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Jeremy R. Porter
Frank M. Howell

Geographical Sociology

Theoretical Foundations
and Methodological Applications
in the Sociology of Location

 Springer

Geographical Sociology

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Theoretical Foundations and Methodological
Applications in the Sociology of Location

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To Linda, Jason, and David.

JRP

*To Jon D. Holmes, DMD, MD, FACS,
the surgeon who saved my life.*

FMH

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Chapter 1

Geo-Sociology

1.1 Geo-Sociology Defined

Recently, increased attention has been given to the relationship between geographic context and the ecological settings in which social process and behaviors of both groups and individuals occur. This focus has been inherently geographic in its focus on concepts associated with such examples as individuals being situated within a neighborhood or populations in proximity to a natural disaster. We argue in this book that while the methodological tools for such analyses are relatively new in their development, spatial thinking has long been at the core of much of the traditional sociological theory that marks the foundations of the discipline. Together, these theoretical foundations, coupled with the more recent methodological ability to put “people into place”, makeup an emerging movement towards a geographically focused sociology. In its most generic form, and on the tail of a recent publication (Porter 2011), *geo-sociology* should be viewed as a synergy between ecologically-centered macro theory and the application of spatially-centered research methods in the examination of sociological questions. This informal definition is useful in the sense that it identifies the role of geo-sociology, in both practice and principle s, and in regards to the complimentary role that theory and research play within its developmental framework.

We make no claims to be the first to introduce the components of such an approach, only to contribute to this development by introducing a unifying medium through which the historical foundations, contemporary understandings, and future developments of geo-sociology can be better understood. Historically, Edward Hayes (1908) first wrote of the need for a geographical sociology. Hayes’ ‘geographical sociology’ was one which aimed to understand the role of the physical environment as an explanation for variations in human behavior and population level processes. Here we move beyond Hayes’ initial introduction of the geographic sociology by linking over 100 years of theoretical and methodological developments in the formation of a modern geo-sociology. Ultimately, this attempted unification of theory and methods sets geo-sociology apart from the many existing, but