



LINDA SCHNEIDER | ARNO

GLOBAL SOCIOLOGY

INTRODUCING FIVE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

SECOND EDITION

Global Sociology

Introducing Five Contemporary Societies

SECOND EDITION

Linda Schneider

Nassau Community College

Arnold Silverman

Nassau Community College



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**GLOBAL SOCIOLOGY: INTRODUCING FIVE
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES**

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About the Authors

LINDA SCHNEIDER is Professor of Sociology at SUNY–Nassau Community College. She received her Ph. D. in sociology from Columbia University. Professor Schneider has for many years enjoyed teaching introductory sociology and has long been involved in activities related to undergraduate instruction. She has published in the ASA journal *Teaching Sociology*, and contributed to panels about teaching at conferences of the Eastern Sociological Society, the Community College Humanities Association, the Community College General Education Association, and the American Association of Community Colleges. Professor Schneider has directed several grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, and the National Science Foundation for multidisciplinary and global curriculum development.

ARNOLD SILVERMAN is Professor of Sociology at SUNY–Nassau Community College. He received his Ph. D. in sociology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Professor Silverman has published widely, and his articles appear in *American Sociological Review*, *Built Environment*, *Contemporary Sociology*, *Social Service Review*, and elsewhere. He is the co-author of *Chosen Children*, a longitudinal study of American adopting families. Professor Silverman has also been active in efforts to improve the quality of undergraduate instruction. He co-directed a faculty development effort financed by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to encourage active learning in undergraduate teaching. He has been chair of the Eastern Sociological Society's Committee on Community Colleges, and he is currently the coordinator of Nassau Community College's Freshman Learning Communities program.

This book is dedicated to the peoples of Egypt, Germany, Mexico, and Japan, and the iKung Bushmen, with whom we share a mutual human history and a common future.

Introduction: To the Student

Global Sociology

Today, no one can afford to ignore the variety of the world's societies. If you go to work in the business world, it is very likely that in selling your products, or buying supplies, or managing your company's factories, you will need to deal with people from other societies. The better you understand cultures that differ from your own, the more likely it is that you will be successful. When you go on vacation or listen to music, you may come in contact with unfamiliar cultures. You will enjoy yourself more if you are comfortable with diversity. *Global Sociology* is a sociological introduction to the diversity of the world's societies.

Sociology has an important message for you: There are many ways to arrange human lives; many different kinds of families, economies, and governments; endlessly varied values, beliefs, attitudes, and customs. Until very recently in human history, most people lived quite isolated lives, seldom meeting people from other societies. People readily believed that their own way of life was the only way, or the best way, and that other societies were strange or evil. In today's global world, condemning other societies leads to misunderstanding and violence. The world's peoples need to learn about each other. We believe that the more you know about different ways of life, the more profoundly you will appreciate how much all humans have in common.

We chose five societies to include in this book:

Japan: A Conforming Culture

Mexico: Nation of Networks

The !Kung Bushmen: An Indigenous People of Southern Africa

Egypt: Faith, Gender, and Class

Germany: Social Institutions and Social Change in a Modern Western Society

It was hard to choose just five societies from all the hundreds in the world today. First of all, we chose societies from different parts of the world and different cultural traditions. One society in this book is in Asia, one in Latin America, one in Europe, and two in Africa, though one of these, Egypt, is culturally part of the Middle East. Japan and Germany are rich, industrialized nations. Mexico and Egypt are “developing” nations, struggling with poverty, and the iKung Bushmen are not a nation at all.

We looked for societies very different from your own, to illustrate the range of the world’s social diversity. Egypt is an Islamic society, where five times a day, the call to prayer penetrates every street and house. Many people pray at every call and strive to follow the laws of Islam. In Japan, people enjoy celebrating the holidays of many religions. At Christmas, Japanese people give each other presents and eat take-out fried chicken. Afterwards, they attend a ceremony in a Buddhist temple. But only 10 percent of Japanese people consider themselves religious.

The Germans and the iKung Bushmen could not be more different peoples, but they have in common the experience of rapid social change. The iKung Bushmen are one of the last peoples on earth who live by gathering wild food. They are now losing their land and their way of life, marking the end of a major chapter in the story of humanity. Since reunification, Germans have struggled to merge two very different societies, one capitalist and one socialist.

In Egypt and Mexico there are tremendous disparities between the rich and the poor. Rich Egyptians have made their country one of the world’s largest importers of German luxury cars, but poor Egyptians, desperate for housing, have taken to living in cemeteries. Indian peasants in Chiapas, Mexico, took up arms against local landowners and the government, and their rebellion, which began in 1994, still continues.

Learning Sociology from Diversity

Learning about many different societies will help you deepen your understanding of sociological concepts. Sociology textbooks teach concepts like values, norms, roles, socialization, deviance, social stratification, modernization, etc. The five societies in this book were chosen to illustrate these and other important sociological concepts. When you understand how sociological concepts can be applied to differing societies, you will understand the concepts much better.

Let’s take an example: the concept of social inequality. We have chosen societies for this book with very varied forms of social inequality. The iKung Bushmen are an almost entirely egalitarian society: No one has any more possessions or any more power than anyone else. Learning about the iKung will sharpen your ability to see inequalities in other societies, including your own. In Egypt, there are very sharp inequalities between men and women. In Japan, people pay close attention to status differences in age, gender, education, and occupation, but income inequalities are quite minimal. In Mexico, millions of people earn the minimum wage of under \$4 a day, while the richest Mexicans have imported cars and air-conditioned houses and send their children to college abroad. When you learn about many different systems of social stratification, you will understand the concept better.

In order to help you understand what life is like in different societies, we have included in each chapter a number of *vignettes*: short, fictional sketches of individuals, their life situations, and their feelings. None of the characters in the vignettes are real people. We made them up, inspired by people we read about and people we met.

Learning through Comparison

Comparison and contrast are very powerful means of learning. The iKung Bushmen spend all their lives in groups of 15 to 40 people, related by kinship. Imagine how hard it would be to teach them the concept of “bureaucracy.” They have never waited in line at the Department of Motor Vehicles or filled out forms for registration at college. When you study the iKung Bushmen, you will learn how new and unusual bureaucracies are in human experience.

Comparison has always been the essence of sociology. Sociologists know that when you are immersed in your own society, you take it for granted and assume that its ways are part of human nature, universal and unchanging. We most easily discover what our own society is like when we learn about a different society. As sociologists say, “the fish is the last to discover water.”

Comparison is a wonderful means of applying concepts and theories and deepening your understanding of their meanings. Comparison is also a challenge to intolerance. Studying world societies shows us that there is no one right way to live, and that the most fundamental characteristic of “human nature” is our tremendous flexibility in creating diverse cultures.

Active Learning

Suppose you wanted to learn to play basketball and someone told you to listen to another person talk about the game, and then watch other people play it. You would be disgusted with this advice, because you know that in order to learn basketball, you must play the game yourself and then practice, practice, practice. If you have a coach or someone else to watch you and give you pointers, you will learn even faster.

Will you be surprised to hear that learning sociology (or any other college subject) works the same way? Just reading or hearing someone else present sociological ideas isn’t enough. You must practice your own sociological reasoning, out loud and in writing and have others coach you in your work in order to learn the subject.

Global Sociology is designed so that you can practice applying sociological concepts to a descriptive “database” of information about five different societies. As you read this book, ask yourself: Can I talk about these societies using the language of sociology? Try to describe the values of each society, or the roles they expect men and women to play. Think about how family life is organized in each society, or what social groups are most important in peoples’ lives. Questions at the end of each chapter will help you put your knowledge of sociology to active use.

One of the best ways of practicing sociological thinking is by making comparisons. We invite you to compare each of these societies to your own society: What similarities and what differences can you see? You can also compare the societies in this book with each other. In writing the book, we have been greatly tempted to make comparisons ourselves, but we have tried to discipline ourselves and stick to description. We wanted to leave the work and play of comparison to the students and instructors who use *Global Sociology*.

Preface: To the Instructor

We wrote this book to give students a broader context for understanding both sociology and their own societies. For several years both authors had assigned William Kephart's *Extraordinary Groups* when teaching introductory sociology. We liked Kephart's case study approach. Reading his descriptions of a variety of American religious groups, students were exposed to diverse cultures and social structures. Despite these advantages, we were unhappy confining our comparisons to religious sects. Linda's student Mike Godino put it nicely when he told us, "You know, introductory sociology is great. I'm learning about ways of life I never imagined, and it makes me see my own society so much more clearly by contrast. But I'm not sure I want to know this much about these little religious groups. Isn't there a book that does the same thing for different countries, important countries that we should understand?" Mike's comment crystallized our desire to extend the range of comparisons, and we searched around, but there wasn't such a book. There were ethnographies, but these were anthropological rather than sociological. Then there were "global" textbooks. We liked these texts, but we were looking for a supplement with in-depth case studies.

Finally we decided to write the book ourselves: *Global Sociology* is a soft-cover supplement to any standard sociology text, providing broad and comprehensive sociological description of five diverse contemporary societies. We aimed for wide geographic distribution: We chose one Asian society—Japan; one Latin American society—Mexico; one European society—Germany; and two African societies—Egypt and the !Kung Bushmen. Two of the societies are wealthy and industrial, and two are poor "developing" nations. For contrast, we included a non-national society—the hunting and gathering !Kung Bushmen.

One of our concerns in writing *Global Sociology* has been to create a text that instructors can use without being specialists in the study of Japan, Mexico, Egypt, Germany, or the !Kung Bushmen. General knowledge and a sociologist's understanding of how societies work is ample background for using *Global Sociology*.

We are confident that you will see how *Global Sociology* can easily be introduced into your courses. Although it is interesting to read some of the more specialized studies we have recommended, it is by no means a requirement for the effective use of *Global Sociology*.

The five societies described here vary in many ways: in their definitions of male and female roles, in their degree of inequality, in the salience of religious values and norms in their cultures, and in their population dynamics. *Global Sociology* includes two different socialist societies, the former East Germany and Egypt, and it examines the post-socialist transformation of East Germany. The book also examines two different capitalist societies, West Germany and Japan, whose styles of capitalism contrast with that of the United States.

Global Sociology is structured so as to parallel the major sections of a standard sociology text. Each chapter is organized around basic sociological topics: culture, social structure and group life, socialization, deviance, social institutions, social stratification, and social change. Earlier chapters place more emphasis on topics usually introduced first in introductory sociology. Chapters on Japan, Mexico, and the !Kung Bushmen provide much discussion of culture, social structure, socialization, and deviance, though they include other topics too. Later chapters on Egypt and Germany touch more briefly on beginning concepts and emphasize social stratification, social institutions, and social change.

Global Sociology will help bring to life abstract textbook presentations of concepts with a wealth of vivid illustrations. Reading about Japanese greeting norms, or Mexican patronage politics, or the effects of population growth in Egypt, or East Germans' first encounters with capitalism, or how the !Kung Bushmen avoid conflict, students will see the universal relevance of sociological ideas. Questions posed at the end of each chapter lead students to make sociological comparisons and to apply sociological concepts to descriptive knowledge.

Comparison is one of the great strengths of sociology. By comparing other societies with their own, students learn about the range of social variation, and they learn what makes their own society distinctive. Reading *Global Sociology*, students will spontaneously make comparisons with their own society, and they can be encouraged to compare the diverse societies described in the book. To aid in this effort, the text provides a variety of tables, summarizing important comparative data for Japan, Mexico, Egypt, Germany, and the United States.

Although most of our students were born and raised in the United States, an increasing number are from countries as diverse as El Salvador, Haiti, Jamaica, Iran, China, Greece, and the former Soviet Union. It is exciting to see that these students can use *Global Sociology* to make meaningful comparisons with the societies and cultures they have been born and raised in. *Global Sociology* doesn't require that students carry the assumptions, insights, and values of an American childhood and schooling.

Learning about other societies helps all students become aware of their ethnocentrism and reach beyond it. Students develop a sense of attachment to the societies they study, even when some of what they read disturbs them. To help students use their imaginations in picturing unfamiliar societies, we have included

fictional vignettes of individuals in each society. Vignettes help students make human connections across cultural divides.

We have found that reading *Global Sociology* heightens student interest in other societies. News from abroad becomes absorbing when students have a framework in which to place it. *Global Sociology* presents societies that are often in the news, and our own students have become alert to news coverage about the societies they study. When an economic crisis shook Japan and a revolutionary movement riveted Mexico, students brought in news clippings and compared Japanese, Mexican, and American responses to crises. When they read about Egypt, our students noticed for the first time that Muslims in their community and their college were observing Ramadan.

The Second Edition

World events move quickly. The second edition is revised to keep your students up to date. First of all, the statistical tables have been updated with the latest information available. We have searched out the best sources of world statistics on the Internet, and Web references are noted with the tables and in the bibliography. You and your students can continue to update data by using these sources. In many cases, Web sources will allow you to generate your own tables by selecting variables.

Global Sociology has been carefully revised for current events. There is new coverage of the social impact of Japan's economic crisis, and revised discussion of the status and roles of women in Japanese society. Analysis of Japanese society introduces new work on inequalities of class and power to give a more complete picture of current scholarly thinking about Japan today.

The chapter on Mexico contains new material on deviance, with discussion of the current crime wave and the effects of narcotics trafficking on Mexican society. We have updated and amplified coverage of political change in Mexico, discussing the rise of opposition parties and contested elections. There is more discussion of Mexico's place in the world economy and the effects of global economic crisis.

Chapter 4 on Egypt has been extensively revised, with a new section on deviance and more information about Islamic fundamentalism and revolutionary Islamic movements, in a world context. We have added coverage of women's rights and Islamic law and updated information on working women and on marriage in Egypt today.

The second edition contains more information about the current situation of the !Kung Bushmen in Namibia and Botswana and the impact of government policy, economic change, and foreign non-governmental organizations.

Ten years after reunification, Germany is a much-changed society. We have included a careful evaluation of just how far the social reunification of the two parts of Germany has progressed. In addition, the second edition discusses recent political change in Germany and the situation of Germany in a unifying Europe. There is more coverage of current controversies about guilt and remembrance, the Holocaust, and Germany's present treatment of immigrants.

Events, no doubt, will continue their rapid pace. We have tried to give you access to current news about the societies in this book, so it will be easy for you to keep up. Please use the Web guide in the Instructor's Manual that accompanies *Global Sociology*. It includes English-language newspaper Web sites for all five societies. We have carefully selected Web sites that are reputable and reliable, easy to access, and constantly updated. They should be a good source for news for you and your students.

We have enjoyed using *Global Sociology* with our students. We appreciate their sense of wonder as they confront diverse societies, and we are continually impressed with how much they learn about their own society when they study other societies. We hope you and your students will enjoy the book too.

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A panel of reviewers gave us useful insights and generously shared their knowledge of the societies described in *Global Sociology*. For the second edition, they include Michael Ball of the University of Wisconsin at Superior, Lee Frank of the Community College of Allegheny County, Kathleen Kalab of Western Kentucky University, Nelson Pichardo of the State University of New York at Albany, Sarah Soule of the University of Arizona, and David Wachtel of Lexington Community College (who thoughtfully included the comments of his students along with his own insights). Special thanks go to Jan AbuShakrah of Portland Community College and Jan Fiola of Moorhead State University. The comments of our reviewers from the first edition continued to be useful to us, especially those of Brenda Phillips of Texas Woman’s University. Our reviewers’ grasp of the teaching process has helped to make this book a more useful classroom document.

Gordon DeBlaey of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan was kind enough to offer us his insights based on the use of our text in his courses.

Our colleague Eric Wood graciously shared his insights and materials from his fieldwork among the !Kung Bushmen in Namibia. Louise Forsyth of Brooklyn Poly Prep contributed her thoughtful insights into the history and literature of the

Middle East and her good sense of what students needed to see and hear in a text dealing with Islamic cultures. Janet Abu-Lughod of the New School for Social Research and Lila Abu-Lughod of New York University helped us develop a broader and better understanding of contemporary Egypt. Their direction in terms of sources and ideas was invaluable.

Marilyn Rosenthal and Marcia Speigelman of Nassau Community College's library initiated us into the use of the Internet and its remarkable resources for an undertaking such as ours. Marilyn and her colleagues also worked hard to find the monographs, articles, and government documents so useful to our work. They were more than ably assisted by the staffs of the community libraries of Rochester, Vermont and Merrick, New York.

We owe a debt of thanks to our able student assistant Yongjoo Kwon, who photocopied endlessly, ran to the library and the mailroom, and helped us keep afloat in the sea of details that producing a text requires.

Finally, we recognize our debts to our respective spouses and children, who encouraged us and endured our preoccupation with researching and writing *Global Sociology*.

Linda Schneider
Arnold Silverman

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