

# Sociology Companion Document for the C3 Framework

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## Introduction to Disciplinary Concepts and Skills in Sociology

Sociology is the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior. Sociologists investigate the structure of groups, organizations, and societies and how people interact within these contexts. Since all human behavior is social, the subject matter of sociology ranges from the intimate family to the hostile mob; from organized crime to religious traditions; and from the divisions of race, gender, and social class to the shared beliefs of a common culture.<sup>2</sup>

Sociology is a science that uses research methods to investigate the social world. The scientific process ensures that the knowledge produced is more representative, objective, trustworthy, and useful for explaining social phenomena than personal opinions or individual experiences. Social phenomena are constructed through human interaction. Thus, sociological inquiry must examine what meanings people give to the behaviors, objects, and interactions that are present in each culture and society. It utilizes the scientific method, is based on critical thinking, and requires students to examine how they are influenced by their social positions. In this way, students learn how to effectively participate in a diverse and multicultural society, and develop a sense of personal and social responsibility.

This Appendix outlines four fundamental disciplinary learning goals for College, Career, and Civic ready students in sociology. These goals highlight key areas for student learning and instructional focus in K-12 sociology units and courses. Each of the four learning goals is accompanied by a set of assessable competencies. These learning goals align with Dimension 2 of the C3 Framework (Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools).

## The Sociological Perspective and Methods of Inquiry

Sociology provides a unique perspective by focusing on the groups to which individuals belong rather than only on the individual. It deeply considers how social contexts influence both individuals and groups. In this way, it helps students to see the world through others' eyes, to increase their understanding of group dynamics, and to develop tolerance of differences. Sociology uses objective and data-driven scientific methods to study

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<sup>2</sup> See American Sociological Association (ASA), *21st Century Careers with an Undergraduate Degree in Sociology* (Washington DC: ASA, 2009).

social interactions at multiple levels, from families and peer-groups to nations and global organizations.

College, Career, and Civic ready students:

- **D2.Soc.1.9-12.** Explain the sociological perspective and how it differs from other social sciences.
- **D2.Soc.2.9-12.** Define social context in terms of the external forces that shape human behavior.
- **D2.Soc.3.9-12.** Identify how social context influences individuals.
- **D2.Soc.4.9-12.** Illustrate how sociological analysis can provide useful data-based information for decision making.
- **D2.Soc.5.9-12.** Give examples of the strengths and weaknesses of four main methods of sociological research: surveys, experiments, observations, and content analysis.

### **Social Structure: Culture, Institutions, and Society**

Sociology studies the social structure and culture of societies in order to understand how social patterns are created and maintained over time; examples of these might include persistent violence or long-standing disparities in school achievement. Important components of social structures are institutions such as the economy, government and politics, the educational system, the family, religion, and the health care system. Culture includes the language, norms, values, and material goods of a society. Social structure and culture work in tandem to shape societies, but are not completely rigid. All individuals are impacted by social change, which refers to the transformation of culture, social institutions, and social structure over time.

College, Career, and Civic ready students:

- **D2.Soc.6.9-12.** Identify the major components of culture.
- **D2.Soc.7.9-12.** Cite examples of how culture influences the individuals in it.

- **D2.Soc.8.9-12.** Identify important social institutions in society.

- **D2.Soc.9.9-12.** Explain the role of social institutions in society.

- **D2.Soc.10.9-12.** Analyze how social structures and cultures change.

### **Social Relationships: Self, Groups, and Socialization**

A fundamental insight of sociology is that individual and group identity is socially constructed through relationships with significant individuals, groups, and society as a whole. Socialization is a life-long process of learning how to function in society. Important socializing agents include family, peers, the media, schools, and religion. Major social and historical events can be a force in socializing entire generational groups. Groups form when individuals share common interests and/or goals, and often become a point of comparison for individuals as they evaluate themselves and others.

College, Career, and Civic ready students:

- **D2.Soc.11.9-12.** Analyze the influence of the primary agents of socialization and why they are influential.
- **D2.Soc.12.9-12.** Explain the social construction of self and groups.
- **D2.Soc.13.9-12.** Identify characteristics of groups, as well as the effects groups have on individuals and society, and the effects of individuals and societies on groups.
- **D2.Soc.14.9-12.** Explain how in-group and out-group membership influences the life chances of individuals and shapes societal norms and values.

### **Stratification and Inequality**

Sociology helps students to understand their own and others' social problems. Group memberships and identities provide or deny certain opportunities and power. They also create and reinforce social stratification. This can result in conflict between groups for scarce or valued resources, and in diminished access for some in

society as others control these resources. Disadvantaged groups experience social problems such as poverty, unemployment, poor education, lack of access to health care, and inequality in obtaining rights and privileges.

College, Career, and Civic ready students:

- **D2.Soc.15.9-12.** Identify common patterns of social inequality.
- **D2.Soc.16.9-12.** Interpret the effects of inequality on groups and individuals.
- **D2.Soc.17.9-12.** Analyze why the distribution of power and inequalities can result in conflict.
- **D2.Soc.18.9-12.** Propose and evaluate alternative responses to inequality.

### **Brief Overview of Connections between Sociology and the English Language Arts/Literacy Common Core Standards**

**Connections with the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards.** Students in sociology develop and use skills that are central to the Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards. Learning the theories, methodologies, and practices of sociology provides students with the knowledge and skills they need to think critically about the world they live in, themselves, and how they are influenced by their social positions. By studying sociology, students learn how to effectively participate in a diverse and multi-cultural society, and develop a sense of personal and social responsibility. Students in sociology integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media in order to address questions or solve complex problems. They are required to integrate data and information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, in order to form a coherent and empirically-based understanding of an idea or social event, noting discrepancies among sources. Students learn how to propose, plan, and conduct simple research and action projects as well as read, discuss, and critique research findings in ways that apply their acquired content knowledge and hone the skills discussed in the Anchor Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language.

More detailed curricular recommendations for sociology can be found on the website of the American Sociological Association ([www.asanet.org/highschool](http://www.asanet.org/highschool)). Although concepts from sociology are frequently seen in science and social studies lessons for students in grades K-8, more commonly the first formal introduction to sociology occurs in grades 9-12. Learning the theories, methodologies, and practices of sociology provides students with the knowledge and skills they need to think critically about sources of evidence, address issues using a systematic Arc of Inquiry based on the scientific method, and understand relationships among variables in complex social contexts. In this way, sociology supports students' successful entry into the world of work or post-secondary education.

### **C3 Framework Disciplinary Inquiry Matrix: Sociology**

In Appendix A, the Disciplinary Inquiry Matrix articulates how each of the four Dimensions of the C3 Framework build upon one another through the use of a content-specific example: *How bad was the Great Recession?* The Disciplinary Inquiry Matrix describes what experts think and do. It is a four-part target example to which students should aspire. The matrix develops through the construction of disciplinary compelling and supporting questions (Dimension 1); the data sources, key concepts, and key strategies specific to each discipline (Dimension 2); the development of evidence-based claims (Dimension 3); and the means of expression (Dimension 4). In the table on page 76, the Great Recession is examined through the disciplinary lens of sociology. The examples in the boxes are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

## WAYS OF KNOWING

## SOCIOLOGY

### SOCIOLOGISTS SAY...

#### DIMENSION 1

#### POSSIBLE DISCIPLINARY COMPELLING AND SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

What were the social consequences of the Great Recession, and in particular, how was the impact of the crisis differentially experienced by individuals, families and groups with different characteristics? What impact has it had on the social cohesion and collective behavior of communities? What were the possible policy responses to the crisis? Would they be effective across diverse communities?

#### DIMENSION 2

#### DATA SOURCES NEEDED TO ADDRESS QUESTIONS

Statistics on employment, housing, government programs, health, demographics, markers of disruption of social cohesion such as crime and divorce, and other organizational impacts. Interviews with individuals about their experiences with unemployment, education, family dynamics, and personal well-being. Observations of individuals and groups in handling financially-related outcomes. Content analysis of published descriptions of the crisis and reactions to it.

#### KEY CONCEPTS AND CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDINGS NEEDED TO ADDRESS QUESTIONS (non-exclusive questions)

Theories (e.g., symbolic interactionism, functionalism, conflict theory) of social structure and contexts including the interplay between institutions and culture; of social relationships and the connection between individuals and the groups to which they belong; and of social stratification and inequality and the reinforcement of current and new inequalities in outcomes. Understanding patterns of reaction to the crisis based on different resources, opportunities, and power statuses.

#### KEY STRATEGIES AND SKILLS NEEDED TO ADDRESS QUESTIONS (non-exclusive examples)

Reading and interpreting statistics and graphical representations such as tables, charts, figures, and political cartoons. Conducting survey research as well as research via experimental, observational, and content analysis methods. Seeing the social world through the perspective of others and understanding why the crisis impacts people differently.

#### DIMENSION 3

#### EVIDENCE-BASED CLAIMS

Statistical and narrative analyses, as well as interpretations based on theories of social structure, social relationships, and social stratification and inequality. These analyses and other methods of inquiry point toward substantiating and justifying claims; these should be judged within the community of peers including sociologists as well as other social scientists.

#### DIMENSION 4

#### FORMS OF COMMUNICATION AND ACTION (illustrative examples)

Books and scholarly articles; television and radio appearances; op-ed pieces and blog entries; policy statements and research briefs; webinars; presentations at professional conferences and meetings; evaluations and reports; websites and anthologies.