

World Societies

The Evolution of Human Social Life

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PREFACE

This book started out with the title *Macrosociology: An Introduction to Human Societies*, published in 1988 by Harper and Row. Second and third editions were published in 1991 and 1995, respectively, by HarperCollins, and a fourth edition appeared in 1999 under the imprint of Addison Wesley Longman. The current version is a major revision of *Macrosociology*, and because the revision is so substantial the book now carries a new title, *World Societies: The Evolution of Human Social Life*, and Arthur Alderson has been added as a coauthor. It was decided to give the book greater flexibility by retaining the core parts of the original book, mainly those that focused on the political economy of human societies and its evolution over the long term. Material on race and ethnicity, family, gender, kinship, and education has been almost completely eliminated, although some of the materials on education were reincorporated into the chapter on modern industrial capitalist societies.

This book has also been thoroughly reorganized. The old organization was topical, whereas the new organization is historical or evolutionary. We start with hunter-gatherer societies, move from there to discuss horticultural, agrarian, and pastoral societies, and then turn to the emergence of capitalism and industrialism, the rise and demise of state socialism, development and underdevelopment, globalization, and the future. The book has been thoroughly updated where necessary, and the materials on globalization have been expanded into an entire chapter. The original chapter on the future has been dramatically revised, with 13 bold predictions for the next 25 to 50 years. Because of the book's reorganization, an entirely new chapter on theories of social evolution and development has been added, and appears as Chapter 2. This chapter might be too difficult for some students. If so, it can be eliminated without much loss, or the main points can be briefly summarized by the instructor. However, we believe it is important to include the chapter because some instructors will find it useful.

World Societies has also been substantially shortened and now appears in paperback at a much lower price. For those who used *Macrosociology* and felt committed to it, *World Societies* can still be used as a stand-alone text. But its much shorter length now makes it appropriate as a supplement to full-scale textbooks. Introductory sociology textbooks focus mostly on modern U.S. society. Some have comparative and historical content, but this is quite limited in the vast majority of cases. *World Societies* would serve as a very useful supplement for those who want to use a conventional text but who would like much more in the way of comparative and historical materials. This book could also be used very nicely as a supplement to the one other textbook that takes a fully comparative and historical approach, Nolan and Lenski's *Human Societies*. Both of these books are evolutionary in approach, but take rather different perspectives and cover quite a different range of materials. They would complement each other very well for those who are teaching the introductory course in a comparative and evolutionary fashion, or other courses that have a

comparative and evolutionary format. *World Societies* would also be very appropriate for courses in social change and for courses in economic or political sociology.

For those instructors who have not used a comparative, historical, or evolutionary approach in teaching the introductory course, but who might have an interest in doing so, the merits of such an approach are discussed in Sanderson (1985).

A test bank of multiple-choice, true-false, and essay questions is available from the publisher.

Stephen K. Sanderson
Arthur S. Alderson

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I also thank the following people for their intellectual collegiality and friendship, which have contributed in important ways to this book and various editions of its predecessor: Chris Chase-Dunn, Tom Hall, Randy Collins, Pierre van den Berghe, Jon Turner, Sandy Maryanski, Andre Gunder Frank, Al Bergesen, Sing Chew, Ed Bell, Sam Clark, Mike Hammond, Josh Dubrow, Wes Roberts, Gerry Lenski, Victor Garcia, Jeff Kentor, Tom Reifer, Herb Hunter, Bruce Lerro, Manuela Boatca, Harvey Holtz, Tom Conelly, Bob Carneiro, and Paul Kamolnick. I am especially grateful to my son, Derek Sanderson, for numerous stimulating conversations about issues of sociological relevance over many years. Although not a sociologist or a student of sociology, he has a keen sociological mind and eye nonetheless.

It is a special pleasure to be able to add Arthur Alderson as my coauthor. He took the introductory sociology course with me in 1984. *Macrosociology* was still in the process of completion (four years away from publication), and he and the other students used a manuscript version of the book as the course's main text. He seemed fascinated by the comparative and historical focus of the manuscript, not realizing that all of these other types of societies existed and could be studied systematically. After the course, he became a sociology major and took several more courses with me. Few authors are as fortunate as I am to be able to add as a coauthor a former student who learned his first sociology from one of the earliest possible versions of the book in question. In the future, I hope he will have the opportunity to shape the direction of the book more and more.

Stephen K. Sanderson

*No description can even begin to lead to a valid explanation
if it does not effectively encompass the whole world.*

—*Fernand Braudel*