

INTRODUCTION TO  
**SOCIOLOGY**



ANTHONY  
**GIDDENS**



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# P R E F A C E

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This book was written in the belief that sociology has a key role to play in modern intellectual culture and a central place within the social sciences. After teaching at all levels of sociology for many years, I became convinced of the need to filter some of the discipline's current advances and developments into an elementary introduction to the field.

My aim has been to write a work that combines some originality with an analysis of all the basic issues of interest to sociologists today. The book does not try to introduce overly sophisticated notions; nevertheless, ideas and findings drawn from the cutting edge of the discipline are incorporated throughout. I hope it is not a partisan treatment; I endeavored to cover the major perspectives in sociology in an even-handed, although not indiscriminate, way.

## MAJOR THEMES

The book is constructed around a number of basic themes, each of which helps to give the work a distinctive character. One major theme is that of the *world in change*. Sociology was born of the transformations that wrenched the industrializing social order of the West



away from the ways of life characteristic of preceding societies. The world that was created by these changes is the primary object of concern of sociological analysis. The pace of social change has continued to accelerate, and it is possible that we stand on the threshold of transitions as fundamental as those that occurred in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sociology has prime responsibility for charting the transformations that have taken place in the past, and for grasping the major lines of development taking place today.

A second important theme of the book is the *globalizing of social life*. For far too long, sociology has been dominated by the view that societies can be studied as independent unities. But even in the past, societies have never really existed in isolation. In current times we can see a clear acceleration in processes of global integration. This is obvious, for example, in the expansion of international trade across the world. The emphasis on globalization in this book also connects closely with the weight given to the interdependence of First and Third Worlds today.

Third, the book takes a strongly *comparative* stance. The study of sociology cannot be taught solely by understanding the institutions of any one particular society. While I have of course slanted the discussion especially towards the United States, such discussion is always balanced by a rich variety of materials drawn from other societies or cultures. These include researches carried out in other Western countries, but I have also referred frequently to the Soviet Union and the East European societies, societies currently undergoing substantial changes. This book also includes much more material on Third World countries than has been usual hitherto in introductions of sociology. In addition, I strongly emphasize the relationship between sociology and anthropology, whose concerns overlap comprehensively. Given the close connections that now mesh societies across the world with one another, and the virtual disappearance of many forms of traditional social system, sociology and anthropology increasingly become indistinguishable.

A fourth theme is the necessity of taking an *historical orientation* to sociology. This involves far more than just filling in the "historical context" within which events occur. One of the most important developments in sociology over the past few years has been an increasing emphasis upon historical analysis. This should not be understood solely as applying a sociological outlook to the past, but as a way of contributing to our understanding of institutions in the present. Recent work in historical sociology is used widely in the book, and provides a framework for the interpretations offered within most of the separate chapters.

Fifth, particular attention is given throughout the text to *issues of gender*. The study of gender is ordinarily regarded as a specific field

within sociology as a whole—and this volume contains a chapter devoted to thinking and research on the subject (Chapter 6). However, questions about gender relations are so fundamental to sociological analysis that they cannot simply be relegated to a subdivision of the discipline. Thus many of the chapters contain sections concerned with issues of gender.

A sixth theme is the relation between the *social* and the *personal*. sociological thinking is a vital help to self-understanding, which in turn can be focused back upon an improved understanding of the social world. Studying sociology should be a liberating experience: sociology enlarges our sympathies and imagination, opens up new perspectives on the sources of our own behavior, and creates an awareness of cultural settings different from our own. Insofar as sociological ideas challenge dogma, teach appreciation of cultural variety, and allow us insight into the working of social institutions, the practice of sociology enhances the possibilities of human freedom.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

There is no abstract discussion of basic sociological concepts at the beginning of this book. Instead, concepts are explained when they are introduced in the relevant chapters, and I have sought throughout to illustrate ideas, concepts, and theories by means of concrete examples. While these are usually taken from sociological research, I have quite often used material from other sources (such as newspaper reports) for illustrative purposes. I have tried to keep the writing style as simple and direct as possible, while endeavoring to make the book lively and “full of surprises.”

The chapters follow a sequence designed to help achieve a progressive mastery of the different fields of sociology, but I have taken care to ensure that the book can be used flexibly and is easy to adapt to the needs of individual courses. Chapters can be deleted, or studied in a different order, without much loss. Each chapter has been written as a fairly autonomous unit, with cross-referencing to other chapters at relevant points.

The five parts of the book provide a comprehensive coverage of the major areas of sociology. Part 1 concentrates on culture, society, and the individual, analyzing the interplay between social influences and personal experience, with gender a major theme. The chapters included here cover culture, the development of different types of human society, socialization, everyday social interaction, and deviance. In Part 2, the themes of inequality, power, and ideology are explored. Several core areas of sociology are discussed here: stratification, ethnicity and race, groups and organizations, politics and the



state, and war and the military. Part 3 deals with basic social institutions and analyzes their influence on key areas of human behavior. The chapters in this part are concerned with marriage and the family, education and the media, religion, and work and economic life. Part 4 groups together chapters in which the theme of *change* is developed with special emphasis, analyzing globalization, modern urbanism, population, health, and aging, and revolution and social movements. It concludes with a discussion of social change in general.


Finally, in Part 5, the major research methods and theoretical perspectives employed in sociology are discussed. Although this material has been placed at the end of the book, it can be read at any point. My reason for not including it earlier, as most texts do, is simply that in my experience students are better able to handle issues in methodology and theory once they are familiar with the basic subject matter and research findings of sociology. I have avoided the practice found in other texts whereby "functionalist," "conflict," and "symbolic interactionist" theories are continually played off one another. Rather than force theoretical debates into these boxes, I have integrated the work of leading theorists, past and present, with the subject matter in the various chapters. In addition, I have given a much fuller exposition of theoretical ideas and perspectives in Chapter 22 than is usual in other texts.

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES AND GLOSSARIES

Each chapter has been carefully structured to make the learning process as entertaining, yet systematic, as possible. Every chapter is followed by a concise summary, plus a list of basic concepts and important terms that it introduced. All these concepts and terms are included in the glossaries at the end of the book, which provide a very extensive reference source. Whenever a new term is first mentioned in the text itself, it is printed in **boldface**.

## FURTHER RESEARCH: READING AND LIBRARIES

Libraries contain abundant sources of information that can be used to follow up, or expand upon, issues discussed here. References are given throughout the text and listed fully in the Bibliography at the end. Also, I have included a short appendix that provides a guide to library resources and how to use them.



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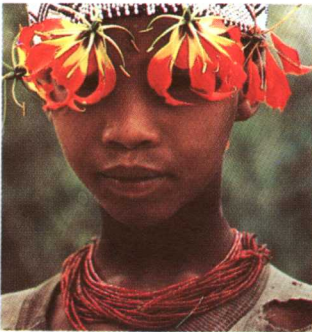
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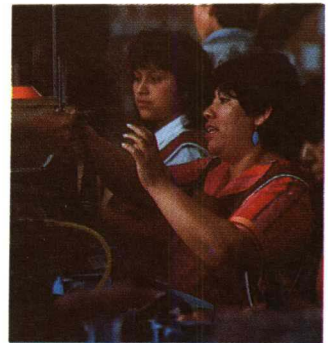
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