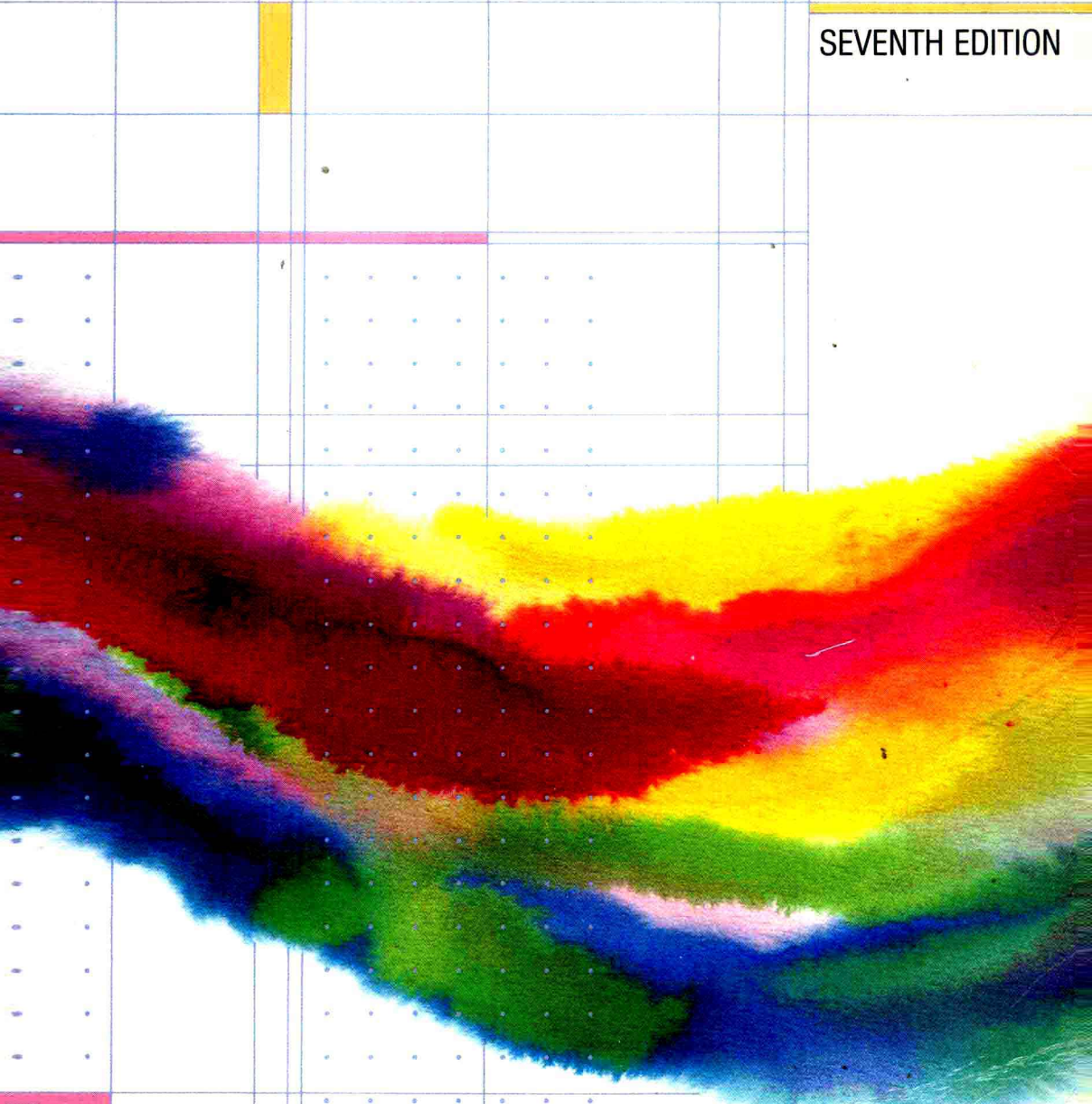


SOCIOLOGY

CONCEPTS AND CHARACTERISTICS

SEVENTH EDITION



JUDSON R. LANDIS

Sociology

CONCEPTS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Seventh Edition

JUDSON R. LANDIS

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Preface

THE PURPOSES OF A FIRST COURSE in a discipline usually are several—to introduce an area of study, to communicate its unique perspective or way of looking at the world, and to offer the promise of secrets yet to be discovered—all in the hope that interested students will come back for more (maybe even thirty units more). That there are many different views of the best way to achieve these ambitions is apparent in sociology from some of the introductory textbooks available.

Many books provide an encyclopedic analysis of what a discipline is and does—all its tools, techniques, and substantive areas. I have decided not to try to do that in this book. It seems to me that a feeling for an area of study and its unique perspective may be gained by sampling the concepts of that field. Concepts are the building blocks—the language—of most disciplines. Once one has this language, the rest comes more easily and makes more sense. This book approaches the task of helping students develop a general understanding of the sociological perspective by focusing on the basic concepts of sociology. Through examining several substantive areas and the research connected with them, students can begin to see how the concepts contribute to sociological analysis.

At the end of most of the chapters, I have included readings to further illustrate the chapter's concepts. These readings are drawn from a variety of sources. Included are descriptions of research and excerpts from novels, autobiographies, and nonfiction works. Some of the selections were written by professional social scientists; some were not. For example, writings of both Helen Keller and Malcolm X are used to illustrate socialization and development of self. In addition, there are selections by William Domhoff on where the powerful play, Christopher Edwards on joining the "moonies," Dee Brown on the history of the American Indian, Stanley and Ruth Freed on attempts to deal with population control in a small village in India, William Kephart's analysis of the Gypsies, and *The New Republic's* interesting debate on the "Jeweler's Dilemma." The readings, I think, illustrate the concepts and ideas in an unusual way. It's always a challenge to find good readings, readings that are both illustrative and interesting. Five of the readings (those written by Helen Keller, Malcolm X, Ralph Linton, Elinor Langer, and Harper Lee) now have survived all seven editions of this book.

This edition reflects the following: I reworked and tightened Chapter One; most chapters have been revised at least slightly; all statistical information has been updated to reflect the most recent data available; most of the tables have been revised, and many have been converted to graphs (for better presentation of information and because I learned how to run a graph program on my computer). This edition has more cross-cultural information than previous editions have had. I've changed one-third of the readings and added five or six new boxes.

Many people have helped me on this and earlier editions with ideas and criticism: my colleagues at CSU, Sacramento—Louise Kanter, Carole Barnes, Tom Kando, Dean Dorn, Pat McGillivray, David Lee, Worth Summers, Ivy Lee, Andres Rendon, Ayad Al-Qazzaz, Robi Chakravorti, Frank Darknell, Rodney Kingsnorth, Jeff Hubbard, Sharad Malelu, Minako Maykovich, and Bob Kloss. The following reviewers were also most helpful: Thomas C. Calhoun, Western Kentucky University; Michael V. Carter, Carson-Newman College; Linda Marie Fritschner, Indiana University at South Bend; Donald W. Getts, Kishwaukee College; Craig B. Little, State University of New York at Cortland; James Loewen, University of Vermont; Louis S. Rupnick, Suffolk County Community College; Steven Schada, Oakton Community College; Alvin P. Short, Southwest Texas State University; and Constance Verdi, Prince George's Community College. I'd also like to thank Lois Hill and Verica Dering and the people at Wadsworth—Steve Rutter, Sheryl Fullerton, Serina Beauparlant, Robert Kauser, Jerilyn Emori, and Joan Pendleton.

This is dedicated to Sheron, who helped whenever I asked, and to Jeffrey, Brian, and Kevin, who have continued to be patient with me.



Judson R. Landis

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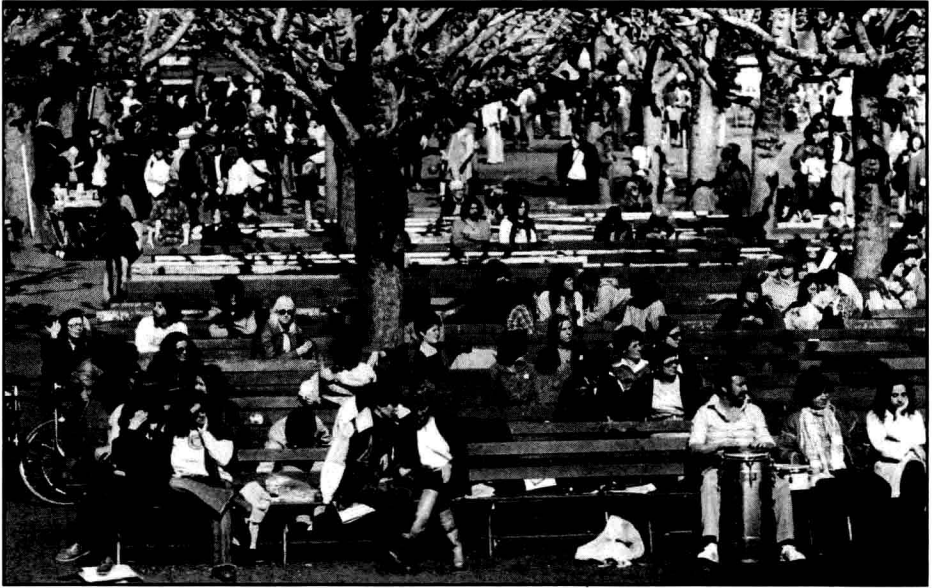
Sociology

Introduction: Knowledge, Science, and Sociology

THIS BOOK is designed to acquaint you with a field of study called *sociology*. Generally speaking, sociology is the study of human society; it is the study of social behavior and the interaction of people in groups. Sociologists study various aspects of social life, including behavior in large organizations and small groups, deviant behavior, and the characteristics of political and religious institutions and social movements; sociologists also examine the social-psychological explanations for behavior. Our view is that you understand human behavior by looking at the groups people belong to and the culture in which they live. We focus on social structure—that complicated network of ways that people are connected together. In this chapter, we look first at the idea of *knowledge*, then at a particular way of gaining knowledge called *science*, and finally at one of the social sciences called *sociology*.

However, before I get into these topics, I'd like to get you accustomed to the way social scientists look at the world, so let's consider several situations.

1. A white sports fan is fascinated by the fact that while the majority of our society is white, the majority of the athletes playing professional basketball are black. He concludes that because of his racial genetic and hereditary background factors, he had better take up tennis. How good is his logic?



-
2. A famous person (Marilyn Monroe, Ernest Hemingway, Freddie Prinz, etc.) commits suicide. Or a murder-suicide takes place in which a person kills at least two other people and then kills himself or herself. What, if anything, will happen among those in the rest of the society who know about these events?
 3. A statistics fanatic finds that in a particular year, Mexico and Miami had a lot of murder but little suicide, and that Hungary, Denmark, and western states like New Mexico, Nevada, and Wyoming had many suicides. Our numbers freak wonders if this is a one-time event or typical, and if typical, why?
 4. A poll tells us that most people (eighty to eighty-five percent) favor using the death penalty as punishment for serious crimes like murder. That same poll mentions that a good portion of those who favor the death penalty do so because they believe that it deters others from committing crime. Is that really so, and is the poll accurate?
 5. We're loaded with crime these days—burglary, robbery, auto theft, you name it. But what about 300 years ago, were there crime waves then like now? If so, what were the criminals doing—burglary, robbery, auto theft?

6. A sane individual goes to the admitting officer of a mental hospital and gives that person an accurate case history (which in general states he is as sane as you and I) and also says one thing that is not true, that he occasionally hears voices, unclear voices that seem to be saying words like "empty," "hollow," and "thud." What will happen to our sane person?
7. A teacher is led to believe (falsely) that several of his or her students are very sharp, bound to do well this semester. How does the teacher behave toward the "sharp" students, and how do the students perform?

These are the types of situations that social scientists study and the types of questions that we try to answer. In fact, the situations listed have been studied, and some fairly interesting answers have emerged. Later in this chapter and in following chapters, I'll try to return to each of these and describe to you how we know what we know.

KNOWLEDGE

Why do we want to study sociology? For ages people have been fascinated with their own existence, and they have persistently tried to find out more about themselves and the world in which they live. Their attempts have occasionally been bumbling and crude, sometimes amazingly sophisticated. For example, around 1900 B.C., a group of immigrants from Holland and the Rhineland arrived in southern England. (They eventually became known as Beaker people because pottery drinking vessels were found in their graves.) Upon their arrival, they began building a structure of posts, mounds, holes, and stones on the Salisbury plain southwest of London that later became known as Stonehenge. Some of the stones they used were as long as thirty feet and weighed fifty tons. The stones were placed on end in holes in an intricate pattern of circles and alleys. It took the Beaker people and the Wessex people, who continued the work, some three hundred years to complete what amounted to a giant calendar, a sort of Stone Age computer. The stones were set up so that sighting through cracks between stones would show sunrise, sunset, moonrise, and moonset on certain important days (for example, midsummer day, midwinter day, first day of summer, first day of winter). Other sightings allowed the Wessex people to predict eclipses of the moon.

Why was this elaborate structure built? As a calendar it was useful for judging the proper time to plant and harvest crops. It probably also proved helpful to priests, who could impress people with their apparent power to make the sun and moon rise and set wherever they wanted. And possibly the structure was built just because the Beaker and Wessex people were curious to see if it could be done.

Aside from the enormous physical work involved, the builders of Stonehenge had to collect and correlate a great deal of information: planting and harvesting times, times of sunrises and sunsets, and phases of the moon. They had to pass this information on from generation to generation. Archaeologists who have studied Stonehenge tell us that what looks like a single

monument is actually several. The first structure didn't work as well as the builders wanted, and a second model was built over the first. It likewise needed improvement, and a third was constructed.

Unlike most primitive structures, Stonehenge has lasted to modern times. Some stones have weathered and fallen from their positions; others have been taken by farmers for stone fences. But much of the structure remains intact. For years, its presence and purpose has confounded people. And although some who studied Stonehenge felt that its existence had something to do with the positions of the sun and moon, the true complexity of Stonehenge was only first revealed in 1961 when astronomy professor Gerald Hawkins fed data on the positions and relationships of the stones, posts, and holes into a computer for analysis. Then modern people learned the significance of what the Beaker and Wessex people learned thirty-five hundred years earlier.¹

In the late 1600s, some chemists who were attempting to explain what happens when substances are heated or burned came up with the theory of *phlogiston*. The theory stated that phlogiston is an invisible substance that exists in all combustible bodies and is released during combustion, the act of burning. Substances rich in phlogiston burned easily, and perhaps fire was a manifestation of phlogiston. The new theory was immediately accepted: It helped explain various phenomena, and it guided the famous scientists of the day. The problem, of course, was that it was totally wrong. Even when confronted with evidence that discredited the phlogiston theory, scientists in the 1780s were very slow to give up on it. Joseph Priestley, a famous scientist of the time, died in 1804 still believing in phlogiston.²

These are just two of countless examples of people's attempts to describe and understand their world, to obtain knowledge about their existence. Regardless of how it is collected and sometimes even regardless of its accuracy, knowledge tends to accumulate. Explanations seem to last if they are convincing. That is, they are believed as long as they seem to explain a part of human experience. If the explanations leave out important elements, they tend to be modified, or even abandoned to be replaced by a better theory.

Exchanging an inaccurate explanation for a better one, however, isn't always easy. Some explanations are very dearly held. Their backers (even fans) may believe in them so fiercely that the ideas remain in vogue even when other theories work better. Scientists have been known to compete with and to conceal findings from each other to arrive at a discovery first and to make certain the discovery stands. This situation, unfortunately, can hinder the growth of knowledge.

But one way or another, knowledge accumulates, and it usually does so in one of three general ways: mysticism, rationalism, or empiricism. **Mysticism** refers to knowledge gained by intuition, revelation, inspiration, magic, visions, or spells. Societies often hold special places for those individuals who seem to possess unusual powers: the magician, the spiritualist, the priest, the witch doctor. The ceremonial use of drugs to produce vision is also highly valued among some peoples. In the seventeenth century, the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony were heartily convinced of the presence of witch-