

Introduction

Sociology students sometimes ask, ‘What does sociology have to do with me?’ Our answer is ‘everything’ and this novel, a love story, is a unique way of bringing the sociological concepts and perspective into awareness. Storytelling is an age-old setting for making sense of the world and provides a way of reminding all of us that we are not alone. Storytelling is also, in every culture, a major venue for the passing on of knowledge, ideas and values from one generation to the next. In the modern world, the transmission of knowledge has become institutionalized and much of our learning occurs in classrooms and from textbooks. *The Dancer’s Gift: Sociology in Life* combines the best of both worlds. By using fiction to illustrate the basic perspectives and concepts of sociology, we re-unite the transmission of knowledge with the joy and familiarity of storytelling.

The specialization of the modern world, with all of its benefits (for instance, Chunky Monkey ice cream and texting), has also created a sense of uncertainty and ambiguity. Such feelings are keenly felt by scores of young people as they move from their childhood families into adulthood. Marcel and Samantha, the main characters of *The Dancer’s Gift*, find themselves having to create their own paths after leaving their families to go away to college, cope with new social settings, experience family crises, confront racial issues and embrace the challenges of their new found love that transcends cultural boundaries. They struggle with redefining themselves as individuals, and as a couple, as they navigate life at an anonymous college on the east coast. The basic concepts of sociology are defined and explained as the tale unfolds. The novel, with its characters, relationships, dialog and subplots bring these sociological concepts to life. This love-story- through-a-sociological-lens not only provides a foundation for understanding social systems but reveals our common humanity through the characters of Samantha and Marcel.

This book is for anyone who’s ever been in love, anyone who’s ever felt lost and confused, anyone who has endured a crisis, and anyone who’s ever wondered about the great cosmic joke of making us social creatures and then not finding an owner’s manual. We think we live our lives with no script, no study guides and no Disney endings, and the exams are on a daily basis. By studying sociology we attempt to make some sense of this, and by using stories in the learning of it we may enrich our paths to understanding. Getting

there is as important as the final destination, so read on for a journey into the Sociology of life. Your destination is your own, and we hope this read helps you find your own way there.

While each of the 12 chapters of *The Dancer's Gift* reveals a new phase in the relationship between Samantha and Marcel, a specific area of sociology is introduced as a backdrop. The areas are the sociological perspective (1), socialization (2), culture (3), sex and gender (4), research methods (5), organizations (6), population and social change (7), religion (8), family (9), race and ethnicity (10), deviance (11), and stratification, social class, economy (12).

The Epilogue at the end is the first chapter of *The Snow Dancer*, the sequel to the story which begins six years later.

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