



The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology: A User's Guide to Sociological Language

By Allan G. Johnson

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

In the author's words, this is "neither an exhaustive dictionary, nor an expansive encyclopedia." It is a portable dictionary that will help undergraduates and others interested in understanding the central concepts of sociology by offering them a representative sampling of some specialized areas within the field and some important concepts from related disciplines--such as *Authority*, *Feminism*, and *Teleological Explanation*. Although there are similar products in print (including *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Sociology*, 1992; *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, 1994; and *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*, 1995), this one is unique in one respect. The others are edited collections of entries composed by many writers, but Johnson wrote this entire work in an effort to present the whole conceptual framework with one continuous voice. This makes it relatively easy to read as dictionaries go.

Dictionary entries are usually brief (three to four paragraphs) and include *see also* references. Suggested readings at the end of entries feature classics as well as more contemporary references. For example, adolescence-related readings include G. Stanley Hall (1904), Margaret Mead (1928), and David Elkind (1984), while those suggested for additional study on social class include Karl Marx (1867), Max Weber (1946), and Bendix & Lipset (1966). Biographical sketches are international in scope and introduce the reader to major figures who have influenced sociological thinking during the past 200 years. Most are sociologists, but there are some individuals from philosophy, economics, and anthropology. Many women, including Mary Smith Coolidge ("the first full-time female professor of sociology in the U.S."), are featured. In addition to an index, the text includes numerous *see* references, so it is easy to get from *Urban Recycling* to *Gentrification*, for example. Illustrations are limited to line drawings of statistical terms (normal curve of distribution, path analysis) and bar graphs.

This work complements the author's other publications (*Human Arrangements: An Introduction to Sociology* and *Forest for the Trees: An Introduction to Sociological Thinking*) that introduce readers to "the only discipline dedicated to making sense of [social life] in all its diversity and wondrous complexity." Its readability makes it useful as a circulating volume, even for those libraries that have similar dictionaries in reference.

Review

"All praise to Allan Johnson for this fine second edition of the very best portable dictionary of sociology. Clear and knowing, it skillfully anatomizes the concepts basic to a sociological understanding of social life. It belongs in every college and public library and in many a personal library as well." *Robert K. Merton, Columbia University*

"Here is a book that every academic library and every department of sociology should own. The author's short opening essay is clear and valuable [and he] has chosen his vocabulary items well. Every word I looked up was there. His essay definitions are good, and closely representative of the discipline, [and] he precisely grasps the distinctive elements of each concept." *Contemporary Sociology*

"It is a portable dictionary that will help undergraduates and others interested in understanding the central concepts of sociology by offering them a representative sampling of some specialized areas within the field

and some important concepts from related disciplines—such as *Authority, Feminism and Teleological Explanation*. This is unique in one respect. The others are edited collections of entries composed by many writers, but Johnson wrote this entire work in an effort to present the whole conceptual framework with one continuous voice." *Booklist, Chicago, Illinois*

"Inexpensive, with an attractive format, this dictionary would be helpful for sociology students and would make a good, if not essential, addition to library collections." *P. Flaherty, Eastern Kentucky University*

"Intended to serve as a guidebook, this dictionary is so well written that it could also be read cover to cover. All public libraries should have a copy of this work in their reference sections." *Libraries Unlimited, American Reference Books*

From the Back Cover

This second edition of Allan G. Johnson's one-volume dictionary includes 75 new entries, as well as an expanded biographical section, extensive revisions and updates, and more thorough cross-referencing. The combination of clear prose, engaging examples, a single author's voice, and minimal assumptions about the average reader's prior knowledge of the field, makes this a distinctive and valuable reference work.

Johnson defines amorphous and fuzzy sociological concepts in a lively and sensible way and his book provides an introduction to what it means to think sociologically. For a deeper understanding of social life, and of the only discipline dedicated to making sense of it in all its diversity, this *Dictionary* is a perfect guide.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Donna Miller:

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