MCAT Guide

***To instructors and students using this resource***

*In 2015, the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test) began to include the social and behavioral sciences (Section 3 Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior). Sociological content constitutes 30% of Section 3. This material is organized under four Foundational Concepts with a range of subtopics known as “Content Categories.” The following are the four Foundational Concepts:*

* [Foundational Concept 7](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-foundational-concept-7/): Biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors influence behavior and behavior change.
* [Foundational Concept 8](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-foundational-concept-8/): Psychological, sociocultural, and biological factors influence the way we think about ourselves and others, as well as how we interact with others.
* [Foundational Concept 9](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-foundational-concept-9/): Cultural and social differences influence well-being.
* [Foundational Concept 10](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-foundational-concept-10/): Social stratification and access to resources influence well-being.

*This guide links the four MCAT Foundational Concepts and Subtopics to appropriate text chapters. It is organized in a chapter-by-chapter manner. It first summarizes the main topics covered in each chapter and then shows the relevant MCAT topics below the summary. Each chapter entry also contains resources that allow students to understand and explore specific topic areas in more detail. These resources include tutorials, graphics, fact sheets, news, and journal articles. Some of these resources fill in material that a chapter covers only briefly but that the MCAT includes in the content category area. Many of the resources make explicit connections to health.*

*Because each chapter covers theoretical perspectives, they are introduced as the primary material of Chapter 1 and highlighted where they become particularly salient or detailed in the chapters that follow.*

*The MCAT also tests four different scientific inquiry skills. These are also detailed at the end of this document. Chapter 3 is crucial for developing students’ proficiencies in this skill-based area.*

# Chapter 1: An Introduction to Sociology in the Global Age

Chapter 1 opens with a vignette of revolutions and counterrevolutions to introduce students to the importance of sociological understanding in this global age. It identifies and explores three major topics of concern for 21st-century sociology: globalization, consumption, and the digital world. It also introduces the discipline of sociology, the sociological imagination, micro/macro, structure/agency, social construction, and social structure. Thus, Chapter 1 briefly introduces a *number* of concepts tied to understanding basics of sociology and MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics. It is a good primer for developing beginning knowledge of sociology and links to MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Content Categories 9A and B.

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 9A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9a/)**: Understanding Social Structure**

* Theoretical Approaches
  + Micro versus macro
  + Social constructionism

[**Content Category 9B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9b/)**: Demographic Characteristics and Processes**

* Globalization
* Factors contributing to globalization (communication technology, economic interdependence)
* Perspectives on globalization

# Chapter 2: Thinking About and Researching the Social World

Chapter 2 begins with a brief discussion of the tension and partisanship that have erupted in U.S. politics under the Trump presidency to illustrate how sociological theories can help us understand politics and other social institutions. It is an essential introduction to the “theoretical approaches” section of MCAT [Foundational Concept 9](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-foundational-concept-9/), Content Category 9A. It also introduces “anomie,” linked to MCAT Foundational Concept 7, Content Category 7B, and concepts of social inequality such as “class consciousness” and “intersectionality” linked to MCAT Foundational Concept 10, Content Category 10A.

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 7B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-7b/)**: Social Processes That Influence Human Behavior**

* + Anomie

[**Content Category 9A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9a/)**: Understanding Social Structure**

* Theoretical Approaches
  + Micro versus macro
  + Functionalism
  + Conflict
  + Symbolic interactionism
  + Social constructionism
  + Exchange-rational choice
  + Feminist theory

[**Content Category 10A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-10a/)**: Social Inequality**

* **Social Class**
  + Aspects of social stratification
    - Social class and socioeconomic status
    - Class consciousness and false consciousness
  + Intersectionality (race, gender, age)

# Chapter 3: Culture

Chapter 3 begins with an example of U.S. culture as evidenced by the popularity of vaping as an introduction to the sociological study of culture. It defines and explores values, norms, and material culture such as language. It also covers cultural differences, addressing a broad range of concepts associated with MCAT Foundational Concept 9, [Content Category 9A](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9a/). Chapter 3 further addresses cultural relativism and ethnocentrism. As such, it links to MCAT Foundational Concept 8, Content Category 8B. (\*Note: Chapter 3 does not cover evolution and human culture--topics that are on the MCAT. The “Evolution and Human Culture” video link below provides a brief overview of that topic area).

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 9A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9a/)**: Understanding Social Structure**

* + Culture
* Elements of culture (beliefs, language, rituals, symbols, values)
* Material versus symbolic culture
* Cultural lag
* Culture shock
* Assimilation
* Multiculturalism
* Subcultures and countercultures
* Mass media and popular culture
* Evolution and human culture\*
* Transmission and diffusion

[**Content Category 8B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-8b/)**: Social Thinking**

* Prejudice and bias
  + Ethnocentrism
* Ethnocentrism versus cultural relativism

# Chapter 4: Socialization and Interaction

Chapter 4 is a significant chapter for MCAT preparation. It opens with a vignette about a transgender boy, Mack Beggs, who, because of traditional notions of gender, was the Texas State Wrestling champion in the *girl’s* league. This chapter describes the development of self and examines the process of socialization and the array of agents of socialization that shape social selves and behavioral choices. It examines the ways in which socialization may differ in total institutions and across the life course. Specifically covered are theoretical perspectives on formation of self-identity through socialization, socialization of children and adults, primary, secondary, and reference groups, and social networks. Chapter 4 also addresses social interaction, presentation of self, and group interactions. As such, it is most linked to MCAT [Foundational Concept 7, Content Category B and MCAT Foundational Concept 8](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-foundational-concept-8/), Content Categories 8A and C.

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 7B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-7b/)**: Social Processes That Influence Human Behavior**

* How the presence of others affects individual behavior
  + Social control
  + Conformity
  + Normative and non-normative behavior

[**Content Category 8A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-8a/)**: Self-Identity**

* Self-concept, self-identity, and social identity
  + Different types of identities (race/ethnicity; gender, age, sexual orientation, class)
* Formation of identity
  + Theories of identity development (e.g., social)
  + Influence of social factors on identity formation
    - Influence of individuals (imitation, looking glass self, role taking)
    - Influence of groups (reference groups)

Influence of culture and socialization on identity formation

[**Content Category 8C**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-8c/)**: Social Interactions**

* Elements of social interaction
* Status
* Types of statuses (ascribed/achieved)
  + - Role
      * Role conflict and role strain
      * Role exit
    - Groups
      * Primary and secondary groups
      * In group versus out group
      * Group size (dyads, triads)
    - Networks
    - Self-presentation and interacting with others
      * Presentation of the self
        + Impression management
* Front stage versus back stage (dramaturgical approach)
  + - * Verbal and nonverbal communication

# Chapter 5: Organizations, Societies, and Global Relationships

Chapter 5 highlights the interplay between individuals and institutions, beginning with a sociological vignette of the impact of Edward Snowden’s governmental document leaks. Chapter 5 focuses on bureaucracies (authority structures, rationality and irrationality, and informal organizations). It explores formal organizations and introduces Max Weber’s ideal-type bureaucracy and the concept of the iron law of oligarchy. While Chapter 5 is most linked to MCAT Foundational Concept 8, Category 8C, it also introduces Weber’s ideal types of authority, linking it to Foundational Concept 9, Category A. Finally, Chapter 5 also provides solid background on globalization and global relationships. As such, it provides background for MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Category B “globalization.”

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 8C**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-8c/)**: Social Interactions**

* Elements of social interaction
  + Networks
  + Organizations
    - Formal organization
    - Bureaucracy
      * Characteristics of an ideal bureaucracy
      * Perspectives on bureaucracy (e.g., iron law of oligarchy, McDonaldization)

[**Content Category 9A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9a/)**: Understanding Social Structure**

* Government and economy
* Power and authority

[**Content Category 9B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9b/)**: Demographic Characteristics and Processes**

Social movements

* + Globalization
  + Factors contributing to globalization (communication technology, economic interdependence)

# Chapter 6: Deviance and Crime

The Chapter 6 opening vignette of Donald Trump’s labeling of immigrants as criminals introduces many of the concepts covered in Chapter 6, including power and socially constructed notions of deviance and stigmatization. Chapter 6 also examines norms, labels, judgments, and social control. It examines theories of deviance including differential association, labeling theory, strain theory, and broken windows theory. As such, it introduces a concept tied to MCAT [Foundational Concept 7](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-foundational-concept-7/), [Content Category 7B](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-7b/), and MCAT Foundational Concept [8,](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-foundational-concept-7/) Content Category 8B.

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 7B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-7b/)**: Social Processes That Influence Human Behavior**

How the presence of others affects individual behavior

* Social control

Normative and non-normative behavior

* Social norms
* Sanctions
* Deviance
* Perspectives on deviance (e.g., differential association, labeling theory, strain theory)

[**Content Category 8B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-8b/)**: Social Thinking**

* + Prejudice and bias
  + Stigma

## For Further Research and Exploration

* **The Public Stigma of Mental Illness**

Pescosolido, B. (2013). The public stigma of mental illness: What do we think; what do we know; what can we prove? *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 54*, 1–21.

This article explores the general population’s attitudes and beliefs around the stigma of mental health. Using data from the General Social Survey, it addresses attitudes, discrimination, stigma, and the sociology of mental health, all useful areas for students studying for the MCAT.

* **Illness of Deviance? Drug Courts, Drug Treatment, and the Ambiguity of Addiction**

Murphy, J. (2015). *Illness or deviance? Drug courts, drug treatment, and the ambiguity of addiction*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

This book examines the social construction of illness and deviance around drug treatment and drug addiction and its consequences.

# Chapter 7: Social Stratification in the United States and Globally

Chapter 7 uses the example of educational stratification to begin this chapter on social stratification in the United States. Its focus is social inequality. It introduces the dimensions of social stratification and explores economic inequality by wealth and income. It highlights quantitative and qualitative dimensions of inequality and both household and neighborhood poverty in the United States. As such, its main MCAT link is Foundational Category 10A. Chapter 7 also examines theoretical approaches on stratification including functionalism, conflict, symbolic interactionist, and feminist approaches, connecting it to MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Content Category 9A. It also examines gender segregation in the labor market. As such, it is connected to MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Content Category 9B.

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 9A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9a/)**: Understanding Social Structure**

* Theoretical approaches
  + Functionalism
  + Conflict
  + Symbolic interactionism
  + Social constructionism
  + Exchange-rational choice
  + Feminist theory
* Education
  + Educational segregation and stratification

[**Content Category 9B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9b/)**: Demographic Characteristics and Processes**

* Demographic structure of society
* Gender
* Gender segregation

[**Content Category 10A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-10a/)**: Social Inequality**

Social class

* + Aspects of social stratification
    - Social class and socioeconomic status
    - Power, privilege, and prestige\* (\*referred to as “status” in Ritzer)
    - Intersectionality (race, gender, age)
    - Global inequalities
  + Patterns of social mobility
    - Inter and intragenerational mobility
    - Vertical and horizontal mobility
  + Poverty
    - Relative and absolute poverty

[**Content Category 10A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-10a/)**: Social Inequality**

* Spatial Inequality
  + Environmental justice (location and exposure to health risks)
* Health disparities (e.g., class, gender, and race inequalities in health)
* Health-care disparities (e.g., class, gender, and race inequalities in health care)

# Chapter 8: Race and Ethnicity

Chapter 8 begins with a vignette about Evo Morales, Bolivia’s first indigenous president whose victory highlights international struggles around race, ethnicity, prejudice, and institutional racism. This chapter touches on three MCAT Foundational Categories, providing sociological definitions of race and ethnicity in historical and recent context, examining majority and minority relations, and exploring social movements around race and racism and institutional racism. Further, this chapter examines ethnicity, racism, and minority group status, prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes and various manifestations and consequences of these social phenomena in a global context. It also introduces the importance of social movements such as hate groups, the Civil Rights Movement, and Collective Identity and Power Movements. As such, it is most connected to MCAT [Foundational Concept 8](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-foundational-concept-8/), [Content Categories 8B](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-8b/) and 8C and Foundational Concept 9, Content Category B. Chapter 8 also touches on educational inequality linking it to MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Content Category A. Chapter 8 also addresses how institutional racism shapes people’s educational, political, economic, housing, social status, and well-being. As such, it is linked to MCAT Foundational Concept 10, Content Category A.

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 8B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-8b/)**: Social Thinking**

* + Prejudice and bias
    - Processes that contribute to prejudice
      * + Power, prestige, class
    - Stereotypes
    - Ethnocentrism

[**Content Category 8C**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-8c/)**: Social Interactions**

* + - Discrimination
      * Individual versus institutional discrimination
      * The relationship between prejudice and discrimination
      * How power, prestige, and class facilitate discrimination

[**Content Category 9A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9a/)**: Understanding Social Structure**

* Social institutions
* Education
  + Educational segregation and stratification

[**Content Category 9B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9b/)**: Demographic characteristics and processes**

* + Demographic structure of society
    - Race and ethnicity
      * The social construction of race
* Social movements
* Globalization

Social changes in globalization (civil unrest, terrorism)

[**Content Category 10A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-10a/)**: Social Inequality**

* Spatial inequality
  + Residential segregation
* Social class
  + Aspects of social stratification
* Intersectionality (race, gender, age)

## For Further Research and Exploration

* **Racial Residential Segregation and Disparities in Obesity Among Women**

[Bower, K. M., Thorpe, R. J., Yenokyan, G., McGinty, E. E., Dubay, L., & Gaskin, D. J. (2015). Racial residential segregation and disparities in obesity among women. *Journal of Urban Health, 92,* 843–852.](https://europepmc.org/articles/PMC4608933)

This 2015 article in the *Journal of* *Urban Health* examines the relationship between racial residential segregation and obesity among Black and White women.

# Chapter 9: Gender and Sexuality

Like Chapter 8, Chapter 9 links with many aspects of the MCAT Foundational Standards. It defines gender terms and concepts and shows how gender is related to identity, behavior, culture and interaction, and well-being. It explores key concepts of sex and gender and examines the social construction of gender, transgender, and nonbinary genders. As such, it is directly linked to MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Content Category B. It also explores gendered inequalities in a domestic and global context. It explores gender at both education and work. As such, it is linked to MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Content Category A.

Chapter 9 addresses the social category of gender and its continuing significance in modern society, examining its effects on individuals, groups, and societies. It also addresses the role of consumer culture and advertising in gender stereotyping. As such, it is linked to Foundational Concept 8, Content Category A. Chapter 9 also provides detailed coverage on the sociology of sexuality. It explores sexuality and how social forces constrain sexuality. It explains the effects of globalization on gender and sexualities. As such, it adds some new information for students to consider around MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Content Category A and Content Category B. Finally, this chapter also touches on global issues of maternal mortality, rape in war, sex trafficking, and the steps being taken to empower women to change their own lives and communities. As such, it is tied to MCAT Foundational Concept 10, Content Category A.

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 8A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-8a/)**: Self-Identity**

* Self-concept, self-identity, and social identity
  + Different types of identities (race/ethnicity; gender, age, sexual orientation, class)
* Formation of identity
  + Influence of social factors on identity formation
    - Influence of culture and socialization on identity formation

[**Content Category 9A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9a/)**: Understanding Social Structure**

Social institutions

* Education
  + Hidden curriculum

[**Content Category 9B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9b/)**: Demographic Characteristics and Processes**

Demographic structure of society

* + Gender
    - Sex versus gender
    - The social construction of gender
* Gender segregation
  + Sexual orientation
  + Globalization

[**Content Category 10A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-10a/)**: Social Inequality**

* **Social class**
  + Aspects of social stratification
* Intersectionality (race, gender, age)

## For Further Research and Exploration

* **Regulating Latina Youth Sexualities Through Community Health Centers: Discourses and Practices of Sexual Citizenship**

[Mann, E. S. (2013). Regulating Latina youth sexualities through community health centers: Discourses and practices of sexual citizenship. Gender & Society, 27, 681–703.](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0891243213493961?journalCode=gasa)

Thisqualitative research explores the regulation of Latina youth sexualities in the context of sexual and reproductive health-care provision. It enlists in-depth interviews with health-care providers in two Latino-serving community health centers. Students might use this article to understand more about social control, sexuality, racial and ethnic inequality, and discrimination.

# Chapter 10: Families

Chapter 10 opens with a vignette of family portrayals on television and their sociological limitations. It introduces key terms and concepts used in the sociological study of families. It explores diversity in family forms, trends in marriage and divorce, and violence and the family. To those ends, it is primarily linked to MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Content Category 9A. A section on gender inequalities also helps students further understand gender dynamics as introduced in MCAT Foundational Concept 9B.

Chapter 10 also discusses poverty and the family and gender inequalities that contribute to family conflict. As such, it links to MCAT Foundational Concept 10, Content Category 10A.

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

**Content Category 9A: Understanding Social Structure**

* Theoretical approaches
  + Functionalism
  + Conflict
  + Symbolic interactionism
  + Exchange-rational choice
  + Feminist theory
* Social institutions
  + Family
    - Diversity in family forms
    - Marriage and divorce
    - Violence in the family (e.g., child abuse, elder abuse, spousal abuse)

**Content Category 9B: Demographic Characteristics and Processes**

* + Demographic structure of society
  + Gender

**Content Category 10A: Social Inequality**

* Social class
* Poverty

# Chapter 11: Education and Religion

Chapter 11 focuses on education as a social institution, examining it in the United States and globally. It also applies the functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist perspectives. These topics correspond with MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Category 9A. This chapter further explores the relationship between social class and inequality sections including the concept of meritocracy, related to MCAT Foundational Concept 10, Content Category 10.

This chapter also explores religion and social change (including fundamentalism and secularization). It introduces types of religious organizations and examines theoretical approaches on stratification including functionalism and conflict. It includes a focus on globalization and religion.

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 9A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9a/)**: Understanding Social Structure**

* Theoretical approaches
  + Functionalism
  + Conflict
  + Symbolic interactionism
* Social institutions
* Education
* Educational segregation and stratification

[**Content Category 9B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9b/)**: Demographic Characteristics and Processes**

* Globalization

[**Content Category 10A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-10a/)**: Social Inequality**

* Social class
  + Aspects of social stratification
    - Cultural capital and social capital
    - Social reproduction
    - Intersectionality (race, gender, age)
    - Meritocracy

[**Content Category 9A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9a/)**: Understanding Social Structure**

* Religion
  + Types of religious organizations (churches, sects, cults)
  + Religion and social change (secularization, fundamentalism)

[**Content Category 9B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9b/)**: Demographic Characteristics and Processes**

* + Demographic shifts and social change
* Globalization

# Chapter 12: Politics and the Economy

Chapter 12 opens with a vignette about the interconnections between economy and politics. It then explores key issues of political and economic sociology. It enlists power and authority through conflict and structural functional theories. It examines the industrial revolution, capitalism, socialism, and communism. In these ways, Chapter 12 connects to MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Content Category 9A. Chapter 12 also addresses the social structure of economy, exploring employment, underemployment, and unemployment. It also addresses consumption and leisure. Chapter 12 also addresses the impact of globalization on the world economy. As such, it provides additional information for the student to learn more about topics contained in MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Content Category 9B.

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 9A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9a/)**: Understanding Social Structure**

* Theoretical approaches
  + Functionalism
  + Conflict
* Social institutions
* Government and economy
  + Power and authority
  + Comparative economic and political systems

[**Content Category 9B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9b/)**: Demographic Characteristics and Processes**

* Demographic shifts and social change
  + Globalization
    - Factors contributing to globalization (economic interdependence)
* Social changes in globalization (terrorism)

# **Chapter 13: The Body, Medicine, Health, and Health Care**

Chapter 13 begins with the example of the opioid crisis to illustrate that the intersection of body, medicine, and health care takes place in a social and political environmental as well as a medical one. It introduces key concepts and terms associated with the study of health and health care, including mortality and morbidity. As such, it is connected to foundational MCAT Concept 9 Content Categories 9A and 9B. Chapter 13 also highlights growing global inequalities and global improvements around health. It explores HIV and the impact of war on health. As such, it is connected to MCAT Foundational Concept 10 Category 10A.

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 9A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9a/)**: Understanding Social Structure**

* Social institutions
  + Health and medicine
    - Medicalization
    - Delivery of health care
    - Illness experience

[**Content Category 9B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9b/)**: Demographic Characteristics and Processes (Brief Link)**

* + Demographic shifts and social change
    - Fertility, mortality

[**Content Category 10A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-10a/)**: Social Inequality**

* Social class
  + - Global inequalities
* Health disparities (e.g., class, gender, and race inequalities in health)
* Health-care disparities (e.g., class, gender, and race inequalities in health care)

# Chapter 14: Population, Urbanization, and the Environment

Chapter 14 explores population, urbanization, and the environment. It looks at population growth and decline and processes of population change (fertility, mortality, migration, and demographic transition). It explores growing urbanization, suburbanization, gentrification, and global cities. As such, it is most clearly linked to MCAT Foundational Concept 9, [Content Category 9B](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9b/).

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 9B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9b/)**: Demographic Characteristics and Processes**

* + Demographic shifts and social change
    - Theories of demographic change (demographic transition)
    - Population growth and decline (population projections, population pyramids)
    - Fertility, migration, mortality
      * Fertility and mortality rates (total, crude, age-specific)
      * Patterns in fertility and mortality
      * Push and pull factors in migration
  + Social movements
    - Globalization
    - Urbanization
    - Industrialization and urban growth
    - Suburbanization and urban decline
* Gentrification and urban renewal

# Chapter 15: Social Change, Social Movements, and Collective Action

Chapter 15 highlights the importance of understanding collective action--opening with the example of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), who in 2001 launched a boycott against Taco Bell. It highlights several social movements in the United States and explains how social movements emerge. Chapter 15 also provides an overview of social movements, their organization, and their practices. It introduces sociological theories on them such as relative deprivation. As such, it is linked to MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Content Category 9B. Additionally, Chapter 15 highlights feminism as a social movement, providing a useful discussion to help students understand feminist theory as linked to MCAT Foundational Concept 9, Content Category 9A. Finally, Chapter 15 explores aspects of collective behavior such as crowds, riots, and disasters. As such, it is linked to MCAT Foundational Concept 7, Content Category 7B.

## MCAT Foundational Standards/Subtopics

[**Content Category 7B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-7b/)**: Social Processes That Influence Human Behavior**

* + Normative and non-normative behavior
    - Aspects of collective behavior (e.g., fads, mass hysteria, riots)

[**Content Category 9A**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9a/)**: Understanding Social Structure**

* Theoretical approaches
* Feminist theory

[**Content Category 9B**](https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/mcat-2015-content-category-9b/)**: Demographic Characteristics and Processes**

* + Social movements
  + Organization of social movements
  + Movement strategies and tactics
  + Globalization

# Appendix A

## MCAT Scientific Inquiry and Reasoning Skills[[1]](#footnote-1)

### Skill 1: Knowledge of Scientific Concepts and Principles

* Demonstrating understanding of scientific concepts and principles
* Identifying the relationships between closely related concepts

Questions that test this skill will ask you to show that you understand scientific concepts and principles by, for example:

* Recognizing correct scientific principles
* Identifying the relationships among closely related concepts
* Identifying the relationships between different representations of concepts (e.g., verbal, symbolic, graphic)
* Identifying examples of observations that illustrate scientific principles

Using mathematical equations to solve problems

### Skill 2: Scientific Reasoning and Problem-Solving

* Reasoning about scientific principles, theories, and models
* Analyzing and evaluating scientific explanations and predictions

You will be asked to show that you can use scientific principles to solve problems by, for example,

* Reasoning about scientific principles, theories, and models
* Analyzing and evaluating scientific explanations and predictions
* Evaluating arguments about causes and consequences
* Bringing together theory, observations, and evidence to draw conclusions
* Recognizing scientific findings that challenge or invalidate a scientific theory or model
* Determining and using scientific formulas to solve problems

### Skill 3: Reasoning About the Design and Execution of Research

* Demonstrating understanding of important components of scientific research
* Reasoning about ethical issues in research

Questions that test this skill will ask you to use your knowledge of important components of scientific methodology by, for example,

* Identifying the role of theory, past findings, and observations in scientific questioning
* Identifying testable research questions and hypotheses
* Distinguishing between samples and populations and between results that do and do not support generalizations about populations
* Identifying the relationships among the variables in a study (e.g., independent vs. dependent variables; control and confounding variables)
* Reasoning about the appropriateness, precision, and accuracy of tools used to conduct research in the natural sciences
* Reasoning about the appropriateness, reliability, and validity of tools used to conduct research in the behavioral and social sciences
* Reasoning about the features of research studies that suggest associations between variables or causal relationships between them (e.g., temporality, random assignment)
* Reasoning about ethical issues in scientific research

### Skill 4: Data-Based and Statistical Reasoning

* Interpreting patterns in data presented in tables, figures, and graphs
* Reasoning about data and drawing conclusions from them

Questions that test this skill will ask you to use your knowledge of data-based and statistical reasoning by, for example,

* Using, analyzing, and interpreting data in figures, graphs, and tables
* Evaluating whether representations make sense for particular scientific observations and data
* Using measures of central tendency (mean, median, and mode) and measures of dispersion (range, interquartile range, and standard deviation) to describe data
* Reasoning about random and systematic error
* Reasoning about statistical significance and uncertainty (e.g., interpreting statistical significance levels, interpreting a confidence interval)
* Using data to explain relationships between variables or make predictions
* Using data to answer research questions and draw conclusions
* Identifying conclusions that are supported by research results
* Determining the implications of results for real-world situations

1. More details on these skills and their linkages to Sociology can be found on the *What’s on The MCAT Exam?* site: https://students-residents.aamc.org/applying-medical-school/article/whats-mcat-exam/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)