his birth. He became involved in politics at the municipal and federal levels, and he engaged in ambitious sociological research. In 1896, he and members of his research team went door to door to canvass the inhabitants of an area he called “the city below the hill.” The study was very detailed for its time. Ames's fascination with statistics sometimes overwhelms even the modern reader, and at the time of the study his approach was unique. He was possibly the first person in Canada to speak of family size not in round numbers but with decimals, saying the average size of families he studied was “4.90 people,” 1.41 of whom worked for wages and 1.64 being children under 16. He was keenly aware that this level of precision was key to achieving the most suitable remedy for the housing problem:

Should the time come when capital shall be ready to be invested in the erection of improved industrial dwellings, it is evident that for its intelligent expenditure, in this or that locality, definite knowledge must be in hand as to the personnel and composition of the average family of the section selected. The number and size of the rooms to be provided, in the improved dwelling for the average family, will depend not only

upon the size of the family, but also upon its composition, since the larger the proportion of the adult or school-child element the more the amount of space and air that will need to be allowed.

To make a success of this work of improvement we can afford to allow no facts to be overlooked. (Ames 1972 [1897]: 30)

Ames's plan was to have old, inadequate housing torn down, and then have business leaders finance construction of new housing. He led by example, bankrolling the construction of model apartments for 39 families. Unfortunately, but predictably, others were reluctant to follow his lead.

With hindsight, we can argue that Ames was naive. We can be amused by the powerful rhetoric he invoked to declare his determination to get rid of the 5,800 outhouses he reckoned there were in the city (“That the privy pit is a danger to public health and morals needs no demonstration, and yet in ‘the city below the hill’ more than half the households are dependent entirely upon such accommodation” [Ames 1972: 45]). But we must admire Ames for his concern for the lives of the working class and for his passion, shared by many Canadian sociologists that followed him.

Colin McKay: A Worker's Sociology

Nova Scotian **Colin McKay** (1876–1939) was described by Ian McKay (an unrelated namesake) as “a working-class intellectual who exemplified a widespread enthusiasm for radical sociology in turn-of-the-century Canada,” and who, “drawing upon theories of Karl Marx and Herbert Spencer, ... developed [his] own critical understanding of capitalist development” (McKay 1998: 390). Colin McKay was a self-educated man, who worked as a merchant seaman, soldier, labour organizer, and journalist. At 24, he spent a short time in jail for “defaming the reputation of a cigar factory proprietor notorious for mistreating children [workers] and discriminating against trade unionists” (McKay 1998: 401).

McKay was a prodigious writer, contributing at least 952 articles and letters-to-the-editor to union publications such as the *Canadian Railway Employees Monthly*, the *Canadian Unionist*, *Eastern Labor News*, *Butler's Journal*, *Cotton's Weekly*, *Le Monde Ouvrier*, *Citizen and Country*, and *Western Clarion*. The scope of his work is revealed in a few selected titles.

- “Duty of the rich to the poverty-stricken: The philosophy of charity, showing it to be in the interest of the rich and strong to help the weak” (*Montreal Herald*, 21 Jan. 1899).
- “The small business man. How the capitalist system annihilates self-earned private property, and reduces the small business man to the economic category of the worker” (*Eastern Labor News*, 8 June 1912).
- “The crime of low wages” (*Labor World / Le Monde Ouvrier*, 18 April 1925).

As part of a vigorous working-class press with considerable influence, Colin McKay

was widely acknowledged as one of Canadian labour's leading intellectuals. It is likely that

McKay's writings, which in the 1930s were reaching thousands of working-class readers in at least four major journals, probably reached far more people than ever read the works of the contemporary academic sociologists in Canada. (McKay 1998: 415)

Most Canadian sociologists today would be envious of such a large audience for their work. Ian McKay suggests that with the death of Colin McKay and the greater institutionalization (or departmentalization) of sociology, there was loss as well as gain. The drive of the well-read working-class radicals such as McKay and his peers is sorely missed in the efforts of Canadian sociologists to make a difference in the social inequality of their country.



In the early twentieth century, the more successful members of Montreal's working class moved to new homes in the suburbs, leaving poorer citizens to take up residence in abandoned houses like this one. Can you see why Ames was concerned about living conditions in “the city below the hill”?

Telling It Like It Is

A Student's POV

The Hijab as Worn by Young Canadian Muslim Women in Montreal

The narrative of a 19-year-old Palestinian-Canadian woman

The veil has freed me from arguments and headaches. I always wanted to do many things that women normally do not do in my culture. I had thought living in Canada would give me that opportunity. But when I turned fourteen, my life changed. My parents started to limit my activities and even telephone conversations. My brothers were free to go and come as they pleased, but my sister and I were to be good Muslim girls. . . . Life became intolerable for me. The weekends were hell.

Then as a way out, I asked to go to Qur'anic classes on Saturdays. There I met with several veiled women of my age. . . . None of them seemed to face my problems. Some told me that since they took the veil, their parents know that they are not going to do anything that goes against Muslim morality. The more I hung around with them, the more convinced I was that the veil is the answer to all Muslim girls' problems here in North America. Because parents seem to be relieved and assured that you are not going to do stupid things, and your community knows that you are acting like a Muslim woman, you are much freer. (quoted in Hoodfar 2003: 20-1)

The narrative of a 17-year-old Pakistani-Canadian woman

Although we did not intermingle much with non-Indian-Canadians, I very much felt at home and part of the wider society. This, however, changed as I got older and clearly my life was different than many girls in my class. I did not talk about boyfriends and did not go out. I did not participate in extracurricular activities. Gradually, I began feeling isolated. Then my cousin and I decided together to wear the veil and made a pact to ignore people's comments; no matter how much hardship we suffered at school, we would keep our veils on. . . .

At first it was difficult. At school people joked and asked stupid questions, but after three months they took us more seriously and there was even a little bit

of respect. We even got a little more respect when we talked about Islam in our classes, while before our teacher dismissed what we said if it didn't agree with her casual perceptions. (quoted in Hoodfar 2003: 28-9)

The narrative of Mona, an Egyptian-Canadian woman

I would never have taken up the veil if I lived in Egypt. Not that I disagree with that, but I see it as part of the male imposition of rules. . . . The double standard frustrates me. But since the Gulf War, seeing how my veiled friends were treated, I made a vow to wear the veil to make a point about my Muslimness and Arabness. I am delighted when people ask me about my veil and Islam, because it gives me a chance to point out their prejudices concerning Muslims. (Hoodfar 2003: 30)

A Muslim student from Montreal reacts to the examples

The young women in these articles claim that wearing the hijab, overall, brought them joy and happiness. However, look at the reason they decided to wear the hijab. In the first example, it was because her parents were not letting her go out and be free like her brothers. So she wore it to gain her own freedom, not to appreciate anything about the culture. In the second, it was because they did not talk about going out or boyfriends. Big deal! Many people do not talk about those things. It was their own minds that made them feel isolated, not the culture surrounding them. And the third example, I feel she did it for more right reasons than any of the others. Nevertheless, to prove a point???

I do not wear this "veil," but have relatives that do. It does not make me a "poor" Muslim woman. Even if a girl has this "veil" on, she can still do bad things and be persuaded to do bad things just like anyone else.

—Farita Haeque

An Inclusive, Narrative Approach

Sociology is the study of people, and in *Elements of Sociology*, the people tell their stories. Students will read first-hand accounts of what it's like to fast during Ramadan, to come out to your family, to experience racism on campus, to meet the expectations of Italian parents, and to raise daughters in an era of Lingerie Barbie and La Senza Girl.

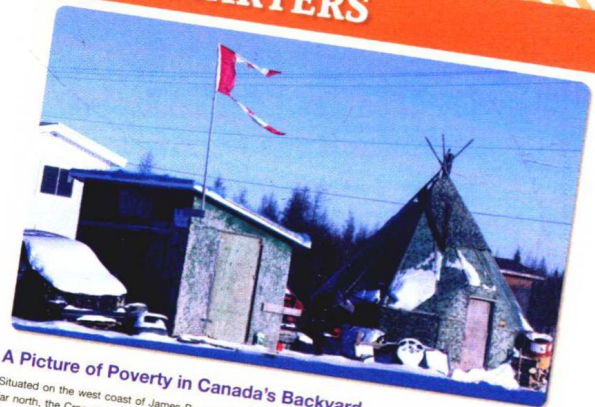
A Visual, Thought-Provoking Approach

Students are challenged on every page to adopt a sociological imagination and see the sociology in everyday life. Carefully chosen photos and captions, provocative critical thinking questions, and end-of-chapter review questions all invite readers to apply the theory and take a stance.

Coverage of Canada's First Nations

No sociology textbook can claim more extensive coverage of the issues that have affected and that continue to affect Canada's Aboriginal peoples.

FOR STARTERS



A Picture of Poverty in Canada's Backyard

Situated on the west coast of James Bay in Ontario's far north, the Cree community of Attawapiskat gained international attention in October 2011, when the leaders of Attawapiskat First Nation declared a state of emergency, citing inadequate housing and poor sanitation. It was not the first time the community had resorted to this measure. Just two years earlier, in May 2008, hundreds of residents were evacuated from their tents, trailers, and shelters because of serious flooding on stories of poverty and overcrowded, substandard housing as though they were new developments, while politicians claimed to have had no idea how bad the situation was.

How bad was it? You can read statistics about lack of housing, but to me, this account tells the story much more vividly:

In a one-room, tented shack where Lisa Kiokee-Linklater is watching television with her two toddlers, two mattresses lie on the floor. Each is a bed for three. Mould is creeping across one

mattress even though Ms Kiokee-Linklater just bought it last summer. It cost her \$1,000.

There is no running water, no bathroom, and cold comes through the uninsulated floor. There is little room for her four children to play. The corner of the room represents a burn hazard and eliminates the notion of the rambunctious play that is the norm for most young kids.

Moving into the tent was Ms Kiokee-Linklater's choice. It seemed a step up from her previous home next door, where she shared a single bathroom with 20 other people until it became too much for her and her growing family.

"It's kind of better, yeah," she said, keeping a watchful eye on a son as he ate spaghetti with his fingers. "But during the winter, it's hard. I cut back on the baths because it is so cold." (Scofield 2011)

A situation like that doesn't just develop overnight. The plight of the residents of Attawapiskat is thrown into sharp relief by the success of its wealthy neighbour.

A Brand-New Chapter on the Environment

The scope of the new edition has been expanded to look at one of the key social issues of our time, the environment.

CHAPTER
14

THE ENVIRONMENT



Learning Objectives

- After reading this chapter, you should be able to:
- discuss the vested interests that come into play when "scientific judgements" are made about the health of the environment
 - outline the ways in which different kinds of societies have an impact on the environment
 - identify the environmental effects of the China Price
 - discuss how environmental disasters can lead to positive social change
 - discuss how "race" and environmental practices intersect

Key Terms

- blaming the victim
- carbon footprint
- China price
- community of scholars
- ecotourism
- environmental refugees
- epidemiology
- farming culture
- foraging societies
- genetically modified (or transgenic)
- horticultural
- hunter-and-gatherer culture
- industrial culture
- informant
- moral community
- operational definition
- organizational culture
- peer-review process
- post-industrial
- red herring
- rotten apple approach
- social ecology
- sociological imagination
- standpoint
- tobacco strategy
- vested interests
- victimology

Names to Know

- Murray Bookchin
- Françoise d'Albaume
- Thomas Keneally
- Samuel Henry Prince
- Lloyd Tatarin

Our Stories

Shooting the Messenger: The Case of Dr John O'Connor, Whistle-Blower

John O'Connor has served as a physician in northern Alberta since 1993, spending much of his time in the oil sands boomtown of Fort McMurray. In 2001 he started working with the Aboriginal community of Fort Chipewyan, population 1,200, located a little way downriver from the Fort Chipewyan community, whose elders told O'Connor about new deformities they were seeing in fish—a staple of their diet—along with a peculiar, oily taste, the doctor began to notice evidence of health problems he hadn't seen in Fort McMurray. Specifically, he observed new cases of cholangiocarcinoma, a rare water duct cancer that had killed his father, and that often showed up in bile ducts of fish swimming in oil-infused water. He also found a high incidence of liver cancers concerning the community for its medical files. One of O'Connor's began publicly articulating his concerns. Canada's federal agency, Health Canada, government representative even made a very public visit to declare the water fit for consumption. He demonstrated this with a rather unceremonious gesture: He demitted from a tap and announced to an attending Globe and Mail reporter: "There's nothing wrong with the water in Fort Chip."

Health Canada presented the findings of their report to the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board in Fort McMurray one week before they spoke with members of the Fort Chipewyan community about their experience. After a quick analysis of the data set, which the agency gave the community a clean bill of health. The agency's work didn't end there, as O'Connor, in a statement given in the House of Commons in June 2009, explained:

In 2007 I got a large envelope in the mail from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Edmonton.... It was a list of complaints that

1. Whose interests was Health Canada best serving?
2. What effect might the O'Connor case have on other doctors who had made similar disclosures?

Health Canada had laid out my activities in Fort Chip. They accused me of blocking access to files, billing irregularities, engineering a sense of mistrust in government in Fort Chip, and causing undue alarm in the community. It was the first time that a Canadian government agency had ever used a patient complaint process to attack a physician in this way. The charges were serious and first three charges were dismissed relatively quickly. The people of Fort Chipewyan, who hadn't been consulted concerning whether they felt "undue alarm," supported him, and in fact requested the dismissal of Health Canada's senior physician. Members of the Alberta Medical Association were unanimous in their support.

In 2008 the Alberta Cancer Board engaged in a more comprehensive study of the community, releasing their findings in February 2009. In their report, the board stated that while the number of cases of cholangiocarcinoma and colon cancer were "within the expected range" during the period of investigation,

the number of cancer cases overall was higher than expected. In particular, increases of observed over expected were found for bile-duct and lymphatic system. These increases were based on a small number of cases and could be due to chance or increased detection. The possibility that the increased rate is due to increased risk in the community, however, cannot be ruled out. (Alberta Cancer Board 2009: 10)

The board concluded that further study was warranted to see if there was any risk associated with living in Fort Chipewyan. In November 2009, the charge against O'Connor of "causing undue alarm" was dropped.

to see if there was any risk associated with living in Fort Chipewyan. In November 2009, the charge against O'Connor of "causing undue alarm" was dropped.

QUICK HITS

Eight Questions About the Environment of the Workplace

At the end of his chapter on the dangers of working with asbestos, Lloyd Tatarin poses 10 questions applicable to all potentially unsafe workplaces and invites the list down to eight and adapted the questions for our purposes here.

1. Is it important to prevent panic among people exposed or even possibly exposed to a health hazard (John O'Connor)?
2. How do you balance an employer's obligation to provide a safe working environment with a worker's willingness to accept certain risks (and "dangerous pay") for reasonably well-paying jobs?
3. Whose primary responsibility is it to oversee working conditions to ensure their safety? Does government protection agencies at the municipal, provincial, and/or federal level, the union, or an outside watchdog group? How might such groups work together?
4. What responsibility does the industry have regarding the health of those who do not work for the company but who live and work nearby?
5. As a city or town, how do you balance the benefits of hosting a large company that employs local community and pays salaries that are spent in the community with the need to guarantee safe working and living conditions by ensuring the company is environmentally responsible?
6. Economic risk is often presented as a reason that owners and executives receive much higher pay than ordinary workers. Should health risk be part of that equation? Should health risk be part of "acceptable" level of health risk require the approval of those placed in situations of greatest risk?
7. How can it be guaranteed that industry-based "experts" are objective and trustworthy in compiling and presenting their observations on a particular company's environmental practices?

How could a company conduct business in this way? Is it arrogance, cynicism, or plain greed? We believe that the answer runs deeper. A sociologist might look at the organizational culture of such a huge corporate entity, whereby the company and the work it does become a part of the individual identity of the employees working there. We might even draw on Durkheim's study of religion, where individuals have a sense of shared mutual identities and a commitment to a common purpose. It's a situation that fosters group loyalty—the kind that is strengthened and threatened by outsiders. In war your identity is to those beside you in the trenches. But the prevailing class and "race" relations, where the majority of those in positions of power—the scientists and administrators who direct corporate policy—were white, while the non-union members, the "other," were predominantly black and without power, and therefore more vulnerable.

Monsanto Again: A Canadian Connection
Consider for a moment the different ways of owning the environment. You can own a piece of property, the surface, and to the plants growing on top, but what about owning an entire biology entity, patenting a life form? The following case involves a Canadian farmer and the chemical giant Monsanto. Born in Bruno, Saskatchewan, Percy Schmeiser grows canola, the only seed plant formerly known and a local member of the Legislative Assembly. He has worked his 1,500-acre farm for over 30 years.

In 1997, Schmeiser sprayed the ditches bordering his land with Roundup, a trademarked herbicide produced by Monsanto. Unintentionally, he found that it was ineffective in killing his canola fields. After consulting with a Monsanto representative, Schmeiser learned the source

Case Studies and Compelling Viewpoints

Elements of Sociology features five different types of feature boxes, scattered throughout every chapter to highlight issues, events, and ideas at the centre of sociological debate and investigation.

Telling It Like It Is

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Telling It Like It Is boxes feature first-person narratives that give voice to a variety of perspectives informed by a variety of social factors—age, sex, gender, class, ethnicity, etc.



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Our Stories boxes examine research and events that are especially relevant to the practice and study of sociology in Canada.



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The Point Is . . . boxes present case studies and highlight important contributions to sociological research, past and present.


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Going Global boxes shed light on international issues of interest to sociologists in Canada and around the world.


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Quick Hits sidebars supplement the authors' narrative with relevant examples and data.

For More Information: Online Resources

Elements of Sociology is part of a comprehensive package of learning and teaching tools that includes resources for both students and instructors.

For Instructors

- ▶ A comprehensive **instructor's manual** provides an extensive set of pedagogical tools and suggestions for every chapter, including overviews and summaries, concepts to emphasize in class, essay and research assignments, and links to relevant videos and online resources.
- ▶ Newly updated and enhanced for this edition, classroom-ready **PowerPoint slides** summarize key points from each chapter and incorporate graphics and tables drawn straight from the text.
- ▶ An extensive **test generator** enables instructors to sort, edit, import, and distribute hundreds of questions in multiple-choice, true–false, and short-answer formats.
- ▶ Carefully chosen **video clips**, matched to each chapter and available as streaming video, provide unique perspectives on themes and issues discussed in the textbook.

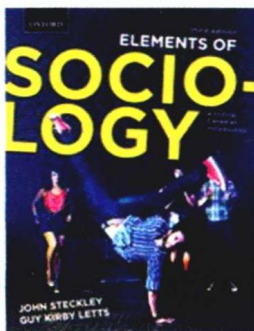
For Students

- ▶ The **Student Study Guide** includes chapter summaries, study questions, and self-grading quizzes, as well as explore-and-discuss exercises to help you review the textbook and classroom material.

COMPANION WEBSITE

John Steckley and Guy Kirby Letts

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About the Book

Acclaimed by instructors and students alike for its fresh, innovative approach to the discipline, *Elements of Sociology* is back and better than ever in this brand new third edition. Narratives, anecdotes, and a wealth of examples and illustrations challenge students to think differently not only about sociology, but also about the social world that surrounds them.

Instructor Resources

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A WORD OR TWO FROM THE AUTHORS

Why Write a Sociology Text?

Why write a Canadian sociology textbook when there are so many out there already? We began with what we saw as an inability among introductory texts on the Canadian market to give proper voice to Aboriginal and South Asian perspectives. We don't claim to have corrected the deficiency, but by incorporating the work of authors from each group, we hope we have made a significant departure from earlier Canadian sociology textbooks.

Making "Other" Voices Heard

We realized, too, that other voices needed to be heard. While we have included the work of authors representing different ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and sexualities, we felt that the best way to make different voices heard was in narratives, which we have incorporated in each chapter. These feature a variety of perspectives informed by a variety of "social locations"—black, Chinese, Italian, lesbian, Muslim, Palestinian, and Portuguese. We strongly believe that the narratives constitute one of the most important features of this textbook.

"We felt that the best way to make different voices heard was in narratives, which we have incorporated in each chapter."

Celebrating Our Heroes of the Discipline

The narrative approach is not the only way in which our textbook is a little different. Some of our views are radical, and we were tired of the dry, conservative bent of other texts, and their general failure to include much or anything about our heroes of the discipline—Dorothy Smith, Michel Foucault, Franz Fanon, Antonio Gramsci, Albert Memmi, and (apart from a perfunctory nod to his sociological imagination) C. Wright Mills. We aimed for a more inclusive approach in covering theories and theorists, including the many women and sociologists of colour who have influenced and redirected the discipline.

"We were tired of the dry, conservative bent of other texts."

Breaking Out of the Mould

The market imperative within the broader political economy of publishing means that there is little interest in doing something different from what has already been done. It wasn't until we began the publishing process that we realized how the conservative elements within the market influenced what materialized as the final product. A low tolerance for difference and little appetite for risk mean merely reproducing what is known to have worked before. We were fortunate that Oxford, constrained by its own market imperative and logic, has been so supportive of our unique views and approach.

Writing for Canadian Students

A textbook is typically considered Canadian when it uses Canadian figures, Canadian data, and Canadian research—this despite the fact the text may entirely overlook the history and emergence of sociology in this country. Canadian sociology is quite different from the sociology found in Europe and the US. For instance, the focus of early Canadian sociology was on rural life and the resource economy, which speaks to a society that is not highly urbanized or industrialized. Moreover, the influence of the social gospel movement and social work orients sociology in Canada, more than its counterparts elsewhere, around issues of social justice, even today.

“Canadian sociology is quite different from the sociology found in Europe and the US. . . . We are confident that this is the most Canadian introductory sociology textbook on the market.”

We are confident that this is the most Canadian introductory sociology textbook on the market. It is not an adapted American textbook with Canadian extensions, nor is it a North American textbook co-written by American and Canadian authors. We designed this book, from the ground up, as a text for Canadian students, to teach them about what we—Canadian sociologists—have done, are doing, have failed to do, and hope to do in the future.

Introducing New Qualitative Research Methods

While contemporary sociology still engages in foundational methods, there has been an expansion of qualitative methodological approaches that have been influenced by feminism, queer theory, poststructuralism, post-colonialism, and cultural studies, many of which had been ghettoized into other disciplines, like anthropology and women's studies. These methods are not new, but they have not been part of the methodological lexicon in sociology. In order to represent contemporary sociology accurately, we went beyond a conventional discussion of quantitative and qualitative methods to include ethnographic research, case studies, and narratives, as well as content and discourse analysis, psychoanalysis, semiotics, and genealogy. We wanted to introduce students to concepts, ideas, and themes that will be recurring throughout their education, and in this way, to inspire their imagination.

Conveying the Discipline's Vitality

To give an accurate survey of sociology today means stressing what is current, what is being done, and who is being studied. The discipline generally and the theory specifically are exciting, yet we feel this message

“The discipline generally and the theory specifically are exciting, yet we feel this message is not conveyed to students, who often see sociology as boring or irrelevant.”

is not conveyed to students, who often see sociology as boring or irrelevant. Sociological theory has shifted immensely, with influences from queer theory, feminist psychoanalysis, post-colonialism, and post-structuralism, as well as people like Foucault, Lacan, Spivak, and Said. Whether the exclusion of these influences is the result of the status quo or the belief that they are too complex for our students to comprehend, it is a misrepresentation that in the end benefits no one, and one that we have tried to correct.

Making Students Think

A casual flip through the pages of this text will reveal an abundance of photographs and other illustrations. The photos are not just pretty distractions to keep students looking at the book. They serve a purpose. We have chosen photos and have written captions that we hope will encourage students to adopt a sociological perspective. The same objective is served by the numerous critical-thinking questions scattered throughout the chapters.

Our Thanks

It takes a number of people to put together a book of this size and scope. First, I would like to thank the people at Oxford University Press who made major contributions to this project. David Stover I thank for suggesting (twice) that I write this book. Mark Thompson, who signed us on for the new edition, deserves to be acknowledged, as do in-house editors Patricia Simoes and Eric Sinkins, who, with amazing effort and diplomatic skill, always get us to the finish line in time.

For helping me write the initial draft of this book, I would also like to thank several of my colleagues at Humber. Les Takahashi, Jim Jackson, John Metcalfe, and Joey Noble all contributed to this work with their support and helpful ideas. Librarians Jennifer Rayment and Marlene Beck worked major feats of magic to make obscure articles and books appear.

Closer to home, there is the Steckley household menagerie: Wiikwaas and Trudy—the dogs that are—and Egwene and Cosmo, the beloved and terribly missed dogs that were; the parrots: Quigley, Finn, Stanee, Louis, Lime, Sam, and Gus, as well as Benji, Misha, and Tika, who provided support on earlier editions. No joke—I couldn't write without their wonderful distraction.

Finally, there is my wife, Angie. She supported me through the highs and lows of this project, when I was not the easiest person to live with (either high or low). When the sands of my life shift, there is always a rock I can depend on.

*John Steckley
February 2013*

I have used numerous texts throughout my teaching career and have always been at odds with both the representation and the pedagogy that was being advocated. In many ways, the sociology that I read, that my colleagues do, and that I myself practise looks nothing like the sociology found in introductory textbooks. I often wondered why a discipline would represent itself to young adults as something conservative, parochial, and, well, *boring*, given that the discipline itself is liberating, dynamic, and exciting.

I would like to thank Oxford University Press for giving us the opportunity to attempt something different, new, and—I believe—exciting. I would like to thank David Stover, at Oxford, who believed in the value of what we were trying to do and shared our enthusiasm, and, also at Oxford, Mark Thompson, Patricia Simoes, and Eric Sinkins, for their patience, creativity, and input. I would also like to thank my family, Angela Aujla, Anushka Luna, Indigo West, and our newest addition, Onyx Akash, for tolerating my always “present absence.” I would like to acknowledge all those who, both real and imagined, helped me formulate a particular perspective that has allowed me to think critically about sociology specifically and society in general, to which I am eternally grateful. And finally, I would like to acknowledge my students for whom I wrote this text, so we might better understand together this strange thing called life.

*Guy Kirby Letts
February 2013*

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