

SECOND EDITION

SOCIOLOGY

Exploring the Architecture of Everyday Life



David M. Newman

Sociology

*Exploring the Architecture
of Everyday Life*

S E C O N D E D I T I O N

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Exploring the Architecture of Everyday Life

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For my Dad

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About the Author

David M. Newman (Ph.D., University of Washington) is an Associate Professor of Sociology at DePauw University. In addition to the introductory course, he teaches courses in research methods, family, social psychology, and deviance. He has won teaching awards at both the University of Washington and DePauw University.

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P R E F A C E

It was the first day of the fall semester in 1994. I had just finished making the final adjustments to the first edition of this book, which was due to be published the following January. I felt good, like I'd just accomplished something monumental. Even my two children were impressed with me (although not as impressed as the time I dislodged a Frisbee with a garden hose from the upper reaches of a redbud tree). I walked into the first meeting of my Contemporary Society class eager to start teaching wide-eyed, first-year students a thing or two about sociology.

In my introductory comments to the class that day I mentioned that I had just finished writing a book. The panicked look in their eyes—a curious combination of awe and fear—calmed when I told them I wouldn't be using it that semester. I assured them that the process of writing an introductory text helped me immensely in preparing for the course and that I hoped to pass on to them the knowledge I had accumulated.

The next day after class one of the students—a bright, freshly scrubbed, 18-year-old man—approached me. The ensuing conversation would leave a lasting, humbling impression:

Student: Hi. Umm. Professor Newman . . . I called my parents last night to, like, tell them how my first day in college went. I think they were more nervous than I was. You know how parents can be.

Me: Yes, I sure do. I'm a parent myself you know.

Student: Yeah, well, anyway, I was telling them about each of my classes and what all my professors are like. I told them about this class and how I thought it would be pretty cool. I told them you were writing a book. I thought that would impress them, you know, make it seem like they were getting their money's worth.

Me: Well, thanks.

Student: So, they go, "What's the book about?" [He laughed sheepishly.] I told them I didn't know, but I'd find out. So that's what I'm doing . . . finding out.

Me: Well, I'm glad you did. You see, it's an introductory sociology textbook that uses everyday experiences and phenomena as a way of understanding important sociological theories and ideas. In it I've attempted to . . .

Student: Wait, did you say it was a *textbook*?

Me: Why, yes. You see the purpose of the book is to provide the reader with a thorough and useful introduction to the sociological perspective. I want to convey . . .

Student: [quite embarrassed now] Oh. Professor Newman, I'm very sorry. I misunderstood you. I thought you had written a *real* book.

Real book. *Real* book. *Real* book. Those words echoed in my head like some relentless church bell. At first I tried to dismiss the comment as the utterings of a naive kid who didn't know any better. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized what his comment reflected. The perception that textbooks aren't *real* books is pervasive and, sadly, not altogether unwarranted. These books hover on the margins of the literary world, somewhere between respectful, intellectual, trailblazing research and Harlequin romance novels. Historically they've been less than titillating: thick, heavy, expensive, and easily discarded for a measly five bucks at the end-of-semester "book buy-back."

My goal from the start has been to write a textbook that reads like a *real* book. In the first edition I wanted to capture simultaneously the essence of my discipline and the reader's interest. From what reviewers, instructors, and students who've read and used the book have said, I think I've been fairly successful. People like the relaxed tone and appreciate the consistent theme that ties all the chapters together. Many instructors have commented on how the book enables students to truly understand the unique and useful features of a sociological perspective.

Changes in the Second Edition

However, no book, especially a sociology textbook, can be of lasting value if it remains static, locked into a particular style and content. So I've made some changes in this second edition to enhance the features that worked so well the first time.

Visual Essays

This edition includes a larger, improved visual component. Many textbooks have photos, graphs, charts, and so on. But rarely does this material go beyond simply filling up space. I wanted the visual images in this book to paint detailed, informative sociological portraits. To that end, Douglas Harper, one of the foremost visual sociologists in the world today, produced several unique, vivid, and provocative visual essays for this edition. Doug is a master at using photographic images to tell powerful sociological stories. His essays—focusing on such diverse social phenomena as baseball, family photo albums, peasant religious pilgrimages, transsexualism, domestic violence, and illegal immigration—provide a wonderful opportunity for you to "see" many of the concepts and ideas I've written about in the book. As you study the visual essays, you will become a much more visually astute observer of and participant in your own social world.

New Micro-Macro Connections and Research Features

In the first edition I provided several in-depth features that focused either on a specific piece of sociological research or on some issue that illustrates the connection between micro and macro sociology. These extended discussions linked social institutions to personal experiences and, in the process, provided insight into the methods sociologists use to gather information and draw conclusions about how our world works.

Many instructors and students who used the first edition found these features useful tools in generating classroom discussion. So in this second edition, I've updated some and added others. The added features focus on many topics receiving widespread attention in the popular press, such as biases in news reporting, female genital mutilation, religion in the nineties, interpersonal relations in cyberspace, impression management on the streets, the popularity of Prozac, the computerized workplace, gated communities, Afrocentric schools, illegal immigration, and the environmental justice movement.

Updated Examples and Information

As in the first edition, each chapter is peppered with anecdotes, personal observations, and accounts of contemporary events. Many of the examples you will read are taken from today's news headlines; others are taken from incidents in my own life. Throughout the book I've tried to provide the most up-to-date information possible. All of these examples are meant to show you the pervasiveness and applicability of sociology in our everyday experiences in a way that, I hope, rings familiar with you.

One of the greatest challenges I face as a teacher of sociology is trying to get my students to see the personal relevance of the course material, to fully appreciate the connection between the individual and society. The "everyday life" approach in this book uses the examples and personal observations as a vehicle for understanding the relationship between individuals and society. The true value of sociology lies in its unique ability to show the reciprocal connection between the most private elements of our lives—our characteristics, experiences, behaviors, and thoughts—and the cultures, groups, organizations, and social institutions to which we belong.

My purpose is to make the familiar, unfamiliar—to make you critically examine the commonplace and the ordinary in your own life. Only when you step back and examine the taken-for-granted aspects of your personal experiences can you see that there is an inherent, sometimes unrecognized organization and predictability to them. At the same time you will see that the structure of society is greater than the sum of the experiences and psychologies of the individuals in it.

More Material on Social Institutions and Global Issues

The second edition contains significantly more material on the larger structural elements of society and their impact on social life. Here are some examples:

- Chapter 3, Building Reality—a discussion of professional ethics in social research.
- Chapter 4, Building Order—an in-depth analysis of the relationship between social structure and emotions.
- Chapter 5, Building Identity—an examination of how religion in the nineties influences socialization.
- Chapter 8, Building Social Relationships—an expanded discussion of the dynamics of social groups and a structural examination of divorce patterns.
- Chapter 10, The Architecture of Stratification—a look at the media's role in perpetuating perceptions of social class.
- Chapter 15, Architects of Change—an examination of the role of politics in movements for social change.

In addition, you will find enhanced discussions of global processes. One of the most profound trends in the world today is linking heretofore disconnected societies and cultures. It is difficult, if not impossible, to provide a complete picture of sociology and social life without examining how our lives are intertwined with global events and processes. Here are a few examples of this new global emphasis:

- Chapter 7, Constructing Difference: Social Deviance—a detailed discussion of the global drug trade.
- Chapter 9, Building the Structure of Society—an enhanced analysis of the impact of globalization on economics, politics, and religion.
- Chapter 10, The Architecture of Stratification—an expanded examination of global inequality.
- Chapter 12, The Architecture of Inequality: Race and Ethnicity—an examination of worldwide patterns of racism.
- Chapter 14, The Dynamics of Population—a look at the politics of immigration.

New Articles in the Companion Reader

The companion volume to this book is a carefully constructed book of short articles, chapters, or excerpts from other authors. These readings are provocative and eye-opening examples of the joys and insights of sociological thinking. Many of them vividly show how sociologists gather evidence through carefully designed research. The readings examine common everyday experiences, important social issues, or distinct historical events that illustrate the relationship between the individual and society.

Over half of the articles in the companion reader are new to this edition. Instructors and students who used the first edition asked to see more contemporary readings. So I have drawn from the most recent scholarship to glean some selections that touch on such important and relevant sociological issues as credit cards, abortion, lying, the lives of athletes, corporal punishment, hospitals, Disneyland, immigrant nannies, and America's youth.

Teaching Resources to Accompany the Book and Companion Reader

The *Teaching Resources Guide*, available from Pine Forge Press in hard copy or on a disk upon adoption of either the text or its companion reader, provides comprehensive, thorough coverage of the material in each book, including:

Learning Outcomes. An essay written by David Newman that explores the various goals motivating his writing and his teaching, along with suggestions on how to use the guide to achieve these instructional goals.

Chapter Summaries

Class Exercises and Discussion Topics. Suggestions for writing exercises, discussion topics, and student assignments to use both in and outside of class. Also provides suggestions for how to utilize the text's Your Turn activities.

Literary and Visual Resources

Test Bank. Multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. The test bank was developed to test students' understanding of the material, so instructors can encourage students to move beyond basic memorization of materials toward application and critique. The multiple-choice questions are separated into Recall Questions and Application Questions. Recall Questions are based more directly on the information presented in the textbook, and Application Questions assess students' comprehension of the material and their ability to apply concepts, theories, and research findings.

Teaching Resource Materials: Annotated Bibliography. An annotated bibliography of resources useful in preparing for and designing classes, suggestions for how to manage teaching interactions and elicit and evaluate student performance, and techniques for handling any challenges that arise in class.

The Architecture of Society

I have chosen the image of architecture in the subtitle to convey one of the driving themes of this book: society is a human construction. Society is not "out there" somewhere, waiting to be visited and examined. It exists in the minute details of our day-to-day lives. Whenever we follow its rules or break them, enter its roles or shed them, work to change things or keep them as they are, we are adding another nail, plank, or frame to the structure of our society. In short, society—like the buildings around us—couldn't exist were it not for the actions of people.

At the same time, however, this structure that we have created appears to exist independently of us. We don't usually spend much time thinking about the buildings we live, work, and play in as human constructions. We see them as finished products, not as the processes that created them. Only when something goes wrong—the pipes leak or the walls crack—do we realize that people made these structures and people are the ones who must fix them. When buildings outlive their usefulness or become dangerous to their inhabitants, people must renovate them or, if necessary, decide to tear them down.

Likewise, society is so massive and has been around for so long that it *appears* to stand on its own, at a level above and beyond the toiling hands of individual people. But here too when things begin to go wrong—widespread discrimination, massive poverty, lack of affordable health care, escalating crime rates—people must do something about it.

So the fascinating paradox of human life is that we build society, collectively “forget” that we’ve built it, and live under its massive and influential structure. But we are not “stuck” with society as it is. Human beings are the architects of their own social reality. Throughout this book I examine the active role individuals play in planning, maintaining, or fixing society.

A Final Thought

It is my conviction that the teaching/learning experience can and should be a personally relevant, thought-provoking, and enjoyable excursion. Reading a textbook doesn't have to be boring or, even worse, the academic equivalent of a trip to the dentist (although I personally have nothing against dentists). I believe that part of my task as an instructor is to provide my students with a challenging but comfortable classroom atmosphere in which to learn. I want to do the same in this book.

Your instructor has chosen this book, not because it makes his or her job teaching your course any easier, but because he or she wants you, the student, to see how sociology helps us to understand how the small private experiences of our everyday lives are connected to this thing we call society. I hope you learn to appreciate this important message, and I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Good luck,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "David M. Newman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "N".

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