INTRODUCTORY SOCIOLOGY



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SOC 300 - Introductory Sociology (Tyler Elston)

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1.1: AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Sociology is the study of social behavior or society, including its origins, development, organization, networks, and institutions. It is a social science that uses various methods of empirical investigation and critical analysis to develop a body of knowledge about social order, disorder, and change. Many sociologists aim to conduct research that may be applied directly to social policy and welfare, while others focus primarily on refining the theoretical understanding of social processes. Subject matter ranges from the micro-sociology level of individual agency and interaction to the macro level of systems and the social structure.

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1.1.1: Introduction



Figure 1.1: Every day, 7.5 million people use the railways around Mumbai, India. The vast majority of them don't know each other, but they share much in common as they move together. (Credit: Rajarshi MITRA/flickr)

Chapter Outline

1.1 What Is Sociology?
1.2 The History of Sociology
1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology
1.4 Why Study Sociology?

A busy commuter train station might seem like a very individualized place. Tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of strangers flow through with a singular purpose: to get where they need to go. Whether walking through main doors at a pace of a dozen people each second, or arriving by train hundreds at a time, the station can feel a bit like a balloon being pumped too full. Throngs of people cluster in tight bottlenecks until they burst through corridors and stairways and tunnels to reach the next stage of their journey. In some stations, walking against the crowd can be a tedious, nearly impossible process. And cutting across a river of determined commuters can be almost dangerous. Things are fast, relentless, and necessary.

But are those hundred thousand or half a million or, in the case of Tokyo's Shinjuku station, 3.5 million people really acting individually? It may seem surprising, but even with those numbers, strangers from across cities can synch up on the same schedules, use the same doors, take one leg of the trip together every day before separating into different directions. After just a few months, faces can become familiar, and senses can be tuned. An experienced commuter can tell where another person is going according to their pace and whatever announcement just went out; they may slow up a bit to let the other person pass, or hold a door open just a bit longer than usual, certain that someone will grab the handle behind them. Many regulars don't need to check the schedule board; they sense whether a train is running late or whether a track has changed simply by the movement of the crowd.

And then the customs develop: Which side to walk on, how fast to go, where to stand, how much space to leave between people on the escalator. When you board early, which seat should you take? When you see someone running for the train, do you jam the closing door with your foot? How does the crowd treat people who ask for food or money? What's the risk level in telling someone to be quiet?

Very few of these behaviors are taught. None are written down. But the transit hub, that pocket of constant flow, is an echo of its society. It takes on some aspects of the city and country around it, but its people also form an informal group of their own. Sociologists, as you will learn, may study these people. Sociologists may seek to understand how they feel about their trip, be it proud or annoyed or just plain exhausted. Sociologists might study how length of commute relates to job satisfaction or family relationships. They may study the ways that conditions of a train station affect attitudes about government, or how the difficulty of

commuting may lead people to relocate. This understanding isn't just a collection of interesting facts; it can influence government policy and spending decisions, employer interventions, and healthcare practices. The work sociologists do to understand our society, and the work you will do in learning about it, is meaningful to our lives and our futures.

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1.1.2: What Is Sociology?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain concepts central to sociology.
- Describe how different sociological perspectives have developed.

What Are Society and Culture?



Figure 1.2: Sociologists learn about society while studying one-to-one and group interactions. (Credit: GlacierNPS/Flickr)

Sociology is the scientific and systematic study of groups and group interactions, societies and social interactions, from small and personal groups to very large groups. A group of people who live in a defined geographic area, who interact with one another, and who share a common culture is what sociologists call a society.

Sociologists study all aspects and levels of society. Sociologists working from the micro-level study small groups and individual interactions, while those using macro-level analysis look at trends among and between large groups and societies. For example, a micro-level study might look at the accepted rules of conversation in various groups such as among teenagers or business professionals. In contrast, a macro-level analysis might research the ways that language use has changed over time or in social media outlets.

The term culture refers to the group's shared practices, values, and beliefs. Culture encompasses a group's way of life, from routine, everyday interactions to the most important parts of group members' lives. It includes everything produced by a society, including all the social rules.

Sociologists often study culture using the sociological imagination, which pioneer sociologist C. Wright Mills described as an awareness of the relationship between a person's behavior and experience and the wider culture that shaped the person's choices and perceptions. It's a way of seeing our own and other people's behavior in relationship to history and social structure (1959). One illustration of this is a person's decision to marry. In the United States, this choice is heavily influenced by individual feelings. However, the social acceptability of marriage relative to the person's circumstances also plays a part.

Remember, though, that culture is a product of the people in a society. Sociologists take care not to treat the concept of "culture" as though it were alive and real. The error of treating an abstract concept as though it has a real, material existence is known as reification (Sahn, 2013).

Studying Patterns: How Sociologists View Society

All sociologists are interested in the experiences of individuals and how those experiences are shaped by interactions with social groups and society. To a sociologist, the personal decisions an individual makes do not exist in a vacuum. Cultural patterns, social forces and influences put pressure on people to select one choice over another. Sociologists try to identify these general patterns by examining the behavior of large groups of people living in the same society and experiencing the same societal pressures.

Consider the changes in U.S. families. The "typical" family in past decades consisted of married parents living in a home with their unmarried children. Today, the percent of unmarried couples, same-sex couples, single-parent and single-adult households is increasing, as well as is the number of expanded households, in which extended family members such as grandparents, cousins, or adult children live together in the family home. While 15 million mothers still make up the majority of single parents, 3.5 million fathers are also raising their children alone (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Increasingly, single people and cohabitating couples are choosing to raise children outside of marriage through surrogates or adoption.

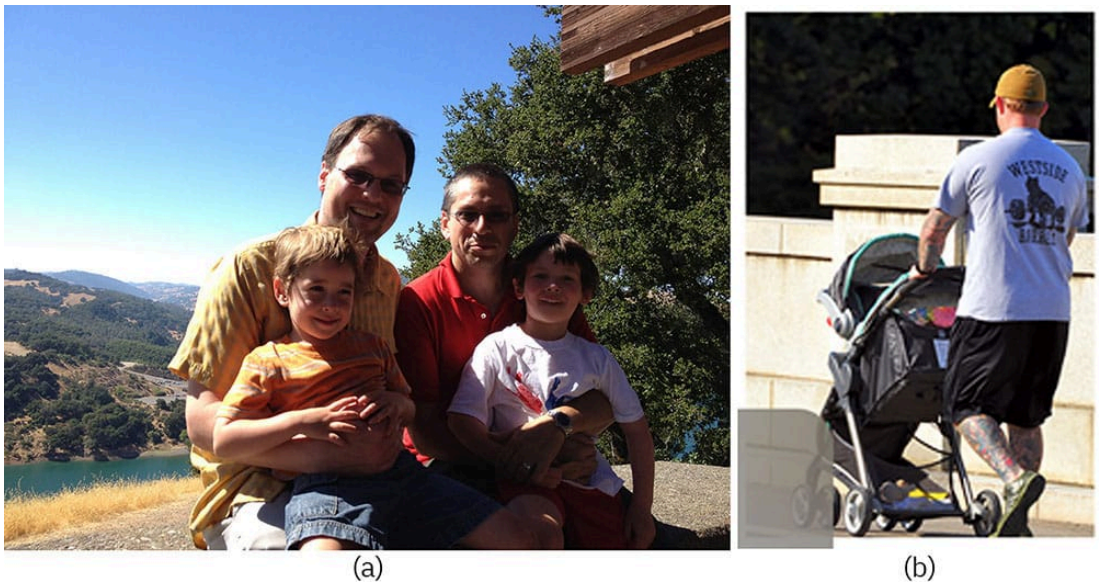


Figure 1.3: Modern U.S. families may be very different in makeup from what was historically typical. (Credit A: Paul Brody/flickr; B: Tony Alter/ Wikimedia Commons)

Some sociologists study social facts—the laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals, and cultural rules that govern social life—that may contribute to these changes in the family. Do people in the United States view marriage and family differently over the years? Do they view them differently than Peruvians? Do employment and economic conditions play a role in families? Other sociologists are studying the consequences of these new patterns, such as the ways children influence and are influenced by them and/or the changing needs for education, housing, and healthcare.

Sociologists identify and study patterns related to all kinds of contemporary social issues. The "Stop and Frisk" policy, the emergence of new political factions, how Twitter influences everyday communication—these are all examples of topics that sociologists might explore.

Studying Part and Whole: How Sociologists View Social Structures

A key component of the sociological perspective is the idea that the individual and society are inseparable. It is impossible to study one without the other. German sociologist Norbert Elias called the process of simultaneously analyzing the behavior of individuals and the society that shapes that behavior figuration.

Consider religion. While people experience religion in a distinctly individual manner, religion exists in a larger social context as a social institution. For instance, an individual's religious practice may be influenced by what government dictates, holidays, teachers, places of worship, rituals, and so on. These influences underscore the important relationship between individual practices of religion and social pressures that influence that religious experience (Elias, 1978). In simpler terms, figuration means that as one analyzes the social institutions in a society, the individuals using that institution in any fashion need to be 'figured' in

to the analysis.

Sociology in the Real World: Individual-Society Connections

When sociologist Nathan Kierns spoke to his friend Ashley (a pseudonym) about the move she and her partner had made from an urban center to a small Midwestern town, he was curious about how the social pressures placed on a lesbian couple differed from one community to the other. Ashley said that in the city they had been accustomed to getting looks and hearing comments when she and her partner walked hand in hand. Otherwise, she felt that they were at least being tolerated. There had been little to no outright discrimination.

Things changed when they moved to the small town for her partner's job. For the first time, Ashley found herself experiencing direct discrimination because of her sexual orientation. Some of it was particularly hurtful. Landlords would not rent to them. Ashley, who is a highly trained professional, had a great deal of difficulty finding a new job.

When Nathan asked Ashley if she and her partner became discouraged or bitter about this new situation, Ashley said that rather than letting it get to them, they decided to do something about it. Ashley approached groups at a local college and several churches in the area. Together they decided to form the town's first Gay-Straight Alliance.

The alliance has worked successfully to educate their community about same-sex couples. It also worked to raise awareness about the kinds of discrimination that Ashley and her partner experienced in the town and how those could be eliminated. The alliance has become a strong advocacy group, and it is working to attain equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, or LGBTQ individuals.

Kierns observed that this is an excellent example of how negative social forces can result in a positive response from individuals to bring about social change (Kierns, 2011).

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1.1.3: The History of Sociology

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain why sociology emerged when it did
- Describe how sociology became a separate academic discipline



(a) (b) (c) (d) (e)

Figure 1.4: People have been thinking like sociologists long before sociology became a distinct academic discipline: Plato and Aristotle, Confucius, Khaldun, Voltaire, and Mary Wollenscraft set the stage for modern sociology. (Credit: A, B, C, and E Wikimedia Commons; D: publicdomainfiles.com.)

For millennia, people have been fascinated by the relationships between individuals and societies. Many topics studied by ancient philosophers in their desire to describe an ideal society are still studied in modern sociology, including theories of social conflict, economics, social cohesion, and power in a continued attempt to describe an ideal society (Hannoum, 2003). Although we are more familiar with western philosophers like Plato and his student, Aristotle, eastern philosophers also thought about social issues.

Until recently, we have very few texts that are non-religious in nature that theorize about social life. From 4th century through the 19th century, the Catholic Church was the seat of power from today's Turkey in the east to western and northern Europe, including the British Isles. Only monks who were charged with rewriting holy texts by hand and the aristocracy were literate. Moreover, the Church consolidated power. In the year 800, Pope Leo III named Charlemagne, the king of Francia (today's France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany) emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, giving one individual control over most of Europe. Doing so gave the Catholic Church the power to maintain its own traditions safeguard them from the influence of people practicing other religions. If any social patterns challenged any belief of the Church, those practitioners were massacred, burned at the stake, or labeled heretics. As a result, the records that we have are extremely subjective and do not offer an unbiased view of social practice.

In the 13th century, Ma Tuan-Lin, a Chinese historian, was the first to record, in his seminal encyclopedia titled *General Study of Literary Remains*, the social dynamics underlying and generating historical development.

In the 14th century, the Tunisian historian Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) set the foundation for both modern sociology and economics. Khaldun proposed a theory of social conflict and provided a comparison of nomadic and sedentary life, an analysis of political economy, and a study connecting a tribe's social cohesion to its capacity for power (Hannoum, 2003). Khaldun often challenged authorities. As sociologists continue to study and report on social issues and problems, they often find themselves in the center of controversy.

From 1347 to 1522, the bubonic plague ravaged Europe, killing up to 35% of population (Armstrong, 2019). The plague dealt a major blow to the credibility of the Catholic Church. Out of this chaos emerged the the work of Copernicus, Galileo, Leonardo, Newton, Linnaeus, and other philosophers whose work sometimes contradicted church teachings. Events once held to be the

product of the divine hand could be analyzed by human reason and observation and could be explained by scientific, testable, and retestable hypotheses. As literacy spread through conquests and colonization, more records and literature became available for sociologists and historians to put social puzzles together.

In the 18th century, Enlightenment philosophers developed general principles that could be used to explain social life. Thinkers such as John Locke, François-Marie Arouet (Voltaire), Immanuel Kant, and Thomas Hobbes responded to what they saw as social ills by writing on topics that they hoped would lead to social reform. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) wrote about women's conditions in society. Like Harriet Martineau and Jane Addams, her works were long ignored by the male academic structure, but since the 1970s, Wollstonecraft has been widely considered the first feminist thinker of consequence. Ideas about economic systems, the family, health and hygiene, national offense and defense, were among the many concerns of social life.

The early 19th century saw great changes with the Industrial Revolution, increased mobility, and new kinds of employment. It was also a period of increased trade, travel, and globalization that exposed many people — for the first time—to societies and cultures other than their own. Millions of people moved into cities and many people turned away from their traditional religious beliefs. Ideas spread rapidly, groups were created, political decisions became public decisions. Among a new generation of philosophers, there were some who believed they could make sense of it all.

Creating a Discipline: European Theorists



Figure 1.5: Early major European theorists. Top row, left to right: Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, and Herbert Spencer. Bottom row, left to right: Georg Simmel, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons; Julius Cornelius Schaarwächter/Public domain.)

Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857)

The term sociology was first coined in 1780 by the French essayist Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès (1748–1836) in an unpublished manuscript (Fauré et al. 1999). In 1838, the term was reintroduced by Auguste Comte (1798–1857). Comte originally studied to be an engineer, but later became a pupil of social philosopher Claude Henri de Rouvroy Comte de Saint-Simon (1760–1825). They both thought that social scientists could study society using the same scientific methods utilized in natural sciences. Comte also believed in the potential of social scientists to work toward the betterment of society. He held that once scholars identified the laws that governed society, sociologists could address problems such as poor education and poverty (Abercrombie et al. 2000).

Comte named the scientific study of social patterns positivism. He described his philosophy in a series of books called *The Course in Positive Philosophy* (1830–1842) and *A General View of Positivism* (1848). He believed that revealing the laws by which societies and individuals interact would usher in a new "positivist" age of history. While the field and its terminology have grown, sociologists still believe in the positive impact of their work.

Harriet Martineau (1802 – 1876)

Harriet Martineau introduced sociology to English speaking scholars through her translation of Comte's writing from French to English. She was an early analyst of social practices, including economics, social class, religion, suicide, government, and women's rights. Her career began with *Illustrations of Political Economy*, a work educating ordinary people about the principles of economics (Johnson, 2003). She later developed the first systematic methodological international comparisons of social institutions in two of her most famous sociological works: *Society in America* (1837) and *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838).

Martineau found the workings of capitalism at odds with the professed moral principles of people in the United States. She pointed out the faults with the free enterprise system in which workers were exploited and impoverished while business owners became wealthy. She further noted that the belief that all are created equal was inconsistent with the lack of women's rights. Much like Mary Wollstonecraft, Martineau was often discounted in her own time because academic sociology was a male-dominated profession.

Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Karl Marx was a German philosopher and economist. In 1848, he and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) coauthored the *Communist Manifesto*. This book is one of the most influential political manuscripts in history. It also presents Marx's theory of society, which differed from what Comte proposed.

Marx rejected Comte's positivism. He believed that societies grew and changed as a result of the struggles of different social classes over the means of production. At the time he was developing his theories, the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism led to great disparities in wealth between the owners of the factories and workers. Capitalism, an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of goods and the means to produce them, had developed in many nations.

Marx predicted that inequalities of capitalism would become so extreme that workers would eventually revolt. This would lead to the collapse of capitalism, which would be replaced by communism. Communism is an economic system under which there is no private or corporate ownership: everything is owned communally and distributed as needed. Marx believed that communism was a more equitable system than capitalism.

While his economic predictions did not materialize in the time frame he predicted, Marx's idea that social conflict leads to change in society is still one of the major theories used in modern sociology.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903)

In 1873, the English philosopher Herbert Spencer published *The Study of Sociology*, the first book with the term "sociology" in the title. Spencer rejected much of Comte's philosophy as well as Marx's theory of class struggle and his support of communism. Instead, he favored a form of government that allowed market forces to control capitalism. His work influenced many early sociologists including Émile Durkheim (1858–1917). Spencer, using Charles Darwin's work as a comparison said, "This survival of the fittest, which I have here sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called 'natural selection,' or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life." (Spencer, 1864) The statement is often misinterpreted and adopted by those who believe in the superiority of one race over another.

Georg Simmel (1858–1918)

Georg Simmel was a German art critic who wrote widely on social and political issues as well. Simmel took an anti-positivism stance and addressed topics such as social conflict, the function of money, individual identity in city life, and the European fear of outsiders (Stapley 2010). Much of his work focused on micro-level theories and analyzed the dynamics of two-person and three-person groups. His work also emphasized individual culture as the creative capacities of individuals (Ritzer and Goodman 2004).

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917)

Émile Durkheim helped establish sociology as a formal academic discipline by establishing the first European department of sociology at the University of Bordeaux in 1895 and by publishing his *Rules of the Sociological Method* in 1895. In *Division of Labour in Society* (1893), Durkheim further laid out his theory on how societies transformed from a primitive state into a capitalist, industrial society. According to Durkheim, people rise to their proper levels in society based on merit.

Durkheim believed that sociologists could study objective social facts (Poggi, 2000). He also believed that through such studies it would be possible to determine if a society was "healthy" or "pathological." Healthy societies were stable while pathological societies experienced a breakdown in social norms.

In 1897, Durkheim attempted to demonstrate the effectiveness of his rules of social research when he published a work titled *Suicide*. Durkheim examined suicide statistics in different police districts to research differences between Catholic and Protestant communities. He attributed the differences to socio-religious forces rather than to individual or psychological causes.

Max Weber (1864–1920)

Prominent sociologist Max Weber established a sociology department in Germany at the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich in 1919. Weber wrote on many topics related to sociology including political change in Russia and social forces that affect factory workers. He is known best for his 1904 book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The theory that Weber sets forth in this book is still controversial. Some believe that Weber argued that the beliefs of many Protestants, especially Calvinists, led to the rise of capitalism. Others interpret it as simply claiming that the ideologies of capitalism and Protestantism are complementary.

Weber believed that it was difficult, if not impossible, to use standard scientific methods to accurately predict the behavior of groups as some sociologists hoped to do. Weber argued that the influence of culture on human behavior had to be taken into account. This even applied to the researchers themselves, who should be aware of how their own cultural biases could influence their research. To deal with this problem, Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey introduced the concept of *verstehen*, a German word that means to understand in a deep way. In seeking *verstehen*, outside observers of a social world—an entire culture or a small setting—attempt to understand it from an insider's point of view.

In *The Nature of Social Action*, Weber described sociology as striving to "... interpret the meaning of social action and thereby give a causal explanation of the way in which action proceeds and the effects it produces." He and other like-minded sociologists proposed a philosophy of anti-positivism whereby social researchers would strive for subjectivity as they worked to represent social processes, cultural norms, and societal values. This approach led to some research methods whose aim was not to generalize or predict (traditional in science), but to systematically gain an in-depth understanding of social worlds.

The different approaches to research based on positivism or anti-positivism are often considered the foundation for the differences found today between quantitative sociology and qualitative sociology. Quantitative sociology uses statistical methods such as surveys with large numbers of participants. Researchers analyze data using statistical techniques to see if they can uncover patterns of human behavior. Qualitative sociology seeks to understand human behavior by learning about it through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and analysis of content sources (like books, magazines, journals, and popular media).

Social Policy and Debate: Should We Raise the Minimum Wage?

During his hard-fought 2020 campaign, President Joe Biden promised Americans that he would raise the federal minimum wage. Opponents of raising the minimum wage argue that some workers would get larger paychecks while others would lose their jobs, and companies would be less likely to hire new workers because of the increased cost of paying them. Biden and other proponents of raising the minimum wage contend that some job loss would be greatly offset by the positive effects on the standard of living of low-wage workers and reducing the income gap between the rich and poor.

Sociologists may consider the minimum wage issue from differing perspectives as well. How much of an impact would a minimum wage raise have for a single mother? Some might study the economic effects, such as her ability to pay bills and keep food on the table. Others might look at how reduced economic stress could improve family relationships. Some sociologists might research the impact on the status of small business owners. These could all be examples of public sociology, a branch of sociology that strives to bring sociological dialogue to public forums. The goals of public sociology are to increase understanding of the social factors that underlie social problems and assist in finding solutions. According to Michael Burawoy (2005), the challenge of public sociology is to engage multiple publics in multiple ways.

Applying the Discipline: American Theorists and Practitioners

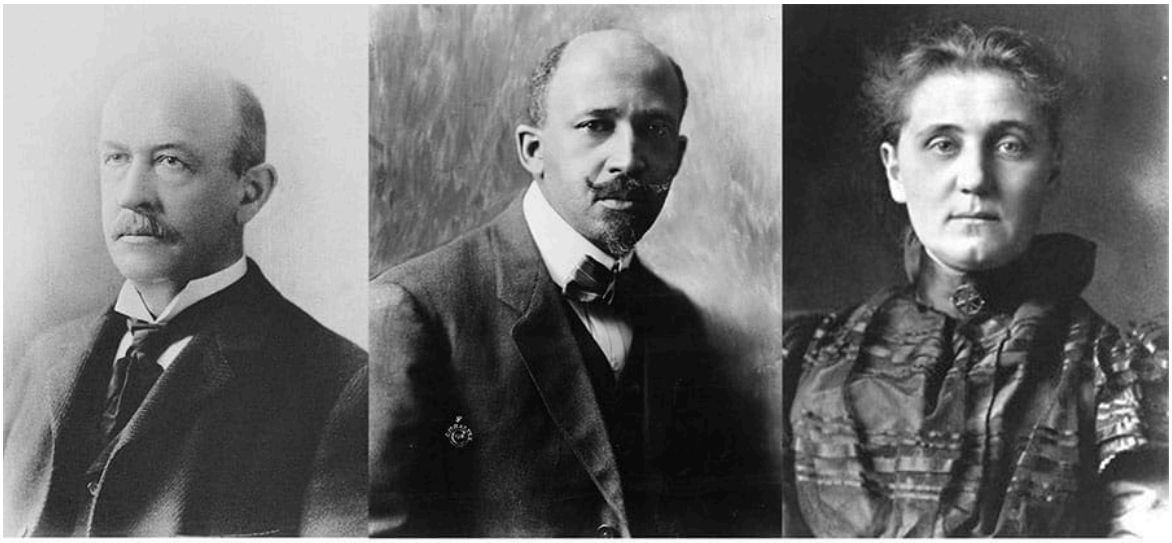


Figure 1.6: From left to right, William Sumner, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Jane Adams. (Credit A, B, and C: Wikimedia Commons.)

In the early 1900s, sociology reached universities in the United States. William Sumner held the first professorship in sociology (Yale University), Franklin Giddings was the first full professor of Sociology (Columbia University), and Albion Small wrote the first sociology textbook. Early American sociologists tested and applied the theories of the Europeans and became leaders in social research. Lester Ward (1841 – 1913) developed social research methods and argued for the use of the scientific method and quantitative data (Chapter 2) to show the effectiveness of policies. In order for sociology to gain respectability in American academia, social researchers understood that they must adopt empirical approaches.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963)

William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B.) Du Bois, a Harvard-trained historian, pioneered the use of rigorous empirical methodology into sociology. His groundbreaking 1896-1897 study of the African American community in Philadelphia incorporated hundreds of interviews Du Bois conducted in order to document the familial and employment structures and assess the chief challenges of the community. These new, comprehensive research methods stood in stark contrast to the less scientific practices of the time, which Du Bois critiqued as being similar to doing research as if through the window of a moving car. His scientific approach became highly influential to entire schools of sociological study, and is considered a forerunner to contemporary practices. Additionally, Du Bois' 1899 publication provided empirical evidence to challenge pseudoscientific ideas of biological racism (Morris, 2015; Green & Wortham, 2018), which had been used as justification to oppress people of different races.

Du Bois also played a prominent role in the effort to increase rights for Black people. Concerned at the slow pace of progress and advice from some Black leaders to be more accommodating of racism, Du Bois became a leader in what would later be known as the Niagara Movement. In 1905, he and others drafted a declaration that called for immediate political, economic, and social equality for African Americans. A few years later, he helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and served as its director of publications.

Thorstein Veblen (1857 – 1929)

After a brief stint as an unemployed college graduate, Thorstein Veblen began to study the economy through a social lens, writing about the leisure class, the business class, and other areas that touched on the idea of 'working' itself. He researched the chronically unemployed, the currently unemployed, the working classes, and the impact of technology and business within society. Veblen is known as a co-founder of the branch (or school) of institutional economics.

Jane Addams (1860-1935)

Jane Addams founded *Hull House*, a center that served needy immigrants through social and educational programs while

providing extensive opportunities for sociological research. Founded in Chicago, Addams worked closely with University of Chicago's Chicago School of Sociology. This school of thought places much importance on environment in which relationships and behaviors develop. Research conducted at Hull House informed child labor, immigration, health care, and other areas of public policy.

Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929)

Charles Horton Cooley posited that individuals compare themselves to others in order to check themselves against social standards and remain part of the group. Calling this idea 'the looking-glass self,' Cooley argued that we 'see' ourselves by the reactions of others with whom we interact. If someone reacts positively to our behavior, theoretically we will continue that behavior. He wrote substantially on what he saw as the order of life in *Human Nature and the Social Order* (1902) followed by *Social Organization* in 1909. He was very concerned with the increasing individualism and competitiveness of US society, fearing it would disrupt families as primary groups lost their importance.

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931)

George Herbert Mead was a philosopher and sociologist whose work focused on the ways in which the mind and the self were developed as a result of social processes (Cronk, n.d.). He argued that how an individual comes to view himself or herself is based to a very large extent on interactions with others. Though Mead adopted Cooley's concept of 'looking-glasses,' Mead felt that an individual's reaction to a positive or negative reflection depended on who the 'other' was. Individuals that had the greatest impact on a person's life were significant others while generalized others were the organized and generalized attitude of a social group. Mead often shares the title of father of symbolic interactionism with Cooley and Erving Goffman.

Robert E. Park (1864-1944)

Robert E. Park is best known as the founder of social ecology. Attached to the Chicago School, Park focused on how individuals lived within their environment. One of the first sociologists to focus on ethnic minorities, he wrote on the Belgian oppression of the Congolese. When he returned to the US, he and Ernest Burgess researched the inner city to show that no matter who lived there, social chaos was prevalent. As such, it was not the residents who caused the chaos but the environment.

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1.1.4: Theoretical Perspectives

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section you should be able to:

- Describe the ways that sociological theories are used to explain social institutions.
- Differentiate between functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.



Figure 1.7: Sociologists develop theories to explain social occurrences such as protest rallies. (Credit: David Shankbone/flickr)

Sociologists study social events, interactions, and patterns, and they develop theories to explain why things work as they do. In sociology, a theory is a way to explain different aspects of social interactions and to create a testable proposition, called a hypothesis, about society (Allan 2006).

For example, although suicide is generally considered an individual phenomenon, Émile Durkheim was interested in studying the social factors that affect it. He studied social solidarity, social ties within a group, and hypothesized that differences in suicide rates might be explained by religious differences. Durkheim gathered a large amount of data about Europeans and found that Protestants were more likely to commit suicide than Catholics. His work supports the utility of theory in sociological research.

Theories vary in scope depending on the scale of the issues that they are meant to explain. Macro-level theories relate to large-scale issues and large groups of people, while micro-level theories look at very specific relationships between individuals or small groups. Grand theories attempt to explain large-scale relationships and answer fundamental questions such as why societies form and why they change. Sociological theory is constantly evolving and should never be considered complete. Classic sociological theories are still considered important and current, but new sociological theories build upon the work of their predecessors and add to them (Calhoun, 2002).

In sociology, a few theories provide broad perspectives that help explain many different aspects of social life, and these are called paradigms. Paradigms are philosophical and theoretical frameworks used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the experiments performed in support of them. Three paradigms have come to dominate sociological thinking because they provide useful explanations: structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Table 1.1 Sociological Theories or Perspectives: Different sociological perspectives enable sociologists to view social issues through a variety of useful lenses.

Sociological Theories/ Paradigms	Level of Analysis	Focus	Analogies	Questions that might be asked
Structural Functionalism	Macro or Mid	The way each part of society functions together to contribute to the functioning of the whole.	How each organ works to keep your body healthy (or not.)	How does education work to transmit culture?
Conflict Theory	Macro	The way inequities and inequalities contribute to social, political, and power differences and how they perpetuate power.	The ones with the most toys wins and they will change the rules to the games to keep winning.	Does education transmit only the values of the most dominant groups?
Symbolic Interactionism	Micro	The way one-on-one interactions and communications behave.	What's it mean to be an X?	How do students react to cultural messages in school?

Functionalism

Functionalism, also called structural-functional theory, sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of the individuals in that society. Functionalism grew out of the writings of English philosopher and biologist, Herbert Spencer, who saw similarities between society and the human body. He argued that just as the various organs of the body work together to keep the body functioning, the various parts of society work together to keep society functioning (Spencer, 1898). The parts of society that Spencer referred to were the social institutions, or patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs, such as government, education, family, healthcare, religion, and the economy.

Émile Durkheim applied Spencer's theory to explain how societies change and survive over time. Durkheim believed that society is a complex system of interrelated and interdependent parts that work together to maintain stability (Durkheim, 1893), and that society is held together by shared values, languages, and symbols. He believed that to study society, a sociologist must look beyond individuals to social facts such as laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashion, and rituals, which all serve to govern social life (Durkheim, 1895). Alfred Radcliff-Brown (1881–1955) defined the function of any recurrent activity as the part it played in social life as a whole, and therefore the contribution it makes to social stability and continuity (Radcliff-Brown 1952). In a healthy society, all parts work together to maintain stability, a state called dynamic equilibrium by later sociologists such as Parsons (1961).

Durkheim believed that individuals may make up society, but in order to study society, sociologists have to look beyond individuals to social facts. . Each of these social facts serves one or more functions within a society. For example, one function of a society's laws may be to protect society from violence, while another is to punish criminal behavior, while another is to preserve public health.

Another noted structural functionalist, Robert Merton (1910–2003), pointed out that social processes often have many functions. Manifest functions are the consequences of a social process that are sought or anticipated, while latent functions are the unsought consequences of a social process. A manifest function of a college education, for example, includes gaining knowledge, preparing for a career, and finding a good job that utilizes that education. Latent functions of your college years include meeting new people, participating in extracurricular activities, or even finding a spouse or partner. Another latent function of education is creating a hierarchy of employment based on the level of education attained. Latent functions can be beneficial, neutral, or harmful. Social processes that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society are called dysfunctions. In education, examples of dysfunction include getting bad grades, truancy, dropping out, not graduating, and not finding suitable employment.

Criticism

One criticism of the structural-functional theory is that it can't adequately explain social change even though the functions are processes. Also problematic is the somewhat circular nature of this theory: repetitive behavior patterns are assumed to have a function, yet we profess to know that they have a function only because they are repeated. Furthermore, dysfunctions may continue, even though they don't serve a function, which seemingly contradicts the basic premise of the theory. Many sociologists now believe that functionalism is no longer useful as a macro-level theory, but that it does serve a useful purpose in some mid-

level analyses.

Big Picture: A Global Culture?



Figure 1.8: Some sociologists see the online world contributing to the creation of an emerging global culture. Are you a part of any global communities? This Indiana rabbi is participating in what was recognized as the longest Zoom meeting, which started in Australia after the Sabbath and proceeded through each of the world's time zones, effectively lasting much longer than a day. (Credit: Chabad Lubavitch/ flickr)

Sociologists around the world look closely for signs of what would be an unprecedented event: the emergence of a global culture. In the past, empires such as those that existed in China, Europe, Africa, and Central and South America linked people from many different countries, but those people rarely became part of a common culture. They lived too far from each other, spoke different languages, practiced different religions, and traded few goods. Today, increases in communication, travel, and trade have made the world a much smaller place. More and more people are able to communicate with each other instantly—wherever they are located—by telephone, video, and text. They share movies, television shows, music, games, and information over the Internet. Students can study with teachers and pupils from the other side of the globe. Governments find it harder to hide conditions inside their countries from the rest of the world.

Sociologists research many different aspects of this potential global culture. Some explore the dynamics involved in the social interactions of global online communities, such as when members feel a closer kinship to other group members than to people residing in their own countries. Other sociologists study the impact this growing international culture has on smaller, less-powerful local cultures. Yet other researchers explore how international markets and the outsourcing of labor impact social inequalities. Sociology can play a key role in people's abilities to understand the nature of this emerging global culture and how to respond to it.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory looks at society as a competition for limited resources. This perspective is a macro-level approach most identified with the writings of German philosopher and economist Karl Marx, who saw society as being made up of individuals in different social classes who must compete for social, material, and political resources such as food and housing, employment, education, and leisure time. Social institutions like government, education, and religion reflect this competition in their inherent inequalities and help maintain the unequal social structure. Some individuals and organizations are able to obtain and keep more resources than others, and these "winners" use their power and influence to maintain social institutions. The perpetuation of power results in the perpetuation of oppression.

Several theorists suggested variations on this basic theme like Polish-Austrian sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838–1909) who expanded on Marx's ideas by arguing that war and conquest are the bases of civilizations. He believed that cultural and ethnic conflicts led to states being identified and defined by a dominant group that had power over other groups (Irving, 2007).

German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) agreed with Marx but also believed that, in addition to economic inequalities, inequalities of political power and social structure cause conflict. Weber noted that different groups were affected differently based on education, race, and gender, and that people's reactions to inequality were moderated by class differences and rates of social mobility, as well as by perceptions about the legitimacy of those in power. A reader of Marx, Georg Simmel believed that conflict can help integrate and stabilize a society. He said that the intensity of the conflict varies depending on the emotional involvement of the parties, the degree of solidarity within the opposing groups, and the clarity and limited nature of the goals. Simmel also showed that groups work to create internal solidarity, centralize power, and reduce dissent. The stronger the bond, the weaker the discord. Resolving conflicts can reduce tension and hostility and can pave the way for future agreements.

In the 1930s and 1940s, German philosophers, known as the Frankfurt School, developed critical theory as an elaboration on Marxist principles. Critical theory is an expansion of conflict theory and is broader than just sociology, incorporating other social sciences and philosophy. A critical theory is a holistic theory and attempts to address structural issues causing inequality. It must explain what's wrong in current social reality, identify the people who can make changes, and provide practical goals for social transformation (Horkeimer, 1982).

More recently, inequality based on gender or race has been explained in a similar manner and has identified institutionalized power structures that help to maintain inequality between groups. Janet Saltzman Chafetz (1941–2006) presented a model of feminist theory that attempts to explain the forces that maintain gender inequality as well as a theory of how such a system can be changed (Turner, 2003). Similarly, critical race theory grew out of a critical analysis of race and racism from a legal point of view. Critical race theory looks at structural inequality based on white privilege and associated wealth, power, and prestige.

Sociology in the Real World: Farming and Locavores: How Sociological Perspectives Might View Food Consumption

The consumption of food is a commonplace, daily occurrence. Yet, it can also be associated with important moments in our lives. Eating can be an individual or a group action, and eating habits and customs are influenced by our cultures. In the context of society, our nation's food system is at the core of numerous social movements, political issues, and economic debates. Any of these factors might become a topic of sociological study.

A structural-functional approach to the topic of food consumption might analyze the role of the agriculture industry within the nation's economy and how this has changed from the early days of manual-labor farming to modern mechanized production. Another might study the different functions of processes in food production, from farming and harvesting to flashy packaging and mass consumerism.

A conflict theorist might be interested in the power differentials present in the regulation of food, by exploring where people's right to information intersects with corporations' drive for profit and how the government mediates those interests. Or a conflict theorist might examine the power and powerlessness experienced by local farmers versus large farming conglomerates, such as the documentary Food Inc., which depicts as resulting from Monsanto's patenting of seed technology. Another topic of study might be how nutrition varies between different social classes.

A sociologist viewing food consumption through a symbolic interactionist lens would be more interested in microlevel topics, such as the symbolic use of food in religious rituals, or the role it plays in the social interaction of a family dinner. This perspective might also explore the interactions among group members who identify themselves based on their sharing a particular diet, such as vegetarians (people who don't eat meat) or locavores (people who strive to eat locally produced food).

Criticism

Just as structural functionalism was criticized for focusing too much on the stability of societies, conflict theory has been criticized because it tends to focus on conflict to the exclusion of recognizing stability. Many social structures are extremely stable or have gradually progressed over time rather than changing abruptly as conflict theory would suggest.

Symbolic Interactionist Theory

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level theory that focuses on the relationships among individuals within a society. Communication—the exchange of meaning through language and symbols—is believed to be the way in which people make sense of their social worlds. Theorists Herman and Reynolds (1994) note that this perspective sees people as being active in shaping

the social world rather than simply being acted upon.

George Herbert Mead is considered a founder of symbolic interactionism though he never published his work on it (LaRossa and Reitzes, 1993). Mead's student, Herbert Blumer (1900-1987), coined the term "symbolic interactionism" and outlined these basic premises: humans interact with things based on meanings ascribed to those things; the ascribed meaning of things comes from our interactions with others and society; the meanings of things are interpreted by a person when dealing with things in specific circumstances (Blumer 1969). If you love books, for example, a symbolic interactionist might propose that you learned that books are good or important in the interactions you had with family, friends, school, or church. Maybe your family had a special reading time each week, getting your library card was treated as a special event, or bedtime stories were associated with warmth and comfort.

Social scientists who apply symbolic-interactionist thinking look for patterns of interaction between individuals. Their studies often involve observation of one-on-one interactions. For example, while a conflict theorist studying a political protest might focus on class difference, a symbolic interactionist would be more interested in how individuals in the protesting group interact, as well as the signs and symbols protesters use to communicate their message.

The focus on the importance of symbols in building a society led sociologists like Erving Goffman (1922-1982) to develop a technique called dramaturgical analysis. Goffman used theater as an analogy for social interaction and recognized that people's interactions showed patterns of cultural "scripts." He argued that individuals were actors in a play. We switched roles, sometimes minute to minute—for example, from student or daughter to dog walker. Because it can be unclear what part a person may play in a given situation, he or she has to improvise his or her role as the situation unfolds (Goffman, 1958).

Studies that use the symbolic interactionist perspective are more likely to use qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or participant observation, because they seek to understand the symbolic worlds in which research subjects live.

Constructivism is an extension of symbolic interaction theory which proposes that reality is what humans cognitively construct it to be. We develop social constructs based on interactions with others, and those constructs that last over time are those that have meanings which are widely agreed-upon or generally accepted by most within the society. This approach is often used to examine what's defined as deviant within a society. There is no absolute definition of deviance, and different societies have constructed different meanings for deviance, as well as associating different behaviors with deviance.

One situation that illustrates this is what you believe you're to do if you find a wallet in the street. In the United States, turning the wallet in to local authorities would be considered the appropriate action, and to keep the wallet would be seen as deviant. In contrast, many Eastern societies would consider it much more appropriate to keep the wallet and search for the owner yourself. Turning it over to someone else, even the authorities, would be considered deviant behavior.

Criticism

Research done from this perspective is often scrutinized because of the difficulty of remaining objective. Others criticize the extremely narrow focus on symbolic interaction. Proponents, of course, consider this one of its greatest strengths.

Sociological Theory Today

These three approaches still provide the main foundation of modern sociological theory though they have evolved. Structural-functionalism was a dominant force after World War II and until the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, sociologists began to feel that structural-functionalism did not sufficiently explain the rapid social changes happening in the United States at that time. The women's movement and the Civil Rights movement forced academics to develop approaches to study these emerging social practices.

Conflict theory then gained prominence, with its emphasis on institutionalized social inequality. Critical theory, and the particular aspects of feminist theory and critical race theory, focused on creating social change through the application of sociological principles. The field saw a renewed emphasis on helping ordinary people understand sociology principles, in the form of public sociology.

Gaining prominence in the wake of Mead's work in the 1920s and 1930s, symbolic interactionism declined in influence during the 1960s and 1970s only to be revitalized at the turn of the twenty-first century (Stryker, 1987). Postmodern social theory developed in the 1980s to look at society through an entirely new lens by rejecting previous macro-level attempts to explain social phenomena. Its growth in popularity coincides with the rise of constructivist views of symbolic interactionism.

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1.1.5: Why Study Sociology?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain why it is worthwhile to study sociology.
- Identify ways sociology is applied in the real world.



Figure 1.9: The research of Kenneth and Mamie Clark helped the Supreme Court decide to end “separate but equal” racial segregation in schools in the United States. (Credit: University of Texas)

When Elizabeth Eckford tried to enter Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in September 1957, she was met by an angry crowd and was turned away by authorities. But she knew she had the law on her side. Three years earlier in the landmark *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court had overturned twenty-one state laws that allowed Black and White people to be taught in separate school systems as long as the school systems were “equal.” The decision was nothing short of momentous, not only for education, but for a number of other segregation and discrimination issues that have lasted into this decade. And in that momentous decision, the Supreme Court cited the research of the husband-and-wife team of social scientists, Kenneth and Mamie Clark, as evidence that segregation generates in minority students a feeling of inferiority. In the ‘doll test,’ for example, the Clarks showed children four dolls, two with white skin and yellow hair and two with brown skin and black hair. When asked which doll they preferred, the majority of Black children chose the doll with the light skin doll, and they assigned positive characteristics to it. Most of the Black children discarded the doll with the brown skin—the one that had a closer resemblance to themselves.

When asked to choose the doll that looked like them, many children left the room, started to cry, and/or became depressed. The Clarks’ research contributed to the Supreme Court’s conclusion that separate but equal was damaging to students, and that separate facilities are unequal.

Sociology and a Better Society

Since it was first founded, many people interested in sociology have been driven by the scholarly desire to contribute knowledge to this field, while others have seen it as way not only to study society but also to improve it. Besides desegregation, sociology has played a crucial role in many important social reforms, such as equal opportunity for women in the workplace, improved treatment for individuals with mental illnesses or learning disabilities, increased accessibility and accommodation for people with physical disabilities, the right of native populations to preserve their land and culture, and prison system reforms.

The predominant American sociologist, the late Peter L. Berger (1929–2017), in his 1963 book, *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*, describes a sociologist as "someone concerned with understanding society in a disciplined way." He asserts that sociologists have a natural interest in the monumental moments of people's lives, as well as a fascination with banal, everyday occurrences. Berger also describes the "aha" moment when a sociological theory becomes applicable and understood:

> [T]here is a deceptive simplicity and obviousness about some sociological investigations. One reads them, nods at the familiar scene, remarks that one has heard all this before and don't people have better things to do than to waste their time on truisms—until one is suddenly brought up against an insight that radically questions everything one had previously assumed about this familiar scene. This is the point at which one begins to sense the excitement of sociology. (Berger, 1963)

Sociology can be exciting because it teaches people ways to recognize how they fit into the world and how others perceive them. Looking at themselves and society from a sociological perspective helps people see where they connect to different groups based on the many different ways they classify themselves and how society classifies them in turn. It raises awareness of how those classifications—such as economic and status levels, education, ethnicity, or sexual orientation—affect perceptions.

Sociology teaches people not to accept easy explanations. It teaches them a way to organize their thinking so that they can ask better questions and formulate better answers. It makes people more aware that there are many different kinds of people in the world who do not necessarily think the way they do. It increases their willingness and ability to try to see the world from other people's perspectives. This prepares them to live and work in an increasingly diverse and integrated world.

Sociology in the Workplace

Employers continue to seek people with what are called "transferable skills." This means that they want to hire people whose knowledge and education can be applied in a variety of settings and whose skills will contribute to various tasks.

Studying sociology can provide people with this wide knowledge and a skill set that can contribute to many workplaces, including

- an understanding of social systems and large bureaucracies;
- the ability to devise and carry out research projects to assess whether a program or policy is working;
- the ability to collect, read, and analyze statistical information from polls or surveys;
- the ability to recognize important differences in people's social, cultural, and economic backgrounds;
- skills in preparing reports and communicating complex ideas; and
- the capacity for critical thinking about social issues and problems that confront modern society. (Department of Sociology, University of Alabama-Huntsville)

Sociology prepares people for a wide variety of careers. Besides actually conducting social research or training others in the field, people who graduate from college with a degree in sociology are hired by government agencies and corporations in fields such as social services, counseling (e.g., family planning, career, substance abuse), community planning, health services, marketing, market research, and human resources. Even a small amount of training in sociology can be an asset in careers like sales, public relations, journalism, teaching, law, and criminal justice.

Sociology in the Real World: Social Networking Consequences

You've probably heard a cautionary story that goes something like this: A high school student spent years working hard, engaging in their community, helping others, and generally growing into a positive and promising young adult. During senior year, they start the college application process, and after a couple of interviews and other interactions, things are looking bright at several of their top choices. But when the time arrives for those fateful notifications about acceptance or rejection, the student and their family are shocked to get rejected from all schools but one. Inquiries from family members and guidance counselors had no results. The only news came in the form of a letter three weeks later from the one school that had accepted the student.

"...After an initial investigation, the University has determined that several posts attributed to you violate our policies, and are offensive and troubling..."

The letter's remaining two pages detailed the ongoing investigation and outlined the potential outcomes. But that one statement said it all: The student had posted something offensive on social media, and their prospective colleges had found it.

Two years earlier, at the beginning of sophomore year, the student had posted two comments and a meme that mocked a classmate who had been assaulted at a party. Even thought the student had removed them within a few days, the posts lived on in other forums and on a few friends' pages; there was also the possibility that someone had screen-grabbed them. While social media posts are protected forms of speech in relation to the government, colleges can review them as they evaluate applicants. Employers can do the same, as can romantic partners or even volunteer organizations.

You may believe that a 15-year-old's social media comments should not impact them years later. Or you may feel that someone who jokes about assault may be a risk to commit a similar act or fail to stop or report one. Sociologists may consider all of those assumptions, and may seek answers or information through research to uncover the impacts, risks, tendencies, and outcomes on the different groups involved. For example, a sociologist might work to discover answers to the following questions:

- Is abusive speech or assault less likely to occur at colleges that screen applicants' social media posts?
- Do sensitivity trainings or cultural competency programs have an effect on online speech?
- Do colleges treat all community members equally when they discover someone has posted offensive comments or other content?
- Are algorithms and artificial intelligence used to detect problematic comments biased against certain people or communities?

None of these questions could be answered by a single study or even a group of them. But like the Supreme Court's use of Mamie and Kenneth Clarke's research, college administrators, high school counselors, and technology companies can use the outcomes of research and analysis to make decisions or implement programs.

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1.1.6: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
antipositivism	the view that social researchers should strive for subjectivity as they worked to represent social processes, cultural norms, and societal values				
conflict theory	a theory that looks at society as a competition for limited resources				
constructivism	an extension of symbolic interaction theory which proposes that reality is what humans cognitively construct it to be				
culture	a group's shared practices, values, and beliefs				
dramaturgical analysis	a technique sociologists use in which they view society through the metaphor of theatrical performance				
dynamic equilibrium	a stable state in which all parts of a healthy society work together properly				
dysfunctions	social patterns that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society				
figuration	the process of simultaneously analyzing the behavior of an individual and the society that shapes that behavior				
function	the part a recurrent activity plays in the social life as a whole and the contribution it makes to structural continuity				
functionalism	a theoretical approach that sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of individuals that make up that society				
generalized others	the organized and generalized attitude of a social group				
grand theories	an attempt to explain large-scale relationships and answer fundamental questions such as why societies form and why they change				
hypothesis	a testable proposition				
latent functions	the unrecognized or unintended consequences of a social process				
macro-level	a wide-scale view of the role of social structures within a society				
manifest functions	sought consequences of a social process				
micro-level theories	the study of specific relationships between individuals or small groups				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
paradigms	philosophical and theoretical frameworks used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the experiments performed in support of them				
positivism	the scientific study of social patterns				
qualitative sociology	in-depth interviews, focus groups, and/or analysis of content sources as the source of its data				
quantitative sociology	statistical methods such as surveys with large numbers of participants				
reification	an error of treating an abstract concept as though it has a real, material existence				
significant others	specific individuals that impact a person's life				
social facts	the laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals, and all of the cultural rules that govern social life				
social institutions	patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs				
social solidarity	the social ties that bind a group of people together such as kinship, shared location, and religion				
society	a group of people who live in a defined geographical area who interact with one another and who share a common culture				
sociological imagination	the ability to understand how your own past relates to that of other people, as well as to history in general and societal structures in particular				
sociology	the systematic study of society and social interaction				
symbolic interactionism	a theoretical perspective through which scholars examine the relationship of individuals within their society by studying their communication (language and symbols)				
theory	a proposed explanation about social interactions or society				
verstehen	a German word that means to understand in a deep way				

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1.1.7: Section Summary

1.1 What Is Sociology?

Sociology is the systematic and scientific study of society and social interaction. In order to carry out their studies, sociologists identify cultural patterns and social forces and determine how they affect individuals and groups. They also develop ways to apply their findings to the real world.

1.2 The History of Sociology

Sociology was developed as an academic and scientific way to study and theorize about the changes to society brought on by the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some of the earliest sociologists thought that societies and individuals' roles in society could be studied using the same scientific methodologies that were used in the natural sciences, while others believed that is was impossible to predict human behavior scientifically, and still others debated the value of such predictions. Those perspectives continue to be represented within sociology today.

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

Sociologists develop theories to explain social events, interactions, and patterns. A theory is a proposed explanation of those social interactions. Theories have different scales. Macro-level theories, such as structural functionalism and conflict theory, attempt to explain how societies operate as a whole. Micro-level theories, such as symbolic interactionism, focus on interactions between individuals.

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

Studying sociology is beneficial both for the individual and for society. By studying sociology people learn how to think critically about social issues and problems that confront our society. The study of sociology enriches students' lives and prepares them for careers in an increasingly diverse world. Society benefits because people with sociological training are better prepared to make informed decisions about social issues and take effective action to deal with them.

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1.1.8: Section Quiz

1.1 What Is Sociology?

1.

Which of the following best describes sociology as a subject?

a. The study of individual behavior
b. The study of cultures
c. The study of society and social interaction
d. The study of economics

2.

C. Wright Mills once said that sociologists need to develop a sociological _____ to study how society affects individuals.

a. culture
b. imagination
c. method
d. tool

3.

A sociologist defines society as a group of people who reside in a defined area, share a culture, and who:

a. interact
b. work in the same industry
c. speak different languages
d. practice a recognized religion

4.

Seeing patterns means that a sociologist needs to be able to:

a. compare the behavior of individuals from different societies
b. compare one society to another
c. identify similarities in how social groups respond to social pressure
d. compare individuals to groups

1.2 The History of Sociology

5.

Which of the following was a topic of study in early sociology?

a. Astrology
b. Economics
c. Physics
d. History

6.

Which founder of sociology believed societies changed due to class struggle?

a. Emile Comte
b. Karl Marx

c. Plato
d. Herbert Spencer

7.

Weber believed humans could not be studied purely objectively because they were influenced by:

a. drugs
b. their culture
c. their genetic makeup
d. the researcher

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

8.

Which of these theories is most likely to look at the social world on a micro level?

a. Structural functionalism
b. Conflict theory
c. Positivism
d. Symbolic interactionism

9.

Who believed that the history of society was one of class struggle?

a. Emile Durkheim
b. Karl Marx
c. Erving Goffmann
d. George Herbert Mead

10.

Who coined the phrase symbolic interactionism?

a. Herbert Blumer
b. Max Weber
c. Lester F. Ward
d. W. I. Thomas

11.

A symbolic interactionist may compare social interactions to:

a. behaviors
b. conflicts
c. human organs
d. theatrical roles

12.

Which research technique would most likely be used by a symbolic interactionist?

a. Surveys
b. Participant observation
c. Quantitative data analysis
d. None of the above

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

13.

Kenneth and Mamie Clark used sociological research to show that segregation was:

a. beneficial
b. harmful
c. illegal
d. of no importance

14.

What did the Clark's use in their experiment noted in question 15?

a. children and dogs
b. adults and dolls
c. children and dolls
d. adults and pets

15.

Studying sociology helps people analyze data because they learn:

a. interview techniques
b. to apply statistics
c. to generate theories
d. all of the above

16.

Berger describes sociologists as concerned with:

a. monumental moments in people's lives
b. common everyday life events
c. both a and b
d. none of the above

17.

Berger writes that sociology

a. is not an academic discipline
b. makes the strange familiar
c. makes the familiar strange
d. is not a science

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1.1.9: Short Answer

1.1 What Is Sociology?

1.

What do you think C. Wright Mills meant when he said that to be a sociologist, one had to develop a sociological imagination?

2.

Describe a situation in which a choice you made was influenced by societal pressures.

1.2 The History of Sociology

3.

What do you make of Karl Marx's contributions to sociology? What perceptions of Marx have you been exposed to in your society, and how do those perceptions influence your views?

4.

Do you tend to place more value on qualitative or quantitative research? Why? Does it matter what topic you are studying?

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

5.

Which theory do you think better explains how societies operate—structural functionalism or conflict theory? Why?

6.

Do you think the way people behave in social interactions is more like the behavior of animals or more like actors playing a role in a theatrical production? Why?

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

7.

How do you think taking a sociology course might affect your social interactions?

8.

What sort of career are you interested in? How could studying sociology help you in this career?

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1.1.10: Further Research

1.1 What Is Sociology?

Sociology is a broad discipline. Different kinds of sociologists employ various methods for exploring the relationship between individuals and society. Check out more about sociology at this website..

1.2 The History of Sociology

Many sociologists helped shape the discipline. To learn more, check out this site featuring prominent sociologists and how they changed sociology.

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

People often think of all conflict as violent, but many conflicts can be resolved nonviolently. To learn more about nonviolent methods of conflict resolution check out the Albert Einstein Institution.

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

Social communication is rapidly evolving due to ever improving technologies. Check out this website to learn more about how sociologists study the impact of these changes

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1.2: Sociological Imagination

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2: SOCIOLOGICAL LENS

2.1: Sociology and the Sociological Perspective

2.1.1: The Sociological Perspective

2.1.2: Sociology as a Social Science

2.1.3: Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

2.1.4: Doing Sociological Research

2.1.S: 1.S- Sociology and the Sociological Perspective (Summary)

2.2: The Sociological Imagination

2.3: Conflict Theory

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2.1: SOCIOLOGY AND THE SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1.1: The Sociological Perspective

2.1.2: Sociology as a Social Science

2.1.3: Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

2.1.4: Doing Sociological Research

2.1.S: 1.S- Sociology and the Sociological Perspective (Summary)

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2.1.1: The Sociological Perspective

Learning Objectives

- Define the sociological perspective.
- Provide examples of how Americans may not be as “free” as they think.
- Explain what is meant by considering individuals as “social beings.”

Most Americans probably agree that we enjoy a great amount of freedom. And yet perhaps we have less freedom than we think. Although we have the right to choose how to believe and act, many of our choices are affected by our society, culture, and social institutions in ways we do not even realize. Perhaps we are not as distinctively individualistic as we might like to think.

The following mental exercise should serve to illustrate this point. Your author has never met the readers of this book, and yet he already knows much about them and can even predict their futures. For example, about 85% of this book’s (heterosexual) readers will one day get married. This prediction will not always come true, but for every 100 readers, it will be correct about 85 times and wrong about 15 times. Because the author knows nothing about the readers other than that they live in the United States (and this might not be true for every reader of this Unnamed Publisher book), the accuracy of this prediction is remarkable.

The author can also predict the kind of person any one heterosexual reader will marry. If the reader is a woman, she will marry a man of her race who is somewhat older and taller and who is from her social class. If the reader is a man, he will marry a woman of his race who is somewhat younger and shorter and who is from his social class. A reader will even marry someone who is similar in appearance. A reader who is good-looking will marry someone who is also good-looking; a reader with more ordinary looks will marry someone who also fits that description; and a reader who is somewhere between good-looking and ordinary-looking will marry someone who also falls in the middle of the spectrum.

Naturally, these predictions will prove wrong for some readers. However, when one takes into account all the attributes listed (race, height, age, social class, appearance), the predictions will be right much more often than they are wrong, because people in the United States do in fact tend to choose mates fitting these general descriptions (Arum, Roksa, & Budig, 2008; Takeuchi, 2006).Arum, R., Josipa R., & Budig, M. J. (2008). The romance of college attendance: Higher education stratification and mate selection. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility, 26,* 107–121; Alexander, T. S. (2006). On the matching phenomenon in courtship: A probability matching theory of mate selection. *Marriage & Family Review, 40,* 25–51. If most people will marry the type of person who has just been predicted for them, this may mean that, practically speaking, one’s choice of spouse is restricted—much more than we might like to admit—by social class, race, age, height, appearance, and other traits. If so, the choice of a mate is not as free as we might like to think it is.

For another example, take the right to vote. The secret ballot is one of the most cherished principles of American democracy. We vote in secret so that our choice of a candidate is made freely and without fear of punishment. That is all true, but it is also possible to predict the candidate for whom any one individual will vote if enough is known about the individual. Again, our choice (in this case, our choice of a candidate) is affected by many aspects of our social backgrounds and, in this sense, is not made as freely as we might think.

To illustrate this point, consider the 2020 presidential election between Democrat Joe Biden and Republican Donald Trump. Suppose a room is filled with 100 randomly selected voters from that election. Nothing is known about them except that they were between 18 and 24 years of age when they voted. Because exit poll data found that Joe Biden won 65% of the vote from people in this age group (https://www.cnn.com/election/2020/ex...tional-results), a prediction that each of these 100 individuals voted for Biden would be correct about 65 times and incorrect only 35 times. Someone betting $1 on each prediction would come out $30 ahead ($65 – $35 = $30), even though the only thing known about the people in the room is their age.



Figure 2.1.1.1: Young people were especially likely to vote for Joe Biden in 2020, while white men tended, especially in Kentucky and several other states, to vote for Donald Trump. These patterns illustrate the influence of our social backgrounds on many aspects of our lives. Source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/189525...75458/sizes/m/

Now let's suppose we have a room filled with 100 randomly selected white men from Kentucky who voted in 2020. We know only three things about them: their race, gender, and state of residence. Because exit poll data found that 64% of white men in Kentucky voted for Donald Trump, a prediction can be made with fairly good accuracy that these 100 men tended to have voted for Trump . Someone betting $1 that each man in the room voted for Trump would be right about 64 times and wrong only 36 times and would come out $28 ahead ($64 – $36 = $28). Even though young people in the United States and white men from Kentucky had every right and freedom under our democracy to vote for whomever they wanted in 2020, they still tended to vote for a particular candidate because of the influence of their age (in the case of the young people) or of their gender, race, and state of residence (white men from Kentucky).

Yes, Americans have freedom, but our freedom to think and act is constrained at least to some degree by society's standards and expectations and by the many aspects of our social backgrounds. This is true for the kinds of important beliefs and behaviors just discussed, and it is also true for less important examples. For instance, think back to the last class you attended. How many of the women wore evening gowns? How many of the men wore skirts? Students are "allowed" to dress any way they want in most colleges and universities (as long as they do not go to class naked), but notice how few students, if any, dress in the way just mentioned. They do not dress that way because of the strange looks and even negative reactions they would receive.

Think back to the last time you rode in an elevator. Why did you not face the back? Why did you not sit on the floor? Why did you not start singing? Children can do these things and "get away with it," because they look cute doing so, but adults risk looking odd. Because of that, even though we are "allowed" to act strangely in an elevator, we do not.

The basic point is that society shapes our attitudes and behavior even if it does not determine them altogether. We still have freedom, but that freedom is limited by society's expectations. Moreover, our views and behavior depend to some degree on our social location in society—our gender, race, social class, religion, and so forth. Thus society as a whole and also our own social backgrounds affect our attitudes and behaviors. Our social backgrounds also affect one other important part of our lives, and that is our life chances—our chances (whether we have a good chance or little chance) of being healthy, wealthy, and well educated and, more generally, of living a good, happy life.

The influence of our social environment in all of these respects is the fundamental understanding that sociology—the scientific study of social behavior and social institutions—aims to present. At the heart of sociology is the sociological perspective, the view that our social backgrounds influence our attitudes, behavior, and life chances. In this regard, we are not just individuals but rather social beings deeply enmeshed in society. Although we all differ from one another in many respects, we share with many other people basic aspects of our social backgrounds, perhaps especially gender, race and ethnicity, and social class. These shared qualities make us more similar to each other than we would otherwise be.

Does society totally determine our beliefs, behavior, and life chances? No. Individual differences still matter, and disciplines such as psychology are certainly needed for the most complete understanding of human action and beliefs. But if individual differences

matter, so do society and the social backgrounds from which we come. Even the most individual attitudes and behaviors, such as the marriage and voting decisions discussed earlier, are influenced to some degree by our social backgrounds and, more generally, by the society to which we belong.

In this regard, consider what is perhaps the most personal decision one could make: the decision to take one's own life. What could be more personal and individualistic than this fatal decision? When individuals commit suicide, we usually assume that they were very unhappy, even depressed. They may have been troubled by a crumbling romantic relationship, bleak job prospects, incurable illness, or chronic pain. But not all people in these circumstances commit suicide; in fact, few do. Perhaps one's chances of committing suicide depend at least in part on various aspects of the person's social background.

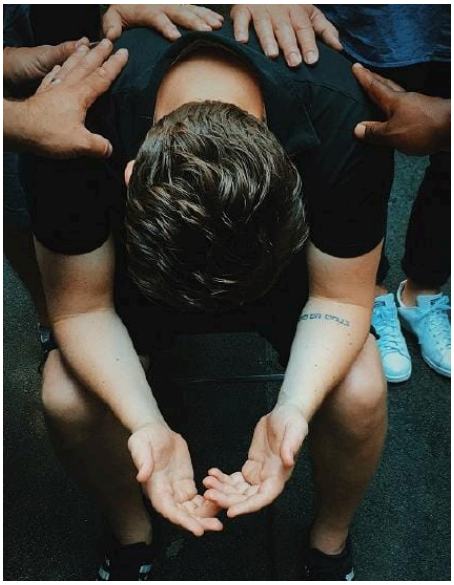


Figure 2.1.1.2: Although suicide is popularly considered to be a very individualistic act, it is also true that individuals' likelihood of committing suicide depends at least partly on various aspects of their social backgrounds. (Unsplash License; **Jon Tyson via Unsplash**)

To illustrate this point, consider suicide rates—the percentage of a particular group of people who commit suicide, usually taken as, say, eight suicides for every 100,000 people in that group. Different groups have different suicide rates. As just one example, men are more likely than women to commit suicide (Figure 2.1.1.3). Why is this? Are men more depressed than women? No, the best evidence indicates that women are more depressed than men (Klein, Corwin, & Ceballos, 2006)Klein, L. C., Corwin, E. J., & Ceballos, R. M. (2006). The social costs of stress: How sex differences in stress responses can lead to social stress vulnerability and depression in women. In C. L. M. Keyes & S. H. Goodman (Eds.), *Women and depression: A handbook for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences* (pp. 199–218). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.) and that women try to commit suicide more often than men (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008).Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2008). Suicide: Facts at a glance. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/ Suicide-DataSheet-a.pdf If so, there must be something about being a man that makes it more likely that males' suicide attempts will result in death. One of these "somethings" is that males are more likely than females to try to commit suicide with a firearm, a far more lethal method than, say, taking an overdose of sleeping pills (Miller & Hemenway, 2008).Miller, M., & Hemenway. D. (2008). Guns and suicide in the United States. *New England Journal of Medicine, 359,* 989–991.If this is true, then it is fair to say that gender influences our chances of committing suicide, even if suicide is perhaps the most personal of all acts.

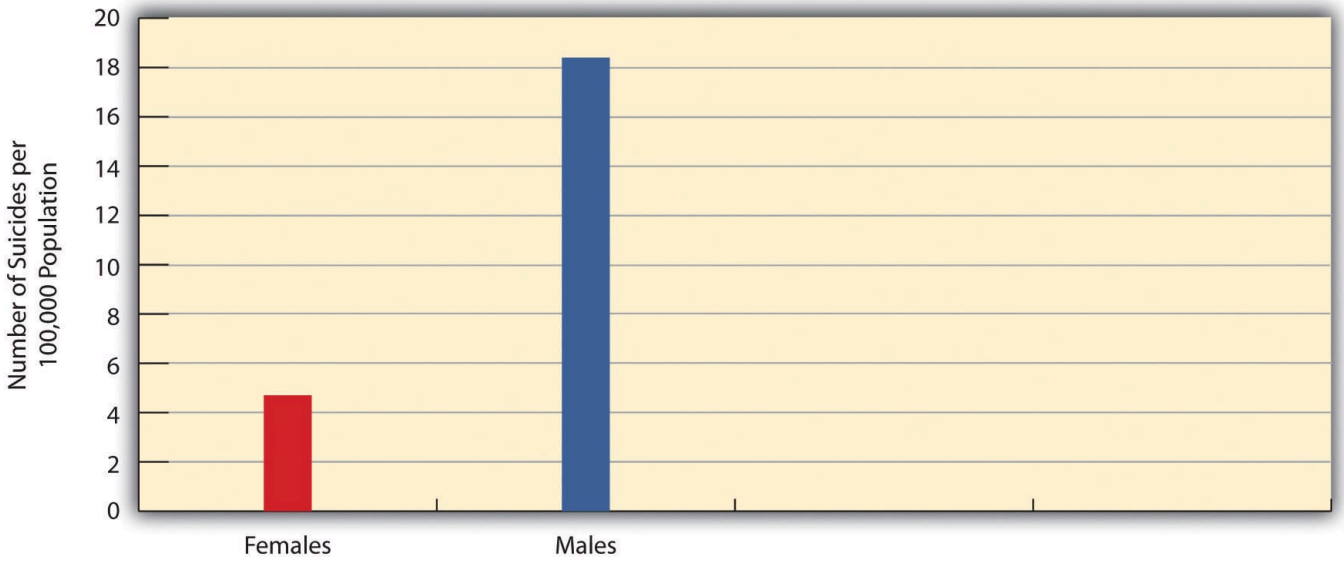


Figure 2.1.1.1: Gender and Suicide Rate, 2007. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2010.

In the United States, suicide rates are generally higher west of the Mississippi River than east of it (Figure 1.4). Is that because people out west are more depressed than those back east? No, there is no evidence of this. Perhaps there is something else about the western states that helps lead to higher suicide rates. For example, many of these states are sparsely populated compared to their eastern counterparts, with people in the western states living relatively far from one another. Because we know that social support networks help people deal with personal problems and deter possible suicides (Stack, 2000),Stack, S. (2000). Sociological research into suicide. In D. Lester (Ed.), *Suicide prevention: Resources for the millennium* (pp. 17–30). New York, NY: Routledge. perhaps these networks are weaker in the western states, helping lead to higher suicide rates. Then too, membership in organized religion is lower out west than back east (Finke & Stark, 2005).Finke, R., & Stark, S. (2005). *The churching of America: Winners and losers in our religious economy*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. If religious beliefs and the social support networks we experience from attending religious services both help us deal with personal problems, perhaps suicide rates are higher out west in part because religious belief is weaker. A depressed person out west thus is, all other things being equal, at least a little more likely than a depressed person back east to commit suicide.

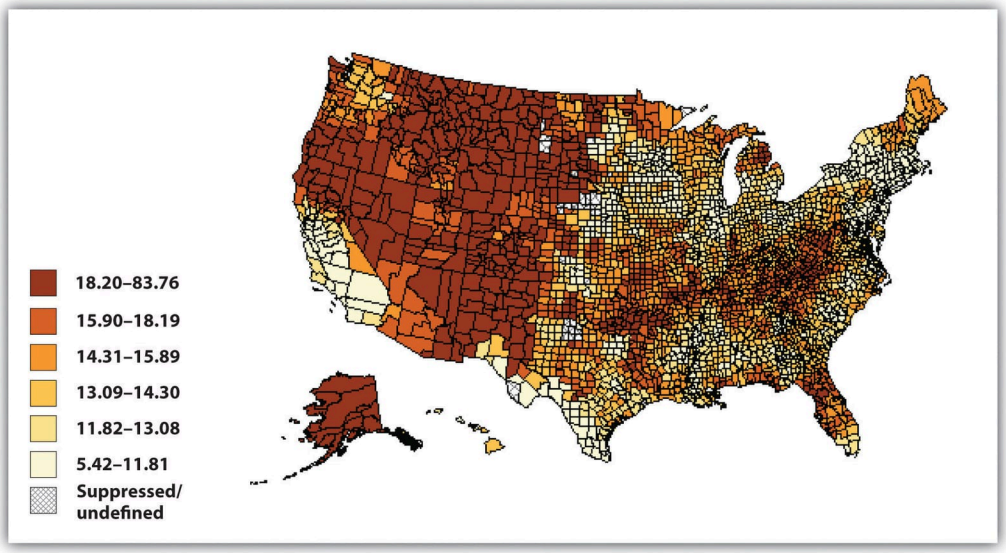


Figure 2.1.1.4: U.S. Suicide Rates, 2000–2006 (Number of Suicides per 100,000 Population). Source: Adapted from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. (2009). National suicide statistics at a glance. Retrieved from www.cdc.gov/violencepreventio...icide_map.html. (Copyright; author via source)

Suicide rates differ based on where you live

Suicide rates can vary substantially across geographic regions, and rural areas experience much higher rates of suicide than urban areas. Suicide rates increase as population density decreases and an area becomes more rural:

- Large central metropolitan: 10.9 per 100,000
- Large fringe metro: 12.5 per 100,000
- Medium metro: 15.3 per 100,000
- Small metro: 17.2 per 100,000
- Micropolitan (non-metro): 18.3 per 100,000
- Noncore (non-metro): 20.5 per 100,000

Suicide rates in rural areas are highest among non-Hispanic AI/AN males (59.6 per 100,000) and non-Hispanic white males (37.9 per 100,000).

Conclusion

- According to the sociological perspective, social backgrounds influence attitudes, behavior, and life chances.
- Social backgrounds influence but do not totally determine attitudes and behavior.
- Americans may be less “free” in their thoughts and behavior than they normally think they are.

For Your Review

1. Do you think that society constrains our thoughts and behaviors as the text argues? Why or why not?
2. Describe how one aspect of your own social background has affected an important attitude you hold, a behavior in which you have engaged, or your ability to do well in life (life chances).

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2.1.2: Sociology as a Social Science

Learning Objectives

- Explain what is meant by the sociological imagination.
- State the difference between the approach of blaming the system and that of blaming the victim.
- Describe what is meant by public sociology, and show how it relates to the early history of sociology in the United States.

Notice that we have been talking in generalizations. For example, the statement that men are more *likely* than women to commit suicide does not mean that every man commits suicide and no woman commits suicide. It means only that men have a higher suicide rate, even though most men, of course, do not commit suicide. Similarly, the statement that young people were more likely to vote for Biden than for Trump in 2020 does not mean that all young people voted for Biden; it means only that they were more likely than not to do so.

A generalization in sociology is a general statement regarding a trend between various dimensions of our lives: gender and suicide rate, race and voting choice, and so forth. Many people will not fit the pattern of such a generalization, because people are shaped but not totally determined by their social environment. That is both the fascination and the frustration of sociology. Sociology is fascinating because no matter how much sociologists are able to predict people's behavior, attitudes, and life chances, many people will not fit the predictions. But sociology is frustrating for the same reason. Because people can never be totally explained by their social environment, sociologists can never completely understand the sources of their behavior, attitudes, and life chances.

In this sense, sociology as a social science is very different from a discipline such as physics, in which known laws exist for which no exceptions are possible. For example, we call the law of gravity a law because it describes a physical force that exists on the earth at all times and in all places and that always has the same result. If you were to pick up the book you are now reading or the computer or other device on which you are reading or listening to it and then let go, the object you were holding would obviously fall to the ground. If you did this a second time, it would fall a second time. If you did this a billion times, it would fall a billion times. In fact, if there were even one time out of a billion that your book or electronic device did not fall down, our understanding of the physical world would be totally revolutionized, the earth could be in danger, and you could go on television and make a lot of money.

For better or worse, people and social institutions—the subject matter of sociology—do not always follow our predictions. They are not like that book or electronic device that keeps falling down. People have their own minds, and social institutions their own reality, that often defy any effort to explain. Sociology can help us understand the social forces that affect our behavior, beliefs, and life chances, but it can only go so far. That limitation conceded, sociological understanding can still go fairly far toward such an understanding, and it can help us comprehend who we are and what we are by helping us first understand the profound yet often subtle influence of our social backgrounds on so many things about us.



Figure 1.5: People's attitudes, behavior, and life chances are influenced but not totally determined by many aspects of their social environment. Thinkstock

Although sociology as a discipline is very different from physics, it is not as different as one might think from this and the other "hard" sciences. Like these disciplines, sociology as a social science relies heavily on systematic research that follows the standard rules of the scientific method. We return to these rules and the nature of sociological research later in this chapter. Suffice it to say here that careful research is essential for a sociological understanding of people, social institutions, and society.

At this point a reader might be saying, "I already know a lot about people. I could have told you that young people voted for Obama. I already had heard that men have a higher suicide rate than women. Maybe our social backgrounds do influence us in ways I had not realized, but what beyond that does sociology have to tell me?"

Students often feel this way because sociology deals with matters already familiar to them. Just about everyone has grown up in a family, so we all know something about it. We read a lot in the media about topics like divorce and health care, so we all already know something about these, too. All this leads some students to wonder if they will learn anything in their introduction to sociology course that they do not already know.

How Do We Know What We Think We Know?

Let's consider this issue a moment: how do we know what we think we know? Our usual knowledge and understanding of social reality come from at least five sources: (a) personal experience; (b) common sense; (c) the media (including the Internet); (d) "expert authorities," such as teachers, parents, and government officials; and (e) tradition. These are all important sources of our understanding of how the world "works," but at the same time their value can often be very limited.

Let's look at them separately by starting with personal experience. Although personal experiences are very important, not everyone has the same personal experience. This obvious fact casts some doubt on the degree to which our personal experiences can help us understand everything there is to know about a topic and the degree to which we can draw conclusions from our personal experiences that necessarily apply to other people. For example, say you grew up in Maine or Vermont, where more than 98% of the population is white. If you relied on your personal experience to calculate how many people of color live in the country, you would conclude that almost everyone in the United States is also white, which obviously is not true. As another example, say you grew up in a family where your parents had the proverbial perfect marriage, as they loved each other deeply and rarely argued. If you relied on your personal experience to understand the typical American marriage, you would conclude that most marriages were as good as your parents' marriage, which, unfortunately, also is not true. Many other examples could be cited here, but the basic point should be clear: although personal experience is better than nothing, it often offers only a very limited understanding of social reality other than our own.

If personal experience does not help that much when it comes to making predictions, what about common sense? Although common sense can be very helpful, it can also contradict itself. For example, which makes more sense, *haste makes waste* or *he or she who hesitates is lost*? How about *birds of a feather flock together* versus *opposites attract*? Or *two heads are better*

than one versus *too many cooks spoil the broth*? Each of these common sayings makes sense, but if sayings that are opposite of each other both make sense, where does the truth lie? Can common sense always be counted on to help us understand social life? Slightly more than five centuries ago, everyone "knew" the earth was flat—it was just common sense that it had to be that way. Slightly more than a century ago, some of the leading physicians in the United States believed that women should not go to college because the stress of higher education would disrupt their menstrual cycles (Ehrenreich & English, 1979).Ehrenreich, B., & English, D. (1979). *For her own good: 150 years of the experts' advice to women*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books. If that bit of common sense(lessness) were still with us, many of the women reading this book would not be in college.

Still, perhaps there are some things that make so much sense they just have to be true; if sociology then tells us that they are true, what have we learned? Here is an example of such an argument. We all know that older people—those 65 or older—have many more problems than younger people. First, their health is generally worse. Second, physical infirmities make it difficult for many elders to walk or otherwise move around. Third, many have seen their spouses and close friends pass away and thus live lonelier lives than younger people. Finally, many are on fixed incomes and face financial difficulties. All of these problems indicate that older people should be less happy than younger people. If a sociologist did some research and then reported that older people are indeed less happy than younger people, what have we learned? The sociologist only confirmed the obvious.

The trouble with this confirmation of the obvious is that the "obvious" turns out not to be true after all. In the 2010 General Social Survey, which was given to a national random sample of Americans, respondents were asked, "Taken all together, how would you say things are these days? Would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?" Respondents aged 65 or older were actually slightly more likely than those younger than 65 to say they were very happy! About 33% of older respondents reported feeling this way, compared with only 28% of younger respondents (Figure 1.6). What we all "knew" was obvious from common sense turns out not to have been so obvious after all.

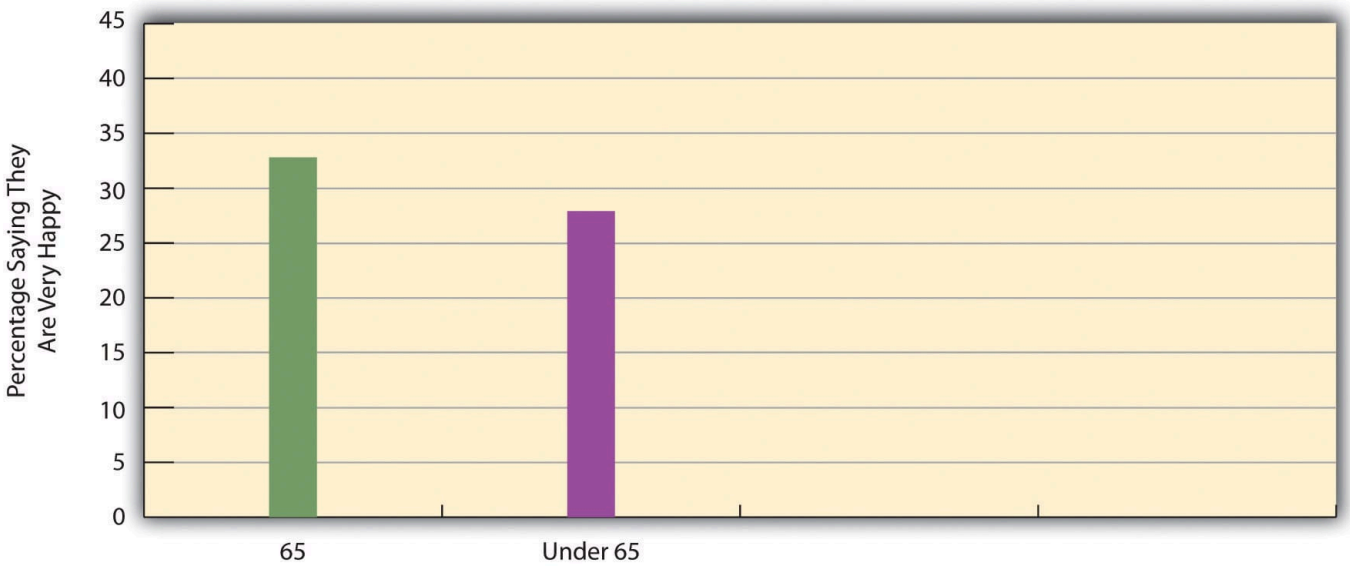


Figure 1.6: Age and Happiness. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

If personal experience and common sense do not always help that much, how about the media? We learn a lot about current events and social and political issues from the Internet, television news, newspapers and magazines, and other media sources. It is certainly important to keep up with the news, but media coverage may oversimplify complex topics or even distort what the best evidence from systematic research seems to be telling us. A good example here is crime. Many studies show that the media sensationalize crime and suggest there is much more violent crime than there really is. For example, in the early 1990s, the evening newscasts on the major networks increased their coverage of murder and other violent crimes, painting a picture of a nation where crime was growing rapidly. The reality was very different, however, as crime was actually declining. John Gramlich with the Pew Research Center reports that according to FBI statistics violent crime rates declined by 49% between 1992 and 2019 (Gramlich, 2020). The view that crime was growing was thus a myth generated by the media (Kurtz, 1997).Kurtz, H. (1997, August 12). The crime spree on network news. *The Washington Post*, p. D1.

Expert authorities, such as teachers, parents, and government officials, are a fourth source that influences our understanding of social reality. We learn much from our teachers and parents and perhaps from government officials, but, for better or worse, not all of what we learn from these sources about social reality is completely accurate. Teachers and parents do not always have the latest research evidence at their fingertips, and various biases may color their interpretation of any evidence with which they

are familiar. As many examples from U.S. history illustrate, government officials may simplify or even falsify the facts. We should perhaps always listen to our teachers and parents and maybe even to government officials, but that does not always mean they give us a true, complete picture of social reality.



Figure 1.7: The news media often oversimplify complex topics and in other respects provide a misleading picture of social reality. As one example, news coverage sensationalizes violent crime and thus suggests that such crime is more common than it actually is. © Thinkstock

A final source that influences our understanding of social reality is tradition, or long-standing ways of thinking about the workings of society. Tradition is generally valuable, because a society should always be aware of its roots. However, traditional ways of thinking about social reality often turn out to be inaccurate and incomplete. For example, traditional ways of thinking in the United States once assumed that women and people of color were biologically and culturally inferior to men and whites. Although some Americans continue to hold these beliefs, as we shall see in later chapters, these traditional assumptions have given way to more egalitarian assumptions. As we shall also see in later chapters, most sociologists certainly do not believe that women and people of color are biologically and culturally inferior.

If we cannot always trust personal experience, common sense, the media, expert authorities, and tradition to help us understand social reality, then the importance of systematic research gathered by sociology and the other social sciences becomes apparent. Although sociology sometimes does confirm the obvious, often it also confirms the *nonobvious* and even challenges conventional understandings of how society works and of controversial social issues. This emphasis is referred to as the *debunking motif*, to which we now turn.

The Debunking Motif

As Peter L. Berger (1963, pp. 23–24) notes in his classic book *Invitation to Sociology*, “The first wisdom of sociology is this—things are not what they seem.” Social reality, he says, has “many layers of meaning,” and a goal of sociology is to help us discover these multiple meanings. He continues, “People who like to avoid shocking discoveries, who prefer to believe that society is just what they were taught in Sunday School…should stay away from sociology.”

This is because sociology helps us see through conventional understandings of how society works. Berger refers to this theme of sociology as the debunking motif. By “looking for levels of reality other than those given in the official interpretations of society” (p. 38),Berger, P. L. (1963). *Invitation to sociology: A humanistic perspective*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books. Berger says, sociology looks beyond on-the-surface understandings of social reality and helps us recognize the value of alternative or other ways of understanding. In this manner, sociology often challenges conventional understandings about social reality and social institutions.

For example, suppose two people meet at a college party. They are interested in getting to know each other. What would be an on-the-surface understanding and description of their interaction over the next few minutes? What do they say? If they are like a typical couple who just met, they will ask questions like, What’s your name? Where are you from? What dorm do you live in? What’s your major? Now, such a description of their interaction is OK as far as it goes, but what is *really* going on in this

interaction? Does either of the two people really care that much about the other person's answers to these questions? Isn't each one more concerned about how the other person is responding, both verbally and nonverbally, during this brief interaction? Is the other person paying attention and even smiling? Isn't this kind of understanding a more complete analysis of these few minutes of interaction than an understanding based solely on the answers to questions like, What's your major? For the most complete understanding of this brief encounter, then, we must look beyond the rather superficial things the two people are telling each other to uncover the true meaning of what is going on.

As another example, consider the power structure in a city or state. To know who has the power to make decisions, we would probably consult a city or state charter or constitution that spells out the powers of the branches of government. This written document would indicate who makes decisions and has power, but what would it *not* talk about? To put it another way, who or what else has power to influence the decisions elected officials make? Big corporations? Labor unions? The media? Lobbying groups representing all sorts of interests? The city or state charter or constitution may indicate who has the power to make decisions, but this understanding would be limited unless one looks beyond these written documents to get a deeper, more complete understanding of how power really operates in the setting being studied.

Social Structure and the Sociological Imagination

One way sociology achieves a more complete understandng of social reality is through its focus on the importance of the social forces affecting our behavior, attitudes, and life chances. This focus involves an emphasis on social structure, the social patterns through which a society is organized. Social structure can be both horizontal or vertical. Horizontal social structure refers to the social relationships and the social and physical characteristics of communities to which individuals belong. Some people belong to many networks of social relationships, including groups like the PTA and the Boy or Girl Scouts, while other people have fewer such networks. Some people grew up on streets where the houses were crowded together, while other people grew up in areas where the homes were much farther apart. These are examples of the sorts of factors constituting the horizontal social structure that forms such an important part of our social environment and backgrounds.

The other dimension of social structure is vertical. Vertical social structure, more commonly called social inequality, refers to ways in which a society or group ranks people in a hierarchy, with some more "equal" than others. In the United States and most other industrial societies, such things as wealth, power, race and ethnicity, and gender help determine one's social ranking, or position, in the vertical social structure. Some people are at the top of society, while many more are in the middle or at the bottom. People's positions in society's hierarchy in turn often have profound consequences for their attitudes, behaviors, and life chances, both for themselves and for their children.

In recognizing the importance of social structure, sociology stresses that individual problems are often rooted in problems stemming from the horizontal and vertical social structures of society. This key insight informed C. Wright Mills's (1959)Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. London, England: Oxford University Press. classic distinction between personal troubles and public issues. *Personal troubles* refer to a problem affecting individuals that the affected person, as well as other members of society, typically blame on the individual's own failings. Examples include such different problems as eating disorders, divorce, and unemployment. *Public issues*, whose source lies in the social structure and culture of a society, refer to a social problem affecting many individuals. Thus problems in society help account for problems that individuals experience. Mills, feeling that many problems ordinarily considered private troubles are best understood as public issues, coined the term sociological imagination to refer to the ability to appreciate the structural basis for individual problems.

To illustrate Mills's viewpoint, let's use our sociological imaginations to understand some important contemporary social problems. We will start with unemployment, which Mills himself discussed. If only a few people were unemployed, Mills wrote, we could reasonably explain their unemployment by saying they were lazy, lacked good work habits, and so forth. If so, their unemployment would be their own personal trouble. But when millions of people are out of work, unemployment is best understood as a public issue because, as Mills (1959, p. 9)Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. London, England: Oxford University Press. put it, "the very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of a scatter of individuals." The growing unemployment rate stemming from the severe economic downturn that began in 2008 provides a telling example of the point Mills was making. Millions of people lost their jobs through no fault of their own. While some individuals are undoubtedly unemployed because they are lazy or lack good work habits, a more structural explanation focusing on lack of opportunity is needed to explain why so many people were out of work as this book went to press. If so, unemployment is best understood as a public issue rather than a personal trouble. The same can be said for the unemployment rate in the second quarter of 2020. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate rose to 13.9 during April, May and June of 2020 (https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2021/ar...-pandemic.html). Why were so many Americans out of work? Were they just lazy? No, there was a global pandemic which caused many businesses to close during those months

of 2020.

Another contemporary problem is crime, which we explore further in Chapter 5. If crime were only a personal trouble, then we could blame crime on the moral failings of individuals, and many explanations of crime do precisely this. But such an approach ignores the fact that crime is a public issue, as structural factors such as inequality and the physical characteristics of communities contribute to high crime rates among certain groups in American society. As an illustration, consider identical twins separated at birth. One twin grows up in a wealthy suburb or rural area, while the other twin grows up in a blighted neighborhood in a poor, urban area. Twenty years later, which twin will be more likely to have a criminal record? You probably answered the twin growing up in the poor, run-down urban neighborhood. If so, you recognize that there is something about growing up in that type of neighborhood that increases the chances of a person becoming prone to crime. That "something" is the structural factors just mentioned. Criminal behavior is a public issue, not just a personal trouble.



Figure 1.8: Although eating disorders often stem from personal problems, they also may reflect a cultural emphasis for women to have slender bodies. © Thinkstock

A final problem we will consider for now is eating disorders. We usually consider a person's eating disorder to be a personal trouble that stems from a lack of control, low self-esteem, or other personal problem. This explanation may be OK as far as it goes, but it does not help us understand why so many people have the personal problems that lead to eating disorders. Perhaps more important, this belief also neglects the larger social and cultural forces that help explain such disorders. For example, most Americans with eating disorders are women, not men. This gender difference forces us to ask what it is about being a woman in American society that makes eating disorders so much more common. To begin to answer this question, we need to look to the standard of beauty for women that emphasizes a slender body (Whitehead & Kurz, 2008).Whitehead, K., & Kurz, T. (2008). Saints, sinners and standards of femininity: Discursive constructions of anorexia nervosa and obesity in women's magazines. *Journal of Gender Studies, 17,* 345–358. If this cultural standard did not exist, far fewer American women would suffer from eating disorders than do now. Even if every girl and woman with an eating disorder were cured, others would take their places unless we could somehow change the cultural standard of female slenderness. To the extent this explanation makes sense, eating disorders are best understood as a public issue, not just as a personal trouble.

Picking up on Mills's argument, William Ryan (1976)Ryan, W. (1976). *Blaming the victim*. New York, NY: Vintage Books. pointed out that Americans typically blame the victim when they think about the reasons for social problems such as poverty, unemployment, and crime. They feel that these problems stem from personal failings of the people suffering them, not from structural problems in the larger society. Using Mills's terms, Americans tend to think of social problems as personal troubles rather than public issues. They thus subscribe to a blaming the victim ideology rather than to a blaming the system belief.

To help us understand a blaming-the-victim ideology, let's consider why poor children in urban areas often learn very little in their schools. A blaming-the-victim approach, according to Ryan, would say that the children's parents do not care about their learning, fail to teach them good study habits, and do not encourage them to take school seriously. This type of explanation may apply to some parents, in Ryan's opinion, but it ignores a much more important reason: the sad shape of America's urban schools, which are decrepit structures housing old textbooks and out-of-date equipment. To improve the schooling of children in urban areas, he wrote, we must improve the schools themselves, and not just try to "improve" the parents.

As this example suggests, a blaming-the-victim approach points to solutions to social problems such as poverty and illiteracy that are very different from those suggested by a more structural approach that "blames the system." If we blame the victim, we would spend our limited dollars to address the personal failings of individuals who suffer from poverty, illiteracy, poor health, eating disorders, and other difficulties. If instead we blame the system, we would focus our attention on the various social conditions (decrepit schools, cultural standards of female beauty, and the like) that account for these difficulties. A sociological perspective suggests that the latter approach is ultimately needed to help us deal successfully with the social problems facing us today.

Sociology and Social Reform: Public Sociology

This book's subtitle is "understanding and changing the social world." The last several pages were devoted to the subtitle's first part, *understanding*. Our discussion of Mills's and Ryan's perspectives in turn points to the implications of a sociological understanding for *changing* the social world. This understanding suggests the need to focus on the structural and cultural factors and various problems in the social environment that help explain both social issues and private troubles, to recall Mills's terms.

The use of sociological knowledge to achieve social reform was a key theme of sociology as it developed in the United States after emerging at the University of Chicago in the 1890s (Calhoun, 2007).Calhoun, C. (2007). Sociology in America: An introduction. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Sociology in America: A history* (pp. 1–38). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. The early Chicago sociologists aimed to use their research to achieve social reform and, in particular, to reduce poverty and its related effects. They worked closely with Jane Addams (1860–1935), a renowned social worker who founded Hull House (a home for the poor in Chicago) in 1899 and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931. Addams gained much attention for her analyses of poverty and other social problems of the time, and her book *Twenty Years at Hull House* remains a moving account of her work with the poor and ill in Chicago (Deegan, 1990).Deegan, M. J. (1990). *Jane Addams and the men of the Chicago school, 1892–1918*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

About the same time, W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963), a sociologist and the first African American to obtain a PhD from Harvard University, wrote groundbreaking books and articles on race in American society and, more specifically, on the problems facing African Americans (Morris, 2007).Morris, A. D. (2007). Sociology of race and W. E. B. Du Bois: The path not taken. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Sociology in America: A history* (pp. 503–534). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. One of these works was his 1899 book *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*, which attributed the problems facing Philadelphia blacks to racial prejudice among whites. Du Bois also helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). A contemporary of Du Bois was Ida B. Wells-Barnett (1862–1931), a former slave who became an activist for women's rights and also worked tirelessly to improve the conditions of African Americans. She wrote several studies of lynching and joined Du Bois in helping to found the NAACP (Bay, 2009).Bay, M. (2009). *To tell the truth freely: The life of Ida B. Wells*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang.

American sociology has never fully lost its early calling, but by the 1940s and 1950s many sociologists had developed a more scientific, professional orientation that disregarded social reform (Calhoun, 2007).Calhoun, C. (2007). Sociology in America: An introduction. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Sociology in America: A history* (pp. 1–38). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. In 1951, a group of sociologists who felt that sociology had abandoned the discipline's early social reform orientation formed a new national association, the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP). SSSP's primary aim today remains the use of sociological knowledge to achieve social justice (http://sssp1.org). During the 1960s, a new wave of young sociologists, influenced by the political events and social movements of that tumultuous period, again took up the mantle of social reform and clashed with their older colleagues. A healthy tension has existed since then between sociologists who see social reform as a major goal of their work and those who favor sociological knowledge for its own sake.

In 2004, the president of the American Sociological Association, Michael Burawoy, called for "public sociology," or the use of sociological insights and findings to address social issues and achieve social change (Burawoy, 2005).Burawoy, M. (2005). 2004 presidential address: For public sociology. *American Sociological Review, 70*, 4–28. His call ignited much excitement and debate, as public sociology became the theme or prime topic of several national and regional sociology conferences and of special issues or sections of major sociological journals. Several sociology departments began degree programs or concentrations in public sociology, and a Google search of "public sociology" in June 2010 yielded 114,000 results. In the spirit of public sociology, the chapters that follow aim to show the relevance of sociological knowledge for social reform.

Conclusion

- Personal experience, common sense, and the mass media often yield inaccurate or incomplete understandings of social reality.
- The debunking motif involves seeing beyond taken-for-granted assumptions of social reality.
- According to C. Wright Mills, the sociological imagination involves the ability to recognize that private troubles are rooted in public issues and structural problems.
- Early U.S. sociologists emphasized the use of sociological research to achieve social reform, and today's public sociology reflects the historical roots of sociology in this regard.

For Your Review

1. Provide an example in which one of your own personal experiences probably led you to inaccurately understand social reality.
2. Provide an example, not discussed in the text, of a taken-for-granted assumption of social reality that may be inaccurate or incomplete.
3. Select an example of a "private trouble" and explain how and why it may reflect a structural problem in society.
4. Do you think it is important to emphasize the potential use of sociological research to achieve social reform? Why or why not?

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2.1.3: Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish macro approaches in sociology from micro approaches.
- Summarize the most important beliefs and assumptions of functionalism and conflict theory.
- Summarize the most important beliefs and assumptions of symbolic interactionism and exchange theory.

We have talked repeatedly about "a" sociological perspective, as if all sociologists share the same beliefs on how society works. This implication is misleading. Although all sociologists would probably accept the basic premise that social backgrounds affect people's attitudes, behavior, and life chances, their views as sociologists differ in many other ways.

Macro and Micro Approaches

Although this may be overly simplistic, sociologists' views basically fall into two camps: macrosociology and microsociology. Macrosociologists focus on the big picture, which usually means such things as social structure, social institutions, and social, political, and economic change. They look at the large-scale social forces that change the course of human society and the lives of individuals. Microsociologists, on the other hand, study social interaction. They look at how families, coworkers, and other small groups of people interact; why they interact the way they do; and how they interpret the meanings of their own interactions and of the social settings in which they find themselves. Often macro- and microsociologists look at the same phenomena but do so in different ways. Their views taken together offer a fuller understanding of the phenomena than either approach can offer alone.



Figure 1.9: Microsociologists examine the interaction of small groups of people, such as the two women conversing here. These sociologists examine how and why individuals interact and interpret the meanings of their interaction. © Thinkstock

The different but complementary nature of these two approaches can be seen in the case of armed robbery. Macrosociologists would discuss such things as why robbery rates are higher in poorer communities and whether these rates change with changes in the national economy. Microsociologists would instead focus on such things as why individual robbers decide to commit a robbery and how they select their targets. Both types of approaches give us a valuable understanding of robbery, but together they offer an even richer understanding.

Within the broad macro camp, two perspectives dominate: functionalism and conflict theory. Within the micro camp, two other perspectives exist: symbolic interactionism and utilitarianism (also called rational choice theory or exchange theory) (Collins, 1994).Collins, R. (1994). *Four sociological traditions*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. We now turn to these four theoretical perspectives, which are summarized in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Theory Snapshot

Theoretical perspective	Major assumptions
Functionalism or Structural Functionalism	Social stability is necessary to have a strong society, and adequate socialization and social integration are necessary to achieve social stability. Society's social institutions perform important functions to help ensure social stability. Slow social change is desirable, but rapid social change threatens social order. Functionalism is a macro theory.
Conflict theory	Society is characterized by pervasive inequality based on social class, gender, and other factors. Far-reaching social change is needed to reduce or eliminate social inequality and to create an egalitarian society. Conflict theory is a macro theory.
Symbolic Interactionism	People construct their roles as they interact; they do not merely learn the roles that society has set out for them. As this interaction occurs, individuals negotiate their definitions of the situations in which they find themselves and socially construct the reality of these situations. In so doing, they rely heavily on symbols such as words and gestures to reach a shared understanding of their interaction. Symbolic interactionism is a micro theory.
Utilitarianism or Exchange Theory	People act to maximize their advantages in a given situation and to reduce their disadvantages. If they decide that benefits outweigh disadvantages, they will initiate the interaction or continue it if it is already under way. If they instead decide that disadvantages outweigh benefits, they will decline to begin interacting or stop the interaction if already begun. Social order is possible because people realize it will be in their best interests to cooperate and to make compromises when necessary. Utilitarianism is a micro theory.

Functionalism or Structural Functionalism

Functionalism, also known as the functionalist perspective, arose out of two great revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries. The first was the French Revolution of 1789, whose intense violence and bloody terror shook Europe to its core. The aristocracy throughout Europe feared that revolution would spread to their own lands, and intellectuals feared that social order was crumbling.

The Industrial Revolution of the 19th century reinforced these concerns. Starting first in Europe and then in the United States, the Industrial Revolution led to many changes, including the rise and growth of cities as people left their farms to live near factories. As the cities grew, people lived in increasingly poor, crowded, and decrepit conditions. One result of these conditions was mass violence, as mobs of the poor roamed the streets of European and American cities. They attacked bystanders, destroyed property, and generally wreaked havoc. Here was additional evidence, if European intellectuals needed it, of the breakdown of social order.

In response, the intellectuals began to write that a strong society, as exemplified by strong social bonds and rules and effective socialization, was needed to prevent social order from disintegrating (Collins, 1994).Collins, R. (1994). *Four sociological traditions*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. In this regard, their view was similar to that of the 20th-century novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding (1954), Golding, W. (1954). *Lord of the flies*. London, England: Coward-McCann.which many college students read in high school. Some British boys are stranded on an island after a plane crash. No longer supervised by adults and no longer in a society as they once knew it, they are not sure how to proceed and come up with new rules for their behavior. These rules prove ineffective, and the boys slowly become savages, as the book calls them, and commit murder. However bleak, Golding's view echoes back to that of the conservative intellectuals writing in the aftermath of the French and Industrial Revolutions. Without a strong society and effective socialization, they warned, social order breaks down, and violence and other signs of social disorder result.

This general framework reached fruition in the writings of Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), a French scholar largely responsible for the sociological perspective as we now know it. Adopting the conservative intellectuals' view of the need for a strong society, Durkheim felt that human beings have desires that result in chaos unless society limits them. He wrote, "To achieve any other result, the passions first must be limited....But since the individual has no way of limiting them, this must be done by some force exterior to him" (Durkheim, 1897/1952, p. 274). Durkheim, E. (1952). *Suicide*. New York, NY: Free Press. (Original work published 1897) This force, Durkheim continued, is the moral authority of society.

How does society limit individual aspirations? Durkheim emphasized two related social mechanisms: socialization and social integration. Socialization helps us learn society's rules and the need to cooperate, as people end up generally agreeing on important norms and values, while social integration, or our ties to other people and to social institutions such as religion and the family, helps to socialize us and to integrate us into society and reinforce our respect for its rules. In general, Durkheim added, society comprises many types of social facts, or forces external to the individual, that affect and constrain individual attitudes

and behavior. The result is that socialization and social integration help establish a strong set of social rules—or, as Durkheim called it, a strong collective conscience—that is needed for a stable society. By so doing, society "creates a kind of cocoon around the individual, making him or her less individualistic, more a member of the group" (Collins, 1994, p. 181).Collins, R. (1994). *Four sociological traditions*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Weak rules or social ties weaken this "moral cocoon" and lead to social disorder. In all of these respects, says Randall Collins (1994, p. 181),Collins, R. (1994). *Four sociological traditions*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Durkheim's view represents the "core tradition" of sociology that lies at the heart of the sociological perspective.



Figure 1.10: Émile Durkheim was a founder of sociology and largely responsible for the sociological perspective as we now know it. Source: Photo courtesy of www.marxists.org/glossary/peo...s/durkheim.jpg.

Durkheim used suicide to illustrate how social disorder can result from a weakening of society's moral cocoon. Focusing on group rates of suicide, he felt they could not be explained simply in terms of individual unhappiness and instead resulted from external forces. One such force is anomie, or normlessness, which results from situations, such as periods of rapid social change, when social norms are weak and unclear or social ties are weak. When anomie sets in, people become more unclear about how to deal with problems in their life. Their aspirations, no longer limited by society's constraints, cannot be fulfilled. The frustration stemming from anomie leads some people to commit suicide (Durkheim, 1897/1952).Durkheim, E. (1952). *Suicide*. New York, NY: Free Press. (Original work published 1897)

To test his theory, Durkheim gathered suicide rate data and found that Protestants had higher suicide rates than Catholics. To explain this difference, he rejected the idea that Protestants were less happy than Catholics and instead reasoned that Catholic doctrine provides many more rules for behavior and thinking than does Protestant doctrine. Protestants' aspirations were thus less constrained than Catholics' desires. In times of trouble, Protestants also have fewer norms on which to rely for comfort and support than do Catholics. He also thought that Protestants' ties to each other were weaker than those among Catholics, providing Protestants fewer social support networks to turn to when troubled. In addition, Protestant belief is ambivalent about suicide, while Catholic doctrine condemns it. All of these properties of religious group membership combine to produce higher suicide rates among Protestants than among Catholics.

Today's functionalist perspective arises out of Durkheim's work and that of other conservative intellectuals of the 19th century. It uses the human body as a model for understanding society. In the human body, our various organs and other body parts serve important functions for the ongoing health and stability of our body. Our eyes help us see, our ears help us hear, our heart circulates our blood, and so forth. Just as we can understand the body by describing and understanding the functions that its parts serve for its health and stability, so can we understand society by describing and understanding the **functions that its "parts"—or, more accurately, its social institutions—serve for the ongoing health and stability of society. Thus functionalism emphasizes the importance of social institutions such as the family, religion, and education for producing a stable society.** We look at these institutions in later chapters.

Similar to the view of the conservative intellectuals from which it grew, functionalism is skeptical of rapid social change and other major social upheaval. The analogy to the human body helps us understand this skepticism. In our bodies, any sudden, rapid change is a sign of danger to our health. If we break a bone in one of our legs, we have trouble walking; if we lose sight in

both our eyes, we can no longer see. Slow changes, such as the growth of our hair and our nails, are fine and even normal, but sudden changes like those just described are obviously troublesome. By analogy, sudden and rapid changes in society and its social institutions are troublesome according to the functionalist perspective. If the human body evolved to its present form and functions because these made sense from an evolutionary perspective, so did society evolve to its present form and functions because these made sense. Any sudden change in society thus threatens its stability and future. By taking a skeptical approach to social change, functionalism supports the status quo and is thus often regarded as a conservative perspective.

Conflict Theory

In many ways, conflict theory is the opposite of functionalism but ironically also grew out of the Industrial Revolution, thanks largely to Karl Marx (1818–1883) and his collaborator, Friedrich Engels (1820–1895). Whereas conservative intellectuals feared the mass violence resulting from industrialization, Marx and Engels deplored the conditions they felt were responsible for the mass violence and the capitalist society they felt was responsible for these conditions. Instead of fearing the breakdown of social order that mass violence represented, they felt that revolutionary violence was needed to eliminate capitalism and the poverty and misery they saw as its inevitable result (Marx, 1867/1906; Marx & Engels, 1848/1962).Marx, K. 1906. *Capital*. New York, NY: Random House. (Original work published 1867); Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1962). The Communist Manifesto. In *Marx and Engels: Selected works* (pp. 21–65). Moscow, Russia: Foreign Language Publishing House. (Original work published 1848)

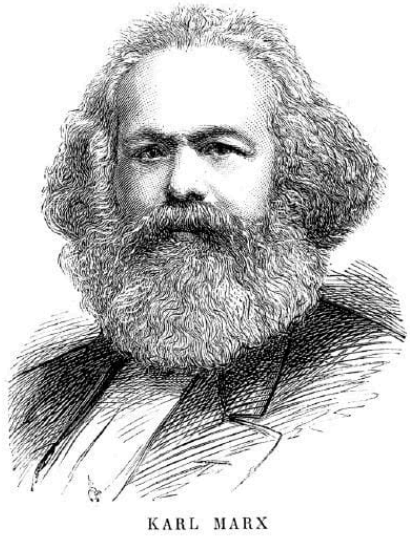


Figure 1.11: Karl Marx and his collaborator Friedrich Engels were intense critics of capitalism. Their work inspired the later development of conflict theory in sociology. © Thinkstock

According to Marx and Engels, every society is divided into two classes based on the ownership of the means of production (tools, factories, and the like). In a capitalist society, the bourgeoisie, or ruling class, owns the means of production, while the proletariat, or working class, does not own the means of production and instead is oppressed and exploited by the bourgeoisie. This difference creates automatic conflict of interests between the two groups. Simply put, the bourgeoisie is interested in maintaining its position at the top of society, while the proletariat's interest lies in rising up from the bottom and overthrowing the bourgeoisie to create an egalitarian society.

In a capitalist society, Marx and Engels wrote, revolution is inevitable because of structural contradictions arising from the very nature of capitalism. Because profit is the main goal of capitalism, the bourgeoisie's interest lies in maximizing profit. To do so, capitalists try to keep wages as low as possible and to spend as little money as possible on working conditions. This central fact of capitalism, said Marx and Engels, eventually prompts the rise among workers of class consciousness, or an awareness of the reasons for their oppression. Their class consciousness in turn leads them to revolt against the bourgeoisie to eliminate the oppression and exploitation they suffer.

Over the years, Marx and Engels's views on the nature of capitalism and class relations have greatly influenced social, political, and economic theory and also inspired revolutionaries in nations around the world. However, history has not supported their prediction that capitalism will inevitably result in a revolution of the proletariat. For example, no such revolution has occurred in the United States, where workers never developed the degree of class consciousness envisioned by Marx and Engels. Because

the United States is thought to be a free society where everyone has the opportunity to succeed, even poor Americans feel that the system is basically just. Thus various aspects of American society and ideology have helped minimize the development of class consciousness and prevent the revolution that Marx and Engels foresaw.

Despite this shortcoming, their basic view of conflict arising from unequal positions held by members of society lies at the heart of today's conflict theory. This theory emphasizes that different groups in society have different interests stemming from their different social positions. These different interests in turn lead to different views on important social issues. Some versions of the theory root conflict in divisions based on race and ethnicity, gender, and other such differences, while other versions follow Marx and Engels in seeing conflict arising out of different positions in the economic structure. In general, however, conflict theory emphasizes that the various parts of society contribute to ongoing inequality, whereas functionalist theory, as we have seen, stresses that they contribute to the ongoing stability of society. Thus, while functionalist theory emphasizes the benefits of the various parts of society for ongoing social stability, conflict theory favors social change to reduce inequality. In this regard, conflict theory may be considered a progressive perspective.

Feminist theory has developed in sociology and other disciplines since the 1970s and for our purposes will be considered a specific application of conflict theory. In this case, the conflict concerns gender inequality rather than the class inequality emphasized by Marx and Engels. Although many variations of feminist theory exist, they all emphasize that society is filled with gender inequality such that women are the subordinate sex in many dimensions of social, political, and economic life (Tong, 2009).Tong, R. (2009). *Feminist thought: A more comprehensive introduction*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Liberal feminists view gender inequality as arising out of gender differences in socialization, while Marxist feminists say that this inequality is a result of the rise of capitalism, which made women dependent on men for economic support. On the other hand, radical feminists view gender inequality as present in all societies, not just capitalist ones. Chapter 8 examines some of the arguments of feminist theory at great length.

Symbolic Interactionism

Whereas the functionalist and conflict perspectives are macro approaches, symbolic interactionism is a micro approach that **focuses on the interaction of individuals and on how they interpret their interaction.** Its roots lie in the work in the early 1900s of American sociologists, social psychologists, and philosophers who were interested in human consciousness and action. Herbert Blumer (1969),Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. a sociologist at the University of Chicago, built upon their writings to develop symbolic interactionism, a term he coined. This view remains popular today, in part because many sociologists object to what they perceive as the overly deterministic view of human thought and action and passive view of the individual inherent in the sociological perspective derived from Durkheim.

Drawing on Blumer's work, symbolic interactionists feel that people do not merely learn the roles that society has set out for them; **instead they construct these roles as they interact. As they interact, they "negotiate" their definitions of the situations in which they find themselves and socially construct the reality of these situations. In so doing, they rely heavily on symbols such as words and gestures to reach a shared understanding of their interaction.**

An example is the familiar symbol of shaking hands. In the United States and many other societies, shaking hands is a symbol of greeting and friendship. This simple act indicates that you are a nice, polite person with whom someone should feel comfortable. To reinforce this symbol's importance for understanding a bit of interaction, consider a situation where someone *refuses* to shake hands. This action is usually intended as a sign of dislike or as an insult, and the other person interprets it as such. Their understanding of the situation and subsequent interaction will be very different from those arising from the more typical shaking of hands.

Now let's say that someone does not shake hands, but this time the reason is that the person's right arm is broken. Because the other person realizes this, no snub or insult is inferred, and the two people can then proceed to have a comfortable encounter. Their definition of the situation depends not only on whether they shake hands but also, if they do not shake hands, on why they do not. As the term symbolic interactionism implies, their understanding of this encounter arises from what they do when they interact and their use and interpretation of the various symbols included in their interaction. According to symbolic interactionists, social order is possible because people learn what various symbols (such as shaking hands) mean and apply these meanings to different kinds of situations. If you visited a society where sticking your right hand out to greet someone was interpreted as a threatening gesture, you would quickly learn the value of common understandings of symbols.

Utilitarianism or Social Exchange Theory

Utilitarianism is a general view of human behavior that says people act to maximize their pleasure and to reduce their pain. It originated in the work of such 18th-century thinkers as the Italian economist Cesare Beccaria (1738–1794) and the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832). Both men thought that people act rationally and decide before they act whether their behavior will cause them more pleasure or pain. Applying their views to crime, they felt the criminal justice system in Europe at the time was far harsher than it needed to be to deter criminal behavior. Another 18th-century utilitarian thinker was Adam Smith, whose book *The Wealth of Nations* (1776/1910)Smith, A. (1910). *The wealth of nations*. London, England: J. M. Dent & Sons; New York, NY: E. P. Dutton. (Original work published 1776) laid the foundation for modern economic thought. Indeed, at the heart of economics is the view that sellers and buyers of goods and services act rationally to reduce their costs and in this and other ways to maximize their profits.

In sociology, utilitarianism is commonly called exchange theory or rational choice theory (Coleman, 1990; Homans, 1961).Coleman, J. S. (1990). *Foundations of social theory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Homans, G. (1961). *Social behavior: Its elementary forms*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. No matter what name it goes under, this view emphasizes that when people interact, **they seek to maximize the benefits they gain from the interaction and to reduce the disadvantages.** If they decide that the interaction's benefits outweigh its disadvantages, they will initiate the interaction or continue it if it is already under way. If they instead decide that the interaction's disadvantages outweigh its benefits, they will decline to begin interacting or stop the interaction if already begun. Social order is possible because people realize it will be in their best interests to cooperate and to make compromises when necessary.

A familiar application of exchange theory would be a dating relationship. Each partner in a dating relationship gives up a bit of autonomy in return for love and other benefits of being close to someone. Yet every relationship has its good and bad moments, and both partners make frequent compromises to ensure the relationship will endure. As long as the couple feels the good moments outweigh the bad moments, the relationship will continue. But once one or both partners decide the reverse is true, the relationship will end.

Comparing Macro and Micro Perspectives

This brief presentation of the four major theoretical perspectives in sociology is necessarily incomplete but should at least outline their basic points. Each perspective has its proponents, and each has its detractors. All four offer a lot of truth, and all four oversimplify and make other mistakes. We will return to them in many of the chapters ahead, but a brief critique is in order here.

A major problem with functionalist theory is that it tends to support the status quo and thus seems to favor existing inequalities based on race, social class, and gender. By emphasizing the contributions of social institutions such as the family and education to social stability, functionalist theory minimizes the ways in which these institutions contribute to social inequality.

Conflict theory's problems are the opposite of functionalist theory's. By emphasizing inequality and dissensus in society, conflict theory overlooks the large degree of consensus on many important issues. And by emphasizing the ways in which social institutions contribute to social inequality, conflict theory minimizes the ways in which these institutions are necessary for society's stability.

Neither of these two macro perspectives has very much to say about social interaction, one of the most important building blocks of society. In this regard, the two micro perspectives, symbolic interactionism and utilitarianism, offer significant advantages over their macro cousins. Yet their very micro focus leads them to pay relatively little attention to the reasons for, and possible solutions to, such broad and fundamentally important issues as poverty, racism, sexism, and social change, which are all addressed by functionalism and conflict theory. In this regard, the two macro perspectives offer significant advantages over their micro cousins. In addition, one of the micro perspectives, rational choice theory, has also been criticized for ignoring the importance of emotions, altruism, and other values for guiding human interaction (Lowenstein, 1996).Lowenstein, G. (1996). Out of control: Visceral influences on behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 65*, 272–292.



Figure 1.12: To explain armed robbery, symbolic interactionists focus on how armed robbers decide when and where to rob a victim and on how their interactions with other criminals reinforce their own criminal tendencies. © Thinkstock

These criticisms aside, all four perspectives taken together offer a more comprehensive understanding of social phenomena than any one perspective can offer alone. To illustrate this, let's return to our armed robbery example. A functionalist approach might suggest that armed robbery and other crimes actually serve positive functions for society. As one function, fear of crime ironically strengthens social bonds by uniting the law-abiding public against the criminal elements in society. As a second function, armed robbery and other crimes create many jobs for police officers, judges, lawyers, prison guards, the construction companies that build prisons, and the various businesses that provide products the public buys to help protect against crime.

Conflict theory would take a very different but no less helpful approach to understanding armed robbery. It might note that most street criminals are poor and thus emphasize that armed robbery and other crimes are the result of the despair and frustration of living in poverty and facing a lack of jobs and other opportunities for economic and social success. The roots of street crime, from the perspective of conflict theory, thus lie in society at least as much as they lie in the individuals committing such crime.

In explaining armed robbery, symbolic interactionism would focus on how armed robbers make such decisions as when and where to rob someone and on how their interactions with other criminals reinforce their own criminal tendencies. Exchange or rational choice theory would emphasize that armed robbers and other criminals are rational actors who carefully plan their crimes and who would be deterred by a strong threat of swift and severe punishment.

Now that you have some understanding of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology, we'll next see how sociologists go about testing these perspectives.

Conclusion

- Sociological theories may be broadly divided into macro approaches and micro approaches.
- Functionalism emphasizes the importance of social institutions for social stability and implies that far-reaching social change will be socially harmful.
- Conflict theory emphasizes social inequality and suggests that far-reaching social change is needed to achieve a just society.
- Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the social meanings and understandings that individuals derive from their social interaction.
- Utilitarianism emphasizes that people act in their self-interest by calculating whether potential behaviors will be more advantageous than disadvantageous.

For Your Review

1. In thinking about how you view society and individuals, do you consider yourself more of a macro thinker or a micro thinker?
2. At this point in your study of sociology, which one of the four sociological traditions sounds most appealing to you? Why?

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2.1.4: Doing Sociological Research

Learning Objectives

- Describe the different types of units of analysis in sociology.
- Explain the difference between an independent variable and a dependent variable.
- List the major advantages and disadvantages of surveys, observational studies, and experiments.
- Discuss an example of a sociological study that raised ethical issues.

Research is an essential component of the social, natural, and physical sciences. This section briefly describes the elements and types of sociological research.

Variables, Units of Analysis, and the Scientific Method

Earlier discussion in this chapter focused on examples involving voting preferences and suicide rates. Each of these involves a characteristic that varies from one person to another or from one region to another. For example, some people are taller or happier than others, some regions have higher suicide rates than other regions, and so forth. We call any characteristic that varies a variable. Sociological research aims to test relationships between variables or, more precisely, to test whether one variable affects another variable.

Suppose we are interested in knowing whether women were more likely than men to have voted for Biden in 2020. In this example, we have two variables. The first is gender, whether someone is a woman or a man. The second variable is whether someone voted for Biden or Trump. In this example, gender is the independent variable and voting preference is the dependent variable. An independent variable is a variable we think can affect another variable. This other variable is the dependent variable, or the variable we think is affected by the independent variable. When sociological research tests relationships between variables, it is testing whether an independent variable affects a dependent variable.

Sociology Making a Difference: Survey Research to Help the Poor

The Community Service Society (CSS) of New York City is a nonprofit organization that, according to its Web site (www.cssny.org), "engages in advocacy, research and direct service" to help low-income residents of the city. It was established about 160 years ago and has made many notable accomplishments over the years, including aiding the victims of the Titanic disaster in 1912, helping initiate the free school lunch program that is now found around the United States, and establishing the largest senior volunteer program in the nation.

A key component of CSS's efforts today involves gathering much information about the lives of poor New Yorkers through an annual survey of random samples of these residents. Because the needs of the poor are so often neglected and their voices so often unheard, CSS calls this effort the Unheard Third survey, as the poor represent about one-third of the New York City population. The individual in charge of the survey at the time of this writing was Jeremy Reiss, who has a BA in sociology from Wesleyan University in Connecticut and a master's degree in Social Policy and Planning from the London School of Economics. His interest in social research for social reform stems from his childhood. "Growing up, my parents worked as hard as they possibly could but we were never able to get ahead," Reiss wrote on the CSS Web site. "I realized from an early age that hard work does not translate into economic security. I strive to help find solutions to make sure that the United States—and New York City in particular—provides a strong social safety net for those who cannot work, and ensures that work provides economic security."

The Unheard Third survey that Reiss heads asks respondents their opinions about many issues affecting their lives and also asks them many questions about such matters as their health and health care needs, employment status and job satisfaction, debt, and housing. CSS then uses all this information in reports about the needs of the poor and near-poor in New York that it prepares for city and state officials, the news media, and key individuals in the private sector. In these ways, CSS uses

> survey research in the service of society. As its Web site (www.cssny.org/research) states, "research is a critical tool we use to increase our understanding of conditions that drive poverty as we advocate for public policy and programs that will improve the economic standing of low-income New Yorkers."

Sociological research is conducted at different levels, depending on the unit of analysis chosen. The most common unit of analysis in sociology is the *person*; this is probably the type of research with which you are most familiar. If we conduct a national poll to see how gender influences voting decisions or how race influences views on the state of the economy, we are studying characteristics, or variables, involving people, and the person is the unit of analysis. Another common unit of analysis in sociology is the *organization*. Suppose we conduct a study of hospitals to see whether the patient-to-nurse ratio (the number of patients divided by the number of nurses) is related to the average number of days that patients stay in the hospital. In this example, the patient-to-nurse ratio and the average number of days patients stay are both characteristics of the hospital, and the hospital is the unit of analysis. A third unit of analysis in sociology is the *geographical region*, whether it is cities, states, regions of a country, or whole societies. In the United States, for example, more large cities generally have higher violent crime rates than small cities. In this example, the city is the unit of analysis.

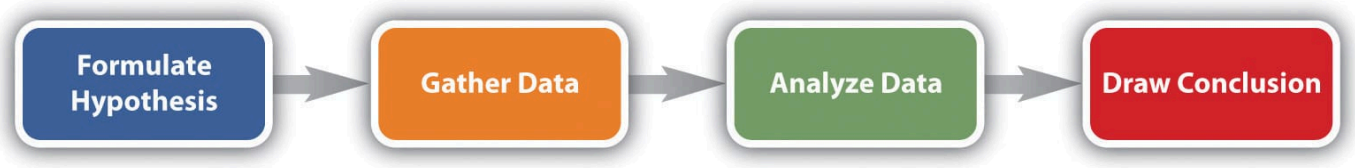


Figure 1.13 Essentials of the Scientific Method

No matter what unit of analysis sociologists use, they follow the scientific method in doing their research. To yield the most reliable conclusions possible, and especially ones that are free of bias or various kinds of methodological errors, the scientific method must be followed. As you probably learned in high school in your biology, chemistry, or physics class, the scientific method involves formulating a hypothesis, or a statement of the relationship between two variables; gathering the data to test the hypothesis; carrying out such a test; analyzing and writing up your results; and drawing appropriate conclusions. In following the scientific method, sociologists are no different from their colleagues in the natural and physical sciences or the other social sciences, even though their research is very different in other respects.

We now turn to the major methods that sociologists use to gather the information they analyze in their research. Table 1.2 summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

Table 1.2 Major Sociological Research Methods

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Survey	Many people can be included. If given to a random sample of the population, a survey's results can be generalized to the population.	Large surveys are expensive and time consuming. Although much information is gathered, this information is relatively superficial.
Experiments	If random assignment is used, experiments provide fairly convincing data on cause and effect.	Because experiments do not involve random samples of the population and most often involve college students, their results cannot readily be generalized to the population.
Observation (field research)	Observational studies may provide rich, detailed information about the people who are observed.	Because observation studies do not involve random samples of the population, their results cannot readily be generalized to the population.
Existing data	Because existing data have already been gathered, the researcher does not have to spend the time and money to gather data.	The data set that is being analyzed may not contain data on all the variables in which a sociologist is interested or may contain data on variables that are not measured in ways the sociologist prefers.

Types of Sociological Research

Surveys

The survey is the most common method by which sociologists gather their data. The Gallup Poll is perhaps the most well-known example of a survey and, like all surveys, gathers its data with the help of a questionnaire that is given to a group of respondents. The Gallup Poll is an example of a survey conducted by a private organization, but sociologists do their own surveys, as does the government and many organizations in addition to Gallup. Many surveys are administered to respondents who are randomly chosen and thus constitute a random sample. In a random sample, everyone in the population (whether it be the whole U.S. population or just the population of a state or city, all the college students in a state or city or all the students at just one college, and so forth) has the same chance of being included in the survey. The ways in which random samples are chosen are too complex to fully discuss here, but suffice it to say the methods used to determine who is in the sample are equivalent to flipping a coin or rolling some dice. The beauty of a random sample is that it allows us to generalize the results of the sample to the population from which the sample comes. This means that we can be fairly sure of the attitudes of the whole U.S. population by knowing the attitudes of just 400 people randomly chosen from that population.

The General Social Survey, described earlier, is an example of a face-to-face survey, in which interviewers meet with respondents to ask them questions. This type of survey can yield a lot of information, because interviewers typically will spend at least an hour asking their questions, and a high response rate (the percentage of all people in the sample who agree to be interviewed), which is important to be able to generalize the survey's results to the entire population. On the downside, this type of survey can be very expensive and time consuming to conduct.

Because of these drawbacks, sociologists and other researchers have turned to telephone surveys. Most Gallup Polls are conducted over the telephone. Computers do random-digit dialing, which results in a random sample of all telephone numbers being selected. Although the response rate and the number of questions asked are both lower than in face-to-face surveys (people can just hang up the phone at the outset or let their answering machine take the call), the ease and low expense of telephone surveys are making them increasingly popular.

Mailed surveys, done by mailing questionnaires to respondents, are still used, but not as often as before. Compared with face-to-face surveys, mailed questionnaires are less expensive and time consuming but have lower response rates, because many people simply throw out the questionnaire along with other junk mail. Whereas mailed surveys are becoming less popular, surveys done over the Internet are becoming more popular, as they can obviously reach many people at very low expense. A major problem with Web surveys is that their results cannot necessarily be generalized to the entire population, because not everyone has access to the Internet.

Learning From Other Societies: Social Research and Social Policy in Canada

In several nations beyond the United States, nonprofit organizations often use social science research, including sociological research, to develop and evaluate various social reform strategies and social policies. Canada is one of these nations. Information on Canadian social research organizations can be found at http://www.canadiansocialresearch.net/index.htm.

The Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy (CRISP) at the University of New Brunswick is one of these organizations. According to its Web site (http://www.unb.ca/crisp/index.php), CRISP is "dedicated to conducting policy research aimed at improving the education and care of Canadian children and youth...and supporting low-income countries in their efforts to build research capacity in child development." To do this, CRISP analyzes data from large data sets, such as the Canadian National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, and it also evaluates policy efforts at the local, national, and international levels.

A major concern of CRISP has been developmental problems in low-income children and teens. These problems are the focus of a CRISP project called Raising and Levelling the Bar: A Collaborative Research Initiative on Children's Learning, Behavioural, and Health Outcomes. This project at the time of this writing involved a team of five senior researchers and almost two dozen younger scholars. CRISP notes that Canada may have the most complete data on child development in the world but that much more research with these data needs to be performed to help inform public policy in the area of child development. CRISP's project aims to use these data to help achieve the following goals, as listed on its Web site: (a) safeguard the healthy development of infants, (b) strengthen early childhood education, (c) improve schools and local

communities, (d) reduce socioeconomic segregation and the effects of poverty, and (e) create a family-enabling society (http://www.unb.ca/crisp/rlb.html). This project has written many policy briefs, journal articles, and popular press articles to educate varied audiences about what the data on children's development suggest for child policy in Canada.

Experiments

Experiments are the primary form of research in the natural and physical sciences, but in the social sciences they are for the most part found only in psychology. Some sociologists still use experiments, however, and they remain a powerful tool of social research.

The major advantage of experiments, whether they are done in the natural and physical sciences or in the social sciences, is that the researcher can be fairly sure of a cause-and-effect relationship because of the way the experiment is set up. Although many different experimental designs exist, the typical experiment consists of an experimental group and a control group, with subjects *randomly assigned* to either group. The researcher "does something" to the experimental group that is not done to the control group. If the two groups differ later in some variable, then it is safe to say that the condition to which the experimental group was subjected was responsible for the difference that resulted.

Most experiments take place in the laboratory, which for psychologists may be a room with a one-way mirror, but some experiments occur in "the field," or in a natural setting. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the early 1980s, sociologists were involved in a much-discussed field experiment sponsored by the federal government. The researchers wanted to see whether arresting men for domestic violence made it less likely that they would commit such violence again. To test this hypothesis, the researchers had police do one of the following after arriving at the scene of a domestic dispute: they either arrested the suspect, separated him from his wife or partner for several hours, or warned him to stop but did not arrest or separate him. The researchers then determined the percentage of men in each group who committed repeated domestic violence during the next 6 months and found that those who were arrested had the lowest rate of recidivism, or repeat offending (Sherman & Berk, 1984).Sherman, L. W., & Berk, R. A. (1984). The specific deterrent effects of arrest for domestic assault. *American Sociological Review, 49*, 261–272. This finding led many jurisdictions across the United States to adopt a policy of mandatory arrest for domestic violence suspects. However, replications of the Minneapolis experiment in other cities found that arrest sometimes reduced recidivism for domestic violence but also sometimes increased it, depending on which city was being studied and on certain characteristics of the suspects, including whether they were employed at the time of their arrest (Sherman, 1992).Sherman, L W. (1992). *Policing domestic violence: Experiments and dilemmas*. New York, NY: Free Press.

As the Minneapolis study suggests, perhaps the most important problem with experiments is that their results are not generalizable beyond the specific subjects studied. The subjects in most psychology experiments, for example, are college students, who obviously are not typical of average Americans: they are younger, more educated, and more likely to be middle class. Despite this problem, experiments in psychology and other social sciences have given us very valuable insights into the sources of attitudes and behavior.

Observational Studies

Observational research, also called field research, is a staple of sociology. Sociologists have long gone into the field to observe people and social settings, and the result has been many rich descriptions and analyses of behavior in juvenile gangs, bars, urban street corners, and even whole communities.

Observational studies consist of both participant observation and nonparticipant observation. Their names describe how they differ. In participant observation, the researcher is part of the group that she or he is studying. The researcher thus spends time with the group and might even live with them. Several classical sociological studies of this type exist, many of them involving people in urban neighborhoods (Liebow, 1967, 1993; Whyte, 1943).Liebow, E. (1967). *Tally's corner*. Boston: Little, Brown; Liebow, E. (1993). *Tell them who I am: The lives of homeless women*. New York: Free Press; Whyte, W. F. (1943). *Street corner society: The social structure of an Italian slum*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Participant researchers must try not to let their presence influence the attitudes or behavior of the people they are observing. In nonparticipant observation, the researcher observes a group of people but does not otherwise interact with them. If you went to your local shopping mall to observe, say, whether people walking with children looked happier than people without children, you would be engaging in nonparticipant observation.

A classic example of field research is Kai T. Erikson's *Everything in Its Path* (1976),Erikson, K. T. (1976). *Everything in its path:*

Destruction of community in the Buffalo Creek flood. New York: Simon and Schuster. a study of the loss of community bonds in the aftermath of a flood in a West Virginia mining community, Buffalo Creek. The flood occurred when an artificial dam composed of mine waste gave way after days of torrential rain. The local mining company had allowed the dam to build up in violation of federal law. When it broke, 132 million gallons of water broke through and destroyed several thousand homes in seconds while killing 125 people. Some 2,500 other people were rendered instantly homeless. Erikson was called in by the lawyers representing the survivors to document the sociological effects of their loss of community, and the book he wrote remains a moving account of how the destruction of the Buffalo Creek way of life profoundly affected the daily lives of its residents.

Similar to experiments, observational studies cannot automatically be generalized to other settings or members of the population. But in many ways they provide a richer account of people's lives than surveys do, and they remain an important method of sociological research.

Existing Data

Sometimes sociologists do not gather their own data but instead analyze existing data that someone else has gathered. The U.S. Census Bureau, for example, gathers data on all kinds of areas relevant to the lives of Americans, and many sociologists analyze census data on such topics as poverty, employment, and illness. Sociologists interested in crime and the legal system may analyze data from court records, while medical sociologists often analyze data from patient records at hospitals. Analysis of existing data such as these is called secondary data analysis. Its advantage to sociologists is that someone else has already spent the time and money to gather the data. A disadvantage is that the data set being analyzed may not contain data on all the variables in which a sociologist may be interested or may contain data on variables that are not measured in ways the sociologist might prefer.

Ethical Issues in Sociological Research

Research involving human subjects must follow certain ethical standards to make sure the subjects are not harmed. Such harm can be quite severe in medical research unless certain precautions are taken. For example, in 1932 the U.S. Public Health Service began studying several hundred poor, illiterate African American men in Tuskegee, Alabama. The men had syphilis, for which no cure then existed, and were studied to determine its effects. After scientists found a decade later that penicillin could cure this disease, the government scientists decided not to give penicillin to the Tuskegee men because doing so would end their research. As a result, several of the men died from their disease, and some of their wives and children came down with it. The study did not end until the early 1970s, when the press finally disclosed the experiment. Several observers likened it to experiments conducted by Nazi scientists. If the subjects had been white and middle class, they said, the government would have ended the study once it learned that penicillin could cure syphilis (Jones, 1981).Jones, J. H. (1981). *Bad blood: The Tuskegee syphilis experiment*. New York: Free Press.

Fortunately, sociological research does not have this potential for harm, but it still must follow ethical standards. The federal government has an extensive set of standards for research on human subjects, and the major sociology professional society, the American Sociological Association, has a code of ethics for sociological research.

One of the most important ethical guidelines in sociological and other human subject research concerns privacy and confidentiality. When they do research, sociologists should protect the privacy and confidentiality of their subjects. When a survey is used, the data must be coded (prepared for computer analysis) anonymously, and in no way should it be possible for any answers to be connected with the respondent who gave them. In field research, anonymity must also be maintained, and aliases (fake names) should normally be used when the researcher reports what she or he has been observing.

Some sociologists consider the privacy and confidentiality of subjects so important that they have risked imprisonment when they have refused to violate confidentiality. In one example, a graduate student named Mario Brajuha had been doing participant observation as a restaurant waiter when the restaurant burned down. When the police suspected arson, they asked Brajuha to turn over his field notes. When Brajuha refused, he was threatened with imprisonment. Meanwhile, two suspects in the case also demanded his field notes for their legal defense, but again Brajuha refused. The controversy ended 2 years later when the suspects died and the prosecutor's office abandoned its effort to obtain the notes (Brajuha & Hallowell, 1986).Brajuha, M., & Hallowell, L. (1986). Legal intrusion and the politics of fieldwork: The impact of the Brajuha case. *Urban Life, 14,* 454–478.

In another case, a graduate student named Rik Scarce refused to turn over his field notes on radical environmentalists after one of the groups he was studying vandalized a university laboratory. Scarce was jailed for contempt of court when he refused to tell a grand jury what he had learned about the group and spent several months behind bars (Monaghan, 1993).Monaghan, P. (1993).

Sociologist is jailed for refusing to testify about research subject. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 39,* 10.

A third example aroused much discussion among sociologists when it came to light. Laud Humphreys studied male homosexual sex that took place in public bathrooms. He did so by acting as the lookout in several encounters where two men had sex; the men did not know Humphreys was a researcher. He also wrote down their license plates and obtained their addresses and a year later disguised himself and interviewed the men at their homes. Many sociologists and other observers later criticized Humphreys for acting so secretly and for violating his subjects' privacy. Humphreys responded that he protected the men's names and that their behavior was not private, as it was conducted in a public setting (Humphreys, 1975).Humphreys, L. (1975). *Teamroom trade: Impersonal sex in public places*. Chicago, IL: Aldine. As this example demonstrates, it is not always easy to decide whether a particular research project is ethically justifiable. Partly for this reason, colleges and universities have committees that review proposed human subject research to ensure that federal guidelines are followed.

Sociological Research in the Service of Society

Should the primary aim of sociological research be to help improve society, or should its primary aim be to discover social knowledge for its own sake? There is no right or wrong answer to this question. However, following in the spirit of the early American sociologists, this book hopes to show the relevance of sociological knowledge and insights, as derived from sound, objective research, for addressing many of the social issues facing American society and various nations around the world.

Although sociological research findings may be relevant for many social issues, this certainly does not guarantee that these findings will actually be marshaled to address these issues. For this to happen, elected officials and other policymakers must be open to the implications of research findings, and an informed public must make its desire for addressing these issues known. For many readers, the introduction to sociology course they are now taking might be the only sociology course they ever take; other readers will take more sociology courses and may even become a sociology major. Regardless of how many sociology courses you do take, and regardless of whether you become an elected official or policymaker or you remain a member of the informed public, this book hopes to help you think like a sociologist as social issues continue and emerge in the many years ahead.

Conclusion

- As a social science, sociology tests hypotheses involving independent and dependent variables reflecting various units of analysis.
- The major types of sociological research include surveys, experiments, observational studies, and the use of existing data.
- Potential ethical issues in sociological research are normally not as serious as those in medical research, but sociologists must still take care to proceed in an ethical manner in their research.
- Although sociologists differ on whether the primary aim of their research should be to improve social conditions, this aim harkens back to the roots of American sociology in efforts to achieve social reform.

For Your Review

1. Have you ever been a respondent or subject in any type of sociological or psychological research project? If so, how did it feel to be studied?
2. Which type of sociological research method sounds most interesting to you? Why?
3. This book emphasizes the use of sociological research to achieve social reform. Do you think this is an appropriate emphasis, or do you think sociological research should primarily be done for its own sake (i.e., to achieve social knowledge without regard to whether it has implications for social reform)? Explain your answer.

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2.1.S: 1.S- Sociology and the Sociological Perspective (Summary)

Summary

1. Although Americans enjoy much freedom of thought and action, society constrains their views and behaviors.
2. The sociological perspective emphasizes that our social backgrounds influence our attitudes, behaviors, and life chances. The chances of committing even an individual act such as suicide depend to some degree on the group backgrounds from which we come.
3. Because sociology deals in generalizations and not laws, people don't always behave and think in the patterns sociologists predict. For every sociological generalization, there are many exceptions.
4. Personal experience, common sense, and the media are all valuable sources of knowledge about various aspects of society, but they often present a limited or distorted view of these aspects.
5. A theme of sociology is the debunking motif. This means that sociological knowledge aims to look beyond on-the-surface understandings of social reality.
6. According to C. Wright Mills, the sociological imagination involves the ability to realize that personal troubles are rooted in problems in the larger social structure. The sociological imagination thus supports a blaming-the-system view over a blaming-the-victim view.
7. Theoretical perspectives in sociology generally divide into macro and micro views. Functionalism emphasizes the functions that social institutions serve to ensure the ongoing stability of society. Conflict theory focuses on the conflict among different racial, ethnic, social class, and other groups and emphasizes how social institutions help ensure inequality. Two micro perspectives, symbolic interactionism and utilitarianism or more commonly referred to as exchange theory, focus on interaction among individuals. Symbolic interactionism focuses on how individuals interpret the meanings of the situations in which they find themselves, while utilitarianism emphasizes that people are guided in their actions by a desire to maximize their benefits and to minimize their disadvantages.
8. Sociological research follows the scientific method. A major goal is to test hypotheses suggesting how an independent variable influences a dependent variable. Hypotheses can concern several units of analysis: the person, the organization, and the geographical region.
9. The major sources of information for sociological research are surveys, experiments, field research, and existing data. Surveys are the most common research method in sociology, but field research provides richer and more detailed information.
10. To be sure that an independent variable affects a dependent variable, we must be certain that the two variables are statistically related, that the independent variable precedes the dependent variable in time, and that the relationship between the two variables is not spurious.
11. Several ethical standards guide sociological research. Among the most important of these are the rights to privacy and confidentiality and to freedom from harm. Some sociologists have risked imprisonment to protect these rights.

USING SOCIOLOGY

Imagine that you are the mayor of a city of about 100,000 residents. Similar to many other cities, yours has a mixture of rich and poor neighborhoods. Because you and one of your key advisers were sociology majors in college, you both remember that the type of neighborhoods in which children grow up can influence many aspects of their development. Your adviser suggests that you seek a large federal grant to conduct a small field experiment to test the effects of neighborhoods in your city. In this experiment, 60 families from poor neighborhoods would be recruited to volunteer. Half of these families would be randomly selected to move to middle-class neighborhoods with their housing partially subsidized (the experimental group), and the other 30 families would remain where they are (the control group). A variety of data would then be gathered about the children in both groups of families over the next decade to determine whether living in middle-class neighborhoods improved the children's cognitive and social development.

You recognize the potential value of this experiment, but you also wonder whether it is entirely ethical, as it would be virtually impossible to maintain the anonymity of the families in the experimental group and perhaps even in the control group. You also worry about the political problems that might result if the people already in the middle-class neighborhoods object to the new families moving into their midst. Do you decide to apply for the federal grant? Why or why not?

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2.2: The Sociological Imagination

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2.3: Conflict Theory

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3: SCIENCE IN SOCIOLOGY

3.1: Chapter 16 Research Methods
3.2: Doing Sociological Research
3.3: The Stanford Prison Experiment
3.4: The Scientific Method- Steps, Examples, Tips, and Exercise

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3.1: Chapter 16 Research Methods

Ethics is defined by Webster's dictionary as conformance to the standards of conduct of a given profession or group. Such standards are often defined at a disciplinary level though a professional code of conduct, and sometimes enforced by university committees called even Institutional Review Board. Even if not explicitly specified, scientists are still expected to be aware of and abide by general agreements shared by the scientific community on what constitutes acceptable and non-acceptable behaviors in the professional conduct of science. For instance, scientists should not manipulate their data collection, analysis, and interpretation procedures in a way that contradicts the principles of science or the scientific method or advances their personal agenda.

Why is research ethics important? Because, science has often been manipulated in unethical ways by people and organizations to advance their private agenda and engaging in activities that are contrary to the norms of scientific conduct. A classic example is pharmaceutical giant Merck's drug trials of Vioxx, where the company hid the fatal side -effects of the drug from the scientific community, resulting in 3468 deaths of Vioxx recipients, mostly from cardiac arrest. In 2010, the company agreed to a $4.85 billion settlement and appointed two independent committees and a chief medical officer to monitor the safety of its drug development process. Merck's conduct was unethical and violation the scientific principles of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Ethics is the moral distinction between right and wrong, and what is unethical may not necessarily be illegal. If a scientist's conduct falls within the gray zone between ethics and law, she may not be culpable in the eyes of the law, but may still be ostracized in her professional community, face severe damage to professional reputation, and may even lose her job on grounds of professional misconduct. These ethical norms may vary from one society to another, and here, we refer to ethical standards as applied to scientific research in Western countries.

Ethical Principles in Scientific Research

Some of the expected tenets of ethical behavior that are widely accepted within the scientific community are as follows.

Voluntary participation and harmlessness. Subjects in a research project must be aware that their participation in the study is voluntary, that they have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any unfavorable consequences, and they are not harmed as a result of their participation or non-participation in the project. The most flagrant violations of the voluntary participation principle are probably forced medical experiments conducted by Nazi researchers on prisoners of war during World War II, as documented in the post-War Nuremberg Trials (these experiments also originated the term "crimes against humanity"). Less known violations include the Tuskegee syphilis experiments conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service during 1932 -1972, in which nearly 400 impoverished African-American men suffering from syphilis were denied treatment even after penicillin was accepted as an effective treatment of syphilis, and subjects were presented with false treatments such as spinal taps as cures for syphilis. Even if subjects face no mortal threat, they should not be subjected to personal agony as a result of their participation. In 1971, psychologist Philip Zambardo created the Stanford Prison Experiment, where Stanford students recruited as subjects were randomly assigned to roles such as prisoners or guards. When it became evident that student prisoners were suffering psychological damage as a result of their mock incarceration and student guards were exhibiting sadism that would later challenge their own self-image, the experiment was terminated.

Today, if an instructor asks her students to fill out a questionnaire and informs them that their participation is voluntary, students must not fear that their non-participation may hurt their grade in class in any way. For instance, it in unethical to provide bonus points for participation and no bonus points for non-participations, because it places non-participants at a distinct disadvantage. To avoid such circumstances, the instructor may possibly provide an alternate task for non-participants so that they can recoup the bonus points without participating in the research study, or by providing bonus points to everyone irrespective of their participation or non- participation. Furthermore, all participants must receive and sign an Informed Consent form that clearly describes their right to not participate and right to withdraw, before their responses in the study can be recorded. In a medical study, this form must also specify any possible risks to subjects from their participation. For subjects under the age of 18, this form must be signed by their parent or legal guardian. Researchers must retain these informed consent forms for a period of time (often three years) after the completion of the data collection process in order comply with the norms of scientific conduct in their discipline or workplace.

Anonymity and confidentiality. To protect subjects' interests and future well-being, their identity must be protected in a scientific

study. This is done using the dual principles of anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymity implies that the researcher or readers of the final research report or paper cannot identify a given response with a specific respondent. An example of anonymity in scientific research is a mail survey in which no identification numbers are used to track who is responding to the survey and who is not. In studies of deviant or undesirable behaviors, such as drug use or illegal music downloading by students, truthful responses may not be obtained if subjects are not assured of anonymity. Further, anonymity assures that subjects are insulated from law enforcement or other authorities who may have an interest in identifying and tracking such subjects in the future.

In some research designs such as face-to-face interviews, anonymity is not possible. In other designs, such as a longitudinal field survey, anonymity is not desirable because it prevents the researcher from matching responses from the same subject at different points in time for longitudinal analysis. Under such circumstances, subjects should be guaranteed confidentiality , in which the researcher can identify a person's responses, but promises not to divulge that person's identify in any report, paper, or public forum. Confidentiality is a weaker form of protection than anonymity, because social research data do not enjoy the "privileged communication" status in United State courts as do communication with priests or lawyers. For instance, two years after the Exxon Valdez supertanker spilled ten million barrels of crude oil near the port of Valdez in Alaska, the communities suffering economic and environmental damage commissioned a San Diego research firm to survey the affected households about personal and embarrassing details about increased psychological problems in their family. Because the cultural norms of many Native Americans made such public revelations particularly painful and difficult, respondents were assured confidentiality of their responses. When this evidence was presented to court, Exxon petitioned the court to subpoena the original survey questionnaires (with identifying information) in order to cross-examine respondents regarding their answers that they had given to interviewers under the protection of confidentiality, and was granted that request. Luckily, the Exxon Valdez case was settled before the victims were forced to testify in open court, but the potential for similar violations of confidentiality still remains.

In one extreme case, Rick Scarce, a graduate student at Washington State University, conducted participant observation studies of animal rights activists, and chronicled his findings in a 1990 book called Ecowarriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement . In 1993, Scarce was called before a grand jury to identify the activists he studied. The researcher refused to answer grand jury questions, in keeping with his ethical obligations as a member of the American Sociological Association, and was forced to spend 159 days at Spokane County Jail. To protect themselves from travails similar to Rik Scarce, researchers should remove any identifying information from documents and data files as soon as they are no longer necessary.

In 2002, the United States Department of Health and Human Services issued a "Certificate of Confidentiality" to protect participants in research project from police and other authorities.

Not all research projects qualify for this protection, but this can provide an important support for protecting participant confidentiality in many cases.

Disclosure. Usually, researchers have an obligation to provide some information about their study to potential subjects before data collection to help them decide whether or not they wish to participate in the study. For instance, who is conducting the study, for what purpose, what outcomes are expected, and who will benefit from the results. However, in some cases, disclosing such information may potentially bias subjects' responses. For instance, if the purpose of a study is to examine to what extent subjects will abandon their own views to conform with "groupthink" and they participate in an experiment where they listen to others' opinions on a topic before voicing their own, then disclosing the study's purpose before the experiment will likely sensitize subjects to the treatment. Under such circumstances, even if the study's purpose cannot be revealed before the study, it should be revealed in a debriefing session immediately following the data collection process, with a list of potential riska or harm borne by the participant during the experiment.

Analysis and reporting. Researchers also have ethical obligations to the scientific community on how data is analyzed and reported in their study. Unexpected or negative findings should be fully disclosed, even if they cast some doubt on the research design or the findings. Similarly, many interesting relationships are discovered after a study is completed, by chance or data mining. It is unethical to present such findings as the product of deliberate design. In other words, hypotheses should not be designed in positivist research after the fact based on the results of data analysis, because the role of data in such research is to test hypotheses, and not build them. It is also unethical to "carve" their data into different segments to prove or disprove their hypotheses of interest, or to generate multiple papers claiming different data sets. Misrepresenting questionable claims as valid based on partial, incomplete, or improper data analysis is also dishonest. Science progresses through openness and honesty, and researchers can best serve science and the scientific community by fully disclosing the problems with their research, so that they can save other researchers from similar problems.

Institutional Review Boards

Research ethics in studies involving human subjects is governed in the United States by federal law. Any agency, such as a university or a hospital, that wants to apply for federal funding to support its research projects must establish that it is in compliance with federal laws governing the rights and protection of human subjects. This process is overseen by a panel of experts in that agency called an Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB reviews all research proposal involving human subjects to ensure that the principles of voluntary participation, harmlessness, anonymity, confidentiality, and so forth are preserved, and that the risks posed to human subjects are minimal. Even though the federal laws apply specifically for federally funded projects, the same standards and procedures are also applied to non-funded or even student projects.

The IRB approval process require completing a structured application providing complete information about the research project, the researchers (principal investigators), and details on how the subjects' rights will be protected. Additional documentation such as the Informed Consent form, research questionnaire or interview protocol may be needed. The researchers must also demonstrate that they are familiar with the principles of ethical research by providing certification of their participation in an research ethics course. Data collection can commence only after the project is cleared by the IRB review committee.

Professional Code of Ethics

Most professional associations of researchers have established and published formal codes of conduct describing what constitute acceptable and unacceptable professional behavior of their member researchers. As an example, the summarized code of conduct for the Association of Information Systems (AIS), the global professional association of researchers in the information systems discipline, is summarized in Table 16.1 (the complete code of conduct is available online at http://home.aisnet.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=15). Similar codes of ethics are also available for other disciplines.

The AIS code of conduct groups ethical violations in two categories. Category I includes serious transgressions such as plagiarism and falsification of data, research procedures, or data analysis, which may lead to expulsion from the association, dismissal from employment, legal action, and fatal damage to professional reputation. Category 2 includes less serious transgression such as not respecting the rights of research subjects, misrepresenting the originality of research projects, and using data published by others without acknowledgement, which may lead to damage to professional reputation, sanctions from journals, and so forth. The code also provides guidance on good research behaviors, what to do when ethical transgressions are detected (for both the transgressor and the victim), and the process to be followed by AIS in dealing with ethical violation cases. Though codes of ethics such as this have not completely eliminated unethical behavior, they have certainly helped clarify the boundaries of ethical behavior in the scientific community and reduced instances of ethical transgressions.

CATEGORY ONE: Codes in this category must ALWAYS be adhered to and disregard for them constitutes a serious ethical breach. Serious breaches can result in your expulsion from academic associations, dismissal from your employment, legal action against you, and potentially fatal damage to your academic reputation.

1. CATEGORY TWO: Codes in this category are recommended ethical behavior. Flagrant disregard of these or other kinds of professional etiquette, while less serious, can result in damage to your reputation, editorial sanctions, professional embarrassment, legal action, and the ill will of your colleagues.
    3. ADVICE: Some suggestions on how to protect yourself from authorship disputes, mis-steps, mistakes, and even legal action.
        1. Table 16.1. Code of ethics for the Association of Information Systems

An Ethical Controversy

Robert Allen “Laud” Humphreys is an American sociologist and author, who is best known for his Ph.D. dissertation, Tearoom Trade , published in 1970. This book is an ethnographic account of anonymous male homosexual encounters in public toilets in parks – a practice known as “tea-rooming” in U.S. gay slang. Humphreys was intrigued by the fact that the majority of participants in tearoom activities were outwardly heterosexual men, who lived otherwise conventional family lives in their communities. However, it was important to them to preserve their anonymity during tearoom visits.

Typically, tearoom encounters involved three people – the two males engaging in a sexual act and a lookout person called a “watchqueen.” The job of the watchqueen was to alert the two participating males for police or other people, while deriving pleasure from watching the action as a voyeur. Because it was not otherwise possible to reach these subjects, Humphreys showed up at public toilets, masquerading as a watchqueen. As a participant observer, Humphreys was able to conduct field observations for his dissertation, as he normally would in a study of political protests or any other sociological phenomenon.

Humphreys needed more information on the participants. But because participants were unwilling to be interviewed in the field or disclose personal identities, Humphreys wrote down the license plate numbers of the participants’ cars, wherever possible, and tracked down their names and addresses from public databases. Then he visited these men at their homes, disguising himself to avoid recognition and announcing that he was conducting a survey, and collected personal data that was not otherwise available.

Humphreys’ research generated considerable controversy within the scientific community. Many critics said that he should not have invaded others’ right to privacy in the name of science, others were worried about his deceitful behavior in leading participants to believe that he was only a watchqueen, when he clearly had ulterior motives. Even those who considered observing tearoom activity to be acceptable because the participants used public facilities, thought that the follow-up interview survey in participants’ homes under false pretenses was unethical, because of the way he obtained their home addresses and because he did not seek informed consent. A few researchers justified Humphrey’s approach saying that this was an important sociological phenomenon worth investigating, that there was no other way to collect this data, and that the deceit was harmless, since Humphreys did not disclose his subjects’ identities to anyone. This controversy was never resolved, and it is still hotly debated in classes and forums on research ethics.

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3.2: Doing Sociological Research

Learning Objectives

- Describe the different types of units of analysis in sociology.
- Explain the difference between an independent variable and a dependent variable.
- List the major advantages and disadvantages of surveys, observational studies, and experiments.
- Discuss an example of a sociological study that raised ethical issues.

Research is an essential component of the social, natural, and physical sciences. This section briefly describes the elements and types of sociological research.

Variables, Units of Analysis, and the Scientific Method

Earlier discussion in this chapter focused on examples involving voting preferences and suicide rates. Each of these involves a characteristic that varies from one person to another or from one region to another. For example, some people are taller or happier than others, some regions have higher suicide rates than other regions, and so forth. We call any characteristic that varies a variable. Sociological research aims to test relationships between variables or, more precisely, to test whether one variable affects another variable.

Suppose we are interested in knowing whether women were more likely than men to have voted for Biden in 2020. In this example, we have two variables. The first is gender, whether someone is a woman or a man. The second variable is whether someone voted for Biden or Trump. In this example, gender is the independent variable and voting preference is the dependent variable. An independent variable is a variable we think can affect another variable. This other variable is the dependent variable, or the variable we think is affected by the independent variable. When sociological research tests relationships between variables, it is testing whether an independent variable affects a dependent variable.

Sociology Making a Difference: Survey Research to Help the Poor

The Community Service Society (CSS) of New York City is a nonprofit organization that, according to its Web site (www.cssny.org), "engages in advocacy, research and direct service" to help low-income residents of the city. It was established about 160 years ago and has made many notable accomplishments over the years, including aiding the victims of the Titanic disaster in 1912, helping initiate the free school lunch program that is now found around the United States, and establishing the largest senior volunteer program in the nation.

A key component of CSS's efforts today involves gathering much information about the lives of poor New Yorkers through an annual survey of random samples of these residents. Because the needs of the poor are so often neglected and their voices so often unheard, CSS calls this effort the Unheard Third survey, as the poor represent about one-third of the New York City population. The individual in charge of the survey at the time of this writing was Jeremy Reiss, who has a BA in sociology from Wesleyan University in Connecticut and a master's degree in Social Policy and Planning from the London School of Economics. His interest in social research for social reform stems from his childhood. "Growing up, my parents worked as hard as they possibly could but we were never able to get ahead," Reiss wrote on the CSS Web site. "I realized from an early age that hard work does not translate into economic security. I strive to help find solutions to make sure that the United States—and New York City in particular—provides a strong social safety net for those who cannot work, and ensures that work provides economic security."

The Unheard Third survey that Reiss heads asks respondents their opinions about many issues affecting their lives and also asks them many questions about such matters as their health and health care needs, employment status and job satisfaction, debt, and housing. CSS then uses all this information in reports about the needs of the poor and near-poor in New York that it prepares for city and state officials, the news media, and key individuals in the private sector. In these ways, CSS uses

> survey research in the service of society. As its Web site (www.cssny.org/research) states, "research is a critical tool we use to increase our understanding of conditions that drive poverty as we advocate for public policy and programs that will improve the economic standing of low-income New Yorkers."

Sociological research is conducted at different levels, depending on the unit of analysis chosen. The most common unit of analysis in sociology is the *person*; this is probably the type of research with which you are most familiar. If we conduct a national poll to see how gender influences voting decisions or how race influences views on the state of the economy, we are studying characteristics, or variables, involving people, and the person is the unit of analysis. Another common unit of analysis in sociology is the *organization*. Suppose we conduct a study of hospitals to see whether the patient-to-nurse ratio (the number of patients divided by the number of nurses) is related to the average number of days that patients stay in the hospital. In this example, the patient-to-nurse ratio and the average number of days patients stay are both characteristics of the hospital, and the hospital is the unit of analysis. A third unit of analysis in sociology is the *geographical region*, whether it is cities, states, regions of a country, or whole societies. In the United States, for example, more large cities generally have higher violent crime rates than small cities. In this example, the city is the unit of analysis.

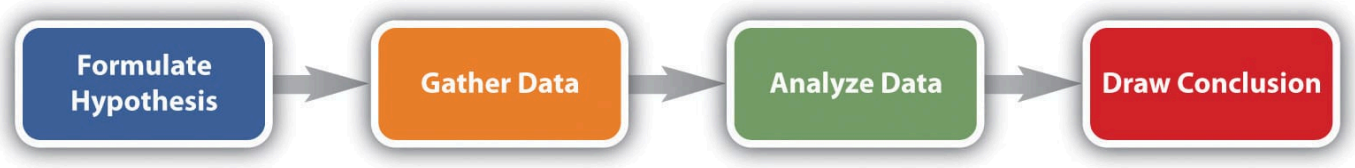


Figure 1.13 Essentials of the Scientific Method

No matter what unit of analysis sociologists use, they follow the scientific method in doing their research. To yield the most reliable conclusions possible, and especially ones that are free of bias or various kinds of methodological errors, the scientific method must be followed. As you probably learned in high school in your biology, chemistry, or physics class, the scientific method involves formulating a hypothesis, or a statement of the relationship between two variables; gathering the data to test the hypothesis; carrying out such a test; analyzing and writing up your results; and drawing appropriate conclusions. In following the scientific method, sociologists are no different from their colleagues in the natural and physical sciences or the other social sciences, even though their research is very different in other respects.

We now turn to the major methods that sociologists use to gather the information they analyze in their research. Table 1.2 summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of each method.

Table 1.2 Major Sociological Research Methods

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Survey	Many people can be included. If given to a random sample of the population, a survey's results can be generalized to the population.	Large surveys are expensive and time consuming. Although much information is gathered, this information is relatively superficial.
Experiments	If random assignment is used, experiments provide fairly convincing data on cause and effect.	Because experiments do not involve random samples of the population and most often involve college students, their results cannot readily be generalized to the population.
Observation (field research)	Observational studies may provide rich, detailed information about the people who are observed.	Because observation studies do not involve random samples of the population, their results cannot readily be generalized to the population.
Existing data	Because existing data have already been gathered, the researcher does not have to spend the time and money to gather data.	The data set that is being analyzed may not contain data on all the variables in which a sociologist is interested or may contain data on variables that are not measured in ways the sociologist prefers.

Types of Sociological Research

Surveys

The survey is the most common method by which sociologists gather their data. The Gallup Poll is perhaps the most well-known example of a survey and, like all surveys, gathers its data with the help of a questionnaire that is given to a group of respondents. The Gallup Poll is an example of a survey conducted by a private organization, but sociologists do their own surveys, as does the government and many organizations in addition to Gallup. Many surveys are administered to respondents who are randomly chosen and thus constitute a random sample. In a random sample, everyone in the population (whether it be the whole U.S. population or just the population of a state or city, all the college students in a state or city or all the students at just one college, and so forth) has the same chance of being included in the survey. The ways in which random samples are chosen are too complex to fully discuss here, but suffice it to say the methods used to determine who is in the sample are equivalent to flipping a coin or rolling some dice. The beauty of a random sample is that it allows us to generalize the results of the sample to the population from which the sample comes. This means that we can be fairly sure of the attitudes of the whole U.S. population by knowing the attitudes of just 400 people randomly chosen from that population.

The General Social Survey, described earlier, is an example of a face-to-face survey, in which interviewers meet with respondents to ask them questions. This type of survey can yield a lot of information, because interviewers typically will spend at least an hour asking their questions, and a high response rate (the percentage of all people in the sample who agree to be interviewed), which is important to be able to generalize the survey's results to the entire population. On the downside, this type of survey can be very expensive and time consuming to conduct.

Because of these drawbacks, sociologists and other researchers have turned to telephone surveys. Most Gallup Polls are conducted over the telephone. Computers do random-digit dialing, which results in a random sample of all telephone numbers being selected. Although the response rate and the number of questions asked are both lower than in face-to-face surveys (people can just hang up the phone at the outset or let their answering machine take the call), the ease and low expense of telephone surveys are making them increasingly popular.

Mailed surveys, done by mailing questionnaires to respondents, are still used, but not as often as before. Compared with face-to-face surveys, mailed questionnaires are less expensive and time consuming but have lower response rates, because many people simply throw out the questionnaire along with other junk mail. Whereas mailed surveys are becoming less popular, surveys done over the Internet are becoming more popular, as they can obviously reach many people at very low expense. A major problem with Web surveys is that their results cannot necessarily be generalized to the entire population, because not everyone has access to the Internet.

Learning From Other Societies: Social Research and Social Policy in Canada

In several nations beyond the United States, nonprofit organizations often use social science research, including sociological research, to develop and evaluate various social reform strategies and social policies. Canada is one of these nations. Information on Canadian social research organizations can be found at http://www.canadiansocialresearch.net/index.htm.

The Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy (CRISP) at the University of New Brunswick is one of these organizations. According to its Web site (http://www.unb.ca/crisp/index.php), CRISP is "dedicated to conducting policy research aimed at improving the education and care of Canadian children and youth...and supporting low-income countries in their efforts to build research capacity in child development." To do this, CRISP analyzes data from large data sets, such as the Canadian National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, and it also evaluates policy efforts at the local, national, and international levels.

A major concern of CRISP has been developmental problems in low-income children and teens. These problems are the focus of a CRISP project called Raising and Levelling the Bar: A Collaborative Research Initiative on Children's Learning, Behavioural, and Health Outcomes. This project at the time of this writing involved a team of five senior researchers and almost two dozen younger scholars. CRISP notes that Canada may have the most complete data on child development in the world but that much more research with these data needs to be performed to help inform public policy in the area of child development. CRISP's project aims to use these data to help achieve the following goals, as listed on its Web site: (a) safeguard the healthy development of infants, (b) strengthen early childhood education, (c) improve schools and local

communities, (d) reduce socioeconomic segregation and the effects of poverty, and (e) create a family-enabling society (http://www.unb.ca/crisp/rlb.html). This project has written many policy briefs, journal articles, and popular press articles to educate varied audiences about what the data on children's development suggest for child policy in Canada.

Experiments

Experiments are the primary form of research in the natural and physical sciences, but in the social sciences they are for the most part found only in psychology. Some sociologists still use experiments, however, and they remain a powerful tool of social research.

The major advantage of experiments, whether they are done in the natural and physical sciences or in the social sciences, is that the researcher can be fairly sure of a cause-and-effect relationship because of the way the experiment is set up. Although many different experimental designs exist, the typical experiment consists of an experimental group and a control group, with subjects *randomly assigned* to either group. The researcher "does something" to the experimental group that is not done to the control group. If the two groups differ later in some variable, then it is safe to say that the condition to which the experimental group was subjected was responsible for the difference that resulted.

Most experiments take place in the laboratory, which for psychologists may be a room with a one-way mirror, but some experiments occur in "the field," or in a natural setting. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the early 1980s, sociologists were involved in a much-discussed field experiment sponsored by the federal government. The researchers wanted to see whether arresting men for domestic violence made it less likely that they would commit such violence again. To test this hypothesis, the researchers had police do one of the following after arriving at the scene of a domestic dispute: they either arrested the suspect, separated him from his wife or partner for several hours, or warned him to stop but did not arrest or separate him. The researchers then determined the percentage of men in each group who committed repeated domestic violence during the next 6 months and found that those who were arrested had the lowest rate of recidivism, or repeat offending (Sherman & Berk, 1984).Sherman, L. W., & Berk, R. A. (1984). The specific deterrent effects of arrest for domestic assault. *American Sociological Review, 49*, 261–272. This finding led many jurisdictions across the United States to adopt a policy of mandatory arrest for domestic violence suspects. However, replications of the Minneapolis experiment in other cities found that arrest sometimes reduced recidivism for domestic violence but also sometimes increased it, depending on which city was being studied and on certain characteristics of the suspects, including whether they were employed at the time of their arrest (Sherman, 1992).Sherman, L W. (1992). *Policing domestic violence: Experiments and dilemmas*. New York, NY: Free Press.

As the Minneapolis study suggests, perhaps the most important problem with experiments is that their results are not generalizable beyond the specific subjects studied. The subjects in most psychology experiments, for example, are college students, who obviously are not typical of average Americans: they are younger, more educated, and more likely to be middle class. Despite this problem, experiments in psychology and other social sciences have given us very valuable insights into the sources of attitudes and behavior.

Observational Studies

Observational research, also called field research, is a staple of sociology. Sociologists have long gone into the field to observe people and social settings, and the result has been many rich descriptions and analyses of behavior in juvenile gangs, bars, urban street corners, and even whole communities.

Observational studies consist of both participant observation and nonparticipant observation. Their names describe how they differ. In participant observation, the researcher is part of the group that she or he is studying. The researcher thus spends time with the group and might even live with them. Several classical sociological studies of this type exist, many of them involving people in urban neighborhoods (Liebow, 1967, 1993; Whyte, 1943).Liebow, E. (1967). *Tally's corner*. Boston: Little, Brown; Liebow, E. (1993). *Tell them who I am: The lives of homeless women*. New York: Free Press; Whyte, W. F. (1943). *Street corner society: The social structure of an Italian slum*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Participant researchers must try not to let their presence influence the attitudes or behavior of the people they are observing. In nonparticipant observation, the researcher observes a group of people but does not otherwise interact with them. If you went to your local shopping mall to observe, say, whether people walking with children looked happier than people without children, you would be engaging in nonparticipant observation.

A classic example of field research is Kai T. Erikson's *Everything in Its Path* (1976),Erikson, K. T. (1976). *Everything in its path:*

Destruction of community in the Buffalo Creek flood. New York: Simon and Schuster. a study of the loss of community bonds in the aftermath of a flood in a West Virginia mining community, Buffalo Creek. The flood occurred when an artificial dam composed of mine waste gave way after days of torrential rain. The local mining company had allowed the dam to build up in violation of federal law. When it broke, 132 million gallons of water broke through and destroyed several thousand homes in seconds while killing 125 people. Some 2,500 other people were rendered instantly homeless. Erikson was called in by the lawyers representing the survivors to document the sociological effects of their loss of community, and the book he wrote remains a moving account of how the destruction of the Buffalo Creek way of life profoundly affected the daily lives of its residents.

Similar to experiments, observational studies cannot automatically be generalized to other settings or members of the population. But in many ways they provide a richer account of people's lives than surveys do, and they remain an important method of sociological research.

Existing Data

Sometimes sociologists do not gather their own data but instead analyze existing data that someone else has gathered. The U.S. Census Bureau, for example, gathers data on all kinds of areas relevant to the lives of Americans, and many sociologists analyze census data on such topics as poverty, employment, and illness. Sociologists interested in crime and the legal system may analyze data from court records, while medical sociologists often analyze data from patient records at hospitals. Analysis of existing data such as these is called secondary data analysis. Its advantage to sociologists is that someone else has already spent the time and money to gather the data. A disadvantage is that the data set being analyzed may not contain data on all the variables in which a sociologist may be interested or may contain data on variables that are not measured in ways the sociologist might prefer.

Ethical Issues in Sociological Research

Research involving human subjects must follow certain ethical standards to make sure the subjects are not harmed. Such harm can be quite severe in medical research unless certain precautions are taken. For example, in 1932 the U.S. Public Health Service began studying several hundred poor, illiterate African American men in Tuskegee, Alabama. The men had syphilis, for which no cure then existed, and were studied to determine its effects. After scientists found a decade later that penicillin could cure this disease, the government scientists decided not to give penicillin to the Tuskegee men because doing so would end their research. As a result, several of the men died from their disease, and some of their wives and children came down with it. The study did not end until the early 1970s, when the press finally disclosed the experiment. Several observers likened it to experiments conducted by Nazi scientists. If the subjects had been white and middle class, they said, the government would have ended the study once it learned that penicillin could cure syphilis (Jones, 1981).Jones, J. H. (1981). *Bad blood: The Tuskegee syphilis experiment*. New York: Free Press.

Fortunately, sociological research does not have this potential for harm, but it still must follow ethical standards. The federal government has an extensive set of standards for research on human subjects, and the major sociology professional society, the American Sociological Association, has a code of ethics for sociological research.

One of the most important ethical guidelines in sociological and other human subject research concerns privacy and confidentiality. When they do research, sociologists should protect the privacy and confidentiality of their subjects. When a survey is used, the data must be coded (prepared for computer analysis) anonymously, and in no way should it be possible for any answers to be connected with the respondent who gave them. In field research, anonymity must also be maintained, and aliases (fake names) should normally be used when the researcher reports what she or he has been observing.

Some sociologists consider the privacy and confidentiality of subjects so important that they have risked imprisonment when they have refused to violate confidentiality. In one example, a graduate student named Mario Brajuha had been doing participant observation as a restaurant waiter when the restaurant burned down. When the police suspected arson, they asked Brajuha to turn over his field notes. When Brajuha refused, he was threatened with imprisonment. Meanwhile, two suspects in the case also demanded his field notes for their legal defense, but again Brajuha refused. The controversy ended 2 years later when the suspects died and the prosecutor's office abandoned its effort to obtain the notes (Brajuha & Hallowell, 1986).Brajuha, M., & Hallowell, L. (1986). Legal intrusion and the politics of fieldwork: The impact of the Brajuha case. *Urban Life, 14,* 454–478.

In another case, a graduate student named Rik Scarce refused to turn over his field notes on radical environmentalists after one of the groups he was studying vandalized a university laboratory. Scarce was jailed for contempt of court when he refused to tell a grand jury what he had learned about the group and spent several months behind bars (Monaghan, 1993).Monaghan, P. (1993).

Sociologist is jailed for refusing to testify about research subject. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 39,* 10.

A third example aroused much discussion among sociologists when it came to light. Laud Humphreys studied male homosexual sex that took place in public bathrooms. He did so by acting as the lookout in several encounters where two men had sex; the men did not know Humphreys was a researcher. He also wrote down their license plates and obtained their addresses and a year later disguised himself and interviewed the men at their homes. Many sociologists and other observers later criticized Humphreys for acting so secretly and for violating his subjects' privacy. Humphreys responded that he protected the men's names and that their behavior was not private, as it was conducted in a public setting (Humphreys, 1975).Humphreys, L. (1975). *Teamroom trade: Impersonal sex in public places*. Chicago, IL: Aldine. As this example demonstrates, it is not always easy to decide whether a particular research project is ethically justifiable. Partly for this reason, colleges and universities have committees that review proposed human subject research to ensure that federal guidelines are followed.

Sociological Research in the Service of Society

Should the primary aim of sociological research be to help improve society, or should its primary aim be to discover social knowledge for its own sake? There is no right or wrong answer to this question. However, following in the spirit of the early American sociologists, this book hopes to show the relevance of sociological knowledge and insights, as derived from sound, objective research, for addressing many of the social issues facing American society and various nations around the world.

Although sociological research findings may be relevant for many social issues, this certainly does not guarantee that these findings will actually be marshaled to address these issues. For this to happen, elected officials and other policymakers must be open to the implications of research findings, and an informed public must make its desire for addressing these issues known. For many readers, the introduction to sociology course they are now taking might be the only sociology course they ever take; other readers will take more sociology courses and may even become a sociology major. Regardless of how many sociology courses you do take, and regardless of whether you become an elected official or policymaker or you remain a member of the informed public, this book hopes to help you think like a sociologist as social issues continue and emerge in the many years ahead.

Conclusion

- As a social science, sociology tests hypotheses involving independent and dependent variables reflecting various units of analysis.
- The major types of sociological research include surveys, experiments, observational studies, and the use of existing data.
- Potential ethical issues in sociological research are normally not as serious as those in medical research, but sociologists must still take care to proceed in an ethical manner in their research.
- Although sociologists differ on whether the primary aim of their research should be to improve social conditions, this aim harkens back to the roots of American sociology in efforts to achieve social reform.

For Your Review

1. Have you ever been a respondent or subject in any type of sociological or psychological research project? If so, how did it feel to be studied?
2. Which type of sociological research method sounds most interesting to you? Why?
3. This book emphasizes the use of sociological research to achieve social reform. Do you think this is an appropriate emphasis, or do you think sociological research should primarily be done for its own sake (i.e., to achieve social knowledge without regard to whether it has implications for social reform)? Explain your answer.

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4: CULTURE AND SOCIETY

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4.1: CULTURE

Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. Culture is the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people.

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4.1.1: Introduction



Figure 3.1: Martial arts has a strong tradition of deep respect for one's opponent, as these judo competitors display after a match. Even in other styles and other venues such as professional boxing or mixed martial arts, it is common to see opponents showing extreme courtesy and concern for each other despite the level of vitriol before a fight or the violence during it. While certainly echoed in other competitive arenas, this practice is a significant part of combat sports culture. (Credit: Special Olympics Nationale/flickr)

Chapter Outline

3.1 What Is Culture?
3.2 Elements of Culture
3.3 High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change
3.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

If you passed someone in a hallway, joined a video conference, or even called into a radio show, it's likely you and the other people involved would exchange some version of the following question : "How are you?" One of you may ask the other. You may exchange a greeting and the question or one of its variants. Generally, we do not consider our responses to these acquaintances as rules. We simply say, "Hello!" and ask, "How was your weekend?" or some other trivial question meant to be a friendly greeting.

We all adhere to various rules, expectations, and standards that are created and maintained in our specific culture. These rules and expectations have meaning, and there are many ways by which the meanings can be misinterpreted or misunderstood. When we do not meet those expectations, we may receive some form of disapproval such as a look or comment informing us that we did something unacceptable.

Consider what would happen if you stopped and informed everyone who asked "Hi, how are you?" exactly how you were doing that day, and in detail. In U.S. society, you would violate norms of 'greeting.' Perhaps if you were in a different situation, such as having coffee with a good friend, that question might warrant a detailed response.

These examples are all aspects of culture, which is comprised of shared *values* (ideals), *beliefs* which strengthen the values, *norms* and *rules* that maintain the values, *language* so that the values can be taught, *symbols* that form the language people must learn, *arts* and *artifacts,* and the people's collective *identities* and *memories*. Sociologically, we examine in which situation and context a certain behavior is expected and in which it is not. People who interact within a shared culture create and enforce these expectations. Sociologists examine these circumstances and search for patterns.

In everyday conversation, people in the U.S. rarely distinguish between the terms culture and society, but the terms have different meanings, and the distinction is important to a sociologist. A culture represents the values, beliefs, norms, language, symbols, and practices of a group, while society represents the people who share a culture. Neither society or culture could exist without the other.

Within the U.S., many groups of people share a community and a culture. By “community,” sociologists refer to a definable region of a society, real *terra firma*—as small as a neighborhood (Brooklyn, or “the east side of town”), as large as a country (Ethiopia, Nepal or the U.S.), or somewhere in between (in the U.S., this might include someone who identifies with Southern or Midwestern society).

In this chapter, we examine the relationship between culture and society in greater detail and pay special attention to the elements and forces that shape culture, including diversity and social changes. A final discussion examines the theoretical perspectives from which sociologists research culture.

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4.1.2: What Is Culture?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate between culture and society
- Explain material versus nonmaterial culture
- Discuss the concept of cultural universals as it relates to society
- Compare and contrast ethnocentrism and xenocentrism

Humans are social creatures. According to Smithsonian Institution research, humans have been forming groups for almost 3 million years in order to survive. Living together, people formed common habits and behaviors, from specific methods of childrearing to preferred techniques for obtaining food.

Almost every human behavior, from shopping to marriage, is learned. In the U.S., marriage is generally seen as an individual choice made by two adults, based on mutual feelings of love. In other nations and in other times, marriages have been arranged through an intricate process of interviews and negotiations between entire families. In Papua New Guinea, almost 30 percent of women marry before the age of 18, and 8 percent of men have more than one wife (National Statistical Office, 2019). To people who are not from such a culture, arranged marriages may seem to have risks of incompatibility or the absence of romantic love. But many people from cultures where marriages are arranged, which includes a number of highly populated and modern countries, often prefer the approach because it reduces stress and increases stability (Jankowiak 2021).

Being familiar with unwritten rules helps people feel secure and at ease. Knowing to look left instead of right for oncoming traffic while crossing the street can help avoid serious injury and even death. Knowing unwritten rules is also fundamental in understanding humor in different cultures. Humor is common to all societies, but what makes something funny is not. Americans may laugh at a scene in which an actor falls; in other cultures, falling is never funny. Most people want to live their daily lives confident that their behaviors will not be challenged or disrupted. But even an action as seemingly simple as commuting to work evidences a great deal of cultural propriety, that is, there are a lot of expected behaviors. And many interpretations of them.



Figure 3.2: How would a visitor from a rural region act and feel on this crowded Hong Kong train? (Credit: Eric Chan/flickr)

Take the case of going to work on public transportation. Whether people are commuting in Egypt, Ireland, India, Japan, and the U.S., many behaviors will be the same and may reveal patterns. Others will be different. In many societies that enjoy public transportation, a passenger will find a marked bus stop or station, wait for the bus or train, pay an agent before or after boarding, and quietly take a seat if one is available. But when boarding a bus in Cairo, Egypt, passengers might board while the bus is

moving, because buses often do not come to a full stop to take on patrons. In Dublin, Ireland, bus riders would be expected to extend an arm to indicate that they want the bus to stop for them. And when boarding a commuter train in Mumbai, India, passengers must squeeze into overstuffed cars amid a lot of pushing and shoving on the crowded platforms. That kind of behavior might be considered rude in other societies, but in Mumbai it reflects the daily challenges of getting around on a train system that is taxed to capacity.

Culture can be material or nonmaterial. Metro passes and bus tokens are part of material culture, as are the buses, subway cars, and the physical structures of the bus stop. Think of material culture as items you can touch-they are *tangible*. Nonmaterial culture, in contrast, consists of the ideas, attitudes, and beliefs of a society. These are things you cannot touch. They are *intangible*. You may *believe* that a line should be formed to enter the subway car or that other passengers should not stand so close to you. Those *beliefs* are intangible because they do not have physical properties and can be touched.

Material and nonmaterial aspects of culture are linked, and physical objects often symbolize cultural ideas. A metro pass is a material object, but it represents a form of nonmaterial culture, namely, capitalism, and the acceptance of paying for transportation. Clothing, hairstyles, and jewelry are part of material culture, but the appropriateness of wearing certain clothing for specific events reflects nonmaterial culture. A school building belongs to material culture symbolizing education, but the teaching methods and educational standards are part of education's nonmaterial culture.

As people travel from different regions to entirely different parts of the world, certain material and nonmaterial aspects of culture become dramatically unfamiliar. What happens when we encounter different cultures? As we interact with cultures other than our own, we become more aware of the differences and commonalities between others and our own. If we keep our sociological imagination awake, we can begin to understand and accept the differences. Body language and hand gestures vary around the world, but some body language seems to be shared across cultures: When someone arrives home later than permitted, a parent or guardian meeting them at the door with crossed arms and a frown on their face means the same in Russia as it does in the U.S. as it does in Ghana.

Cultural Universals

Although cultures vary, they also share common elements. Cultural universals are patterns or traits that are globally common to all societies. One example of a cultural universal is the family unit: every human society recognizes a family structure that regulates sexual reproduction and the care of children. Even so, how that family unit is defined and how it functions vary. In many Asian cultures, for example, family members from all generations commonly live together in one household. In these cultures, young adults continue to live in the extended household family structure until they marry and join their spouse's household, or they may remain and raise their nuclear family within the extended family's homestead. In the U.S., by contrast, individuals are expected to leave home and live independently for a period before forming a family unit that consists of parents and their offspring. Other cultural universals include customs like funeral rites, weddings, and celebrations of births. However, each culture may view and conduct the ceremonies quite differently.

Anthropologist George Murdock first investigated the existence of cultural universals while studying systems of kinship around the world. Murdock found that cultural universals often revolve around basic human survival, such as finding food, clothing, and shelter, or around shared human experiences, such as birth and death or illness and healing. Through his research, Murdock identified other universals including language, the concept of personal names, and, interestingly, jokes. Humor seems to be a universal way to release tensions and create a sense of unity among people (Murdock, 1949). Sociologists consider humor necessary to human interaction because it helps individuals navigate otherwise tense situations.

Sociological Research: Is Music a Cultural Universal?

Imagine that you are sitting in a theater, watching a film. The movie opens with the protagonist sitting on a park bench with a grim expression on their face. The music starts to come in. The first slow and mournful notes play in a minor key. As the melody continues, the heroine turns her head and sees a man walking toward her. The music gets louder, and the sounds don't seem to go together – as if the orchestra is intentionally playing the wrong notes. You tense up as you watch, almost hoping to stop. The character is clearly in danger.

Now imagine that you are watching the same movie – the exact same footage – but with a different soundtrack. As the scene opens, the music is soft and soothing, with a hint of sadness. You see the protagonist sitting on the park bench with a grim expression. Suddenly, the music swells. The woman looks up and sees a man walking toward her. The notes are high and bright, and the pace is bouncy. You feel your heart rise in your chest. This is a happy moment.

Music has the ability to evoke emotional responses. In television shows, movies, commercials, and even the background music in a store, music has a message and seems to easily draw a response from those who hear it – joy, sadness, fear, victory. Are these types of musical cues cultural universals?

In 2009, a team of psychologists, led by Thomas Fritz of the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig, Germany, studied people's reactions to music that they'd never heard (Fritz et al., 2009). The research team traveled to Cameroon, Africa, and asked Mafa tribal members to listen to Western music. The tribe, isolated from Western culture, had never been exposed to Western culture and had no context or experience within which to interpret its music. Even so, as the tribal members listened to a Western piano piece, they were able to recognize three basic emotions: happiness, sadness, and fear. Music, the study suggested, is a sort of universal language.

Researchers also found that music can foster a sense of wholeness within a group. In fact, scientists who study the evolution of language have concluded that originally language (an established component of group identity) and music were one (Darwin, 1871). Additionally, since music is largely nonverbal, the sounds of music can cross societal boundaries more easily than words. Music allows people to make connections, where language might be a more difficult barricade. As Fritz and his team found, music and the emotions it conveys are cultural universals.

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

Although human societies have much in common, cultural differences are far more prevalent than cultural universals. For example, while all cultures have language, analysis of conversational etiquette reveals tremendous differences. In some Middle Eastern cultures, it is common to stand close to others in conversation. Americans keep more distance and maintain a large "personal space." Additionally, behaviors as simple as eating and drinking vary greatly from culture to culture. Some cultures use tools to put the food in the mouth while others use their fingers. If your professor comes into an early morning class holding a mug of liquid, what do you assume they are drinking? In the U.S., it's most likely filled with coffee, not Earl Grey tea, a favorite in England, or Yak Butter tea, a staple in Tibet.

Some travelers pride themselves on their willingness to try unfamiliar foods, like the late celebrated food writer Anthony Bourdain (1956-2017). Often, however, people express disgust at another culture's cuisine. They might think that it's gross to eat raw meat from a donkey or parts of a rodent, while they don't question their own habit of eating cows or pigs.

Such attitudes are examples of ethnocentrism, which means to evaluate and judge another culture based on one's own cultural norms. Ethnocentrism is believing your group is the correct measuring standard and if other cultures do not measure up to it, they are wrong. As sociologist William Graham Sumner (1906) described the term, it is a belief or attitude that one's own culture is better than all others. Almost everyone is a little bit ethnocentric.

A high level of appreciation for one's own culture can be healthy. A shared sense of community pride, for example, connects people in a society. But ethnocentrism can lead to disdain or dislike of other cultures and could cause misunderstanding, stereotyping, and conflict. Individuals, government, non-government, private, and religious institutions with the best intentions sometimes travel to a society to "help" its people, because they see them as uneducated, backward, or even inferior. Cultural imperialism is the deliberate imposition of one's own cultural values on another culture.

Colonial expansion by Portugal, Spain, Netherlands, and England grew quickly in the fifteenth century was accompanied by severe cultural imperialism. European colonizers often viewed the people in these new lands as uncultured savages who needed to adopt Catholic governance, Christianity, European dress, and other cultural practices.

A modern example of cultural imperialism may include the work of international aid agencies who introduce agricultural methods and plant species from developed countries into areas that are better served by indigenous varieties and agricultural approaches to the particular region. Another example would be the deforestation of the Amazon Basin as indigenous cultures lose land to timber corporations.



Figure 3.3: Experiencing an entirely new practice may lead to a high degree of interest or a level of criticism. The Indegenous people of Sagada, in the Philippines, have for thousands of years placed the bodies of deceased people into coffins hung on the cliffs near their villages. Some visitors may find this practice admirable, while others may think it's inappropriate. (Credit: Arian Zwegers/flickr)

When people find themselves in a new culture, they may experience disorientation and frustration. In sociology, we call this culture shock. In addition to the traveler's biological clock being 'off', a traveler from Chicago might find the nightly silence of rural Montana unsettling, not peaceful. Now, imagine that the 'difference' is cultural. An exchange student from China to the U.S. might be annoyed by the constant interruptions in class as other students ask questions—a practice that is considered rude in China. Perhaps the Chicago traveler was initially captivated with Montana's quiet beauty and the Chinese student was originally excited to see a U.S.- style classroom firsthand. But as they experience unanticipated differences from their own culture, they may experience ethnocentrism as their excitement gives way to discomfort and doubts about how to behave appropriately in the new situation. According to many authors, international students studying in the U.S. report that there are personality traits and behaviors expected of them. Black African students report having to learn to 'be Black in the U.S.' and Chinese students report that they are naturally expected to be good at math. In African countries, people are identified by country or kin, not color. Eventually, as people learn more about a culture, they adapt to the new culture for a variety of reasons.

Culture shock may appear because people aren't always expecting cultural differences. Anthropologist Ken Barger (1971) discovered this when he conducted a participatory observation in an Inuit community in the Canadian Arctic. Originally from Indiana, Barger hesitated when invited to join a local snowshoe race. He knew he would never hold his own against these experts. Sure enough, he finished last, to his mortification. But the tribal members congratulated him, saying, "You really tried!" In Barger's own culture, he had learned to value victory. To the Inuit people, winning was enjoyable, but their culture valued survival skills essential to their environment: how hard someone tried could mean the difference between life and death. Over the course of his stay, Barger participated in caribou hunts, learned how to take shelter in winter storms, and sometimes went days with little or no food to share among tribal members. Trying hard and working together, two nonmaterial values, were indeed much more important than winning.

During his time with the Inuit tribe, Barger learned to engage in cultural relativism. Cultural relativism is the practice of assessing a culture by its own standards rather than viewing it through the lens of one's own culture. Practicing cultural relativism requires an open mind and a willingness to consider, and even adapt to, new values, norms, and practices.

However, indiscriminately embracing everything about a new culture is not always possible. Even the most culturally relativist people from egalitarian societies—ones in which women have political rights and control over their own bodies—question whether the widespread practice of female genital mutilation in countries such as Ethiopia and Sudan should be accepted as a part of cultural tradition. Sociologists attempting to engage in cultural relativism, then, may struggle to reconcile aspects of their own culture with aspects of a culture that they are studying. Sociologists may take issue with the practices of female genital mutilation in many countries to ensure virginity at marriage just as some male sociologists might take issue with scarring of the flesh to show membership. Sociologists work diligently to keep personal biases out of research analysis.

Sometimes when people attempt to address feelings of ethnocentrism and develop cultural relativism, they swing too far to the other end of the spectrum. Xenocentrism is the opposite of ethnocentrism, and refers to the belief that another culture is superior

to one's own. (The Greek root word xeno-, pronounced "ZEE-no," means "stranger" or "foreign guest.") An exchange student who goes home after a semester abroad or a sociologist who returns from the field may find it difficult to associate with the values of their own culture after having experienced what they deem a more upright or nobler way of living. An opposite reaction is xenophobia, an irrational fear or hatred of different cultures.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for sociologists studying different cultures is the matter of keeping a perspective. It is impossible for anyone to overcome all cultural biases. The best we can do is strive to be aware of them. Pride in one's own culture doesn't have to lead to imposing its values or ideas on others. And an appreciation for another culture shouldn't preclude individuals from studying it with a critical eye. This practice is perhaps the most difficult for all social scientists.

Sociology in the Real World: Overcoming Culture Shock

During her summer vacation, Caitlin flew from Chicago, Illinois to Madrid, Spain to visit Maria, the exchange student she had befriended the previous semester. In the airport, she heard rapid, musical Spanish being spoken all around her.

Exciting as it was, she felt isolated and disconnected. Maria's mother kissed Caitlin on both cheeks when she greeted her. Her imposing father kept his distance. Caitlin was half asleep by the time supper was served—at 10 p.m. Maria's family sat at the table for hours, speaking loudly, gesturing, and arguing about politics, a taboo dinner subject in Caitlin's house. They served wine and toasted their honored guest. Caitlin had trouble interpreting her hosts' facial expressions, and did not realize she should make the next toast. That night, Caitlin crawled into a strange bed, wishing she had not come. She missed her home and felt overwhelmed by the new customs, language, and surroundings. She'd studied Spanish in school for years—why hadn't it prepared her for this?

What Caitlin did not realize was that people depend not only on spoken words but also on body language, like gestures and facial expressions, to communicate. Cultural norms and practices accompany even the smallest nonverbal signals (DuBois, 1951). They help people know when to shake hands, where to sit, how to converse, and even when to laugh. We relate to others through a shared set of cultural norms, and ordinarily, we take them for granted.

For this reason, culture shock is often associated with traveling abroad, although it can happen in one's own country, state, or even hometown. Anthropologist Kalervo Oberg (1960) is credited with first coining the term "culture shock." In his studies, Oberg found that most people are excited at first to encounter a new culture. But bit by bit, they become stressed by interacting with people from a different culture who speak another language and use different regional expressions. There is new food to digest, new daily schedules to follow, and new rules of etiquette to learn. Living with this constant stress can make people feel incompetent and insecure. People react to frustration in a new culture, Oberg found, by initially rejecting it and glorifying one's own culture. An American visiting Italy might long for a "real" pizza or complain about the unsafe driving habits of Italians.

It helps to remember that culture is learned. Everyone is ethnocentric to an extent, and identifying with one's own country is natural. Caitlin's shock was minor compared to that of her friends Dayar and Mahlika, a Turkish couple living in married student housing on campus. And it was nothing like that of her classmate Sanai. Sanai had been forced to flee war-torn Bosnia with her family when she was fifteen. After two weeks in Spain, Caitlin had developed more compassion and understanding for what those people had gone through. She understood that adjusting to a new culture takes time. It can take weeks or months to recover from culture shock, and it can take years to fully adjust to living in a new culture.

By the end of Caitlin's trip, she had made new lifelong friends. Caitlin stepped out of her comfort zone. She had learned a lot about Spain, but discovered a lot about herself and her own culture.



Figure 3.4: Experiencing new cultures offers an opportunity to practice cultural relativism. (Credit: OledSidorenko/flickr)

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4.1.3: Elements of Culture

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate values, beliefs, and norms
- Explain the significance of symbols and language to a culture
- Explain the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
- Discuss the role of social control within culture

Values and Beliefs

The first, and perhaps most crucial, elements of culture we will discuss are values and beliefs. Value does not mean monetary worth in sociology, but rather ideals, or principles and standards members of a culture hold in high regard. Most cultures in any society hold "knowledge" (education) in high regard. *Value*s are deeply embedded and are critical for learning a culture's *belief*s, which are the tenets or convictions that people hold to be true. Individual cultures in a society have personal beliefs, but they also shared collective values. To illustrate the difference, U.S. citizens may believe in the American Dream—that anyone who works hard enough will be successful and wealthy. Underlying this belief is the American value that wealth is important. In other cultures, success may be tied less to wealth and more to having many healthy children. Values shape a society by suggesting what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly, sought or avoided.

Consider the value that the U.S. places upon youth. Children represent innocence and purity, while a youthful adult appearance signifies sexuality. Shaped by this value, individuals spend millions of dollars each year on cosmetic products and surgeries to look young and beautiful. The U.S. also has an individualistic culture, meaning people place a high value on individuality and independence. In contrast, many other cultures are collectivist, meaning the welfare of the group takes priority over that of the individual. Fulfilling a society's values can be difficult. Marital monogamy is valued, but many spouses engage in infidelity. Cultural diversity and equal opportunities for all people are valued in the U.S., yet the country's highest political offices have been dominated by white men.

Values often suggest how people should behave, but they don't accurately reflect how people do behave. Values portray an ideal culture, the standards society would like to embrace and live up to. But ideal culture differs from real culture. In an ideal culture, there would be no traffic accidents, murders, poverty, or racial tension. But in real culture, police officers, lawmakers, educators, and social workers constantly strive to prevent or address these issues. American teenagers are encouraged to value celibacy. However, the number of unplanned pregnancies among teens reveals that the ideal alone is not enough to spare teenagers the potential consequences of having sex.

One of the ways societies strive to maintain its values is through rewards and punishments. When people observe the norms of society and uphold its values, they are often rewarded. A boy who helps an elderly woman board a bus may receive a smile and a "thank you." A business manager who raises profit margins may receive a quarterly bonus. People sanction unwanted or inappropriate behaviors by withholding support, approval, or permission, or by implementing sanctions. We may think of 'sanction' as a negative term, but sanctions are forms of social control, ways to encourage conformity to cultural norms or rules. Sometimes people conform to norms in anticipation or expectation of positive sanctions. Receiving good grades, for instance, may mean praise from parents and teachers. Sanctions can also be negative. . A boy who shoves an elderly woman aside to board the bus first may receive frowns or even a scolding from other passengers. A business manager who drives away customers will likely be fired. Breaking norms and rejecting values can lead to cultural sanctions such as earning a negative label like 'lazy' or to legal sanctions, such as traffic tickets, fines, or imprisonment. Utilizing social control encourages most people to conform regardless of whether authority figures (such as law enforcement) are present.

Values are not static. They change across time and between groups as people evaluate, debate, and change collective social beliefs. Values also vary from culture to culture. For example, cultures differ in their values about what kinds of physical closeness are appropriate in public. It's rare to see two male friends or coworkers holding hands in the U.S. where that behavior often symbolizes romantic feelings. But in many nations, masculine physical intimacy is considered natural in public. This difference in cultural values came to light when people reacted to photos of former president G.W. Bush holding hands with the Crown Prince

of Saudi Arabia in 2005. Simple gestures, such as hand-holding, carry great symbolic differences across cultures.



Figure 3.5: In many parts of Africa and the Middle East, it is considered normal for men to hold hands in friendship. How would US citizens react to these two soldiers? (Credit: Geordie Mott/Wikimedia Commons)

Norms

So far, many of the examples in this chapter have described how people are *expected* to behave in certain situations—for example, buying food or boarding a bus. These examples describe the visible and invisible rules of conduct through which societies are structured, or what sociologists call norms. Norms are behaviors that reflect compliance with what cultures and societies have defined as good, right, and important. Most members adhere to them.

Formal norms are established, written rules existing in all societies. They support many social institutions, such as the military, criminal justice and healthcare systems, and public schools. Functionalists may question what *purpose* these norms serve, conflict theorists might be interested in *who* creates, benefits, and suffers under these formal norms, and symbolic interactionists wonder about how a group that benefits interacts. Laws are formal norms, but so are employee manuals, college entrance exam requirements, and “no running” signs at swimming pools. Formal norms are the most specific and clearly stated of the various types of norms, and they are the most strictly enforced. But they are enforced to varying degrees.

For example, private property is highly valued in the U.S. Thieves can be fined, imprisoned, or both. People safeguard valuable possessions by locking their doors, buying a safe, and installing alarm systems on homes and cars. A less strictly enforced social norm is driving while intoxicated. While it’s against the law to drive drunk, drinking is for the most part an acceptable social behavior. And though there are laws to punish drunk driving, there are few systems in place to prevent the crime.

There are plenty of formal norms, but the list of informal norms—casual behaviors that are generally and widely conformed to—is longer. People learn informal norms by observation, imitation, and general socialization. Some informal norms are taught directly— “Kiss your Aunt Edna” or “Use your napkin”—while others are learned by observation, including understanding consequences when someone else violates a norm. Informal norms dictate appropriate behaviors without the need of written rules and so may be difficult to learn when you are new to or not familiar with the culture.

Although informal norms define personal interactions, they extend into other systems as well. In the U.S., there are informal norms regarding behavior at fast food restaurants. Customers line up to order their food and leave when they are done. They don’t sit down at a table with strangers, sing loudly as they prepare their condiments, or nap in a booth. Most people don’t commit even harmless breaches of informal norms.

Sociological Research: Breaching Experiments

Sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1917–2011) studied people's customs in order to find out how societal rules and norms not only influence behavior but also shape social order. He believed that members of society together create a social order (Weber, 2011). His resulting book, *Studies in Ethno-methodology* (1967) discusses people's assumptions about the social makeup of their communities.

One of Garfinkel's research methods was known as a "breaching experiment," in which the researcher behaves in a socially awkward manner in order to test the sociological concepts of social norms and conformity. The participants are not aware an experiment is in progress, but their response is recorded. For example, if the experimenter is, say, a man in a business suit, and he skips down the sidewalk or hops on one foot, a passersby is likely to stare at him with surprised expressions. But the experimenter does not simply "act weird" in public. Rather, the point is to deviate from a specific social norm in a small way, to subtly break some form of social etiquette, and see what happens.

For example, he set up a simple game of tic-tac-toe. One player was asked beforehand to mark Xs and Os not in the boxes but on the lines dividing the spaces instead. The other player, in the dark about the study, was flabbergasted and did not know how to continue. The second player's outrage, anger, puzzlement, or other emotion suggested that a cultural norms had been violated.

There are many rules about speaking with strangers in public. It is okay to tell a woman you like her shoes. It is not okay to ask if you can try them on. It is okay to stand in line behind someone at the ATM. It is not okay to look over his shoulder as he makes a transaction. It is okay to sit beside someone on a crowded bus. It's weird to sit beside a stranger in a half-empty bus.

For some breaches, the researcher directly engages with innocent bystanders. An experimenter might strike up a conversation in a public bathroom, where it's common to respect each other's privacy. In a grocery store, an experimenter might take a food item out of another person's grocery cart, saying, "That looks good! I think I'll try it." An experimenter might sit down at a table with others in a fast-food restaurant or follow someone around a museum and study the same paintings. In those cases, the bystanders are pressured to respond, and their discomfort illustrates how much we depend on social norms. Breaching experiments uncover and explore the many unwritten social rules we live by.

Norms may be further classified as either mores or folkways. Mores (mor-ays) are norms that embody the moral views and principles of a group. They often have a religious foundation. Violating them can have serious consequences. The strongest mores are protected with laws and other formal sanctions. In most societies, for instance, homicide is considered immoral, and it's punishable by law (a formal norm). But more often, mores are judged and guarded by public sentiment (an informal norm). People who violate mores are seen as shameful. They can even be shunned or banned from some groups.

The mores of the U.S. school system require that a student's writing be in the student's own words or use special forms (such as quotation marks and a whole system of citation) for crediting other writers. Submitting or publishing another person's words as if they are one's own has a name—plagiarism. The consequences for violating this norm are often severe and can result in expulsion from school or termination from employment.

Unlike mores, folkways are norms without any moral underpinnings. Rather, folkways direct appropriate behavior in the day-to-day practices and expressions of a culture. We can think of them as 'traditions'—things we do because we 'always have.' They indicate whether to shake hands or kiss on the cheek when greeting another person. They specify whether to wear a tie and blazer or a T-shirt and sandals to an event. In Canada, women can smile and say hello to men on the street. In Egypt, that's not acceptable. In regions in the southern U.S., bumping into an acquaintance means stopping to chat. It's considered rude not to, no matter how busy one is. In other regions, people guard their privacy and value time efficiency. A simple nod of the head is enough. Other accepted folkways in the U.S. may include holding the door open for a stranger or giving someone a gift on their birthday. The rules regarding these folkways may change from culture to culture. A folkway in one culture could be extremely rude in another.

Folkways are actions that people everywhere take for granted. People need to act without thinking in order to get seamlessly through daily routines. They can't stop and analyze every action (Sumner, 1906). Folkways might be small actions, learned by observation and imitated, but they are by no means trivial. An important folkway in many cultures is kissing Grandmother on the cheek. Fail to do so and you will likely be scolded.

Symbols and Culture

Humans, consciously and subconsciously, are always striving to make sense of their surrounding world. Symbols—such as gestures, signs, objects, signals, and words—help people understand that world. They provide communication methods to understanding experiences by conveying recognizable meanings that are shared by societies.

The world is filled with symbols. Sports uniforms, company logos, and traffic signs are symbols. In some cultures, a gold ring is a symbol of marriage. Some symbols are highly functional; stop signs, for instance, provide useful instruction. As physical objects, they belong to material culture, but because they function as symbols, they also convey nonmaterial cultural meanings. Some symbols are valuable only in what they represent. Trophies, blue ribbons, or gold medals, for example, represent accomplishments. But many objects have both material and nonmaterial symbolic value.



(a) (b)

Figure 3.6: Some road signs are universal. But how would you interpret the signage on the right? (Credit: (a) Andrew Bain/flickr; (b) HonzaSoukup/flickr)

Symbols often get noticed when they are out of context. Used unconventionally, they convey strong messages. A stop sign placed on the door of a college building makes a political statement, as does a camouflage military jacket worn in an antiwar protest. Together, the semaphore signals for “N” and “D” represent nuclear disarmament—and form the well-known peace sign (Westcott, 2008). Some college students wear pajamas and bedroom slippers to class, clothing that was formerly associated only with privacy and bedtime. By wearing the outfit, students are defying traditional cultural norms.

Some symbols represent only one side of the story and elicit strong emotions, which can lead to social unrest. Their presence is a reminder of a nation’s worst times and not something to celebrate. Many of these symbols are targets of vandalism as the destruction of these representations is symbolic. Effigies representing public figures are burned to demonstrate anger at certain leaders. In 1989, crowds tore down the Berlin Wall, a decades-old symbol of the division between East and West Germany, communism, and capitalism. In the U.S. beginning in 2019, statues associated with slavery and the Civil War were removed from state capitols, college campuses, and public parks. In Germany, any display of Hitler or Nazi memorabilia or to deny the Holocaust is illegal.

While different cultures have varying systems of symbols, one system is common to all: language. Whatever its form, people learn social and cultural norms through it.

Language and Symbols

Language is a system that uses symbols with which people communicate and through which culture is transmitted. Letters (which make up words), pictographs, and hand gestures are all symbols that create a language used for communication. Sign language, for example, requires an intimate knowledge not only of an alphabet but also of signs that represent entire words and the meaning indicated by certain facial expressions or postures. Its grammar differs from the spoken language. As spoken language is different

across regions, nations and cultures, and can even differ by the age of the person, so too does sign language.

All language systems contain the same basic elements that are effective in communicating ideas - object, subject, action. A written language system consists of symbols that refer to spoken sound. Taken together, these symbols convey specific meanings. The English language uses a combination of twenty-six letters to create words. These twenty-six letters make up over 600,000 recognized words (OED Online, 2011). We can compare the reliance on tone and inflection to Mandarin Chinese. It contains over 8,000 characters, but the same character may symbolize different concepts depending on the tone used.

English today contains an English and French version for the same concept. For example, in the English version, one eats, but in French version, one dines. In the English version, we meet someone. In the French version, we encounter someone. Readers of American English may be surprised by the inclusion of a 'u' in some spellings of words like 'behaviour' or 'flavour.' Americans have dropped that 'u' that writers of British English include. Billions of people speak English, and there are almost as many pronunciations of it.

Rules for speaking and writing vary even within cultures, most notably by region. Do you eat a grinder, a sub, or a hero/gyro? Do you refer to a can of carbonated liquid as "soda" or "pop"? Is a household entertainment room a "family room," "rec room," or "den"? When leaving a restaurant, do you ask your server for a "check," the "ticket," or your "bill"? Language is constantly evolving and adding new words as societies create new ideas. In this age of technology, many cultures have adapted almost instantly to new nouns such as "e-mail" and "Internet," and verbs such as "downloading," "texting," and "blogging." These would have considered nonsense words just the world twenty-five years ago.

Language and Culture

Even while it constantly evolves, language shapes our perception of reality and our behavior. In the 1920s, linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf advanced this idea which became known as Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or linguistic relativity. It is based on the idea that people experience their world through their language, and therefore understand their world through the cultural meanings embedded in their language. The hypothesis suggests that language shapes thought and thus behavior (Swoyer, 2003). For example, words have attached meanings beyond their definition that can influence thought and behavior. In the U.S. where the number thirteen is associated with bad luck, many high-rise buildings do not have a 13^{th} floor. In Japan, however, the number four is considered unlucky, since it is pronounced similarly to the Japanese word for "death."

Many sociologists believe that language can have a broad and lasting impact on perception. In 2002, Lera Boroditsky and her colleagues conducted experiments on native German and Spanish speakers in English. Unlike English, these languages assign genders to nouns. In German, for example, the word for sun, die Sonne, is feminine, but the word for moon, der Mond, is masculine. The team chose a set of nouns with opposite genders in German and Spanish and asked participants to provide adjectives to describe them. They found that German speakers used more masculine adjectives than Spanish speakers when describing a noun that was grammatically masculine in German but feminine in Spanish. For example, the word for key is masculine in German and feminine in Spanish. German speakers described keys as hard, heavy, jagged, metal, serrated, and useful, while Spanish speakers used the adjectives, golden, intricate, little, lovely, shiny, and tiny. The team concluded that gender perceptions acquired in a person's native language carry forward to how they see the world even when they switch to a language without grammatical genders (Boroditsky, Schmidt, and Phillips, 2002).

Some sociologists also believe the structure of language can have consequences on both individual and group behavior. For example, a series of studies have found that Finland has a significantly higher rate of workplace accidents than Sweden despite the fact that the languages have similar workplace regulations (Salminen & Johansson, 2000). John A. Lucy explained this discrepancy through differences in the structure of these languages. Swedish places a greater emphasis on the timing of movement in three-dimensional space. Consequently, Lucy argued, the Swedish factories are physically arranged in a manner that supports the smooth running of the product process. Finnish factors experience frequent disruptions, so that workers must rush and have more accidents (Lucy, 1997).

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been interpreted to suggest that if a word does not exist in a language then users of that language cannot have the experience. Studies have shown, for instance, that unless people have access to the word "ambivalent," they don't *recognize* having conflicting positive and negative feelings about an issue as 'ambivalence.' However, the hypothesis should not suggest that people do not have conflicting feelings but rather that they interpret the feelings differently.

In addition to using spoken language, people communicate without words. Nonverbal communication is symbolic, and, as in the case of language, is learned through one's culture. Some gestures are nearly universal; some are not. Smiles often indicate positive reinforcement in the U.S., whereas in some cultures it is rude as you do not know the person. A thumbs-up in Russia

and Australia is an offensive curse (Passero, 2002). Other gestures vary in meaning depending on the situation and the person. A wave of the hand can mean many things, depending on how it's done and for whom. It may mean "hello," "goodbye," "no thank you," or "I'm royalty." Winks convey a variety of messages, including "We have a secret," "I'm only kidding," or "I'm attracted to you." From a distance, a person may "read" the emotional situation of people just by watching their body language and facial expressions. However, many cultures communicate with lots of physicality, which people outside that culture may interpret as an argument. So, for example, you might believe two people are arguing when, in fact, they are simply having a regular conversation.

Social Policy and Debate: Is the U.S. Bilingual?

When she was six, Lucy and her family immigrated to the United States and attended a school that allowed for the use of both English and Spanish. Lucy's teacher and many staff were bilingual (fluent in English and Spanish), and the district offered books in both languages. While she was being driven to learn English, the dual-language option helped to ensure that she did not become lost and get behind in her learning of all subjects. Having math, science, and computing taught in both languages helped her understand those concepts and skills. Within two years of enrolling in the school, Lucy was getting nearly all of her instruction in English, and rarely used the Spanish-language books or resources. While she still had trouble with some intricacies of English, her math progress was above grade level and she did well in other subjects as well.

Some people might believe that Lucy would have learned faster had she been instructed only in English. But research indicates that is not the case. Johns Hopkins University researchers conducted a series of studies on the effects of bilingual education across multiple subjects (Slavin et al. 2008). They found that students taught in both their native tongue and English make better progress than those taught only in English.

Legally, the U.S. has no official language. But many believe English to be the rightful language of the U.S., and over thirty states have passed laws specifying English as their official tongue. Proponents of English-only laws suggest that a national ruling will save money on translation, printing, and human resource costs, including funding for bilingual teachers. They argue that setting English as the official language will encourage non-English speakers to learn English faster and adapt to the culture of the U.S. more easily (Mount 2010). Groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) oppose making English the official language and claim that it violates the rights of non-English speakers. English-only laws, they believe, deny the reality of our nation's diversity and unfairly target non-English speakers. They point to the fact that much of the debate on this topic has risen since 1970, a period during which the U.S. has experienced new waves of immigration from Asia and Mexico.

Today, a lot of product information gets written in multiple languages. Enter a store like Home Depot and you'll find signs in both English and Spanish. Buy a children's product and the safety warnings could be presented in multiple languages. While marketers are financially motivated to reach the largest number of consumers possible, this trend also may help people become accustomed to a culture of bilingualism.

Studies show that most US immigrants eventually abandon their native tongues and become fluent in English. Bilingual education helps with that transition. Today, Lucy is an ambitious and high-achieving college student. Fluent in both English and Spanish, Lucy is studying law enforcement—a field that seeks bilingual employees. The same bilingualism that contributed to her success in grade school will help her thrive professionally as a law officer serving her community.



Figure 3.7: Many signs—on streets and in stores—include both English and Spanish. What effect does this have on members of society? What effect does it have on our culture? (Credit: istolethetv/flickr)

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4.1.4: High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Discuss the roles of both high culture and pop culture within society
- Differentiate between subculture and counterculture
- Explain the role of innovation, invention, and discovery in culture
- Describe the role of cultural lag and globalization in cultural change

It may seem obvious that there are a multitude of cultural differences between societies in the world. After all, we can easily see that people vary from one society to the next. It's natural to think that a young woman from a village in rural Kenya in Eastern Africa would have a different view of the world from a young woman from urban Mumbai, India—one of the most populated cities in the world.

Additionally, each culture has its own internal variations. Sometimes the differences between cultures are not as large as the differences within cultures. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu wrote about *cultural capital*, which consists of material goods, non-material attitudes, and knowledge that are specific to a certain economic class. Bourdieu grouped cultural capital into three categories: *embodied* (a regional dialect), *objectified* (possessions), and *institutionalized* (academic credentials). In the U.S., some group culture into three categories as well: high, low, and pop (for popular).

High, Low, and Popular Culture

Can you identify the Chief Financial Officer of three major corporations? How about the name of the server at three local hangouts? How many books do you own? How many social media sites do you visit? Is your family listed on the Social Register©? Have you ever heard of the Social Register©? In each pair, one type of knowledge is considered high culture and the other low culture.

This could be considered stereotyping by economic class rather than by race or gender, but sociologists use the term high culture to describe the *pattern* of cultural experiences and attitudes that exist in the highest or elite class segments of a society. People often associate high culture with intellectualism, political power, and prestige. In America, high culture also tends to be associated with wealth. Events considered high culture can be expensive, formal, and exclusive – attending a ballet, seeing a play, listening to a live symphony performance, or attending a prestigious university. Similarly, low culture is associated with the pattern of cultural experiences and attitudes that exist in the lowest class segments of a society.

The term popular culture refers to the pattern of cultural experiences and attitudes that exist in mainstream society. Popular culture events might include a parade, a baseball game, or the season finale of a television show. Music, anime, and cosplay are pieces of popular culture. Popular culture is accessible by most and is expressed and spread via commercial and social media outlets such as radio, television, movies, the music industry, publishers, and corporate-run websites. You can share a discussion of favorite football teams with a new coworker or comment on a reality show when making small talk in line at the grocery store. But if you tried to launch into a deep discussion on the classical Greek play *Antigone*, few members of U.S. society today would be familiar with it. Although high culture may be considered by some as superior to popular culture, the lines between high culture and popular culture vary over time and place. Shakespearean plays, considered to be popular culture when they were written, are now part of our society's high culture. Five hundred years from now, will our descendants consider *Dancing with the Stars* as fine performance art?

Subculture and Counterculture



Figure 3.8: Cosplayers are a distinct subculture (a smaller cultural group within the larger culture) in the United States. And within the larger subculture are subgroups, such as this one emulating D.C. Comics characters. (Credit: Pat Loika)

A subculture is just what it sounds like—a smaller cultural group within a larger culture. People of a subculture are part of the larger culture but also share a specific identity within a smaller group.*

Thousands of subcultures exist within the U.S. Ethnic and racial groups share the language, food, and customs of their heritage. Other subcultures are formed through shared experiences. Biker culture revolves around an interest in motorcycles. Some subcultures are formed by people who possess traits or preferences that differ from the majority of a society's population. The body modification community embraces aesthetic additions to the human body, such as tattoos, piercings, and certain forms of plastic surgery. But even as members of a subculture band together, they still identify with and participate in the larger society.

Sociologists distinguish subcultures from countercultures, which reject some of the larger culture's norms and values. In contrast to subcultures, which operate relatively smoothly within the larger society, countercultures might actively defy larger society by developing their own set of rules and norms to live by, sometimes even creating communities that operate outside of greater society. Counterculture members are 'against' the dominant ruling culture and want to install their own values. Sub-culture members may want to change some things but established procedures are followed.

Cults, a word derived from culture, are also considered counterculture groups. The group "Yearning for Zion" (YFZ) in Eldorado, Texas, existed outside the mainstream and the limelight, until its leader was accused of statutory rape and underage marriage. The sect's formal norms clashed too severely to be tolerated by US law, and in 2008, authorities raided the compound and removed more than two hundred women and children from the property. Many cults claim to be spiritual, often establishing themselves as a religion. When each of the three Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) in the world began, they were treated as cults and suffered much oppression because of it.

Cultural Change

Cultures continually change because new items are added to material culture every day and in turn, meanings are assigned to them (non-material), which affects other cultural components. For example, a new technology, such as railroads or smartphones, might introduce new ways of traveling or communicating. New ideas, such as flash mobs or crowdfunding, enter a culture . Sociologists identify two broad categories of change as innovation (meaning new) and diffusion (to spread out). Material cultural change happens when new items are *discovered* or *invented* or enter a culture as a result of *globalization*.

Innovation: Discovery and Invention

An innovation refers to an object or concept's initial appearance in society—it is innovative because it is new. Innovations are discovered or invented. *Discoveries* make known previously unknown but existing aspects of reality. In 1610, when Galileo looked

through his telescope and discovered Saturn, the planet was already there, but until then, no one had known about it. When Christopher Columbus encountered Hispaniola, the island was, of course, already well known to its inhabitants. However, his discovery was new knowledge for Europeans, and it opened the way to changes in European culture, as well as to the cultures of the discovered lands. For example, new foods such as potatoes and tomatoes transformed the European diet, and horses brought from Europe changed hunting practices of Great Plains Native Americans.

Inventions result when something new is formed from existing objects or concepts—when things are put together in an entirely new manner. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, electric appliances were invented at an astonishing pace. Cars, airplanes, vacuum cleaners, lamps, radios, telephones, and televisions were all new inventions. Inventions may shape a culture by replacing older ways of carrying out tasks, being integrated into current practices, or creating new activities. Their adoption reflects (and may shape) cultural values, and their use may introduce new norms and practices.

Consider the rise of mobile phones. As more and more people began carrying these devices, phone conversations no longer were restricted to homes, offices, and phone booths. People on trains, in restaurants, and in other public places became annoyed by listening to one-sided conversations. New norms and behaviors were needed for cell phone use. Some people pushed for the idea that those who are out in the world should pay attention to their companions and surroundings. Fortunately, technology found a workaround: texting, which enables quiet communication surpassed phone conversations as the primary way to communicate anywhere, everywhere.

When the pace of innovation increases, it can lead to generation gaps. Technological gadgets that catch on quickly with one generation are sometimes dismissed by an older generation that is skeptical or struggles to adopt them. The older generation might tune into a musician performing on public television while the younger generation prefers a livestream. A culture's objects and ideas can cause not just generational but cultural gaps. Material culture tends to diffuse more quickly than nonmaterial culture; technology can spread through society in a matter of months, but it can take generations for the ideas and beliefs of society to change including methods for researching or learning information (e.g., library versus Internet search).

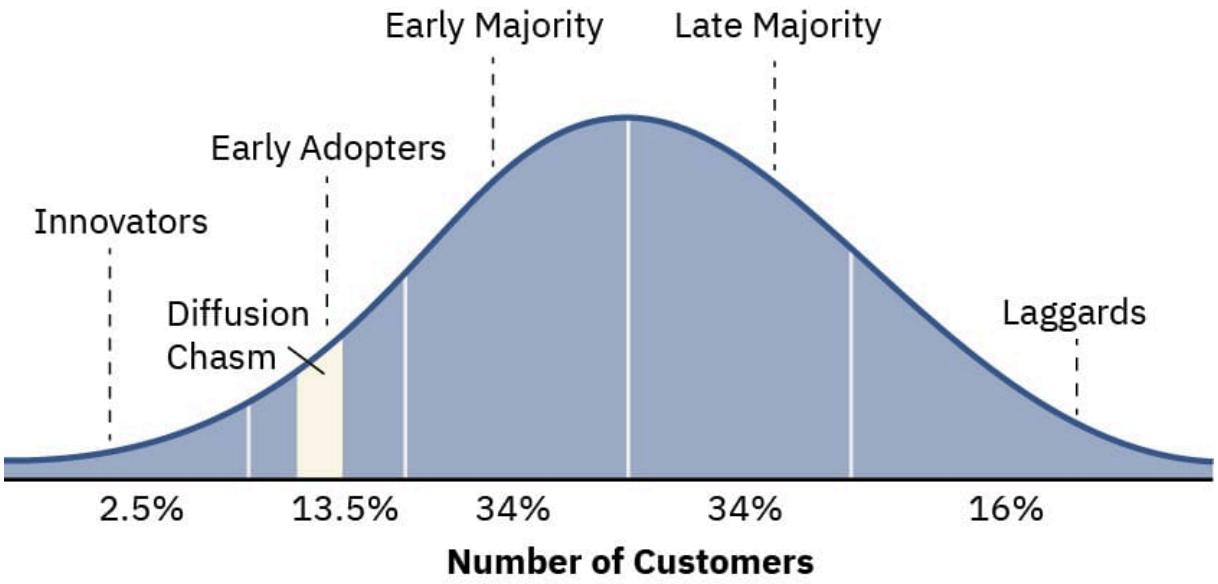


Figure 3.9: Technology Adoption Lifecycle — Sociologist Everett Rogers (1962) developed a model of the diffusion of innovations. As consumers gradually adopt a new innovation, the item grows toward 100 percent usage, or complete saturation within a society. This graph is frequently used in business, sales, technology, and cultural innovations. It can be used to describe how quickly different groups adopt (or begin using) a new technology or a new slang word, but note it is just a framework: not every innovation follows this exact pattern, but it provides a good foundation for discussion and prediction. (Graph attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY 4.0 license)

Coined by sociologist William F. Ogburn (1957), the term culture lag refers to the time that passes between the introduction of a new item of material culture and its social acceptance. Culture lag can also cause tangible problems. The infrastructure of the U.S., built a hundred years ago or more, is having trouble supporting today's more heavily populated and fast-paced life. Yet there is a lag in conceptualizing solutions to infrastructure problems. Municipalities struggle with traffic control, increased air pollution, and limited parking, which are all symptoms of culture lag. Although people are becoming aware of the consequences, overuse, or lack of resources, addressing these needs takes time.

Diffusion and Globalization

Another way material and nonmaterial culture crosses borders is through diffusion. Like a gas in a laboratory experiment, the item or idea spreads throughout. Diffusion relates to the process of the integration of cultures into the mainstream while globalization refers to the promotion and increase of interactions between different regions and populations around the globe resulting in the integration of markets and interdependence of nations fostered through trade.

Ideas concepts, or artifacts are often diffused, or spread, to individuals and groups, resulting in new social practices. People might develop a new appreciation of Thai noodles or Italian gelato (ice cream). Access to television and the Internet has brought the lifestyles and values portrayed in U.S. sitcoms into homes around the globe and vice versa. Twitter feeds from public demonstrations in one nation have encouraged political protesters in other countries. When this kind of diffusion occurs, ideas from one culture are introduced into another, often before the associated material objects. The graph above displays when diffusion typically occurs, essentially driving an innovation to spread beyond its earliest adopters to the wider majority of people.

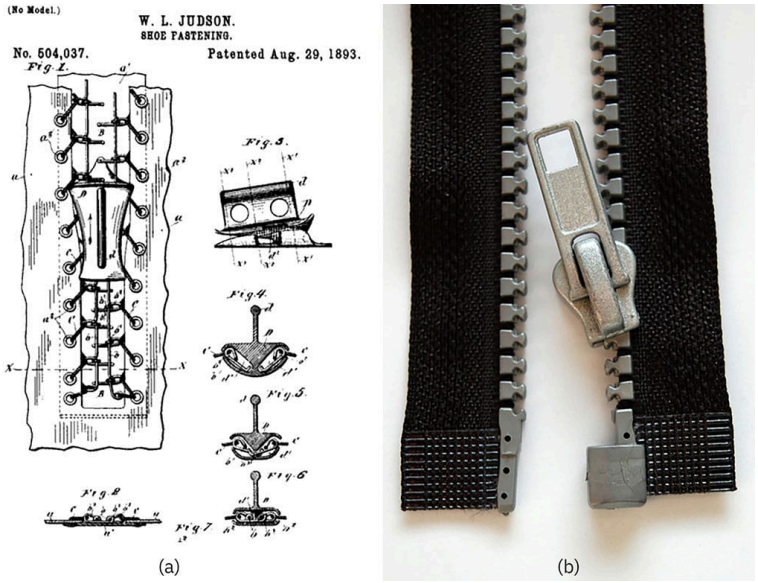


Figure 3.10: Officially patented in 1893 as the “clasp locker” (left), the zipper did not diffuse through society for many decades. Today, it is immediately recognizable around the world. (Credit: (a) US Patent Office/Wikimedia Commons; (b) Rabensteiner/Wikimedia Commons).

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4.1.5: Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section you should be able to:

- Discuss the major theoretical approaches to cultural interpretation

Music, fashion, technology, and values—all are products of culture. But what do they mean? How do sociologists perceive and interpret culture based on these material and nonmaterial items? Let's finish our analysis of culture by reviewing them in the context of three theoretical perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Functionalists view society as a system in which all parts work—or function—together to create society as a whole. They often use the human body as an analogy. Looking at life in this way, *societies need culture to exist*. Cultural norms function to support the fluid operation of society, and cultural values guide people in making choices. Just as members of a society work together to fulfill a society's needs, culture exists to meet its members' social and personal needs.

Functionalists also study culture in terms of values. For example, education is highly valued in the U.S. The culture of education—including material culture such as classrooms, textbooks, libraries, educational technology, dormitories and non-material culture such as specific teaching approaches—demonstrates how much emphasis is placed on the value of educating a society's members. In contrast, if education consisted of only providing guidelines and some study material without the other elements, that would demonstrate that the culture places a lower value on education.



Figure 3.11: This statue of Superman stands in the center of Metropolis, Illinois. His pedestal reads "Truth—Justice—The American Way." How would a functionalist interpret this statue? What does it reveal about the values of American culture? (Credit: David Wilson/flickr)

Functionalists view the different categories of culture as serving many functions. Having membership in a culture, a subculture, or a counterculture brings camaraderie and social cohesion and benefits the larger society by providing places for people who share similar ideas.

Conflict theorists, however, view social structure as inherently unequal, based on power differentials related to issues like class, gender, race, and age. For a conflict theorist, established educational methods are seen as reinforcing the dominant societal culture and issues of privilege. The historical experiences of certain groups— those based upon race, sex, or class, for instance, or those that portray a negative narrative about the dominant culture—are excluded from history books. For a long time, U.S. History education omitted the assaults on Native American people and society that were part of the colonization of the land that became the United States. A more recent example is the recognition of historical events like race riots and racially based massacres like

the Tulsa Massacre, which was widely reported when it occurred in 1921 but was omitted from many national historical accounts of that period of time. When an episode of HBO's *Watchmen* showcased the event in stunning and horrific detail, many people expressed surprise that it had occurred and it hadn't been taught or discussed (Ware 2019).

Historical omission is not restricted to the U.S. North Korean students learn of their benevolent leader without information about his mistreatment of large portions of the population. According to defectors and North Korea experts, while famines and dire economic conditions are obvious, state media and educational agencies work to ensure that North Koreans do not understand how different their country is from others (Jacobs 2019).

Inequities exist within a culture's value system and become embedded in laws, policies, and procedures. This inclusion leads to the oppression of the powerless by the powerful. A society's cultural norms benefit some people but hurt others. Women were not allowed to vote in the U.S. until 1920, making it hard for them to get laws passed that protected their rights in the home and in the workplace. Same-sex couples were denied the right to marry in the U.S. until 2015. Elsewhere around the world, same-sex marriage is only legal in 31 of the planet's 195 countries.

At the core of conflict theory is the effect of economic production and materialism. Dependence on technology in rich nations *versus* a lack of technology and education in poor nations. Conflict theorists believe that a society's system of material production has an effect on the rest of culture. People who have less power also have fewer opportunities to adapt to cultural change. This view contrasts with the perspective of functionalism. Where functionalists would see the purpose of culture—traditions, folkways, values—as helping individuals navigate through life and societies run smoothly, conflict theorists examine socio-cultural struggles, including the power and privilege created for some by using and reinforcing a dominant culture that sustains their position in society.

Symbolic interactionism is the sociological perspective that is most concerned with the face-to-face interactions and cultural meanings between members of society. It is considered a micro-level analysis. Instead of looking how access is different between the rich and poor, interactionists see culture as being created and maintained by the ways people interact and in how individuals interpret each other's actions. In this perspective, people perpetuate cultural ways. Proponents of this theory conceptualize human interaction as a continuous process of deriving meaning from both objects in the environment and the actions of others. Every object and action has a symbolic meaning, and language serves as a means for people to represent and communicate interpretations of these meanings to others. Symbolic interactionists perceive culture as highly dynamic and fluid, as it is dependent on how meaning is interpreted and how individuals interact when conveying these meanings. Interactionists research changes in language. They study additions and deletions of words, the changing meaning of words, and the transmission of words in an original language into different ones.



Figure 3.12: Sometimes external observers may believe that people from a culture dress a certain way based on images from a parade or special event. In reality, these two people may wear business suits or jeans and T-shirts when they are not participating in a flower parade. While people may not always outwardly express their cultural identity or use items related to their culture, special events often bring out those expressions. (Credit: John Shedrick)

We began this chapter by asking, "What is culture?" Culture is comprised of values, beliefs, norms, language, practices, and

artifacts of a society. Because culture is learned, it includes how people think and express themselves. While we may like to consider ourselves individuals, we must acknowledge the impact of culture on us and our way of life. We inherit language that shapes our perceptions and patterned behavior, including those of family, friends, faith, and politics.

To an extent, culture is a social comfort. After all, sharing a similar culture with others is precisely what defines societies. Nations would not exist if people did not coexist culturally. There could be no societies if people did not share heritage and language, and civilization would cease to function if people did not agree on similar values and systems of social control.

Culture is preserved through transmission from one generation to the next, but it also evolves through processes of innovation, discovery, and cultural diffusion. As such, cultures are social constructions. The society approves or disapproves of items or ideas, which are therefore included or not in the culture. We may be restricted by the confines of our own culture, but as humans we have the ability to question values and make conscious decisions. No better evidence of this freedom exists than the amount of cultural diversity around the world. The more we study another culture, the better we become at understanding our own.

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4.1.6: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
beliefs	tenets or convictions that people hold to be true				
countercultures	groups that reject and oppose society's widely accepted cultural patterns				
cultural universals	patterns or traits that are globally common to all societies				
culture	shared beliefs, values, and practices				
culture lag	the gap of time between the introduction of material culture and nonmaterial culture's acceptance of it				
diffusion	the spread of material and nonmaterial culture from one culture to another				
discoveries	things and ideas found from what already exists				
ethnocentrism	the evaluation and judgment of another culture based on one's own cultural norms				
folkways	direct, appropriate behavior in the day-to-day practices and expressions of a culture				
formal norms	established, written rules				
globalization	the integration of international trade and finance markets				
high culture	the cultural patterns of a society's elite				
ideal culture	the standards a society would like to embrace and live up to				
informal norms	casual behaviors that are generally and widely conformed to				
innovations	new objects or ideas introduced to culture for the first time				
inventions	a combination of pieces of existing reality into new forms				
language	a symbolic system of communication				
mores	the moral views and principles of a group				
norms	the visible and invisible rules of conduct through which societies are structured				
popular culture	mainstream, widespread patterns among a society's population				
real culture	the way society really is based on what actually occurs and exists				
sanctions	a way to authorize or formally disapprove of certain behaviors				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
Sapir-Whorf hypothesis	the way that people understand the world based on their form of language				
social control	a way to encourage conformity to cultural norms				
society	people who live in a definable community and who share a culture				
subcultures	groups that share a specific identification, apart from a society's majority, even as the members exist within a larger society				
symbols	gestures or objects that have meanings associated with them that are recognized by people who share a culture				
values	a culture's standard for discerning what is good and just in society				

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4.1.7: Section Summary

3.1 What Is Culture?

Though “society” and “culture” are often used interchangeably, they have different meanings. A society is a group of people sharing a community and culture. The term culture generally describes the shared values, beliefs, norms, language, practices, and artifacts of these people, and includes material and nonmaterial elements. Our experience of cultural difference is influenced by our ethnocentrism (judging others using your cultural standards) and Xenocentrism (belief that another culture is superior). Sociologists practice cultural relativism (assessing others using their own cultural standards) although it is quite difficult.

3.2 Elements of Culture

A culture consists of many elements, such as the values and beliefs of its society. Culture is also governed by norms, including laws, mores (norms that embody moral views), and folkways (traditions without any moral underpinnings). The symbols and language of a society are key to developing and conveying culture. In a nutshell, the four main components are values, beliefs, norms, language, practices, and artifacts.

3.3 High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change

Sociologists recognize that there is a dominant culture or cultural practice that is dominant often characterized as the norm in a society as well as different types of cultures within societies. Societies also consist of many subcultures (a smaller cultural group within a larger culture). Some arese as a result of a shared identity or interest. Countercultures reject the dominant culture’s values and create their own cultural rules and norms. Cultural change can happen through invention or discovery. Cultures evolve via new ideas and new ways of thinking. In many modern cultures, the cornerstone of innovation is technology, the rapid growth of which can lead to cultural lag (time from creation or introduction to social acceptance). Technology is also responsible for the spread of both material and nonmaterial culture that contributes to globalization (the increase of movement and exchange of goods and ideas all over the planet).

3.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

There are three major theoretical approaches toward the interpretation of culture. A functionalist perspective acknowledges that the many parts of culture work together as a system to fulfill society’s needs. Functionalists view culture as a reflection of society’s values. Conflict theorists see culture as inherently unequal, reinforcing inequalities in gender, class, race, and age. Symbolic interactionists are primarily interested in culture as experienced in the daily interactions, interpretations, and exchanges between individuals and the symbols that comprise a culture. Various cultural and sociological occurrences can be explained by these theories. Each theory provides a different perspective or lens to help understand culture in societies.

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4.1.8: Section Quiz

3.1 What Is Culture?

1.

The terms _____ and _____ are often used interchangeably, but have nuances that differentiate them.

a. imperialism and relativism
b. culture and society
c. society and ethnocentrism
d. ethnocentrism and Xenocentrism

2.

The American flag is a material object that denotes the U.S. However, many associate ideas with the flag, like bravery and freedom. In this example, what are bravery and freedom?

a. Symbols
b. Language
c. Material culture
d. Nonmaterial culture

3.

The belief that one's culture is inferior to another culture is called:

a. ethnocentrism
b. nationalism
c. xenocentrism
d. imperialism

4.

The irrational fear or hatred of another culture is called:

a. ethnocentrism
b. xenophobia
c. xenophile
d. ethnophobia

5.

Rodney and Elise are U.S. students studying abroad in Italy. When they are introduced to their host families, the families kiss them on both cheeks. When Rodney's host brother introduces himself and kisses Rodney on both cheeks, Rodney pulls back in surprise. Where he is from, unless they are romantically involved, men do not kiss one another. This is an example of:

a. culture shock
b. imperialism
c. ethnocentrism
d. xenocentrism

6.

Most cultures have been found to identify laughter as a sign of humor, joy, or pleasure. Laughter is an examples of:

a. relativism

b. ethnocentrism
c. xenocentrism
d. universalism

3.2 Elements of Culture

7.

A nation's flag is:

a. A symbol
b. A value
c. A culture
d. A folkway

8.

The existence of social norms, both formal and informal, is one of the main things that inform _____, otherwise known as encouraging social conformity.

a. values
b. sanctions
c. social control
d. mores

9.

The biggest difference between mores and folkways is that

a. mores are linked to morality, whereas folkways are tied to commonplace behaviors
b. mores are absolute, whereas folkways are temporary
c. mores refer to material culture, whereas folkways refer to nonmaterial culture
d. mores refer to nonmaterial culture, whereas folkways refer to material culture

10.

The notion that people cannot feel or experience something that they do not have a word for can be explained by:

a. linguistics
b. Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
c. Ethnographic imagery
d. bilingualism

11.

Cultural sanctions can also be viewed as ways that society:

a. Establishes leaders
b. Determines language
c. Regulates behavior
d. Determines laws

3.3 High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change

12.

An example of high culture is _____, whereas an example of popular culture would be _____.

a. Dostoevsky style in film; "American Idol" winners
b. medical marijuana; film noir

c. country music; pop music
d. political theory; sociological theory

13.

The Ku Klux Klan is an example of what part of culture?

a. Counterculture
b. Subculture
c. Multiculturalism
d. pop culture

14.

Modern-day hipsters are an example of:

a. ethnocentricity
b. counterculture
c. subculture
d. high culture

15.

Your eighty-three-year-old grandmother has been using a computer for some time now. As a way to keep in touch, you frequently send emails of a few lines to let her know about your day. She calls after every email to respond point by point, but she has never emailed a response back. This can be viewed as an example of:

a. cultural lag
b. Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
c. Ethnographic imagery
d. bilingualism

16.

Some jobs today advertise in multinational markets and permit telecommuting in lieu of working from a primary location. This broadening of the job market and the way that jobs are performed can be attributed to:

a. cultural lag
b. diffusion
c. discovery
d. globalization

17.

The major difference between invention and discovery is:

a. Invention is based on technology, whereas discovery is usually based on culture
b. Discovery involves finding items that already exists, but invention puts things together in a new way
c. Invention refers to material culture, whereas discovery can be material or theoretic, like laws of physics
d. Invention is typically used to refer to prehistoric objects, whereas discovery refers to local culture

18.

McDonald's restaurants are found in almost every country around the world. What is this an example of?

a. globalization
b. diffusion
c. culture lag
d. xenocentrism

3.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Culture

19.

A sociologist conducts research into the ways that Hispanic American students are historically underprivileged in the U.S. education system. What theoretical approach is the sociologist Using?

a. Symbolic interactionism
b. Functionalism
c. Conflict theory
d. Ethnocentrism

20.

Members of a counterculture movement believed that the economic disparity between the highest and the mid to lower economic classes is growing at an exponentially alarming rate. A sociologist who studies that movement by examining the interactions between its members would most likely use what theoretical approach?

a. Symbolic interactionism
b. Functionalism
c. Conflict theory
d. Ethnocentrism

21.

What theoretical perspective views society as having a system of interdependent inherently connected parts?

a. Sociobiology
b. Functionalism
c. Conflict theory
d. Ethnocentrism

22.

The “American Dream”—the notion that anybody can be successful and rich if they work hard enough—is most commonly associated with which sociological theory?

a. Sociobiology
b. Functionalism
c. Conflict theory
d. Ethnocentrism

Short Answer

24.
23.

Consider a current social trend that you have witnessed, perhaps situated around family, education, transportation, or finances. For example, many veterans of the Armed Forces, after completing tours of duty in the Middle East, are returning to college rather than entering jobs as previous generations did. Choose a sociological approach—functionalism, conflict theory, or symbolic interactionism—to describe, explain, and analyze the social issue you choose. Afterward, determine why you chose the approach you did. Does it suit your own way of thinking? Or does it offer the most relevant method of illuminating the social issue?

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4.1.9: Short Answer

3.1 What Is Culture?

1.

Examine the difference between material and nonmaterial culture in your world. Identify ten objects that are part of your regular cultural experience. For each, then identify what aspects of nonmaterial culture (values, beliefs, norms, language, and practices) that these objects represent. What has this exercise revealed to you about your culture?

2.

Do you believe that feelings of ethnocentricity or xenocentric attitudes and practices are prevalent in U.S. culture? Why do you believe this? What issues or events might influence your ideas about these concepts?

3.2 Elements of Culture

3.

What do you think of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis? Do you agree or disagree with it? Cite examples or research to support your point of view.

4.

How would the elimination of a social “norm” influence your culture? Describe the positive and negative effects.

3.3 High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change

5.

Identify several examples of popular culture and describe how they form societal culture. How prevalent is the effect of these examples in your everyday life?

6.

Consider some of the specific issues or concerns of your generation. Are any ideas or concepts countercultural? What subcultures have emerged from your generation? How have the issues of your generation expressed themselves culturally? How has your generation made its mark on society’s collective culture?

7.

What are some examples of cultural lag that are present in your life? What influence does technology have on culture? Explain.

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4.1.10: Further Research

3.1 What Is Culture?

Ethnocentrism is a problem in many arenas. In the workplace, it can be hurtful and detrimental to an entire organization and especially to those who face mistreatment or feel unwelcome. People who exhibit ethnocentrism in the workplace are not only putting their careers at risk, but missing opportunities to flourish and advance with colleagues and customers of different backgrounds. In other words, curbing ethnocentrism is an important personal and societal goal, and it's important for careers. This guide from an executive leadership academy discusses ways that multicultural teams can create more success if the people and company undertake the correct practices.

3.2 Elements of Culture

The science-fiction novel, *Babel-17*, by Samuel R. Delaney was based upon the principles of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Read an excerpt from *Babel-17* here.

3.3 High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change

Many people believe that the time of the counterculture is over. Like many aspects of culture, it could come back at any time. In this interview, Princeton professor German Labrador and director of exhibitions at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona discuss the past, present, and potential future of counterculture.

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5: SOCIALIZATION AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

5.1: Socialization and Social Interactions

5.1.1: Introduction to Socialization and Social Interactions

5.1.2: The Importance of Socialization

5.1.3: Explaining Socialization

5.1.4: Agents of Socialization

5.1.5: Resocialization and Total Institutions

5.1.6: Social Interaction

5.1.S: Socialization and Social Interactions (Summary)

5.2: Dramaturgy (Dramaturgical Analysis)

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5.1: SOCIALIZATION AND SOCIAL INTERACTIONS



- Topic hierarchy

5.1.1: Introduction to Socialization and Social Interactions

5.1.2: The Importance of Socialization

5.1.3: Explaining Socialization

5.1.4: Agents of Socialization

5.1.5: Resocialization and Total Institutions

5.1.6: Social Interaction

5.1.S: Socialization and Social Interactions (Summary)

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5.1.1: Introduction to Socialization and Social Interactions

Social Issues in the News

“Lessons from Charlie Howard’s Death,” the headline of the op-ed column said. On July 7, 2009, Bangor, Maine, marked the 25th anniversary of the death of Charlie Howard, an openly gay, 23-year-old man who was beaten and thrown off a bridge into a river by three teenagers on July 7, 1984. Howard could not swim and drowned. His three assailants eventually pleaded guilty to manslaughter and were sentenced to a juvenile correction center. One of the lessons of his death, wrote the columnist, a theology professor, is the need to challenge the hateful mindset that underlies homophobia. “The three youth who killed Charlie Howard were not social rebels acting out against societal norms and values,” he wrote, but instead “were social conformists who thought they would be rewarded for acting in conformity to this community’s norms. In fact, when the three boys returned to Bangor High School, they were cheered as heroes by their peers and some adults.” (Ellison, 2009)

Why did three teenagers in a small town beat a gay man and hurl him to his death a quarter-century ago? We may never know, but it seems obvious that they had learned to hate gays from community norms back then and perhaps also from some of the many people with whom they interacted every day. This was not the first hate crime against a gay man or other individual, nor was it the last, but it nonetheless illustrates one of the ugly aspects of the many things we learn from our culture and from the people around us. We learn many good things, all necessary to have a society, but we can also learn some very harmful ideas.

The stories of Sarah Patton Boyle and Lillian Smith illustrate this all too well. Sarah Patton Boyle was born in 1906 to one of the leading families of Virginia. A great-grandfather had been a prominent attorney and acting governor of the state; both her grandfathers led illustrious military careers; her father was a respected Episcopalian minister. She was raised on the plantation on which her ancestors had once owned slaves, and her family employed several African American servants.

It was in this setting that little Sarah learned to be racially prejudiced. She was forbidden to visit the servants’ rooms, which, she was told, were filthy and ridden with disease. The servants themselves were not allowed to use the family’s bathroom or china, lest they spread disease from the germs they were assumed to harbor. Sarah’s mother loved her servants the same way she loved the family’s pets, “without the slightest feeling that they were much like herself,” and taught Sarah that African Americans “belonged to a lower order of man than we” (Boyle, 1962, p. 14). When Sarah turned 12, she was told to stop playing with the servants’ children because she was now too old to be “familiar” with black youngsters, and she then endured a “dreadful training period” in which she was scolded if she forgot her new, standoffish role. She learned during the next few years to treat whites better than blacks. When Sarah’s adolescence ended, she was “as close to a typical Southern lady as anyone ever is to a typical anything” (Boyle, 1962, pp. 14, 29). Her racial views stayed with her for many years.



Figure 5.1.1.1: Whites like Sarah Patton Boyle and Lillian Smith, who grew up in the South before the 1960s civil rights movement, learned to be racially prejudiced toward African Americans. Source: Photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress, http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8c10944.

Lillian Smith learned similar beliefs after her birth, a few years before Sarah's, to a wealthy family in Florida. She learned about taboos and manners in race relations just as she learned her games, prayers, and other childhood practices. A central lesson was that "I was better than a Negro, that all black folks have their place and must be kept in it,...that a terrifying disaster would befall the South if ever I treated a Negro as my social equal" (Smith, 1949, p. 17). Her parents played a prime role in this learning process: "The mother who taught me what I know of tenderness and love and compassion taught me also the bleak rituals of keeping Negroes in their place. The father who...reminding me that 'all men are brothers,' trained me in the steel-rigid decorums I must demand of every colored male. They...taught me also to split my conscience from my acts and Christianity from Southern tradition" (Smith, 1949, pp. 17–18).These racial views also stuck with her for many years.

Thanks to the civil rights movement, the South is much different, of course, from when Sarah Patton Boyle and Lillian Smith were growing up, but their poignant descriptions and Charlie Howard's death remind us that children and adolescents learn all sorts of things, good or bad, without formal instruction. They learn these things from their parents, their friends, and other parts of their social environment. The things they learn constitute their culture: norms, values, and symbols. Socialization is the term sociologists use to describe the process by which people learn their culture. Socialization occurs in societies big and small, simple and complex, preindustrial and industrial. It happens in the United States, in Brazil, in Saudi Arabia, and in Indonesia. Without socialization we would not learn our culture, and, as the previous chapter indicated, without culture we could not have a society. Socialization, then, is an essential process for any society to be possible.

This chapter examines several aspects of socialization and social interaction. In so doing it continues developing the sociological perspective addressed by the previous two chapters, as we will again see the ways in which our social environment shapes our thoughts, actions, and life chances.

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5.1.2: The Importance of Socialization

Social Issues in the News

“Lessons from Charlie Howard’s Death,” the headline of the op-ed column said. On July 7, 2009, Bangor, Maine, marked the 25th anniversary of the death of Charlie Howard, an openly gay, 23-year-old man who was beaten and thrown off a bridge into a river by three teenagers on July 7, 1984. Howard could not swim and drowned. His three assailants eventually pleaded guilty to manslaughter and were sentenced to a juvenile correction center. One of the lessons of his death, wrote the columnist, a theology professor, is the need to challenge the hateful mindset that underlies homophobia. “The three youth who killed Charlie Howard were not social rebels acting out against societal norms and values,” he wrote, but instead “were social conformists who thought they would be rewarded for acting in conformity to this community’s norms. In fact, when the three boys returned to Bangor High School, they were cheered as heroes by their peers and some adults.” (Ellison, 2009)

Why did three teenagers in a small town beat a gay man and hurl him to his death a quarter-century ago? We may never know, but it seems obvious that they had learned to hate gays from community norms back then and perhaps also from some of the many people with whom they interacted every day. This was not the first hate crime against a gay man or other individual, nor was it the last, but it nonetheless illustrates one of the ugly aspects of the many things we learn from our culture and from the people around us. We learn many good things, all necessary to have a society, but we can also learn some very harmful ideas.

The stories of Sarah Patton Boyle and Lillian Smith illustrate this all too well. Sarah Patton Boyle was born in 1906 to one of the leading families of Virginia. A great-grandfather had been a prominent attorney and acting governor of the state; both her grandfathers led illustrious military careers; her father was a respected Episcopalian minister. She was raised on the plantation on which her ancestors had once owned slaves, and her family employed several African American servants.

It was in this setting that little Sarah learned to be racially prejudiced. She was forbidden to visit the servants’ rooms, which, she was told, were filthy and ridden with disease. The servants themselves were not allowed to use the family’s bathroom or china, lest they spread disease from the germs they were assumed to harbor. Sarah’s mother loved her servants the same way she loved the family’s pets, “without the slightest feeling that they were much like herself,” and taught Sarah that African Americans “belonged to a lower order of man than we” (Boyle, 1962, p. 14). When Sarah turned 12, she was told to stop playing with the servants’ children because she was now too old to be “familiar” with black youngsters, and she then endured a “dreadful training period” in which she was scolded if she forgot her new, standoffish role. She learned during the next few years to treat whites better than blacks. When Sarah’s adolescence ended, she was “as close to a typical Southern lady as anyone ever is to a typical anything” (Boyle, 1962, pp. 14, 29). Her racial views stayed with her for many years.



Figure 5.1.2.1: Whites like Sarah Patton Boyle and Lillian Smith, who grew up in the South before the 1960s civil rights movement, learned to be racially prejudiced toward African Americans. Source: Photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress, http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8c10944.

Lillian Smith learned similar beliefs after her birth, a few years before Sarah's, to a wealthy family in Florida. She learned about taboos and manners in race relations just as she learned her games, prayers, and other childhood practices. A central lesson was that "I was better than a Negro, that all black folks have their place and must be kept in it,...that a terrifying disaster would befall the South if ever I treated a Negro as my social equal" (Smith, 1949, p. 17). Her parents played a prime role in this learning process: "The mother who taught me what I know of tenderness and love and compassion taught me also the bleak rituals of keeping Negroes in their place. The father who...reminding me that 'all men are brothers,' trained me in the steel-rigid decorums I must demand of every colored male. They...taught me also to split my conscience from my acts and Christianity from Southern tradition" (Smith, 1949, pp. 17–18).These racial views also stuck with her for many years.

Thanks to the civil rights movement, the South is much different, of course, from when Sarah Patton Boyle and Lillian Smith were growing up, but their poignant descriptions and Charlie Howard's death remind us that children and adolescents learn all sorts of things, good or bad, without formal instruction. They learn these things from their parents, their friends, and other parts of their social environment. The things they learn constitute their culture: norms, values, and symbols. Socialization is the term sociologists use to describe the process by which people learn their culture. Socialization occurs in societies big and small, simple and complex, preindustrial and industrial. It happens in the United States, in Brazil, in Saudi Arabia, and in Indonesia. Without socialization we would not learn our culture, and, as the previous chapter indicated, without culture we could not have a society. Socialization, then, is an essential process for any society to be possible.

This chapter examines several aspects of socialization and social interaction. In so doing it continues developing the sociological perspective addressed by the previous two chapters, as we will again see the ways in which our social environment shapes our thoughts, actions, and life chances.

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5.1.3: Explaining Socialization

Learning Objectives

- Describe the theories of Cooley, Mead, Freud, Piaget, Kohlberg, Gilligan, and Erikson.

Because socialization is so important, scholars in various fields have tried to understand how and why it occurs, with different scholars looking at different aspects of the process. Their efforts mostly focus on infancy, childhood, and adolescence, which are the critical years for socialization, but some have also looked at how socialization continues through the life course. Let's examine some of the major theories of socialization, which are summarized in Table 5.1.3.1.

Table 5.1.3.1: Theory Snapshot

Theory	Major figure(s)	Major assumptions
Looking-glass self	Charles Horton Cooley	Children gain an impression of how people perceive them as the children interact with them. In effect, children "see" themselves when they interact with other people, as if they are looking in a mirror. Individuals use the perceptions that others have of them to develop judgments and feelings about themselves.
Taking the role of the other	George Herbert Mead	Children pretend to be other people in their play and in so doing learn what these other people expect of them. Younger children take the role of significant others, or the people, most typically parents and siblings, who have the most contact with them; older children when they play sports and other games take on the roles of other people and internalize the expectations of the generalized other, or society itself.
Psychoanalytic	Sigmund Freud	The personality consists of the id, ego, and superego. If a child does not develop normally and the superego does not become strong enough to overcome the id, antisocial behavior may result.
Cognitive development	Jean Piaget	Cognitive development occurs through four stages. The final stage is the formal operational stage, which begins at age 12 as children begin to use general principles to resolve various problems.
Moral development	Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan	Children develop their ability to think and act morally through several stages. If they fail to reach the conventional stage, in which adolescents realize that their parents and society have rules that should be followed because they are morally right to follow, they might well engage in harmful behavior. Whereas boys tend to use formal rules to decide what is right or wrong, girls tend to take personal relationships into account.
Identity development	Erik Erikson	Identity development encompasses eight stages across the life course. The fifth stage occurs in adolescence and is especially critical because teenagers often experience an identity crisis as they move from childhood to adulthood.

Sociological Explanations: The Development of the Self

One set of explanations, and the most sociological of those we discuss, looks at how the self, or one's identity, self-concept, and self-image, develops. These explanations stress that we learn how to interact by first interacting with others and that we do so by using this interaction to gain an idea of who we are and what they expect of us.

Charles Horton Cooley

Among the first to advance this view was Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929), who said that by interacting with other people we gain an impression of how they perceive us. In effect, we "see" ourselves when we interact with other people, as if we are looking in a mirror when we are with them. Cooley (1902) developed his famous concept of the looking-glass self to summarize this process. Cooley said we first imagine how we appear to others and then imagine how they think of us and, more specifically, whether they are evaluating us positively or negatively. We then use these perceptions to develop judgments and feelings about

ourselves, such as pride or embarrassment.



Figure 5.1.3.2: Charles Horton Cooley wrote that we gain an impression of ourselves by interacting with other people. By doing so, we "see" ourselves as if we are looking in a mirror when we are with them. Cooley developed his famous concept of the looking-glass self to summarize this process. © Thinkstock

Sometimes errors occur in this complex process, as we may misperceive how others regard us and develop misguided judgments of our behavior and feelings. For example, you may have been in a situation where someone laughed at what you said, and you thought they were mocking you, when in fact they just thought you were being funny. Although you should have interpreted their laughter positively, you interpreted it negatively and probably felt stupid or embarrassed.

Whether errors occur or not, the process Cooley described is especially critical during childhood and adolescence, when our self is still in a state of flux. Imagine how much better children on a sports team feel after being cheered for making a great play or how children in the school band feel after a standing ovation at the end of the band's performance. If they feel better about themselves, they may do that much better next time. For better or worse, the reverse is also true. If children do poorly on the sports field or in a school performance and the applause they hoped for does not occur, they may feel dejected and worse about themselves and from frustration or anxiety perform worse the next time around.

Yet it is also true that the looking-glass-self process affects us throughout our lives. By the time we get out of late adolescence and into our early adult years, we have very much developed our conception of our self, yet this development is never complete. As young, middle-aged, or older adults, we continue to react to our perceptions of how others are viewing us, and these perceptions influence our conception of our self, even if this influence is often less than was true in our younger years. Whether our social interaction is with friends, relatives, coworkers, supervisors, or even strangers, our self continues to change.

George Herbert Mead

Another scholar who discussed the development of the self was George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), a founder of the field of symbolic interactionism discussed in Chapter 1. Mead's (1934). main emphasis was on children's playing, which he saw as central to their understanding of how people should interact. When they play, Mead said, children take the role of the other. This means they pretend to be other people in their play and in so doing learn what these other people expect of them. For example, when children play house and pretend to be their parents, they treat their dolls the way they think their parents treat them. In so doing, they get a better idea of how they are expected to behave. Another way of saying this is that they internalize the expectations other people have of them.

Younger children, said Mead, take the role of significant others, or the people, most typically parents and siblings, who have the most contact with them. Older children take on the roles of other people and learn society's expectations as a whole. In so doing they internalize the expectations of what Mead called the generalized other, or society itself.

This whole process, Mead wrote, involves several stages. In the *imitation* stage, infants can only imitate behavior without really

understanding its purposes. If their parents rub their own bellies and laugh, 1-year-olds may do likewise. After they reach the age of 3, they are in the *play* stage. Here most of their play is by themselves or with only one or two other children, and much of it involves pretending to be other people: their parents, teachers, superheroes, television characters, and so forth. In this stage they begin taking the role of the other. Once they reach age 6 or 7, or roughly the time school begins, the *games* stage begins, and children start playing in team sports and games. The many players in these games perform many kinds of roles, and they must all learn to anticipate the actions of other members of their team. In so doing, they learn what is expected of the roles all team members are supposed to play and by extension begin to understand the roles society wants us to play, or to use Mead's term, the expectations of the generalized other.

Mead felt that the self has two parts, the "I" and the "me." The "*I*" is the creative, spontaneous part of the self, while the "*me*" is the more passive part of the self stemming from the internalized expectations of the larger society. These two parts are not at odds, he thought, but instead complement each other and thus enhance the individual's contributions to society. Society needs creativity, but it also needs at least some minimum of conformity. The development of both these parts of the self is important not only for the individual but also for the society to which the individual belongs.

Social-Psychological Explanations: Personality and Cognitive and Moral Development

A second set of explanations is more psychological, as it focuses on the development of personality, cognitive ability, and morality.

Sigmund Freud and the Unconscious Personality

Whereas Cooley and Mead focused on interaction with others in explaining the development of the self, the great psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) focused on unconscious, biological forces that he felt shape individual personality. Freud (1933). thought that the personality consists of three parts: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id is the selfish part of the personality and consists of biological instincts that all babies have, including the need for food and, more generally, the demand for immediate gratification. As babies get older, they learn that not all their needs can be immediately satisfied and thus develop the ego, or the rational part of the personality. As children get older still, they internalize society's norms and values and thus begin to develop their superego, which represents society's conscience. If a child does not develop normally and the superego does not become strong enough, the individual is more at risk for being driven by the id to commit antisocial behavior.

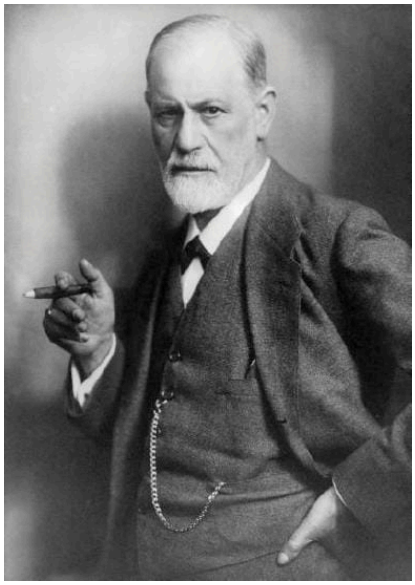


Figure 5.1.3.3: Sigmund Freud believed that the personality consists of three parts: the id, ego, and superego. The development of these biological forces helps shape an individual's personality. Source: Photo courtesy of LIFE Photo Archive, http://images.google.com/hosted/life...*5a47b1b422*cca3.

Freud's basic view that an individual's personality and behavior develop from within conflicts with sociology's emphasis on the social environment. That is not to say his view is wrong, but it is to say that it neglects the many very important influences

highlighted by sociologists. In another problem, Freud's views on women reflected the sexism of the Victorian era in which he lived. He thought that having and raising babies was women's natural, desired role in life and that women who desired careers were mentally ill because they had not adjusted to this role. Freud's views on women were heavily criticized by the contemporary women's movement at its outset in the 1960s (Friedan, 1963; Millett, 1970).

Piaget and Cognitive Development

Children acquire a self and personality, but they also learn how to think and reason. The way they acquire such cognitive development was the focus of research by Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980) thought that cognitive development occurs through four stages and that proper maturation of the brain and socialization were necessary for adequate development.

The first stage is the *sensorimotor* stage, in which infants cannot really think or reason and instead use their hearing, vision, and other senses to discover the world around them. The second stage is the *preoperational* stage, lasting from about age 2 to age 7, in which children begin to use symbols, especially words, to understand objects and simple ideas. The third stage is the *concrete operational* stage, lasting from about age 7 to age 11 or 12, in which children begin to think in terms of cause and effect but still do not understand underlying principles of fairness, justice, and related concepts. The fourth and final stage is the *formal operational* stage, which begins about the age of 12. Here children begin to think abstractly and use general principles to resolve various problems.

Recent research supports Piaget's emphasis on the importance of the early years for children's cognitive development. Scientists have found that brain activity develops rapidly in the earliest years of life, and that stimulation from a child's social environment enhances this development. Conversely, a lack of stimulation impairs it, and children whose parents or other caregivers routinely play with them and talk, sing, and read to them have much better neurological and cognitive development than other children (Riley, San Juan, Klinkner, & Ramminger, 2009). By providing a biological basis for the importance of human stimulation for children, this research underscores both the significance of interaction and the dangers of social isolation. For both biological and social reasons, socialization is not fully possible without extensive social interaction.

Kohlberg, Gilligan, and Moral Development

An important part of children's reasoning is their ability to distinguish right from wrong and to decide on what is morally correct to do. Psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987) said that children develop their ability to think and act morally through several stages. In the *preconventional* stage, young children equate what is morally right simply to what keeps them from getting punished. In the *conventional* stage, adolescents realize that their parents and society have rules that should be followed because they are morally right to follow, not just because disobeying them leads to punishment. At the *postconventional* stage, which occurs in late adolescence and early adulthood, individuals realize that higher moral standards may supersede those of their own society and even decide to disobey the law in the name of these higher standards. If people fail to reach at least the conventional stage, Kohlberg (1969) said, they do not develop a conscience and instead might well engage in harmful behavior if they think they will not be punished. Incomplete moral development, Kohlberg concluded, was a prime cause of antisocial behavior.



Figure 5.1.3.4: Carol Gilligan believes that girls take personal relationships into account during their moral development. © Thinkstock

One problem with Kohlberg's research was that he studied only boys. That raises the question of whether girls go through similar stages of moral development. Carol Gilligan (1982) concluded that they do not. Whereas boys tend to use formal rules to decide what is right or wrong, she wrote, girls tend to take personal relationships into account. If people break a rule because of some important personal need or because they are trying to help someone, then their behavior may not be wrong. To use other terminology, males tend to use impersonal, *universalistic* criteria for moral decision making, whereas females tend to use more individual, *particularistic* criteria.

An example from children's play may illustrate the difference between these two forms of moral reasoning. If boys are playing a sport, say basketball, and a player says he was fouled, they may disagree—sometimes heatedly—over how much contact occurred and whether it indeed was enough to be a foul. In contrast, girls in a similar situation may decide in the interest of having everyone get along to call the play a "do-over."

Erikson and Identity Development

We noted earlier that the development of the self is not limited to childhood but instead continues throughout the life span. More generally, although socialization is most important during childhood and adolescence, it, too, continues throughout the life span. Psychologist Erik Erikson (1902–1990) explicitly recognized this central fact in his theory of *identity development* (Erikson, 1980). This sort of development, he said, encompasses eight stages of life across the life course. In the first four stages, occurring in succession from birth to age 12, children ideally learn trust, self-control, and independence and also learn how to do tasks whose complexity increases with their age. If all this development goes well, they develop a positive identity, or self-image.

The fifth stage occurs in adolescence and is especially critical, said Erikson, because teenagers often experience an *identity crisis*. This crisis occurs because adolescence is a transition between childhood and adulthood: adolescents are leaving childhood but have not yet achieved adulthood. As they try to work through all the complexities of adolescence, teenagers may become rebellious at times, but most eventually enter young adulthood with their identities mostly settled. Stages 6, 7, and 8 involve young adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood, respectively. In each of these stages, people's identity development is directly related to their family and work roles. In late adulthood, people reflect on their lives while trying to remain contributing members of society. Stage 8 can be a particularly troubling stage for many people, as they realize their lives are almost over.

Conclusion

- Cooley and Mead explained how one's self-concept and self-image develop.
- Freud focused on the need to develop a proper balance among the id, ego, and superego.
- Piaget wrote that cognitive development among children and adolescents occurs from four stages of social interaction.
- Kohlberg wrote about stages of moral development and emphasized the importance of formal rules, while Gilligan emphasized that girls' moral development takes into account personal relationships.

- Erikson's theory of identity development encompasses eight stages, from infancy through old age.

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For Your Review

1. Select one of the theories of socialization in this section, and write about how it helps you to understand your own socialization.
2. Gilligan emphasized that girls take social relationships into account in their moral development, while boys tend to stress the importance of formal rules. Do you agree with her argument? Why or why not?

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5.1.4: Agents of Socialization

Learning Objectives

- Identify five agents of socialization.
- Describe good and bad aspects of the socialization these agents produce.

Several institutional and other sources of socialization exist and are called *agents of socialization*. The first of these, the family, is certainly the most important agent of socialization for infants and young children.

The Family

Should parents get the credit when their children turn out to be good kids and even go on to accomplish great things in life? Should they get the blame if their children turn out to be bad? No parent deserves all the credit or blame for their children's successes and failures in life, but the evidence indicates that our parents do affect us profoundly. In many ways, we even end up resembling our parents in more than just appearance.



Figure 5.1.4.1: The family is perhaps the most important agent of socialization for children. Parents' values and behavior patterns profoundly influence those of their daughters and sons. © Thinkstock

The reason we turn out much like our parents, for better or worse, is that our families are such an important part of our socialization process. When we are born, our primary caregivers are almost always one or both of our parents. For several years we have more contact with them than with any other adults. Because this contact occurs in our most formative years, our parents' interaction with us and the messages they teach us can have a profound impact throughout our lives, as indicated by the stories of Sarah Patton Boyle and Lillian Smith presented earlier.

The ways in which our parents socialize us depend on many factors, two of the most important of which are our parents' social class and our own biological sex. Melvin Kohn (1965; 1977)

found that working-class and middle-class parents tend to socialize their children very differently. Kohn reasoned that working-class parents tend to hold factory and other jobs in which they have little autonomy and instead are told what to do and how to do it. In such jobs, obedience is an important value, lest the workers be punished for not doing their jobs correctly. Working-class parents, Kohn thought, should thus emphasize obedience and respect for authority as they raise their children, and they should favor spanking as a primary way of disciplining their kids when they disobey. In contrast, middle-class parents tend to hold white-collar jobs where autonomy and independent judgment are valued and workers get ahead by being creative. These parents should

emphasize independence as they raise their children and should be less likely than working-class parents to spank their kids when they disobey.

Sociology Making a Difference

Understanding Racial Socialization

In a society that is still racially prejudiced, African American parents continue to find it necessary to teach their children about African American culture and to prepare them for the bias and discrimination they can expect to encounter. Scholars in sociology and other disciplines have studied this process of *racial socialization*. One of their most interesting findings is that African American parents differ in the degree of racial socialization they practice: some parents emphasize African American identity and racial prejudice to a considerable degree, while other parents mention these topics to their children only minimally. The reasons for these differences have remained unclear.

Sociologist Jason E. Shelton (2008)analyzed data from a national random sample of African Americans to determine these reasons, in what he called "one of the most comprehensive analyses to date of racial socialization strategies among African Americans" (p. 237). Among other questions, respondents were asked whether "in raising your children, have you done or told them things to help them know what it means to be Black." They were also asked whether "there are any other things you've done or told your children to help them know how to get along with White people."

In his major results, Shelton found that respondents were more likely to practice racial socialization if they were older, female, and living outside the South; if they perceived that racial discrimination was a growing problem and were members of civil rights and other organizations aimed at helping African Americans; and if they had higher incomes.

These results led Shelton to conclude that "African Americans are not a culturally monolithic group," as they differ in "the parental lessons they impart to their children about race relations" (p. 253). Further, the parents who do practice racial socialization "do so in order to demystify and empower their offspring to seize opportunities in the larger society" (p. 253).

Shelton's study helps us to understand the factors accounting for differences in racial socialization by African American parents, and it also helps us understand that the parents who do attempt to make their children aware of U.S. race relations are merely trying, as most parents do, to help their children get ahead in life. By increasing our understanding of these matters, Shelton's research has helped make a difference.

If parents' social class influences how they raise their children, it is also true that the sex of their children affects how they are socialized by their parents. Many studies find that parents raise their daughters and sons quite differently as they interact with them from birth. We will explore this further in Chapter 8, but suffice it to say here that parents help their girls learn how to act and think "like girls," and they help their boys learn how to act and think "like boys." That is, they help their daughters and sons learn their gender (Wood, 2009). For example, they are gentler with their daughters and rougher with their sons. They give their girls dolls to play with, and their sons guns. Girls may be made of "sugar and spice and everything nice" and boys something quite different, but their parents help them greatly, for better or worse, to turn out that way. To the extent this is true, our gender stems much more from socialization than from biological differences between the sexes, or so most sociologists probably assume. To return to a question posed earlier, if Gilligan is right that boys and girls reach moral judgments differently, socialization matters more than biology for how they reach these judgments.

As the "Learning From Other Societies" box illustrates, various cultures socialize their children differently. We can also examine cross-cultural variation in socialization with data from the World Values Survey, which was administered to almost six dozen nations. Figure 5.1.4.2 shows the percentage of people in several countries who list obedience as an "especially important" quality for children to learn. Here we see some striking differences in the value placed on obedience, with the United States falling somewhat in between the nations in the figure.

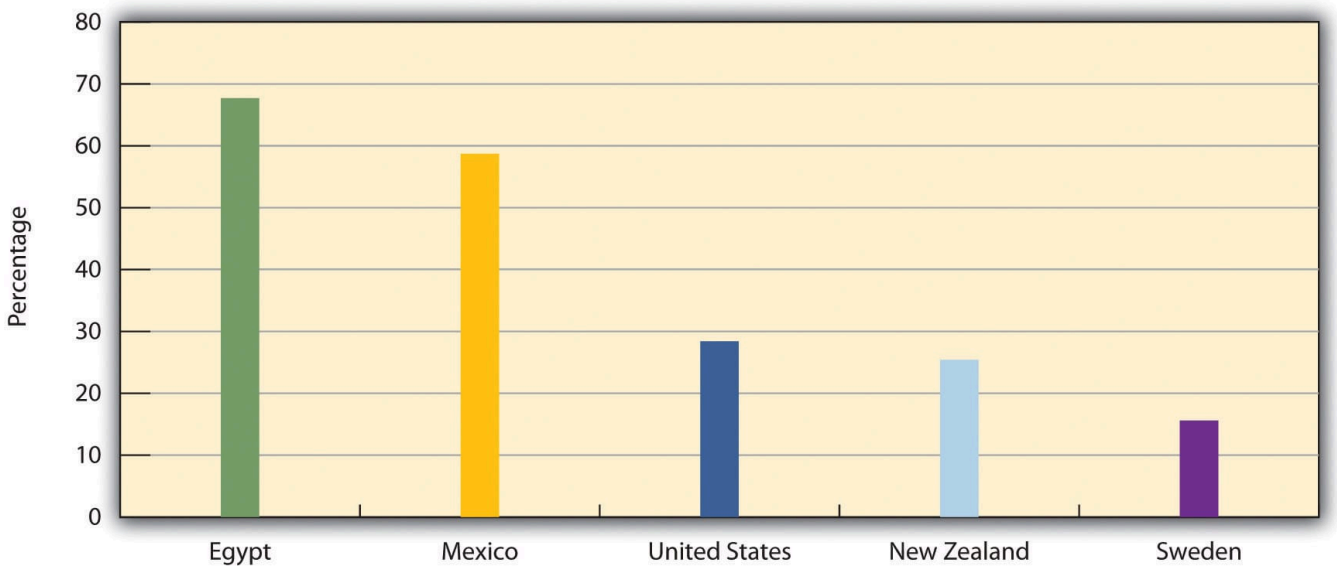


Figure 5.1.4.2: Percentage Believing That Obedience Is Especially Important for a Child to Learn. Source: Data from World Values Survey, 2005–2008.

Learning From Other Societies: Children and Socialization in Japan

This chapter ends with the observation that American children need to be socialized with certain values in order for our society to be able to address many of the social issues, including hate crimes and violence against women, facing it. As we consider the socialization of American children, the experience of Japan offers a valuable lesson.

Recall from Chapter 2 that Japan's culture emphasizes harmony, cooperation, and respect for authority in Japan's culture. Socialization in Japan is highly oriented toward the teaching of the values just listed, with much of it stressing the importance of belonging to a group and dependence, instead of individual autonomy and independence. This is especially true in Japanese schools, which, as two sociologists write, "stress the similarity of all children, and the importance of the group" (Schneider & Silverman, 2010, p. 24).Let's see how this happens (Hendry, 1987; Schwalb & Schwalb, 1996).

From the time they begin school, Japanese children learn to value their membership in their homeroom, or *kumi*, and they spend several years in the same *kumi*. Each *kumi* treats its classroom as a "home away from home," as the children arrange the classroom furniture, bring in plants and other things from their own homes, and clean the classroom every day. At recess one *kumi* will play against another. In an interesting difference from standard practice in the United States, a *kumi* in junior high school will stay in its classroom while the teachers for, say, math and social science move from one classroom to another. In the United States, of course, the opposite is true: teachers stay in their classrooms, and students move from one room to another.

Other practices in Japanese schools further the learning of Japanese values. Young schoolchildren wear the same uniforms. Japanese teachers use constant drills to teach them how to bow, and they have the children repeatedly stand up and sit down as a group. These practices help students learn respect for authority and help to enhance the sense of group belonging that the *kumi* represents. Whereas teachers in the United States routinely call on individual students to answer a question, Japanese teachers rarely do this. Rather than competing with each other for a good grade, Japanese schoolchildren are evaluated according to the performance of the *kumi* as a whole. Because decision making within the *kumi* is done by consensus, the children learn the need to compromise and to respect each other's feelings.

Because the members of a *kumi* spend so much time together for so many years, they develop extremely close friendships and think of themselves more as members of the *kumi* than as individuals. They become very loyal to the *kumi* and put its interests above their own individual interests. In these and other ways, socialization in Japanese schools helps the children and adolescents there learn the Japanese values of harmony, group loyalty, and respect for authority. If American children learned these values to a greater degree, it would be easier to address violence and other issues facing the United States.

Schools

Schools socialize children by teaching them their formal curriculum but also a hidden curriculum. The formal curriculum is the "three Rs": reading, writing, and arithmetic. But there is also a *hidden curriculum* that schools impart, and that is the cultural values of the society in which the schools are found.

To help you understand the hidden curriculum, pretend you could wave a magic wand and start your own society. Because you would probably want children to grow up loving their country and respecting your authority, you realize their schooling needs to help them grow up this way. What would you do in the schools to make sure this happens? Write a few ideas down on a separate sheet of paper.

Here is a list you might have written. First, because you want children to grow up respecting your authority, it is important for them to respect authority in general. You would thus have them sit in rows and learn from kindergarten on that they should do whatever their teacher and principal tell them. Second, you would make sure that their history lessons emphasize only positive things about the country's past. Of course, because you just invented this country with a magic wand, it has no past, so you make it up. Naturally, you want to pretend that the country had a great past—that it was a land that promised freedom and opportunity to people moving to it from poor, oppressed countries overseas, for example, and that many people indeed were able to find this opportunity and become quite successful.

Third, you would probably want schoolchildren to learn songs that extolled your country's virtues. At a minimum, these songs would talk about the freedom in your country and about its natural beauty. Ideally, children would sing these songs every day, or at least once or twice a week. After several years of coming to school and learning to obey their teachers and principal, of learning about how great their country was in the past, and of singing songs praising their country, you would have gone a long way toward socializing the children in your society to love their country and to respect your authority.

Now this has been magic wand time, but weren't you raised (assuming you grew up in the United States) in a society that sounds suspiciously like this one? Wasn't your schooling eerily similar to the type just described? No one deliberately went out to brainwash you once you started kindergarten, of course, but the processes and consequences of your early schooling were still quite similar to the more conspiratorial type just described. There is not necessarily anything wrong with that, but it does illustrate, for better or worse, that schools are an important agent of socialization. As the "Learning From Other Societies" box illustrated, this is especially true in Japan, where schooling helps instill the traditional Japanese values of harmony, group loyalty, and respect for authority.

Besides the values and beliefs just discussed, schools also teach us through their tests and grading to be competitive. Implicitly, they teach us that failure—in this case poor grades—stems from not studying hard enough and, more generally, from not trying hard enough (Booher-Jennings, 2008; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). This process reinforces the blaming-the-victim ideology discussed in the previous chapters. Again, no one conspires for this to happen, but it happens nonetheless. Schools are also a significant source of gender socialization, as even in this modern day, teachers and curriculum send out various messages that reinforce the qualities traditionally ascribed to females and males, and students engage in recess and other extracurricular activities that do the same thing (Booher-Jennings, 2008; Thorne, 1993).

Peers

When you were a 16-year-old, how many times did you complain to your parent(s), "All of my friends are [doing so and so]. Why can't I? It isn't fair!" As this all-too-common example indicates, our friends play a very important role in our lives. This is especially true during adolescence, when peers influence our tastes in music, clothes, and so many other aspects of our lives, as the now common image of the teenager always on a cell phone reminds us. But friends are important during other parts of the life course as well. We rely on them for fun, for emotional comfort and support, and for companionship.



Figure 5.1.4.3. Our peers also help socialize us and may even induce us to violate social norms. © Thinkstock

That is the upside of friendships. The downside is called *peer pressure*, with which you are undoubtedly familiar. Suppose it is Friday night and you are studying for a big exam on Monday. Your friends come by and ask you to go with them to get a pizza and the beverage of your choice. You would probably agree to go with them, partly because you really dislike studying on a Friday night, but also because there is at least some subtle pressure on you to do so. As this example indicates, our friends can influence us in many ways. During adolescence, their interests can affect our own interests in film, music, and other aspects of popular culture. More ominously, adolescent peer influences have been implicated in underage drinking, drug use, delinquency, and hate crimes, such as the killing of Charlie Howard, recounted at the beginning of this chapter (Agnew, 2007) (see Chapter 5).

After we reach our 20s and 30s, our peers become less important in our lives, especially if we get married. Yet even then our peers do not lose all their importance, as married couples with young children still manage to get out with friends now and then. Scholars have also begun to emphasize the importance of friendships with coworkers for emotional and practical support and for our continuing socialization (Elsesser & Peplau, 2006; Marks, 1994).

The Mass Media

The mass media are another agent of socialization. Social Media, digital media, television, radio, movies, popular music, magazines, internet, advertising, and other aspects of the mass media influence our political views; our tastes in popular culture; our views of women, people of color, and gays; and many other beliefs and practices.

In an ongoing controversy, the mass media are often blamed for youth violence and many other of our society's ills. The average child sees thousands of acts of violence on television and in the movies before reaching young adulthood. Rap lyrics often seemingly extol very ugly violence, including violence against women. Commercials can greatly influence our choice of soda, shoes, and countless other products. The mass media also reinforce racial and gender stereotypes, including the belief that women are sex objects and suitable targets of male violence. In the General Social Survey (GSS), about 28% of respondents said that they watch four or more hours of television every day, while another 46% watch 2-3 hours daily (see Figure 5.1.4.4). The mass media certainly are an important source of socialization unimaginable a half-century ago.

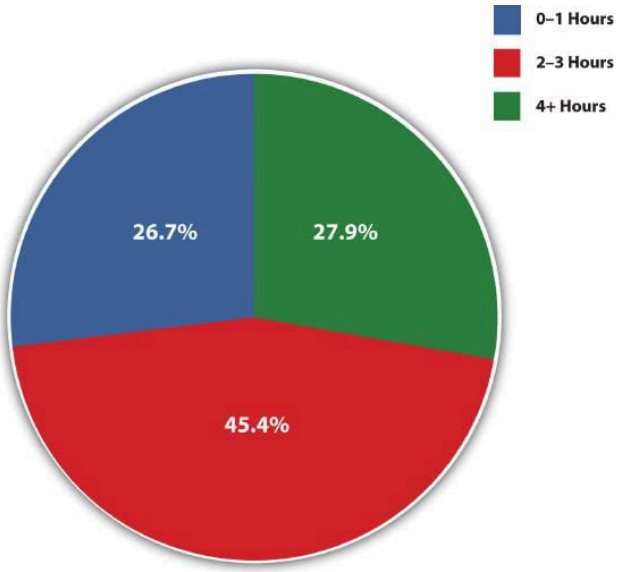


Figure 5.1.4.4: Average Number of Hours of Television Watched Daily. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

As the mass media socialize children, adolescents, and even adults, a key question is the extent to which media violence causes violence in our society (Surette, 2011). Studies consistently uncover a strong correlation between watching violent television shows and movies and committing violence. However, this does not necessarily mean that watching the violence actually causes violent behavior: perhaps people watch violence because they are already interested in it and perhaps even committing it. Scholars continue to debate the effect of media violence on youth violence. In a free society, this question is especially important, as the belief in this effect has prompted calls for monitoring the media and the banning of certain acts of violence. Civil libertarians argue that such calls smack of censorship that violates the First Amendment to the Constitution, whole others argue that they fall within the First Amendment and would make for a safer society. Certainly the concern and debate over mass media violence will continue for years to come.

Religion

One final agent of socialization is religion, discussed further in Chapter 12. Although religion is arguably less important in people's lives now than it was a few generations ago, it still continues to exert considerable influence on our beliefs, values, and behaviors.

Here we should distinguish between *religious preference* (e.g., Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish) and *religiosity* (e.g., how often people pray or attend religious services). Both these aspects of religion can affect your values and beliefs on religious and nonreligious issues alike, but their particular effects vary from issue to issue. To illustrate this, consider the emotionally charged issue of abortion. People hold very strong views on abortion, and many of their views stem from their religious beliefs. Yet which aspect of religion matters the most, religious preference or religiosity? General Social Survey data help us answer this question (Figure 5.1.4.5). It turns out that religious preference, if we limit it for the sake of this discussion to Catholics versus Protestants, does not matter at all: Catholics and Protestants in the GSS exhibit roughly equal beliefs on the abortion issue, as about one-third of each group thinks abortion should be allowed for any reason. (The slight difference shown in the table is not statistically significant.) However, religiosity matters a lot: GSS respondents who pray daily are only about half as likely as those who never pray to think abortion should be allowed.

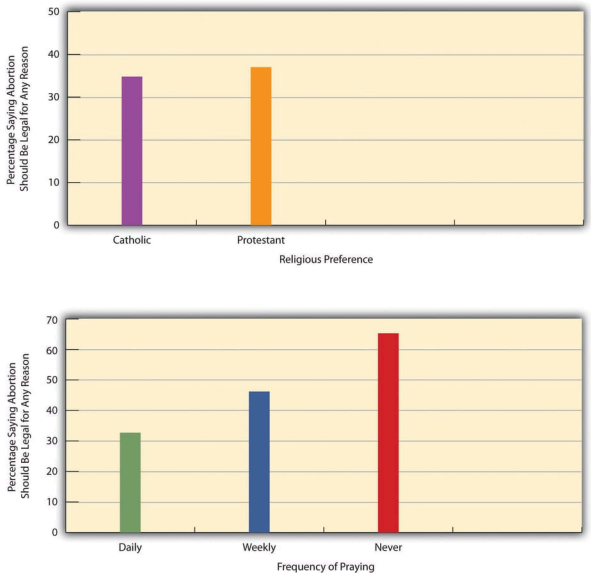


Figure 5.1.4.5: Religious Preference, Religiosity, and Belief That Abortion Should Be Legal for Any Reason

Conclusion

- The ways in which parents socialize children depend in part on the parents' social class and on their child's biological sex.
- Schools socialize children by teaching them both the formal curriculum and a hidden curriculum.
- Peers are an important source of emotional support and companionship, but peer pressure can induce individuals to behave in ways they might ordinarily regard as wrong.
- The mass media are another important agent of socialization, and scholars debate the effect the media have on violence in society.
- In considering the effects of religion on socialization, we need to distinguish between religious preference and religiosity.

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For Your Review

1. Describe one important value or attitude you have that is the result of socialization by your parent(s).
2. Do you agree that there is a hidden curriculum in secondary schools? Explain your answer.
3. Briefly describe one example of how peers influenced you or someone you know in a way that you now regard as negative.

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5.1.5: Resocialization and Total Institutions

Learning Objectives

- Discuss what is meant by resocialization.
- List any two characteristics of a total institution.

Some people live in settings where their lives are so controlled that their values and beliefs change drastically. This change is so drastic, in fact, that these people are in effect resocialized. Such resocialization occurs in what Erving Goffman (1961) called *total institutions*. As their name implies, these institutions have total control over the lives of the people who live in them.



Figure 5.1.5.1: A boot camp is an example of a total institution. Source: Photo courtesy of U.S. Navy, www.navy.mil/view_single.asp?id=47674.

Several types of total institutions exist: mental asylums, Nazi concentration camps, military boot camps, convents, and monasteries. Some scholars would also say that criminal prisons are total institutions, as they exhibit some of the same processes found in the other types. As this list implies, total institutions can be used for good or bad purposes. Resocialization is not necessarily good or bad in and of itself; what is more important is the ends to which it is put.

Whether we are talking about total institutions that are good or bad, they all share certain processes and procedures that make them total institutions. The most important characteristic is that they have total control over the lives of their inmates, patients, or whatever name is given to the people who live in them. These residents, to use a generic term, have no freedom or autonomy. They are told what to do and when to do it, and punishment for rule infraction can be quite severe. In Nazi concentration camps, punishment was torture or death; in religious cloisters, it may be banishment; in boot camp, it may be a court-martial; in mental asylums, it may be solitary confinement in a straitjacket.

Second, total institutions take away the identity of their residents in an effort to weaken their self-identity and ensure conformity to the institutions' rules. Their residents typically wear uniforms and often have their heads shaved and, depending on the institution, may be known by a number or a new name. These procedures make everyone look more similar to each other than they otherwise would and help to weaken the residents' self-identity. Whether these outcomes are good or bad depends again on which total institution we have in mind.

Third, total institutions subject their residents to harsh treatment and, quite often, abuse, although the nature of this abuse, and whether it occurs at all, obviously depends on which total institution we have in mind. Nazis starved concentration camp inmates, tortured them, stripped them naked, conducted hideous experiments on them, and, of course, exterminated millions (Gigliotti & Lang, 2005). Literature on mental asylums is filled with examples of abuses of the patients living there (Goffman, 1961). Drill sergeants have also been known for harshly treating new recruits: some observers defend this practice as necessary for military

discipline and readiness, while others consider it to be unjustified abuse.

Resocialization is often accompanied via a degradation ceremony, an encounter in which a total institution's resident is humiliated, often in front of the institution's other residents or officials (Goffman, 1961). A drill sergeant may call a physically unconditioned male recruit a "girl" or "lady" and question his manhood in front of other recruits. In a mental asylum or prison, an inmate may be stripped naked and checked in their private areas for lice and other vermin. Shaving the heads of new military recruits or prison inmates is another example of a degradation ceremony.

Resocialization also occurs in groups that are not institutional settings. Alcoholics Anonymous is one such group, as it tries to change the alcoholics' value system by having them internalize several principles about how to live one's life. The goal here, of course, is to have the alcoholic stop drinking and to continue to refrain from drinking (Davis & Jansen, 1998).Some religious cults also resocialize their members and continue to spark much controversy in today's society (Cowan & Bromley, 2008).

Conclusion

- Resocialization involves far-reaching changes in an individual's values, beliefs, and behavior.
- Total institutions exert total control over the lives of their residents. They typically try to eliminate the individual identity of their residents and often subject them to harsh treatment.

For Your Review

1. Do you know anyone who has spent time in a total institution of any kind? If so, describe how this person's experience there changed the person to the best of your knowledge.

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5.1.6: Social Interaction

Learning Objectives

- Describe what is meant by dramaturgy and by impression management.
- Distinguish between role and status.
- Provide one example of role conflict or role strain.
- Explain why new patterns of socialization might help address certain social ills in American society.

If socialization results from our social interaction with others, it is also true that we learn how to interact from our socialization. We have seen many examples of this process in this and previous chapters. Among other things, we learn how far apart to stand when talking to someone else, we learn to enjoy kissing, we learn how to stand and behave in an elevator, and we learn to shake hands when greeting someone.

Dramaturgy and Impression Management

From a sociological standpoint, much of our social interaction can be understood by likening it to a performance in a play.

Example 1:

As with so many things, Shakespeare said it best when he wrote,

> All the world's a stage,
>
> And all the men and women merely players.
>
> They have their exits and their entrances;
>
> And one man in his time plays many parts. (As You Like It, act 2, scene 7)

From this perspective, each individual has many parts or roles to play in society, and many of these roles specify how we should interact in any given situation. These roles exist before we are born, and they continue long after we die. The culture of society is thus similar to the script of a play. Just as actors in a play learn what lines to say, where to stand on the stage, how to position their bodies, and so many other things, so do we learn as members of society the roles that specify how we should interact.

This fundamental metaphor was developed and popularized by sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) in what he called a dramaturgical approach. By this he meant that we can understand social interaction as if it were a theatrical performance. People who interact are actors on a stage, the things they say and do are equivalent to the parts actors play, and the people who observe their interaction are equivalent to the audience at a play.

Beyond these aspects of his theatrical analogy, Goffman also stressed that the *presentation of self*guides social interaction just as it guides behavior in a play. Actors in a play, he wrote, aim to act properly, which at a minimum means they need to say their lines correctly and in other ways carry out their parts as they were written. They try to convey the impression of their character the playwright had in mind when the play was written and the director has in mind when the play is presented.

Such impression management, Goffman wrote, also guides social interaction in everyday life. When people interact, they routinely try to convey a positive impression of themselves to the people with whom they interact. Our behavior in a job interview differs dramatically (pun intended) from our behavior at a party. The key dimension of social interaction, then, involves trying to manage the impressions we convey to the people with whom we interact. We usually do our best, consciously or unconsciously, to manage the impressions we convey to others and so to evoke from them reactions that will please us.



Figure 5.1.6.1: Social interaction involves impression management. How a student behaves with a professor is probably very different from how the same student behaves when out on the town with friends. © Thinkstock

Goffman wrote about other aspects of social interaction that affect our efforts to manage these impressions. Again using his dramaturgical metaphor, he said that some interaction occurs in the "frontstage," or front region, while other interaction occurs in the "backstage," or back region. In a play, of course, the frontstage is what the audience sees and is obviously the location in which the actors are performing their lines. Backstage, they can do whatever they want, and the audience will have no idea of what they are doing (as long as they are quiet). Much of our everyday interaction is on the frontstage, where an audience can see everything we do and hear everything we say. But we also spend a lot of time on the backstage, by ourselves, when we can do and say things in private (such as singing in the shower) that we would not dare do or say in public.

How we dress is also a form of impression management. You are the same person regardless of what clothes you wear, but if you dress for a job interview as you would dress for a party (to use our earlier example), the person interviewing you would get an impression you might not want to be conveying. If you showed up for a medical visit and your physician were wearing a bathing suit, wouldn't you feel just a bit uneasy?

People convey impressions not only through how they act and dress but also through how they arrange the appearance of the settings in which they interact. Consider the medical visit just mentioned. A physician tries to convey an impression of a serious, knowledgeable professional not only by how she or he dresses but also by how the waiting room looks. Usually the room is well furnished with clean, comfortable chairs and such magazines as *People*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*. What impression would be conveyed if the physician's office looked shabby and even had a bad odor? What if it had *Playboy* in it? How long would you stay in that office?

Life is filled with impression management. Compare the decor of your favorite fast-food restaurant with that of a very expensive restaurant with which you might be familiar. Compare the appearance, dress, and demeanor of the servers and other personnel in the two establishments. The expensive restaurant is trying to convey an image that the food will be wonderful and that the time you spend there will be memorable and well worth the money. The fast-food restaurant is trying to convey just the opposite impression. In fact, if it looked too fancy, you would probably think it was too expensive.

Some people go to great efforts to manage the impressions they convey. You have probably done so in a job interview or on a date. In New York City, the capital of book publishing, editors of large publishing companies and "superagents" for authors are very conscious of the impressions they convey, because much of the publishing industry depends on gossip, impressions, and the development of rapport. Editors and agents often dine together in one of a few very expensive "power" restaurants, where their presence is certain to be noted. Publishers or senior editors who dine at these restaurants will eat only with celebrity authors, other senior editors or publishers, or important agents. Such agents rarely dine with junior editors, who are only "allowed" to eat with junior agents. To eat with someone "beneath" your standing would convey the wrong impression (Arnold, 1998).

As these examples indicate, social reality is to a large extent socially constructed. It is what we make of it, and the individuals who interact help construct the reality of the situation in which they interact. Sociologists refer to this process as the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1963). Although we usually come into a situation with shared understandings of what

is about to happen, as the interaction proceeds the actors continue to define the situation and thus to construct its reality. This view lies at the heart of the symbolic interactionist perspective discussed in Chapter 1.

Roles and Statuses

The related concepts of role and status help us further understand social interaction. *Status* has many meanings in the dictionary and also within sociology, but for now we will define it as the position that someone occupies in society. This position is often a job title, but many other types of positions exist: parent, sibling, relative, friend, and so forth. Any one individual often occupies several different statuses at the same time, and someone can simultaneously be a banker, Girl Scout troop leader, mother, school board member, volunteer at a homeless shelter, and wife. This someone would be very busy! We call all the positions an individual occupies that person's status set.



Figure 5.1.6.2: Any individual occupies several statuses and thus has several roles. Many employees are also parents and must often juggle the expectations their employers have of them with the needs of their children. © Thinkstock

Sociologists often speak of three kinds of statuses. The first type is ascribed status, which is the status that someone is born with and has no control over. There are relatively few ascribed statuses; the most common ones are our biological sex, race, and parents' social class and religious affiliation. The second kind of status is called achieved status, which, as the name implies, is a status you achieve, at some point after birth, sometimes through your own efforts and sometimes because good or bad luck befalls you. All the statuses in the example of the woman in the previous paragraph would be achieved statuses. The third type of status is called a master status. This is a status that is so important that it overrides other statuses you may hold. A physical disability often becomes a master status, because if you are confined to a wheelchair, to take one type of disability, this confinement becomes more important than the other statuses you have. For similar reasons, gender, race, and sexual orientation may also be considered master statuses, as these statuses often subject women, people of color, and gays and lesbians, respectively, to discrimination and other problems, no matter what other statuses they may have.

Whatever its type, every status is accompanied by a *role*, which is the behavior expected of someone—and in fact *everyone*—with a certain status. You and most other people reading this book are students. Despite all the other differences among you, you have at least this one status in common. As such, there is a role expected of you as a student (at least by your professors): this role includes coming to class regularly, doing all the reading assigned from this textbook, and studying the best you can for exams.

Because roles are the behavior expected of people in various statuses, they help us interact because we are familiar with the roles in the first place. Suppose you are shopping in a department store. Your status is a shopper, and the role expected of you as a shopper—and of all shoppers—involves looking quietly at various items in the store, taking the ones you want to purchase to a checkout line, and paying for them. The person who takes your money is occupying another status in the store that we call a cashier. The role expected of that cashier—and of all cashiers not only in that store but in every other store—is to accept your payment in a businesslike way and put your items in a bag.

This is all very automatic, and we often perform our roles without thinking about them. That is why social interaction is possible: if

we always had to think about our roles before we performed them, social interaction would be slow, tedious, and fraught with error. (Analogously, if actors in a play always had to read the script before performing their lines, as an understudy sometimes does, the play would be slow and stilted.) It is when people violate their roles that the importance of roles is thrown into sharp relief. Suppose you were shopping in that department store just mentioned, and while you were in the checkout line the cashier asked you how your sex life has been! Now, you might expect such an intimate question from a very close friend, because discussions of intimate matters are part of the roles close friends play, but you would definitely *not* expect it from a cashier you do not know.

As this example suggests, the social construction of reality rests on shared assumptions, including our understanding of the roles expected of people in a given encounter, that are easily violated if one has the nerve to do so. If they are violated, social order might well break down, as you would quickly find if you dared to ask your cashier how her or his sex life has been, or if two people sitting in the front of a large lecture hall started kissing each other passionately. Sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1967). argued that unexpected events like these underscore how fragile social order is and remind us that people are constantly constructing the social reality of the situations in which they find themselves. To illustrate his point, he had his students perform a series of experiments, including acting like a stranger in their parents' home. Not surprisingly, their parents quickly became flustered and wondered what college was doing to their daughters and sons!

Roles and Personalities

As we have just seen, roles help us interact and help make social order possible. But they even can shape our personalities. The idea here is that if we assume a new role, the expectations of that role can change how we interact with others and the way we even think about ourselves. In short, roles can change our personalities.



Figure 5.1.6.3: Roles can shape personalities. When individuals become police officers, the nature of their job can prompt them to act and think in a more authoritarian manner. © Thinkstock

A telling example of this effect comes from the story of a criminal justice professor from Florida named George Kirkham. In his classes, Kirkham would be critical of the harshness with which police treated suspects and other citizens. One day, some police officers in one of his classes said Kirkham could not begin to understand what it was like being a police officer, and they challenged him to become one. He took up the challenge by gaining admission to a police academy and going through the regular training program for all recruits. Kirkham (1984) later recounted what happened on his first few days on the job. In one episode, he and his veteran partner went into a bar where an intoxicated patron had been causing trouble. Kirkham politely asked the patron to go with him outside. Evidently surprised by this new police officer's politeness, the man instead swung at Kirkham and landed a blow. Kirkham could not believe this happened and was forced to subdue his assailant. In another episode, Kirkham and his partner were checking out the drivers of a double-parked car. An ugly crowd soon gathered and began making threats. Alarmed, Kirkham opened up his car's trunk and pulled out a shotgun to keep the crowd away. In recounting this episode, Kirkham wrote that as a professor he quickly would have condemned the police officer he had now become. In a few short days, he had turned from a polite, kind professor into a gruff, angry police officer. His role had changed and, along with it, his personality.

Role Problems

Roles can help our interactions run smoothly and automatically and, for better or worse, shape our personalities, but they can also cause various kinds of problems. One such problem is role conflict, which occurs when the roles of our many statuses conflict with each other. For example, say you are a student and also a parent. Your 3-year-old child gets sick. You now have a conflict between your role as a parent and your role as a student. To perform your role as a parent, you should stay home with your sick child. To perform your role as a student, you should go to your classes and take the big exam that had been scheduled weeks ago. What do you do?

Obviously, you cannot perform both roles at the same time. To resolve role conflict, we ordinarily have to choose between one role or the other, which is often a difficult choice to make. In this example, if you take care of your child, you miss your classes and exam; if you go to your classes, you have to leave your child at home alone, an unacceptable and illegal option. Another way to resolve role conflict is to find some alternative that would meet the needs of your conflicting roles. In our sick child example, you might be able to find someone to watch your child until you can get back from classes. It is certainly desirable to find such alternatives, but, unfortunately, they are not always forthcoming. If role conflict becomes too frequent and severe, a final option is to leave one of your statuses altogether. In our example, if you find it too difficult to juggle your roles as parent and student, you could stop being a parent—hardly likely!—or, more likely, take time off from school until your child is older. Most of us in these circumstances would try our best to avoid having to do this.

Another role-related problem is called role strain. Here you have one status, and a role associated with it, that is causing problems because of all the demands coming to you from people in other statuses with which your own status is involved. Suppose you were a high school principal. In your one role as a principal, you come into contact with people in several different statuses: teachers, students, custodial and support staff, the superintendent, school board members, the community as a whole, and the news media. These statuses may make competing demands on you in your one role as a principal. If your high school has a dress code, for example, the students may want you to abolish it, the teachers and superintendent may want you to keep it, and maybe the school board would agree with the students. As you try to please all of these competing factions, you certainly might experience some role strain!

A third type of role problem occurs when we occupy a status whose role demands a certain type of personality that differs from the one we actually have. Can you imagine a police officer who was afraid of guns? An athlete who was not competitive? Although most people avoid this type of role problem by not taking on a role to which their personality is ill suited, such problems occur nonetheless. For example, some people who dislike children and do not have the patience to be good parents end up being parents anyway. In another example, your author once knew a new professor who was woefully nervous lecturing in front of students. You might wonder why he became a professor in the first place, but he probably just loved the subject matter so much that he thought he would overcome his nervousness. He did not.

Socialization Practices and Improving Society

This chapter began with a news story about the beating and killing of a gay man and proceeded with the stories of two women who grew up in the South when it was racially segregated. These stories illustrate the power of socialization, which can have both good and bad consequences. Socialization into one's culture is necessary for any society to exist, and socialization is also necessary for any one individual to be "human" in the social sense of the term, as our discussion of feral children indicated. Yet socialization can also result in attitudes and behaviors that most of us would rightly condemn. Socialization created the homophobic mentality that led three teenagers to beat Charlie Howard and throw him into a river, and it also created the racist mentality that Sarah Patton Boyle and Lillian Smith described in their accounts of growing up in the South. We learn to be good, cooperative members of society, but some of us also learn to hate and to think that other kinds of people are inferior and perhaps even less than human.

For many of the social issues confronting the United States today—hate crimes, other crimes, violence against women, sexism, racism, and so forth—it might not be an exaggeration to say that new patterns of socialization are ultimately necessary if our society wants to be able to address these issues effectively. Parents of young children and adolescents bear a major responsibility for making sure our children do not learn to hate and commit harm to others, but so do our schools, mass media, and religious bodies. No nation is perfect, but nations like Japan have long been more successful than the United States in raising their children to be generous and cooperative. Their examples hold many good lessons for the United States to follow.

Conclusion

- A dramaturgical approach likens social interaction to a dramatic production.
- Individuals ordinarily try to manage the impression they make when interacting with others. Social interaction can be understood as a series of attempts at impression management.
- Roles exist before we are born and will endure after we die and mightily affect individual behavior.
- Various kinds of role strains and problems often occur as individuals try to perform the roles expected of them from the many statuses they occupy.
- New socialization practices might be necessary to address many of the social ills facing the United States and other societies.

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For Your Review

1. Describe a recent example of how you tried to manage the impression you were conveying in a social interaction.
2. Describe a recent example of a role problem that you experienced and what you did, if anything, to reduce this problem.
3. If you were in charge of our society, what socialization practice would you most try to change to help improve our society? Explain your answer.

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5.1.S: Socialization and Social Interactions (Summary)

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5.2: Dramaturgy (Dramaturgical Analysis)

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6: ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

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6.1: GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

6.1.1: Introduction

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6.1.1: Introduction

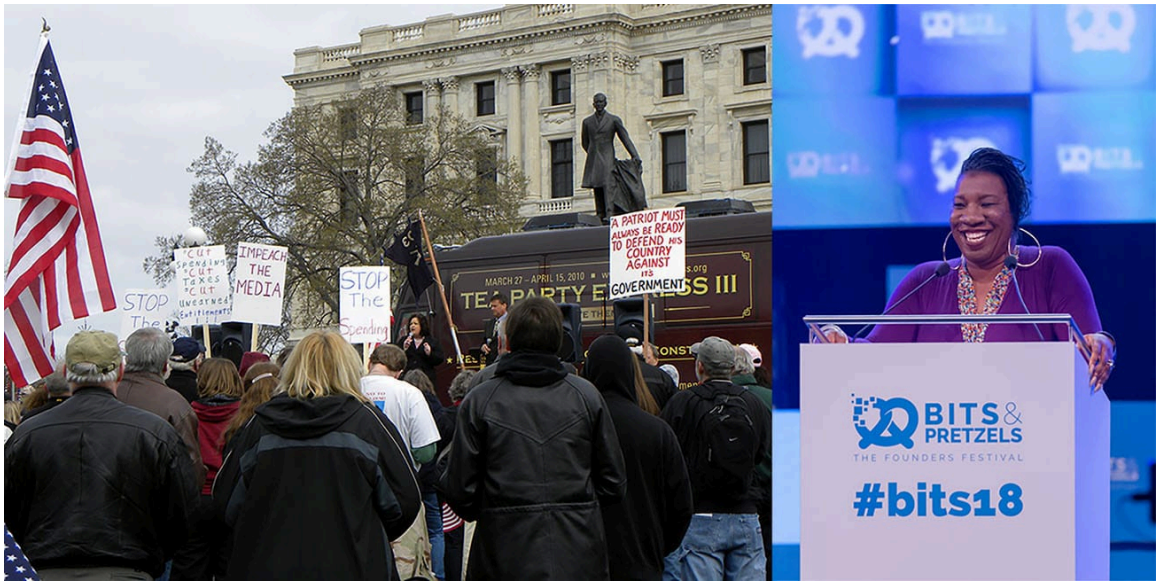


Figure 6.1: The national tour of the Tea Party Express visited Minnesota and held a rally outside the state capitol building. Tarana Burke, who originated the term “me too” in the context of supporting or acknowledging sexual harassment or assault victims, has spoken frequently on the evolution and issues regarding the MeToo movement. (Credit: a. Fibonacci Blue/flickr; b Marco Verch)

Chapter Outline

6.1 Types of Groups
6.2 Group Size and Structure
6.3 Formal Organizations

Throughout the history of the United States, individuals have formed groups in order to achieve goals and bring about change. Some groups are loosely defined, while others have highly organized structure and mission. And in some cases, groups can have significant influence on culture, society, the economy, and government.

In 2009, people protesting government spending held a series of “tea parties,” referencing the Boston Tea Party, an anti-taxation event that led up to the Revolutionary War. Tea Party activists also opposed big government, high taxes, and political corruption and supported gun rights and traditional family values. They called for “awareness to any issue which challenges the security, sovereignty, or domestic tranquility of our beloved nation, the United States of America” (Tea Party, Inc. 2021). The movement grew into a major political force, with chapters popping up in nearly every community across the country.

By 2010, Tea Party candidates had won seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate, demonstrating the political power of the group and its message. As grassroots activism faded, the Tea Party gained influence within the Republican Party. Many of its ideas have been assimilated into the mainstream conservative movement and Republican Party platform.

In 2016, highly successful Fox News host Gretchen Carlson filed a lawsuit against Fox chairman, Roger Ailes, for sexual harassment. The suit led other women to come forward with similar allegations against Ailes and others in the entertainment industry. Soon after, actress Alyssa Milano posted this statement on Twitter: “If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too’ as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem.” The phrase, “Me Too” had been first used in this context in 2006 by activist Tarana Burke, in an effort to empower women of color. Within a day of Milano’s post, the “Me Too” phrase or hashtag was used over 500,000 times on Twitter, and was used in over 12 million posts by 4.7 million people on Facebook. Thousands of people, including other celebrities, shared their own stories of sexual harassment, abuse, or assault. (MeTooMvmt.org, 2020) The “MeToo” movement became the lead story on many newscasts and talk shows. Over the months that followed, the movement sparked reforms within companies and governments to combat sexual harassment and better support women. The movement inspired abuse victims to come forward and led to the sanction or removal of prominent individuals accused of serial harassment or abuse in academia, media, government, and other industries.

The Tea Party evolved into an organization. From a loosely associated set of local chapters, it developed into several closely affiliated nonprofits (filed with the IRS), a political faction within the Republican Party, and a caucus within Congress. What about the MeToo movement? Burke started it in 2006 and was working to enact change long before the hashtag sparked more awareness and new policies. The MeToo has brought together people to work in groups, but it has yet to form into a permanent MeToo organization.

As enduring social units, groups help foster shared value systems and are key to the structure of society as we know it. There are three primary sociological perspectives for studying groups: Functionalist, Conflict, and Interactionist. We can look at the Tea Party and the MeToo movements through the lenses of these methods to better understand the roles and challenges that they offer.

The Functionalist perspective is a big-picture, macro-level view that looks at how different aspects of society are intertwined. This perspective is based on the idea that society is a well-balanced system with all parts necessary to the whole, and it studies the roles these parts play in relation to the whole. A Functionalist might look at the macro-level needs that each movement serves. For example, a Structural Functionalist might ask how the Tea Party arose to voice the concerns of a large sector of society that felt politically underrepresented, or how MeToo drove people to pay attention to sexual harassment and gender inequality. This approach might look at how each group enabled the voicing of discontent and so stabilized society.

The Conflict perspective is another macroanalytical view, one that focuses on the genesis and growth of inequality. A conflict theorist studying the Tea Party Movement might look at how it checked interests that have manipulated the political system over the last 30 years. Or this perspective might explore how MeToo challenged organizations that have allowed sexual harassment to persist in order to protect those in power.

A third perspective is the Symbolic Interaction or Interactionist perspective. This method of analyzing groups takes a micro-level view. Instead of studying the big picture, these researchers look at the day-to-day interactions of groups. Studying these details, the Interactionist looks at issues like leadership style and group dynamics. In the case of the Tea Party Movement, Interactionists might ask, “How does the Tea Party dynamic in New York differ from that in Atlanta?” Or, in the case of the MeToo, researchers may seek to learn about who defines the agenda and approach within the movement.

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6.1.2: Types of Groups

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate between primary and secondary groups.
- Recognize in-groups and out-groups as subtypes of primary and secondary groups
- Define reference groups

Most of us feel comfortable using the word “group” without giving it much thought. Often, we mean different things when using that word. We might say that a group of kids all saw the dog, and it could mean 250 students in a lecture hall or four siblings playing on a front lawn. In everyday use, it can be a generic term, although it carries important clinical and scientific meanings. Moreover, the concept of a group is central to much of how we think about society and human interaction. So how can we hone the meaning more precisely for sociological purposes?

Defining a Group

The term group is an amorphous one and can refer to a wide variety of gatherings, from just two people (think about a “group project” in school when you partner with another student), a club, a regular gathering of friends, or people who work together or share a hobby. In short, the term refers to any collection of at least two people who interact with some frequency and who share a sense that their identity is somehow aligned with the group. Of course, every time people are gathered, it is not necessarily a group. A rally is usually a one-time event, for instance, and belonging to a political party doesn’t imply interaction with others. People who happen to be in the same place at the same time but who do not interact or share a sense of identity—such as a bunch of people standing in line at Starbucks—are considered an aggregate, or a crowd.

Another example of a nongroup is people who share similar characteristics but are not tied to one another in any way. These people are considered a category, and as an example all children born from approximately 1980–2000 are referred to as “Millennials.” Why are Millennials a category and not a group? Because while some of them may share a sense of identity, they do not, as a whole, interact frequently with each other.

Interestingly, people within an aggregate or category can become a group. During disasters, people in a neighborhood (an aggregate) who did not know each other might become friendly and depend on each other at the local shelter. After the disaster when people go back to simply living near each other, the feeling of cohesiveness may last since they have all shared an experience. They might remain a group, practicing emergency readiness, coordinating supplies for next time, or taking turns caring for neighbors who need extra help.

Similarly, there may be many groups within a single category. Consider teachers, for example. Within this category, groups may exist like teachers’ unions, teachers who coach, or staff members who are involved with the PTA.

Types of Groups

Sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929) suggested that groups can broadly be divided into two categories: primary groups and secondary groups (Cooley 1909). According to Cooley, primary groups play the most critical role in our lives. The primary group is usually fairly small and is made up of individuals who generally engage face-to-face in long-term emotional ways. This group serves emotional needs: expressive functions rather than pragmatic ones. The primary group is usually made up of significant others, those individuals who have the most impact on our socialization. The best example of a primary group is the family.

Secondary groups are often larger and impersonal. They may also be task-focused and time-limited. These groups serve an instrumental function rather than an expressive one, meaning that their role is more goal- or task-oriented than emotional. A classroom or office can be an example of a secondary group.

Neither primary nor secondary groups are bound by strict definitions or set limits. In fact, people can move from one group to another. A group of coworkers, for example, can start as a secondary group, but as the employees work together over the years, they may find common interests and strong ties that transform them into a primary group. As we will discuss in the chapter on Media and Technology, even online networks of people with common interests can sometimes move from secondary to primary group status.

Sociology in the Real World: Best Friends She's Never Met

Writer Allison Levy worked alone. While she liked the freedom and flexibility of working from home, she sometimes missed having a community of coworkers, both for the practical purpose of brainstorming and socializing. Levy did what many do in the Internet age: she found a group of other writers online through a web forum. Over time, a group of approximately twenty writers, who all wrote for a similar audience, broke off from the larger group and started a private invitation-only forum. While writers in general represent all genders, ages, and interests, this group ended up being a collection of twenty- and thirty-something women who all wrote fiction for children and young adults.

At first, the writers' forum was clearly a secondary group united by the members' professions and work situations. As Levy explained, "On the Internet, you can be present or absent as often as you want. No one is expecting you to show up." It was a useful place to research information about publishers, recently-published books and authors, and industry trends. But as time passed, Levy found it served a different purpose. Since the group shared other characteristics beyond their writing (such as age and gender), their conversation naturally turned to matters such as child-rearing, aging parents, health, and exercise. Levy found it was a sympathetic place to talk about any number of subjects, not just writing. Further, when people didn't post for several days, others expressed concern, asking whether anyone had heard from the missing writers. It reached a point where most members would tell the group if they were traveling or needed to be offline for awhile.

The group continued to share. One member on the site who was going through a difficult family illness wrote, "I don't know where I'd be without you women. It is so great to have a place to vent that I know isn't hurting anyone." Others shared similar sentiments.

So is this a primary group? Most of these people have never met each other. They live in Hawaii, Australia, Minnesota, and across the world. They may never meet. Levy wrote recently to the group, saying, "Most of my 'real-life' friends and even my husband don't really get the writing thing. I don't know what I'd do without you." Despite the distance and the lack of physical contact, the group clearly fills an expressive need.



Figure 6.2: Engineering and construction students gather around a job site. How do your academic interests define your in- and out-groups? (Credit: USACEpublicaffairs/flickr)

In-Groups and Out-Groups

One of the ways that groups can be powerful is through inclusion, and its inverse, exclusion. The feeling that we belong in an elite or select group is a heady one, while the feeling of not being allowed in, or of being in competition with a group, can be motivating in a different way. Sociologist William Sumner (1840–1910) developed the concepts of in-group and out-group to explain this phenomenon (Sumner 1906). In short, an in-group is the group that an individual feels she belongs to, and she believes it to be an integral part of who she is. An out-group, conversely, is a group someone doesn't belong to; often we may feel disdain or competition in relationship to an out-group. Sports teams, unions, and sororities are examples of in-groups and out-groups. Primary groups consist of both in-groups and out-groups, as do secondary groups.

While group affiliations can be neutral or positive, the concept of in-groups and out-groups can also explain some negative human behavior, such as white supremacist movements. By defining others as "not like us" and inferior, in-groups can end up practicing ethnocentrism, racism, sexism, ageism, and heterosexism—manners of judging others negatively based on their culture, race, sex, age, or sexuality.

Often, in-groups can form within a secondary group. For instance, a workplace can have cliques of people, from senior executives who play golf together, to engineers who write code together, to young singles who socialize after hours. While these in-groups might show favoritism and affinity for other in-group members, the overall organization may be unable or unwilling to acknowledge it. Therefore, it pays to be wary of the politics of in-groups, since members may exclude others as a form of gaining status within the group.

Big Picture: Bullying and Cyberbullying: How Technology Has Changed the Game

Most of us know that the old rhyme "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" is inaccurate. Words can hurt, and never is that more apparent than in instances of bullying. Bullying often reaches extreme levels of cruelty in children and young adults. People at these stages of life are especially vulnerable to opinions of others and deeply invested in their peer groups. Today, cyberbullying is on the rise. Cyberbullying can involve sending threatening texts, harassing someone in a public forum (such as social media), hacking someone's account and pretending to be them, posting embarrassing images online, and so on. A study by the Cyberbullying Research Center found that 28 percent of teens have been a victim of cyberbullying (Hinduja and Patchin, 2019). Severe bullying can lead to suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts (John, 2018). Researchers noted that students who experienced in-person and online bullying were eleven times more likely to attempt suicide (Hinduja, 2018). Whereas bullying face-to-face requires willingness to interact with your victim, cyberbullying allows bullies to harass others from the privacy of their homes without witnessing the damage firsthand. This form of bullying is particularly dangerous because it's widely accessible and therefore easier to carry out. Cyberbullying can create a feeling of powerlessness and inescapability because victimization is not constrained to physical locations. Many victims report being harassed across multiple platforms or formats at the same time.

Cyberbullying first made international headlines in 2010 when a fifteen-year-old girl, Phoebe Prince, in South Hadley, Massachusetts, died by suicide after being relentlessly bullied by girls at her school. In the aftermath of her death, the bullies were prosecuted and the state passed anti-bullying legislation. This marked a significant change in how bullying, including cyberbullying, is viewed in the United States. Now there are numerous resources for schools, families, and communities to provide education and prevention on this issue. Social media platforms and their parent companies are also taking steps (often under pressure from communities) to improve cyberbullying detection and reporting capabilities.

According to a report released in 2013 by the National Center for Educational Statistics, close to 1 in every 3 (27.8 percent) students report being bullied by their school peers. Seventeen percent of students reported being the victims of cyberbullying. Overall, LGBTQ youth are targeted at a higher rate than other youth, and members of minority populations overall are more likely to be cyberbullying victims (Hinjuda & Patchin, 2020). Finally, adults (particularly college students) are also frequent cyberbullying victims and perpetrators.

Reference Groups



Figure 6.3: Athletes are often viewed as a reference group for young people. (Credit: nonorganical/ flickr)

A reference group is a group that people compare themselves to—it provides a standard of measurement. In U.S. society, peer groups are common reference groups. Kids and adults pay attention to what their peers wear, what music they like, what they do with their free time—and they compare themselves to what they see. Most people have more than one reference group, so a middle school boy might look not just at his classmates but also at his older brother's friends and see a different set of norms. And he might observe the behaviors of his favorite athletes for yet another point of reference.

Some other examples of reference groups can be one's cultural center, workplace, family gathering, and even parents. Often, reference groups convey competing messages. For instance, on television and in movies, young adults often have wonderful apartments and cars and lively social lives despite not holding a job. In music videos, young women might dance and sing in a sexually aggressive way that suggests experience beyond their years. At all ages, we use reference groups to help guide our behavior and establish our social norms. So how important is it to surround yourself with positive reference groups? You may not recognize a reference group, but it still influences the way you act. Identifying your reference groups can help you understand the source of the social identities you aspire to or want to distance yourself from.

Sociology in the Real World: College: A World of In-Groups, Out-Groups, and Reference Groups



Figure 6.4: Which fraternity or sorority would you fit into, if any? Sorority recruitment day offers students an opportunity to learn about these different groups. (Credit: Texas A&M/flickr)

For a student entering college, the sociological study of groups takes on an immediate and practical meaning. After all, when we arrive someplace new, most of us glance around to see how well we fit in or stand out in the ways we want. This is a natural response to a reference group, and on a large campus, there can be many competing groups. Say you are a strong athlete who wants to play intramural sports, and your favorite musicians are a local punk band. You may find yourself engaged with two very different reference groups.

These reference groups can also become your in-groups or out-groups. For instance, different groups on campus might solicit you to join. Are there fraternities and sororities at your school? If so, chances are they will try to convince students—that is, students they deem worthy—to join them. And if you love playing soccer and want to play on a campus team, but you're wearing shredded jeans, combat boots, and a local band T-shirt, you might have a hard time convincing the soccer team to give you a chance. While most campus groups refrain from insulting competing groups, there is a definite sense of an in-group versus an out-group. "Them?" a member might say. "They're all right, but their parties are nowhere near as cool as ours." Or, "Only serious engineering geeks join that group." This immediate categorization into in-groups and out-groups means that students must choose carefully, since whatever group they associate with might define their friends for several years to come.

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6.1.3: Group Size and Structure

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the ways that size influences group dynamics
- Differentiate among styles of leadership
- Interpret the impact of groups on individual behavior



Figure 6.5: Cadets illustrate how strongly conformity can define groups. (Credit: West Point — The U.S. Military Academy/flickr)

Dyads, Triads, and Large Groups

A small group is typically one where the collection of people is small enough that all members of the group know each other and share simultaneous interaction, such as a nuclear family, a dyad, or a triad. Georg Simmel (1858–1915) wrote extensively about the difference between a dyad, or two-member group, and a triad, which is a three-member group (Simmel 1902). In the former, if one person withdraws, the group can no longer exist. We can think of a divorce, which effectively ends the "group" of the married couple or of two best friends never speaking again. In a triad, however, the dynamic is quite different. If one person withdraws, the group lives on. A triad has a different set of relationships. If there are three in the group, two-against-one dynamics can develop, and a majority opinion may form on any issue.

Small groups generally have strong internal cohesiveness and a sense of connection. Small groups may face challenges when trying to achieve large goals. They can struggle to be heard or to be a force for change if they are pushing against larger groups.

It is difficult to define exactly when a small group becomes a large group. Perhaps it occurs when one group grows so large that there are too many people to join in a simultaneous discussion. Sometimes it occurs when a group joins with other groups as part of a movement. These larger groups may share a geographic space, such as a fraternity or sorority on the same campus, or they might be spread out around the globe. The larger the group, the more attention it can garner, and the more pressure members can put toward whatever goal they wish to achieve. At the same time, the larger the group becomes, the more the risk grows for division and lack of cohesion.

Group Leadership

Often, larger groups require some kind of leadership. In small, primary groups, leadership tends to be informal. After all, most families don't take a vote on who will rule the group, nor do most groups of friends. This is not to say that *de facto* leaders don't emerge, but formal leadership is rare. In secondary groups, leadership is usually more overt. They often outline roles and responsibilities, with a chain of command to follow. Some secondary groups, like the military, have highly structured and clearly understood chains of command, and sometimes lives depend on those. After all, how well could soldiers function in a battle if different people were calling out orders and if they had no idea whom to listen to? Other secondary groups, like a workplace or a classroom, also have formal leaders, but the styles and functions of leadership can vary significantly.

Leadership function refers to the main goal of the leader, which may be instrumental or expressive. An instrumental leader is one who is goal-oriented and largely concerned with accomplishing set tasks. We can imagine that an army general or a Fortune 500 CEO would be an instrumental leader. In contrast, expressive leaders are more concerned with promoting emotional strength and health, and ensuring that people feel supported. Social and religious leaders—rabbis, priests, imams, directors of youth homes and social service programs—are often perceived as expressive leaders. Sometimes people expect men to take on instrumental roles and women to assume expressive roles. Women and men who exhibit the other-gender manner can be seen as deviants and can encounter resistance. Yet, both men and women prefer leaders who use a combination of expressive and instrumental leadership (Boatwright and Forrest, 2000).

Sociologists recognize three leadership styles. Democratic leaders encourage group participation in all decision making. They work hard to build consensus before choosing a course of action and moving forward. This type of leader is particularly common, for example, in a club where the members vote on which activities or projects to pursue. Democratic leaders can be well liked, but there is often a danger that decisions will proceed slowly since consensus building is time-consuming. A further risk is that group members might pick sides and entrench themselves into opposing factions rather than reaching a solution.

In contrast, a laissez-faire (French for "leave it alone") leader is hands-off, allowing group members to self-manage and make their own decisions. An example of this kind of leader might be an art teacher who opens the art cupboard, leaves materials on the shelves, and tells students to help themselves and make some art. While this style can work well with highly motivated and mature participants who have clear goals and guidelines, it risks group dissolution and a lack of progress.

Finally, authoritarian leaders issue orders and assign tasks with little to no feedback from group members. These leaders are often instrumental leaders with a strong focus on meeting goals. Often, entrepreneurs fall into this mold, like Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg. Not surprisingly, authoritarian leaders risk alienating the workers. When decisions need to made quickly or informed by a high level of expertise, however, this style of leadership can be required.

In different circumstances, each of these leadership styles can be effective and successful. Consider what leadership style you prefer. Why? Do you like the same style in different areas of your life, such as a classroom, a workplace, and a sports team?

Big Picture: Women Political Candidates



Figure 6.6: Kamala Harris, like many other women leaders, faces unique and sometimes conflicting expectations. She may want to lead, but some care more about whether she is liked. (Credit: California National Guard/flickr)

Kamala Harris broke a significant barrier when she became the first woman and first person of Black and South Asian descent to be elected vice president of the United States. A prominent presidential candidate in her own right during the 2020 primary election, Harris was asked by then-candidate Joe Biden to be his running mate in order to secure his electoral victory.

You may be surprised, however, to learn that more than ten other women were on the ballot for president or vice president on November 3, 2020. Many were not on the ballot in every state, and at least one (Ricki Sue King) actually encouraged people not to vote for her. Shirley Chisholm, Lenora Fulani, Jill Stein, Hillary Clinton and many other women have been candidates, but the United States has yet to elect a woman to the presidency.

Researchers and political analysts have long established that gender plays a significant role in how political leaders (both candidates and elected officials) are perceived. As a starting point, research indicates that, even among women, the public prefer masculine qualities in presidents. For example, a study in which subjects completed the Bem Sex-Role Inventory and Implicit Leadership Inventory found that the hypothetical "Ideal" president possessed more masculine qualities than feminine qualities (Powell and Butterfield 2011).

Beyond the implicit preference toward masculine qualities, women candidates face what is sometimes referred to the "likability trap." Essentially, the public expects and prefers certain qualities from its leaders, and also expects and prefers certain qualities based on the candidates' gender. For women presidential candidates, these expectations often conflict. For example, when a male candidate ranks low on feminine qualities, their likeability is not significantly affected. But when a female candidate, like Hillary Clinton, ranks low on feminine qualities, their likability is significantly impacted. Interestingly, the same survey found that Kamala Harris had a much more balanced gender quality rating than Clinton did. The researchers qualified that since Kamala Harris ran for vice president, rather than president, the ratings cannot be directly compared to Clinton's. This difference, though, may indicate why many women are elected to legislative and gubernatorial roles, but not to the presidency (Conroy, Martin, and Nadler, 2020).

These same perceptions present themselves in the workplace. Prescriptive stereotypes—that is, ideas about how men or women should behave—limit women's advancement to leadership positions. Men are often appreciated for being ambitious, while women who exhibit assertive behavior are generally perceived as selfish or overly competitive (Baldoni, 2020). Furthermore, when men help out in the workplace, their contribution is appreciated while the same task carried out by women goes unacknowledged. Scholars observe that women are underrepresented in the top levels of U.S. businesses and Fortune 500 companies (Heilman 2012).



Figure 6.7: This gag gift demonstrates how female leaders may be viewed if they violate social norms. (Credit: istolethetv/flickr)

Conformity

We all like to fit in to some degree. Likewise, if we want to stand out, then we want to choose how we stand out and for what reasons. For example, a person who loves cutting-edge fashion might dress in thought-provoking new styles to set a new trend.

Conformity is the extent to which an individual complies with group norms or expectations. As you might recall, we use reference groups to assess and understand how to act, to dress, and to behave. Not surprisingly, young people are particularly aware of who conforms and who does not. A high school boy whose mother makes him wear ironed button-down shirts might protest that everyone else wears T-shirts and he will look stupid. Another high school boy might like wearing those shirts as a way of standing out. How much do you enjoy being noticed? Do you consciously prefer to conform to group norms so as not to be singled out? Are there people in your class who immediately come to mind when you think about those who don't want to conform?

Psychologist Solomon Asch (1907–1996) conducted experiments that illustrated how great the pressure to conform is, specifically within a small group (1956). Read about his work in the Sociological Research feature and consider what you would do in Asch's experiment. Would you speak up? What would help you speak up and what would discourage it?

Sociological Research: Conforming to Expectations

In 1951, psychologist Solomon Asch sat a small group of about eight people around a table. Only one of the people sitting there was the true subject; the rest were associates of the experimenter. However, the subject was led to believe that the others were all, like him, people brought in for an experiment in visual judgments. The group was shown two cards, the first card with a single vertical line, and the second card with three vertical lines differing in length. The experimenter polled the group and asked each participant one at a time which line on the second card matched up with the line on the first card.

However, this was not really a test of visual judgment. Rather, it was Asch's study on the pressures of conformity. He was curious to see what the effect of multiple wrong answers would be on the subject, who presumably was able to tell which lines matched. In order to test this, Asch had each planted respondent answer in a specific way. The subject was seated in such a way that he had to hear almost everyone else's answers before it was his turn. Sometimes the nonsubject members would unanimously choose an answer that was clearly wrong.

So what was the conclusion? Asch found that thirty-seven out of fifty test subjects responded with an "obviously erroneous" answer at least once. When faced by a unanimous wrong answer from the rest of the group, the subject conformed to a mean of four of the staged answers. Asch revised the study and repeated it, wherein the subject still heard the staged wrong

answers, but was allowed to write down his answer rather than speak it aloud. In this version, the number of examples of conformity––giving an incorrect answer so as not to contradict the group––fell by two thirds. He also found that group size had an impact on how much pressure the subject felt to conform.

The results showed that speaking up when only one other person gave an erroneous answer was far more common than when five or six people defended the incorrect position. Finally, Asch discovered that people were far more likely to give the correct answer in the face of near-unanimous consent if they had a single ally. If even one person in the group also dissented, the subject conformed only a quarter as often. Clearly, it was easier to be a minority of two than a minority of one.

Asch concluded that there are two main causes for conformity: people want to be liked by the group or they believe the group is better informed than they are. He found his study results disturbing. To him, they revealed that intelligent, well-educated people would, with very little coaxing, go along with an untruth. He believed this result highlighted real problems with the education system and values in our society (Asch 1956).

Stanley Milgram, a Yale psychologist, had similar results in his experiment that is now known simply as the Milgram Experiment. In 1962, Milgram found that research subjects were overwhelmingly willing to perform acts that directly conflicted with their consciences when directed by a person of authority. In the experiment, subjects were willing to administer painful, even supposedly deadly, shocks to others who answered questions incorrectly.

To learn more about similar research, visit http://www.prisonexp.org/

The Bystander Effect and Diffusion of Responsibility

Social psychologists have recognized that other people's presence influences our behavior, whether we are aware of it or not. One example is the bystander effect, a situation in which people are less likely to interfere during an emergency or when a social norm is being violated if there are others around. They feel less responsible because of the presence of other bystanders (Beyer et al., 2017). This is known as diffusion of responsibility.

Most of the time people report that they don't want to get involved and that's why they don't respond when they see something wrong. They assume someone else will step up and help. Researchers have found that people are less likely to help if they don't know the victim (Cherry 2020).

Think about it this way, you're walking to class and there are several students around. Someone falls on the ground having a seizure. What would you do? The bystander effect suggests that unless you know the person who has fallen, you are more likely to walk away than help. However, social psychologists believe that you are much more likely to help, or at least stop and check, if you are the only one around.

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6.1.4: Formal Organizations

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Distinguish the types of formal organizations
- Recognize the characteristics of bureaucracies
- Identify the impact of the McDonaldization of society

A complaint of modern life is that society is dominated by large and impersonal secondary organizations. From schools to businesses to healthcare to government, these organizations, referred to as formal organizations, are highly bureaucratized. Indeed, all formal organizations are, or likely will become, bureaucracies. We will discuss the purpose of formal organizations and the structure of their bureaucracies.

Types of Formal Organizations



(a) (b)

Figure 6.8: Girl Scout troops and correctional facilities are both formal organizations. (Credit: (a) moonlightbulb/flickr; (b) CxOxS/flickr)

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1975) posited that formal organizations fall into three categories. Normative organizations, also called voluntary organizations, are based on shared interests. As the name suggests, joining them is voluntary. People find membership rewarding in an intangible way. They receive non-material benefits. The Audubon Society and a ski club are examples of normative organizations.

Coercive organizations are groups that we must be coerced, or pushed, to join. These may include prison or a rehabilitation center. Symbolic interactionist Erving Goffman states that most coercive organizations are total institutions (1961). A total institution is one in which inmates or military soldiers live a controlled lifestyle and in which total resocialization takes place.

The third type is utilitarian organizations, which, as the name suggests, are joined because of the need for a specific material reward. High school and the workplace fall into this category—one joined in pursuit of a diploma, the other in order to make money.

Table 6.1 Table of Formal Organizations: This table shows Etzioni's three types of formal organizations. (Credit: Etzioni 1975)

	Normative or Voluntary	Coercive	Utilitarian
Benefit of Membership	Intangible benefit	Corrective benefit	Tangible benefit

	Normative or Voluntary	Coercive	Utilitarian
Type of Membership	Volunteer basis	Required	Contractual basis
Feeling of Connectedness	Shared affinity	No affinity	Some affinity

The Structure of Bureaucracies

Bureaucracies are an ideal type of formal organization. By ideal, sociologists don't mean "best." Rather, bureaucracies have a collection of characteristics that most of them exhibit. Pioneer sociologist Max Weber characterized a bureaucracy as having a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules, and impersonality (1922). People often complain about bureaucracies––declaring them slow, rule-bound, difficult to navigate, and unfriendly. Let's take a look at terms that define a bureaucracy to understand what they mean.

Hierarchy of authority refers to the chain of command that places one individual or office in charge of another, who in turn must answer to her own superiors. For example, as an employee at Walmart, your shift manager assigns you tasks. Your shift manager answers to his store manager, who must answer to her regional manager, and so on, up to the CEO who must answer to the board members, who in turn answer to the stockholders. Everyone in this bureaucracy follows the chain of command.

Bureaucracies have a clear division of labor: each individual has a specialized task to perform. For example, at a university, psychology professors teach psychology, but they do not attempt to provide students with financial aid forms. The Office of Admissions often takes on this task. In this case, it is a clear and commonsense division. But what about in a restaurant where food is backed up in the kitchen and a hostess is standing nearby texting on her phone? Her job is to seat customers, not to deliver food. Is this a smart division of labor?

Bureaucracies have explicit rules, rules that are outlined, written down, and standardized. For example, at your college or university, the student guidelines are contained within the Student Handbook. As technology changes and campuses encounter new concerns like cyberbullying, identity theft, and other problems that arise, organizations scramble to ensure their explicit rules cover these emerging issues.

Finally, bureaucracies are also characterized by impersonality, which takes personal feelings out of professional situations. This characteristic grew, to some extent, out of a desire to avoid nepotism, backroom deals, and other types of favoritism, while simultaneously protecting customers and others served by the organization. Impersonality Bureaucracies can effectively and efficiently serve volumes of customers quickly. However, explicit rules, clear division of labor, and a strict hierarchy of authority does not allow them to easily adjust to unique or new situations. As a result, customers frequently complain that stores with bureaucratic structures, like Walmart, care little about individuals, other businesses, and the community at large.

Bureaucracies are often meritocracies, meaning that hiring and promotion is based on proven and documented skills, rather than on nepotism or random choice. In order to get into a prestigious college, you need to perform well on the SAT and have an impressive transcript. In order to become a lawyer and represent clients, you must graduate law school and pass the state bar exam. Of course, there are many well-documented examples of success by those who did not proceed through traditional meritocracies. Think about technology companies with founders who dropped out of college, or performers who became famous after a YouTube video went viral.

In addition, organizations that aspire to become meritocracies encounter challenges. How well do you think established meritocracies identify talent? Wealthy families hire tutors, interview coaches, test-prep services, and consultants to help their kids get into the best schools. This starts as early as kindergarten in New York City, where competition for the most highly-regarded schools is especially fierce. Are these schools, many of which have copious scholarship funds that are intended to make the school more democratic, really offering all applicants a fair shake?

There are several positive aspects of bureaucracies. They are intended to improve efficiency, ensure equal opportunities, and serve a large population. And there are times when rigid hierarchies are needed. But remember that many of our bureaucracies grew large at the same time that our school model was developed––during the Industrial Revolution. Young workers were trained, and organizations were built for mass production, assembly line work, and factory jobs. In these scenarios, a clear chain of command was critical. Now, in the information age, this kind of rigid training and adherence to protocol can actually decrease both productivity and efficiency.

Today's workplace requires a faster pace, more problem solving, and a flexible approach to work. Too much adherence to explicit rules and a division of labor can leave an organization behind. And unfortunately, once established, bureaucracies can take on a

life of their own. Maybe you have heard the expression “trying to turn a tanker around mid-ocean,” which refers to the difficulties of changing direction with something large and set in its ways. State governments and current budget crises are examples of this challenge. It is almost impossible to make quick changes, leading states to fail, year after year, to address increasingly unbalanced budgets. Finally, bureaucracies, grew as institutions at a time when privileged white males held all the power. While ostensibly based on meritocracy, bureaucracies can perpetuate the existing balance of power by only recognizing the merit in traditionally male and privileged paths.

Michels (1911) suggested that all large organizations are characterized by the Iron Rule of Oligarchy**,** wherein an entire organization is ruled by a few elites. Do you think this is true? Can a large organization be collaborative?



Figure 6.9: This McDonald’s storefront in Egypt shows the McDonaldization of society. (Credit: s_w_ellis/flickr)

The McDonaldization of Society

The McDonaldization of Society (Ritzer 1993) refers to the increasing presence of the fast food business model in common social institutions, including government, education, and even relationships. The term itself isn't widely used in publications, research, or common conversation, but its effects are very familiar, even commonplace. The McDonald's model includes efficiency (the division of labor), predictability, calculability, and control (monitoring). For example, in your average chain grocery store, people at the register check out customers while stockers keep the shelves full of goods and deli workers slice meats and cheese to order (efficiency). Whenever you enter a store within that grocery chain, you receive the same type of goods, see the same store organization, and find the same brands at the same prices (predictability). You will find that goods are sold by the pound, so that you can weigh your fruit and vegetable purchase rather than simply guessing at the price for that bag of onions. The employees use a timecard to calculate their hours and receive overtime pay (calculability). Finally, you will notice that all store employees are wearing a uniform, and usually a name tag, so that they can be easily identified. There are security cameras to monitor the store, and some parts of the store, such as the stockroom, are generally considered off-limits to customers (control). This approach is so common in chain stores that you might not even notice it; in fact, if you went to a large-chain resturant or a store like Walmart, seeing a worker or a process that didn’t have these uniform characteristics would seem odd.

While McDonaldization has resulted in improved profits and an increased availability of various goods and services to more people worldwide, it has also reduced the variety of goods available in the marketplace while rendering available products uniform, generic, and bland. Think of the difference between a mass-produced shoe and one made by a local cobbler, between a chicken from a family-owned farm and a corporate grower, or between a cup of coffee from the local diner and one from Starbucks. Some more contemporary efforts can be referred to as “de-McDonaldization”: farmers markets, microbreweries, and various do-it-yourself trends. And with recent advertising and products emphasizing individuality, even McDonald’s seems to be de-McDonaldizing itself.

The corporate impact of this phenomenon is interesting on its own, but sociologists and ordinary citizens are often more concerned about its echoes in other areas of society. A primary example, discussed extensively later on in this text, is education. Curricula and teaching practices were long the domain of local districts under state guidance. Some experts felt that this led to

both inefficiency and underperformance. Starting in the 1990s and especially in the early 2000s with the No Child Left Behind law, national standards began to override local approaches. But the desired outcome (improved education) is difficult to measure and far more difficult to achieve. Due to funding gaps, difficult standards, and intense public and local government opposition, the law was largely seen as having limited impact and was eventually phased out.

Healthcare has also gone to a mass production and efficiency model. As you will explore later in the text, U.S. healthcare providers and insurers faced overwhelming increases in demand, partly the result of America's aging and less healthy population. In the 1990s, providers consolidated in what was called hospital "merger mania." Local hospitals and even small doctors' offices were merged or acquired by larger systems (Fuchs 1997). The trend continued with new growth in providers like urgent care offices. Other efficiency and standardization methods include telemedicine, new types of healthcare professionals, insurance mandates, and artificial intelligence.

Sociology in the Real World: Secrets of the McJob

We often talk about bureaucracies disparagingly, and no organization takes more heat than fast food restaurants. Several books and movies, such as *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* by Eric Schossler, paint an ugly picture of what goes in, what goes on, and what comes out of fast food chains. From their environmental impact to their role in the U.S. obesity epidemic, fast food chains are connected to numerous societal ills. Furthermore, working at a fast food restaurant is often disparaged, and even referred to dismissively, as having a McJob rather than a real job.

But business school professor Jerry Newman went undercover and worked behind the counter at seven fast food restaurants to discover what really goes on there. His book, *My Secret Life on the McJob*, documents his experience. Unlike Schossler, Newman found that these restaurants offer much good alongside the bad. Specifically, he asserted that the employees were honest and hardworking, that management was often impressive, and that the jobs required a lot more skill and effort than most people imagined. In the book, Newman cites a pharmaceutical executive who says a fast-food service job on an applicant's résumé is a plus because it indicates the employee is reliable and can handle pressure.

Businesses like Chipotle, Panera, and Costco attempt to combat many of the effects of McDonaldization. In fact, Costco is known for paying its employees an average of $20 per hour, or slightly more than $40,000 per year. Nearly 90% of their employees receive health insurance from Costco, a number that is unheard of in the retail sector.

While Chipotle is not known for the high wages of its employees, it is known for attempting to sell high-quality foods from responsibly sourced providers. This is a different approach from what Schossler describes among burger chains like McDonalds.

So, what do you think? Are these McJobs and the organizations that offer them still serving an important role in the economy and people's careers? Or are they dead-end jobs that typify all that is negative about large bureaucracies? Have you ever worked in one? Would you?

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6.1.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
aggregate	a collection of people who exist in the same place at the same time, but who don't interact or share a sense of identity				
authoritarian leader	a leader who issues orders and assigns tasks				
bureaucracies	formal organizations characterized by a hierarchy of authority, a clear division of labor, explicit rules, and impersonality.				
category	people who share similar characteristics but who are not connected in any way				
clear division of labor	the fact that each individual in a bureaucracy has a specialized task to perform				
coercive organizations	organizations that people do not voluntarily join, such as prison or a mental hospital				
conformity	the extent to which an individual complies with group or societal norms				
democratic leader	a leader who encourages group participation and consensus-building before moving into action				
dyad	a two-member group				
explicit rules	the types of rules in a bureaucracy; rules that are outlined, recorded, and standardized				
expressive function	a group function that serves an emotional need				
expressive leader	a leader who is concerned with process and with ensuring everyone's emotional wellbeing				
formal organizations	large, impersonal organizations				
group	any collection of at least two people who interact with some frequency and who share some sense of aligned identity				
hierarchy of authority	a clear chain of command found in a bureaucracy				
impersonality	the removal of personal feelings from a professional situation				
in-group	a group a person belongs to and feels is an integral part of his identity				
instrumental function	being oriented toward a task or goal				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
instrumental leader	a leader who is goal oriented with a primary focus on accomplishing tasks				
Iron Rule of Oligarchy	the theory that an organization is ruled by a few elites rather than through collaboration				
laissez-faire leader	a hands-off leader who allows members of the group to make their own decisions				
leadership function	the main focus or goal of a leader				
leadership style	the style a leader uses to achieve goals or elicit action from group members				
McDonaldization of Society	the increasing presence of the fast food business model in common social institutions				
meritocracy	a bureaucracy where membership and advancement is based on merit—proven and documented skills				
normative or voluntary organizations	organizations that people join to pursue shared interests or because they provide some intangible rewards				
out-group	a group that an individual is not a member of, and may even compete with				
primary groups	small, informal groups of people who are closest to us				
reference groups	groups to which an individual compares herself				
secondary groups	larger and more impersonal groups that are task-focused and time limited				
total institution	an organization in which participants live a controlled lifestyle and in which total resocialization occurs				
triad	a three-member group				
utilitarian organizations	organizations that are joined to fill a specific material need				

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6.1.6: Section Summary

6.1 Types of Groups

Groups largely define how we think of ourselves. There are two main types of groups: primary and secondary. As the names suggest, the primary group is the long-term, complex one. People use groups as standards of comparison to define themselves—both who they are and who they are not. Sometimes groups can be used to exclude people or as a tool that strengthens prejudice.

6.2 Group Size and Structure

The size and dynamic of a group greatly affects how members act. Primary groups rarely have formal leaders, although there can be informal leadership. Groups generally are considered large when there are too many members for a simultaneous discussion. In secondary groups there are two types of leadership functions, with expressive leaders focused on emotional health and wellness, and instrumental leaders more focused on results. Further, there are different leadership styles: democratic leaders, authoritarian leaders, and laissez-faire leaders.

Within a group, conformity is the extent to which people want to go along with the norm. A number of experiments have illustrated how strong the drive to conform can be. It is worth considering real-life examples of how conformity and obedience can lead people to ethically and morally suspect acts.

6.3 Formal Organizations

Large organizations fall into three main categories: normative/voluntary, coercive, and utilitarian. We live in a time of contradiction: while the pace of change and technology are requiring people to be more nimble and less bureaucratic in their thinking, large bureaucracies like hospitals, schools, and governments are more hampered than ever by their organizational format. At the same time, the past few decades have seen the development of a trend to bureaucratize and conventionalize local institutions. Increasingly, Main Streets across the country resemble each other; instead of a Bob's Coffee Shop and Jane's Hair Salon there is a Dunkin Donuts and a Supercuts. This trend has been referred to as the McDonaldization of society.

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6.1.7: Section Quiz

6.1 Types of Groups

1.

What does a Functionalist consider when studying a phenomenon like the Tea Party movement?

a. The minute functions that every person at the protests plays in the whole
b. The internal conflicts that play out within such a diverse and leaderless group
c. How the movement contributes to the stability of society by offering the discontented a safe, controlled outlet for dissension
d. The factions and divisions that form within the movement

2.

What is the largest difference between the Functionalist and Conflict perspectives and the Interactionist perspective?

a. The former two consider long-term repercussions of the group or situation, while the latter focuses on the present.
b. The first two are the more common sociological perspective, while the latter is a newer sociological model.
c. The first two focus on hierarchical roles within an organization, while the last takes a more holistic view.
d. The first two perspectives address large-scale issues facing groups, while the last examines more detailed aspects.

3.

What role do secondary groups play in society?

a. They are transactional, task-based, and short-term, filling practical needs.
b. They provide a social network that allows people to compare themselves to others.
c. The members give and receive emotional support.
d. They allow individuals to challenge their beliefs and prejudices.

4.

When a high school student gets teased by her basketball team for receiving an academic award, she is dealing with competing _____.

a. primary groups
b. out-groups
c. reference groups
d. secondary groups

5.

Which of the following is *not* an example of an in-group?

a. The Ku Klux Klan
b. A fraternity
c. A synagogue
d. A high school

6.

What is a group whose values, norms, and beliefs come to serve as a standard for one's own behavior?

a. Secondary group
b. Formal organization
c. Reference group

d. Primary group

7.

A parent who is worrying over her teenager's dangerous and self-destructive behavior and low self-esteem may wish to look at her child's:

a. reference group
b. in-group
c. out-group
d. All of the above

6.2 Group Size and Structure

8.

Two people who have just had a baby have turned from a _____ to a _____.

a. primary group; secondary group
b. dyad; triad
c. couple; family
d. de facto group; nuclear family

9.

Who is more likely to be an expressive leader?

a. The sales manager of a fast-growing cosmetics company
b. A high school teacher at a reform school
c. The director of a summer camp for chronically ill children
d. A manager at a fast-food restaurant

10.

Which of the following is *not* an appropriate group for democratic leadership?

a. A fire station
b. A college classroom
c. A high school prom committee
d. A homeless shelter

11.

In Asch's study on conformity, what contributed to the ability of subjects to resist conforming?

a. A very small group of witnesses
b. The presence of an ally
c. The ability to keep one's answer private
d. All of the above

12.

Which type of group leadership has a communication pattern that flows from the top down?

a. Authoritarian
b. Democratic
c. Laissez-faire
d. Expressive

6.3 Formal Organizations

13.

Which is *not* an example of a normative organization?

a. A book club
b. A church youth group
c. A People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) protest group
d. A study hall

14.

Which of these is an example of a total institution?

a. Jail
b. High school
c. Political party
d. A gym

15.

Why do people join utilitarian organizations?

a. Because they feel an affinity with others there
b. Because they receive a tangible benefit from joining
c. Because they have no choice
d. Because they feel pressured to do so

16.

Which of the following is *not* a characteristic of bureaucracies?

a. Coercion to join
b. Hierarchy of authority
c. Explicit rules
d. Division of labor

17.

What are some of the intended positive aspects of bureaucracies?

a. Increased productivity
b. Increased efficiency
c. Equal treatment for all
d. All of the above

18.

What is an advantage of the McDonaldization of society?

a. There is more variety of goods.
b. There is less theft.
c. There is more worldwide availability of goods.
d. There is more opportunity for businesses.

19.

What is a disadvantage of the McDonaldization of society?

a. There is less variety of goods.
b. There is an increased need for employees with postgraduate degrees.
c. There is less competition so prices are higher.
d. There are fewer jobs so unemployment increases.

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6.1.8: Short Answer

6.1 Types of Groups

1.

How has technology changed your primary groups and secondary groups? Do you have more (and separate) primary groups due to online connectivity? Do you believe that someone, like Levy, can have a true primary group made up of people she has never met? Why, or why not?

2.

Compare and contrast two different political groups or organizations, such as the MeToo and Tea Party movements. How do the groups differ in terms of leadership, membership, and activities? How do the group's goals influence participants? Are any of them in-groups (and have they created out-groups)? Explain your answer.

3.

The concept of hate crimes has been linked to in-groups and out-groups. Can you think of an example where people have been excluded or tormented due to this kind of group dynamic?

6.2 Group Size and Structure

4.

Think of a scenario where an authoritarian leadership style would be beneficial. Explain. What are the reasons it would work well? What are the risks?

5.

Describe a time you were led by a leader using, in your opinion, a leadership style that didn't suit the situation. When and where was it? What could she or he have done better?

6.

Imagine you are in Asch's study. Would you find it difficult to give the correct answer in that scenario? Why or why not? How would you change the study now to improve it?

7.

What kind of leader do you tend to be? Do you embrace different leadership styles and functions as the situation changes? Give an example of a time you were in a position of leadership and what function and style you expressed.

6.3 Formal Organizations

8.

What do you think about the recent spotlight on fast food restaurants? Do you think they contribute to society's ills? Do you believe they provide a needed service? Have you ever worked a job like this? What did you learn?

9.

Do you consider today's large companies like General Motors, Amazon, or Facebook to be bureaucracies? Why, or why not? Which of the main characteristics of bureaucracies do you see in them? Which are absent?

10.

Where do you prefer to shop, eat out, or grab a cup of coffee? Large chains like Walmart or smaller retailers? Starbucks or a local restaurant? What do you base your decisions on? Does this section change how you think about these choices? Why, or why not?

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6.1.9: Further Research

6.1 Types of Groups

For more information about cyberbullying causes and statistics, check out this website on cyberbullying research.

6.2 Group Size and Structure

What is your leadership style? This leadership style quiz helps you find out.

6.3 Formal Organizations

As mentioned above, the concept of McDonaldization is a growing one. Check out this article discussing the phenomenon of McDonaldization further.

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6.2: Peter Principle - When People get Promoted Into Maximum Incompetence

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7: DEVIANCE AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

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7.1: DEVIANCE, CRIME, AND SOCIAL CONTROL



- Topic hierarchy

7.1.1: Prelude to Deviance, Crime, and Social Control

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7.1.1: Prelude to Deviance, Crime, and Social Control

Social Issues in the News

On May 29th an 18 year old male walked into a classroom at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas and shot and killed 19 students and 2 teachers (Elamroussi, 2022). "A bustling entertainment district turned into a scene of carnage when multiple shooters opened fire in the South Street area of Philadelphia, killing at least three people and wounding 11 others, police said." (Rose, Yan, Beech & Tucker, 2022). As of June 5th 2022 there were 239 mass shootings in the United States in 156 days. Why do crimes like this happen? What can be done to reduce such crime? What strategies for reducing crime does a sociological understanding of criminal behavior imply? These terrible crimes were, of course, just one of millions that occur in the United States each year. A central message of this book so far is that society is possible because people conform to its norms, values, and roles. As the sad story of the Robb Elementary School illustrates, this chapter has a different message: that people often violate their society's norms and are sometimes punished for doing so. Why do they commit deviance and crime? What influences their chances of being punished? How do behaviors come to be defined as deviant or criminal? Recalling this book's emphasis on changing society, how can crime and deviance be reduced? These are questions that sociologists have long tried to answer, and we explore possible answers in the pages that follow.

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7.1.2: Social Control and the Relativity of Deviance

Learning Objectives

- Define deviance, crime, and social control.
- Understand why Émile Durkheim said deviance is normal.
- Understand what is meant by the relativity of deviance.

Deviance is behavior that violates social norms and arouses negative social reactions. Some behavior is considered so harmful that governments enact written laws that ban the behavior. Crime is behavior that violates these laws and is obviously an important type of deviance that concerns many Americans.

The fact that both deviance and crime arouse negative social reactions reminds us that every society needs to ensure that its members generally obey social norms in their daily interaction. Social control refers to ways in which a society tries to prevent and sanction behavior that violates norms. Just as a society like the United States has informal and formal norms (see Chapter 2), so does it have informal and formal social control. Generally, informal social control is used to control behavior that violates informal norms, and formal social control is used to control behavior that violates formal norms. We typically decline to violate informal norms, if we even think of violating them in the first place, because we fear risking the negative reactions of other people. These reactions, and thus examples of informal social control, include, but are not limited to, anger, disappointment, ostracism, and ridicule. Formal social control in the United States typically involves the legal system (police, judges and prosecutors, corrections officials) and also, for businesses, the many local, state, and federal regulatory agencies that constitute the regulatory system.

Social control is never perfect, and so many norms and people exist that there are always some people who violate some norms. In fact, Émile Durkheim (1895/1962), a founder of sociology discussed in Chapter 1, stressed that a society *without* deviance is impossible for at least two reasons. First, the collective conscience (see Chapter 1) is never strong enough to prevent *all* rule breaking. Even in a "society of saints," such as a monastery, he said, rules will be broken and negative social reactions aroused. Second, because deviance serves several important functions for society (which we discuss later in this chapter), any given society "invents" deviance by defining certain behaviors as deviant and the people who commit them as deviants. Because Durkheim thought deviance was inevitable for these reasons, he considered it a *normal* part of every healthy society.



Figure 5.1. Informal social control, such as the anger depicted here, is used to control behavior that violates informal norms.© Thinkstock

Although deviance is normal in this regard, it remains true that some people are more likely than others to commit it. It is also true that some locations within a given society have higher rates of deviance than other locations; for example, U.S. cities have higher rates of violent crime than do rural areas. Still, Durkheim's monastery example raises an important point about the **relativity** of deviance: whether a behavior is considered deviant depends on the circumstances in which the behavior occurs and

not on the behavior itself. Although talking might be considered deviant in a monastery, it would certainly be considered very normal elsewhere. If an assailant, say a young male, murders someone, he faces arrest, prosecution, and, in many states, possible execution. Yet if a soldier kills someone in wartime, he may be considered a hero. Killing occurs in either situation, but the context and reasons for the killing determine whether the killer is punished or given a medal.

Deviance is also relative in two other ways. First, it is *relative in place*: a given behavior may be considered deviant in one society but acceptable in another society. Recall Chapter 2's discussion of sexual behavior, where we saw that sexual acts condemned in some societies are often practiced in others. There we contrasted a small island off the coast of Ireland, where sex and nudity are considered disgusting, with another island in the South Pacific, where sexual activity is very common. We also saw that although many societies condemn homosexuality, in some societies homosexuality is actually fairly common.

Second, deviance is *relative in time*: a behavior in a given society may be considered deviant in one time period but acceptable many years later; conversely, a behavior may be considered acceptable in one time period but deviant many years later. In the late 1800s, many Americans used cocaine, marijuana, and opium, because they were common components of over-the-counter products for symptoms like depression, insomnia, menstrual cramps, migraines, and toothaches. Coca-Cola originally contained cocaine and, perhaps not surprisingly, became an instant hit when it went on sale in 1894 (Goode, 2008).

The relativity of deviance in all of these ways is captured in a famous statement by sociologist Howard S. Becker (1963, p. 9), who wrote several decades ago that deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules or sanctions to an "offender." The deviant is one to whom that label has been successfully applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label.

This insight raises some provocative possibilities for society's response to deviance and crime. First, harmful behavior committed by corporations and wealthy individuals may not be considered deviant, perhaps because "respectable" people engage in them. Second, prostitution and other arguably less harmful behaviors may be considered very deviant because they are deemed immoral or because of bias against the kinds of people (poor and nonwhite) thought to be engaging in them. These considerations yield several questions that need to be answered in the study of deviance. First, why are some individuals more likely than others to commit deviance? Second, why do rates of deviance differ within social categories such as gender, race, social class, and age? Third, why are some locations more likely than other locations to have higher rates of deviance? Fourth, why are some behaviors more likely than others to be considered deviant? Fifth, why are some individuals and those from certain social backgrounds more likely than other individuals to be considered deviant and punished for deviant behavior? Sixth and last, but certainly not least, what can be done to reduce rates of violent crime and other serious forms of deviance? The sociological study of deviance and crime aims to answer all of these questions.

Conclusion

- Deviance is behavior that violates social norms and arouses negative social reactions.
- Crime is behavior that is considered so serious that it violates formal laws prohibiting such behavior.
- Social control refers to ways in which a society tries to prevent and sanction behavior that violates norms.
- Émile Durkheim believed that deviance is a normal part of every society.
- Whether a behavior is considered deviant depends on the circumstances under which it occurs. Considerations of certain behaviors as deviant also vary from one society to another and from one era to another within a given society.

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Goode, E. (2008). *Drugs in American society*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.Today, of course, all three drugs are illegal.

For Your Review

1. In what ways is deviance considered relative?
2. Why did Durkheim consider deviance a normal part of society?

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7.1.3: Explaining Deviance

Learning Objectives

- Explain what biological and psychological explanations of deviance have in common.
- State the major arguments and assumptions of the various sociological explanations of deviance.

If we want to reduce violent crime and other serious deviance, we must first understand why it occurs. Many theories of deviance exist, and together they offer a more complete explanation of deviance and the reactions to it than any one theory offers by itself. The sociological theories highlighted in the pages that follow stress elements of the social environment and of social interaction. Before turning to them, we briefly discuss biological and psychological approaches, both of which stress factors lying inside the individual.

Biological and Psychological Approaches

Although several biological and psychological explanations exist, they share a central proposition: deviants are different biologically or psychologically from nondeviants, and they have biological or psychological problems that predispose them to committing deviance. The implication is that deviants are biologically or psychologically abnormal. We have space here to discuss just a few of these explanations.

Early biological explanations focused on body size and shape (Rafter, 2008). Toward the end of the 1800s, Italian physician Cesare Lombroso measured various body dimensions of Italian prisoners and decided their bodies resembled those of primitive men. He reasoned that criminals were evolutionary accidents, or atavists, whose brains were incapable of conforming to modern norms. Coming in the aftermath of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, Lombroso's view gained instant popularity but was soon discredited for various methodological problems, including imprecise body measurements and the lack of adequate control groups. Nonetheless, his view that criminals are biologically different continues to guide today's biological research on crime and deviance.

This research is much more sophisticated than the earlier work and has made important strides in understanding the possible biological bases of deviant behavior. One line of research focuses on *heredity* and violent crime. Studies of identical twins tend to find that if one twin has committed a crime, so has the other twin, and if one twin has not committed a crime, neither has the other one. Although this similarity suggests a genetic basis for criminality, identical twins are alike beyond their genes. Usually they spend much time together, have the same friends, and are very close emotionally. These social similarities may explain why their activities, including criminal behavior or the lack thereof, are so often alike (Nisbett, 2009).

Figure 5.2



One line of contemporary research on biology and crime focuses on identical twins. Although twins often behave the same in regard to committing a crime, it is not clear whether their identical genetic makeup or their similar social environment accounts for their similar behavior.

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To avoid these possibilities, a few studies examine identical twins who were separated in infancy and reared by different families. Some of these studies also find that if one twin has committed a crime, so has the other one. However, many of these twins were in fact raised by parents who were neighbors or relatives and even spent time with each other while they were growing up. Because these "separated" twins were not so separated after all, the influence of their similar social environments on their similar behavior cannot be ruled out. Because of these problems, many scholars say it is premature to conclude that a strong genetic basis for criminality exists (Nisbett, 2009). Other scholars, however, are convinced that such a basis does exist and argue that genes and the social environment have a joint influence on deviant behavior (Beaver, 2009).

The most popular contemporary psychological explanation of deviance focuses on various *personality problems* that are said to create deviant individuals. Several studies find that young children with behavior problems and adolescents who commit delinquency are more likely than well-behaved youths to have personality problems such as impulsiveness and irritability (Moffitt, 2006). These problems arise during early childhood and are thought to be caused by biological abnormalities or inadequate parenting (or both). Several well-designed studies strongly suggest that early childhood programs, including home visits to children at risk for antisocial behavior (such as those born to teenage mothers) may reduce these problems and thus reduce deviance, delinquency, and crime (Welsh & Farrington, 2007).

Sociological Explanations

Biological and psychological theories perhaps begin to explain why some individuals are more likely than others to commit deviance, but they have less to say about the other questions posed earlier: why rates of deviance differ within social categories and across locations, why some behaviors are more likely than others to be considered deviant, and why some kinds of people are more likely than others to be considered deviant and punished for deviant behavior. To answer these questions, sociological explanations are necessary. While biological and psychological theories suggest that deviants are different from nondeviants and are in that sense abnormal, sociological explanations suggest that deviants are normal people who have been influenced by the social environment to commit acts that violate social norms. In this way, they complement the social-psychological experiments discussed in the previous chapter. Sociological explanations as a whole have important implications for successful programs and policies to reduce deviance and crime. Consistent with this book's public sociology theme, a discussion of several such strategies concludes this chapter.

We now turn to the major sociological explanations of crime and deviance. A summary of these explanations appears in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Theory Snapshot: Summary of Sociological Explanations of Deviance and Crime

Major theory	Related explanation	Summary of explanation
Functionalist	Durkheim's views	Deviance has several functions: (a) it clarifies norms and increases conformity, (b) it strengthens social bonds among the people reacting to the deviant, and (c) it can help to lead to positive social change.
	Social ecology	Certain social and physical characteristics of urban neighborhoods contribute to high crime rates. These characteristics include poverty, dilapidation, population density, and population turnover.
	Strain theory	According to Robert Merton, deviance among the poor results from a gap between the cultural emphasis on economic success and the inability to achieve such success through the legitimate means of working. According to Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin, differential access to illegitimate means affects the type of deviance in which individuals experiencing strain engage.
	Deviant subcultures	Poverty and other community conditions give rise to certain subcultures through which adolescents acquire values that promote deviant behavior. Albert Cohen wrote that lack of success in school leads lower-class boys to join gangs whose value system promotes and rewards delinquency. Walter Miller wrote that delinquency stems from focal concerns, a taste for trouble, toughness, cleverness, and excitement. Marvin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti argued that a subculture of violence in inner-city areas promotes a violent response to insults and other problems.
	Social control theory	Travis Hirschi wrote that delinquency results from weak bonds to conventional social institutions such as families and schools. These bonds include attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief.
Conflict		People with power pass laws and otherwise use the legal system to secure their position at the top of society and to keep the powerless on the bottom. The poor and minorities are more likely because of their poverty and race to be arrested, convicted, and imprisoned.
	Feminist perspectives	Inequality against women and antiquated views about relations between the sexes underlie rape, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and other crimes against women. Sexual abuse prompts many girls and women to turn to drugs and alcohol use and other antisocial behavior. Gender socialization is a key reason for large gender differences in crime rates.
Symbolic interactionism	Differential association theory	Edwin H. Sutherland argued that criminal behavior is learned by interacting with close friends and family members who teach us how to commit various crimes and also about the values, motives, and rationalizations we need to adopt in order to justify breaking the law.
	Techniques of neutralization	Gresham M. Sykes and David Matza wrote that adolescents must neutralize potential guilt and shame by justifying their delinquency. Specific rationalizations include: (a) denial of responsibility, (b) denial of injury, (c) denial of the victim, (d) condemnation of the condemners, and (e) appeal to higher loyalties.
	Labeling theory	Deviance results from being labeled a deviant; nonlegal factors such as appearance, race, and social class affect how often labeling occurs.

Functionalist Explanations

Several explanations may be grouped under the functionalist perspective in sociology, as they all share this perspective's central view on the importance of various aspects of society for social stability and other social needs.

Émile Durkheim: The Functions of Deviance

As noted earlier, Émile Durkheim said deviance is normal, but he did not stop there. In a surprising and still controversial twist, he also argued that deviance serves several important functions for society.

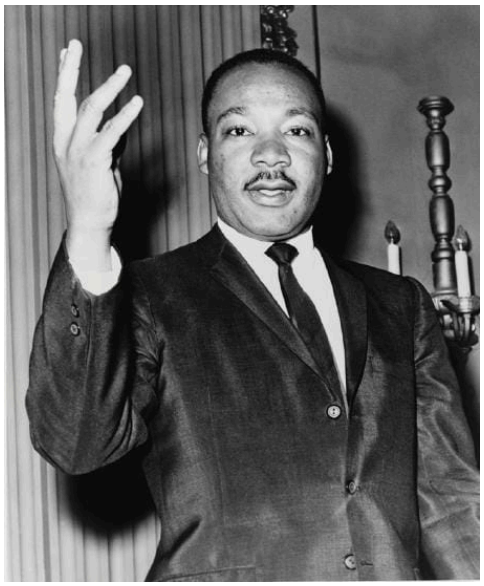
First, Durkheim said, deviance clarifies social norms and increases conformity. This happens because the discovery and

punishment of deviance reminds people of the norms and reinforces the consequences of violating them. If your class were taking an exam and a student was caught cheating, the rest of the class would be instantly reminded of the rules about cheating and the punishment for it, and as a result they would be less likely to cheat.

A second function of deviance is that it strengthens social bonds among the people reacting to the deviant. An example comes from the classic story *The Ox-Bow Incident* (Clark, 1940), in which three innocent men are accused of cattle rustling and are eventually lynched. The mob that does the lynching is very united in its frenzy against the men, and, at least at that moment, the bonds among the individuals in the mob are extremely strong.

A final function of deviance, said Durkheim, is that it can help to lead to positive social change. Although some of the greatest figures in history—Socrates, Jesus, Joan of Arc, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. to name just a few—were considered the worst kind of deviants in their time, we now honor them for their commitment and sacrifice.

Figure 5.3



Émile Durkheim wrote that deviance can lead to positive social change. Many Southerners had strong negative feelings about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights movement, but history now honors him for his commitment and sacrifice.

Source: Photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3c26559.

Sociologist Herbert Gans (1996)Gans, H. J. (1996). *The war against the poor: The underclass and antipoverty policy*. New York, NY: Basic Books.pointed to an additional function of deviance: deviance creates jobs for the segments of society—police, prison guards, criminology professors, and so forth—whose main focus is to deal with deviants in some manner. If deviance and crime did not exist, hundreds of thousands of law-abiding people in the United States would be out of work!

Although deviance can have all of these functions, many forms of it can obviously be quite harmful, as the story of the mugged voter that began this chapter reminds us. Violent crime and property crime in the United States victimize millions of people and households each year, while crime by corporations has effects that are even more harmful, as we discuss later. Drug use, prostitution, and other "victimless" crimes may involve willing participants, but these participants often cause themselves and others much harm. Although deviance according to Durkheim is inevitable and normal and serves important functions, that certainly does not mean the United States and other nations should be happy to have high rates of serious deviance. The sociological theories we discuss point to certain aspects of the social environment, broadly defined, that contribute to deviance and crime and that should be the focus of efforts to reduce these behaviors.

Social Ecology: Neighborhood and Community Characteristics

An important sociological approach, begun in the late 1800s and early 1900s by sociologists at the University of Chicago, stresses that certain social and physical characteristics of urban neighborhoods raise the odds that people growing up and living

in these neighborhoods will commit deviance and crime. This line of thought is now called the social ecology approach (Mears, Wang, Hay, & Bales, 2008). Many *criminogenic* (crime-causing) neighborhood characteristics have been identified, including high rates of poverty, population density, dilapidated housing, residential mobility, and single-parent households. All of these problems are thought to contribute to social disorganization, or weakened social bonds and social institutions, that make it difficult to socialize children properly and to monitor suspicious behavior (Mears et al., 2008; Sampson, 2006). How does community context matter? Social mechanisms and the explanation of crime rates. In P.-O. H. Wikström & R. J. Sampson (Eds.), *The explanation of crime: Context, mechanisms, and development*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Sociology Making a Difference

Improving Neighborhood Conditions Helps Reduce Crime Rates

One of the sociological theories of crime discussed in the text is the social ecology approach. To review, this approach attributes high rates of deviance and crime to the neighborhood's social and physical characteristics, including poverty, high population density, dilapidated housing, and high population turnover. These problems create social disorganization that weakens the neighborhood's social institutions and impairs effective child socialization.

Much empirical evidence supports social ecology's view about negative neighborhood conditions and crime rates and suggests that efforts to improve these conditions will lower crime rates. Some of the most persuasive evidence comes from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (directed by sociologist Robert J. Sampson), in which more than 6,000 children, ranging in age from birth to 18, and their parents and other caretakers were studied over a 7-year period. The social and physical characteristics of the dozens of neighborhoods in which the subjects lived were measured to permit assessment of these characteristics' effects on the probability of delinquency. A number of studies using data from this project confirm the general assumptions of the social ecology approach. In particular, delinquency is higher in neighborhoods with lower levels of "collective efficacy," that is, in neighborhoods with lower levels of community supervision of adolescent behavior.

The many studies from the Chicago project and data in several other cities show that neighborhood conditions greatly affect the extent of delinquency in urban neighborhoods. This body of research in turn suggests that strategies and programs that improve the social and physical conditions of urban neighborhoods may well help decrease the high rates of crime and delinquency that are so often found there.

Strain Theory

Failure to achieve the American dream lies at the heart of Robert Merton's (1938) famous strain theory (also called anomie theory). Recall from Chapter 1 that Durkheim attributed high rates of suicide to anomie, or normlessness, that occurs in times when social norms are unclear or weak. Adapting this concept, Merton wanted to explain why poor people have higher deviance rates than the nonpoor. He reasoned that the United States values economic success above all else and also has norms that specify the approved means, working, for achieving economic success. Because the poor often cannot achieve the American dream of success through the conventional means of working, they experience a gap between the goal of economic success and the means of working. This gap, which Merton likened to Durkheim's anomie because of the resulting lack of clarity over norms, leads to strain or frustration. To reduce their frustration, some poor people resort to several adaptations, including deviance, depending on whether they accept or reject the goal of economic success and the means of working. Table 5.2 presents the logical adaptations of the poor to the strain they experience. Let's review these briefly.

Table 5.2 Merton's Anomie Theory

Adaptation	Goal of economic success	Means of working
I. Conformity	+	+
II. Innovation	+	–
III. Ritualism	–	+
IV. Retreatism	–	–
V. Rebellion	±	±
+ means accept, – means reject, ± means reject and work for a new society		

Source: Adapted from Merton, R. K. (1938). Social structure and anomie. American Sociological Review, 3, 672–682.

Despite their strain, most poor people continue to accept the goal of economic success and continue to believe they should work to make money. In other words, they continue to be good, law-abiding citizens. They conform to society's norms and values, and, not surprisingly, Merton calls their adaptation *conformity*.

Figure 5.4



One of Robert Merton's adaptations in his strain theory is retreatism, in which poor people abandon society's goal of economic success and reject its means of employment to reach this goal. Many of today's homeless people might be considered retreatists under Merton's typology.

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Faced with strain, some poor people continue to value economic success but come up with innovative means of achieving it. They rob people or banks, commit fraud, or use other illegal means of acquiring money or property. Merton calls this adaptation *innovation*.

Other poor people continue to work at a job while really giving up all hope of improving their lot in life. They go to work day after day as a habit. Merton calls this third adaptation *ritualism*. This adaptation does not involve deviant behavior but is a logical response to the strain poor people experience.

In Merton's fourth adaptation, *retreatism*, some poor people withdraw from society by becoming hobos or vagrants or by becoming addicted to alcohol, heroin, or other drugs. Their response to the strain they feel is to reject both the goal of economic success and the means of working.

Merton's fifth and final adaptation is *rebellion*. Here poor people not only reject the goal of success and the means of working but work actively to bring about a new society with a new value system. These people are the radicals and revolutionaries of their time. Because Merton developed his strain theory in the aftermath of the Great Depression, in which the labor and socialist movements had been quite active, it is not surprising that he thought of rebellion as a logical adaptation of the poor to their lack of economic success.

Although Merton's theory has been popular over the years, it has some limitations. Perhaps most important, it overlooks deviance such as fraud by the middle and upper classes and also fails to explain murder, rape, and other crimes that usually are not done for economic reasons. It also does not explain why some poor people choose one adaptation over another.

Merton's strain theory stimulated other explanations of deviance that built on his concept of strain. Differential opportunity theory, developed by Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960), tried to explain why the poor choose one or the other of Merton's adaptations. Whereas Merton stressed that the poor have *differential access to legitimate means* (working), Cloward and Ohlin

stressed that they have *differential access to illegitimate means*. For example, some live in neighborhoods where organized crime is dominant and will get involved in such crime; others live in neighborhoods rampant with drug use and will start using drugs themselves.

In a more recent formulation, two sociologists, Steven F. Messner and Richard Rosenfeld (2007), expanded Merton's view by arguing that in the United States crime arises from several of our most important values, including an overemphasis on economic success, individualism, and competition. These values produce crime by making many Americans, rich or poor, feel they never have enough money and by prompting them to help themselves even at other people's expense. Crime in the United States, then, arises ironically from the country's most basic values.

In yet another extension of Merton's theory, Robert Agnew (2007) reasoned that adolescents experience various kinds of strain in addition to the economic type addressed by Merton. A romantic relationship may end, a family member may die, or students may be taunted or bullied at school. Repeated strain-inducing incidents such as these produce anger, frustration, and other negative emotions, and these emotions in turn prompt delinquency and drug use.

Deviant Subcultures

Some sociologists stress that poverty and other community conditions give rise to certain subcultures through which adolescents acquire values that promote deviant behavior. One of the first to make this point was Albert K. Cohen (1955), whose status frustration theory says that lower-class boys do poorly in school because schools emphasize middle-class values. School failure reduces their status and self-esteem, which the boys try to counter by joining juvenile gangs. In these groups, a different value system prevails, and boys can regain status and self-esteem by engaging in delinquency. Cohen had nothing to say about girls, as he assumed they cared little about how well they did in school, placing more importance on marriage and family instead, and hence would remain nondelinquent even if they did not do well. Scholars later criticized his disregard for girls and assumptions about them.

Another sociologist, Walter Miller (1958), said poor boys become delinquent because they live amid a lower-class subculture that includes several focal concerns, or values, that help lead to delinquency. These focal concerns include a taste for trouble, toughness, cleverness, and excitement. If boys grow up in a subculture with these values, they are more likely to break the law. Their deviance is a result of their socialization. Critics said Miller exaggerated the differences between the value system in poor inner-city neighborhoods and wealthier, middle-class communities (Akers & Sellers, 2008).

A very popular subcultural explanation is the so-called subculture of violence thesis, first advanced by Marvin Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti (1967). In some inner-city areas, they said, a subculture of violence promotes a violent response to insults and other problems, which people in middle-class areas would probably ignore. The subculture of violence, they continued, arises partly from the need of lower-class males to "prove" their masculinity in view of their economic failure. Quantitative research to test their theory has failed to show that the urban poor are more likely than other groups to approve of violence (Cao, Adams, & Jensen, 1997).Cao, L., Adams, A., & Jensen, V. J. (1997). A test of the black subculture of violence thesis: A research note. *Criminology, 35,* 367–379. On the other hand, recent ethnographic (qualitative) research suggests that large segments of the urban poor do adopt a "code" of toughness and violence to promote respect (Anderson, 1999).Anderson, E. (1999). *Code of the street: Decency, violence, and the moral life of the inner city*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton. As this conflicting evidence illustrates, the subculture of violence view remains controversial and merits further scrutiny.

Social Control Theory

Travis Hirschi (1969) argued that human nature is basically selfish and thus wondered why people do *not* commit deviance. His answer, which is now called social control theory (also known as *social bonding theory*), was that their bonds to conventional social institutions such as the family and the school keep them from violating social norms. Hirschi's basic perspective reflects Durkheim's view that strong social norms reduce deviance such as suicide.

Hirschi outlined four types of bonds to conventional social institutions. The first is *attachment*, which refers to how much we feel loyal to these institutions and care about the opinions of people in them, such as our parents and teachers. The more attached we are to our families and schools, the less likely we are to be deviant. The second type is *commitment*, which refers to how much we value our participation in conventional activities such as getting a good education. The more committed we are to these activities and the more time and energy we have invested in them, the less deviant we will be. The third dimension is *involvement*, or the amount of time we spend in conventional activities. The more time we spend, the less opportunity we have to be deviant. The final type of bond is *belief*, which refers to our acceptance of society's norms. The more we believe in these norms, the less we deviate.

Figure 5.5



Travis Hirschi's social control theory stresses the importance of bonds to social institutions for preventing deviance. His theory emphasized the importance of attachment to one's family in this regard.

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Hirschi's theory has been very popular. Many studies find that youths with weaker bonds to their parents and schools are more likely to be deviant. But the theory has its critics (Akers & Sellers, 2008).One problem centers on the "chicken and egg" question of causal order. For example, many studies support social control theory by finding that delinquent youths often have worse relationships with their parents than do nondelinquent youths. Is that because the bad relationships prompt the youths to be delinquent, as Hirschi thought? Or is it because the youths' delinquency worsens their relationship with their parents? Despite these questions, Hirschi's social control theory continues to influence our understanding of deviance. To the extent it is correct, it suggests several strategies for preventing crime, including programs designed to improve parenting and relations between parents and children (Welsh & Farrington, 2007).

Conflict Explanations

Explanations of crime rooted in the conflict perspective reflect its general view that society is a struggle between the "haves" at the top of society with social, economic, and political power and the "have-nots" at the bottom. Accordingly, they assume that those with power pass laws and otherwise use the legal system to secure their position at the top of society and to keep the powerless on the bottom (Bohm & Vogel, 2011). The poor and minorities are more likely because of their poverty and race to be arrested, convicted, and imprisoned. These explanations also blame street crime by the poor on the economic deprivation and inequality in which they live rather than on any moral failings of the poor.

Some conflict explanations also say that capitalism helps create street crime by the poor. An early proponent of this view was Dutch criminologist Willem Bonger (1916), who said that capitalism as an economic system involves competition for profit. This competition leads to an emphasis in a capitalist society's culture on *egoism*, or self-seeking behavior, and *greed*. Because profit becomes so important, people in a capitalist society are more likely than those in noncapitalist ones to break the law for profit and other gains, even if their behavior hurts others.

Not surprisingly, conflict explanations have sparked much controversy (Akers & Sellers, 2008). Many scholars dismiss them for painting an overly critical picture of the United States and ignoring the excesses of noncapitalistic nations, while others say the theories overstate the degree of inequality in the legal system. In assessing the debate over conflict explanations, a fair conclusion is that their view on discrimination by the legal system applies more to victimless crime (discussed in a later section) than to conventional crime, where it is difficult to argue that laws against such things as murder and robbery reflect the needs of the powerful. However, much evidence supports the conflict assertion that the poor and minorities face disadvantages in the legal system (Reiman & Leighton, 2010). Simply put, the poor cannot afford good attorneys, private investigators, and the other

advantages that money brings in court. As just one example, if someone much poorer than O. J. Simpson, the former football player and media celebrity, had been arrested, as he was in 1994, for viciously murdering two people, the defendant would almost certainly have been found guilty. Simpson was able to afford a defense costing hundreds of thousands of dollars and won a jury acquittal in his criminal trial (Barkan, 1996). Also in accordance with conflict theory's views, corporate executives, among the most powerful members of society, often break the law without fear of imprisonment, as we shall see in our discussion of white-collar crime later in this chapter. Finally, many studies support conflict theory's view that the roots of crimes by poor people lie in social inequality and economic deprivation (Barkan, 2009).

Feminist Perspectives

Feminist perspectives on crime and criminal justice also fall into the broad rubric of conflict explanations and have burgeoned in the last two decades. Much of this work concerns rape and sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and other crimes against women that were largely neglected until feminists began writing about them in the 1970s (Griffin, 1971). Their views have since influenced public and official attitudes about rape and domestic violence, which used to be thought as something that girls and women brought on themselves. The feminist approach instead places the blame for these crimes squarely on society's inequality against women and antiquated views about relations between the sexes (Renzetti, 2011).

Another focus of feminist work is gender and legal processing. Are women better or worse off than men when it comes to the chances of being arrested and punished? After many studies in the last two decades, the best answer is that we are not sure (Belknap, 2007). Women are treated a little more harshly than men for minor crimes and a little less harshly for serious crimes, but the gender effect in general is weak.

A third focus of feminist work is the causes of female deviance and crime. Several studies find that the poverty, negative community conditions, and other factors that affect male criminality also affect female criminality. But they also find that the sexual abuse many girls suffer is a particular cause of many of their behavior problems, including prostitution and drug and alcohol abuse (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004).

A final area concerns why females commit less crime than males. Most sociologists attribute this difference to gender socialization. Simply put, socialization into the male gender role, or masculinity, leads to values such as competitiveness and behavioral patterns such as spending more time away from home that all promote deviance. Conversely, despite whatever disadvantages it may have, socialization into the female gender role, or femininity, promotes values such as gentleness and behavior patterns such as spending more time at home that help limit deviance (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004). Noting that males commit so much crime, Kathleen Daly and Meda Chesney-Lind (1988, p. 527)

A large price is paid for structures of male domination and for the very qualities that drive men to be successful, to control others, and to wield uncompromising power....Gender differences in crime suggest that crime may not be so normal after all. Such differences challenge us to see that in the lives of women, men have a great deal more to learn. Two decades later, that challenge still remains.



Figure 5.6. Gender socialization helps explain why females commit less serious crime than males. Boys are raised to be competitive and aggressive, while girls are raised to be more gentle and nurturing. © Thinkstock

Symbolic Interactionist Explanations

Because symbolic interactionism focuses on the means people gain from their social interaction, symbolic interactionist explanations attribute deviance to various aspects of the social interaction and social processes that normal individuals experience. These explanations help us understand why some people are more likely than others living in the same kinds of social environments. Several such explanations exist.

Differential Association Theory

One popular set of explanations, often called *learning theories*, emphasizes that deviance is learned from interacting with other people who believe it is OK to commit deviance and who often commit deviance themselves. Deviance, then, arises from normal socialization processes. The most influential such explanation is Edwin H. Sutherland's (1947) differential association theory, which says that criminal behavior is learned by interacting with close friends and family members. These individuals teach us not only how to commit various crimes but also the values, motives, and rationalizations that we need to adopt in order to justify breaking the law. The earlier in our life that we associate with deviant individuals and the more often we do so, the more likely we become deviant ourselves. In this way, a normal social process, socialization, can lead normal people to commit deviance.

Sutherland's theory of differential association was one of the most influential sociological theories ever. Over the years much research has documented the importance of adolescents' peer relationships for their entrance into the world of drugs and delinquency (Akers & Sellers, 2008). However, some critics say that not all deviance results from the influences of deviant peers. Still, differential association theory and the larger category of learning theories it represents remain a valuable approach to understanding deviance and crime.

Techniques of Neutralization

Recall the view on deviant subcultures discussed earlier. Gresham M. Sykes and David Matza (1957) said this view ignores the fact that adolescents who commit delinquency often feel guilty or ashamed for doing so. They thus must come up with justifications for why it is OK to commit deviance. In short, they must "neutralize" their potential guilt or shame. Sykes and Matza said five such rationalizations, or techniques of neutralization, exist.

The first is *denial of responsibility*. Youths rationalize that because outside forces, such as the influence of deviant friends, are prompting them to break the law, they are not responsible for doing so. The second technique of neutralization is *denial of injury*. Here youths contemplating law breaking reason that no one will really be hurt by their actions. The third rationalization is *denial of the victim*. Would-be delinquents reason that their potential victim deserves what is about to happen. A store's prices are far

too high, so you decide to steal from it. The fourth is *condemnation of the condemners*. In this technique of neutralization, youths condemn police and other aspects of society as hopelessly corrupt and in no position to criticize the youths' own behavior. The final technique of neutralization is *appeal to higher loyalties*. In this rationalization, potential lawbreakers reason that they need to break the law in order to help a friend, a family member, or another member of their primary groups.

Sykes and Matza's theory has received mixed reviews. On the one hand, many adolescents undoubtedly do feel guilty about breaking the law and must engage in techniques of neutralization before they can do so. On the other hand, some delinquents may not rationalize their behavior until *after* they have already broken the law, which is not what Sykes and Matza thought (Hamlin, 1988). Critics also question Sykes and Matza's assumption that delinquents feel guilty about their behavior.

Labeling Theory

If we arrest and imprison someone, we hope they will be "scared straight," or deterred from committing a crime again. Labeling theory assumes precisely the opposite: it says that labeling someone deviant increases the chances that the labeled person will continue to commit deviance. According to labeling theory, this happens because the labeled person ends up with a deviant self-image that leads to even more deviance. Deviance is the result of being labeled (Bohm & Vogel, 2011).

This effect is reinforced by how society treats someone who has been labeled. Research shows that job applicants with a criminal record are much less likely than those without a record to be hired (Pager, 2009). Suppose you had a criminal record and had seen the error of your ways but were rejected by several potential employers. Do you think you might be just a little frustrated? If your unemployment continues, might you think about committing a crime again? Meanwhile, you want to meet some law-abiding friends, so you go to a singles bar. You start talking with someone who interests you, and in response to this person's question, you say you are between jobs. When your companion asks about your last job, you reply that you were in prison for armed robbery. How soon will it take for your companion to make an excuse like going to the bathroom, never to be seen again by you?

As this scenario suggests, being labeled deviant can make it difficult to avoid a continued life of deviance. Although this consequence seems very plausible, the empirical evidence of the effects of being labeled is actually mixed (Akers & Sellers, 2008). Supporting labeling theory, some studies find that offenders treated more harshly by the criminal justice system are more apt to commit new offenses than those treated less harshly, but other studies find the opposite to be true. Still other studies find little effect of labeling one way or the other. Contrary to labeling theory, most studies also find that labeling does not worsen the self-image of those labeled.

Figure 5.7



Labeling theory assumes that someone who is labeled deviant will be more likely to commit deviance as a result. One problem that ex-prisoners face after being released back into society is that potential employers do not want to hire them. This fact makes it more likely that they will commit new offenses.

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Labeling theory also asks whether some people and behaviors are indeed more likely than others to acquire a deviant label. In particular, it asserts that nonlegal factors such as appearance, race, and social class affect how often official labeling occurs.

William Chambliss's (1973) classic analysis of the "Saints" and the "Roughnecks" is an excellent example of this argument. The Saints were eight male high-school students from middle-class backgrounds who were very delinquent, while the Roughnecks were six male students in the same high school who were also very delinquent but who came from poor, working-class families. Although the Saints' behavior was arguably more harmful than the Roughnecks', their actions were considered harmless pranks, and they were never arrested. After graduating from high school, they went on to college and graduate and professional school and ended up in respectable careers. In contrast, the Roughnecks were widely viewed as troublemakers and often got into trouble for their behavior. As adults they either ended up in low-paying jobs or went to prison.

Although again labeling theory's view of this process sounds quite plausible, empirical support for this view is in fact mixed. Some studies find that extralegal factors such as appearance, race, class, and gender do affect the chances of arrest and other official labeling, but other studies find these factors do not matter very much (Walker, Spohn, & DeLone, 2007). Despite the mixed evidence for labeling theory's two central assumptions on the effects of labeling and on possible biases in labeling, it has greatly influenced the study of deviance and crime in the last few decades and promises to do so for many years to come.

Conclusion

- Both biological and psychological explanations assume that deviance stems from problems arising inside the individual.
- Sociological explanations attribute deviance to various aspects of the social environment.
- Several functionalist explanations exist. Durkheim highlighted the functions that deviance serves for society. Merton's strain theory assumed that deviance among the poor results from their inability to achieve the economic success so valued in American society. Other explanations highlight the role played by the social and physical characteristics of urban neighborhoods, of deviant subcultures, and of weak bonds to social institutions.
- Conflict explanations assume that the wealthy and powerful use the legal system to protect their own interests and to keep the poor and racial minorities subservient. Feminist perspectives highlight the importance of gender inequality for crimes against women and of male socialization for the gender difference in criminality.
- Interactionist explanations highlight the importance of social interaction in the commitment of deviance and in reactions to deviance. Labeling theory assumes that the labeling process helps ensure that someone will continue to commit deviance, and it also assumes that some people are more likely than others to be labeled deviant because of their appearance, race, social class, and other characteristics.

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For Your Review

1. In what important way do biological and psychological explanations differ from sociological explanations?

2. What are any two functions of deviance according to Durkheim?
3. What are any two criminogenic social or physical characteristics of urban neighborhoods?
4. What are any two assumptions of feminist perspectives on deviance and crime?
5. According to labeling theory, what happens when someone is labeled as a deviant?

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7.1.4: Crime and Criminals

Learning Objectives

- Describe how gender and race affect public opinion about crime.
- Explain problems in the accurate measurement of crime.
- Describe the demographic backgrounds (race, gender, age, location) of conventional criminals.
- Be familiar with examples of white-collar crime and with the various harms of such crime.
- Explain the arguments over laws prohibiting victimless crime.

We now turn our attention from theoretical explanations of deviance and crime to certain aspects of crime and the people who commit it. What do we know about crime and criminals in the United States?

Crime and Public Opinion

One thing we know is that the American public is very concerned about crime. In a 2009 Gallup Poll, about 55% said crime is an "extremely" or "very" serious problem in the United States, and in other national surveys, about one-third of Americans said they would be afraid to walk alone in their neighborhoods at night (Maguire & Pastore, 2009; Saad, 2008).Maguire, K., & Pastore, A. L. (2009). *Sourcebook of criminal justice statistics*. Retrieved from www.albany.edu/sourcebook; Saad, L. (2008). Perceptions of crime problem remain curiously negative. Retrieved from http://www.gallup.com/poll/102262/Pe...-Negative.aspx

Recall that according to the sociological perspective, our social backgrounds affect our attitudes, behavior, and life chances. Do gender and race affect our fear of crime? Figure 5.8 shows that gender has quite a large effect. About 46% of women are afraid to walk alone at night, compared to only 17% of men. Because women are less likely than men to be victims of crime other than rape, their higher fear of crime reflects their heightened fear of rape and other types of sexual assault (Warr, 2000).Warr, M. (2000). Public perceptions of and reactions to crime. In J. F. Sheley (Ed.), *Criminology: A contemporary handbook* (3rd ed., pp. 13–31). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

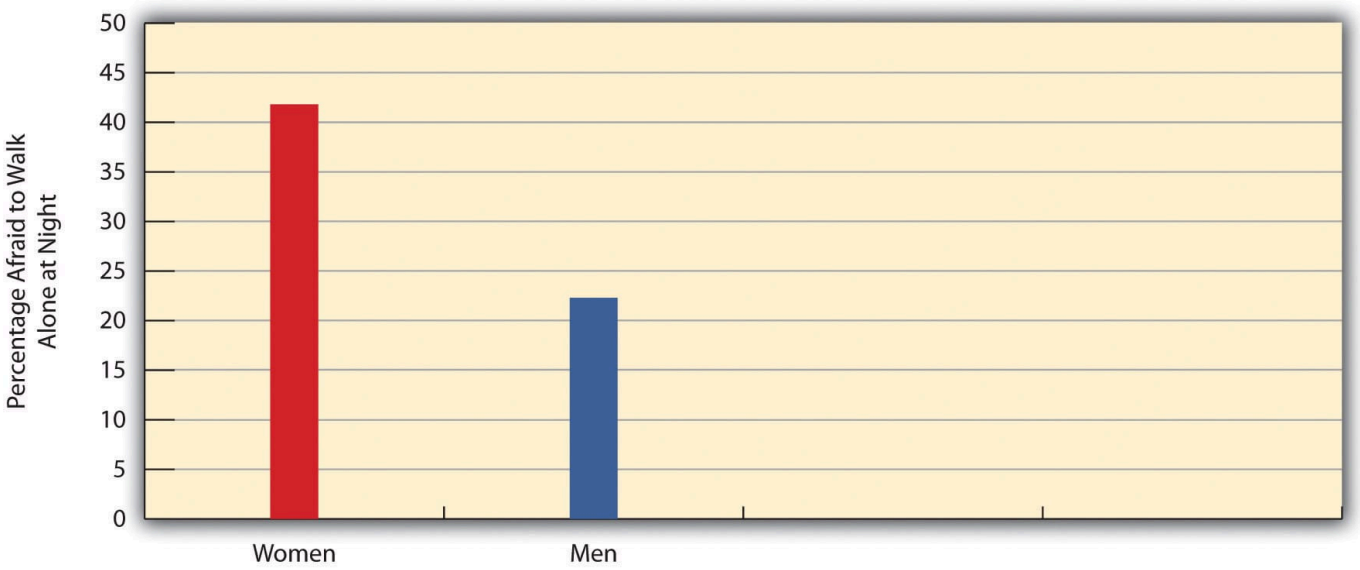


Figure 7.1.4.1: Gender and Fear of Crime. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

Race also makes a difference. Figure 5.9 shows that African Americans are more afraid than whites of walking near their homes alone at night. This difference reflects the fact that African Americans are more likely than whites to live in large cities with high crime rates and to live in higher crime neighborhoods within these cities (Peterson & Krivo, 2009).Peterson, R. D., & Krivo, L. J. (2009). Segregated spatial locations, race-ethnic composition, and neighborhood violent crime. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 623*, 93–107.

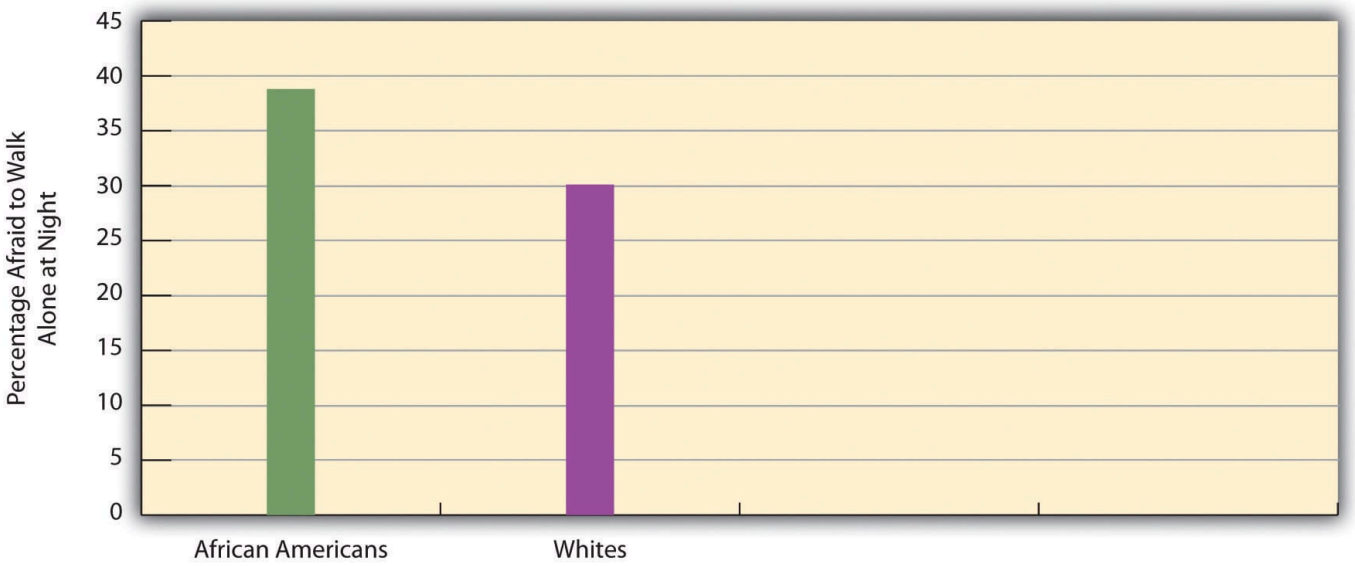


Figure 7.1.4.2: Race and Fear of Crime. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

Race also affects views about the criminal justice system. For example, African Americans are much less likely than whites to favor the death penalty (Figure 5.10), in part because they perceive that the death penalty and criminal justice system in general are racially discriminatory (Johnson, 2008).Johnson, D. (2008). Racial prejudice, perceived injustice, and the black–white gap in punitive attitudes. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 36,* 198–206.

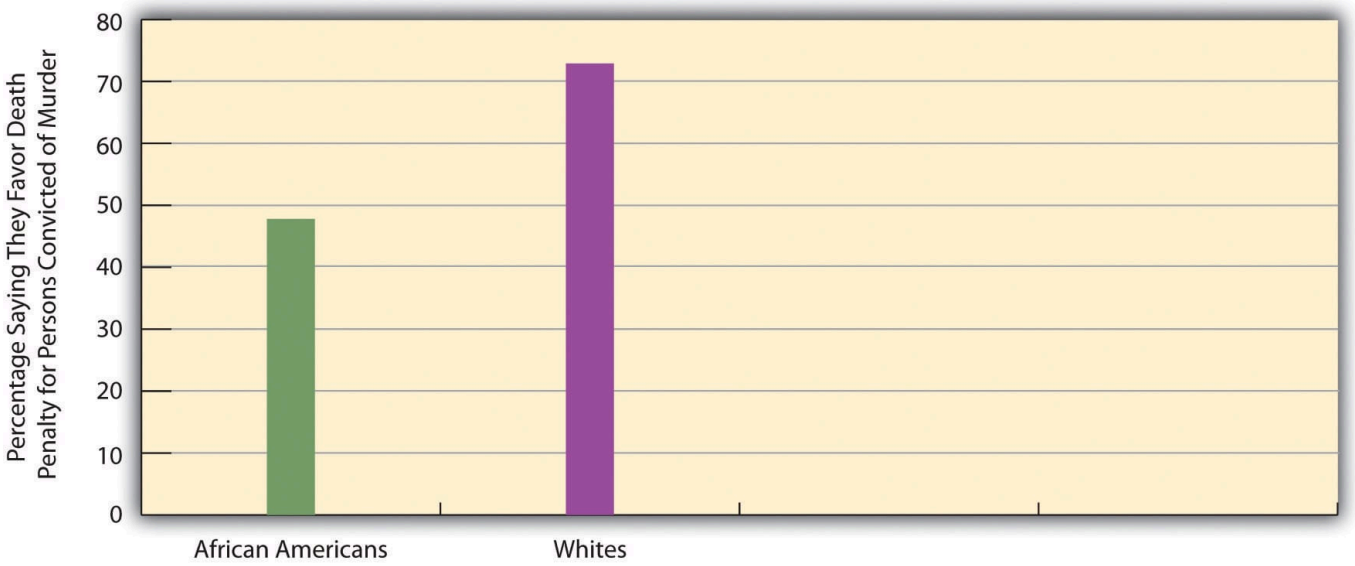


Figure 7.1.4.3: Race and Support for the Death Penalty. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

The Measurement of Crime

It is surprisingly difficult to know how much crime occurs. Crime is not like the weather, when we all can see whether it is raining, snowing, or sunny. Usually when crime occurs, only the criminal and the victim, and sometimes an occasional witness, know about it. Although we have an incomplete picture of the crime problem, because of various data sources we still have a fairly good understanding of how much crime exists and of who is most likely to do it and be victimized by it.

The government's primary source of crime data is the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), published annually by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The FBI gathers its data from police departments around the country, who inform the FBI about crimes that have come to their attention. The police also tell the FBI whether someone is arrested for the crime and, if so, the person's age, gender, and race. The FBI gathers all of these UCR data and reports them in an annual volume called *Crime in the United States*.

Most UCR data concern the so-called Part I Offenses, eight felonies that the FBI considers the most serious. Four of these are violent crimes: homicide, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery; four are property crimes: burglary, larceny (e.g., shoplifting, pickpocketing, purse snatching), motor vehicle theft, and arson.

According to the FBI, in 2009 about 1.3 million violent crimes and 9.3 million property crimes occurred, for a total of about 10.6 million serious crimes, or 3,466 for every 100,000 Americans.Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2010). *Crime in the United States, 2009*. Washington, DC: Author. This is the nation's official crime rate, and by any standard it is a lot of crime. However, this figure is in fact much lower than the actual crime rate because, according to surveys of random samples of crime victims, *more than half of all crime victims do not report their crimes to the police*, leaving the police unaware of the crimes. (Reasons for nonreporting include the belief that police will not be able to find the offender and fear of retaliation by the offender.) The true crime problem is therefore much greater than suggested by the UCR.



Figure 7.1.4.4: When a crime occurs, the police do not usually find out about it unless the victim or a witness informs the police about the crime. © Thinkstock

This underreporting of crime represents a major problem for the UCR's validity. Several other problems exist (Lynch & Addington, 2007).Lynch, J. P., & Addington, L. A. (2007). *Understanding crime statistics: Revisiting the divergence of the NCVS and the UCR*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. First, the UCR omits crime by corporations and thus diverts attention away from their harm (see a little later in this chapter). Second, police practices affect the UCR. For example, the police do not record every report they hear from a citizen as a crime. Sometimes they have little time to do so, sometimes they do not believe the citizen, and sometimes they deliberately fail to record a crime to make it seem that they are doing a good job of preventing crime. If they do not record the report, the FBI does not count it as a crime. If the police start recording every report, the official crime rate will rise, even though the actual number of crimes has not changed. In a third problem, if crime victims become more likely to report their crimes to the police, which might have happened after the 911 emergency number became common, the official crime rate will again change, even if the actual number of crimes has not changed.

To get a more accurate picture of crime, the federal government began in the early 1970s to administer a survey, now called the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), to tens of thousands of randomly selected U.S. households. People in the households are asked whether they or their residence has been the victim of several different types of crimes in the past half year. Their responses are then extrapolated to the entire U.S. population to yield fairly accurate estimates of the actual number of crimes occurring in the nation. Still, the NCVS's estimates are not perfect. Among other problems, some respondents decline to tell NCVS interviewers about victimizations they have suffered, and the NCVS's sample excludes some segments of the population, such as the homeless, whose victimizations therefore go uncounted.

Table 5.3lists the number of violent and property crimes as reported by the UCR (see earlier) and estimated by the NCVS. Note that these two crime sources do not measure exactly the same crimes. For example, the NCVS excludes commercial crimes such as shoplifting, while the UCR includes them. The NCVS includes simple assaults (where someone receives only a minor injury), while the UCR excludes them. These differences notwithstanding, we can still see that the NCVS estimates about twice as many crimes as the UCR reports to us.

Table 7.1.4.3: Number of Crimes: Uniform Crime Reports and National Crime Victimization Survey, 2009. Source: Data from Maguire, K. (2011). Sourcebook of criminal justice statistics. Retrieved from www.albany.edu/sourcebook.

Type of crime	UCR	NCVS
Violent crime	1,318,398	4,343,450
Property crime	9,320,971	15,713,720
Total	10,639,369	20,057,170

A third source of crime information is the self-report survey. Here subjects, usually adolescents, are given an anonymous questionnaire and asked to indicate whether and how often they committed various offenses in a specific time period, usually the past year. They also answer questions about their family relationships, school performance, and other aspects of their backgrounds. Although these respondents do not always report every offense they committed, self-report studies yield valuable information about delinquency and explanations of crime. Like the NCVS, they underscore how much crime is committed that does not come to the attention of the police.

The Types and Correlates of Crime and Victimization

The three data sources just discussed give us a fairly good understanding of the types of crime, of who does them and who is victimized by them, and of why the crimes are committed. We have already looked at the "why" question when we reviewed the many theories of deviance. Let's look now at the various types of crime and highlight some important things about them.



Figure 7.1.4.5: Rates of violent crime victimization are higher in urban areas than in rural areas. © Thinkstock

Conventional Crime

By conventional crime we mean the violent and property offenses listed previously that worry average citizens more than any other type of crime. As Table 5.3 indicated, about 20 million violent and property victimizations occurred in the United States in 2009. These offenses included some 15,241 murders, 126,000 rapes and sexual assaults, 534,000 robberies, and 832,000 aggravated assaults. Even more property crime occurs: 3.1 million burglaries, 11.8 million larcenies, and 736,000 motor vehicle thefts (Maguire, 2011).Maguire, K. (2011). *Sourcebook of criminal justice statistics*. Retrieved from www.albany.edu/sourcebook The NCVS estimates that the crimes it measures cost their victims almost $20 billion each year in property losses, medical expenses, and time lost from work.

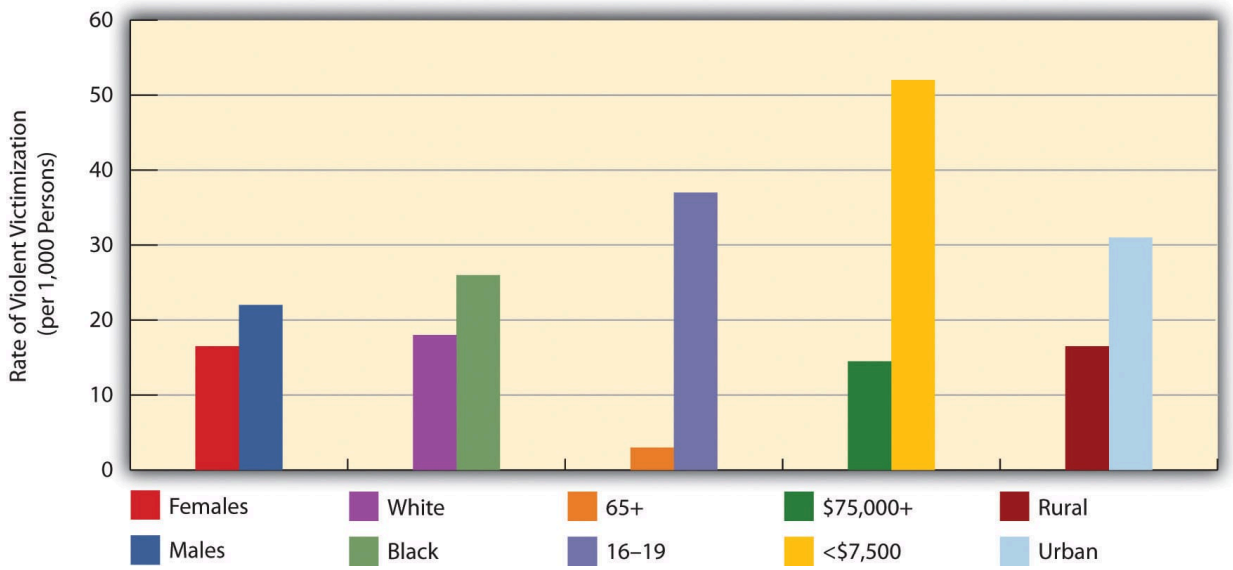


Figure 7.1.4.6: Correlates of Violent Crime Victimization, 2008. Note: Income data are for 2007; rural and urban data are for 2005. Source: Data from Maston, C. T., & Klaus, P. (2010). Criminal victimization in the United States, 2007—statistical tables. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice; Rand, M. (2009). Criminal victimization, 2008. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.

Generally, African Americans and other people of color are more likely than whites to be victims of conventional crime, poor people more likely than wealthy people, men more likely than women (excluding rape and sexual assault), and urban residents more likely than rural residents. To illustrate these differences, Figure 5.13 presents some relevant comparisons for violent crime victimization.

As this figure illustrates, violent crime is more common in urban areas than in rural areas. It varies geographically in at least one other respect, and that is among the regions of the United States. In general, violent crime is more common in the South and West than in the Midwest or Northeast. Figure 5.14 depicts this variation for homicide rates. Louisiana has the highest homicide rate, 14.24 homicides per 100,000 residents, and New Hampshire has the lowest rate, 1.1 per 100,000 residents. Although homicide is thankfully a rare occurrence, it is much more common in Louisiana than in New Hampshire, and it is generally more common in the South and West than in other regions. Scholars attribute the South's high rate of homicide and other violent crime to several factors, among them a subculture of violence, its history of slavery and racial violence, and its high levels of poverty (Lee, Bankston, Hayes, & Thomas, 2007).Lee, M. R., Bankston, W. B., Hayes, T. C., & Thomas, S. A. (2007). Revisiting the Southern subculture of violence. *The Sociological Quarterly, 48,*253–275.

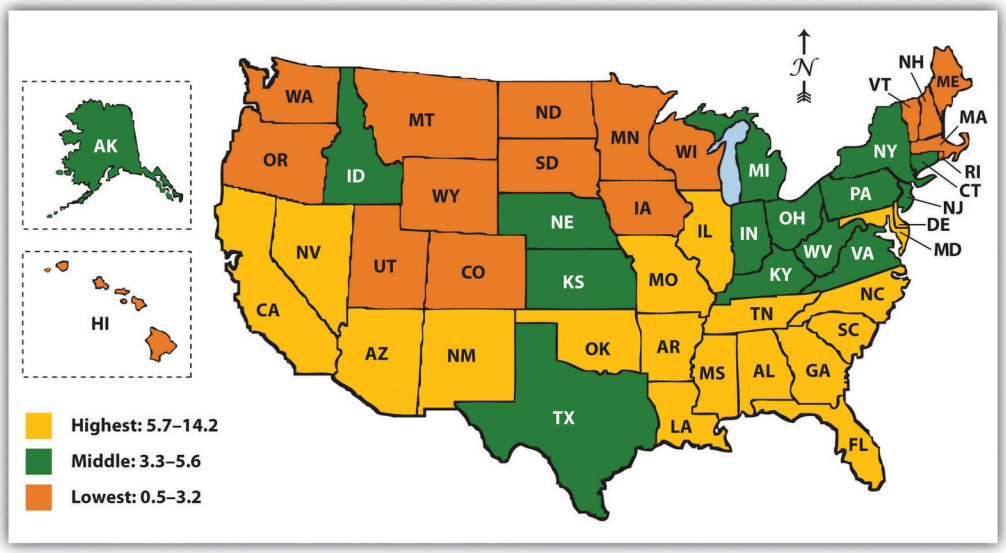


Figure 7.1.4.7: U.S. Homicide Rates, 2008. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

When it comes to crime, we fear strangers much more than people we know, but NCVS data suggest our fear is somewhat misplaced (Rand, 2009).Rand, M. (2009). *Criminal victimization, 2008*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. In cases of assault, rape, or robbery, the NCVS asks respondents whether they knew the offender. Strangers commit only about 36% of these offenses, meaning that *almost two-thirds* of the offenses *are committed by someone the victim knows*. There is also a gender difference in this area: about 70% of women victims are attacked by someone they know (usually a man), compared to about half of male victims. Women have more to fear from men they know than from men they do not know.

Another important fact about conventional crime is that most of it is *intraracial*, meaning that the offender and victim are usually of the same race. For example, 83% of all single offender-single victim homicides in 2008 involved persons who were either both white or both African American (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009).Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2009). *Crime in the United States, 2008*. Washington, DC: Author.

Who is most likely to commit conventional crime? As noted earlier, males are more likely than females to commit it (see Figure 5.15) because of gender differences in socialization. Opportunity may also matter, as during adolescence boys have more freedom than girls to be outside the home and to get into trouble.

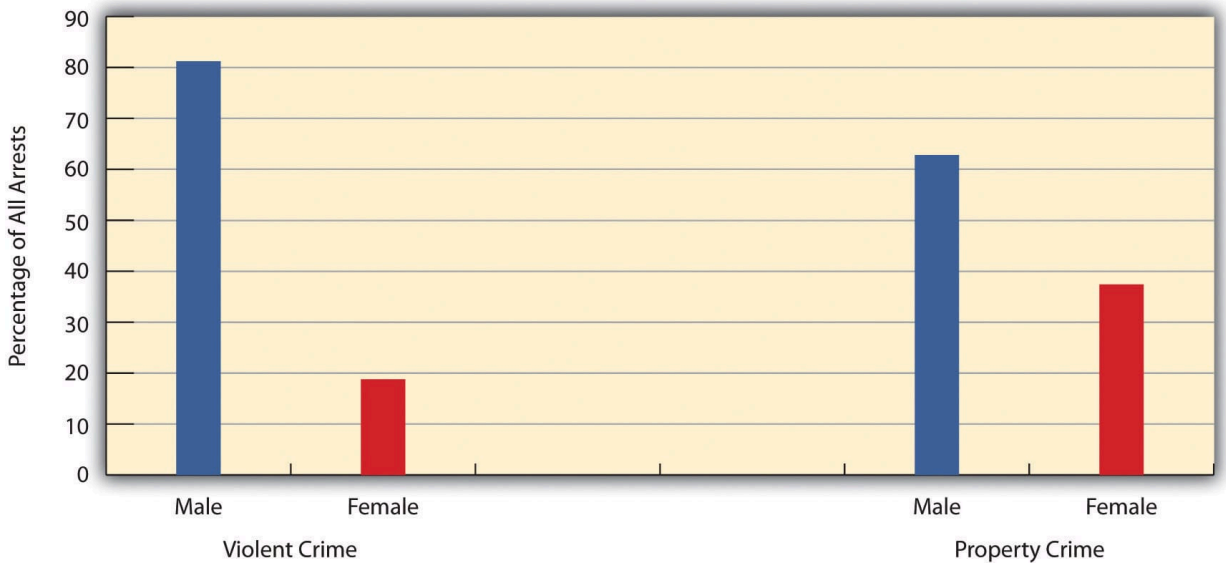


Figure 7.1.4.8: Gender and Arrest, 2009. Source: Data from Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2010). Crime in the United States, 2009. Washington, DC: Author.

Despite much controversy over what racial differences in arrest mean, African Americans have higher rates of arrest than whites for conventional crime. Criminologists generally agree that these rates indicate higher rates of offending (Walker et al., 2007).Walker, S., Spohn, C., & DeLone, M. (2007). *The color of justice: Race, ethnicity, and crime in America*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. Although African Americans are about 13% of the U.S. population, they made up about 39% of all arrests for violent crime in 2009 and 30% of all arrests for property crime (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010).Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2010). *Crime in the United States, 2009*. Washington, DC: Author. Much of these higher crime rates stem from the fact that African Americans are much poorer than whites on average and much more likely to live in the large cities with high crime rates and in the neighborhoods in these cities with the highest crime rates (McNulty & Bellair, 2003).McNulty, T. L., & Bellair, P. E. (2003). Explaining racial and ethnic differences in serious adolescent violent behavior. *Criminology, 41,* 709–748. If whites lived under the same conditions, their crime rates would be much higher as well.

Social class also makes a difference in conventional crime rates. Most people arrested for conventional crime have low education and low incomes. Such class differences in arrest can be explained by several of the explanations of deviance already discussed, including strain theory. Note, however, that wealthier people commit most white-collar crimes. If the question is whether social class affects crime rates, the answer depends on what kind of crime we have in mind.

One final factor affecting conventional crime rates is age. The evidence is very clear that conventional crime is disproportionately committed by people 30 and under. For example, people in the 10–24 age group are about 22% of the U.S. population but account for about 45% of all arrests (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009).Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2009). *Crime in the United States, 2008*. Washington, DC: Author. During adolescence and young adulthood, peer influences are especially strong and "stakes in conventional activities," to use some sociological jargon, are weak. Once we start working full-time and get married, our stakes in society become stronger and our sense of responsibility grows. We soon realize that breaking the law might prove more costly than when we were 15.

White-Collar Crime

White-collar crime is crime committed as part of one's occupation. It ranges from fraudulent repairs by auto repair shops to corruption in the high-finance industry to unsafe products and workplaces in some of our largest corporations. It also includes employee theft of objects and cash. Have you ever taken something without permission from a place where you worked? Whether or not you have, many people steal from their employees, and the National Retail Federation estimates that employee theft involves some $20 billion annually (National Retail Federation, 2007).National Retail Federation. (2007, June 11). Retail losses hit $41.6 billion last year, according to National Retail Security Survey [Press release]. Retrieved from http://www.nrf.com/modules.php?name=...18White-collar crime also includes health-care fraud, which is estimated to cost some $100 billion a year as, for example, physicians and other health-care providers bill Medicaid for exams and tests that were never done or were unnecessary (Rosoff, Pontell, & Tillman, 2010).Rosoff, S. M., Pontell, H. N., & Tillman, R. (2010). *Profit without honor: White collar crime and the looting of America*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. And it also involves tax evasion: the IRS estimates that tax evasion costs the government some $300 billion annually, a figure many times greater than the cost of all robberies and burglaries (Montgomery, 2007).Montgomery, L. (2007, April 16). Unpaid taxes tough to recover. *The Washington Post*, p. A1.

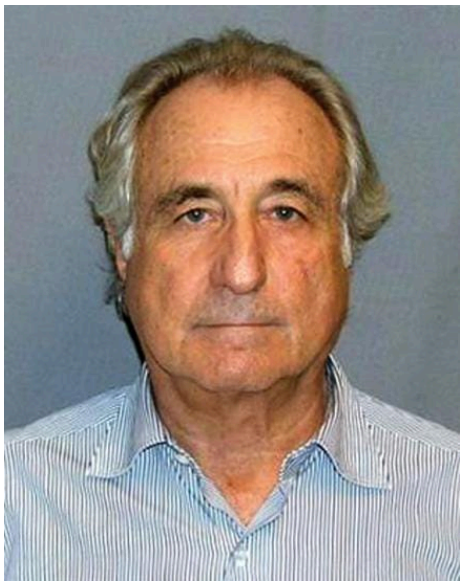


Figure 7.1.4.9: In June 2009, investment expert Bernard Madoff was sentenced to 150 years in prison for defrauding thousands of investors of tens of billions of dollars. This was the largest such crime in U.S. history. Source: Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of Justice, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...nardMadoff.jpg.

One of the most serious recent examples of white-collar crime came to light in December 2008, when it was discovered that 70-year-old investment expert Bernard Madoff had engaged in a Ponzi scheme (in which new investments are used to provide the income for older investments) since the early 1990s in which he defrauded thousands of investors of an estimated $50 billion, the largest such scandal in U.S. history (Creswell & Thomas, 2009).Creswell, J., & Thomas, L., Jr. (2009, January 25). The talented Mr. Madoff. *The New York Time*s, p. BU1. Madoff pleaded guilty in February 2009 to 11 felonies, including securities fraud and money laundering, and was sentenced to 150 years in prison (Henriques & Healy, 2009).Henriques, D. B., & Healy, J. (2009, March 13). Madoff goes to jail after guilty pleas. *The New York Time*s, p. A1.

Some of the worst crime is committed by our major corporations (*corporate crime*). As just one example, price fixing in the corporate world costs the U.S. public about $60 billion a year (Simon, 2006).Simon, D. R. (2006). *Elite deviance*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Even worse, an estimated 50,000 workers die each year from workplace-related illnesses and injuries that could have been prevented if companies had obeyed regulatory laws and followed known practices for safe workplaces (AFL-CIO, 2007).AFL-CIO. (2007). *Death on the job: The toll of neglect*. Washington, DC: AFL-CIO.A tragic example of this problem occurred in April 2010, when an explosion in a mining cave in West Virginia killed 29 miners. It was widely thought that a buildup of deadly gases had caused the explosion, and the company that owned the mine had been cited many times during the prior year for safety violations related to proper gas ventilation (Urbina, 2010).Urbina, I. (2010, April 10). No survivors found after West Virginia mine disaster. *The New York Times,* p. A1.

Corporations also make deadly products. In the 1930s the asbestos industry first realized their product was dangerous but hid the evidence of its danger, which was not discovered until 40 years later. In the meantime thousands of asbestos workers came down with deadly asbestos-related disease, and the public was exposed to asbestos that was routinely put into buildings until its danger came to light. It is estimated that more than 200,000 people will eventually die from asbestos (Lilienfeld, 1991).Lilienfeld, D. E. (1991). The silence: The asbestos industry and early occupational cancer research—a case study. *American Journal of Public Health, 81,* 791–800.

Asbestos is not the only unsafe product. The Consumer Product Safety Commission and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that about 10,000 Americans die annually from dangerous products, including cars, drugs, and food (Consumer Product Safety Commission, 2003; Petersen & Drew, 2003).U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. (2003). *Annual report to Congress, 2002*. Washington, DC: Author; Petersen, M., & Drew, C. (2003, October 9). New safety rules fail to stop tainted meat. *The New York Time*s, p. A1. In perhaps the most notorious case, Ford Motor Company marketed the Pinto even though company officials knew the gas tank could catch fire and explode when hit from the rear end at low speeds. Ford had determined it could fix each car's defect for $11 but that doing so would cost it more money than the amount of lawsuits it would eventually pay to the families of dead and burned Pinto victims if it did not fix the defect. Because Ford decided not to fix the defect, many people—estimates range from two dozen up to 500—people died in Pinto accidents (Cullen, Maakestad, & Cavender, 2006).Cullen, F. T., Maakestad, W. J., & Cavender, G. (2006). *Corporate crime under attack: The fight to criminalize business violence*. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson.In a more recent example involving a motor vehicle company, Toyota was fined $16.4 million

by the federal government in April 2010 for allegedly suppressing evidence that its vehicles were at risk for sudden acceleration. The government's announcement asserted that Toyota "knowingly hid a dangerous defect for months from U.S. officials and did not take action to protect millions of drivers and their families" (Maynard, 2010, p. A1).Maynard, M. (2010, April 6). U.S. is seeking a fine of $16.4 million against Toyota. *The New York Times,* p. A1.

Corporations also damage the environment, as the BP oil spill that began in April 2010 reminds us. Because federal laws are lax or nonexistent, corporations can and do pollute the environment with little fear of serious consequences. According to one report, one-fifth of U.S. landfills and incinerators and one-half of wastewater treatment plants violate health regulations (Armstrong, 1999).Armstrong, D. (1999, November 16). U.S. lagging on prosecutions. *The Boston Globe,* p. A1. It is estimated that between 50,000 and 100,000 Americans and 300,000 Europeans die every year from the side effects (including heart disease, respiratory problems, and cancer) of air pollution (BBC News, 2005);BBC News. (2005, February 21). Air pollution causes early deaths. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/4283295.stm many of these deaths would not occur if corporations followed the law and otherwise did not engage in unnecessary pollution of the air, water, and land. Critics also assert that laws against pollution are relatively weak and that government enforcement of these laws is often lax.

Is white-collar crime worse than conventional crime? The evidence seems to say yes. A recent estimate put the number of deaths from white-collar crime annually at about 110,000, compared to "only" 16,000 to 17,000 from homicide. The financial cost of white-collar crime to the public was also estimated at about $565 billion annually, compared to about $18 billion from conventional crime (Barkan, 2012).Barkan, S. E. (2012). *Criminology: A sociological understanding* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Although we worry about conventional crime much more than white-collar crime, the latter harms the public more in terms of death and financial costs.

Victimless Crime

Victimless crime is illegal behavior in which people willingly engage and in which there are no unwilling victims. The most common examples are drug use, prostitution, pornography, and gambling. Many observers say these crimes are not really victimless, even if people do engage in them voluntarily. For example, many drug users hurt themselves and members of their family from their addiction and the physical effects of taking drugs. Prostitutes put themselves at risk for sexually transmitted disease and abuse by pimps and customers. Illegal gamblers can lose huge sums of money. Although none of these crimes is truly victimless, the fact that the people involved in them are not *unwilling* victims makes victimless crime different from conventional crime.

Victimless crime raises controversial philosophical and sociological questions. The philosophical question is this: should people be allowed to engage in behavior that hurts themselves (Meier & Geis, 2007)Meier, R. F., & Geis, G. (2007). *Criminal justice and moral issues*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.? For example, our society lets adults smoke cigarettes, even though tobacco use kills several hundred thousand people every year. We also let adults gamble legally in state lotteries, at casinos and racetracks, and in other ways. We obviously let people of all ages eat "fat food" such as hamburgers, candy bars, and ice cream. Few people would say we should prohibit these potentially harmful behaviors. Why, then, prohibit the behaviors we call victimless crime? Some scholars say that any attempt to decide which behaviors are so unsafe or immoral that they should be banned is bound to be arbitrary, and they call for these bans to be lifted. Others say that the state does indeed have a legitimate duty to ban behavior the public considers unsafe or immoral and that the present laws reflect public opinion on which behaviors should be banned.



Figure 7.1.4.10: Laws against illegal drug use and other victimless crimes raise several philosophical and sociological questions, including whether the laws do more harm than good. © Thinkstock

The sociological question is just as difficult to resolve: do laws against victimless crimes do more harm than good (Meier & Geis, 2007)?Meier, R. F., & Geis, G. (2007). *Criminal justice and moral issues*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Some scholars say these laws in fact do much more harm than good, and they call for the laws to be abolished or at least reconsidered for several reasons: the laws are ineffective even though they cost billions of dollars to enforce, and they lead to police and political corruption and greater profits for organized crime. Laws against drugs further lead to extra violence, as youth gangs and other groups fight each other to corner the market for the distribution of drugs in various neighborhoods. The opponents of victimless crime laws commonly cite the example of Prohibition during the 1920s, where the banning of alcohol led to all of these problems, which in turn forced an end to Prohibition by the early 1930s. If victimless crimes were made legal, opponents add, the government could tax the behaviors now banned and collect billions of additional tax dollars.

Those in favor of laws against victimless crimes cite the danger these behaviors pose for the people engaging in them and for the larger society. If we made drugs legal, they say, even more people would use them, and even more death and illness would occur. Removing the bans against behaviors such as drug use and prostitution, these proponents add, would imply that these behaviors are acceptable in a civil society.

The debate over victimless crimes and victimless crime laws will not end soon, as both sides have several good points to make. One thing that is clear is that our current law enforcement approach is not working. More than 1 million people are arrested annually for drug use and trafficking and other victimless crimes, but there is little evidence that using the law in this manner has lowered people's willingness to take part in victimless crime behavior (Meier & Geis, 2007).Meier, R. F., & Geis, G. (2007). *Criminal justice and moral issues*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. Perhaps it is not too rash to say that a serious national debate needs to begin on the propriety of the laws against victimless crimes to determine what course of action makes the most sense for American society.

Learning From Other Societies: Crime and Punishment in Denmark and the Netherlands

As the text notes, since the 1970s the United States has used a get-tough approach to fight crime; a key dimension of this approach is mandatory sentencing and long prison terms and, as a result, a huge increase in the number of people in prison and jail. Many scholars say this approach has not reduced crime to a great degree and has cost hundreds of billions of dollars.

The experience of Denmark and the Netherlands suggests a different way of treating criminals and dealing with crime. Those nations, like most others in Western Europe, think prison makes most offenders worse and should be used only as a last resort for the most violent and most incorrigible offenders. They also recognize that incarceration is very expensive and much more costly than other ways of dealing with offenders. These concerns have led Denmark, the Netherlands, and other Western European nations to favor alternatives to imprisonment for the bulk of their offenders. These alternatives include the widespread use of probation, community service, and other kinds of community-based corrections. Studies indicate that

these alternatives may be as effective as incarceration in reducing recidivism (repeat offending) and cost much less than incarceration. If so, an important lesson from Denmark, the Netherlands, and other nations in Western Europe is that it is possible to keep society safe from crime without using the costly get-tough approach that has been the hallmark of the U.S. criminal justice system since the 1970s.

Sources: Bijleveld and Smit, 2005; Dammer and Fairchild, 2006. Bijleveld, C. C. J. H., & Smit, P. R. (2005). Crime and punishment in the Netherlands, 1980–1999. *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research, 33,* 161–211; Dammer, H. R., & Fairchild, E. (2006). *Comparative criminal justice systems.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Conclusion

- The public is very concerned about crime. At the same time, race and gender influence public perceptions about crime.
- Accurate measurement of crime is difficult to achieve for many reasons, including the fact that many crime victims do not report their victimization to their police.
- Conventional crime is disproportionately committed by the young, by persons of color, by men, and by urban residents. The disproportionate involvement of African Americans in crime arises largely from their poverty and urban residence.
- White-collar crime is more costly in terms of personal and financial harm than conventional crime.
- For several reasons, laws against victimless crime may do more harm than good.

For Your Review

1. Why are African Americans more likely than whites to fear walking around their homes at night?
2. Why is it difficult to measure crime accurately? Why is measurement of crime by the FBI inaccurate?
3. Do you think any victimless crimes should be made legal? Why or why not?

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7.1.5: The Get-Tough Approach - Boon or Bust?

Learning Objectives

- Explain the get-tough approach to conventional crime, and describe its disadvantages according to several scholars.

It would be presumptuous to claim to know exactly how to reduce crime, but a sociological understanding of its causes and dynamics points to several directions that show strong crime-reduction potential. Before sketching these directions, we first examine the get-tough approach, a strategy the United States has used to control crime since the 1970s.

Harsher law enforcement, often called the *get-tough approach*, has been the guiding strategy for the U.S. criminal justice system since the 1970s. This approach has involved increased numbers of arrests and, especially, a surge in incarceration, which has quintupled since the 1970s. Reflecting this surge, the United States now has the highest incarceration rate by far in the world. Many scholars trace the beginnings of the get-tough approach to efforts by the Republican Party to win the votes of whites by linking crime to African Americans. These efforts increased public concern about crime and pressured lawmakers of both parties to favor more punitive treatment of criminals to avoid looking soft on crime (Beckett & Sasson, 2004; Pratt, 2008).Beckett, K., & Sasson, T. (2004). *The politics of injustice: Crime and punishment in America*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage; Pratt, T. C. (2008). *Addicted to incarceration: Corrections policy and the politics of misinformation in the United States*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.According to these scholars, the incarceration surge stems much more from political decisions and pronouncements, many of them racially motivated, by lawmakers than from trends in crime rates. As Beckett and Sasson (2004, pp. 104, 128)Beckett, K., & Sasson, T. (2004). *The politics of injustice: Crime and punishment in America*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. summarize this argument,

Crime-related issues rise to the top of the popular agenda in response to political and media activity around crime—not the other way around. By focusing on violent crime perpetrated by racial minorities...politicians and the news media have amplified and intensified popular fear and punitiveness....Americans have become most alarmed about crime and drugs on those occasions when national political leaders and, by extension, the mass media have spotlighted these issues.



Figure 5.18. The get-tough approach since the 1970s has greatly increased the number of prisoners. Scholars question whether this approach has reduced crime effectively and cost efficiently. © Thinkstock

Today more than 2.3 million Americans are incarcerated in jail or prison at any one time, compared to only about one-fourth that number 30 years ago (Warren, 2009).Warren, J. (2009). *One in 31: The long reach of American corrections*. Washington, DC: Pew Center on the States. This increase in incarceration has cost the nation hundreds of billions of dollars since then.

Despite this very large expenditure, criminologists question whether it has helped lower crime significantly (Piquero & Blumstein,

2007; Raphael & Stoll, 2009).Piquero, A. R., & Blumstein, A. (2007). Does incapacitation reduce crime? *Journal of Quantitative Criminology, 23,* 267–285; Raphael, S., & Stoll, M. A. (2009). Why are so many Americans in prison? In S. Raphael & M. A. Stoll (Eds.), *Do prisons make us safer? The benefits and costs of the prison boom* (pp. 27–72). New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. Although crime fell by a large amount during the 1990s as incarceration rose, scholars estimate that the increased use of incarceration accounted for at most only 10%–25% of the crime drop during this decade. They conclude that this result was not cost-effective and that the billions of dollars spent on incarceration would have had a greater crime-reduction effect had they been spent on crime-prevention efforts. They also point to the fact that the heavy use of incarceration today means that some 700,000 prisoners are released back to their communities every year, creating many kinds of problems (Clear, 2007).Clear, T. R. (2007). *Imprisoning communities: How mass incarceration makes disadvantaged neighborhoods worse*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. A wide variety of evidence, then, indicates that the get-tough approach has been more bust than boon.

Recognizing this situation, several citizens' advocacy groups have formed since the 1980s to call attention to the many costs of the get-tough approach and to urge state and federal legislators to reform harsh sentencing practices and to provide many more resources for former inmates. One of the most well-known and effective such groups is the Sentencing Project (http://www.sentencingproject.org), which describes itself as "a national organization working for a fair and effective criminal justice system by promoting reforms in sentencing law and practice, and alternatives to incarceration." The Sentencing Project was founded in 1986 and has since sought "to bring national attention to disturbing trends and inequities in the criminal justice system with a successful formula that includes the publication of groundbreaking research, aggressive media campaigns and strategic advocacy for policy reform." The organization's Web site features a variety of resources on topics such as racial disparities in incarceration, women in the criminal justice system, and drug policy.

Conclusion

- The get-tough approach to crime has not proven effective even though it has cost billions of dollars and led to other problems.
- Racialized politics are thought to have led to the surge in incarceration that has been the highlight of this approach.

For Your Review

1. Why did the get-tough approach begin during the 1970s and why has it continued since then?
2. Do you think the expense of the get-tough approach has been worth it? Why or why not?

What Sociology Suggests

Not surprisingly, many sociologists and other social scientists think it makes more sense to try to prevent crime than to wait until it happens and then punish the people who commit it. That does not mean abandoning all law enforcement, of course, but it does mean paying more attention to the sociological causes of crime as outlined earlier in this chapter and to institute programs and other efforts to address these causes.

Several insights for (conventional) crime reduction may be gleaned from the sociological explanations of deviance and crime discussed earlier. For example, the social ecology approach suggests paying much attention to the social and physical characteristics of urban neighborhoods that are thought to generate high rates of crime. These characteristics include, but are not limited to, poverty, joblessness, dilapidation, and overcrowding. Strain theory suggests paying much attention to poverty, while explanations regarding deviant subcultures and differential association remind us of the need to focus on peer influences. Social control theory calls attention to the need to focus on family interaction in general and especially on children in families marked by inadequate parenting, stress, and disharmony. Despite mixed support for its assumptions, labeling theory reminds us of the strong possibility that harsh punishment may do more harm than good, and feminist explanations remind us that much deviance and crime is rooted in masculinity. In sum a sociological understanding of deviance and crime reminds us that much conventional crime is ultimately rooted in poverty, in negative family functioning and negative peer relationships, in criminogenic physical and social conditions of urban neighborhoods, and in the "macho" socialization of boys.

With this backdrop in mind, a sociological understanding suggests the potential of several strategies and policies for reducing conventional crime (Currie, 1998; Greenwood, 2006; Jacobson, 2005; Welsh & Farrington, 2007).Currie, E. (1998). *Crime and punishment in America*. New York, NY: Henry Holt; Greenwood, P. W. (2006). *Changing lives: Delinquency prevention as crime-control policy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; Jacobson, M. (2005). *Downsizing prisons: How to reduce crime and end mass incarceration*. New York, NY: New York University Press; Welsh, B. C., & Farrington, D. P. (Eds.). (2007). *Preventing crime:*

What works for children, offenders, victims and places. New York, NY: Springer. Such efforts would include, at a minimum, the following:

1. Establish good-paying jobs for the poor in urban areas.
2. Establish youth recreation programs and in other ways strengthen social interaction in urban neighborhoods.
3. Improve living conditions in urban neighborhoods.
4. Change male socialization practices.
5. Establish early childhood intervention programs to help high-risk families raise their children.
6. Improve the nation's schools by establishing small classes and taking other measures.
7. Provide alternative corrections for nondangerous prisoners in order to reduce prison crowding and costs and to lessen the chances of repeat offending.
8. For ex-offenders, provide better educational and vocational services and better services for treating and preventing drug and alcohol abuse.

This is not a complete list, but it does point the way to the kinds of strategies that would help get at the roots of conventional crime and, in the long run, help greatly to reduce it. Although the United States has been neglecting this crime-prevention approach, programs and strategies such as those just mentioned would in the long run be more likely than our current get-tough approach to create a safer society. For this reason, sociological knowledge on crime and deviance can indeed help us make a difference in our larger society.

What about white-collar crime? Although we have not stressed the point, the major sociological explanations of deviance and crime, especially those stressing poverty, the conditions of poor urban neighborhoods, and negative family functioning, are basically irrelevant for understanding why white-collar crime occurs and, in turn, do not suggest very much at all about ways to reduce it. Instead, scholars attribute the high level of white-collar crime, and especially of corporate crime, to one or more of the following: (a) greed arising from our society's emphasis on economic success, (b) the absence of strong regulations governing corporate conduct and a severe lack of funding for the federal and state regulatory agencies that police such conduct, and/or (c) weak punishment of corporate criminals when their crimes are detected (Cullen et al., 2006; Leaf, 2002; Rosoff et al., 2010).Cullen, F. T., Maakestad, W. J., & Cavender, G. (2006). *Corporate crime under attack: The fight to criminalize business violence*. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson; Leaf, C. (2002, March 18). Enough is enough. *Fortune,* pp. 60–68; Rosoff, S. M., Pontell, H. N., & Tillman, R. (2010). *Profit without honor: White collar crime and the looting of America*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Drawing on this understanding, many scholars think that more effective corporate regulation and harsher punishment of corporate criminals (that is, imprisonment in addition to the fines that corporations typically receive when they are punished) may help deter corporate crime. As a writer for *Fortune* magazine observed, corporate crime "will not go away until white-collar thieves face a consequence they're actually scared of: time in jail" (Leaf, 2002, p. 62).Leaf, C. (2002, March 18). Enough is enough. *Fortune*, pp. 60–68.

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7.1.6: Deviance, Crime, and Social Control (Summary)

Summary

1. Deviance is behavior that violates social norms and arouses negative reactions. What is considered deviant depends on the circumstances in which it occurs and varies by location and time period.
2. Durkheim said deviance performs several important functions for society. It clarifies social norms, strengthens social bonds, and can lead to beneficial social change.
3. Biological explanations of deviance assume that deviants differ biologically from nondeviants. Psychological explanations of deviance assume that deviants have a psychological problem that produces their deviance.
4. Sociological theories emphasize different aspects of the social environment as contributors to deviance and crime.
5. Crime in the United States remains a serious problem that concerns the public. Public opinion about crime does not always match reality and is related to individuals' gender and race among other social characteristics. Women and African Americans are especially likely to be afraid of crime.
6. Crime is difficult to measure, but the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), and self-report studies give us a fairly accurate picture of the amount of crime and of its correlates.
7. Several types of crime exist. Conventional crime includes violent and property offenses and worries Americans more than any other type of crime. Such crime tends to be intraracial, and a surprising amount of violent crime is committed by people known by the victim. White-collar crime is more harmful than conventional crime in terms of personal harm and financial harm. Victimless crime is very controversial, as it involves behavior by consenting adults. Scholars continue to debate whether the nation is better or worse off with laws against victimless crimes.
8. To reduce crime, most criminologists say that a law-enforcement approach is not enough and that more efforts aimed at crime prevention are needed. These efforts include attempts to improve schools and living conditions in inner cities and programs aimed at improving nutrition and parenting for the children who are at high risk for impairment to their cognitive and social development.

Using Sociology

Imagine that you are a member of your state legislature. As a sociology major in college, you learned that the get-tough approach to crime, involving harsher criminal sentencing and the increased use of incarceration, costs much money and is not very effective in reducing crime. A bill comes before the legislature that would double the minimum prison term for several types of violent crime. You realize that this change in policy would probably do little to reduce the crime rate and eventually cost millions of dollars in increased incarceration costs, but you also recognize that if you vote against the bill, your opponent in the upcoming election will charge that you are soft on crime. Do you vote for or against the bill? Why? Regardless of your vote, what else would you do as a state legislator to try to reduce the crime rate? How would your efforts relate to a sociological understanding of crime and deviance?

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7.2: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

No matter what determines it, a society's stratification has significant consequences for its members' attitudes, behavior, and, perhaps most important of all, life chances—how well people do in such areas as education, income, and health. We will see examples of these consequences in the pages ahead and end with a discussion of some promising policies and programs for reducing inequality and poverty.

7.2.1: Prelude to Social Stratification

7.2.2: Systems of Stratification

7.2.3: Explaining Stratification

7.2.4: Social Class in the United States

7.2.5: Economic Inequality and Poverty in the United States

7.2.6: Global Stratification

7.2.S: Social Stratification (Summary)

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7.2.1: Prelude to Social Stratification

Social Issues in the News

"More Wichita Kids Go Hungry," the headline said. In July 2009, as the United States was in a deep recession, poverty-stricken parents in Wichita, Kansas, increasingly worried about how they would be able to feed their children. As a state official explained, "We see a lot of children who regularly wonder where their next meal is coming from. Churches that used to do food drives once every two to three months are now doing them once a month." The number of children eating at one of Wichita's major food pantries had climbed by one-third from a year earlier, and the number of children classified as homeless had increased by 90% from 1,000 to 1,900. A sixth-grade girl gave life to these numbers when she wrote of her own family's situation. "My mom works very hard to support our family," she said, "[but] some days we would eat only once a day. Then Mom got her paycheck and we were really happy but then the bills started coming and we couldn't buy food because a house was more important. We would rather have a house to live in and we needed a car." (Wenzl, 2009)

This story of hunger in America's heartland reminds us that poverty is far from unknown in the richest nation in the world, especially since a severe economic recession began in 2008. The United States has long been considered a land of opportunity, but research by sociologists and other social scientists shows again and again that people differ dramatically in their opportunity to realize the American dream.

To illustrate this, imagine that you and four other people are about to begin playing the popular board game *Monopoly*. Following the rules, each player begins with $1,500. You start the game, go around the board, buy properties or land on someone else's properties, and sometimes end up in Jail or Free Parking. Like life itself, whether you eventually win or lose the game is a matter of both luck and skill.

But if *Monopoly* were *more* like real life, each player would *not* begin with $1,500. Instead, they would begin with very different amounts, because in real life some people are richer than others, and some are much poorer. In fact, reflecting the unequal distribution of wealth in the United States, one player, the richest, would begin with $6,352 of the $7,500 distributed to the five players combined. The next richest player would have $848. The third player would start with $285, while the next would have $52. The fifth and poorest player would actually begin $38 in debt! Figure 7.2.1.1 depicts this huge disparity in money at the beginning of the game.

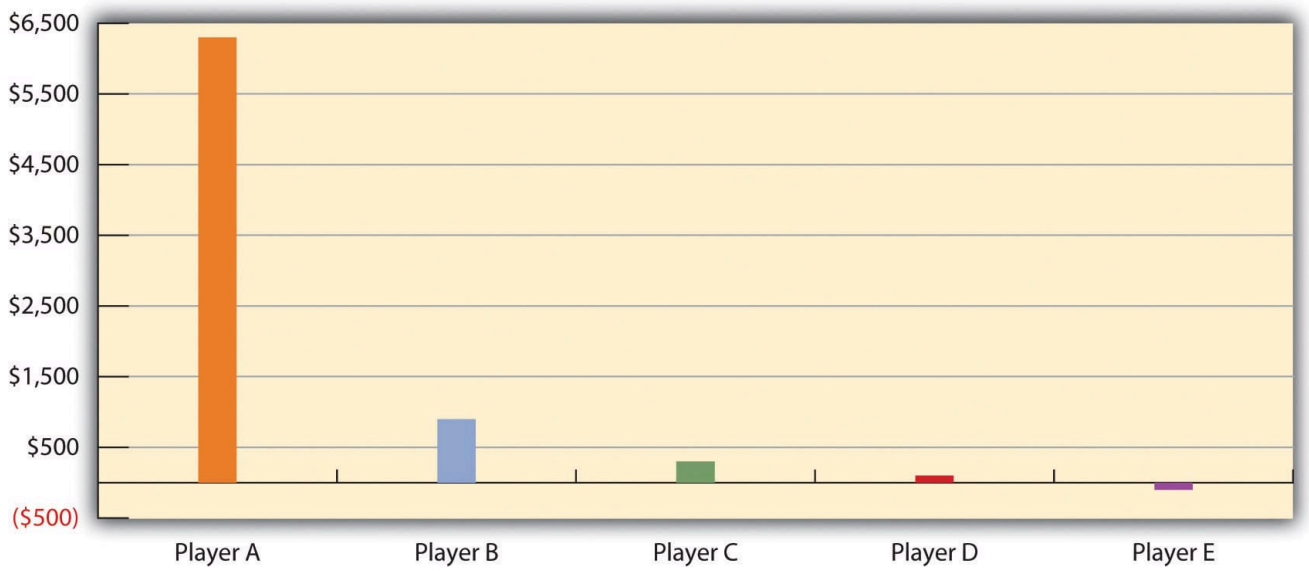


Figure 7.2.1.1: Distribution of Starting Cash If Monopoly Were More Like Real Life. Source: Based on distribution of wealth data from Mishel, L., Bernstein, J., & Shierholz, H. (2009). The state of working America 2008/2009. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press [An imprint of Cornell University Press].

Now suppose you are the player starting $38 in debt. How would you feel being this player? You can hardly afford to buy Park Place or Boardwalk. Even landing on a couple of "pay" spaces like a utility the first time you go around the board would virtually

force you out of the game. If you landed in Jail, you could not afford to get out. What are your chances of winning the game? Yes, you have a chance to win, but how likely is this? The second, third, and fourth players have a better chance of winning than you do, but in the long run they obviously will not win nearly as often as the richest player, who, after all, starts out with about 85% of all the money distributed at the beginning.

Unlike most games, real life is filled with differences in wealth and other resources a society values. Sociologists refer to rankings based on these differences as social stratification. Except for the simplest preindustrial societies, every society is stratified to some extent, and some societies are more stratified than others. Another way of saying this is that some societies have more *economic inequality*, or a greater difference between the best-off and the worst-off, than others. In modern society, stratification is usually determined by income and other forms of wealth, such as stocks and bonds, but resources such as power and prestige matter, too. No matter what determines it, a society's stratification has significant consequences for its members' attitudes, behavior, and, perhaps most important of all, life chances—how well people do in such areas as education, income, and health. We will see examples of these consequences in the pages ahead and end with a discussion of some promising policies and programs for reducing inequality and poverty.

References

Wenzl, R. (2009, July 5). More Wichita kids go hungry. *The Wichita Eagle*. Retrieved from www.kansas.com/news/featured/story/879754.html

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7.2.2: Systems of Stratification

Learning Objectives

- Explain the difference between open and closed societies.
- Define the several systems of stratification.
- Understand how Max Weber and Karl Marx differed in their view of class societies.

When we look around the world and through history, we see different types of stratification systems. These systems vary on their degree of vertical mobility, or the chances of rising up or falling down the stratification ladder. In some so-called *closed* societies, an individual has virtually no chance of moving up or down. *Open* societies have more vertical mobility, as some people, and perhaps many people, can move up or even down. That said, a key question is how much vertical mobility really exists in these societies. Let's look at several systems of stratification, moving from the most closed to the most open.

Slavery

The most closed system is slavery, or the ownership of people, which has been quite common in human history (Ennals, 2007).Ennals, R. (2007). *From slavery to citizenship*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley. Slavery is thought to have begun 10,000 years ago, after agricultural societies developed, as people in these societies made prisoners of war work on their farms. Many of the ancient lands of the Middle East, including Babylonia, Egypt, and Persia, also owned slaves, as did ancient China and India. Slavery especially flourished in ancient Greece and Rome, which used thousands of slaves for their trade economies. Most slaves in ancient times were prisoners of war or debtors. As trade died down during the Middle Ages, so did slavery.

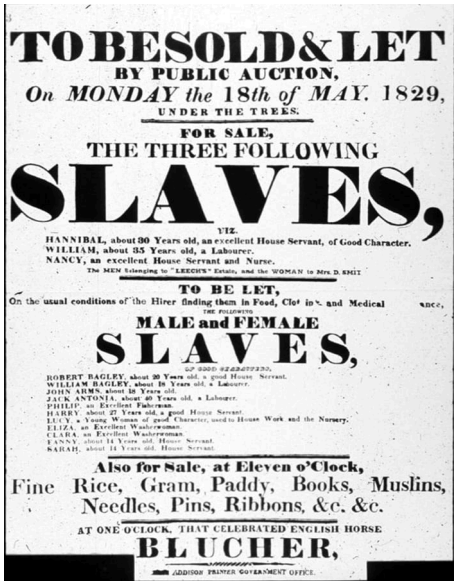

TO BE SOLD & LET
BY PUBLIC AUCTION,
On MONDAY the 18th of MAY. 1829,
UNDER THE TREES.
FOR SALE,
THE THREE FOLLOWING
SLAVES,
VIZ.
HANNIBAL, about 30 Years old, an excellent House Servant, of Good Character.
WILLIAM, about 35 Years old, a Labourer.
NANCY, an excellent House Servant and Nurse.
The MEN belonging to "LEECH'S" Estate, and the WOMAN to Mrs D. SMIT
TO BE LET,
On the usual conditions of the Hirer finding them in Food, Clothing and Medical
THE FOLLOWING
MALE and FEMALE
SLAVES,
ROBERT BAGLEY, about 30 Years old, a good House Servant.
WILLIAM BAGLEY, about 28 Years old, a Labourer.
JOHN ARMS, about 28 Years old.
JACK ANTONIA, about 40 Years old, a Labourer.
PHILIP, an Excellent Fisherman.
HARRY, about 27 Years old, a good House Servant.
LUCY, a Young Woman of good Character, used to House Work and the Nursery.
ELIZA, an Excellent Washerwoman.
CLARA, an Excellent Washerwoman.
FANNY, about 14 Years old, House Servant.
SARAH, about 11 Years old, House Servant.
Also for Sale, at Eleven o'Clock,
Fine Rice, Gram, Paddy, Books, Muslins,
Needles, Pins, Ribbons, &c. &c.
AT ONE O'CLOCK, THAT CELEBRATED ENGLISH HORSE
BLUCHER,
ADDISON PRINTER GOVERNMENT OFFICE.

Figure 7.2.2.1: Slavery is the most closed system of stratification. Although U.S. slavery, depicted here, ended with the Civil War, slavery still exists today in parts of Africa, Asia, and South America. Source: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi..._posterJPG.JPG.

But once Europeans began exploring the Western Hemisphere in the 1500s, slavery regained its popularity. Portuguese and Spanish colonists who settled in Brazil and Caribbean islands made slaves of thousands of Indians already living there. After most of them died from disease and abuse, the Portuguese and Spaniards began bringing slaves from Africa. In the next century, the English, the French, and other Europeans also began bringing African slaves into the Western Hemisphere, and by the 1800s they had captured and shipped to the New World some 10–12 million Africans, almost 2 million of whom died along the way (Thornton, 1998).Thornton, J. K. (1998). *Africa and Africans in the making of the Atlantic world, 1400–1800* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

The United States, of course, is all too familiar with slavery, which remains perhaps the most deplorable experience in American

history and continues to have repercussions for African Americans and the rest of American society. It increasingly divided the new nation after it won its independence from Britain and helped lead to the Civil War eight decades later. The cruel treatment of slaves was captured in Harriet Beecher Stowe's classic but controversial book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which ignited passions on both sides of the slavery debate.

Today slavery still exists in parts of Africa, Asia, and South America, with some estimates putting the number of slaves in the tens of millions. Today's slaves include (a) men first taken as prisoners of war in ethnic conflicts; (b) girls and women captured in wartime or kidnapped from their neighborhoods and used as prostitutes or sex slaves; (c) children sold by their parents to become child laborers; and (d) workers paying off debts who are abused and even tortured and too terrified to leave (Bales, 2007; Batstone, 2007).Bales, K. (2007). *Ending slavery: How we free today's slaves*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Batstone, D. (2007). *Not for sale: The return of the global slave trade—and how we can fight it*. New York, NY: HarperOne.

Estate Systems

Estate systems are characterized by control of land and were common in Europe and Asia during the Middle Ages and into the 1800s. In these systems, two major estates existed: the landed gentry or nobility and the peasantry or serfs. The landed gentry owned huge expanses of land on which serfs toiled. The serfs had more freedom than slaves had but typically lived in poverty and were subject to arbitrary control by the nobility (Kerbo, 2009).Kerbo, H. R. (2009). *Social stratification and inequality*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Estate systems thrived in Europe until the French Revolution in 1789 violently overturned the existing order and inspired people in other nations with its cries for freedom and equality. As time went on, European estate systems slowly gave way to class systems of stratification (discussed a little later). After the American colonies won their independence from Britain, the South had at least one characteristic of an estate system, the control of large plots of land by a relatively few wealthy individuals and their families, but it obviously used slaves rather than serfs to work the land.

Much of Asia, especially China and Japan, also had estate systems. For centuries, China's large population lived as peasants in abject conditions and frequently engaged in peasant uprisings. These escalated starting in the 1850s after the Chinese government raised taxes and charged peasants higher rents for the land on which they worked. After many more decades of political and economic strife, Communists took control of China in 1949 (DeFronzo, 2007).DeFronzo, J. (2007). *Revolutions and revolutionary movements* (3rd ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Caste Systems

In a caste system, people are born into unequal groups based on their parents' status and remain in these groups for the rest of their lives. For many years, the best-known caste system was in India, where, supported by Hindu beliefs emphasizing the acceptance of one's fate in life, several major castes dictated one's life chances from the moment of birth, especially in rural areas (Kerbo, 2009).Kerbo, H. R. (2009). *Social stratification and inequality*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. People born in the lower castes lived in abject poverty throughout their lives. Another caste, the *harijan*, or *untouchables*, was considered so low that technically it was not thought to be a caste at all. People in this caste were called the untouchables because they were considered unclean and were prohibited from coming near to people in the higher castes. Traditionally, caste membership in India almost totally determined an individual's life, including what job you had and whom you married; for example, it was almost impossible to marry someone in another caste. After India won its independence from Britain in 1949, its new constitution granted equal rights to the untouchables. Modern communication and migration into cities further weakened the caste system, as members of different castes now had more contact with each other. Still, caste prejudice remains a problem in India and illustrates the continuing influence of its traditional system of social stratification.



Figure 7.2.2.2: Many observers believe a caste system existed in the U.S. South until the civil rights government ended legal racial segregation. Source: Photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsc.00199.

A country that used to have a caste system is South Africa. In the days of apartheid, from 1950 to 1990, a small group of white Afrikaners ruled the country. Black people constituted more than three-quarters of the nation's population and thus greatly outnumbered Afrikaners, but they had the worst jobs, could not vote, and lived in poor, segregated neighborhoods. Afrikaners bolstered their rule with the aid of the South African police, which used terror tactics to intimidate blacks (Berger, 2009).Berger, I. (2009). *South Africa in world history*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Many observers believe a caste system also existed in the South in the United States after Reconstruction and until the civil rights movement of the 1960s ended legal segregation. A segregated system called Jim Crow dominated the South, and even though African Americans had several rights, including the right to vote, granted to them by the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, these rights were denied in practice. Lynchings were common for many decades, and the Southern police system bolstered white rule in the South just as the South African police system bolstered white rule in that country (Litwack, 2009).Litwack, L. F. (2009). *How free is free? The long death of Jim Crow*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Class Systems

Many societies, including all industrial ones, have class systems. In this system of stratification, a person is born into a social ranking but can move up or down from it much more easily than in caste systems or slave societies. This movement in either direction is primarily the result of a person's own effort, knowledge, and skills or lack of them. Although these qualities do not aid upward movement in caste or slave societies, they often do enable upward movement in class societies. Of the three systems of stratification discussed so far, class systems are by far the most open, meaning they have the most vertical mobility. We will look later at social class in the United States and discuss the extent of vertical mobility in American society.

Sociologist Max Weber, whose work on organizations and bureaucracies was discussed in Chapter 4, also had much to say about class systems of stratification. Such systems, he wrote, are based on three dimensions of stratification: class (which we will call *wealth*), power, and prestige. Wealth is the total value of an individual or family, including income, stocks, bonds, real estate, and other assets; power is the ability to influence others to do your bidding, even if they do not want to; and prestige refers to the status and esteem people hold in the eyes of others.

In discussing these three dimensions, Weber disagreed somewhat with Karl Marx, who, as you might recall from Chapter 1, said our ranking in society depends on whether we own the means of production. Marx thus felt that the primary dimension of stratification in class systems was economic. Weber readily acknowledged the importance of this economic dimension but thought power and prestige also matter. He further said that although wealth, power, and prestige usually go hand-in-hand, they do not always overlap. For example, although the head of a major corporation has a good deal of wealth, power, and prestige, we can think of many other people who are high on one dimension but not on the other two. A professional athlete who makes millions of dollars a year has little power in the political sense that Weber meant it. An organized crime leader might also be very wealthy but have little prestige outside of the criminal underworld. Conversely, a scientist or professor may enjoy much prestige

but not be very wealthy.

Classless Societies

Although, as noted earlier, all societies except perhaps for the simplest ones are stratified, some large nations have done their best to eliminate stratification by developing classless societies. Marx, of course, predicted that one day the proletariat would rise up and overthrow the bourgeoisie and create a communist society, by which he meant a classless one in which everyone had roughly the same amount of wealth, power, and prestige. In Russia, China, and Cuba, revolutions inspired by Marx's vision occurred in the 20th century. These revolutions resulted in societies not only with less economic inequality than in the United States and other class systems but also with little or no political freedom. Moreover, governing elites in these societies enjoyed much more wealth, power, and prestige than the average citizen. Overall, the communist experiments in Russia, China, and Cuba failed to achieve Marx's vision of an egalitarian society.

Some Western European nations, such as Sweden and Denmark, have developed "social democracies" based on fairly socialist economies. Although a few have nominal monarchies, these nations have much political freedom and less economic inequality than the United States and other class societies. They also typically rank much higher than the United States on various social and economic indicators. Although these nations are not truly classless, they indicate it is possible, if not easy, to have a society that begins to fulfill Marx's egalitarian vision but where political freedom still prevails (Sandbrook, Edelman, Heller, & Teichman, 2007).Sandbrook, R., Edelman, M., Heller, P., & Teichman, J. (2007). *Social democracy in the global periphery: Origins, challenges, prospects*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Conclusion

- Systems of stratification vary in their degree of vertical social mobility. Some societies are more open in this regard, while some are more closed.
- The major systems of stratification are slavery, estate systems, caste systems, and class systems.
- Some Western European nations are not classless but still have much less economic inequality than class societies such as the United States.

For Your Review

1. What, if anything, should the United States and the United Nations try to do about the slavery that still exists in today's world?
2. Why do you think some class societies have more vertical social mobility than other class societies?

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7.2.3: Explaining Stratification

Learning Objectives

- Outline the assumptions of the functionalist explanation of stratification.
- Outline the assumptions of the conflict theory explanation of stratification.
- Understand how symbolic interactionism views stratification.

Why is stratification so common? Is it possible to have a society without stratification? Sociologists trying to answer these questions have developed two very different macro explanations of stratification, while symbolic interactionists have examined the differences that stratification produces for everyday interaction. Table 7.2.3.1 summarizes these three approaches.

Table 7.2.3.1: Theory Snapshot

Theoretical perspective	Major assumptions
Functionalism	Stratification is necessary to induce people with special intelligence, knowledge, and skills to enter the most important occupations. For this reason, stratification is necessary and inevitable.
Conflict	Stratification results from lack of opportunity and from discrimination and prejudice against the poor, women, and people of color. It is neither necessary nor inevitable.
Symbolic interactionism	Stratification affects people's beliefs, lifestyles, daily interaction, and conceptions of themselves.

The Functionalist View

Recall from Chapter 1 that functionalist theory assumes that the various structures and processes in society exist because they serve important functions for society's stability and continuity. In line with this view, functionalist theorists in sociology assume that stratification exists because it also serves important functions for society. This explanation was developed more than 60 years ago by Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (Davis & Moore, 1945)Davis, K., & Moore, W. (1945). Some principles of stratification. *American Sociological Review, 10*, 242–249.in the form of several logical assumptions that imply stratification is both necessary and inevitable. When applied to American society, their assumptions would be as follows:

1. **Some jobs are more important than other jobs**. For example, the job of a brain surgeon is more important than the job of shoe-shining.
2. **Some jobs require more skills and knowledge than other jobs**. To stay with our example, it takes more skills and knowledge to do brain surgery than to shine shoes.
3. **Relatively few people have the ability to acquire the skills and knowledge that are needed to do these important, highly skilled jobs**. Most of us would be able to do a decent job of shining shoes, but very few of us would be able to become brain surgeons.
4. **To induce the people with the skills and knowledge to do the important, highly skilled jobs, society must promise them higher incomes or other rewards**. If this is true, some people automatically end up higher in society's ranking system than others, and stratification is thus necessary and inevitable. To illustrate this, say we have a society where shining shoes and doing brain surgery both give us incomes of $150,000 per year. (This example is *very* hypothetical, but please keep reading.) If you decide to shine shoes, you can begin making this money at age 16, but if you decide to become a brain surgeon, you will not start making this same amount until about age 35, as you first must go to college and medical school and then acquire several more years of medical training. While you have spent 19 additional years beyond age 16 getting this education and training and taking out tens of thousands of dollars in student loans, you could have spent these 19 years shining shoes and making $150,000 a year, or $2.85 million overall. Which job would you choose?



Figure 7.2.3.1: Functional theory argues that the promise of very high incomes is necessary to induce talented people to pursue important careers such as surgery. If physicians and shoe shiners made the same high income, would enough people decide to become physicians?© Thinkstock

As this example suggests, many people might not choose to become brain surgeons unless considerable financial and other rewards awaited them. By extension, we might not have enough people filling society's important jobs unless they know they will be similarly rewarded. If this is true, we must have stratification. This all sounds very logical, but a few years after Davis and Moore published their functionalist theory of stratification, other sociologists pointed out some serious problems in their argument (Tumin, 1953; Wrong, 1959).Tumin, M. M. (1953). Some principles of stratification: A critical analysis. *American Sociological Review, 18*, 387–393; Wrong, D. H. (1959). The functional theory of stratification: Some neglected considerations. *American Sociological Review, 24*, 772–782.

First, it is difficult to compare the importance of many types of jobs. For example, which is more important, doing brain surgery or mining coal? Although you might be tempted to answer "brain surgery," if no coal were mined, much of our society could not function. In another example, which job is more important, attorney or professor? (Be careful how you answer this one!)

Second, the functionalist explanation implies that the most important jobs have the highest incomes and the least important jobs the lowest incomes, but many examples, including the ones just mentioned, counter this view. Coal miners make much less money than physicians, and professors, for better or worse, earn much less on the average than lawyers. A professional athlete making millions of dollars a year earns many times the income of the president of the United States, but who is more important to the nation? Elementary school teachers do a very important job in our society, but their salaries are much lower than those of sports agents, advertising executives, and many other people whose jobs are far less essential.

Third, the functionalist view also implies that people move up the economic ladder based on their abilities, skills, and knowledge and, more generally, their merit. If this is true, another implication is that if they do not move up the ladder, they lack the necessary merit. This view ignores the fact that much of our stratification stems from lack of equal opportunity, as our *Monopoly* example at the beginning of the chapter made clear. Because of their race, ethnicity, gender, and class standing at birth, some people have less opportunity than others to acquire the skills and training they need to fill the types of jobs addressed by the functionalist approach.

Finally, the functionalist explanation might make sense up to a point, but it does not justify the extremes of wealth and poverty found in the United States and other nations. Even if we do have to promise higher incomes to get enough people to become physicians, does that mean we also need the amount of poverty we have? Do CEOs of corporations really need to make millions of dollars per year to get enough qualified people to become CEOs? Don't people take on a CEO job or other high-paying job at least partly because of the challenge, working conditions, and other positive aspects they offer? The functionalist view does not answer these questions adequately.

The Conflict View

Conflict theory's explanation of stratification draws on Karl Marx's view of class societies and incorporates the critique of

the functionalist view just discussed. Many different explanations grounded in conflict theory exist, but they all assume that stratification stems from a fundamental conflict between the needs and interests of the powerful, or "haves," in society and those of the weak, or "have-nots" (Kerbo, 2009).Kerbo, H. R. (2009). *Social stratification and inequality*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. The former take advantage of their position at the top of society to stay at the top, even if it means oppressing those at the bottom. At a minimum, they can heavily influence the law, the media, and other institutions in a way that maintains society's class structure.

Ideology and Stratification

In explaining stratification, conflict theory emphasizes ideology, or a set of ideas that justifies the status quo. This emphasis goes back to the work of Marx, who said the ruling class shapes and even controls the ruling ideas of a society. It tries to shape these ideas so that they justify the existing order and decrease the chances that the poor will challenge it. The key goal of the ruling class here is to prevent the poor from achieving class consciousness, or an awareness of their oppression and the true reasons for it (Marx & Engels, 1947).Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1947). *The German ideology*. New York, NY: International Publishers. If the poor instead do not recognize their interests as a class that does not control the means of production, they suffer from false consciousness.

As an example, Marx called religion the "opiate of the masses." By this he meant that religious beliefs influence the poor to feel that their fate in life is God's will or a test of their belief in God. If they hold such beliefs, they will neither blame their poverty on the rich nor rebel against them. Religious beliefs help create false consciousness.

Ideological beliefs bolster every system of stratification and domination. In slave societies, the dominant ideology, and one that at least some slaves accepted, was that slaves are inferior to their masters and deserve no better fate in life. When U.S. slavery existed in the South, it was commonly thought that blacks were biologically inferior and suited only to be slaves. Caste societies, as we noted earlier, have similar beliefs that justify the existence and impact of the caste system. Hitler's "final solution" likewise rested on the belief that Jews and other groups he targeted were biologically inferior and deserving of extermination.

Ideological beliefs in class societies are more subtle and complex but nonetheless influential. One of the most important beliefs in the United States is the American Dream, epitomized by the story of Abraham Lincoln. According to this belief, people born into poverty can lift themselves up by the bootstraps and become successful if they work hard enough. By implication, if people remain poor, they are not trying hard enough or have other personal deficiencies keeping them in poverty. This ideology prompts many Americans to take a blaming-the-victim approach (see Chapter 1) by blaming poverty on laziness and other problems in the poor rather than on discrimination and the lack of opportunity in society. To the extent that people accept such ideological beliefs, they are less likely to criticize the existing system of stratification. Marx did not foresee the extent to which these beliefs in the United States would impede the development of class consciousness.

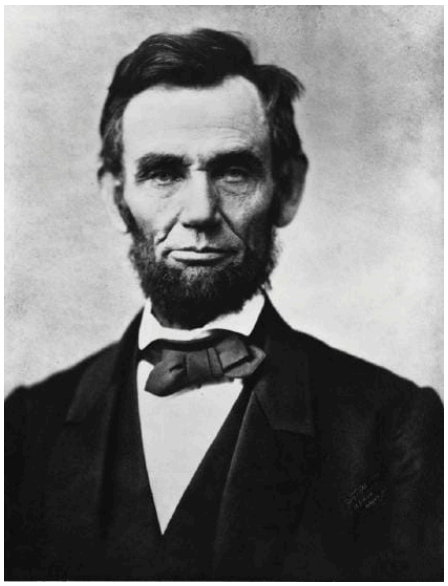


Figure 7.2.3.2: Because he was born in a log cabin and later became president, Abraham Lincoln's life epitomizes the American Dream, the belief that people born into poverty can become successful through hard work. The popularity of this belief leads many Americans to blame poor people for their poverty.Source: Photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3a53289.

International data underline this American ideology. We saw in Chapter 2 that about 60% of Americans attribute poverty to laziness and lack of willpower, compared to less than half that in Mexico, Russia, Spain, and Sweden. Belief in the American Dream evidently helps lead to a blaming-the-victim ideology that blames the poor for their own fate.

Conflict theory assumes that class position influences our perceptions of social and political life, even if not to the degree envisioned by Marx. Some national survey data support this assumption. A General Social Survey question asks whether it is the government's responsibility to "reduce income differences between the rich and poor." As Figure 7.2.3.3 shows, low-income people are much more likely than high-income people to think the government has this responsibility.

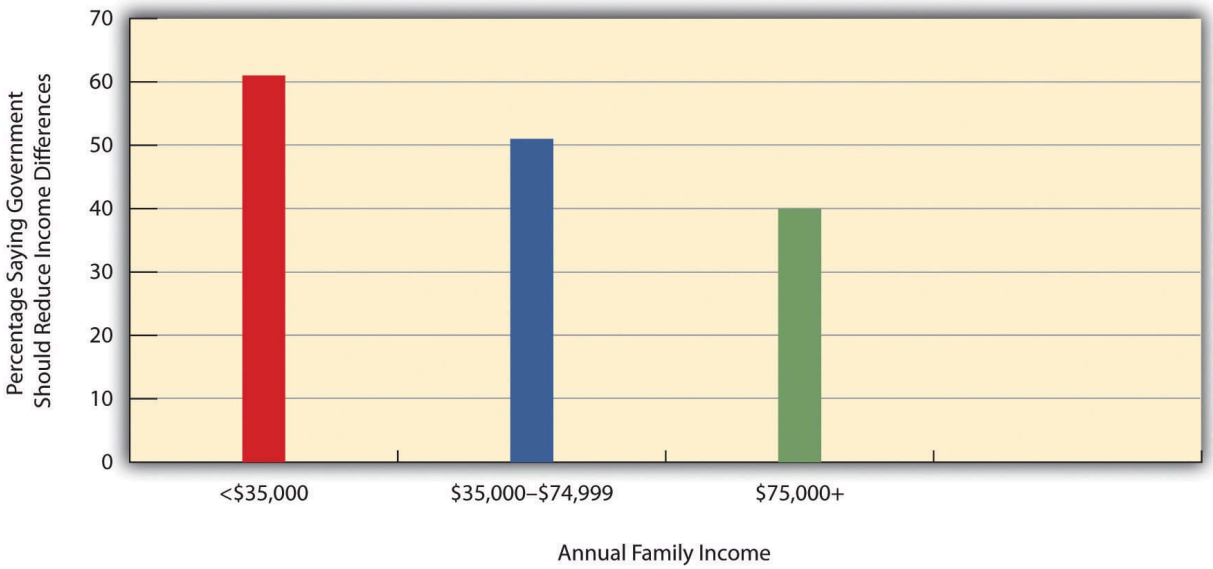


Figure 7.2.3.3: Annual Family Income and Belief That Government "Should Reduce Income Differences Between the Rich and Poor". Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2006.

Symbolic Interactionism

Consistent with its micro orientation, symbolic interactionism tries to understand stratification by looking at people's interaction and understandings in their daily lives. Unlike the functionalist and conflict views, it does not try to explain why we have stratification in the first place. Rather, it examines the differences that stratification makes for people's lifestyles and their interaction with other people.

One of the most insightful analyses of stratification that fits into a symbolic interactionist framework was Thorstein Veblin's (1899/1953)Veblen, T. (1953). *The theory of the leisure class: An economic study of institutions*. New York, NY: New American Library. (Original work published 1899) famous discussion of *conspicuous consumption*, or the acquisition and display by the wealthy of lavish products that show off their wealth. The very rich do not "need" mansions or other very opulent homes, and neither do they need a motor vehicle costing upward of $100,000 or more or jewelry costing thousands and thousands of dollars. Yet they purchase these products to show off their wealth and to feel better about themselves. The lifestyles of the rich are featured in classic novels by writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and in classic films such as *The Philadelphia Story*, starring the formidable trio of Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant, and James Stewart. Although one message of many of these cultural works is that money does not always bring happiness, it remains true, as Fitzgerald once wrote, "Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me."

Examples of the symbolic interactionist framework are also seen in the many literary works and films that portray the difficulties that the rich and poor have in interacting on the relatively few occasions when they do interact. For example, in the film *Pretty Woman*, Richard Gere plays a rich businessman who hires a prostitute, played by Julia Roberts, to accompany him to swank parties and other affairs. Roberts has to buy a new wardrobe and learn how to dine and behave in rich social settings, and much of the film's humor and poignancy come from her awkwardness in learning the lifestyle of the rich.

If there are many dramatic and humorous accounts of the "lifestyles of the rich and famous," there are also many sociological and other accounts of lives of the poor. Poverty is discussed later in this chapter, but for now it is sufficient to say that the poor often lead lives of quiet desperation and must find many ways of coping with the fact of being poor. Studies of the poor, too, reflect the

symbolic interactionist perspective.

Conclusion

- According to the functionalist view, stratification is a necessary and inevitable consequence of the need to use the promise of financial reward to induce talented people to pursue important jobs and careers.
- According to conflict theory, stratification results from lack of opportunity and discrimination against the poor and people of color.
- According to symbolic interactionism, social class affects how people interact in everyday life and how they view certain aspects of the social world.

For Your Review

1. In explaining stratification in the United States, which view, functionalist or conflict, makes more sense to you? Why?
2. Suppose you could wave a magic wand and invent a society where everyone had about the same income no matter which job he or she performed. Do you think it would be difficult to persuade enough people to become physicians or to pursue other important careers? Explain your answer.

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7.2.4: Social Class in the United States

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish objective and subjective measures of social class.
- Outline the functionalist view of the American class structure.
- Outline the conflict view of the American class structure.
- Discuss whether the United States has much vertical social mobility.

There is a surprising amount of disagreement among sociologists on the number of social classes in the United States and even on how to measure social class membership. We first look at the measurement issue and then discuss the number and types of classes sociologists have delineated.

Measuring Social Class

We can measure social class either *objectively* or *subjectively*. If we choose the objective method, we classify people according to one or more criteria, such as their occupation, education, and/or income. The researcher is the one who decides which social class people are in based on where they stand in regard to these variables. If we choose the subjective method, we ask people what class *they think* they are in. For example, the General Social Survey asks, "If you were asked to use one of four names for your social class, which would you say you belong in: the lower class, the working class, the middle class, or the upper class?" Figure 7.2.4.1 depicts responses to this question. The trouble with such a subjective measure is that some people say they are in a social class that differs from what objective criteria might indicate they are in. This problem leads most sociologists to favor objective measures of social class when they study stratification in American society.

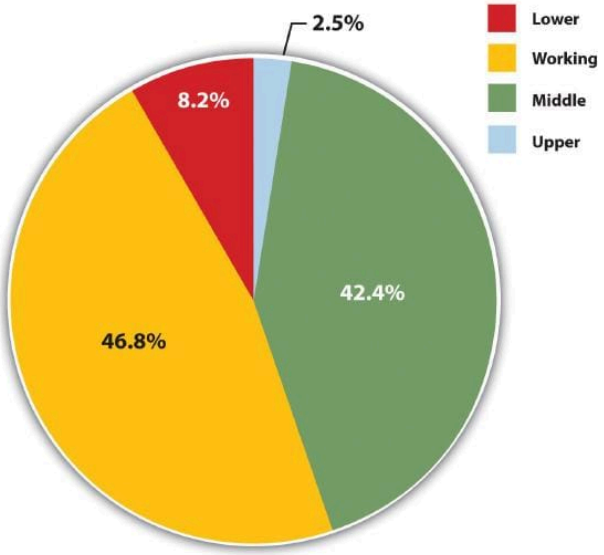


Figure 7.2.4.1: Subjective Social Class Membership. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

Yet even here there is disagreement between functionalist theorists and conflict theorists on which objective measures to use. Functionalist sociologists rely on measures of socioeconomic status (SES), such as education, income, and occupation, to determine someone's social class. Sometimes one of these three variables is used by itself to measure social class, and sometimes two or all three of the variables are combined (in ways that need not concern us) to measure social class. When occupation is used, sociologists often rely on standard measures of occupational prestige. Since the late 1940s, national surveys have asked Americans to rate the prestige of dozens of occupations, and their ratings are averaged together to yield prestige scores for the occupations (Hodge, Siegel, & Rossi, 1964).Hodge, R. W., Siegel, P., & Rossi, P. (1964). Occupational prestige in the United States, 1925–63. *American Journal of Sociology, 70*, 286–302. Over the years these scores have been relatively stable. Here are some average prestige scores for various occupations: physician, 86; college professor, 74; elementary school teacher,

64; letter carrier, 47; garbage collector, 28; and janitor, 22.

Despite SES's usefulness, conflict sociologists prefer different, though still objective, measures of social class that take into account ownership of the means of production and other dynamics of the workplace. These measures are closer to what Marx meant by the concept of class throughout his work, and they take into account the many types of occupations and workplace structures that he could not have envisioned when he was writing during the 19th century.

For example, corporations have many upper-level managers who do not own the means of production but still determine the activities of workers under them. They thus do not fit neatly into either of Marx's two major classes, the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. Recognizing these problems, conflict sociologists delineate social class on the basis of several factors, including the ownership of the means of production, the degree of autonomy workers enjoy in their jobs, and whether they supervise other workers or are supervised themselves (Wright, 2000).Wright, E. O. (2000). *Class counts: Comparative studies in class analysis*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

The American Class Structure

As should be evident, it is not easy to determine how many social classes exist in the United States. Over the decades, sociologists have outlined as many as six or seven social classes based on such things as, once again, education, occupation, and income, but also on lifestyle, the schools people's children attend, a family's reputation in the community, how "old" or "new" people's wealth is, and so forth (Coleman & Rainwater, 1978; Warner & Lunt, 1941).Coleman, R. P., & Rainwater, L. (1978). *Social standing in America*. New York, NY: Basic Books; Warner, W. L., & Lunt, P. S. (1941). *The social life of a modern community*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. For the sake of clarity, we will limit ourselves to the four social classes included in Figure 6.7: the upper class, the middle class, the working class, and the lower class. Although subcategories exist within some of these broad categories, they still capture the most important differences in the American class structure (Gilbert, 2002).Gilbert, D. (2002). *The American class structure in an age of growing inequality* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. The annual income categories listed for each class are admittedly somewhat arbitrary but are based on the percentage of families above or below a specific income level.

The Upper Class

Depending on how it is defined, the upper class consists of about 5% of the U.S. population and includes families with annual incomes (2007 data) of more than $200,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008).U.S. Census Bureau. (2008). *Current population survey, 2008 annual social and economic supplement*. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. Some scholars would raise the ante further by limiting the upper class to families with incomes of at least $500,000 or so, which in turn reduces this class to about 1% of the population, with an average wealth (income, stocks and bonds, and real estate) of several million dollars. However it is defined, the upper class has much wealth, power, and influence (Kerbo, 2009).Kerbo, H. R. (2009). *Social stratification and inequality*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.



Figure 7.2.4.2: The upper class in the United States consists of up to 5% of the population and possesses much wealth, power, and influence. © Thinkstock

Members of the *upper-upper* class have “old” money that has been in their families for generations; some boast of their ancestors coming over on the *Mayflower*. They belong to exclusive clubs and live in exclusive neighborhoods, have their names in the *Social Register*, send their children to expensive private schools, serve on the boards of museums, corporations, and major charities, and exert much influence on the political process and other areas of life from behind the scenes. Members of the *lower-upper* class have “new” money acquired through hard work, lucky investments, and/or athletic prowess. In many ways their lives are similar to those of their old-money counterparts, but they do not enjoy the prestige that old money brings. Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft and the richest person in the United States in 2009, would be considered a member of the lower-upper class because his money is too “new.” Because he does not have a long-standing pedigree, upper-upper class members might even be tempted to disparage his immense wealth, at least in private.

The Middle Class

Many of us like to think of ourselves in the middle class, as Figure 6.7 showed, and many of us are. The middle class includes the 50% of all families whose annual incomes (2007 data) range from $55,000 to $199,999. As this very broad range suggests, the middle class includes people with many different levels of education and income and many different types of jobs. It is thus helpful to distinguish the *upper-middle* class from the *lower-middle* class on the upper and lower ends of this income bracket, respectively. The upper-middle class has family incomes from about $140,000 to $199,000, or about 7% to 8% of all families. People in the upper-middle class typically have college and, very often, graduate or professional degrees, live in the suburbs or in fairly expensive urban areas, and are bankers, lawyers, engineers, corporate managers, and financial advisers, among other occupations.



Figure 7.2.4.3: The upper-middle class in the United States consists of about 7%–8% of all families, with incomes ranging from $140,000 to $199,000. © Thinkstock

The lower-middle class has family incomes from about $55,000 to $77,500, or about 17% of all families. People in this income bracket typically work in white-collar jobs as nurses, teachers, and the like. Many have college degrees, usually from the less prestigious colleges, but many also have 2-year degrees or only a high school degree. They live somewhat comfortable lives but can hardly afford to go on expensive vacations or buy expensive cars and can send their children to expensive colleges only if they receive significant financial aid.

The Working Class

Working-class families have annual incomes between about $22,500 and $54,999 and constitute about 30% of all U.S. families. They generally work in blue-collar jobs such as factory work, construction, restaurant serving, and less skilled clerical positions. People in the working class typically do not have 4-year college degrees, and some do not have high school degrees. Although most are not living in official poverty, their financial situation is very uncomfortable. A single large medical bill or expensive car repair would be almost impossible to pay without going into considerable debt. Working-class families are far less likely than their wealthier counterparts to own their own homes or to send their children to college. Many of them live at risk for unemployment as their companies downsize by laying off workers even in good times, and hundreds of thousands began to be laid off when the U.S. recession began in 2008.



Figure 7.2.4.4: The working class in the United States consists of about 30% of all families, whose members work in blue-collar jobs and less skilled clerical positions. © Thinkstock

The Lower Class

Although lower class is a common term, many observers prefer a less negative-sounding term like the poor, which is the term used here. The poor have family incomes under $22,500 and constitute about 15% of all U.S. families. Many of the poor lack high school degrees, and many are unemployed or employed only part-time in semiskilled or unskilled jobs. When they do work, they work as janitors, house cleaners, migrant laborers, and shoe shiners. They tend to rent apartments rather than own their own homes, lack medical insurance, and have inadequate diets. We will discuss the poor further when we focus later in this chapter on inequality and poverty in the United States.



Figure 7.2.4.4. The lower class or poor in the United States constitute about 15% of all families. Many poor individuals lack high school degrees and are unemployed or employed only part-time. © Thinkstock

Social Mobility

Regardless of how we measure and define social class, what are our chances of moving up or down within the American class structure? As we saw earlier, the degree of vertical social mobility is a key distinguishing feature of systems of stratification. Class

systems such as in the United States are thought to be open, meaning that social mobility is relatively high. It is important, then, to determine how much social mobility exists in the United States.

Here we need to distinguish between two types of vertical social mobility. Intergenerational mobility refers to mobility from one generation to the next within the same family. If children from poor parents end up in high-paying jobs, the children have experienced upward intergenerational mobility. Conversely, if children of college professors end up hauling trash for a living, these children have experienced downward intergenerational mobility. Intragenerational mobility refers to mobility within a person's own lifetime. If you start out as an administrative assistant in a large corporation and end up as an upper-level manager, you have experienced upward intragenerational mobility. But if you start out from business school as an upper-level manager and get laid off 10 years later because of corporate downsizing, you have experienced downward intragenerational mobility.



Figure 7.2.4.5: A college education is a key step toward achieving upward social mobility. However, the payoff of education is often higher for men than for women and for whites than for people of color.© Thinkstock

Sociologists have conducted a good deal of research on vertical mobility, much of it involving the movement of males up or down the occupational prestige ladder compared to their fathers, with the earliest studies beginning in the 1960s (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Featherman & Hauser, 1978).Blau, P. M., & Duncan, O. D. (1967). *The American occupational structure*. New York, NY: Wiley; Featherman, D. L., & Hauser, R. M. (1978). *Opportunity and change*. New York, NY: Academic Press. For better or worse, the focus on males occurred because the initial research occurred when many women were still homemakers and also because women back then were excluded from many studies in the social and biological sciences. The early research on males found that about half of sons end up in higher-prestige jobs than their fathers had but that the difference between the sons' jobs and their fathers' was relatively small. For example, a child of a janitor may end up running a hardware store but is very unlikely to end up as a corporate executive. To reach that lofty position, it helps greatly to have parents in jobs much more prestigious than a janitor's. Contemporary research also finds much less mobility among African Americans and Latinos than among non-Latino whites with the same education and family backgrounds, suggesting an important negative impact of racial and ethnic discrimination (see Chapter 7).

A key vehicle for upward mobility is formal education. Regardless of the socioeconomic status of our parents, we are much more likely to end up in a high-paying job if we attain a college degree or, increasingly, a graduate or professional degree. Figure 7.2.4.6 vividly shows the difference that education makes for Americans' mean annual incomes. Notice, however, that for a given level of education, men's incomes are greater than women's. Figure 6.13 thus suggests that the payoff of education is higher for men than for women, and many studies support this conclusion (Green & Ferber, 2008).Green, C. A., & Ferber, M. A. (2008). The long-term impact of labor market interruptions: How crucial is timing? *Review of Social Economy, 66*, 351–379. The reasons for this gender difference are complex and will be discussed elsewhere. To the extent vertical social mobility exists in the United States, then, it is higher for men than for women and higher for whites than for people of color.

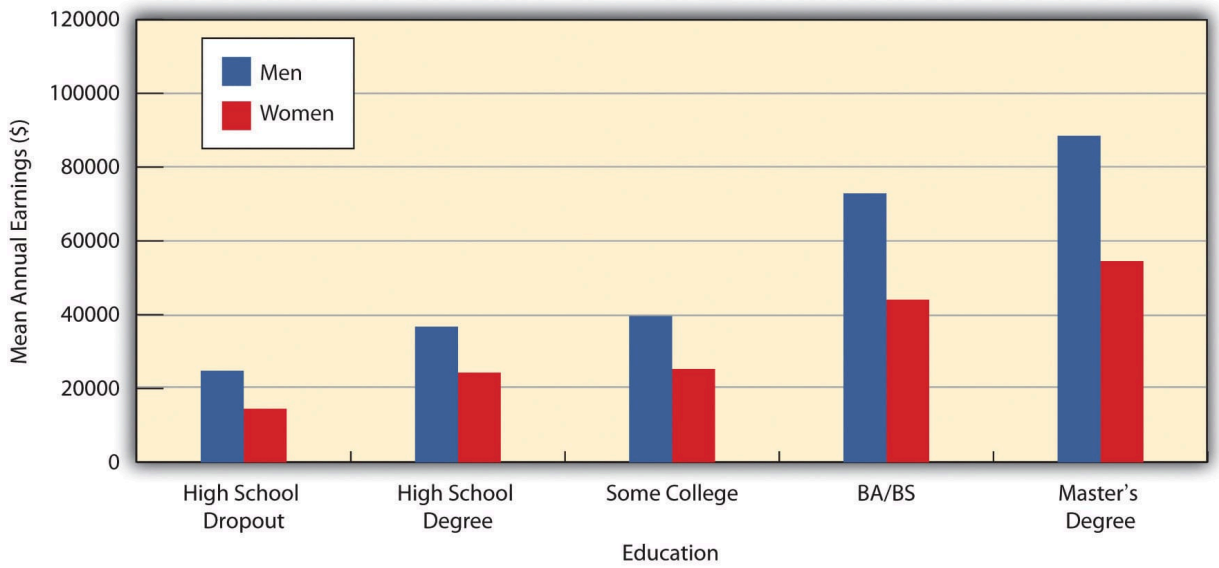


Figure 7.2.4.6: Median Earnings of Year-Round, Full-Time Workers, 2008. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

Certainly the United States has upward social mobility, even when we take into account gender and racial discrimination. Whether we conclude the United States has *a lot of* vertical mobility or *just a little* is the key question, and the answer to this question depends on how the data are interpreted. People can and do move up the socioeconomic ladder, but their movement is fairly limited. Hardly anyone starts at the bottom of the ladder and ends up at the top. As we see later in this chapter, recent trends in the U.S. economy have made it more difficult to move up the ladder and have even worsened the status of some people.

One way of understanding the issue of U.S. mobility is to see how much parents' education affects the education their children attain. Figure 7.2.4.7 compares how General Social Survey respondents with parents of different educational backgrounds fare in attaining a college (bachelor's) degree. For the sake of clarity, the figure includes only those respondents whose parents had the same level of education as each other: they either both dropped out of high school, both were high school graduates, or both were college graduates.

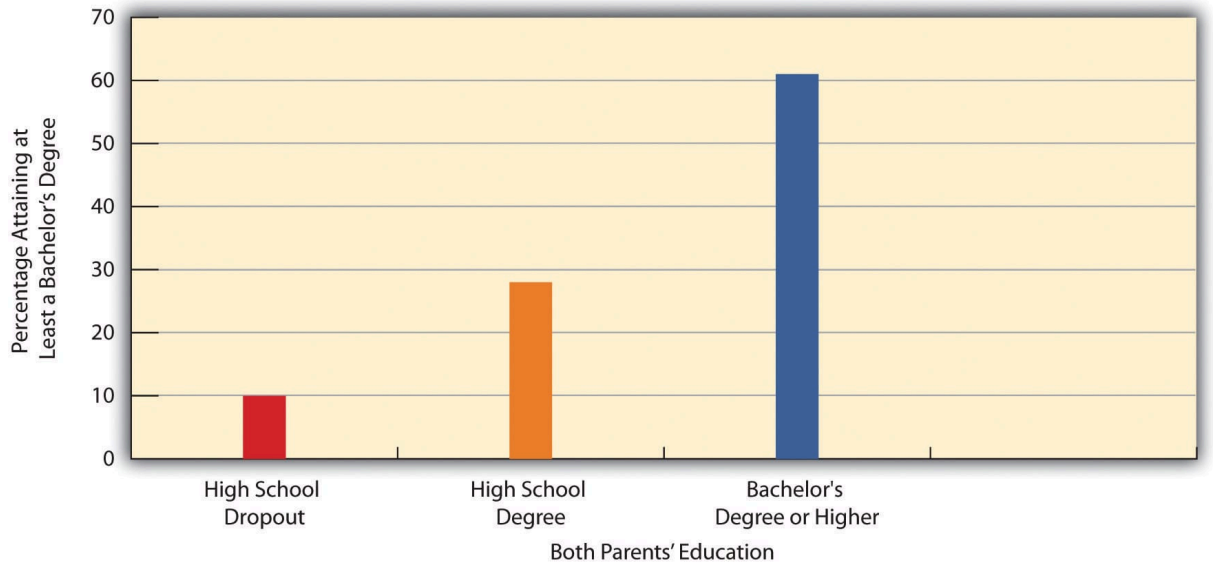


Figure 7.2.4.7: Parents' Education and Percentage of Respondents Who Have a College Degree. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2008.

As Figure 7.2.4.7 indicates, we are much more likely to get a college degree if our parents had college degrees themselves. The two bars for respondents whose parents were high school graduates or dropouts, respectively, do represent upward mobility, because the respondents are graduating from college even though their parents did not. But the three bars taken together

also show that our chances of going to college depend heavily on our parents' education (and presumably their income and other aspects of our family backgrounds). The American Dream does exist, but it is much more likely to remain *only* a dream unless we come from advantaged backgrounds. In fact, there is less vertical mobility in the United States than in other Western democracies. As a recent analysis summarized the evidence, "There is considerably more mobility in most of the other developed economies of Europe and Scandinavia than in the United States" (Mishel et al., 2009, p. 108).Mishel, L., Bernstein, J., & Shierholz, H. (2009). *The state of working America 2008/2009*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press [An imprint of Cornell University Press].

Conclusion

- Several ways of measuring social class exist. Functionalist and conflict sociologists disagree on which objective criteria to use in measuring social class. Subjective measures of social class, which rely on people rating their own social class, may lack some validity.
- Sociologists disagree on the number of social classes in the United States, but a common view is that the United States has four classes: upper, middle, working, and lower. Further variations exist within the upper and middle classes.
- The United States has some vertical social mobility, but not as much as several nations in Western Europe.

For Your Review

1. Which way of measuring social class do you prefer, objective or subjective? Explain your answer.
2. Which objective measurement of social class do you prefer, functionalist or conflict? Explain your answer.

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7.2.5: Economic Inequality and Poverty in the United States

Learning Objectives

- Understand trends in U.S. inequality.
- Explain the social distribution of U.S. poverty.
- Distinguish the structural and individual explanations of poverty.
- List the major effects of poverty.

In his classic book *The Other America*, Michael Harrington (1962)Harrington, M. (1962). *The other America: Poverty in the United States*. New York, NY: Macmillan. brought the reality of poverty home to many Americans. In chapter after chapter, he discussed the troubled lives of the poor in rural Appalachia, in our urban centers, and in other areas of the country, and he indicted the country for not helping the poor. His book helped kindle interest in the White House and Congress in aiding the poor and deeply affected its thousands of readers. Almost five decades later, we know much more about poverty than we used to. Despite initial gains in fighting poverty in the 1960s (Schwartz, 1984),Schwartz, J. E. (1984, June 18). The war we won: How the great society defeated poverty. *The New Republic,* 18–19. poverty is still with us and has worsened since the early 2000s, especially since the onset of the serious economic recession that began in 2008. What do we know about the extent of poverty, the reasons for it, and its consequences?

Economic Inequality

Let's start by discussing economic inequality, which refers to the extent of the economic difference between the rich and the poor. Because most societies are stratified, there will always be some people who are richer or poorer than others, but the key question is *how much* richer or poorer they are. When the gap between them is large, we say that much economic inequality exists; when the gap between them is small, we say that relatively little economic inequality exists.

Considered in this light, the United States has a very large degree of economic inequality. A common way to examine inequality is to rank the nation's families by income from lowest to highest and then to divide this distribution into *fifths*. Thus, we have the poorest fifth of the nation's families (or the 20% of families with the lowest family incomes), a second fifth with somewhat higher incomes, and so on until we reach the richest fifth of families, or the 20% with the highest incomes. We then can see what percentage each fifth has of the nation's *entire* income. Figure 6.15 shows such a calculation for the United States. The poorest fifth enjoys only 4.1% of the nation's income, while the richest fifth enjoys 47.3%. Another way of saying this is that the richest 20% of the population have almost as much income as the remaining 80% of the population.

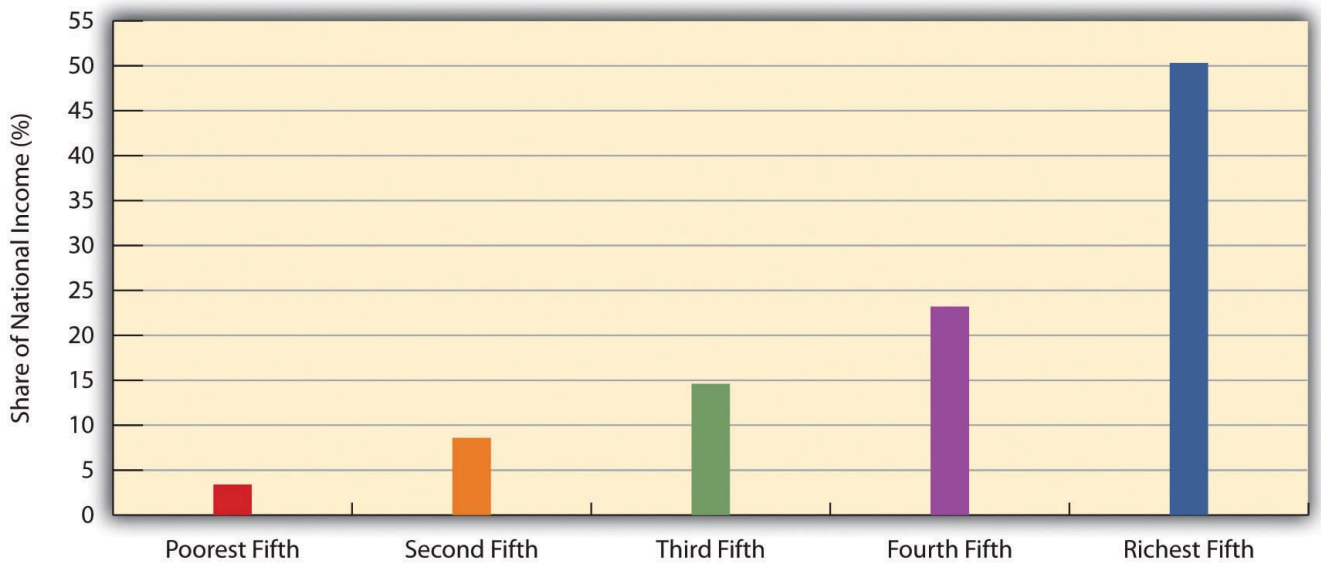
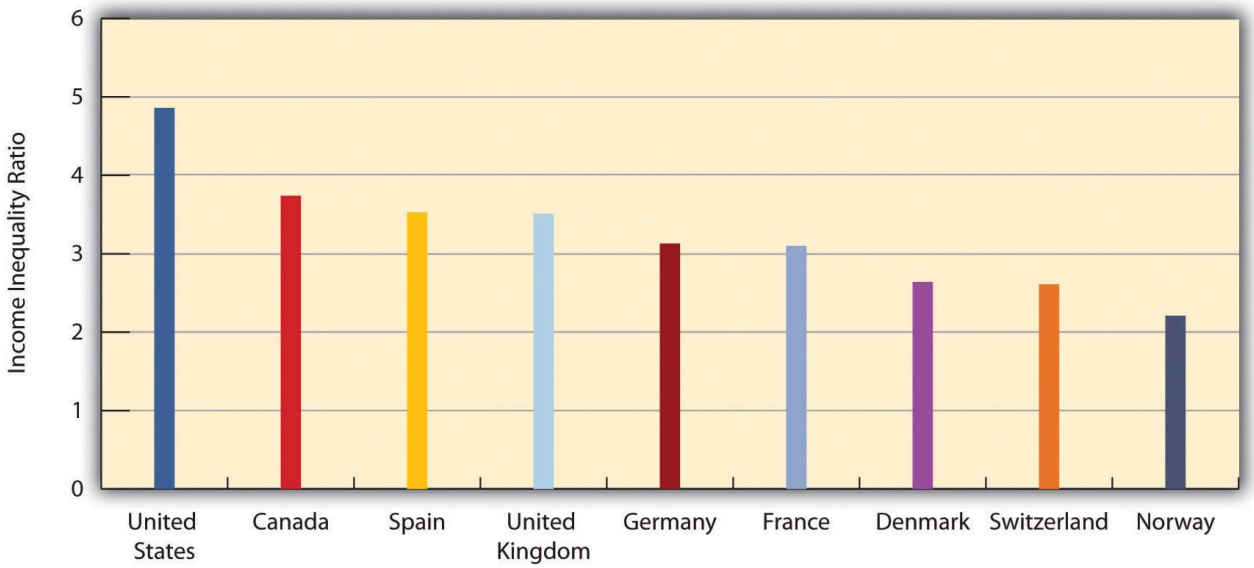


Figure 7.2.5.1: Share of National Income Going to Income Fifths, 2009. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

This degree of inequality is the largest in the industrialized world. Figure 6.16 compares the inequality among several industrialized nations by dividing the median income of households in the 90th percentile (meaning they have more income than 90% of all households) by the median income of households in the 10th percentile (meaning they have more income than only 10% of all households); the higher the resulting ratio, the greater a nation's inequality. The ratio for the United States, 4.86, far exceeds that for any other nation.

Figure 7.2.5.2**:** Income Inequality Around the World



Ratio of median income of richest 10% in each nation to that of poorest 10%.

Source: Data from Mishel, L., Bernstein, J., & Shierholz, H. (2009). The state of working America 2008/2009. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press [An imprint of Cornell University Press].

Economic inequality in the United States has increased during the last two decades. The loss of manufacturing jobs and changes in taxation and income distribution policies since the early 1980s have favored the rich and hurt the economic standing of the middle class and the poor (Barlett & Steele, 2002; Wilson, 2009).Barlett, D. L., & Steele, J. B. (2002). *The great American tax dodge: How spiraling fraud and avoidance are killing fairness, destroying the income tax, and costing you*. Berkeley: University

of California Press; Wilson, W. J. (2009). The economic plight of inner-city black males. In E. Anderson (Ed.), *Against the wall: Poor, young, black, and male* (pp. 55–70). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. After adjusting for inflation, the post-tax income of the nation's wealthiest families grew by a much greater amount than that for the poorest families from 1979 to 2005. It grew by only 6% for the poorest fifth but by 80% for the wealthiest fifth, and it also grew by a whopping 228% for families in the top 1% of the nation's families (Mishel et al., 2009).Mishel, L., Bernstein, J., & Shierholz, H. (2009). *The state of working America 2008/2009*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press [An imprint of Cornell University Press]. As the saying goes, the rich get richer. To recall our earlier discussion, to be upwardly mobile, it helps to be well-off to begin with.

Poverty

Measuring Poverty

When U.S. officials became concerned about poverty during the 1960s, they quickly realized they needed to find out how much poverty we had. To do so, a measure of official poverty, or a poverty line, was needed. This line was first calculated in 1963 by multiplying the cost of a very minimal diet by three, as a 1955 government study had determined that the typical American family spent one-third of its income on food. Thus a family whose income is lower than three times the cost of a very minimal diet is considered officially poor.



Figure 7.2.5.3. The measure of official poverty began in 1963 and stipulates that a family whose income is lower than three times the cost of a minimal diet is considered officially poor. This measure has not changed since 1963 even though family expenses have risen greatly in many areas. © Thinkstock

This way of calculating the poverty line has not changed since 1963, even though many other things, such as energy, child care, and health care, now occupy a greater percentage of the typical family's budget than was true in 1963. As a national measure, the poverty line also fails to take into account regional differences in the cost of living. For all of these reasons, many experts think the official measurement of poverty is highly suspect. As a recent report observed, "Most poverty analysts strongly believe that the official poverty statistics are inadequate to the task of determining who is poor in America" (Mishel et al., 2009, p. 298).Mishel, L., Bernstein, J., & Shierholz, H. (2009). *The state of working America 2008/2009*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press [An imprint of Cornell University Press].

The poverty line is adjusted annually for inflation and takes into account the number of people in a family: the larger the family size, the higher the poverty line. In 2009, the poverty line for a nonfarm family of four (two adults, two children) was $21,954. A four-person family earning even one more dollar than $21,954 in 2009 was not officially poor, even though its "extra" income hardly lifted it out of dire economic straits. Policy experts have calculated a no-frills budget that enables a family to meet its basic needs in food, clothing, shelter, and so forth; this budget is about twice the poverty line. Families with incomes between the poverty line and twice the poverty line are barely making ends meet, but they are not considered officially poor. When we talk here about the poverty level, keep in mind that we are talking only about *official* poverty and that there are many families and individuals living in near-poverty who have trouble meeting their basic needs, especially when they face unusually high medical or

motor vehicle expenses or the like. For this reason, some analyses use “twice-poverty” data (i.e., family incomes below twice the poverty line) to provide a more accurate understanding of how many Americans face serious financial difficulties.

The Extent and Social Distribution of Poverty

With this caveat in mind, how many Americans are poor, and who are they? The U.S. Census Bureau gives us some answers. In 2009, 14.3% of the U.S. population, or almost 44 million Americans, lived in (official) poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab. This percentage represented a decline from the early 1990s but was higher than the rate in the late 1960s (see Figure 6.18). If we were winning the war on poverty in the 1960s, since then poverty has fought us to a standstill.

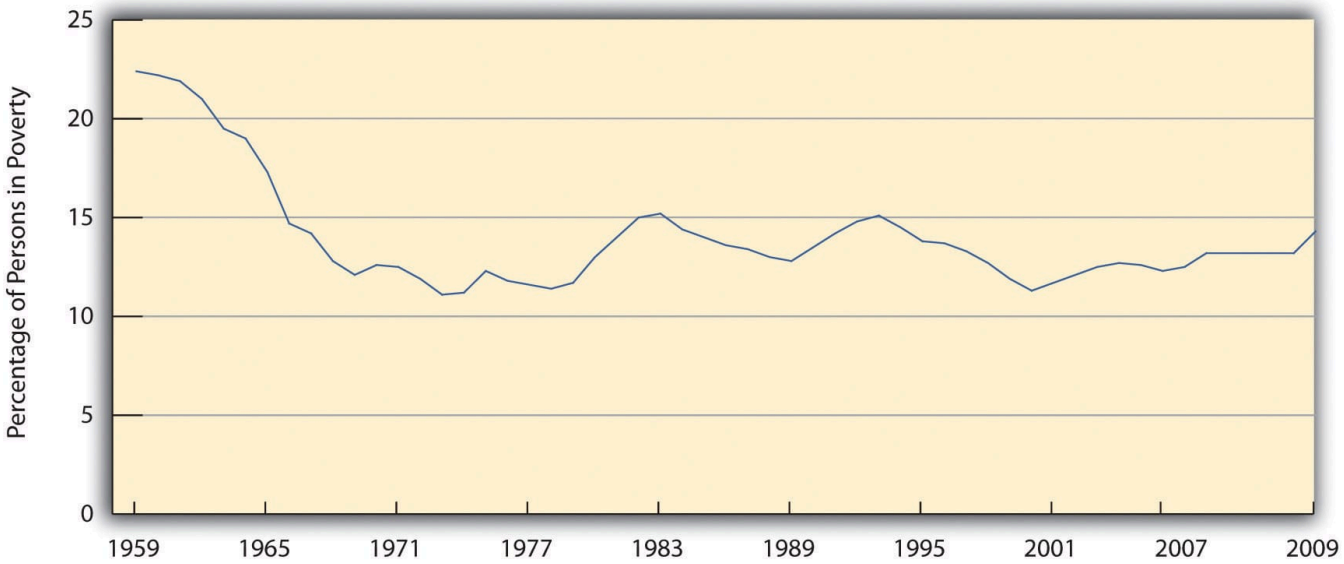


Figure 7.2.5.4: U.S. Poverty, 1959–2009. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Historical poverty tables: people. Retrieved from www.census.gov/hhes/www/pover...al/people.html.

Another way of understanding the extent of poverty is to consider episodic poverty, defined by the Census Bureau as being poor for at least 2 consecutive months in some time period. From 2004 to 2006, the last years for which data are available, almost one-third of the U.S. public, equal to about 90 million people, were poor for at least 2 consecutive months, although only 2.8% were poor for all 3 years (Anderson, 2011).Anderson, R. J. (2011). *Dynamics of economic well-being: Poverty, 2004–2006*. (Current Population Report P70–123). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. As these figures indicate, people go into and out of poverty, but even those who go out of it do not usually move very far from it.

Learning From Other Societies: Poverty and Poverty Policy in Other Western Democracies

To compare international poverty rates, scholars commonly use a measure of the percentage of households in a nation that receive no more than half of the nation’s median household income after taxes and cash transfers from the government. In 2000, the latest date for which data are available, 17% of U.S. households lived in poverty as defined by this measure (Mishel et al., 2009).Mishel, L., Bernstein, J., & Shierholz, H. (2009). *The state of working America 2008/2009*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press [An imprint of Cornell University Press]. By comparison, selected other Western democracies had the following rates (Mishel et al., 2009, p. 384):Mishel, L., Bernstein, J., & Shierholz, H. (2009). *The state of working America 2008/2009*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press [An imprint of Cornell University Press].

Canada	11.4%
Denmark	9.2%
France	8.0%

Germany	8.3%
Norway	6.4%
Spain	14.3%
Sweden	6.5%
United Kingdom	12.4%

The average poverty rate of Western democracies excluding the United States is 9.8%. The U.S. rate is thus 1.73 times greater than this average.

Why is there so much more poverty in the United States than in its Western counterparts? Several differences between the United States and the other nations stand out. First, other Western nations have higher minimum wages and stronger unions than the United States has, and these lead to incomes that help push people above poverty. Second, the other nations spend a much greater proportion of their gross domestic product on social expenditures (income support and social services such as child care subsidies and housing allowances) than does the United States. As a recent analysis concluded,

Other peer countries are much more likely than the United States to step in where markets have failed to lift their most disadvantaged citizens out of poverty. This suggests that the relatively low expenditures on social welfare are at least partially implicated in the high poverty rates in the United States. (Mishel et al., 2009, p. 387)Mishel, L., Bernstein, J., & Shierholz, H. (2009). *The state of working America 2008/2009*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press [An imprint of Cornell University Press].

In short, the United States has so much more poverty than other democracies in part because it spends so much less than they do on helping the poor. The United States certainly has the wealth to follow their example, but it has chosen not to do so, and a high poverty rate is the unfortunate result.

Who are the poor? Contrary to popular images, the most typical poor person in the United States is *white*: 43% of poor people are white (non-Latino), 28% are Latino, 23% are black, and 4% are Asian (see Figure 7.2.5.5). At the same time, race and ethnicity affect the chances of being poor: while only 9.4% of non-Latino whites are poor, 25.8% of African Americans, 12.5% of Asians, and 25.3% of Latinos (who may be of any race) are poor (see Figure 7.2.5.6).

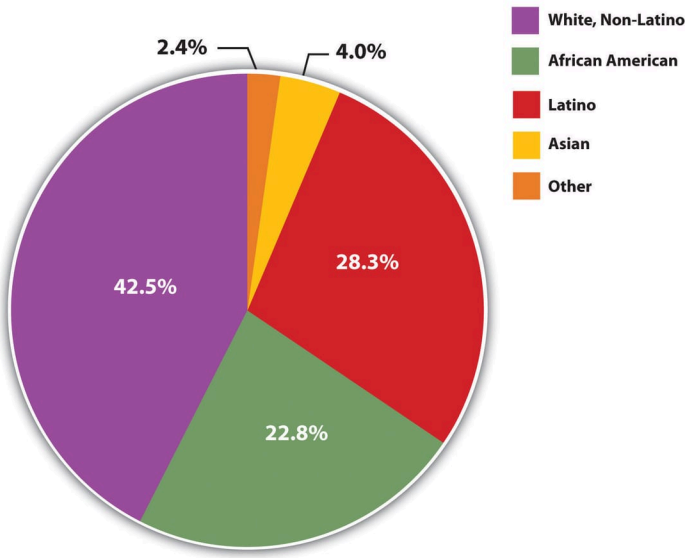


Figure 7.2.5.5: Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Poor, 2009 (Percentage of Poor Persons in Each Group). Source: Data from DeNavas-Walt, C., Proctor, B. D., & Smith, J. C. (2010). Income, poverty, and health insurance coverage in the United States: 2009 (Current Population Report P60–238). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

Thus African Americans and Latinos are more than three times as likely as non-Latino whites to be poor. (Because there are so many non-Latino whites in the United States, the plurality of poor people are non-Latino white, even if the percentage of whites

who are poor is relatively low.) Chapter 7 further discusses the link between poverty and race and ethnicity.

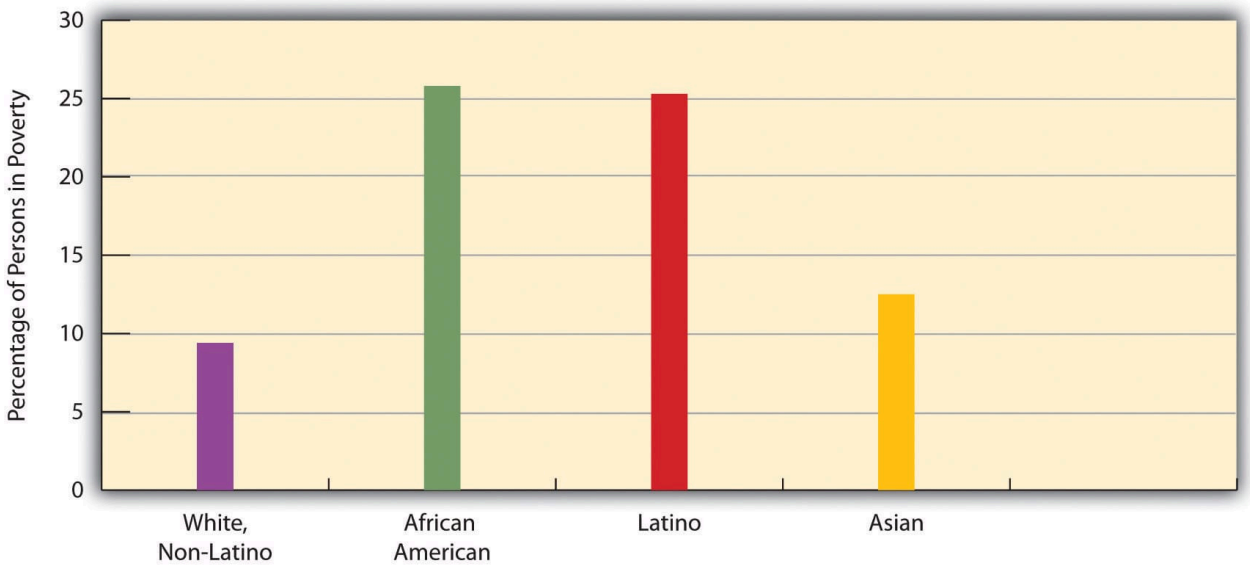


Figure 7.2.5.6: Race, Ethnicity, and Poverty, 2009. Source: Data from DeNavas-Walt, C., Proctor, B. D., & Smith, J. C. (2010). Income, poverty, and health insurance coverage in the United States: 2009 (Current Population Report P60–238). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

Turning to age, 20.7% of children under age 18 are poor (amounting to 15.5 million children), including 35.3% of African American children and 32.5% of Latino children (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, and Smith, 2010).DeNavas-Walt, C., Proctor, B. D., & Smith, J. C. (2010). *Income, poverty, and health insurance coverage in the United States: 2009*. (Current Population Report P60-238). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau. The poverty rate for U.S. children is the highest in the Western world and 1.5 to 9 times greater than the corresponding rates in Canada and Western Europe (Mishel et al., 2009).Mishel, L., Bernstein, J., & Shierholz, H. (2009). *The state of working America 2008/2009*. Ithaca, NY: ILR Press [An imprint of Cornell University Press]. At the other end of the age distribution, 8.9% of people age 65 or older are poor (amounting to about 3.4 million seniors). Turning around these U.S. figures, about 35% of all poor people in the United States are children, and about 8% of the poor are 65 or older. Thus about 42% of Americans living in poverty are children or the elderly.



Figure 7.2.5.7: The poverty rate for U.S. children is the highest in the Western world. © Thinkstock

The type of family structure also makes a difference: whereas about 11% of children living with married parents live in poverty, 44% of those living with only their mother live in poverty. This latter figure is about 41% for non-Latino white children and rises to slightly more than 50% for African American children and Latino children (Child Trends, 2010).Child Trends (2010). *Children in Poverty*. Retrieved from http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/?q=node/221 As these latter numbers indicate, families headed by a

single woman are much more likely to be poor. Poverty thus has a female face.

Explaining Poverty

Explanations of poverty focus on problems either within the poor themselves or in the society in which they live (Iceland, 2006).Iceland, J. (2006). *Poverty in America: A handbook*. Berkeley: University of California Press. The first type of explanation follows logically from the functional theory of stratification and may be considered an "individual" explanation. The second type of explanation follows from conflict theory and is a structural explanation that focuses on problems in American society that produce poverty. As the "Sociology Making a Difference" box discusses, the explanation of poverty people favor affects how sympathetic they are to the poor.

According to the individual explanation, the poor have personal problems and deficiencies that are responsible for their poverty. In the past, the poor were thought to be biologically inferior, a view that has not entirely faded, but today the much more common belief is that they lack the ambition and motivation to work hard and to achieve. According to the World Values Survey, 60% of Americans believe that people are poor "because they are lazy and lack willpower." This percentage reflects the tendency of Americans to favor individual explanations of poverty (Davidson, 2009).Davidson, T. C. (2009). Attributions for poverty among college students: The impact of service-learning and religiosity. *College Student Journal, 43*, 136–144.

A more sophisticated version of this type of explanation is called the *culture of poverty* theory (Banfield, 1974; O. Lewis, 1966).Banfield, E. C. (1974). *The unheavenly city revisited*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown; Lewis, O. (1966). The culture of poverty. *Scientific American, 113*, 19–25. According to this theory, the poor generally have beliefs and values that differ from those of the nonpoor and that doom them to continued poverty. For example, they are said to be impulsive and to live for the present rather than the future. Critics say this view exaggerates the degree to which the poor and nonpoor do in fact hold different values and ignores discrimination and other problems in American society (Iceland, 2003).Iceland, J. (2003). *Dynamics of economic well-being, 1996–1999* (Current Population Report P70–91). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

According to the second, structural explanation, U.S. poverty stems from problems in American society that lead to lack of equal opportunity. These problems include (a) racial, ethnic, gender, and age discrimination; (b) lack of good schooling and adequate health care; and (c) structural changes in the American economic system, such as the departure of manufacturing companies from American cities in the 1980s and 1990s (Iceland, 2003).Iceland, J. (2003). *Dynamics of economic well-being, 1996–1999* (Current Population Report P70–91). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. These problems help create a vicious cycle of poverty in which children of the poor are often fated to end up in poverty or near-poverty themselves as adults.

Sociology Making a Difference

Attributions for Poverty and Public Education Campaigns

The text discusses two general explanations for poverty. The first attributes poverty to lack of willpower and other problems among the poor themselves, while the second attributes poverty to structural obstacles and lack of opportunity in the larger society. As the text notes, Americans tend to favor the first explanation more than the second explanation. They also tend to disagree that the government should do more to help the poor. Could these two sets of views be linked? If so, what would such a link imply for poverty policy?

Sociological research finds that the explanation we favor for poverty—the attribution for poverty we hold—affects whether we want the government to take an active role in helping the poor (Bradley & Cole, 2002).Bradley, C., & Cole, D. J. (2002). Causal attributions and the significance of self-efficacy in predicting solutions to poverty. *Sociological Focus, 35*, 381–396. People who attribute poverty to problems in the larger society are much more likely than those who attribute it to deficiencies among the poor to believe that the government should take such a role. The attribution for poverty we hold presumably affects the amount of sympathy we have for the poor, and our sympathy, or lack of sympathy, in turn affects our views about the government's role in helping the poor. As sociologist Theresa C. Davidson (2009)Davidson, T. C. (2009). Attributions for poverty among college students: The impact of service-learning and religiosity. *College Student Journal, 43*, 136–144. observes, "Beliefs about the causes of poverty shape attitudes toward the poor."

This body of research strongly suggests that public support for government aid for the poor is weak because so much of the public attributes poverty to failings among the poor themselves. If so, the public might very well begin to endorse greater government aid if its attribution for poverty became more structural instead of individual. Public education campaigns that call attention to the lack of opportunity and other structural problems that account for poverty thus might further poverty policy by beginning to

change public perceptions of the poor.

Most sociologists favor the structural explanation. As our earlier *Monopoly* example illustrates, poverty greatly blocks opportunities for success. Later chapters document racial and ethnic discrimination, lack of adequate schooling and health care, and other problems that make it difficult to rise out of poverty. On the other hand, some ethnographic research supports the individual explanation by showing that the poor do have certain values and follow certain practices that augment their plight (Liebow, 1967).Liebow, E. (1967). *Tally's corner*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown. For example, the poor have higher rates of cigarette smoking (34% of people with annual incomes between $6,000 and $11,999 smoke, compared to only 13% of those with incomes $90,000 or greater (Goszkowski, 2008)),Goszkowski, R. (2008). Among Americans, smoking decreases as income increases. Retrieved from www.gallup.com/poll/105550/am...ricans-smoking -decreases-income-increases.aspx which helps lead them to have more serious health problems. Adopting an integrated perspective, some researchers say these values and practices are in many ways the result of poverty itself (Duncan & Tickamyer, 1988).Duncan, C. M., & Tickamyer, A. R. (1988). Poverty research and policy for rural America. *The American Sociologist, 19*, 243–259. These scholars concede a culture of poverty does exist, but they also say it exists because it helps the poor cope daily with the structural effects of being poor. If these effects lead to a culture of poverty, they add, then poverty becomes self-perpetuating. If poverty is both cultural and structural in origin, these scholars say, a comprehensive national effort must be launched to improve the lives of the people in the "other America."

The Effects of Poverty

However poverty is explained, it has important and enduring effects, which later chapters will continue to discuss. For now, we can list some of the major consequences of poverty (and near-poverty) in the United States. As we do so, recall the sociological perspective's emphasis on how our social backgrounds influence our attitudes, behaviors, and life chances. This influence on life chances is quite evident when we look at some of the effects of poverty (Moore et al., 2009; Iceland, 2006; Lindsey, 2009):Moore, K. A., Redd, Z., Burkhauser, M., Mbawa, K., & Collins, A. (2009). *Children in poverty; trends, consequences, and policy options*. Washington, DC: Child Trends. Retrieved from www.childtrends.org/Files//Ch...2009_04_07_RB_ ChildreninPoverty.pdf; Iceland, J. (2006). *Poverty in America: A handbook*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Lindsey, D. (2009). *Child poverty and inequality: Securing a better future for America's children*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.



Figure 7.2.5.8: Poor children are more likely to have inadequate nutrition and to experience health, behavioral, and cognitive problems.© Thinkstock

- The poor are at greater risk for family problems, including divorce and domestic violence. The stress of being poor is thought to be a major reason for these problems.
- The poor are also at greater risk for health problems, including infant mortality, earlier mortality during adulthood, mental illness, and inadequate medical care. Many poor people lack health insurance. Poor children are more likely to have inadequate nutrition and to suffer health, behavioral, and cognitive problems. These problems in turn impair their ability to do well in school and land stable employment as adults, helping to ensure that poverty will persist across generations.
- Poor children typically go to run-down schools with inadequate facilities where they receive inadequate schooling. They are much less likely than nonpoor children to graduate from high school or to go to college. Their lack of education in turn

restricts them and their own children to poverty, once again helping to ensure a vicious cycle of continuing poverty across generations.
- The poor are, not surprisingly, more likely to be homeless than the nonpoor but also more likely to live in dilapidated housing and unable to buy their own homes. Many poor families spend more than half their income on rent. The lack of adequate housing for the poor remains a major national problem.

Conclusion

- Inequality refers to the gap between the rich and the poor. The United States has a high degree of inequality.
- Although the official poverty line measure has been criticized for several reasons, in 2009 about 14.3% of the U.S. population, or more than 37 million people, were living in official poverty.
- About 21% of children live in official poverty; this rate is the highest in the Western world.
- Explanations of poverty focus on problems either within the poor themselves or in the society in which they live. These two types of explanations reflect the functionalist and conflict views, respectively.
- Poverty has several important and enduring consequences, including many kinds of health problems.

For Your Review

1. Do you agree with the criticism of the official measure of poverty in the United States, or do you think it is probably accurate enough because it has been used since the 1960s? Explain your answer.
2. Which explanation of poverty makes the most sense to you? Why?

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7.2.6: Global Stratification

Learning Objectives

- Describe the most important characteristics of wealthy nations, middle-income nations, and poor nations.
- Describe the arguments of modernization and dependency theories.
- List the major effects of global stratification.

If the United States is stratified by wealth, power, and prestige, so is the world. In fact, inequality around the globe is even more striking than inequality within the United States. This section examines the major dimensions of global stratification, popular explanations for its existence, and its consequences for the lives of people across the world.

Classifying Global Stratification

For the sake of clarity and simplicity, the best way to understand global stratification is to think of the world composed of three categories of nations, based on their degree of wealth or poverty, their level of industrialization and economic development, and related factors. Over the decades, scholars and international organizations such as the United Nations and World Bank have used various classification systems containing three categories.

One of the first typologies came into use after World War II and classified nations as falling into the *First World*, *Second World*, and *Third World*. The First World was generally the western, capitalist democracies of North America and Europe and certain other nations (Australia, New Zealand, Japan). The Second World was the nations belonging to the Soviet Union, while the Third World was all the remaining nations, almost all of them from Central and South America, Africa, and Asia. Although this classification was useful for several reasons, the demise of the Soviet Union by the end of 1991 caused it to fall out of favor.

A replacement typology placed nations into *developed*, *developing*, and *undeveloped* categories, respectively. Although this typology was initially popular, critics said that calling nations "developed" made them sound superior, while calling nations "undeveloped" made them sound inferior. Although this classification scheme is still used, it, too, has begun to fall out of favor.

Today a popular typology simply ranks nations into groups called *wealthy* (or *high-income*) nations, *middle-income nations*, and *poor* (or *low-income*) nations. This classification has the advantage of being based on the most important economic difference among the nations of the world: how much income and wealth they have. At the risk of being somewhat simplistic, the other important differences among the world's nations all stem from their degree of wealth or poverty. Figure $7.2.6.1$ depicts these three categories of nations (with the middle category divided into upper middle and lower middle). The world is indeed stratified to a very great degree.

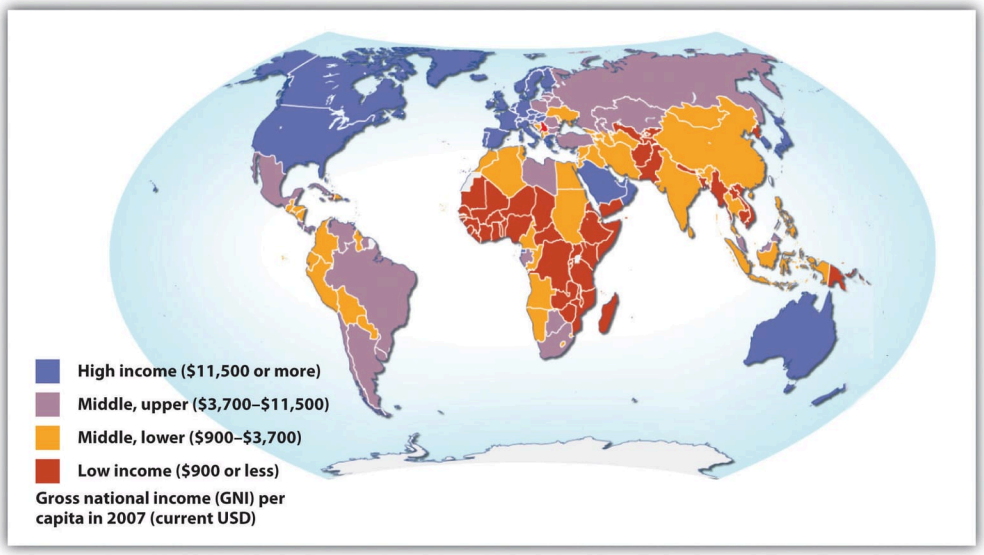


Figure 7.2.6.1: Global Stratification MapSource: Adapted from UNEP/GRID-Arendal Maps and Graphics Library. (2009). Country income groups (World Bank classification). Retrieved from maps.grida.no/go/graphic/coun...classification.

Wealthy Nations

The wealthy nations are the most industrialized nations, and they consist primarily of the nations of North America and Western Europe; Australia, Japan, and New Zealand; and certain other nations in the Middle East and Asia. Many of them were the first nations to become industrialized starting in the 19th century, when the Industrial Revolution began, and their early industrialization certainly contributed to the great wealth they enjoy today. Yet it is also true that many Western European nations were also wealthy before the Industrial Revolution, thanks in part to the fact that they had been colonial powers and acquired wealth from the resources of the lands that they colonized.

Although wealthy nations constitute only about one-fifth of the world's population, they hold about four-fifths of the world's entire wealth. They are the leading nations in industry, high finance, and information technology. Although each of the world's wealthy nations is internally stratified to a greater or lesser degree, these nations as a group live a much more comfortable existence than middle-income nations and, especially, poor nations. People in wealthy nations are more educated and healthier, and they enjoy longer lives. At the same time, wealthy nations use up more than their fair share of the world's natural resources, and their high level of industrialization causes them to pollute and otherwise contribute to climate change to a far greater degree than is true of nations in the other two categories.

Middle-Income Nations

Middle-income nations are generally less industrialized than wealthy nations but more industrialized than poor nations. They consist primarily of nations in Central and South America, Eastern Europe, and parts of Africa and Asia and constitute about one-third of the world's population.

There is much variation in income and wealth within the middle-income category, even within the same continent. In South America, for example, the gross national income per capita in Chile, adjusted to U.S. dollars, is $13,270 (2008 figures), compared to only $4,140 in Bolivia (Population Reference Bureau, 2010).Population Reference Bureau. (2010). *2010 world population data sheet*. Washington, DC: Author. Thus many international organizations and scholars find it useful to further divide middle-income nations into upper-middle-income nations and lower-middle-income nations. Not surprisingly, many more people in the latter nations live in dire economic circumstances than those in the former nations. In Bolivia, for example, 30% of the population lives on less than $2 per day, compared to only 5% in Chile.

Poor Nations

Poor nations are certainly the least industrialized and most agricultural of all the world's countries. This category consists

primarily of nations in Africa and parts of Asia and constitutes roughly half of the world's population.

By any standard, people in these nations live a desperate existence in the most miserable conditions possible. They suffer from AIDS and other deadly diseases, live on the edge of starvation, and lack indoor plumbing, electricity, and other modern conveniences that most Americans take for granted. Most of us have seen unforgettable photos or video of African children with stick-thin limbs and distended stomachs symptomatic of severe malnutrition. We revisit their plight in a later section on the consequences of global stratification.

Explaining Global Stratification

Explanations of global stratification parallel those of U.S. inequality in their focus on individual versus structural problems. One type of explanation takes an individual, blaming-the-victim approach by in effect blaming the people in the poorest nations for their own poverty, while a second explanation takes a more structural approach in blaming the situation of the poorest nations on their treatment by the richest ones. Again there is evidence to support both types of explanations, but many sociologists favor the more structural explanation.

Modernization Theory

The individual explanation is called modernization theory (Rostow, 1990).Rostow, W. W. (1990). *The stages of economic growth: A non-Communist Manifesto* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. According to this theory, rich nations became wealthy because early on they were able to develop the "correct" beliefs, values, and practices—in short, the correct culture—for trade, industrialization, and rapid economic growth to occur. These cultural traits include a willingness to work hard, to abandon tradition in favor of new ways of thinking and doing things, and to adopt a future orientation rather than one aimed toward the present.

Modernization theory has direct relevance for the experience of Western Europe. According to the theory, Western European nations began to emerge several centuries ago as economic powers because their populations adopted the kinds of values and practices just listed. According to Max Weber (1904/1958),Weber, M. (1958). *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (T. Parsons, Trans.). New York, NY: Scribner. (Original work published 1904) one of the founders of sociology, Western Europe was able to do this because the Protestant Reformation diminished the traditional distrust of the Catholic Church for material success and social and economic change. The new Protestant ethic that Western Europeans adopted stressed the importance of hard work and material success in one's lifetime, rather than the traditional emphasis on rewards in an afterlife.



Figure 7.2.6.2: According to modernization theory, poor nations are poor because their people never developed values such as an emphasis on hard work. © Thinkstock

According to modernization theory, nations in other parts of the world never became wealthy and remain poor today because they never developed the values and practices just listed. Instead, they continued to follow traditional beliefs and practices that

stymied industrial development and modernization.

As should be clear, modernization theory has much in common with the culture of poverty theory discussed earlier. It attributes the poverty of poor nations to their failure to develop the "proper" beliefs, values, and practices necessary for economic success both at the beginning of industrialization during the 19th century and in the two centuries that have since transpired. Because modernization theory implies that people in poor nations do not have the talent and ability to improve their lot, it falls into the functionalist explanation of stratification.

Dependency Theory

The structural explanation for global stratification is called dependency theory. Not surprisingly, this theory's views sharply challenge modernization theory's assumptions (Packenham, 1992).Packenham, R. A. (1992). *The dependency movement: Scholarship and politics in development studies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Whereas modernization theory attributes global stratification to the "wrong" cultural values and practices in the poorest nations, dependency theory blames global stratification on the exploitation of these nations by the rich ones. According to this view, the poor nations never got the chance to pursue economic growth because early on they were conquered and colonized by European ones. The European nations stole the poor nation's resources and either enslaved their populations or used them as cheap labor. Because dependency theory implies that poor nations remain poor because of lack of opportunity owing to exploitation by wealthy nations, it falls into the conflict perspective on stratification.

In today's world, huge multinational corporations continue to exploit the labor and resources of the poorest nations, say dependency theorists. Often these corporations work hand-in-hand with corrupt officials in the poor nations to strengthen their economic stake in the countries. An example of this dynamic occurred during the 1990s in the poor western African country of Nigeria, where the Royal Dutch/Shell oil company at the time was pumping half of that nation's oil. Activists in southern Nigeria began to claim that Shell's oil drilling was destroying their land and that Shell was paying them too little for their oil. In response to their protests, the government sent in police at Shell's request, with Shell paying some of the police costs. The police put down the activists' dissent by destroying several villages and killing 2,000 people (P. Lewis, 1996).Lewis, P. (1996, February 13). Nigeria's deadly war: Shell defends its record, *The New York Times,* p. 1.

Which makes more sense, modernization theory or dependency theory? As with many theories, both make sense to some degree, but both have their faults. Modernization theory places too much blame on poor nations for their own poverty and ignores the long history of exploitation of poor nations by rich nations and multinational corporations alike. For its part, dependency theory cannot explain why some of the poorest countries are poor even though they were never European colonies; neither can it explain why some former colonies such as Hong Kong have been able to attain enough economic growth to leave the rank of the poorest nations. Together, both theories help us understand the reasons for global stratification, but most sociologists would probably favor dependency theory because of its emphasis on structural factors in the world's historic and current economy.

Effects of Global Stratification

Global stratification greatly affects the life chances of people around the world. As noted earlier, people in the poorest nations live in some of the worst conditions possible. AIDS, malaria, starvation, and other deadly diseases are common. Many children die before reaching adolescence, and many adults die before reaching what in the richest nations would be considered their middle age. Many people in the poorest nations are illiterate, and a college education remains as foreign to them as their way of life would be to us.

One of the most important indicators of a nation's well-being is infant mortality (the number of infant deaths during the first year of life for every 1,000 births), and the global picture of infant mortality presents sad, striking evidence of the difference that a nation's poverty makes. Because of poor prenatal and postnatal nutrition, disease, and the other dire conditions facing people in the poorest nations, their rates of infant mortality are shockingly high and manifest one tragic effect of global poverty.

Later chapters further discuss the difference that global stratification makes for health and illness, infant mortality, life expectancy, and other life chances. For now, it is instructive to compare one wealthy nation, the United States, with one poor nation from Africa, Uganda, on some important socioeconomic and other indicators as presented in Table 7.2.6.1. As will be obvious, Americans and Ugandans live very different lives, notwithstanding the high degree of poverty found in the United States compared to other wealthy nations. The typical American lives a comfortable life that the typical Ugandan can only dream of, while the typical Ugandan lives a life that the typical American would find only in her or his worst nightmare.

Table 7.2.6.1: The United States and Uganda

	United States	Uganda
Gross national income per capita ($)	46,970	1,140
Population living below $2 per day (%)	—	76
Infant mortality rate (number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births)	6.6	76
Life expectancy at birth (years)	78	50
Lifetime births per woman	2.1	6.7
Underweight children, ages < 5 (%)	1	20
Motor vehicles per 1,000 population	787	6

Source: Population Reference Bureau. (2010). *2010 world population data sheet*. Washington, DC: Author.

Conclusion

- According to modernization theory, rich nations became rich because their peoples possessed certain values, beliefs, and practices conducive to the acquisition of wealth. Poor nations remained poor because their peoples did not possess these values, beliefs, and practices and never developed them.
- According to dependency theory, poor nations have remained poor because they have been exploited by rich nations.
- People in the poorest nations live in some of the worst conditions possible. Deadly diseases are common, and many children die before reaching adolescence.

For Your Review

1. Which theory makes more sense to you, modernization theory or dependency theory? Explain your answer.
2. Do you think rich nations are doing enough to help poor nations? Why or why not?

Reducing U.S. Poverty: What Sociology Suggests

It is easy to understand why the families in Wichita, Kansas, discussed in the news story that began this chapter might be poor in the middle of a deep economic recession. Yet a sociological understanding of poverty emphasizes its structural basis in bad times and good times alike. Poverty is rooted in social and economic problems of the larger society rather than in the lack of willpower, laziness, or other moral failings of poor individuals themselves. Individuals born into poverty suffer from a lack of opportunity from their first months up through adulthood, and poverty becomes a self-perpetuating, vicious cycle. To the extent a culture of poverty might exist, it is best seen as a logical and perhaps even inevitable outcome of, and adaptation to, the problem of being poor and not the primary force driving poverty itself.

This sort of understanding suggests that efforts to reduce poverty must address first and foremost the structural basis for poverty while not ignoring certain beliefs and practices of the poor that also make a difference. An extensive literature on poverty policy outlines many types of policies and strategies that follow this dual approach (Moore et al., 2009; Iceland, 2006; Lindsey, 2009; Cancian & Danziger, 2009; Turner & Rawlings, 2005).Moore, K. A., Redd, Z., Burkhauser, M., Mbawa, K., & Collins, A. (2009). *Children in poverty; trends, consequences, and policy options*. Washington, DC: Child Trends. Retrieved from www.childtrends.org/Files//Ch...ninPoverty.pdf; Iceland, J. (2006). *Poverty in America: A handbook*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Lindsey, D. (2009). *Child poverty and inequality: Securing a better future for America's children*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; Cancian, M., & Danziger, S. (2009). *Changing poverty and changing antipoverty policies*. Ann Arbor: National Poverty Center, University of Michigan; Turner, M. A., & Rawlings, L. A. (2005). *Overcoming concentrated poverty and isolation: Ten lessons for policy and practice*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. If these were fully adopted, funded, and implemented, they offer great promise for reducing poverty. As two poverty experts recently wrote, "We are optimistic that poverty can be reduced significantly in the long term if the public and policymakers can muster the political will to pursue a range of promising antipoverty policies" (Cancian & Danziger, 2009, p. 32).Cancian, M., & Danziger, S. (2009). *Changing poverty and changing antipoverty policies*. Ann Arbor: National Poverty Center, University of Michigan. Although a full discussion of these policies is beyond the scope of this chapter, the following measures are commonly cited as holding strong potential for reducing poverty:

1. Adopt a national “full employment” policy for the poor, involving federally funded job training and public works programs.
2. Increase federal aid for the working poor, including earned income credits and child care subsidies for those with children.
3. Establish well-funded early-childhood intervention programs, including home visitation by trained professionals, for poor families.
4. Improve the schools that poor children attend and the schooling they receive and expand early childhood education programs for poor children.
5. Provide better nutrition and health services for poor families with young children.
6. Strengthen efforts to reduce teenage pregnancies.

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7.2.S: Social Stratification (Summary)

Summary

1. Almost all societies are stratified according to wealth, power, prestige, and other resources the societies value. Societies are often categorized into systems of stratification according to the degrees of inequality and vertical social mobility that characterize them.
2. Systems of stratification include slave societies, caste societies, and class societies, with class societies the most open in terms of vertical social mobility. Classless societies exist in theory, according to Karl Marx and other thinkers, but have never been achieved in reality. Certain social democracies in Western Europe have succeeded in limiting their degree of inequality while preserving political freedom.
3. The two major explanations of stratification are the functionalist and conflict views. Functionalist theory says that stratification is necessary and inevitable because of the need to induce people with the needed knowledge and skills to decide to pursue the careers that are most important to society. Conflict theory says stratification exists because of discrimination against, and blocked opportunities for, the have-nots of society. A set of ideological beliefs supports the existence and perpetuation of systems of stratification and domination. In the United States, these beliefs include the ideas surrounding the American Dream ethos that even poor people can succeed by working hard and pulling themselves up by their bootstraps.
4. Social class in the United States is usually measured in terms of socioeconomic status, but some conflict theory scholars prefer measures more related to Marx's concept of the ownership of the means of production. Many typologies of the American class structure exist, but four commonly delineated classes include the upper class, middle class, working class, and lower class or the poor. Within the upper class and middle classes are subclasses distinguished by their incomes and lifestyles.
5. Many studies examine the degree of vertical social mobility in the United States. Some vertical mobility does exist, but overall it's fairly small. Your family's socioeconomic status (SES) greatly affects your own chances for success in life; people on the bottom of society usually can move up only a little bit, if at all.
6. The United States has the highest degree of economic inequality in the industrial world, and its degree of inequality has increased in the last two decades. Although our poverty rate declined in the late 1990s, it was as high as in the middle 1960s, before the war on poverty began reducing the poverty rate.
7. Poverty rates are strongly related to factors such as race and ethnicity, age, and gender. Although most poor people are white, people of color have higher poverty rates than whites. About 40% of all poor people are children under the age of 18. Single-parent households headed by women have especially high poverty rates.
8. In explaining poverty, observers attribute it either to personal deficiencies of the poor themselves or instead to structural problems in American society such as racial discrimination and rundown schools that block the ability and opportunity of the poor to improve their lot. Poverty has dire effects for the poor in many areas of life, including illness and health care, schooling, and housing.
9. The nations of the world differ dramatically in wealth and other resources, with the poorest nations in Africa and parts of Asia. Modernization theory explains global stratification in terms of deficient cultures of the poorest nations, while dependency theory explains it in terms of colonialization and exploitation by the richest nations in Western Europe and North America. The residents of the poorest nations live in miserable conditions and are at much greater risk than those of the richest nations for deadly diseases and other major problems.

Using Sociology

It is Thanksgiving dinner, and your family and other relatives are gathered around a very large table. Having taken a few sociology courses, you subscribe to the structural explanation for poverty presented in this chapter. One of your cousins asks if you have any career plans after college, and you reply that you're thinking of becoming a community activist in your home state to help the poor deal with the many problems they have. Your cousin is surprised to hear this and says that poor people are just lazy and don't like to work. A silence sets over the table, and everyone is staring at you, wondering what you will say in response to your cousin. What do you say?

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7.3: SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN THE UNITED STATES

7.3.1: Introduction

7.3.2: What Is Social Stratification?

7.3.3: Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

7.3.4: Global Stratification and Inequality

7.3.5: Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

7.3.6: Key Terms

7.3.7: Section Summary

7.3.8: Section Quiz

7.3.9: Short Answer

7.3.10: Further Research

7.3.11: References

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7.3.1: Introduction

Jarrett grew up on a farm in rural Ohio, left home to serve in the Army, and returned a few years later to take over the family farm. He moved into his family house, and eighteen months later married Eric, with whom he had maintained a long-distance relationship for several years. Eric had two children from a previous marriage. They quickly realized the income from the farm was no longer sufficient to meet their needs. Jarrett, with little experience beyond the farm, took on a job at a grocery store to supplement his income. This part-time job shifted the direction of their family's life.



Figure 9.1: This house, formerly owned by the famous television producer, Aaron Spelling, sold in 2019 for $119 million, which set the record for the highest individual home sale in California history. It is the largest private home in Los Angeles, and is considered one of the most extravagant homes in the United States. (Credit: Atwater Village Newbie/flickr)

One of the managers at the store liked Jarrett, his attitude, and his work ethic. He began to groom Jarrett for advancement at the store, and encouraged him to take a few classes at a local college. Despite knowing he'd receive financial support from the military, this was the first time Jarrett had seriously thought about college. Could he be successful, Jarrett wondered? Could he actually become the first in his family to earn a degree? Fortunately, Eric also believed in him. Jarrett kept his college enrollment a secret from his mother, his brothers, and his friends. He did not want others to know about it, in case he failed.

Jarrett was nervous on his first day of class. He was older than the other students, and he had never considered himself college material. When he earned only a C- on his first test, he thought his fears were being realized, and that it was perhaps not a fit for him. But his instructor strongly recommended that Jarrett pay a visit to the academic success center. After a few sessions, he utilized a better study schedule and got a B- on the next exam. He was successful in that class, and enrolled in two more the next semester.

Unfortunately, life took a difficult turn when Jarrett's and Eric's daughter became ill; he couldn't focus on his studies and he dropped all of his classes. With his momentum slowed, Jarrett wasn't sure he was ready to resume after his daughter recovered. His daughter, though, set him straight. One day after telling her to start her homework, she was reluctant and said, "You're not doing your homework anymore; I shouldn't have to do mine." A bit annoyed, Jarrett and Eric explained the difference between being an adult with work and family obligations and being a child in middle school. But Jarrett realized he was most upset at himself for using her illness as an excuse. He thought he wasn't living up to the example he wanted to set for her. The next day, he called his academic advisor and re-enrolled.

Just under two years later, Jarrett was walking across the stage to receive a Bachelor's degree with a special certificate for peer support. The ceremony seemed surreal to Jarrett. He'd earned medals and other recognition in the military, but he always felt those accomplishments were shared among his team. While he'd had a lot of help with college, he felt that graduating was a milestone that was more closely tied to himself.

Stories like this permeate American society and may sound familiar, yet this quest to achieve the American Dream is often hard for many Americans to achieve, even with hard work. After all, nearly one in three first-year college students is a first-generation college student and many are not as successful as Jarrett. According to the Center for Student Opportunity, a national nonprofit, 89% of first-generation students will not earn an undergraduate degree within six years of starting their studies. In fact, these students "drop out of college at four times the rate of peers whose parents have postsecondary degrees" (Center for Student Opportunity quoted in Huot 2014).

Why do students with parents who have completed college tend to graduate more often than those students whose parents do not hold degrees? That question and many others will be answered as we explore social stratification.

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7.3.2: What Is Social Stratification?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate between open and closed stratification systems
- Distinguish between caste and class systems
- Explain why meritocracy is considered an ideal system of stratification



Figure 9.2: In the upper echelons of the working world, people with the most power reach the top. These people make the decisions and earn the most money. The majority of Americans will never see the view from the top. (Credit: Alex Proimos/flickr)

Sociologists use the term social stratification to describe the system of social standing. Social stratification refers to a society's categorization of its people into rankings based on factors like wealth, income, education, family background, and power.

Geologists also use the word "stratification" to describe the distinct vertical layers found in rock. Typically, society's layers, made of people, represent the uneven distribution of society's resources. Society views the people with more resources as the top layer of the social structure of stratification. Other groups of people, with fewer and fewer resources, represent the lower layers. An individual's place within this stratification is called socioeconomic status (SES).

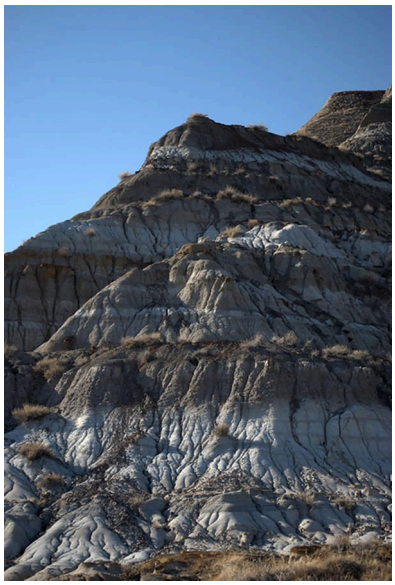


Figure 9.3: Strata in rock illustrate social stratification. People are sorted, or layered, into social categories. Many factors determine a person's social standing, such as wealth, income, education, family background, and power. (Credit: Just a Prairie Boy/flickr)

Most people and institutions in the United States indicate that they value equality, a belief that everyone has an equal chance at success. In other words, hard work and talent—not inherited wealth, prejudicial treatment, institutional racism, or societal values—determine social mobility. This emphasis on choice, motivation, and self-effort perpetuates the American belief that people control their own social standing.

However, sociologists recognize social stratification as a society-wide system that makes inequalities apparent. While inequalities exist between individuals, sociologists are interested in larger social patterns. Sociologists look to see if individuals with similar backgrounds, group memberships, identities, and location in the country share the same social stratification. No individual, rich or poor, can be blamed for social inequalities, but instead all participate in a system where some rise and others fall. Most Americans believe the rising and falling is based on individual choices. But sociologists see how the structure of society affects a person's social standing and therefore is created and supported by society.



Figure 9.4: The people who live in these houses most likely share similar levels of income and education. Neighborhoods often house people of the same social standing. Wealthy families do not typically live next door to poorer families, though this varies depending on the particular city and country. (Credit: Orin Zebest/flickr)

Factors that define stratification vary in different societies. In most societies, stratification is an economic system, based on wealth, the net value of money and assets a person has, and income, a person's wages or investment dividends. While people are

regularly categorized based on how rich or poor they are, other important factors influence social standing. For example, in some cultures, prestige is valued, and people who have them are revered more than those who don't. In some cultures, the elderly are esteemed, while in others, the elderly are disparaged or overlooked. Societies' cultural beliefs often reinforce stratification.

One key determinant of social standing is our parents. Parents tend to pass their social position on to their children. People inherit not only social standing but also the cultural norms, values, and beliefs that accompany a certain lifestyle. They share these with a network of friends and family members that provide resources and support. This is one of the reasons first-generation college students do not fare as well as other students. They lack access to the resources and support commonly provided to those whose parents have gone to college.

Other determinants are found in a society's occupational structure. Teachers, for example, often have high levels of education but receive relatively low pay. Many believe that teaching is a noble profession, so teachers should do their jobs for love of their profession and the good of their students—not for money. Yet, the same attitude is not applied to professional athletes, executives, or those working in corporate world. Cultural attitudes and beliefs like these support and perpetuate social and economic inequalities.

Systems of Stratification

Sociologists distinguish between two types of systems of stratification. Closed systems accommodate little change in social position. They do not allow people to shift levels and do not permit social relationships between levels. Closed systems include estate, slavery, and caste systems. Open systems are based on achievement and allow for movement and interaction between layers and classes. How different systems operate reflect, emphasize, and foster specific cultural values, shaping individual beliefs. In this section, we'll review class and caste stratification systems, plus discuss the ideal system of meritocracy.

The Caste System



Figure 9.5: India used to have a rigid caste system. The people in the lowest caste suffered from extreme poverty and were shunned by society. Some aspects of India's defunct caste system remain socially relevant. (Credit: Elessar/flickr)

Caste systems are closed stratification systems where people can do little or nothing to change the social standing of their birth. The caste system determines all aspects of an individual's life: occupations, marriage partners, and housing. Individual talents, interests, or potential do not provide opportunities to improve a person's social position.

In the Hindu caste tradition, people expect to work in an occupation and to enter into a marriage based on their caste. Accepting this social standing is considered a moral duty and people are socialized to accept their social standing. Cultural values reinforced the system. Caste systems promote beliefs in fate, destiny, and the will of a higher power, rather than promoting individual freedom as a value. This belief system is an ideology. Every culture has an ideology that supports its system of stratification.

The caste system in India has been officially dismantled, but is still deeply embedded in Indian society, particularly in rural

areas. In India's larger cities, people now have more opportunities to choose their own career paths and marriage partners. As a global center of employment, corporations have introduced merit-based hiring and employment to the nation shifting the cultural expectations of the caste system.

The Class System

A class system is based on both social factors and individual achievement. A class consists of a set of people who share similar status based on factors like wealth, income, education, family background, and occupation. Unlike caste systems, class systems are open. People may move to a different level (vertical movement) of education or employment status than their parents. Though family and other societal models help guide a person toward a career, personal choice and opportunity play a role.

They can also socialize with and marry members of other classes. People have the option to form an exogamous marriage, a union of spouses from different social categories. Exogamous marriages often focus on values such as love and compatibility. Though social conformities still exist that encourage people to choose partners within their own class, called an endogamous marriage, people are not as pressured to choose marriage partners based solely on their social location.

Meritocracy

Meritocracy is a hypothetical system in which social stratification is determined by personal effort and merit. The concept of meritocracy is an ideal because no society has ever existed where social standing was based entirely on merit. Rather, multiple factors influence social standing, including processes like socialization and the realities of inequality within economic systems. While a meritocracy has never existed, sociologists see aspects of meritocracies in modern societies when they study the role of academic and job performance and the systems in place for evaluating and rewarding achievement in these areas.

The differences between an open and closed system are explored further in the example below.

Status Consistency

Sociologists use the term status consistency to describe the consistency, or lack thereof, of an individual's rank across the factors that determine social stratification within a lifetime. Caste systems correlate with high status consistency, due to the inability to move out of a class, whereas the more flexible class system demonstrates lower status consistency.

To illustrate, let's consider Serena. Serena earned her high school diploma but did not go to college. Completing high school but not college is a trait more common to the lower-middle class. After high school, she began landscaping, which, as manual labor, tracks with lower-middle class or even lower class. However, over time, Serena started her own company. She hired employees. She won larger contracts. Serena became a business owner and earned more money. Those traits represent the upper-middle class. Inconsistencies between Serena's educational level, her occupation, and income show Serena's flexibility in her social status, giving her low status consistency. In a class system, hard work, new opportunities, coupled with a lower education status still allow a person movement into middle or upper class, whereas in a caste system, that would not be possible. In a class system, low status consistency correlates with having more choices and opportunities.

Social Policy and Debate: LEAVING ROYALTY BEHIND



Figure 9.6: Prince Harry and Meghan Markle with other members of the Royal family, in 2017. One year later, the couple would wed and the American-born actress and fashion-designer would immediately become Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Sussex, a position and title that bestows significant benefits of social class (Credit: Mark Jones/Wikimedia Commons)

Meghan Markle, who married a member of the British royal family, for years endured unceasing negative media attention, invasion of privacy, and racially abusive comments. She and her husband–Prince Harry, grandson to Queen Elizabeth–undertook a series of legal actions to push back against overly aggressive media outlets. But because of the continued harassment and disagreements with others in the royal family, Meghan and Harry decided to step down from their royal obligations and begin a disassociation from the British monarchy. In doing so, they gave up honorary positions, titles, and financial support. For Meghan, who had been born in the U.S. and had earned her wealth through a successful career, these changes may not be so jarring. Prince Harry, however, had been "His Royal Highness" since he was born; by nature of his ancestry he was entitled to vast sums of money, property, and cultural-political positions such as Honorary Air Commandant, Commodore-in-Chief, and President of the Queen's Commonwealth Trust. Harry would also lose the military rank he had earned through almost ten years of military service, including two combat deployments to Afghanistan. Would Megxit work for him? What gave him those honors in the first place?

Britain's monarchy arose during the Middle Ages. Its social hierarchy placed royalty at the top and commoners on the bottom. This was generally a closed system, with people born into positions of nobility. Wealth was passed from generation to generation through primogeniture, a law stating that all property would be inherited by the firstborn son. If the family had no son, the land went to the next closest male relation. Women could not inherit property, and their social standing was primarily determined through marriage.

The arrival of the Industrial Revolution changed Britain's social structure. Commoners moved to cities, got jobs, and made better livings. Gradually, people found new opportunities to increase their wealth and power. Today, the government is a constitutional monarchy with the prime minister and other ministers elected to their positions, and with the royal family's role being largely ceremonial. The long-ago differences between nobility and commoners have blurred, and the modern class system in Britain is similar to that of the United States (McKee 1996).

Today, the royal family still commands wealth, power, and a great deal of attention. When Queen Elizabeth II retires or passes away, Prince Charles will be first in line to ascend the throne. If he abdicates (chooses not to become king) or dies, the position will go to Prince William, Prince Harry's older brother.

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, meanwhile, moved to Los Angeles and signed a voiceover deal with Disney while also joining Netflix in a series production. They founded an organization focusing on non-profit activities and media ventures. Living in LA and working to some extent in entertainment, they will likely be considered a different type of royalty.

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7.3.3: Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe the U.S. class structure
- Describe several types of social mobility
- Recognize characteristics that define and identify class

How does social stratification affect your ability to move up or down the social classes? What is a standard of living? What factors matter in rising up or becoming more successful in the eyes of those around you? Does being in a social class dictate your style, behavior, or opportunities?

Social Classes in the United States



Figure 9.7: Does taste or fashion sense indicate class? Is there any way to tell if these people come from an upper-, middle-, or lower-class background? (Credit: Kelly Bailey/flickr)

For sociologists, categorizing social class is a fluid science. Sociologists generally identify three levels of class in the United States: upper, middle, and lower class. Within each class, there are many subcategories. Wealth is the most significant way of distinguishing classes, because wealth can be transferred to one's children and perpetuate the class structure. One economist, J.D. Foster, defines the 20 percent of U.S. citizens' highest earners as "upper income," and the lower 20 percent as "lower income." The remaining 60 percent of the population make up the middle class (Mason 2010). With that distinction, economists can describe the range in annual household incomes for the middle-class, but they cannot show how the range of all incomes vary and how they change over time. For this reason, the Pew Center defines classes based on the median household income. The lower class includes those whose income is two-thirds of the national median, the middle class includes those whose income falls between two-thirds and twice the median, and the upper class includes those whose income is above twice the national median (Kochhar 2015). Though median income levels vary from state to state, at the national level you would be considered in the middle-class if you earned between $48,500 to $145,500 in 2018 U.S. dollars (Bennett 2000).

One sociological perspective distinguishes the classes, in part, according to their relative power and control over their lives. Members of the upper class not only have power and control over their own lives, but their social status gives them power and control over others' lives. The middle class doesn't generally control other strata of society, but its members do exert control over their own lives. In contrast, the lower class has little control over their work or lives. Below, we will explore the major divisions of

U.S. social class and their key subcategories.

Upper Class



Figure 9.8: Members of the upper class can afford to live, work, and play in exclusive places, such as country clubs and gated communities, designed for luxury, safety, and comfort. (Credit: PrimeImageMedia.com/flickr)

The upper class is considered the top, and only the powerful elite get to see the view from there. In the United States, people with extreme wealth make up one percent of the population, and they own roughly one-third of the country's wealth (Beeghley 2008).

Money provides not just access to material goods, but also access to a lot of power. As corporate leaders, members of the upper class make decisions that affect the job status of millions of people. As media owners, they influence the collective identity of the nation. They run the major network television stations, radio broadcasts, newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, and sports franchises. As board members of the most influential colleges and universities, they influence cultural attitudes and values. As philanthropists, they establish foundations to support social causes they believe in. As campaign contributors and legislation drivers, they fund political campaigns to sway policymakers, sometimes to protect their own economic interests and at other times to support or promote a cause. (The methods, effectiveness, and impact of these political efforts are discussed in the Politics and Government chapter.)

U.S. society has historically distinguished between "old money" (inherited wealth passed from one generation to the next) and "new money" (wealth you have earned and built yourself). While both types may have equal net worth, they have traditionally held different social standings. People of old money, firmly situated in the upper class for generations, have held high prestige. Their families have socialized them to know the customs, norms, and expectations that come with wealth. Often, the very wealthy don't work for wages. Some study business or become lawyers in order to manage the family fortune. Others, such as Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian, capitalize on being a rich socialite and transform that into celebrity status, flaunting a wealthy lifestyle.

However, new-money members of the upper class are not oriented to the customs and mores of the elite. They haven't gone to the most exclusive schools. They have not established old-money social ties. People with new money might flaunt their wealth, buying sports cars and mansions, but they might still exhibit behaviors attributed to the middle and lower classes.

The Middle Class



Figure 9.9: These members of a club likely consider themselves middle class, as do many Americans. (Credit: United Way Canada-Centraide Canada/flickr)

Many people consider themselves middle class, but there are differing ideas about what that means. People with annual incomes of $150,000 call themselves middle class, as do people who annually earn $30,000. That helps explain why, in the United States, the middle class is broken into upper and lower subcategories.

Lower-middle class members tend to complete a two-year associate's degrees from community or technical colleges or a four-year bachelor's degree. Upper-middle class people tend to continue on to postgraduate degrees. They've studied subjects such as business, management, law, or medicine.

Middle-class people work hard and live fairly comfortable lives. Upper-middle-class people tend to pursue careers, own their homes, and travel on vacation. Their children receive high-quality education and healthcare (Gilbert 2010). Parents can support more specialized needs and interests of their children, such as more extensive tutoring, arts lessons, and athletic efforts, which can lead to more social mobility for the next generation. Families within the middle class may have access to some wealth, but also must work for an income to maintain this lifestyle.

In the lower middle class, people hold jobs supervised by members of the upper middle class. They fill technical, lower- level management or administrative support positions. Compared to lower-class work, lower-middle-class jobs carry more prestige and come with slightly higher paychecks. With these incomes, people can afford a decent, mainstream lifestyle, but they struggle to maintain it. They generally don't have enough income to build significant savings. In addition, their grip on class status is more precarious than those in the upper tiers of the class system. When companies need to save money, lower-middle class people are often the ones to lose their jobs.

The Lower Class



Figure 9.10: Bike messengers and bike delivery people are often considered members of the working class. They endure difficult and dangerous conditions to do their work, and they are not always well represented by government agencies and in regulations designed for safety or fairness. (Credit: edwardhblake/flickr)

The lower class is also referred to as the working class. Just like the middle and upper classes, the lower class can be divided into subsets: the working class, the working poor, and the underclass. Compared to the lower middle class, people from the lower economic class have less formal education and earn smaller incomes. They work jobs that require less training or experience than middle-class occupations and often do routine tasks under close supervision.

Working-class people, the highest subcategory of the lower class, often land steady jobs. The work is hands-on and often physically demanding, such as landscaping, cooking, cleaning, or building.

Beneath the working class is the working poor. They have unskilled, low-paying employment. However, their jobs rarely offer benefits such as healthcare or retirement planning, and their positions are often seasonal or temporary. They work as migrant farm workers, housecleaners, and day laborers. Education is limited. Some lack a high school diploma.

How can people work full-time and still be poor? Even working full-time, millions of the working poor earn incomes too meager to support a family. The government requires employers pay a minimum wage that varies from state to state, and often leave individuals and families below the poverty line. In addition to low wages, the value of the wage has not kept pace with inflation. “The real value of the federal minimum wage has dropped 17% since 2009 and 31% since 1968 (Cooper, Gould, & Zipperer, 2019). Furthermore, the living wage, the amount necessary to meet minimum standards, differs across the country because the cost of living differs. Therefore, the amount of income necessary to survive in an area such as New York City differs dramatically from small town in Oklahoma (Glasmeier, 2020).

The underclass is the United States’ lowest tier. The term itself and its classification of people have been questioned, and some prominent sociologists (including a former president of the American Sociological Association), believe its use is either overgeneralizing or incorrect (Gans 1991). But many economists, sociologists government agencies, and advocacy groups recognize the growth of the underclass. Members of the underclass live mainly in inner cities. Many are unemployed or underemployed. Those who do hold jobs typically perform menial tasks for little pay. Some of the underclass are homeless. Many rely on welfare systems to provide food, medical care, and housing assistance, which often does not cover all their basic needs. The underclass have more stress, poorer health, and suffer crises fairly regularly.

Class Traits

Does a person’s appearance indicate class? Can you tell a person’s education level based on their clothing? Do you know a person’s income by the car they drive? Class traits, also called class markers, are the typical behaviors, customs, and norms that define each class. Class traits indicate the level of exposure a person has to a wide range of cultures. Class traits also indicate the amount of resources a person has to spend on items like hobbies, vacations, and leisure activities.

People may associate the upper class with enjoyment of costly, refined, or highly cultivated tastes—expensive clothing, luxury cars, high-end fund-raisers, and frequent or expensive vacations. People may also believe that the middle and lower classes are more likely to enjoy camping, fishing, or hunting, shopping at large retailers, and participating in community activities. While these descriptions may identify class traits, they are stereotypes. Moreover, just as class distinctions have blurred in recent decades, so too have class traits. A factory worker could be a skilled French cook. A billionaire might dress in ripped jeans, and a low-income student might own designer shoes.

For famous wealthy people, making choices that do not seem to align with their economic status can often lead to public commentary. Jennifer Lopez being spotted in a dress that cost less than $30 and Zac Efron shopping at thrift stores have made the news. Others, like Halle Berry and Keanu Reeves, are known for frequent use of public transportation and relatively modest living (at least when considering to their net worth). When questioned, most point to nothing more than practicality. Lady Gaga tweeted " why do people look at me like I'm crazy when i use coupons at grocery or try bargaining at retail..." (2012). And in dense, crowded cities such as Washington, Chicago, and New York, riding the trains is often faster and easier than taking a car.

Social Mobility

People are often inspired and amazed at people's ability to overcome extremely difficult upbringings. Mariano Rivera, acknowledged to be the best relief pitcher in history, made a baseball glove out of cardboard and tape because his family could not afford a real one. Alice Coachman grew up with few resources and was denied access to training facilities because of her race; she ran barefoot and built her own high jump equipment before becoming the first Black athlete (and one of the first American track and field athletes) to win an Olympic Gold. Pelé, perhaps the most transformative figure in soccer, learned the game while using a rag-stuffed sock for a ball. These are some of the stories told in documentaries or biographies meant to inspire and share the challenges of unequal upbringings. Relative to the overall population, the number of people who rise from poverty to become very successful is small, and the number that become wealthy is even smaller. Systemic barriers like unequal education, discrimination, and lack of opportunity can slow or diminish one's ability to move up. Still, people who earn a college degree, get a job promotion, or marry someone with a good income may move up socially.

Social mobility refers to the ability of individuals to change positions within a social stratification system. When people improve or diminish their economic status in a way that affects social class, they experience social mobility. Individuals can experience upward or downward social mobility for a variety of reasons. Upward mobility refers to an increase—or upward shift—when they move from a lower to a higher socioeconomical class. In contrast, individuals experience downward mobility when they move from higher socioeconomic class to a lower one. Some people move downward because of business setbacks, unemployment, or illness. Dropping out of school, losing a job, or getting a divorce may result in a loss of income or status and, therefore, downward social mobility.

It is not uncommon for different generations of a family to belong to varying social classes. This is known as intergenerational mobility. For example, an upper-class executive may have parents who belonged to the middle class. In turn, those parents may have been raised in the lower class. Patterns of intergenerational mobility can reflect long-term societal changes.

On the other hand, intragenerational mobility refers to changes in a person's social mobility over the course of their lifetime. For example, the wealth and prestige experienced by one person may be quite different from that of their siblings.

Structural mobility happens when societal changes enable a whole group of people to move up or down the social class ladder. Structural mobility is attributable to changes in society as a whole. In the first half of the twentieth century, industrialization expanded the U.S. economy, raising the standard of living and leading to upward structural mobility for almost everyone. In the decade and a half of the twenty-first century, recessions and the outsourcing of jobs overseas have contributed to the withdrawal of Americans from the workforce (BLS 2021). Many people experienced economic setbacks, creating a wave of downward structural mobility.

When analyzing the trends and movements in social mobility, sociologists consider all modes of mobility. Scholars recognize that mobility is not as common or easy to achieve as many people think.

Stratification of Socioeconomic Classes

In the last century, the United States has seen a steady rise in its standard of living, the level of wealth available to acquire the material necessities and comforts to maintain a specific lifestyle. The country's standard of living is based on factors such as income, employment, class, literacy rates, mortality rates, poverty rates, and housing affordability. A country with a high standard

of living will often reflect a high quality of life, which in the United States means residents can afford a home, own a car, and take vacations. Ultimately, standard of living is shaped by the wealth and distribution of wealth in a country and the expectations its citizens have for their lifestyle.

Wealth is not evenly distributed in most countries. In the United States, a small portion of the population has the means to the highest standard of living. The wealthiest one percent of the population holds one-third of our nation's wealth while the bottom 50 percent of Americans hold only 2 percent. Those in-between, the top 50 to 90 percent hold almost two-thirds of the nation's wealth (The Federal Reserve, 2021).

Many people think of the United States as a "middle-class society." They think a few people are rich, a few are poor, and most are fairly well off, existing in the middle of the social strata. Rising from lower classes into the middle-class is to achieve the American Dream. For this reason, scholars are particularly worried by the shrinking of the middle class. Although the middle class is still significantly larger than the lower and upper classes, it shrank from 69 percent in 1971 to 51 percent in 2020. Arguably the most significant threat to the U.S.'s relatively high standard of living is the decline of the middle class. The wealth of the middle class has also been declining in recent decades. Its share of the wealth fell from 32 percent in 1983 to 16 percent in 2016 (Horowitz, Igielnik, & Kochhar 2020).

People with wealth often receive the most and best schooling, access better health care, and consume the most goods and services. In addition, wealthy people also wield decision-making power over their daily life because money gives them access to better resources. By contrasts, many lower-income individuals receive less education and inadequate health care and have less influence over the circumstances of their everyday lives.

Additionally, tens of millions of women and men struggle to pay rent, buy food, find work, and afford basic medical care. Women who are single heads of household tend to have a lower income and lower standard of living than their married or single male counterparts. This is a worldwide phenomenon known as the "feminization of poverty"—which acknowledges that women disproportionately make up the majority of individuals in poverty across the globe and have a lower standard of living. In the United States, women make up approximately 56 percent of Americans living in poverty. One reason for this difference is the struggle of single mothers to provide for their children. One in four unmarried mothers lives in poverty (Bleiweis, 2020). The wage gap, discussed extensively in the Work and the Economy chapter, also contributes to the gender-disparity in poverty.

In the United States, poverty is most often referred to as a relative rather than absolute measurement. Absolute poverty is an economic condition in which a family or individual cannot afford basic necessities, such as food and shelter, so that day-to-day survival is in jeopardy. Relative poverty is an economic condition in which a family or individuals have 50% income less than the average median income. This income is sometimes called the poverty level or the poverty line. In 2021, for example, the poverty for a single individual was set at $12,880 for one individual, $17,420 for a couple, and $26,500 for a family of four (ASPE 2021).

As a wealthy developed country, the United States invests in resources to provide the basic necessities to those in need through a series of federal and state social welfare programs. These programs provide food, medical, and cash assistance. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provides cash assistance. The goal of TANF is to help families with children achieve economic self-sufficiency. Adults who receive assistance must fall under a specific income level, usually half the poverty level, set by the state. TANF funding goes to childcare, support for parents who are working or training a required number of hours a week, and other services. TANF is time-limited. Most states only provide assistance for a maximum of 5 years (CBPP).

One of the best-known programs is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), administered by the United States Department of Agriculture and formerly known as the Food Stamp Program. This program began in the Great Depression, when unmarketable or surplus food was distributed to the hungry. It was not formalized until 1961, when President John F. Kennedy initiated a food stamp pilot program. His successor Lyndon B. Johnson was instrumental in the passage of the Food Stamp Act in 1964. In 1965, more than 500,000 individuals received food assistance. During the height of the pandemic in 2020, participation reached 43 million people.

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7.3.4: Global Stratification and Inequality

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Define global stratification
- Describe different sociological models for understanding global stratification
- Explain the ways that studies of global stratification enable social scientists to identify worldwide inequalities



Figure 9.11: A family lives in this grass hut in Ethiopia. Another family lives in a single-wide trailer in the United States. Both families are considered poor, or lower class. With such differences in global stratification, what constitutes poverty? (Credit: (a) Canned Muffins/flickr; Photo (b) Herb Neufeld/flickr)

Global stratification compares the wealth, status, power, and economic stability of countries across the world. Global stratification highlights worldwide patterns of social inequality.

In the early years of civilization, hunter-gatherer and agrarian societies lived off the earth and rarely interacted with other societies. When explorers began traveling, societies began trading goods, as well as ideas and customs.

In the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution created unprecedented wealth in Western Europe and North America. Due to mechanical inventions and new means of production, people began working in factories—not only men, but women and children as well. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, industrial technology had gradually raised the standard of living for many people in the United States and Europe.

The Industrial Revolution also saw the rise of vast inequalities between countries that were industrialized and those that were not. As some nations embraced technology and saw increased wealth and goods, the non-industrialized nations fell behind economically, and the gap widened.

Sociologists studying global stratification analyze economic comparisons between nations. Income, purchasing power, and wealth are used to calculate global stratification. Global stratification also compares the quality of life that a country's population can have. Poverty levels have been shown to vary greatly across countries. Yet all countries struggle to support the lower classes.

Models of Global Stratification



Figure 9.12: Luxury vacation resorts can contribute to a poorer country's economy. This one, in Jamaica, attracts middle and upper-middle class people from wealthier nations. The resort is a source of income and provides jobs for local people. Just outside its borders, however, are poverty-stricken neighborhoods. (Credit, both photos: Gail Frederick/flickr)

In order to determine the stratification or ranking of a country, economists created various models of global stratification. All of these models have one thing in common: they rank countries according to their economic status, often ranked by gross national product (GNP). The GNP is the value of goods and services produced by a nation's citizens both within its boarders and abroad.

Another system of global classification defines countries based on the gross domestic product (GDP), a country's national wealth. The GDP calculated annually either totals the income of all people living within its borders or the value of all goods and services produced in the country during the year. It also includes government spending. Because the GDP indicates a country's productivity and performance, comparing GDP rates helps establish a country's economic health in relation to other countries, with some countries rising to the top and others falling to the bottom. The chapter on Work and the Economy (specifically the section on Globalization and the Economy) shows the differences in GDP among various countries.

Traditional models, now considered outdated, used labels, such as "first world", "second world," and "third world" to describe the stratification of the different areas of the world. First and second world described industrialized nations, while third world referred to "undeveloped" countries (Henslin 2004). When researching existing historical sources, you may still encounter these terms, and even today people still refer to some nations as the "third world." This model, however, is outdated because it lumps countries together that are quite different in terms of wealth, power, prestige, and economic stability.

Another model separates countries into two groups: more developed and less developed. More-developed nations have higher wealth, such as Canada, Japan, and Australia. Less-developed nations have less wealth to distribute among populations, including many countries in central Africa, South America, and some island nations.

GNP and GDP are used to gain insight into global stratification based on a country's standard of living. According to this analysis, a GDP standard of a middle-income nation represents a global average. In low-income countries, most people are poor relative to people in other countries. Citizens have little access to amenities such as electricity, plumbing, and clean water. People in low-income countries are not guaranteed education, and many are illiterate. The life expectancy of citizens is lower than in high-income countries. Therefore, the different expectations in lifestyle and access to resources varies.

Big Picture: The Big Picture: Calculating Global Stratification

A few organizations take on the job of comparing the wealth of nations. The Population Reference Bureau (PRB) is one of them. Besides a focus on population data, the PRB publishes an annual report that measures the relative economic well-being of all the world's countries using the Gross National Income (GNI) and Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).

The GNI measures the current value of goods and services produced by a country. The PPP measures the relative power a country has to purchase those same goods and services. So, GNI refers to productive output and PPP refers to buying power.

Because costs of goods and services vary from one country to the next, the PPP is used to convert the GNI into a relative international unit. This value is then divided by the number of residents living in a country to establish the average relative income of a resident of that country. This measure is called the GNI PPI. Calculating GNI PPP figures helps researchers accurately compare countries' standard of living. They allow the United Nations and Population Reference Bureau to compare and rank the wealth of all countries and consider international stratification issues (nationsonline.org).

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7.3.5: Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Apply functionalist, conflict theory, and interactionist perspectives on social stratification

Basketball is one of the highest-paying professional sports and stratification exists even among teams in the NBA. For example, the Toronto Raptors hands out the lowest annual payroll, while the New York Knicks reportedly pays the highest. Stephen Curry, a Golden State Warriors guard, is one of the highest paid athletes in the NBA, earning around $43 million a year (Sports Illustrated 2020), whereas the lowest paid player earns just over $200,000 (ESPN 2021). Even within specific fields, layers are stratified, members are ranked, and inequality exists.

In sociology, even an issue such as NBA salaries can be seen from various points of view. Functionalists will examine the purpose of such high salaries, conflict theorists will study the exorbitant salaries as an unfair distribution of money, and symbolic interactionists will describe how players display that wealth. Social stratification takes on new meanings when it is examined from different sociological perspectives—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Functionalism

In sociology, the functionalist perspective examines how society's parts operate. According to functionalism, different aspects of society exist because they serve a vital purpose. What is the function of social stratification?

In 1945, sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore published the Davis-Moore thesis, which argued that the greater the functional importance of a social role, the greater must be the reward. The theory posits that social stratification represents the inherently unequal value of different work. Certain tasks in society are more valuable than others (for example, doctors or lawyers). Qualified people who fill those positions are rewarded more than others.

According to Davis and Moore, a firefighter's job is more important than, for instance, a grocery store cashier's job. The cashier position does not require similar skill and training level as firefighting. Without the incentive of higher pay, better benefits, and increased respect, why would someone be willing to rush into burning buildings? If pay levels were the same, the firefighter might as well work as a grocery store cashier and avoid the risk of firefighting. Davis and Moore believed that rewarding more important work with higher levels of income, prestige, and power encourages people to work harder and longer.

Davis and Moore stated that, in most cases, the degree of skill required for a job determines that job's importance. They noted that the more skill required for a job, the fewer qualified people there would be to do that job. Certain jobs, such as cleaning hallways or answering phones, do not require much skill. Therefore, most people would be qualified for these positions. Other work, like designing a highway system or delivering a baby, requires immense skill limiting the number of people qualified to take on this type of work.

Many scholars have criticized the Davis-Moore thesis. In 1953, Melvin Tumin argued that it does not explain inequalities in the education system or inequalities due to race or gender. Tumin believed social stratification prevented qualified people from attempting to fill roles (Tumin 1953).

Conflict Theory



Figure 9.13: These people are protesting a decision made by Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee, to lay off custodians and outsource the jobs to a private firm to avoid paying employee benefits. Private job agencies often pay lower hourly wages. Is the decision fair? (Credit: Brian Stansberry/Wikimedia Commons)

Conflict theorists are deeply critical of social stratification, asserting that it benefits only some people, not all of society. For instance, to a conflict theorist, it seems wrong that a basketball player is paid millions for an annual contract while a public school teacher may earn $35,000 a year. Stratification, conflict theorists believe, perpetuates inequality. Conflict theorists try to bring awareness to inequalities, such as how a rich society can have so many poor members.

Many conflict theorists draw on the work of Karl Marx. During the nineteenth-century era of industrialization, Marx believed social stratification resulted from people's relationship to production. People were divided into two main groups: they either owned factories or worked in them. In Marx's time, bourgeois capitalists owned high-producing businesses, factories, and land, as they still do today. Proletariats were the workers who performed the manual labor to produce goods. Upper-class capitalists raked in profits and got rich, while working-class proletariats earned skimpy wages and struggled to survive. With such opposing interests, the two groups were divided by differences of wealth and power. Marx believed workers experience deep alienation, isolation and misery resulting from powerless status levels (Marx 1848). Marx argued that proletariats were oppressed by the bourgeoisie.

Today, while working conditions have improved, conflict theorists believe that the strained working relationship between employers and employees still exists. Capitalists own the means of production, and a system is in place to make business owners rich and keep workers poor. According to conflict theorists, the resulting stratification creates class conflict.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism uses everyday interactions of individuals to explain society as a whole. Symbolic interactionism examines stratification from a micro-level perspective. This analysis strives to explain how people's social standing affects their everyday interactions.

In most communities, people interact primarily with others who share the same social standing. It is precisely because of social stratification that people tend to live, work, and associate with others like themselves, people who share their same income level, educational background, class traits and even tastes in food, music, and clothing. The built-in system of social stratification groups people together. This is one of the reasons why it was rare for a royal prince like England's Prince William to marry a commoner.

Symbolic interactionists also note that people's appearance reflects their perceived social standing. As discussed above, class traits seen through housing, clothing, and transportation indicate social status, as do hairstyles, taste in accessories, and personal style. Symbolic interactionists also analyze how individuals think of themselves or others interpretation of themselves based on these class traits.



Figure 9.14: (a) A group of construction workers on the job site, and (b) businesspeople in a meeting. What categories of stratification do these construction workers share? How do construction workers differ from executives or custodians? Who is more skilled? Who has greater prestige in society? (Credit: (a) Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) Chun Kit/flickr)

To symbolically communicate social standing, people often engage in conspicuous consumption, which is the purchase and use of certain products to make a social statement about status. Carrying pricey but eco-friendly water bottles could indicate a person's social standing, or what they would like others to believe their social standing is. Some people buy expensive trendy sneakers even though they will never wear them to jog or play sports. A $17,000 car provides transportation as easily as a $100,000 vehicle, but the luxury car makes a social statement that the less expensive car can't live up to. All these symbols of stratification are worthy of examination by an interactionist.

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7.3.6: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
absolute poverty	deprivation so severe that it puts day-to-day survival in jeopardy.				
caste system	a system in which people are born into a social standing that they will retain their entire lives				
class	a group who shares a common social status based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation				
class system	social standing based on social factors and individual accomplishments				
class traits	the typical behaviors, customs, and norms that define each class (also called class markers)				
closed system	a system of stratification that accommodates little change in social position.				
conspicuous consumption	the act of buying and using products to make a statement about one's social standing				
Davis-Moore thesis	a thesis that argues some social stratification is a social necessity and is functional				
downward mobility	a lowering of one's social class				
endogamous marriages	unions of people within the same social category				
exogamous unions	unions of spouses from different social categories				
global stratification	a comparison of the wealth, status, power, and economic stability of countries as a whole				
ideology	the cultural belief system that justifies a society's system of stratification				
income	the money a person earns from work or investments				
intergenerational mobility	a difference in social class between different generations of a family				
intragenerational mobility	changes in a person's social mobility over the course of their lifetime.				
meritocracy	an ideal system in which personal effort—or merit—determines social standing				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
open system	a system of stratification, based on achievement, that allows some movement and interaction between layers and classes.				
primogeniture	a law stating that all property passes to the firstborn son				
relative poverty	is not having the means to live the lifestyle of the average person in your country				
social mobility	the ability to change positions within a social stratification system				
social stratification	a socioeconomic system that divides society's members into categories ranking from high to low, based on things like wealth, power, and prestige. Also called inequality.				
socioeconomic status (SES)	an individual's level of wealth, power, and prestige				
standard of living	the level of wealth available to acquire material goods and comforts to maintain a particular socioeconomic lifestyle				
status consistency	the consistency, or lack thereof, of an individual's rank across social categories like wealth, power, and prestige				
structural mobility	a societal change that enables a whole group of people to move up or down the class ladder				
upward mobility	an increase—or upward shift—in social class				
wealth	the value of money and assets a person has from, for example, inheritance or salary.				

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7.3.7: Section Summary

9.1 What Is Social Stratification?

Stratification systems, where people are ranked based on their wealth, power, and status within society, are either closed, meaning they allow little change in social position, or open, meaning they allow movement and interaction between the layers. A caste system is one in which social standing is based on ascribed status or birth. Class systems are open, with achievement playing a role in social position. People fall into classes based on factors like wealth, income, education, and occupation. A meritocracy is an ideal system of social stratification that confers standing based on solely on personal worth, rewarding effort. A pure meritocracy has never existed. Stratification is reinforced and shaped by cultural beliefs and values, called an ideology.

9.2 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

The United States has a high standard of living, where individuals expect to own property and have the ability to travel. Even so, the United States struggles with economic inequality, with a small number of citizens with a large amount of wealth and a larger number of people falling into relative poverty. There are three main classes in the United States: upper, middle, and lower class. Social mobility describes a shift from one social class to another. Class traits, also called class markers, are the typical behaviors, customs, and norms that define each class, but have become less definitive in assigning class to a specific individual.

9.3 Global Stratification and Inequality

Global stratification compares the wealth, status, power, and economic stability, of countries and ranks the countries. By comparing income and productivity between nations, researchers can better identify global financial and econommic leaders as well as inequalities within and among nations.

9.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

Social stratification can be examined from different sociological perspectives—functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. The functionalist perspective states that systems exist in society for good reasons, such as incentives and rewards for those who demonstrate high skill and complete a high-level of education or training. Conflict theorists observe that stratification promotes inequality, such as different opportunities and success of rich business owners and their lower paid workers. Symbolic interactionists examine stratification from a micro-level perspective. They observe how social standing affects people's everyday interactions and how the concept of "social class" is constructed and maintained through everyday interactions.

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7.3.8: Section Quiz

9.1 What Is Social Stratification?

1.

What factor makes caste systems closed?

a. They are run by secretive governments.
b. People cannot change their social standing.
c. Most have been outlawed.
d. They exist only in rural areas.

2.

Which of these systems allows for the most social mobility?

a. Caste
b. Monarchy
c. Meritocracy
d. Class

3.

Which person best illustrates opportunities for upward social mobility in the United States?

a. First-shift factory worker
b. First-generation college student
c. Firstborn son who inherits the family business
d. First-time interviewee who is hired for a job

4.

Which statement illustrates low status consistency?

a. A suburban family lives in a modest ranch home and enjoys a nice vacation each summer.
b. A single mother receives food stamps and struggles to find adequate employment.
c. A college dropout launches an online company that earns millions in its first year.
d. A celebrity actor owns homes in three countries.

5.

Based on meritocracy, a physician's assistant would:

a. receive the same pay as all the other physician's assistants
b. be considered a member of the upper class
c. most likely marry a professional at the same level
d. earn a pay raise for doing excellent work

9.2 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

6.

In the United States, most people define themselves as:

a. middle class
b. upper class

c. lower class
d. no specific class

7.

The behaviors, customs, and norms associated with a class are known as:

a. class traits
b. power
c. prestige
d. underclass

8.

Which of the following scenarios is an example of intragenerational mobility?

a. A janitor belongs to the same social class as his grandmother did.
b. An executive belongs to a different class than her parents.
c. An editor shares the same social class as his cousin.
d. A lawyer belongs to a different class than her sister.

9.

Occupational prestige means that jobs are:

a. all equal in status
b. not equally valued
c. assigned to a person for life
d. not part of a person's self-identity

9.3 Global Stratification and Inequality

10.

How do traditional models of global stratification breakdown different categories of countries?

a. They analyze the degree of industrialization.
b. They evaluate cultural norms and social goals.
c. They measure social mobility between classes.
d. They use measures to assess the economic power each nation.

11.

Which event created a significant divide between Western Europe/America and the rest of the world?

a. The Industrial Revolution
b. The American Revolution
c. The Reformation
d. World War I

12.

The GNI PPP figure represents:

a. a country's total accumulated wealth
b. annual government spending
c. the average annual income of a country's citizens
d. a country's debt

9.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

13.

The basic premise of the Davis-Moore thesis is that the unequal distribution of rewards in social stratification:

a. is an outdated mode of societal organization
b. is an artificial reflection of society
c. serves a purpose in society
d. cannot be justified

14.

Unlike Davis and Moore, Melvin Tumin believed that, because of social stratification, some qualified people were _____ higher-level job positions.

a. denied the opportunity to obtain
b. encouraged to train for
c. often fired from
d. forced into

15.

Which statement represents stratification from the perspective of symbolic interactionism?

a. Men often earn more than women, even working the same job.
b. After work, Pat, a janitor, feels more comfortable eating in a truck stop than a French restaurant.
c. Doctors earn more money because their job is more highly valued.
d. Teachers continue to struggle to keep benefits such as health insurance.

16.

When Karl Marx said workers experience alienation, he meant that workers:

a. must labor alone, without companionship
b. do not feel connected to their work or to one another
c. move from one geographical location to another
d. have to put forth self-effort to get ahead

17.

Conflict theorists view capitalists as those who:

a. are ambitious
b. fund social services
c. spend money wisely
d. get rich while workers stay poor

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7.3.9: Short Answer

9.1 What Is Social Stratification?

1.

Track the social stratification of your family tree. Did the social standing of your parents differ from the social standing of your grandparents and great-grandparents? Are there any exogamous marriages in your history? Does your family exhibit status consistencies or inconsistencies?

2.

Review the concept of stratification. Does your family have wealth? What is the overall family income? What kind of employment do your caregivers/parents/guardians have? Where would you guess you fall within the social classes (low, middle, or high)?

3.

Where did your family grow up? What is their understanding of the American Dream and how you can achieve it? Does your family share the same understanding of stratification?

9.2 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

4.

Which social class do you and your family belong to? Are you in a different or same social class than your grandparents and great-grandparents? Why are you in the class you are? What changed? What stayed the same? Marriages? Acquisition of property? Education? Career changes? Reflect on your family's journey within the classes.

5.

What class traits define your peer group? For example, what speech patterns or clothing trends do you and your friends share? What cultural elements, such as taste in music or hobbies, define your peer group? How do you see this set of class traits as different from other classes either above or below yours?

6.

Write a list of ten to twenty class traits that describe the environment of your upbringing. Which of these seem like true class traits, and which seem like stereotypes? What items might fall into both categories? How do you imagine a sociologist might address the conflation of class traits and stereotypes?

9.3 Global Stratification and Inequality

7.

7. What does it mean for a country to be seen as "underdeveloped"? What about "developed"? How does this shape our perception of the citizens within those countries?

8.

Why is it important to understand and be aware of global stratification? Make a list of specific issues that are related to global stratification. For inspiration, turn on a news channel or read the newspaper. Next, choose a topic from your list, and look at it more closely. Who is affected by this issue? How is the issue specifically related to global stratification?

9.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Social Stratification

9.

Analyze the Davis-Moore thesis. Do you agree with Davis and Moore? Does social stratification have an important function in society? What examples can you think of that support the thesis? What examples can you think of that refute the thesis?

10.

Consider social stratification from the symbolic interactionist perspective. How does social stratification influence the daily interactions of individuals? How do systems of class, based on factors such as prestige, power, income, and wealth, influence your own daily routines, as well as your beliefs and attitudes? Illustrate your ideas with specific examples and anecdotes from your own life and the lives of people in your community.

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7.3.10: Further Research

9.1 What Is Social Stratification?

The New Press provides an interactive helpful in exploring social stratification. Within the relatively straightforward graphic activity, you can select two demographic categories and illustrate the quantity those populations by income level.

9.2 Social Stratification and Mobility in the United States

The Pew Research Center Created an income calculator to determine people's socioeconomic classification according to state and income.

9.3 Global Stratification and Inequality

Our World in Data's Global Economic Inequality page a wide range of data sources, narratives, and charts. While the sources should be verified before citing them in papers, the presentation offers a multifaceted picture of global inequality : .

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7.4: GLOBAL INEQUALITY

While you read this chapter, think about the global system that allows U.S. companies to outsource their manufacturing to peripheral nations, where many women and children work in conditions that some characterize as slave labor. Do people in the United States have a responsibility to foreign workers? Should U.S. corporations be held accountable for what happens to garment factory workers who make their clothing? What can you do as a consumer to help such workers?

7.4.1: Introduction

7.4.2: Global Stratification and Classification

7.4.3: Global Wealth and Poverty

7.4.4: Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

7.4.5: Key Terms

7.4.6: Section Summary

7.4.7: Section Quiz

7.4.8: Short Answer

7.4.9: Further Research

7.4.10: References

Thumbnail : A young boy sits over an open sewer in the Kibera slum, Nairobi (CC BY 2.0; Trocaire).

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7.4.1: Introduction



Figure 10.1: Contemporary economic development often follows a similar pattern around the world, best described as a growing gap between the haves and have-nots. (Credit: Alicia Nijdam/Wikimedia Commons)

Chapter Outline

10.1 Global Stratification and Classification
10.2 Global Wealth and Poverty
10.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

The April 24, 2013 collapse of the Rana Plaza in Dhaka, Bangladesh that killed over 1,100 people, was the deadliest garment factory accident in history, and it was preventable (International Labour Organization, Department of Communication 2014).

In addition to garment factories employing about 5,000 people, the building contained a bank, apartments, childcare facilities, and a variety of shops. Many of these closed the day before the collapse when cracks were discovered in the building walls. When some of the garment workers refused to enter the building, they were threatened with the loss of a month's pay. Most were young women, aged twenty or younger. They typically worked over thirteen hours a day, with two days off each month. For this work, they took home between twelve and twenty-two cents an hour, or $10.56 to $12.48 a week. Without that pay, most would have been unable to feed their children. In contrast, the U.S. federal minimum wage is $7.25 an hour, and workers receive wages at time-and-a-half rates for work in excess of forty hours a week.

32 percent of the clothing made in the collapsed Rana Plaza building was intended for U.S., Canadian, and European stores. Walmart jeans were made on the fifth floor. Clothing for The Children's Place was produced in the building, as well. Afterward, Walmart and The Children's Place pledged $1 million and $450,000 (respectively) to the Rana Plaza Trust Fund, but fifteen other companies with clothing made in the building chose not to (Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights 2014).

While you read this chapter, think about the global system that allows U.S. companies to outsource their manufacturing to peripheral nations, where many women and children work in conditions that some characterize as slave labor. Do people in the United States have a responsibility to foreign workers? Should U.S. corporations be held accountable for what happens to garment factory workers who make their clothing? What can you do as a consumer to help such workers?

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7.4.2: Global Stratification and Classification

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe global stratification
- Differentiate the development history of various classification systems
- Use terminology from Wallerstein's world systems approach
- Explain the World Bank's classification of economies

Just as the United States' wealth is increasingly concentrated among its richest citizens, global inequality concentrates resources within certain nations and among certain people.

Measuring the financial resource of the world's richest people is generally easier than measuring the resources of people living in poverty (Matthews 2019), but researchers and advocates have created some tools to evaluate and understand economic conditions and outcomes.

One straightforward method is to compare the ratio of income of the richest 10 percent to the income of the poorest 10 percent. (The same method is sometime used with the richest 20 percent and the poorest 20 percent.) This method does not always provide a full picture of income inequality (it literally leaves out the middle), but it can certain provide insight.

The Human Development Index expresses the capabilities of people's potential achievement. The index is calculated using data regarding people's lifespan, education, and income. By using both financial and non-financial factors, it paints a deeper picture of the lives and issues in a region. For example, a nation with high income but low education will still have difficulty in overall opportunity. This approach was developed by Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq, who produced the first annual Human Development report, which captures and illustrates development issues and changes each year.

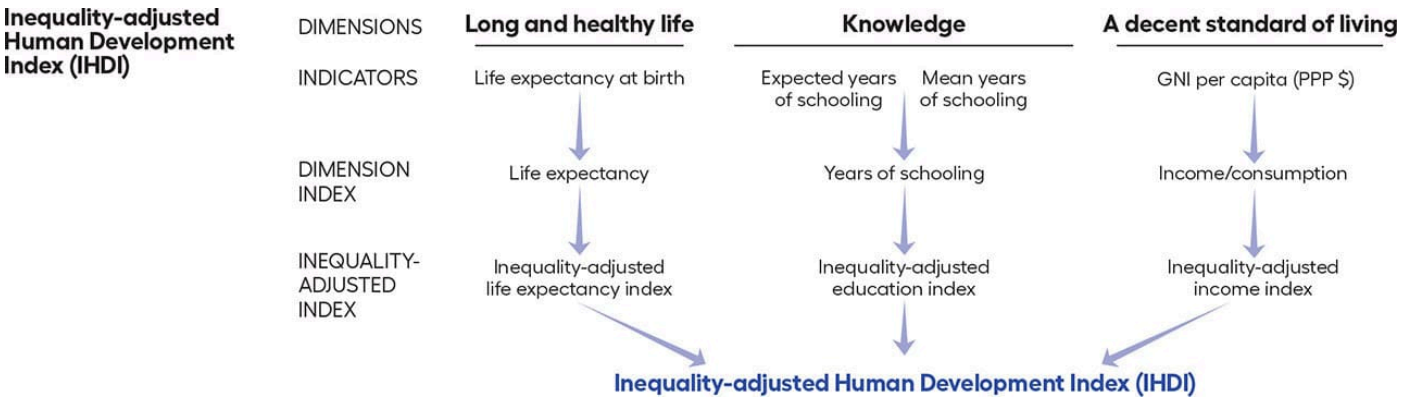


Figure 10.2: The Human Development Index and its derivative, and extensions like the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), were developed to center people—not just finances—as the core determinants of a nation's or region's discussions about economic opportunities, support, and policies. The index considers three main dimension (categories)—which are health, knowledge, and standard of living (income)—to calculate an individual value for each dimension, which is then averaged to produce the final value. (Under decent standard of living, GNI stands for gross national income, and PPP stands for purchasing power parity, both of which are key indicators of income and relative wealth.) (Credit: United Nations Development Programme)

Another measure of inequality is Gini Coefficient, named after the Italian sociologist and statistician Corrado Gini. (Be sure not to confuse this with GNI, which is the gross national income.) It is is calculated using a number of financial indicators, and is expressed as either a decimal or a percentage. A country in which every resident has the same income would have a Gini coefficient of 0 (or 0 percent). A country in which one resident earned all the income, while everyone else earned nothing, would have an income Gini coefficient of 1 (or 100 percent). Thus, the higher the number (the closer to that one person having all the income or wealth), the more inequality there is.

Other gauges are a bit more direct: To indicate the level of poverty within a nation or region, researchers calculate the percentage

of the population living beneath various poverty thresholds. A common measure is to consider the percentage of a nation's population living on less than $1.90 per day, which is commonly known as the International Poverty Line. (Note that United States dollars are often used as a global standard in these types of measurement.) The table in the next sub-section uses this method.

These are just a few of the ways that sociologists, economists, governments, and others try to understand levels of income inequality and poverty. Changes in these indicators would alert policymakers that something is affecting the population. No changes might tell people that, for example, a new financial assistance program for the poor is not working.

With these analytical elements in mind, let's consider how the three major sociological perspectives might contribute to our understanding of global inequality.

The functionalist perspective is a macroanalytical view that focuses on the way that all aspects of society are integral to the continued health and viability of the whole. A functionalist might focus on why we have global inequality and what social purposes it serves. This view might assert, for example, that we have global inequality because some nations are better than others at adapting to new technologies and profiting from a globalized economy, and that when core nation companies locate in peripheral nations, they expand the local economy and benefit the workers.

Conflict theory focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality. A conflict theorist would likely address the systematic inequality created when core nations exploit the resources of peripheral nations. For example, how many U.S. companies take advantage of overseas workers who lack the constitutional protection and guaranteed minimum wages that exist in the United States? Doing so allows them to maximize profits, but at what cost?

The symbolic interaction perspective studies the day-to-day impact of global inequality, the meanings individuals attach to global stratification, and the subjective nature of poverty. Someone applying this view to global inequality would probably focus on understanding the difference between what someone living in a core nation defines as poverty (relative poverty, defined as being unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in your country) and what someone living in a peripheral nation defines as poverty (extreme poverty, defined as being barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities, such as food).

Global Stratification

While stratification in the United States refers to the unequal distribution of resources among individuals, global stratification refers to this unequal distribution among nations. There are two dimensions to this stratification: gaps between nations and gaps within nations. When it comes to global inequality, both economic inequality and social inequality may concentrate the burden of poverty among certain segments of the earth's population (Myrdal 1970).

As mentioned earlier, one way to evaluate stratification is to consider how many people are living in poverty, and particularly extreme poverty, which is often defined as needing to survive on less than $1.90 per day. Fortunately, until the COVID-19 pandemic impacted economies in 2020, the extreme poverty rate had been on a 20-year decline. In 2015, 10.1 percent of the world's population was living in extreme poverty; in 2017, that number had dropped an entire percentage point to 9.2 percent. While a positive, that 9.2 percent is equivalent to 689 million people living on less than $1.90 a day. The same year, 24.1 percent of the world lived on less than $3.20 per day and 43.6 percent on less than $5.50 per day in 2017 (World Bank 2020). The table below makes the differences in poverty very clear.

Table 10.1: The differences among countries is clear when considering their extreme poverty rates. For the most part, the selected countries show disparities even within countries from the same regions. All data is from 2018. (World Bank 2020)

Country	Percentage of people living on less than $1.90	Percentage of people living on less than $3.90	Percentage of people living on less than $5.50
Colombia	4.1	10.9	27.8
Costa Rica	1.4	3.6	10.9
Georgia	4.5	15.7	42.9
Kyrgyzstan	0.9	15.5	61.3
Sierra Leone	40.1	74.4	92.1

Country	Percentage of people living on less than $1.90	Percentage of people living on less than $3.90	Percentage of people living on less than $5.50
Angola	51.8	73.2	89.3
Lithuania	0.7	1.0	3.8
Ukraine	0.0	0.4	4.0
Vietnam	1.9	7.0	23.6
Indonesia	3.6	9.6	53.2

Most of us are accustomed to thinking of global stratification as economic inequality. For example, we can compare the United States' average worker's wage to America's average wage. Social inequality, however, is just as harmful as economic discrepancies. Prejudice and discrimination—whether against a certain race, ethnicity, religion, or the like—can create and aggravate conditions of economic equality, both within and between nations. Think about the inequity that existed for decades within the nation of South Africa. Apartheid, one of the most extreme cases of institutionalized and legal racism, created a social inequality that earned it the world's condemnation.

Gender inequity is another global concern. Consider the controversy surrounding female genital mutilation. Nations that practice this female circumcision procedure defend it as a longstanding cultural tradition in certain tribes and argue that the West shouldn't interfere. Western nations, however, decry the practice and are working to stop it.

Inequalities based on sexual orientation and gender identity exist around the globe. According to Amnesty International, a number of crimes are committed against individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles or sexual orientations (however those are culturally defined). From culturally sanctioned rape to state-sanctioned executions, the abuses are serious. These legalized and culturally accepted forms of prejudice and discrimination exist everywhere—from the United States to Somalia to Tibet—restricting the freedom of individuals and often putting their lives at risk (Amnesty International 2012).

Global Classification

A major concern when discussing global inequality is how to avoid an ethnocentric bias implying that less-developed nations want to be like those who've attained post-industrial global power. Terms such as developing (nonindustrialized) and developed (industrialized) imply that unindustrialized countries are somehow inferior, and must improve to participate successfully in the global economy, a label indicating that all aspects of the economy cross national borders. We must take care how we delineate different countries. Over time, terminology has shifted to make way for a more inclusive view of the world.

Global classification methods are not only important in understanding economic differences among countries, but also in providing ways to classify countries and identify trends in other areas. The classifications discussed below will be used in other chapters, such as the chapter on health and medicine.

Cold War Terminology

Cold War terminology was developed during the Cold War era (1945–1980). Familiar and still used by many, it classifies countries into first world, second world, and third world nations based on their respective economic development and standards of living. When this nomenclature was developed, capitalistic democracies such as the United States and Japan were considered part of the first world. The poorest, most undeveloped countries were referred to as the third world and included most of sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and Asia. The second world was the in-between category: nations not as limited in development as the third world, but not as well off as the first world, having moderate economies and standard of living, such as China or Cuba. Later, sociologist Manual Castells (1998) added the term fourth world to refer to stigmatized minority groups that were denied a political voice all over the globe (indigenous minority populations, prisoners, and the homeless, for example).

Also during the Cold War, global inequality was described in terms of economic development. Along with developing and developed nations, the terms less-developed nation and underdeveloped nation were used. This was the era when the idea of *noblesse oblige* (first-world responsibility) took root, suggesting that the so-termed developed nations should provide foreign aid to the less-developed and underdeveloped nations in order to raise their standard of living.

Immanuel Wallerstein: World Systems Approach

Immanuel Wallerstein's (1979) world systems approach uses an economic basis to understand global inequality. Wallerstein conceived of the global economy as a complex system that supports an economic hierarchy that placed some nations in positions of power with numerous resources and other nations in a state of economic subordination. Those that were in a state of subordination faced significant obstacles to mobilization.

Core nations are dominant capitalist countries, highly industrialized, technological, and urbanized. For example, Wallerstein contends that the United States is an economic powerhouse that can support or deny support to important economic legislation with far-reaching implications, thus exerting control over every aspect of the global economy and exploiting both semi-peripheral and peripheral nations. We can look at free trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) as an example of how a core nation is able to leverage its power to gain the most advantageous position in the matter of global trade.

Peripheral nations have very little industrialization; what they do have often represents the outdated castoffs of core nations or the factories and means of production owned by core nations. They typically have unstable governments, inadequate social programs, and are economically dependent on core nations for jobs and aid. There are abundant examples of countries in this category, such as Vietnam and Cuba. We can be sure the workers in a Cuban cigar factory, for example, which are owned or leased by global core nation companies, are not enjoying the same privileges and rights as U.S. workers.

Semi-peripheral nations are in-between nations, not powerful enough to dictate policy but nevertheless acting as a major source for raw material and an expanding middle-class marketplace for core nations, while also exploiting peripheral nations. Mexico is an example, providing abundant cheap agricultural labor to the U.S., and supplying goods to the United States market at a rate dictated by the U.S. without the constitutional protections offered to United States workers.

World Bank Economic Classification by Income

While the World Bank is often criticized, both for its policies and its method of calculating data, it is still a common source for global economic data. Along with tracking the economy, the World Bank tracks demographics and environmental health to provide a complete picture of whether a nation is high income, middle income, or low income.

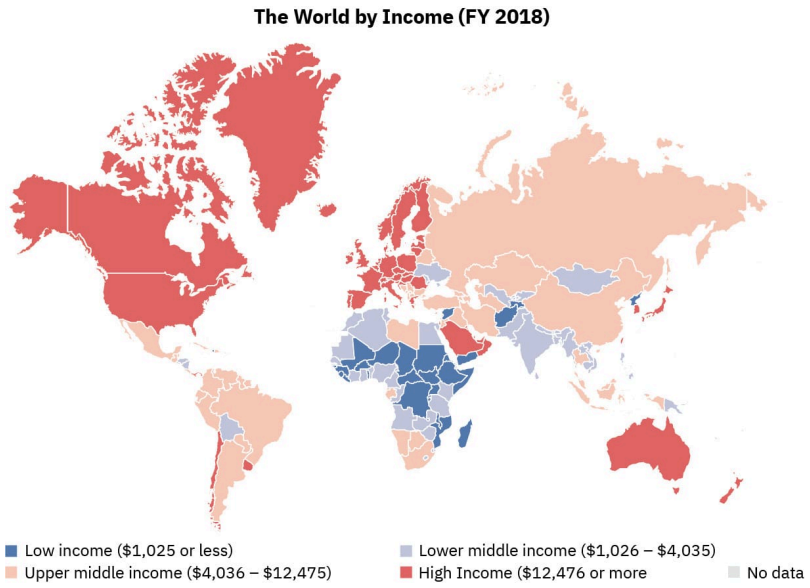


Figure 10.3: This world map shows advanced, transitioning, less, and least developed countries. Note that the data in this map is one year older than the data presented in the text below. (Credit: Sbw01f, data obtained from the CIA World Factbook/Wikimedia Commons)

High-Income Nations

The World Bank defines high-income nations as having a gross national income of at least $12,536 per capita. in 2019 (World Bank 2021). (Note that the classifications will always lag by a couple of years so that analysts can evaluate the true income of the nations.) Examples include Belgium, Canada, Japan, Oman, Puerto Rico, and the United States.

High-income countries face two major issues: capital flight and deindustrialization. Capital flight refers to the movement (flight) of capital from one nation to another, as when General Motors automotive company closed U.S. factories in Michigan and opened factories in Mexico.

Deindustrialization, a related issue, occurs as a consequence of capital flight, as no new companies open to replace jobs lost to foreign nations. As expected, global companies move their industrial processes to the places where they can get the most production with the least cost, including the building of infrastructure, training of workers, shipping of goods, and, of course, paying employee wages. This means that as emerging economies create their own industrial zones, global companies see the opportunity for existing infrastructure and much lower costs. Those opportunities lead to businesses closing the factories that provide jobs to the middle class within core nations and moving their industrial production to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations.

Big Picture: Capital Flight, Outsourcing, and Jobs in the United States



Figure 10.4: Factories and stores in places like the Detroit metro area have been closed and abandoned as companies go out of business. (Credit: Joe Nuxoll/flickr)

Capital flight describes jobs and infrastructure moving from one nation to another. Look at the U.S. automobile industry. In the early twentieth century, the cars driven in the United States were made here, employing thousands of workers in Detroit and in the companies that produced everything that made building cars possible. However, once the fuel crisis of the 1970s hit and people in the United States increasingly looked to imported cars with better gas mileage, U.S. auto manufacturing began to decline. During the 2007–2009 recession, the U.S. government provided emergency funding (usually called a "bail out") for the three main auto companies, which is evidence of those companies' vulnerability. At the same time, Japanese-owned Toyota and Honda and South Korean Kia maintained stable sales levels.

Capital flight also occurs when services (as opposed to manufacturing) are relocated. Chances are if you have called the tech support line for your cell phone or Internet provider, you've spoken to someone halfway across the globe. This professional might tell you her name is Susan or Joan, but her accent makes it clear that her real name might be Parvati or Indira. It might be the middle of the night in that country, yet these service providers pick up the line saying, "Good morning," as though they are in the next town over. They know everything about your phone or your modem, often using a remote server to log in to your home computer to accomplish what is needed. These are the workers of the twenty-first century. They are not on factory floors or in traditional sweatshops; they are educated, speak at least two languages, and usually have significant technology skills. They are skilled workers, but they are paid a fraction of what similar workers are paid in the United States. For U.S. and multinational companies, the equation makes sense. India and other semi-peripheral countries have emerging infrastructures and education systems to fill their needs, without core nation costs.

As services are relocated, so are jobs. In the United States, unemployment is high. Many college-educated people are unable to find work, and those with only a high school diploma are in even worse shape. We have, as a country, outsourced ourselves out of jobs, and not just menial jobs, but white-collar work as well. But before we complain too bitterly, we must look at the

culture of consumerism that we embrace. A flat screen television that might have cost $1,000 a few years ago is now $250. That cost savings has to come from somewhere. When consumers seek the lowest possible price, shop at big box stores for the biggest discount they can get, and generally ignore other factors in exchange for low cost, they are building the market for outsourcing. And as the demand is built, the market will ensure it is met, even at the expense of the people who wanted it in the first place.



Figure 10.5: Outsourcing was initially a practice for manufacturing and related work. But as more technically skilled people become more available in other countries, customer service and other services are being moved out of the United States as well? (Credit: Carlos Ebert/ flickr)

Middle-Income Nations

The World Bank divides middle-income economies into two categories. Lower middle income areas are those with a GNI per capita of more than $1,036 but less than $4,045. Upper middle income areas are those with A GNI per capita between $4,046 and $12,535. Democratic Republic of Congo, Tunisia, Philippines, El Salvador, and Nepal are are examples of lower-middle-income countries. And Argentina, Mexico, China, Iran, Turkey, and Namibia are examples of upper-middle-income nations (World Bank 2021).

Perhaps the most pressing issue for middle-income nations is the problem of debt accumulation. As the name suggests, debt accumulation is the buildup of external debt, wherein countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals. As the uncertainties of the global economy make repaying these debts, or even paying the interest on them, more challenging, nations can find themselves in trouble. Once global markets have reduced the value of a country's goods, it can be very difficult to ever manage the debt burden. Such issues have plagued middle-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as East Asian and Pacific nations (Dogruel and Dogruel 2007).

Low-Income Nations

The World Bank defines low-income countries as nations whose per capita GNI was $1,035 per capita or less in 2019. For example, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Yemen are considered low-income countries. Low-income economies are primarily found in Asia and Africa (World Bank 2021), where most of the world's population lives. There are two major challenges that these countries face: women are disproportionately affected by poverty (in a trend toward a global feminization of poverty) and much of the population lives in absolute poverty.

Nations' classifications often change as their economies evolve and, sometimes, when their political positions change. Nepal, Indonesia, and Romania all moved up to a higher status based on improved economies. While Sudan, Algeria, and Sri Lanka moved down a level. A few years ago, Myanmar was a low-income nation, but now it has moved into the middle-income area. With Myanmar's 2021 coup, the massive citizen response, and the military's killing of protesters, its economy may go through a downturn again, returning it to the low-income nation status.

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7.4.3: Global Wealth and Poverty

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate relative, extreme, and subjective poverty
- Describe the economic situation of some of the world's most impoverished areas
- Explain the cyclical impact of the consequences of poverty



Figure 10.6: This young girl was begging for food in the street in Vietnam, holding a younger child as she was doing so. (Credit: Augapfel/flickr)

What does it mean to be poor? Does it mean being a single mother with two kids in New York City, waiting for the next paycheck in order to buy groceries? Does it mean living with almost no furniture in your apartment because your income doesn't allow for extras like beds or chairs? Or does it mean having to live with the distended bellies of the chronically malnourished throughout the peripheral nations of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia? Poverty has a thousand faces and a thousand gradations; there is no single definition that pulls together every part of the spectrum. You might feel you are poor if you can't afford cable television or buy your own car. Every time you see a fellow student with a new laptop and smartphone you might feel that you, with your ten-year-old desktop computer, are barely keeping up. However, someone else might look at the clothes you wear and the calories you consume and consider you rich.

Types of Poverty

Social scientists define global poverty in different ways and take into account the complexities and the issues of relativism described above. Relative poverty is a state of living where people can afford necessities but are unable to meet their society's average standard of living. People often disparage "keeping up with the Joneses"—the idea that you must keep up with the neighbors' standard of living to not feel deprived. But it is true that you might feel "poor" if you are living without a car to drive to and from work, without any money for a safety net should a family member fall ill, and without any "extras" beyond just making ends meet.

Contrary to relative poverty, people who live in extreme poverty lack even the basic necessities, which typically include adequate food, clean water, safe housing, and access to healthcare. Extreme poverty occurs when someone lives on less than 1.90 U.S dollars per day.

In prior years, the World Bank—the primary organization analyzing these trends--focused heavily on the number of people under

that extreme poverty level of $1.90 per day. (The previous term was "absolute poverty.") In 2018, the World Bank added two more measures to consider: people living on less than $3.20 and people living on less than $5.50. As the number of people in that extreme category continues to decline, these two new categories will be important to recognize the population that lives above the $1.90 line, but still remains vulnerable to extreme poverty. Someone who begins to earn enough to live on more than $1.90 is still in severe poverty and should be considered as such (Schoch 2020).

If you were forced to live on $1.90 a day, or even $5.50, how would you do it? What would you deem worthy of spending money on, and what could you do without? How would you manage the necessities—and how would you make up the gap between what you need to live and what you can afford?



Figure 10.7: Slums in many countries illustrate absolute poverty all too well. (Credit: Ninara/flickr)

Subjective poverty describes poverty that is composed of many dimensions; it is subjectively present when your actual income does not meet your expectations and perceptions. With the concept of subjective poverty, the poor themselves have a greater say in recognizing when it is present. In short, subjective poverty has more to do with how a person or a family defines themselves. This means that a family subsisting on a few dollars a day in Nepal might think of themselves as doing well, within their perception of normal. However, a westerner traveling to Nepal might visit the same family and see extreme need.

Big Picture: The Underground Economy Around the World

What do the driver of an unlicensed hack cab in New York, a piecework seamstress working from her home in Mumbai, and a street tortilla vendor in Mexico City have in common? They are all members of the underground economy, a loosely defined unregulated market unhindered by taxes, government permits, or human protections. Official statistics before the worldwide recession posit that the underground economy accounted for over 50 percent of nonagricultural work in Latin America; the figure went as high as 80 percent in parts of Asia and Africa (Chen 2001). A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* discusses the challenges, parameters, and surprising benefits of this informal marketplace. The wages earned in most underground economy jobs, especially in peripheral nations, are a pittance––a few rupees for a handmade bracelet at a market, or maybe 250 rupees ($5 U.S.) for a day's worth of fruit and vegetable sales (Barta 2009). But these tiny sums mark the difference between survival and extinction for the world's poor.

The underground economy has never been viewed very positively by global economists. After all, its members don't pay taxes, don't take out loans to grow their businesses, and rarely earn enough to put money back into the economy in the form of consumer spending. But according to the International Labor Organization (an agency of the United Nations), some 52 million people worldwide will lose their jobs due to the ongoing worldwide recession. And while those in core nations know that high unemployment rates and limited government safety nets can be frightening, their situation is nothing compared to the loss of a job for those barely eking out an existence. Once that job disappears, the chance of staying afloat is very slim.

Within the context of this recession, some see the underground economy as a key player in keeping people alive. Indeed, an economist at the World Bank credits jobs created by the informal economy as a primary reason why peripheral nations are not in worse shape during this recession. Women in particular benefit from the informal sector. The majority of economically active women in peripheral nations are engaged in the informal sector, which is somewhat buffered from the economic downturn. The flip side, of course, is that it is equally buffered from the possibility of economic growth.

Even in the United States, the informal economy exists, although not on the same scale as in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. It might include under-the-table nannies, gardeners, and housecleaners, as well as unlicensed street vendors and taxi drivers. There are also those who run informal businesses, like daycares or salons, from their houses. Analysts estimate that this type of labor may make up 10 percent of the overall U.S. economy, a number that will likely grow as companies reduce head counts, leaving more workers to seek other options. In the end, the article suggests that, whether selling medicinal wines in Thailand or woven bracelets in India, the workers of the underground economy at least have what most people want most of all: a chance to stay afloat (Barta 2009).

Who Are the Impoverished?

Who are the impoverished? Who is living in absolute poverty? The truth that most of us would guess is that the richest countries are often those with the least people. Compare the United States, which possesses a relatively small slice of the population pie and owns by far the largest slice of the wealth pie, with India. These disparities have the expected consequence. The poorest people in the world are women and those in peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. For women, the rate of poverty is particularly worsened by the pressure on their time. In general, time is one of the few luxuries the very poor have, but study after study has shown that women in poverty, who are responsible for all family comforts as well as any earnings they can make, have less of it. The result is that women are suffering more in terms of overall wellbeing (Buvinic 1997). It is harder for females to get credit to expand businesses, to take the time to learn a new skill, or to spend extra hours improving their craft so as to be able to earn at a higher rate.

Global Feminization of Poverty

In almost all societies, women have higher rates of poverty than men. More women and girls live in poor conditions, receive inadequate healthcare, bear the brunt of malnutrition and inadequate drinking water, and so on. This situation goes back decades, and led University of Michigan sociologist Diana Pearce to coin the term "feminization of poverty" in 1978. Throughout the 1990s, data indicated that while overall poverty rates were rising, especially in peripheral nations, the rates of impoverishment increased for women nearly 20 percent more than for men (Mogadham 2005). More recently, as extreme poverty rates continue to fall, women still make up a disproportionate amount of the world's poor. Gender differences are sometimes difficult to discern in international poverty data, but researchers have undertaken efforts to define the makeup of those affected by poverty. Of people aged 25-34, the world has 122 women living in poverty for every 100 men living in poverty. The world's elderly below the poverty line are also more likely to be women (World Bank 2018).

Why is this happening? While myriad variables affect women's poverty, research specializing in this issue identifies three causes (Mogadham 2005):

1. The expansion in the number of female-headed households
2. The persistence and consequences of intra-household inequalities and biases against women
3. The implementation of neoliberal economic policies around the world

While women are living longer and healthier lives today compared to ten years ago, around the world many women are denied basic rights, particularly in the workplace. In peripheral nations, they accumulate fewer assets, farm less land, make less money, and face restricted civil rights and liberties. Women can stimulate the economic growth of peripheral nations, but they are often undereducated and lack access to credit needed to start small businesses. When women are able to attain higher levels of education, they account for significant economic growth within their nations (OECD 2012).

A wide range of organizations undertake programs or provide support in order to improve opportunity, safety, education, equality, and financial outcomes for women. Some of these efforts involve diplomacy, such as one government (or a coalition) working to secure greater rights and improve circumstances of women in other countries. Key areas of focus are reducing institutional and cultural discrimination, ending domestic violence, providing women more agency in decision making, and increasing education for children (Scott 2012). Other programs focus on more immediate needs and opportunities. Microcredit and women's collective

savings accounts are ways to provide financial resources for women and families to make important investments, such as building a well at their home to improve health and reduce time spent obtaining clean water. Other uses may involve starting a business, paying a debt, or buying an important appliance or equipment. Unfortunately, these microfinance programs don't have a track record of alleviating poverty, and in some cases they can lead to negative outcomes such as trapping women in a cycle of debt, or increasing domestic violence. Collective savings programs—where local people pool their resources and extend credit within their group—have shown some more positive outcomes (Aizenman 2016 and Niner 2018). The UN has emphasized that microfinance and cultural empowerment would both be more successful if they were used in concert with each other (Scott 2012).

Africa

The majority of the poorest countries in the world are in Africa. That is not to say there is not diversity within the countries of that continent; countries like South Africa and Egypt have much lower rates of poverty than Angola and Ethiopia, for instance. Overall, African income levels have been dropping relative to the rest of the world, meaning that Africa as a whole is getting relatively poorer. Making the problem worse, 2014 saw an outbreak of the *Ebola* virus in western Africa, leading to a public health crisis and an economic downturn due to loss of workers and tourist dollars.

Why is Africa in such dire straits? Much of the continent's poverty can be traced to the availability of land, especially arable land (land that can be farmed). Centuries of struggle over land ownership have meant that much useable land has been ruined or left unfarmed, while many countries with inadequate rainfall have never set up an infrastructure to irrigate. Many of Africa's natural resources were long ago taken by colonial forces, leaving little agricultural and mineral wealth on the continent.

Further, African poverty is worsened by civil wars and inadequate governance that are the result of a continent re-imagined with artificial colonial borders and leaders. Consider the example of Rwanda. There, two ethnic groups cohabitated with their own system of hierarchy and management until Belgians took control of the country in 1915 and rigidly confined members of the population into two unequal ethnic groups. While, historically, members of the Tutsi group held positions of power, the involvement of Belgians led to the Hutu seizing power during a 1960s revolt. This ultimately led to a repressive government and genocide against Tutsis that left hundreds of thousands of Rwandans dead or living in diaspora (U.S. Department of State 2011c). The painful rebirth of a self-ruled Africa has meant many countries bear ongoing scars as they try to see their way towards the future (World Poverty 2012a). In 2020, armed conflicts were underway in regions of nations including the Tigray conflict in Ethiopia, the Kamwina Nsapo rebellion in Democratic Republic of Congo, the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and neighboring countries, and several more. While most of the ongoing conflicts are considered minor, they are both dangerous and disruptive to the people living in those regions, and several have included ethnic cleansing, mass kidnapping, extensive sexual violence, and use of child soldiers.

Asia



Figure 10.8: For children who have homes in slums like this one in Phnom Phen, Cambodia, survival and safety are often the primary and immediate concerns. Longer-term goals, such as education and social mobility, may not be available options. (Credit: ND Strupler)

While the majority of the world's poorest countries are in Africa, the majority of the world's poorest people are in Asia. As in Africa, Asia finds itself with disparity in the distribution of poverty, with Japan and South Korea holding much more wealth than India and Cambodia. In fact, most poverty is concentrated in South Asia. One of the most pressing causes of poverty in Asia is simply the pressure that the size of the population puts on its resources. Unlike Africa, many people living in poverty reside in urban areas, often in crowded, unhygenic conditions with limited access to water and resources. Estimates indicate that Asia has 60 percent of the world's people who live in slums (WorldVision 2019). Those who find work often do so in garment factories or other manufacturing facilities, where pay is very low and the demands are incredibly high. (See the feature below on sweatshop labor.) Children are sent to work in these conditions as well.

Asia is also frequently impacted by natural disasters. Countries like India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines experience frequent typhoons (hurricanes) and flooding. For those living in insecure structures —often constructed from various leftover materials and not subject to any type of building codes—such events can leave entire swaths of the population homeless and vulnerable to disease or injury (WorldVision 2019).

MENA

The Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) includes oil-rich countries in the Gulf, such as Iran, Iraq, and Kuwait, but also countries that are relatively resource-poor in relationship to their populations, such as Morocco and Yemen. These countries are predominately Islamic. For the last quarter-century, economic growth was slower in MENA than in other developing economies, and almost a quarter of the 300 million people who make up the population live on less than $2.00 a day (World Bank 2013).

The International Labour Organization tracks the way income inequality influences social unrest. The two regions with the highest risk of social unrest are Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East-North Africa region (International Labour Organization 2012). Increasing unemployment and high socioeconomic inequality in MENA were major factors in the Arab Spring, which—beginning in 2010—toppled dictatorships throughout the Middle East in favor of democratically elected government. Unemployment and income inequalities are still being blamed on immigrants, foreign nationals, and ethnic/religious minorities.

Sociology in the Real World: Sweatshops and Student Protests: Who's Making Your Team Spirit?



Figure 10.9: These protesters seek to bring attention to the issue of sweatshop labor in producing clothing. (Credit: Jo Guldi/flickr)

Most of us don't pay too much attention to where our favorite products are made. And certainly when you're shopping for a college sweatshirt or ball cap to wear to a school football game, you probably don't turn over the label, check who produced the item, and then research whether or not the company has fair labor practices. But for the members of USAS—United Students Against Sweatshops—that's exactly what they do. The organization, which was founded in 1997, has waged countless battles against both apparel makers and other multinational corporations that do not meet what USAS considers fair working conditions and wages. USAS also focuses on ensuring safe and non-exploitative conditions as well as improved pay and benefits for campus workers, including dining hall staff, security guards, and adjuncts (USAS 2021).

How do clothes get made, and why are garment workers among the most commonly mistreated? In many cases, large apparel companies—including Nike, Lululemon, H&M, Urban Outfitters (owner of Anthropologie and Free People), Zara, and most other major brands—outsource their manufacturing to factories around the world. The apparel companies negotiate prices and schedules with the local manufacturers, and often push for the lowest possible manufacturing cost and the fastest schedule. In order to keep up with demand and manufacture the clothing at the required cost, the factories may pay their employees less, force them to work longer hours, and may maintain unsafe conditions. All of those tactics are associated with sweatshop practices (Chan 2019). In response to action from organizations like USAS, many apparel companies have undertaken steps to ensure that the factories they use are treating workers properly, but in reality, it is very difficult to know for sure. Often, the brands work through subcontractors and subsidiaries, and may not know exactly which factories are producing their products.

Members of USAS helped form the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), which monitors working conditions for a wide array of companies and their affiliated factories. WRC conducts regular reviews of worldwide manufacturing facilities and publishes the results. The WRC also studies and reports on overall economic conditions and their effect on employment. For example, in 2020, as the global economy went through a rapid downturn, apparel companies demanded lower prices while they also reduced their orders, which put workers at risk of exploitation or job loss (Karim 2020).

Consequences of Poverty



Figure 10.10: For this child, who is being assessed for malnutrition at a clinic in Kenya, risks associated with poverty and lack of food were exacerbated by a massive drought that hit the region. (Credit: DFID - UK Department for International Development/flickr)

Not surprisingly, the consequences of poverty are often also causes. The poor often experience inadequate healthcare, limited education, and the inaccessibility of birth control. But those born into these conditions are incredibly challenged in their efforts to break out since these consequences of poverty are also causes of poverty, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage.

According to sociologists Neckerman and Torche (2007) in their analysis of global inequality studies, the consequences of poverty are many. Neckerman and Torche have divided them into three areas. The first, termed “the sedimentation of global inequality,” relates to the fact that once poverty becomes entrenched in an area, it is typically very difficult to reverse. As mentioned above, poverty exists in a cycle where the consequences and causes are intertwined. The second consequence of poverty is its effect on physical and mental health. Poor people face physical health challenges, including malnutrition and high infant mortality rates. Mental health is also detrimentally affected by the emotional stresses of poverty, with relative deprivation carrying the most robust effect. Again, as with the ongoing inequality, the effects of poverty on mental and physical health become more entrenched as time goes on. Neckerman and Torche’s third consequence of poverty is the prevalence of crime. Cross-nationally, crime rates are higher, particularly for violent crime, in countries with higher levels of income inequality (Fajnzylber 2002).

Slavery

While most of us are accustomed to thinking of slavery in terms of the antebellum South, modern day slavery goes hand-in-hand with global inequality. In short, slavery refers to any situation in which people are sold, treated as property, or forced to work for little or no pay. Just as in the pre-Civil War United States, these humans are at the mercy of their employers. Chattel slavery, the form of slavery once practiced in the American South, occurs when one person owns another as property. Child slavery, which may include child prostitution, is a form of chattel slavery. In debt bondage, or bonded labor, the poor pledge themselves as servants in exchange for the cost of basic necessities like transportation, room, and board. In this scenario, people are paid less than they are charged for room and board. When travel is required, they can arrive in debt for their travel expenses and be unable to work their way free, since their wages do not allow them to ever get ahead.

The global watchdog group Anti-Slavery International recognizes other forms of slavery: human trafficking (in which people are moved away from their communities and forced to work against their will), child domestic work and child labor, and certain forms of servile marriage, in which women are little more than enslaved people (Anti-Slavery International 2012).

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7.4.4: Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe the modernization and dependency theory perspectives on global stratification

As with any social issue, global or otherwise, scholars have developed a variety of theories to study global stratification. The two most widely applied perspectives are modernization theory and dependency theory.

Modernization Theory

According to modernization theory, low-income countries are affected by their lack of industrialization and can improve their global economic standing through (Armer and Katsillis 2010):

1. an adjustment of cultural values and attitudes to work
2. industrialization and other forms of economic growth

Critics point out the inherent ethnocentric bias of this theory. It supposes all countries have the same resources and are capable of following the same path. In addition, it assumes that the goal of all countries is to be as "developed" as possible. There is no room within this theory for the possibility that industrialization and technology are not the best goals.

There is, of course, some basis for this assumption. Data show that core nations tend to have lower maternal and child mortality rates, longer life spans, and less absolute poverty. It is also true that in the poorest countries, millions of people die from the lack of clean drinking water and sanitation facilities, which are benefits most of us take for granted. At the same time, the issue is more complex than the numbers might suggest. Cultural equality, history, community, and local traditions are all at risk as modernization pushes into peripheral countries. The challenge, then, is to allow the benefits of modernization while maintaining a cultural sensitivity to what already exists.

Dependency Theory

Dependency theory was created in part as a response to the Western-centric mindset of modernization theory. It states that global inequality is primarily caused by core nations (or high-income nations) exploiting semi-peripheral and peripheral nations (or middle-income and low-income nations), which creates a cycle of dependence (Hendricks 2010). As long as peripheral nations are dependent on core nations for economic stimulus and access to a larger piece of the global economy, they will never achieve stable and consistent economic growth. Further, the theory states that since core nations, as well as the World Bank, choose which countries to make loans to, and for what they will loan funds, they are creating highly segmented labor markets that are built to benefit the dominant market countries.

At first glance, it seems this theory ignores the formerly low-income nations that are now considered middle-income nations and are on their way to becoming high-income nations and major players in the global economy, such as China. But some dependency theorists would state that it is in the best interests of core nations to ensure the long-term usefulness of their peripheral and semi-peripheral partners. Following that theory, sociologists have found that entities are more likely to outsource a significant portion of a company's work if they are the dominant player in the equation; in other words, companies want to see their partner countries healthy enough to provide work, but not so healthy as to establish a threat (Caniels and Roeleveld 2009).

Sociological Research: Factory Girls

We've examined functionalist and conflict theorist perspectives on global inequality, as well as modernization and dependency theories. How might a symbolic interactionist approach this topic?

The book *Factory Girls: From Village to City in Changing China*, by Leslie T. Chang, provides this opportunity. Chang follows two young women (Min and Chunming) employed at a handbag plant. They help manufacture coveted purses and bags for the global market. As part of the growing population of young people who are leaving behind the homesteads and farms of rural China, these female factory workers are ready to enter the urban fray and pursue an ambitious income.

Although Chang's study is based in a town many have never heard of (Dongguan), this city produces one-third of all shoes on the planet (Nike and Reebok are major manufacturers here) and 30 percent of the world's computer disk drives, in addition to an abundance of apparel (Chang 2008).

But Chang's focus is centered less on this global phenomenon on a large scale, than on how it affects these two women. As a symbolic interactionist would do, Chang examines the daily lives and interactions of Min and Chunming—their workplace friendships, family relationships, gadgets and goods—in this evolving global space where young women can leave tradition behind and fashion their own futures. Their story is one that all people, not just scholars, can learn from as we contemplate sociological issues like global economies, cultural traditions and innovations, and opportunities for women in the workforce.

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7.4.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
capital flight	the movement (flight) of capital from one nation to another, via jobs and resources				
chattel slavery	a form of slavery in which one person owns another				
core nations	dominant capitalist countries				
debt accumulation	the buildup of external debt, wherein countries borrow money from other nations to fund their expansion or growth goals				
debt bondage	the act of people pledging themselves as servants in exchange for money for passage, and are subsequently paid too little to regain their freedom				
deindustrialization	the loss of industrial production, usually to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations where the costs are lower				
dependency theory	a theory which states that global inequity is due to the exploitation of peripheral and semi-peripheral nations by core nations				
extreme poverty	the state where one is barely able, or unable, to afford basic necessities				
first world	a term from the Cold War era that is used to describe industrialized capitalist democracies				
fourth world	a term that describes stigmatized minority groups who have no voice or representation on the world stage				
GINI coefficient	a measure of income inequality between countries using a 100-point scale, in which 1 represents complete equality and 100 represents the highest possible inequality				
global feminization of poverty	a pattern that occurs when women bear a disproportionate percentage of the burden of poverty				
global inequality	the concentration of resources in core nations and in the hands of a wealthy minority				
global stratification	the unequal distribution of resources between countries				
gross national income (GNI)	the income of a nation calculated based on goods and services produced, plus income earned by citizens and corporations headquartered in that country				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
modernization theory	a theory that low-income countries can improve their global economic standing by industrialization of infrastructure and a shift in cultural attitudes towards work				
peripheral nations	nations on the fringes of the global economy, dominated by core nations, with very little industrialization				
relative poverty	the state of poverty where one is unable to live the lifestyle of the average person in the country				
second world	a term from the Cold War era that describes nations with moderate economies and standards of living				
semi-peripheral nations	in-between nations, not powerful enough to dictate policy but acting as a major source of raw materials and an expanding middle class marketplace				
subjective poverty	a state of poverty composed of many dimensions, subjectively present when one's actual income does not meet one's expectations				
third world	a term from the Cold War era that refers to poor, unindustrialized countries				
underground economy	an unregulated economy of labor and goods that operates outside of governance, regulatory systems, or human protections				

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7.4.6: Section Summary

10.1 Global Stratification and Classification

Stratification refers to the gaps in resources both between nations and within nations. While economic equality is of great concern, so is social equality, like the discrimination stemming from race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and/or sexual orientation. While global inequality is nothing new, several factors make it more relevant than ever, like the global marketplace and the pace of information sharing. Researchers try to understand global inequality by classifying it according to factors such as how industrialized a nation is, whether a country serves as a means of production or as an owner, and what income a nation produces.

10.2 Global Wealth and Poverty

When looking at the world's poor, we first have to define the difference between relative poverty, absolute poverty, and subjective poverty. While those in relative poverty might not have enough to live at their country's standard of living, those in absolute poverty do not have, or barely have, basic necessities such as food. Subjective poverty has more to do with one's perception of one's situation. North America and Europe are home to fewer of the world's poor than Africa, which has most poor countries, or Asia, which has the most people living in poverty. Poverty has numerous negative consequences, from increased crime rates to a detrimental impact on physical and mental health.

10.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

Modernization theory and dependency theory are two of the most common lenses sociologists use when looking at the issues of global inequality. Modernization theory posits that countries go through evolutionary stages and that industrialization and improved technology are the keys to forward movement. Dependency theory, on the other hand, sees modernization theory as Eurocentric and patronizing. With this theory, global inequality is the result of core nations creating a cycle of dependence by exploiting resources and labor in peripheral and semi-peripheral countries.

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7.4.7: Section Quiz

10.1 Global Stratification and Classification

1.

A sociologist who focuses on the way that multinational corporations headquartered in core nations exploit the local workers in their peripheral nation factories is using a _____ perspective to understand the global economy.

a. functional
b. conflict theory
c. feminist
d. symbolic interactionist

2.

A _____ perspective theorist might find it particularly noteworthy that wealthy corporations improve the quality of life in peripheral nations by providing workers with jobs, pumping money into the local economy, and improving transportation infrastructure.

a. functional
b. conflict
c. feminist
d. symbolic interactionist

3.

A sociologist working from a symbolic interaction perspective would:

a. study how inequality is created and reproduced
b. study how corporations can improve the lives of their low-income workers
c. try to understand how companies provide an advantage to high-income nations compared to low-income nations
d. want to interview women working in factories to understand how they manage the expectations of their supervisors, make ends meet, and support their households on a day-to-day basis

4.

France might be classified as which kind of nation?

a. Global
b. Core
c. Semi-peripheral
d. Peripheral

5.

In the past, the United States manufactured clothes. Many clothing corporations have shut down their U.S. factories and relocated to China. This is an example of:

a. conflict theory
b. automation
c. global inequality
d. capital flight

10.2 Global Wealth and Poverty

6.

Slavery in the pre-Civil War U.S. South most closely resembled

a. chattel slavery
b. debt bondage
c. relative poverty
d. peonage

7.

Maya is a twelve-year-old girl living in Thailand. She is homeless, and often does not know where she will sleep or when she will eat. We might say that Maya lives in _____ poverty.

a. subjective
b. absolute
c. relative
d. global

8.

Mike, a college student, rents a studio apartment. He cannot afford a television and lives on cheap groceries like dried beans and ramen noodles. Since he does not have a regular job, he does not own a car. Mike is living in:

a. global poverty
b. extreme poverty
c. subjective poverty
d. relative poverty

9.

Faith has a full-time job and two children. She has enough money for the basics and can pay her rent each month, but she feels that, with her education and experience, her income should be enough for her family to live much better than they do. Faith is experiencing:

a. global poverty
b. subjective poverty
c. extreme poverty
d. relative poverty

10.

In a U.S. town, a mining company owns all the stores and most of the houses. It sells goods to the workers at inflated prices, offers house rentals for twice what a mortgage would be, and makes sure to always pay the workers less than needed to cover food and rent. Once the workers are in debt, they have no choice but to continue working for the company, since their skills will not transfer to a new position. This situation most closely resembles:

a. child slavery
b. chattel slavery
c. debt slavery
d. servile marriage

10.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

11.

One flaw in dependency theory is the unwillingness to recognize _____.

a. that previously low-income nations such as China have successfully developed their economies and can no longer be classified as dependent on core nations
b. that previously high-income nations such as China have been economically overpowered by low-income nations entering the global marketplace

c. that countries such as China are growing more dependent on core nations
d. that countries such as China do not necessarily want to be more like core nations

12.

One flaw in modernization theory is the unwillingness to recognize _____.

a. that semi-peripheral nations are incapable of industrializing
b. that peripheral nations prevent semi-peripheral nations from entering the global market
c. its inherent ethnocentric bias
d. the importance of semi-peripheral nations industrializing

13.

If a sociologist says that nations evolve toward more advanced technology and more complex industry as their citizens learn cultural values that celebrate hard work and success, she is using _____ theory to study the global economy.

a. modernization theory
b. dependency theory
c. modern dependency theory
d. evolutionary dependency theory

14.

If a sociologist points out that core nations dominate the global economy, in part by creating global interest rates and international tariffs that will inevitably favor high-income nations over low-income nations, he is a:

a. functionalist
b. dependency theorist
c. modernization theorist
d. symbolic interactionist

15.

Dependency theorists explain global inequality and global stratification by focusing on the way that:

a. core nations and peripheral nations exploit semi-peripheral nations
b. semi-peripheral nations exploit core nations
c. peripheral nations exploit core nations
d. core nations exploit peripheral nations

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7.4.8: Short Answer

10.1 Global Stratification and Classification

1.

Consider the matter of rock-bottom prices at Walmart. What would a functionalist think of Walmart's model of squeezing vendors to get the absolute lowest prices so it can pass them along to core nation consumers?

2.

Why do you think some scholars find Cold War terminology (“first world” and so on) objectionable?

3.

Give an example of the feminization of poverty in core nations. How is it the same or different in peripheral nations?

4.

Pretend you are a sociologist studying global inequality by looking at child labor manufacturing Barbie dolls in China. What do you focus on? How will you find this information? What theoretical perspective might you use?

10.2 Global Wealth and Poverty

5.

Consider the concept of subjective poverty. Does it make sense that poverty is in the eye of the beholder? When you see a person who is homeless, is your reaction different if he or she is seemingly content versus begging? Why?

6.

Think of people among your family, your friends, or your classmates who are relatively unequal in terms of wealth. What is their relationship like? What factors come into play?

7.

Go to your campus bookstore or visit its web site. Find out who manufactures apparel and novelty items with your school’s insignias. In what countries are these produced? Conduct some research to determine how well your school adheres to the principles advocated by USAS.

10.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

8.

There is much criticism that modernization theory is Eurocentric. Do you think dependency theory is also biased? Why, or why not?

9.

Compare and contrast modernization theory and dependency theory. Which do you think is more useful for explaining global inequality? Explain, using examples.

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7.4.9: Further Research

10.1 Global Stratification and Classification

To learn more about the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, look here.

To learn more about the existence and impact of global poverty, peruse the poverty and equity data portal here.

10.2 Global Wealth and Poverty

Students often think that the United States is immune to the atrocity of human trafficking. Check out this website to learn more about trafficking in the United States.

For more information about the ongoing practices of slavery in the modern world take a look at the Anti-Slavery International website.

10.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Global Stratification

For more information about economic modernization, check out the Hudson Institute.

Learn more about economic dependency at the University of Texas Inequality Project.

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8: RACE AND ETHNICITY

8.1: Race and Ethnicity

8.1.1: Prelude to Race and Ethnicity

8.1.2: Racial and Ethnic Relations - An American Dilemma

8.1.3: The Meaning of Race and Ethnicity

8.1.4: Prejudice

8.1.5: Discrimination

8.1.6: Racial and Ethnic Inequality in the United States

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8.1.S: Race and Ethnicity (Summary)

8.2: Race and Ethnicity

8.2.1: Introduction

8.2.2: Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

8.2.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

8.2.4: Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

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8.1: RACE AND ETHNICITY

8.1.1: Prelude to Race and Ethnicity
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8.1.3: The Meaning of Race and Ethnicity
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8.1.1: Prelude to Race and Ethnicity

Social Issues in the News

“White Supremacist Held Without Bond in Tuesday’s Attack,” the headline said. In August 2009, James Privott, a 76-year-old African American, had just finished fishing in a Baltimore city park when he was attacked by several white men. They knocked him to the ground, punched him in the face, and hit him with a baseball bat. Privott lost two teeth and had an eye socket fractured in the assault. One of his assailants was arrested soon afterwards and told police the attack “wouldn’t have happened if he was a white man.” The suspect was a member of a white supremacist group, had a tattoo of Hitler on his stomach, and used “Hitler” as his nickname. At a press conference attended by civil rights and religious leaders, the Baltimore mayor denounced the hate crime. “We all have to speak out and speak up and say this is not acceptable in our communities,” she said. “We must stand together in opposing this kind of act.” (Fenton, 2009, p. 11)Fenton, J. (2009). "White supremacist held without bail in Tuesday’s attack." *The Baltimore Sun*. August 20: A3.

In 1959, John Howard Griffin, a white writer, changed his race. Griffin decided that he could not begin to understand the discrimination and prejudice that African Americans face every day unless he experienced these problems himself. So he went to a dermatologist in New Orleans and obtained a prescription for an oral medication to darken his skin. The dermatologist also told him to lie under a sun lamp several hours a day and to use a skin-staining pigment to darken any light spots that remained.

Griffin stayed inside, followed the doctor’s instructions, and shaved his head to remove his straight hair. About a week later he looked, for all intents and purposes, like an African American. Then he went out in public and passed as black.

New Orleans was a segregated city in those days, and Griffin immediately found he could no longer do the same things he did when he was white. He could no longer drink at the same water fountains, use the same public restrooms, or eat at the same restaurants. When he went to look at a menu displayed in the window of a fancy restaurant, he later wrote,

I read, realizing that a few days earlier I could have gone in and ordered anything on the menu. But now, though I was the same person with the same appetite, no power on earth could get me inside this place for a meal. (Griffin, 1961, p. 42)Griffin, J. H. (1961). *Black like me*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Because of his new appearance, Griffin suffered other slights and indignities. Once when he went to sit on a bench in a public park, a white man told him to leave. Later a white bus driver refused to let Griffin get off at his stop and let him off only eight blocks later. A series of stores refused to cash his traveler’s checks. As he traveled by bus from one state to another, he was not allowed to wait inside the bus stations. At times white men of various ages cursed and threatened him, and he became afraid for his life and safety. Months later, after he wrote about his experience, he was hanged in effigy, and his family was forced to move from their home.

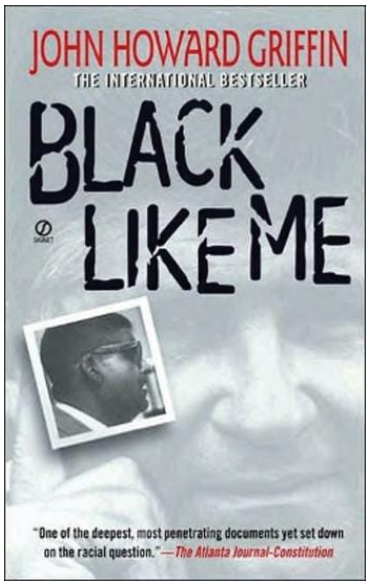


Figure 7.1. John Howard Griffin's classic 1959 book Black Like Me documented the racial discrimination he experienced in the South after darkening his skin and passing as black.

Source: http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Black_Like_Me.jpg.

Griffin's reports about how he was treated while posing as a black man, and about the way African Americans he met during that time were also treated, helped awaken white Americans across the United States to racial prejudice and discrimination. The Southern civil rights movement, which had begun a few years earlier and then exploded into the national consciousness with sit-ins at lunch counters in February 1960 by black college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, ended Southern segregation and changed life in the South and across the rest of the nation.

What has happened since then? Where do we stand more than 50 years after the beginning of the civil rights movement and Griffin's travels in the South? In answering this question, this chapter discusses the changing nature of racial and ethnic prejudice and inequality in the United States but also documents their continuing importance for American society, as the hate crime story that began this chapter signifies. We begin our discussion of the present with a brief look back to the past.

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8.1.2: Racial and Ethnic Relations - An American Dilemma

Learning Objectives

- Describe the targets of 19th-century mob violence in U.S. cities.
- Discuss why the familiar saying, “The more things change, the more they stay the same,” applies to the history of race and ethnicity in the United States.

Race and ethnicity have torn at the fabric of American society ever since the time of Christopher Columbus, when about 1 million Native Americans were thought to have populated the eventual United States. By 1900, their numbers had dwindled to about 240,000, as tens of thousands were killed by white settlers and U.S. troops and countless others died from disease contracted from people with European backgrounds. Scholars have said that this mass killing of Native Americans amounted to genocide (J. Wilson, 1999).

African Americans obviously also have a history of maltreatment that began during the colonial period, when Africans were forcibly transported from their homelands to be sold and abused as slaves in the Americas. During the 1830s, white mobs attacked African Americans in cities throughout the nation, including Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Buffalo, and Pittsburgh. This mob violence led Abraham Lincoln to lament “the worse than savage mobs” and “the increasing disregard for law which pervades the country” (Feldberg, 1980, p. 4). The mob violence stemmed from a “deep-seated racial prejudice…in which whites saw blacks as ‘something less than human’” (Brown, 1975, p. 206)Brown, R. M. (1975). *Strain of violence: Historical studies of American violence and vigilantism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. and continued well into the 20th century, when whites attacked African Americans in several cities, with at least seven anti-black riots occurring in 1919 alone that left dozens dead. Meanwhile, an era of Jim Crow racism in the South led to the lynchings of thousands of African Americans, segregation in all facets of life, and other kinds of abuses (Litwack, 2009).



Figure 8.1.2.1: During the era of Jim Crow racism in the South, several thousand African Americans were lynched. Source: Photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress, http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/npcc.12928.

Blacks were not the only targets of native-born white mobs back then (Dinnerstein & Reimers, 2009). As immigrants from Ireland, Italy, Eastern Europe, Mexico, and Asia flooded into the United States during the 19th and early 20th centuries, they, too, were beaten, denied jobs, and otherwise mistreated. During the 1850s, mobs beat and sometimes killed Catholics in cities such as Baltimore and New Orleans. During the 1870s, whites rioted against Chinese immigrants in cities in California and other states. Hundreds of Mexicans were attacked and/or lynched in California and Texas during this period.

Not surprisingly, scholars have written about U.S. racial and ethnic prejudice ever since the days of slavery. In 1835, the great social observer Alexis de Tocqueville (1835/1994) despaired that whites’ prejudice would make it impossible for them to live in

harmony with African Americans. Decades later, W. E. B. Du Bois (1903/1968, p. vii), one of the first sociologists to study race, observed in 1903 that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line" and cited example after example of economic, social, and legal discrimination against African Americans.

Nazi racism in the 1930s and 1940s helped awaken Americans to the evils of prejudice in their own country. Against this backdrop, a monumental two-volume work by Swedish social scientist Gunnar Myrdal (1944) attracted much attention when it was published. The book, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, documented the various forms of discrimination facing blacks back then. The "dilemma" referred to by the book's title was the conflict between the American democratic ideals of egalitarianism and liberty and justice for all and the harsh reality of prejudice, discrimination, and lack of equal opportunity. Using the common term for African American of his time, Myrdal wrote optimistically,

If America in actual practice could show the world a progressive trend by which the Negro finally became integrated into modern democracy, all mankind would be given faith again—it would have reason to believe that peace, progress, and order are feasible....America is free to choose whether the Negro shall remain her liability or become her opportunity. (Myrdal, 1944, pp. 1121–22)

Unfortunately, Myrdal was too optimistic, as legal segregation did not end until the Southern civil rights movement won its major victories in the 1960s. Even after segregation ended, improvement in other areas was slow. Thus in 1968, the so-called Kerner Commission (1968, p. 1), appointed by President Lyndon Johnson in response to the 1960s urban riots, warned in a famous statement, "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal." Despite this warning, and despite the civil rights movement's successes, 30 years later writer David K. Shipler (1997, p. 10). Knopf. felt compelled to observe that there is "no more intractable, pervasive issue than race" and that when it comes to race, we are "a country of strangers." Sociologists and other social scientists have warned since then that the conditions of people of color have actually been worsening (Massey, 2007; W. J. Wilson, 2009). Toward a framework for understanding forces that contribute to or reinforce racial inequality. *Race and Social Problems, 1*, 3–11. Despite the historic election of Barack Obama in 2008 as the first president of color, race and ethnicity remain an "intractable, pervasive issue." As the old French saying goes, *plus ça change, plus la meme chose* (the more things change, the more they stay the same). Indeed, it would be accurate to say, to paraphrase Du Bois, that "the problem of the 21st century is the problem of the color line." Evidence of this continuing problem appears in much of the remainder of this chapter.

Conclusion

- U.S. history is filled with violence and other maltreatment against Native Americans, blacks, and immigrants.
- The familiar saying "The more things change, the more they stay the same" applies to race and ethnic relations in the United States.

For Your Review

1. Describe why Myrdal said U.S. race relations were an "American dilemma."
2. How much did you learn in high school about the history of race and ethnicity in the United States? Do you think you should have learned more?

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8.1.3: The Meaning of Race and Ethnicity

Learning Objectives

- Critique the biological concept of race.
- Discuss why race is a social construction.
- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a sense of ethnic identity.

To understand this problem further, we need to take a critical look at the very meaning of race and ethnicity in today's society. These concepts may seem easy to define initially but are much more complex than their definitions suggest.

Race

Let's start first with race, which refers to *a category of people who share certain inherited physical characteristics, such as skin color, facial features, and stature*. A key question about race is whether it is more of a biological category or a social category. Most people think of race in biological terms, and for more than 300 years, or ever since White Europeans began colonizing populations of color elsewhere in the world, race has indeed served as the "premier source of human identity" (A. Smedley, 1998, p. 690).

It is certainly easy to see that people in the United States and around the world differ physically in some obvious ways. The most noticeable difference is skin tone: some groups of people have very dark skin, while others have very light skin. Other differences also exist. Some people have very curly hair, while others have very straight hair. Some have thin lips, while others have thick lips. Some groups of people tend to be relatively tall, while others tend to be relatively short. Using such physical differences as their criteria, scientists at one point identified as many as nine races: African, American Indian or Native American, Asian, Australian Aborigine, European (more commonly called "white"), Indian, Melanesian, Micronesian, and Polynesian (A. Smedley, 1998).

Although people certainly do differ in the many physical features that led to the development of such racial categories, anthropologists, sociologists, and many biologists question the value of these categories and thus the value of the biological concept of race (A. Smedley, 2007). For one thing, we often see more physical differences *within* a race than *between* races. For example, some people we call "white" (or European), such as those with Scandinavian backgrounds, have very light skins, while others, such as those from some Eastern European backgrounds, have much darker skins. In fact, some "whites" have darker skin than some "blacks," or African Americans. Some whites have very straight hair, while others have very curly hair; some have blonde hair and blue eyes, while others have dark hair and brown eyes. Because of interracial reproduction going back to the days of slavery, African Americans also differ in the darkness of their skin and in other physical characteristics. In fact it is estimated that about 80% of African Americans have some white (i.e., European) ancestry; 50% of Mexican Americans have European or Native American ancestry; and 20% of whites have African or Native American ancestry. If clear racial differences ever existed hundreds or thousands of years ago (and many scientists doubt such differences ever existed), in today's world these differences have become increasingly blurred.

Another reason to question the biological concept of race is that an individual or a group of individuals is often "assigned" to a race on arbitrary or even illogical grounds. A century ago, for example, Irish, Italians, and Eastern European Jews who left their homelands for a better life in the United States were not regarded as white once they reached the United States but rather as a different, inferior (if unnamed) race (Painter, 2010). The belief in their inferiority helped justify the harsh treatment they suffered in their new country. Today, of course, we call people from all three backgrounds white or European.



Figure 8.1.3.1: President Barack Obama had an African father and a white mother. Although his ancestry is equally black and white, Obama considers himself an African American, as do most Americans. In several Latin American nations, however, Obama would be considered white because of his white ancestry. Source: Photo courtesy of Steve Jurvetson, www.flickr.com/photos/jurvetson/2175936409.

In this context, consider someone in the United States who has a white parent and a black parent. What race is this person? American society usually calls this person black or African American, and the person may adopt the same identity (as does Barack Obama, who had a white mother and African father). But where is the logic for doing so? This person, including President Obama, is as much white as black in terms of parental ancestry. Or consider someone with one white parent and another parent that is the child of one black parent and white parent. This person thus has three white grandparents and one black grandparent. Even though this person's ancestry is thus 75% white and 25% black, she or he is likely to be considered black in the United States and may well adopt this racial identity. This practice reflects the traditional "one-drop rule" in the United States that defines someone as black if she or he has at least one drop of "black blood" and that was used in the antebellum South to keep the slave population as large as possible (Wright, 1993). Yet in many Latin American nations, this person would be considered white. In Brazil, the term *black* is reserved for someone with no European (white) ancestry at all. If we followed this practice in the United States, about 80% of the people we call "black" would now be called "white." With such arbitrary designations, race is more of a social category than a biological one.

A third reason to question the biological concept of race comes from the field of biology itself and more specifically from the study of genetics and of human evolution. Starting with genetics, people from different races are more than 99.9% the same in their DNA (Begley, 2008). To turn that around, less than 0.1% of all the DNA in our bodies accounts for the physical differences among people that we associate with racial differences. In terms of DNA, then, people with different racial backgrounds are much, much more similar than dissimilar.

Even if we acknowledge that people differ in the physical characteristics we associate with race, modern evolutionary evidence reminds us that we are all, really, of one human race. According to evolutionary theory, the human race began thousands and thousands of years ago in sub-Saharan Africa. As people migrated around the world over the millennia, natural selection took over. It favored dark skin for people living in hot, sunny climates (i.e., near the equator), because the heavy amounts of melanin that produce dark skin protect against severe sunburn, cancer, and other problems. By the same token, natural selection favored light skin for people who migrated farther from the equator to cooler, less sunny climates, because dark skins there would have interfered with the production of vitamin D (Stone & Lurquin, 2007).Stone, L., & Lurquin, P. F. (2007). *Genes, culture, and human evolution: A synthesis*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. Evolutionary evidence thus reinforces the common humanity of people who differ in the rather superficial ways associated with their appearances: we are one human species composed of people who happen to look different.

Race as a Social Construction

The reasons for doubting the biological basis for racial categories suggest that race is more of a social category than a biological one. Another way to say this is that race is a social construction, a concept that has no objective reality but rather is what people decide it is (Berger & Luckmann, 1963).Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1963). *The social construction of reality*. New York, NY:

Doubleday. In this view race has no real existence other than what and how people think of it.

This understanding of race is reflected in the problems, outlined earlier, in placing people with multiracial backgrounds into any one racial category. We have already mentioned the example of President Obama. As another example, the famous (and now notorious) golfer Tiger Woods was typically called an African American by the news media when he burst onto the golfing scene in the late 1990s, but in fact his ancestry is one-half Asian (divided evenly between Chinese and Thai), one-quarter white, one-eighth Native American, and only one-eighth African American (Leland & Beals, 1997). In living colors: Tiger Woods is the exception that rules. *Newsweek*, pp. 58–60.

Historical examples of attempts to place people in racial categories further underscore the social constructionism of race. In the South during the time of slavery, the skin tone of slaves lightened over the years as babies were born from the union, often in the form of rape, of slave owners and other whites with slaves. As it became difficult to tell who was "black" and who was not, many court battles over people's racial identity occurred. People who were accused of having black ancestry would go to court to "prove" they were white in order to avoid enslavement or other problems (Staples, 1998).The shifting meanings of "black" and "white," *The New York Time*s, p. WK14. Litigation over race continued long past the days of slavery. In a relatively recent example, Susie Guillory Phipps sued the Louisiana Bureau of Vital Records in the early 1980s to change her "official" race to white. Phipps was descended from a slave owner and a slave and thereafter had only white ancestors. Despite this fact, she was called "black" on her birth certificate because of a state law, echoing the "one-drop rule," that designated people as black if their ancestry was at least 1/32 black (meaning one of their great-great-great grandparents was black). Phipps had always thought of herself as white and was surprised after seeing a copy of her birth certificate to discover she was officially black because she had one black ancestor about 150 years earlier. She lost her case, and the U.S. Supreme Court later refused to review it (Omi & Winant, 1994).

Although race is a social construction, it is also true, as noted in an earlier chapter, that things perceived as real are real in their consequences. Because people *do* perceive race as something real, it has real consequences. Even though so little of DNA accounts for the physical differences we associate with racial differences, that low amount leads us not only to classify people into different races but to treat them differently—and, more to the point, unequally—based on their classification. Yet modern evidence shows there is little, if any, scientific basis for the racial classification that is the source of so much inequality.

Ethnicity

Because of the problems in the meaning of *race*, many social scientists prefer the term *ethnicity* in speaking of people of color and others with distinctive cultural heritages. In this context, ethnicity refers to *the shared social, cultural, and historical experiences, stemming from common national or regional backgrounds, that make subgroups of a population different from one another*. Similarly, an ethnic group is *a subgroup of a population with a set of shared social, cultural, and historical experiences; with relatively distinctive beliefs, values, and behaviors; and with some sense of identity of belonging to the subgroup*. So conceived, the terms *ethnicity* and *ethnic group* avoid the biological connotations of the terms *race* and *racial group* and the biological differences these terms imply. At the same time, the importance we attach to ethnicity illustrates that it, too, is in many ways a social construction, and our ethnic membership thus has important consequences for how we are treated.

The sense of identity many people gain from belonging to an ethnic group is important for reasons both good and bad. Because, as we learned previously, one of the most important functions of groups is the identity they give us, ethnic identities can give individuals a sense of belonging and a recognition of the importance of their cultural backgrounds. This sense of belonging is illustrated in Figure 8.1.3.2, which depicts the answers of General Social Survey respondents to the question, "How close do you feel to your ethnic or racial group?" More than three-fourths said they feel close or very close. The term ethnic pride captures the sense of self-worth that many people derive from their ethnic backgrounds. More generally, if group membership is important for many ways in which members of the group are socialized, ethnicity certainly plays an important role in the socialization of millions of people in the United States and elsewhere in the world today.

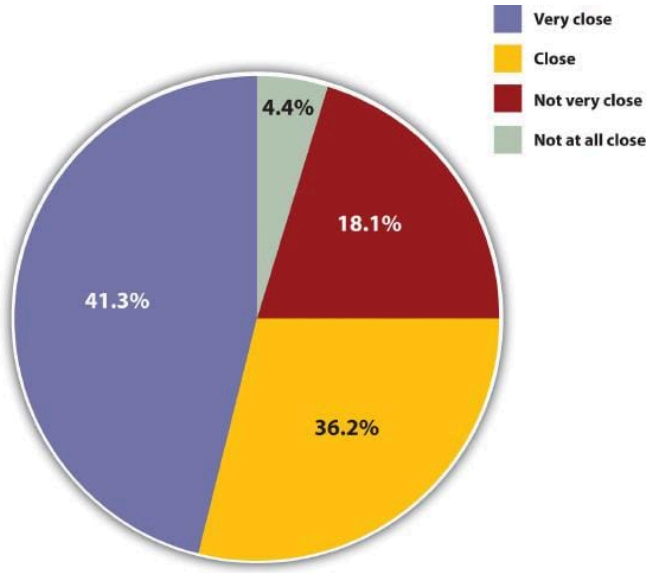


Figure 8.1.3.2: Responses to “How Close Do You Feel to Your Ethnic or Racial Group?” Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2004.

A downside of ethnicity and ethnic group membership is the conflict they create among people of different ethnic groups. History and current practice indicate that it is easy to become prejudiced against people with different ethnicities from our own. Much of the rest of this chapter looks at the prejudice and discrimination operating today in the United States against people whose ethnicity is not white and European. Around the world today, ethnic conflict continues to rear its ugly head. The 1990s and 2000s were filled with “ethnic cleansing” and pitched battles among ethnic groups in Eastern Europe, Africa, and elsewhere. Our ethnic heritages shape us in many ways and fill many of us with pride, but they also are the source of much conflict, prejudice, and even hatred, as the hate crime story that began this chapter so sadly reminds us.

Conclusion

- Sociologists think race is best considered a social construction rather than a biological category.
- “Ethnicity” and “ethnic” avoid the biological connotations of “race” and “racial.”

For Your Review

1. List everyone you might know whose ancestry is biracial or multiracial. What do these individuals consider themselves to be?
2. List two or three examples that indicate race is a social construction rather than a biological category.

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8.1.4: Prejudice

Learning Objectives

- Define *prejudice*, *racism*, and *stereotypes*.
- Discuss the major social-psychological and sociological theories of prejudice.
- Describe how the nature of prejudice has changed.

Let's examine racial and ethnic prejudice further and then turn to discrimination in the next section. Prejudice and discrimination are often confused, but the basic difference between them is this: prejudice is the attitude, while discrimination is the behavior. More specifically, racial and ethnic prejudice refers to *a set of negative attitudes, beliefs, and judgments about whole categories of people, and about individual members of those categories, because of their perceived race and/or ethnicity*. A closely related concept is racism, or *the belief that certain racial or ethnic groups are inferior to one's own*. Prejudice and racism are often based on racial and ethnic stereotypes, or *simplified, mistaken generalizations about people because of their race and/or ethnicity*. While cultural and other differences do exist among the various American racial and ethnic groups, many of the views we have of such groups are unfounded and hence stereotypes. An example of the stereotypes that white people have of other groups appears in Figure 7.5, in which white respondents in the General Social Survey (GSS) are less likely to think blacks are intelligent than they are to think whites are intelligent.

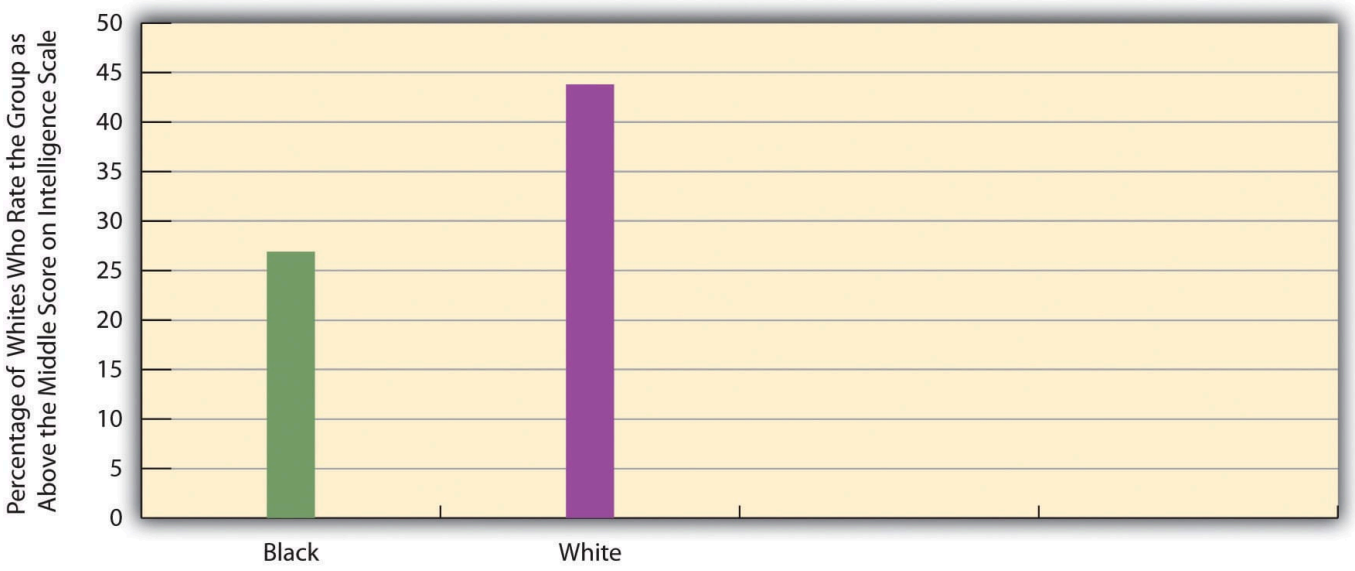


Figure 7.5: Perceptions by Non-Latino White Respondents of the Intelligence of White and Black AmericansSource: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

Explaining Prejudice

Where do racial and ethnic prejudices come from? Why are some people more prejudiced than others? Scholars have tried to answer these questions at least since the 1940s, when the horrors of Nazism were still fresh in people's minds. Theories of prejudice fall into two camps, social-psychological and sociological. We will look at social-psychological explanations first and then turn to sociological explanations. We will also discuss distorted mass media treatment of various racial and ethnic groups.

Social-Psychological Explanations

One of the first social-psychological explanations of prejudice centered on the "authoritarian personality" (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950).Adorno, T. W., Frenkel-Brunswick, E., Levinson, D. J., & Sanford, R. N. (1950). *The authoritarian personality*. New York, NY: Harper. According to this view, authoritarian personalities develop in childhood in

response to parents who practice harsh discipline. Individuals with authoritarian personalities emphasize such things as obedience to authority, a rigid adherence to rules, and low acceptance of people (out-groups) not like oneself. Many studies find strong racial and ethnic prejudice among such individuals (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008).Sibley, C. G., & Duckitt, J. (2008). Personality and prejudice: A meta-analysis and theoretical review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 12*, 248–279. But whether their prejudice stems from their authoritarian personalities or instead from the fact that their parents were probably prejudiced themselves remains an important question.



Figure 7.6: Authoritarian personalities are said to develop in childhood from harsh parental discipline and to be linked to racial and ethnic prejudice. Although many people with authoritarian personalities are prejudiced, it remains unclear whether their prejudice stems from their personalities or from their parents' own prejudice. © Thinkstock

Another early and still popular social-psychological explanation is called frustration or scapegoat theory (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939).Dollard, J., Doob, L. W., Miller, N. E., Mowrer, O. H., & Sears, R. R. (1939). *Frustration and aggression*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. In this view individuals who experience various kinds of problems become frustrated and tend to blame their troubles on groups that are often disliked in the real world (e.g., racial, ethnic, and religious minorities). These minorities are thus scapegoats for the real sources of people's misfortunes. Several psychology experiments find that when people are frustrated, they indeed become more prejudiced. In one early experiment, college students who were purposely not given enough time to solve a puzzle were more prejudiced after the experiment than before it (Cowen, Landes, & Schaet, 1959).Cowen, E. L., Landes, J., & Schaet, D. E. (1959). The effects of mild frustration on the expression of prejudiced attitudes. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 64,* 33–38.

In the real world, scapegoating at a mass level has been quite common. In medieval Europe, Jews were commonly blamed and persecuted when economic conditions were bad or when war efforts were failing. After the bubonic plague broke out in 1348 and eventually killed more than one-third of all Europeans, Jews were blamed either for deliberately spreading the plague or for angering God because they were not Christian. When Germany suffered economic hardship after World War I, Jews again proved a convenient scapegoat, and anti-Semitism helped fuel the rise of Hitler and Nazism (Litvinoff, 1988).Litvinoff, B. (1988). *The burning bush: Anti-Semitism and world history*. New York, NY: E. P. Dutton.

Sociological Explanations

Sociological explanations of prejudice incorporate some of the principles and processes discussed in previous chapters. One popular explanation emphasizes *conformity and socialization* (also called *social learning theory*). In this view, people who are prejudiced are merely conforming to the culture in which they grow up, and prejudice is the result of socialization from parents, peers, the news media, and other various aspects of their culture. Supporting this view, studies have found that people tend to become more prejudiced when they move to areas where people are very prejudiced and less prejudiced when they move to locations where people are less prejudiced (Aronson, 2008).Aronson, E. (2008). *The social animal* (10th ed.). New York: Worth. If people in the South today continue to be more prejudiced than those outside the South, as we discuss later, even though legal segregation ended more than four decades ago, the influence of their culture on their socialization may help explain these beliefs.

A second sociological explanation emphasizes *economic and political competition* and is commonly called *group threat theory* (Quillian, 2006; Hughes & Tuch, 2003).Quillian, L. (2006). New approaches to understanding racial prejudice and discrimination. *Annual Review of Sociology, 32*, 299–328; Hughes, M., & Tuch, S. A. (2003). Gender differences in whites' racial attitudes: Are women's attitudes really more favorable? *Social Psychology Quarterly, 66*, 384–401. In this view prejudice arises from competition over jobs and other resources and from disagreement over various political issues. When groups vie with each other over these matters, they often become hostile toward each other. Amid such hostility, it is easy to become prejudiced toward the group that threatens your economic or political standing. A popular version of this basic explanation is Susan Olzak's (1992)Olzak, S. (1992). *The dynamics of ethnic competition and conflict*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.*ethnic competition theory*, which holds that ethnic prejudice and conflict increase when two or more ethnic groups find themselves competing for jobs, housing, and other goals.



Figure 7.7: During the 1870s, whites feared that Chinese immigrants would take away their jobs. This fear led to white mob violence against the Chinese and to an act of Congress that prohibited Chinese immigration. Source: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...to_America.jpg.

As might be clear, the competition explanation is the macro or structural equivalent of the frustration/scapegoat theory already discussed. Much of the white mob violence discussed earlier stemmed from whites' concern that the groups they attacked threatened their jobs and other aspects of their lives. Thus lynchings of African Americans in the South increased when the Southern economy worsened and decreased when the economy improved (Tolnay & Beck, 1995).Tolnay, S. E., & Beck, E. M. (1995). *A festival of violence: An analysis of Southern lynchings, 1882–1930*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press. Similarly, white mob violence against Chinese immigrants in the 1870s began after the railroad construction that employed so many Chinese immigrants slowed and the Chinese began looking for work in other industries. Whites feared that the Chinese would take jobs away from white workers and that their large supply of labor would drive down wages. Their assaults on the Chinese killed several people and prompted the passage by Congress of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 that prohibited Chinese immigration (Dinnerstein & Reimers, 2009).Dinnerstein, L., & Reimers, D. M. (2009). *Ethnic Americans: A history of immigration*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Several nations today, including the United States, have experienced increased anti-immigrant prejudice because of the growing numbers of immigrants into their shores (Bauer, 2009).Bauer, M. (2009). *Under seige: Life for low-income Latinos in the South*. Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center. We return to anti-immigrant prejudice later in this chapter.

The Role of the Mass Media

Growing evidence suggests that news media coverage of people of color helps fuel racial prejudice and stereotypes. By presenting people of color in a negative light, the media may unwittingly reinforce the prejudice that individuals already have or even increase their prejudice (Larson, 2005).Larson, S. G. (2005). *Media & minorities: The politics of race in news and entertainment*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Examples of distorted media coverage abound. Even though poor people are more likely to be white than any other race or ethnicity (see Chapter 6), the news media use pictures of African Americans far more often than those of whites in stories about poverty. In one study, national news magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* and television news shows portrayed African

Americans in almost two-thirds of their stories on poverty, even though only about one-fourth of poor people are African Americans. In the magazine stories, only 12% of the African Americans had a job, even though in the real world more than 40% of poor African Americans were working at the time the stories were written (Gilens, 1996).Gilens, M. (1996). Race and poverty in America: Public misperceptions and the American news media. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 60*, 515–541. In another study of Chicago television stations, African Americans arrested for violent crime were twice as likely as whites arrested for violent crime to be shown being handcuffed or held by police. Even though whites and African Americans live in Chicago in roughly equal numbers, the television news shows there depicted whites 14 times more often in stories of "good Samaritans" (Entman & Rojecki, 2001).Entman, R. M., & Rojecki, A. (2001). *The black image in the white mind*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Many other studies find that newspaper and television stories about crime and drugs feature higher proportions of African Americans as offenders than is true in arrest statistics (Lundman, 2003; Surette, 2011)..Lundman, R. J. (2003). The newsworthiness and selection bias in news about murder: Comparative and relative effects of novelty and race and gender typifications on newspaper coverage of homicide. *Sociological Forum, 18*, 357–386; Surette, R. (2011). *Media, crime, and criminal justice: Images, realities, and policies* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. Studies like these show that the news media "convey the message that black people are violent, lazy, and less civic minded" (Jackson, 1997, p. A27).Jackson, D. Z. (1997, December 5). Unspoken during race talk. *The Boston Globe*, p. A27.

Nor are African Americans the only group receiving biased media coverage. A study of television business stories in San Francisco found that no Asian Americans were shown in these stories, even though Asian Americans constituted 29% of San Francisco's population at the time of the study (Jackson, 1997).Jackson, D. Z. (1997, December 5). Unspoken during race talk. *The Boston Globe*, p. A27. Similarly, a study of the 12,000 stories on the national television evening news shows in 1997 found that less than 1% featured Latinos, even though Latinos made up about 10% of the U.S. population at that time. About two-thirds of the Latinos' stories focused on their crime, immigration, and employment problems rather than on their achievements in politics, business, and popular culture (Alvear, 1998).Alvear, C. (1998). No Chicanos on TV. *Nieman Reports, 52*, 49–50.

Does this stereotypical media coverage actually affect public views about racial and ethnic groups? The answer appears to be yes, as research finds a link between the proportion of African American offenders in television news stories and crime shows and fear of crime experienced by white viewers of these programs: the higher the proportion of African American offenders, the greater the fear of crime the viewers expressed (Eschholz, 2002).Eschholz, S. (2002). Racial composition of television offenders and viewers' fear of crime. *Critical Criminology, 11*, 41–60. An interesting experiment also indicated that stereotypical media coverage does indeed make a difference. The experiment involved white students in an introduction to psychology class at the University of Michigan. The researcher, Tali Mendelberg (1997),Mendelberg, T. (1997). Executing Hortons: Racial crime in the 1988 presidential campaign. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 61*, 34–57. randomly assigned subjects to one of two groups. The experimental group viewed news coverage of a young black man, Willie Horton, who, while away on a weekend pass from prison where he was serving a life term for first-degree murder, kidnapped a white couple and then raped the woman and stabbed the man; his story was the feature of a key campaign commercial on behalf of the 1988 presidential campaign of then-Vice President George H. W. Bush. The control group viewed a video about pollution in Boston Harbor. After watching the videos, subjects in both groups were asked their views on several racial issues, including government efforts to help African Americans. The experimental group that watched the Horton video was more likely than the control group to oppose these efforts and in other respects to have negative views about African Americans. Mendelberg concluded that prejudicial media depictions of racial matters do indeed have prejudicial effects.

Correlates of Prejudice

Since the 1940s, social scientists have investigated the individual correlates of racial and ethnic prejudice (Stangor, 2009).Stangor, C. (2009). The study of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination within social psychology: A quick history of theory and research. In T. D. Nelson (Ed.), *Handbook of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination* (pp. 1–22). New York, NY: Psychology Press. These correlates help test the theories of prejudice just presented. For example, if authoritarian personalities do produce prejudice, then people with these personalities should be more prejudiced. If frustration also produces prejudice, then people who are frustrated with aspects of their lives should also be more prejudiced. Other correlates that have been studied include age, education, gender, region of country, race, residence in integrated neighborhoods, and religiosity. We can take time here to focus on gender, education, and region of country and discuss the evidence for the racial attitudes of whites, as most studies do in view of the historic dominance of whites in the United States.

The findings on gender are rather surprising. Although women are usually thought to be more empathetic than men and thus to be less likely to be racially prejudiced, recent research indicates that the racial views of (white) women and men are in fact very similar and that the two genders are about equally prejudiced (Hughes & Tuch, 2003).Hughes, M., & Tuch, S. A. (2003). Gender differences in whites' racial attitudes: Are women's attitudes really more favorable? *Social Psychology Quarterly, 66*, 384–401. This similarity supports group threat theory, outlined earlier, in that it indicates that white women and men are responding more

as whites than as women or men, respectively, in formulating their racial views.

Findings on education and region of country are not surprising. Focusing again just on whites, less educated people are usually more racially prejudiced than better educated people, and Southerners are usually more prejudiced than non-Southerners (Krysan, 2000; Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997).Krysan, M. (2000). Prejudice, politics, and public opinion: Understanding the sources of racial policy attitudes. *Annual Review of Sociology, 26*, 135–168; Schuman, H., Steeh, C., Bobo, L., & Krysan, M. (1997). *Racial attitudes in America: Trends and interpretations* (rev. ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Evidence of these differences appears in Figure 7.8, which depicts educational and regional differences in a type of racial prejudice that social scientists call “social distance,” or feelings about interacting with members of other races and ethnicities. The General Social Survey asks respondents how they feel about a “close relative” marrying an African American. Figure 7.8 shows how responses by white (non-Latino) respondents to this question vary by education and by Southern residence. Whites without a high school degree are much more likely than those with more education to oppose these marriages, and whites in the South are also much more likely than their non-Southern counterparts to oppose them. To recall the sociological perspective, our social backgrounds certainly do seem to affect our attitudes.

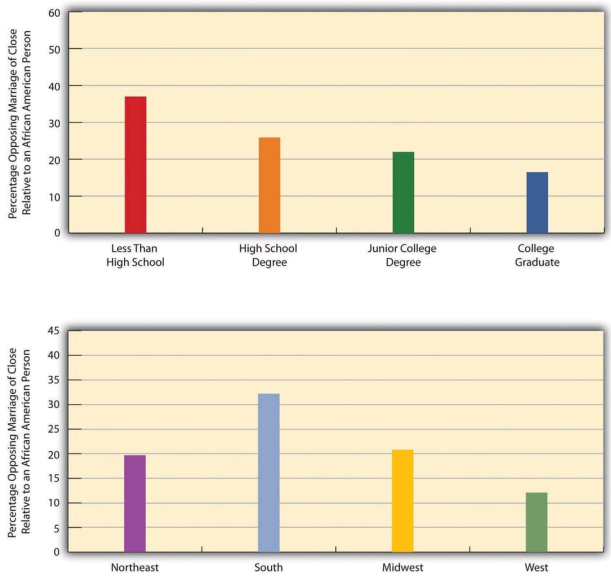


Figure 7.8 Education, Region, and Opposition by Non-Latino Whites to a Close Relative Marrying an African American. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010

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The Changing Nature of Prejudice

Although racial and ethnic prejudice still exists in the United States, its nature has changed during the past half-century. Studies of these changes focus on whites’ perceptions of African Americans. Back in the 1940s and before, an era of overt, *Jim Crow* racism (also called *traditional* or *old-fashioned*racism) prevailed, not just in the South but in the entire nation. This racism involved blatant bigotry, firm beliefs in the need for segregation, and the view that blacks were biologically inferior to whites. In the early 1940s, for example, more than half of all whites thought that blacks were less intelligent than whites, more than half favored segregation in public transportation, more than two-thirds favored segregated schools, and more than half thought whites should receive preference over blacks in employment hiring (Schuman et al., 1997).Schuman, H., Steeh, C., Bobo, L., & Krysan, M. (1997). *Racial attitudes in America: Trends and interpretations* (rev. ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

The Nazi experience and then the civil rights movement led whites to reassess their views, and Jim Crow racism gradually waned. Few whites believe today that African Americans are biologically inferior, and few favor segregation. As just one example, Figure 7.9 shows with General Social Survey data that whites’ support for segregated housing declined dramatically from about 40% in the early 1970s to about 13% in 1996. So few whites now support segregation and other Jim Crow views that national surveys no longer include many of the questions that were asked some 50 years ago, and the General Social Survey stopped asking about segregated housing after 1996.

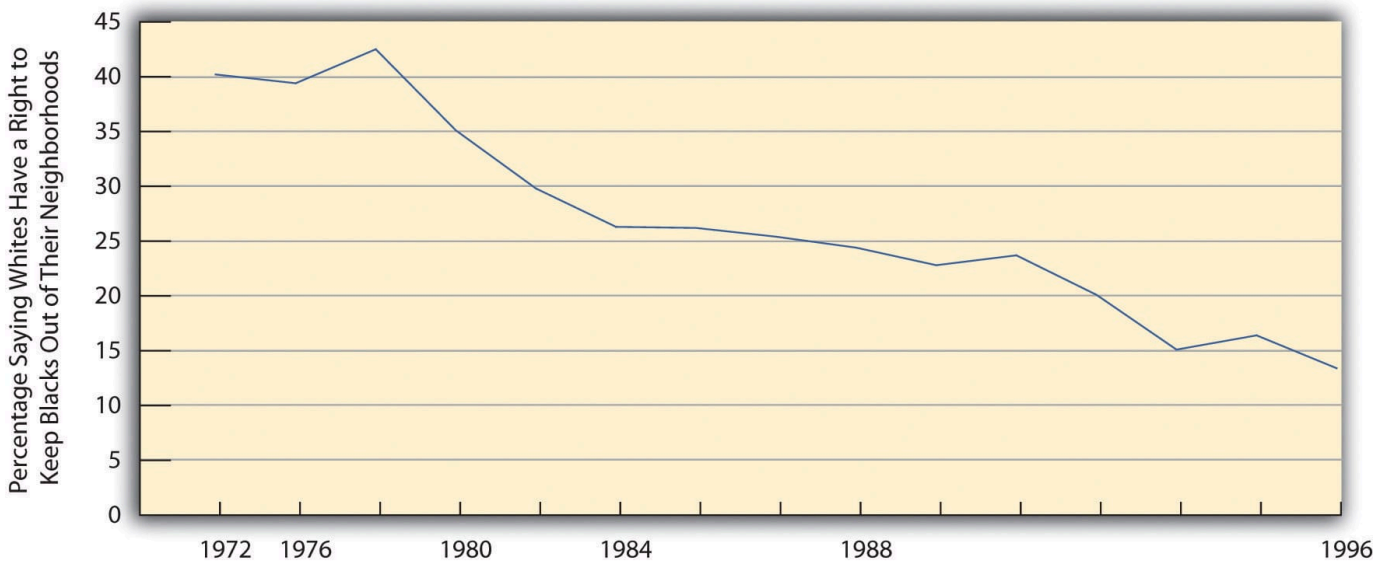


Figure 7.9 Changes in Support by Whites for Segregated Housing, 1972–1996. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2008.

Despite these changes, several scholars say that Jim Crow racism has been replaced by a more subtle form of racial prejudice, termed *laissez-faire*, *symbolic*, or *modern* racism, that amounts to a "kinder, gentler, antiblack ideology" that avoids notions of biological inferiority (Quillian, 2006; Bobo, Kluegel, & Smith, 1997, p. 15; Sears, 1988).Quillian, L. (2006). New approaches to understanding racial prejudice and discrimination. *Annual Review of Sociology, 32*, 299–328; Bobo, L., Kluegel, J. R., & Smith, R. A. (1997). Laissez-faire racism: The crystallization of a kinder, gentler, antiblack ideology. In S. A. Tuch & J. K. Martin (Eds.), *Racial attitudes in the 1990s: Continuity and change* (pp. 15–44). Westport, CT: Praeger. Sears, D. O. (1988). Symbolic racism. In P. A. Katz & D. A. Taylor (Eds.), *Eliminating racism: Profiles in controversy* (pp. 53–84). New York, NY: Plenum. Instead, it involves stereotypes about African Americans, a belief that their poverty is due to their cultural inferiority, and opposition to government policies to help them. In effect, this new form of prejudice blames African Americans themselves for their low socioeconomic standing and involves such beliefs that they simply do not want to work hard. As Lawrence Bobo and colleagues (1997, p. 31)Bobo, L., Kluegel, J. R., & Smith, R. A. (1997). Laissez-faire racism: The crystallization of a kinder, gentler, antiblack ideology. In S. A. Tuch & J. K. Martin (Eds.), *Racial attitudes in the 1990s: Continuity and change* (pp. 15–44). Westport, CT: Praeger put it, "Blacks are still stereotyped and blamed as the architects of their own disadvantaged status." They note that these views lead whites to oppose government efforts to help African Americans.

Evidence for this modern form of prejudice is seen in Figure 7.10, which presents whites' responses to two General Social Survey questions that asked, respectively, whether African Americans' low socioeconomic status is due to their lower "in-born ability to learn" or to their lack of "motivation and willpower to pull themselves up out of poverty." While only 9.2% of whites attributed blacks' status to lower innate intelligence (reflecting the decline of Jim Crow racism), almost 52% attributed it to their lack of motivation and willpower. Although this reason sounds "kinder" and "gentler" than a belief in blacks' biological inferiority, it is still one that blames African Americans for their low socioeconomic status.

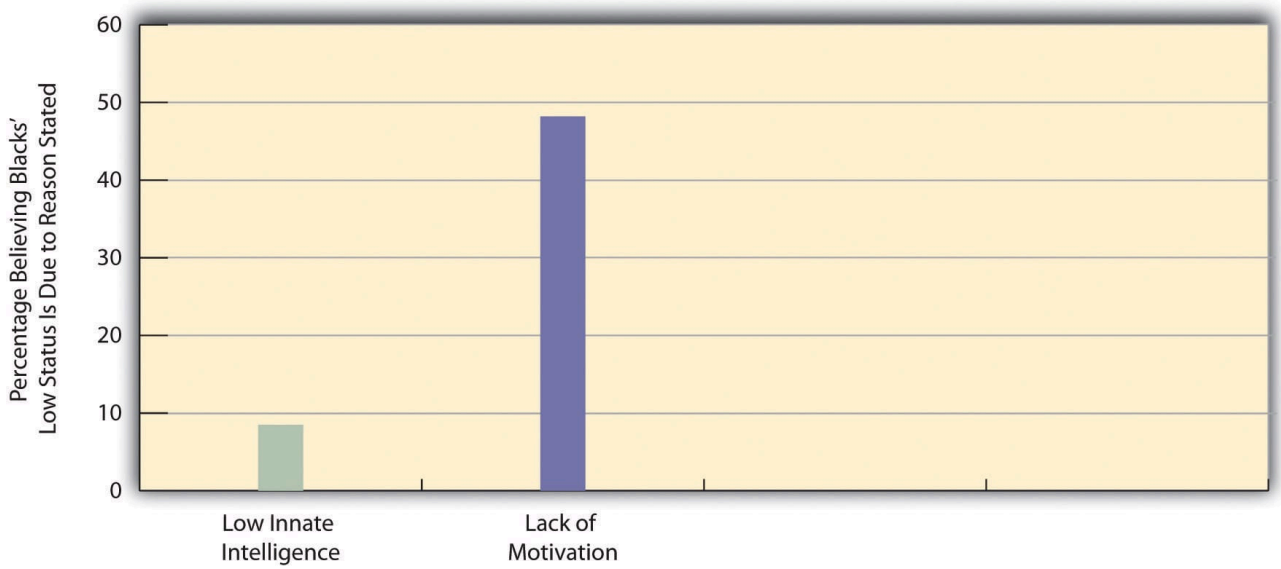


Figure 7.10 Attribution by Non-Latino Whites of Blacks' Low Socioeconomic Status to Blacks' Low Innate Intelligence and to Their Lack of Motivation to Improve. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

Prejudice and Public Policy Preferences

If whites do continue to believe in racial stereotypes, say the scholars who study modern prejudice, they are that much more likely to oppose government efforts to help people of color. For example, whites who hold racial stereotypes are more likely to oppose government programs for African Americans (Quillian, 2006; Krysan, 2000; Sears, Laar, Carrillo, & Kosterman, 1997).Quillian, L. (2006). New approaches to understanding racial prejudice and discrimination. *Annual Review of Sociology, 32*, 299–328; Krysan, M. (2000). Prejudice, politics, and public opinion: Understanding the sources of racial policy attitudes. *Annual Review of Sociology, 26*, 135–168; Sears, D. O., Laar, C.V., Carrillo, M., & Kosterman, R. (1997). Is it really racism? The origins of white Americans' opposition to race-targeted policies. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 61*, 16–57. We can see an example of this type of effect in Figure 7.11, which shows that whites who attribute blacks' poverty to lack of motivation are more likely than whites who cite discrimination to believe the government is spending too much to improve the conditions of blacks.

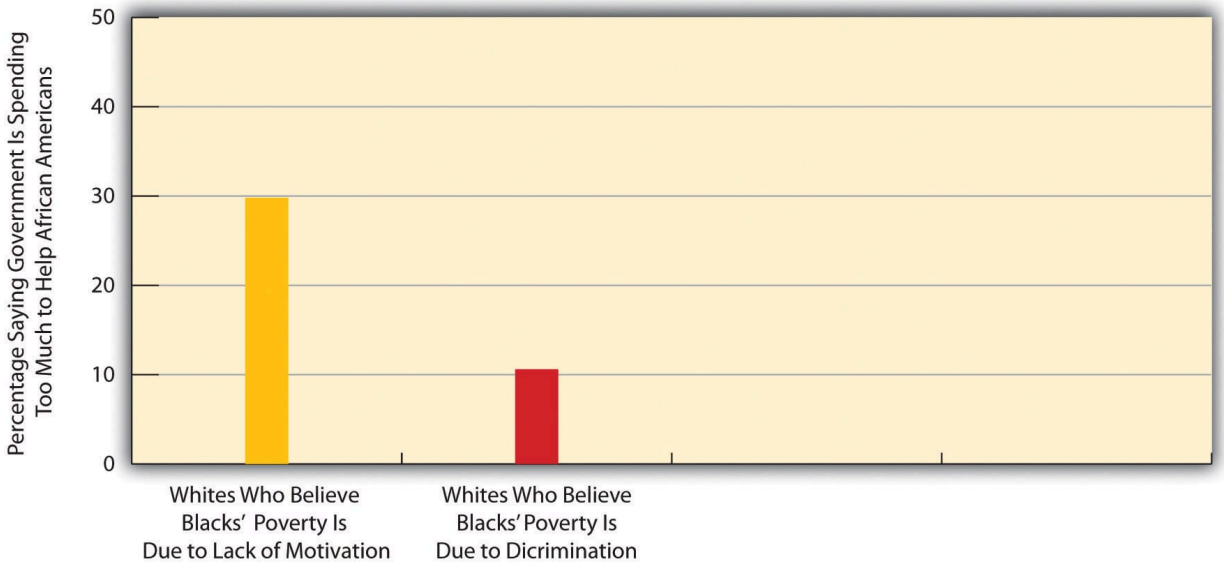


Figure 7.11 Racial Stereotyping by Non-Latino Whites and Their Opposition to Government Spending to Help African Americans. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.



Figure 7.12. Whites who are racially prejudiced are more likely to favor harsher treatment of criminals and in particular are more likely to support the death penalty. © Thinkstock

Racial prejudice influences other public policy preferences as well. In the area of criminal justice, whites who hold racial stereotypes or hostile feelings toward African Americans are more likely to be afraid of crime, to think that the courts are not harsh enough, to support the death penalty, to want more money spent to fight crime, and to favor excessive use of force by police (Barkan & Cohn, 1998, 2005; Unnever & Cullen, 2010).Barkan, S. E., & Cohn, S. F. (1998). Racial prejudice and support by whites for police use of force: A research note. *Justice Quarterly, 15*, 743–753; Barkan, S. E., & Cohn, S. F. (2005). On reducing white support for the death penalty: A pessimistic appraisal. *Criminology & Public Policy, 4*, 39–44; Unnever, J. D., & Cullen, F. T. (2010). The social sources of Americans' punitiveness: A test of three competing models. *Criminology, 48*, 99–129.

If racial prejudice influences views on all of these issues, then these results are troubling for a democratic society like the United States. In a democracy, it is appropriate for the public to disagree on all sorts of issues, including criminal justice. For example, citizens hold many reasons for either favoring or opposing the death penalty. But is it appropriate for racial prejudice to be one of these reasons? To the extent that elected officials respond to public opinion, as they should in a democracy, and to the extent that public opinion is affected by racial prejudice, then racial prejudice may be influencing government policy on criminal justice and on other issues. In a democratic society, it is unacceptable for racial prejudice to have this effect.

Conclusion

- Social-psychological explanations of prejudice emphasize authoritarian personalities and frustration, while sociological explanations emphasize social learning and group threat.
- Education and region of residence are related to racial prejudice among whites; prejudice is higher among whites with lower levels of formal education and among whites living in the South.
- Jim Crow racism has been replaced by symbolic or modern racism that emphasizes the cultural inferiority of people of color.
- Racial prejudice among whites is linked to certain views they hold about public policy. Prejudice is associated with lower support among whites for governmental efforts to help people of color and with greater support for a more punitive criminal justice system.

For Your Review

1. Think about the last time you heard someone say a remark that was racially prejudiced. What was said? What was your reaction?
2. The text argues that it is inappropriate in a democratic society for racial prejudice to influence public policy. Do you agree with this argument? Why or why not?

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8.1.5: Discrimination

Learning Objectives

- Discuss Merton's views on whether prejudice and discrimination always coincide.
- Distinguish between individual discrimination and institutional discrimination.
- Provide two examples of institutional discrimination.

Often racial and ethnic prejudice lead to discrimination against the subordinate racial and ethnic groups in a given society. Discrimination in this context refers to *the arbitrary denial of rights, privileges, and opportunities to members of these groups*. The use of the word *arbitrary* emphasizes that these groups are being treated unequally not because of their lack of merit but because of their race and ethnicity.

Usually prejudice and discrimination go hand-in-hand, but Robert Merton (1949)Merton, R. K. (1949). Discrimination and the American creed. In R. M. MacIver (Ed.), *Discrimination and national welfare*(pp. 99–126). New York, NY: Institute for Religious Studies. stressed that this is not always the case. Sometimes we can be prejudiced and not discriminate, and sometimes we might not be prejudiced and still discriminate. Table 7.1 illustrates his perspective. The top-left cell and bottom-right cells consist of people who behave in ways we would normally expect. The top-left one consists of "active bigots," in Merton's terminology, people who are both prejudiced and discriminatory. An example of such a person is the white owner of an apartment building who dislikes people of color and refuses to rent to them. The bottom-right cell consists of "all-weather liberals," as Merton called them, people who are neither prejudiced nor discriminatory. An example would be someone who holds no stereotypes about the various racial and ethnic groups and treats everyone the same regardless of her/his background.

Table 7.1 The Relationship Between Prejudice and Discrimination

	Prejudiced?	
Discriminates?	*Yes*	*No*
Yes	Active bigots	Fair-weather liberals
No	Timid bigots	All-weather liberals

Source: Adapted from Merton, R. K. (1949). Discrimination and the American creed. In R. M. MacIver (Ed.), Discrimination and national welfare (pp. 99–126). New York, NY: Institute for Religious Studies.

The remaining two cells of the table in Table 7.1 are the more unexpected ones. On the bottom-left, we see people who are prejudiced but who nonetheless do not discriminate; Merton called them "timid bigots." An example would be white restaurant owners who do not like people of color but still serve them anyway because they want their business or are afraid of being sued if they do not serve them. At the top right, we see "fair-weather liberals": people who are not prejudiced but who still discriminate. An example would be white store owners in the South during the segregation era who thought it was wrong to treat blacks worse than whites but who still refused to sell to them because they were afraid of losing white customers.

Individual Discrimination

The discussion so far has centered on individual discrimination, or discrimination that individuals practice in their daily lives, usually because they are prejudiced but sometimes even if they are not prejudiced. Examples of individual discrimination abound in today's world. The slights and indignities John Howard Griffin suffered in his experiment some 40 years ago ended when he went back to being white, but people of color do not have the luxury of switching their race or ethnicity. For them, individual discrimination by whites is a routine occurrence. Joe Feagin (1991),Feagin, J. R. (1991). The continuing significance of race: Antiblack discrimination in public places. *American Sociological Review, 56*, 101–116. a former president of the American Sociological Association, documented such discrimination when he interviewed middle-class African Americans about their experiences.



Figure 7.13. Sociologist Joe Feagin's study of middle-class African Americans found that many had been harassed by police and otherwise had experienced various kinds of racial slights. © Thinkstock

Many of the people he interviewed said they had been refused service, or at least received poor service, in stores or restaurants. Others said they had been harassed by the police, and even put in fear of their lives, just for being black. Feagin concluded that these examples are not just isolated incidents but rather reflect the larger racism that characterizes U.S. society. To many observers, the arrest of Henry Louis Gates Jr., a renowned African American scholar at Harvard University, at his home in July 2009 was another example of individual discrimination. Gates had returned home after a trip and was trying to open his jammed front door. Fearing a burglary, a passerby called the police. A white officer responded and confirmed that Gates owned the house. Tempers evidently flared, and Gates was arrested. The incident aroused a national controversy and led President Obama to invite Gates and the officer, James Crowley, to the White House for a beer (Wallsten, 2009).Wallsten, P. (2009, August 17). Speech follows beer summit; at a Long Beach convention, the man who arrested a black professor will thank police for support. *Los Angeles Times,* pp. A10.



Figure 7.14: Harvard University scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr. was arrested in July 2009 in front of his house by police officer James Crowley, who was investigating a report of a possible burglary. This incident aroused a national controversy and led President Obama to invite both men to the White House for a beer. Source: Photo courtesy of the White House, http://www.flickr.com/photos/whitehouse/3772873071.



Figure 7.15. Sociologist Denise Segura found that more than 40% of the Mexican American women she interviewed at a public university had encountered workplace discrimination based on their ethnicity and/or gender. © Thinkstock

Much individual discrimination occurs in the workplace, as sociologist Denise Segura (1992)Segura, D. A. (1992). Chicanas in white-collar jobs: "You have to prove yourself more." In C. G. Ellison & W. A. Martin (Eds.), *Race and ethnic relations in the United States: Readings for the 21st century* (pp. 79–88). Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury. documented when she interviewed 152 Mexican American women working in white-collar jobs at a public university in California. More than 40% of the women said they had encountered workplace discrimination based on their ethnicity and/or gender, and they attributed their treatment to stereotypes held by their employers and coworkers. Along with discrimination, they were the targets of condescending comments like "I didn't know that there were any educated people in Mexico that have a graduate degree."

Institutional Discrimination

Individual discrimination is important to address, but at least as consequential in today's world is institutional discrimination, or discrimination that pervades the practices of whole institutions, such as housing, medical care, law enforcement, employment, and education. This type of discrimination does not just affect a few isolated people of color. Instead, it affects large numbers of individuals simply because of their race or ethnicity. Sometimes institutional discrimination is also based on gender, disability, and other characteristics.

In the area of race and ethnicity, institutional discrimination often stems from prejudice, as was certainly true in the South during segregation. However, just as individuals can discriminate without being prejudiced, so can institutions when they engage in practices that seem to be racially neutral but in fact have a discriminatory effect. Individuals in institutions can also discriminate without realizing it. They make decisions that turn out upon close inspection to discriminate against people of color even if they did not mean to do so.

The bottom line is this: institutions can discriminate even if they do not intend to do so. Consider height requirements for police. Before the 1970s, police forces around the United States commonly had height requirements, say 5 feet 10 inches. As women began to want to join police forces in the 1970s, many found they were too short. The same was true for people from some racial/ethnic backgrounds, such as Latino, whose stature is smaller on the average than that of non-Latino whites. Of course, even many white males were too short be become police officers, but the point is that even more women, and even more men of certain ethnicities, were too short.



Figure 7.16. Institutional discrimination can occur even if this type of discrimination is not intended. Police forces used to have height requirements, but these were deemed by courts to discriminate against women, Latinos, and other individuals. In response, police forces lowered their height requirements. © Thinkstock

This gender and ethnic difference is not, in and of itself, discriminatory as the law defines the term. The law allows for *bona fide* (good faith) physical qualifications for a job. As an example, we would all agree that someone has to be able to see to be a school bus driver; sight therefore is a *bona fide*requirement for this line of work. Thus, even though people who are blind cannot become school bus drivers, the law does not consider such a physical requirement to be discriminatory.

But were the height restrictions for police work in the early 1970s *bona fide*requirements? Women and members of certain ethnic groups challenged these restrictions in court and won their cases, as it was decided that there was no logical basis for the height restrictions then in effect. In short (pun intended), the courts concluded that a person did not have to be 5 feet 10 inches to be an effective police officer. In response to these court challenges, police forces lowered their height requirements, opening the door for many more women, Latino men, and some other men to join police forces (Appier, 1998).Appier, J. (1998). *Policing women: The sexual politics of law enforcement and the LAPD*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. Whether police forces back then intended their height requirements to discriminate, or whether they honestly thought their height requirements made sense, remains in dispute. Regardless of the reason, their requirements did discriminate.

Today institutional discrimination affects the life chances of people of color in many aspects of life. To illustrate this, we turn to some examples of institutional discrimination that have been the subject of government investigation and scholarly research. (We will discuss gender-based institutional discrimination in Chapter 8.)

Health Care

People of color have higher rates of disease and illness than whites, a fact we explore further in Chapter 13's treatment of health and medicine. One question that arises is why their health is worse. Do they have poorer diets, less healthy lifestyles, and the like, or do they receive worse medical care because of their higher poverty and, perhaps, because of institutional discrimination in the health-care industry? We examine these possible answers in Chapter 13, but for now focus on evidence of institutional discrimination based on race and ethnicity.

Several studies use hospital records to investigate whether people of color receive optimal medical care, including coronary bypass surgery, angioplasty, and catheterization. After taking the patients' medical symptoms and needs into account, these studies find that African Americans are much less likely than whites to receive the procedures just listed. This is true when poor blacks are compared to poor whites and also when middle-class blacks are compared to middle-class whites (B. D. Smedley, Stith, & Nelson, 2003).Smedley, B. D., Stith, A. Y., & Nelson, A. R. (Eds.). (2003). *Unequal treatment: Confronting racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press. In a novel way of studying race and cardiac care, one study performed an experiment in which several hundred doctors viewed videos of African American and white patients, all of whom, unknown to the doctors, were actors. In the videos, each "patient" complained of identical chest pain and other symptoms. The doctors were then asked to indicate whether they thought the patient needed cardiac catheterization. The African American

patients were less likely than the white patients to be recommended for this procedure (Schulman, 1999).Schulman, K. A., et al. (1999). The effect of race and sex on physicians' recommendations for cardiac catheterization. *The New England Journal of Medicine, 340*, 618–626.

Why does discrimination like this occur? It is possible, of course, that some doctors are racists and decide that the lives of African Americans just are not worth saving, but it is far more likely that they have *unconscious* racial biases that somehow affect their medical judgments. Regardless of the reason, the result is the same: African Americans are less likely to receive potentially life-saving cardiac procedures simply because they are black. Institutional discrimination in health care, then, is literally a matter of life and death.

Mortgages, Redlining, and Residential Segregation

When loan officers review mortgage applications, they consider many factors, including the person's income and employment and credit history. The law forbids them to consider race and ethnicity. Yet many studies find that African Americans and Latinos are more likely than whites to have their mortgage applications declined (Blank, Venkatachalam, McNeil, & Green, 2005).Blank, E. C., Venkatachalam, P., McNeil, L., & Green, R. D. (2005). Racial discrimination in mortgage lending in Washington, D.C.: A mixed methods approach. *The Review of Black Political Economy, 33*(2), 9–30.Because members of these groups tend to be poorer than whites and to have less desirable employment and credit histories, the higher rate of mortgage rejections may be appropriate, albeit unfortunate.

To control for this possibility, researchers take these factors into account and in effect compare whites, African Americans, and Latinos with similar incomes and employment and credit histories. Some studies are purely statistical, and some involve white, African American, and Latino individuals who independently visit the same mortgage lending institutions and report similar employment and credit histories. Both types of studies find that African Americans and Latinos are still more likely than whites with similar qualifications to have their mortgage loans rejected (Turner, Freiberg, Godfrey, Herbig, Levy, & Smith, 2002).Turner, M. A., Freiberg, F., Godfrey, E., Herbig, C., Levy, D. K., & Smith, R. R. (2002). *All other things being equal: A paired testing study of mortgage lending institutions*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. We will probably never know whether loan officers are consciously basing their decisions on racial prejudice, but their practices still amount to racial and ethnic discrimination whether the loan officers are consciously prejudiced or not.

There is also evidence of banks rejecting mortgage applications for people who wish to live in certain urban, supposedly high-risk neighborhoods, and of insurance companies denying homeowner's insurance or else charging higher rates for homes in these same neighborhoods. Practices like these that discriminate against houses in certain neighborhoods are called *redlining*, and they also violate the law (Ezeala-Harrison, Glover, & Shaw-Jackson, 2008).Ezeala-Harrison, F., Glover, G. B., & Shaw-Jackson, J. (2008). Housing loan patterns toward minority borrowers in Mississippi: Analysis of some micro data evidence of redlining. *The Review of Black Political Economy, 35*(1), 43–54. Because the people affected by redlining tend to be people of color, redlining, too, is an example of institutional discrimination.



Figure 7.17. Banks have rejected mortgage applications from people who wish to live in certain urban, high-risk neighborhoods. This practice, called redlining, violates the law. Because many of the loan applicants who experience redlining are people of color, redlining is an example of institutional discrimination.

Source: Photo courtesy of Taber Andrew Bain, http://www.flickr.com/photos/88442983@N00/2943913721.

The denial of mortgages and homeowner's insurance contributes to an ongoing pattern of residential segregation, which was once enforced by law but now is reinforced by a pattern of illegal institutional discrimination. Residential segregation involving African Americans in northern cities intensified during the early 20th century, when tens of thousands of African Americans began migrating from the South to the North to look for jobs (Massey & Denton, 1993).Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Their arrival alarmed whites, who feared the job competition from the migration and considered African Americans their biological inferiors. Mob violence against African Americans and bombings of their houses escalated, and newspapers used racial slurs routinely and carried many stories linking African Americans to crime. Fear of white violence made African Americans afraid to move into white neighborhoods, and "improvement associations" in white neighborhoods sprung up in an effort to keep African Americans from moving in. These associations and real estate agencies worked together to implement *restrictive covenants* among property owners that stipulated they would not sell or rent their properties to African Americans. These covenants were common after 1910 and were not banned by the U.S. Supreme Court until 1948. Still, residential segregation worsened over the next few decades, as whites used various kinds of harassment, including violence, to keep African Americans out of their neighborhoods, and real estate agencies simply refused to sell property in white neighborhoods to them.

Because of continuing institutional discrimination in housing, African Americans remain highly segregated by residence in many cities, much more so than is true for other people of color. Sociologists Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton (1993)Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. term this problem "hypersegregation" and say it is reinforced by a pattern of subtle discrimination by realtors and homeowners that makes it difficult for African Americans to find out about homes in white neighborhoods and to buy them. Realtors, for example, may tell African American clients that no homes are available in white neighborhoods. Housing "audits," in which white and African American couples of similar economic standing each inquire at a real estate agency about housing in white neighborhoods, confirm this practice: the white couples are told about houses for sale or apartments for rent, and the African American couples are told that none exist. Today, the routine posting of housing listings on the Internet might be reducing this form of housing discrimination, but not all houses and apartments are posted, and some are simply sold by word of mouth to avoid certain people finding out about them.

The hypersegregation that African Americans experience, say Massey and Denton, cuts them off from the larger society, as many rarely leave their immediate neighborhoods, and results in "concentrated poverty," where joblessness, crime, and other problems reign. Calling residential segregation "American apartheid," they urge vigorous federal, state, and local action to end this ongoing problem.

Employment Discrimination

Title VII of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned racial discrimination in employment, including hiring, wages, and firing. Table 7.2 presents weekly earnings data by race and ethnicity and shows that African Americans and Latinos have much lower earnings than whites. Several factors explain this disparity, including the various structural obstacles discussed in Chapter 6's examination of poverty. Despite Title VII, however, an additional reason is that African Americans and Latinos continue to face discrimination in hiring and promotion (Hirsh & Cha, 2008).Hirsh, C. E., & Cha, Y. (2008). Understanding employment discrimination: A multilevel approach. *Sociology Compass, 2*(6), 1989–2007. It is again difficult to determine whether such discrimination stems from conscious prejudice or from unconscious prejudice on the part of potential employers, but it is racial discrimination nonetheless. A now-classic field experiment documented such discrimination. Sociologist Devah Pager (2007)Pager, D. (2007). *Marked: Race, crime, and finding work in an era of mass incarceration*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. had young white and African American men apply independently in person for entry-level jobs. They dressed the same and reported similar levels of education and other qualifications. Some applicants also admitted having a criminal record, while other applicants reported no such record. As might be expected, applicants with a criminal record were hired at lower rates than those without a record. However, in striking evidence of racial discrimination in hiring, African American applicants *without* a criminal record were hired at the same low rate as the white applicants *with* a criminal record. Other evidence of racial discrimination in employment abounds. As just one example, in 1996 a major oil company, Texaco, agreed to a $176 million settlement after it was sued by African American employees for rampant discrimination in its promotion practices. Texaco executives had also been caught on tape uttering racial slurs at a meeting where they were discussing the lawsuit (Hammonds, 1996).Hammonds, K. H. (1996, December 16). Texaco was just the beginning: Expect more civil rights tangles with corporate America. *Business Week,* pp. 34–35.

Table 7.2 Median Weekly Earnings of Full-Time Workers, 2009

	Median weekly earnings ($)
White	757
Black	601
Hispanic	541

Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

Conclusion

- People who practice racial or ethnic discrimination are usually also prejudiced, but not always. Some people practice discrimination without being prejudiced, and some may not practice discrimination even though they are prejudiced.
- Individual discrimination is common and can involve various kinds of racial slights. Much individual discrimination occurs in the workplace.
- Institutional discrimination often stems from prejudice, but institutions can also practice racial and ethnic discrimination when they engage in practices that seem to be racially neutral but in fact have a discriminatory effect.

For Your Review

1. If you have ever experienced individual discrimination, either as the person committing it or as the person affected by it, briefly describe what happened. How do you now feel when you reflect on this incident?
2. Do you think institutional discrimination occurs because people are purposely acting in a racially discriminatory manner? Why or why not?

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8.1.6: Racial and Ethnic Inequality in the United States

Learning Objectives

- Describe three explanations for why racial and ethnic inequality exist in the United States.
- Provide two examples of white privilege.

Probably the best way to begin to understand racial and ethnic inequality in the United States is to read first-hand accounts by such great writers of color as Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, Piri Thomas, Richard Wright, and Malcolm X, all of whom wrote moving, autobiographical accounts of the bigotry and discrimination they faced while growing up. Sociologists and urban ethnographers have written their own accounts of the daily lives of people of color, and these, too, are well worth reading. One of the classics here is Elliot Liebow's (1967)Liebow, E. (1967). *Tally's corner*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.*Tally's Corner*, a study of black men and their families in Washington, DC.

Statistics also give a picture of racial and ethnic inequality in the United States. We can begin to get a picture of this inequality by examining racial and ethnic differences in such life chances as income, education, and health. Table 7.3 presents data on some of these differences.

Table 7.3 Selected Indicators of Racial and Ethnic Inequality in the United States

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American
Median family income, 2009 ($)	65,758	40,608	41,653	76,117	37,815 (2008)
Persons who are college educated, 2009 (%)	29.9	19.3	13.2	52.3	12.9 (2007)
Persons in poverty, 2009 (%)	9.4	25.8	25.3	12.5	26.1
Infant mortality (number of infant deaths per 1,000 births), 2006	5.6	12.9	5.4	4.6	8.3

Sources: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.; MacDorman, M., & Mathews, T. J. (2011). Infant deaths—United States, 2000–2007. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 60(1), 49–51; Ogunwole, S. U. (2006). We the people: American Indians and Alaska natives in the United States. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

The data are clear: U.S. racial and ethnic groups differ dramatically in their life chances. Compared to whites, for example, African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans have much lower family incomes and much higher rates of poverty; they are also much less likely to have college degrees. In addition, African Americans and Native Americans have much higher infant mortality rates than whites: black infants, for example, are more than twice as likely as white infants to die. These comparisons obscure some differences *within* some of the groups just mentioned. Among Latinos, for example, Cuban Americans have fared better than Latinos overall, and Puerto Ricans worse. Similarly, among Asians, people with Chinese and Japanese backgrounds have fared better than those from Cambodia, Korea, and Vietnam.



Figure 7.18. Asian Americans have higher family incomes than whites on the average. Although Asian Americans are often viewed as a "model minority," some Asians have been less able than others to achieve economic success, and stereotypes of Asians and discrimination against them remain serious problems. © Thinkstock

Although Table 7.2shows that African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans fare much worse than whites, it presents a more complex pattern for Asian Americans. Compared to whites, Asian Americans have higher family incomes and are more likely to hold college degrees, but they also have a higher poverty rate. Thus many Asian Americans do relatively well, while others fare relatively worse, as just noted. Although Asian Americans are often viewed as a "model minority," meaning that they have achieved economic success despite not being white, some Asians have been less able than others to climb the economic ladder. Moreover, stereotypes of Asian Americans and discrimination against them remain serious problems (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Fong, 2007).Chou, R. S., & Feagin, J. R. (2008). *The myth of the model minority: Asian Americans facing racism*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm; Fong, T. P. (2007). *The contemporary Asian American experience: Beyond the model minority* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Even the overall success rate of Asian Americans obscures the fact that their occupations and incomes are often lower than would be expected from their educational attainment. They thus have to work harder for their success than whites do (Hurh & Kim, 1999).Hurh, W. M., & Kim, K. C. (1999). The "success" image of Asian Americans: Its validity, and its practical and theoretical implications. In C. G. Ellison & W. A. Martin (Eds.), *Race and ethnic relations in the United States* (pp. 115–122). Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury.

Explaining Racial and Ethnic Inequality

Why do racial and ethnic inequality exist? Why do African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and some Asian Americans fare worse than whites? In answering these questions, many people have some very strong opinions.

One long-standing explanation is that blacks and other people of color are *biologically inferior*: they are naturally less intelligent and have other innate flaws that keep them from getting a good education and otherwise doing what needs to be done to achieve the American Dream. As discussed earlier, this racist view is no longer common today. However, whites historically used this belief to justify slavery, lynchings, the harsh treatment of Native Americans in the 1800s, and lesser forms of discrimination. In 1994, Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray revived this view in their controversial book, *The Bell Curve* (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994),Herrnstein, R. J., & Murray, C. (1994). *The bell curve: Intelligence and class structure in American life*. New York, NY: Free Press. in which they argued that the low IQ scores of African Americans, and of poor people more generally, reflect their genetic inferiority in the area of intelligence. African Americans' low innate intelligence, they said, accounts for their poverty and other problems. Although the news media gave much attention to their book, few scholars agreed with its views, and many condemned the book's argument as a racist way of "blaming the victim" (Gould, 1994).Gould, S. J. (1994, November 28). Curveball. *The New Yorker*, pp. 139–149.

Another explanation of racial and ethnic inequality focuses on supposed *cultural deficiencies* of African Americans and other people of color (Murray, 1984).Murray, C. (1984). *Losing ground: American social policy, 1950–1980*. New York, NY: Basic Books. These deficiencies include a failure to value hard work and, for African Americans, a lack of strong family ties, and are said to account for the poverty and other problems facing these minorities. This view echoes the "culture of poverty" argument presented

in Chapter 6 and is certainly popular today: as we saw earlier, more than half of non-Latino whites think that blacks' poverty is due to their lack of motivation and willpower. Ironically some scholars find support for this "cultural deficiency" view in the experience of many Asian Americans, whose success is often attributed to their culture's emphasis on hard work, educational attainment, and strong family ties (Min, 2005).Min, P. G. (Ed.). (2005). *Asian Americans: Contemporary trends and issues* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. If that is true, these scholars say, then the lack of success of other people of color stems from the failure of their own cultures to value these attributes.

How accurate is the cultural deficiency argument? Whether people of color have "deficient" cultures remains hotly debated (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Steele, 2006).Bonilla-Silva, E. (2006). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States* (2nd ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield; Steele, S. (2006). *White guilt*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.Many social scientists find little or no evidence of cultural problems in minority communities and say that the belief in cultural deficiencies is an example of symbolic racism that blames the victim. Yet other social scientists, including those sympathetic to the structural problems facing people of color, believe that certain cultural problems do exist, but they are careful to say that these cultural problems arise out of the structural problems. For example, Elijah Anderson (1999)Anderson, E. (1999). *Code of the street: Decency, violence, and the moral life of the inner city*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton. wrote that a "street culture" or "oppositional culture" exists among African Americans in urban areas that contributes to high levels of violent behavior, but he emphasized that this type of culture stems from the segregation, extreme poverty, and other difficulties these citizens face in their daily lives and helps them deal with these difficulties. Thus even if cultural problems do exist, they should not obscure the fact that structural problems are responsible for the cultural ones.

A third explanation for U.S. racial and ethnic inequality is based in conflict theory and falls into the blaming-the-system approach outlined in Chapter 1. This view attributes racial and ethnic inequality to institutional and individual discrimination and a lack of opportunity in education and other spheres of life (Feagin, 2006).Feagin, J. R. (2006). *Systematic racism: A theory of oppression*. New York, NY: Routledge. Segregated housing, for example, prevents African Americans from escaping the inner city and from moving to areas with greater employment opportunities. Employment discrimination keeps the salaries of people of color much lower than they would be otherwise. The schools that many children of color attend everyday are typically overcrowded and underfunded. As these problems continue from one generation to the next, it becomes very difficult for people already at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder because of their race and ethnicity to climb up it.

The Benefits of Being White

Before we leave this section on racial and ethnic inequality, it is important to discuss the advantages that U.S. whites enjoy in their daily lives *simply because they are white*. Social scientists term these advantages white privilege and say that whites benefit from being white whether or not they are aware of their advantages (McIntosh, 2007).McIntosh, P. (2007). White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondence through work in women's studies. In M. L. Andersen & P. H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class, and gender: An anthology* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. This chapter's discussion of the problems facing people of color points to some of these advantages. For example, whites can usually drive a car at night or walk down a street without having to fear that a police officer will stop them simply because they are white. They can count on being able to move into any neighborhood they desire to as long as they can afford the rent or mortgage. They generally do not have to fear being passed up for promotion simply because of their race. College students who are white can live in dorms without having to worry that racial slurs will be directed their way. White people in general do not have to worry about being the victims of hate crimes based on their race. They can be seated in a restaurant without having to worry that they will be served more slowly or not at all because of their skin color. If they are in a hotel, they do not have to think that someone will mistake them for a bellhop, parking valet, or maid. If they are trying to hail a taxi, they do not have to worry about the taxi driver ignoring them because the driver fears he or she will be robbed.

Social scientist Robert W. Terry (1981, p. 120)Terry, R. W. (1981). The negative impact on white values. In B. P. Bowser & R. G. Hunt (Eds.), *Impacts of racism on white Americans* (pp. 119–151). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage. once summarized white privilege as follows: "*To be white in America is not to have to think about it.* Except for hard-core racial supremacists, the meaning of being white is having the choice of attending to or ignoring one's own whiteness" (emphasis in original). For people of color in the United States, it is not an exaggeration to say that race and ethnicity is a daily fact of their existence. Yet whites do not generally have to think about being white. As all of us go about our daily lives, this basic difference is one of the most important manifestations of racial and ethnic inequality in the United States.

Conclusion

- Three explanations for racial and ethnic inequality in the United States are that (a) people of color are biologically inferior,

now considered a racist explanation; (b) people of color have cultural deficiencies; and (c) people of color face many structural obstacles, lack of opportunity, and discriminatory practices.
- Whites benefit from being white, whether or not they realize it. This benefit is called white privilege.

For Your Review

1. Which of the three explanations of racial and ethnic inequality makes the most sense to you? Why?
2. If you are white, describe a time when you benefited from white privilege, whether or not you realized it at the time. If you are a person of color, describe an experience when you would have benefited if you had been white.

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8.1.7: Race and Ethnicity in the 21st Century

Learning Objectives

- Discuss why there is cause for hope and despair in regard to race and ethnic relations in the United States.
- Summarize the debate over affirmative action.
- Summarize recent reaction to growing immigration into the United States.

At the beginning of this chapter we noted that the more things change, the more they stay the same. We saw evidence of this in proclamations over the years about the status of people of color in the United States. As a reminder, in 1903 sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois wrote in his classic book *The Souls of Black Folk* that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line." Some six decades later, social scientists and government commissions during the 1960s continued to warn us about the race problem in the United States and placed the blame for this problem squarely in the hands of whites and of the social and economic institutions that discriminate against people of color (Kerner Commission, 1968).Kerner Commission. (1968). *Report of the National Adivsory Commission on Civil Disorders*. New York, NY: Bantam Books. Three to four decades after these warnings, social scientists during the 1990s and 2000s wrote that conditions had actually worsened for people of color since the 1960s (Massey & Denton, 1993; W. J. Wilson, 1996; Hacker, 2003).Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Wilson, W. J. (1996). *When work disappears: The world of the new urban poor*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf; Hacker, A. (2003). *Two nations: Black and white, separate, hostile, unequal* (rev. ed.). New York, NY: Scribner.

Now that we have examined race and ethnicity in the United States, what have we found? Where do we stand a decade into the new century and just more than one hundred years after Du Bois wrote about the problem of the color line? Did the historic election of Barack Obama as president in 2008 signify a new era of equality between the races, as many observers wrote, or did his election occur despite the continued existence of pervasive racial and ethnic inequality?

On the one hand, there is cause for hope. Legal segregation is gone. The vicious, "old-fashioned" racism that was so rampant in this country into the 1960s has declined dramatically since that tumultuous time. People of color have made important gains in several spheres of life, and African Americans and other people of color occupy some important elected positions in and outside the South, a feat that would have been unimaginable a generation ago. Perhaps most notably, Barack Obama has African ancestry and identifies as an African American, and on his election night people across the country wept with joy at the symbolism of his victory. Certainly progress has been made in U.S. racial and ethnic relations.

On the other hand, there is also cause for despair. The old-fashioned racism has been replaced by a modern, symbolic racism that still blames people of color for their problems and reduces public support for government policies to deal with their problems. Institutional discrimination remains pervasive, and hate crimes, such as the beating of the elderly African American that began this chapter, remain all too common. Americans of different racial and ethnic backgrounds remain sharply divided on many issues, reminding us that the United States as a nation remains divided by race and ethnicity. Two issues that continue to arouse controversy are affirmative action and immigration, to which we now turn.

Affirmative Action

Affirmative action refers to the preferential treatment of minorities and women in employment and education. Affirmative action programs were begun in the 1960s to provide African Americans and then other people of color and women access to jobs and education to make up for past discrimination. President John F. Kennedy was the first known official to use the term, when he signed an executive order in 1961 ordering federal contractors to "take affirmative action" in ensuring that applicants are hired and treated without regard to their race and national origin. Six years later, President Lyndon B. Johnson added sex to race and national origin as demographic categories for which affirmative action should be used.

Although many affirmative action programs remain in effect today, court rulings, state legislation, and other efforts have limited their number and scope. Despite this curtailment, affirmative action continues to spark much controversy, with scholars, members of the public, and elected officials all holding strong views on the issue (Karr, 2008; Wise, 2005; Cohen & Sterba, 2003).Karr, J. (Ed.). (2008). *Affirmative action*. Detroit, MI: Greenhaven Press; Wise, T. J. (2005). *Affirmative action: Racial preference in black and white*. New York, NY: Routledge; Cohen, C., & Sterba, J. P. (2003). *Affirmative action and racial preference: A debate*. New

York, NY: Oxford University Press.

One of the major court rulings just mentioned was the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, 438 U.S. 265 (1978). Allan Bakke was a 35-year-old white man who had twice been rejected for admission into the medical school at the University of California, Davis. At the time he applied, UC–Davis had a policy of reserving 16 seats in its entering class of 100 for qualified people of color to make up for their underrepresentation in the medical profession. Bakke's college grades and scores on the Medical College Admission Test were higher than those of the people of color admitted to UC–Davis either time Bakke applied. He sued for admission on the grounds that his rejection amounted to reverse racial discrimination on the basis of his being white (Stefoff, 2005).Stefoff, R. (2005). *The Bakke case: Challenging affirmative action*. New York, NY: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark.

The case eventually reached the Supreme Court, which ruled 5–4 that Bakke must be admitted into the UC–Davis medical school because he had been unfairly denied admission on the basis of his race. As part of its historic but complex decision, the Court thus rejected the use of strict racial quotas in admission as it declared that no applicant could be excluded based solely on the applicant's race. At the same time, however, the Court also declared that race may be used as one of the several criteria that admissions committees consider when making their decisions. For example, if an institution desires racial diversity among its students, it may use race as an admissions criterion along with other factors such as grades and test scores.

Two more recent Supreme Court cases both involved the University of Michigan: *Gratz v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 244 (2003), which involved the university's undergraduate admissions, and *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003), which involved the university's law school admissions. In *Grutter* the Court reaffirmed the right of institutions of higher education to take race into account in the admissions process. In *Gratz*, however, the Court invalidated the university's policy of awarding additional points to high school students of color as part of its use of a point system to evaluate applicants; the Court said that consideration of applicants needed to be more individualized than a point system allowed.

Drawing on these Supreme Court rulings, then, affirmative action in higher education admissions on the basis of race and ethnicity is permissible as long as it does not involve a rigid quota system and as long as it does involve an individualized way of evaluating candidates. Race may be used as one of several criteria in such an individualized evaluation process, but it must not be used as the only criterion.

The Debate Over Affirmative Action

Opponents of affirmative action cite several reasons for opposing it. Affirmative action, they say, is reverse discrimination and, as such, is both illegal and immoral. The people benefiting from affirmative action are less qualified than many of the whites with whom they compete for employment and college admissions. In addition, opponents say, affirmative action implies that the people benefiting from it need extra help and thus are indeed less qualified. This implication stigmatizes the groups benefiting from affirmative action.

In response proponents of affirmative action give several reasons for favoring it. Many say it is needed to make up not just for past discrimination and lack of opportunities for people of color but also for ongoing discrimination and lack of opportunity. For example, because of their social networks, whites are much better able than people of color to find out about and to get jobs (Reskin, 1998).Reskin, B. F. (1998). *Realities of affirmative action in employment*. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association. If this is true, people of color are automatically at a disadvantage in the job market, and some form of affirmative action is needed to give them an equal chance at employment. Proponents also say that affirmative action helps add diversity to the workplace and to the campus. Many colleges, they note, give some preference to high school students who live in a distant state in order to add needed diversity to the student body; to "legacy" students—those with a parent who went to the same institution—to reinforce alumni loyalty and to motivate alumni to donate to the institution; and to athletes, musicians, and other applicants with certain specialized talents and skills. If all of these forms of preferential admission make sense, proponents say, it also makes sense to take students' racial and ethnic backgrounds into account as admissions officers strive to have a diverse student body.

Proponents add that affirmative action has indeed succeeded in expanding employment and educational opportunities for people of color, and that individuals benefiting from affirmative action have generally fared well in the workplace or on the campus. In this regard research finds that African American students graduating from selective U.S. colleges and universities after being admitted under affirmative action guidelines are slightly *more* likely than their white counterparts to obtain professional degrees and to become involved in civic affairs (Bowen & Bok, 1998).Bowen, W. G., & Bok, D. C. (1998). *The shape of the river: Long-term consequences of considering race in college and university admissions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

As this brief discussion indicates, several reasons exist for and against affirmative action. A cautious view is that affirmative action may not be perfect but that some form of it is needed to make up for past and ongoing discrimination and lack of opportunity in the workplace and on the campus. Without the extra help that affirmative action programs give disadvantaged people of color, the discrimination and other difficulties they face are certain to continue.

Immigration

Since the 1980s, large numbers of immigrants have entered the United States from countries in Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere. This new wave of immigration has had important consequences for American social, economic, and political life (Dinnerstein & Reimers, 2009; Waters & Ueda, 2007).Dinnerstein, L., & Reimers, D. M. (2009). *Ethnic Americans: A history of immigration*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press; Waters, M. C., & Ueda, R. (Eds.). (2007). *The new Americans: A guide to immigration since 1965*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

One of the most important consequences is competition over jobs. The newcomers have tended to move into the large cities on the East and West Coasts and in the southwestern region of the country. At the same time, eastern and western cities were losing jobs as manufacturing and other industries moved South or overseas. The new immigrants thus began competing with native-born Americans for increasingly scarce jobs. Their increasing numbers also prompted native-born whites to move out of these cities in a search for all-white neighborhoods. As they did so, they left behind them neighborhoods that were increasingly segregated among ethnic lines.

Sociology Making a Difference

Immigration and the Crime Rate

Many Americans take a dim view of immigration. In a 2009 Gallup Poll, 50% of Americans thought that immigration should be decreased, 32% thought it should stay at its present level, and only 14% thought it should be increased (Morales, 2009).Morales, L. (2009, August 5). Americans return to tougher immigration stance. Retrieved from www.gallup.com/poll/122057/Am...Return-Tougher -Immigration-Stance.aspx As the text notes, fear of job competition is a primary reason for the concern that Americans show about immigration. Yet another reason might be their fear that immigration raises the crime rate. A 2007 Gallup Poll asked whether immigrants are making “the situation in the country better or worse, or not having much effect” for the following dimensions of our national life: food, music and the arts; the economy; social and moral values; job opportunities; taxes; and the crime situation. The percentage of respondents saying “worse” was higher for the crime situation (58%) than for any other dimension. Only 4% of respondents said that immigration has made the crime situation better (Newport, 2007).Newport, F. (2007, July 13). Americans have become more negative on impact of immigrants. Retrieved from www.gallup.com/poll/28132/Ame...-More-Negative -Impact-Immigrants.aspx

However, research conducted by sociologists and criminologists finds that these 4% are in fact correct: immigrants have lower crime rates than native-born Americans, and immigration has apparently helped lower the U.S. crime rate (Immigration Policy Center, 2008; Vélez, 2006; Sampson, 2008).Immigration Policy Center. (2008, September 10). From anecdotes to evidence: Setting the record straight on immigrants and crime. Retrieved from immigrationpolicy.org/just-fa...ants-and-crime; Vélez, M. B. (2006). Toward an understanding of the lower rates of homicide in Latino versus black neighborhoods: A look at Chicago. In R. D. Peterson, L. J. Krivo, & J. Hagan (Eds.), *The many colors of crime: Inequalities of race, ethnicity, and crime in America* (pp. 91–107). New York, NY: New York University Press; Sampson, R. J. (2008). Rethinking crime and immigration. *Contexts, 7*(2), 28–33. What accounts for this surprising consequence? One reason is that immigrant neighborhoods tend to have many small businesses, churches, and other social institutions that help ensure neighborhood stability and, in turn, lower crime rates. A second reason is that the bulk of recent immigrants are Latinos, who tend to have high marriage rates and strong family ties, both of which again help ensure lower crime rates (Vélez, 2006).Vélez, M. B. (2006). Toward an understanding of the lower rates of homicide in Latino versus black neighborhoods: A look at Chicago. In R. D. Peterson, L. J. Krivo, & J. Hagan (Eds.), *The many colors of crime: Inequalities of race, ethnicity, and crime in America* (pp. 91–107). New York, NY: New York University Press. A final reason may be that undocumented immigrants hardly want to be deported and thus take extra care to obey the law by not committing street crime (Immigration Policy Center, 2008).Immigration Policy Center. (2008, September 10). From anecdotes to evidence: Setting the record straight on immigrants and crime. Retrieved from immigrationpolicy.org/just-fa...ants-and-crime

Reinforcing the immigration-lower crime conclusion, other research also finds that immigrants’ crime rates rise as they stay in the United States longer. Apparently, as the children of immigrants become more “Americanized,” their criminality increases. As one report concluded, “The children and grandchildren of many immigrants—as well as many immigrants themselves the longer they live in the United States—become subject to economic and social forces that increase the likelihood of criminal behavior”

(Rumbaut & Ewing, 2007, p. 11).Rumbaut, R. G., & Ewing, W. A. (2007). *The myth of immigrant criminality and the paradox of assimilation: Incarceration rates among native and foreign-born men*. Washington, DC: American Immigration Law Foundation.

As the United States continues to address immigration policy, it is important that the public and elected officials have the best information possible about the effects of immigration. The findings by sociologists and other social scientists that immigrants have lower crime rates and that immigration has apparently helped lower the U.S. crime rate add an important dimension to the ongoing debate over immigration policy.

One other impact of the new wave of immigration has been increased prejudice and discrimination against the new immigrants. As noted earlier, the history of the United States is filled with examples of prejudice and discrimination against immigrants. Such problems seem to escalate as the number of immigrants increases. The past two decades have been no exception to this pattern. As the large numbers of immigrants moved into the United States, blogs and other media became filled with anti-immigrant comments, and hate crimes against immigrants increased. As one report summarized this trend,

There's no doubt that the tone of the raging national debate over immigration is growing uglier by the day. Once limited to hard-core white supremacists and a handful of border-state extremists, vicious public denunciations of undocumented brown-skinned immigrants are increasingly common among supposedly mainstream anti-immigration activists, radio hosts, and politicians. While their dehumanizing rhetoric typically stops short of openly sanctioning bloodshed, much of it implicitly encourages or even endorses violence by characterizing immigrants from Mexico and Central America as "invaders," "criminal aliens," and "cockroaches."

The results are no less tragic for being predictable: although hate crime statistics are highly unreliable, numbers that are available strongly suggest a marked upswing in racially motivated violence against all Latinos, regardless of immigration status. (Mock, 2007)Mock, B. (2007). Immigration backlash: Hate crimes against Latinos flourish. Retrieved from www.splcenter.org/intel/intel...le.jsp?aid=845

As just one recent example of one of these hate crimes, a New York City resident from Ecuador who owned a real estate company, died in December 2008 after being beaten with a baseball bat by three men who shouted anti-Hispanic slurs. His murder was preceded by the death a month earlier of another Ecuadorean immigrant, who was attacked on Long Island by a group of males who beat him with lead pipes, chair legs, and other objects (Fahim & Zraick, 2008).Fahim, K., & Zraick, K. (2008, December 15). Killing haunts Ecuadoreans' rise in New York. *The New York Times*, p. A28.

Meanwhile, the new immigrants have included thousands who came to the United States illegally. When they are caught, many are detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in local jails, federal prisons, and other detention facilities. Immigrants who are in the United States legally but then get arrested for minor infractions are often also detained in these facilities to await deportation. It is estimated that ICE detains about 300,000 immigrants of both kinds every year. Human rights organizations say that all of these immigrants suffer from lack of food, inadequate medical care, and beatings; that many are being detained indefinitely; and that their detention proceedings lack due process.

Learning From Other Societies

Immigration and Ill Will in the Netherlands

Sometimes we can learn from other countries' positive examples, but sometimes we can also learn from their negative examples. In thinking about immigration and immigrants in the United States, the experience of the Netherlands provides a negative example from which there is much to learn.

Normally considered a very tolerant nation, and one whose crime policy was featured in the "Learning From Other Societies" box in Chapter 5, the Netherlands in recent years has exhibited marked intolerance for the immigrants in its midst. More than 4% of the Netherlands' 16.7 million population are of Moroccan or Turkish descent, and many of these are Muslim. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, hostility toward Muslim immigrants increased not only in the United States but also in the Netherlands and other European nations. In the Netherlands, the political climate worsened in 2002 when a politician named Pim Fortuyn campaigned on an explicit anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim platform. He termed Islam "a backward culture," wrote a book entitled *Against the Islamization of Our Culture*, and called for the repeal of an anti-discrimination amendment of the Netherlands' constitution. He also said that immigration to the Netherlands should be sharply curtailed and even eliminated, explaining, "This is a full country. I think 16 million Dutchmen are about enough." Just as Fortuyn's popularity was reaching a peak, he was assassinated by a native white Dutch citizen who was angered by Fortuyn's views. The assassination only served to win sympathy for Fortuyn's beliefs. Sympathy for anti-immigration views strengthened in 2004, when a Dutch filmmaker, the

great-grandson of a brother of painter Vincent van Gogh, was murdered by a Moroccan immigrant angered by the filmmaker's production of a short movie that condemned the treatment of women in Islamic nations.

In the ensuing years, relations between native Dutch and Muslim immigrants have worsened. In March 2006 the Dutch government established what were called "some of Europe's most stringent requirements for would-be immigrants." Among other stipulations, the new rules required anyone seeking a residency visa to pass both a Dutch language test and a "civic-integration examination" before arriving in the Netherlands. They also had to take an exam to prove their values were not at odds with Dutch values. Because the exam included a movie depicting a nude beach and gay people kissing, critics said the exam was explicitly designed to exclude Muslim immigrants, whose values would likely differ.

As 2009 began, the Netherlands' anti-immigrant stance had spread across the political spectrum. In late 2008 the nation's Labor Party, its largest left-wing political group, issued a position paper in which it called for an end to the Netherlands' acceptance of people with non-Dutch backgrounds and urged that immigrants accommodate themselves to Dutch society rather than the reverse. "We have to stop the existence of parallel societies within our country," the chair of the Labor Party said. In mid-2009 the anti-Islam Dutch Freedom Party, headed by Geert Wilders, made electoral advances. Wilders had once written, "I've had enough of Islam in the Netherlands; let not one more Muslim immigrate. I've had enough of the Koran in the Netherlands: Forbid that fascist book."

The Netherlands' experience indicates that ethnic prejudice can arise even in nations normally known for their tolerance and generosity. In view of the growing anti-immigrant prejudice in the United States discussed in the text, Americans who believe prejudice is wrong must maintain vigilance lest the Netherlands' extreme experience replicate itself in the United States.

Sources: BBC News, 2002; Vinocur, 2008; Bransten, 2006; Smyth, 2009. BBC News. (2002, May 6). Obituary: Pim Fortuyn. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1971462.stm; Vinocur, J. (2008, November 29). From the Left, a call to end the current Dutch notion of tolerance. The New York Times. Retrieved from www.nytimes.com/2008/2012/202...igrants&st=cse; Bransten, J. (2006, August 30). EU: Netherlands leading trend to more stringent immigration rules. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Retrieved from http://www.rferl.org/content/Article/1067418.html; Smyth, J. (2009, June 1). EU critic's anti-Islam stance wins controversy and votes. The Irish Times, 8.

Reducing Racial and Ethnic Inequality: What Sociology Suggests

The American racial and ethnic landscape is expected to change dramatically during the next few decades. Figure 7.19 shows the current racial and ethnic distribution in the United States and the projected one for the year 2050. Whereas about two-thirds of the country now consists of whites of European backgrounds, in 2050 only about 46% of the country is expected to be white, with Latinos making the greatest gains of all the other racial and ethnic groups. On the other side of the coin, people of color now constitute about one-third of the country but their numbers will increase to about 54% of the country in 2050 (Roberts, 2008).Roberts, S. (2008, August 14). In a generation, minorities may be the U.S. majority. *The New York Times*, p. A1.

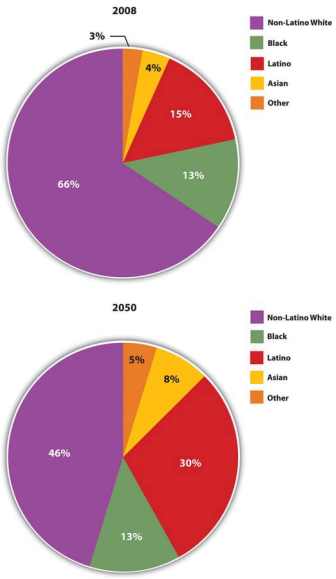


Figure 7.19 Racial and Ethnic Composition of the United States, 2008 and 2050 (Projected). Source: Data from Roberts, S. (2008, August 14). In a generation, minorities may be the U.S. majority. The New York Times, p. A1.

Four decades from now, then, whites, the dominant racial group today in terms of power and privilege, will constitute less than half the country. It is difficult at this early date to predict what difference this demographic shift will mean for racial and ethnic relations in the United States. As the number of Latinos and other people of color increases, whites may fear and resent the competition they will provide for jobs and other resources and respond with racial violence and legal efforts to control the growing population of color. As we saw earlier, this was the pattern of the white response in the late 1800s and early 1900s to the great waves of immigration and to black migration from the South. If whites repeat this pattern during the next few decades, we may well be in for even more racial and ethnic strife than we have been seeing in the recent past.

This possibility makes it even more urgent that individuals in their daily lives and the local, state, and federal governments in their policies do everything possible to foster mutual understanding and to eliminate individual and institutional discrimination. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, one message of both evolution and of religion is that we are all part of one human race, and if we fail to recognize this lesson we are doomed to repeat the experiences of the past, when racial and ethnic hostility overtook good reason and subjected people who happened to look different from the white majority to legal, social, and violent oppression. In the democracy that is America, we must try to do better so that there will truly be “liberty and justice for all.”

As the United States attempts, however haltingly, to reduce racial and ethnic inequality, sociology has much insight to offer in its emphasis on the structural basis for this inequality. This emphasis strongly indicates that racial and ethnic inequality has much less to do with any personal faults of people of color than with the structural obstacles they face, including ongoing discrimination and lack of opportunity. Efforts aimed at such obstacles, then, are in the long run essential to reducing racial and ethnic inequality (Danziger, Reed, & Brown, 2004; Loury, 2003; Syme, 2008).Danziger, S., Reed, D., & Brown, T. N. (2004). *Poverty and prosperity: Prospects for reducing racial/ethnic economic disparities in the United States*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development; Loury, G. C. (2003). *The anatomy of racial inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Syme, S. L. (2008). Reducing racial and social-class inequalities in health: The need for a new approach. *Health Affairs, 27*, 456–459. Some of these efforts resemble those for reducing poverty outlined in Chapter 6, given the greater poverty of many people of color, and include the following:

1. Adopt a national “full employment” policy involving federally funded job-training and public-works programs.
2. Increase federal aid for the working poor, including earned income credits and child care subsidies for those with children.
3. Establish well-funded early-childhood intervention programs, including home visitation by trained professionals, for poor families.
4. Improve the schools that poor children attend and the schooling they receive, and expand early childhood education programs for poor children.
5. Provide better nutrition and health services for poor families with young children.
6. Strengthen efforts to reduce teenage pregnancies.
7. Strengthen affirmative action programs within the limits imposed by court rulings.
8. Strengthen legal enforcement of existing law forbidding racial and ethnic discrimination in hiring and promotion.
9. Strengthen efforts to reduce residential segregation.

Conclusion

- There is reason to be both hopeful and less hopeful in regard to the future of racial and ethnic relations and inequality in the United States.
- Affirmative action continues to be a very controversial issue. Proponents think it is necessary to compensate for past and continuing racial and ethnic discrimination and lack of opportunity, while opponents think it discriminates against qualified whites.
- Recent waves of immigration have increased anti-immigration prejudice, including hate crimes, in the United States. This result mimics earlier periods of American history.

For Your Review

1. How hopeful are you in regard to race and ethnicity in the United States? Explain your answer.
2. Do you favor or oppose affirmative action? Why?
3. Do you think the United States should try to increase immigration, reduce immigration, or let its level stay about the same? Explain your answer.

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8.1.S: Race and Ethnicity (Summary)

Summary

1. Racial and ethnic prejudice and discrimination have been an “American dilemma” in the United States ever since the colonial period. Slavery was only the ugliest manifestation of this dilemma. In the 19th century, white mobs routinely attacked blacks and immigrants, and these attacks continued well into the 20th century. The urban riots of the 1960s led to warnings about the racial hostility and discrimination confronting African Americans and other groups, and these warnings continue down to the present.
2. Social scientists today tend to consider race more of a social category than a biological one for several reasons. People within a given race often look more different from each other than people do across races. Over the decades, so much interracial reproduction has occurred that many people have mixed racial ancestry. DNA evidence indicates that only a small proportion of our DNA accounts for the physical differences that lead us to put people into racial categories. Given all of these reasons, race is best considered a social construction and not a fixed biological category.
3. Ethnicity refers to a shared cultural heritage and is a term increasingly favored by social scientists over race. Membership in ethnic groups gives many people an important sense of identity and pride but can also lead to hostility toward people in other ethnic groups.
4. Prejudice, racism, and stereotypes all refer to negative attitudes about people based on their membership in racial or ethnic categories. Social-psychological explanations of prejudice focus on scapegoating and authoritarian personalities, while sociological explanations focus on conformity and socialization or on economic and political competition. Before the 1970s old-fashioned or Jim Crow racism prevailed that considered African Americans and some other groups biologically inferior. This form of racism has since given way to modern or “symbolic” racism that considers these groups to be culturally inferior and that affects the public’s preferences for government policy touching on racial issues. Stereotypes in the mass media fuel racial and ethnic prejudice.
5. Discrimination and prejudice often go hand in hand, but not always. People can discriminate without being prejudiced, and they can be prejudiced without discriminating. Individual and institutional discrimination both continue to exist in the United States, but institutional discrimination in such areas as employment, housing, and medical care is especially pervasive.
6. Racial and ethnic inequality in the United States is reflected in income, employment, education, and health statistics. In all of these areas, African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos lag far behind whites. As a “model minority,” many Asian Americans have fared better than whites, but some Asian groups also lag behind whites. In their daily lives, whites enjoy many privileges denied their counterparts in other racial and ethnic groups. They don’t have to think about being white, and they can enjoy freedom of movement and other advantages simply because of their race.
7. On many issues Americans remain sharply divided along racial and ethnic lines. One of the most divisive issues is affirmative action. Its opponents view it among other things as reverse discrimination, while its proponents cite many reasons for its importance, including the need to correct past and present discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities.
8. By the year 2050, whites of European backgrounds will constitute only about half of the American population, whereas now they make up about three-fourths of the population. This demographic change may exacerbate racial tensions if whites fear the extra competition for jobs and other resources that their dwindling numbers may engender. Given this possibility, intense individual and collective efforts are needed to help people of all races and ethnicities realize the American Dream.

Using Sociology

Kim Smith is the vice president of a multicultural group on her campus named Students Operating Against Racism (SOAR). Recently two black students at her school said that they were walking across campus at night and were stopped by campus police for no good reason. SOAR has a table at the campus dining commons with flyers protesting the incident and literature about racial profiling. Kim is sitting at the table, when suddenly two white students come by, knock the literature off the table, and walk away laughing. What, if anything, should Kim do next?

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8.2: RACE AND ETHNICITY

8.2.1: Introduction

8.2.2: Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

8.2.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

8.2.4: Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

8.2.5: Intergroup Relationships

8.2.6: Race and Ethnicity in the United States

8.2.7: Key Terms

8.2.8: Section Summary

8.2.9: Section Quiz

8.2.10: Short Answer

8.2.11: Further Research

8.2.12: References

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8.2.1: Introduction

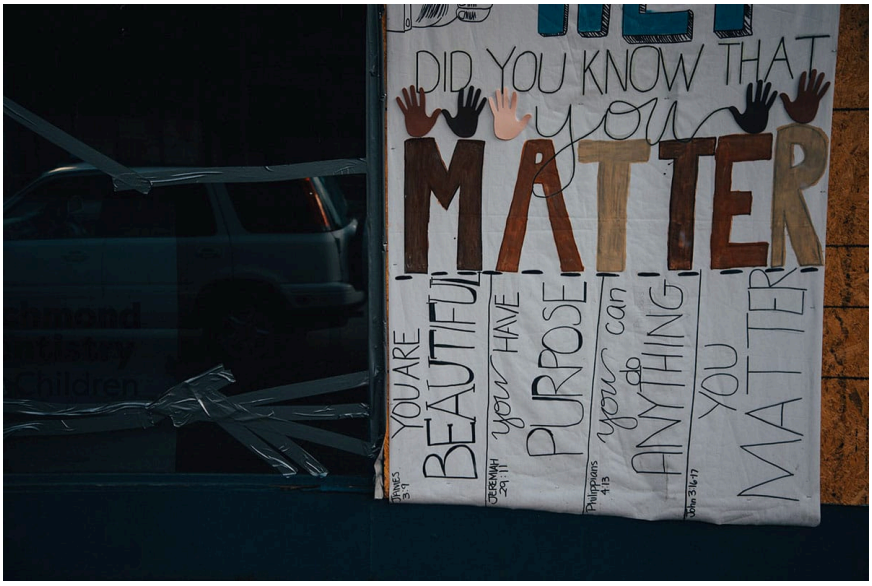


Figure 11.1: The juxtaposition of anger and hope. Over a window broken during protests in Richmond, Virginia, the business owner placed a sign that reads "Did You Know That You Matter. You are beautiful. You have purpose. You can do anything. You matter," and is accompanied with bible verses. (Credit: I threw a guitar a him/flickr)

Chapter Outline

11.1 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups
11.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity
11.3 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism
11.4 Intergroup Relationships
11.5 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

Trayvon Martin was a seventeen-year-old Black teenager. On the evening of February 26, 2012, he was visiting with his father and his father's fiancée in the Sanford, Florida multi-ethnic gated community where his father's fiancée lived. Trayvon went on foot to buy a snack from a nearby convenience store. As he was returning, George Zimmerman, a White Hispanic man and the community's neighborhood watch program coordinator, noticed him. In light of a recent rash of break-ins, Zimmerman called the police to report a person acting suspiciously, which he had done on many other occasions. During the call, Zimmerman said in reference to suspicious people, "[expletive] punks. Those [expletive], they always get away." The 911 operator told Zimmerman not to follow the teen, as was also stated in the police neighborhood watch guidelines that had been provided to Zimmerman. But Zimmerman did follow the teen, and, soon after, they had a physical confrontation. Several people in the community heard yelling, cries for help, and saw two people on the ground. According to Zimmerman, Martin attacked him, and in the ensuing scuffle, Zimmerman shot and killed Martin (CNN Library 2021).

A public outcry followed Martin's death. There were allegations of racial profiling—the use of race alone to determine whether to detain or investigate someone. As part of the initial investigation, Zimmerman was extensively interviewed by police, but was released under Florida's "Stand Your Ground" Law, which indicated police could not arrest him for his actions. About six weeks later, Zimmerman was arrested and charged with second-degree murder by a special prosecutor, Angela Corey, who had been appointed by Florida's governor. In the ensuing trial, he was found not guilty (CNN Library 2021).

The shooting, the public response, and the trial that followed offer a snapshot of the sociology of race. Do you think race played a role in Martin's death? Do you think race had an influence on the initial decision not to arrest Zimmerman, or on his later acquittal? Does society fear Black men, leading to racial profiling at an institutional level?

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8.2.2: Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Understand the difference between race and ethnicity
- Define a majority group (dominant group)
- Define a minority group (subordinate group)

While many students first entering a sociology classroom are accustomed to conflating the terms “race,” “ethnicity,” and “minority group,” these three terms have distinct meanings for sociologists. The idea of race refers to superficial physical differences that a particular society considers significant, while ethnicity describes shared culture. And the term "minority groups" describe groups that are subordinate, or that lack power in society regardless of skin color or country of origin. For example, in modern U.S. history, the elderly might be considered a minority group due to a diminished status that results from popular prejudice and discrimination against them. Ten percent of nursing home staff admitted to physically abusing an elderly person in the past year, and 40 percent admitted to committing psychological abuse (World Health Organization 2011). In this chapter we focus on racial and ethnic minorities.

What Is Race?

A human **race** is a grouping of humankind based on shared physical or social qualities that can vary from one society to another.

Historically, the concept of race has changed across cultures and eras, and has eventually become less connected with ancestral and familial ties, and more concerned with superficial physical characteristics. In the past, theorists developed categories of race based on various geographic regions, ethnicities, skin colors, and more. Their labels for racial groups have connoted regions or skin tones, for example.

German physician, zoologist, and anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) introduced one of the famous groupings by studying human skulls. Blumenbach divided humans into five races (MacCord 2014):

- Caucasian or White race: people of European, Middle Eastern, and North African origin
- Ethiopian or Black race: people of sub-Saharan Africans origin (sometimes spelled Aethiopian)
- Malayan or Brown race: people of Southeast Asian origin and Pacific Islanders
- Mongolian or Yellow race: people of all East Asian and some Central Asian origin
- American or Red race: people of North American origin or American Indians

Over time, descriptions of race like Blumenbach's have fallen into disuse, and the social construction of race is a more accepted way of understanding racial categories. Social science organizations including the American Association of Anthropologists, the American Sociological Association, and the American Psychological Association have all officially rejected explanations of race like those listed above. Research in this school of thought suggests that race is not biologically identifiable and that previous racial categories were based on pseudoscience; they were often used to justify racist practices (Omi and Winant 1994; Graves 2003). For example, some people used to think that genetics of race determined intelligence. While this idea was mostly put to rest in the later 20th Century, it resurged several times in the past 50 years, including the widely read and cited 1994 book, *The Bell Curve*. Researchers have since provided substantial evidence that refutes a biological-racial basis for intelligence, including the widespread closing of IQ gaps as Black people gained more access to education (Dickens 2006). This research and other confirming studies indicate that any generally lower IQ among a racial group was more about *nurture* than *nature*, to put it into the terms of the Socialization chapter.

While many of the historical considerations of race have been corrected in favor of more accurate and sensitive descriptions, some of the older terms remain. For example, it is generally unacceptable and insulting to refer to Asian people or Native American people with color-based terminology, but it is acceptable to refer to White and Black people in that way. In 2020, a number of publications announced that they would begin capitalizing the names of races, though not everyone used the same approach (Seipel 2020). This practice comes nearly a hundred years after sociologist and leader W.E.B. Du Bois drove newsrooms

to capitalize "Negro," the widely used term at the time. And, finally, some members of racial groups (or ethnic groups, which are described below) "reclaim" terms previously used to insult them (Rao 2018). These examples are more evidence of the social construction of race, and our evolving relationships among people and groups.

What Is Ethnicity?

Ethnicity is sometimes used interchangeably with race, but they are very different concepts. Ethnicity is based on shared culture—the practices, norms, values, and beliefs of a group that might include shared language, religion, and traditions, among other commonalities. Like race, the term ethnicity is difficult to describe and its meaning has changed over time. And as with race, individuals may be identified or self-identify with ethnicities in complex, even contradictory, ways. For example, ethnic groups such as Irish, Italian American, Russian, Jewish, and Serbian might all be groups whose members are predominantly included in the “White” racial category. Ethnicity, like race, continues to be an identification method that individuals and institutions use today—whether through the census, diversity initiatives, nondiscrimination laws, or simply in personal day-to-day relations.

In some cases, ethnicity is incorrectly used as a synonym for national origin, but those constructions are technically different. National origin (itself sometimes confused with nationality) has to do with the geographic and political associations with a person's birthplace or residence. But people from a nation can be of a wide range of ethnicities, often unknown to people outside of the region, which leads to misconceptions. For example, someone in the United States may, with no ill-intent, refer to all Vietnamese people as an ethnic group. But Vietnam is home to 54 formally recognized ethnic groups.

Adding to the complexity: Sometimes, either to build bridges between ethnic groups, promote civil rights, gain recognition, or other reasons, diverse but closely associated ethnic groups may develop a "pan-ethnic" group. For example, the various ethnic groups and national origins of people from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and adjoining nations, who may share cultural, linguistic, or other values, may group themselves together in a collective identity. If they do so, they may not seek to erase their individual ethnicities, but finding the correct description and association can be challenging and depend on context. The large number of people who make up the Asian American community may embrace their collective identity in the context of the United States. However, that embrace may depend on people's ages, and may be expressed differently when speaking to different populations (Park 2008). For example, someone who identifies as Asian American while at home in Houston may not refer to themselves as such when they visit extended family in Japan. In a similar manner, a grouping of people from Mexico, Central America and South America—often referred to as Latinx, Latina, or Latino—may be embraced by some and rejected by others in the group (Martinez 2019).

What Are Minority Groups?

Sociologist Louis Wirth (1945) defined a minority group as “any group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination.” The term minority connotes discrimination, and in its sociological use, the term subordinate group can be used interchangeably with the term minority group, while the term dominant group is often substituted for the group that represents rulers or is in the majority who can access power and privilege in a given society. These definitions correlate to the concept that the dominant group is that which holds the most power in a given society, while subordinate groups are those who lack power compared to the dominant group.

Note that being a numerical minority is not a characteristic of being a minority group; sometimes larger groups can be considered minority groups due to their lack of power. It is the lack of power that is the predominant characteristic of a minority, or subordinate group. For example, consider apartheid in South Africa, in which a numerical majority (the Black inhabitants of the country) were exploited and oppressed by the White minority.

According to Charles Wagley and Marvin Harris (1958), a minority group is distinguished by five characteristics: (1) unequal treatment and less power over their lives, (2) distinguishing physical or cultural traits like skin color or language, (3) involuntary membership in the group, (4) awareness of subordination, and (5) high rate of in-group marriage. Additional examples of minority groups might include the LGBTQ community, religious practitioners whose faith is not widely practiced where they live, and people with disabilities.

Scapegoat theory, developed initially from Dollard’s (1939) Frustration-Aggression theory, suggests that the dominant group will displace its unfocused aggression onto a subordinate group. History has shown us many examples of the scapegoating of a subordinate group. An example from the last century is the way Adolf Hitler blamed the Jewish population for Germany’s social and economic problems. In the United States, recent immigrants have frequently been the scapegoat for the nation’s—or an

individual's—woes. Many states have enacted laws to disenfranchise immigrants; these laws are popular because they let the dominant group scapegoat a subordinate group.

Multiple Identities



Figure 11.2: Golfer Tiger Woods has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage. Individuals with multiple ethnic backgrounds are becoming more common. (Credit: familymwr/flickr)

Prior to the twentieth century, racial intermarriage (referred to as miscegenation) was extremely rare, and in many places, illegal. While the sexual subordination of enslaved people did result in children of mixed race, these children were usually considered Black, and therefore, property. There was no concept of multiple racial identities with the possible exception of the Creole. Creole society developed in the port city of New Orleans, where a mixed-race culture grew from French and African inhabitants. Unlike in other parts of the country, "Creoles of color" had greater social, economic, and educational opportunities than most African Americans.

Increasingly during the modern era, the removal of miscegenation laws and a trend toward equal rights and legal protection against racism have steadily reduced the social stigma attached to racial exogamy (exogamy refers to marriage outside a person's core social unit). It is now common for the children of racially mixed parents to acknowledge and celebrate their various ethnic identities. Golfer Tiger Woods, for instance, has Chinese, Thai, African American, Native American, and Dutch heritage; he jokingly refers to his ethnicity as "Cablinasian," a term he coined to combine several of his ethnic backgrounds. While this is the trend, it is not yet evident in all aspects of our society. For example, the U.S. Census only recently added additional categories for people to identify themselves, such as non-White Hispanic. A growing number of people chose multiple races to describe themselves on the 2020 Census, indicating that individuals have multiple identities.

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8.2.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe how major sociological perspectives view race and ethnicity
- Identify examples of culture of prejudice

Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

We can examine race and ethnicity through three major sociological perspectives: functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism. As you read through these theories, ask yourself which one makes the most sense and why.

Functionalism

Functionalism emphasizes that all the elements of society have functions that promote solidarity and maintain order and stability in society. Hence, we can observe people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds interacting harmoniously in a state of social balance. Problems arise when one or more racial or ethnic groups experience inequalities and discriminations. This creates tension and conflict resulting in temporary dysfunction of the social system. For example, the killing of a Black man George Floyd by a White police officer in 2020 stirred up protests demanding racial justice and changes in policing in the United States. To restore the society's pre-disturbed state or to seek a new equilibrium, the police department and various parts of the system require changes and compensatory adjustments.

Another way to apply the functionalist perspective to race and ethnicity is to discuss the way racism can contribute positively to the functioning of society by strengthening bonds between in-group members through the ostracism of out-group members. Consider how a community might increase solidarity by refusing to allow outsiders access. On the other hand, Rose (1951) suggested that dysfunctions associated with racism include the failure to take advantage of talent in the subjugated group, and that society must divert from other purposes the time and effort needed to maintain artificially constructed racial boundaries. Consider how much money, time, and effort went toward maintaining separate and unequal educational systems prior to the civil rights movement.

In the view of functionalism, racial and ethnic inequalities must have served an important function in order to exist as long as they have. This concept, sometimes, can be problematic. How can racism and discrimination contribute positively to society? Nash (1964) focused his argument on the way racism is functional for the dominant group, for example, suggesting that racism morally justifies a racially unequal society. Consider the way slave owners justified slavery in the antebellum South, by suggesting Black people were fundamentally inferior to White and preferred slavery to freedom.

Interactionism

For symbolic interactionists, race and ethnicity provide strong symbols as sources of identity. In fact, some interactionists propose that the symbols of race, not race itself, are what lead to racism. Famed Interactionist Herbert Blumer (1958) suggested that racial prejudice is formed through interactions between members of the dominant group: Without these interactions, individuals in the dominant group would not hold racist views. These interactions contribute to an abstract picture of the subordinate group that allows the dominant group to support its view of the subordinate group, and thus maintains the status quo. An example of this might be an individual whose beliefs about a particular group are based on images conveyed in popular media, and those are unquestionably believed because the individual has never personally met a member of that group.

Another way to apply the interactionist perspective is to look at how people define their races and the race of others. Some people who claim a White identity have a greater amount of skin pigmentation than some people who claim a Black identity; how did they come to define themselves as Black or White?

Conflict Theory

Conflict theories are often applied to inequalities of gender, social class, education, race, and ethnicity. A conflict theory perspective of U.S. history would examine the numerous past and current struggles between the White ruling class and racial and ethnic minorities, noting specific conflicts that have arisen when the dominant group perceived a threat from the minority group. In the late nineteenth century, the rising power of Black Americans after the Civil War resulted in draconian Jim Crow laws that severely limited Black political and social power. For example, Vivien Thomas (1910–1985), the Black surgical technician who helped develop the groundbreaking surgical technique that saves the lives of "blue babies" was classified as a janitor for many years, and paid as such, despite the fact that he was conducting complicated surgical experiments. The years since the Civil War have showed a pattern of attempted disenfranchisement, with gerrymandering and voter suppression efforts aimed at predominantly minority neighborhoods.

Intersection Theory

Feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1990) further developed intersection theory, originally articulated in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes (Figure 11.4). When we examine race and how it can bring us both advantages and disadvantages, it is important to acknowledge that the way we experience race is shaped, for example, by our gender and class. Multiple layers of disadvantage intersect to create the way we experience race. For example, if we want to understand prejudice, we must understand that the prejudice focused on a White woman because of her gender is very different from the layered prejudice focused on an Asian woman in poverty, who is affected by stereotypes related to being poor, being a woman, and her ethnic status.

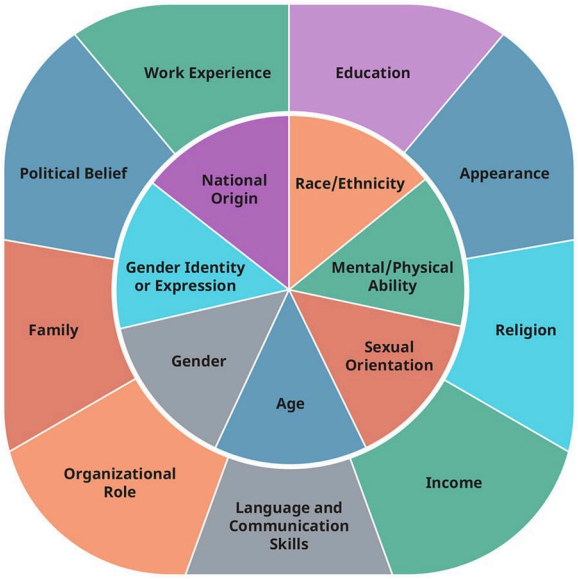


Figure 11.3: Our identities are formed by dozens of factors, sometimes represented in intersection wheels. Consider the subset of identity elements represented here. Generally, the outer ring contains elements that may change relatively often, while the elements in the inner circle are often considered more permanent. (There are certainly exceptions.) How does each contribute to who you are, and how would possible change alter your self-defined identity?

Culture of Prejudice

Culture of prejudice refers to the theory that prejudice is embedded in our culture. We grow up surrounded by images of stereotypes and casual expressions of racism and prejudice. Consider the casually racist imagery on grocery store shelves or the stereotypes that fill popular movies and advertisements. It is easy to see how someone living in the Northeastern United States, who may know no Mexican Americans personally, might gain a stereotyped impression from such sources as Speedy Gonzalez or Taco Bell's talking Chihuahua. Because we are all exposed to these images and thoughts, it is impossible to know to what extent they have influenced our thought processes.

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8.2.4: Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the difference between stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and racism
- Identify different types of discrimination
- View racial tension through a sociological lens

It is important to learn about stereotypes before discussing the terms prejudice, discrimination, and racism that are often used interchangeably in everyday conversation. Stereotypes are oversimplified generalizations about groups of people. Stereotypes can be based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation—almost any characteristic. They may be positive (usually about one's own group) but are often negative (usually toward other groups, such as when members of a dominant racial group suggest that a subordinate racial group is stupid or lazy). In either case, the stereotype is a generalization that doesn't take individual differences into account.

Where do stereotypes come from? In fact, new stereotypes are rarely created; rather, they are recycled from subordinate groups that have assimilated into society and are reused to describe newly subordinate groups. For example, many stereotypes that are currently used to characterize new immigrants were used earlier in American history to characterize Irish and Eastern European immigrants.

Prejudice

Prejudice refers to the beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes someone holds about a group. A prejudice is not based on personal experience; instead, it is a prejudgment, originating outside actual experience. Recall from the chapter on Crime and Deviance that the criminalization of marijuana was based on anti-immigrant sentiment; proponents used fictional, fear-instilling stories of "reefer madness" and rampant immoral and illegal activities among Spanish-speaking people to justify new laws and harsh treatment of marijuana users. Many people who supported criminalizing marijuana had never met any of the new immigrants who were rumored to use it; the ideas were based in prejudice.

While prejudice is based in beliefs outside of experience, experience can lead people to feel that their prejudice is confirmed or justified. This is a type of confirmation bias. For example, if someone is taught to believe that a certain ethnic group has negative attributes, every negative act committed someone in that group can be seen as confirming the prejudice. Even a minor social offense committed by a member of the ethnic group, like crossing the street outside the crosswalk or talking too loudly on a bus, could confirm the prejudice.

While prejudice often originates outside experience, it isn't instinctive. Prejudice—as well as the stereotypes that lead to it and the discrimination that stems from it—is most often taught and learned. The teaching arrives in many forms, from direct instruction or indoctrination, to observation and socialization. Movies, books, charismatic speakers, and even a desire to impress others can all support the development of prejudices.



Figure 11.4: Stereotypes and prejudices are persistent and apply to almost every category of people. They are also subject to confirmation bias, in which any bit of supporting evidence gives a person more confidence in their belief. For example, if you think older people are bad drivers, every time you see an accident involving an older driver, it's likely to increase your confidence in your stereotype. Even if you hear the statistics that younger drivers cause more accidents than older drivers, the fulfillment of your stereotype is difficult to overcome. (Credit: Chris Freser/ flickr)

Discrimination

While prejudice refers to biased thinking, discrimination consists of actions against a group of people. Discrimination can be based on race, ethnicity, age, religion, health, and other categories. For example, discrimination based on race or ethnicity can take many forms, from unfair housing practices such as redlining to biased hiring systems. Overt discrimination has long been part of U.S. history. In the late nineteenth century, it was not uncommon for business owners to hang signs that read, "Help Wanted: No Irish Need Apply." And southern Jim Crow laws, with their "Whites Only" signs, exemplified overt discrimination that is not tolerated today.

Discrimination also manifests in different ways. The scenarios above are examples of individual discrimination, but other types exist. Institutional discrimination occurs when a societal system has developed with embedded disenfranchisement of a group, such as the U.S. military's historical nonacceptance of minority sexualities (the "don't ask, don't tell" policy reflected this norm).

While the form and severity of discrimination vary significantly, they are considered forms of oppression. Institutional discrimination can also include the promotion of a group's status, such in the case of privilege, which is the benefits people receive simply by being part of the dominant group.

Most people have some level of privilege, whether it has to do with health, ability, race, or gender. When discussing race, the focus is often on White privilege, which is the societal privilege that benefits White people, or those perceived to be White, over non-White people in some societies, including the United States. Most White people are willing to admit that non-White people live with a set of disadvantages due to the color of their skin. But until they gain a good degree of self-awareness, few people are willing to acknowledge the benefits they themselves receive by being a part of the dominant group. Why not? Some may feel it lessens their accomplishments, others may feel a degree of guilt, and still others may feel that admitting to privilege makes them seem like a bad or mean person. But White (or other dominant) privilege is an institutional condition, not a personal one. It exists whether the person asks for it or not. In fact, a pioneering thinker on the topic, Peggy McIntosh, noted that she didn't recognize privilege because, in fact, it was not based in meanness. Instead, it was an "invisible weightless knapsack full of special provisions" that she didn't ask for, yet from which she still benefitted (McIntosh 1989). As the reference indicates, McIntosh's first major publication about White privilege was released in 1989; many people have only become familiar with the term in recent years.

Prejudice and discrimination can overlap and intersect in many ways. To illustrate, here are four examples of how prejudice and discrimination can occur. Unprejudiced nondiscriminators are open-minded, tolerant, and accepting individuals. Unprejudiced discriminators might be those who unthinkingly practice sexism in their workplace by not considering women or gender

nonconforming people for certain positions that have traditionally been held by men. Prejudiced nondiscriminators are those who hold racist beliefs but don't act on them, such as a racist store owner who serves minority customers. Prejudiced discriminators include those who actively make disparaging remarks about others or who perpetuate hate crimes.

Racism

Racism is a stronger type of prejudice and discrimination used to justify inequalities against individuals by maintaining that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others; it is a set of practices used by a racial dominant group to maximize advantages for itself by disadvantaging racial minority groups. Such practices have affected wealth gap, employment, housing discrimination, government surveillance, incarceration, drug arrests, immigration arrests, infant mortality and much more (Race Forward 2021).

Broadly, individuals belonging to minority groups experience both individual racism and systemic racism during their lifetime. While reading the following some of the common forms of racism, ask yourself, “Am I a part of this racism?” “How can I contribute to stop racism?”

- Individual or Interpersonal Racism refers to prejudice and discrimination executed by individuals consciously and unconsciously that occurs between individuals. Examples include telling a racist joke and believing in the superiority of White people.
- Systemic Racism, also called structural racism or institutional racism, is systems and structures that have procedures or processes that disadvantages racial minority groups. Systemic racism occurs in organizations as discriminatory treatments and unfair policies based on race that result in inequitable outcomes for White people over people of color. For example, a school system where students of color are distributed into underfunded schools and out of the higher-resourced schools.
- Racial Profiling is a type of systemic racism that involves the singling out of racial minorities for differential treatment, usually harsher treatment. The disparate treatment of racial minorities by law enforcement officials is a common example of racial profiling in the United States. For example, a study on the Driver's License Privilege to All Minnesota Residents from 2008 to 2010 found that the percentage of Latinos arrested was disproportionally high (Feist 2013). Similarly, the disproportionate number of Black men arrested, charged, and convicted of crimes reflect racial profiling.
- Historical Racism is economic inequality or social disparity caused by past racism. For example, African-Americans have had their opportunities in wealth, education and employment adversely affected due to the mistreatment of their ancestors during the slavery and post-slavery period (Wilson 2012).
- Cultural Racism occurs when the assumption of inferiority of one or more races is built into the culture of a society. For example, the European culture is considered supposedly more mature, evolved and rational than other cultures (Blaut 1992). A study showed that White and Asian American students with high GPAs experience greater social acceptance while Black and Native American students with high GPAs are rejected by their peers (Fuller-Rowell and Doan 2010).
- Colorism is a form of racism, in which someone believes one type of skin tone is superior or inferior to another within a racial group. For example, if an employer believes a Black employee with a darker skin tone is less capable than a Black employee with lighter skin tone, that is colorism. Studies suggest that darker skinned African Americans experience more discrimination than lighter skinned African Americans (Herring, Keith, and Horton 2004; Klonoff and Landrine 2000).
- Color-Avoidance Racism (sometimes referred to as "colorblind racism") is an avoidance of racial language by European-Americans that the racism is no longer an issue. The U.S. cultural narrative that typically focuses on individual racism fails to recognize systemic racism. It has arisen since the post-Civil Rights era and supports racism while avoiding any reference to race (Bonilla-Silva (2015).

How to Be an Antiracist

Almost all mainstream voices in the United States oppose racism. Despite this, racism is prevalent in several forms. For example, when a newspaper uses people's race to identify individuals accused of a crime, it may enhance stereotypes of a certain minority. Another example of racist practices is racial steering, in which real estate agents direct prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighborhoods based on their race.

Racist attitudes and beliefs are often more insidious and harder to pin down than specific racist practices. They become more complex due to implicit bias (also referred to as unconscious bias) which is the process of associating stereotypes or attitudes towards categories of people without conscious awareness – which can result in unfair actions and decisions that are at odds with one’s conscious beliefs about fairness and equality (Osta and Vasquez 2021). For example, in schools we often see “honors” and “gifted” classes quickly filled with White students while the majority of Black and Latino students are placed in the lower track classes. As a result, our mind consciously and unconsciously starts to associate Black and Latino students with being less

intelligent, less capable. Osta and Vasquez (2021) argue that placing the student of color into a lower and less rigorous track, we reproduce the inequity and the vicious cycle of structural racism and implicit bias continues.

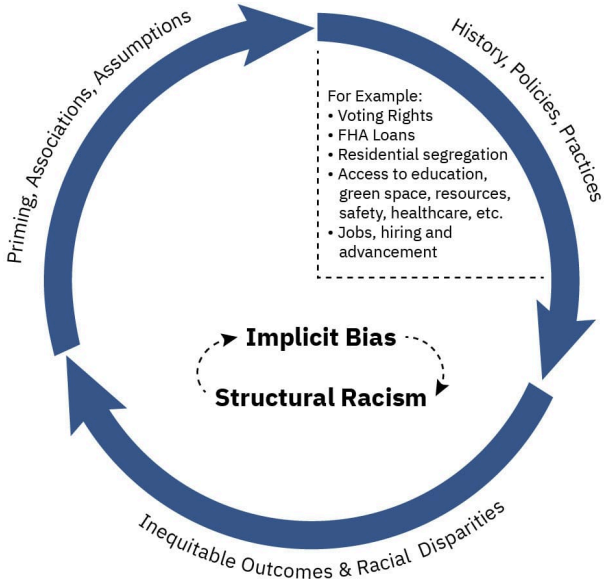


Figure 11.5: Implicit Bias and Structural Racialization (Osta and Vasquez 2021)

If everyone becomes antiracist, breaking the vicious cycle of structural racism and implicit bias may not be far away. To be antiracist is a radical choice in the face of history, requiring a radical reorientation of our consciousness (Kendi 2019). Proponents of anti-racism indicate that we must work collaboratively within ourselves, our institutions, and our networks to challenge racism at local, national and global levels. The practice of anti-racism is everyone's ongoing work that everyone should pursue at least the following (Carter and Snyder 2020):

- Understand and own the racist ideas in which we have been socialized and the racist biases that these ideas have created within each of us.
- Identify racist policies, practices, and procedures and replace them with antiracist policies, practices, and procedures.

Anti-racism need not be confrontational in the sense of engaging in direct arguments with people, feeling terrible about your privilege, or denying your own needs or success. In fact, many people who are a part of a minority acknowledge the need for allies from the dominant group (Melaku 2020). Understanding and owning the racist ideas, and recognizing your own privilege, is a good and brave thing.

We cannot erase racism simply by enacting laws to abolish it, because it is embedded in our complex reality that relates to educational, economic, criminal, political, and other social systems. Importantly, everyone can become antiracist by making conscious choices daily. Being racist or antiracist is not about who you are; it is about what you do (Carter and Snyder 2020).

What does it mean to you to be an "anti-racist"? How do see the recent events or protests in your community, country or somewhere else? Are they making any desired changes?

Big Picture: Racial Tensions in the United States

The death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri on August 9, 2014 illustrates racial tensions in the United States as well as the overlap between prejudice, discrimination, and institutional racism. On that day, Brown, a young unarmed Black man, was killed by a White police officer named Darren Wilson. During the incident, Wilson directed Brown and his friend to walk on the sidewalk instead of in the street. While eyewitness accounts vary, they agree that an altercation occurred between Wilson and Brown. Wilson's version has him shooting Brown in self-defense after Brown assaulted him, while Dorian Johnson, a friend of Brown also present at the time, claimed that Brown first ran away, then turned with his hands in the air to surrender, after which Wilson shot him repeatedly (Nobles and Bosman 2014). Three autopsies independently confirmed that Brown was shot six times (Lowery and Fears 2014).

The shooting focused attention on a number of race-related tensions in the United States. First, members of the predominantly Black community viewed Brown's death as the result of a White police officer racially profiling a Black man (Nobles and Bosman 2014). In the days after, it was revealed that only three members of the town's fifty-three-member police force were Black (Nobles and Bosman 2014). The national dialogue shifted during the next few weeks, with some commentators pointing to a nationwide sedimentation of racial inequality and identifying redlining in Ferguson as a cause of the unbalanced racial composition in the community, in local political establishments, and in the police force (Bouie 2014). Redlining is the practice of routinely refusing mortgages for households and businesses located in predominately minority communities, while sedimentation of racial inequality describes the intergenerational impact of both practical and legalized racism that limits the abilities of Black people to accumulate wealth.

Ferguson's racial imbalance may explain in part why, even though in 2010 only about 63 percent of its population was Black, in 2013 Black people were detained in 86 percent of stops, 92 percent of searches, and 93 percent of arrests (Missouri Attorney General's Office 2014). In addition, de facto segregation in Ferguson's schools, a race-based wealth gap, urban sprawl, and a Black unemployment rate three times that of the White unemployment rate worsened existing racial tensions in Ferguson while also reflecting nationwide racial inequalities (Bouie 2014).

This situation has not much changed in the United States. After Michael Brown, dozens of unarmed Black people have been shot and killed by police. Studies find no change to the racial disparity in the use of deadly force by police (Belli 2020). Do you think that racial tension can be reduced by stopping police action against racial minorities? What types of policies and practices are important to reduce racial tension? Who are responsible? Why?

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8.2.5: Intergroup Relationships

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain different intergroup relations in terms of their relative levels of tolerance
- Give historical and/or contemporary examples of each type of intergroup relation

Intergroup relations (relationships between different groups of people) range along a spectrum between tolerance and intolerance. The most tolerant form of intergroup relations is pluralism, in which no distinction is made between minority and majority groups, but instead there's equal standing. At the other end of the continuum are amalgamation, expulsion, and even genocide—stark examples of intolerant intergroup relations.

Pluralism

Pluralism is represented by the ideal of the United States as a "salad bowl": a great mixture of different cultures where each culture retains its own identity and yet adds to the flavor of the whole. True pluralism is characterized by mutual respect on the part of all cultures, both dominant and subordinate, creating a multicultural environment of acceptance. In reality, true pluralism is a difficult goal to reach. In the United States, the mutual respect required by pluralism is often missing, and the nation's past model of a melting pot posits a society where cultural differences aren't embraced as much as erased.

Assimilation

Assimilation describes the process by which a minority individual or group gives up its own identity by taking on the characteristics of the dominant culture. In the United States, which has a history of welcoming and absorbing immigrants from different lands, assimilation has been a function of immigration.



Figure 11.6: For many immigrants to the United States, the Statue of Liberty is a symbol of freedom and a new life. Unfortunately, they often encounter prejudice and discrimination. (Credit: Mark Heard/flickr)

Most people in the United States have immigrant ancestors. In relatively recent history, between 1890 and 1920, the United States became home to around 24 million immigrants. In the decades since then, further waves of immigrants have come to these shores and have eventually been absorbed into U.S. culture, sometimes after facing extended periods of prejudice and

discrimination. Assimilation may lead to the loss of the minority group's cultural identity as they become absorbed into the dominant culture, but assimilation has minimal to no impact on the majority group's cultural identity.

Some groups may keep only symbolic gestures of their original ethnicity. For instance, many Irish Americans may celebrate Saint Patrick's Day, many Hindu Americans enjoy a Diwali festival, and many Mexican Americans may celebrate *Cinco de Mayo* (a May 5 acknowledgment of the Mexican victory over the French Empire at the Battle of Puebla). However, for the rest of the year, other aspects of their originating culture may be forgotten.

Assimilation is antithetical to the "salad bowl" created by pluralism; rather than maintaining their own cultural flavor, subordinate cultures give up their own traditions in order to conform to their new environment. Sociologists measure the degree to which immigrants have assimilated to a new culture with four benchmarks: socioeconomic status, spatial concentration, language assimilation, and intermarriage. When faced with racial and ethnic discrimination, it can be difficult for new immigrants to fully assimilate. Language assimilation, in particular, can be a formidable barrier, limiting employment and educational options and therefore constraining growth in socioeconomic status.

Amalgamation

Amalgamation is the process by which a minority group and a majority group combine to form a new group. Amalgamation creates the classic "melting pot" analogy; unlike the "salad bowl," in which each culture retains its individuality, the "melting pot" ideal sees the combination of cultures that results in a new culture entirely.

Amalgamationin the form of miscegenation is achieved through intermarriage between races. In the United States, antimiscegenation laws, which criminalized interracial marriage, flourished in the South during the Jim Crow era. It wasn't until 1967's *Loving v. Virginia* that the last antimiscegenation law was struck from the books, making these laws unconstitutional.

Genocide

Genocide, the deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group, is the most toxic intergroup relationship. Historically, we can see that genocide has included both the intent to exterminate a group and the function of exterminating of a group, intentional or not.

Possibly the most well-known case of genocide is Hitler's attempt to exterminate the Jewish people in the first part of the twentieth century. Also known as the Holocaust, the explicit goal of Hitler's "Final Solution" was the eradication of European Jewish people, as well as the destruction of other minority groups such as Catholics, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ people. With forced emigration, concentration camps, and mass executions in gas chambers, Hitler's Nazi regime was responsible for the deaths of 12 million people, 6 million of whom were Jewish. Hitler's intent was clear, and the high Jewish death toll certainly indicates that Hitler and his regime committed genocide. But how do we understand genocide that is not so overt and deliberate?

The treatment of the Native Americans by the European colonizers is an example of genocide committed against indigenous people. Some historians estimate that Native American populations dwindled from approximately 12 million people in the year 1500 to barely 237,000 by the year 1900 (Lewy 2004). European settlers coerced American Indians off their own lands, often causing thousands of deaths in forced removals, such as occurred in the Cherokee or Potawatomi Trail of Tears. Settlers also enslaved Native Americans and forced them to give up their religious and cultural practices. But the major cause of Native American death was neither slavery nor war nor forced removal: it was the introduction of European diseases and Native American lack of immunity to them. Smallpox, diphtheria, and measles flourished among indigenous American tribes who had no exposure to the diseases and no ability to fight them. Quite simply, these diseases decimated the tribes. The use of diseases as weapon was most likely unintentional in some cases and intentional in others. For example, during the Seven Years War, the British gave smallpox-infected blankets to the Native tribes in order to "reduce them," and this and similar practices likely continued throughout the centuries-long assault on the Native American people.

Genocide is not a just a historical concept; it is practiced even in the twenty- first century. For example, ethnic and geographic conflicts in the Darfur region of Sudan have led to hundreds of thousands of deaths. As part of an ongoing land conflict, the Sudanese government and their state-sponsored Janjaweed militia have led a campaign of killing, forced displacement, and systematic rape of Darfuri people. Although a treaty was signed in 2011, the peace is fragile.

Expulsion

Expulsion refers to a subordinate group being forced, by a dominant group, to leave a certain area or country. As seen in the examples of the Trail of Tears and the Holocaust, expulsion can be a factor in genocide. However, it can also stand on its own as a destructive group interaction. Expulsion has often occurred historically with an ethnic or racial basis. In the United States, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 in 1942, after the Japanese government's attack on Pearl Harbor. The Order authorized the establishment of internment camps for anyone with as little as one-eighth Japanese ancestry (i.e., one great-grandparent who was Japanese). Over 120,000 legal Japanese residents and Japanese U.S. citizens, many of them children, were held in these camps for up to four years, despite the fact that there was never any evidence of collusion or espionage. (In fact, many Japanese Americans continued to demonstrate their loyalty to the United States by serving in the U.S. military during the War.) In the 1990s, the U.S. executive branch issued a formal apology for this expulsion; reparation efforts continue today.

Segregation

Segregation refers to the physical separation of two groups, particularly in residence, but also in workplace and social functions. It is important to distinguish between *de jure* segregation (segregation that is enforced by law) and *de facto* segregation (segregation that occurs without laws but because of other factors). A stark example of *de jure* segregation is the apartheid movement of South Africa, which existed from 1948 to 1994. Under apartheid, Black South Africans were stripped of their civil rights and forcibly relocated to areas that segregated them physically from their White compatriots. Only after decades of degradation, violent uprisings, and international advocacy was apartheid finally abolished.

De jure segregation occurred in the United States for many years after the Civil War. During this time, many former Confederate states passed Jim Crow laws that required segregated facilities for Black and White people. These laws were codified in 1896's landmark Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which stated that "separate but equal" facilities were constitutional. For the next five decades, Black people were subjected to legalized discrimination, forced to live, work, and go to school in separate—but *unequal*—facilities. It wasn't until 1954 and the *Brown v. Board of Education* case that the Supreme Court declared that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal," thus ending *de jure* segregation in the United States.

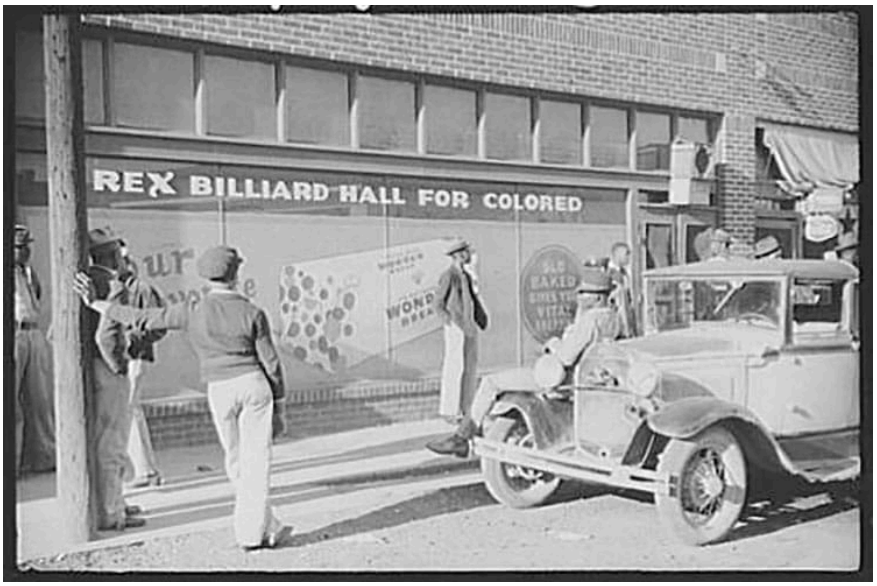


Figure 11.7: In the "Jim Crow" South, it was legal to have "separate but equal" facilities for Black people and White people. (Credit: Library of Congress/Wikimedia Commons)

De facto segregation, however, cannot be abolished by any court mandate. Few institutions desegregated as a result of *Brown*; in fact, government and even military intervention was necessary to enforce the ruling, and it took the Civil Rights Act and other laws to formalize the equality. Segregation is still alive and well in the United States, with different racial or ethnic groups often segregated by neighborhood, borough, or parish. Sociologists use segregation indices to measure racial segregation of different races in different areas. The indices employ a scale from zero to 100, where zero is the most integrated and 100 is the least. In the New York metropolitan area, for instance, the Black-White segregation index was seventy-nine for the years 2005–2009. This means that 79 percent of either Black or White people would have to move in order for each neighborhood to have the same

racial balance as the whole metro region (Population Studies Center 2010).

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8.2.6: Race and Ethnicity in the United States

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Compare and contrast the different experiences of various ethnic groups in the United States
- Apply theories of intergroup relations, race, and ethnicity to different subordinate groups

When colonists came to the New World, they found a land that did not need "discovering" since it was already inhabited. While the first wave of immigrants came from Western Europe, eventually the bulk of people entering North America were from Northern Europe, then Eastern Europe, then Latin America and Asia. And let us not forget the forced immigration of enslaved Africans. Most of these groups underwent a period of disenfranchisement in which they were relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy before they managed (for those who could) to achieve social mobility. Because of this achievement, the U.S. is still a "dream destination" for millions of people living in other countries. Many thousands of people, including children, arrive here every year both documented and undocumented. Most Americans welcome and support new immigrants wholeheartedly. For example, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act introduced in 2001 provides a means for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as children to gain a pathway to permanent legal status. Similarly, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) introduced in 2012 gives young undocumented immigrants a work permit and protection from deportation (Georgetown Law 2021). Today, the U.S. society is multicultural, multiracial and multiethnic that is composed of people from several national origins.

The U.S. Census Bureau collects racial data in accordance with guidelines provided by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB 2016). These data are based on self-identification; generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country that include racial and national origin or sociocultural groups. People may choose to report more than one race to indicate their racial mixture, such as "American Indian" and "White." People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish may be of any race. OMB requires five minimum categories: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The U.S. Census Bureau's QuickFacts as of July 1, 2019 showed that over 328 million people representing various racial groups were living in the U.S. (Table 11.1).

Table 11.1: Percentage of Race and Hispanic Origin Population 2019 (Table courtesy of U.S. Census Bureau)

Population estimates, July 1, 2019, (V2019)	328,239,523
Race and Hispanic Origin	**Percentage (%)**
White alone	76.3
Black or African American alone	13.4
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	1.3
Asian alone	5.9
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.2
Two or More Races	2.8
Hispanic or Latino	18.5
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	60.1

To clarify the terminology in the table, note that the U.S. Census Bureau defines racial groups as follows:

- White – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- Black or African American – A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
- American Indian or Alaska Native – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- Asian – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent

including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

Information on race is required for many Federal programs and is critical in making policy decisions, particularly for civil rights including racial justice. States use these data to meet legislative redistricting principles. Race data also are used to promote equal employment opportunities and to assess racial disparities in health and environmental risks that demonstrates the extent to which this multiculturality is embraced. The many manifestations of multiculturalism carry significant political repercussions. The sections below will describe how several groups became part of U.S. society, discuss the history of intergroup relations for each faction, and assess each group's status today.

Native Americans

Native Americans are Indigenous peoples, the only nonimmigrant people in the United States. According to the National Congress of American Indians, Native Americans are "All Native people of the United States and its trust territories (i.e., American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, Chamorros, and American Samoans), as well as persons from Canadian First Nations and Indigenous communities in Mexico and Central and South America who are U.S. residents (NCAI 2020, p. 11)." Native Americans once numbered in the millions but by 2010 made up only 0.9 percent of U.S. populace; see above (U.S. Census 2010). Currently, about 2.9 million people identify themselves as Native American alone, while an additional 2.3 million identify themselves as Native American mixed with another ethnic group (Norris, Vines, and Hoeffel 2012).

Sociology in the Real World: Sports Teams with Native American Names



Figure 11.8: Many Native Americans (and others) believe sports teams with names like the Indians, Braves, and Warriors perpetuate unwelcome stereotypes. The Not Your Mascot protest was one of many directed at the then Washington Redskins, which eventually changed its name. (Credit: Fibonacci Blue/fickr)

The sports world abounds with team names like the Indians, the Warriors, the Braves, and even the Savages and Redskins. These names arise from historically prejudiced views of Native Americans as fierce, brave, and strong: attributes that would be beneficial to a sports team, but are not necessarily beneficial to people in the United States who should be seen as more than that.

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has been campaigning against the use of such mascots, asserting that the "warrior savage myth . . . reinforces the racist view that Indians are uncivilized and uneducated and it has been used to justify policies of forced assimilation and destruction of Indian culture" (NCAI Resolution #TUL-05-087 2005). The campaign has met with limited success. While some teams have changed their names, hundreds of professional, college, and K–12 school teams still have names derived from this stereotype. Another

group, American Indian Cultural Support (AICS), is especially concerned with the use of such names at K–12 schools, influencing children when they should be gaining a fuller and more realistic understanding of Native Americans than such stereotypes supply.

After years of pressure and with a wider sense of social justice and cultural sensitivity, the Washington Football Team removed their offensive name before the 2020 season, and the Cleveland Major League Baseball team announced it would change its name after the 2021 season.

What do you think about such names? Should they be allowed or banned? What argument would a symbolic interactionist make on this topic?

History of Intergroup Relations

Native American culture prior to European settlement is referred to as Pre-Columbian: that is, prior to the coming of Christopher Columbus in 1492. Mistakenly believing that he had landed in the East Indies, Columbus named the indigenous people "Indians," a name that has persisted for centuries despite being a geographical misnomer and one used to blanket hundreds of sovereign tribal nations (NCAI 2020).

The history of intergroup relations between European colonists and Native Americans is a brutal one. As discussed in the section on genocide, the effect of European settlement of the Americans was to nearly destroy the indigenous population. And although Native Americans' lack of immunity to European diseases caused the most deaths, overt mistreatment and massacres of Native Americans by Europeans were devastating as well.

From the first Spanish colonists to the French, English, and Dutch who followed, European settlers took what land they wanted and expanded across the continent at will. If indigenous people tried to retain their stewardship of the land, Europeans fought them off with superior weapons. Europeans' domination of the Americas was indeed a conquest; one scholar points out that Native Americans are the only minority group in the United States whose subordination occurred purely through conquest by the dominant group (Marger 1993).

After the establishment of the United States government, discrimination against Native Americans was codified and formalized in a series of laws intended to subjugate them and keep them from gaining any power. Some of the most impactful laws are as follows:

- The Indian Removal Act of 1830 forced the relocation of any Native tribes east of the Mississippi River to lands west of the river.
- The Indian Appropriation Acts funded further removals and declared that no Indian tribe could be recognized as an independent nation, tribe, or power with which the U.S. government would have to make treaties. This made it even easier for the U.S. government to take land it wanted.
- The Dawes Act of 1887 reversed the policy of isolating Native Americans on reservations, instead forcing them onto individual properties that were intermingled with White settlers, thereby reducing their capacity for power as a group.

Native American culture was further eroded by the establishment of boarding schools in the late nineteenth century. These schools, run by both Christian missionaries and the United States government, had the express purpose of "civilizing" Native American children and assimilating them into White society. The boarding schools were located off-reservation to ensure that children were separated from their families and culture. Schools forced children to cut their hair, speak English, and practice Christianity. Physical and sexual abuses were rampant for decades; only in 1987 did the Bureau of Indian Affairs issue a policy on sexual abuse in boarding schools. Some scholars argue that many of the problems that Native Americans face today result from almost a century of mistreatment at these boarding schools.

Current Status

The eradication of Native American culture continued until the 1960s, when Native Americans were able to participate in and benefit from the civil rights movement. The Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968 guaranteed Indian tribes most of the rights of the United States Bill of Rights. New laws like the Indian Self-Determination Act of 1975 and the Education Assistance Act of the same year recognized tribal governments and gave them more power. Indian boarding schools have dwindled to only a few, and Native American cultural groups are striving to preserve and maintain old traditions to keep them from being lost forever. Today, Native Americans are citizens of three sovereigns: their tribal nations, the United States, and the state in which they reside (NCAI

2020).

However, Native Americans (some of whom wish to be called American Indians so as to avoid the “savage” connotations of the term “native”) still suffer the effects of centuries of degradation. Long-term poverty, inadequate education, cultural dislocation, and high rates of unemployment contribute to Native American populations falling to the bottom of the economic spectrum. Native Americans also suffer disproportionately with lower life expectancies than most groups in the United States.

African Americans

As discussed in the section on race, the term African American can be a misnomer for many individuals. Many people with dark skin may have their more recent roots in Europe or the Caribbean, seeing themselves as Dominican American or Dutch American, for example. Further, actual immigrants from Africa may feel that they have more of a claim to the term African American than those who are many generations removed from ancestors who originally came to this country.

The U.S. Census Bureau (2019) estimates that at least 13.4 percent of the United States' population is Black.

How and Why They Came

African Americans are the exemplar minority group in the United States whose ancestors did not come here by choice. A Dutch sea captain brought the first Africans to the Virginia colony of Jamestown in 1619 and sold them as indentured servants. (Indentured servants are people who are committed to work for a certain period of time, typically without formal pay). This was not an uncommon practice for either Black or White people, and indentured servants were in high demand. For the next century, Black and White indentured servants worked side by side. But the growing agricultural economy demanded greater and cheaper labor, and by 1705, Virginia passed the slave codes declaring that any foreign-born non-Christian could be enslaved, and that enslaved people were considered property.

The next 150 years saw the rise of U.S. slavery, with Black Africans being kidnapped from their own lands and shipped to the New World on the trans-Atlantic journey known as the Middle Passage. Once in the Americas, the Black population grew until U.S.-born Black people outnumbered those born in Africa. But colonial (and later, U.S.) slave codes declared that the child of an enslaved person was also an enslaved person, so the slave class was created. By 1808, the slave trade was internal in the United States, with enslaved people being bought and sold across state lines like livestock.

History of Intergroup Relations

There is no starker illustration of the dominant-subordinate group relationship than that of slavery. In order to justify their severely discriminatory behavior, slaveholders and their supporters viewed Black people as innately inferior. Enslaved people were denied even the most basic rights of citizenship, a crucial factor for slaveholders and their supporters. Slavery poses an excellent example of conflict theory’s perspective on race relations; the dominant group needed complete control over the subordinate group in order to maintain its power. Whippings, executions, rapes, and denial of schooling and health care were widely practiced.

Slavery eventually became an issue over which the nation divided into geographically and ideologically distinct factions, leading to the Civil War. And while the abolition of slavery on moral grounds was certainly a catalyst to war, it was not the only driving force. Students of U.S. history will know that the institution of slavery was crucial to the Southern economy, whose production of crops like rice, cotton, and tobacco relied on the virtually limitless and cheap labor that slavery provided. In contrast, the North didn’t benefit economically from slavery, resulting in an economic disparity tied to racial/political issues.

A century later, the civil rights movement was characterized by boycotts, marches, sit-ins, and freedom rides: demonstrations by a subordinate group and their supporters that would no longer willingly submit to domination. The major blow to America’s formally institutionalized racism was the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This Act, which is still important today, banned discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Current Status

Although government-sponsored, formalized discrimination against African Americans has been outlawed, true equality does not yet exist. The National Urban League’s *2020 Equality Index* reports that Black people’s overall equality level with White people has been generally improving. Measuring standards of civic engagement, economics, education, and others, Black people had

an equality level of 71 percent in 2010 and had an equality level of 74 percent in 2020. The *Index*, which has been published since 2005, notes a growing trend of increased inequality with White people, especially in the areas of unemployment, insurance coverage, and incarceration. Black people also trail White people considerably in the areas of economics, health, and education (National Urban League 2020).

To what degree do racism and prejudice contribute to this continued inequality? The answer is complex. 2008 saw the election of this country's first African American president: Barack Obama. Despite being popularly identified as Black, we should note that President Obama is of a mixed background that is equally White, and although all presidents have been publicly mocked at times (Gerald Ford was depicted as a klutz, Bill Clinton as someone who could not control his libido), a startling percentage of the critiques of Obama were based on his race. In a number of other chapters, we discuss racial disparities in healthcare, education, incarceration, and other areas.

Although Black people have come a long way from slavery, the echoes of centuries of disempowerment are still evident.

Sociology in the Real World: Black People Are Still Seeking Racial Justice



Figure 11.9: This gathering at the site of George Floyd's death took place five days after he was killed. The location, at Chicago Avenue and 38th Street in Minneapolis, became a memorial. (Credit: Fibbonacci Blue/flickr)

In 2020, racial justice movements expanded their protests against incidents of police brutality and all racially motivated violence against Black people. Black Lives Matter (BLM), an organization founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, was a core part of the movement to protest the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other Black victims of police violence. Millions of people from all racial backgrounds participated in the movement directly or indirectly, demanding justice for the victims and their families, redistributing police department funding to drive more holistic and community-driven law enforcement, addressing systemic racism, and introducing new laws to punish police officers who kill innocent people.

The racial justice movement has been able to achieve some these demands. For example, Minneapolis City Council unanimously approved $27 million settlement to the family of George Floyd in March 2021, the largest pre-trial settlement in a wrongful death case ever for the life of a Black person (Shapiro and Lloyd, 2021). $500,000 from the settlement amount is intended to enhance the business district in the area where Floyd died. Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, was arrested and murdered in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020. Do you think such settlement is adequate to provide justice for the victims, their families and communities affected by the horrific racism? What else should be done more? How can you contribute to bring desired changes?

Asian Americans

Asian Americans represent a great diversity of cultures and backgrounds. The experience of a Japanese American whose family

has been in the United States for three generations will be drastically different from a Laotian American who has only been in the United States for a few years. This section primarily discusses Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese immigrants and shows the differences between their experiences. The most recent estimate from the U.S. Census Bureau (2019) suggest about 5.9 percent of the population identify themselves as Asian.

How and Why They Came

The national and ethnic diversity of Asian American immigration history is reflected in the variety of their experiences in joining U.S. society. Asian immigrants have come to the United States in waves, at different times, and for different reasons.

The first Asian immigrants to come to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century were Chinese. These immigrants were primarily men whose intention was to work for several years in order to earn incomes to support their families in China. Their main destination was the American West, where the Gold Rush was drawing people with its lure of abundant money. The construction of the Transcontinental Railroad was underway at this time, and the Central Pacific section hired thousands of migrant Chinese men to complete the laying of rails across the rugged Sierra Nevada mountain range. Chinese men also engaged in other manual labor like mining and agricultural work. The work was grueling and underpaid, but like many immigrants, they persevered.

Japanese immigration began in the 1880s, on the heels of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Many Japanese immigrants came to Hawaii to participate in the sugar industry; others came to the mainland, especially to California. Unlike the Chinese, however, the Japanese had a strong government that negotiated with the U.S. government to ensure the well-being of their immigrants. Japanese men were able to bring their wives and families to the United States, and were thus able to produce second- and third-generation Japanese Americans more quickly than their Chinese counterparts.

The most recent large-scale Asian immigration came from Korea and Vietnam and largely took place during the second half of the twentieth century. While Korean immigration has been fairly gradual, Vietnamese immigration occurred primarily post-1975, after the fall of Saigon and the establishment of restrictive communist policies in Vietnam. Whereas many Asian immigrants came to the United States to seek better economic opportunities, Vietnamese immigrants came as political refugees, seeking asylum from harsh conditions in their homeland. The Refugee Act of 1980 helped them to find a place to settle in the United States.



Figure 11.10: Thirty-five Vietnamese refugees wait to be taken aboard the amphibious USS *Blue Ridge (LCC-19)*. They are being rescued from a thirty-five-foot fishing boat 350 miles northeast of Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, after spending eight days at sea. (Credit: U.S. Navy/Wikimedia Commons)

History of Intergroup Relations

Chinese immigration came to an abrupt end with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This act was a result of anti-Chinese sentiment burgeoned by a depressed economy and loss of jobs. White workers blamed Chinese migrants for taking jobs, and the passage of the Act meant the number of Chinese workers decreased. Chinese men did not have the funds to return to China or to bring their families to the United States, so they remained physically and culturally segregated in the Chinatowns of large cities.

Later legislation, the Immigration Act of 1924, further curtailed Chinese immigration. The Act included the race-based National Origins Act, which was aimed at keeping U.S. ethnic stock as undiluted as possible by reducing “undesirable” immigrants. It was not until after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that Chinese immigration again increased, and many Chinese families were reunited.

Although Japanese Americans have deep, long-reaching roots in the United States, their history here has not always been smooth. The California Alien Land Law of 1913 was aimed at them and other Asian immigrants, and it prohibited immigrants from owning land. An even uglier action was the Japanese internment camps of World War II, discussed earlier as an illustration of expulsion.

Current Status

Asian Americans certainly have been subject to their share of racial prejudice, despite the seemingly positive stereotype as the model minority. The model minority stereotype is applied to a minority group that is seen as reaching significant educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without challenging the existing establishment.

This stereotype is typically applied to Asian groups in the United States, and it can result in unrealistic expectations by putting a stigma on members of this group that do not meet the expectations. Stereotyping all Asians as smart and capable can also lead to a lack of much-needed government assistance and to educational and professional discrimination.

Sociology in the Real World: Hate Crimes Against Asian Americans



Figure 11.11: In response to widespread attacks against Asian people, partly linked to incorrect associations regarding Asian people and the COVID-19 pandemic, groups around the country and world held Stop Asian Hate rallies like this one in Canada. (Credit: GoToVan/ flickr)

Asian Americans across the United States experienced a significant increase in hate crimes, harassment and discrimination tied to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Community trackers recorded more than 3,000 anti-Asian attacks nationwide during 2020 in comparison to about 100 such incidents recorded annually in the prior years (Abdollah 2021). Asian American leaders have been urging community members to report any criminal incidents, demanding local law enforcement agencies for greater enforcement of existing hate-crime laws.

Many Asian Americans feel their communities have long been ignored by mainstream politics, media and entertainment although they are considered as a “model minority.” Recently, Asian American journalists are sharing their own stories of discrimination on social media and a growing chorus of federal lawmakers are demanding actions. Do you think you can do something to stop violence against Asian Americans? Can any of your actions not only help Asian Americans but also wider people in the United States?

White Americans

White Americans are the dominant racial group in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), 76.3 percent of U.S. adults currently identify themselves as White alone. In this section, we will focus on German, Irish, Italian, and Eastern European immigrants.

Why They Came

White ethnic Europeans formed the second and third great waves of immigration, from the early nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. They joined a newly minted United States that was primarily made up of White Protestants from England. While most immigrants came searching for a better life, their experiences were not all the same.

The first major influx of European immigrants came from Germany and Ireland, starting in the 1820s. Germans came both for economic opportunity and to escape political unrest and military conscription, especially after the Revolutions of 1848. Many German immigrants of this period were political refugees: liberals who wanted to escape from an oppressive government. They were well-off enough to make their way inland, and they formed heavily German enclaves in the Midwest that exist to this day.

The Irish immigrants of the same time period were not always as well off financially, especially after the Irish Potato Famine of 1845. Irish immigrants settled mainly in the cities of the East Coast, where they were employed as laborers and where they faced significant discrimination.

German and Irish immigration continued into the late 19th century and earlier 20th century, at which point the numbers for Southern and Eastern European immigrants started growing as well. Italians, mainly from the Southern part of the country, began arriving in large numbers in the 1890s. Eastern European immigrants—people from Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, and Austria-Hungary—started arriving around the same time. Many of these Eastern Europeans were peasants forced into a hardscrabble existence in their native lands; political unrest, land shortages, and crop failures drove them to seek better opportunities in the United States. The Eastern European immigration wave also included Jewish people escaping pogroms (anti-Jewish massacres) of Eastern Europe and the Pale of Settlement in what was then Poland and Russia.

History of Intergroup Relations

In a broad sense, German immigrants were not victimized to the same degree as many of the other subordinate groups this section discusses. While they may not have been welcomed with open arms, they were able to settle in enclaves and establish roots. A notable exception to this was during the lead up to World War I and through World War II, when anti-German sentiment was virulent.

Irish immigrants, many of whom were very poor, were more of an underclass than the Germans. In Ireland, the English had oppressed the Irish for centuries, eradicating their language and culture and discriminating against their religion (Catholicism). Although the Irish had a larger population than the English, they were a subordinate group. This dynamic reached into the New World, where Anglo-Americans saw Irish immigrants as a race apart: dirty, lacking ambition, and suitable for only the most menial jobs. In fact, Irish immigrants were subject to criticism identical to that with which the dominant group characterized African Americans. By necessity, Irish immigrants formed tight communities segregated from their Anglo neighbors.

The later wave of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe was also subject to intense discrimination and prejudice. In particular, the dominant group—which now included second- and third-generation Germans and Irish—saw Italian immigrants as the dregs of Europe and worried about the purity of the American race (Myers 2007). Italian immigrants lived in segregated slums in Northeastern cities, and in some cases were even victims of violence and lynching similar to what African Americans endured. They undertook physical labor at lower pay than other workers, often doing the dangerous work that other laborers were reluctant to take on, such as earth moving and construction.

Current Status

German Americans are the largest group among White ethnic Americans in the country. For many years, German Americans endeavored to maintain a strong cultural identity, but they are now culturally assimilated into the dominant culture.

There are now more Irish Americans in the United States than there are Irish in Ireland. One of the country's largest cultural groups, Irish Americans have slowly achieved acceptance and assimilation into the dominant group.

Myers (2007) states that Italian Americans' cultural assimilation is "almost complete, but with remnants of ethnicity." The presence of "Little Italy" neighborhoods—originally segregated slums where Italians congregated in the nineteenth century—exist today. While tourists flock to the saints' festivals in Little Italies, most Italian Americans have moved to the suburbs at the same rate as other White groups. Italian Americans also became more accepted after World War II, partly because of other, newer migrating groups and partly because of their significant contribution to the war effort, which saw over 500,000 Italian Americans join the military and fight against the Axis powers, which included Italy itself.

As you will see in the Religion chapter, Jewish people were also a core immigrant group to the United States. They often resided in tight-knit neighborhoods in a similar way to Italian people. Jewish identity is interesting and varied, in that many Jewish people consider themselves as members of a collective ethnic group as well as a religion, and many Jewish people feel connected by their ancestry as well as their religion. In fact, much of the data around the number of Jewish Americans is presented with caveats about different definitions and identifications of what it means to be Jewish (Lipka 2013).

As we have seen, there is no minority group that fits easily in a category or that can be described simply. While sociologists believe that individual experiences can often be understood in light of their social characteristics (such as race, class, or gender), we must balance this perspective with awareness that no two individuals' experiences are alike. Making generalizations can lead to stereotypes and prejudice. The same is true for White ethnic Americans, who come from diverse backgrounds and have had a great variety of experiences.

Social Policy and Debate: Thinking about White Ethnic Americans: Arab Americans


(a) (b)

Figure 11.12: The Islamic Center of America in Dearborn, Michigan is the largest mosque, or Islamic religious place of worship, in the United States. Muslim women and girls often wear head coverings, which sometimes makes them a target of harassment. (Credit A: Ryan Ready/flickr; B: U.S. Department of Agriculture/flickr)

The first Arab immigrants came to this country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were predominantly Syrian, Lebanese, and Jordanian Christians, and they came to escape persecution and to make a better life. These early immigrants and their descendants, who were more likely to think of themselves as Syrian or Lebanese than Arab, represent almost half of the Arab American population today (Myers 2007). Restrictive immigration policies from the 1920s until 1965 curtailed immigration, but Arab immigration since 1965 has been steady. Immigrants from this time period have been more likely to be Muslim and more highly educated, escaping political unrest and looking for better opportunities.

The United States was deeply affected by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and racial profiling has proceeded against Arab Americans since then. Particularly when engaged in air travel, being young and Arab-looking is enough to warrant a special search or detainment. This Islamophobia (irrational fear of or hatred against Muslims) does not show signs of abating. Arab Americans represent all religious practices, despite the stereotype that all Arabic people practice Islam. Geographically, the Arab region comprises the Middle East and parts of North Africa (MENA). People whose ancestry lies in that area or who speak primarily Arabic may consider themselves Arabs.

> The U.S. Census has struggled with the issue of Arab identity. The 2020 Census, as in previous years, did not offer a (MENA) category under the question of race. The US government rejected a push by Arab American advocates and organizations to add the new category, meaning that people stemming from the Arab region will be counted as "white" (Harb 2018). Do you think an addition of MENA category is appropriate to reduce prejudice and discrimination against Arab Americans? What other categories should be added to promote racial justice in the United States?

Hispanic Americans

The U.S. Census Bureau uses two ethnicities in collecting and reporting data: “Hispanic or Latino” and “Not Hispanic or Latino." Hispanic or Latino is a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. Hispanic Americans have a wide range of backgrounds and nationalities.

The segment of the U.S. population that self-identifies as Hispanic in 2019 was recently estimated at 18.5 percent of the total (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, about 75 percent of the respondents who identify as Hispanic report being of Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban origin. Remember that the U.S. Census allows people to report as being more than one ethnicity.

Not only are there wide differences among the different origins that make up the Hispanic American population, but there are also different names for the group itself. Hence, there have been some disagreements over whether Hispanic or Latino is the correct term for a group this diverse, and whether it would be better for people to refer to themselves as being of their origin specifically, for example, Mexican American or Dominican American. This section will compare the experiences of Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans.

How and Why They Came

Mexican Americans form the largest Hispanic subgroup and also the oldest. Mexican migration to the United States started in the early 1900s in response to the need for inexpensive agricultural labor. Mexican migration was often circular; workers would stay for a few years and then go back to Mexico with more money than they could have made in their country of origin. The length of Mexico’s shared border with the United States has made immigration easier than for many other immigrant groups.

Cuban Americans are the second-largest Hispanic subgroup, and their history is quite different from that of Mexican Americans. The main wave of Cuban immigration to the United States started after Fidel Castro came to power in 1959 and reached its crest with the Mariel boatlift in 1980. Castro’s Cuban Revolution ushered in an era of communism that continues to this day. To avoid having their assets seized by the government, many wealthy and educated Cubans migrated north, generally to the Miami area.

History of Intergroup Relations

For several decades, Mexican workers crossed the long border into the United States, both "documented" and "undocumented" to work in the fields that provided produce for the developing United States. Western growers needed a steady supply of labor, and the 1940s and 1950s saw the official federal Bracero Program (*bracero* is Spanish for *strong-arm*) that offered protection to Mexican guest workers. Interestingly, 1954 also saw the enactment of “Operation Wetback,” which deported thousands of illegal Mexican workers. From these examples, we can see the U.S. treatment of immigration from Mexico has been ambivalent at best.

Sociologist Douglas Massey (2006) suggests that although the average standard of living than in Mexico may be lower in the United States, it is not so low as to make permanent migration the goal of most Mexicans. However, the strengthening of the border that began with 1986’s Immigration Reform and Control Act has made one-way migration the rule for most Mexicans. Massey argues that the rise of illegal one-way immigration of Mexicans is a direct outcome of the law that was intended to reduce it.

Cuban Americans, perhaps because of their relative wealth and education level at the time of immigration, have fared better than many immigrants. Further, because they were fleeing a Communist country, they were given refugee status and offered protection and social services. The Cuban Migration Agreement of 1995 has curtailed legal immigration from Cuba, leading many Cubans to try to immigrate illegally by boat. According to a 2009 report from the Congressional Research Service, the U.S. government applies a “wet foot/dry foot” policy toward Cuban immigrants; Cubans who are intercepted while still at sea will be returned to Cuba, while those who reach the shore will be permitted to stay in the United States.

Current Status

Mexican Americans, especially those who are here undocumented, are at the center of a national debate about immigration. Myers (2007) observes that no other minority group (except the Chinese) has immigrated to the United States in such an environment of legal dispute. He notes that in some years, three times as many Mexican immigrants may have entered the United States undocumented as those who arrived documented. It should be noted that this is due to enormous disparity of economic opportunity on two sides of an open border, not because of any inherent inclination to break laws. In his report, "Measuring Immigrant Assimilation in the United States," Jacob Vigdor (2008) states that Mexican immigrants experience relatively low rates of economic and civic assimilation. He further suggests that "the slow rates of economic and civic assimilation set Mexicans apart from other immigrants, and may reflect the fact that the large numbers of Mexican immigrants residing in the United States undocumented have few opportunities to advance themselves along these dimensions."

By contrast, Cuban Americans are often seen as a model minority group within the larger Hispanic group. Many Cubans had higher socioeconomic status when they arrived in this country, and their anti-Communist agenda has made them welcome refugees to this country. In south Florida, especially, Cuban Americans are active in local politics and professional life. As with Asian Americans, however, being a model minority can mask the issue of powerlessness that these minority groups face in U.S. society.

Social Policy and Debate: Arizona's Senate Bill 1070



Figure 11.13: Protesters in Arizona dispute the harsh new anti-immigration law. (Credit: rprathap/flickr)

As both legal and illegal immigrants, and with high population numbers, Mexican Americans are often the target of stereotyping, racism, and discrimination. A harsh example of this is in Arizona, where a stringent immigration law—known as SB 1070 (for Senate Bill 1070)—caused a nationwide controversy. Formally titled "Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, the law requires that during a lawful stop, detention, or arrest, Arizona police officers must establish the immigration status of anyone they suspect may be here illegally. The law makes it a crime for individuals to fail to have documents confirming their legal status, and it gives police officers the right to detain people they suspect may be in the country illegally.

To many, the most troublesome aspect of this law is the latitude it affords police officers in terms of whose citizenship they may question. Having "reasonable suspicion that the person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the United States" is reason enough to demand immigration papers (Senate Bill 1070 2010). Critics say this law will encourage racial profiling (the illegal practice of law enforcement using race as a basis for suspecting someone of a crime), making it hazardous to be caught "Driving While Brown," a takeoff on the legal term Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) or the slang reference of "Driving While Black." Driving While Brown refers to the likelihood of getting pulled over just for being nonWhite.

SB 1070 has been the subject of many lawsuits, from parties as diverse as Arizona police officers, the American Civil Liberties Union, and even the federal government, which is suing on the basis of Arizona contradicting federal immigration laws (ACLU 2011). The future of SB 1070 is uncertain, but many other states have tried or are trying to pass similar measures. Do you think such measures are appropriate?

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8.2.7: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
amalgamation	the process by which a minority group and a majority group combine to form a new group				
antiracist	a person who opposes racism and acts for racial justice				
assimilation	the process by which a minority individual or group takes on the characteristics of the dominant culture				
colorism	the belief that one type of skin tone is superior or inferior to another within a racial group				
culture of prejudice	the theory that prejudice is embedded in our culture				
discrimination	prejudiced action against a group of people				
dominant group	a group of people who have more power in a society than any of the subordinate groups				
ethnicity	shared culture, which may include heritage, language, religion, and more				
expulsion	the act of a dominant group forcing a subordinate group to leave a certain area or even the country				
genocide	the deliberate annihilation of a targeted (usually subordinate) group				
intersection theory	theory that suggests we cannot separate the effects of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other attributes				
minority group	any group of people who are singled out from the others for differential and unequal treatment				
model minority	the stereotype applied to a minority group that is seen as reaching higher educational, professional, and socioeconomic levels without protest against the majority establishment				
pluralism	the ideal of the United States as a “salad bowl:” a mixture of different cultures where each culture retains its own identity and yet adds to the “flavor” of the whole				
prejudice	biased thought based on flawed assumptions about a group of people				
racial profiling	the use by law enforcement of race alone to determine whether to stop and detain someone				
racial steering	the act of real estate agents directing prospective homeowners toward or away from certain neighborhoods based on their race				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
racism	a set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices that are used to justify the belief that one racial category is somehow superior or inferior to others				
redlining	the practice of routinely refusing mortgages for households and business located in predominately minority communities				
scapegoat theory	a theory that suggests that the dominant group will displace its unfocused aggression onto a subordinate group				
sedimentation of racial inequality	the intergenerational impact of de facto and de jure racism that limits the abilities of Black people to accumulate wealth				
segregation	the physical separation of two groups, particularly in residence, but also in workplace and social functions				
social construction of race	the school of thought that race is not biologically identifiable				
stereotypes	oversimplified ideas about groups of people				
subordinate group	a group of people who have less power than the dominant group				
systemic racism	racism embedded in social institutions; also referred to as institutional racism and structural racism				
White privilege	the societal privilege that benefits White people, or those perceived to be White, over non-White people in some societies, including the United States				

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8.2.8: Section Summary

11.1 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

Race is fundamentally a social construct. Ethnicity is a term that describes shared culture and national origin. Minority groups are defined by their lack of power.

11.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

Functionalist views of race study the role dominant and subordinate groups play to create a stable social structure. Conflict theorists examine power disparities and struggles between various racial and ethnic groups. Interactionists see race and ethnicity as important sources of individual identity and social symbolism. The concept of culture of prejudice recognizes that all people are subject to stereotypes that are ingrained in their culture.

11.3 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

Stereotypes are oversimplified ideas about groups of people. Prejudice refers to thoughts and feelings, while discrimination refers to actions. Racism is both prejudice and discrimination due to the belief that one race is inherently superior or inferior to other races. Antiracists fight against the systems of racism by employing antiracist policies and practices in institutions and communities.

11.4 Intergroup Relationships

Intergroup relations range from a tolerant approach of pluralism to intolerance as severe as genocide. In pluralism, groups retain their own identity. In assimilation, groups conform to the identity of the dominant group. In amalgamation, groups combine to form a new group identity.

11.5 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

The history of the U.S. people contains an infinite variety of experiences that sociologist understand follow patterns. From the indigenous people who first inhabited these lands to the waves of immigrants over the past 500 years, migration is an experience with many shared characteristics. Most groups have experienced various degrees of prejudice and discrimination as they have gone through the process of assimilation.

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8.2.9: Section Quiz

11.1 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

1.

The racial term “African American” can refer to:

a. a Black person living in the United States
b. people whose ancestors came to the United States through the slave trade
c. a White person who originated in Africa and now lives in the United States
d. any of the above

2.

What is the one defining feature of a minority group?

a. Self-definition
b. Numerical minority
c. Lack of power
d. Strong cultural identity

3.

Ethnicity describes shared:

a. beliefs
b. language
c. religion
d. any of the above

4.

Which of the following is an example of a numerical majority being treated as a subordinate group?

a. Jewish people in Germany
b. Creoles in New Orleans
c. White people in Brazil
d. Black people under apartheid in South Africa

5.

Scapegoat theory shows that:

a. subordinate groups blame dominant groups for their problems
b. dominant groups blame subordinate groups for their problems
c. some people are predisposed to prejudice
d. all of the above

11.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

6.

As a White person in the United States, being reasonably sure that you will be dealing with authority figures of the same race as you is a result of:

a. intersection theory

b. conflict theory
c. White privilege
d. scapegoating theory

7.

Speedy Gonzalez is an example of:

a. intersection theory
b. stereotyping
c. interactionist view
d. culture of prejudice

11.3 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

8.

Stereotypes can be based on:

a. race
b. ethnicity
c. gender
d. all of the above

9.

What is discrimination?

a. Biased thoughts against an individual or group
b. Biased actions against an individual or group
c. Belief that a race different from yours is inferior
d. Another word for stereotyping

10.

Which of the following is the best explanation of racism as a social fact?

a. It needs to be eradicated by laws.
b. It is like a magic pill.
c. It does not need the actions of individuals to continue.
d. None of the above

11.4 Intergroup Relationships

11.

Which intergroup relation displays the least tolerance?

a. Segregation
b. Assimilation
c. Genocide
d. Expulsion

12.

What doctrine justified legal segregation in the South?

a. Jim Crow
b. *Plessy v. Ferguson*
c. *De jure*

d. Separate but equal

13.

What intergroup relationship is represented by the “salad bowl” metaphor?

a. Assimilation
b. Pluralism
c. Amalgamation
d. Segregation

14.

Amalgamation is represented by the _____ metaphor.

a. melting pot
b. Statue of Liberty
c. salad bowl
d. separate but equal

11.5 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

15.

What makes Native Americans unique as a subordinate group in the United States?

a. They are the only group that experienced expulsion.
b. They are the only group that was segregated.
c. They are the only group that was enslaved.
d. They are the only group that is indigenous to the United States.

16.

Which subordinate group is often referred to as the “model minority?”

a. African Americans
b. Asian Americans
c. White ethnic Americans
d. Native Americans

17.

Which federal act or program was designed to allow more Hispanic American immigration, not block it?

a. The Bracero Program
b. Immigration Reform and Control Act
c. Operation Wetback
d. SB 1070

18.

Many Arab Americans face _____, especially after 9/11.

a. racism
b. segregation
c. Islamophobia
d. prejudice

19.

Why did most White ethnic Americans come to the United States?

a. For a better life
b. To escape oppression
c. Because they were forced out of their own countries
d. a and b only

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8.2.10: Short Answer

11.1 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

1.

Why do you think the term “minority” has persisted when the word “subordinate” is more descriptive?

2.

How do you describe your ethnicity? Do you include your family’s country of origin? Do you consider yourself multiethnic? How does your ethnicity compare to that of the people you spend most of your time with?

11.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

3.

How do redlining and racial steering contribute to institutionalized racism?

4.

Give an example of stereotyping that you see in everyday life. Explain what would need to happen for this to be eliminated.

11.3 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

5.

Give three examples of White privilege. Do you know people who have experienced this? From what perspective?

6.

What is the worst example of culture of prejudice you can think of? What are your reasons for thinking it is the worst?

11.4 Intergroup Relationships

7.

Do you believe immigration laws should foster an approach of pluralism, assimilation, or amalgamation? Which perspective do you think is most supported by current U.S. immigration policies?

8.

Which intergroup relation do you think is the most beneficial to the subordinate group? To society as a whole? Why?

11.5 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

9.

In your opinion, which group had the easiest time coming to this country? Which group had the hardest time? Why?

10.

Which group has made the most socioeconomic gains? Why do you think that group has had more success than others have?

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8.2.11: Further Research

11.1 Racial, Ethnic, and Minority Groups

Explore aspects of race and ethnicity at PBS's site, "What Is Race?".

11.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Race and Ethnicity

Are you aware of your own or others' privilege? Watch this TED Talk on White privilege to explore the concept.

11.3 Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism

How far should First Amendment rights extend? Read more about the subject at the First Amendment Center.

Learn more about institutional racism at the Southern Poverty Law Center's website.

Learn more about how prejudice develops by watching the short documentary "Eye of the Storm"

11.4 Intergroup Relationships

So you think you know your own assumptions? Check and find out with the Implicit Association Test

What do you know about the treatment of Australia's aboriginal population? Find out more by viewing the feature-length documentary *Our Generation*.

11.5 Race and Ethnicity in the United States

Are people interested in reclaiming their ethnic identities? Read the article *The White Ethnic Revival* and decide.

What is the current racial composition of the United States? Review up-to-the minute statistics at the United States Census Bureau.

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8.2.12: References

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9: SEX AND GENDER

9.1: Gender and Gender Inequality

9.1.1: Prelude to Gender and Gender Inequality

9.1.2: 8.2- Understanding Sex and Gender

9.1.3: 8.3- Gender Inequality

9.1.4: 8.4- Violence Against Women- Rape and Pornography

9.1.5: 8.5- The Benefits and Costs of Being Male

9.1.S: Gender and Gender Inequality (Summary)

9.2: Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

9.2.1: Introduction

9.2.2: Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression

9.2.3: Gender and Gender Inequality

9.2.4: Sexuality

9.2.5: Key Terms

9.2.6: Section Summary

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9.2.9: Further Research

9.2.10: References

9.3: What is Gender?

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9.1: GENDER AND GENDER INEQUALITY



- Topic hierarchy

9.1.1: Prelude to Gender and Gender Inequality

9.1.2: 8.2- Understanding Sex and Gender

9.1.3: 8.3- Gender Inequality

9.1.4: 8.4- Violence Against Women- Rape and Pornography

9.1.5: 8.5- The Benefits and Costs of Being Male

9.1.S: Gender and Gender Inequality (Summary)

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9.1.1: Prelude to Gender and Gender Inequality

Social Issues in the News

September 2009 was Rape Awareness Month at the University of Missouri-Columbia. The coordinator of the Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Center (RSVP), the group sponsoring the month-long series of events, said they chose September because of the high rates of sexual violence committed against new women students during the first few weeks of the semester. As on many campuses around the country since the late 1970s, a Take Back the Night march and rally was the highlight of RSVP's effort to call attention to violence against women. An RSVP staff member explained that Take Back the Night marches began when women decided, "No, we're not going to live in fear, we're not going to stay inside, these are our streets. This is our community; we're not going to be frightened." At her own campus, she said, "It's women getting together and saying, 'You know what, these are our lives. We own these streets just like anyone else, we walk these streets just like anyone else.' It's a very empowering kind of event and evening." (Silverman, 2009)Silverman, J. (2009, September 1). RSVP educates students for Rape Awareness Month. *The Maneater* (official student newspaper of the University of Missouri-Columbia). Retrieved from www.themaneater.com/stories/2...cates-students -rape-awareness-month

It was the early 1970s. Susan (a pseudonym), a sophomore college student, wanted to become a physician, so she went to talk to her biology professor about the pre-med program at her school. The professor belittled her interest in medicine and refused to discuss the program. Women, he advised her, should just become wives and mothers and leave the doctoring to men.

At the same college and about the same time, John (also a pseudonym) went to talk to a draft counselor for advice as he considered his options to military service in Vietnam. John said he had something very embarrassing to say and hesitated a long time before speaking. Finally John explained, as if revealing a deep secret, that he had never liked to fight, not even as a young boy, and wondered aloud if there was something wrong with him. It was not that he was scared to fight, he assured the draft counselor, it was that he thought fighting was wrong, even though his friends had sometimes called him a "sissy" and other words for refusing to fight. John was advised that he might qualify as a conscientious objector and was informed about that and his other options to being drafted. He left the room, and the draft counselor never saw him again.

Much has changed during the almost four decades since these two real-life stories occurred and since Take Back the Night marches began. Women have entered medicine, engineering, and other professions and careers in unprecedented numbers, no doubt dismaying the biology professor who thought them best suited as wives and mothers. Many men have begun to realize that "real men" do not necessarily have to enjoy fighting and other traditionally male behaviors and attitudes. Our society now has an awareness of rape and other violence against women that would astonish students of the 1970s. Still, gender roles and gender inequality persist and violence against women continues, with important consequences for both women and men and for society as a whole. To begin our discussion of gender and gender inequality, this chapter begins with a critical look at the concepts of sex and gender.

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9.1.2: 8.2- Understanding Sex and Gender

Learning Objectives

- Define sex and gender and femininity and masculinity.
- Critically assess the evidence on biology, culture and socialization, and gender.
- Discuss agents of gender socialization.

Although the terms *sex* and *gender* are sometimes used interchangeably and do in fact complement each other, they nonetheless refer to different aspects of what it means to be a woman or man in any society.

Sex refers to *the anatomical and other biological differences between females and males that are determined at the moment of conception and develop in the womb and throughout childhood and adolescence*. Females, of course, have two X chromosomes, while males have one X chromosome and one Y chromosome. From this basic genetic difference spring other biological differences. The first to appear are the different genitals that boys and girls develop in the womb and that the doctor (or midwife) and parents look for when a baby is born (assuming the baby's sex is not already known from ultrasound or other techniques) so that the momentous announcement, "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!" can be made. The genitalia are called primary sex characteristics, while the other differences that develop during puberty are called secondary sex characteristics and stem from hormonal differences between the two sexes. In this difficult period of adolescents' lives, boys generally acquire deeper voices, more body hair, and more muscles from their flowing testosterone. Girls develop breasts and wider hips and begin menstruating as nature prepares them for possible pregnancy and childbirth. For better or worse, these basic biological differences between the sexes affect many people's perceptions of what it means to be female or male, as we shall soon discuss.

Gender as a Social Construction

If sex is a biological concept, then gender is a social concept. It refers to *the social and cultural differences a society assigns to people based on their (biological) sex*. A related concept, gender roles, refers to *a society's expectations of people's behavior and attitudes based on whether they are females or males*. Understood in this way, gender, like race as discussed in Chapter 7, is a *social construction*. How we think and behave as females and males is not etched in stone by our biology but rather is a result of how society expects us to think and behave based on what sex we are. As we grow up, we learn these expectations as we develop our gender identity, or our beliefs about ourselves as females or males.

These expectations are called *femininity* and *masculinity*. Femininity refers to *the cultural expectations we have of girls and women*, while masculinity refers to *the expectations we have of boys and men*. A familiar nursery rhyme nicely summarizes these two sets of traits:

What are little boys made of?

Snips and snails,

And puppy dog tails,

That's what little boys are made of.

What are little girls made of?

Sugar and spice,

And everything nice,

That's what little girls are made of.

As this nursery rhyme suggests, our traditional notions of femininity and masculinity indicate that we think females and males are fundamentally different from each other. In effect, we think of them as two sides of the same coin of being human. What

we traditionally mean by femininity is captured in the adjectives, both positive and negative, we traditionally ascribe to women: gentle, sensitive, nurturing, delicate, graceful, cooperative, decorative, dependent, emotional, passive, and weak. Thus, when we say that a girl or woman is very feminine, we have some combination of these traits, usually the positive ones, in mind: she is soft, dainty, pretty, even a bit flighty. What we traditionally mean by masculinity is captured in the adjectives, again both positive and negative, our society traditionally ascribes to men: strong, assertive, brave, active, independent, intelligent, competitive, insensitive, unemotional, and aggressive. When we say that a boy or man is very masculine, we have some combination of these traits in mind: he is tough, strong, and assertive.

Figure 8.1



Infant girls traditionally wear pink, while infant boys wear blue. This color difference reflects the different cultural expectations we have for babies based on their (biological) sex.

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These traits might sound like stereotypes of females and males in today's society, and to some extent they are, but differences between men and women in attitudes and behavior do in fact exist (Aulette, Wittner, & Blakeley, 2009).Aulette, J. R., Wittner, J., & Blakeley, K. (2009). *Gendered worlds*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. For example, women cry more often than men do. Men are more physically violent than women. Women take care of children more than men do. Women smile more often than men. Men curse more often than women. When women talk with each other, they are more likely to talk about their personal lives than men are when they talk with each other (Tannen, 2001).Tannen, D. (2001). *You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation*. New York, NY: Quill.The two sexes even differ when they hold a cigarette (not that anyone should smoke). When a woman holds a cigarette, she usually has the palm of her cigarette-holding hand facing upward. When a man holds a cigarette, he usually has his palm facing downward.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation refers to a person's preference for sexual relationships with individuals of the other sex (*heterosexuality*), one's own sex (*homosexuality*), or both sexes (*bisexuality*). The term also increasingly refers to *transgendered* individuals, those whose behavior, appearance, and/or gender identity fails to conform to conventional norms. Transgendered individuals include *transvestites* (those who dress in the clothing of the opposite sex) and *transsexuals*(those whose gender identity differs from the physiological sex and who sometimes undergo a sex change).

It is difficult to know precisely how many people are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered. One problem is conceptual. For example, what does it mean to be gay or lesbian? Does one need to actually have sexual relations with a same-sex partner to be considered gay? What if someone is attracted to same-sex partners but does not actually engage in sex with such persons? What if someone identifies as heterosexual but engages in homosexual sex for money (as in certain forms of prostitution) or for power and influence (as in much prison sex)? These conceptual problems make it difficult to determine the extent of homosexuality.

A second problem is empirical. Even if we can settle on a definition of homosexuality, how do we then determine how many people fit this definition? For better or worse, our best evidence of the number of gays and lesbians in the United States comes from surveys of national samples of Americans in which they are asked various questions about their sexuality. Although these are anonymous surveys, obviously at least some individuals may be reluctant to disclose their sexual activity and thoughts to an interviewer. Still, scholars think the estimates from these surveys are fairly accurate but that they probably underestimate by at least a small amount the number of gays and lesbians.

A widely cited survey carried out by researchers at the University of Chicago found that 2.8% of men and 1.4% of women identified themselves as gay/lesbian or bisexual, with greater percentages reporting having had sexual relations with same-sex partners or being attracted to same-sex persons (see Table 8.1). In the 2008 General Social Survey, 2.2% of men and 3.5% of women identified themselves as gay/lesbian or bisexual. Among individuals having had any sexual partners since turning 18, 2.2% of men reported having had at least some male partners, while 4.6% of women reported having had at least some female partners. Although precise numbers must remain unknown, it seems fair to say that between about 2% and 5% of Americans are gay/lesbian or bisexual.

Table 8.1 Prevalence of Homosexuality in the United States

Activity, attraction, or identity	Men (%)	Women (%)
Find same-sex sexual relations appealing	4.5	5.6
Attracted to people of same sex	6.2	4.4
Identify as gay or bisexual	2.8	1.4
At least one sex partner of same sex during past year among those sexually active	2.7	1.3
At least one sex partner of same sex since turning 18	4.9	4.1

Source: Data from Laumann, E. O., Gagnon, J. H., Michael, R. T., & Michaels, S. (1994). The social organization of sexuality. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

If it is difficult to determine the number of people who are gay/lesbian or bisexual, it is even more difficult to determine why some people have this sexual orientation while most do not have it. Scholars disagree on the "causes" of sexual orientation (Engle, McFalls, Gallagher, & Curtis, 2006; Sheldon, Pfeffer, Jayaratne, Feldbaum, & Petty, 2007).Engle, M. J., McFalls, J. A., Jr., Gallagher, B. J., III, & Curtis, K. (2006). The attitudes of American sociologists toward causal theories of male homosexuality. *The American Sociologist, 37*(1), 68–67; Sheldon, J. P., Pfeffer, C. A., Jayaratne, T. E., Feldbaum, M., & Petty, E. M. (2007). Beliefs about the etimology of homosexuality and about the ramifications of discovering its possible genetic origin. *Journal of Homosexuality, 52*(3/4), 111–150.Some scholars attribute it to unknown biological factor(s) over which individuals have no control, just as individuals do not decide whether they are left-handed or right-handed. Supporting this view, many gays say they realized they were gay during adolescence, just as straights would say they realized they were straight during their own adolescence. Other scholars say that sexual orientation is at least partly influenced by cultural norms, so that individuals are more likely to identify as gay or straight depending on the cultural views of sexual orientation into which they are socialized as they grow up. At best, perhaps all we can say is that sexual orientation stems from a complex mix of biological and cultural factors that remain to be determined.

The Development of Gender Differences

What accounts for differences in female and male behavior and attitudes? Do the biological differences between the sexes account for differences between these other differences? Or do these latter differences stem, as most sociologists think, from cultural expectations and from differences in the ways in which the sexes are socialized? These are critical questions, for they ask whether the differences between boys and girls and women and men stem more from biology or from society. As Chapter 2 pointed out, biological explanations for human behavior implicitly support the status quo. If we think behavioral and other differences between the sexes are due primarily to their respective biological makeups, we are saying that these differences are inevitable or nearly so and that any attempt to change them goes against biology and will likely fail.

As an example, consider the obvious biological fact that women bear and nurse children and men do not. Couple this with the common view that women are also more gentle and nurturing than men, and we end up with a "biological recipe" for women to be the primary caretakers of children. Many people think this means women are therefore much better suited than men to take care of children once they are born, and that the family might be harmed if mothers work outside the home or if fathers are the primary caretakers. Figure 8.2 shows that more than one-third of the public agrees that "it is much better for everyone involved

if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." To the extent this belief exists, women may not want to work outside the home or, if they choose to do so, they face difficulties from employers, family, and friends. Conversely, men may not even think about wanting to stay at home and may themselves face difficulties from employees, family, and friends if they want to do so. A belief in a strong biological basis for differences between women and men implies, then, that there is little we can or should do to change these differences. It implies that "anatomy is destiny," and destiny is, of course, by definition inevitable.

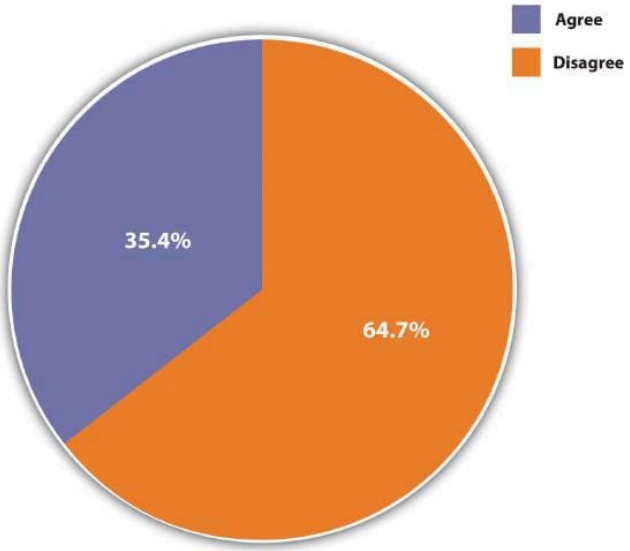


Figure 8.2 Belief That Women Should Stay at Home. Agreement or disagreement with statement that "it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family."

Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

This implication makes it essential to understand the extent to which gender differences do, in fact, stem from biological differences between the sexes or, instead, stem from cultural and social influences. If biology is paramount, then gender differences are perhaps inevitable and the status quo will remain. If culture and social influences matter much more than biology, then gender differences can change and the status quo may give way. With this backdrop in mind, let's turn to the biological evidence for behavioral and other differences between the sexes and then examine the evidence for their social and cultural roots.

Biology and Gender

Several biological explanations for gender roles exist, and we discuss two of the most important ones here. One explanation is from the related fields of sociobiology (see Chapter 2) and evolutionary psychology (Workman & Reader, 2009)Workman, L., & Reader, W. (2009). *Evolutionary psychology* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. and argues an evolutionary basis for traditional gender roles.

Scholars advocating this view reason as follows (Barash, 2007; Thornhill & Palmer, 2000).Barash, D. P. (2007). *Natural selections: Selfish altruists, honest liars, and other realities of evolution*. New York, NY: Bellevue Literary Press; Thornhill, R., & Palmer, C. T. (2000). *A natural history of rape: Biological bases of sexual coercion*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. In prehistoric societies, few social roles existed. A major role centered on relieving hunger by hunting or gathering food. The other major role centered on bearing and nursing children. Because only women could perform this role, they were also the primary caretakers for children for several years after birth. And because women were frequently pregnant, their roles as mothers confined them to the home for most of their adulthood. Meanwhile, men were better suited than women for hunting because they were stronger and quicker than women. In prehistoric societies, then, biology was indeed destiny: for biological reasons, men in effect worked outside the home (hunted), while women stayed at home with their children.

Evolutionary reasons also explain why men are more violent than women. In prehistoric times, men who were more willing to commit violence against and even kill other men would "win out" in the competition for female mates. They thus were more likely than less violent men to produce offspring, who would then carry these males' genetic violent tendencies. By the same token, men who were prone to rape women were more likely to produce offspring, who would then carry these males' "rape genes." This early

process guaranteed that rape tendencies would be biologically transmitted and thus provides a biological basis for the amount of rape that occurs today.

If the human race evolved along these lines, sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists continue, natural selection favored those societies where men were stronger, braver, and more aggressive and where women were more fertile and nurturing. Such traits over the millennia became fairly instinctual, meaning that men's and women's biological natures evolved differently. Men became, by nature, more assertive, daring, and violent than women, and women are, by nature, more gentle, nurturing, and maternal than men. To the extent this is true, these scholars add, traditional gender roles for women and men make sense from an evolutionary standpoint, and attempts to change them go against the sexes' biological natures. This in turn implies that existing gender inequality must continue because it is rooted in biology. As the title of a book presenting the evolutionary psychology argument summarizes this implication, "biology at work: rethinking sexual equality" (Browne, 2002).Browne, K. (2002). *Biology at work: Rethinking sexual equality*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Critics challenge the evolutionary explanation on several grounds (Hurley, 2007; Buller, 2006; Begley, 2009).Hurley, S. (2007). Sex and the social construction of gender: Can feminism and evolutionary psychology be reconciled? In J. Browne (Ed.), *The future of gender* (pp. 98–115). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press; Buller, D. J. (2006). *Adapting minds: Evolutionary psychology and the persistent quest for human nature*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; Begley, S. (2009, June 29). Don't blame the caveman. *Newsweek*, pp. 52–62. First, much greater gender variation in behavior and attitudes existed in prehistoric times than the evolutionary explanation assumes. Second, even if biological differences did influence gender roles in prehistoric times, these differences are largely irrelevant in today's world, in which, for example, physical strength is not necessary for survival. Third, human environments throughout the millennia have simply been too diverse to permit the simple, straightforward biological development that the evolutionary explanation assumes. Fourth, evolutionary arguments implicitly justify existing gender inequality by implying the need to confine women and men to their traditional roles.

Recent anthropological evidence also challenges the evolutionary argument that men's tendency to commit violence, including rape, was biologically transmitted. This evidence instead finds that violent men have trouble finding female mates who would want them and that the female mates they find and the children they produce are often killed by rivals to the men. The recent evidence also finds those rapists' children are often abandoned and then die. As one anthropologist summarizes the rape evidence, "The likelihood that rape is an evolved adaptation [is] extremely low. It just wouldn't have made sense for men in the [prehistoric epoch] to use rape as a reproductive strategy, so the argument that it's preprogrammed into us doesn't hold up" (Begley, 2009, p. 54).Begley, S. (2009, June 29). Don't blame the caveman. *Newsweek*, pp. 52–62.



Figure 8.3. According to some sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists, today's gender differences in strength and physical aggression are ultimately rooted in certain evolutionary processes that spanned millennia.

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A second biological explanation for traditional gender roles centers on hormones and specifically on testosterone, the so-called male hormone. One of the most important differences between boys and girls and men and women in the United States and many other societies is their level of aggression. Simply put, males are much more physically aggressive than females and in

the United States commit about 85%–90% of all violent crimes (see Chapter 5). Why is this so? As Chapter 5 pointed out, this gender difference is often attributed to males' higher levels of testosterone (Mazur, 2009).Mazur, A. (2009). Testosterone and violence among young men. In A. Walsh & K. M. Beaver (Eds.), *Biosocial criminology: New directions in theory and research* (pp. 190–204). New York, NY: Routledge.

To see whether testosterone does indeed raise aggression, investigators typically assess whether males with higher testosterone levels are more aggressive than those with lower testosterone levels. Several studies find that this is indeed the case. For example, a widely cited study of Vietnam-era male veterans found that those with higher levels of testosterone had engaged in more violent behavior (Booth & Osgood, 1993).Booth, A., & Osgood, D. W. (1993). The influence of testosterone on deviance in adulthood: Assessing and explaining the relationship. *Criminology, 31*(1), 93–117. However, this correlation does not necessarily mean that their testosterone increased their violence: as has been found in various animal species, it is also possible that their violence increased their testosterone. Because studies of human males can't for ethical and practical reasons manipulate their testosterone levels, the exact meaning of the results from these testosterone-aggression studies must remain unclear, according to a review sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences (Miczek, Mirsky, Carey, & Raine, 1994).Miczek, K. A., Mirsky, A. F., Carey, G., DeBold, J., & Raine, A. (1994). An overview of biological influences on violent behavior. In J. Albert, J. Reiss, K. A. Miczek, & J. A. Roth (Eds.), *Understanding and preventing violence: Biobehavioral influences* (Vol. 2, pp. 1–20). Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Another line of research on the biological basis for sex differences in aggression involves children, including some as young as ages 1 or 2, in various situations (Card, Stucky, Sawalani, & Little, 2008).Card, N. A., Stucky, B. D., Sawalani, G. M., & Little, T. D. (2008). Direct and indirect aggression during childhood and adolescence: A meta-analytic review of gender differences, intercorrelations, and relations to maladjustment. *Child Development, 79*(5), 1185–1229. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2008.01184.x They might be playing with each other, interacting with adults, or writing down solutions to hypothetical scenarios given to them by a researcher. In most of these studies, boys are more physically aggressive in thought or deed than girls, even at a very young age. Other studies are more experimental in nature. In one type of study, a toddler will be playing with a toy, only to have it removed by an adult. Boys typically tend to look angry and to try to grab the toy back, while girls tend to just sit there and whimper. Because these gender differences in aggression are found at very young ages, researchers often say they must have some biological basis. However, critics of this line of research counter that even young children have already been socialized along gender lines (Begley, 2009; Eliot, 2009),Begley, S. (2009, September 14). Pink brain, blue brain: Claims of sex differences fall apart. *Newsweek*, p. 28; Eliot, L. (2009). *Pink brain, blue brain: How small differences grow into troublesome gaps—and what we can do about it*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. a point to which we return later. To the extent this is true, gender differences in children's aggression may simply reflect socialization and not biology.

In sum, biological evidence for gender differences certainly exists, but its interpretation remains very controversial. It must be weighed against the evidence, to which we next turn, of cultural variations in the experience of gender and of socialization differences by gender. One thing is clear: to the extent we accept biological explanations for gender, we imply that existing gender differences and gender inequality must continue to exist. This implication prompts many social scientists to be quite critical of the biological viewpoint. As Linda L. Lindsey (2011, p. 52)Lindsey, L. L. (2011). *Gender roles: A sociological perspective* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. notes, "Biological arguments are consistently drawn upon to justify gender inequality and the continued oppression of women." In contrast, cultural and social explanations of gender differences and gender inequality promise some hope for change. Let's examine the evidence for these explanations.

Culture and Gender

Some of the most compelling evidence against a strong biological determination of gender roles comes from anthropologists, whose work on preindustrial societies demonstrates some striking gender variation from one culture to another. This variation underscores the impact of culture on how females and males think and behave.

Margaret Mead (1935)Mead, M. (1935). *Sex and temperament in three primitive societies*. New York, NY: William Morrow. was one of the first anthropologists to study cultural differences in gender. In New Guinea she found three tribes—the Arapesh, the Mundugumor, and the Tchambuli—whose gender roles differed dramatically. In the Arapesh both sexes were gentle and nurturing. Both women and men spent much time with their children in a loving way and exhibited what we would normally call maternal behavior. In the Arapesh, then, different gender roles did not exist, and in fact, both sexes conformed to what Americans would normally call the female gender role.



Figure 8.4. Margaret Mead made important contributions to the anthropological study of gender. Her work suggested that culture dramatically influences how females and males behave and that gender is rooted much more in culture than in biology.

Source: Photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress, http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3c20226.

The situation was the reverse among the Mundugumor. Here both men and women were fierce, competitive, and violent. Both sexes seemed to almost dislike children and often physically punished them. In the Mundugumor society, then, different gender roles also did not exist, as both sexes conformed to what we Americans would normally call the male gender role.

In the Tchambuli, Mead finally found a tribe where different gender roles did exist. One sex was the dominant, efficient, assertive one and showed leadership in tribal affairs, while the other sex liked to dress up in frilly clothes, wear makeup, and even giggle a lot. Here, then, Mead found a society with gender roles similar to those found in the United States, but with a surprising twist. In the Tchambuli, women were the dominant, assertive sex that showed leadership in tribal affairs, while men were the ones wearing frilly clothes and makeup.

Mead's research caused a firestorm in scholarly circles, as it challenged the biological view on gender that was still very popular when she went to New Guinea. In recent years, Mead's findings have been challenged by other anthropologists. Among other things, they argue that she probably painted an overly simplistic picture of gender roles in her three societies (Scheper-Hughes, 1987).Scheper-Hughes, N. (1987). The Margaret Mead controversy: Culture, biology and anthropological inquiry. In H. Applebaum (Ed.), *Perspectives in cultural anthropology* (pp. 443–454). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. Other anthropologists defend Mead's work and note that much subsequent research has found that gender-linked attitudes and behavior do differ widely from one culture to another (S. Morgan, 1989).Morgan, S. (Ed.). (1989). *Gender and anthropology: Critical reviews for research and teaching*. Washington, DC: American Anthropological Association. If so, they say, the impact of culture on what it means to be a female or male cannot be ignored.

Extensive evidence of this impact comes from anthropologist George Murdock, who created the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample of almost 200 preindustrial societies studied by anthropologists. Murdock (1937)Murdock, G. (1937). Comparative data on the division of labor by sex. *Social Forces, 15*, 551–553. found that some tasks in these societies, such as hunting and trapping, are almost always done by men, while other tasks, such as cooking and fetching water, are almost always done by women. These patterns provide evidence for the evolutionary argument presented earlier, as they probably stem from the biological differences between the sexes. Even so there were at least some societies in which women hunted and in which men cooked and fetched water.

More importantly, Murdock found much greater gender variation in several of the other tasks he studied, including planting crops, milking, and generating fires. Men primarily performed these tasks in some societies, women primarily performed them in other societies, and in still other societies both sexes performed them equally. Figure 8.5 shows the gender responsibility for yet another task, weaving. Women are the primary weavers in about 61% of the societies that do weaving, men are the primary weavers in 32%, and both sexes do the weaving in 7% of the societies. Murdock's findings illustrate how gender roles differ from one culture to another and imply they are not biologically determined.

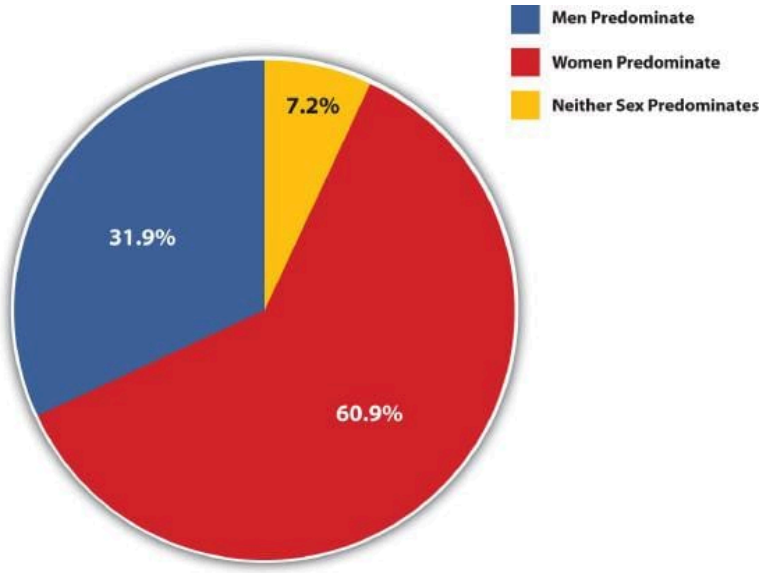


Figure 8.5 Gender Responsibility for Weaving. Source: Data from Standard Cross-Cultural Sample.

Anthropologists since Mead and Murdock have continued to investigate cultural differences in gender. Some of their most interesting findings concern gender and sexuality (Morgan, 1989; Brettell & Sargent, 2009).Morgan, S. (Ed.). (1989). *Gender and anthropology: Critical reviews for research and teaching*. Washington, DC: American Anthropological Association; Brettell, C. B., & Sargent, C. F. (Eds.). (2009). *Gender in cross-cultural perspective* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.Although all societies distinguish "femaleness" and "maleness," additional gender categories exist in some societies. The Native Americans known as the Mohave, for example, recognize four genders: a woman, a woman who acts like a man, a man, and a man who acts like a woman. In some societies, a third, intermediary gender category is recognized. Anthropologists call this category the *berdache*, who is usually a man who takes on a woman's role. This intermediary category combines aspects of both femininity and masculinity of the society in which it is found and is thus considered an androgynous gender. Although some people in this category are born as *intersexed* individuals (formerly known as *hermaphrodites*), meaning they have genitalia of both sexes, many are born biologically as one sex or the other but adopt an androgynous identity.

An example of this intermediary gender category may be found in India, where the *hirja* role involves males who wear women's clothing and identify as women (Reddy, 2006).Reddy, G. (2006). *With respect to sex: Negotiating Hirja identity in South India*. New Delhi, India: Yoda. The *hirja* role is an important part of Hindu mythology, in which androgynous figures play key roles both as humans and as gods. Today people identified by themselves and others as *hirjas* continue to play an important role in Hindu practices and in Indian cultural life in general. Serena Nanda (1997, pp. 200–201)Nanda, S. (1997). Neither man nor woman: The Hirjas of India. In C. B. Brettell & C. F. Sargent (Eds.), *Gender in cross-cultural perspective* (2nd ed., pp. 198–201). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. calls *hirjas*"human beings who are neither man nor woman" and says they are thought of as "special, sacred beings" even though they are sometimes ridiculed and abused.

Anthropologists have found another androgynous gender composed of women warriors in 33 Native American groups in North America. Walter L. Williams (1997)Williams, W. L. (1997). Amazons of America: Female gender variance. In C. B. Brettell & C. F. Sargent (Eds.), *Gender in cross-cultural perspective* (2nd ed., pp. 202–213). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. calls these women "amazons" and notes that they dress like men and sometimes even marry women. In some tribes girls exhibit such "masculine" characteristics from childhood, while in others they may be recruited into "amazonhood." In the Kaska Indians, for example, a married couple with too many daughters would select one to "be like a man." When she was about 5 years of age, her parents would begin to dress her like a boy and have her do male tasks. Eventually she would grow up to become a hunter.

The androgynous genders found by anthropologists remind us that gender is a social construction and not just a biological fact. If culture does affect gender roles, socialization is the process through which culture has this effect. What we experience as girls and boys strongly influences how we develop as women and men in terms of behavior and attitudes. To illustrate this important dimension of gender, let's turn to the evidence on socialization.

Socialization and Gender

Chapter 3 identified several agents of socialization, including the family, peers, schools, the mass media, and religion. While

that chapter's discussion focused on these agents' impact on socialization in general, ample evidence of their impact on gender role socialization also exists. Such socialization helps boys and girls develop their gender identity (M. Andersen & Hysock, 2009).Andersen, M., & Hysock, D. (2009). *Thinking about women: Sociological perspectives on sex and gender* (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

The Family



Figure 8.6. Parents play with their daughters and sons differently. For example, fathers generally roughhouse more with their sons than with their daughters. © Thinkstock

Socialization into gender roles begins in infancy, as almost from the moment of birth parents begin to socialize their children as boys or girls without even knowing it (Begley, 2009; Eliot, 2009).Begley, S. (2009, September 14). Pink brain, blue brain: Claims of sex differences fall apart. *Newsweek*, p. 28; Eliot, L. (2009). *Pink brain, blue brain: How small differences grow into troublesome gaps—and what we can do about it*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Many studies document this process (Lindsey, 2011).Lindsey, L. L. (2011). *Gender roles: A sociological perspective* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Parents commonly describe their infant daughters as pretty, soft, and delicate and their infant sons as strong, active, and alert, even though neutral observers find no such gender differences among infants when they do not know the infants' sex. From infancy on, parents play with and otherwise interact with their daughters and sons differently. They play more roughly with their sons—for example, by throwing them up in the air or by gently wrestling with them—and more quietly with their daughters. When their infant or toddler daughters cry, they warmly comfort them, but they tend to let their sons cry longer and to comfort them less. They give their girls dolls to play with and their boys "action figures" and toy guns. While these gender differences in socialization are probably smaller now than a generation ago, they certainly continue to exist. Go into a large toy store and you will see pink aisles of dolls and cooking sets and blue aisles of action figures, toy guns, and related items.

Peers

Peer influences also encourage gender socialization. As they reach school age, children begin to play different games based on their gender (see the "Sociology Making a Difference" box). Boys tend to play sports and other competitive team games governed by inflexible rules and relatively large numbers of roles, while girls tend to play smaller, cooperative games such as hopscotch and jumping rope with fewer and more flexible rules. Although girls are much more involved in sports now than a generation ago, these gender differences in their play as youngsters persist and continue to reinforce gender roles. For example, they encourage competitiveness in boys and cooperation and trust among girls. Boys who are not competitive risk being called "sissy" or other words by their peers. The patterns we see in adult males and females thus have their roots in their play as young children (King, Miles, & Kniska, 1991).King, W. C., Jr., Miles, E. W., & Kniska, J. (1991). Boys will be boys (and girls will be girls): The attribution of gender role stereotypes in a gaming situation. *Sex Roles, 25*, 607–623.

Sociology Making a Difference

Gender Differences in Children's Play and Games

In considering the debate, discussed in the text, between biology and sociology over the origins of gender roles, some widely cited studies by sociologists over gender differences in children's play and games provide important evidence for the importance of socialization.

Janet Lever (1978)Lever, J. (1978). Sex differences in the complexity of children's play and games. *American Sociological Review, 43*, 471–483. studied fifth-grade children in three different communities in Connecticut. She watched them play and otherwise interact in school and also had the children keep diaries of their play and games outside school. One of her central aims was to determine how complex the two sexes' play and games were in terms of such factors as number of rules, specialization of roles, and size of the group playing. In all of these respects, Lever found that boys' play and games were typically more complex than girls' play and games. She attributed these differences to socialization by parents, teachers, and other adults and argued that the complexity of boys' play and games helped them to be better able than girls to learn important social skills such as dealing with rules and coordinating actions to achieve goals.

Meanwhile, Barrie Thorne (1993)Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. spent many months observing fourth and fifth graders in two different working-class communities in California and Michigan sit in class and lunchrooms and play on the school playgrounds. Most children were white, but several were African American or Latino. As you might expect, the girls and boys she observed usually played separately from each other, and the one-sex groups in which they played were very important for the development of their gender identity, with boys tending to play team sports and other competitive games and girls tending to play cooperative games such as jump rope. These differences led Thorne to conclude that gender-role socialization stems not only from practices by adults but also from the children's own activities without adult involvement. When boys and girls did interact, it was often "girls against the boys" or vice-versa in classroom spelling contests and in games such as tag. Thorne concluded that these "us against them" contests helped the children learn that boys and girls are two different and antagonistic sexes and that gender itself is antagonistic, even if there were also moments when both sexes interacted on the playground in more relaxed, noncompetitive situations. Boys also tended to disrupt girls' games more than the reverse and in this manner both exerted and learned dominance over females. In all of these ways, children were not just the passive recipients of gender-role socialization from adults (their teachers), but they also played an active role in ensuring that such socialization occurred.

The studies by Lever and Thorne were among the first to emphasize the importance of children's play and peer relationships for gender socialization. They also called attention to the importance of the traits and values learned through such socialization for outcomes later in life. The rise in team sports opportunities for girls in the years since Lever and Thorne did their research is a welcome development that addresses the concerns expressed in their studies, but young children continue to play in the ways that Lever and Thorne found. To the extent children's play has the consequences just listed, and to the extent these consequences impede full gender inequality, these sociological studies suggest the need for teachers, parents, and other adults to help organize children's play that is more egalitarian along the lines discussed by Lever, Thorne, and other scholars. In this way, their sociological work has helped to make a difference and promises to continue to do so.

Schools

School is yet another agent of gender socialization (Klein, 2007).Klein, S. S. (Ed.). (2007). *Handbook for achieving gender equity through education* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.First of all, school playgrounds provide a location for the gender-linked play activities just described to occur. Second, and perhaps more important, teachers at all levels treat their female and male students differently in subtle ways of which they are probably not aware. They tend to call on boys more often to answer questions in class and to praise them more when they give the right answer. They also give boys more feedback about their assignments and other school work (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).Sadker, M., & Sadker, D. (1994). *Failing at fairness: How America's schools cheat girls*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's. At all grade levels, many textbooks and other books still portray people in gender-stereotyped ways. It is true that the newer books do less of this than older ones, but the newer books still contain some stereotypes, and the older books are still used in many schools, especially those that cannot afford to buy newer volumes.

Mass Media

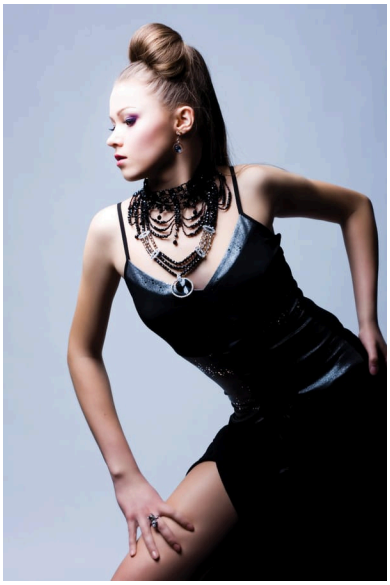


Figure 8.7. Women's magazines reinforce the view that women need to be slender and wear many cosmetics in order to be considered beautiful. © Thinkstock

Gender socialization also occurs through the mass media (Dow & Wood, 2006).Dow, B. J., & Wood, J. T. (Eds.). (2006). *The SAGE handbook of gender and communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. On children's television shows, the major characters are male. On Nickelodeon, for example, the very popular SpongeBob SquarePants is a male, as are his pet snail, Gary; his best friend, Patrick Star; their neighbor, Squidward Tentacles; and SpongeBob's employer, Eugene Crabs. Of the major characters in Bikini Bottom, only Sandy Cheeks is a female. For all its virtues, *Sesame Street* features Bert, Ernie, Cookie Monster, and other male characters. Most of the Muppets are males, and the main female character, Miss Piggy, depicted as vain and jealous, is hardly an admirable female role model. As for adults' prime-time television, more men than women continue to fill more major roles in weekly shows, despite notable women's roles in shows such as *The Good Wife* and *Grey's Anatomy*. Women are also often portrayed as unintelligent or frivolous individuals who are there more for their looks than for anything else. Television commercials reinforce this image (Yoder, Christopher, & Holmes, 2008).Yoder, J. D., Christopher, J., & Holmes, J. D. (2008). Are television commercials still achievement scripts for women? *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 32*(3), 303–311. doi:10.1111/j.1471-6402.2008.00438.xCosmetic ads abound, suggesting not only that a major task for women is to look good but also that their sense of self-worth stems from looking good. Other commercials show women becoming ecstatic over achieving a clean floor or sparkling laundry. Judging from the world of television commercials, then, women's chief goals in life are to look good and to have a clean house. At the same time, men's chief goals, judging from many commercials, are to drink beer and drive cars.

Women's and men's magazines reinforce these gender images (Milillo, 2008).Milillo, D. (2008). Sexuality sells: A content analysis of lesbian and heterosexual women's bodies in magazine advertisements. *Journal of Lesbian Studies, 12*(4), 381–392. Most of the magazines intended for teenage girls and adult women are filled with pictures of thin, beautiful models, advice on dieting, cosmetic ads, and articles on how to win and please your man. Conversely, the magazines intended for teenage boys and men are filled with ads and articles on cars and sports, advice on how to succeed in careers and other endeavors, and pictures of thin, beautiful (and sometimes nude) women. These magazine images again suggest that women's chief goals are to look good and to please men and that men's chief goals are to succeed, win over women, and live life in the fast lane.

Religion

Another agent of socialization, religion, also contributes to traditional gender stereotypes. Many traditional interpretations of the Bible yield the message that women are subservient to men (Tanenbaum, 2009).Tanenbaum, L. (2009). *Taking back God: American women rising up for religious equality*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. This message begins in Genesis, where the first human is Adam, and Eve was made from one of his ribs. The major figures in the rest of the Bible are men, and women are for the most part depicted as wives, mothers, temptresses, and prostitutes; they are praised for their roles as wives and mothers and condemned for their other roles. More generally, women are constantly depicted as the property of men. The Ten Commandments includes a neighbor's wife with his house, ox, and other objects as things not to be coveted (Exodus 20:17), and many biblical passages say explicitly that women belong to men, such as this one from the New Testament:

Wives be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church. As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. (Ephesians 5:22–24)

Several passages in the Old Testament justify the rape and murder of women and girls. The Koran, the sacred book of Islam, also contains passages asserting the subordinate role of women (Mayer, 2009).Mayer, A. E. (2009). Review of "Women, the Koran and international human rights law: The experience of Pakistan" [Book review]. *Human Rights Quarterly, 31*(4), 1155–1158.

This discussion suggests that religious people should believe in traditional gender views more than less religious people, and research confirms this relationship (M. Morgan, 1988).Morgan, M. (1988). The impact of religion on gender-role attitudes. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 11*, 301–310. To illustrate this, Figure 8.8 shows the relationship in the General Social Survey between frequency of prayer and the view (seen first in Figure 8.2) that "it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." People who pray more often are more likely to accept this traditional view of gender roles.

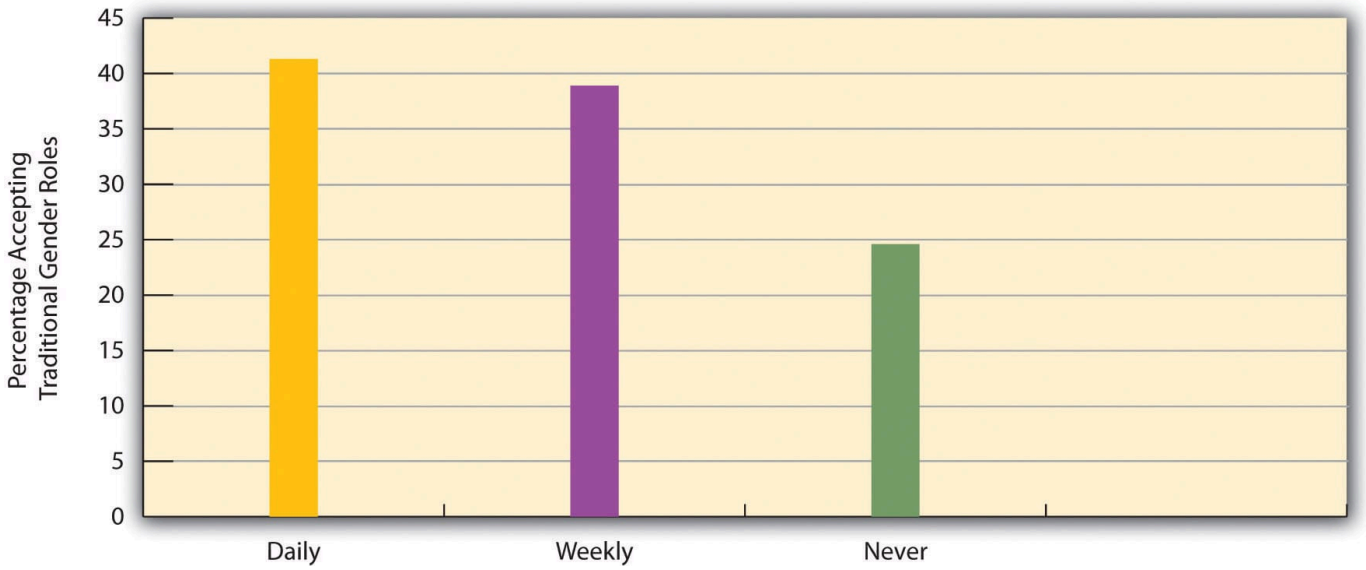


Figure 8.8 Frequency of Prayer and Acceptance of Traditional Gender Roles in the Family. Percentage agreeing that "it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family."

Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

A Final Word on the Sources of Gender

Scholars in many fields continue to debate the relative importance of biology and of culture and socialization for how we behave and think as girls and boys and as women and men. The biological differences between females and males lead many scholars and no doubt much of the public to assume that masculinity and femininity are to a large degree biologically determined or at least influenced. In contrast, anthropologists, sociologists, and other social scientists tend to view gender as a social construction. Even if biology does matter for gender, they say, the significance of culture and socialization should not be underestimated. To the extent that gender is indeed shaped by society and culture, it is possible to change gender and to help bring about a society where both men and women have more opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Conclusion

- Sex is a biological concept, while gender is a social concept and refers to the social and cultural differences a society assigns to people based on their sex.
- Several biological explanations for gender roles exist, but sociologists think culture and socialization are more important sources of gender roles than biology.
- Families, schools, peers, the mass media, and religion are agents of socialization for the development of gender identity and gender roles.

For Your Review

1. Write a short essay about one or two events you recall from your childhood that reflected or reinforced your gender socialization.
2. Do you think gender roles are due more to biology or to culture and socialization? Explain your answer.

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9.1.3: 8.3- Gender Inequality

Learning Objectives

- Understand the extent of and reasons for gender inequality in income and the workplace.
- Understand the extent of and reasons for sexual harassment.
- Explain how and why women of color experience a triple burden.
- Describe how and why sexual orientation is a source of inequality.

We have said that the women's movement changed American life in many ways but that gender inequality persists. Let's look at examples of such inequality, much of it taking the form of institutional discrimination, which, as we saw in Chapter 7, can occur even if it is not intended to happen. We start with gender inequality in income and the workplace and then move on to a few other spheres of life.

Income and Workplace Inequality

In the last few decades, women have entered the workplace in increasing numbers, partly, and for many women mostly, out of economic necessity and partly out of desire for the sense of self-worth and other fulfillment that comes with work. This is true not only in the United States but also in other nations, including Japan, where views of women are more traditional than those in the United States (see the "Learning From Other Societies" box). In February 2010, 58.9% of U.S. women age 16 or older were in the labor force, compared to only 43.3% in 1970; comparable figures for men were 71.0% in 2010 and 79.7% in 1970 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010).Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2010). Employment & earnings online. Retrieved from www.bls.gov/opub/ee/home.htm Thus while women's labor force participation continues to lag behind men's, they have narrowed the gap. The figures just cited include women of retirement age. When we just look at younger women, labor force participation is even higher. For example, 76.1% of women aged 35–44 were in the labor force in 2008, compared to only 46.8% in 1970.

Learning From Other Societies: Women in Japan and Norway

The United Nations Development Programme ranks nations on a "gender empowerment measure" of women's involvement in their nation's economy and political life. Of the 93 nations included in the measure, Norway ranks first, while Japan ranks 54th, the lowest among the world's industrial nations (Watkins, 2007).Watkins, K. (2007). *Human development report 2007/2008*. New York, NY: United Nations Development Programme. This contrast provides some lessons for the status of women in the United States, which ranked only 15th.

Japan has historically been a nation with very traditional gender expectations. As the image of the woman's *geisha* role in Japan illustrates, Japanese women have long been thought to be men's helpmates and subordinates. As Linda Schneider and Arnold Silverman (2010, p. 39)Schneider, L., & Silverman, A. (2010). *Global sociology: Introducing five contemporary societies* (5th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. put it,

The subordination of women is built into Japanese institutions, shaping family life, education, and the economy. Women are seen as fundamentally different from men and inferior to men. Almost everyone assumes that the purpose of a woman's life is to serve others: her children, her husband, perhaps her in-laws, the men at work.

Many more Japanese women work outside the home now than just a few decades ago and now make up almost half the labor force. However, the percentage of all management jobs held by women was just 10.1% in 2005, up only slightly from its 6.6% level in 1985. Japan's work culture that demands 15-hour days is partly responsible for this low percentage, as it is difficult for women to meet this expectation and still bear and raise children. Another reason is outright employment discrimination. Although Japan enacted an equal opportunity law for women's employment in 1985, the law is more symbolic than real because the only penalty it provides for violations is the publication of the names of the violators (Fackler, 2007).Fackler, M. (2007, August 6). Career women in Japan find a blocked path. *The New York Times*, p. A1.

In sharp contrast, Norway has made a concerted effort to boost women's involvement in the business and political worlds (Sumer, Smithson, Guerreiro, & Granlund, 2008).Sumer, S., Smithson, J., Guerreiro, M. d. D., & Granlund, L. (2008). Becoming working mothers: Reconciling work and family at three particular workplaces in Norway, the UK, and Portugal. *Community, Work & Family, 11*(4), 365–384. Like other Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden) that also rank at the top of the United Nations gender empowerment measure, Norway is a social democratic welfare state characterized by extensive government programs and other efforts to promote full economic and gender equality. Its government provides day care for children and adult care for older or disabled individuals, and it also provides 44 weeks of paid parental leave after the birth of a child. Parents can also work fewer hours without losing income until their child is 2 years of age. All of these provisions mean that women are much more likely than their American counterparts to have the freedom and economic means to work outside the home, and they have taken advantage of this opportunity. As a recent analysis concluded,

It has been extremely important for women that social rights have been extended to cover such things as the caring of young children and elderly, sick and disabled members of society. In the Nordic countries, women have been more successful than elsewhere in combining their dual role as mothers and workers, and social policy arrangements are an integral part of the gender equality policy. (Kangas & Palme, 2009, p. S65)Kangas, O., & Palme, J. (2009). Making social policy work for economic development: The Nordic experience [Supplement]. *International Journal of Social Welfare, 18*(s1), S62–S72.

While the United States ranks much higher than Japan on the UN's gender empowerment measure, it ranks substantially lower than Norway and the other Nordic nations. An important reason for these nations' higher ranking is government policy that enables women to work outside the home if they want to do so. The experience of these nations indicates that greater gender equality might be achieved in the United States if it adopted policies similar to those found in these nations that make it easier for women to join and stay in the labor force.

The Gender Gap in Income

Despite the gains women have made, problems persist. Perhaps the major problem is a gender gap in income. Women have earned less money than men ever since records started being kept (Reskin & Padavic, 2002).Reskin, B., & Padavic, I. (2002). *Women and men at work* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. In the United States in the early 1800s, full-time women workers in agriculture and manufacturing earned less than 38% of what men earned. By 1885 they were earning about 50% of what men earned in manufacturing jobs. As the 1980s began, full-time women workers' median weekly earnings were about 65% of men's. Women have narrowed the gender gap in earnings since then: their weekly earnings now (2010) are 81.2% of men's among full-time workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011). *Employment and earnings online*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved from www.bls.gov/opub/ee/home.htm Still, this means that for every $10,000 men earn, women earn only about $8,120. To turn that around, for every $10,000 women earn, men earn $12,315. This gap amounts to hundreds of thousands of dollars over a lifetime of working. Although such practices and requirements are now illegal, they still continue.



Figure 9.1.3.1: Women have earned less money than men ever since records started being kept. Women now earn about 80% of what men earn. © Thinkstock

The sex segregation they help create contributes to the continuing gender gap between female and male workers. Occupations dominated by women tend to have lower wages and salaries. Because women are concentrated in low-paying jobs, their earnings are much lower than men's (Reskin & Padavic, 2002).Reskin, B., & Padavic, I. (2002). *Women and men at work* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

As Table 8.2 shows, this gender gap exists for all levels of education and even increases with higher levels of education. On the average, college-educated women (bachelor's degree and higher) working full-time earn almost $18,600 less per year than their male counterparts.

Table 9.1.3.1: Median Annual Earnings of Year-Round, Full-Time Workers Aged 25–64, by Educational Attainment, 2010

	High school dropout	High school degree	Some college or associate's degree	Bachelor's degree and higher
Men	25,272	36,920	43,940	69,160
Women	20,176	28,236	33,176	51,272
Difference	5,096	8,684	10,764	17,888
Gender gap (%; women/men)	79.8	76.5	75.5	74.1
Note: Median yearly earnings derived from median weekly earnings × 52 weeks. *Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011). Highlights of women's earnings in 2010. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.*				

What accounts for the gender gap in earnings? A major reason is sex segregation in the workplace, which accounts for up to 45% of the gender gap (Reskin & Padavic 2002).Reskin, B., & Padavic, I. (2002). *Women and men at work* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. Although women have increased their labor force participation, the workplace remains segregated by gender. Almost half of all women work in a few low-paying clerical and service (e.g., waitressing) jobs, while men work in a much greater variety of jobs, including high-paying ones. Table 8.3 shows that many jobs are composed primarily of women or of men. Part of the reason for this segregation is that socialization affects what jobs young men and women choose to pursue, and part of the reason is that women and men do not want to encounter difficulties they may experience if they took a job traditionally assigned to the other sex. A third reason is that sex-segregated jobs discriminate against applicants who are not the "right" sex for that job. Employers may either consciously refuse to hire someone who is the "wrong" sex for the job or have job requirements (e.g., height requirements) and workplace rules (e.g., working at night) that unintentionally make it more difficult for women to qualify for certain jobs.

Table 9.1.3.1: Gender Segregation in the Workplace for Selected Occupations, 2009. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

Occupation	Female workers (%)	Male workers (%)
Preschool and kindergarten teachers	97.8	2.2
Secretaries and administrative assistants	96.8	3.2
Dental hygienists	96.6	3.4
Speech-language pathologists	95.8	4.2
Registered nurses	92.0	8.0
Food servers (waiters/waitresses)	71.5	18.5
Lawyers	32.4	67.6
Physicians	32.2	67.8
Dentists	30.2	69.8
Computer software engineers	20.2	79.8
Electricians	2.2	97.8
Carpenters	1.6	98.4

This fact raises an important question: why do women's jobs pay less than men's jobs? Is it because their jobs are not important and require few skills (recalling the functional theory of stratification discussed in Chapter 6)? The evidence indicates otherwise: women's work is devalued precisely because it is women's work, and women's jobs thus pay less than men's jobs because they are women's jobs (Magnusson, 2009).Magnusson, C. (2009). Gender, occupational prestige, and wages: A test of devaluation theory. *European Sociological Review, 25*(1), 87–101.

Studies of comparable worth support this argument (Stone & Kuperberg, 2005; Wolford, 2005).Stone, P., & Kuperberg, A. (2005). Anti-discrimination vs. anti-poverty? A comparison of pay equity and living wage reforms. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy, 27*(5), 23–39. doi:10.1300/J501v27n03_3; Wolford, K. M. (2005). Gender discrimination in employment: Wage inequity for professional and doctoral degree holders in the United States and possible remedies. *Journal of Education Finance, 31*(1), 82–100. Retrieved from http://www.press.uillinois.edu/journals/jef.html Researchers rate various jobs in terms of their requirements and attributes that logically should affect the salaries they offer: the importance of the job, the degree of skill it requires, the level of responsibility it requires, the degree to which the employee must exercise independent judgment, and so forth. They then use these dimensions to determine what salary a job should offer. Some jobs might be "better" on some dimensions and "worse" on others but still end up with the same predicted salary if everything evens out.

When researchers make their calculations, they find that certain women's jobs pay less than men's even though their comparable worth is equal to or even higher than the men's jobs. For example, a social worker may earn less money than a probation officer, even though calculations based on comparable worth would predict that a social worker should earn at least as much. The comparable worth research demonstrates that women's jobs pay less than men's jobs of comparable worth and that the average working family would earn several thousand dollars more annually if pay scales were reevaluated based on comparable worth and women paid more for their work.

Even when women and men work in the same jobs, women often earn less than men (Sherrill, 2009),Sherrill, A. (2009). *Women's pay: Converging characteristics of men and women in the federal workforce help explain the narrowing pay gap*. Washington, DC: United States Government Accountability Office. and men are more likely than women to hold leadership positions in these occupations. Census data provide ready evidence of the lower incomes women receive than men even in the same occupations. For example, female marketing and sales managers earn only 68% of what their male counterparts earn; female human resource managers earn only 68% of what their male counterparts earn; female claims adjusters earn only 83%; female accountants earn only 72%; female elementary and middle school teachers earn only 90%; and even female secretaries and clerical workers earn only 86% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008).Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2008). *Highlights of women's earnings in 2007*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.When variables like number of years on the job, number of hours worked per week, and size of firm are taken into account, these disparities diminish but do not disappear altogether, and it is very likely that sex discrimination (conscious or unconscious) by employers accounts for much of the remaining disparity.

Litigation has suggested or revealed specific instances of sex discrimination in earnings and employment. In July 2009, the Dell computer company, without admitting any wrongdoing, agreed to pay $9.1 million to settle a class action lawsuit, brought by former executives, that alleged sex discrimination in salaries and promotions (Walsh, 2009).Walsh, S. (2009). Dell settles sex discrimination suit for $9 million. Retrieved from www.gadgetell.com/tech/commen...imination-suit -for-9-million Earlier in the decade, a Florida jury found Outback Steakhouse liable for paying a woman site development assistant only half what it paid a man with the same title. After she trained him, Outback assigned him most of her duties, and when she complained, Outback transferred her to a clerical position. The jury awarded her $2.2 million in compensatory and punitive damages (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2001).U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (2001). Jury finds outback steakhouse guilty of sex discrimination and illegal retaliation. Retrieved from www.eeoc.gov/press/9-19-01.html

Some of the sex discrimination in employment reflects the existence of two related phenomena, the glass ceiling and the glass escalator. Women may be promoted in a job only to find they reach an invisible "glass ceiling" beyond which they cannot get promoted, or they may not get promoted in the first place. In the largest U.S. corporations, women constitute only about 16% of the top executives, and women executives are paid much less than their male counterparts (Jenner & Ferguson, 2009).Jenner, L., & Ferguson, R. (2009). *2008 catalyst census of women corporate officers and top darners of the FP500*. New York, NY: Catalyst. Although these disparities stem partly from the fact that women joined the corporate ranks much more recently than men, they also reflect a glass ceiling in the corporate world that prevents qualified women from rising up above a certain level (Hymowitz, 2009).Hymowitz, C. (2009, May 1). For executive women, it can be lonely at the top. *Forbes*. Retrieved from www.forbes.com/2009/05/01/exe...r-careers.html Men, on the other hand, can often ride a "glass escalator" to the top, even in female occupations. An example is seen in elementary school teaching, where principals typically rise from the ranks of teachers. Although men constitute only about 20% of all public elementary school teachers, they account for about 44% of all elementary school principals (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009).National Center for Education Statistics. (2009). *The condition of education*. Retrieved from nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2007...ndicator34.asp



Figure 9.1.3.3: Women constitute only about 16% of the top executives in the largest U.S. corporations, and women executives are paid much less than their male counterparts. These disparities reflect a "glass ceiling" that limits women's opportunities for promotion.© Thinkstock

Whatever the reasons for the gender gap in income, the fact that women make so much less than men means that female-headed families are especially likely to be poor. In 2008, about 31% of these families lived in poverty, compared to only 6.7% of married-couple families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab The term *feminization of poverty* refers to the fact that female-headed households are especially likely to be poor. The gendering of poverty in this manner is one of the most significant manifestations of gender inequality in the United States.

Sexual Harassment

Another workplace problem (including schools) is sexual harassment, which, as defined by federal guidelines and legal rulings and statutes, consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or physical conduct of a sexual nature used as a condition of employment or promotion or that interferes with an individual's job performance and creates an intimidating or

hostile environment.

Although men can be, and are, sexually harassed, women are more often the targets of sexual harassment, which is often considered a form of violence against women (discussed a little later in this chapter). This gender difference exists for at least two reasons, one cultural and one structural. The cultural reason centers on the depiction of women and the socialization of men. As our discussion of the mass media and gender socialization indicated, women are still depicted in our culture as sexual objects who exist for men's pleasure. At the same time, our culture socializes men to be sexually assertive. These two cultural beliefs combine to make men believe that they have the right to make verbal and physical advances to women in the workplace. When these advances fall into the guidelines listed here, they become sexual harassment.

The second reason that most targets of sexual harassment are women is more structural. Reflecting the gendered nature of the workplace and of the educational system, typically the men doing the harassment are in a position of power over the women they harass. A male boss harasses a female employee, or a male professor harasses a female student or employee. These men realize that subordinate women may find it difficult to resist their advances for fear of reprisals: a female employee may be fired or not promoted, and a female student may receive a bad grade.

How common is sexual harassment? This is difficult to determine, as the men who do the sexual harassment are not about to shout it from the rooftops, and the women who suffer it often keep quiet because of the repercussions just listed. But anonymous surveys of women employees in corporate and other settings commonly find that 40%–65% of the respondents report being sexually harassed (Rospenda, Richman, & Shannon, 2009).Rospenda, K. M., Richman, J. A., & Shannon, C. A. (2009). Prevalence and mental health correlates of harassment and discrimination in the workplace: Results from a national study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 24*(5), 819–843. In a survey of 4,501 women physicians, 36.9% reported being sexually harassed either in medical school or in their practice as physicians (Frank, Brogan, & Schiffman, 1998).Frank, E., Brogan, D., & Schiffman, M. (1998). Prevalence and correlates of harassment among U.S. women physicians. *Archives of Internal Medicine, 158*(4), 352–358.



Figure 9.1.3.4: Sexual harassment in the workplace is a common experience. In surveys of women employees, up to two-thirds of respondents report being sexually harassed. © Thinkstock

Sexual harassment cases continue to make headlines. In one recent example, the University of Southern Mississippi paid $112,500 in September 2009 to settle a case brought by a women's tennis graduate assistant against the school's women's tennis coach; the coach then resigned for personal reasons (Magee, 2009).Magee, P. (2009, September 22). USM settles with ex-student. *Hattiesburg American*. Retrieved from pqasb.pqarchiver.com/hattiesb...866160481.html? That same month, the CEO of a hospital in Washington State was reprimanded after a claim of sexual harassment was brought against him, and he was also fired for unspecified reasons (Mehaffey, 2009).Mehaffey, K. C. (2009, September 15). Chelan hospital board fires CEO. *The Wenatchee World*. Retrieved from www.wenatcheeworld.com/news/2...oard-fires-ceo

Women of Color: A Triple Burden

Earlier we mentioned multicultural feminism, which stresses that women of color face difficulties for three reasons: their gender,

their race, and, often, their social class, which is frequently near the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. They thus face a triple burden that manifests itself in many ways.

For example, women of color experience “extra” income inequality. Earlier we discussed the gender gap in earnings, with women earning 80.2% of what men earn, but women of color face both a gender gap *and* a racial/ethnic gap. Table 8.4 depicts this double gap for full-time workers. We see a racial/ethnic gap among both women and men, as African Americans and Latinos of either gender earn less than whites, and we also see a gender gap between men and women, as women earn less than men within any race or ethnicity. These two gaps combine to produce an especially high gap between African American and Latina women and white men: African American women earn only 68.9% of what white men earn, and Latina women earn only 60.2% of what white men earn (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab

Table 9.1.3.2: The Race/Ethnicity and Gender Gap in Annual Earnings for Full-Time, Year-Round Workers, 2010. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011). Highlights of women’s earnings in 2010. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

	Annual earnings ($)	Percentage of white male earnings
Men		
White (non-Hispanic)	44,200	—
Black	32,916	74.5
Latino	26,416	59.8
Women		
White (non-Hispanic)	35,568	80.5
Black	30,784	69.7
Latina	26,416	59.8
Note: Median yearly earnings derived from median weekly earnings × 52 weeks.		

These differences in income mean that African American and Latina women are poorer than white women. We noted earlier that about 31% of all female-headed families are poor. This figure masks race/ethnic differences among such families: 21.5% of families headed by non-Latina white women are poor, compared to 40.5% of families headed by African American women and also 40.5% of families headed by Latina women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). While white women are poorer than white men, African American and Latina women are clearly poorer than white women.

Sexual Orientation and Inequality

A recent report by a task force of the American Psychological Association stated that “same-sex sexual and romantic attractions, feelings, and behaviors are normal and positive variations of human sexuality” (Glassgold et al., 2009, p. v).Glassgold, J. M., Beckstead, L., Drescher, J., Greene, B., Miller, R. L., & Worthington, R. L. (2009). Report of the American Psychological Association task force on appropriate therapeutic responses to sexual orientation. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. A majority of Americans do not share this opinion. In the 2008 General Social Survey, 52% of respondents said that “sexual relations between two adults of the same sex” is “always wrong.” Although this figure represents a substantial decline from the survey’s 1973 finding of 74%, it is clear that many Americans remain sharply opposed to homosexuality. Not surprisingly, then, sexual orientation continues to be the source of much controversy and no small amount of abuse and discrimination directed toward members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered community.

These individuals experience various forms of abuse, mistreatment, and discrimination that their heterosexual counterparts do not experience. In this respect, their sexuality is the source of a good deal of inequality. For example, gay teenagers are very often the targets of taunting, bullying, physical assault, and other abuse in schools and elsewhere that sometimes drives them to suicide or at least to experience severe emotional distress (Denizet-Lewis, 2009).Denizet-Lewis, B. (2009, September 27). Coming out in middle school. *The New York Times Magazine*, p. MM36ff. In 38 states, individuals can be denied employment or fired from a job because of their sexual orientation, even though federal and state laws prohibit employment discrimination for reasons related to race and ethnicity, gender, age, religious belief, and national origin. And in 45 states as of April 2010, same-sex couples are legally prohibited from marrying. In most of these states, this prohibition means that same-sex couples

lack hundreds of rights, responsibilities, and benefits that spouses enjoy, including certain income tax and inheritance benefits, spousal insurance coverage, and the right to make medical decisions for a partner who can no longer communicate because of disease or traumatic injury (Gerstmann, 2008).Gerstmann, E. (2008). *Same-sex marriage and the Constitution* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Household Inequality

We will talk more about the family in Chapter 11, but for now the discussion will center on housework. Someone has to do housework, and that someone is usually a woman. It takes many hours a week to clean the bathrooms, cook, shop in the grocery store, vacuum, and do everything else that needs to be done. The best evidence indicates that women married to or living with men spend two to three times as many hours per work on housework as men spend (Gupta & Ash, 2008).Gupta, S., & Ash, M. (2008). Whose money, whose time? A nonparametric approach to modeling time spent on housework in the United States. *Feminist Economics, 14*(1), 93–120. This disparity holds true even when women work outside the home, leading sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1989)Hochschild, A. (1989). *The second shift: Working parents and the revolution at home*. New York, NY: Viking. to observe in a widely cited book that women engage in a "second shift" of unpaid work when they come home from their paying job.

The good news is that gender differences in housework time are smaller than a generation ago. The bad news is that a large gender difference remains. As one study summarized the evidence on this issue, "women invest significantly more hours in household labor than do men despite the narrowing of gender differences in recent years" (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000, p. 196).Bianchi, S. M., Milkie, M. A., Sayer, L. C., & Robinson, J. P. (2000). Is anyone doing the Housework? Trends in the gender division of household labor. *Social Forces, 79*(1), 191–228. In the realm of household work, then, gender inequality persists.

Conclusion

- Among full-time workers, women earn about 79.4% of men's earnings. This gender gap in earnings stems from several factors, including sex segregation in the workplace and the lower wages and salaries found in occupations that involve mostly women.
- Sexual harassment results partly from women's subordinate status in the workplace and may involve up to two-thirds of women employees.
- Women of color may face a "triple burden" of difficulties based on their gender, their race and ethnicity, and their social class.
- Sexual orientation continues to be another source of inequality in today's world. Among other examples of this inequality, gays and lesbians are prohibited from marrying in most states in the nation.

For Your Review

1. Do you think it is fair for occupations dominated by women to have lower wages and salaries than those dominated by men? Explain your answer.
2. If you know a woman who works in a male-dominated occupation, interview her about any difficulties she might be experiencing as a result of being in this sort of situation.
3. Write a short essay in which you indicate whether you think same-sex marriage should be legal and provide the reasoning for the position you hold on this issue.

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9.1.4: 8.4- Violence Against Women- Rape and Pornography

Learning Objectives

- Describe the extent of rape and the reasons for it.
- Discuss the debate over pornography

When we consider interpersonal violence of all kinds—homicide, assault, robbery, and rape and sexual assault—men are more likely than women to be victims of violence. While true, this fact obscures another fact: women are far more likely than men to be raped and sexually assaulted. They are also much more likely to be portrayed as victims of pornographic violence on the Internet and in videos, magazines, and other outlets. Finally, women are more likely than men to be victims of *domestic violence*, or violence between spouses and others with intimate relationships. The gendered nature of these acts against women distinguishes them from the violence men suffer. Violence is directed against men not because they are men *per se*, but because of anger, jealousy, and the sociological reasons discussed in Chapter 5's treatment of deviance and crime. But rape and sexual assault, domestic violence, and pornographic portrayals of violence are directed against women precisely because they are women. These acts are thus an extreme extension of the gender inequality women face in other areas of life. We discuss rape and pornography here but will leave domestic violence for Chapter 11.

Rape

Susan Griffin (1971, p. 26)Griffin, S. (1971, September). Rape: The all-American crime. *Ramparts, 10*, 26–35. began a classic essay on rape in 1971 with this startling statement:

I have never been free of the fear of rape. From a very early age I, like most women, have thought of rape as a part of my natural environment—something to be feared and prayed against like fire or lightning. I never asked why men raped; I simply thought it one of the many mysteries of human nature.

What do we know about rape? Why do men rape? Our knowledge about the extent and nature of rape and reasons for it comes from three sources: the FBI Uniform Crime Reports and the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), both discussed in Chapter 5, and surveys of and interviews with women and men conducted by academic researchers. From these sources we have a fairly good if not perfect idea of how much rape occurs, the context in which it occurs, and the reasons for it. What do we know?

The Extent and Context of Rape

According to the Uniform Crime Reports, about 88,000 reported rapes (including attempts) occurred in the United States in 2009, for a rate of about 55 for every 100,000 women age 12 or older (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010).Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2010). *Crime in the United States: 2009*. Washington, DC: Author. Because women often do not tell police they were raped, the NCVS probably yields a better estimate of rape. According to the NCVS, almost 106,000 rapes and sexual assaults occur annually, for a rate of 0.8 for every 1,000 women age 12 or older (or 130 per 100,000) (Truman & Rand, 2010).Truman, J. L., & Rand, M. R. (2010). *Criminal victimization, 2009*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. Other research indicates that up to one-third of U.S. women will experience a rape or sexual assault, including attempts, at least once in their lives (Barkan, 2012).Barkan, S. E. (2012). *Criminology: A sociological understanding* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. A study of a random sample of 420 Toronto women involving intensive interviews yielded even higher figures: 56% said they had experienced at least one rape or attempted rape, and two-thirds said they had experienced at least one rape or sexual assault, including attempts. The researchers, Melanie Randall and Lori Haskell (1995, p. 22),Randall, M., & Haskell, L. (1995). Sexual violence in women's lives: Findings from the women's safety project, a community-based survey. *Violence Against Women*, 1, 6–31. concluded that "it is more common than not for a woman to have an experience of sexual assault during their lifetime."



Figure 8.17: Up to one-third of U.S. women experience a rape or sexual assault, including attempts, at least once in their lives. © Thinkstock

These figures apply not just to the general public but also to college students. About 20%–30% of women students in anonymous surveys report being raped or sexually assaulted (including attempts), usually by a male student they knew beforehand (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Gross, Winslett, Roberts, & Gohm, 2006).Fisher, B. S., Cullen, F. T., & Turner, M. G. (2000). *The sexual victimization of college women*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice and Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice; Gross, A. M., Winslett, A., Roberts, M., & Gohm, C. L. (2006). An examination of sexual violence against college women. *Violence Against Women, 12*, 288–300. Thus at a campus of 10,000 students of whom 5,000 are women, about 1,000–1,500 will be raped or sexually assaulted over a period of 4 years, or about 10 per week in a 4-year academic calendar.

The public image of rape is of the proverbial stranger attacking a woman in an alleyway. While such rapes do occur, most rapes actually happen between people who know each other. A wide body of research finds that 60%–80% of all rapes and sexual assaults are committed by someone the woman knows, including husbands, ex- husbands, boyfriends, and ex-boyfriends, and only 20%–35% by strangers (Barkan, 2012).Barkan, S. E. (2012). *Criminology: A sociological understanding* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. A woman is thus two to four times more likely to be raped by someone she knows than by a stranger.

Explaining Rape

Sociological explanations of rape fall into cultural and structural categories similar to those presented earlier for sexual harassment. Various “rape myths” in our culture support the absurd notion that women somehow enjoy being raped, want to be raped, or are “asking for it” (Franiuk, Seefelt, & Vandello, 2008).Franiuk, R., Seefelt, J., & Vandello, J. (2008). Prevalence of rape myths in headlines and their effects on attitudes toward rape. *Sex Roles, 58*(11/12), 790–801. doi:10.1007/s11199-007-9372-4. One of the most famous scenes in movie history occurs in the classic film *Gone with the Wind*, when Rhett Butler carries a struggling Scarlett O’Hara up the stairs. She is struggling because she does not want to have sex with him. The next scene shows Scarlett waking up the next morning with a satisfied, loving look on her face. The not-so-subtle message is that she enjoyed being raped (or, to be more charitable to the film, was just playing hard to get).

A related cultural belief is that women somehow ask or deserve to be raped by the way they dress or behave. If she dresses attractively or walks into a bar by herself, she wants to have sex, and if a rape occurs, well, then, what did she expect? In the award-winning film *The Accused*, based on a true story, actress Jodie Foster plays a woman who was raped by several men on top of a pool table in a bar. The film recounts how members of the public questioned why she was in the bar by herself if she did not want to have sex and blamed her for being raped.

A third cultural belief is that a man who is sexually active with a lot of women is a stud. Although this belief is less common in this day of AIDS and other STDs, it is still with us. A man with multiple sex partners continues to be the source of envy among many of his peers. At a minimum, men are still the ones who have to “make the first move” and then continue making more moves. There is a thin line between being sexually assertive and sexually aggressive (Kassing, Beesley, & Frey, 2005).Kassing, L. R., Beesley, D., & Frey, L. L. (2005). Gender role conflict, homophobia, age, and education as predictors of male rape myth acceptance. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 27*(4), 311–328.

These three cultural beliefs—that women enjoy being forced to have sex, that they ask or deserve to be raped, and that men should be sexually assertive or even aggressive—combine to produce a cultural recipe for rape. Although most men do not rape, the cultural beliefs and myths just described help account for the rapes that do occur. Recognizing this, the contemporary women's movement began attacking these myths back in the 1970s, and the public is much more conscious of the true nature of rape than a generation ago. That said, much of the public still accepts these cultural beliefs and myths, and prosecutors continue to find it difficult to win jury convictions in rape trials unless the woman who was raped had suffered visible injuries, had not known the man who raped her, and/or was not dressed attractively (Levine, 2006).Levine, K. L. (2006). The intimacy discount: Prosecutorial discretion, privacy, and equality in the statuory rape caseload. *Emory Law Journal, 55*(4), 691–749.

Structural explanations for rape emphasize the power differences between women and men similar to those outlined earlier for sexual harassment. In societies that are male dominated, rape and other violence against women is a likely outcome, as they allow men to demonstrate and maintain their power over women. Supporting this view, studies of preindustrial societies and of the 50 states of the United States find that rape is more common in societies where women have less economic and political power (Baron & Straus, 1989; Sanday, 1981).Baron, L., & Straus, M. A. (1989). *Four theories of rape in American society: A state-level analysis*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; Sanday, P. R. (1981). The socio-cultural context of rape: A cross-cultural study. *Journal of Social Issues, 37*, 5–27.Poverty is also a predictor of rape: although rape in the United States transcends social class boundaries, it does seem more common among poorer segments of the population than among wealthier segments, as is true for other types of violence (Rand, 2009).Rand, M. R. (2009). *Criminal victimization, 2008*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.Scholars think the higher rape rates among the poor stem from poor men trying to prove their "masculinity" by taking out their economic frustration on women (Martin, Vieraitis, & Britto, 2006).Martin, K., Vieraitis, L. M., & Britto, S. (2006). Gender equality and women's absolute status: A test of the feminist models of rape. *Violence Against Women, 12*(4), 321–339.

Reducing Rape

In sum, a sociological perspective tells us that cultural myths and economic and gender inequality help lead to rape, and that the rape problem goes far beyond a few psychopathic men who rape women. A sociological perspective thus tells us that our society cannot just stop at doing something about these men. Instead it must make more far-reaching changes by changing people's beliefs about rape and by making every effort to reduce poverty and to empower women. This last task is especially important, for, as Randall and Haskell (1995, p. 22),Randall, M., & Haskell, L. (1995). Sexual violence in women's lives: Findings from the Women's Safety Project, a community-based survey. *Violence Against Women, 1*, 6–31. the authors of the Toronto study cited earlier, observed, a sociological perspective on rape "means calling into question the organization of sexual inequality in our society."

Aside from this fundamental change, other remedies such as additional and better funded rape-crisis centers would help women who experience rape and sexual assault. Yet even here women of color face an additional barrier. Because the anti-rape movement was begun by white, middle-class feminists, the rape-crisis centers they founded tended to be near where they live, such as college campuses, and not in the areas where women of color live, such as inner cities and Native American reservations. This meant that women of color who experienced sexual violence lacked the kinds of help available to their white, middle-class counterparts (Matthews, 1989),Matthews, N. A. (1989). Surmounting a legacy: The expansion of racial diversity in a local anti-rape movement. *Gender & Society, 3*, 518–532. and, despite some progress, this is still true today.

Pornography

Back in the 1950s, young boys in the United States would page through *National Geographic* magazine to peek at photos of native women who were partially nude. Those photos, of course, were not put there to excite boys across the country; instead they were there simply to depict native people in their natural habitat. Another magazine began about the same time that also contained photos of nude women. Its name was *Playboy*, and its photos obviously had a much different purpose: to excite teenage boys and older men alike. Other, more graphic magazines grew in its wake, and today television shows and PG-13 and R-rated movies show more nudity and sex than were ever imaginable in the days when *National Geographic* was a boy's secret pleasure. Beyond these movies and television shows, a powerful pornography industry now exists on the Internet, in porn stores, and elsewhere. Although *Playboy* quickly became very controversial, it is now considered tame compared to what else is available.

If things as different as *National Geographic*, *Playboy*, R-rated movies, and hard-core pornography show nudity and can be sexually arousing, what, then, should be considered pornography? Are at least some of the tamer pictures in *Playboy* really that different from the great paintings in art history that depict nude women? This question is not necessarily meant to defend *Playboy*; rather it is meant to stimulate your thinking over what exactly is and is not pornography and over what, if anything, our society can

and should do about it.

Many people obviously oppose pornography, but two very different groups have been especially outspoken over the years. One of these groups, religious moralists, condemns pornography as a violation of religious values and as an offense to society's moral order. The other group, feminists, condemn pornography for its sexual objectification of women and especially condemns the hard-core pornography that glorifies horrible sexual violence against women. Many feminists also charge that pornography promotes rape by reinforcing the cultural myths discussed earlier. As one writer put it in a famous phrase some 30 years ago, "Pornography is the theory, and rape the practice" (Morgan, 1980, p. 139).Morgan, R. (1980). Theory and practice: Pornography and rape. In L. Lederer (Ed.), *Take back the night* (pp. 134–140). New York, NY: William Morrow.

This charge raises an important question: to what extent does pornography cause rape or other violence against women? The fairest answer might be that we do not really know. Many studies do conclude that pornography indeed causes rape. For example, male students who watch violent pornography in experiments later exhibit more hostile attitudes toward women than those watching consensual sex or nonsexual interaction. However, it remains unclear whether viewing pornography has a longer-term effect that lasts beyond the laboratory setting, and scholars and other observers continue to disagree over pornography's effects on the rape rate (Ferguson & Hartley, 2009).Ferguson, C. J., & Hartley, R. D. (2009). The pleasure is momentary...the expense damnable? The influence of pornography on rape and sexual assault. *Aggression & Violent Behavior, 14*(5), 323–329. doi:10.1016/j.avb.2009.04.008Even if pornography does cause rape, efforts to stop it run smack into the issue of censorship. In a free society, civil liberties advocates say, we must proceed very cautiously. Once we ban some forms of pornography, they ask, where do we stop (Strossen, 2000)?Strossen, N. (2000). *Defending pornography: Free speech, sex, and the fight for women's rights*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

This issue aside, much of what we call pornography still degrades women by depicting them as objects that exist for men's sexual pleasure and by portraying them as legitimate targets of men's sexual violence. These images should be troubling for any society that values gender equality. The extent of pornography in the United States may, for better or worse, reflect our historical commitment to freedom of speech, but it may also reflect our lack of commitment to full equality between women and men. Even if, as we have seen, the survey evidence shows growing disapproval of traditional gender roles, the persistence of pornography shows that our society has a long way to go toward viewing women as equally human as men.

Conclusion

- Rape and sexual assault result from a combination of structural and cultural factors. Up to one-third of U.S. women experience a rape or sexual assault, including attempts, in their lifetime.
- Pornography is another form of violence against women. Important questions remain regarding whether pornography leads to further violence against women and whether freedom of speech standards protect the production and distribution of pornography.

For Your Review

1. What evidence and reasoning indicate that rape and sexual assault are not just the result of psychological problems affecting the men who engage in these crimes?
2. Is pornography protected by freedom of speech? Write an essay in which you answer this question and explain the reasoning behind your answer.

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9.1.5: 8.5- The Benefits and Costs of Being Male

Learning Objectives

- List some of the benefits of being male.
- List some of the costs of being male.

Most of the discussion so far has been about women, and with good reason: in a sexist society such as our own, women are the subordinate, unequal sex. But "gender" means more than "female," and a few comments about men are in order.

Benefits

In Chapter 7, we talked about "white privilege," the advantages that whites automatically have in a racist society whether or not they realize they have these advantages. Many scholars also talk about male privilege, or the advantages that males automatically have in a patriarchal society whether or not they realize they have these advantages (McIntosh, 2007).McIntosh, P. (2007). White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondence through work in women's studies. In M. L. Andersen & P. H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class, and gender: An anthology* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

A few examples illustrate male privilege. Men can usually walk anywhere they want or go into any bar they want without having to worry about being raped or sexually harassed. Susan Griffin was able to write "I have never been free of the fear of rape" because she was a woman: it is no exaggeration to say that few men could write the same thing and mean it. Although some men are sexually harassed, most men can work at any job they want without having to worry about sexual harassment. Men can walk down the street without having strangers make crude remarks about their looks, dress, and sexual behavior. Men can apply for most jobs without worrying about being rejected or, if hired, not being promoted because of their gender. We could go on with many other examples, but the fact remains that in a patriarchal society, men automatically have advantages just because they are men, even if race, social class, and sexual orientation affect the degree to which they are able to enjoy these advantages.

Costs

Yet it is also true that men pay a price for living in a patriarchy. Without trying to claim that men have it as bad as women, scholars are increasingly pointing to the problems men face in a society that promotes male domination and traditional standards of masculinity such as assertiveness, competitiveness, and toughness (Kimmel & Messner, 2010).Kimmel, M. S., & Messner, M. A. (Eds.). (2010). *Men's lives* (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Socialization into masculinity is thought to underlie many of the emotional problems men experience, which stem from a combination of their emotional inexpressiveness and reluctance to admit to, and seek help for, various personal problems (Wong & Rochlen, 2005).Wong, Y. J., & Rochlen, A. B. (2005). Demystifying men's emotional behavior: New directions and implications for counseling and research. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 6,* 62–72. Sometimes these emotional problems build up and explode, as mass shootings by males at schools and elsewhere indicate, or express themselves in other ways. Compared to girls, for example, boys are much more likely to be diagnosed with emotional disorders, learning disabilities, and attention deficit disorder, and they are also more likely to commit suicide and to drop out of high school.

Men experience other problems that put themselves at a disadvantage compared to women. They commit much more violence than women do and, apart from rape, also suffer a much higher rate of violent victimization. They die earlier than women and are injured more often. Because men are less involved than women in child-rearing, they also miss out on the joy of parenting that women are much more likely to experience.

Growing recognition of the problems males experience because of their socialization into masculinity has led to increased concern over what is happening to American boys. Citing the strong linkage between masculinity and violence, some writers urge parents to raise their sons differently in order to help our society reduce its violent behavior (Miedzian, 2002).Miedzian, M. (2002). *Boys will be boys: Breaking the link between masculinity and violence*. New York, NY: Lantern Books. In all of these respects, boys and men—and our nation as a whole—are paying a very real price for being male in a patriarchal society.

Conclusion

- In a patriarchal society, males automatically have certain advantages, including a general freedom from fear of being raped and sexually assaulted and from experiencing job discrimination on the basis of their gender.
- Men also suffer certain disadvantages from being male, including higher rates of injury, violence, and death and a lower likelihood of experiencing the joy that parenting often brings.

For Your Review

1. What do you think is the most important advantage, privilege, or benefit that men enjoy in the United States? Explain your answer.
2. What do you think is the most significant cost or disadvantage that men experience? Again, explain your answer.

Reducing Gender Inequality: What Sociology Suggests

Gender inequality is found in varying degrees in most societies around the world, and the United States is no exception. Just as racial/ethnic stereotyping and prejudice underlie racial/ethnic inequality (see Chapter 7), so do stereotypes and false beliefs underlie gender inequality. Although these stereotypes and beliefs have weakened considerably since the 1970s thanks in large part to the contemporary women's movement and the gay and lesbian rights movements, they obviously persist and hamper efforts to achieve full gender equality.

A sociological perspective reminds us that gender inequality stems from a complex mixture of cultural and structural factors that must be addressed if gender inequality is to be reduced further than it already has been since the 1970s. Despite changes during this period, children are still socialized from birth into traditional notions of femininity and masculinity, and gender-based stereotyping incorporating these notions still continues. Although people should generally be free to pursue whatever family and career responsibilities they desire, socialization and stereotyping still combine to limit the ability of girls and boys and women and men alike to imagine less traditional possibilities. Meanwhile, structural obstacles in the workplace and elsewhere continue to keep women in a subordinate social and economic status relative to men. Cultural and structural factors also continue to produce inequality based on sexual orientation, an inequality that is reinforced both by the presence of certain laws directed at gays and lesbians (such as laws in many states that prohibit same-sex marriage) and by the absence of other laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation (such as laws prohibiting employment discrimination).

To reduce gender inequality, then, a sociological perspective suggests various policies and measures to address the cultural and structural factors that help produce gender inequality. These might include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Reduce socialization by parents and other adults of girls and boys into traditional gender roles.
2. Confront gender stereotyping and sexual orientation stereotyping by the popular and news media.
3. Increase public consciousness of the reasons for, extent of, and consequences of rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography.
4. Increase enforcement of existing laws against gender-based employment discrimination and against sexual harassment.
5. Increase funding of rape-crisis centers and other services for girls and women who have been raped and/or sexually assaulted.
6. Increase government funding of high-quality day-care options to enable parents, and especially mothers, to work outside the home if they so desire, and to do so without fear that their finances or their children's well-being will be compromised.
7. Pass federal and state legislation banning employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and allowing same-sex couples to marry and enjoy all the rights, responsibilities, and benefits of heterosexual married couples.
8. Increase mentorship and other efforts to boost the number of women in traditionally male occupations and in positions of political leadership.

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9.1.S: Gender and Gender Inequality (Summary)

Summary

1. S*ex* is a concept that refers to biological differences between females and males, while *gender* is a concept that refers to a society's expectations of how females and males should think and behave. To the extent that women and men and girls and boys are different, it's essential to determine how much of these differences stems from the biological differences between the sexes.
2. In understanding gender differences, scholars continue to debate the value of biological explanations. Biological explanations centering on evolution, natural selection, and hormonal differences are provocative but ultimately imply that gender differences are inevitable and that the status quo must be maintained. In contrast, cultural and socialization explanations imply some hope for changing gender roles and for reducing gender inequality. Anthropologists find gender similarities across cultures that probably reflect the biological differences between the sexes, but they also find much cultural variation in gender roles that underscores the importance of culture and socialization for understanding gender.
3. Many studies emphasize that socialization leads children in the United States to adopt the gender roles associated with femininity and masculinity. Parents view and interact with their daughters and sons differently, and children continue to learn their gender roles from their peers, schools, the mass media, and religion.
4. Feminism refers to the belief that women should be equal to men. With feminism defined in this way, many more people hold feminist beliefs than might be willing to admit to it. The feminist movement began during the pre-Civil War abolitionist period and eventually won women the right to vote. Its reemergence in the late 1960s has changed many aspects of American life. Since then support for traditional gender roles has declined dramatically in national surveys. Several variables, including education, are associated with a feminist outlook, but, surprisingly, women are not consistently more likely than men to support feminist beliefs.
5. Gender inequality in the workplace is manifested through the gender gap in earnings and through sexual harassment. Women earn less than 75% of what men earn. Several reasons account for this gap, including sex segregation in the workplace, the devaluing of women's work, and outright sex discrimination by employers. Sexual harassment against women is quite common and stems from cultural beliefs about women's and men's roles and structural differences in the workplace in power between women and men.
6. Gender inequality also exists in the household in the extent to which women and men perform housework. Women perform much more housework than men, even when they also work outside the home. Although some studies show that men perform more housework than they used to, recent evidence suggests that men are merely exaggerating the amount of housework they now perform by giving socially desirable responses to questions about their housework.
7. Although women have made great gains in the world of politics in the United States, they still lag behind men in the extent to which they occupy legislative seats. This extent is higher in the United States than in many other countries, but lower than in many nations in Europe and elsewhere.
8. Women of color experience a triple burden based on their gender, race and ethnicity, and social class. Even though white women earn less money and are poorer than white men, women of color earn less money and are poorer than white women.
9. Violence against women is another manifestation of gender inequality. Research shows that up to one-third of U.S. women will be raped or sexually assaulted and that about 70%–80% of their assailants will be men they know. Cultural beliefs and structural differences in power explain why rape occurs. Pornography is often considered another type of violence against women, but questions continue over the definition of pornography and over whether it does indeed promote rape and other forms of antiwoman violence. Efforts to combat pornography may run afoul of First Amendment protections for freedom of speech.
10. In a patriarchal society men enjoy privileges just for being male, whether or not they recognize these privileges. At the same time, men also experience disadvantages, including violent behavior and victimization and higher rates of certain emotional problems than those experienced by women.

Using Sociology

You are helping to organize a Take Back the Night march similar to the one mentioned in the news story about the University of Missouri-Columbia that began this chapter. Naturally you tell all your friends about it and urge them to participate in the march. But two of them, one woman and one man, say they don't really think there is a need for the march. When you ask them why, they say that many women who claim to have been raped were dressed too provocatively or really wanted to have sex but then changed their minds. How do you respond to your friends?

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9.2: GENDER, SEX, AND SEXUALITY

In this chapter, we will discuss the differences between sex and gender, along with issues like gender identity and sexuality. We will also explore various theoretical perspectives on the subjects of gender and sexuality, including the social construction of sexuality and queer theory.

9.2.1: Introduction

9.2.2: Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression

9.2.3: Gender and Gender Inequality

9.2.4: Sexuality

9.2.5: Key Terms

9.2.6: Section Summary

9.2.7: Section Quiz

9.2.8: Short Answer

9.2.9: Further Research

9.2.10: References

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9.2.1: Introduction



Figure 12.1: New opportunities, laws, and attitudes have opened the door for people to take on roles that are not traditionally associated with their gender. But despite this progress, many people are misunderstood or mistreated based on gender.

Chapter Outline

12.1 Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression
12.2 Gender and Gender Inequality
12.3 Sexuality

Imagine that there's a fire in a building nearby. As you watch the flames and smoke pour out of windows, you also watch firefighters run inside. Minutes go by and more people arrive--crowds, news trucks, ambulances. Firefighters working the hoses start pointing to a top-floor window, where a lone member of their crew emerges half-pulling, half-carrying a victim of the fire. Behind them, through the window, you can see the fire in the background, flames that the firefighter must have pushed through to get to the victim. Eventually, others reach them with large ladders, and they bring the nearly unconscious victim down to the street.

Close up, you can see the heroic firefighter is covered in dirt and soot. A large gash is visible in their suit, and they're immediately given medical attention. As the EMTs pull off the firefighters' helmet, you're surprised to see features you identify as a woman's. You had just assumed the person was a man, but you were incorrect.

You wouldn't be alone. For centuries, nearly all firefighters had been men. As a child, saying fireman and firemen may have been perfectly appropriate, because all the people you met in the profession were, in fact, men. But as with many professions that were formerly almost exclusively gender-specific, firefighting has become more integrated.

What does that mean for the people in those professions? They must endure physical challenges, overcome stereotypes about any physical limitations, and likely deal with a culture built over a long time to appeal to and serve the needs of men. As they train, firefighters may be yelled at and undergo levels of punishment for not achieving the necessary standards. Does the dynamic of those interactions change when a man in a superior position is for the first time giving orders and issuing reprimands to people of another gender? Should they be able to treat women the same way they treated men? What would be equal in that situation?

Consider another profession. What would you think about if you witnessed a young woman being pepper sprayed by a man? Is she fulfilling the role society may assume for her? Does it matter that the person spraying her is a man, and that he has a degree of control over her?

Military police and security personnel are required to be pepper sprayed at least once during their training. The logic goes: They may have to utilize this deterrent against other people, and so they should have experienced it. While there are no guarantees

that the future enforcement officer will use the substances judiciously, having experienced the painful effects of pepper spray is deemed more likely to produce a level of empathy and restraint.

But is this what she signed up for? Assuming that these military personnel have undergone some level of training prior to this event—they've invested their lives and others have invested in them—could she turn back? How would her peers react? How would her family and others react?

Saving someone from a burning building takes a degree of courage and ability that is very rare, regardless of gender. Voluntary pepper spraying is an extreme situation, again regardless of gender. But gender plays a role in how we see the people involved in both situations. Gender and sexuality are among the most powerful and impactful elements of people's identities, and drive the way they see the world and the way the world sees them. People of different genders go through difficult circumstances and events based partly on their role in society—a role that they do not often define for themselves. And when people express, identify, or outwardly display signs that they do not fit in a societies, established categories, they may face exclusion and discrimination.

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9.2.2: Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Define and differentiate between sex and gender
- Define and discuss what is meant by gender identity
- Distinguish the meanings of different sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions



Figure 12.2: While the biological differences between males and females are fairly straightforward, the social and cultural aspects of being a man or woman can be complicated. (Credit: Mapbox Uncharted ERG /flickr)

When filling out a document such as a job application or school registration form, you are often asked to provide your name, address, phone number, birth date, and sex or gender. But have you ever been asked to provide your sex *and* your gender? Like most people, you may not have realized that sex and gender are not the same. However, sociologists and most other social scientists view them as conceptually distinct. Sex refers to physical or physiological differences between males and females, including both primary sex characteristics (the reproductive system) and secondary characteristics such as height and muscularity. Gender refers to behaviors, personal traits, and social positions that society attributes to being female or male.

A person's sex, as determined by their biology, does not always correspond with their gender. Therefore, the terms *sex* and *gender* are not interchangeable. A baby who is born with male genitalia will most likely be identified as male. As a child or adult, however, they may identify with the feminine aspects of culture. Since the term *sex* refers to biological or physical distinctions, characteristics of sex will not vary significantly between different human societies. Generally, persons of the female sex, regardless of culture, will eventually menstruate and develop breasts that can lactate. Characteristics of gender, on the other hand, may vary greatly between different societies. For example, in U.S. culture, it is considered feminine (or a trait of the female gender) to wear a dress or skirt. However, in many Middle Eastern, Asian, and African cultures, sarongs, robes, or gowns are considered masculine. The kilt worn by a Scottish man does not make him appear feminine in that culture.

The dichotomous or binary view of gender (the notion that someone is either male or female) is specific to certain cultures and is not universal. In some cultures gender is viewed as fluid. In the past, some anthropologists used the term *berdache* to refer to individuals who occasionally or permanently dressed and lived as a different gender. The practice has been noted among certain Native American tribes (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 1997). Samoan culture accepts what Samoans refer to as a "third gender." *Fa'afafine*, which translates as "the way of the woman," is a term used to describe individuals who are born biologically male but embody both masculine and feminine traits. Fa'afafines are considered an important part of Samoan culture. Individuals from other cultures may mislabel their sexuality because fa'afafines have a varied sexual life that may include men and women (Poasa

1992).

Social Policy and Debate: The Legalese of Sex and Gender

The terms *sex* and *gender* have not always been differentiated in the English language. It was not until the 1950s that U.S. and British psychologists and other professionals formally began distinguishing between sex and gender. Since then, professionals have increasingly used the term gender (Moi 2005). By the end of the twenty-first century, expanding the proper usage of the term *gender* to everyday language became more challenging—particularly where legal language is concerned. In an effort to clarify usage of the terms *sex* and *gender*, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia wrote in a 1994 briefing, "The word gender has acquired the new and useful connotation of cultural or attitudinal characteristics (as opposed to physical characteristics) distinctive to the sexes. That is to say, gender is to sex as feminine is to female and masculine is to male" (*J.E.B. v. Alabama*, 144 S. Ct. 1436 [1994]). Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg had a different take, however. She freely swapped them in her briefings so as to avoid having the word "sex" pop up too often. Ginsburg decided on this approach earlier in her career while she was arguing before the Supreme court; her Columbia Law School secretary suggested it to Ginsburg, saying that when "those nine men" (the Supreme Court justices), "hear that word and their first association is not the way you want them to be thinking" (Block 2020).

More recently, the word "sex" was a key element of the landmark Supreme Court case affirming that the Civil Rights Act's workplace protections applied to LGBTQ people. Throughout the case documents and discussions, the term and its meanings are discussed extensively. In his decision statement, Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote, "It is impossible to discriminate against a person for being homosexual or transgender without discriminating … based on sex" (Supreme Court 2020). Dissenting justices and commentators felt that Gorsuch and the other justices in the majority were recalibrating the original usage of the term. The arguments about the language itself, which occupy much of the Court's writings on the matter, are further evidence of the evolving nature of the words, as well as their significance.

Sexuality and Sexual Orientation

A person's sexuality is their capacity to experience sexual feelings and attraction. Studying sexual attitudes and practices is a particularly interesting field of sociology because sexual behavior and attitudes about sexual behavior have cultural and societal influences and impacts. As you will see in the Relationships, Marriage, and Family chapter, each society interprets sexuality and sexual activity in different ways, with different attitudes about premarital sex, the age of sexual consent, homosexuality, masturbation, and other sexual behaviors (Widmer 1998).

A person's sexual orientation is their physical, mental, emotional, and sexual attraction to a particular sex (male and/or female). Sexual orientation is typically divided into several categories: *heterosexuality*, the attraction to individuals of the other sex; *homosexuality*, the attraction to individuals of the same sex; *bisexuality*, the attraction to individuals of either sex; *asexuality*, a lack of sexual attraction or desire for sexual contact; *pansexuality*, an attraction to people regardless of sex, gender, gender identity, or gender expression; *omnisexuality*, an attraction to people of all sexes, genders, gender identities, and gender expressions that considers the person's gender, and *queer*, an umbrella term used to describe sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Other categories may not refer to a sexual attraction, but rather a romantic one. For example, an *aromantic* person does not experience romantic attraction; this is different from asexuality, which refers to a lack of sexual attraction. And some sexual orientations do not refer to gender in their description, though those who identify as having that orientation may feel attraction to a certain gender. For example, *demisexual* refers to someone who feels a sexual attraction to someone only after they form an emotional bond; the term itself doesn't distinguish among gender identities, but the person may feel attraction based on gender (PFLAG 2021). It is important to acknowledge and understand that many of these orientations exist on on a spectrum, and there may be no specific term to describe how an individual feels. Some terms have been developed to address this—such as *graysexual* or *grayromantic*—but their usage is a personal choice (Asexual Visibility and Education Network 2021).

People who are attracted to others of a different gender are typically referred to as "straight," and people attracted to others of the same gender are typically referred to as "gay" for men and "lesbian" for women. As discussed, above, however, there are many more sexual and romantic orientations, so the term "gay," for example, should not be used to describe all of them. Proper terminology includes the acronyms LGBT and LGBTQ, which stands for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender" (and "Queer" or "Questioning" when the Q is added). In other cases, people and organizations may add "I" to represent Intersex people (described below), and "A" for Asexual or Aromantic people (or sometimes for "Allies"), as well as one "P" to describe Pansexual people and sometimes another "P" to describe Polysexual people. Finally, some people and organizations add a plus sign (+) to represent other possible identities or orientations. Sexuality and gender terminology are constantly changing, and may mean different things to different

people; they are not universal, and each individual defines them for themselves (UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center 2020). Finally, a person who does not fully understand all of these terms can still be supportive of people who have those orientations or others; in fact, advocacy and support organizations indicate it is much better to admit you don't know something than to make assumptions or apply an incorrect label to someone (GLAAD 2021).

While the descriptions above are evidence of a vast degree of diversity, the United States and many other countries are heteronormative societies, meaning many people assume heterosexual orientation is biologically determined and is the default or normal type of orientation. While awareness and acceptance of different sexual orientations and identities seems to be increasing, the influence of a heteronormative society can lead LGBTQ people to be treated like "others," even by people who do not deliberately seek to cause them harm. This can lead to significant distress (Boyer 2020). Causes of these heteronormative behaviors and expectations are tied to implicit biases; they can be especially harmful for children and young adults (Tompkins 2017).

There is not a wealth of research describing exactly when people become aware of their sexual orientation. According to current scientific understanding, individuals are usually aware of their sexual orientation between middle childhood and early adolescence (American Psychological Association 2008). They do not have to participate in sexual activity to be aware of these emotional, romantic, and physical attractions; people can be celibate and still recognize their sexual orientation, and may have very different experiences of discovering and accepting their sexual orientation. Some studies have shown that a percentage of people may start to have feelings related to attraction or orientation at ages nine or ten, even if these feelings are not sexual (Calzo 2018). At the point of puberty, some may be able to announce their sexual orientation, while others may be unready or unwilling to make their sexual orientation or identity known since it goes against society's historical norms (APA 2008). And finally, some people recognize their true sexual orientation later in life—in their 30s, 40s, and beyond.

There is no scientific consensus regarding the exact reasons why an individual holds a specific sexual orientation. Research has been conducted to study the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, but there has been no evidence that links sexual orientation to one factor (APA 2008). Alfred Kinsey was among the first to conceptualize sexuality as a continuum rather than a strict dichotomy of gay or straight. He created a six-point rating scale that ranges from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively homosexual. See the figure below. In his 1948 work *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, Kinsey writes, "Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats … The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects" (Kinsey 1948). Many of Kinsey's specific research findings have been criticized or discredited, but his influence on future research is widely accepted.

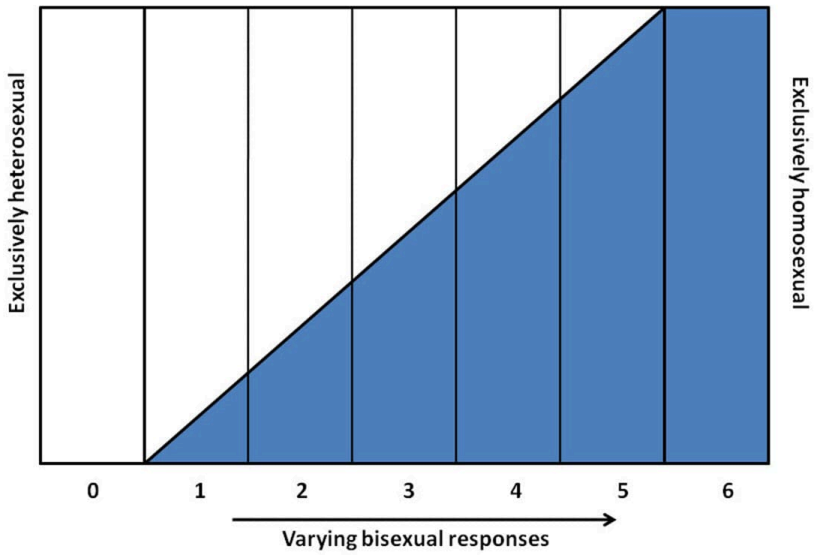


Figure 12.3: The Kinsey scale was one of the first attempts to frame the diversity of human sexual orientation.

Later scholarship by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick expanded on Kinsey's notions. She coined the term "homosocial" to oppose "homosexual," describing nonsexual same-sex relations. Sedgwick recognized that in U.S. culture, males are subject to a clear divide between the two sides of this continuum, whereas females enjoy more fluidity. This can be illustrated by the way women in the United States can express homosocial feelings (nonsexual regard for people of the same sex) through hugging, handholding, and physical closeness. In contrast, U.S. males refrain from these expressions since they violate the heteronormative expectation that male sexual attraction should be exclusively for females. Research suggests that it is easier for women violate these norms

than men, because men are subject to more social disapproval for being physically close to other men (Sedgwick 1985).

Because of the deeply personal nature of sexual orientation, as well as the societal biases against certain orientations, many people may question their sexual orientation before fully accepting it themselves. In a similar way, parents may question their children's sexual orientation based on certain behaviors. Simply viewing the many web pages and discussion forums dedicated to people expressing their questions makes it very clear that sexual orientation is not always clear. Feelings of guilt, responsibility, rejection, and simple uncertainty can make the process and growth very challenging. For example, a woman married to a man who recognizes that she is asexual, or a man married to a woman who recognizes that he is attracted to men, may both have extreme difficulty coming to terms with their sexuality, as well as disclosing it to others. At younger ages, similarly challenging barriers and difficulties exist. For example, adolescence can be a difficult and uncertain time overall, and feelings of different or changing orientation or nonconformity can only add to the challenges (Mills-Koonce 2018).

Gender Roles

As we grow, we learn how to behave from those around us. In this socialization process, children are introduced to certain roles that are typically linked to their biological sex. The term gender role refers to society's concept of how men and women are expected to look and how they should behave. These roles are based on norms, or standards, created by society. In U.S. culture, masculine roles are usually associated with strength, aggression, and dominance, while feminine roles are usually associated with passivity, nurturing, and subordination. Role learning starts with socialization at birth. Even today, our society is quick to outfit male infants in blue and girls in pink, even applying these color-coded gender labels while a baby is in the womb.

One way children learn gender roles is through play. Parents typically supply boys with trucks, toy guns, and superhero paraphernalia, which are active toys that promote motor skills, aggression, and solitary play. Daughters are often given dolls and dress-up apparel that foster nurturing, social proximity, and role play. Studies have shown that children will most likely choose to play with "gender appropriate" toys (or same-gender toys) even when cross-gender toys are available because parents give children positive feedback (in the form of praise, involvement, and physical closeness) for gender normative behavior (Caldera, Huston, and O'Brien 1998). As discussed in the Socialization chapter, some parents and experts become concerned about young people becoming too attached to these stereotypical gender roles.



Figure 12.4: Childhood activities and instruction, like this father-daughter duck-hunting trip, can influence people's lifelong views on gender roles. (Credit: Tim Miller, USFWS Midwest Region/flickr)

The drive to adhere to masculine and feminine gender roles continues later in life, in a tendency sometimes referred to as "occupational sorting" (Gerdeman 2019). Men tend to outnumber women in professions such as law enforcement, the military, and politics. Women tend to outnumber men in care-related occupations such as childcare, healthcare (even though the term "doctor" still conjures the image of a man), and social work. These occupational roles are examples of typical U.S. male and female behavior, derived from our culture's traditions. Adherence to these roles demonstrates fulfillment of social expectations but not necessarily personal preference (Diamond 2002); sometimes, people work in a profession because of societal pressure and/or the opportunities afforded to them based on their gender.

Historically, women have had difficulty shedding the expectation that they cannot be a "good mother" and a "good worker" at the same time, which results in fewer opportunities and lower levels of pay (Ogden 2019). Generally, men do not share this difficulty: Since the assumed role of a men as a fathers does not seem to conflict with their perceived work role, men who are fathers (or who are expected to become fathers) do not face the same barriers to employment or promotion (González 2019). This is sometimes referred to as the "motherhood penalty" versus the "fatherhood premium," and is prevalent in many higher income countries (Bygren 2017). These concepts and their financial and societal implications will be revisited later in the chapter.

Gender Identity

U.S. society allows for some level of flexibility when it comes to acting out gender roles. To a certain extent, men can assume some feminine roles and women can assume some masculine roles without interfering with their gender identity. Gender identity is a person's deeply held internal perception of one's gender.

Transgender people's sex assigned at birth and their gender identity are not necessarily the same. A transgender woman is a person who was assigned male at birth but who identifies and/or lives as a woman; a transgender man was assigned female at birth but lives as a man. While determining the size of the transgender population is difficult, it is estimated that 1.4 million adults (Herman 2016) and 2 percent of high school students in the U.S. identify as transgender (Johns 2019). The term "transgender" does not indicate sexual orientation or a particular gender expression, and we should avoid making assumptions about people's sexual orientation based on knowledge about their gender identity (GLAAD 2021).



Figure 12.5: Actress Laverne Cox is the first openly transgender person to play a transgender character on a major show. She won a producing Emmy and was nominated four times for the Best Actress Emmy. She is also an advocate for LGBTQ issues outside of her career, such as in this "Ain't I a Woman?" speaking tour. (Credit: modification of work by "KOMUnews_Flickr"/Flickr)

Some transgender individuals may undertake a process of transition, in which they move from living in a way that is more aligned with the sex assigned at birth to living in a way that is aligned with their gender identity. Transitioning may take the form of social, legal or medical aspects of someone's life, but not everyone undertakes any or all types of transition. Social transition may involve the person's presentation, name, pronouns, and relationships. Legal transition can include changing their gender on government or other official documents, changing their legal name, and so on. Some people may undergo a physical or medical transition, in which they change their outward, physical, or sexual characteristics in order for their physical being to better align with their gender identity (UCSF Transgender Care 2019). Not all transgender individuals choose to alter their bodies: many will maintain their original anatomy but may present themselves to society as another gender. This is typically done by adopting the dress, hairstyle, mannerisms, or other characteristic typically assigned to another gender. It is important to note that people who cross-dress, or wear clothing that is traditionally assigned to a gender different from their biological sex, are not necessarily transgender. Cross-dressing is typically a form of self-expression or personal style, and it does not indicate a person's gender identity or that they are transgender (TSER 2021).



Figure 12.6: The most widely known transgender pride flag was designed by transgender woman and U.S. Navy veteran Monica Helms. Other designers have different interpretation of the transgender flag, and other groups within the LGBTQ community have their own flags and symbols. Interestingly, Gilbert Baker, the designer of the first widely adopted pride flag, made a point to avoid trademark or other limits on the flag, so that it could be reinterpreted and reused by others. (Credit: crudmucosa/flickr)

There is no single, conclusive explanation for why people are transgender. Transgender expressions and experiences are so diverse that it is difficult to identify their origin. Some hypotheses suggest biological factors such as genetics or prenatal hormone levels as well as social and cultural factors such as childhood and adulthood experiences. Most experts believe that all of these factors contribute to a person's gender identity (APA 2008).

Intersex is a general term used to describe people whose sex traits, reproductive anatomy, hormones, or chromosomes are different from the usual two ways human bodies develop. Some intersex traits are recognized at birth, while others are not recognizable until puberty or later in life (interACT 2021). While some intersex people have physically recognizable features that are described by specific medical terms, intersex people and newborns are healthy. Most in the medical and intersex community reject unnecessary surgeries intended to make a baby conform to a specific gender assignment; medical ethicists indicate that any surgery to alter intersex characteristics or traits—if desired—should be delayed until an individual can decide for themselves (Behrens 2021). If a physical trait or medical condition prohibits a baby from urinating or performing another bodily function (which is very rare), then a medical procedure such as surgery will be needed; in other cases, hormonal issues related to intersex characteristics may require medical intervention. Intersex and transgender are not interchangeable terms; many transgender people have no intersex traits, and many intersex people do not consider themselves transgender. Some intersex people believe that intersex people should be included within the LGBTQ community, while others do not (Koyama n.d.).

Those who identify with the sex they were assigned at birth are often referred to as *cisgender*, utilizing the Latin prefix "cis," which means "on the same side." (The prefix "trans" means "across.") Because they are in the majority and do not have a potential component to transition, many cisgender people do not self-identify as such. As with transgender people, the term or usage of cisgender does not indicate a person's sexual orientation, gender, or gender expression (TSER 2021). And as many societies are heteronormative, they are also *cisnormative*, which is the assumption or expectation that everyone is cisgender, and that anything other than cisgender is not normal.

The language of sexuality, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression is continually changing and evolving. In order to get an overview of some of the most commonly used terms, explore the Trans Student Educational Resources Online Glossary: http://openstax.org/r/tsero

When individuals do not feel comfortable identifying with the gender associated with their biological sex, then they may experience gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria is a diagnostic category in the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) that describes individuals who do not identify as the gender that most people would assume they are. This dysphoria must persist for at least six months and result in significant distress or dysfunction to meet DSM-5 diagnostic criteria. In order for children to be assigned this diagnostic category, they must verbalize their desire to become the other gender. It is important to note that not all transgender people experience gender dysphoria, and that its diagnostic categorization is not universally accepted. For example, in 2019, the World Health Organization reclassified "gender identity

disorder" as "gender incongruence," and categorized it under sexual health rather than a mental disorder. However, health and mental health professionals indicate that the presence of the diagnostic category does assist in supporting those who need treatment or help.

People become aware that they may be transgender at different ages. Even if someone does not have a full (or even partial) understanding of gender terminology and its implications, they can still develop an awareness that their gender assigned at birth does not align with their gender identity. Society, particularly in the United States, has been reluctant to accept transgender identities at any age, but we have particular difficulty accepting those identities in children. Many people feel that children are too young to understand their feelings, and that they may "grow out of it." And it is true that some children who verbalize their identification or desire to live as another gender may ultimately decide to live in alignment with their assigned gender. But if a child consistently describes themselves as a gender (or as both genders) and/or expresses themselves as that gender over a long period of time, their feelings cannot be attributed to going through a "phase" (Mayo Clinic 2021).

Some children, like many transgender people, may feel pressure to conform to social norms, which may lead them to suppress or hide their identity. Experts find evidence of gender dysphoria—the long-term distress associated with gender identification—in children as young as seven (Zaliznyak 2020). Again, most children have a limited understanding of the social and societal impacts of being transgender, but they can feel strongly that they are not aligned with their assigned sex. And considering that many transgender people do not come out or begin to transition until much later in life—well into their twenties—they may live for a long time under that distress.

Discrimination Against LGBTQ people

Recall from the chapter on Crime and Deviance that the FBI's hate crime data indicates that crimes against LGBTQ people have been increasing, and that those crimes account for nearly one in five hate crimes committed in the United States (FBI 2020). While the disbanding of anti-LGBTQ laws in the United States has reduced government or law enforcement oppression or abuse, it has not eliminated it. In other countries, however, LGBTQ people can face even more danger. Reports from the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, and the International Lesbian, Gay, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA) indicate that many countries impose penalties for same-sex relationships, gender noncomformity, and other acts deemed opposed to the cultural or religious observances of the nation. As of 2020, six United Nations members imposed the death penalty for consensual same-sex acts, and another 61 countries penalized same sex acts, through jail time, corporal punishment (such as lashing), or other measures. These countries include prominent United States allies such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia (both of which can legally impose the death penalty for same-sex acts). Some nearby nations criminalize same-sex relations: Barbados can impose lifetime imprisonment for same-sex acts, and Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia have lesser penalties, though Saint Lucia's government indicates it does not enforce those laws (ILGA 2020). Even when the government criminal code does not formalize anti-LGBTQ penalties, local ordinances or government agents may have wide discretion. For example, many people fleeing Central American countries do so as a result of anti-LGBTQ violence, sometimes at the hands of police (Human Rights Watch 2020).

Such severe treatment at the hands of the government is no longer the case in the United States. But until the 1960s and 1970s, every state in the country criminalized same-sex acts, which allowed the military to dishonorably discharge gay veterans (stripping them of all benefits) and law enforcement agencies to investigate and detain people suspected of same-sex acts. Police regularly raided bars and clubs simply for allowing gay and lesbian people to dance together. Public decency laws allowed police to arrest people if they did not wear clothing aligning with the typical dress for their biological sex. Criminalization of same-sex acts began to unravel at the state level in the 1960's and 1970s, and was fully invalidated in a 2003 Supreme Court decision.

Hate crimes and anti-LGBTQ legislation are overt types of discrimination, but LGBTQ people are also treated differently from straight and cisgender people in schools, housing, and in healthcare. This can have effects on mental health, employment and financial opportunities, and relationships. For example, more than half of LGBTQ adults and 70 percent of those who are transgender or gender nonconforming report experiencing discrimination from a health care professional; this leads to delays or reluctance in seeking care or preventative visits, which has negative health outcomes (American Heart Association 2020). Similarly, elderly LGBTQ people are far less likely to come out to healthcare professionals than are straight or cisgender people, which may also lead to healthcare issues at an age that is typically highly reliant on medical care (Foglia 2014).

Much of this discrimination is based on stereotypes and misinformation. Some is based on heterosexism, which Herek (1990) suggests is both an ideology and a set of institutional practices that privilege straight people and heterosexuality over other sexual orientations. Much like racism and sexism, heterosexism is a systematic disadvantage embedded in our social institutions, offering power to those who conform to heterosexual orientation while simultaneously disadvantaging those who do not. *Homophobia*, an extreme or irrational aversion to gay, lesbian, bisexual, or all LGBTQ people, which often manifests as prejudice

and bias. *Transphobia* is a fear, hatred, or dislike of transgender people, and/or prejudice and discrimination against them by individuals or institutions.

Fighting discrimination and being an ally



Figure 12.7: Hashtags, pride parades, and other activism are important elements of supporting LGBTQ people, but most experts and advocates agree that some of the most important steps are ones taken internally to better educate ourselves, and on interpersonal levels with friends, coworkers, and family members. (Credit: Lars Verket/flickr)

Major policies to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation have not come into effect until recent years. In 2011, President Obama overturned “don’t ask, don’t tell,” a controversial policy that required gay and lesbian people in the US military to keep their sexuality undisclosed. In 2015, the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Obgerfell vs. Hodges* that the right to civil marriage was guaranteed to same-sex couples. And, as discussed above, in the landmark 2020 Supreme Court decision added sexual orientation and gender identity as categories protected from employment discrimination by the Civil Rights Act. At the same time, laws passed in several states permit some level of discrimination against same-sex couples and other LGBTQ people based on a person's individual religious beliefs or prejudices.

Supporting LGTBQ people requires effort to better understand them without making assumptions. Understand people by listening, respecting them, and by remembering that every person—LGBTQ or otherwise— is different. Being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual is not a choice, but the way a person expresses or reveals that reality is their choice. Your experience or knowledge of other LGBTQ people (even your own experience if you are LGBTQ) cannot dictate how another person feels or acts. Finally, as discussed in the Race and Ethnicity chapter, intersectionality means that people are defined by more than their gender identity and sexual orientation. People from different age groups, races, abilities, and experiences within the LGTBQ community have different perspectives and needs.

While each individual has their own perspective, respecting their feelings and protecting their equality and wellbeing does have some common elements. These include referring to a person as they would like to be referred to, including the avoidance of abbreviations or slang terms unless you are sure they accept them. For example, many people and organizations (including those referenced in this chapter) use the abbreviation "trans" to represent transgender people, but a non-transgender person should not use that abbreviation unless they know the person or subject is comfortable with it. Respect also includes people's right to privacy: One person should never out a person to someone else or assume that someone is publicly out. LGBTQ allies can support everyone's rights to be equal and empowered members of society, including within organizations, institutions, and even individual classrooms.

Supporting others may require a change in mindset and practice. For example, if a transgender person wants to be referred to by a different name, or use different pronouns, it might take some getting used to, especially if you have spent years referring to the person by another name or by other pronouns. However, making the change is worthwhile and not overly onerous.

You can learn more about being an ally through campus, government, and organizational resources like the Human Rights Campaign's guide https://www.hrc.org/resources/being-an-lgbtq-ally

Language is an important part of culture, and it has been evolving to better include and describe people who are not gender-binary. In many languages, including English, pronouns are gendered. That is, pronouns are intended to identify the gender of the individual being referenced. English has traditionally been binary, providing only “he/him/his,” for male subjects and “she/her/hers,” for female subjects.

This binary system excludes those who identify as neither male nor female. The word “they,” which was used for hundreds of years as a singular pronoun, is more inclusive. As a result, in fact, Merriam Webster selected this use of “they” as Word of the Year for 2019. “They” and other pronouns are now used to reference those who do not identify as male or female on the spectrum of gender identities.

Gender inclusive language has impacts beyond personal references. In biology, anatomy, and healthcare, for example, people commonly refer to organs or processes with gender associations. However, more accurate and inclusive language avoids such associations. For example, *women* do not produce eggs; *ovaries* produce eggs. *Men* are not more likely to be color-blind; those with *XY chromosomes* are more likely to be color blind (Gender Inclusive Biology 2019).

Beyond the language of gender, the language of society and culture itself can be either a barrier or an opening to inclusivity. Societal norms are important sociological concepts, and behaviors outside of those norms can lead to exclusion. By disassociating gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation from the concept of norms, we can begin to eliminate the implicit and explicit biases regarding those realities. In everyday terms, this can take the form of avoiding references to what is normal or not normal in regard to sexuality or gender (Canadian Public Health Association 2019).

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9.2.3: Gender and Gender Inequality

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the influence of socialization on gender roles in the United States
- Explain the stratification of gender in major American institutions
- Provide examples of gender inequality in the United States
- Describe the rise of feminism in the United States
- Describe gender from the view of each sociological perspective



Figure 12.8: Traditional images of U.S. gender roles reinforce the idea that women should be subordinate to men. (Credit: Sport Suburban/ flickr)

Gender and Socialization

The phrase “boys will be boys” is often used to justify behavior such as pushing, shoving, or other forms of aggression from young boys. The phrase implies that such behavior is unchangeable and something that is part of a boy’s nature. Aggressive behavior, when it does not inflict significant harm, is often accepted from boys and men because it is congruent with the cultural script for masculinity. The “script” written by society is in some ways similar to a script written by a playwright. Just as a playwright expects actors to adhere to a prescribed script, society expects women and men to behave according to the expectations of their respective gender roles. Scripts are generally learned through a process known as socialization, which teaches people to behave according to social norms.

Socialization

Children learn at a young age that there are distinct expectations for boys and girls. Cross-cultural studies reveal that children are aware of gender roles by age two or three. At four or five, most children are firmly entrenched in culturally appropriate gender roles (Kane 1996). Children acquire these roles through socialization, a process in which people learn to behave in a particular way as dictated by societal values, beliefs, and attitudes. For example, society often views riding a motorcycle as a masculine activity and, therefore, considers it to be part of the male gender role. Attitudes such as this are typically based on stereotypes, oversimplified notions about members of a group. Gender stereotyping involves overgeneralizing about the attitudes, traits, or behavior patterns of women or men. For example, women may be thought of as too timid or weak to ride a motorcycle.



Figure 12.9: Although our society may have a stereotype that associates motorcycles with men, women make up a sizable portion of the biker community. (Credit: Robert Couse-Baker/flickr)

Gender stereotypes form the basis of sexism. Sexism refers to prejudiced beliefs that value one sex over another. It varies in its level of severity. In parts of the world where women are strongly undervalued, young girls may not be given the same access to nutrition, healthcare, and education as boys. Further, they will grow up believing they deserve to be treated differently from boys (UNICEF 2011; Thorne 1993). While it is illegal in the United States when practiced as discrimination, unequal treatment of women continues to pervade social life. It should be noted that discrimination based on sex occurs at both the micro- and macro-levels. Many sociologists focus on discrimination that is built into the social structure; this type of discrimination is known as institutional discrimination (Pincus 2008).

Gender socialization occurs through four major agents of socialization: family, education, peer groups, and mass media. Each agent reinforces gender roles by creating and maintaining normative expectations for gender-specific behavior. Exposure also occurs through secondary agents such as religion and the workplace. Repeated exposure to these agents over time leads men and women into a false sense that they are acting naturally rather than following a socially constructed role.

Family is the first agent of socialization. There is considerable evidence that parents socialize sons and daughters differently. Generally speaking, girls are given more latitude to step outside of their prescribed gender role (Coltrane and Adams 2004; Kimmel 2000; Raffaelli and Ontai 2004). However, differential socialization typically results in greater privileges afforded to sons. For instance, boys are allowed more autonomy and independence at an earlier age than daughters. They may be given fewer restrictions on appropriate clothing, dating habits, or curfew. Sons are also often free from performing domestic duties such as cleaning or cooking and other household tasks that are considered feminine. Daughters are limited by their expectation to be passive and nurturing, generally obedient, and to assume many of the domestic responsibilities.

Even when parents set gender equality as a goal, there may be underlying indications of inequality. For example, boys may be asked to take out the garbage or perform other tasks that require strength or toughness, while girls may be asked to fold laundry or perform duties that require neatness and care. It has been found that fathers are firmer in their expectations for gender conformity than are mothers, and their expectations are stronger for sons than they are for daughters (Kimmel 2000). This is true in many types of activities, including preference for toys, play styles, discipline, chores, and personal achievements. As a result, boys tend to be particularly attuned to their father's disapproval when engaging in an activity that might be considered feminine, like dancing or singing (Coltraine and Adams 2008). Parental socialization and normative expectations also vary along lines of social class, race, and ethnicity. African American families, for instance, are more likely than Caucasians to model an egalitarian role structure for their children (Staples and Boulin Johnson 2004).

The reinforcement of gender roles and stereotypes continues once a child reaches school age. Until very recently, schools were rather explicit in their efforts to stratify boys and girls. The first step toward stratification was segregation. Girls were encouraged to take home economics or humanities courses and boys to take math and science.

Studies suggest that gender socialization still occurs in schools today, perhaps in less obvious forms (Lips 2004). Teachers may not even realize they are acting in ways that reproduce gender differentiated behavior patterns. Yet any time they ask students

to arrange their seats or line up according to gender, teachers may be asserting that boys and girls should be treated differently (Thorne 1993).

Even in levels as low as kindergarten, schools subtly convey messages to girls indicating that they are less intelligent or less important than boys. For example, in a study of teacher responses to male and female students, data indicated that teachers praised male students far more than female students. Teachers interrupted girls more often and gave boys more opportunities to expand on their ideas (Sadker and Sadker 1994). Further, in social as well as academic situations, teachers have traditionally treated boys and girls in opposite ways, reinforcing a sense of competition rather than collaboration (Thorne 1993). Boys are also permitted a greater degree of freedom to break rules or commit minor acts of deviance, whereas girls are expected to follow rules carefully and adopt an obedient role (Ready 2001).

Mimicking the actions of significant others is the first step in the development of a separate sense of self (Mead 1934). Like adults, children become agents who actively facilitate and apply normative gender expectations to those around them. When children do not conform to the appropriate gender role, they may face negative sanctions such as being criticized or marginalized by their peers. Though many of these sanctions are informal, they can be quite severe. For example, a girl who wishes to take karate class instead of dance lessons may be called a “tomboy” and face difficulty gaining acceptance from both male and female peer groups (Ready 2001). Boys, especially, are subject to intense ridicule for gender nonconformity (Coltrane and Adams 2004; Kimmel 2000).

Mass media serves as another significant agent of gender socialization. In television and movies, women tend to have less significant roles and are often portrayed as wives or mothers. When women are given a lead role, it often falls into one of two extremes: a wholesome, saint-like figure or a malevolent, hypersexual figure (Etaugh and Bridges 2003). This same inequality is pervasive in children’s movies (Smith 2008). Research indicates that in the ten top-grossing G-rated movies released between 1991 and 2013, nine out of ten characters were male (Smith 2008).

Television commercials and other forms of advertising also reinforce inequality and gender-based stereotypes. Women are almost exclusively present in ads promoting cooking, cleaning, or childcare-related products (Davis 1993). Think about the last time you saw a man star in a dishwasher or laundry detergent commercial. In general, women are underrepresented in roles that involve leadership, intelligence, or a balanced psyche. Of particular concern is the depiction of women in ways that are dehumanizing, especially in music videos. Even in mainstream advertising, however, themes intermingling violence and sexuality are quite common (Kilbourne 2000).

Social Stratification and Inequality

Stratification refers to a system in which groups of people experience unequal access to basic, yet highly valuable, social resources. There is a long history of gender stratification in the United States. When looking to the past, it would appear that society has made great strides in terms of abolishing some of the most blatant forms of gender inequality (see timeline below) but underlying effects of male dominance still permeate many aspects of society.

- Before 1809—Women could not execute a will
- Before 1840—Women were not allowed to own or control property
- Before 1920—Women were not permitted to vote
- Before 1963—Employers could legally pay a woman less than a man for the same work
- Before 1973—Women did not have the right to a safe and legal abortion (Imbornoni 2009)

The Pay Gap

Despite making up nearly half (49.8 percent) of payroll employment, men vastly outnumber women in authoritative, powerful, and, therefore, high-earning jobs (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Even when a woman’s employment status is equal to a man’s, she will generally make only 81 cents for every dollar made by her male counterpart (Payscale 2020). Women in the paid labor force also still do the majority of the unpaid work at home. On an average day, 84 percent of women (compared to 67 percent of men) spend time doing household management activities (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). This double duty keeps working women in a subordinate role in the family structure (Hochschild and Machung 1989).

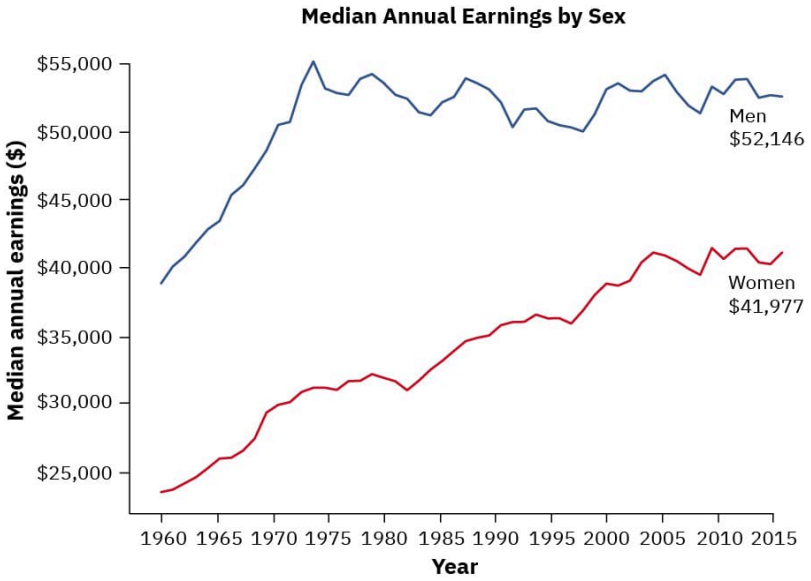


Figure 12.10: In 2017 men's overall median earnings were $52,146 and women's were $41,977. This means that women earned 80.1% of what men earned in the United States. (Credit: Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor)

Gender stratification through the division of labor is not exclusive to the United States. According to George Murdock's classic work, *Outline of World Cultures* (1954), all societies classify work by gender. When a pattern appears in all societies, it is called a cultural universal. While the phenomenon of assigning work by gender is universal, its specifics are not. The same task is not assigned to either men or women worldwide. But the way each task's associated gender is valued is notable. In Murdock's examination of the division of labor among 324 societies around the world, he found that in nearly all cases the jobs assigned to men were given greater prestige (Murdock and White 1968). Even if the job types were very similar and the differences slight, men's work was still considered more vital.



Figure 12.11: In some cultures, women do all of the household chores with no help from men, as doing housework is a sign of weakness, considered by society as a feminine trait. (Credit: Evil Erin/flickr)

Part of the gender pay gap can be attributed to unique barriers faced by women regarding work experience and promotion opportunities. A mother of young children is more likely to drop out of the labor force for several years or work on a reduced schedule than is the father. As a result, women in their 30s and 40s are likely, on average, to have less job experience than men. This effect becomes more evident when considering the pay rates of two groups of women: those who did *not* leave the workforce and those who did: In the United States, childless women with the same education and experience levels as men are typically paid with closer (but not exact) parity to men. However, women with families and children are paid less: Mothers are recommended a 7.9 percent lower starting salary than non-mothers, which is 8.6 percent lower than men (Correll 2007).

This evidence points to levels of discrimination that go beyond behaviors by individual companies or organizations. As discussed earlier in the gender roles section, many of these gaps are rooted in America's social patterns of discrimination, which involve the roles that different genders play in child-rearing, rather than individual discrimination by employers in hiring and salary decisions. On the other hand, legal and ethical practices demand that organizations do their part to promote more equity among all genders.

The Glass Ceiling

The idea that women are unable to reach the executive suite is known as the glass ceiling. It is an invisible barrier that women encounter when trying to win jobs in the highest level of business. At the beginning of 2021, for example, a record 41 of the world's largest 500 companies were run by women. While a vast improvement over the number twenty years earlier – where only two of the companies were run by women – these 41 chief executives still only represent eight percent of those large companies (Newcomb 2020).

Why do women have a more difficult time reaching the top of a company? One idea is that there is still a stereotype in the United States that women aren't aggressive enough to handle the boardroom or that they tend to seek jobs and work with other women (Reiners 2019). Other issues stem from the gender biases based on gender roles and motherhood discussed above.

Another idea is that women lack mentors, executives who take an interest and get them into the right meetings and introduce them to the right people to succeed (Murrell & Blake-Beard 2017).

Women in Politics

One of the most important places for women to help other women is in politics. Historically in the United States, like many other institutions, political representation has been mostly made up of White men. By not having women in government, their issues are being decided by people who don't share their perspective. The number of women elected to serve in Congress has increased over the years, but does not yet accurately reflect the general population. For example, in 2018, the population of the United States was 49 percent male and 51 percent female, but the population of Congress was 78.8 percent male and 21.2 percent female (Manning 2018). Over the years, the number of women in the federal government has increased, but until it accurately reflects the population, there will be inequalities in our laws.

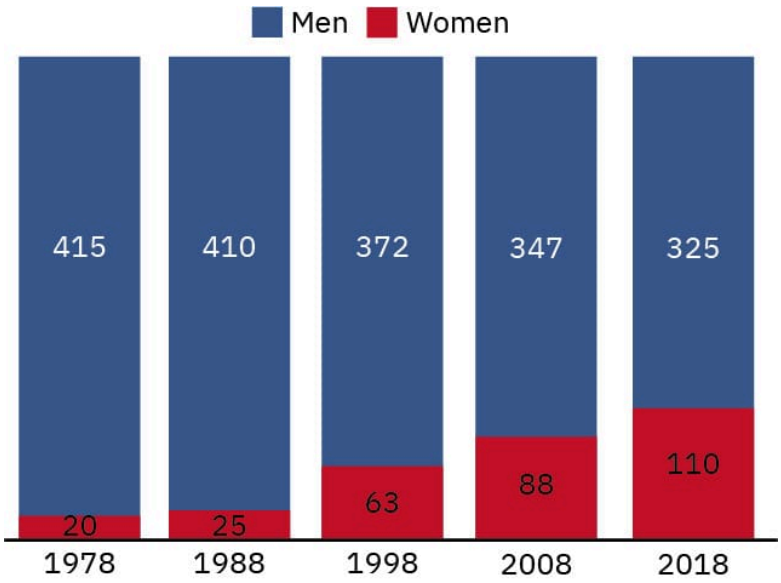


Figure 12.12: Breakdown of Congressional Membership by Gender. 2021 saw a record number of women in Congress, with 120 women serving in the House and 24 serving in the Senate. Gender representation has been steadily increasing over time, but is not close to being equal. (Credit: Based on data from Center for American Women in Politics, Rutgers University)

Movements for Change: Feminism

One of the underlying issues that continues to plague women in the United States is misogyny. This is the hatred of or, aversion to, or prejudice against women. Over the years misogyny has evolved as an ideology that men are superior to women in all aspects

of life. There have been multiple movements to try and fight this prejudice.

In 1963, writer and feminist Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in which she contested the post-World War II belief that it was women's sole destiny to marry and bear children. Friedan's book began to raise the consciousness of many women who agreed that homemaking in the suburbs sapped them of their individualism and left them unsatisfied. In 1966, the National Organization for Women (NOW) formed and proceeded to set an agenda for the *feminist movement*. Framed by a statement of purpose written by Friedan, the agenda began by proclaiming NOW's goal to make possible women's participation in all aspects of American life and to gain for them all the rights enjoyed by men.

Feminists engaged in protests and actions designed to bring awareness and change. For example, the New York Radical Women demonstrated at the 1968 Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City to bring attention to the contest's—and society's—exploitation of women. The protestors tossed instruments of women's oppression, including high-heeled shoes, curlers, girdles, and bras, into a "freedom trash can." News accounts incorrectly described the protest as a "bra burning," which at the time was a way to demean and trivialize the issue of women's rights (Gay 2018).

Other protests gave women a more significant voice in a male-dominated social, political, and entertainment climate. For decades, *Ladies Home Journal* had been a highly influential women's magazine, managed and edited almost entirely by men. Men even wrote the advice columns and beauty articles. In 1970, protesters held a sit-in at the magazine's offices, demanding that the company hire a woman editor-in-chief, add women and non-White writers at fair pay, and expand the publication's focus.

Feminists were concerned with far more than protests, however. In the 1970s, they opened battered women's shelters and successfully fought for protection from employment discrimination for pregnant women, reform of rape laws (such as the abolition of laws requiring a witness to corroborate a woman's report of rape), criminalization of domestic violence, and funding for schools that sought to counter sexist stereotypes of women. In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade* invalidated a number of state laws under which abortions obtained during the first three months of pregnancy were illegal. This made a nontherapeutic abortion a legal medical procedure nationwide.

Gloria Steinem had pushed through gender barriers to take on serious journalism subjects, and had emerged as a prominent advocate for women's rights. Through her work, Steinem met Dorothy Pittman-Hughes, who had founded New York City's first shelter for domestic violence victims as well as the city's Agency for Child Development. Together they founded *Ms*. Magazine, which avoided articles on homemaking and fashion in favor of pieces on women's rights and empowerment. *Ms*. showcased powerful and accomplished women such as Shirley Chisholm and Sissy Farenthold, and was among the first publications to bring domestic violence, sexual harassment, and body image issues to the national conversation (Pogrebrin 2011).

Many advances in women's rights were the result of women's greater engagement in politics. For example, Patsy Mink, the first Asian American woman elected to Congress, was the co-author of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, Title IX of which prohibits sex discrimination in education. Mink had been interested in fighting discrimination in education since her youth, when she opposed racial segregation in campus housing while a student at the University of Nebraska. She went to law school after being denied admission to medical school because of her gender. Like Mink, many other women sought and won political office, many with the help of the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC). In 1971, the NWPC was formed by Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, and other leading feminists to encourage women's participation in political parties, elect women to office, and raise money for their campaign.



Figure 12.13: “Unbought and Unbossed”: Shirley Chisholm was the first Black United States Congresswoman, the co-founder of the Congressional Black Caucus, and a candidate for a major-party Presidential nomination.

Shirley Chisholm personally took up the mantle of women’s involvement in politics. Born of immigrant parents, she earned degrees from Brooklyn College and Columbia University, and began a career in early childhood education and advocacy. In the 1950’s she joined various political action groups, worked on election campaigns, and pushed for housing and economic reforms. After leaving one organization over its refusal to involve women in the decision-making process, she sought to increase gender and racial diversity within political and activist organizations throughout New York City. In 1968, she became the first Black woman elected to Congress. Refusing to take the quiet role expected of new Representatives, she immediately began sponsoring bills and initiatives. She spoke out against the Vietnam War, and fought for programs such as Head Start and the national school lunch program, which was eventually signed into law after Chisholm led an effort to override a presidential veto. Chisholm would eventually undertake a groundbreaking presidential run in 1972, and is viewed as paving the way for other women, and especially women of color, achieving political and social prominence (Emmrich 2019).

Theoretical Perspectives on Gender

Sociological theories help sociologists to develop questions and interpret data. For example, a sociologist studying why middle-school girls are more likely than their male counterparts to fall behind grade-level expectations in math and science might use a feminist perspective to frame her research. Another scholar might proceed from the conflict perspective to investigate why women are underrepresented in political office, and an interactionist might examine how the symbols of femininity interact with symbols of political authority to affect how women in Congress are treated by their male counterparts in meetings.

Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism has provided one of the most important perspectives of sociological research in the twentieth century and has been a major influence on research in the social sciences, including gender studies. Viewing the family as the most integral component of society, assumptions about gender roles within marriage assume a prominent place in this perspective.

Functionalists argue that gender roles were established well before the pre-industrial era when men typically took care of responsibilities outside of the home, such as hunting, and women typically took care of the domestic responsibilities in or around the home. These roles were considered functional because women were often limited by the physical restraints of pregnancy and nursing and unable to leave the home for long periods of time. Once established, these roles were passed on to subsequent generations since they served as an effective means of keeping the family system functioning properly.

When changes occurred in the social and economic climate of the United States during World War II, changes in the family structure also occurred. Many women had to assume the role of breadwinner (or modern hunter-gatherer) alongside their domestic role in order to stabilize a rapidly changing society. When the men returned from war and wanted to reclaim their jobs, society fell back into a state of imbalance, as many women did not want to forfeit their wage-earning positions (Hawke 2007).

Conflict Theory

According to conflict theory, society is a struggle for dominance among social groups (like women versus men) that compete for scarce resources. When sociologists examine gender from this perspective, we can view men as the dominant group and women as the subordinate group. According to conflict theory, social problems are created when dominant groups exploit or oppress subordinate groups. Consider the Women's Suffrage Movement or the debate over women's "right to choose" their reproductive futures. It is difficult for women to rise above men, as dominant group members create the rules for success and opportunity in society (Farrington and Chertok 1993).

Friedrich Engels, a German sociologist, studied family structure and gender roles. Engels suggested that the same owner-worker relationship seen in the labor force is also seen in the household, with women assuming the role of the proletariat. This is due to women's dependence on men for the attainment of wages, which is even worse for women who are entirely dependent upon their spouses for economic support. Contemporary conflict theorists suggest that when women become wage earners, they can gain power in the family structure and create more democratic arrangements in the home, although they may still carry the majority of the domestic burden, as noted earlier (Rismanand and Johnson-Sumerford 1998).

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is a type of conflict theory that examines inequalities in gender-related issues. It uses the conflict approach to examine the maintenance of gender roles and inequalities. Radical feminism, in particular, considers the role of the family in perpetuating male dominance. In patriarchal societies, men's contributions are seen as more valuable than those of women. Patriarchal perspectives and arrangements are widespread and taken for granted. As a result, women's viewpoints tend to be silenced or marginalized to the point of being discredited or considered invalid.

Sanday's study of the Indonesian Minangkabau (2004) revealed that in societies some consider to be matriarchies (where women comprise the dominant group), women and men tend to work cooperatively rather than competitively regardless of whether a job is considered feminine by U.S. standards. The men, however, do not experience the sense of bifurcated consciousness under this social structure that modern U.S. females encounter (Sanday 2004).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism aims to understand human behavior by analyzing the critical role of symbols in human interaction. This is certainly relevant to the discussion of masculinity and femininity. Imagine that you walk into a bank hoping to get a small loan for school, a home, or a small business venture. If you meet with a male loan officer, you may state your case logically by listing all the hard numbers that make you a qualified applicant as a means of appealing to the analytical characteristics associated with masculinity. If you meet with a female loan officer, you may make an emotional appeal by stating your good intentions as a means of appealing to the caring characteristics associated with femininity.

Because the meanings attached to symbols are socially created and not natural, and fluid, not static, we act and react to symbols based on the current assigned meaning. The word *gay*, for example, once meant "cheerful," but by the 1960s it carried the primary meaning of "homosexual." In transition, it was even known to mean "careless" or "bright and showing" (Oxford American Dictionary 2010). Furthermore, the word *gay* (as it refers to a person), carried a somewhat negative and unfavorable meaning fifty years ago, but it has since gained more neutral and even positive connotations. When people perform tasks or possess characteristics based on the gender role assigned to them, they are said to be doing gender. This notion is based on the work of West and Zimmerman (1987). Whether we are expressing our masculinity or femininity, West and Zimmerman argue, we are always "doing gender." Thus, gender is something we do or perform, not something we are.

In other words, both gender and sexuality are socially constructed. The social construction of sexuality refers to the way in which socially created definitions about the cultural appropriateness of sex-linked behavior shape the way people see and experience sexuality. This is in marked contrast to theories of sex, gender, and sexuality that link male and female behavior to biological determinism, or the belief that men and women behave differently due to differences in their biology.

Sociological Research: Being Male, Being Female, and Being Healthy

In 1971, Broverman and Broverman conducted a groundbreaking study on the traits mental health workers ascribed to males and females. When asked to name the characteristics of a female, the list featured words such as unaggressive, gentle, emotional, tactful, less logical, not ambitious, dependent, passive, and neat. The list of male characteristics featured words such as aggressive, rough, unemotional, blunt, logical, direct, active, and sloppy (Seem and Clark 2006). Later, when asked to describe the characteristics of a healthy person (not gender specific), the list was nearly identical to that of a male.

This study uncovered the general assumption that being female is associated with being somewhat unhealthy or not of sound mind. This concept seems extremely dated, but in 2006, Seem and Clark replicated the study and found similar results. Again, the characteristics associated with a healthy male were very similar to that of a healthy (genderless) adult. The list of characteristics associated with being female broadened somewhat but did not show significant change from the original study (Seem and Clark 2006). This interpretation of feminine characteristic may help us one day better understand gender disparities in certain illnesses, such as why one in eight women can be expected to develop clinical depression in her lifetime (National Institute of Mental Health 1999). Perhaps these diagnoses are not just a reflection of women's health, but also a reflection of society's labeling of female characteristics, or the result of institutionalized sexism.

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9.2.4: Sexuality

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Differentiate among attitudes associated with sex and sexuality
- Describe sex education issues in the United States
- Discuss theoretical perspectives on sex and sexuality



Figure 12.14: Sexual practices can differ greatly among groups. Recent trends include the finding that married couples have sex more frequently than do singles and that 27 percent of married couples in their 30s have sex at least twice a week (NSSHB 2010). (Credit: epSos.de/flickr)

Sexual Attitudes and Practices

In the area of sexuality, sociologists focus their attention on sexual attitudes and practices, not on physiology or anatomy. As mentioned earlier, sexuality is viewed as a person's capacity for sexual feelings. Studying sexual attitudes and practices is a particularly interesting field of sociology because sexual behavior is a cultural universal. Throughout time and place, the vast majority of human beings have participated in sexual relationships (Broude 2003). Each society, however, interprets sexuality and sexual activity in different ways. At the same time, sociologists have learned that certain norms are shared among most societies. The incest taboo is present in every society, though which relative is deemed unacceptable for sex varies widely from culture to culture. For example, sometimes the relatives of the father are considered acceptable sexual partners for a woman while the relatives of the mother are not. Likewise, societies generally have norms that reinforce their accepted social system of sexuality.

What is considered "normal" in terms of sexual behavior is based on the mores and values of the society. Societies that value monogamy, for example, would likely oppose extramarital sex. Individuals are socialized to sexual attitudes by their family, education system, peers, media, and religion. Historically, religion has been the greatest influence on sexual behavior in most societies, but in more recent years, peers and the media have emerged as two of the strongest influences, particularly among U.S. teens (Potard, Courtois, and Rusch 2008). Let us take a closer look at sexual attitudes in the United States and around the world.

Sexuality around the World

Cross-national research on sexual attitudes in industrialized nations reveals that normative standards differ across the world. For example, several studies have shown that Scandinavian students are more tolerant of premarital sex than are U.S. students

(Grose 2007). A study of 37 countries reported that non-Western societies—like China, Iran, and India—valued chastity highly in a potential mate, while Western European countries—such as France, the Netherlands, and Sweden—placed little value on prior sexual experiences (Buss 1989).

Even among Western cultures, attitudes can differ. For example, according to a 33,590-person survey across 24 countries, 89 percent of Swedes responded that there is nothing wrong with premarital sex, while only 42 percent of Irish responded this way. From the same study, 93 percent of Filipinos responded that sex before age 16 is always wrong or almost always wrong, while only 75 percent of Russians responded this way (Widmer, Treas, and Newcomb 1998). Sexual attitudes can also vary within a country. For instance, 45 percent of Spaniards responded that homosexuality is always wrong, while 42 percent responded that it is never wrong; only 13 percent responded somewhere in the middle (Widmer, Treas, and Newcomb 1998).

Of industrialized nations, several European nations are is thought to be the most liberal when it comes to attitudes about sex, including sexual practices and sexual openness. Sweden, for example, has very few regulations on sexual images in the media, and sex education, which starts around age six, is a compulsory part of Swedish school curricula. Switzerland, Belgium, Iceland, Denmark, and The Netherlands have similar policies. Their more open approach to sex has helped countries avoid some of the major social problems associated with sex. For example, rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease are among the world's lowest in Switzerland and the Netherlands – lower than other European countries and far lower than the United States (Grose 2007 and Dutch News 2017). It would appear that these approaches are models for the benefits of sexual freedom and frankness. However, implementing their ideals and policies regarding sexuality in other, more politically conservative, nations would likely be met with resistance.

Sexuality in the United States

The United States prides itself on being the land of the "free," but it is rather restrictive when it comes to its citizens' general attitudes about sex compared to other industrialized nations. In an international survey, 25 percent of U.S. respondents stated that premarital sex is always wrong, while the average among the 24 countries surveyed was 17 percent, with less than ten percent of respondents from France, Germany, and Spain saying premarital sex was unacceptable (Chamie 2018). Similar discrepancies were found in questions about the condemnation of sex before the age of 16, extramarital sex, and homosexuality, with total disapproval of these acts being 12, 13, and 11 percent higher, respectively, in the United States, than the study's average (Widmer, Treas, and Newcomb 1998). U.S. culture is particularly restrictive in its attitudes about sex when it comes to women and sexuality.

It is widely believed that men are more sexual than are women. In fact, there was a popular notion that men think about sex every seven seconds. Research, however, suggests that men think about sex an average of 19 times per day, which is closer to once an hour, compared to 10 times per day for women (Fisher, Moore, and Pittenger 2011).

Belief that men have—or have the right to—more sexual urges than women creates a double standard. Ira Reiss, a pioneer researcher in the field of sexual studies, defined the *double standard* as prohibiting premarital sexual intercourse for women but allowing it for men (Reiss 1960). This standard has evolved into allowing women to engage in premarital sex only within committed love relationships, but allowing men to engage in sexual relationships with as many partners as they wish without condition (Milhausen and Herold 1999). Due to this double standard, a woman is likely to have fewer sexual partners in her life time than a man. According to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) survey, the average thirty-five-year-old woman has had three opposite-sex sexual partners while the average thirty-five-year-old man has had twice as many (Centers for Disease Control 2011).

The future of a society's sexual attitudes may be somewhat predicted by the values and beliefs that a country's youth expresses about sex and sexuality. Data from the most recent National Survey of Family Growth reveals that 70 percent of boys and 78 percent of girls ages fifteen to nineteen said they "agree" or "strongly agree" that "it's okay for an unmarried female to have a child" (National Survey of Family Growth 2013). In a separate survey, 65 percent of teens stated that they "strongly agreed" or "somewhat agreed" that although waiting until marriage for sex is a nice idea, it's not realistic (NBC News 2005). This does not mean that today's youth have given up traditional sexual values such as monogamy. Nearly all college men (98.9 percent) and women (99.2 percent) who participated in a 2002 study on sexual attitudes stated they wished to settle down with one mutually exclusive sexual partner at some point in their lives, ideally within the next five years (Pedersen et al. 2002).

Sex Education

One of the biggest controversies regarding sexual attitudes is sexual education in U.S. classrooms. Unlike many other countries, sex education is not required in all public school curricula in the United States. The heart of the controversy is not about whether sex education should be taught in school (studies have shown that only seven percent of U.S. adults oppose sex education in

schools); it is about the *type* of sex education that should be taught.

Much of the debate is over the issue of abstinence as compared to a comprehensive sex education program. Abstinence-only programs focus on avoiding sex until marriage and/or delaying it as long as possible. So they do not focus on other types of prevention of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. As a result, according to the Sexuality and Information Council of the United States, only 38 percent of high schools and 14 percent of middle schools across the country teach all 19 topics identified as critical for sex education by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Janfaza 2020).

Research suggests that while government officials may still be debating about the content of sexual education in public schools, the majority of U.S. adults are not. Two-thirds (67 percent) of Americans say education about safer sexual practices is more effective than abstinence-only education in terms of reducing unintended pregnancies. A slightly higher percentage—69 percent—say that emphasizing safer sexual practices and contraception in sexuality education is a better way to reduce the spread of STIs than is emphasizing abstinence (Davis 2018).

Even with these clear majorities in favor of comprehensive education, the Federal government offers roughly $85 million per year to communities that will drive abstinence-only sex education (Columbia Public Health 2017 a). The results, as stated earlier, are relatively clear: the United States has nearly four times the rate of teenage pregnancy than a country like Germany, which has a comprehensive sex education program.

In a similar educational issue not necessarily related to sexuality, researchers and public health advocates find that young girls feel underprepared for puberty. Ages of first menstruation (menarche) and breast development are continually declining in the United States, but education about these changes typically doesn't begin until middle school, which is generally too late. Young people indicate concerns about misinformation and discomfort during the informal conversations about the topics with friends, sisters, or mothers (Columbia Public Health 2017 b)

Sociological Perspectives on Sex and Sexuality

Sociologists representing all three major theoretical perspectives study the role sexuality plays in social life today. Scholars recognize that sexuality continues to be an important and defining social location and that the manner in which sexuality is constructed has a significant effect on perceptions, interactions, and outcomes.

Structural Functionalism

When it comes to sexuality, functionalists stress the importance of regulating sexual behavior to ensure marital cohesion and family stability. Since functionalists identify the family unit as the most integral component in society, they maintain a strict focus on it at all times and argue in favor of social arrangements that promote and ensure family preservation.

Functionalists such as Talcott Parsons (1955) have long argued that the regulation of sexual activity is an important function of the family. Social norms surrounding family life have, traditionally, encouraged sexual activity within the family unit (marriage) and have discouraged activity outside of it (premarital and extramarital sex). From a functionalist point of view, the purpose of encouraging sexual activity in the confines of marriage is to intensify the bond between spouses and to ensure that procreation occurs within a stable, legally recognized relationship. This structure gives offspring the best possible chance for appropriate socialization and the provision of basic resources.

In this context, the functionalist perspective does not take into account the increasing legal acceptance of same-sex marriage, or the rise in LGBTQ couples who choose to bear and raise children through a variety of available resources.

Conflict Theory

From a conflict theory perspective, sexuality is another area in which power differentials are present and where dominant groups actively work to promote their worldview as well as their economic interests.

For conflict theorists, there were two key dimensions to the debate over marriage equality—one ideological and the other economic. Dominant groups wish for their worldview—which embraces traditional marriage and the nuclear family—to win out over what they see as the intrusion of a secular, individually driven worldview. On the other hand, many LGBTQ activists argue that legal marriage is a fundamental right that cannot be denied based on sexual orientation and that, historically, there already exists a precedent for changes to marriage laws: the 1960s legalization of formerly forbidden interracial marriages is one example.

From an economic perspective, activists in favor of same-sex marriage point out that legal marriage brings with it certain entitlements, many of which are financial in nature, like Social Security benefits and medical insurance (Solmonese 2008). Denial of these benefits to same-sex couples is wrong, they argue. Conflict theory suggests that as long as people struggle over these social and financial resources, there will be some degree of conflict.

Symbolic Interactionism

Interactionists focus on the meanings associated with sexuality and with sexual orientation. Since femininity is devalued in U.S. society, those who adopt such traits are subject to ridicule; this is especially true for boys or men. Just as masculinity is the symbolic norm, so too has heterosexuality come to signify normalcy. Prior to 1973, the American Psychological Association (APA) defined homosexuality as an abnormal or deviant disorder. Interactionist labeling theory recognizes the impact this has made. Before 1973, the APA was powerful in shaping social attitudes toward homosexuality by defining it as pathological. Today, the APA cites no association between sexual orientation and psychopathology and sees homosexuality as a normal aspect of human sexuality (APA 2008).

Recall Cooley's "looking-glass self," which suggests that self develops as a result of our interpretation and evaluation of the responses of others (Cooley 1902). Constant exposure to derogatory labels, jokes, and pervasive homophobia would lead to a negative self-image, or worse, self-hate. The CDC reports that homosexual youths (as referred to in the study) who experience high levels of social rejection are six times more likely to have high levels of depression and eight times more likely to have attempted suicide (CDC 2011).

Queer Theory

Queer Theory is an interdisciplinary approach to sexuality studies that identifies Western society's rigid splitting of gender into specific roles and questions the manner in which we have been taught to think about sexual orientation. According to Jagose (1996), Queer [Theory] focuses on mismatches between anatomical sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation, not just division into male/female or homosexual/hetereosexual. By calling their discipline "queer," scholars reject the effects of labeling; instead, they embraced the word "queer" and reclaimed it for their own purposes. The perspective highlights the need for a more flexible and fluid conceptualization of sexuality—one that allows for change, negotiation, and freedom. This mirrors other oppressive schemas in our culture, especially those surrounding gender and race (Black versus White, man versus woman).

Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argued against U.S. society's monolithic definition of sexuality and its reduction to a single factor: the sex of someone's desired partner. Sedgwick identified dozens of other ways in which people's sexualities were different, such as:

- Even identical genital acts mean very different things to different people.
- Sexuality makes up a large share of the self-perceived identity of some people, a small share of others'.
- Some people spend a lot of time thinking about sex, others little.
- Some people like to have a lot of sex, others little or none.
- Many people have their richest mental/emotional involvement with sexual acts that they don't do, or don't even want to do.
- Some people like spontaneous sexual scenes, others like highly scripted ones, others like spontaneous-sounding ones that are nonetheless totally predictable.
- Some people experience their sexuality as deeply embedded in a matrix of gender meanings and gender differentials. Others do not (Sedgwick 1990).

Thus, theorists utilizing queer theory strive to question the ways society perceives and experiences sex, gender, and sexuality, opening the door to new scholarly understanding.

Throughout this chapter we have examined the complexities of gender, sex, and sexuality. Differentiating between sex, gender, and sexual orientation is an important first step to a deeper understanding and critical analysis of these issues. Understanding the sociology of sex, gender, and sexuality will help to build awareness of the inequalities experienced by people outside the dominant groups.

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9.2.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
biological determinism	the belief that men and women behave differently due to inherent sex differences related to their biology				
doing gender	the performance of tasks based upon the gender assigned to us by society and, in turn, ourselves				
DOMA	Defense of Marriage Act, a 1996 U.S. law explicitly limiting the definition of “marriage” to a union between one man and one woman and allowing each individual state to recognize or deny same-sex marriages performed in other states				
double standard	the concept that prohibits premarital sexual intercourse for women but allows it for men				
gender	a term that refers to social or cultural distinctions of behaviors that are considered male or female				
gender dysphoria	a condition listed in the DSM-5 in which people whose gender at birth is contrary to the one they identify with. This condition replaces "gender identity disorder"				
gender identity	a person’s deeply held internal perception of one's gender				
gender role	society’s concept of how men and women should behave				
glass ceiling	an invisible barrier that women encounter when trying to win jobs in the highest level of business				
heterosexism	an ideology and a set of institutional practices that privilege straight people and heterosexuality over other sexual orientations				
homophobia	an extreme or irrational aversion to gay, lesbian, bisexual, or all LGBTQ people, which often manifests as prejudice and bias				
intersex	people born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.				
misogyny	the hatred of or, aversion to, or prejudice against women				
pay gap	the difference in earnings between men and women				
sex	a term that denotes the presence of physical or physiological differences between males and females				
sexism	the prejudiced belief that one sex should be valued over another				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
sexual orientation	a person's physical, mental, emotional, and sexual attraction to a particular sex (male or female)				
sexuality	a person's capacity for sexual feelings				
social construction of sexuality	socially created definitions about the cultural appropriateness of sex-linked behavior which shape how people see and experience sexuality				
transgender	an adjective that describes individuals who identify with the behaviors and characteristics that are other than their biological sex				

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9.2.6: Section Summary

12.1 Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression

The terms “sex” and “gender” refer to two different identifiers. Sex denotes biological characteristics differentiating males and females, while gender denotes social and cultural characteristics of masculine and feminine behavior. Sex and gender are not always synchronous. Individuals who strongly identify with the opposing gender are considered transgender.

12.2 Gender and Gender Inequality

Children become aware of gender roles in their earliest years, and they come to understand and perform these roles through socialization, which occurs through four major agents: family, education, peer groups, and mass media. Socialization into narrowly prescribed gender roles results in the stratification of men and women. The impacts of discrimination and inequality have deep implications for economics, social mobility, and political power. The feminist movement undertook protests, improvement programs, and political focus in order to improve equality and the lives of women. Each sociological perspective offers a valuable view for understanding how and why gender inequality occurs in our society.

12.3 Sexuality

When studying sex and sexuality, sociologists focus their attention on sexual attitudes and practices, not on physiology or anatomy. Norms regarding gender and sexuality vary across cultures. In general, the United States tends to be fairly conservative in its sexual attitudes. As a result, programs such as sex education are often limited or selective in what topics they cover.

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9.2.7: Section Quiz

12.1 Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression

1.

The terms “masculine” and “feminine” refer to a person’s _____.

a. sex
b. gender
c. both sex and gender
d. none of the above

2.

The term _____ refers to society's concept of how men and women are expected to act and how they should behave.

a. gender role
b. gender bias
c. sexual orientation
d. sexual attitudes

3.

Research indicates that individuals are aware of their sexual orientation _____.

a. at infancy
b. in early adolescence
c. in early adulthood
d. in late adulthood

12.2 Gender and Gender Inequality

4.

Which of the following is the best example of a gender stereotype?

a. Women are typically shorter than men.
b. Men do not live as long as women.
c. Women tend to be overly emotional, while men tend to be levelheaded.
d. Men hold more high-earning, leadership jobs than women.

5.

Which of the following is the best example of the role peers play as an agent of socialization for school-aged children?

a. Children can act however they wish around their peers because children are unaware of gender roles.
b. Peers serve as a support system for children who wish to act outside of their assigned gender roles.
c. Peers tend to reinforce gender roles by criticizing and marginalizing those who behave outside of their assigned roles.
d. None of the above

6.

To which theoretical perspective does the following statement most likely apply: Women continue to assume the responsibility in the household along with a paid occupation because it keeps the household running smoothly, i.e., at a state of balance?

a. Conflict theory

b. Functionalism
c. Feminist theory
d. Symbolic interactionism

7.

Only women are affected by gender stratification.

a. True
b. False

8.

According to the symbolic interactionist perspective, we “do gender”:

a. during half of our activities
b. only when they apply to our biological sex
c. only if we are actively following gender roles
d. all of the time, in everything we do

9.

Misogyny is:

a. A certain kind if spa treatment
b. One’s biological sex
c. How we know our gender roles
d. the hatred of or, aversion to, or prejudice against women

10.

Which of the following factors can affect the pay gap?

a. having children
b. lower education level
c. being married
d. all of the above

11.

The idea that gender inequality comes from the division of labor fits with which Sociological theory?

a. Symbolic Interactionism
b. Functionalism
c. Conflict Theory
d. Feminist Theory

12.

Prior to the 19th Amendment being ratified, women were not considered a legal person on their own.

a. True
b. False

13.

In the 115th Congress of the United States, what percentage of the elected officials were women?

a. 10.5%
b. 21.2%

c. 30.4%
d. 50%

12.3 Sexuality

14.

Of these, which country is thought to be the most liberal in its attitudes toward sex?

a. United States
b. Sweden
c. Mexico
d. Ireland

15.

Compared to most Western societies, U.S. sexual attitudes are considered _____.

a. conservative
b. liberal
c. permissive
d. free

16.

Sociologists associate sexuality with _____.

a. a person's capacity for personal attachment
b. sexual maturation
c. biological factors
d. a person’s capacity for sexual feelings

17.

According to national surveys, most U.S. parents support which type of sex education program in school?

a. Abstinence only
b. Abstinence plus sexual safety
c. Sexual safety without promoting abstinence
d. No sex education

18.

Which theoretical perspective stresses the importance of regulating sexual behavior to ensure marital cohesion and family stability?

a. Functionalism
b. Conflict theory
c. Symbolic interactionalism
d. Queer theory

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9.2.8: Short Answer

12.1 Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression

1.

Why do sociologists find it important to differentiate between sex and gender? What importance does the differentiation have in modern society?

2.

How is children's play influenced by gender roles? Think back to your childhood. How "gendered" were the toys and activities available to you? Do you remember gender expectations being conveyed through the approval or disapproval of your playtime choices?

12.2 Gender and Gender Inequality

3.

In what way do parents treat sons and daughters differently? How do sons and daughters typically respond to this treatment?

4.

What can be done to lessen the effects of gender stratification in the workplace? How does gender stratification harm both men and women?

5.

Why is it important to have women in political roles?

6.

What can be done to narrow the pay gap for women?

12.3 Sexuality

7.

Identify three examples of how U.S. society is heteronormative.

8.

Consider the types of derogatory labeling that sociologists study and explain how these might apply to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

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9.2.9: Further Research

12.1 Sex, Gender, Identity, and Expression

To learn about what organizations are doing to improve diversity and social justice education for young people, review Learning For Justice's educational materials.

For more information on gender identity and advocacy for transgender individuals see the Global Action for Trans Equality web site.

Visit The Trevor Project website for more information on suicide prevention and crisis intervention for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning) young people.

12.2 Gender and Gender Inequality

Learn more about Women's Rights movements in the United States.

12.3 Sexuality

To learn about different approaches to sex education, visit Advocates for Youth.

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9.2.10: References

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9.3: What is Gender?

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10: RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY

10.1: Marriage and Family

10.1.1: Introduction

10.1.2: What Is Marriage? What Is a Family?

10.1.3: Variations in Family Life

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10.2: Encanto and the Complexity of Family and Expectation

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10.1: MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

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10.1.1: Introduction



Figure 14.1: If we see a young couple in a park, what do we assume about them? Are our assumptions based on what we see, or what we've experienced? (Credit: Jaroslav A. Polák/flickr)

Chapter Outline

14.1 What Is Marriage? What Is a Family?
14.2 Variations in Family Life
14.3 Challenges Families Face

Elena and Cam met through friends when they were in their early twenties. Elena had been out of college for two years and worked in the city procurement office; she took graduate classes in operations management, but she'd need a few more years to finish her Master's. Cam had received extensive computing training while in the Navy, and was a database architect at an insurance company.

In their first few years of dating, the idea of marriage came up mostly through other people. Friends' weddings seemed like monthly events, and "who's next?" small talk was unavoidable. Elena's grandmother and aunts added to the chorus; they talked about their home country, where women were married with a couple of children by the time they reached Elena's age. (Elena often pointed out that they were wrong, and the average age of marriage had been climbing for decades.) These pressures were pretty minor at first. They came in the form of jokes, wedding dress texts, and the occasional insult about Cam's salary. But every once in a while someone would sit Elena down for a serious talk, or corner Cam while he was at a family gathering.

Most of Elena's family predicted that things would change when she earned her graduate degree and could "focus on her family." Things did change; Elena became compliance officer for the office of city services, resulting in almost a ten percent increase in her salary. Cam became a supervisor three months later. They moved out of their apartment, which was in Cam's mother's garage, and into their own place downtown. They were happy. They were committed to each other. They didn't get married.

Five years later, Elena and Cam were still living downtown, but they'd traded their rental for a condo. Aside from work, they co-founded a nonprofit where Elena taught financial literacy and Cam ran computing boot camps for recent immigrants and refugees. Maybe it was the hundreds of children they met through the organization, or maybe it was seeing their friends' kids, or maybe it was being in her thirties, but Elena realized she wanted to be a mother. They started the adoption process, and eighteen months later welcomed a young girl who had been born in another country.

When did Elena and Cam become a family? Was it when they moved in together? When they adopted the child? Does their not being married matter?

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10.1.2: What Is Marriage? What Is a Family?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe society's current understanding of family
- Recognize changes in marriage and family patterns
- Differentiate between lines of descent and residence



Figure 14.2: If you asked a small child who is in their family, their response might depend more on their living arrangements than on their understanding of formal family structures.

Marriage and family are key structures in many societies. Many of us learn from a young age that finding and joining the right person is a key to happiness and security. We're told that children need two parents. Many of the tax laws, medical laws, retirement benefit laws, and banking and loan processes seem to favor or assume marriage. Should those assumptions be changed? Is marriage still the foundation of the family and our society?

In 1960, 66 percent of households in America were headed by a married couple. That meant that most children grew up in such households, as did their friends and extended families. Marriage could certainly be seen as the foundation of the culture. By 2010, that number of households headed by married couples had dropped to 45 percent (Luscombe 2014). The approximately 20 percent drop is more than just a statistic; it has significant practical effects. It means that nearly every child in most parts of America is either in or is close to a family that is not headed by a married couple. It means that teachers and counselors and even people who meet children in a restaurant can't assume they live with two married parents. Some view this decline as a problem with outcomes related to values, crime, financial strength, and mental health. Sociologists may study that viewpoint to determine if it is actually true.

What is marriage? Not even sociologists are able to agree on a single meaning. For our purposes, we'll define marriage as a legally recognized social contract between two people, traditionally based on a sexual relationship and implying a permanence of the union. In practicing cultural relativism, we should also consider variations, such as whether a legal union is required, whether more than two people can be involved, or whether the marriage is a religious one or a civil one.

Sociologists are interested in the relationship between the institution of marriage and the institution of family because, historically, marriages are what create a family, and families are the most basic social unit upon which society is built. Both marriage and family create status roles that are sanctioned by society.

The question of what constitutes a family may be an even more difficult one to answer; it's a prime area of debate in family sociology, as well as in politics and religion. Social conservatives tend to define the family in terms of structure with each family member filling a certain role (like father, mother, or child). Sociologists, on the other hand, tend to define family more in terms of the manner in which members relate to one another than on a strict configuration of status roles. Here, we'll define family as a socially recognized group (usually joined by blood, marriage, cohabitation, or adoption) that forms an emotional connection and serves as an economic unit of society. Sociologists identify different types of families based on how one enters into them. A family of orientation refers to the family into which a person is born. A family of procreation describes one that is formed through marriage. These distinctions have cultural significance related to issues of lineage.

Drawing on two sociological paradigms, the sociological understanding of what constitutes a family can be explained by symbolic interactionism as well as functionalism. These two theories indicate that families are groups in which participants view themselves as family members and act accordingly. In other words, families are groups in which people come together to form a strong primary group connection and maintain emotional ties to one another over a long period of time. Such families may include groups of close friends or teammates. In addition, the functionalist perspective views families as groups that perform vital roles for society—both internally (for the family itself) and externally (for society as a whole). Families provide for one another's physical, emotional, and social well-being. Parents care for and socialize children. Later in life, adult children often care for elderly parents. While interactionism helps us understand the subjective experience of belonging to a "family," functionalism illuminates the many purposes of families and their roles in the maintenance of a balanced society (Parsons and Bales 1956). We will go into more detail about how these theories apply to family in the following pages.

Challenges Families Face

People in the United States as a whole are somewhat divided when it comes to determining what does and what does not constitute a family. In a 2010 survey conducted by professors at the University of Indiana, nearly all participants (99.8 percent) agreed that a husband, wife, and children constitute a family. Ninety-two percent stated that a husband and a wife without children still constitute a family. The numbers drop for less traditional structures: unmarried couples with children (83 percent), unmarried couples without children (39.6 percent), gay male couples with children (64 percent), and gay male couples without children (33 percent) (Powell et al. 2010). This survey revealed that children tend to be the key indicator in establishing "family" status: the percentage of individuals who agreed that unmarried couples and gay couples constitute a family nearly doubled when children were added.

The study also revealed that 60 percent of U.S. respondents agreed that if you consider yourself a family, you are a family (a concept that reinforces an interactionist perspective) (Powell 2010). The government, however, is not so flexible in its definition of "family." The U.S. Census Bureau defines a family as "a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together" (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). While this structured definition can be used as a means to consistently track family-related patterns over several years, it excludes individuals such as cohabitating unmarried couples. Legality aside, sociologists would argue that the general concept of family is more diverse and less structured than in years past. Society has given more leeway to the design of a family making room for what works for its members (Jayson 2010).

Family is, indeed, a subjective concept, but it is a fairly objective fact that family (whatever one's concept of it may be) is very important to people in the United States. In a 2010 survey by Pew Research Center in Washington, DC, 76 percent of adults surveyed stated that family is "the most important" element of their life—just one percent said it was "not important" (Pew Research Center 2010). It is also very important to society. President Ronald Reagan notably stated, "The family has always been the cornerstone of American society. Our families nurture, preserve, and pass on to each succeeding generation the values we share and cherish, values that are the foundation of our freedoms" (Lee 2009). While the design of the family may have changed in recent years, the fundamentals of emotional closeness and support are still present. Most responders to the Pew survey stated that their family today is at least as close (45 percent) or closer (40 percent) than the family with which they grew up (Pew Research Center 2010).

As you may have seen in the chapter on Aging and the Elderly, different generations have varying living situations and views on aging. The same goes for living situations with family. The Pew Research Center analyzed living situation of 40-year-olds from different generations. At that age, Millennials indicated that 45 percent of them were not living in a family of their own. In contrast, when Gen Xers and Baby Boomers were about 40 years old (around 2003 and 1987, respectively), an average of 33 percent of them lived outside of a family (Barroso 2020). The dynamic of nearly a 50-50 split between family/non-family for Millennials is very different from a two-third/one third split of Boomers and Gen X.

The data also show that women are having children later in life and that men are much less likely to live in a household with their own children. In 2019, 32 percent of Millennial men were living in a household with their children, compared to 41 percent of Gen

X men in 2003 and 44 percent of Boomer men in 1987 (Barroso 2020). Again, the significant drop off in parenting roles likely has an impact on attitudes toward family.

Alongside the debate surrounding what constitutes a family is the question of what people in the United States believe constitutes a marriage. Many religious and social conservatives believe that marriage can only exist between a man and a woman, citing religious scripture and the basics of human reproduction as support. Social liberals and progressives, on the other hand, believe that marriage can exist between two consenting adults—be they a man and a woman, or a woman and a woman—and that it would be discriminatory to deny such a couple the civil, social, and economic benefits of marriage.

Marriage Patterns

With single parenting and cohabitation (when a couple shares a residence but not a marriage) becoming more acceptable in recent years, people may be less motivated to get married. In a recent survey, 39 percent of respondents answered "yes" when asked whether marriage is becoming obsolete (Pew Research Center 2010). The institution of marriage is likely to continue, but some previous patterns of marriage will become outdated as new patterns emerge. In this context, cohabitation contributes to the phenomenon of people getting married for the first time at a later age than was typical in earlier generations (Glezer 1991). Furthermore, marriage will continue to be delayed as more people place education and career ahead of "settling down."

One Partner or Many?

People in the United States typically equate marriage with monogamy, when someone is married to only one person at a time. In many countries and cultures around the world, however, having one spouse is not the only form of accepted marriage, even if it is the most common. Polygamy, or being married to more than one person at a time, is accepted to varying degrees around the world, with most polygamous societies existing in northern Africa and east Asia (OECD 2019). Instances of polygamy are almost exclusively in the form of a man being married to more than one woman at the same time, rather than a woman being married to more than one man (Altman and Ginat 1996).

While the majority of societies accept polygamy, the majority of people do not practice it. Even in the regions where it is most common, only an average of 11 percent of the population lives in arrangements that include more than one spouse (Kramer 2020). In these relationships, the husbands are often older, wealthy, high-status men (Altman and Ginat 1996). The average plural marriage involves no more than three wives. Negev Bedouin men in Israel, for example, typically have two wives, although it is acceptable to have up to four (Griver 2008). As urbanization increases in these cultures, polygamy is likely to decrease as a result of greater access to mass media, technology, and education (Altman and Ginat 1996).

In the United States, polygamy is illegal. A recent Gallup poll showed that 21 percent of people believe polygamy is morally acceptable, which is a major increase since earlier versions of the same poll. But the poll also found that polygamy was among the least acceptable behaviors considered in the study; for example, polygamy was far less acceptable than consensual sex between teenagers, though it was more acceptable than a married person having an affair (Brenan 2020). The act of entering into marriage while still married to another person is referred to as bigamy and is considered a felony in most states.

Residency and Lines of Descent

When considering one's lineage, most people in the United States look to both their father's and mother's sides. Both paternal and maternal ancestors are considered part of one's family. This pattern of tracing kinship is called bilateral descent. Note that kinship, or one's traceable ancestry, can be based on blood or marriage or adoption. Sixty percent of societies, mostly modernized nations, follow a bilateral descent pattern. Unilateral descent (the tracing of kinship through one parent only) is practiced in the other 40 percent of the world's societies, with high concentration in pastoral cultures (O'Neal 2006).

There are three types of unilateral descent: patrilineal, which follows the father's line only; matrilineal, which follows the mother's side only; and ambilineal, which follows either the father's only or the mother's side only, depending on the situation. In patrilineal societies, such as those in rural China and India, only males carry on the family surname. This gives males the prestige of permanent family membership while females are seen as only temporary members (Harrell 2001). U.S. society assumes some aspects of patrilineal decent. For instance, most children assume their father's last name even if the mother retains her birth name.

In matrilineal societies, inheritance and family ties are traced to women. Matrilineal descent is common in Native American

societies, notably the Crow and Cherokee tribes. In these societies, children are seen as belonging to the women and, therefore, one's kinship is traced to one's mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and so on (Mails 1996). In ambilineal societies, which are most common in Southeast Asian countries, parents may choose to associate their children with the kinship of either the mother or the father. This choice may be based on the desire to follow stronger or more prestigious kinship lines or on cultural customs such as men following their father's side and women following their mother's side (Lambert 2009).

Tracing one's line of descent to one parent rather than the other can be relevant to the issue of residence. In many cultures, newly married couples move in with, or near to, family members. In a patrilocal residence system it is customary for the wife to live with (or near) her husband's blood relatives (or family of orientation). Patrilocal systems can be traced back thousands of years. In a DNA analysis of 4,600-year-old bones found in Germany, scientists found indicators of patrilocal living arrangements (Haak et al 2008). Patrilocal residence is thought to be disadvantageous to women because it makes them outsiders in the home and community; it also keeps them disconnected from their own blood relatives. In China, where patrilocal and patrilineal customs are common, the written symbols for maternal grandmother (*wàipó*) are separately translated to mean "outsider" and "women" (Cohen 2011).

Similarly, in matrilocal residence systems, where it is customary for the husband to live with his wife's blood relatives (or her family of orientation), the husband can feel disconnected and can be labeled as an outsider. The Minangkabau people, a matrilocal society that is indigenous to the highlands of West Sumatra in Indonesia, believe that home is the place of women and they give men little power in issues relating to the home or family (Joseph and Najmabadi 2003). Most societies that use patrilocal and patrilineal systems are patriarchal, but very few societies that use matrilocal and matrilineal systems are matriarchal, as family life is often considered an important part of the culture for women, regardless of their power relative to men.

Stages of Family Life



Figure 14.3: The ability for parents to socialize and the types of events they can attend is often influenced by the ages and characteristics of their children. Preparing to go out with a four-year-old is usually much easier than doing so with a four-month-old, but the four-year-old needs to be watched more carefully. As children grow and families have more children, and perhaps include extended families, members' lives and perspective change. (Credit: Elvert Barnes/flickr)

As we've established, the concept of family has changed greatly in recent decades. Historically, it was often thought that many families evolved through a series of predictable stages. Developmental or "stage" theories used to play a prominent role in family sociology (Strong and DeVault 1992). Today, however, these models have been criticized for their linear and conventional assumptions as well as for their failure to capture the diversity of family forms. While reviewing some of these once-popular theories, it is important to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

The set of predictable steps and patterns families experience over time is referred to as the family life cycle. One of the first designs of the family life cycle was developed by Paul Glick in 1955. In Glick's original design, he asserted that most people will grow up, establish families, rear and launch their children, experience an "empty nest" period, and come to the end of their lives. This cycle will then continue with each subsequent generation (Glick 1989). Glick's colleague, Evelyn Duvall, elaborated on the family life cycle by developing these classic stages of family (Strong and DeVault 1992):

Table 14.1: This table shows one example of how a "stage" theory might categorize the phases a family goes through.

Stage Theory		
Stage	**Family Type**	**Children**
1	Marriage Family	Childless
2	Procreation Family	Children ages 0 to 2.5
3	Preschooler Family	Children ages 2.5 to 6
4	School-age Family	Children ages 6–13
5	Teenage Family	Children ages 13–20
6	Launching Family	Children begin to leave home
7	Empty Nest Family	"Empty nest"; adult children have left home

The family life cycle was used to explain the different processes that occur in families over time. Sociologists view each stage as having its own structure with different challenges, achievements, and accomplishments that transition the family from one stage to the next. For example, the problems and challenges that a family experiences in Stage 1 as a married couple with no children are likely much different than those experienced in Stage 5 as a married couple with teenagers. The success of a family can be measured by how well they adapt to these challenges and transition into each stage. While sociologists use the family life cycle to study the dynamics of family over time, consumer and marketing researchers have used it to determine what goods and services families need as they progress through each stage (Murphy and Staples 1979).

As early "stage" theories have been criticized for generalizing family life and not accounting for differences in gender, ethnicity, culture, and lifestyle, less rigid models of the family life cycle have been developed. One example is the family life course, which recognizes the events that occur in the lives of families but views them as parting terms of a fluid course rather than in consecutive stages (Strong and DeVault 1992). This type of model accounts for changes in family development, such as the fact that in today's society, childbearing does not always occur with marriage. It also sheds light on other shifts in the way family life is practiced. Society's modern understanding of family rejects rigid "stage" theories and is more accepting of new, fluid models.

Sociology in the Real World: The Evolution of Television Families

Whether you grew up watching the Huxtables, the Simpsons, the Kardashians, or the Johnsons, most of the drama or comedy you saw involved the relationships, tensions, challenges, and sometimes ridiculousness of family life. You may have also seen a great deal of change. The 1960s was the height of the suburban U.S. nuclear family on television with shows such as *The Donna Reed Show* and *Father Knows Best*. While some shows of this era portrayed single parents (*My Three Sons* and *Bonanza*, for instance), the single status almost always resulted from being widowed—not divorced or unwed.

Although family dynamics in real U.S. homes were changing, the expectations for families portrayed on television were not. The United States' first reality show, *An American Family* aired on PBS in 1973. The show chronicled Bill and Pat Loud and their children. During the series, the oldest son, Lance, announced to the family that he was gay, and at the series' conclusion, Bill and Pat decided to divorce. Although the Loud's union was among the 30 percent of marriages that ended in divorce in 1973, the family was featured on the cover of the March 12 issue of *Newsweek* with the title "The Broken Family" (Ruoff 2002).

Less traditional family structures in sitcoms gained popularity in the 1980s with shows such as *Diff'rent Strokes* (a widowed man with two adopted African American sons) and *One Day at a Time* (a divorced woman with two teenage daughters). Still, traditional families such as those in *Family Ties* and *The Cosby Show* dominated the ratings. The late 1980s and the 1990s saw the introduction of the dysfunctional family. Shows such as *Roseanne*, *Married with Children*, and *The Simpsons* portrayed traditional nuclear families, but in a much less flattering light than those from the 1960s did (Museum of Broadcast Communications 2011).

In the early 2000s, the nontraditional family has become somewhat of a tradition in television. While many situation comedies focus on single men and women without children, those that do portray families often stray from the classic structure: they include unmarried and divorced parents, adopted children, gay or lesbian couples, and multigenerational households.

In 2009, ABC emphasized the changes in family dynamics with their choice of title for *Modern Family*. The show follows an extended family that includes a divorced and remarried father with one stepchild and his biological adult children—one of whom is in a traditional two-parent household, and the other who is a gay man in a committed relationship raising an adopted daughter. *Black-ish*, which portrays an extended family of African Americans, has at many times dealt with the issue implied by its name: That sometimes what it means to be Black can bring issues of interpretation conflict, especially across generations. For example, the children of the central family have shown interest in "blending in" with their White friends, which brings negative reactions from their grandparents.

Other shows, such as *Shameless*, interweave family diversity with complex and painful issues such as addiction. The series has a large cast of characters representing different groups, and central to the series are the roles of children, rather than parents, as family leaders. "The families on shows like this one aren't as idealistic, but they remain relatable," states television critic Maureen Ryan. "The most successful shows, comedies especially, have families that you can look at and see parts of your family in them" (Respers France 2010).

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10.1.3: Variations in Family Life

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Recognize variations in family life
- Explain the prevalence and unique characteristics of single parents, blended families, foster care, cohabitation, same-sex couples, and unmarried individuals
- Discuss the social impact of changing family structures

The combination of husband, wife, and children that 99.8 percent of people in the United States believe constitutes a family is not representative of 99.8 percent of U.S. families. According to 2010 census data, only 66 percent of children under seventeen years old live in a household with two married parents. This is a decrease from 77 percent in 1980 (U.S. Census 2011). This two-parent family structure is known as a nuclear family, referring to married parents and children as the nucleus, or core, of the group. Recent years have seen a rise in variations of the nuclear family with the parents not being married. Three percent of children live with two cohabiting parents (U.S. Census 2011).



Figure 14.4: Military families sometimes have to endure long parental absences. The other parent or other family members, including older siblings, often take on more responsibility during deployments. The serving parent faces stress and detachment when they are away. (Credit: The National Guard.)

Single Parents, Blended Families, and Foster Families

Single-parent households are on the rise. In 2017, 32 percent of children lived with a single parent only, up from 25 percent in 2008. Of that 32 percent, 21 percent live with their mother. Four percent live with their father, which is a percentage that is growing in share; in 1968, for example, only one percent of children lived with a solo father, and three percent lived with a solo father in 2008 (Livingston 2018).

About 16 percent of children are living in blended families, those with step parents and/or step-siblings. This number has remained relatively stable since the 1980s when the Census Bureau began reliably measuring it. Four percent of children live in families with couples who are not married. (That number is partially composed of parents in same-sex relationships who were previously prohibited from getting married.)

In some cases, parents can no longer care for their children. In 2018, three million children lived with a guardian who was neither

their biological nor adoptive parent. The causes range from parental mental health issues, drug use, or incarceration, as well as physical or sexual abuse of the children by the parent, or abandonment by the parent. The wide array of causes leads to a similarly wide array of arrangements and types of people and organizations involved. About half of these children live with grandparents, and about 20 percent live with other relatives (ChildStats 2019). Sometimes a grandparent or other relative temporarily assumes care of children, perhaps informally, while other times the arrangement is longer term and the state or city child welfare or similar department is involved.

25 percent of children who do not live with an adoptive or biological parent live with nonrelatives, including foster parents, temporary guardians, or people in other types of relationships with the child or the child's parents. Non-relative foster parents are state-certified adults, who care for children under the guidance and supervision of a relevant agency. Foster parents comply with guideline and are provided with financial support for the children they care for. (Sometimes the term foster parent refers to a relative who cares for the children under agency guidelines, and sometimes these "kinship" foster parents are also provided financial support.)

When children are placed into foster care or other non-parental care, agencies and families usually do their best to keep siblings together. Brothers and sisters usually provide each other with someone to navigate social challenges and provide continuity over time. Studies have shown that siblings placed together show more closeness to their foster caregivers and like living in the foster home more than those not placed with a sibling (Hegar and Rosenthal, 2011). Separating siblings can cause them to worry about each other or their birth families, and slows acceptance of their new home (Affronti, Rittner, & Semanchin Jones, 2015).

Siblings sometimes play more of a parental role themselves, especially when there are large age gaps or if there are very young children involved. These older siblings may take on some parental responsibilities during a divorce or when children are sent to live with others. "Parentified" siblings may have trouble navigating the complexities of parental roles when they themselves are often still very young. These experiences can actually be traumatic and lead to compulsive disorders as well as lifelong issues with relationships and self-care (Lamothe 2017)

Changes in the traditional family structure raise questions about how such societal shifts affect children. U.S. Census statistics have long shown that children living in homes with both parents grow up with more financial and educational advantages than children who are raised in single-parent homes (U.S. Census 1997). Parental marital status seems to be a significant indicator of advancement in a child's life. Children living with a divorced parent typically have more advantages than children living with a parent who never married; this is particularly true of children who live with divorced fathers. This correlates with the statistic that never-married parents are typically younger, have fewer years of schooling, and have lower incomes (U.S. Census 1997). Six in ten children living with only their mother live near or below the poverty level. Of those being raised by single mothers, 69 percent live in or near poverty compared to 45 percent for divorced mothers (U.S. Census 1997). Though other factors such as age and education play a role in these differences, it can be inferred that marriage between parents is generally beneficial for children.

Cohabitation

Living together before or in lieu of marriage is a growing option for many couples. Cohabitation is when a man and woman live together in a sexual relationship without being married. In 2018, 15 percent of young adults ages 25-34 live with an unmarried partner, up from 12 percent 10 years ago (Gurrentz 2018). This surge in cohabitation is likely due to the decrease in social stigma pertaining to the practice. 69 percent of surveyed Americans believe it is acceptable for adults to live together if they are not currently married or do not plan to get married, while 16 percent say it is acceptable only if they plan to get married. (Horowitz 2019).

Cohabitating couples may choose to live together in an effort to spend more time together or to save money on living costs. Many couples view cohabitation as a "trial run" for marriage. 66 percent of married couples who cohabited but were not engaged saw cohabitation as a step toward marriage. And 44 percent of cohabiting adults who are not yet engaged or married see moving in with their partner as a step toward marriage (Horowitz 2019).

While couples may use this time to "work out the kinks" of a relationship before they wed, the most recent research has found that cohabitation has little effect on the success of a marriage. In fact, those who do not cohabitate before marriage have slightly better rates of remaining married for more than ten years (Jayson 2010). Cohabitation may contribute to the increase in the number of men and women who delay marriage. The median age for marriage is the highest it has ever been since the U.S. Census kept records—age twenty-six for women and age twenty-eight for men (U.S. Census 2010).

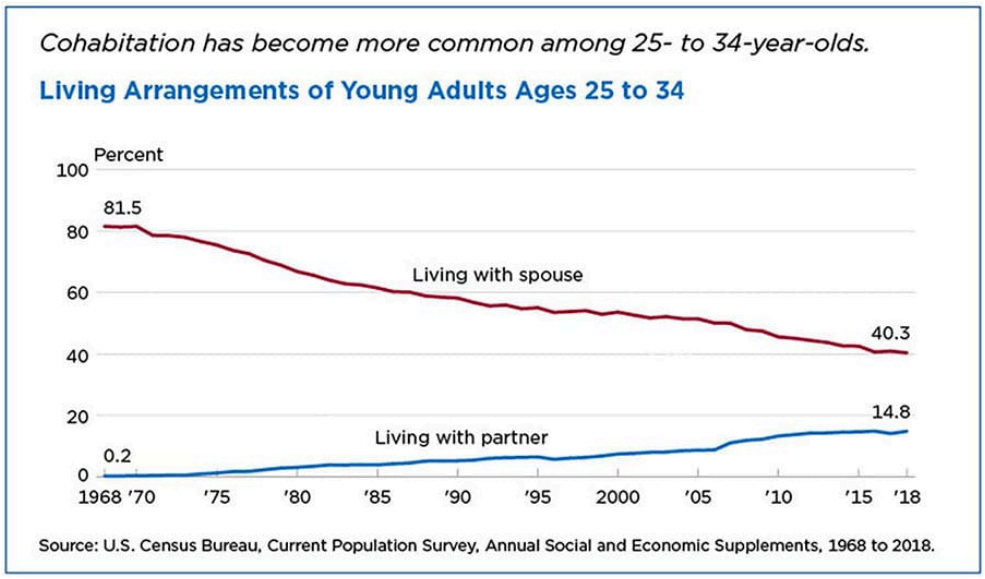


Figure 14.5: As shown by this graph of marital status percentages among young adults, more young people are choosing to delay or opt out of marriage, while the number of people living with a partner has increased. The overall number of people living with either a spouse or a partner has also declined. (Credit: U.S. Census Bureau)

Same-Sex Couples



Figure 14.6: After being together for 23 years, Phyllis Siegel (standing) and Connie Kopolev were the first same-sex couple to marry in New York City. (Credit: TJ Sengal/flickr)

The number of same-sex couples has grown significantly in the past decade. The U.S. Census Bureau reported 594,000 same-sex couple households in the United States, a 50 percent increase from 2000. This increase is a result of more coupling, the growing social acceptance of LGBTQ people, and a subsequent increase in people's willingness to share more about their identity. Nationally, same-sex couple households make up 1.5 percent of the total partner-headed households in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2020). When the 2015 Obergefell vs. Hodges Supreme Court decision legalized same-sex marriage throughout the United States, all federally mandated spousal rights and benefits began apply to same-sex married couples. These have impacts on Social Security and veterans benefits, family leave, and so on. For example, when same-sex marriage was not legal, an LGBTQ person couldn't take the same type of family leave as an opposite sex spouse could if their partner became ill, and could even be prohibited from visiting their partner in the hospital.

In terms of demographics, same-sex couples are not very different from opposite-sex couples. Same-sex couple households have an average age of 52 and an average annual household income of about $107,000; opposite-sex couple households have

an average age of 59 and an average household income of $97,000. Same-sex couples are less likely to have children under 18-years-old, with a rate of 14 percent compared to 38 percent of opposite-sex couples; note these include both married and unmarried couples (Census Bureau 2020).

In an analysis of 81 parenting studies, sociologists found no quantifiable data to support the notion that opposite-sex parenting is any better than same-sex parenting. Children of lesbian couples, however, were shown to have slightly lower rates of behavioral problems and higher rates of self-esteem (Biblarz and Stacey 2010). Prior to the nationwide legalization, studies also showed that the rate of suicide among high school students declined in states where same-sex marriage was legal. Suicide is the second-highest cause of death among high school students, and it is a tragic outcome for LGBTQ teenagers who feel unaccepted or vulnerable. The evidence indicates that the legalization of same-sex marriage had positive outcomes for the emotional and mental wellbeing of LGBTQ people (Johns Hopkins University 2017).

Staying Single

About three-in-ten American adults report that they are single, meaning that they are neither married nor in a committed relationship. That group varies greatly by age and gender. Half of men below age 30 are single, compared with about a quarter of men between ages 30-64. About 30 percent of women under 30 are single, and that drops to 19 percent for women between 30 and 60 years-old. There are also differences among racial lines, with White and Hispanic adults less likely to be single than are Black people. Single individuals are found in higher concentrations in large cities or metropolitan areas, with New York City being one of the highest.

Although both single men and single women report social pressure to get married, women are subject to greater scrutiny. Single women are often portrayed as unhappy or in some way lacking something they should have. Single men, on the other hand, are typically portrayed as lifetime bachelors who cannot settle down or simply “have not found the right girl.” Single women report feeling insecure and displaced in their families when their single status is disparaged (Roberts 2007). However, single women older than thirty-five years old report feeling secure and happy with their unmarried status, as many women in this category have found success in their education and careers. In general, women feel more independent and more prepared to live a large portion of their adult lives without a spouse or domestic partner than they did in the 1960s (Roberts 2007).

The decision to marry or not to marry can be based on a variety of factors including religion and cultural expectations. Asian individuals are the most likely to marry, while African Americans are the least likely to marry (Venugopal 2011). Additionally, individuals who place no value on religion are more likely to be unmarried than those who place a high value on religion. For Black women, however, the importance of religion made no difference in marital status (Bakalar 2010). In general, being single is not a rejection of marriage; rather, it is a lifestyle that does not necessarily include marriage.

Sociological Research: Deceptive Divorce Rates

It is often cited that half of all marriages end in divorce. This statistic has made many people cynical when it comes to marriage, but it is misleading. Let’s take a closer look at the data.

Using National Center for Health Statistics data from 2003 that show a marriage rate of 7.5 (per 1000 people) and a divorce rate of 3.8, it would appear that exactly one half of all marriages failed (Hurley 2005). This reasoning is deceptive, however, because instead of tracing actual marriages to see their longevity (or lack thereof), this compares what are unrelated statistics: that is, the number of marriages in a given year does not have a direct correlation to the divorces occurring that same year. Research published in the *New York Times* took a different approach—determining how many people had ever been married, and of those, how many later divorced. The result? According to this analysis, U.S. divorce rates have only gone as high as 41 percent (Hurley 2005). Another way to calculate divorce rates would be through a cohort study. For instance, we could determine the percentage of marriages that are intact after, say, five or seven years, compared to marriages that have ended in divorce after five or seven years. Sociological researchers must remain aware of research methods and how statistical results are applied. As illustrated, different methodologies and different interpretations can lead to contradictory, and even misleading, results.

Theoretical Perspectives on Marriage and Family

Sociologists study families on both the macro and micro level to determine how families function. Sociologists may use a variety

of theoretical perspectives to explain events that occur within and outside of the family.

Functionalism

When considering the role of family in society, functionalists uphold the notion that families are an important social institution and that they play a key role in stabilizing society. They also note that family members take on status roles in a marriage or family. The family—and its members—perform certain functions that facilitate the prosperity and development of society.

Sociologist George Murdock conducted a survey of 250 societies and determined that there are four universal residual functions of the family: sexual, reproductive, educational, and economic (Lee 1985). According to Murdock, the family (which for him includes the state of marriage) regulates sexual relations between individuals. He does not deny the existence or impact of premarital or extramarital sex, but states that the family offers a socially legitimate sexual outlet for adults (Lee 1985). This outlet gives way to reproduction, which is a necessary part of ensuring the survival of society.

Once children are produced, the family plays a vital role in training them for adult life. As the primary agent of socialization and enculturation, the family teaches young children the ways of thinking and behaving that follow social and cultural norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes. Parents teach their children manners and civility. A well-mannered child reflects a well-mannered parent.

Parents also teach children gender roles. Gender roles are an important part of the economic function of a family. In each family, there is a division of labor that consists of instrumental and expressive roles. Men tend to assume the instrumental roles in the family, which typically involve work outside of the family that provides financial support and establishes family status. Women tend to assume the expressive roles, which typically involve work inside of the family which provides emotional support and physical care for children (Crano and Aronoff 1978). According to functionalists, the differentiation of the roles on the basis of sex ensures that families are well balanced and coordinated. When family members move outside of these roles, the family is thrown out of balance and must recalibrate in order to function properly. For example, if the father assumes an expressive role such as providing daytime care for the children, the mother must take on an instrumental role such as gaining paid employment outside of the home in order for the family to maintain balance and function.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists are quick to point out that U.S. families have been defined as private entities, the consequence of which has been to leave family matters to only those within the family. Many people in the United States are resistant to government intervention in the family: parents do not want the government to tell them how to raise their children or to become involved in domestic issues. Conflict theory highlights the role of power in family life and contends that the family is often not a haven but rather an arena where power struggles can occur. This exercise of power often entails the performance of family status roles. Conflict theorists may study conflicts as simple as the enforcement of rules from parent to child, or they may examine more serious issues such as domestic violence (spousal and child), sexual assault, marital rape, and incest.

The first study of marital power was performed in 1960. Researchers found that the person with the most access to value resources held the most power. As money is one of the most valuable resources, men who worked in paid labor outside of the home held more power than women who worked inside the home (Blood and Wolfe 1960). Conflict theorists find disputes over the division of household labor to be a common source of marital discord. Household labor offers no wages and, therefore, no power. Studies indicate that when men do more housework, women experience more satisfaction in their marriages, reducing the incidence of conflict (Coltrane 2000). In general, conflict theorists tend to study areas of marriage and life that involve inequalities or discrepancies in power and authority, as they are reflective of the larger social structure.

Symbolic Interactionism

Interactionists view the world in terms of symbols and the meanings assigned to them (LaRossa and Reitzes 1993). The family itself is a symbol. To some, it is a father, mother, and children; to others, it is any union that involves respect and compassion. Interactionists stress that family is not an objective, concrete reality. Like other social phenomena, it is a social construct that is subject to the ebb and flow of social norms and ever-changing meanings.

Consider the meaning of other elements of family: “parent” was a symbol of a biological and emotional connection to a child; with more parent-child relationships developing through adoption, remarriage, or change in guardianship, the word “parent” today is less likely to be associated with a biological connection than with whoever is socially recognized as having the responsibility for a child’s upbringing. Similarly, the terms “mother” and “father” are no longer rigidly associated with the meanings of caregiver and

breadwinner. These meanings are more free-flowing through changing family roles.

Interactionists also recognize how the family status roles of each member are socially constructed, playing an important part in how people perceive and interpret social behavior. Interactionists view the family as a group of role players or "actors" that come together to act out their parts in an effort to construct a family. These roles are up for interpretation. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a "good father," for example, was one who worked hard to provide financial security for his children. Today, a "good father" is one who takes the time outside of work to promote his children's emotional well-being, social skills, and intellectual growth—in some ways, a much more daunting task.

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10.1.4: Challenges Families Face

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe the social and interpersonal impact of divorce
- Describe the social and interpersonal impact of family abuse

As the structure of family changes over time, so do the challenges families face. Events like divorce and remarriage present new difficulties for families and individuals. Other long-standing domestic issues such as abuse continue to strain the health and stability of today's families.

Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce, while fairly common and accepted in modern U.S. society, was once a word that would only be whispered and was accompanied by gestures of disapproval. In 1960, divorce was generally uncommon, affecting only 9.1 out of every 1,000 married persons. That number more than doubled (to 20.3) by 1975 and peaked in 1980 at 22.6. Over the last quarter century, divorce rates have dropped steadily and are now similar to those in 1970 (Wang 2020). The dramatic increase in divorce rates after the 1960s has been associated with the liberalization of divorce laws, as well as the shift in societal makeup due to women increasingly entering the workforce (Michael 1978). The decrease in divorce rates can be attributed to three probable factors: First, an increase in the age at which people get married, and second, an increased level of education among those who marry—both of which have been found to promote greater marital stability. The third factor is that the marriage rate itself is going down, and with it the divorce rate. In 2019, there were 16.3 new marriages for every 1,000 women age 15 and over in the United States, down from 17.6 in 2009 (Anderson 2020).

Divorce does not occur equally among all people in the United States; some segments of the U.S. population are more likely to divorce than others. According to the American Community Survey (ACS), men and women in the Northeast and Midwest have the lowest rates of divorce. The South generally has the highest rate of divorce. Divorce rates are likely higher in the South because marriage rates are higher and marriage occurs at younger-than-average ages in this region. In the Northeast, the marriage rate is lower and first marriages tend to be delayed; therefore, the divorce rate is lower (Reynolds 2020). Note that these are generalizations. For example, the District of Columbia has a high marriage rate but among the lowest divorce rate (Anderson 2020).

So what causes divorce? While more young people are choosing to postpone or opt out of marriage, those who enter into the union do so with the expectation that it will last. A great deal of marital problems can be related to stress, especially financial stress. According to researchers participating in the University of Virginia's National Marriage Project, couples who enter marriage without a strong asset base (like a home, savings, and a retirement plan) are 70 percent more likely to be divorced after three years than are couples with at least $10,000 in assets. This is connected to factors such as age and education level that correlate with low incomes.

The addition of children to a marriage creates added financial and emotional stress. Research has established that marriages enter their most stressful phase upon the birth of the first child (Popenoe and Whitehead 2007). This is particularly true for couples who have multiples (twins, triplets, and so on). Married couples with twins or triplets are 17 percent more likely to divorce than those with children from single births (McKay 2010). Another contributor to the likelihood of divorce is a general decline in marital satisfaction over time. As people get older, they may find that their values and life goals no longer match up with those of their spouse (Popenoe and Whitehead 2004).

Divorce is thought to have a cyclical pattern. Children of divorced parents are 40 percent more likely to divorce than children of married parents. And when we consider children whose parents divorced and then remarried, the likelihood of their own divorce rises to 91 percent (Wolfinger 2005). This might result from being socialized to a mindset that a broken marriage can be replaced rather than repaired (Wolfinger 2005). That sentiment is also reflected in the finding that when both partners of a married couple have been previously divorced, their marriage is 90 percent more likely to end in divorce (Wolfinger 2005).



Figure 14.7: A study from Radford University indicated that bartenders are among the professions with the highest divorce rates (38.4 percent). Other traditionally low-wage industries (like restaurant service, custodial employment, and factory work) are also associated with higher divorce rates. (Aamodt and McCoy 2010). (Credit: Daniel Lobo/flickr)

About 15 percent of all married couples involve one partner who is in their second marriage while the other partner is in their first marriage. About 9 percent of married couples are both in their second marriage. (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). The vast majority (91 percent) of remarriages occur after divorce; only 9 percent occur after death of a spouse (Kreider 2006). Most men and women remarry within five years of a divorce, with the median length for men (three years) being lower than for women (4.4 years). This length of time has been fairly consistent since the 1950s. The majority of those who remarry are between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four (Kreider 2006). The general pattern of remarriage also shows that White people are more likely to remarry than Black people.

Marriage the second time around (or third or fourth) can be a very different process than the first. Remarriage lacks many of the classic courtship rituals of a first marriage. In a second marriage, individuals are less likely to deal with issues like parental approval, premarital sex, or desired family size (Elliot 2010). In a survey of households formed by remarriage, a mere 8 percent included only biological children of the remarried couple. Of the 49 percent of homes that include children, 24 percent included only the woman's biological children, 3 percent included only the man's biological children, and 9 percent included a combination of both spouse's children (U.S. Census Bureau 2006).

Children of Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce and remarriage can be stressful on partners and children alike. Divorce is often justified by the notion that children are better off in a divorced family than in a family with parents who do not get along. However, long-term studies determine that to be generally untrue. Research suggests that while marital conflict does not provide an ideal childrearing environment, going through a divorce can be damaging. Children are often confused and frightened by the threat to their family security. They may feel responsible for the divorce and attempt to bring their parents back together, often by sacrificing their own well-being (Amato 2000). Only in high-conflict homes do children benefit from divorce and the subsequent decrease in conflict. The majority of divorces come out of lower-conflict homes, and children from those homes are more negatively impacted by the stress of the divorce than the stress of unhappiness in the marriage (Amato 2000). Studies also suggest that stress levels for children are not improved when a child acquires a stepfamily through marriage. Although there may be increased economic stability, stepfamilies typically have a high level of interpersonal conflict (McLanahan and Sandefur 1994).

Children's ability to deal with a divorce may depend on their age. Research has found that divorce may be most difficult for school-aged children, as they are old enough to understand the separation but not old enough to understand the reasoning behind it. Older teenagers are more likely to recognize the conflict that led to the divorce but may still feel fear, loneliness, guilt, and pressure to choose sides. Infants and preschool-age children may suffer the heaviest impact from the loss of routine that the marriage offered (Temke 2006).

Proximity to parents also makes a difference in a child's well-being after divorce. Boys who live or have joint arrangements

with their fathers show less aggression than those who are raised by their mothers only. Similarly, girls who live or have joint arrangements with their mothers tend to be more responsible and mature than those who are raised by their fathers only. Nearly three-fourths of the children of parents who are divorced live in a household headed by their mother, leaving many boys without a father figure residing in the home (U.S. Census Bureau 2011b). Still, researchers suggest that a strong parent-child relationship can greatly improve a child's adjustment to divorce (Temke 2006).

There is empirical evidence that divorce has not discouraged children in terms of how they view marriage and family. A blended family has additional stress resulting from combining children from the current and previous relationships. The blended family may also have a parent that has different discipline techniques. In a survey conducted by researchers from the University of Michigan, about three-quarters of high school seniors said it was "extremely important" to have a strong marriage and family life. And over half believed it was "very likely" that they would be in a lifelong marriage (Popenoe and Whitehead 2007). These numbers have continued to climb over the last twenty-five years.

Violence and Abuse

Violence and abuse are among the most disconcerting of the challenges that today's families face. Abuse can occur between spouses, between parent and child, as well as between other family members. The frequency of violence among families is a difficult to determine because many cases of spousal abuse and child abuse go unreported. In any case, studies have shown that abuse (reported or not) has a major impact on families and society as a whole.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a significant social problem in the United States. It is often characterized as violence between household or family members, specifically spouses. To include unmarried, cohabitating, and same-sex couples, family sociologists have created the term intimate partner violence (IPV). (Note that healthcare and support personnel, researchers, or victims may use these terms or related ones interchangeably to refer to the same general issue of violence, aggression, and abuse.) Women are the primary victims of intimate partner violence. It is estimated that one in five women has experienced some form of IPV in her lifetime (compared to one in seven men) (Catalano 2007). IPV may include physical violence, such as punching, kicking, or other methods of inflicting physical pain; sexual violence, such as rape or other forced sexual acts; threats and intimidation that imply either physical or sexual abuse; and emotional abuse, such as harming another's sense of self-worth through words or controlling another's behavior. IPV often starts as emotional abuse and then escalates to other forms or combinations of abuse (Centers for Disease Control 2012). IPV includes stalking as well as technological violence (sometimes called cyber aggression), which is committed through communications/social networks or which uses cameras or other technologies to harm victims or control their behavior (Watkins 2016).



Figure 14.8: Many people have experienced intimate partner violence. Note that while data like this are important to consider and hopefully build awareness around IPV, there are gaps in both reporting and information gathering. For example, less information is known about IPV against transgender people, but analysis of various sources indicate that it is 1.7 times more likely to be committed against transgender people than against cisgender people, as described below. (Credit: Centers for Disease Control)

Beyond its tragic outcomes and damaging long-term effects, sociologists and other researchers seeking to understand and prevent IPV and support victims may find a wide variance in the data.

On a global scale, intimate partners kill over 130 women each day. The UN Office of Drugs and Crime reported that, "women continue to pay the highest price as a result of gender inequality, discrimination and negative stereotypes... They are also the most likely to be killed by intimate partners and family" (Doom 2018).

The types of violence can vary significantly according to gender. In 2010, of IPV acts that involved physical actions against women, 57 percent involved physical violence only; 9 percent involved rape and physical violence; 14 percent involved physical violence and stalking; 12 percent involved rape, physical violence, and stalking; and 4 percent involved rape only (CDC 2011). This is vastly different than IPV abuse patterns for men, which show that nearly all (92 percent) physical acts of IVP take the form of physical violence and fewer than 1 percent involve rape alone or in combination (Catalano 2007). Perpetrators of IPV work to establish and maintain dependence in order to hold power and control over their victims, making them feel stupid, crazy, or ugly—in some way worthless.

IPV affects different segments of the population at different rates. The rate of IPV for Native American and Alaskan Native women is higher than any other race (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2017). The rate of IPV for Black women (4.6 per 1,000 persons over the age of twelve) is higher than that for White women (3.1). These numbers have been fairly stable for both racial groups over the last ten years.

Accurate statistics on IPV are difficult to determine, as it is estimated that more than half of nonfatal IPV goes unreported. It is not until victims choose to report crimes that patterns of abuse are exposed. Most victims studied stated that abuse had occurred for at least two years prior to their first report (Carlson, Harris, and Holden 1999). Also, studies and research methods apply a range of categories, which makes comparative or reinforcing data difficult to obtain. For example, some studies may only ask about IPV in two categories (for example, physical and sexual violence only) and may find fewer respondents reporting IPV than do studies that add psychological abuse, stalking, and technological violence.

Sometimes abuse is reported to police by a third party, but it still may not be confirmed by victims. A study of domestic violence incident reports found that even when confronted by police about abuse, 29 percent of victims denied that abuse occurred. Surprisingly, 19 percent of their assailants were likely to admit to abuse (Felson, Ackerman, and Gallagher 2005). According to the National Criminal Victims Survey, victims cite varied reasons why they are reluctant to report abuse, as shown in the table below.

Table 14.2: This chart shows reasons that victims give for why they fail to report abuse to police authorities (Catalano 2007).

Reason Abuse Is Unreported	% Females	% Males
Considered a Private Matter	22	39
Fear of Retaliation	12	5
To Protect the Abuser	14	16
Belief That Police Won't Do Anything	8	8

IPV against LGBTQ people is generally higher than it is against non-LGBTQ people. Gay men report experiencing IPV in their lifetimes less often (26 percent) than straight men (29 percent) or bisexual men (37 percent). 44 percent of lesbian women report experiencing some type of IPV in their lifetime, compared to 35 percent of straight women. 61 percent of bisexual women report experiencing IPV, a much higher rate than any other sexual orientation frequently studied.

Studies regarding intimate partner violence against transgender people are relatively limited, but several are ongoing. A meta-analysis of available information indicated that physical IPV had occurred in the lifetimes of 38 percent of transgender people, and 25 percent of transgender people had experienced sexual IPV in their lifetimes. Compared with cisgender individuals, transgender individuals were 1.7 times more likely to experience any IPV (Peitzmeier 2020).

Many college students encounter IPV, as well. Overall, psychological violence seems to be the type of IPV college students face most frequently, followed by physical and/or sexual violence (Cho & Huang, 2017). Of high schoolers who report being in a dating relationship, 10% experience physical violence by a boyfriend or girlfriend, 7% experience forced sexual intercourse, and 11% experience sexual dating violence. Seven percent of women and four percent of men who experience IPV are victimized before age 18 (NCJRS 2017). IPV victimization during young adulthood, including the college years, is likely to lead to continuous victimization in adulthood, possibly throughout a lifetime (Greenman & Matsuda, 2016)

Child Abuse

Children are among the most helpless victims of abuse. In 2010, there were more than 3.3 million reports of child abuse involving an estimated 5.9 million children (Child Help 2011). Three-fifths of child abuse reports are made by professionals, including teachers, law enforcement personnel, and social services staff. The rest are made by anonymous sources, other relatives, parents, friends, and neighbors.

Child abuse may come in several forms, the most common being neglect (78.3 percent), followed by physical abuse (10.8 percent), sexual abuse (7.6 percent), psychological maltreatment (7.6 percent), and medical neglect (2.4 percent) (Child Help 2011). Some children suffer from a combination of these forms of abuse. The majority (81.2 percent) of perpetrators are parents; 6.2 percent are other relatives.

Infants (children less than one year old) were the most victimized population with an incident rate of 20.6 per 1,000 infants. This age group is particularly vulnerable to neglect because they are entirely dependent on parents for care. Some parents do not purposely neglect their children; factors such as cultural values, standard of care in a community, and poverty can lead to hazardous level of neglect. If information or assistance from public or private services are available and a parent fails to use those services, child welfare services may intervene (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).



Figure 14.9: Dr. Michael C. Irving's monument for child abuse survivors is composed of handprints and messages of people who have been victims of abuse. (Credit: Harvey K/flickr)

Infants are also often victims of physical abuse, particularly in the form of violent shaking. This type of physical abuse is referred to as shaken-baby syndrome, which describes a group of medical symptoms such as brain swelling and retinal hemorrhage resulting from forcefully shaking or causing impact to an infant's head. A baby's cry is the number one trigger for shaking. Parents may find themselves unable to soothe a baby's concerns and may take their frustration out on the child by shaking him or her violently. Other stress factors, such as a poor economy, unemployment, and general dissatisfaction with parental life, may contribute this type of abuse. While there is no official central registry of shaken-baby syndrome statistics, it is estimated that each year 1,400 babies die or suffer serious injury from being shaken (Barr 2007).

Social Policy and Debate: Corporal Punishment

Physical abuse in children may come in the form of beating, kicking, throwing, choking, hitting with objects, burning, or other methods. Injury inflicted by such behavior is considered abuse even if the parent or caregiver did not intend to harm the child. Other types of physical contact that are characterized as discipline (spanking, for example) are not considered abuse as long as no injury results (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2008).

> This issue is rather controversial among modern-day people in the United States. While some parents feel that physical discipline, or corporal punishment, is an effective way to respond to bad behavior, others feel that it is a form of abuse. According to a poll conducted by ABC News, 65 percent of respondents approve of spanking and 50 percent said that they sometimes spank their child.
>
> Tendency toward physical punishment may be affected by culture and education. Those who live in the South are more likely than those who live in other regions to spank their child. Those who do not have a college education are also more likely to spank their child (Crandall 2011). Currently, 23 states officially allow spanking in the school system; however, many parents may object and school officials must follow a set of clear guidelines when administering this type of punishment (Crandall 2011). Studies have shown that spanking is not an effective form of punishment and may lead to aggression by the victim, particularly in those who are spanked at a young age (Berlin 2009).

Child abuse occurs at all socioeconomic and education levels and crosses ethnic and cultural lines. Just as child abuse is often associated with stresses felt by parents, including financial stress, parents who demonstrate resilience to these stresses are less likely to abuse (Samuels 2011). Young parents are typically less capable of coping with stresses, particularly the stress of becoming a new parent. Teenage mothers are more likely to abuse their children than their older counterparts. As a parent's age increases, the risk of abuse decreases. Children born to mothers who are fifteen years old or younger are twice as likely to be abused or neglected by age five than are children born to mothers ages twenty to twenty-one (George and Lee 1997).

Drug and alcohol use is also a known contributor to child abuse. Children raised by substance abusers have a risk of physical abuse three times greater than other kids, and neglect is four times as prevalent in these families (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2011). Other risk factors include social isolation, depression, low parental education, and a history of being mistreated as a child. Approximately 30 percent of abused children will later abuse their own children (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2006).

The long-term effects of child abuse impact the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of a child. Injury, poor health, and mental instability occur at a high rate in this group, with 80 percent meeting the criteria of one or more psychiatric disorders, such as depression, anxiety, or suicidal behavior, by age twenty-one. Abused children may also suffer from cognitive and social difficulties. Behavioral consequences will affect most, but not all, of child abuse victims. Children of abuse are 25 percent more likely, as adolescents, to suffer from difficulties like poor academic performance and teen pregnancy, or to engage in behaviors like drug abuse and general delinquency. They are also more likely to participate in risky sexual acts that increase their chances of contracting a sexually transmitted disease (Child Welfare Information Gateway 2006). Other risky behaviors include drug and alcohol abuse. As these consequences can affect the health care, education, and criminal systems, the problems resulting from child abuse do not just belong to the child and family, but to society as a whole.

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10.1.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
ambilineal	a type of unilateral descent that follows either the father's or the mother's side exclusively				
bigamy	the act of entering into marriage while still married to another person				
bilateral descent	the tracing of kinship through both parents' ancestral lines				
cohabitation	the act of a couple sharing a residence while they are not married				
extended family	a household that includes at least one parent and child as well as other relatives like grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins				
family	socially recognized groups of individuals who may be joined by blood, marriage, or adoption and who form an emotional connection and an economic unit of society				
family life course	a sociological model of family that sees the progression of events as fluid rather than as occurring in strict stages				
family life cycle	a set of predictable steps and patterns families experience over time				
family of orientation	the family into which one is born				
family of procreation	a family that is formed through marriage				
intimate partner violence (IPV)	violence that occurs between individuals who maintain a romantic or sexual relationship				
kinship	a person's traceable ancestry (by blood, marriage, and/or adoption)				
marriage	a legally recognized contract between two or more people in a sexual relationship who have an expectation of permanence about their relationship				
matrilineal descent	a type of unilateral descent that follows the mother's side only				
matrilocal residence	a system in which it is customary for a husband to live with the his wife's family				
monogamy	the act of being married to only one person at a time				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
nuclear family	two parents (traditionally a married husband and wife) and children living in the same household				
patrilineal descent	a type of unilateral descent that follows the father's line only				
patrilocal residence	a system in which it is customary for the a wife to live with (or near) the her husband's family				
polyandry	a form of marriage in which one woman is married to more than one man at one time				
polygamy	the state of being committed or married to more than one person at a time				
polygyny	a form of marriage in which one man is married to more than one woman at one time				
shaken-baby syndrome	a group of medical symptoms such as brain swelling and retinal hemorrhage resulting from forcefully shaking or impacting an infant's head				
unilateral descent	the tracing of kinship through one parent only.				

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10.1.6: Section Summary

14.1 What Is Marriage? What Is a Family?

Sociologists view marriage and families as societal institutions that help create the basic unit of social structure. Both marriage and a family may be defined differently—and practiced differently—in cultures across the world. Families and marriages, like other institutions, adapt to social change.

14.2 Variations in Family Life

People's concepts of marriage and family in the United States are changing. Increases in cohabitation, same-sex partners, and singlehood are altering of our ideas of marriage. Similarly, single parents, same-sex parents, cohabitating parents, and unwed parents are changing our notion of what it means to be a family. While most children still live in opposite-sex, two-parent, married households, that is no longer viewed as the only type of nuclear family.

14.3 Challenges Families Face

Today’s families face a variety of challenges, specifically to marital stability. While divorce rates have decreased in the last twenty-five years, many family members, especially children, still experience the negative effects of divorce. Children are also negatively impacted by violence and abuse within the home, with nearly 6 million children abused each year.

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10.1.7: Section Quiz

14.1 What Is Marriage? What Is a Family?

1.

Sociologists tend to define family in terms of

a. how a given society sanctions the relationships of people who are connected through blood, marriage, or adoption
b. the connection of bloodlines
c. the status roles that exist in a family structure
d. how closely members adhere to social norms

2.

Research suggests that people generally feel that their current family is _____ than the family they grew up with.

a. less close
b. more close
c. at least as close
d. none of the above

3.

A woman being married to two men would be an example of:

a. monogamy
b. polygyny
c. polyandry
d. cohabitation

4.

A child who associates his line of descent with his father's side only is part of a ____ society.

a. matrilocal
b. bilateral
c. matrilineal
d. patrilineal

5.

Which of the following is a criticism of the family life cycle model?

a. It is too broad and accounts for too many aspects of family.
b. It is too narrowly focused on a sequence of stages.
c. It does not serve a practical purpose for studying family behavior.
d. It is not based on comprehensive research.

14.2 Variations in Family Life

6.

The majority of U.S. children live in:

a. two-parent households
b. one-parent households

c. no-parent households
d. multigenerational households

7.

According to the study cited by the U.S. Census Bureau, children who live with married parents grow up with more advantages than children who live with:

a. a divorced parent
b. a single parent
c. a grandparent
d. all of the above

8.

Couples who cohabitate before marriage are _____ couples who did not cohabitate before marriage to be married at least ten years.

a. far more likely than
b. far less likely than
c. slightly less likely than
d. equally as likely as

9.

Same-sex couple households account for _____ percent of U.S. households.

a. 1
b. 10
c. 15
d. 30

10.

The median age of first marriage has _____ in the last fifty years.

a. increased for men but not women
b. decreased for men but not women
c. increased for both men and women
d. decreased for both men and women

14.3 Challenges Families Face

11.

Current divorce rates are:

a. at an all-time high
b. at an all-time low
c. steadily increasing
d. steadily declining

12.

Children of divorced parents are _____ to divorce in their own marriage than children of parents who stayed married.

a. more likely
b. less likely
c. equally likely

13.

In general, children in _____ households benefit from divorce.

a. stepfamily
b. multigenerational
c. high-conflict
d. low-conflict

14.

Which of the following is true of intimate partner violence (IPV)?

a. IPV victims are more frequently men than women.
b. One in ten women is a victim of IPV.
c. Nearly half of instances of IPV involve drugs or alcohol.
d. Rape is the most common form of IPV.

15.

Which type of child abuse is most prevalent in the United States?

a. Physical abuse
b. Neglect
c. Shaken-baby syndrome
d. Verbal mistreatment

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10.1.8: Short Answer

14.1 What Is Marriage? What Is a Family?

1.

According to research, what are people's general thoughts on family in the United States? How do they view nontraditional family structures? How do you think these views might change in twenty years?

2.

Explain the difference between bilateral and unilateral descent. Using your own association with kinship, explain which type of descent applies to you?

14.2 Variations in Family Life

3.

Explain the different variations of the nuclear family and the trends that occur in each.

4.

Why are some couples choosing to cohabitate before marriage? What effect does cohabitation have on marriage?

14.3 Challenges Families Face

5.

Explain how financial status impacts marital stability. What other factors are associated with a couple's financial status?

6.

Explain why more than half of IPV goes unreported? Why are those who are abused unlikely to report the abuse?

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10.1.9: Further Research

14.1 What Is Marriage? What Is a Family?

For more information on family development and lines of descent, visit the New England Historical Genealogical Society's web site, American Ancestors, and find out how genealogies have been established and recorded since 1845.

14.2 Variations in Family Life

For more statistics on marriage and family, see the Forum on Child and Family Statistics at http://openstax.org/l/child_family_statistics, as well as the American Community Survey, the Current Population Survey, and the U.S. Census decennial survey at the U.S. Census Bureau's web site.

14.3 Challenges Families Face

To find more information on child abuse, visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services web site to review documents provided by the Child Welfare Information Gateway.

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10.2: Encanto and the Complexity of Family and Expectation

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11.1: EDUCATION AND RELIGION



- Topic hierarchy

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11.1.1: Prelude to Education and Religion

Social Issues in the News

“America’s First Muslim College to Open This Fall,” the headline said. The United States has hundreds of colleges and universities run by or affiliated with the Catholic Church and several Protestant and Jewish denominations, and now it was about to have its first Muslim college. Zaytuna College in Berkeley, California, had just sent out acceptance letters to students who would make up its inaugural class in the fall of 2010. The school’s founder said it would be a Muslim liberal arts college whose first degrees would be in Islamic law and theology and in the Arabic language. The chair of the college’s academic affairs committee explained, “We are trying to graduate well-rounded students who will be skilled in a liberal arts education with the ability to engage in a wider framework of society and the variety of issues that confront them….We are thinking of how to set up students for success. We don’t see any contradiction between religious and secular subjects.”

The college planned to rent a building in Berkeley during its first several years and was doing fund-raising to pay for the eventual construction or purchase of its own campus. It hoped to obtain academic accreditation within a decade. Because the United States has approximately 6 million Muslims whose numbers have tripled since the 1970s, college officials were optimistic that their new institution would achieve their high hopes for its success. An official with the Islamic Society of North America, which aids Muslim communities and organizations and provides chaplains for the U.S. military, applauded the new college. “It tells me that Muslims are coming of age,” he said. “This is one more thing that makes Muslims part of the mainstream of America. It is an important part of the development of our community.” (Oguntoyinbo, 2010)Oguntoyinbo, L. (2010, May 20). America’s first Muslim college to open this fall. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*. Retrieved from diverseeducation.com/article/...this-fall.html

The opening of any college is normally cause for celebration, but the news about this particular college aroused a mixed reaction. Some people wrote positive comments on the Web page on which this news article appeared, but two anonymous writers left very negative comments. One asked, “What if they teach radical Islam?” while the second commented, “Dose [sic] anyone know how Rome fell all those years ago? We are heading down the same road.”

As the reaction to this news story reminds us, religion and especially Islam have certainly been hot topics since 9/11, as America continues to worry about terrorist threats from people with Middle Eastern backgrounds. Many political and religious leaders urge Americans to practice religious tolerance, and advocacy groups have established programs and secondary school curricula to educate the public and students, respectively. Colleges and universities have responded with courses and workshops on Islamic culture, literature, and language.

In all of these ways, two key social institutions, education and religion, have intersected. The news story about Zaytuna College is yet another illustration of this intersection. Education and religion clearly play an important role in American life. Children and adolescents spend most of their weekday waking hours in school or doing homework or participating in extracurricular activities, and many then go on to college. Most Americans believe in a deity, three-fourths pray at least weekly, and more than half attend religious services at least monthly. Educational and religious issues continue to spark national controversy, if only because they involve our dearest values. If we can understand the place of education and religion in our society, we are better able to understand our society itself. This chapter discusses sociological perspectives on both education and religion to show the role they play in our lives and to stimulate your thinking on some of the important issues they raise.

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11.1.2: 10.1- Education

Learning Objectives

- Summarize the key developments in the history of education since the colonial period.
- List the major functions of education.
- Explain the problems that conflict theory sees in education.
- Describe how symbolic interactionism understands education.

Education is the social institution through which a society teaches its members the skills, knowledge, norms, and values they need to learn to become good, productive members of their society. As this definition makes clear, education is an important part of socialization. Education is both *formal* and *informal*. Formal education is often referred to as *schooling*, and as this term implies, it occurs in schools under teachers, principals, and other specially trained professionals. Informal education may occur almost anywhere, but for young children it has traditionally occurred primarily in the home, with their parents as their instructors. Day care in industrial societies is an increasing venue for young children's instruction, and education from the early years of life is thus more formal than it used to be.

A Brief History of Education in the United States

Historically, compulsory education in public schools is a relatively recent phenomenon. During the colonial period, the Puritans in what is now Massachusetts required parents to teach their children to read and also required larger towns to have an elementary school, where children learned reading, writing, and religion. In general, though, schooling was not required in the colonies, and only about 10% of colonial children, usually just the wealthiest, went to school, although others became apprentices (Urban, Jennings, & Wagoner, 2008).Urban, W. J., Jennings L., & Wagoner, J. (2008). *American education: A history* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

To help unify the nation after the Revolutionary War, textbooks were written to standardize spelling and pronunciation and to instill patriotism and religious beliefs in students. At the same time, these textbooks included negative stereotypes of Native Americans and certain immigrant groups. The children going to school continued primarily to be those from wealthy families. By the middle 1800s, a call for free, compulsory education had begun, and compulsory education became widespread by the end of the century. This was an important development, as children from all social classes could now receive a free, formal education. Compulsory education was intended to further national unity and to teach immigrants "American" values. It also arose because of industrialization, as an industrial economy demanded reading, writing, and math skills much more than an agricultural economy had.

Free, compulsory education, of course, applied only to primary and secondary schools. Until the mid-1900s, very few people went to college, and those who did typically came from the fairly wealthy families. After World War II, however, college enrollments soared, and today more people are attending college than ever before, even though college attendance is still related to social class, as we shall discuss shortly.

At least two themes emerge from this brief history. One is that until very recently in the record of history, formal schooling was restricted to wealthy males. This means that boys who were not white and rich were excluded from formal schooling, as were virtually all girls, whose education was supposed to take place informally at home. Today, as we will see, race, ethnicity, social class, and, to some extent, gender continue to affect both educational achievement and the amount of learning occurring in schools.

Second, although the rise of free, compulsory education was an important development, the reasons for this development trouble some critics (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Cole, 2008).Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reforms and the contradictions of economic life*. New York, NY: Basic Books; Cole, M. (2008). *Marxism and educational theory: Origins and issues*. New York, NY: Routledge. Because compulsory schooling began in part to prevent immigrants' values from corrupting "American" values, they see its origins as smacking of ethnocentrism. They also criticize its intention to teach workers the skills they needed for the new industrial economy. Because most workers were very poor in this economy, these critics say, compulsory education served the interests of the upper/capitalist class much more than it served the interests of workers. It was good that workers became educated, say the critics, but in the long run their education helped the owners of capital much more

than it helped the workers themselves. Whose interests are served by education remains an important question addressed by sociological perspectives on education, to which we now turn.

Sociological Perspectives on Education

The major sociological perspectives on education fall nicely into the functional, conflict, and symbolic interactionist approaches (Ballantine & Hammack, 2009).Ballantine, J. H., & Hammack, F. M. (2009). *The sociology of education: A systematic analysis* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Table 12.1 summarizes what these approaches say.

Table 11.1.2.1*: Theory Snapshot*

Theoretical perspective	Major assumptions
Functionalism	Education serves several functions for society. These include (a) socialization, (b) social integration, (c) social placement, and (d) social and cultural innovation. Latent functions include child care, the establishment of peer relationships, and lowering unemployment by keeping high school students out of the full-time labor force.
Conflict theory	Education promotes social inequality through the use of tracking and standardized testing and the impact of its "hidden curriculum." Schools differ widely in their funding and learning conditions, and this type of inequality leads to learning disparities that reinforce social inequality.
Symbolic interactionism	This perspective focuses on social interaction in the classroom, on the playground, and in other school venues. Specific research finds that social interaction in schools affects the development of gender roles and that teachers' expectations of pupils' intellectual abilities affect how much pupils learn.

The Functions of Education

Functional theory stresses the functions that education serves in fulfilling a society's various needs. Perhaps the most important function of education is *socialization*. If children need to learn the norms, values, and skills they need to function in society, then education (as Chapter 3 noted) is a primary vehicle for such learning. Schools teach the three Rs, as we all know, but they also teach many of the society's norms and values. In the United States, these norms and values include respect for authority, patriotism (remember the Pledge of Allegiance?), punctuality, individualism, and competition. Regarding these last two values, American students from an early age compete as individuals over grades and other rewards. The situation is quite the opposite in Japan, where, as we saw in Chapter 3, children learn the traditional Japanese values of harmony and group belonging from their schooling (Schneider & Silverman, 2010).Schneider, L., & Silverman, A. (2010). *Global sociology: Introducing five contemporary societies* (5th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. They learn to value their membership in their homeroom, or *kumi*, and are evaluated more on their *kumi*'s performance than on their own individual performance. How well a Japanese child's *kumi* does is more important than how well the child does as an individual.

A second function of education is *social integration*. For a society to work, functionalists say, people must subscribe to a common set of beliefs and values. As we saw, the development of such common views was a goal of the system of free, compulsory education that developed in the 19th century. Thousands of immigrant children in the United States today are learning English, U.S. history, and other subjects that help prepare them for the workforce and integrate them into American life. Such integration is a major goal of the English-only movement, whose advocates say that only English should be used to teach children whose native tongue is Spanish, Vietnamese, or whatever other language their parents speak at home. Critics of this movement say it slows down these children's education and weakens their ethnic identity (Schildkraut, 2005).Schildkraut, D. J. (2005). *Press "one" for English: Language policy, public opinion, and American identity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

A third function of education is *social placement*. Beginning in grade school, students are identified by teachers and other school officials either as bright and motivated or as less bright and even educationally challenged. Depending on how they are identified, children are taught at the level that is thought to suit them best. In this way they are prepared in the most appropriate way possible for their later station in life. Whether this process works as well as it should is an important issue, and we explore it further when we discuss school tracking shortly.

Social and cultural innovation is a fourth function of education. Our scientists cannot make important scientific discoveries and our artists and thinkers cannot come up with great works of art, poetry, and prose unless they have first been educated in the many subjects they need to know for their chosen path.

Education also involves several *latent* functions, functions that are by-products of going to school and receiving an education rather than a direct effect of the education itself. One of these is *child care*. Once a child starts kindergarten and then first grade, for several hours a day the child is taken care of for free. The *establishment of peer relationships* is another latent function of schooling. Most of us met many of our friends while we were in school at whatever grade level, and some of those friendships endure the rest of our lives. A final latent function of education is that it *keeps millions of high school students out of the full-time labor force*. This fact keeps the unemployment rate lower than it would be if they were in the labor force.

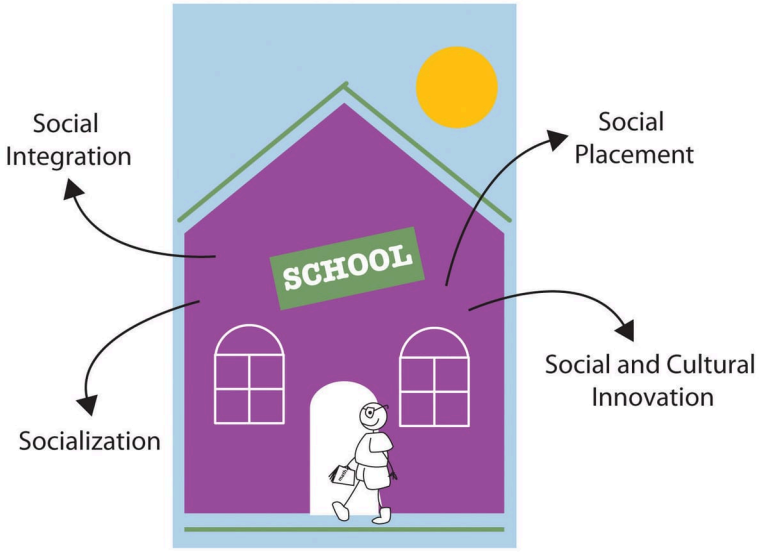


Figure 11.1.2.1: The Functions of Education. Schools ideally perform many important functions in modern society. These include socialization, social integration, social placement, and social and cultural innovation.

Education and Inequality

Conflict theory does not dispute most of the functions just described. However, it does give some of them a different slant and talks about various ways in which education perpetuates social inequality (Hill, Macrine, & Gabbard, 2010; Liston, 1990).Hill, D., Macrine, S., & Gabbard, D. (Eds.). (2010). *Capitalist education: Globalisation and the politics of inequality*. New York, NY: Routledge; Liston, D. P. (1990). *Capitalist schools: Explanation and ethics in radical studies of schooling*. New York, NY: Routledge. One example involves the function of social placement. As most schools track their students starting in grade school, the students thought by their teachers to be bright are placed in the faster tracks (especially in reading and arithmetic), while the slower students are placed in the slower tracks; in high school, three common tracks are the college track, vocational track, and general track.

Such *tracking* does have its advantages; it helps ensure that bright students learn as much as their abilities allow them, and it helps ensure that slower students are not taught over their heads. But, conflict theorists say, tracking also helps perpetuate social inequality by *locking* students into faster and lower tracks. Worse yet, several studies show that students' social class and race and ethnicity affect the track into which they are placed, even though their intellectual abilities and potential should be the only things that matter: white, middle-class students are more likely to be tracked "up," while poorer students and students of color are more likely to be tracked "down." Once they are tracked, students learn more if they are tracked up and less if they are tracked down. The latter tend to lose self-esteem and begin to think they have little academic ability and thus do worse in school because they were tracked down. In this way, tracking is thought to be good for those tracked up and bad for those tracked down. Conflict theorists thus say that tracking perpetuates social inequality based on social class and race and ethnicity (Ansalone, 2006; Oakes, 2005).Ansalone, G. (2006). Tracking: A return to Jim Crow. *Race, gender & class, 13*, 1–2; Oakes, J. (2005). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality* (2nd ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Social inequality is also perpetuated through the widespread use of standardized tests. Critics say these tests continue to be culturally biased, as they include questions whose answers are most likely to be known by white, middle-class students, whose backgrounds have afforded them various experiences that help them answer the questions. They also say that scores on standardized tests reflect students' socioeconomic status and experiences in addition to their academic abilities. To the extent this critique is true, standardized tests perpetuate social inequality (Grodsky, Warren, & Felts, 2008).Grodsky, E., Warren, J. R., & Felts, E. (2008). Testing and social stratification in American education. *Annual Review of Sociology, 34*(1), 385–404.

As we will see, schools in the United States also differ mightily in their resources, learning conditions, and other aspects, all of which affect how much students can learn in them. Simply put, schools are unequal, and their very inequality helps perpetuate inequality in the larger society. Children going to the worst schools in urban areas face many more obstacles to their learning than those going to well-funded schools in suburban areas. Their lack of learning helps ensure they remain trapped in poverty and its related problems.

Conflict theorists also say that schooling teaches a hidden curriculum, by which they mean a set of values and beliefs that support the status quo, including the existing social hierarchy (Booher-Jennings, 2008).Booher-Jennings, J. (2008). Learning to label: Socialisation, gender, and the hidden curriculum of high-stakes testing. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 29*, 149–160. Chapter 3's discussion of socialization first presented the concept of the hidden curriculum by having you pretend you were a ruler of a new society who wanted its children to grow up loving their country and respecting your authority. Although no one plots this behind closed doors, our schoolchildren learn patriotic values and respect for authority from the books they read and from various classroom activities.

Symbolic Interactionism and School Behavior

Symbolic interactionist studies of education examine social interaction in the classroom, on the playground, and in other school venues. These studies help us understand what happens in the schools themselves, but they also help us also understand how what occurs in school is relevant for the larger society. Some studies, for example, show how children's playground activities reinforce gender role socialization. Girls tend to play more cooperative games, while boys play more competitive sports (Thorne, 1993) (see Chapter 8).Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.



Figure 11.1.2.3: Research guided by the symbolic interactionist perspective suggests that teachers' expectations may influence how much their students learn. When teachers expect little of their students, their students tend to learn less. © Thinkstock

Another body of research shows that teachers' views about students can affect how much the students learn. When teachers think students are smart, they tend to spend more time with them, to call on them, and to praise them when they give the right answer. Not surprisingly these students learn more because of their teachers' behavior. But when teachers think students are less bright, they tend to spend less time with them and in other ways act in a way that leads the students to learn less. One of the first studies to find this example of a self-fulfilling prophecy was conducted by Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson (1968).Rosenthal, R., & Jacobson, L. (1968). *Pygmalion in the classroom*. New York, NY: Holt. They tested a group of students at the beginning of the school year and told their teachers which were bright and which were not. They tested the students again at the end of the school year; not surprisingly the bright students had learned more during the year than the less bright ones. But it turned out that the researchers had randomly decided which students would be designated bright and less bright. Because the "bright" students learned more during the school year without actually being brighter at the beginning, their teachers' behavior must have been the reason. In fact, their teachers did spend more time with them and praised them more often than was true for the "less bright" students. To the extent this type of self-fulfilling prophecy occurs, it helps us understand why tracking is bad for the students tracked down.

Other research focuses on how teachers treat girls and boys. Several studies from the 1970s through the 1990s found that teachers call on boys more often and praise them more often (American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1998; Jones & Dindia, 2004).American Association of University Women Educational Foundation. (1998). *Gender gaps: Where schools still fail our children*. Washington, DC: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation; Jones, S. M., & Dindia, K. (2004). A meta-analystic perspective on sex equity in the classroom. *Review of Educational Research, 74*, 443–471. Teachers did not do this consciously, but their behavior nonetheless sent an implicit message to girls that math and science are not for girls and that they are not suited to do well in these subjects. This body of research stimulated efforts to educate teachers about the ways in which they may unwittingly send these messages and about strategies they could use to promote greater interest and achievement by girls in math and science (Battey, Kafai, Nixon, & Kao, 2007).Battey, D., Kafai, Y., Nixon, A. S., & Kao, L. L. (2007). Professional development for teachers on gender equity in the sciences: Initiating the conversation. *Teachers College Record, 109*(1), 221–243.

Conclusion

- At least two themes emerge from the history of education. The first is that until very recently in the record of history, formal schooling was restricted to wealthy males. The second is that the rise of free, compulsory education was an important development that nonetheless has been criticized for orienting workers in the 19th century to be disciplined and to obey authority.
- The functions of education include socialization, social integration, social placement, and social and cultural innovation.
- Education is said for several reasons to contribute to social inequality and to involve a hidden curriculum that stifles independent thinking.

For Your Review

1. Write a brief essay in which you discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the rise of free, compulsory education.
2. Review how the functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist perspectives understand and explain education. Which of these three approaches do you most prefer? Why?

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11.1.3: 10.2- Education in the United States

Learning Objectives

- Summarize social class, gender, and racial and ethnic differences in educational attainment.
- Describe the impact that education has on income.
- Discuss how education affects social and moral attitudes.

Education in the United States is a massive social institution involving millions of people and billions of dollars. About 75 million people, almost one-fourth of the U.S. population, attend school at all levels. This number includes 40 million in grades pre-K through 8, 16 million in high school, and 19 million in college (including graduate and professional school). They attend some 132,000 elementary and secondary schools and about 4,200 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities and are taught by about 4.8 million teachers and professors (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab Education is obviously a huge social institution.

Correlates of Educational Attainment

About 65% of U.S. high school graduates enroll in college the following fall. This is a very high figure by international standards, as college in many other industrial nations is reserved for the very small percentage of the population who pass rigorous entrance exams. They are the best of the brightest in their nations, whereas higher education in the United States is open to all who graduate high school. Even though that is true, our chances of achieving a college degree are greatly determined at birth, as social class and race and ethnicity have a significant effect on access to college. They affect whether students drop out of high school, in which case they obviously do not go on to college; they affect the chances of getting good grades in school and good scores on college entrance exams; they affect whether a family can afford to send its children to college; and they affect the chances of staying in college and obtaining a degree versus dropping out. For these reasons, educational attainment depends heavily on family income and race and ethnicity.

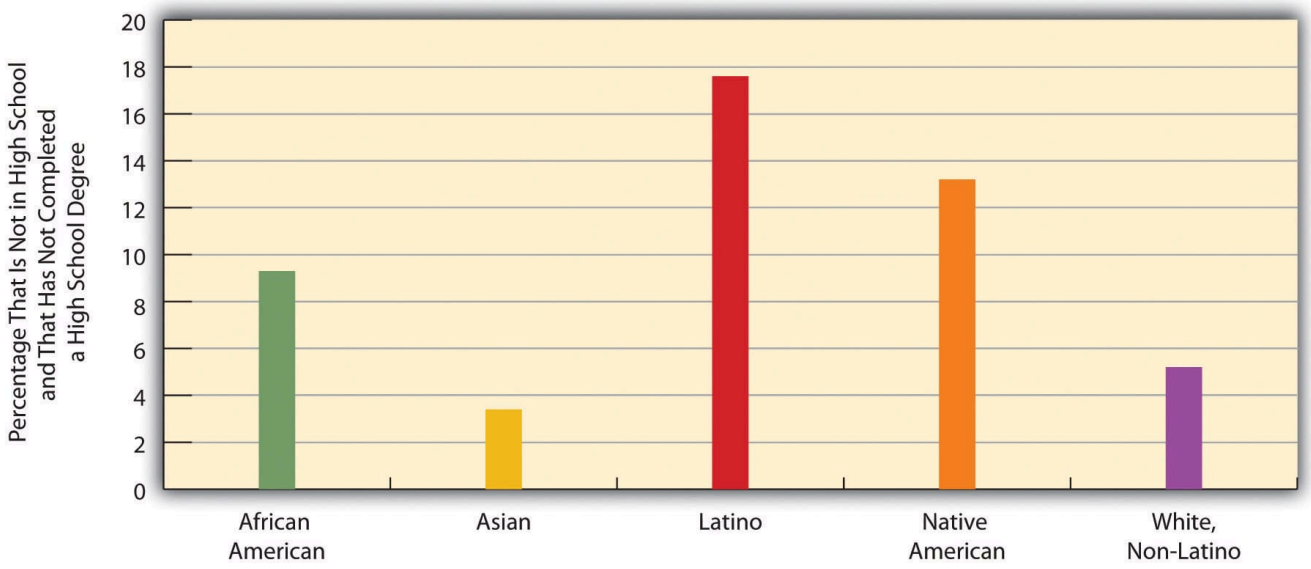


Figure 11.1.3.1: Race, Ethnicity, and High School Dropout Rate, 16–24-Year-Olds, 2009. Source: Data from Aud, S., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., & Tahan, K. (2011). The condition of education 2011 (NCES 2011-033). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

Figure 11.1.3.1 shows how race and ethnicity affect dropping out of high school. The dropout rate is highest for Latinos and Native Americans and lowest for Asians and whites. One way of illustrating how income and race and ethnicity affect the chances of achieving a college degree is to examine the percentage of high school graduates who enroll in college immediately following

graduation. As Figure 11.1.3.2 shows, students from families in the highest income bracket are more likely than those in the lowest bracket to attend college. For race/ethnicity, it is useful to see the percentage of persons 25 or older who have at least a 4-year college degree. As Figure 11.1.3.3 shows, this percentage varies significantly, with African Americans and Latinos least likely to have a degree.

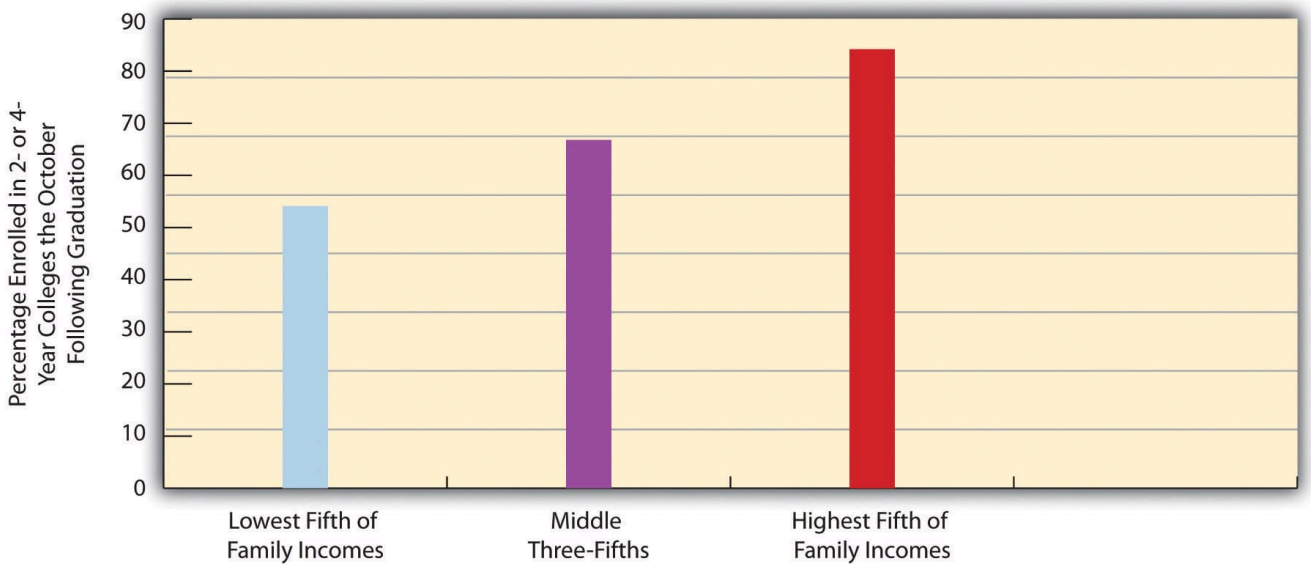


Figure 11.1.3.2: Family Income and Percentage of High School Graduates Who Attend College Immediately After Graduation, 2009Source: Data from Aud, S., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., & Tahan, K. (2011). The condition of education 2011 (NCES 2011-033). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

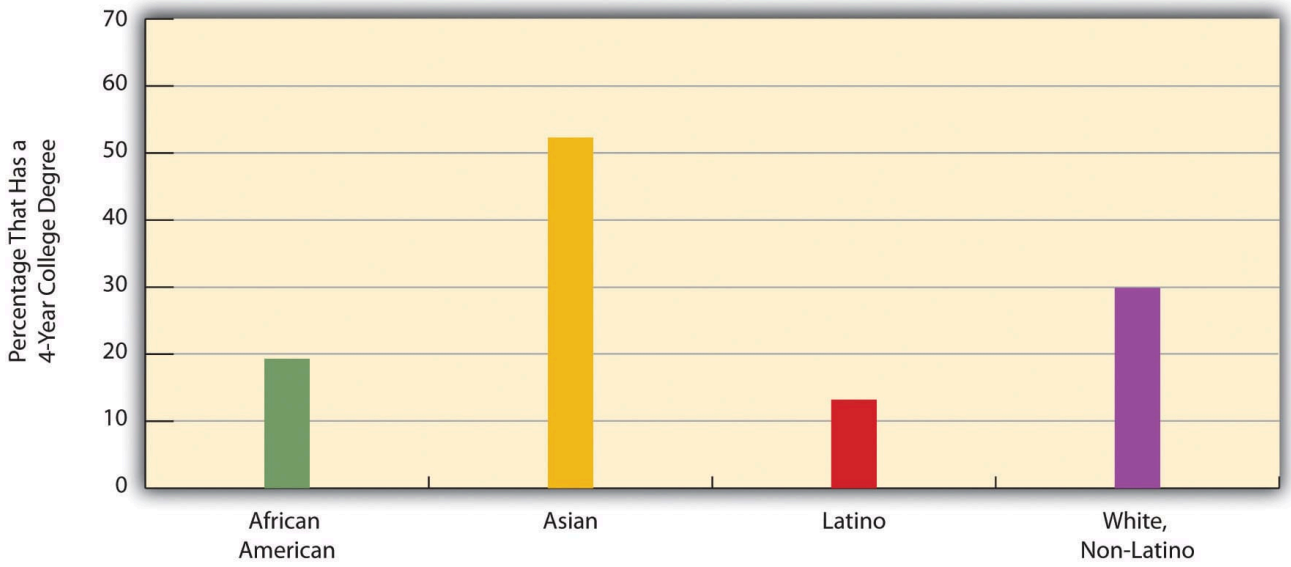


Figure 11.1.3.3: Race, Ethnicity, and Percentage of Persons 25 or Older With a 4-Year College Degree, 2009Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

Why do African Americans and Latinos have lower educational attainment? Two factors are commonly cited: (a) the underfunded and otherwise inadequate schools that children in both groups often attend and (b) the higher poverty of their families and lower education of their parents that often leave them ill-prepared for school even before they enter kindergarten (Ballantine & Hammack, 2009; Yeung & Pfeiffer, 2009).Ballantine, J. H., & Hammack, F. M. (2009). *The sociology of education: A systematic analysis* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall; Yeung, W.-J. J., & Pfeiffer, K. M. (2009). The black–white test score gap and early home environment. *Social Science Research, 38*(2), 412–437.

Does gender affect educational attainment? The answer is yes, but perhaps not in the way you expect. If we do not take age into account, slightly more men than women have a college degree: 30.1% of men and 29.1% of women. This difference reflects the

fact that women were less likely than men in earlier generations to go to college. But now there is a gender difference in the other direction: women now earn more than 57% of all bachelor's degrees, up from just 35% in 1960 (see Figure 11.1.3.4 "Percentage of All Bachelor's Degrees Received by Women, 1960–2009").

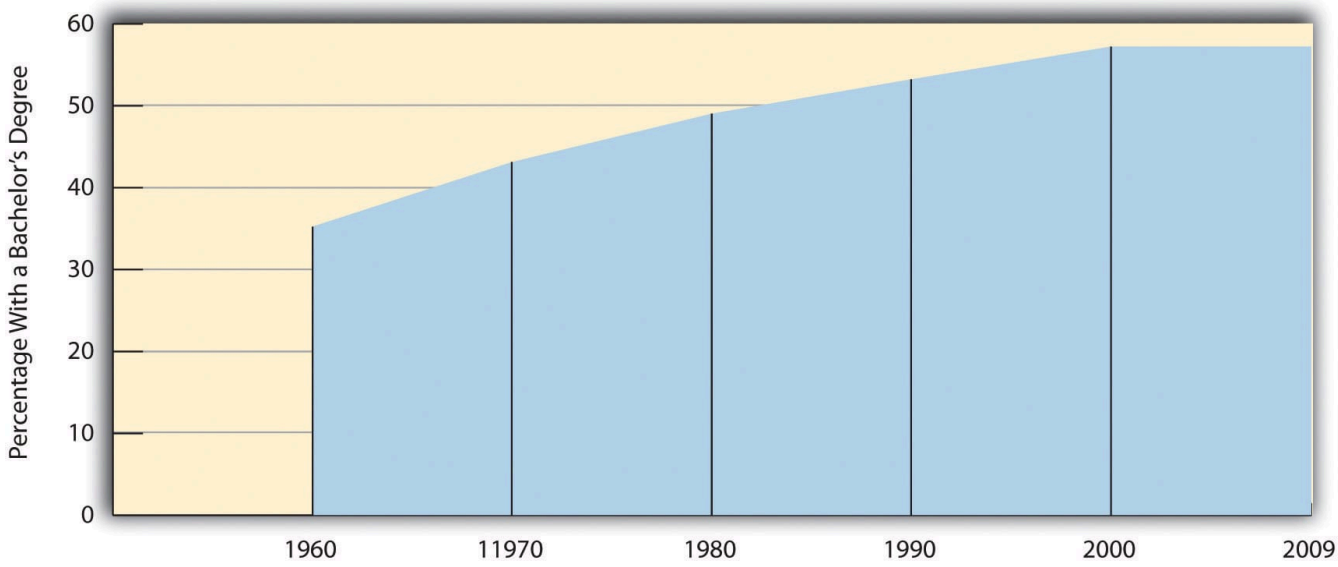


Figure 11.1.3.4: Percentage of All Bachelor's Degrees Received by Women, 1960–2009. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

The Difference Education Makes: Income

Have you ever applied for a job that required a high school degree? Are you going to college in part because you realize you will need a college degree for a higher-paying job? As these questions imply, the United States is a credential society (Collins, 1979).Collins, R. (1979). *The credential society: An historical sociology of education and stratification*. New York, NY: Academic Press. This means at least two things. First, a high school or college degree (or beyond) indicates that a person has acquired the needed knowledge and skills for various jobs. Second, a degree at some level is a requirement for most jobs. As you know full well, a college degree today is a virtual requirement for a decent-paying job. Over the years the ante has been upped considerably, as in earlier generations a high school degree, if even that, was all that was needed, if only because so few people graduated from high school to begin with (Figure 11.1.3.5. With so many people graduating from high school today, a high school degree is not worth as much. Then, too, today's technological and knowledge-based postindustrial society increasingly requires skills and knowledge that only a college education brings.

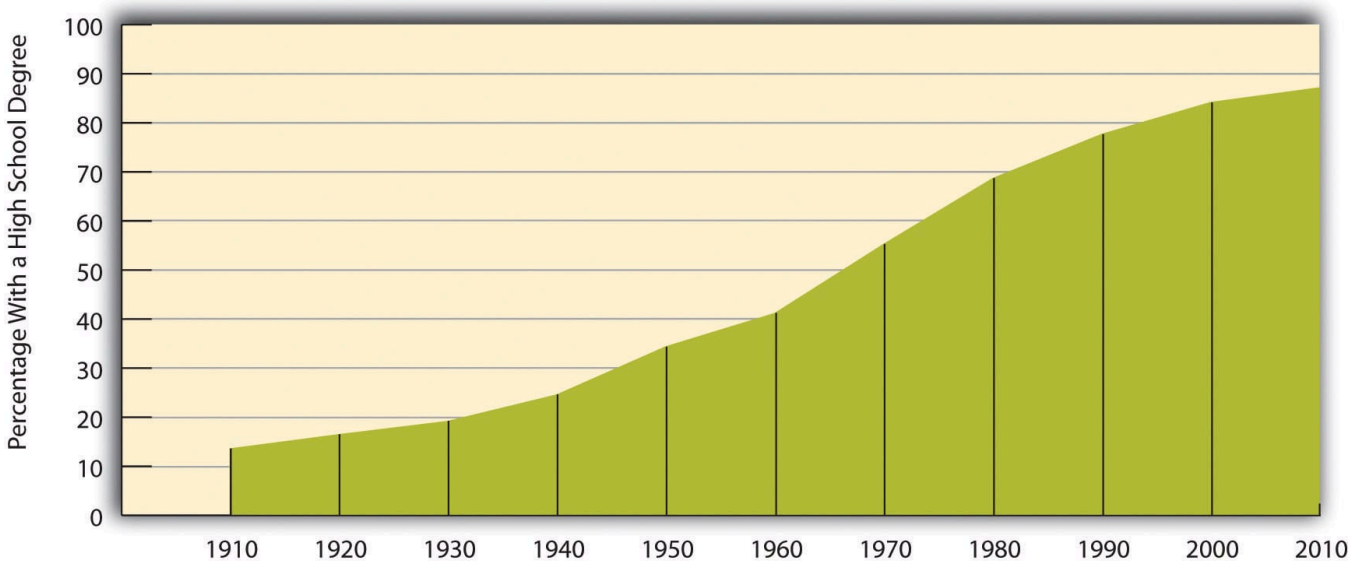


Figure 11.1.3.5: Percentage of Population 25 or Older With at Least a High School Degree, 1910–2010. Source: Data from Snyder, T. D., & Dillow, S. A. (2011). Digest of education statistics 2010. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

A credential society also means that people with more educational attainment achieve higher incomes. Annual earnings are indeed much higher for people with more education (Figure 11.1.3.6). As earlier chapters indicated, gender and race/ethnicity affect the payoff we get from our education, but education itself still makes a huge difference for our incomes.

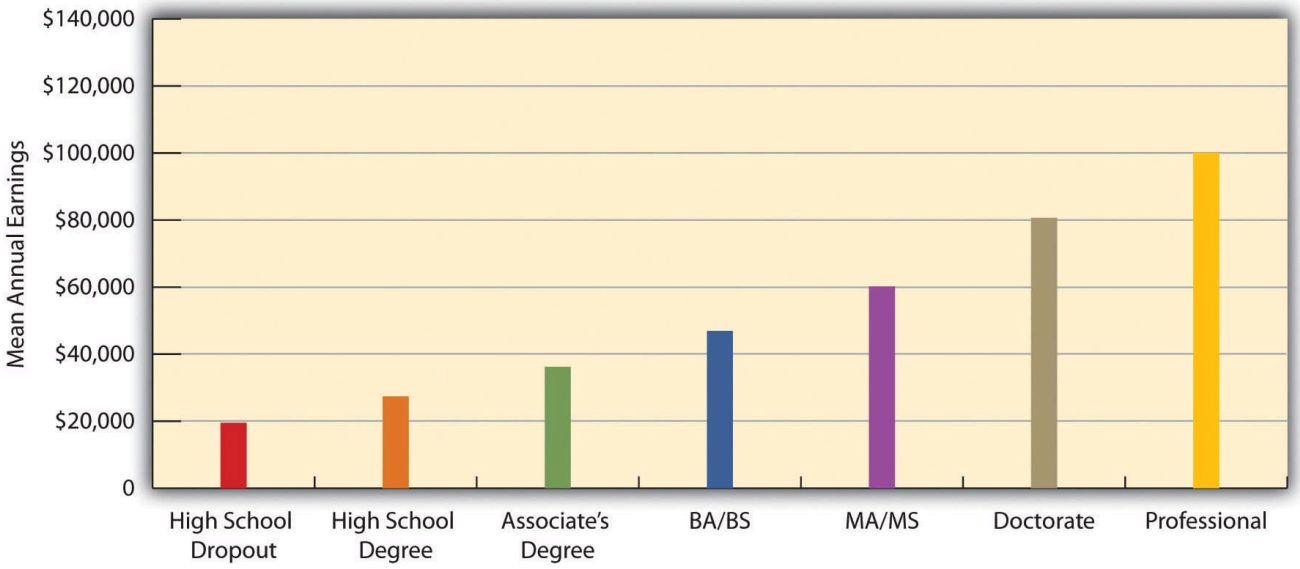


Figure 11.1.3.6: Educational Attainment and Mean Annual Earnings, 2009Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

The Difference Education Makes: Attitudes

Education also makes a difference for our attitudes. Researchers use different strategies to determine this effect. They compare adults with different levels of education; they compare college seniors with first-year college students; and sometimes they even study a group of students when they begin college and again when they are about to graduate. However they do so, they typically find that education leads us to be more tolerant and even approving of nontraditional beliefs and behaviors and less likely to hold various kinds of prejudices (McClelland & Linnander, 2006; Moore & Ovadia, 2006).McClelland, K., & Linnander, E. (2006). The role of contact and information in racial attitude change among white college students. *Sociological Inquiry, 76*(1), 81–115; Moore, L. M., & Ovadia, S. (2006). Accounting for spatial variation in tolerance: The effects of education and religion. *Social Forces, 84*(4),

2205–2222. Racial prejudice and sexism, two types of belief explored in previous chapters, all reduce with education. Education has these effects because the material we learn in classes and the experiences we undergo with greater schooling all teach us new things and challenge traditional ways of thinking and acting.

We see evidence of education's effect in Figure 11.1.3.7, which depicts the relationship in the General Social Survey between education and agreement with the statement that "it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." College-educated respondents are much less likely than those without a high school degree to agree with this statement.

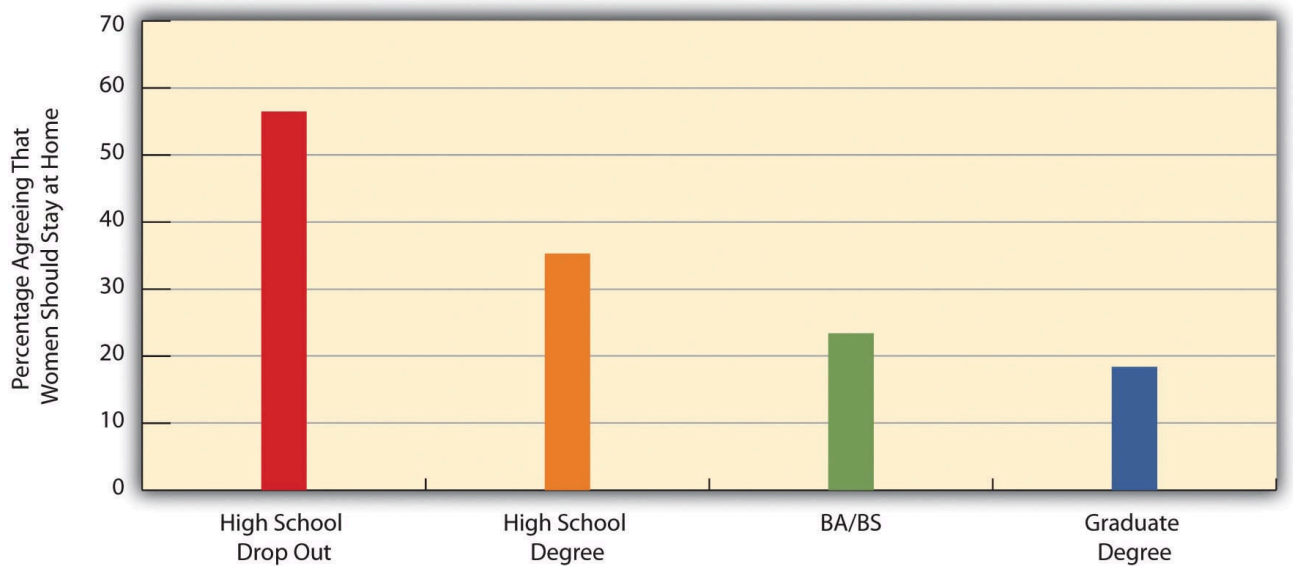


Figure 11.1.3.7: Education and Agreement That "It Is Much Better for Everyone Involved if the Man Is the Achiever Outside the Home and the Woman Takes Care of the Home and Family". Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

Conclusion

- Social class, race and ethnicity, and gender all influence the degree of educational attainment.
- Education has a significant impact both on income and on social and cultural attitudes. Higher levels of education are associated with higher incomes and with less conservative beliefs on social and cultural issues.

For Your Review

1. Do you think the government should take steps to try to reduce racial and ethnic differences in education, or do you think it should take a hands-off approach? Explain your answer.
2. Why do you think lower levels of education are associated with more conservative beliefs and social and cultural issues? What is it about education that often leads to less conservative beliefs on these issues?

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11.1.4: 10.3- Issues and Problems in Education

Learning Objectives

- Describe how schooling in the United States helps perpetuate social inequality.
- Explain the difference between de jure segregation and de facto segregation.
- Summarize the evidence on the effectiveness of single-sex education.
- Describe the extent of school violence and the controversy over zero-tolerance policies.

The education system today faces many issues and problems of interest not just to educators and families but also to sociologists and other social scientists. We cannot discuss all of these issues here, but we will highlight some of the most interesting and important.

Schools and Inequality

Earlier we mentioned that schools differ greatly in their funding, their conditions, and other aspects. Noted author and education critic Jonathan Kozol refers to these differences as "savage inequalities," to quote the title of one of his books (Kozol, 1991).Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York, NY: Crown. Kozol's concern over inequality in the schools stemmed from his experience as a young teacher in a public elementary school in a Boston inner-city neighborhood in the 1960s. Kozol was shocked to see that his school was literally falling apart. The physical plant was decrepit, with plaster falling off the walls and bathrooms and other facilities substandard. Classes were large, and the school was so overcrowded that Kozol's fourth-grade class had to meet in an auditorium, which it shared with another class, the school choir, and, for a time, a group of students practicing for the Christmas play. Kozol's observations led to the writing of his first, award-winning book, *Death at an Early Age* (Kozol, 1967).Kozol, J. (1967). *Death at an early age: The destruction of the hearts and minds of Negro children in the Boston public schools*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.



Figure 11.1.4.1: Jonathan Kozol has written movingly of "savage inequalities" in American schools arising from large differences in their funding and in the condition of their physical facilities. © Thinkstock

Kozol left this school after being fired for departing from the prescribed curriculum by teaching poems by Robert Frost and Langston Hughes to his fourth graders. He then taught in a wealthy school in one of Boston's suburbs, where his class had only 21 students. The conditions he saw there were far superior to those in his inner-city Boston school. "The shock of going from one of the poorest schools to one of the wealthiest cannot be overstated," he later wrote (Kozol, 1991, p. 2).Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York, NY: Crown.

During the late 1980s, Kozol (1991)Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York, NY: Crown. traveled around the country and systematically compared public schools in several cities' inner-city neighborhoods to those in the cities' suburbs. Everywhere he went, he found great discrepancies in school spending and in the quality of instruction. In schools in Camden, New Jersey, for example, spending per pupil was less than half the amount spent in the nearby, much wealthier town of Princeton. Chicago and New York City schools spent only about half the amount that some of their suburbs spent.

Learning From Other Societies

Successful Schooling in Denmark

Denmark's model for schooling from the earliest years up through high school offers several important lessons for U.S. education. The Danish model reflects that nation's strong belief that significant income inequality causes many problems and that it is the role of government to help the poorest members of society. This philosophy is seen in both the Danish approach to early childhood education and its approach to secondary schooling (Morrill, 2007).Morrill, R. (2007). Denmark: Lessons for American principals and teachers? In D. S. Eitzen (Ed.), *Solutions to social problems: Lessons from other societies* (pp. 125–130). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

In early childhood education, Denmark's policies also reflect its recognition of the importance of child cognitive and emotional development during the first few years of life, as well as its recognition to take special steps to help children of families living in poverty. Accordingly, along with several other Nordic and Western European nations, Denmark provides preschool and day care education for all children. According to one Danish scholar, "intervention in day-care/pre-school is considered the best way to give children a good beginning in life, particularly socially endangered children. [T]he dominant view is that the earlier children develop academic skills and knowledge the better, as these skills will enable them to participate in society on equal terms with children of the same age" (Jensen, 2009, p. 6).Jensen, B. (2009). A nordic approach to early childhood education (ECE) and socially endangered children. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 17*(1), 7–21.

Once students start elementary school, they join a class of about 20 students. Rather than being tracked (grouped by ability), students are simply assigned to a class with other children from their neighborhood. The class remains with the same "class teacher" from grades 1 through 9; this teacher instructs them in Danish language and literature. Other teachers teach them subjects such as arithmetic/mathematics, music, social studies, and science. Because the "class teacher" is with the students for so many years, they get to know each other very well, and the teacher and each child's parents also become very well acquainted. These rather close relationships help the teacher deal with any academic or behavioral problems that might occur. Because a class stays together for 9 years, the students develop close relationships with each other and a special sense of belonging to their class and to their school (Morrill, 2007).Morrill, R. (2007). Denmark: Lessons for American principals and teachers? In D. S. Eitzen (Ed.), *Solutions to social problems: Lessons from other societies* (pp. 125–130). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

The commitment to free or low-cost, high-quality early childhood education found in Denmark and many other Nordic and Western European nations is lacking in the United States, where parents who desire such education for their children usually must pay hundreds of dollars monthly. Many education scholars think the United States would do well to follow the example of these other nations in this regard. The interesting "class teacher" model in Denmark's lower grades seems to provide several advantages that the United States should also consider. In both these respects, the United States may have much to learn from Denmark's approach to how children should learn.

These numbers were reflected in other differences Kozol found when he visited city and suburban schools. In East St. Louis, Illinois, where most of the residents are poor and almost all are African American, schools had to shut down once because of sewage backups. The high school's science labs were 30 to 50 years out of date when Kozol visited them; the biology lab had no dissecting kits. A history teacher had 110 students but only 26 textbooks, some of which were missing their first 100 pages. At one of the city's junior high schools, many window frames lacked any glass, and the hallways were dark because light bulbs were missing or not working. Visitors could smell urinals 100 feet from the bathroom. When he visited an urban high school in New Jersey, Kozol found it had no showers for gym students, who had to wait 20 minutes to shoot one basketball because seven classes would use the school's gym at the same time.

Contrast these schools with those Kozol visited in suburbs. A high school in a Chicago suburb had seven gyms and an Olympic-size swimming pool. Students there could take classes in seven foreign languages. A suburban New Jersey high school offered 14 AP courses, fencing, golf, ice hockey, and lacrosse, and the school district there had 10 music teachers and an extensive music program.

From his observations, Kozol concluded that the United States is shortchanging its children in poor rural and urban areas. Poor

children start out in life with many strikes against them. The schools they attend compound their problems and help ensure that the American ideal of equal opportunity for all remains just that—an ideal—rather than reality. As Kozol (1991, p. 233)Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York, NY: Crown. observed, "All our children ought to be allowed a stake in the enormous richness of America. Whether they were born to poor white Appalachians or to wealthy Texans, to poor black people in the Bronx or to rich people in Manhasset or Winnetka, they are all quite wonderful and innocent when they are small. We soil them needlessly."

Although the book in which Kozol reported these conditions was published about 20 years ago, ample evidence indicates that little, if anything, has changed in the poor schools of the United States since then, with large funding differences continuing. In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, for example, annual per-pupil expenditure is about $9,000; in nearby Lower Merion Township, it is more than twice as high, at about $19,000. Just a few years ago, a news report discussed public schools in Washington, DC. More than 75% of the schools in the city had a leaking roof at the time the report was published, and 87% had electrical problems, some of which involved shocks or sparks. Most of the schools' cafeterias, 85%, had health violations, including peeling paint near food and rodent and roach infestation. Thousands of requests for building repairs, including 1,100 labeled "urgent" or "dangerous," had been waiting more than a year to be addressed. More than one-third of the schools had a mouse infestation, and in one elementary school, there were so many mice that the students gave them names and drew their pictures. An official with the city's school system said, "I don't know if anybody knows the magnitude of problems at D.C. public schools. It's mind-boggling" (Keating & Haynes, 2007, p. A1).Keating, D., & Haynes, V. D. (2007, June 10). Can D.C. schools be fixed? *The Washington Post*, p. A1.

Although it is widely assumed that school conditions like the ones in Washington, DC, and those depicted in Kozol's books impair student learning, there is surprisingly little research on this issue. Addressing this scholarly neglect, a recent study found that poor school conditions indeed impair learning, in part because they reduce students' attendance, which in turn impairs their learning (Durán-Narucki, 2008).Durán-Narucki, V. (2008). School building condition, school attendance, and academic achievement in New York City public schools: A mediation model. *Journal of Environmental Psychology, 28*(3), 278–286.

School Segregation

A related issue to inequality in the schools is school segregation. Before 1954, schools in the South were segregated by law (de jure segregation). Communities and states had laws that dictated which schools white children attended and which schools African American children attended. Schools were either all white or all African American, and, inevitably, white schools were much better funded than African American schools. Then in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed de jure school segregation in its famous *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. In this decision the Court explicitly overturned its earlier, 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which said that schools could be racially separate but equal. *Brown* rejected this conclusion as contrary to American egalitarian ideals and as also not supported by empirical evidence, which finds that segregated schools are indeed unequal. Southern school districts fought the *Brown* decision with legal machinations, and de jure school segregation did not really end in the South until the civil rights movement won its major victories a decade later.

Meanwhile, northern schools were also segregated and, in the years since the *Brown* decision, have become even more segregated. School segregation in the North stemmed, both then and now, not from the law but from neighborhood residential patterns. Because children usually go to schools near their homes, if adjacent neighborhoods are all white or all African American, then the schools children from these neighborhoods attend will also be all white or all African American, or mostly so. This type of segregation is called de facto segregation.

Today many children continue to go to schools that are segregated because of neighborhood residential patterns, a situation that Kozol (2005)Kozol, J. (2005). *The shame of the nation: The restoration of apartheid schooling in America*. New York, NY: Crown. calls "apartheid schooling." About 40% of African American and Latino children attend schools that are very segregated (at least 90% of their students are of color); this level of segregation is higher than it was four decades ago. Although such segregation is legal, it still results in schools that are all African American and/or all Latino and that suffer severely from lack of funding, poor physical facilities, and inadequate teachers (Orfield, 2009).Orfield, G. (2009). *Reviving the goal of an integrated society: A 21st century challenge*. Los Angeles: The Civil Rights Project, University of California at Los Angeles.

During the 1960s and 1970s, states, municipalities, and federal courts tried to reduce de facto segregation by busing urban African American children to suburban white schools and, less often, by busing white suburban children to African American urban schools. Busing inflamed passions as perhaps few other issues during those decades (Lukas, 1985).Lukas, J. A. (1985). *Common ground: A turbulent decade in the lives of three American families*. New York, NY: Knopf. White parents opposed it because they did not want their children bused to urban schools, where, they feared, the children would receive an inferior education and face risks to their safety. The racial prejudice that many white parents shared heightened their concerns over these issues. African

American parents were more likely to see the need for busing, but they, too, wondered about its merits, especially because it was their children who were bused most often and faced racial hostility when they entered formerly all-white schools.

As one possible solution to reduce school segregation, some cities have established *magnet schools*, schools for high-achieving students of all races to which the students and their families apply for admission (Davis, 2007).Davis, M. R. (2007). Magnet schools and diversity. *Education Week, 26*(18), 9. Although these schools do help some students whose families are poor and of color, their impact on school segregation has been minimal because the number of magnet schools is low and because they are open only to the very best students who, by definition, are also few in number. Some critics also say that magnet schools siphon needed resources from public school systems and that their reliance on standardized tests makes it difficult for African American and Latino students to gain admission.

School Vouchers and School Choice

Another issue involving schools today is s*chool choice*. In a school choice program, the government gives parents certificates, or vouchers, that they can use as tuition at private or parochial (religious) schools.

Advocates of school choice programs say they give poor parents an option for high-quality education they otherwise would not be able to afford. These programs, the advocates add, also help improve the public schools by forcing them to compete for students with their private and parochial counterparts. In order to keep a large number of parents from using vouchers to send their children to the latter schools, public schools have to upgrade their facilities, improve their instruction, and undertake other steps to make their brand of education an attractive alternative. In this way, school choice advocates argue, vouchers have a “competitive impact” that forces public schools to make themselves more attractive to prospective students (Walberg, 2007).Walberg, H. J. (2007). *School choice: The findings*. Washington, DC: Cato Institute.

Critics of school choice programs say they hurt the public schools by decreasing their enrollments and therefore their funding. Public schools do not have the money now to compete with private and parochial ones, and neither will they have the money to compete with them if vouchers become more widespread. Critics also worry that voucher programs will lead to a “brain drain” of the most academically motivated children and families from low-income schools (Caldas & Bankston, 2005).Caldas, S. J., & Bankston, C. L., III. (2005). *Forced to fail: The paradox of school desegregation*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Because school choice programs and school voucher systems are still relatively new, scholars have not yet had time to assess whether they improve the academic achievement of the students who attend them. Although some studies do find small improvements, methodological problems make it difficult to reach any firm conclusions at this point (DeLuca & Dayton, 2009).DeLuca, S., & Dayton, E. (2009). Switching social contexts: The effects of housing mobility and school choice programs on youth outcomes. *Annual Review of Sociology, 35*(1), 457–491. Although there is similarly little research on the impact of school choice programs on funding and other aspects of public school systems, some evidence does indicate a negative impact. In Milwaukee, for example, enrollment decline from the use of vouchers cost the school system $26 million in state aid during the 1990s, forcing a rise in property taxes to replace the lost funds. Because the students who left the Milwaukee school system came from most of its 157 public schools, only a few left any one school, diluting the voucher system’s competitive impact. Another city, Cleveland, also lost state aid in the late 1990s because of the use of vouchers, and there, too, the competitive impact was small. Thus, although school choice programs may give some families alternatives to public schools, they might not have the competitive impact on public schools that their advocates claim, and they may cost public school systems state aid (Cooper, 1999; Lewin, 1999).Cooper, K. J. (1999, June 25). Under vouchers, status quo rules. *The Washington Post,* p. A3; Lewin, T. (1999, March 27). Few clear lessons from nation’s first school-choice program. *The New York Times,* p. A10.

Single-Sex Schools and Classes

Before the late 1960s and early 1970s, many colleges and universities, including several highly selective campuses, were single-sex institutions. Since that time, almost all the male colleges and many of the female colleges have gone coed. A few women’s colleges still remain, as their administrators and alumnae say that women can achieve much more in a women’s college than in a coed institution. The issue of single-sex institutions has been more muted at the secondary school level, as most public schools have been coeducational since the advent of free, compulsory education during the 19th century. However, several private schools were single-sex ones from their outset, and many of these remain today. Still, the trend throughout the educational world was toward coeducation.



Figure 11.1.4.2: Single-sex schools and classes have become more popular for several reasons. The research so far indicates that single-sex education may be beneficial in certain respects for the students experiencing it. © Thinkstock

Since the 1990s, however, some education specialists and other observers have considered whether single-sex secondary schools, or at least single-sex classes, might make sense for girls or for boys; in response, single-sex classes and single-sex schools have arisen in at least 17 U.S. cities. The argument for single-sex learning for girls rests on the same reasons advanced by advocates for women's colleges: girls can do better academically, and perhaps especially in math and science classes, when they are by themselves. The argument for boys rests on a different set of reasons (Sax, 2009).Sax, L. (2009). *Boys adrift: The five factors driving the growing epidemic of unmotivated boys and underachieving young men*. New York, NY: Basic Books. Boys in classes with girls are more likely to act "macho" and thus to engage in disruptive behavior; in single-sex classes, boys thus behave better and are more committed to their studies. They also feel freer to exhibit an interest in music, the arts, and other subjects not usually thought of as "macho" topics. Furthermore, because the best students in coed schools are often girls, many boys tend to devalue academic success in coed settings and are more likely to value it in single-sex settings. Finally, in a boys-only setting, teachers can use examples and certain teaching techniques that boys may find especially interesting, such as the use of snakes to teach biology. To the extent that single-sex education may benefit boys for any of these reasons, these benefits are often thought to be highest for boys from families living in poverty or near poverty.

What does the research evidence say about the benefits of single-sex schooling? A recent review of several dozen studies concluded that the results of single-sex schooling are mixed overall but that there are slightly more favorable outcomes for single-sex schools compared to coeducational schools: "There is some support for the premise that single-sex schooling can be helpful, especially for certain outcomes related to academic achievement and more positive academic aspirations. For many outcomes, there is no evidence of either benefit or harm" (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).U.S. Department of Education. (2005). *Single-sex versus secondary schooling: A systematic review*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service, U.S. Department of Education. None of the studies involved random assignment of students to single-sex or coeducational schooling, and the review cautioned that firmer conclusions must await higher-quality research of this nature (which may be ideal in terms of the research process but difficult and perhaps impossible to perform in real life). Also, because all the studies involved high school students and a majority involved students in Catholic schools, the review called for additional studies of younger students and those in public schools.

School Violence

The issue of school violence won major headlines during the 1990s, when many children, teachers, and other individuals died in the nation's schools. From 1992 until 1999, 248 students, teachers, and other people died from violent acts (including suicide) on school property, during travel to and from school, or at a school-related event, for an average of about 35 violent deaths per year (Zuckoff, 1999).Zuckoff, M. (1999, May 21). Fear is spread around nation. *The Boston Globe,* p. A1. Against this backdrop, the infamous April 1999 school shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, where two students murdered 12 other students and one teacher before killing themselves, led to national soul-searching over the causes of teen and school violence and on possible ways to reduce it.

The murders in Littleton were so numerous and cold-blooded that they would have aroused national concern under any circumstances, but they also followed a string of other mass shootings at schools. In just a few examples, in December 1997 a student in a Kentucky high school shot and killed three students in a before-school prayer group. In March 1998 two middle school students in Arkansas pulled a fire alarm to evacuate their school and then shot and killed four students and one teacher as they emerged. Two months later an Oregon high school student killed his parents and then went to his school cafeteria, where he killed two students and wounded 22 others. Against this backdrop, Littleton seemed like the last straw. Within days, school after school across the nation installed metal detectors, located police at building entrances and in hallways, and began questioning or suspending students joking about committing violence. People everywhere wondered why the schools were becoming so violent and what could be done about it (Zuckoff, 1999).Zuckoff, M. (1999, May 21). Fear is spread around nation. *The Boston Globe,* p. A1.

Violence can obviously also happen on college and university campuses, although shootings are very rare. However, two recent examples illustrate that students and faculty are not immune from gun violence. In February 2010, Amy Bishop, a biology professor at the University of Alabama in Huntsville who had recently been denied tenure, allegedly shot and killed three faculty at a department meeting and wounded three others. Almost 3 years earlier, a student at Virginia Tech University went on a shooting rampage and killed 32 students and faculty before killing himself.

Sociology Making a Difference

School Bonding and Delinquency

As discussed in Chapter 5, the social control theory of delinquency assumes that weak social bonds to family, schools, and other social institutions help to promote juvenile delinquency. This theory was developed by sociologist Travis Hirschi (1969) Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of delinquency*. Berkeley: University of California Press. about four decades ago. Hirschi's emphasis on social bonds was inspired by the work of sociology founder Émile Durkheim, who more broadly emphasized the importance of strong ties to society for social cohesion and individual well-being.

Since the development of social bonding theory, most studies testing it have focused on family and school bonds. They generally support Hirschi's view that weak bonds to family and school help promote delinquency. One issue that has received less study is whether s*trong* bonds to school might help prevent delinquency by youths who otherwise might be at high risk for such behavior, for example, those who were born to a teenaged mother, who exhibited aggressive behavior during childhood, or who have delinquent friends.

A Canadian team of researchers examined this possibility with national data on youths studied from childhood to young adulthood (Sprott, Jenkins, & Doob, 2005).Sprott, J. B., Jenkins, J. M., & Doob, A. N. (2005). The importance of school: Protecting at-risk youth from early offending. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 3*(1), 59–77. They identified children aged 10–11 with various risk factors for antisocial behavior and measured how strongly bonded they felt to their schools, based on their responses to several questions (including how much they liked their school and how often they finish their homework). They also determined the extent of their delinquency at ages 12–13 based on the youths' responses to a series of questions. Confirming their hypothesis, the researchers found that high-risk children were less likely to be delinquent at ages 12–13 if they had strong school bonds at ages 10–11 than if they had weak bonds. The researchers concluded that strong school bonds help prevent delinquency even by high-risk children, and they further speculated that zero-tolerance policies (as discussed in the text) that lead to suspension or expulsion may ironically promote delinquency because they weaken school bonding for the children who leave school.

As should be clear, the body of research on school bonding and delinquency inspired by social control theory suggests that schools play an important role in whether students misbehave both inside and outside school. It also suggests that efforts to improve the nation's schools will also reduce delinquency because these efforts will almost certainly strengthen the bonds children feel to their schools. As social control theory is ultimately rooted in the work of Émile Durkheim, sociology is again making a difference.

Fortunately, school violence has declined during the past decade, as fewer students and other people have died at the nation's schools than during 1990s. As this trend indicates, the risk of school violence should not be exaggerated: statistically speaking, schools are very safe. Less than 1% of homicides involving school-age children take place in or near school. About 56 million students attend elementary and secondary schools. With about 17 student homicides a year, the chances are less than one in 3 million that a student will be killed at school. The annual rate of other serious violence (rape and sexual assault, aggravated assault, and robbery) is only three crimes per 100 students; although this is still three too many, it does indicate that 97% of students do not suffer these crimes. Bullying is a much more common problem, with about one-third of students reporting being bullied annually (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2010).National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

(2010). *Understanding school violence fact sheet*. Washington, DC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

To reduce school violence, many school districts have *zero-tolerance* policies involving weapons. These policies call for automatic suspension or expulsion of a student who has anything resembling a weapon for any reason. For better or worse, however, there have been many instances in which these policies have been applied too rigidly. In a recent example, a 6-year-old boy in Delaware excitedly took his new camping utensil—a combination of knife, fork, and spoon—from Cub Scouts to school to use at lunch. He was suspended for having a knife and ordered to spend 45 days in reform school. His mother said her son certainly posed no threat to anyone at school, but school officials replied that their policy had to be strictly enforced because it is difficult to determine who actually poses a threat from who does not (Urbina, 2009).Urbina, I. (2009, October 11). It's a fork, it's a spoon, it's a...weapon? *The New York Time*s, p. A1. In another case, a ninth grader took a knife and cigarette lighter away from a student who had used them to threaten a fellow classmate. The ninth grader was suspended for the rest of the school year for possessing a weapon, even though he obviously had them only because he was protecting his classmate. According to a news story about this case, the school's reaction was "vigilance to a fault" (Walker, 2010, p. A12).Walker, A. (2010, January 23). Vigilance to a fault. *The Boston Globe*, p. A12.

Ironically, one reason many school districts have very strict policies is to avoid the racial discrimination that was seen to occur in districts whose officials had more discretion in deciding which students needed to be suspended or expelled. In these districts, African American students with weapons or "near-weapons" were more likely than white students with the same objects to be punished in this manner. Regardless of the degree of discretion afforded officials in zero-tolerance policies, these policies have not been shown to be effective in reducing school violence and may actually raise rates of violence by the students who are suspended or expelled under these policies (Skiba & Rausch, 2006).Skiba, R. J., & Rausch, M. K. (2006). Zero tolerance, suspension, and expulsion: Questions of equity and effectiveness. In C. M. Evertson & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 1063–1089). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Conclusion

- Schools in America are unequal: they differ greatly in the extent in their funding, in the quality of their physical facilities, and in other respects. Jonathan Kozol calls these differences "savage inequalities."
- Single-sex education at the secondary level has become more popular. Preliminary evidence indicates that this form of education may be beneficial for several reasons, but more evidence on this issue is needed.
- Although school violence has declined since the 1990s, it continues to concern many Americans. Bullying at school is a common problem and can lead to more serious violence by the children who are bullied.

For Your Review

1. If you were the principal of a middle school, would you favor or oppose single-sex classes? Explain your answer.
2. If you were the principal of a middle school, what steps would you take to reduce bullying?

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11.1.5: 10.4- Religion

Learning Objectives

- Describe key developments in the history of religion since ancient times.
- List the major religions in the world today.
- Summarize the major functions of religion.
- Explain the views of religion held by the conflict and symbolic interactionist perspectives.
- Understand the differences among the major types of religious organizations.

Religion is the set of beliefs and practices regarding sacred things that help a society understand the meaning and purpose of life. Émile Durkheim (1915/1947)Durkheim, E. (1947). *The elementary forms of religious life* (J. Swain, Trans.). Glencoe, IL: Free Press. (Original work published 1915)observed long ago that every society has beliefs about things that are supernatural and awe-inspiring and beliefs about things that are more practical and down-to-earth. He called the former beliefs sacred beliefs and the latter beliefs profane beliefs. Religious beliefs and practices involve the sacred: they involve things our senses cannot readily observe, and they involve things that inspire in us awe, reverence, and even fear.

Durkheim did not try to prove or disprove religious beliefs. Religion, he acknowledged, is a matter of faith, and faith is not provable or disprovable through scientific inquiry. Rather, Durkheim tried to understand the role played by religion in social life and the impact on religion of social structure and social change. In short, he treated religion as a social institution.

Sociologists since his time have treated religion in the same way. Anthropologists, historians, and other scholars have also studied religion. The remainder of this chapter reviews what we know about religion as a social institution and the role it plays in American life.

A Brief History of Religion

Every known society has practiced religion, although the nature of religious belief and practice has differed from one society to the next. Prehistoric people turned to religion to help them understand birth, death, and natural events such as hurricanes. They also relied on religion for help in dealing with their daily needs for existence: good weather, a good crop, an abundance of animals to hunt (Noss & Grangaard, 2008).Noss, D. S., & Grangaard, B. R. (2008). *A history of the world's religions*(12th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Although the world's most popular religions today are *monotheistic* (believing in one god), many societies in ancient times, most notably Egypt, Greece, and Rome, were *polytheistic* (believing in more than one god). You have been familiar with their names since childhood: Aphrodite, Apollo, Athena, Mars, Zeus, and many others. Each god "specialized" in one area; Aphrodite, for example, was the Greek goddess of love, while Mars was the Roman god of war (Noss & Grangaard, 2008).Noss, D. S., & Grangaard, B. R. (2008). *A history of the world's religions* (12th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.



Figure 11.1.5.1: Ancient Greece and Rome were polytheistic, as they believed in many gods. Thes statues depict Aphrodite (Goddess of beauty, love, desire, and pleasure), Zeus (king of Gods), Hermes (God of boundaries, travel, communication, trade, language, thieves and writing) and Ares (God of war, bloodshed, and violence) in Greek mythology.

During the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church dominated European life. The Church's control began to weaken with the Protestant Reformation, which began in 1517 when Martin Luther, a German monk, spoke out against Church practices. By the end of the century, Protestantism had taken hold in much of Europe. Another founder of sociology, Max Weber, argued a century ago that the rise of Protestantism in turn led to the rise of capitalism. In his great book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber wrote that Protestant belief in the need for hard work and economic success as a sign of eternal salvation helped lead to the rise of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution (Weber, 1904/1958).Weber, M. (1958). *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (T. Parsons, Trans.). New York, NY: Scribner. (Original work published 1904)Although some scholars challenge Weber's views for several reasons, including the fact that capitalism also developed among non-Protestants, his analysis remains a compelling treatment of the relationship between religion and society.

Moving from Europe to the United States, historians have documented the importance of religion since the colonial period. Many colonists came to the new land to escape religious persecution in their home countries. The colonists were generally very religious, and their beliefs guided their daily lives and, in many cases, the operation of their governments and other institutions. In essence, government and religion were virtually the same entity in many locations, and church and state were not separate. Church officials performed many of the duties that the government performs today, and the church was not only a place of worship but also a community center in most of the colonies (Gaustad & Schmidt, 2004).Gaustad, E. S., & Schmidt, L. E. (2004). *The religious history of America*. San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco. The Puritans of what came to be Massachusetts refused to accept religious beliefs and practices different from their own and persecuted people with different religious views. They expelled Anne Hutchinson in 1637 for disagreeing with the beliefs of the Puritans' Congregational Church and hanged Mary Dyer in 1660 for practicing her Quaker faith.

Key World Religions Today

Today the world's largest religion is Christianity, to which more than 2 billion people, or about one-third the world's population, subscribe. Christianity began 2,000 years ago in Palestine under the charismatic influence of Jesus of Nazareth and today is a Western religion, as most Christians live in the Americas and in Europe. Beginning as a cult, Christianity spread through the Mediterranean and later through Europe before becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire. Today, dozens of Christian denominations exist in the United States and other nations. Their views differ in many respects, but generally they all regard Jesus as the son of God, and many believe that salvation awaits them if they follow his example (Young, 2010).Young, W. A. (2010). *The world's religions: Worldviews and contemporary issues* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

The second largest religion is Islam, which includes about 1.6 billion Muslims, most of them in the Middle East, northern Africa, and parts of Asia. Muhammad founded Islam in the 600s A.D. and is regarded today as a prophet who was a descendant of Abraham. Whereas the sacred book of Christianity and Judaism is the Bible, the sacred book of Islam is the Koran. The Five Pillars of Islam guide Muslim life: (a) the acceptance of Allah as God and Muhammad as his messenger; (b) ritual worship, including

daily prayers facing Mecca, the birthplace of Muhammad; (c) observing Ramadan, a month of prayer and fasting; (d) giving alms to the poor; and (e) making a holy pilgrimage to Mecca at least once before one dies.

The third largest religion is Hinduism, which includes more than 800 million people, most of whom live in India and Pakistan. Hinduism began about 2000 B.C. and, unlike Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, has no historic linkage to any one person and no real belief in one omnipotent deity. Hindus live instead according to a set of religious precepts called *dharma*. For these reasons Hinduism is often called an *ethical religion*. Hindus believe in reincarnation, and their religious belief in general is closely related to India's caste system (see Chapter 6), as an important aspect of Hindu belief is that one should live according to the rules of one's caste.

Buddhism is another key religion and claims almost 400 million followers, most of whom live in Asia. Buddhism developed out of Hinduism and was founded by Siddhartha Gautama more than 500 years before the birth of Jesus. Siddhartha is said to have given up a comfortable upper-caste Hindu existence for one of wandering and poverty. He eventually achieved enlightenment and acquired the name of Buddha, or "enlightened one." His teachings are now called the *dhamma*, and over the centuries they have influenced Buddhists to lead a moral life. Like Hindus, Buddhists generally believe in reincarnation, and they also believe that people experience suffering unless they give up material concerns and follow other Buddhist principles.

Another key religion is Judaism, which claims more than 13 million adherents throughout the world, most of them in Israel and the United States. Judaism began about 4,000 years ago when, according to tradition, Abraham was chosen by God to become the progenitor of his "chosen people," first called Hebrews or Israelites and now called Jews. The Jewish people have been persecuted throughout their history, with anti-Semitism having its ugliest manifestation during the Holocaust of the 1940s, when 6 million Jews died at the hands of the Nazis. One of the first monotheistic religions, Judaism relies heavily on the *Torah*, which is the first five books of the Bible, and the *Talmud* and the *Mishnah*, both collections of religious laws and ancient rabbinical interpretations of these laws. The three main Jewish dominations are the Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform branches, listed in order from the most traditional to the least traditional. Orthodox Jews take the Bible very literally and closely follow the teachings and rules of the *Torah*, *Talmud*, and *Mishnah*, while Reform Jews think the Bible is mainly a historical document and do not follow many traditional Jewish practices. Conservative Jews fall in between these two branches.

A final key religion in the world today is Confucianism, which reigned in China for centuries but was officially abolished in 1949 after the Chinese Revolution ended in Communist control. People who practice Confucianism today do so secretly, and its number of adherents is estimated at some 5 or 6 million. Confucianism was founded by K'ung Fu-tzu, from whom it gets its name, about 500 years before the birth of Jesus. His teachings, which were compiled in a book called the *Analects*, were essentially a code of moral conduct involving self-discipline, respect for authority and tradition, and the kind treatment of everyone. Despite the official abolition of Confucianism, its principles continue to be important for Chinese family and cultural life.

As this overview indicates, religion takes many forms in different societies. No matter what shape it takes, however, religion has important consequences. These consequences can be both good and bad for the society and the individuals in it. Sociological perspectives expand on these consequences, and we now turn to them.

Sociological Perspectives on Religion

Sociological perspectives on religion are similar to those on education in that they try to understand the functions religion serves, the inequality and other problems it can reinforce and perpetuate, and the role it plays in our daily lives (Emerson, Monahan, & Mirola, 2011).Emerson, M. O., Monahan, S. C., & Mirola, W. A. (2011). *Religion matters: What sociology teaches us about religion in our world*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Table 11.1.5.1 summarizes what these perspectives say.

Table 11.1.5.1*: Theory Snapshot*

Theoretical perspective	Major assumptions
Functionalism	Religion serves several functions for society. These include (a) giving meaning and purpose to life, (b) reinforcing social unity and stability, (c) serving as an agent of social control of behavior, (d) promoting physical and psychological well-being, and (e) motivating people to work for positive social change.
Conflict theory	Religion reinforces and promotes social inequality and social conflict. It helps to convince the poor to accept their lot in life, and it leads to hostility and violence motivated by religious differences.

Theoretical perspective	Major assumptions
Symbolic interactionism	This perspective focuses on the ways in which individuals interpret their religious experiences. It emphasizes that beliefs and practices are not sacred unless people regard them as such. Once they are regarded as sacred, they take on special significance and give meaning to people's lives.

The Functions of Religion

Much of the work of Émile Durkheim stressed the functions that religion serves for society regardless of how it is practiced or of what specific religious beliefs a society favors. Durkheim's insights continue to influence sociological thinking today on the functions of religion.

First, religion *gives meaning and purpose to life*. Many things in life are difficult to understand. That was certainly true, as we have seen, in prehistoric times, but even in today's highly scientific age, much of life and death remains a mystery, and religious faith and belief help many people make sense of the things science cannot tell us.

Second, religion *reinforces social unity and stability*. This was one of Durkheim's most important insights. Religion strengthens social stability in at least two ways. First, it gives people a common set of beliefs and thus is an important agent of socialization (see Chapter 3). Second, the communal practice of religion, as in houses of worship, brings people together physically, facilitates their communication and other social interaction, and thus strengthens their social bonds.



Figure 11.1.5.2: The communal practice of religion in a house of worship brings people together and allows them to interact and communicate. In this way religion helps to reinforce social unity and stability. This function of religion was one of Émile Durkheim's most important insights.
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A third function of religion is related to the one just discussed. Religion *is an agent of social control and thus strengthens social order*. Religion teaches people moral behavior and thus helps them learn how to be good members of society. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Ten Commandments are perhaps the most famous set of rules for moral behavior.

A fourth function of religion is *greater psychological and physical well-being*. Religious faith and practice can enhance psychological well-being by being a source of comfort to people in times of distress and by enhancing their social interaction with others in places of worship. Many studies find that people of all ages, not just the elderly, are happier and more satisfied with their lives if they are religious. Religiosity also apparently promotes better physical health, and some studies even find that religious people tend to live longer than those who are not religious (Moberg, 2008).Moberg, D. O. (2008). Spirituality and aging: Research and implications. *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging, 20*, 95–134.We return to this function later.

A final function of religion is that it may *motivate people to work for positive social change*. Religion played a central role in the development of the Southern civil rights movement a few decades ago. Religious beliefs motivated Martin Luther King Jr. and

other civil rights activists to risk their lives to desegregate the South. Black churches in the South also served as settings in which the civil rights movement held meetings, recruited new members, and raised money (Morris, 1984).Morris, A. (1984). *The origins of the civil rights movement: Black communities organizing for change*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Religion, Inequality, and Conflict

Religion has all of these benefits, but, according to conflict theory, it can also reinforce and promote social inequality and social conflict. This view is partly inspired by the work of Karl Marx, who said that religion was the "opiate of the masses" (Marx, 1964).Marx, K. (1964). *Karl Marx: Selected writings in sociology and social philosophy* (T. B. Bottomore, Trans.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.By this he meant that religion, like a drug, makes people happy with their existing conditions. Marx repeatedly stressed that workers needed to rise up and overthrow the bourgeoisie. To do so, he said, they needed first to recognize that their poverty stemmed from their oppression by the bourgeoisie. But people who are religious, he said, tend to view their poverty in religious terms. They think it is God's will that they are poor, either because he is testing their faith in him or because they have violated his rules. Many people believe that if they endure their suffering, they will be rewarded in the afterlife. Their religious views lead them not to blame the capitalist class for their poverty and thus not to revolt. For these reasons, said Marx, religion leads the poor to accept their fate and helps to maintain the existing system of social inequality.

As Chapter 8 discussed, religion also promotes gender inequality by presenting negative stereotypes about women and by reinforcing traditional views about their subordination to men (Klassen, 2009).Klassen, P. (Ed.). (2009). *Women and religion*. New York, NY: Routledge. A declaration a decade ago by the Southern Baptist Convention that a wife should "submit herself graciously" to her husband's leadership reflected traditional religious belief (Gundy-Volf, 1998).Gundy-Volf, J. (1998, September–October). Neither biblical nor just: Southern Baptists and the subordination of women. *Sojourners,* 12–13.

As the Puritans' persecution of non-Puritans illustrates, religion can also promote social conflict, and the history of the world shows that individual people and whole communities and nations are quite ready to persecute, kill, and go to war over religious differences. We see this today and in the recent past in central Europe, the Middle East, and Northern Ireland. Jews and other religious groups have been persecuted and killed since ancient times. Religion can be the source of social unity and cohesion, but over the centuries it also has led to persecution, torture, and wanton bloodshed.

News reports going back since the 1990s indicate a final problem that religion can cause, and that is sexual abuse, at least in the Catholic Church. As you undoubtedly have heard, an unknown number of children were sexually abused by Catholic priests and deacons in the United States, Canada, and many other nations going back at least to the 1960s. There is much evidence that the Church hierarchy did little or nothing to stop the abuse or to sanction the offenders who were committing it, and that they did not report it to law enforcement agencies. Various divisions of the Church have paid tens of millions of dollars to settle lawsuits. The numbers of priests, deacons, and children involved will almost certainly never be known, but it is estimated that at least 4,400 priests and deacons in the United States, or about 4% of all such officials, have been accused of sexual abuse, although fewer than 2,000 had the allegations against them proven (Terry & Smith, 2006).Terry, K., & Smith, M. L. (2006). *The nature and scope of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests and deacons in the United States: Suppelmentary data analysis*. Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Given these estimates, the number of children who were abused probably runs into the thousands.

Symbolic Interactionism and Religion

While functional and conflict theories look at the macro aspects of religion and society, symbolic interactionism looks at the micro aspects. It examines the role that religion plays in our daily lives and the ways in which we interpret religious experiences. For example, it emphasizes that beliefs and practices are not sacred unless people regard them as such. Once we regard them as sacred, they take on special significance and give meaning to our lives. Symbolic interactionists study the ways in which people practice their faith and interact in houses of worship and other religious settings, and they study how and why religious faith and practice have positive consequences for individual psychological and physical well-being.

Religious symbols indicate the value of the symbolic interactionist approach. A crescent moon and a star are just two shapes in the sky, but together they constitute the international symbol of Islam. A cross is merely two lines or bars in the shape of a "t," but to tens of millions of Christians it is a symbol with deeply religious significance. A Star of David consists of two superimposed triangles in the shape of a six-pointed star, but to Jews around the world it is a sign of their religious faith and a reminder of their history of persecution.

Religious rituals and ceremonies also illustrate the symbolic interactionist approach. They can be deeply intense and can involve crying, laughing, screaming, trancelike conditions, a feeling of oneness with those around you, and other emotional and

psychological states. For many people they can be transformative experiences, while for others they are not transformative but are deeply moving nonetheless.

Types of Religious Organizations

Many types of religious organizations exist in modern societies. Sociologists usually group them according to their size and influence. Categorized this way, three types of religious organizations exist: church, sect, and cult (Emerson et al., 2011).Emerson, M. O., Monahan, S. C., & Mirola, W. A. (2011). *Religion matters: What sociology teaches us about religion in our world*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. A church further has two subtypes: the ecclesia and denomination. We first discuss the largest and most influential of the types of religious organization, the ecclesia, and work our way down to the smallest and least influential, the cult.

Church: The Ecclesia and Denomination

A church is a large, bureaucratically organized religious organization that is closely integrated into the larger society. Two types of church organizations exist. The first is the ecclesia, a large, bureaucratic religious organization that is a formal part of the state and has most or all of a state's citizens as its members. As such, the ecclesia is the national or state religion. People ordinarily do not join an ecclesia; instead they automatically become members when they are born. A few ecclesiae exist in the world today, including Islam in Saudi Arabia and some other Middle Eastern nations, the Catholic Church in Spain, the Lutheran Church in Sweden, and the Anglican Church in England.

As should be clear, in an ecclesiastic society there may be little separation of church and state, because the ecclesia and the state are so intertwined. In some ecclesiastic societies, such as those in the Middle East, religious leaders rule the state or have much influence over it, while in others, such as Sweden and England, they have little or no influence. In general the close ties that ecclesiae have to the state help ensure they will support state policies and practices. For this reason, ecclesiae often help the state solidify its control over the populace.

The second type of church organization is the denomination, a large, bureaucratic religious organization that is closely integrated into the larger society but is not a formal part of the state. In modern pluralistic nations, several denominations coexist. Most people are members of a specific denomination because their parents were members. They are born into a denomination and generally consider themselves members of it the rest of their lives, whether or not they actively practice their faith, unless they convert to another denomination or abandon religion altogether.

The Megachurch

A relatively recent development in religious organizations is the rise of the so-called *megachurch*, a church at which more than 2,000 people worship every weekend on the average. Several dozen have at least 10,000 worshippers (Priest, Wilson, & Johnson, 2010; Warf & Winsberg, 2010);Priest, R. J., Wilson, D., & Johnson, A. (2010). U.S. megachurches and new patterns of global mission. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research, 34*(2), 97–104; Warf, B., & Winsberg, M. (2010). Geographies of megachurches in the United States. *Journal of Cultural Geography, 27*(1), 33–51. the largest U.S. megachurch, in Houston, has more than 35,000 worshippers and is nicknamed a "gigachurch." There are more than 1,300 megachurches in the United States, a steep increase from the 50 that existed in 1970, and their total membership exceeds 4 million. About half of today's megachurches are in the South, and only 5% are in the Northeast. About one-third are nondenominational, and one-fifth are Southern Baptist, with the remainder primarily of other Protestant denominations. A third spend more than 10% of their budget on ministry on other nations. Some have a strong television presence, with Americans in the local area or sometimes around the country watching services and/or preaching by televangelists and providing financial contributions in response to information presented on the television screen.

Compared to traditional, smaller churches, megachurches are more concerned with meeting their members' practical needs in addition to helping them achieve religious fulfillment. Some even conduct market surveys to determine these needs and how best to address them. As might be expected, their buildings are huge by any standard, and they often feature bookstores, food courts, and sports and recreation facilities. They also provide day care, psychological counseling, and youth outreach programs. Their services often feature electronic music and light shows.

Although megachurches are obviously popular, they have been criticized for being so big that members are unable to develop the close bonds with each other and with members of the clergy characteristic of smaller houses of worship. Their supporters say that megachurches involve many people in religion who would otherwise not be involved.

Sects

A sect is a relatively small religious organization that is not closely integrated within the larger society and that often conflicts with at least some of its norms and values. Typically a sect has broken away from a larger denomination in an effort to restore what members of the sect regard as the original views of the denomination. Because sects are relatively small, they usually lack the bureaucracy of denominations and ecclesiae and often also lack clergy who have received official training. Their worship services can be intensely emotional experiences, often more so than those typical of many denominations, where worship tends to be more formal and restrained. Members of many sects typically proselytize and try to recruit new members into the sect. If a sect succeeds in attracting many new members, it gradually grows, becomes more bureaucratic, and, ironically, eventually evolves into a denomination. Many of today's Protestant denominations began as sects, as did the Mennonites, Quakers, and other groups. The Amish in the United States are perhaps the most well-known example of a current sect.



Figure 11.1.5.3: The Amish, who live in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and many other states, are perhaps the most well-known example of a sect in the United States today.© Thinkstock

Cults

A cult is a small religious organization that is at great odds with the norms and values of the larger society. Cults are similar to sects but differ in at least three respects. First, they generally have not broken away from a larger denomination and instead originate outside the mainstream religious tradition. Second, they are often secretive and do not proselytize as much. Third, they are at least somewhat more likely than sects to rely on *charismatic leadership* based on the extraordinary personal qualities of the cult's leader.

Although the term *cult* today raises negative images of crazy, violent, small groups of people, it is important to keep in mind that major world religions, including Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, and denominations such as the Mormons all began as cults. Research challenges several popular beliefs about cults, including the ideas that they brainwash people into joining them and that their members are mentally ill. In a study of the Unification Church (Moonies), Eileen Barker (1984) Barker, E. (1984). *The making of a moonie: Choice or brainwashing*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.found no more signs of mental illness among people who joined the Moonies than in those who did not. She also found no evidence that people who joined the Moonies had been brainwashed into doing so.

Another image of cults is that they are violent. In fact, most are not violent. However, some cults have committed violence in the recent past. In 1995 the *Aum Shinrikyo* (Supreme Truth) cult in Japan killed 10 people and injured thousands more when it released bombs of deadly nerve gas in several Tokyo subway lines (Strasser & Post, 1995).Strasser, S., & Post, T. (1995, April 3). A cloud of terror—and suspicion. *Newsweek,* p. 36–41. Two years earlier, the Branch Davidian cult engaged in an armed standoff with federal agents in Waco, Texas. When the agents attacked its compound, a fire broke out and killed 80 members of the cult, including 19 children; the origin of the fire remains unknown (Tabor & Gallagher, 1995).Tabor, J. D., & Gallagher, E. V. (1995). *Why Waco? Cults and the battle for religious freedom in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press. A few cults have also committed mass suicide. In another example from the 1990s, more than three dozen members of the Heaven's

Gate killed themselves in California in March 1997 in an effort to communicate with aliens from outer space (Hoffman & Burke, 1997).Hoffman, B., & Burke, K. (1997). *Heaven's Gate: Cult suicide in San Diego*. New York, NY: Harper Paperbacks. Some two decades earlier, more than 900 members of the People's Temple cult killed themselves in Guyana under orders from the cult's leader, Jim Jones (Stoen, 1997).Stoen, T. (1997, April 7). The most horrible night of my life. *Newsweek,* p. 44–45.

Conclusion

- Every known society has practiced religion. Ancient Greece and Rome were polytheistic, while in the Middle Ages the Catholic Church was the dominant religious force in Europe.
- The major religions in the world today are Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Confucianism.
- Religion ideally serves several functions. It gives meaning and purpose to life, reinforces social unity and stability, serves as an agent of social control, promotes psychological and physical well-being, and may motivate people to work for positive social change.
- On the other hand, religion may help keep poor people happy with their lot in life, promote traditional views about gender roles, and engender intolerance toward people whose religious faith differs from one's own.
- The three major types of religious organizations are the church, sect, and cult. The two types of churches are the ecclesia and the denomination.

For Your Review

1. Describe the assumptions of the functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist approaches of religion.
2. Write a brief essay in which you indicate which of these three approaches you most favor and state the reasons for your choice.

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11.1.6: 10.5- Religion in the United States

Learning Objectives

- Describe the extent and correlates of religious affiliation.
- Explain the different dimensions of religiosity.

In many ways, the United States is a religious nation, although it is not more religious than many other nations. In a 2002 international survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, 59% of Americans said that religion is “very important” in their lives, a figure that ranked the United States 29th out of 42 nations. In a 2007 Pew survey conducted in the United States, about 83% of Americans expressed a religious preference, 61% were official members of a local house of worship, and 39% attended religious services at least weekly (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008).Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. (2008). *U.S. religious landscape survey*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Religious Affiliation and Religious Identification

Let’s look at religious affiliation a bit more closely. *Religious affiliation* is a term that can mean actual membership in a church or synagogue, or just a stated *identification* with a particular religion, whether or not someone actually is a member of a church or synagogue. As the figures just listed indicate, more people identify with a religion than actually belong to it. Another term for religious affiliation is *religious preference*.

The 2007 Pew survey included some excellent data on religious identification (Figure 11.1.6.1). Slightly more than half the public say their religious preference is Protestant, while about 24% call themselves Catholic. Almost 2% say they are Jewish, while 6% state another religious preference and 16% say they have no religious preference. Although Protestants are thus a majority of the country, the Protestant religion includes several denominations. About 34% of Protestants are Baptists; 12% are Methodists; 9% are Lutherans; 9% are Pentecostals; 5% are Presbyterians; and 3% are Episcopalians. The remainder identify with other Protestant denominations or say their faith is nondenominational. Based on their religious beliefs, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists are typically grouped together as Liberal Protestants; Methodists, Lutherans, and a few other denominations as Moderate Protestants; and Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and many other denominations as Conservative Protestants.

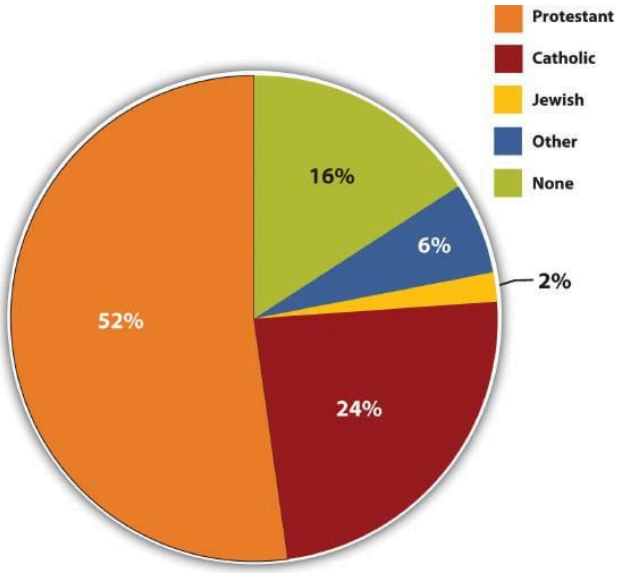


Figure 11.1.6.1: Religious Preference in the United States. Source: Data from Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. (2008). U.S. religious landscape survey. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Correlates of Religious Affiliation

The religious affiliations just listed differ widely in the nature of their religious belief and practice, but they also differ in demographic variables of interest to sociologists (Finke & Stark, 2005).Finke, R., & Stark, R. (2005). *The churching of America: Winners and losers in our religious economy* (2nd ed.). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. For example, Liberal Protestants tend to live in the Northeast and to be well educated and relatively wealthy, while Conservative Protestants tend to live in the South and to be less educated and working-class. In their education and incomes, Catholics and Moderate Protestants fall in between these two groups. Like Liberal Protestants, Jews also tend to be well educated and relatively wealthy.



Figure 11.1.6.2: Race and ethnicity are related to religious affiliation. African Americans are overwhelmingly Protestant, for example, while Latinos are primarily Catholic. © Thinkstock

Race and ethnicity are also related to religious affiliation. African Americans are overwhelmingly Protestant, usually Conservative Protestants (Baptists), while Latinos are primarily Catholic. Asian Americans and Native Americans tend to hold religious preferences other than Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish.

Age is yet another factor related to religious affiliation, as older people are more likely than younger people to belong to a church or synagogue. As young people marry and "put roots down," their religious affiliation increases, partly because many wish to expose their children to a religious education. In the Pew survey, 25% of people aged 18–29 expressed no religious preference, compared to only 8% of those 70 or older.

Religiosity

People can belong to a church, synagogue, or mosque or claim a religious preference, but that does not necessarily mean they are very religious. For this reason, sociologists consider religiosity, or the significance of religion in a person's life, an important topic of investigation.

Religiosity has a simple definition but actually is a very complex topic. What if someone prays every day but does not attend religious services? What if someone attends religious services but never prays at home and does not claim to be very religious? Someone can pray and read a book of scriptures daily, while someone else can read a book of scriptures daily but pray only sometimes. As these possibilities indicate, a person can be religious in some ways but not in other ways.

For this reason, religiosity is best conceived of as a concept involving several dimensions: experiential, ritualistic, ideological, intellectual, and consequential (Stark & Glock, 1968).Stark, R., & Glock, C. Y. (1968). *Patterns of religious commitment*. Berkeley: University of California Press.*Experiential* religiosity refers to how important people consider religion to be in their lives. *Ritualistic* religiosity refers to the extent of their involvement in prayer, reading a book of scriptures, and attendance at a house of worship. *Ideological* religiosity involves the degree to which people accept religious doctrine and includes the nature of their belief in a deity, while *intellectual* religiosity concerns the extent of their knowledge of their religion's history and teachings. Finally, *consequential* religiosity refers to the extent to which religion affects their daily behavior.

National data on prayer are perhaps especially interesting (see Figure 11.1.6.3), as prayer occurs both with others and by oneself. Almost 60% of Americans say they pray at least once daily outside of religious services, and only 7% say they never pray (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008).Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. (2008). *U.S. religious landscape survey*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Daily praying is more common among older people than younger people.

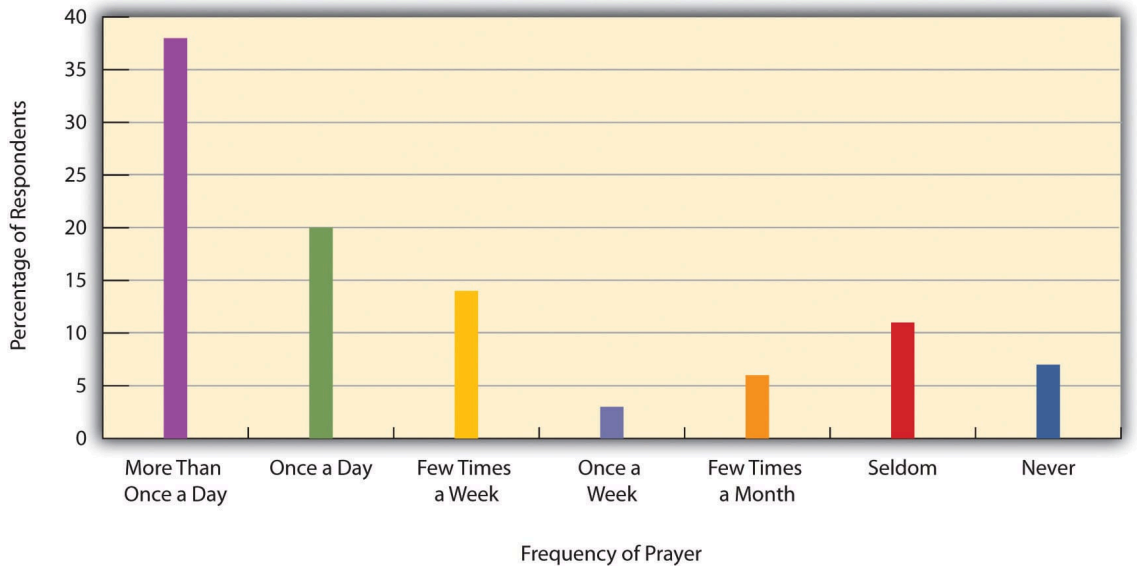


Figure 11.1.6.3: Frequency of Prayer. Source: Data from Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. (2008). U.S. religious landscape survey. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

When we try to determine why some people are more religious than others, we are treating religiosity as a *dependent variable*. But religiosity itself can also be an *independent variable*, as it affects attitudes on a wide range of social, political, and moral issues. Generally speaking, the more religious people are, the more conservative their attitudes in these areas (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009).Adamczyk, A., & Pitt, C. (2009). Shaping attitudes about homosexuality: The role of religion and cultural context. *Social Science Research, 38*(2), 338–351. An example of this relationship appears in Table 11.1.6.1, which shows that people who pray daily are *much* more opposed to homosexual sex. The relationship in the table once again provides clear evidence of the sociological perspective's emphasis on the importance of social backgrounds for attitudes.

Table 11.1.6.1: Frequency of Prayer and Belief That Homosexual Sex Is "Always Wrong. "Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010

	Several times a day	Once a day	Several times a week	Once a week	Less than once a week	Never
Percentage saying "always wrong"	65.2	49.5	40.8	43.3	34.0	17.0

Religiosity and College Students

The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles, conducted a national longitudinal survey during the last decade of college students' religiosity and religious beliefs (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2010).Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., & Lindholm, J. A. (2010). *Cultivating the spirit: How college can enhance students' inner lives*. Hoboken NJ: Jossey-Bass. They interviewed more than 112,000 entering students in 2004 and more than 14,000 of these students in spring 2007 toward the end of their junior year. This research design enabled the researchers to assess whether and how various aspects of religious belief and religiosity change during college. Several findings were notable.

- First, *religious commitment* (measures of the students' assessment of how important religion is to them) stayed fairly stable during college. Students who drank alcohol and partied the most were more likely to experience a decline in religious commitment, although cause and effect here are difficult to determine.
- Second, *religious engagement* (measures of religious services attendance, praying, religious singing, and reading sacred texts) declined during the college years. This decline was especially steep for religious attendance. Almost 40% of juniors reported less frequent attendance than during their high school years, while only 7% reported more frequent attendance.

- Third, *religious skepticism* (measures of how well religion explains various phenomena compared to science) stayed fairly stable. Skepticism tended to rise among students who partied a lot, went on a study-abroad program, and attended a college with students who were very liberal politically.
- Fourth, *religious/social conservatism* (views on such things as abortion, casual sex, and atheism) tended to decline during college, although the decline was not at all steep. This set of findings is in line with the research discussed earlier showing that students tend to become more liberal during their college years. To the extent students' views became more liberal, the beliefs of their friends among the student body mattered much more than the beliefs of their faculty.
- Fifth, *religious struggle* (measures of questioning one's religious beliefs, disagreeing with parents about religion, feeling distant from God, and the like) tended to increase during college. This increase was especially high at campuses where a higher proportion of students were experiencing religious struggle when they entered college. Students who drank alcohol and watched television more often and who had a close friend or family member die were more likely to experience religious struggle, although cause and effect are again difficult to determine.

Conclusion

- The United States is a fairly religious nation, with most people expressing a religious preference. About half of Americans are Protestants and one-fourth are Catholics.
- Religiosity is composed of several dimensions. Almost 60% of Americans say they pray at least once daily outside of religious services.
- Generally speaking, higher levels of religiosity are associated with more conservative views on social, moral, and political issues.

For Your Review

1. Do you consider yourself religious? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think religiosity is associated with more conservative views on social, moral, and political issues? What is it about religiosity that helps lead to such beliefs?

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11.1.7: Trends in Religious Belief and Activity

Learning Objectives

- Summarize the evidence on the nature and extent of secularization.
- Discuss trends in regard to religious conservatism in the United States.
- Describe the relationship between religiosity and deviant behavior.

Because religion is such an important part of our society, sociologists and other observers have examined how religious thought and practice have changed in the last few decades. We discuss two of the most important trends here.

Secularization

Secularization refers to the weakening importance of religion in a society. It plays less of a role in people's lives, as they are less guided in their daily behavior by religious beliefs. The influence of religious organizations in society also declines, and some individual houses of worship give more emphasis to worldly concerns such as soup kitchens than to spiritual issues. There is no doubt that religion is less important in modern society than it was before the rise of science in the 17th and 18th centuries. Scholars of religion have tried to determine the degree to which the United States has become more secularized during the last few decades (Finke & Stark, 2005; Fenn, 2001).Finke, R., & Stark, R. (2005). *The churching of America: Winners and losers in our religious economy* (2nd ed.). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press; Fenn, R. K. (2001). *Beyond idols: The shape of a secular society*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

The best evidence shows that religion has declined in importance since the 1960s but still remains a potent force in American society as a whole and for the individual lives of Americans (Finke & Scheitle, 2005).Finke, R., & Scheitle, C. (2005). Accounting for the uncounted: Computing correctives for the 2000 RCMS data. *Review of Religious Research, 47*, 5–22. Although membership in mainstream Protestant denominations has declined since the 1960s, membership in conservative denominations has risen. Most people (92% in the Pew survey) still believe in God, and, as already noted, more than half of all Americans pray daily.

Scholars also point to the continuing importance of civil religion, or the devotion of a nation's citizens to their society and government (Santiago, 2009).Santiago, J. (2009). From "civil religion" to nationalism as the religion of modern times: Rethinking a complex relationship. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 48*(2), 394–401. In the United States, love of country—patriotism—and admiration for many of its ideals are widespread. Citizens routinely engage in rituals, such as reciting the Pledge of Allegiance or singing the National Anthem, that express their love of the United States. These beliefs and practices are the secular equivalent of traditional religious beliefs and practices and thus a functional equivalent of religion.

The Rise of Religious Conservatism

The rise of religious conservatism also challenges the notion that secularization is displacing religion in American life. Religious conservatism in the U.S. context is the belief that the Bible is the actual word of God. As noted earlier, religious conservatism includes the various Baptist denominations and any number of evangelical organizations, and its rapid rise was partly the result of fears that the United States was becoming too secularized. Many religious conservatives believe that a return to the teachings of the Bible and religious spirituality is necessary to combat the corrupting influences of modern life (Almond, Appleby, & Sivan, 2003).Almond, G. A., Appleby, R. S., & Sivan, E. (2003). *Strong religion: The rise of fundamentalisms around the world*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.



Figure 12.19. The rise of religious conservatism in the United States was partly the result of fears that the nation was becoming too secularized. © Thinkstock

Today about one-third of Americans state a religious preference for a conservative denomination (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008).Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. (2008). *U.S. religious landscape survey*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. Because of their growing numbers, religious conservatives have been the subject of increasing research. They tend to hold politically conservative views on many issues, including abortion and the punishment of criminals, and are more likely than people with other religious beliefs to believe in such things as the corporal punishment of children (Burdette, Ellison, & Hill, 2005).Burdette, A. M., Ellison, C. G., & Hill, T. D. (2005). Conservative protestantism and tolerance toward homosexuals: An examination of potential mechanisms. *Sociological Inquiry, 75*(2), 177–196. They are also more likely to believe in traditional roles for women.

Closely related to the rise of religious conservatism has been the increasing influence of what has been termed the "new religious right" in American politics (Martin, 2005; Capps, 1990; Moen, 1992).Martin, W. C. (2005). *With God on our side: The rise of the religious Right in America*. New York, NY: Broadway Books; Capps, W. H. (1990). *The new religious Right: Piety, patriotism, and politics*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press; Moen, M. (1992). *The transformation of the Christian Right*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press. Since the 1980s, the religious right has been a potent force in the political scene at both the national and local levels, with groups like the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition effective in raising money, using the media, and lobbying elected officials. As its name implies, the religious right tries to advance a conservative political agenda consistent with conservative religious concerns. Among other issues, it opposes legal abortion, gay rights, and violence and sex in the media, and it also advocates an increased religious presence in public schools. Although the influence of the religious right has waned since the 1990s, its influence on American politics is bound to be controversial for many years to come.

Religiosity and Deviant Behavior

As discussed earlier, Durkheim considered religion a moral force for socialization and social bonding. Building on this insight, sociologists and other scholars have thought that religiosity might reduce participation in "deviant" behaviors such as drinking, illegal drug use, delinquency, and certain forms of sexual behavior. A growing body of research, almost all of it on adolescents, finds that this is indeed the case. Holding other factors constant, more religious adolescents are less likely than other adolescents to drink and take drugs, to commit various kinds of delinquency, to have sex during early adolescence or at all, and to have sex frequently if they do start having sex (Regenerus, 2007).Regenerus, M. D. (2007). *Forbidden fruit: Sex & religion in the lives of American teenagers*. New York, NY: Oxford Univeristy Press.

There is much less research on whether this relationship continues to hold true during adulthood. If religion might have more of an impact during adolescence, an impressionable period of one's life, then the relationship found during adolescence may not persist into adulthood. However, two recent studies did find that more religious, unmarried adults were less likely than other unmarried adults to have premarital sex partners (Barkan, 2006; Uecker, 2008).Barkan, S. E. (2006). Religiosity and premarital sex during adulthood. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 45*, 407–417; Uecker, J. E. (2008). Religion, pledging, and the premarital sexual behavior of married young adults. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 70*(3), 728–744. These results suggest that

religiosity may indeed continue to affect sexual behavior and perhaps other behaviors during adulthood.

Religiosity, Physical Health, and Psychological Well-Being

Sociologists and other scholars have also built on Durkheim's insights to assess whether religious involvement promotes better physical health and psychological well-being. As noted earlier, a growing body of research finds that various measures of religious involvement, but perhaps especially attendance at religious services, are positively associated with better physical and mental health. Religious involvement is linked in many studies to lower rates of cardiovascular disease, hypertension (high blood pressure), and mortality (Ellison & Hummer, 2010; Green & Elliott, 2010).Ellison, C. G., & Hummer, R. A. (Eds.). (2010). *Religion, families, and health: Population-based research in the United States*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press; Green, M., & Elliott, M. (2010). Religion, health, and psychological well-being. *Journal of Religion & Health, 49*(2), 149–163. doi:10.1007/s10943-009-9242-1 It is also linked to higher rates of happiness and lower rates of depression and anxiety.

These effects are thought to stem from several reasons. First, religious attendance increases social ties that provide emotional and practical support when someone has various problems and that also raise one's self-esteem. Second, personal religious belief can provide spiritual comfort in times of trouble. Third, and as noted in the preceding section, religious involvement promotes healthy lifestyles for at least some people, including lower use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, as well as other risky behaviors such as gambling and unsafe sex. Lower participation in all of these activities helps in turn to increase one's physical and mental health.

Conclusion

- Despite concerns among many observers that secularization has been occurring, religion remains important in many Americans' lives and a potent force in American society.
- Membership in conservative denominations has increased in the United States in recent decades. Today about one-third of Americans state a religious preference for a conservative denomination.
- Higher levels of religiosity are associated with lower involvement in drinking, illegal drug use, sexual behavior, and some forms of delinquency.

For Your Review

1. What evidence that you have observed suggests to you that the United States has become a secular society? What evidence suggests to you that it remains a fairly religious society?
2. Why do you think religiosity is associated with lower levels of involvement in deviant behavior? What is it about religiosity that might reduce deviant behavior?

Addressing Educational and Religious Issues: What Sociology Suggests

Sociological theory and research have helped people to understand the reasons for various issues arising in education and religion. Accordingly, this final section discusses strategies suggested by this body of work for addressing a few of these issues.

Education

Two major issues are school inequality and school violence. The inequality that exists in American society finds its way into the schools, and inequality in the schools in turn contributes to inequality in the larger society. Although scholars continue to debate the relative importance of family backgrounds and school funding and other school factors for academic achievement, it is clear that schools with decaying buildings and uncommitted teachers cannot be expected to produce students with high or even adequate academic achievement. At a minimum, schools need to be smaller and better funded, teachers need to be held accountable for their students' learning, and decaying buildings need to be repaired. On the national level, these steps will cost billions of dollars, but this expenditure promises to have a significant payoff (Smerdon & Borman, 2009).Smerdon, B. A., & Borman, K. M. (Eds.). (2009). *Saving America's high schools*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press.

School violence is another issue that needs to be addressed. The steps just outlined should reduce school violence, but other measures should also help. One example involves antibullying programs, which include regular parent meetings, strengthened playground supervision, and appropriate discipline when warranted. Research indicates that these programs reduce bullying by 20%–23% on the average (Farrington & Trofi, 2009).Farrington, D. P., & Trofi, M. M. (2009). School-based programs to reduce

bullying and victimization. *Campbell Systematic Reviews, 6,* 1–148. doi:10.4073/csr.2009.6 Any reduction in bullying should in turn help reduce the likelihood of school massacres like Columbine, as many of the students committing these massacres were humiliated and bullied by other students (Adler & Springen, 1999).Adler, J., & Springen, K. (1999, May 3). How to fight back. *Newsweek,* p. 36–38.

Experts also think that reducing the size of schools and the size of classes will reduce school violence, as having smaller classes and schools should help create a less alienating atmosphere, allow for more personal attention, and make students' attitudes toward their school more positive (Levin & Fox, 1999).Levin, J., & Fox, J. A. (1999, April 25). Schools learning a grim lesson (but will society flunk?). *The Boston Globe,* p. C1. More generally, because the roots of school violence are also similar to the roots of youth violence outside the schools, measures that reduce youth violence should also reduce school violence. As discussed in previous chapters, such measures include early childhood prevention programs for youths at risk for developmental and behavioral problems, and policies that provide income and jobs for families living in poverty (Welsh & Farrington, 2007).Welsh, B. C., & Farrington, D. P. (Eds.). (2007). *Preventing crime: What works for children, offenders, victims and places*. New York, NY: Springer.

Religion

One major religious issue today is religious intolerance. Émile Durkheim did not stress the hatred and conflict that religion has promoted over the centuries, but this aspect of conflict theory's view of religion should not be forgotten. Certainly religious tolerance should be promoted among all peoples, and strategies for doing so include education efforts about the world's religions and interfaith activities for youth and adults. The Center for Religious Tolerance (http://www.c-r-t.org/index.php), headquartered in Sarasota, Florida, is one of the many local and national organizations in the United States that strive to promote interfaith understanding. In view of the hostility toward Muslims that increased in the United States after 9/11, it is perhaps particularly important for education efforts and other activities to promote understanding of Islam.

Religion may also help address other social issues. In this regard, we noted earlier that religious belief and practice seem to promote physical health and psychological well-being. To the extent this is true, efforts that promote the practice of one's faith may enhance their physical and mental health. In view of the health problems of older people and also their greater religiosity, some scholars urge that such efforts be especially undertaken for people in their older years (Moberg, 2008).Moberg, D. O. (2008). Spirituality and aging: Research and implications. *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging, 20*, 95–134. We also noted that religiosity helps to reduce drinking, drug use, and sexual behavior among adolescents and perhaps among adults. This does not mean that religion should be forced on anyone against their will, but this body of research does suggest that efforts by houses of worship to promote religious activities among their adolescents and younger children may help prevent or otherwise minimize risky behaviors during this important period of the life course.

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11.1.S: Education and Religion (Summary)

Summary

1. Education is both formal and informal. Formal education occurs in schools under specially trained teachers, while informal education takes place primarily in the home, with parents as instructors. For much of human history, education was informal, especially before the beginning of writing and numbers. As societies became more complex economically and socially, schools began to develop, but they were usually restricted to relatively wealthy boys.
2. In the early 19th century in the United States, a movement for free, compulsory education began. Reasons for interest in such education included the perceived needs to unify the country, to "Americanize" immigrants, and to give members of the working class the skills, knowledge, and discipline they needed to be productive workers.
3. Sociological perspectives on education fall into the functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist approaches discussed in earlier chapters. Functional theory stresses the functions education serves for society, including socialization, social placement, social integration, and social and cultural innovation. Conflict theory stresses that education perpetuates and reinforces existing social inequality for several reasons, including the use of tracking and inequality in schooling between rich and poor communities. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the social interaction that's part of schooling and calls attention to the ways in which the treatment of students as smart or dull can affect how much they end up learning.
4. In the United States, social class, race and ethnicity, and gender all affect educational attainment. Poor people end up with less schooling than middle- and upper-class people, and African Americans and Latinos have lower educational attainment than whites and Asian Americans. Although women had less schooling than men in the past, today they are more likely to graduate from high school and to attend college.
5. Education in the United States has a significant impact on two areas. One is income: the higher the education, the higher the income. The second is attitudes: the higher the education, the greater the tolerance for nontraditional behaviors and viewpoints.
6. Several issues and problems affect education in the United States today. Many schools are poor and run-down and lack sufficient books and equipment. Many schools are also segregated by race and ethnicity. These twin problems make it difficult for students in these schools to receive a good education. Increasing interest in school choice has led to controversy over whether the government should provide aid to parents to send their children to private and parochial schools. Additional controversy surrounds the issue of single-sex schools for girls, which their advocates say promotes girls' learning, especially in math, science, and technology. Finally, school violence is an issue of continuing concern and received even more attention after the massacre at a high school in Littleton, Colorado. Despite this concern, the best evidence indicates that the vast majority of schools are very safe for their students, teachers, and other personnel.
7. All societies have beliefs and practices that help them understand supernatural and spiritual phenomena. Religion takes different forms in the many types of societies that have existed, but ultimately it seeks to make sense out of life, death, and the other mysteries of human existence.
8. The world's major religions today include Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Judaism. They differ in many respects, including the nature of their belief in God, whether their religion began with the efforts of one particular individual, and whether a sacred text is involved.
9. Religion serves several functions for society. It gives meaning and purpose to life, reinforces social stability and social control, and promotes physical and psychological well-being. Yet religion can also perpetuate social inequality and promote social conflict among peoples with different religious faiths. Traditionally religion has also reinforced gender inequality. Symbolic interactionism explores the micro side of religion and focuses on the role religion plays in our daily lives and the ways in which we interpret religious experiences.
10. The primary types of religious organization include the church (either an ecclesia or a denomination), sect, and cult. These types differ in many ways, including their size and integration into society. Cults have a very negative image, but Christianity, Judaism, and various denominations all began as cults.
11. The United States is, according to many measures, one of the most religious societies in the industrial world. Most people believe in God, and a strong majority belong to a church or synagogue. Religious affiliation is related to several demographic variables in which sociologists are interested, including social class and race. Liberal Protestants and Jews tend to be relatively wealthy and well educated, while Conservative Protestants tend to be poorer and less educated. Catholics and Moderate Protestants tend to occupy a middle ground on these variables.
12. Religiosity is a multidimensional concept that gets beyond actual membership in a church or synagogue. The more religious people are, the more conservative they tend to be on various social and moral issues.
13. Two religious trends in recent decades in the United States include secularization and the rise of religious conservatism. Despite fears that the United States is becoming a less religious society, the best evidence indicates that religion continues

to play an important role in the lives of individuals and their families. The rise of religious conservatism has an important and controversial impact on national political affairs.

Using Sociology

It is October, and you are now in your second year of teaching fifth graders in a poor urban neighborhood. You don't have enough textbooks for your 40 students, and the ones you do have are very much out of date. Worse yet, there is a leak in your classroom ceiling that seems to be getting worse every week, even though you asked that it be repaired, and a foul odor arose a few days ago from a nearby bathroom and also seems to be getting worse. You decide you have at least four choices: (a) quit your job immediately and look for another job; (b) stay through the end of the academic year and then quit, while keeping quiet about your concerns about the school; (c) complain to the principal and/or perhaps to school district officials; or (d) ask for an interview with the local newspaper to bring your school's problems to light. What do you decide to do? Explain your answer.

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11.2: EDUCATION

11.2.1: Introduction

11.2.2: Education around the World

11.2.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Education

11.2.4: Issues in Education

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11.2.1: Introduction



Figure 16.1: High school and college graduation often marks a milestone for families, friends, and even the wider community. Education, however, occurs in many venues and with far ranging outcomes. (Credit: Kevin Dooley/flickr)

Chapter Outline

16.1 Education around the World
16.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Education
16.3 Issues in Education

“What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves” (Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed). David Simon, in his book *Social Problems and the Sociological Imagination: A Paradigm for Analysis* (1995), points to the notion that social problems are, in essence, contradictions—that is, statements, ideas, or features of a situation that are opposed to one another. Consider then, that one of the greatest expectations in U.S. society is that to attain any form of success in life, a person needs an education. In fact, a college degree is rapidly becoming an expectation at many levels of success, not merely an enhancement to our occupational choices. And, as you might expect, the number of people graduating from college in the United States continues to rise dramatically.

The contradiction, however, lies in the fact that the more impactful a college degree has become, the harder it has become to achieve it. The cost of getting a college degree has risen sharply since the mid-1980s, while many important forms of government support have barely increased.

The net result is that those who do graduate from college are likely to begin a career in debt. As of 2009, a typical student’s loans amounted to around $23,000. Ten years later, the average amount of debt for students who took loans grew to over $30,000. The overall national student loan debt topped $1.6 trillion in 2020, according to the Federal Reserve. These rising costs and risky debt burdens have led to a number of diverse proposals for solutions. Some call for cancelling current college debt and making more colleges free to qualifying students. Others advocate for more focused and efficient education in order to achieve needed career requirements more quickly. Employers, seeking both to widen their applicant pool and increase equity among their workforce, have increasingly sought ways to eliminate unnecessary degree requirements: If a person has the skills and knowledge to do the job, they have more access to it (Kerr 2020).

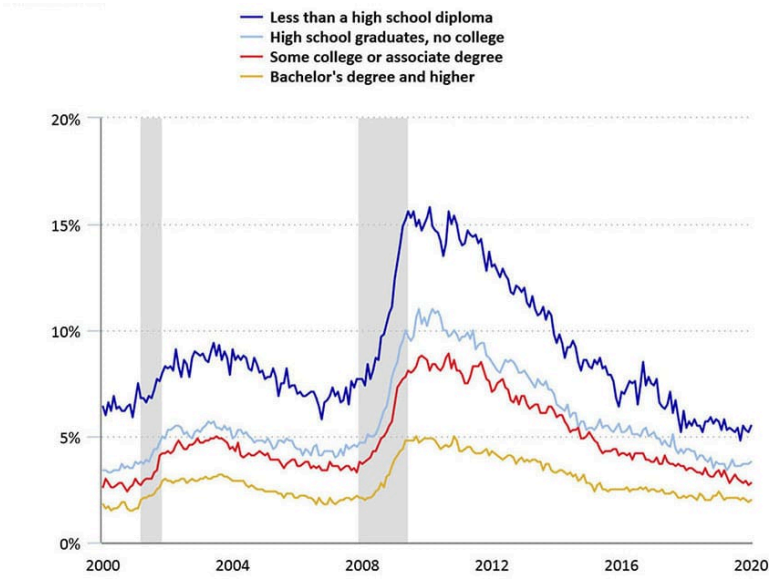


Figure 16.2: Unemployment rates for people age 25 and older by educational attainment. As can be seen in the graph, the overall unemployment rate began falling in 2009 after it peaked during the financial crisis and continued its downward trend through the decade from 2010 to 2020. (This graph does not account for the unemployment spike during the COVID-19 pandemic.) Note the differences in educational attainment and their impact on unemployment. People with bachelor's degrees have always had the lowest levels of unemployment, while those without a high school diploma have always had the highest level. (Credit: Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Is a college degree still worth it? Lifetime earnings among those with a college degree are, on average, still much higher than for those without. A 2019 Federal Reserve report indicated that, on average, college graduates earn $30,000 per year more than non-college graduates. Also, that wage gap has nearly doubled in the past 40 years (Abel 2019).

Is the wage advantage enough to overcome the potential debt? And what's behind those averages? Remember, since the $30,000 is an average, it also confirms what we see from other data: That certain people and certain college majors earn far more than others. As a result, earning a college degree in a field that has a smaller wage advantage over non-college graduates might not seem "worth it."

But is college worth more than money?

A student earning Associate's and Bachelor's degrees generally will often take a wide array of courses, including many outside of their major. The student is exposed to a fairly broad range of topics, from mathematics and the physical sciences to history and literature, the social sciences, and music and art through introductory and survey-styled courses. It is in this period that the student's world view is, it is hoped, expanded. Then, when they begin the process of specialization, it is with a much broader perspective than might be otherwise. This additional "cultural capital" can further enrich the life of the student, enhance their ability to work with experienced professionals, and build wisdom upon knowledge. Over two thousand years ago, Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." The real value of an education, then, is to enhance our skill at self-examination. Education, its impact, and its costs are important not just to sociologists, but to policymakers, employers, and of course to parents.

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11.2.2: Education around the World

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Identify differences in educational resources around the world
- Describe the concept of universal access to education



Figure 16.3: These students in Cambodia have a relatively informal classroom setting. Other schools, both nearby and around the world, have very different environments and practices. (Credit: Nguyen Hun Vu/flickr)

Education is a social institution through which members of a society are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms. Every nation in the world is equipped with some form of education system, though those systems vary greatly. The major factors that affect education systems are the resources and money that are utilized to support those systems in different nations. As you might expect, a country's wealth has much to do with the amount of money spent on education. Countries that do not have such basic amenities as running water are unable to support robust education systems or, in many cases, any formal schooling at all. The result of this worldwide educational inequality is a social concern for many countries, including the United States.

International differences in education systems are not solely a financial issue. The value placed on education, the amount of time devoted to it, and the distribution of education within a country also play a role in those differences. For example, students in South Korea spend 220 days a year in school, compared to the 180 days a year of their United States counterparts (Pellissier 2010).

Then there is the issue of educational distribution and changes within a nation. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is administered to samples of fifteen-year-old students worldwide. In 2010, the results showed that students in the United States had fallen from fifteenth to twenty-fifth in the rankings for science and math (National Public Radio 2010). The same program showed that by 2018, U.S. student achievement had remained on the same level for mathematics and science, but had shown improvements in reading. In 2018, about 4,000 students from about 200 high schools in the United States took the PISA test (OECD 2019).

Analysts determined that the nations and city-states at the top of the rankings had several things in common. For one, they had well-established standards for education with clear goals for all students. They also recruited teachers from the top 5 to 10 percent of university graduates each year, which is not the case for most countries (National Public Radio 2010).

Finally, there is the issue of social factors. One analyst from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the organization that created the PISA test, attributed 20 percent of performance differences and the United States' low rankings to differences in social background. Researchers noted that educational resources, including money and quality teachers, are not distributed equitably in the United States. In the top-ranking countries, limited access to resources did not necessarily predict low performance. Analysts also noted what they described as "resilient students," or those students who achieve at a higher level than one might expect given their social background. In Shanghai and Singapore, the proportion of resilient students is about 70 percent. In the United States, it is below 30 percent. These insights suggest that the United States' educational system may be on a descending path that could detrimentally affect the country's economy and its social landscape (National Public Radio 2010).

Big Picture: Education in Finland

With public education in the United States under such intense criticism, why is it that Singapore, South Korea, and especially Finland (which is culturally most similar to us), have such excellent public education? Over the course of thirty years, the country has pulled itself from among the lowest rankings by the Organization of Economic Cooperation (OEDC) to first in 2012, and remains, as of 2014, in the top five. Contrary to the rigid curriculum and long hours demanded of students in South Korea and Singapore, Finnish education often seems paradoxical to outside observers because it appears to break a lot of the rules we take for granted. It is common for children to enter school at seven years old, and children will have more recess and less hours in school than U.S. children—approximately 300 less hours. Their homework load is light when compared to all other industrialized nations (nearly 300 fewer hours per year in elementary school). There are no gifted programs, almost no private schools, and no high-stakes national standardized tests (Laukkanen 2008; LynNell Hancock 2011).

Prioritization is different than in the United States. There is an emphasis on allocating resources for those who need them most, high standards, support for special needs students, qualified teachers taken from the top 10 percent of the nation's graduates and who must earn a Master's degree, evaluation of education, balancing decentralization and centralization.

"We used to have a system which was really unequal," stated the Finnish Education Chief in an interview. "My parents never had a real possibility to study and have a higher education. We decided in the 1960s that we would provide a free quality education to all. Even universities are free of charge. Equal means that we support everyone and we're not going to waste anyone's skills." As for teachers, "We don't test our teachers or ask them to prove their knowledge. But it's true that we do invest in a lot of additional teacher training even after they become teachers" (Gross-Loh 2014).

Yet over the past decade Finland has consistently performed among the top nations on the PISA. Finland's school children didn't always excel. Finland built its excellent, efficient, and equitable educational system in a few decades from scratch, and the concept guiding almost every educational reform has been equity. The Finnish paradox is that by focusing on the bigger picture for all, Finland has succeeded at fostering the individual potential of most every child.

"We created a school system based on equality to make sure we can develop everyone's potential. Now we can see how well it's been working. Last year the OECD tested adults from twenty-four countries measuring the skill levels of adults aged sixteen to sixty-five on a survey called the PIAAC (Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies), which tests skills in literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments. Finland scored at or near the top on all measures."

Formal and Informal Education

As already mentioned, education is not solely concerned with the basic academic concepts that a student learns in the classroom. Societies also educate their children, outside of the school system, in matters of everyday practical living. These two types of learning are referred to as formal education and informal education.

Formal education describes the learning of academic facts and concepts through a formal curriculum. Arising from the tutelage of ancient Greek thinkers, centuries of scholars have examined topics through formalized methods of learning. Education in earlier times was only available to the higher classes; they had the means for access to scholarly materials, plus the luxury of leisure time that could be used for learning. The Industrial Revolution and its accompanying social changes made education more accessible to the general population. Many families in the emerging middle class found new opportunities for schooling.

The modern U.S. educational system is the result of this progression. Today, basic education is considered a right and

responsibility for all citizens. Expectations of this system focus on formal education, with curricula and testing designed to ensure that students learn the facts and concepts that society believes are basic knowledge.

In contrast, informal education describes learning about cultural values, norms, and expected behaviors by participating in a society. This type of learning occurs both through the formal education system and at home. Our earliest learning experiences generally happen via parents, relatives, and others in our community. Through informal education, we learn important life skills that help us get through the day and interact with each other, including how to dress for different occasions, how to perform regular tasks such as shopping for and preparing food, and how to keep our bodies clean. Many professional tasks and local customs are learned informally, as well.



Figure 16.4: Children showing younger siblings how to serve food is an example of informal education. (Credit: Tim Pierce/flickr)

Cultural transmission refers to the way people come to learn the values, beliefs, and social norms of their culture. Both informal and formal education include cultural transmission. For example, a student will learn about cultural aspects of modern history in a U.S. History classroom. In that same classroom, the student might learn the cultural norm for asking a classmate out on a date through passing notes and whispered conversations.

Access to Education

Another global concern in education is universal access. This term refers to people's equal ability to participate in an education system. On a world level, access might be more difficult for certain groups based on class or gender (as was the case in the United States earlier in the nation's history, a dynamic we still struggle to overcome). The modern idea of universal access arose in the United States as a concern for people with disabilities. In the United States, one way in which universal education is supported is through federal and state governments covering the cost of free public education. Of course, the way this plays out in terms of school budgets and taxes makes this an often-contested topic on the national, state, and community levels.

Table 16.1: How does state spending affect educational opportunities? (EducationData.org 2018)

Rank	State	Education Spending Per Student
1	New York	$24,040
2	District of Columbia	$22,759
3	Connecticut	$20,635
4	New Jersey	$20,021
5	Vermont	$19,340
6	Alaska	$17,726

Rank	State	Education Spending Per Student
7	Massachusetts	$17,058
8	New Hampshire	$16,893
9	Pennsylvania	$16,395
10	Wyoming	$16,224
11	Rhode Island	$16,121
12	Illinois	$15,741
13	Delaware	$15,639
14	Hawaii	$15,242
15	Maryland	$14,762
16	Maine	$14,145
17	North Dakota	$13,758
18	Ohio	$13,027
19	Washington	$12,995
20	Minnesota	$12,975
21	California	$12,498
22	Nebraska	$12,491
23	Michigan	$12,345
24	Wisconsin	$12,285
25	Virginia	$12,216
26	Oregon	$11,920
27	Iowa	$11,732
28	Montana	$11,680
29	Kansas	$11,653
30	Louisiana	$11,452
31	West Virginia	$11,334
32	Kentucky	$11,110
33	South Carolina	$10,856
34	Missouri	$10,810
34	Georgia	$10,810
36	Indiana	$10,262
37	Colorado	$10,202
38	Arkansas	$10,139
39	South Dakota	$10,073
40	Alabama	$9,696
41	Texas	$9,606
42	New Mexico	$9,582
43	Tennessee	$9,544

Rank	State	Education Spending Per Student
44	Nevada	$9,417
45	North Carolina	$9,377
46	Florida	$9,346
47	Mississippi	$8,935
48	Oklahoma	$8,239
49	Arizona	$8,239
50	Idaho	$7,771
51	Utah	$7,628

A precedent for universal access to education in the United States was set with the 1972 U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia's decision in *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia*. This case was brought on the behalf of seven school-age children with special needs who argued that the school board was denying their access to free public education. The school board maintained that the children's "exceptional" needs, which included intellectual disabilities, precluded their right to be educated for free in a public school setting. The board argued that the cost of educating these children would be too expensive and that the children would therefore have to remain at home without access to education.

This case was resolved in a hearing without any trial. The judge, Joseph Cornelius Waddy, upheld the students' right to education, finding that they were to be given either public education services or private education paid for by the Washington, D.C., board of education. He noted that

> Constitutional rights must be afforded citizens despite the greater expense involved … the District of Columbia's interest in educating the excluded children clearly must outweigh its interest in preserving its financial resources. … The inadequacies of the District of Columbia Public School System whether occasioned by insufficient funding or administrative inefficiency, certainly cannot be permitted to bear more heavily on the "exceptional" or handicapped child than on the normal child (*Mills v. Board of Education* 1972).

Today, the optimal way to include people with disabilities students in standard classrooms is still being researched and debated. "Inclusion" is a method that involves complete immersion in a standard classroom, whereas "mainstreaming" balances time in a special-needs classroom with standard classroom participation. There continues to be social debate surrounding how to implement the ideal of universal access to education.

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11.2.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Education

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Define manifest and latent functions of education
- Explain and discuss how functionalism, conflict theory, feminism, and interactionism view issues of education

While it is clear that education plays an integral role in individuals' lives as well as society as a whole, sociologists view that role from many diverse points of view. Functionalists believe that education equips people to perform different functional roles in society. Conflict theorists view education as a means of widening the gap in social inequality. Feminist theorists point to evidence that sexism in education continues to prevent women from achieving a full measure of social equality. Symbolic interactionists study the dynamics of the classroom, the interactions between students and teachers, and how those affect everyday life. In this section, you will learn about each of these perspectives.

Functionalism

Functionalists view education as one of the more important social institutions in a society. They contend that education contributes two kinds of functions: manifest (or primary) functions, which are the intended and visible functions of education; and latent (or secondary) functions, which are the hidden and unintended functions.

Manifest Functions

There are several major manifest functions associated with education. The first is socialization. Beginning in preschool and kindergarten, students are taught to practice various societal roles. The French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), who established the academic discipline of sociology, characterized schools as "socialization agencies that teach children how to get along with others and prepare them for adult economic roles" (Durkheim 1898). Indeed, it seems that schools have taken on this responsibility in full.

This socialization also involves learning the rules and norms of the society as a whole. In the early days of compulsory education, students learned the dominant culture. Today, since the culture of the United States is increasingly diverse, students may learn a variety of cultural norms, not only that of the dominant culture.

School systems in the United States also transmit the core values of the nation through manifest functions like social control. One of the roles of schools is to teach students conformity to law and respect for authority. Obviously, such respect, given to teachers and administrators, will help a student navigate the school environment. This function also prepares students to enter the workplace and the world at large, where they will continue to be subject to people who have authority over them. Fulfillment of this function rests primarily with classroom teachers and instructors who are with students all day.



Figure 16.5: The teacher's authority in the classroom is a way in which education fulfills the manifest functions of social control. (Credit: US Department of Education/flickr)

Education also provides one of the major methods used by people for upward social mobility. This function is referred to as social placement. College and graduate schools are viewed as vehicles for moving students closer to the careers that will give them the financial freedom and security they seek. As a result, college students are often more motivated to study areas that they believe will be advantageous on the social ladder. A student might value business courses over a class in Victorian poetry because she sees business class as a stronger vehicle for financial success.

Latent Functions

Education also fulfills latent functions. As you well know, much goes on in a school that has little to do with formal education. For example, you might notice an attractive fellow student when he gives a particularly interesting answer in class—catching up with him and making a date speaks to the latent function of courtship fulfilled by exposure to a peer group in the educational setting.

The educational setting introduces students to social networks that might last for years and can help people find jobs after their schooling is complete. Of course, with social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn, these networks are easier than ever to maintain. Another latent function is the ability to work with others in small groups, a skill that is transferable to a workplace and that might not be learned in a homeschool setting.

The educational system, especially as experienced on university campuses, has traditionally provided a place for students to learn about various social issues. There is ample opportunity for social and political advocacy, as well as the ability to develop tolerance to the many views represented on campus. In 2011, the Occupy Wall Street movement swept across college campuses all over the United States, leading to demonstrations in which diverse groups of students were unified with the purpose of changing the political climate of the country.

Table 16.2 Manifest and Latent Functions of Education: According to functionalist theory, education contributes both manifest and latent functions.

Manifest Functions: Openly stated functions with intended goals	Latent Functions: Hidden, unstated functions with sometimes unintended consequences
Socialization	Courtship
Transmission of culture	Social networks
Social control	Group work
Social placement	Creation of generation gap
Cultural innovation	Political and social integration

Functionalists recognize other ways that schools educate and enculturate students. One of the most important U.S. values students in the United States learn is that of individualism—the valuing of the individual over the value of groups or society as a whole. In countries such as Japan and China, where the good of the group is valued over the rights of the individual, students do not learn as they do in the United States that the highest rewards go to the "best" individual in academics as well as athletics. One of the roles of schools in the United States is fostering self-esteem; conversely, schools in Japan focus on fostering social esteem—the honoring of the group over the individual.

In the United States, schools also fill the role of preparing students for competition in life. Obviously, athletics foster a competitive nature, but even in the classroom students compete against one another academically. Schools also fill the role of teaching patriotism. Students recite the Pledge of Allegiance each morning and take history classes where they learn about national heroes and the nation's past.



Figure 16.6: Starting each day with the Pledge of Allegiance is one way in which students are taught patriotism. According to a number of court rulings, students in the United States cannot be compelled to recite or salute during the Pledge. (Credit: SC National Guard/flickr)

Another role of schools, according to functionalist theory, is that of sorting, or classifying students based on academic merit or potential. The most capable students are identified early in schools through testing and classroom achievements. Such students are placed in accelerated programs in anticipation of successful college attendance.

Functionalists also contend that school, particularly in recent years, is taking over some of the functions that were traditionally undertaken by family. Society relies on schools to teach about human sexuality as well as basic skills such as budgeting and job applications—topics that at one time were addressed by the family.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists do not believe that public schools reduce social inequality. Rather, they believe that the educational system reinforces and perpetuates social inequalities that arise from differences in class, gender, race, and ethnicity. Where functionalists see education as serving a beneficial role, conflict theorists view it more negatively. To them, educational systems preserve the status quo and push people of lower status into obedience.



Figure 16.7: Conflict theorists see the education system as a means by which those in power stay in power. (Credit: Thomas Ricker/flickr)

The fulfillment of one's education is closely linked to social class. Students of low socioeconomic status are generally not afforded the same opportunities as students of higher status, no matter how great their academic ability or desire to learn. Picture a student from a working-class home who wants to do well in school. On a Monday, he's assigned a paper that's due Friday. Monday evening, he has to babysit his younger sister while his divorced mother works. Tuesday and Wednesday, he works stocking shelves after school until 10:00 p.m. By Thursday, the only day he might have available to work on that assignment, he's so exhausted he can't bring himself to start the paper. His mother, though she'd like to help him, is so tired herself that she isn't able to give him the encouragement or support he needs. And since English is her second language, she has difficulty with some of his educational materials. They also lack a computer and printer at home, which most of his classmates have, so they have to rely on the public library or school system for access to technology. As this story shows, many students from working-class families have to contend with helping out at home, contributing financially to the family, poor study environments and a lack of support from their families. This is a difficult match with education systems that adhere to a traditional curriculum that is more easily understood and completed by students of higher social classes.

Such a situation leads to social class reproduction, extensively studied by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. He researched how cultural capital, or cultural knowledge that serves (metaphorically) as currency that helps us navigate a culture, alters the experiences and opportunities available to French students from different social classes. Members of the upper and middle classes have more cultural capital than do families of lower-class status. As a result, the educational system maintains a cycle in which the dominant culture's values are rewarded. Instruction and tests cater to the dominant culture and leave others struggling to identify with values and competencies outside their social class. For example, there has been a great deal of discussion over what standardized tests such as the SAT truly measure. Many argue that the tests group students by cultural ability rather than by natural intelligence.

The cycle of rewarding those who possess cultural capital is found in formal educational curricula as well as in the hidden curriculum, which refers to the type of nonacademic knowledge that students learn through informal learning and cultural transmission. This hidden curriculum reinforces the positions of those with higher cultural capital and serves to bestow status unequally.

Conflict theorists point to tracking, a formalized sorting system that places students on "tracks" (advanced versus low achievers) that perpetuate inequalities. While educators may believe that students do better in tracked classes because they are with students of similar ability and may have access to more individual attention from teachers, conflict theorists feel that tracking leads to self-fulfilling prophecies in which students live up (or down) to teacher and societal expectations (Education Week 2004).

To conflict theorists, schools play the role of training working-class students to accept and retain their position as lower members of society. They argue that this role is fulfilled through the disparity of resources available to students in richer and poorer neighborhoods as well as through testing (Lauen and Tyson 2008).

IQ tests have been attacked for being biased—for testing cultural knowledge rather than actual intelligence. For example, a test item may ask students what instruments belong in an orchestra. To correctly answer this question requires certain cultural

knowledge—knowledge most often held by more affluent people who typically have more exposure to orchestral music. Though experts in testing claim that bias has been eliminated from tests, conflict theorists maintain that this is impossible. These tests, to conflict theorists, are another way in which education does not provide opportunities, but instead maintains an established configuration of power.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory aims to understand the mechanisms and roots of gender inequality in education, as well as their societal repercussions. Like many other institutions of society, educational systems are characterized by unequal treatment and opportunity for women. Almost two-thirds of the world's 862 million illiterate people are women, and the illiteracy rate among women is expected to increase in many regions, especially in several African and Asian countries (UNESCO 2005; World Bank 2007).

Women in the United States have been relatively late, historically speaking, to be granted entry to the public university system. In fact, it wasn't until the establishment of Title IX of the Education Amendments in 1972 that discriminating on the basis of sex in U.S. education programs became illegal. In the United States, there is also a post-education gender disparity between what male and female college graduates earn. A study released in May 2011 showed that, among men and women who graduated from college between 2006 and 2010, men out-earned women by an average of more than $5,000 each year. First-year job earnings for men averaged $33,150; for women the average was $28,000 (Godofsky, Zukin, and van Horn 2011). Similar trends are seen among salaries of professionals in virtually all industries.

When women face limited opportunities for education, their capacity to achieve equal rights, including financial independence, are limited. Feminist theory seeks to promote women's rights to equal education (and its resultant benefits) across the world.

Sociology in the Real World: Grade Inflation: When Is an A Really a C?

In 2019, news emerged of a criminal conspiracy regarding wealthy and, in some cases, celebrity parents who illegally secured college admission for their children. Over 50 people were implicated in the scandal, including employees from prestigious universities; several people were sentenced to prison. Their activity included manipulating test scores, falsifying students' academic or athletic credentials, and acquiring testing accommodations through dishonest claims of having a disability.

One of the questions that emerged at the time was how the students at the subject of these efforts could succeed at these challenging and elite colleges. Meaning, if they couldn't get in without cheating, they probably wouldn't do well. Wouldn't their lack of preparation quickly become clear?

Many people would say no. First, many of the students involved (the children of the conspirators) had no knowledge or no involvement of the fraud; those students may have been admitted anyway. But there may be another safeguard for underprepared students at certain universities: grade inflation.

Grade inflation generally refers to a practice of awarding students higher grades than they have earned. It reflects the observation that the relationship between letter grades and the achievements they reflect has been changing over time. Put simply, what used to be considered C-level, or average, now often earns a student a B, or even an A.

Some, including administrators at elite universities, argue that grade inflation does not exist, or that there are other factors at play, or even that it has benefits such as increased funding and elimination of inequality (Boleslavsky 2014). But the evidence reveals a stark change. Based on data compiled from a wide array of four-year colleges and universities, a widely cited study revealed that the number of A grades has been increasing by several percentage points per decade, and that A's were the most common grade awarded (Jaschik 2016). In an anecdotal case, a Harvard dean acknowledged that the median grade there was an A-, and the most common was also an A. Williams College found that the number of A+ grades had grown from 212 instances in 2009-10 to 426 instances in 2017-18 (Berlinsky-Schine 2020). Princeton University took steps to reduce inflation by limiting the number of A's that could be issued, though it then reversed course (Greason 2020).

Why is this happening? Some cite the alleged shift toward a culture that rewards effort instead of product, i.e., the amount of work a student puts in raises the grade, even if the resulting product is poor quality. Another oft-cited contributor is the pressure for instructors to earn positive course evaluations from their students. Finally, many colleges may accept a level of grade inflation because it works. Analysis and formal experiments involving graduate school admissions and hiring practices

showed that students with higher grades are more likely to be selected for a job or a grad school. And those higher-grade applicants are still preferred even if decision-maker knows that the applicant's college may be inflating grades (Swift 2013). In other words, people with high GPA at a school with a higher average GPA are preferred over people who have a high GPA at a school with a lower average GPA.

Ironically, grade inflation is not simply a college issue. Many of the same college faculty and administrators who encounter or engage in some level of grade inflation may lament that it is also occurring at high schools (Murphy 2017).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism sees education as one way that labeling theory is seen in action. A symbolic interactionist might say that this labeling has a direct correlation to those who are in power and those who are labeled. For example, low standardized test scores or poor performance in a particular class often lead to a student who is labeled as a low achiever. Such labels are difficult to "shake off," which can create a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton 1968).

In his book *High School Confidential*, Jeremy Iversen details his experience as a Stanford graduate posing as a student at a California high school. One of the problems he identifies in his research is that of teachers applying labels that students are never able to lose. One teacher told him, without knowing he was a bright graduate of a top university, that he would never amount to anything (Iversen 2006). Iversen obviously didn't take this teacher's false assessment to heart. But when an actual seventeen-year-old student hears this from a person with authority over her, it's no wonder that the student might begin to "live down to" that label.

The labeling with which symbolic interactionists concern themselves extends to the very degrees that symbolize completion of education. Credentialism embodies the emphasis on certificates or degrees to show that a person has a certain skill, has attained a certain level of education, or has met certain job qualifications. These certificates or degrees serve as a symbol of what a person has achieved, and allows the labeling of that individual.

Indeed, as these examples show, labeling theory can significantly impact a student's schooling. This is easily seen in the educational setting, as teachers and more powerful social groups within the school dole out labels that are adopted by the entire school population.

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11.2.4: Issues in Education

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Identify historical and contemporary issues in education
- Discuss the impacts of educational equality efforts
- Explain important United States government actions and programs in education

As schools strive to fill a variety of roles in their students' lives, many issues and challenges arise. Students walk a minefield of bullying, violence in schools, the results of declining funding, changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and other problems that affect their education. When Americans are asked about their opinion of public education on the Gallup poll each year, reviews are mixed at best (Saad 2008). Schools are no longer merely a place for learning and socializing. With the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling in 1954, schools became a repository of much political and legal action that is at the heart of several issues in education.

Equal Education

Until the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, schools had operated under the precedent set by *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, which allowed racial segregation in schools and private businesses (the case dealt specifically with railroads) and introduced the much maligned phrase "separate but equal" into the U.S. lexicon. The 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision overruled this, declaring that state laws that had established separate schools for Black and White students were, in fact, unequal and unconstitutional.

While the ruling paved the way toward civil rights, it was also met with contention in many communities. In Arkansas in 1957, the governor mobilized the state National Guard to prevent Black students from entering Little Rock Central High School. President Eisenhower, in response, sent members of the 101st Airborne Division from Kentucky to uphold the students' right to enter the school. In 1963, almost ten years after the ruling, Governor George Wallace of Alabama used his own body to block two Black students from entering the auditorium at the University of Alabama to enroll in the school. Wallace's desperate attempt to uphold his policy of "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever," stated during his 1963 inauguration (PBS 2000) became known as the "Stand in the Schoolhouse Door." He refused to grant entry to the students until a general from the Alabama National Guard arrived on President Kennedy's order.



Figure 16.8: President Eisenhower sent members of the 101st Airborne Division from Kentucky to escort Black students into Little Rock Central High School after the governor of Arkansas tried to deny them entry. (Credit: the U.S. Army)

Presently, students of all races and ethnicities are permitted into schools, but there remains a troubling gap in the equality of education they receive. The long-term socially embedded effects of racism—and other discrimination and disadvantage—have left a residual mark of inequality in the nation's education system. Students from wealthy families and those of lower socioeconomic status do not receive the same opportunities.

Today's public schools, at least in theory, are positioned to help remedy those gaps. Predicated on the notion of universal access, this system is mandated to accept and retain all students regardless of race, religion, social class, and the like. Moreover, public schools are held accountable to equitable per-student spending (Resnick 2004). Private schools, usually only accessible to students from high-income families, and schools in more affluent areas generally enjoy access to greater resources and better opportunities. In fact, some of the key predictors for student performance include socioeconomic status and family background. Children from families of lower socioeconomic status often enter school with learning deficits they struggle to overcome throughout their educational tenure. These patterns, uncovered in the landmark Coleman Report of 1966, are still highly relevant today, as sociologists still generally agree that there is a great divide in the performance of white students from affluent backgrounds and their nonwhite, less affluent, counterparts (Coleman 1966).

The findings in the Coleman Report were so powerful that they brought about two major changes to education in the United States. The federal Head Start program, which is still active and successful today, was developed to give low-income students an opportunity to make up the preschool deficit discussed in Coleman's findings. The program provides academic-centered preschool to students of low socioeconomic status.

Transfers and Busing

In the years following *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Southern states were not alone in their resistance to change. In New York City, schools in lower-income neighborhoods had less experienced teachers, inadequate facilities, and lower spending per student than did schools in higher-income neighborhoods, even though all of the schools were in the same district. In 1958, Activist Mae Mallory, with the support of grassroots advocate Ella Baker and the NAACP, led a group of parents who kept their children out of school, essentially boycotting the district. She and the rest of the group, known as the Harlem Nine, were publicly chastised and pursued by the judicial system. After several decisions and appeals, the culminating legal decision found that the city was effectively segregating schools, and that students in certain neighborhoods were still receiving a "discriminatorily inferior education." New York City, the nation's largest school district, enacted an open transfer policy that laid the groundwork for further action (Jeffries 2012).

With the goal of further desegregating education, courts across the United States ordered some school districts to begin a program that became known as "busing." This program involved bringing students to schools outside their neighborhoods (and therefore schools they would not normally have the opportunity to attend) to bring racial diversity into balance. This practice was met with a great deal of public resistance from people on both sides dissatisfied with White students traveling to inner city schools and minority students being transported to schools in the suburbs.

No Child Left Behind and Every Student Succeeds

In 2001, the Bush administration passed the No Child Left Behind Act, which requires states to test students in grades three through eight. The results of those tests determine eligibility to receive federal funding. Schools that do not meet the standards set by the Act run the risk of having their funding cut. Sociologists and teachers alike have contended that the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act is far more negative than positive, arguing that a "one size fits all" concept cannot apply to education.

As a result of widespread criticism, many of the national aspects of the act were gradually altered, and in 2015 they were essentially eliminated. That year, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The law decreases the federal role in education. Annual testing is still required, but the achievement and improvement accountability is shifted to the states, which must submit plans and goals regarding their approaches to the U.S. Department of Education for approval. While this aspect of ESSA was delayed for several years under the Trump administration, the Department of Education announced in April, 2020 that Massachusetts had become the first to have its plans approved. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed many states' further action in terms of ESSA approval.

New Views On Standardized Tests

The funding tie-in of the No Child Left Behind Act has led to the social phenomenon commonly called "teaching to the test,"

which describes when a curriculum focuses on equipping students to succeed on standardized tests, to the detriment of broader educational goals and concepts of learning. At issue are two approaches to classroom education: the notion that teachers impart knowledge that students are obligated to absorb, versus the concept of student-centered learning that seeks to teach children not facts, but problem solving abilities and learning skills. Both types of learning have been valued in the U.S. school system. The former, to critics of "teaching to the test," only equips students to regurgitate facts, while the latter, to proponents of the other camp, fosters lifelong learning and transferable work skills.

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Testing (ACT) have for decades served as rites of passage for millions of high school students. Colleges utilize the scores as benchmarks in the admissions process. Since the tests have been important in college admissions, many families place significant emphasis on preparing for them.

However, the disparity in how much money families are able to spend on that preparation results in inequities. SAT/ACT-prep courses and tutors are expensive, and not everyone can afford them. As a result, the inequity found in K-12 education may extend to college.

For years, college admissions programs have been taking these disparities into account, and have based admissions on factors beyond standardized test scores. However, issues with the tests remain. In 2020, a slate of highly selective colleges eliminated their standardized test requirement for admission, and, in 2021 several colleges expanded and extended their "test-optional" approach.

Students With Disabilities

Since the 1978 implementation of what would become the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), states and local districts have continually increased their investment in the quality of education for students with disabilities. The Act's reauthorization, coupled with No Child Left Behind, added requirements and guidance for states and school districts. Until that point in time, students with intellectual or other disabilities had been steadily improving their achievement, graduation rates, and success in post-high school endeavors. However, significant disparities existed (and persist today) based on race, ethnicity, and also on geography. Beyond the quality of education for students with disabilities, the disparity was often most noticeable in the classification of those students. States varied on which disabilities received services, and how much support was provided.

Many students with dyslexia, ADHD, and other disorders are either not diagnosed, not taken seriously, or not given as much support as they require in order to succeed. This can extend into adulthood. For example, ADHD was for years considered only a children's disease, something that people "grew out of." But the disorder can impact people at any age, something that many educators and even some doctors are not aware of.

No Child Left Behind's focus on standards and standardized testing extended to students with disabilities as well. A core goal was that students with disabilities would work toward the same standards and take the same tests (with accommodations, if needed) as did students without disabilities. The outcomes were mixed. Test performance for students with disabilities increased, but so did drop outs. There was also evidence that some schools were less welcoming to students with disabilities, as a way to increase average scores (National Council on Disabilities 2004).

In general, programs have improved to the point that students with disabilities are graduating from high school at a national average of about 73 percent. This is lower than the average graduation rate for students in all populations, which is 88 percent, but it is a vast improvement over previous decades (NCES 2020). However, several issues remain. First, students from lower-income and areas and states with lower education budgets still are offered far fewer services; they graduate high school at a much lower rate than the average. Second, because identification remains a major gap, many students with disabilities may be in the "mainstream" population but are not supported as well as they should be. Even when this group gets to college, they may be starting with a lower level of preparation (Samuels 2019).

School Choice

As we have seen, education is not equal, and people have varied needs. Parents, guardians, and child advocates work to obtain the best schooling for children, which may take them outside the traditional environment.

Public school alternatives to traditional schools include vocational schools, special education schools, magnet schools, charter schools, alternative schools, early college schools, and virtual schools. Private school options may include religious and non-religious options, as well as boarding schools. In some locations, a large number of students engage in these options. For

example, in North Carolina, one in five students does not attend a traditional public school (Hui 2019).

Homeschooling refers to children being educated in their own homes, typically by a parent, instead of in a traditional public or private school system. Proponents of this type of education argue that it provides an outstanding opportunity for student-centered learning while circumventing problems that plague today's education system. Opponents counter that homeschooled children miss out on the opportunity for social development that occurs in standard classroom environments and school settings.

School choice advocates promote the idea that more choice allows parents and students a more effective educational experience that is right for them. They may choose a nontraditional school because it is more aligned with their philosophy, because they've been bullied or had other trouble in their neighborhood school, or because they want to prepare for a specific career (American Federation for Children 2017). School choice opponents may argue that while the alternative schools may be more effective for those students who need them and are fortunate enough to get in, the money would be better spent in general public schools.

Remote and Hybrid Schooling

The COVID-19 pandemic was among the most disruptive events in American education. You likely have your own stories, successes, failures, and preferences based on your experiences as students, parents, and family members. Educators at every level went through stages of intense stress, lack of information, and difficult choices. In many cities and states, families, school districts, governments, and health departments found themselves on different sides of debates. Countless arguments raged over attendance, mental health, instructional quality, safety, testing, academic integrity, and the best ways to move forward as the situation began to improve.

College students and their families went through similar disruptions and debates, compounded by the fact that many students felt that the high costs of particular colleges were not worth it. Overall college enrollment dipped significantly during the pandemic (Koenig 2020).

At the time of this writing, the sociological and educational impact of the pandemic is difficult to assess, though many are studying it. Overall data indicates that most outcomes are negative. Students underperformed, stress and mental health problems increased, and overall plans and pathways were interrupted. Perhaps most damaging was that the pandemic amplified many of the other challenges in education, meaning that under-resourced districts and underserved students were impacted even more severely than others. On the other hand, once instructors and students adapted to the technological and social differences, many began to employ new techniques to ensure more caretaking, connection, differentiated instruction, and innovation. Most agree that education will be changed for years following the pandemic, but it might not all be for the worse.

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11.2.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
credentialism	the emphasis on certificates or degrees to show that a person has a certain skill, has attained a certain level of education, or has met certain job qualifications				
cultural capital	cultural knowledge that serves (metaphorically) as currency to help one navigate a culture				
cultural transmission	the way people come to learn the values, beliefs, and social norms of their culture				
education	a social institution through which a society's children are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills, and cultural norms				
formal education	the learning of academic facts and concepts				
grade inflation	the idea that the achievement level associated with an A today is notably lower than the achievement level associated with A-level work a few decades ago				
Head Start program	a federal program that provides academically focused preschool to students of low socioeconomic status				
hidden curriculum	the type of nonacademic knowledge that people learn through informal learning and cultural transmission				
informal education	education that involves learning about cultural values, norms, and expected behaviors through participation in a society				
No Child Left Behind Act	an act that requires states to test students in prescribed grades, with the results of those tests determining eligibility to receive federal funding				
social placement	the use of education to improve one's social standing				
sorting	classifying students based on academic merit or potential				
tracking	a formalized sorting system that places students on "tracks" (advanced, low achievers) that perpetuate inequalities				
universal access	the equal ability of all people to participate in an education system				

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11.2.6: Section Summary

16.1 Education around the World

Educational systems around the world have many differences, though the same factors—including resources and money—affect every educational system. Educational distribution is a major issue in many nations, including in the United States, where the amount of money spent per student varies greatly by state. Education happens through both formal and informal systems; both foster cultural transmission. Universal access to education is a worldwide concern.

16.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Education

The major sociological theories offer insight into how we understand education. Functionalists view education as an important social institution that contributes both manifest and latent functions. Functionalists see education as serving the needs of society by preparing students for later roles, or functions, in society. Conflict theorists see schools as a means for perpetuating class, racial-ethnic, and gender inequalities. In the same vein, feminist theory focuses specifically on the mechanisms and roots of gender inequality in education. The theory of symbolic interactionism focuses on education as a means for labeling individuals.

16.3 Issues in Education

As schools continue to fill many roles in the lives of students, challenges arise. Historical issues include the racial desegregation of schools, marked by the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruling. In today's diverse educational landscape, socioeconomic status and diversity remain at the heart of issues in education. Students with disabilities have improved outcomes compared to previous decades, but issues with identifying and serving varied needs remain. Other educational issues that impact society include school choice and standardized testing.

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11.2.7: Section Quiz

16.1 Education around the World

1.

What are the major factors that affect education systems throughout the world?

a. Resources and money
b. Student interest
c. Teacher interest
d. Transportation

2.

What do nations that are top-ranked in science and math have in common?

a. They are all in Asia.
b. They recruit top teachers.
c. They spend more money per student.
d. They use cutting-edge technology in classrooms.

3.

Informal education _____.

a. describes when students teach their peers
b. refers to the learning of cultural norms
c. only takes place at home
d. relies on a planned instructional process

4.

Learning from classmates that most students buy lunch on Fridays is an example of _____.

a. cultural transmission
b. educational access
c. formal education
d. informal education

5.

The 1972 case *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* set a precedent for _____.

a. access to education
b. average spending on students
c. desegregation of schools
d. teacher salary

16.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Education

6.

Which of the following is *not* a manifest function of education?

a. Cultural innovation
b. Courtship

c. Social placement
d. Socialization

7.

Because she plans on achieving success in marketing, Tammie is taking courses on managing social media. This is an example of _____.

a. cultural innovation
b. social control
c. social placement
d. socialization

8.

Which theory of education focuses on the ways in which education maintains the status quo?

a. Conflict theory
b. Feminist theory
c. Functionalist theory
d. Symbolic interactionism

9.

Which theory of education focuses on the labels acquired through the educational process?

a. Conflict theory
b. Feminist theory
c. Functionalist theory
d. Symbolic interactionism

10.

What term describes the assignment of students to specific education programs and classes on the basis of test scores, previous grades, or perceived ability?

a. Hidden curriculum
b. Labeling
c. Self-fulfilling prophecy
d. Tracking

11.

Functionalist theory sees education as serving the needs of _____.

a. families
b. society
c. the individual
d. all of the above

12.

Rewarding students for meeting deadlines and respecting authority figures is an example of _____.

a. a latent function
b. a manifest function
c. informal education
d. transmission of moral education

13.

What term describes the separation of students based on merit?

a. Cultural transmission
b. Social control
c. Sorting
d. Hidden curriculum

14.

Conflict theorists see sorting as a way to _____.

a. challenge gifted students
b. perpetuate divisions of socioeconomic status
c. help students who need additional support
d. teach respect for authority

15.

Conflict theorists see IQ tests as being biased. Why?

a. They are scored in a way that is subject to human error.
b. They do not give children with learning disabilities a fair chance to demonstrate their true intelligence.
c. They don't involve enough test items to cover multiple intelligences.
d. They reward affluent students with questions that assume knowledge associated with upper-class culture.

16.3 Issues in Education

16.

Plessy v. Ferguson set the precedent that _____.

a. racial segregation in schools was allowed
b. separate schools for Black and White students were unconstitutional
c. students do not have a right to free speech in public schools
d. students have a right to free speech in public schools

17.

Public schools must guarantee that _____.

a. all students graduate from high school
b. all students receive an equal education
c. per-student spending is equitable
d. the amount spent on each student is equal to that spent regionally

18.

Key predictors for student success include _____.

a. how many school-age siblings the student has
b. socioeconomic status and family background
c. the age of the student when she or he enters kindergarten
d. how many students attend the school

19.

Allowing a student to move to the next grade regardless of whether or not they have met the requirements for that grade is called _____.

a. affirmative action

b. social control
c. social promotion
d. socialization

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11.2.8: Short Answer

16.1 Education around the World

1.

Has there ever been a time when your formal and informal educations in the same setting were at odds? How did you overcome that disconnect?

2.

Do you believe free access to schools has achieved its intended goal? Explain.

16.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Education

3.

Thinking of your school, what are some ways that a conflict theorist would say that your school perpetuates class differences?

4.

Which sociological theory best describes your view of education? Explain why.

5.

Based on what you know about symbolic interactionism and feminist theory, what do you think proponents of those theories see as the role of the school?

16.3 Issues in Education

6.

Is busing a reasonable method of serving students from diverse backgrounds? If not, suggest and support an alternative.

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11.2.9: Further Research

16.1 Education around the World

Though it's a struggle, education is continually being improved in the developing world. To learn how educational programs are being fostered worldwide, explore the Education section of the Center for Global Development's website.

16.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Education

Can tracking actually improve learning? This 2009 article from *Education Next* explores the debate with evidence from Kenya.

The National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest) is committed to ending the bias and other flaws seen in standardized testing. Their mission is to ensure that students, teachers, and schools are evaluated fairly. You can learn more about their mission, as well as the latest in news on test bias and fairness, at their website.

16.3 Issues in Education

Whether or not students in public schools are entitled to free speech is a subject of much debate. In the public school system, there can be a clash between the need for a safe learning environment and the guarantee to free speech granted to U.S. citizens. You can learn more about this complicated issue on this web page about the First Amendment in schools.

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11.3: RELIGION

Why do sociologists study religion? For centuries, humankind has sought to understand and explain the “meaning of life.” Many philosophers believe this contemplation and the desire to understand our place in the universe are what differentiate humankind from other species. Religion, in one form or another, has been found in all human societies since human societies first appeared. Archaeological digs have revealed ritual objects, ceremonial burial sites, and other religious artifacts. Social conflict and even wars often result from religious disputes. To understand a culture, sociologists must study its religion.

11.3.1: Introduction

11.3.2: The Sociological Approach to Religion

11.3.3: World Religions

11.3.4: Religion in the United States

11.3.5: Key Terms

11.3.6: Section Summary

11.3.7: Section Quiz

11.3.8: Short Answer

11.3.9: Further Research

11.3.10: References

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11.3.1: Introduction



Figure 15.1: Religions come in many forms, such as this large megachurch. (Credit: ToBeDaniel/Wikimedia Commons)

Chapter Outline

15.1 The Sociological Approach to Religion
15.2 World Religions
15.3 Religion in the United States

Why do sociologists study religion? For centuries, humankind has sought to understand and explain the “meaning of life.” Many philosophers believe this contemplation and the desire to understand our place in the universe are what differentiate humankind from other species. Religion, in one form or another, has been found in all human societies since human societies first appeared. Archaeological digs have revealed ritual objects, ceremonial burial sites, and other religious artifacts. Social conflict and even wars often result from religious disputes. To understand a culture, sociologists must study its religion.

What is religion? Pioneer sociologist Émile Durkheim described it with the ethereal statement that it consists of “things that surpass the limits of our knowledge” (1915). He went on to elaborate: Religion is “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community, called a church, all those who adhere to them” (1915). Some people associate religion with places of worship (a synagogue or church), others with a practice (confession or meditation), and still others with a concept that guides their daily lives (like dharma or sin). All these people can agree that religion is a system of beliefs, values, and practices concerning what a person holds sacred or considers to be spiritually significant.

Does religion bring fear, wonder, relief, explanation of the unknown or control over freedom and choice? How do our religious perspectives affect our behavior? These are questions sociologists ask and are reasons they study religion. What are peoples' conceptions of the profane and the sacred? How do religious ideas affect the real-world reactions and choices of people in a society?

Religion can also serve as a filter for examining other issues in society and other components of a culture. For example, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and later in during the rise and predominant of the terrorist group ISIS, it became important for teachers, church leaders, and the media to educate Americans about Islam to prevent stereotyping and to promote religious tolerance. Sociological tools and methods, such as surveys, polls, interviews, and analysis of historical data, can be applied to the study of religion in a culture to help us better understand the role religion plays in people’s lives and the way it influences society.

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11.3.2: The Sociological Approach to Religion

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Discuss the historical view of religion from a sociological perspective
- Describe how the major sociological paradigms view religion



Figure 15.2: Universality of religious practice, such as these prayers at the The Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, can create bonds among people who would otherwise be strangers. Muslim people around the world pray five times each day while facing the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca (pictured in Section 15.2). Beyond the religious observance, such a unifying act can build a powerful sense of community. (Credit: Arian Zwegers/flickr).

From the Latin *religio* (respect for what is sacred) and *religare* (to bind, in the sense of an obligation), the term religion describes various systems of belief and practice that define what people consider to be sacred or spiritual (Fasching and deChant 2001; Durkheim 1915). Throughout history, and in societies across the world, leaders have used religious narratives, symbols, and traditions in an attempt to give more meaning to life and understand the universe. Some form of religion is found in every known culture, and it is usually practiced in a public way by a group. The practice of religion can include feasts and festivals, intercession with God or gods, marriage and funeral services, music and art, meditation or initiation, sacrifice or service, and other aspects of culture.

While some people think of religion as something individual because religious beliefs can be highly personal, religion is also a social institution. Social scientists recognize that religion exists as an organized and integrated set of beliefs, behaviors, and norms centered on basic social needs and values. Moreover, religion is a cultural universal found in all social groups. For instance, in every culture, funeral rites are practiced in some way, although these customs vary between cultures and within religious affiliations. Despite differences, there are common elements in a ceremony marking a person's death, such as announcement of the death, care of the deceased, disposition, and ceremony or ritual. These universals, and the differences in the way societies and individuals experience religion, provide rich material for sociological study.

In studying religion, sociologists distinguish between what they term the experience, beliefs, and rituals of a religion. Religious experience refers to the conviction or sensation that we are connected to "the divine." This type of communion might be experienced when people are pray or meditate. Religious beliefs are specific ideas members of a particular faith hold to be true, such as that Jesus Christ was the son of God, or that reincarnation exists. Another illustration of religious beliefs is the creation stories we find in different religions. Religious rituals are behaviors or practices that are either required or expected of the members of a particular group, such as bar mitzvah or confession of sins (Barkan and Greenwood 2003).

The History of Religion as a Sociological Concept

In the wake of nineteenth century European industrialization and secularization, three social theorists attempted to examine the relationship between religion and society: Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx. They are among the founding thinkers of modern sociology.

As stated earlier, French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) defined religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things" (1915). To him, sacred meant extraordinary—something that inspired wonder and that seemed connected to the concept of "the divine." Durkheim argued that "religion happens" in society when there is a separation between the profane (ordinary life) and the sacred (1915). A rock, for example, isn't sacred or profane as it exists. But if someone makes it into a headstone, or another person uses it for landscaping, it takes on different meanings—one sacred, one profane.

Durkheim is generally considered the first sociologist who analyzed religion in terms of its societal impact. Above all, he believed religion is about community: It binds people together (social cohesion), promotes behavior consistency (social control), and offers strength during life's transitions and tragedies (meaning and purpose). By applying the methods of natural science to the study of society, Durkheim held that the source of religion and morality is the collective mind-set of society and that the cohesive bonds of social order result from common values in a society. He contended that these values need to be maintained to maintain social stability.

But what would happen if religion were to decline? This question led Durkheim to posit that religion is not just a social creation but something that represents the power of society: When people celebrate sacred things, they celebrate the power of their society. By this reasoning, even if traditional religion disappeared, society wouldn't necessarily dissolve.

Whereas Durkheim saw religion as a source of social stability, German sociologist and political economist Max Weber (1864–1920) believed it was a precipitator of social change. He examined the effects of religion on economic activities and noticed that heavily Protestant societies—such as those in the Netherlands, England, Scotland, and Germany—were the most highly developed capitalist societies and that their most successful business leaders were Protestant. In his writing *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), he contends that the Protestant work ethic influenced the development of capitalism. Weber noted that certain kinds of Protestantism supported the pursuit of material gain by motivating believers to work hard, be successful, and not spend their profits on frivolous things. (The modern use of "work ethic" comes directly from Weber's Protestant ethic, although it has now lost its religious connotations.)

Big Picture: The Protestant Work Ethic in the Information Age

Max Weber (1904) posited that, in Europe in his time, Protestants were more likely than Catholics to value capitalist ideology, and believed in hard work and savings. He showed that Protestant values directly influenced the rise of capitalism and helped create the modern world order. Weber thought the emphasis on community in Catholicism versus the emphasis on individual achievement in Protestantism made a difference. His century-old claim that the Protestant work ethic led to the development of capitalism has been one of the most important and controversial topics in the sociology of religion. In fact, scholars have found little merit to his contention when applied to modern society (Greeley 1989).

What does the concept of work ethic mean today? The work ethic in the information age has been affected by tremendous cultural and social change, just as workers in the mid- to late nineteenth century were influenced by the wake of the Industrial Revolution. Factory jobs tend to be simple, uninvolved, and require very little thinking or decision making on the part of the worker. Today, the work ethic of the modern workforce has been transformed, as more thinking and decision making is required. Employees also seek autonomy and fulfillment in their jobs, not just wages. Higher levels of education have become necessary, as well as people management skills and access to the most recent information on any given topic. The information age has increased the rapid pace of production expected in many jobs.

On the other hand, the "McDonaldization" of the United States (Hightower 1975; Ritzer 1993), in which many service industries, such as the fast-food industry, have established routinized roles and tasks, has resulted in a "discouragement" of the work ethic. In jobs where roles and tasks are highly prescribed, workers have no opportunity to make decisions. They are considered replaceable commodities as opposed to valued employees. During times of recession, these service jobs may be the only employment possible for younger individuals or those with low-level skills. The pay, working conditions, and robotic nature of the tasks dehumanizes the workers and strips them of incentives for doing quality work.

> Working hard also doesn't seem to have any relationship with Catholic or Protestant religious beliefs anymore, or those of other religions; information age workers expect talent and hard work to be rewarded by material gain and career advancement.

German philosopher, journalist, and revolutionary socialist Karl Marx (1818–1883) also studied the social impact of religion. He believed religion reflects the social stratification of society and that it maintains inequality and perpetuates the status quo. For him, religion was just an extension of working-class (proletariat) economic suffering. He famously argued that religion "is the opium of the people" (1844).

For Durkheim, Weber, and Marx, who were reacting to the great social and economic upheaval of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in Europe, religion was an integral part of society. For Durkheim, religion was a force for cohesion that helped bind the members of society to the group, while Weber believed religion could be understood as something separate from society. Marx considered religion inseparable from the economy and the worker. Religion could not be understood apart from the capitalist society that perpetuated inequality. Despite their different views, these social theorists all believed in the centrality of religion to society.

Theoretical Perspectives on Religion



Figure 15.3: Functionalists believe religion meets many important needs for people, including group cohesion and companionship. Hindu pilgrims come from far away to Ram Kund, a holy place in the city of Nashik, India. One of the rituals performed is intended to bring salvation to the souls of people who have passed away. What need is this practice fulfilling? (Credit: Arian Zwegers/flickr)

Modern-day sociologists often apply one of three major theoretical perspectives. These views offer different lenses through which to study and understand society: functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory. Let's explore how scholars applying these paradigms understand religion.

Functionalism

Functionalists contend that religion serves several functions in society. Religion, in fact, depends on society for its existence, value, and significance, and vice versa. From this perspective, religion serves several purposes, like providing answers to spiritual mysteries, offering emotional comfort, and creating a place for social interaction and social control.

In providing answers, religion defines the spiritual world and spiritual forces, including divine beings. For example, it helps answer questions like, "How was the world created?" "Why do we suffer?" "Is there a plan for our lives?" and "Is there an afterlife?" As another function, religion provides emotional comfort in times of crisis. Religious rituals bring order, comfort, and organization through shared familiar symbols and patterns of behavior.

One of the most important functions of religion, from a functionalist perspective, is the opportunities it creates for social

interaction and the formation of groups. It provides social support and social networking and offers a place to meet others who hold similar values and a place to seek help (spiritual and material) in times of need. Moreover, it can foster group cohesion and integration. Because religion can be central to many people's concept of themselves, sometimes there is an "in-group" versus "out-group" feeling toward other religions in our society or within a particular practice. On an extreme level, the Inquisition, the Salem witch trials, and anti-Semitism are all examples of this dynamic. Finally, religion promotes social control: It reinforces social norms such as appropriate styles of dress, following the law, and regulating sexual behavior.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists view religion as an institution that helps maintain patterns of social inequality. For example, the Vatican has a tremendous amount of wealth, while the average income of Catholic parishioners is small. According to this perspective, religion has been used to support the "divine right" of oppressive monarchs and to justify unequal social structures, like India's caste system.

Conflict theorists are critical of the way many religions promote the idea that believers should be satisfied with existing circumstances because they are divinely ordained. This power dynamic has been used by Christian institutions for centuries to keep poor people poor and to teach them that they shouldn't be concerned with what they lack because their "true" reward (from a religious perspective) will come after death. Conflict theorists also point out that those in power in a religion are often able to dictate practices, rituals, and beliefs through their interpretation of religious texts or via proclaimed direct communication from the divine.



Figure 15.4: Many religions, including the Catholic faith, have long prohibited women from becoming spiritual leaders. Feminist theorists focus on gender inequality and promote leadership roles for women in religion. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

The feminist perspective is a conflict theory view that focuses specifically on gender inequality. In terms of religion, feminist theorists assert that, although women are typically the ones to socialize children into a religion, they have traditionally held very few positions of power within religions. A few religions and religious denominations are more gender equal, but male dominance remains the norm of most.

Sociology in the Real World: Rational Choice Theory: Can Economic Theory Be Applied to Religion?

How do people decide which religion to follow, if any? How does one pick a church or decide which denomination "fits" best? Rational choice theory (RCT) is one way social scientists have attempted to explain these behaviors. The theory proposes that people are self-interested, though not necessarily selfish, and that people make rational choices—choices that can reasonably be expected to maximize positive outcomes while minimizing negative outcomes. Sociologists Roger Finke and Rodney Stark (1988) first considered the use of RCT to explain some aspects of religious behavior, with the assumption that there is a basic human need for religion in terms of providing belief in a supernatural being, a sense of meaning in life, and belief in life after death. Religious explanations of these concepts are presumed to be more satisfactory than scientific

explanations, which may help to account for the continuation of strong religious connectedness in countries such as the United States, despite predictions of some competing theories for a great decline in religious affiliation due to modernization and religious pluralism.

Another assumption of RCT is that religious organizations can be viewed in terms of "costs" and "rewards." Costs are not only monetary requirements, but are also the time, effort, and commitment demands of any particular religious organization. Rewards are the intangible benefits in terms of belief and satisfactory explanations about life, death, and the supernatural, as well as social rewards from membership. RCT proposes that, in a pluralistic society with many religious options, religious organizations will compete for members, and people will choose between different churches or denominations in much the same way they select other consumer goods, balancing costs and rewards in a rational manner. In this framework, RCT also explains the development and decline of churches, denominations, sects, and even cults; this limited part of the very complex RCT theory is the only aspect well supported by research data.

Critics of RCT argue that it doesn't fit well with human spiritual needs, and many sociologists disagree that the costs and rewards of religion can even be meaningfully measured or that individuals use a rational balancing process regarding religious affiliation. The theory doesn't address many aspects of religion that individuals may consider essential (such as faith) and further fails to account for agnostics and atheists who don't seem to have a similar need for religious explanations. Critics also believe this theory overuses economic terminology and structure and point out that terms such as "rational" and "reward" are unacceptably defined by their use; they would argue that the theory is based on faulty logic and lacks external, empirical support. A scientific explanation for *why* something occurs can't reasonably be supported by the fact that it *does* occur. RCT is widely used in economics and to a lesser extent in criminal justice, but the application of RCT in explaining the religious beliefs and behaviors of people and societies is still being debated in sociology today.

Symbolic Interactionism

Rising from the concept that our world is socially constructed, symbolic interactionism studies the symbols and interactions of everyday life. To interactionists, beliefs and experiences are not sacred unless individuals in a society regard them as sacred. The Star of David in Judaism, the cross in Christianity, and the crescent and star in Islam are examples of sacred symbols. Interactionists are interested in what these symbols communicate. Because interactionists study one-on-one, everyday interactions between individuals, a scholar using this approach might ask questions focused on this dynamic. The interaction between religious leaders and practitioners, the role of religion in the ordinary components of everyday life, and the ways people express religious values in social interactions—all might be topics of study to an interactionist.



Figure 15.5: The symbols of fourteen religions are depicted here. In no particular order, they represent Judaism, Wicca, Taoism, Christianity, Confucianism, Baha'i, Druidism, Islam, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Shinto, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism. Can you match the symbol to the religion? What might a symbolic interactionist make of these symbols? (Credit: ReligiousTolerance.org)

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11.3.3: World Religions

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the differences between various types of religious organizations
- Classify religion, like animism, polytheism, monotheism, and atheism
- Describe several major world religions



Figure 15.6: Cultural traditions may emerge from religious traditions, or may influence them. People from the same branch of Christianity may celebrate holidays very differently based on where they live. In this image from Guatemala, women dress as if for a funeral as they play a prominent role in a Holy Week (Semena Santa) procession. Even in other nearby Central American countries, the procession may look different from this one.

The major religions of the world (Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Taoism, and Judaism) differ in many respects, including how each religion is organized and the belief system each upholds. Other differences include the nature of belief in a higher power, the history of how the world and the religion began, and the use of sacred texts and objects.

Types of Religious Organizations

Religions organize themselves—their institutions, practitioners, and structures—in a variety of fashions. For instance, when the Roman Catholic Church emerged, it borrowed many of its organizational principles from the ancient Roman military and turned senators into cardinals, for example. Sociologists use different terms, like ecclesia, denomination, and sect, to define these types of organizations. Scholars are also aware that these definitions are not static. Most religions transition through different organizational phases. For example, Christianity began as a cult, transformed into a sect, and today exists as an ecclesia.

Cults, like sects, are new religious groups. In the United States today this term often carries pejorative connotations. However, almost all religions began as cults and gradually progressed to levels of greater size and organization. The term cult is sometimes used interchangeably with the term new religious movement (NRM). The new term may be an attempt to lessen the negativity that the term ‘cult’ has amassed.

Controversy exists over whether some groups are cults, perhaps due in part to media sensationalism over groups like polygamous Mormons or the Peoples Temple followers who died at Jonestown, Guyana. Some groups that are controversially labeled as cults today include the Church of Scientology and the Hare Krishna movement.

A sect is a small and relatively new group. Most of the well-known Christian denominations in the United States today began as sects. For example, the Methodists and Baptists protested against their parent Anglican Church in England, just as Henry VIII protested against the Catholic Church by forming the Anglican Church. From “protest” comes the term Protestant.

Occasionally, a sect is a breakaway group that may be in tension with larger society. They sometimes claim to be returning to “the fundamentals” or to contest the veracity of a particular doctrine. When membership in a sect increases over time, it may grow into a denomination. Often a sect begins as an offshoot of a denomination, when a group of members believes they should separate from the larger group.

Some sects do not grow into denominations. Sociologists call these established sects. Established sects, such as the Amish or Jehovah’s Witnesses fall halfway between sect and denomination on the ecclesia–cult continuum because they have a mixture of sect-like and denomination-like characteristics.

A denomination is a large, mainstream religious organization, but it does not claim to be official or state sponsored. It is one religion among many. For example, Baptist, African Methodist Episcopal, Catholic, and Seventh-day Adventist are all Christian denominations.

The term ecclesia, originally referring to a political assembly of citizens in ancient Athens, Greece, now refers to a congregation. In sociology, the term is used to refer to a religious group that most all members of a society belong to. It is considered a nationally recognized, or official, religion that holds a religious monopoly and is closely allied with state and secular powers. The United States does not have an ecclesia by this standard; in fact, this is the type of religious organization that many of the first colonists came to America to escape.

There are many countries in Europe, Asia, Central and South America, and Africa that are considered to have an official state-church. Most of their citizens share similar beliefs, and the state-church has significant involvement in national institutions, which includes restricting the behavior of those with different belief systems. The state-church of England is the Church of England or the Anglican Church established in the 16th century by King Henry VIII. In Saudi Arabia, Islamic law is enforced, and public display of any other religion is illegal. Using this definition then, it can be said that the major Abrahamic systems of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, are ecclesia; in some regions, they are considered a state-church.



Figure 15.7: How might you classify the Mennonites? As a cult, a sect, or a denomination? (Credit: Frenkieb/flickr)

One way to remember these religious organizational terms is to think of cults, sects, denominations, and ecclesia representing a continuum, with increasing influence on society, where cults are least influential and ecclesia are most influential.

Types of Religions

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have strived to classify religions. One widely accepted categorization that helps people understand different belief systems considers what or who people worship (if anything). Using this method of classification,

religions might fall into one of these basic categories, as shown in Table 15.1.

Table 15.1: One way scholars have categorized religions is by classifying what or who they hold to be divine.

Religious Classification	What/Who Is Divine	Example
Polytheism	Multiple gods	Belief systems of the ancient Greeks and Romans
Monotheism	Single god	Judaism, Islam
Atheism	No deities	Atheism
Animism	Nonhuman beings (animals, plants, natural world)	Indigenous nature worship (Shinto)
Totemism	Human-natural being connection	Ojibwa (Native American) beliefs

Note that some religions may be practiced—or understood—in various categories. For instance, the Christian notion of the Holy Trinity (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit) defies the definition of monotheism, which is a religion based on belief in a single deity, to some scholars. Similarly, many Westerners view the multiple manifestations of Hinduism's godhead as polytheistic, which is a religion based on belief in multiple deities,, while Hindus might describe those manifestations are a monotheistic parallel to the Christian Trinity. Some Japanese practice Shinto, which follows animism, which is a religion that believes in the divinity of nonhuman beings, like animals, plants, and objects of the natural world, while people who practice totemism believe in a divine connection between humans and other natural beings.

It is also important to note that every society also has nonbelievers, such as atheists, who do not believe in a divine being or entity, and agnostics, who hold that ultimate reality (such as God) is unknowable. While typically not an organized group, atheists and agnostics represent a significant portion of the population. It is important to recognize that being a nonbeliever in a divine entity does not mean the individual subscribes to no morality. Indeed, many Nobel Peace Prize winners and other great humanitarians over the centuries would have classified themselves as atheists or agnostics.

The World's Religions and Philosophies

Religions have emerged and developed across the world. Some have been short-lived, while others have persisted and grown. In this section, we will explore seven of the world's major religions.

Hinduism

The oldest religion in the world, Hinduism originated in the Indus River Valley about 4,500 years ago in what is now modern-day northwest India and Pakistan. It arose contemporaneously with ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures. With roughly one billion followers, Hinduism is the third-largest of the world's religions. Hindus believe in a divine power that can manifest as different entities. Three main incarnations—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva—are sometimes compared to the manifestations of the divine in the Christian Trinity.

Multiple sacred texts, collectively called the Vedas, contain hymns and rituals from ancient India and are mostly written in Sanskrit. Hindus generally believe in a set of principles called dharma, which refer to one's duty in the world that corresponds with "right" actions. Hindus also believe in karma, or the notion that spiritual ramifications of one's actions are balanced cyclically in this life or a future life (reincarnation).

Buddhism

Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama around 500 B.C.E. Siddhartha was said to have given up a comfortable, upper-class life to follow one of poverty and spiritual devotion. At the age of thirty-five, he famously meditated under a sacred fig tree and vowed not to rise before he achieved enlightenment (*bodhi*). After this experience, he became known as Buddha, or "enlightened one." Followers were drawn to Buddha's teachings and the practice of meditation, and he later established a monastic order.



Figure 15.8: Meditation is an important practice in Buddhism. A Tibetan monk is shown here engaged in solitary meditation. (Credit: Prince Roy/flickr)

Buddha's teachings encourage Buddhists to lead a moral life by accepting the four Noble Truths: 1) life is suffering, 2) suffering arises from attachment to desires, 3) suffering ceases when attachment to desires ceases, and 4) freedom from suffering is possible by following the "middle way." The concept of the "middle way" is central to Buddhist thinking, which encourages people to live in the present and to practice acceptance of others (Smith 1991). Buddhism also tends to deemphasize the role of a godhead, instead stressing the importance of personal responsibility (Craig 2002).

Confucianism

Confucianism was developed by Kung Fu-Tzu (Confucius), who lived in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.E. An extraordinary teacher, his lessons—which were about self-discipline, respect for authority and tradition, and *jen* (the kind treatment of every person)—were collected in a book called the *Analects*.

Many consider Confucianism more of a philosophy or social system than a religion because it focuses on sharing wisdom about moral practices but doesn't involve any type of specific worship; nor does it have formal objects. In fact, its teachings were developed in context of problems of social anarchy and a near-complete deterioration of social cohesion. Dissatisfied with the social solutions put forth, Kung Fu-Tzu developed his own model of religious morality to help guide society (Smith 1991).

Taoism

In Taoism, the purpose of life is inner peace and harmony. Tao is usually translated as "way" or "path." The founder of the religion is generally recognized to be a man named Laozi, who lived sometime in the sixth century B.C.E. in China. Taoist beliefs emphasize the virtues of compassion and moderation.

The central concept of *tao* can be understood to describe a spiritual reality, the order of the universe, or the way of modern life in harmony with the former two. The ying-yang symbol and the concept of polar forces are central Taoist ideas (Smith 1991). Some scholars have compared this Chinese tradition to its Confucian counterpart by saying that "whereas Confucianism is concerned with day-to-day rules of conduct, Taoism is concerned with a more spiritual level of being" (Feng and English 1972).

Judaism

After their Exodus from Egypt in the thirteenth century B.C.E., Jews, a nomadic society, became monotheistic, worshipping only one God. The Jews' covenant, or promise of a special relationship with Yahweh (God), is an important element of Judaism. Abraham, a key figure in the foundation of the Jewish faith, is also recognized as a foundation of Christianity and Islam, resulting in the three religions and a few others being referred to as "Abrahamic." The sacred Jewish text is the Torah, which Christians also follow as the first five books of the Bible. Talmud refers to a collection of sacred Jewish oral interpretation of the Torah. Jews

emphasize moral behavior and action in this world as opposed to beliefs or personal salvation in the next world. Since Moses was a leader of the Jewish people when he recorded the Ten Commandments, their culture is interwoven with that of other religions and of governments who adhere to "Judeo-Christian values."

Jewish people may identify as an ethnic group as well as a religion (Glauz-Todrank 2014). After numerous invasions and wars in the Jewish homeland, culminating in the destruction of the Second Temple, Jewish people relocated to other parts of the world in what is known as the Jewish Diaspora. Large populations settled in Europe, and eventually migrated to the United States. Though a contemporary Jewish person's ancestors may hail from Eastern Europe, the Middle East, or the Iberian Peninsula, many identify themselves as people of Jewish origin, rather than indicating the nation from which their ancestors emigrated (Chervyakov 2010). Today, Jewish people are the second-largest religious group in the United States (Pew Research Center 2018), and the United States is also home to the second largest population of Jewish people, with Israel having the largest.

Islam

Islam is monotheistic religion, and it follows the teaching of the prophet Muhammad, born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in 570 C.E. Muhammad is seen only as a prophet, not as a divine being, and he is believed to be the messenger of Allah (God), who is divine. The followers of Islam are called Muslims.

Islam means "peace" and "submission." The sacred text for Muslims is the Qur'an (or Koran). As with Christianity's Old Testament, many of the Qur'an stories are shared with the Jewish faith. Divisions exist within Islam, but all Muslims are guided by five beliefs or practices, often called "pillars": 1) Allah is the only god, and Muhammad is his prophet, 2) daily prayer, 3) helping those in poverty, 4) fasting as a spiritual practice, and 5) pilgrimage to the holy center of Mecca.

About one-fifth of the world's population identifies as Muslim. While there is a significant concentration of Muslim people in the Middle East, they span the globe. The most country with the most Muslim people is is Indonesia, an island country in Southeast Asia. In the United States, Muslim people make up the third-largest religious group after Christian and Jewish people, and that population is expected to become larger than the U.S. Jewish population by about 2040 (Pew Research Center 2018).

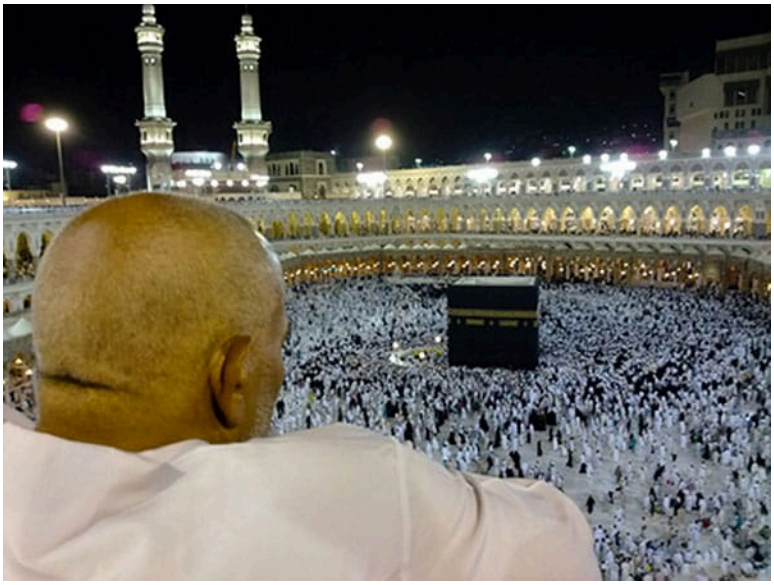


Figure 15.9: One of the cornerstones of Muslim practice is journeying to the religion's most sacred place, Mecca. The cube structure is the Kaaba (also spelled Ka'bah or Kabah). (Credit: Raeky/flickr)

Christianity

Today the largest religion in the world, Christianity began 2,000 years ago in Palestine, with Jesus of Nazareth, a leader who taught his followers about *caritas* (charity) or treating others as you would like to be treated yourself.

The sacred text for Christians is the Bible. While Jews, Christians, and Muslims share many of same historical religious stories, their beliefs verge. In their shared sacred stories, it is suggested that the son of God—a messiah—will return to save God's followers. While Christians believe that he already appeared in the person of Jesus Christ, Jews and Muslims disagree. While

they recognize Christ as an important historical figure, their traditions don't believe he's the son of God, and their faiths see the prophecy of the messiah's arrival as not yet fulfilled.



Figure 15.10: The renowned Howard Gospel Choir of Howard University is made up of students, alumni, and community members. It performs on campus and throughout the world, such as this performance in Ukraine. (Credit: US Embassy Kyiv Ukraine/flickr)

The largest group of Christians in the United States are members of the Protestant religions, including members of the Baptist, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal, and other churches. However, more people identify as Catholic than any one of those individual Protestant religions (Pew Research Center, 2020).

Different Christian groups have variations among their sacred texts. For instance, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, an established Christian sect, also uses the Book of Mormon, which they believe details other parts of Christian doctrine and Jesus' life that aren't included in the Bible. Similarly, the Catholic Bible includes the Apocrypha, a collection that, while part of the 1611 King James translation, is no longer included in Protestant versions of the Bible. Although monotheistic, many Christians describe their god through three manifestations that they call the Holy Trinity: the father (God), the son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a term Christians often use to describe religious experience, or how they feel the presence of the sacred in their lives. One foundation of Christian doctrine is the Ten Commandments, which decry acts considered sinful, including theft, murder, and adultery.

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11.3.4: Religion in the United States

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Give examples of religion as an agent of social change
- Describe current U.S. trends including megachurches, stances on LGBTQ rights, and religious identification.



Figure 15.11: Religion and religious observance play a key role in every life stage, deepening its emotional and cognitive connections. Many religions have a ceremony or sacrament to bring infants into the faith, as this Baptism does for Christians. In Judaism, adolescents transition to adulthood through ceremonies like the Bat Mitzvah or Bar Mitzvah. And many couples cement their relationship through religious marriage ceremonies, as did these members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. (Credit: a: John Ragai/flickr; b: Michele Pace/flickr; c: kristin klein/flickr)

In examining the state of religion in the United States today, we see the complexity of religious life in our society, plus emerging trends like the rise of the megachurch, secularization, and the role of religion in social change.

Religion and Social Change

Religion has historically been an impetus for and a barrier against social change. With Gutenberg's invention of the printing press, spreading ideas became far easier to share. Many pamphlets for all sorts of interests were printed, but one of Gutenberg's greatest contributions may have been mass producing the Christian Bible. The translation of sacred texts into everyday, nonscholarly language empowered people to shape their religions. However, printers did not just work for the Church. They printed many other texts, including those that were not aligned with Church doctrine. Martin Luther had his complaints against the Church (the 95 Theses) printed in 1517, which allowed them to be distributed throughout Europe. His convictions eventually led to the Protestant Reformation, which revolutionized not only the Church, but much of Western civilization. Disagreements between religious groups and instances of religious persecution have led to wars and genocides. The United States is no stranger to religion as an agent of social change. In fact, many of the United States' early European arrivals were acting largely on religious convictions when they were driven to settle in the United States.

Liberation Theology

Liberation theology began as a movement within the Roman Catholic Church in the 1950s and 1960s in Latin America, and it combines Christian principles with political activism. It uses the church to promote social change via the political arena, and it is most often seen in attempts to reduce or eliminate social injustice, discrimination, and poverty. A list of proponents of this kind of social justice (although some pre-date liberation theory) could include Francis of Assisi, Leo Tolstoy, Martin Luther King Jr., and Desmond Tutu.

Although begun as a moral reaction against the poverty caused by social injustice in that part of the world, today liberation theology is an international movement that encompasses many churches and denominations. Liberation theologians discuss theology from the point of view of the poor and the oppressed, and some interpret the scriptures as a call to action against poverty and injustice. In Europe and North America, feminist theology has emerged from liberation theology as a movement to bring social justice to women.

Social Policy and Debate: Religious Leaders and the Rainbow of Gay Pride

What happens when a religious leader officiates a gay marriage against denomination policies? What about when that same minister defends the action in part by coming out and making her own lesbian relationship known to the church?

In the case of the Reverend Amy DeLong, it meant a church trial. Some leaders in her denomination assert that homosexuality is incompatible with their faith, while others feel this type of discrimination has no place in a modern church (Barrick 2011).

As the LGBTQ community increasingly earns basic civil rights, how will religious communities respond? Many religious groups have traditionally discounted LGBTQ sexualities as "wrong." However, these organizations have moved closer to respecting human rights by, for example, increasingly recognizing women as an equal gender. The Episcopal Church, a Christian sect comprising about 2.3 million people in the United States, has been far more welcoming to LGBTQ people. Progressing from a supportive proclamation in 1976, the Episcopal Church in the USA declared in 2015 that its clergy could preside over and sanction same-sex marriages (HRC 2019). The decision was not without its detractors, and as recently as 2020 an Episcopal bishop (a senior leader) in upstate New York was dismissed for prohibiting same-sex marriages in his diocese. (NBC, 2020). Lutheran and Anglican denominations also support the blessing of same-sex marriages, though they do not necessarily offer them the full recognition of opposite-sex marriages.

Catholic Church leader Pope Francis has been pushing for a more open church, and some Catholic bishops have been advocating for a more "gay-friendly" church (McKenna, 2014). For these and some other policies, Pope Francis has met vocal resistance from Church members and some more conservative bishops, while other Catholic bishops have supported same-sex marriages.

American Jewish denominations generally recognize and support the blessing of same-sex marriages, and Jewish rabbis have been supporters of LGBTQ rights from the Civil Rights era. In other religions, such as Hinduism, which does not have a governing body common to other religions, LGBTQ people are generally welcomed, and the decision to perform same-sex marriages is at the discretion of individual priests.

Megachurches

A megachurch is a Christian church that has a very large congregation averaging more than 2,000 people who attend regular weekly services. As of 2009, the largest megachurch in the United States was in Houston Texas, boasting an average weekly attendance of more than 43,000 (Bogan 2009). Megachurches exist in other parts of the world, especially in South Korea, Brazil, and several African countries, but the rise of the megachurch in the United States is a fairly recent phenomenon that has developed primarily in California, Florida, Georgia, and Texas.

Since 1970 the number of megachurches in this country has grown from about fifty to more than 1,000, most of which are attached to the Southern Baptist denomination (Bogan 2009). Approximately six million people are members of these churches (Bird and Thumma 2011). The architecture of these church buildings often resembles a sport or concert arena. The church may include jumbotrons (large-screen televisual technology usually used in sports arenas to show close-up shots of an event). Worship services feature contemporary music with drums and electric guitars and use state-of-the-art sound equipment. The buildings sometimes include food courts, sports and recreation facilities, and bookstores. Services such as child care and mental health counseling are often offered.

Typically, a single, highly charismatic pastor leads the megachurch; at present, most are male. Some megachurches and their preachers have a huge television presence, and viewers all around the country watch and respond to their shows and fundraising.

Besides size, U.S. megachurches share other traits, including conservative theology, evangelism, use of technology and social networking (Facebook, Twitter, podcasts, blogs), hugely charismatic leaders, few financial struggles, multiple sites, and predominantly white membership. They list their main focuses as youth activities, community service, and study of the Scripture

(Hartford Institute for Religion Research b).

Secularization

Historical sociologists Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud anticipated secularization and claimed that the modernization of society would bring about a decrease in the influence of religion. Weber believed membership in distinguished clubs would outpace membership in Protestant sects as a way for people to gain authority or respect.

Conversely, some people suggest secularization is a root cause of many social problems, such as divorce, drug use, and educational downturn. One-time presidential contender Michele Bachmann even linked Hurricane Irene and the 2011 earthquake felt in Washington D.C. to politicians' failure to listen to God (Ward 2011). Similar statements have been made about Hurricane Harvey being the result of Houston's progressivism and for the city electing a lesbian mayor.

While some the United States seems to be increasingly secular, that change is occurring with a concurrent rise in fundamentalism. Compared to other democratic, industrialized countries, the United States is generally perceived to be a fairly religious nation. Whereas 65 percent of U.S. adults in a 2009 Gallup survey said religion was an important part of their daily lives, the numbers were lower in Spain (49 percent), Canada (42 percent), France (30 percent), the United Kingdom (27 percent), and Sweden (17 percent) (Crabtree and Pelham 2009).

Secularization interests social observers because it entails a pattern of change in a fundamental social institution. Much has been made about the rising number of people who identify as having no religious affiliation, which in a 2019 Pew Poll reached a new high of 26 percent, up from 17 percent in 2009 (Pew Research Center, 2020). But the motivations and meanings of having "no religion" vary significantly. A person who is a part of a religion may make a difficult decision to formally leave it based on disagreements with the organization or the tenets of the faith. Other people may simply "drift away," and decide to no longer identify themselves as members of a religion. Some people are not raised as a part of a religion, and therefore make a decision whether or not to join one later in life. And finally, a growing number of people identify as spiritual but not religious (SBNR) and they may pray, meditate, and even celebrate holidays in ways quite similar to people affiliated with formal religions; they may also find spirituality through other avenues that range from nature to martial arts. Sociologists and other social scientists may study these motivations and their impact on aspects of individuals' lives, as well as cultural and group implications.

In addition to the identification and change regarding people's religious affiliation, religious observance is also interesting. Researchers analyze the depth of involvement in formal institutions, like attending worship, and informal or individual practices. As shown in Table 15.2, of the religions surveyed, members of the Jehovah's Witness religion attend religious services more regularly than members of other religions in the United States. A number of Protestant religions also have relatively high attendance. Regular attendance at services may play a role in building social structure and acceptance of new people into the general community.

Table 15.2: A survey of U.S. adults asked about regularity of religious service attendance. (Credit: Pew Research Center, 2020)

Religious tradition	At least once a week	Once or twice a month/a few times a year	Seldom/ never
Buddhist	18%	50%	31%
Catholic	39%	40%	20%
Evangelical Protestant	58%	30%	12%
Hindu	18%	60%	21%
Historically Black Protestant	53%	36%	10%
Jehovah's Witness	85%	11%	3%
Jewish	19%	49%	31%
Mainline Protestant	33%	43%	24%
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints	77%	14%	9%
Muslim	45%	31%	22%

Religious tradition	At least once a week	Once or twice a month/a few times a year	Seldom/ never
Orthodox Christian	31%	54%	15%
Unaffiliated (religious "nones")	4%	24%	72%

Sociology in the Real World: Thank God for that Touchdown: Separation of Church and State

Imagine three public universities with football games scheduled on Saturday. At University A, a group of students in the stands who share the same faith decide to form a circle amid the spectators to pray for the team. For fifteen minutes, people in the circle share their prayers aloud among their group. At University B, the team ahead at halftime decides to join together in prayer, giving thanks and seeking support from God. This lasts for the first ten minutes of halftime on the sidelines of the field while spectators watch. At University C, the game program includes, among its opening moments, two minutes set aside for the team captain to share a prayer of his choosing with the spectators.

In the tricky area of separation of church and state, which of these actions is allowed and which is forbidden? In our three fictional scenarios, the last example is against the law while the first two situations are perfectly acceptable.

In the United States, a nation founded on the principles of religious freedom (many settlers were escaping religious persecution in Europe), how stringently do we adhere to this ideal? How well do we respect people's right to practice any belief system of their choosing? The answer just might depend on what religion you practice.

In 2003, for example, a lawsuit escalated in Alabama regarding a monument to the Ten Commandments in a public building. In response, a poll was conducted by *USA Today*, CNN, and Gallup. Among the findings: 70 percent of people approved of a Christian Ten Commandments monument in public, while only 33 percent approved of a monument to the Islamic Qur'an in the same space. Similarly, survey respondents showed a 64 percent approval of social programs run by Christian organizations, but only 41 percent approved of the same programs run by Muslim groups (Newport 2003).

These statistics suggest that, for most people in the United States, freedom of religion is less important than the religion under discussion. And this is precisely the point made by those who argue for separation of church and state. According to their contention, any state-sanctioned recognition of religion suggests endorsement of one belief system at the expense of all others—contradictory to the idea of freedom of religion.

So what violates separation of church and state and what is acceptable? Myriad lawsuits continue to test the answer. In the case of the three fictional examples above, the issue of spontaneity is key, as is the existence (or lack thereof) of planning on the part of event organizers.

The next time you're at a state event—political, public school, community—and the topic of religion comes up, consider where it falls in this debate.

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11.3.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
animism	the religion that believes in the divinity of nonhuman beings, like animals, plants, and objects of the natural world				
atheism	the belief in no deities				
cults	religious groups that are small, secretive, and highly controlling of members and have a charismatic leader				
denomination	a large, mainstream religion that is not sponsored by the state				
ecclesia	a religion that is considered the state religion				
established sects	sects that last but do not become denominations				
liberation theology	the use of a church to promote social change via the political arena				
megachurch	a Christian church that has a very large congregation averaging more than 2,000 people who attend regular weekly services				
monotheism	a religion based on belief in a single deity				
polytheism	a religion based on belief in multiple deities				
religion	a system of beliefs, values, and practices concerning what a person holds to be sacred or spiritually significant				
religious beliefs	specific ideas that members of a particular faith hold to be true				
religious experience	the conviction or sensation that one is connected to “the divine”				
religious rituals	behaviors or practices that are either required for or expected of the members of a particular group				
sect	a small, new offshoot of a denomination				
totemism	the belief in a divine connection between humans and other natural beings				

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11.3.6: Section Summary

15.1 The Sociological Approach to Religion

Religion describes the beliefs, values, and practices related to sacred or spiritual concerns. Social theorist Émile Durkheim defined religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things" (1915). Max Weber believed religion could be a force for social change. Karl Marx viewed religion as a tool used by capitalist societies to perpetuate inequality. Religion is a social institution, because it includes beliefs and practices that serve the needs of society. Religion is also an example of a cultural universal, because it is found in all societies in one form or another. Functionalism, conflict theory, and interactionism all provide valuable ways for sociologists to understand religion.

15.2 World Religions

Sociological terms for different kinds of religious organizations are, in order of decreasing influence in society, ecclesia, denomination, sect, and cult. Religions can be categorized according to what or whom its followers worship. Some of the major, and oldest, of the world's religions and related philosophies include Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. In the United States, the most widespread religions are Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

15.3 Religion in the United States

Liberation theology combines Christian principles with political activism to address social injustice, discrimination, and poverty. Megachurches are those with a membership of more than 2,000 regular attendees, and they are a vibrant, growing and highly influential segment of U.S. religious life. While the numbers of people who identify as having no religious affiliation is rising in the United States, individual motivations and ways of identifying may vary significantly.

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11.3.7: Section Quiz

15.1 The Sociological Approach to Religion

1.

In what ways does religion serve the role of a social institution?

a. Religions have a complex and integrated set of norms.
b. Religious practices and beliefs are related to societal values.
c. Religions often meet several basic needs.
d. All of the above

2.

A cultural universal is something that:

a. addresses all aspects of a group's behavior
b. is found in all cultures
c. is based on social norms
d. may or may not be of value in meeting social needs

3.

Which of the main theoretical perspectives would approach religion from the micro-level, studying how religion impacts an individual's sense of support and well-being?

a. Functionalism
b. Symbolic interactionism
c. Conflict theory
d. Feminism

4.

Which perspective most emphasizes the ways in which religion helps keep the social system running smoothly?

a. Functional perspective
b. Symbolic interactionist perspective
c. Conflict perspective
d. Feminist perspective

5.

Which socialist perspective most emphasizes the ways in which religion helps to maintain social inequalities within a society?

a. Functional
b. Symbolic interactionist
c. Conflict theory
d. Feminist perspective

6.

Which of the following do the functionalist and conflict perspectives share?

a. Position that religion relates to social control, enforcing social norms
b. Emphasis on religion as providing social support
c. Belief that religion helps explain the mysteries of life

d. None of the above

7.

The Protestant work ethic was viewed in terms of its relationship to:

a. evolution and natural selection
b. capitalism
c. determinism
d. prejudice and discrimination

15.2 World Religions

8.

What are some denominations of the Christian Protestant church?

a. Catholic and Jewish
b. Jehovah's Witnesses and Presbyterians
c. Scientology and Hare Krishna
d. Methodist and Seventh-day Adventist

9.

A sect:

a. has generally grown so large that it needs new buildings and multiple leaders
b. often believes it must split from the larger group to return to important fundamentals
c. is another term for a cult
d. All of the above

10.

The main difference between an ecclesia and a denomination is:

a. the number of followers or believers is much larger for denominations
b. the geographical location varies for ecclesia versus denominations
c. ecclesia are state-sponsored and considered an official religion
d. there are no important differences; the terms are interchangeable

11.

Some controversial groups that may be mislabeled as cults include:

a. Scientology and the Hare Krishna
b. the Peoples Temple and Heaven's Gate
c. the Branch Davidians and the Manson Family
d. Quakers and Pentecostals

12.

In what part of the world have Confucianism and Taoism been primarily practiced?

a. India
b. Europe
c. China
d. The Middle East

13.

Many stories in the sacred text of Judaism are:

a. referred to as the Apocrypha
b. oral traditions only because Judaism has no sacred text
c. shared by Christianity and Islam
d. no longer part of the Torah

14.

What do Christianity and Islam have in common?

a. Both believe in a single supreme god.
b. Both share many of the same stories in their central religious texts.
c. Both believe in an afterlife.
d. All of the above

15.3 Religion in the United States

15.

Social scientists refer to the use of a church to combat social injustice in the political realm as:

a. the protestant work ethic
b. conflict management
c. liberation theology
d. justice work

16.

Megachurches tend to have:

a. a variety of male and female clergy
b. numerous buildings in which to meet
c. high attendance for only a limited time
d. large arenas where services are held

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11.3.8: Short Answer

15.1 The Sociological Approach to Religion

1.

List some ways that you see religion having social control in the everyday world.

2.

What are some sacred items that you're familiar with? Are there some objects, such as cups, candles, or clothing, that would be considered profane in normal settings but are considered sacred in special circumstances or when used in specific ways?

3.

Consider a religion that you are familiar with, and discuss some of its beliefs, behaviors, and norms. Discuss how these meet social needs. Then, research a religion that you don't know much about. Explain how its beliefs, behaviors, and norms are like/unlike the other religion.

15.2 World Religions

4.

Consider the different types of religious organizations in the United States. What role did ecclesia play in the history of the United States? How have sects tended to change over time? What role do cults have today?

5.

What is your understanding of monotheism versus polytheism? How might your ideology be an obstacle to understanding the theism of another religion you're unfamiliar with?

6.

In U.S. society, do you believe there is social stratification that correlates with religious beliefs? What about within the practitioners of a given religion? Provide examples to illustrate your point.

15.3 Religion in the United States

7.

Do you believe the United States is becoming more secularized or more fundamentalist? Comparing your generation to that of your parents or grandparents, what differences do you see in the relationship between religion and society? What would popular media have you believe is the state of religion in the United States today?

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11.3.9: Further Research

15.1 The Sociological Approach to Religion

For more discussion on the study of sociology and religion, check out The Immanent Frame is a forum for the exchange of ideas about religion, secularism, and society by leading thinkers in the social sciences and humanities.

Read more about functionalist views on religion here. Read more about women in the clergy here.

Some would argue that the Protestant work ethic is still alive and well in the United States. Read British historian Niall Ferguson's view here.

15.2 World Religions

PBS's *Frontline* explores "the life of Jesus and the rise of Christianity" in this in-depth documentary. View the piece in its entirety here: .

For more insight on Confucianism, read the Analects by Confucius. For a primer on Judaism, read Judaism 101.

Sorting through the different Christian denominations can be a daunting task. To help clarify these groups, go to this page with information on Christian denominations.

15.3 Religion in the United States

What is a megachurch and how are they changing the face of religion? Read "Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their Characteristics and Cultural Context".

Curious about the LGBT religious movement? Visit the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and Human Rights Campaign (HRC) web sites for current news about the growing inclusion of LGBT citizens into their respective religious communities, both in the pews and from the pulpit.

How do Christians feel about gay marriage? How many Mormons are there in the United States? Check out the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, a research institute examining U.S. religious trends.

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12: SOCIAL MEDIA AND MASS MEDIA

12.1: Media and Technology

12.1.1: Prelude to Media and Technology

12.1.2: Technology Today

12.1.3: Media and Technology in Society

12.1.4: Global Implications of Media and Technology

12.1.5: Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

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12.1: MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY



- Topic hierarchy

12.1.1: Prelude to Media and Technology

12.1.2: Technology Today

12.1.3: Media and Technology in Society

12.1.4: Global Implications of Media and Technology

12.1.5: Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

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12.1.1: Prelude to Media and Technology



Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are just a few examples of social media that increasingly shape how we interact with the world. (Photo courtesy of Khalid Albaih/flickr)

How many good friends do you have? How many people do you meet up with for coffee or a movie? How many would you call with news about an illness or invite to your wedding? Now, how many “friends” do you have on Facebook? How often do you post a "selfie" online? How often do you check e-mail? How often do you meet friends for a meal and spend your time texting other people instead of talking to each other? Technology has changed how we interact with each other. It has turned “friend” into a verb and has made it possible to share mundane news (“My dog just threw up under the bed! Ugh!”) with hundreds or even thousands of people who might know you only slightly, if at all. You might be glued to your cell phone, even when you should be focused on driving your car, or you might text in class instead of listening to the professor's lecture. When we have the ability to stay constantly connected to a data stream, it is easy to lose focus on the here and now.

At the same time that technology is expanding the boundaries of our social circles, various media are also changing how we perceive and interact with each other. We don’t only use Facebook to keep in touch with friends; we also use it to “like” certain television shows, products, or celebrities. Even television is no longer a one-way medium; it is an interactive one. We are encouraged to tweet, text, or call in to vote for contestants in everything from singing competitions to matchmaking endeavors—bridging the gap between our entertainment and our own lives.

How does technology change our lives for the better? Or does it? When you tweet a social cause, share an ice bucket challenge video on YouTube, or cut and paste a status update about cancer awareness on Facebook, are you promoting social change? Does the immediate and constant flow of information mean we are more aware and engaged than any society before us? Or are*Keeping Up With the Kardashians* and The Real Housewives franchise today’s version of ancient Rome’s “bread and circuses”––distractions and entertainment to keep the working classes complacent about the inequities of their society?

These are some of the questions that interest sociologists. How might we examine these issues from a sociological perspective? A functionalist would probably focus on what social purposes technology and media serve. For example, the web is both a form of technology and of media, and it links individuals and nations in a communication network that facilitates both small family discussions and global trade networks. A functionalist would also be interested in the manifest functions of media and technology, as well as their role in social dysfunction. Someone applying the conflict perspective would probably focus on the systematic inequality created by differential access to media and technology. For example, how can middle-class U.S. citizens be sure the news they hear is an objective account of reality, unsullied by moneyed political interests? Someone applying the interactionist perspective to technology and the media might seek to understand the difference between the real lives we lead and the reality depicted on “reality” television shows, such as *The Bachelor*. Throughout this chapter, we will use our sociological imagination to explore how media and technology impact society.

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12.1.2: Technology Today

It is easy to look at the latest sleek Apple product and think technology is a recent addition to our world. But from the steam engine to the most cutting-edge robotic surgery tools, technology has described the application of science to address the problems of daily life. We might look back at the enormous and clunky computers of the 1970s that had about as much storage as an iPod Shuffle and roll our eyes in disbelief. But chances are thirty years from now our skinny laptops and iPods will look just as archaic.



Technology is the application of science to address the problems of daily life, from hunting tools and agricultural advances, to manual and electronic ways of computing, to today's tablets and smartphones. (Photo (a) courtesy of Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) courtesy of Martin Pettitt/flickr; Photo (c) courtesy of Whitefield d./flickr; Photo (d) courtesy of Andrew Parnell/flickr; Photo (e) courtesy of Jemimus/flickr; Photo (f) courtesy of Kārlis Dambrāns/flickr)

What Is Technology?

While most people probably picture computers and cell phones when the subject of technology comes up, technology is not merely a product of the modern era. For example, fire and stone tools were important forms that technology developed during the Stone Age. Just as the availability of digital technology shapes how we live today, the creation of stone tools changed how premodern humans lived and how well they ate. From the first calculator, invented in 2400 B.C.E. Babylon in the form of an abacus, to the predecessor of the modern computer, created in 1882 by Charles Babbage, all of our technological innovations are advancements on previous iterations. And indeed, all aspects of our lives today are influenced by technology. In agriculture, the introduction of machines that can till, thresh, plant, and harvest greatly reduced the need for manual labor, which in turn meant there were fewer rural jobs. This led to the urbanization of society, as well as lowered birthrates because there was less need for large families to work the farms. In the criminal justice system, the ability to ascertain innocence through DNA testing has saved the lives of people on death row. The examples are endless: technology plays a role in absolutely every aspect of our lives.

Technological Inequality



Some schools sport cutting-edge computer labs, while others sport barbed wire. Is your academic technology at the cusp of innovation, relatively disadvantaged, or somewhere in between? (Photo courtesy of Carlos Martinez/flickr)

As with any improvement to human society, not everyone has equal access. Technology, in particular, often creates changes that lead to ever greater inequalities. In short, the gap gets wider faster. This technological stratification has led to a new focus on ensuring better access for all.

There are two forms of technological stratification. The first is differential class-based access to technology in the form of the digital divide. This digital divide has led to the second form, a knowledge gap, which is, as it sounds, an ongoing and increasing gap in information for those who have less access to technology. Simply put, students in well-funded schools receive more exposure to technology than students in poorly funded schools. Those students with more exposure gain more proficiency, which makes them far more marketable in an increasingly technology-based job market and leaves our society divided into those with technological knowledge and those without. Even as we improve access, we have failed to address an increasingly evident gap ine-readiness—the ability to sort through, interpret, and process knowledge (Sciadas 2003).

Since the beginning of the millennium, social science researchers have tried to bring attention to the digital divide, the uneven access to technology among different races, classes, and geographic areas. The term became part of the common lexicon in 1996, when then Vice President Al Gore used it in a speech. This was the point when personal computer use shifted dramatically, from 300,000 users in 1991 to more than 10 million users by 1996 (Rappaport 2009). In part, the issue of the digital divide had to do with communities that received infrastructure upgrades that enabled high-speed Internet access, upgrades that largely went to affluent urban and suburban areas, leaving out large swaths of the country.

At the end of the twentieth century, technology access was also a big part of the school experience for those whose communities could afford it. Early in the millennium, poorer communities had little or no technology access, while well-off families had personal computers at home and wired classrooms in their schools. In the 2000s, however, the prices for low-end computers dropped considerably, and it appeared the digital divide was naturally ending. Research demonstrates that technology use and Internet access still vary a great deal by race, class, and age in the United States, though most studies agree that there is minimal difference in Internet use by adult men and adult women.

Data from the Pew Research Center (2011) suggests the emergence of yet another divide. As technological devices gets smaller and more mobile, larger percentages of minority groups (such as Latinos and African Americans) are using their phones to connect to the Internet. In fact, about 50 percent of people in these minority groups connect to the web via such devices, whereas only one-third of whites do (Washington 2011). And while it might seem that the Internet is the Internet, regardless of how you get there, there's a notable difference. Tasks like updating a résumé or filling out a job application are much harder on a cell phone than on a wired computer in the home. As a result, the digital divide might mean no access to computers or the Internet, but could mean access to the kind of online technology that allows for empowerment, not just entertainment (Washington 2011).

Mossberger, Tolbert, and Gilbert (2006) demonstrated that the majority of the digital divide for African Americans could be explained by demographic and community-level characteristics, such as socioeconomic status and geographic location. For the Latino population, ethnicity alone, regardless of economics or geography, seemed to limit technology use. Liff and Shepard (2004) found that women, who are accessing technology shaped primarily by male users, feel less confident in their Internet skills and have less Internet access at both work and home. Finally, Guillen and Suarez (2005) found that the global digital divide resulted from both the economic and sociopolitical characteristics of countries.

Use of Technology and Social Media in Society by Individuals

Do you own an e-reader or tablet? What about your parents or your friends? How often do you check social media or your cell phone? Does all this technology have a positive or negative impact on your life? When it comes to cell phones, 67 percent of users check their phones for messages or calls even when the phone wasn't ringing. In addition, "44% of cell owners have slept with their phone next to their bed because they wanted to make sure they didn't miss any calls, text messages, or other updates during the night and 29% of cell owners describe their cell phone as 'something they can't imagine living without'" (Smith 2012).

While people report that cell phones make it easier to stay in touch, simplify planning and scheduling their daily activities, and increase their productivity, that's not the only impact of increased cell phone ownership in the United States. Smith also reports that "roughly one in five cell owners say that their phone has made it at least somewhat harder to forget about work at home or on the weekends; to give people their undivided attention; or to focus on a single task without being distracted" (Smith 2012).

A new survey from the Pew Research Center reported that 73 percent of adults engage in some sort of social networking online. Facebook was the most popular platform, and both Facebook users and Instagram users check their sites on a daily basis. Over a third of users check their sites more than once a day (Duggan and Smith 2013).

With so many people using social media both in the United States and abroad, it is no surprise that social media is a powerful force for social change. You will read more about the fight for democracy in the Middle East embodied in the Arab Spring in Chapters 17 and 21, but spreading democracy is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to using social media to incite change. For example, McKenna Pope, a thirteen-year-old girl, used the Internet to successfully petition Hasbro to fight gender stereotypes by creating a gender-neutral Easy-Bake Oven instead of using only the traditional pink color (Kumar 2014). Meanwhile in Latvia, two twenty-three-year-olds used a U.S. State Department grant to create an e-petition platform so citizens could submit ideas directly to the Latvian government. If at least 20 percent of the Latvian population (roughly 407,200 people) supports a petition, the government will look at it (Kumar 2014).

Online Privacy and Security

As we increase our footprints on the web by going online more often to connect socially, share material, conduct business, and store information, we also increase our vulnerability to those with criminal intent. The Pew Research Center recently published a report that indicated the number of Internet users who express concern over the extent of personal information about them available online jumped 17 percent between 2009 and 2013. In that same survey, 12 percent of respondents indicated they had been harassed online, and 11 percent indicated that personal information, such as their Social Security number, had been stolen (Rainie, Kiesler, Kang, and Madden 2013).

Online privacy and security is a key organizational concern as well. Recent large-scale data breaches at retailers such as Target, financial powerhouses such as JP Morgan, the government health insurance site Healthcare.gov, and cell phone providers such as Verizon, exposed millions of people to the threat of identity theft when hackers got access to personal information by compromising website security.

For example, in late August 2014, hackers breached the iCloud data storage site and promptly leaked wave after wave of nude photos from the private accounts of actors such as Jennifer Lawrence and Kirsten Dunst (Lewis 2014). While large-scale data breaches that affect corporations and celebrities are more likely to make the news, individuals may put their personal information at risk simply by clicking a suspect link in an official sounding e-mail.

How can individuals protect their data? Numerous facts sheets available through the government, nonprofits, and the private sector outline common safety measures, including the following: become familiar with privacy rights; read privacy policies when making a purchase (rather than simply clicking "accept"); give out only the minimum information requested by any source; ask why information is being collected, how it is going to be used, and who will have access it; and monitor your credit history for red flags that indicate your identity has been compromised.

Net Neutrality

The issue of net neutrality, the principle that all Internet data should be treated equally by Internet service providers, is part of the national debate about Internet access and the digital divide. On one side of this debate is the belief that those who provide Internet service, like those who provide electricity and water, should be treated as common carriers, legally prohibited from discriminating based on the customer or nature of the goods. Supporters of net neutrality suggest that without such legal protections, the Internet could be divided into “fast” and “slow” lanes. A conflict perspective theorist might suggest that this discrimination would allow bigger corporations, such as Amazon, to pay Internet providers a premium for faster service, which could lead to gaining an advantage that would drive small, local competitors out of business.

The other side of the debate holds the belief that designating Internet service providers as common carriers would constitute an unreasonable regulatory burden and limit the ability of telecommunication companies to operate profitably. A functional perspective theorist might point out that, without profits, companies would not invest in making improvements to their Internet service or expanding those services to underserved areas. The final decision rests with the Federal Communications Commission and the federal government, which must decide how to fairly regulate broadband providers without dividing the Internet into haves and have-nots.

Summary

Technology is the application of science to address the problems of daily life. The fast pace of technological advancement means the advancements are continuous, but that not everyone has equal access. The gap created by this unequal access has been termed the digital divide. The knowledge gap refers to an effect of the digital divide: the lack of knowledge or information that keeps those who were not exposed to technology from gaining marketable skills

Section Quiz

Jerome is able to use the Internet to select reliable sources for his research paper, but Charlie just copies large pieces of web pages and pastes them into his paper. Jerome has _____ while Charlie does not.

1. a functional perspective
2. the knowledge gap
3. e-readiness
4. a digital divide

Answer

C

The _____ can be directly attributed to the digital divide, because differential ability to access the internet leads directly to a differential ability to use the knowledge found on the Internet.

1. digital divide
2. knowledge gap
3. feminist perspective
4. e-gap

Answer

B

The fact that your cell phone is using outdated technology within a year or two of purchase is an example of _____.

1. the conflict perspective
2. conspicuous consumption
3. media
4. planned obsolescence

Answer

D

The history of technology began _____.

1. in the early stages of human societies
2. with the invention of the computer
3. during the Renaissance
4. during the nineteenth century

Answer

A

Short Answer

Can you think of people in your own life who support or defy the premise that access to technology leads to greater opportunities? How have you noticed technology use and opportunity to be linked, or does your experience contradict this idea?

Should the U.S. government be responsible for providing all citizens with access to the Internet? Or is gaining Internet access an individual responsibility?

How have digital media changed social interactions? Do you believe it has deepened or weakened human connections? Defend your answer.

Conduct sociological research. Google yourself. How much information about you is available to the public? How many and what types of companies offer private information about you for a fee? Compile the data and statistics you find. Write a paragraph or two about the social issues and behaviors you notice.

Further Research

To learn more about the digital divide and why it matters, check out these web sites: openstaxcollege.org/l/Digital_Divideand http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Digital_Divide2

To find out more about Internet privacy and security, check out the web site below: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/2EPrivacy

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Glossary

digital divide
: the uneven access to technology around race, class, and geographic lines

e-readiness
: the ability to sort through, interpret, and process digital knowledge

knowledge gap
: the gap in information that builds as groups grow up without access to technology

net neutrality
: the principle that all Internet data should be treated equally by internet service providers

planned obsolescence
: the act of a technology company planning for a product to be obsolete or unable from the time it’s created

technology
: the application of science to solve problems in daily life

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12.1.3: Media and Technology in Society

Technology and the media are interwoven, and neither can be separated from contemporary society in most core and semi-peripheral nations. Media is a term that refers to all print, digital, and electronic means of communication. From the time the printing press was created (and even before), technology has influenced how and where information is shared. Today, it is impossible to discuss media and the ways societies communicate without addressing the fast-moving pace of technology change. Twenty years ago, if you wanted to share news of your baby's birth or a job promotion, you phoned or wrote letters. You might tell a handful of people, but you probably wouldn't call up several hundred, including your old high school chemistry teacher, to let them know. Now, you might join an online community of parents-to-be even before you announce your pregnancy via a staged Instagram picture. The circle of communication is wider than ever and when we talk about how societies engage with technology, we must take media into account, and vice versa.



In the coming future, there is no doubt that robots are going to play a large role in all aspects of our lives. (Photo courtesy of shay sowden/flickr)

Technology creates media. The comic book you bought your daughter is a form of media, as is the movie you streamed for family night, the web site you used to order takeout, the billboard you passed on the way to pick up your food, and the newspaper you read while you were waiting for it. Without technology, media would not exist, but remember, technology is more than just the media we are exposed to.

Categorizing Technology

There is no one way of dividing technology into categories. Whereas once it might have been simple to classify innovations such as machine-based or drug-based or the like, the interconnected strands of technological development mean that advancement in one area might be replicated in dozens of others. For simplicity's sake, we will look at how the U.S. Patent Office, which receives patent applications for nearly all major innovations worldwide, addresses patents. This regulatory body will patent three types of innovation. Utility patents are the first type. These are granted for the invention or discovery of any new and useful process, product, or machine, or for a significant improvement to existing technologies. The second type of patent is a design patent. Commonly conferred in architecture and industrial design, this means someone has invented a new and original design for a manufactured product. Plant patents, the final type, recognize the discovery of new plant types that can be asexually reproduced. While genetically modified food is the hot-button issue within this category, farmers have long been creating new hybrids and patenting them. A more modern example might be food giant Monsanto, which patents corn with built-in pesticide (U.S. Patent and Trademark Office 2011).

Anderson and Tushman (1990) suggest an evolutionary model of technological change, in which a breakthrough in one form

of technology leads to a number of variations. Once those are assessed, a prototype emerges, and then a period of slight adjustments to the technology, interrupted by a breakthrough. For example, floppy disks were improved and upgraded, then replaced by Zip disks, which were in turn improved to the limits of the technology and were then replaced by flash drives. This is essentially a generational model for categorizing technology, in which first-generation technology is a relatively unsophisticated jumping-off point that leads to an improved second generation, and so on.

VIOLENCE IN MEDIA AND VIDEO GAMES: DOES IT MATTER?

A glance through popular video game and movie titles geared toward children and teens shows the vast spectrum of violence that is displayed, condoned, and acted out. As a way to guide parents in their programming choices, the motion picture industry put a rating system in place in the 1960s. But new media—video games in particular—proved to be uncharted territory. In 1994, the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ERSB) set a ratings system for games that addressed issues of violence, sexuality, drug use, and the like. California took it a step further by making it illegal to sell video games to underage buyers. The case led to a heated debate about personal freedoms and child protection, and in 2011, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the California law, stating it violated freedom of speech (ProCon 2012).



One of the most popular video games, Grand Theft Auto, has frequently been at the center of debate about gratuitous violence in the gaming world. (Photo courtesy of Meddy Garnet/flickr)

Children's play has often involved games of aggression—from cowboys and Indians, to cops and robbers, to fake sword fights. Many articles report on the controversy surrounding the suggested link between violent video games and violent behavior. Is the link real? Psychologists Anderson and Bushman (2001) reviewed forty-plus years of research on the subject and, in 2003, determined that there are causal linkages between violent video game use and aggression. They found that children who had just played a violent video game demonstrated an immediate increase in hostile or aggressive thoughts, an increase in aggressive emotions, and physiological arousal that increased the chances of acting out aggressive behavior (Anderson 2003).

Ultimately, repeated exposure to this kind of violence leads to increased expectations that violence is a solution, increased violent behavioral scripts, and an increased cognitive accessibility to violent behavior (Anderson 2003). In short, people who play a lot of these games find it easier to imagine and access violent solutions than nonviolent ones, and they are less socialized to see violence as a negative. While these facts do not mean there is no role for video games, it should give players pause. In 2013, The American Psychological Association began an expansive meta-analysis of peer-reviewed research analyzing the effect of media violence. Results are expected in 2014.

Types of Media and Technology

Media and technology have evolved hand in hand, from early print to modern publications, from radio to television to film. New media emerge constantly, such as we see in the online world.

Print Newspaper

Early forms of print media, found in ancient Rome, were hand-copied onto boards and carried around to keep the citizenry informed. With the invention of the printing press, the way that people shared ideas changed, as information could be mass produced and stored. For the first time, there was a way to spread knowledge and information more efficiently; many credit this development as leading to the Renaissance and ultimately the Age of Enlightenment. This is not to say that newspapers of old were more trustworthy than the *Weekly World News* and *National Enquirer* are today. Sensationalism abounded, as did censorship that forbade any subjects that would incite the populace.

The invention of the telegraph, in the mid-1800s, changed print media almost as much as the printing press. Suddenly information could be transmitted in minutes. As the nineteenth century became the twentieth, U.S. publishers such as Hearst redefined the world of print media and wielded an enormous amount of power to socially construct national and world events. Of course, even as the media empires of William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer were growing, print media also allowed for the dissemination of countercultural or revolutionary materials. Internationally, Vladimir Lenin's *Irksa* (*The Spark*) newspaper was published in 1900 and played a role in Russia's growing communist movement (World Association of Newspapers 2004).

With the invention and widespread use of television in the mid-twentieth century, newspaper circulation steadily dropped off, and in the 21st century, circulation has dropped further as more people turn to internet news sites and other forms of new media to stay informed. According to the Pew Research Center, 2009 saw an unprecedented drop in newspaper circulation––down 10.6 percent from the year before (Pew 2010).

This shift away from newspapers as a source of information has profound effects on societies. When the news is given to a large diverse conglomerate of people, it must maintain some level of broad-based reporting and balance in order to appeal to a broad audience and keep them subscribing. As newspapers decline, news sources become more fractured, so each segment of the audience can choose specifically what it wants to hear and what it wants to avoid. Increasingly, newspapers are shifting online in an attempt to remain relevant. It is hard to tell what impact new media platforms will have on the way we receive and process information.

Increasingly, newspapers are shifting online in an attempt to remain relevant. It is hard to tell what impact new media platforms will have on the way we receive and process information. The Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism (2013) reported that audiences for all the major news magazines declined in 2012, though digital ad revenue increased. The same report suggested that, while newspaper circulation is holding steady at around $10 billion after years of decline, it is digital pay plans that allow newspapers to keep their heads above water, and the digital ad revenue that is increasing for news magazines is not enough to compensate for print revenue loss in newspapers.

A 2014 report suggested that U.S. adults read a median of five books per year in 2013, which is about average. But are they reading traditional print or e-books? About 69 percent of people said they had read at least one printed book in the past year, versus 28 percent who said they'd read an e-book (DeSilver 2014). Is print more effective at conveying information? In recent study, Mangen, Walgermo, and Bronnick (2013) found that students who read on paper performed slightly better than those who read an e-book on an open-book reading comprehension exam of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. While a meta-analysis of research by Andrews (1992) seemed to confirm that people read more slowly and comprehend less when reading from screens, a meta-analysis of more recent research on this topic does not show anything definite (Noyes and Garland 2008).

Television and Radio

Radio programming obviously preceded television, but both shaped people's lives in much the same way. In both cases, information (and entertainment) could be enjoyed at home, with a kind of immediacy and community that newspapers could not offer. For instance, many people in the United States might remember when they saw on television or heard on the radio that the Twin Towers in New York City had been attacked in 2001. Even though people were in their own homes, media allowed them to share these moments in real time. This same kind of separate-but-communal approach occurred with entertainment too. School-aged children and office workers gathered to discuss the previous night's installment of a serial television or radio show.

Right up through the 1970s, U.S. television was dominated by three major networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) that competed for ratings and advertising dollars. The networks also exerted a lot of control over what people watched. Public television, in contrast, offered an educational nonprofit alternative to the sensationalization of news spurred by the network competition for viewers and advertising dollars. Those sources—PBS (Public Broadcasting Service), the BBC (British Broadcasting Company), and CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Company)—garnered a worldwide reputation for high-quality programming and a global perspective. Al Jazeera, the Arabic independent news station, has joined this group as a similar media force that broadcasts to people worldwide.

The impact of television on U.S. society is hard to overstate. By the late 1990s, 98 percent of U.S. homes had at least one television set, and the average person watched between two and a half and five hours of television daily. All this television has a powerful socializing effect, providing reference groups while reinforcing social norms, values, and beliefs.

Film

The film industry took off in the 1930s, when color and sound were first integrated into feature films. Like television, early films were unifying for society: as people gathered in theaters to watch new releases, they would laugh, cry, and be scared together. Movies also act as time capsules or cultural touchstones for society. From Westerns starring the tough-talking Clint Eastwood to the biopic of Facebook founder and Harvard dropout Mark Zuckerberg, movies illustrate society's dreams, fears, and experiences. While many consider Hollywood the epicenter of moviemaking, India's Bollywood actually produces more films per year, speaking to the cultural aspirations and norms of Indian society. Increasingly, people are watching films online via Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, and other streaming services. While most streaming video companies keep their user data secret, Nielsen estimated that 38 percent of U.S. citizens accessed Netflix in 2013. In 2013, Google, Inc. reported that YouTube served 1 billion unique viewers every month—an impressive number, considering that it amounts to one-third of the estimated 3 billion accessing the Internet every month (Reuters 2013; International Telecommunication Union 2014).

New Media



Netflix, one form of new media, exchanges information in the form of DVDs to users in the comfort of their own homes. (Photo courtesy of Marit & Toomas Hinnosaar/flickr)

New media encompasses all interactive forms of information exchange. These include social networking sites, blogs, podcasts, wikis, and virtual worlds. Clearly, the list grows almost daily. However, there is no guarantee that the information offered is accurate. In fact, the immediacy of new media coupled with the lack of oversight means we must be more careful than ever to ensure our news is coming from accurate sources.

PLANNED OBSOLESCENCE: TECHNOLOGY THAT'S BUILT TO CRASH



People have trouble keeping up with technological innovation. But people may not be to blame, as manufacturers intentionally develop products with short life spans. (Photo courtesy of Mathias F. Svendsen/flickr)

Chances are your mobile phone company, as well as the makers of your laptop and your household appliances, are all counting on their products to fail. Not too quickly, of course, or consumers wouldn't stand for it—but frequently enough that you might find that it costs far more to fix a device than to replace it with a newer model. Or you find the phone company e-mails you saying that you're eligible for a free new phone, because yours is a whopping two years old. And appliance repair people say that while they might be fixing some machines that are twenty years old, they generally aren't fixing those that are seven years old; newer models are built to be thrown out. This strategy is called planned obsolescence, and it is the business practice of planning for a product to be obsolete or unusable from the time it is created.

To some extent, planned obsolescence is a natural extension of new and emerging technologies. After all, who is going to cling to an enormous and slow desktop computer from 2000 when a few hundred dollars can buy one that is significantly faster and better? But the practice is not always so benign. The classic example of planned obsolescence is the nylon stocking. Women's stockings—once an everyday staple of women's lives--get "runs" or "ladders" after only a few wearings. This requires the stockings to be discarded and new ones purchased. Not surprisingly, the garment industry did not invest heavily in finding a rip-proof fabric; it was in manufacturers' best interest that their product be regularly replaced.

Those who use Microsoft Windows might feel that like the women who purchased endless pairs of stockings, they are victims of planned obsolescence. Every time Windows releases a new operating system, there are typically not many innovations in it that consumers feel they must have. However, the software programs are upwardly compatible only. This means that while the new versions can read older files, the old version cannot read the newer ones. In short order, those who have not upgraded right away find themselves unable to open files sent by colleagues or friends, and they usually wind up upgrading as well.

Ultimately, whether you are getting rid of your old product because you are being offered a shiny new free one (like the latest smartphone model), or because it costs more to fix than to replace (like the iPod model), or because not doing so leaves you out of the loop (like the Windows model), the result is the same. It might just make you nostalgic for your old Sony Discman and simple DVD player.

Product Advertising

Companies use advertising to sell to us, but the way they reach us is changing. Naomi Klein identified the destructive impact of corporate branding her 1999 text, *No Logo*, an antiglobalization treatise that focused on sweatshops, corporate power, and anticonsumerist social movements. In the post-millennial society, synergistic advertising practices ensure you are receiving the same message from a variety of sources and on a variety of platforms. For example, you may see billboards for Miller beer on your way to a stadium, sit down to watch a game preceded by a Miller commercial on the big screen, and watch a halftime ad in which people are shown holding up the trademark bottles. Chances are you can guess which brand of beer is for sale at the concession stand.

Advertising has changed, as technology and media have allowed consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues. From the invention of the remote control, which allows us to skip television advertising without leaving our seats, to recording devices that let us watch programs but skip the ads, conventional television advertising is on the wane. And print media is no different. Advertising revenue in newspapers and on television fell significantly in 2009, which shows that companies need new ways of getting their messages to consumers.

One model companies are considering to address this advertising downturn uses the same philosophy as celebrity endorsements, just on a different scale. Companies are hiring college students to be their on-campus representatives, and they are looking for popular students engaged in high-profile activities like sports, fraternities, and music. The marketing team is betting that if we buy perfume because Beyoncé tells us to, we'll also choose our cell phone or smoothie brand if a popular student encourages that choice. According to an article in the *New York Times*, fall semester 2011 saw an estimated 10,000 U.S. college students working on campus as brand ambassadors for products from Red Bull energy drinks to Hewlett-Packard computers (Singer 2011). As the companies figure it, college students will trust one source of information above all: other students.

Homogenization and Fragmentation

Despite the variety of media at hand, the mainstream news and entertainment you enjoy are increasingly homogenized. Research by McManus (1995) suggests that different news outlets all tell the same stories, using the same sources, resulting in the same message, presented with only slight variations. So whether you are reading the *New York Times* or the CNN's web site, the coverage of national events like a major court case or political issue will likely be the same.

Simultaneously with this homogenization among the major news outlets, the opposite process is occurring in the newer media streams. With so many choices, people increasingly customize their news experience, minimizing their opportunity to encounter information that does not jive with their worldview (Prior 2005). For instance, those who are staunchly Republican can avoid centrist or liberal-leaning cable news shows and web sites that would show Democrats in a favorable light. They know to seek out Fox News over MSNBC, just as Democrats know to do the opposite. Further, people who want to avoid politics completely can choose to visit web sites that deal only with entertainment or that will keep them up to date on sports scores. They have an easy way to avoid information they do not wish to hear.

Summary

Media and technology have been interwoven from the earliest days of human communication. The printing press, the telegraph, and the Internet are all examples of their intersection. Mass media have allowed for more shared social experiences, but new media now create a seemingly endless amount of airtime for any and every voice that wants to be heard. Advertising has also changed with technology. New media allow consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues and cause companies to be more innovative and intrusive as they try to gain our attention.

Section Quiz

When it comes to technology, media, and society, which of the following is true?

1. Media can influence technology, but not society.
2. Technology created media, but society has nothing to do with these.
3. Technology, media, and society are bound and cannot be separated.
4. Society influences media but is not connected to technology.

Answer

C

If the U.S. Patent Office were to issue a patent for a new type of tomato that tastes like a jellybean, it would be issuing a _____ patent?

1. utility patent
2. plant patent
3. design patent

4. The U.S. Patent Office does not issue a patent for plants.

Answer

B

Which of the following is the primary component of the evolutionary model of technological change?

1. Technology should not be subject to patenting.
2. Technology and the media evolve together.
3. Technology can be traced back to the early stages of human society.
4. A breakthrough in one form of technology leads to a number of variations, and technological developments.

Answer

D

Which of the following is *not* a form of new media?

1. The cable television program *Dexter*
2. Wikipedia
3. Facebook
4. A cooking blog written by Rachael Ray

Answer

A

Research regarding video game violence suggests that _____.

1. boys who play violent video games become more aggressive, but girls do not
2. girls who play violent video games become more aggressive, but boys do not
3. violent video games have no connection to aggressive behavior
4. violent video games lead to an increase in aggressive thought and behavior

Answer

D

Comic books, Wikipedia, MTV, and a commercial for Coca-Cola are all examples of:

1. media
2. symbolic interaction perspective
3. e-readiness
4. the digital divide

Answer

A

Short Answer

Where and how do you get your news? Do you watch network television? Read the newspaper? Go online? How about your parents or grandparents? Do you think it matters where you seek out information? Why, or why not?

Do you believe new media allows for the kind of unifying moments that television and radio programming used to? If so, give an example.

Where are you most likely to notice advertisements? What causes them to catch your attention?

Further Research

To get a sense of the timeline of technology, check out this web site: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Tech_History

To learn more about new media, click here: openstaxcollege.org/l/new_media

To understand how independent media coverage differs from major corporate affiliated news outlets, review material from the Democracy Now! website: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/2EDemoNow

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Glossary

design patents
: patents that are granted when someone has invented a new and original design for a manufactured product

evolutionary model of technological change
: a breakthrough in one form of technology that leads to a number of variations, from which a prototype emerges, followed by a period of slight adjustments to the technology, interrupted by a breakthrough

media
: all print, digital, and electronic means of communication

new media
: all interactive forms of information exchange

plant patents
: patents that recognize the discovery of new plant types that can be asexually reproduced

utility patents
: patents that are granted for the invention or discovery of any new and useful process, product, or machine

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12.1.4: Global Implications of Media and Technology



These Twitter updates—a revolution in real time—show the role social media can play on the political stage. (Photo courtesy of Cambodia4kidsorg/flickr)

Technology, and increasingly media, has always driven globalization. In a landmark book, Thomas Friedman (2005), identified several ways in which technology "flattened" the globe and contributed to our global economy. The first edition of *The World Is Flat*, written in 2005, posits that core economic concepts were changed by personal computing and high-speed Internet. Access to these two technological shifts has allowed core-nation corporations to recruit workers in call centers located in China or India. Using examples like a Midwestern U.S. woman who runs a business from her home via the call centers of Bangalore, India, Friedman warns that this new world order will exist whether core-nation businesses are ready or not, and that in order to keep its key economic role in the world, the United States will need to pay attention to how it prepares workers of the twenty-first century for this dynamic.

Of course not everyone agrees with Friedman's theory. Many economists pointed out that in reality innovation, economic activity, and population still gather in geographically attractive areas, and they continue to create economic peaks and valleys, which are by no means flattened out to mean equality for all. China's hugely innovative and powerful cities of Shanghai and Beijing are worlds away from the rural squalor of the country's poorest denizens.

It is worth noting that Friedman is an economist, not a sociologist. His work focuses on the economic gains and risks this new world order entails. In this section, we will look more closely at how media globalization and technological globalization play out in a sociological perspective. As the names suggest, media globalization is the worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas, while technological globalization refers to the cross-cultural development and exchange of technology.

Media Globalization

Lyons (2005) suggests that multinational corporations are the primary vehicle of media globalization, and these corporations control global mass-media content and distribution (Compaine 2005). It is true, when looking at who controls which media outlets, that there are fewer independent news sources as larger and larger conglomerates develop. The United States offers about 1,500 newspapers, 2,600 book publishers, and an equal number of television stations, plus 6,000 magazines and a whopping 10,000 radio outlets (Bagdikian 2004).

On the surface, there is endless opportunity to find diverse media outlets. But the numbers are misleading. Media consolidationis a process in which fewer and fewer owners control the majority of media outlets. This creates an oligopoly in which a few firms dominate the media marketplace. In 1983, a mere 50 corporations owned the bulk of mass-media outlets. Today in the United

States (which has no government-owned media) just five companies control 90 percent of media outlets (McChesney 1999). Ranked by 2014 company revenue, Comcast is the biggest, followed by the Disney Corporation, Time Warner, CBS, and Viacom (Time.com 2014). What impact does this consolidation have on the type of information to which the U.S. public is exposed? Does media consolidation deprive the public of multiple viewpoints and limit its discourse to the information and opinions shared by a few sources? Why does it matter?

Monopolies matter because less competition typically means consumers are less well served since dissenting opinions or diverse viewpoints are less likely to be found. Media consolidation results in the following dysfunctions. First, consolidated media owes more to its stockholders than to the public. Publicly traded Fortune 500 companies must pay more attention to their profitability and to government regulators than to the public's right to know. The few companies that control most of the media, because they are owned by the power elite, represent the political and social interests of only a small minority. In an oligopoly there are fewer incentives to innovate, improve services, or decrease prices.

While some social scientists predicted that the increase in media forms would create a global village (McLuhan 1964), current research suggests that the public sphere accessing the global village will tend to be rich, Caucasoid, and English-speaking (Jan 2009). As shown by the spring 2011 uprisings throughout the Arab world, technology really does offer a window into the news of the world. For example, here in the United States we saw internet updates of Egyptian events in real time, with people tweeting, posting, and blogging on the ground in Tahrir Square.

Still, there is no question that the exchange of technology from core nations to peripheral and semi-peripheral ones leads to a number of complex issues. For instance, someone using a conflict theorist approach might focus on how much political ideology and cultural colonialism occurs with technological growth. In theory at least, technological innovations are ideology-free; a fiber optic cable is the same in a Muslim country as a secular one, a communist country or a capitalist one. But those who bring technology to less-developed nations—whether they are nongovernment organizations, businesses, or governments—usually have an agenda. A functionalist, in contrast, might focus on the ways technology creates new means to share information about successful crop-growing programs, or on the economic benefits of opening a new market for cell phone use. Either way, cultural and societal assumptions and norms are being delivered along with those high-speed wires.

Cultural and ideological bias are not the only risks of media globalization. In addition to the risk of cultural imperialism and the loss of local culture, other problems come with the benefits of a more interconnected globe. One risk is the potential for censoring by national governments that let in only the information and media they feel serve their message, as is occurring in China. In addition, core nations such as the United States risk the use of international media by criminals to circumvent local laws against socially deviant and dangerous behaviors such as gambling, child pornography, and the sex trade. Offshore or international web sites allow U.S. citizens (and others) to seek out whatever illegal or illicit information they want, from twenty-four hour online gambling sites that do not require proof of age, to sites that sell child pornography. These examples illustrate the societal risks of unfettered information flow.

CHINA AND THE INTERNET: AN UNCOMFORTABLE FRIENDSHIP



What information is accessible to these patrons of an internet café in China? What is censored from their view? (Photo Courtesy of Kai Hendry/flickr)

In the United States, the Internet is used to access illegal gambling and pornography sites, as well as to research stocks, crowd-source what car to buy, or keep in touch with childhood friends. Can we allow one or more of those activities, while restricting the rest? And who decides what needs restricting? In a country with democratic principles and an underlying belief in free-market capitalism, the answer is decided in the court system. But globally, the questions––and the government's responses––are very different.

China is in many ways the global poster child for the uncomfortable relationship between Internet freedom and government control. China, which is a country with a tight rein on the dissemination of information, has long worked to suppress what it calls "harmful information," including dissent concerning government politics, dialogue about China's role in Tibet, or criticism of the government's handling of events.

With sites like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube blocked in China, the nation's Internet users––some 500 million strong in 2011––turn to local media companies for their needs. Renren.com is China's answer to Facebook. Perhaps more importantly from a social-change perspective, Sina Weibo is China's version of Twitter. Microblogging, or *Weibo*, acts like Twitter in that users can post short messages that can be read by their subscribers. And because these services move so quickly and with such wide scope, it is difficult for government overseers to keep up. This tool was used to criticize government response to a deadly rail crash and to protest a chemical plant. It was also credited with the government's decision to report more accurately on the air pollution in Beijing, which occurred after a high-profile campaign by a well-known property developer (Pierson 2012).

There is no question of China's authoritarian government ruling over this new form of Internet communication. The nation blocks the use of certain terms, such as human rights, and passes new laws that require people to register with their real names and make it more dangerous to criticize government actions. Indeed, fifty-six-year-old microblogger Wang Lihong was recently sentenced to nine months in prison for "stirring up trouble," as her government described her work helping people with government grievances (Bristow 2011). But the government cannot shut down this flow of information completely. Foreign companies, seeking to engage with the increasingly important Chinese consumer market, have their own accounts: the NBA has more than 5 million followers, and Tom Cruise's Weibo account boasts almost 3 million followers (Zhang 2011). The government, too, uses Weibo to get its own message across. As the millennium progresses, China's approach to social media and the freedoms it offers will be watched anxiously––on Sina Weibo and beyond––by the rest of the world.

Technological Globalization

Technological globalization is speeded in large part by technological diffusion, the spread of technology across borders. In the last two decades, there has been rapid improvement in the spread of technology to peripheral and semi-peripheral nations, and a 2008 World Bank report discusses both the benefits and ongoing challenges of this diffusion. In general, the report found that technological progress and economic growth rates were linked, and that the rise in technological progress has helped improve the situations of many living in absolute poverty (World Bank 2008). The report recognizes that rural and low-tech products such as corn can benefit from new technological innovations, and that, conversely, technologies like mobile banking can aid those whose rural existence consists of low-tech market vending. In addition, technological advances in areas like mobile phones can lead to competition, lowered prices, and concurrent improvements in related areas such as mobile banking and information sharing.

However, the same patterns of social inequality that create a digital divide in the United States also create digital divides within peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. While the growth of technology use among countries has increased dramatically over the past several decades, the spread of technology within countries is significantly slower among peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. In these countries, far fewer people have the training and skills to take advantage of new technology, let alone access it. Technological access tends to be clustered around urban areas and leaves out vast swaths of peripheral-nation citizens. While the diffusion of information technologies has the potential to resolve many global social problems, it is often the population most in need that is most affected by the digital divide. For example, technology to purify water could save many lives, but the villages in peripheral nations most in need of water purification don't have access to the technology, the funds to purchase it, or the technological comfort level to introduce it as a solution.

THE MIGHTY CELL PHONE: HOW MOBILE PHONES ARE IMPACTING SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Many of Africa's poorest countries suffer from a marked lack of infrastructure including poor roads, limited electricity, and minimal access to education and telephones. But while landline use has not changed appreciably during the past ten years, there's been a fivefold increase in mobile phone access; more than a third of people in Sub-Saharan Africa have the ability to access a mobile

phone (Katine 2010). Even more can use a “village phone”—through a shared-phone program created by the Grameen Foundation. With access to mobile phone technology, a host of benefits become available that have the potential to change the dynamics in these poorest nations. Sometimes that change is as simple as being able to make a phone call to neighboring market towns. By finding out which markets have vendors interested in their goods, fishers and farmers can ensure they travel to the market that will serve them best and avoid a wasted trip. Others can use mobile phones and some of the emerging money-sending systems to securely send money to a family member or business partner elsewhere (Katine 2010).

These shared-phone programs are often funded by businesses like Germany’s Vodafone or Britain’s Masbabi, which hope to gain market share in the region. Phone giant Nokia points out that there are 4 billion mobile phone users worldwide—that’s more than twice as many people as have bank accounts—meaning there is ripe opportunity to connect banking companies with people who need their services (ITU Telecom 2009). Not all access is corporate-based, however. Other programs are funded by business organizations that seek to help peripheral nations with tools for innovation and entrepreneurship.

But this wave of innovation and potential business comes with costs. There is, certainly, the risk of cultural imperialism, and the assumption that core nations (and core-nation multinationals) know what is best for those struggling in the world’s poorest communities. Whether well intentioned or not, the vision of a continent of Africans successfully chatting on their iPhone may not be ideal. Like all aspects of global inequity, access to technology in Africa requires more than just foreign investment. There must be a concerted effort to ensure the benefits of technology get to where they are needed most.

Summary

Technology drives globalization, but what that means can be hard to decipher. While some economists see technological advances leading to a more level playing field where anyone anywhere can be a global contender, the reality is that opportunity still clusters in geographically advantaged areas. Still, technological diffusion has led to the spread of more and more technology across borders into peripheral and semi-peripheral nations. However, true technological global equality is a long way off.

Section Quiz

When Japanese scientists develop a new vaccine for swine flu and offer that technology to U.S. pharmaceutical companies, _____ has taken place.

1. media globalization
2. technological diffusion
3. monetizing
4. planned obsolescence

Answer

B

In the mid-90s, the U.S. government grew concerned that Microsoft was a _____, exercising disproportionate control over the available choices and prices of computers.

1. monopoly
2. conglomerate
3. oligopoly
4. technological globalization

Answer

A

The movie *Babel* featured an international cast and was filmed on location in various nations. When it screened in theaters worldwide, it introduced a number of ideas and philosophies about cross-cultural connections. This might be an example of:

1. technology
2. conglomerating
3. symbolic interaction

4. media globalization

Answer

D

Which of the following is *not* a risk of media globalization?

1. The creation of cultural and ideological biases
2. The creation of local monopolies
3. The risk of cultural imperialism
4. The loss of local culture

Answer

B

The government of _____ blocks citizens' access to popular new media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

1. China
2. India
3. Afghanistan
4. Australia

Answer

A

Short Answer

Do you believe that technology has indeed flattened the world in terms of providing opportunity? Why, or why not? Give examples to support your reason.

Where do you get your news? Is it owned by a large conglomerate (you can do a web search and find out!)? Does it matter to you who owns your local news outlets? Why, or why not?

Who do you think is most likely to bring innovation and technology (like cell phone businesses) to Sub-Saharan Africa: nonprofit organizations, governments, or businesses? Why?

Further Research

Check out more on the global digital divide here: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Global_Digital_Divide

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Glossary

media consolidation
: a process by which fewer and fewer owners control the majority of media outlets

media globalization
: the worldwide integration of media through the cross-cultural exchange of ideas

oligopoly
: a situation in which a few firms dominate a marketplace

technological diffusion
: the spread of technology across borders

technological globalization
: the cross-cultural development and exchange of technology

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12.1.5: Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

It is difficult to conceive of any one theory or theoretical perspective that can explain the variety of ways in which people interact with technology and the media. Technology runs the gamut from the match you strike to light a candle all the way up to sophisticated nuclear power plants that might power the factory where that candle was made. Media could refer to the television you watch, the ads wrapping the bus you take to work or school, or the magazines you flip through in a dentist's waiting room, not to mention all the forms of new media, including Instagram, Facebook, blogs, YouTube, and the like. Are media and technology critical to the forward march of humanity? Are they pernicious capitalist tools that lead to the exploitation of workers worldwide? Are they the magic bullet the world has been waiting for to level the playing field and raise the world's poor out of extreme poverty? Choose any opinion and you will find studies and scholars who agree with you––and those who disagree.

Functionalism

Because functionalism focuses on how media and technology contribute to the smooth functioning of society, a good place to begin understanding this perspective is to write a list of functions you perceive media and technology to perform. Your list might include the ability to find information on the Internet, television's entertainment value, or how advertising and product placement contribute to social norms.

Commercial Function



TV commercials can carry significant cultural currency. For some, the ads during the Super Bowl are more water cooler-worthy than the game itself. (Photo courtesy of Dennis Yang/flickr)

As you might guess, with nearly every U.S. household possessing a television, and the 250 billion hours of television watched annually by people in the United States, companies that wish to connect with consumers find television an irresistible platform to promote their goods and services (Nielsen 2012). Television advertising is a highly functional way to meet a market demographic where it lives. Sponsors can use the sophisticated data gathered by network and cable television companies regarding their viewers and target their advertising accordingly. Whether you are watching cartoons on Nick Jr. or a cooking show on Telemundo, chances are advertisers have a plan to reach you.

And it certainly doesn't stop with television. Commercial advertising precedes movies in theaters and shows up on and inside public transportation, as well as on the sides of building and roadways. Major corporations such as Coca-Cola bring their advertising into public schools, by sponsoring sports fields or tournaments, as well as filling the halls and cafeterias of those schools with vending machines hawking their goods. With rising concerns about childhood obesity and attendant diseases, the

era of soda machines in schools may be numbered. In fact, as part of the United States Department of Agriculture's Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act and Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Initiative, a ban on junk food in school began in July 2014.

Entertainment Function

An obvious manifest function of media is its entertainment value. Most people, when asked why they watch television or go to the movies, would answer that they enjoy it. And the numbers certainly illustrate that. While 2012 Nielsen research shows a slight reduction of U.S. homes with televisions, the reach of television is still vast. And the amount of time spent watching is equally large. Clearly, enjoyment is paramount. On the technology side, as well, there is a clear entertainment factor to the use of new innovations. From online gaming to chatting with friends on Facebook, technology offers new and more exciting ways for people to entertain themselves.

Social Norm Functions

Even while the media is selling us goods and entertaining us, it also serves to socialize us, helping us pass along norms, values, and beliefs to the next generation. In fact, we are socialized and resocialized by media throughout our whole lives. All forms of media teach us what is good and desirable, how we should speak, how we should behave, and how we should react to events. Media also provide us with cultural touchstones during events of national significance. How many of your older relatives can recall watching the explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger* on television? How many of those reading this textbook followed the events of September 11 or Hurricane Katrina on television or the Internet?

Just as in Anderson and Bushman's (2011) evidence in the Violence in Media and Video Games: Does It Matter? feature, debate still exists over the extent and impact of media socialization. One recent study (Krahe et al. 2011) demonstrated that violent media content does have a desensitizing affect and is correlated with aggressive thoughts. Another group of scholars (Gentile, Mathieson, and Crick 2011) found that among children exposure to media violence led to an increase in both physical and relational aggression. Yet, a meta-analysis study covering four decades of research (Savage 2003) could not establish a definitive link between viewing violence and committing criminal violence.

It is clear from watching people emulate the styles of dress and talk that appear in media that media has a socializing influence. What is not clear, despite nearly fifty years of empirical research, is how much socializing influence the media has when compared to other agents of socialization, which include any social institution that passes along norms, values, and beliefs (such as peers, family, religious institutions, and the like).

Life-Changing Functions

Like media, many forms of technology do indeed entertain us, provide a venue for commercialization, and socialize us. For example, some studies suggest the rising obesity rate is correlated with the decrease in physical activity caused by an increase in use of some forms of technology, a latent function of the prevalence of media in society (Kautiainen et al. 2011). Without a doubt, a manifest function of technology is to change our lives, sometimes for the better and sometimes for the worse. Think of how the digital age has improved the ways we communicate. Have you ever used Skype or another webcast to talk to a friend or family member far away? Or maybe you have organized a fund drive, raising thousands of dollars, all from your desk chair.

Of course, the downside to this ongoing information flow is the near impossibility of disconnecting from technology that leads to an expectation of constant convenient access to information and people. Such a fast-paced dynamic is not always to our benefit. Some sociologists assert that this level of media exposure leads to narcotizing dysfunction, a result in which people are too overwhelmed with media input to really care about the issue, so their involvement becomes defined by awareness instead of by action (Lazerfeld and Merton 1948).

Conflict Perspective

In contrast to theories in the functional perspective, the conflict perspective focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality—social processes that tend to disrupt society rather than contribute to its smooth operation. When we take a conflict perspective, one major focus is the differential access to media and technology embodied in the digital divide. Conflict theorists also look at who controls the media, and how media promotes the norms of upper-middle-class white people in the United States while minimizing the presence of the working class, especially people of color.

Control of Media and Technology

Powerful individuals and social institutions have a great deal of influence over which forms of technology are released, when and where they are released, and what kind of media is available for our consumption, which is a form of gatekeeping. Shoemaker and Voss (2009) define gatekeeping as the sorting process by which thousands of possible messages are shaped into a mass media-appropriate form and reduced to a manageable amount. In other words, the people in charge of the media decide what the public is exposed to, which, as C. Wright Mills (1956) famously noted, is the heart of media's power. Take a moment to think of the way "new media" evolve and replace traditional forms of hegemonic media. With hegemonic media, a culturally diverse society can be dominated by one race, gender, or class that manipulates the media to impose its worldview as a societal norm. New media weakens the gatekeeper role in information distribution. Popular sites such as YouTube and Facebook not only allow more people to freely share information but also engage in a form of self-policing. Users are encouraged to report inappropriate behavior that moderators will then address.

In addition, some conflict theorists suggest that the way U.S. media are generated results in an unbalanced political arena. Those with the most money can buy the most media exposure, run smear campaigns against their competitors, and maximize their visual presence. Almost a year before the 2012 U.S. presidential election, the candidates––Barack Obama for the Democrats and numerous Republican contenders––had raised more than $186 million (Carmi et al. 2012). Some would say that the *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Committee* is a major contributing factor to our unbalanced political arena. In *Citizens United*, the Supreme Court affirmed the right of outside groups, including Super Political Action Committees (SuperPACs) with undisclosed donor lists, to spend unlimited amounts of money on political ads as long as they don't coordinate with the candidate's campaign or specifically advocate for a candidate. What do you think a conflict perspective theorist would suggest about the potential for the non-rich to be heard in politics, especially when SuperPACs ensure that the richest groups have the most say?

Technological Social Control and Digital Surveillance

Social scientists take the idea of the surveillance society so seriously that there is an entire journal devoted to its study,*Surveillance and Society*. The panoptic surveillance envisioned by Jeremy Bentham, depicted in the form of an all-powerful, all-seeing government by George Orwell in *1984*, and later analyzed by Michel Foucault (1975) is increasingly realized in the form of technology used to monitor our every move. This surveillance was imagined as a form of constant monitoring in which the observation posts are decentralized and the observed is never communicated with directly. Today, digital security cameras capture our movements, observers can track us through our cell phones, and police forces around the world use facial-recognition software.

Feminist Perspective



What types of women are we exposed to in the media? Some would argue that the range of female images is misleadingly narrow. (Photo courtesy of Cliff1066/flickr)

Take a look at popular television shows, advertising campaigns, and online game sites. In most, women are portrayed in a particular set of parameters and tend to have a uniform look that society recognizes as attractive. Most are thin, white or light-skinned, beautiful, and young. Why does this matter? Feminist perspective theorists believe this idealized image is crucial in creating and reinforcing stereotypes. For example, Fox and Bailenson (2009) found that online female avatars conforming to gender stereotypes enhance negative attitudes toward women, and Brasted (2010) found that media (advertising in particular) promotes gender stereotypes. As early as 1990, *Ms.* magazine instituted a policy to publish without any commercial advertising.

The gender gap in tech-related fields (science, technology, engineering, and math) is no secret. A 2011 U.S. Department of Commerce Report suggested that gender stereotyping is one reason for this gap which acknowledges the bias toward men as keepers of technological knowledge (US Department of Commerce 2011). But gender stereotypes go far beyond the use of technology. Press coverage in the media reinforces stereotypes that subordinate women; it gives airtime to looks over skills, and coverage disparages women who defy accepted norms.

Recent research in new media has offered a mixed picture of its potential to equalize the status of men and women in the arenas of technology and public discourse. A European agency, the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (2010), issued an opinion report suggesting that while there is the potential for new media forms to perpetuate gender stereotypes and the gender gap in technology and media access, at the same time new media could offer alternative forums for feminist groups and the exchange of feminist ideas. Still, the committee warned against the relatively unregulated environment of new media and the potential for antifeminist activities, from pornography to human trafficking, to flourish there.

Increasingly prominent in the discussion of new media and feminism is cyberfeminism, the application to, and promotion of, feminism online. Research on cyberfeminism runs the gamut from the liberating use of blogs by women living in Iraq during the second Gulf War (Peirce 2011) to an investigation of the Suicide Girls web site (Magnet 2007).

Symbolic Interactionism

Technology itself may act as a symbol for many. The kind of computer you own, the kind of car you drive, your ability to afford the latest Apple product—these serve as a social indicator of wealth and status. Neo-Luddites are people who see technology as symbolizing the coldness and alienation of modern life. But for technophiles, technology symbolizes the potential for a brighter future. For those adopting an ideological middle ground, technology might symbolize status (in the form of a massive flat-screen television) or failure (ownership of a basic old mobile phone with no bells or whistles).

Social Construction of Reality

Meanwhile, media create and spread symbols that become the basis for our shared understanding of society. Theorists working in the interactionist perspective focus on this social construction of reality, an ongoing process in which people subjectively create and understand reality. Media constructs our reality in a number of ways. For some, the people they watch on a screen can become a primary group, meaning the small informal groups of people who are closest to them. For many others, media becomes a reference group: a group that influences an individual and to which an individual compares himself or herself, and by which we judge our successes and failures. We might do very well without the latest smartphone, until we see characters using it on our favorite television show or our classmates whipping it out between classes.

While media may indeed be the medium to spread the message of rich white males, Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes, and Sasson (1992) point out that some forms of media discourse allow competing constructions of reality to appear. For example, advertisers find new and creative ways to sell us products we don't need and probably wouldn't want without their prompting, but some networking sites such as Freecycle offer a commercial-free way of requesting and trading items that would otherwise be discarded. The web is also full of blogs chronicling lives lived "off the grid," or without participation in the commercial economy.

Social Networking and Social Construction

While Tumblr and Facebook encourage us to check in and provide details of our day through online social networks, corporations can just as easily promote their products on these sites. Even supposedly crowd-sourced sites like Yelp (which aggregates local reviews) are not immune to corporate shenanigans. That is, we think we are reading objective observations when in reality we may be buying into one more form of advertising.

Facebook, which started as a free social network for college students, is increasingly a monetized business, selling you goods and services in subtle ways. But chances are you don't think of Facebook as one big online advertisement. What started out as

a symbol of coolness and insider status, unavailable to parents and corporate shills, now promotes consumerism in the form of games and fandom. For example, think of all the money spent to upgrade popular Facebook games like Candy Crush. And notice that whenever you become a "fan," you likely receive product updates and special deals that promote online and real-world consumerism. It is unlikely that millions of people want to be "friends" with Pampers. But if it means a weekly coupon, they will, in essence, rent out space on their Facebook pages for Pampers to appear. Thus, we develop both new ways to spend money and brand loyalties that will last even after Facebook is considered outdated and obsolete.

Summary

There are myriad theories about how society, technology, and media will progress. Functionalism sees the contribution that technology and media provide to the stability of society, from facilitating leisure time to increasing productivity. Conflict theorists are more concerned with how technology reinforces inequalities among communities, both within and among countries. They also look at how media typically give voice to the most powerful, and how new media might offer tools to help those who are disenfranchised. Symbolic interactionists see the symbolic uses of technology as signs of everything from a sterile futuristic world to a successful professional life.

Section Quiz

A parent secretly monitoring the babysitter through the use of GPS, site blocker, and nanny cam is a good example of:

1. the social construction of reality
2. technophilia
3. a neo-Luddite
4. panoptic surveillance

Answer

D

The use of Facebook to create an online persona by only posting images that match your ideal self exemplifies the_____ that can occur in forms of new media.

1. social construction of reality
2. cyberfeminism
3. market segmentation
4. referencing

Answer

A

_____ tend to be more pro-technology, while _____ view technology as a symbol of the coldness of modern life.

1. Luddites; technophiles
2. technophiles; Luddites
3. cyberfeminists; technophiles
4. liberal feminists; conflict theorists

Answer

B

When it comes to media and technology, a functionalist would focus on:

1. the symbols created and reproduced by the media
2. the association of technology and technological skill with men
3. the way that various forms of media socialize users
4. the digital divide between the technological haves and have-nots

Answer

C

When all media sources report a simplified version of the environmental impact of hydraulic fracturing, with no effort to convey the hard science and complicated statistical data behind the story, _____ is probably occurring.

1. gatekeeping
2. the digital divide
3. technophilia
4. market segmentation

Answer

A

Short Answer

Contrast a functionalist viewpoint of digital surveillance with a conflict perspective viewpoint.

In what ways has the Internet affected how you view reality? Explain using a symbolic interactionist perspective.

Describe how a cyberfeminist might address the fact that powerful female politicians are often demonized in traditional media.

The issue of airplane-pilot exhaustion is an issue of growing media concern. Select a theoretical perspective, and describe how it would explain this.

Would you characterize yourself as a technophile or a Luddite? Explain, and use examples.

Further Research

To learn more about cyberfeminism, check out the interdisciplinary artist collective, subRosa:http://openstaxcollege.org/l/cyberfeminism

To explore the implications of panoptic surveillance, review some surveillance studies at the free, open source Surveillance and Society site: http://openstaxcollege.org/l/Surveillance

Read an example of socialist media from *Jacobin* magazine here: openstaxcollege.org/l/2EJacobin

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Glossary

cyberfeminism
: the application to and promotion of feminism online

gatekeeping
: the sorting process by which thousands of possible messages are shaped into a mass media-appropriate form and reduced to a manageable amount

neo-Luddites
: those who see technology as a symbol of the coldness of modern life

panoptic surveillance
: a form of constant monitoring in which the observation posts are decentralized and the observed is never communicated with directly

technophiles
: those who see technology as symbolizing the potential for a brighter future

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13: POPULATIONS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

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13.1: SOCIAL CHANGE - POPULATION, URBANIZATION, AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

- Topic hierarchy

13.1.1: Prelude to Population, Urbanization, and Social Movements

13.1.2: 14.1- Understanding Social Change

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13.1.7: Public Sociology and Improving Society

13.1.8: A Final Word

13.1.S: Population, Urbanization, and Social Movements (Summary)

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13.1.1: Prelude to Population, Urbanization, and Social Movements

Social Issues in the News

“Governor Signs Texting Law Inspired by Teen’s Death,” the headline said. In June 2010, the governor of Georgia signed the Caleb Sorohan Act, named for an 18-year-old student who died in a car accident caused by his texting while driving. The bill made it illegal for any drivers in Georgia to text unless they were parked. After Caleb died, his family started a campaign, along with dozens of his high school classmates, to enact a texting while driving ban. They signed petitions, started a Facebook page, and used phone banks to lobby members of their state legislature. Vermont enacted a similar ban about the same time. The new laws in Georgia and Vermont increased the number of states banning texting while driving to 28. (Downey, 2010)Downey, M. (2010, June 4). Governor signs texting law inspired by teen’s death. *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Retrieved from blogs.ajc.com/get-schooled-bl...by-teens-death

“Amherst Sleeps Out to Protest Climate Change,” another headline said. It was February 2010, and a student at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, had been living in a tent for 121 days. His goal was to call attention to the importance of clean energy. The student was a member of a Massachusetts group, Students for a Just and Stable Future (SJSF), comprised of college students across the state. To dramatize the problem of climate change, the group had engaged in sleep-outs in various parts of the state, including one on the Boston Common, a famed public park in that city, over a series of weekends in late 2009. About 200 students were arrested on trespassing charges for staying in the park after it was closed at 11:00 p.m. The UMass student in the tent thought he was making a difference; as he put it, “Hopefully people see me and realize that there are people out there who care about the Earth’s future and civilization’s stability enough to do something about it.” Yet he knew that improvements to the environment would take some time: “It’s not going to happen overnight.” (Vincent, 2010, p. A16)Vincent, L. (2010). Amherst sleeps out to protest climate change. *DailyCollegian.com*. Retrieved from http://dailycollegian.com/2010/2002/...climate-change

Societies change just as people do. The change we see in people is often very obvious, as when they have a growth spurt during adolescence, lose weight on a diet, or buy new clothes or get a new hairstyle. The change we see in society is usually more gradual. Unless it is from a natural disaster like an earthquake or from a political revolution, social change is usually noticeable only months or years after it began. This sort of social change arises from many sources: changes in a society’s technology (as the news story on texting and driving illustrates), in the size and composition of its population, and in its culture. But some social change stems from the concerted efforts of people acting in social movements to alter social policy, as the news story on the student in the tent illustrates, or even the very structure of their government.

This chapter examines the types and sources of social change. We begin by looking generally at social change to understand its overall significance. We then turn to the study of population, as changes in population can and do have important implications for changes in society itself. We also look at urbanization, which over the centuries has changed the social landscape profoundly. Finally, we look at social movements, which involve purposive efforts by groups of people to bring about changes they think necessary and desirable in society.

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13.1.2: 14.1- Understanding Social Change

Learning Objectives

- Understand the differences between modern, large societies and small, traditional societies.
- Discuss the functionalist and conflict perspectives on social change.
- Describe the major sources of social change.

Social change refers to the transformation of culture, behavior, social institutions, and social structure over time. We are familiar from earlier chapters with the basic types of society: hunting and gathering, horticultural and pastoral, agricultural, industrial, and postindustrial. In looking at all of these societies, we have seen how they differ in such dimensions as size, technology, economy, inequality, and gender roles. In short, we have seen some of the ways in which societies change over time. Another way of saying this is that we have seen some of the ways in which societies change as they become more modern. To understand social change, then, we need to begin to understand what it means for a society to become more modern. We considered this briefly in Chapter 2 and expand on it here.

Modernization

Modernization refers to the process and impact of becoming more modern. Modernization has been an important focus of sociology since its origins in the 19th century. Several dimensions and effects of modernization seem apparent (Nolan & Lenski, 2009).Nolan, P., & Lenski, G. (2009). *Human societies: An introduction to macrosociology* (11th ed.). Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

First, as societies evolve, they become much larger and more *heterogeneous*. This means that people are more different from each other than when societies were much smaller, and it also means that they ordinarily cannot know each other nearly as well. Larger, more modern societies thus typically have weaker social bonds and a weaker sense of community than small societies and more of an emphasis on the needs of the individual.



Figure 14.1: As societies become more modern, they begin to differ from nonmodern societies in several ways. In particular, they become larger and more heterogeneous, they lose their traditional ways of thinking, and they gain in individual freedom and autonomy.© Thinkstock

We can begin to appreciate the differences between smaller and larger societies when we contrast a small college of 1,200 students with a large university of 40,000 students. Perhaps you had this contrast in mind when you were applying to college and had a preference for either a small or a large institution. In a small college, classes might average no more than 20 students; these students get to know each other well and to have a lot of interaction with the professor. In a large university, classes might hold 600 students or more, and everything is more impersonal. Large universities do have many advantages, but they probably

do not have as strong a sense of community as is found at small colleges.

A second aspect of modernization is a loss of traditional ways of thinking. This allows a society to be creative and to abandon old ways that may no longer be appropriate, but it also means a weakening or even loss of the traditions that helped define the society and gave it a sense of identity.

A third aspect of modernization is the growth of individual freedom and autonomy. As societies grow, become more impersonal, and lose their traditions and sense of community, their norms become weaker, and individuals thus become freer to think for themselves and to behave in new ways. Although most of us would applaud this growth in individual freedom, it also means, as Émile Durkheim (1895/1962)Durkheim, E. (1962). *The rules of sociological method*. New York, NY: Free Press. (Original work published 1895) recognized long ago, that people feel freer to *deviate* from society's norms and thus to commit deviance. If we want a society that values individual freedom, Durkheim said, we automatically must have a society with deviance.

Is modernization good or bad? This is a simplistic question about a very complex concept, but a quick answer is that it is both good and bad. We see evidence for both responses in the views of sociologists Ferdinand Tönnies, Max Weber, and Durkheim. As Chapter 2 discussed, Tönnies (1887/1963)Tönnies, F. (1963). *Community and society*. New York, NY: Harper and Row. (Original work published 1887) said that modernization meant a shift from *Gemeinschaft* (small societies with strong social bonds) to *Gesellschaft* (large societies with weaker social bonds and more impersonal social relations). Tönnies lamented the loss of close social bonds and of a strong sense of community resulting from modernization.

Weber (1921/1978)Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology* (G. Roth & C. Wittich, Eds.). Berkeley: University of California Press. (Original work published 1921) was also concerned about modernization. The hallmarks of modernization, he thought, are rationalization, a loss of tradition, and the rise of impersonal bureaucracy. He despaired over the impersonal quality of rational thinking and bureaucratization, as he thought it was a dehumanizing influence.

Durkheim (1893/1933)Durkheim, E. (1933). *The division of labor in society*. London, England: The Free Press. (Original work published 1893) took a less negative view of modernization. He certainly appreciated the social bonds and community feeling, which he called mechanical solidarity, characteristic of small, traditional societies. However, he also thought that these societies stifled individual freedom and that social solidarity still exists in modern societies. This solidarity, which he termed organic solidarity, stems from the division of labor, in which everyone has to depend on everyone else to perform their jobs. This *interdependence* of roles, Durkheim said, creates a solidarity that retains much of the bonding and sense of community found in premodern societies.

Beyond these abstract concepts of social bonding and sense of community, modern societies have certainly been a force for both good and bad in other ways. They have led to scientific discoveries that have saved lives, extended life spans, and made human existence much easier than imaginable in the distant past and even in the recent past. But they have also polluted the environment, engaged in wars that have killed tens of millions, and built up nuclear arsenals that, even with the demise of the Soviet Union, still threaten the planet. Modernization, then, is a double-edged sword. It has given us benefits too numerous to count, but it also has made human existence very precarious.

Sociological Perspectives on Social Change

Sociological perspectives on social change fall into the functionalist and conflict approaches. As usual, both views together offer a more complete understanding of social change than either view by itself (Vago, 2004).Vago, S. (2004). *Social change* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Table 14.1 summarizes their major assumptions.

Table 14.1 Theory Snapshot

Theoretical perspective	Major assumptions
Functionalism	Society is in a natural state of equilibrium. Gradual change is necessary and desirable and typically stems from such things as population growth, technological advances, and interaction with other societies that brings new ways of thinking and acting. However, sudden social change is undesirable because it disrupts this equilibrium. To prevent this from happening, other parts of society must make appropriate adjustments if one part of society sees too sudden a change.

Theoretical perspective	Major assumptions
Conflict theory	Because the status quo is characterized by social inequality and other problems, sudden social change in the form of protest or revolution is both desirable and necessary to reduce or eliminate social inequality and to address other social ills.

The Functionalist Understanding

The functionalist understanding of social change is based on insights developed by different generations of sociologists. Early sociologists likened change in society to change in biological organisms. Taking a cue from the work of Charles Darwin, they said that societies evolved just as organisms do, from tiny, simple forms to much larger and more complex structures. When societies are small and simple, there are few roles to perform, and just about everyone can perform all of these roles. As societies grow and evolve, many new roles develop, and not everyone has the time or skill to perform every role. People thus start to *specialize* their roles and a *division of labor* begins. As noted earlier, sociologists such as Durkheim and Tönnies disputed the implications of this process for social bonding and a sense of community, and this basic debate continues today.

Several decades ago, Talcott Parsons (1966),Parsons, T. (1966). *Societies: Evolutionary and comparative perspectives*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. the leading 20th-century figure in functionalist theory, presented an equilibrium model of social change. Parsons said that society is always in a natural state of equilibrium, defined as a state of equal balance among opposing forces. Gradual change is both necessary and desirable and typically stems from such things as population growth, technological advances, and interaction with other societies that brings new ways of thinking and acting. However, any sudden social change disrupts this equilibrium. To prevent this from happening, other parts of society must make appropriate adjustments if one part of society sees too sudden a change.



Figure 14.2: Functionalist theory assumes that sudden social change, as by the protest depicted here, is highly undesirable, whereas conflict theory assumes that sudden social change may be needed to correct inequality and other deficiencies in the status quo. Source: Photo courtesy of Kashfi Halford, http://www.flickr.com/photos/kashklick/3406972544.

The functionalist perspective has been criticized on a few grounds. The perspective generally assumes that the change from simple to complex societies has been very positive, when in fact, as we have seen, this change has also proven costly in many ways. It might well have weakened social bonds, and it has certainly imperiled human existence. Functionalist theory also assumes that sudden social change is highly undesirable, when such change may in fact be needed to correct inequality and other deficiencies in the status quo.

Conflict Theory

Whereas functional theory assumes the status quo is generally good and sudden social change is undesirable, conflict theory

assumes the status quo is generally bad. It thus views sudden social change in the form of protest or revolution as both desirable and necessary to reduce or eliminate social inequality and to address other social ills. Another difference between the two approaches concerns industrialization, which functional theory views as a positive development that helped make modern society possible. In contrast, conflict theory, following the views of Karl Marx, says that industrialization exploited workers and thus increased social inequality.

In one other difference between the two approaches, functionalist sociologists view social change as the result of certain natural forces, which we will discuss shortly. In this sense, social change is unplanned even though it happens anyway. Conflict theorists, however, recognize that social change often stems from efforts by social movements to bring about fundamental changes in the social, economic, and political systems. In his sense social change is more “planned,” or at least intended, than functional theory acknowledges.

Critics of conflict theory say that it exaggerates the extent of social inequality and that it sometimes overemphasizes economic conflict while neglecting conflict rooted in race and ethnicity, gender, religion, and other sources. Its Marxian version also erred in predicting that capitalist societies would inevitably undergo a socialist-communist revolution.

Sources of Social Change

We have seen that social change stems from natural forces and also from the intentional acts of groups of people. This section further examines these sources of social change.

Population Growth and Composition

Much of the discussion so far has talked about population growth as a major source of social change as societies evolved from older to modern times. Yet even in modern societies, changes in the size and composition of the population can have important effects for other aspects of a society. As just one example, the number of school-age children reached a high point in the late 1990s as the children of the post–World War II baby boom entered their school years. This swelling of the school-age population had at least three important consequences. First, new schools had to be built, modular classrooms and other structures had to be added to existing schools, and more teachers and other school personnel had to be hired (Leonard, 1998).Leonard, J. (1998, September 25). Crowding puts crunch on classrooms. *The Los Angeles Times,* p. B1. Second, school boards and municipalities had to borrow dollars and/or raise taxes to pay for all of these expenses. Third, the construction industry, building supply centers, and other businesses profited from the building of new schools and related activities. The growth of this segment of our population thus had profound implications for many aspects of U.S. society even though it was unplanned and “natural.” We explore population growth and change further in a later section.

Culture and Technology

Culture and technology are other sources of social change. Changes in culture can change technology; changes in technology can transform culture; and changes in both can alter other aspects of society (Crowley & Heyer, 2011).Crowley, D., & Heyer, P. (2011). *Communication in history: Technology, culture, society* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Two examples from either end of the 20th century illustrate the complex relationship among culture, technology, and society. At the beginning of the century, the car was still a new invention, and automobiles slowly but surely grew in number, diversity, speed, and power. The car altered the social and physical landscape of the United States and other industrial nations as few other inventions have. Roads and highways were built; pollution increased; families began living farther from each other and from their workplaces; tens of thousands of people started dying annually in car accidents. These are just a few of the effects the invention of the car had, but they illustrate how changes in technology can affect so many other aspects of society.

At the end of the 20th century came the personal computer, whose development has also had an enormous impact that will not be fully understand for some years to come. Anyone old enough, such as many of your oldest professors, to remember having to type long manuscripts on a manual typewriter will easily attest to the difference computers have made for many aspects of our work lives. E-mail, the Internet, and smartphones have enabled instant communication and make the world a very small place, and tens of millions of people now use Facebook and other social media. A generation ago, students studying abroad or working in the Peace Corps overseas would send a letter back home, and it would take up to 2 weeks or more to arrive. It would take another week or 2 for them to hear back from their parents. Now even in poor parts of the world, access to computers and smartphones lets us communicate instantly with people across the planet.

As the world becomes a smaller place, it becomes possible for different cultures to have more contact with each other. This contact, too, leads to social change to the extent that one culture adopts some of the norms, values, and other aspects of another culture. Anyone visiting a poor nation and seeing Coke, Pepsi, and other popular U.S. products in vending machines and stores in various cities will have a *culture shock* that reminds us instantly of the influence of one culture on another. For better or worse, this impact means that the world's diverse cultures are increasingly giving way to a more uniform *global culture*.

This process has been happening for more than a century. The rise of newspapers, the development of trains and railroads, and the invention of the telegraph, telephone, and, later, radio and television allowed cultures in different parts of the world to communicate with each other in ways not previously possible. Affordable jet transportation, cell phones, the Internet, and other modern technology have taken such communication a gigantic step further.

Many observers fear that the world is becoming "Westernized" as Coke, Pepsi, McDonald's, and other products and companies invade other cultures. Others say that Westernization is a good thing, because these products, but especially more important ones like refrigerators and computers, do make people's lives easier and therefore better. Still other observers say the impact of Westernization has been exaggerated. Both within the United States and across the world, these observers say, many cultures continue to thrive, and people continue to hold on to their ethnic identities.

The Natural Environment

Changes in the natural environment can also lead to changes in a society itself. We see the clearest evidence of this when a major hurricane, an earthquake, or another natural disaster strikes. Three recent disasters illustrate this phenomenon. In April 2010, an oil rig operated by BP, an international oil and energy company, exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, creating the worst environmental disaster in U.S. history; its effects on the ocean, marine animals, and the economies of states and cities affected by the oil spill will be felt for decades to come. In January 2010, a devastating earthquake struck Haiti and killed more than 250,000 people, or about 2.5% of that nation's population. A month later, an even stronger earthquake hit Chile. Although this earthquake killed only hundreds (it was relatively far from Chile's large cities and the Chilean buildings were sturdily built), it still caused massive damage to the nation's infrastructure. Obviously the effects of these natural disasters on the economy and society of each of these two countries will also be felt for many years to come.



Figure 14.3: As is evident in this photo taken in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake that devastated Haiti, changes in the natural environment can lead to profound changes in a society. Environmental changes are one of the many sources of social change. Source: Photo courtesy of United Nations, http://www.flickr.com/photos/37913760@N03/4274632760.

Slower changes in the environment can also have a large social impact. As noted earlier, one of the negative effects of industrialization has been the increase in pollution of our air, water, and ground. With estimates of the number of U.S. deaths from air pollution ranging from a low of 10,000 to a high of 60,000 (Reiman & Leighton, 2010),Reiman, J., & Leighton, P. (2010). *The rich get richer and the poor get prison: Ideology, class, and criminal justice* (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. pollution obviously has an important impact on our society. A larger environmental problem, climate change, has also been relatively slow in arriving but threatens the whole planet in ways that climate change researchers have already documented

and will no doubt be examining for the rest of our lifetimes and beyond (Schneider, Rosencranz, Mastrandrea, & Kuntz-Duriseti, 2010).Schneider, S. H., Rosencranz, A., Mastrandrea, M. D., & Kuntz-Duriseti, K. (Eds.). (2010). *Climate change science and policy*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Social Conflict

Change also results from social conflict, including wars, ethnic conflict, efforts by social movements to change society, and efforts by their opponents to maintain the status quo. The immediate impact that wars have on societies is obvious, as the deaths of countless numbers of soldiers and civilians over the ages have affected not only the lives of their loved ones but also the course of whole nations. To take just one of many examples, the defeat of Germany in World War I led to a worsening economy during the next decade that in turn helped fuel the rise of Hitler. In a less familiar example, the deaths of so many soldiers during the American Civil War left many wives and mothers without their family's major breadwinner. Many of these women thus had to turn to prostitution to earn an income, helping to fuel a rise in prostitution after the war (Marks, 1990).Marks, P. (1990). *Bicycles, bangs, and bloomers: The new woman in the popular press*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.

Social movements have also been major forces for social change. Racial segregation in the South ended only after thousands of African Americans, often putting their lives on the line for their cause, engaged in sit-ins, marches, and massive demonstrations during the 1950s and 1960s. The Southern civil rights movement is just one of the many social movements that have changed American history, and we return to these movements later in the chapter.

Conclusion

- As societies become more modern, they become larger and more heterogeneous. Traditional ways of thinking decline, and individual freedom and autonomy increase.
- Functionalist theory favors slow, incremental social change, while conflict theory favors fast, far-reaching social change to correct what it views as social inequalities and other problems in the status quo.
- Major sources of social change include population growth and composition, culture and technology, the natural environment, and social conflict.

For Your Review

1. If you had to do it over again, would you go to a large university, a small college, or something in between? Why? How does your response relate to some of the differences between smaller, traditional societies and larger, modern societies?
2. When you think about today's society and social change, do you favor the functionalist or conflict view on the kind of social change that is needed? Explain your answer.

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13.1.3: 14.2- Population

Learning Objectives

- Explain why there is less concern about population growth now than there was a generation ago.
- Describe how demographers measure birth and death rates.
- Understand demographic transition theory and how it compares with the views of Malthus.

We have commented that population growth is an important source of other changes in society. A generation ago, population growth was a major issue in the United States and some other nations. *Zero population growth*, or ZPG, was a slogan often heard. There was much concern over the rapidly growing population in the United States and, especially, around the world, and there was fear that our "small planet" could not support massive increases in the number of people (Ehrlich, 1969).Ehrlich, P. R. (1969). *The population bomb*. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club. Some of the most dire predictions of the time warned of serious food shortages by the end of the century.

Those predictions did not come to pass, and concern over population growth has faded as the world's resources seem to be standing up to population growth. Widespread hunger in Africa and other regions does exist, with hundreds of millions of people suffering from hunger and malnutrition, but many experts attribute this problem not to overpopulation and lack of food but rather to problems in distributing the sufficient amount of food that actually does exist to people in poor nations (see "Sociology Making a Difference" box).

Sociology Making a Difference: World Hunger and the Scarcity Fallacy

A popular belief is that world hunger exists because there is too little food to feed too many people in poor nations in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. Sociologists Stephen J. Scanlan, J. Craig Jenkins, and Lindsey Peterson (2010)Scanlan, S. J., Jenkins, J. C., & Peterson, L. (2010). The scarcity fallacy. *Contexts, 9*(1), 34–39. call this belief the "scarcity fallacy." According to these authors, "The conventional wisdom is that world hunger exists primarily because of natural disasters, population pressure, and shortfalls in food production" (p. 35). However, this conventional wisdom is mistaken, as world hunger stems not from a shortage of food but from the inability to deliver what is actually a sufficient amount of food to the world's poor. As Scanlan and colleagues note,

A good deal of thinking and research in sociology suggests that world hunger has less to do with the shortage of food than with a shortage of *affordable* or *accessible* food. Sociologists have found that social inequalities, distribution systems, and other economic and political factors create barriers to food access. (p. 35)

This sociological view has important implications for how the world should try to reduce global hunger, say these authors. International organizations such as the World Bank and several United Nations agencies have long believed that hunger is due to food scarcity, and this belief underlies the typical approaches to reducing world hunger that focus on increasing food supplies with new technologies and developing more efficient methods of delivering food. But if food scarcity is not a problem, then other approaches are necessary.

Scanlan and colleagues argue that food scarcity is, in fact, not the problem that international agencies and most people believe it to be:

The bigger problem with emphasizing food supply as the problem, however, is that scarcity is largely a myth. On a per capita basis, food is more plentiful today than any other time in human history....[E]ven in times of localized production shortfalls or regional famines there has long been a global food surplus. (p. 35)

If the problem is not a lack of food, then what is the problem? Scanlan and colleagues argue that the real problem is a lack of access to food and a lack of equitable distribution of food: "Rather than food scarcity, then, we should focus our attention on the persistent inequalities that often accompany the growth in food supply" (p. 36).

What are these inequalities? Recognizing that hunger is especially concentrated in the poorest nations, the authors note that these nations lack the funds to import the abundant food that does exist. These nations' poverty, then, is one inequality that leads to world hunger, but gender and ethnic inequalities are also responsible. For example, women around the world are more likely than men to suffer from hunger, and hunger is more common in nations with greater rates of gender inequality (as measured by gender differences in education and income, among other criteria). Hunger is also more common among ethnic minorities not only in poor nations but also in wealthier nations. In findings from their own research, these sociologists add, hunger lessens when nations democratize, when political rights are protected, and when gender and ethnic inequality is reduced.

If inequality underlies world hunger, they add, then efforts to reduce world hunger will succeed only to the extent that they recognize the importance of inequality in this regard: "To get at inequality, policy must give attention to democratic governance and human rights, fixing the politics of food aid, and tending to the challenges posed by the global economy" (p. 38). For this to happen, they say, food must be upheld as a "fundamental human right." More generally, world hunger cannot be effectively reduced unless and until ethnic and gender inequality is reduced. Scanlan and colleagues conclude,

The challenge, in short, is to create a more equitable and just society in which food access is ensured for all. Food scarcity matters. However, it is rooted in social conditions and institutional dynamics that must be the focus of any policy innovations that might make a real difference. (p. 39)

In calling attention to the myth of food scarcity and the inequalities that contribute to world hunger, Scanlan and colleagues point to better strategies for addressing this significant international problem. Once again, sociology is making a difference.

Concern over population growth also decreased because of criticism by people of color that ZPG was directed largely at their ranks and smacked of racism. The call for population control, they said, was a disguised call for controlling the growth of their own populations and thus reducing their influence (Kuumba, 1993).Kuumba, M. B. (1993). Perpetuating neo-colonialism through population control: South Africa and the United States. *Africa Today, 40*(3), 79–85.

Still another reason for the reduced concern over population growth is that birth rates in many industrial nations have slowed considerably. Some nations are even experiencing population declines, while several more are projected to have population declines by 2050 (Goldstein, Sobotka, & Jasilioniene, 2009).Goldstein, J. R., Sobotka, T., & Jasilioniene, A. (2009). The end of "lowest-low" fertility? *Population & Development Review, 35*(4), 663–699. doi:10.1111/j.1728–4457.2009.00304.xFor a country to maintain its population, the average woman needs to have 2.1 children, the *replacement level* for population stability. But several industrial nations, not including the United States, are far below this level. Increased birth control is one reason for their lower fertility rates, but so are the decisions by women to stay in school longer and then to go to work right after their schooling ends and not having their first child until somewhat later.



Figure 14.4: Spain is one of several European nations that have been experiencing a population decline because of lower birth rates. Like some other nations, Spain has adopted pronatalist policies to encourage people to have more children; it provides 2,500 euros, about $3,400, for each child. Source: Photo courtesy of Sergi Larripa, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BCN01.JPG.

Ironically, these nations' population declines have begun to concern demographers and policy makers (Shorto, 2008).Shorto, R. (2008, June 2). No babies? *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved from www.nytimes.com/2008/06/29/ma...p=1&sq=&st=nyt Because people in many industrial nations are living longer while the birth rate drops, these nations are increasingly having a greater proportion of older people and a smaller proportion of younger people. In several European nations, there are more people 61 or older than 19 or younger. As this trend continues, it will become increasingly difficult to take care of the health and income needs of so many older persons, and there may be too few younger people to fill the many jobs and provide the many services that an industrial society demands. The smaller labor force may also mean that governments will have fewer income tax dollars to provide these services.

To deal with these problems, several governments have initiated *pronatalist* policies aimed at encouraging women to have more children. In particular, they provide generous child-care subsidies, tax incentives, and flexible work schedules designed to make it easier to bear and raise children, and some even provide couples outright cash payments when they have an additional child. Russia in some cases provides the equivalent of about $9,000 for each child beyond the first, while Spain provides 2,500 euros (equivalent to about $3,400) for each child (Haub, 2009).Haub, C. (2009). *Birth rates rising in some low birth-rate countries*. Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau. Retrieved from www.prb.org/Articles/2009/fal...irthrates.aspx

Demography and Demographic Concepts

As all of these issues indicate, changes in the size and composition of population have important implications for other social changes. The study of population is so significant that it occupies a special subfield within sociology called demography. To be more precise, demography is the study of changes in the size and composition of population. It encompasses several concepts: fertility and birth rates, mortality and death rates, and migration (Weeks, 2008).Weeks, J. R. (2008). *Population: An introduction to concepts and issues* (10th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. Let's look at each of these briefly.

Fertility and Birth Rates

Fertility refers to the number of live births. Demographers use several measures of fertility. One measure is the crude birth rate, or the number of live births for every 1,000 people in a population in a given year. To determine the crude birth rate, the number of live births in a year is divided by the population size, and this result is then multiplied by 1,000. For example, in 2008 the United States had a population of about 304 million and 4,251,095 births. Dividing the latter figure by the former figure gives us 0.0140 rounded off. We then multiply this quotient by 1,000 to yield a crude birth rate of 14.0 births per 1,000 population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab We call this a "crude" birth rate because the denominator, population size, consists of the total population, not just the number of women or even the number of women of childbearing age (commonly considered 15–44).

A second measure is the general fertility rate (also just called the *fertility rate* or *birth rate*), or the number of live births per 1,000 women aged 15–44 (i.e., of childbearing age). This is calculated in a manner similar to that for the crude fertility rate, but in this case the number of births is divided by the number of women aged 15–44 before multiplying by 1,000. The U.S. general fertility rate for 2007 was about 69.5 (i.e., 69.5 births per 1,000 women aged 15–44) (Hamilton, Martin, & Ventura, 2009).Hamilton, B. E., Martin, J. A., & Ventura, S. J. (2009). Births: Preliminary data for 2007. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 57*(12), 1–12.

A third measure is the total fertility rate, or the number of children an average woman is expected to have in her lifetime. This measure often appears in the news media and is more easily understood by the public than either of the first two measures. In 2007, the U.S. total fertility rate was 2.1. Sometimes the total fertility rate is expressed as the average number of births that an average group of 1,000 women would be expected to have. In this case, the average number of children that one woman is expected to have is simply multiplied by 1,000. Using this latter calculation, the U.S. total fertility rate in 2007 was 2,100 (i.e., an average group of 1,000 women would be expected to have, in their lifetimes, 2,100 children) (Hamilton et al., 2009).Hamilton, B. E., Martin, J. A., & Ventura, S. J. (2009). Births: Preliminary data for 2007. *National Vital Statistics Reports, 57*(12), 1–12.

As Figure 14.5 indicates, the U.S. general fertility rate has changed a lot since 1920, dropping from 101 (per 1,000 women aged 15–44) in 1920 to 70 in 1935, during the Great Depression, before rising afterward until 1955. (Note the very sharp increase from 1945 to 1955, as the post–World War II baby boom began.) The fertility rate then fell steadily after 1960 until the 1970s but has remained rather steady since then, fluctuating only slightly between 65 and 70 per 1,000 women aged 15–44.

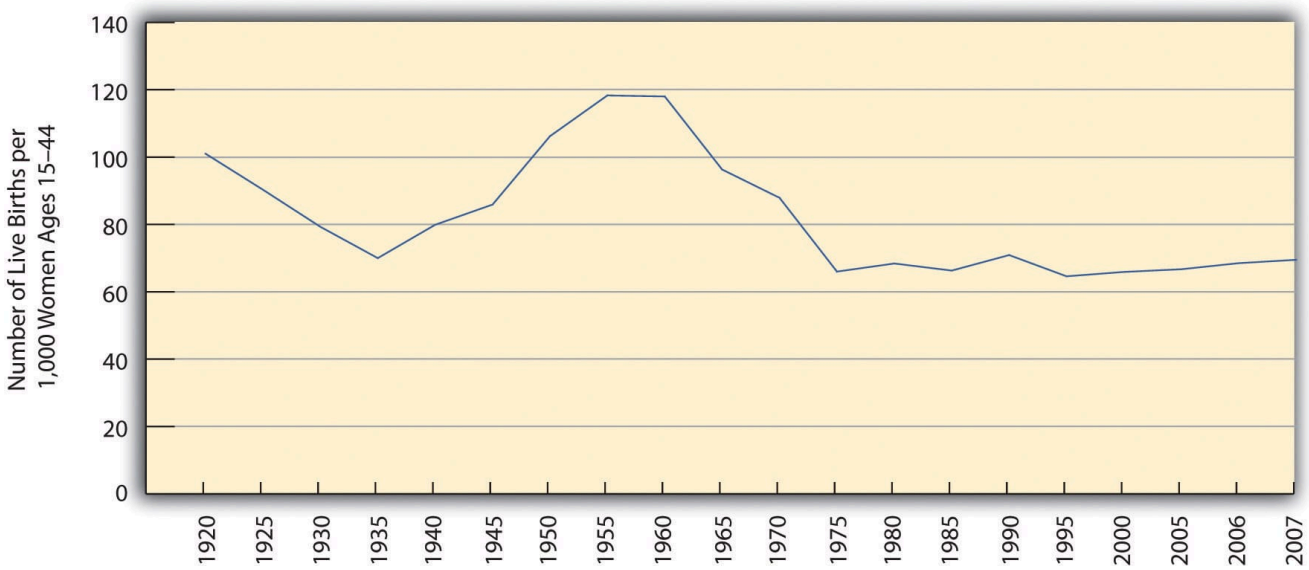


Figure 14.5 U.S. General Fertility Rate, 1920–2007: Sources: Data from Martin, J. A., Hamilton, B. E., Sutton, P. D., Ventura, S. J., Menacker, F., Kirmeyer, S., & Mathews, T. J. (2009). Births: Final data for 2006. National Vital Statistics Reports, 57(7), 1–102; U.S. Census Bureau. (1951). Statistical abstract of the United States: 1951. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office; U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

The fertility rate varies by race and ethnicity. As Figure 14.6 shows, it is lowest for non-Latina white women and the highest for Latina women. Along with immigration, the high fertility rate of Latina women has fueled the large growth of the Latino population. Latinos now account for about 16% of the U.S. population, and their proportion is expected to reach more than 30% by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab

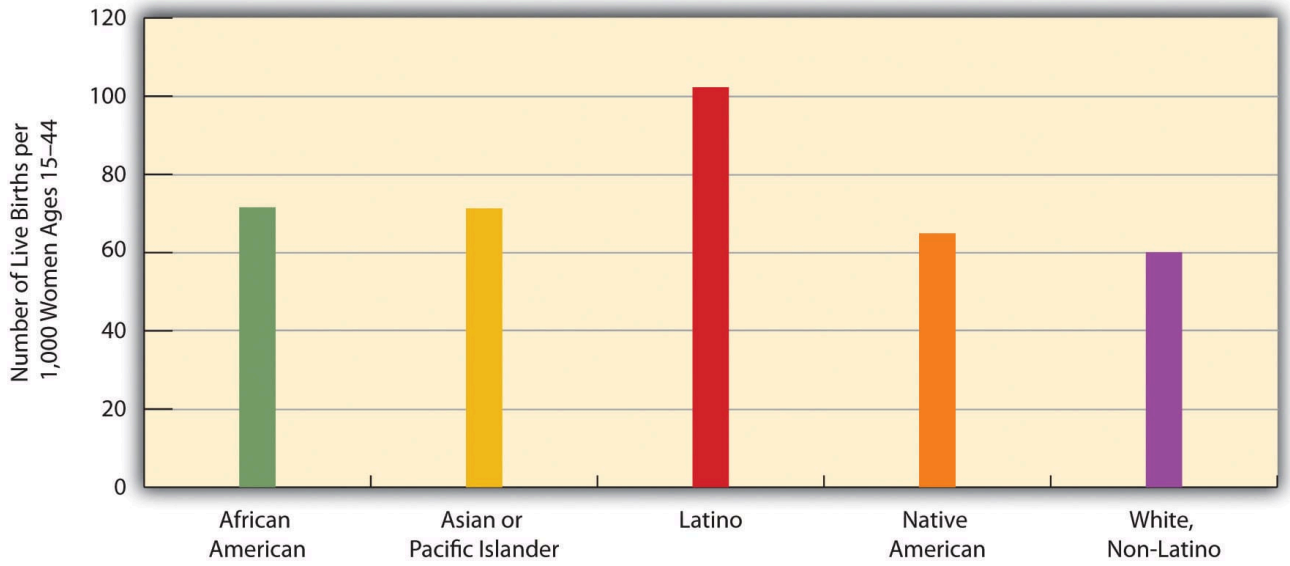


Figure 14.6 Race, Ethnicity, and U.S. Fertility Rates, 2007. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

The fertility rate of teenagers is a special concern because of their age. Although it is still a rate that most people wish were lower, it dropped steadily through the 1990s, before leveling off after 2002 and rising slightly by 2007 (see Figure 14.7). Although most experts attribute this drop to public education campaigns and increased contraception, the United States still has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy and fertility of any industrial nation (Eckholm, 2009).Eckholm, E. (2009, March 18). '07 U.S. births break baby boom record. *The New York Times*, p. A14. Teenage fertility again varies by race and ethnicity, with Latina teenagers having the highest fertility rates and Asian American teenagers the lowest (see Figure 14.8).

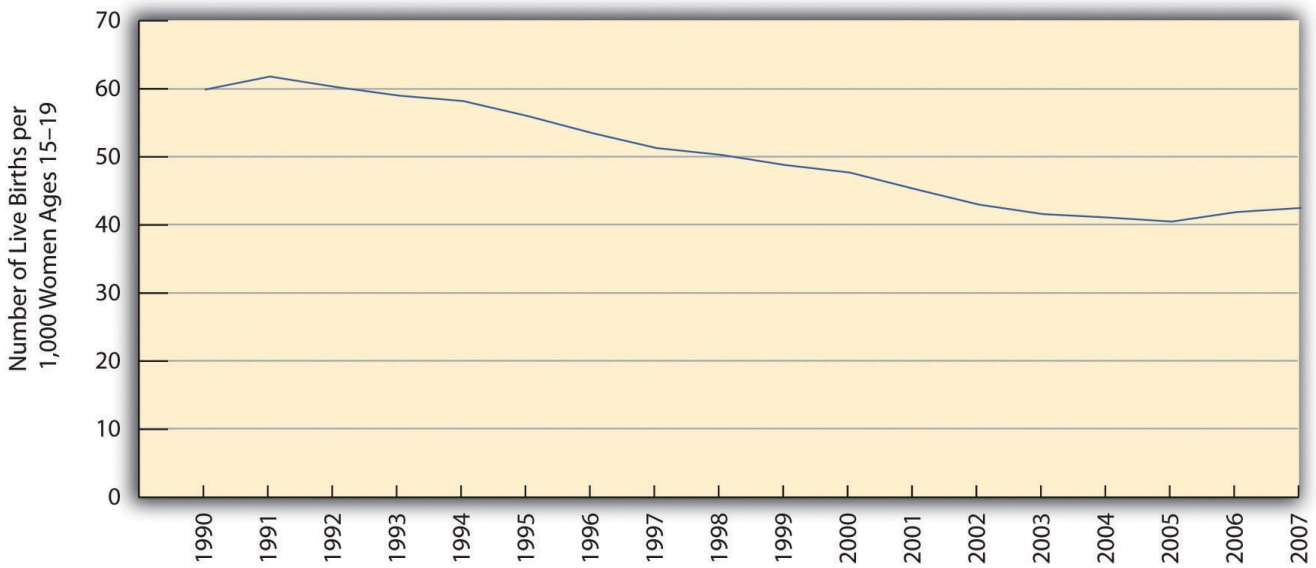


Figure 14.7 U.S. Teenage Fertility Rate, 1990–2007. Sources: Data from Martin, J. A., Hamilton, B. E., Sutton, P. D., Ventura, S. J., Menacker, F., Kirmeyer, S., & Mathews, T. J. (2009). Births: Final data for 2006. National Vital Statistics Reports, 57(7), 1–102; U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

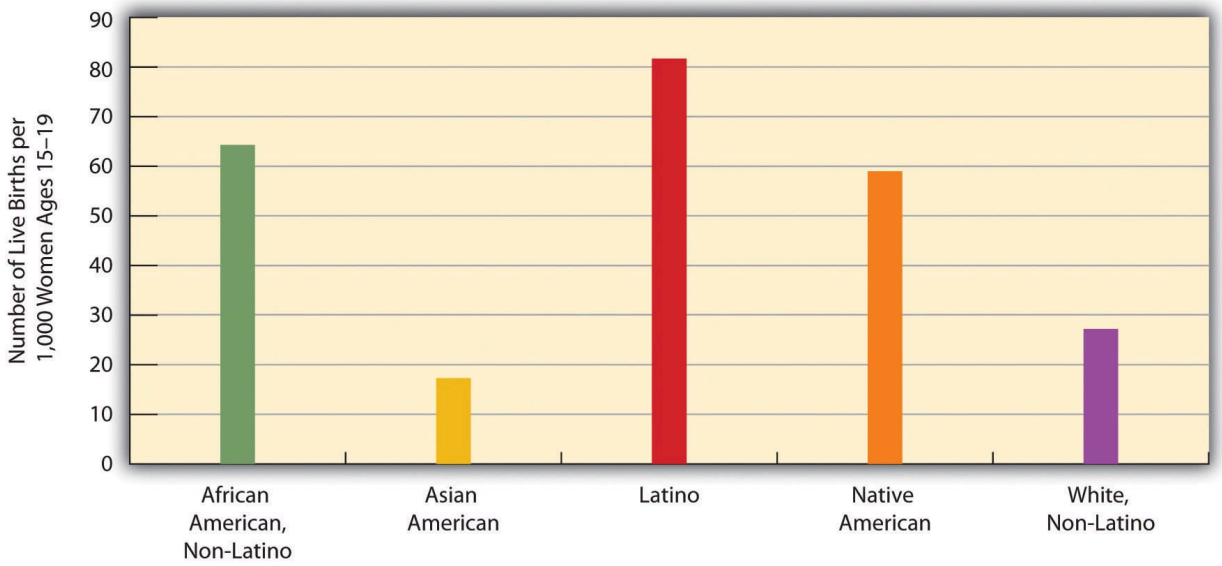


Figure 14.8 Race, Ethnicity, and U.S. Teenage Fertility Rates, 2007. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

Fertility rates also differ around the world and are especially high in poor nations (see Figure 14.9). Demographers identify several reasons for these high rates (Weeks, 2008).Weeks, J. R. (2008). *Population: An introduction to concepts and issues* (10th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

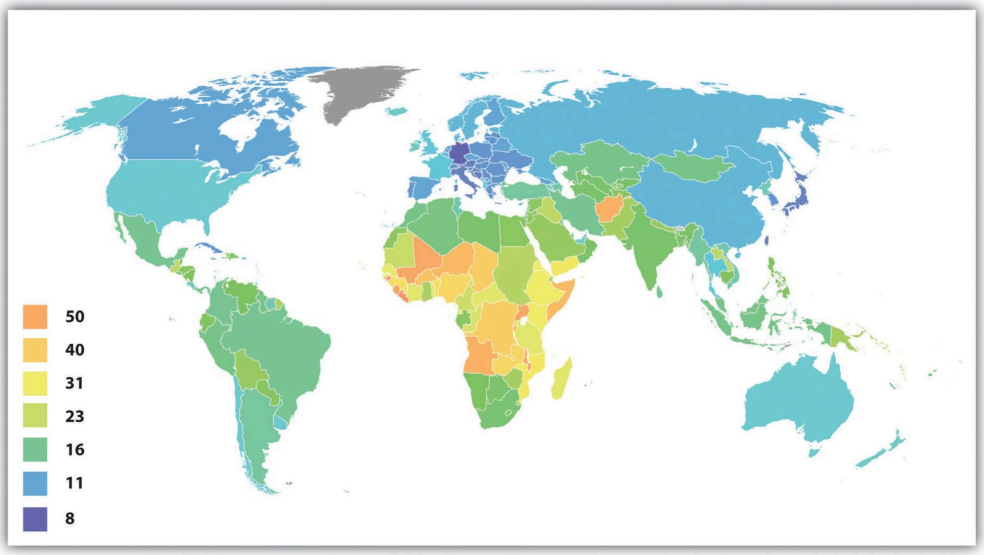


Figure 14.9 Crude Birth Rates Around the World, 2008 (Number of Births per 1,000 Population). Source: Adapted from en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bi..._countries.PNG.

First, poor nations are usually agricultural ones. In agricultural societies, children are an important economic resource, as a family will be more productive if it has more children. This means that families will ordinarily try to have as many children as possible. Second, infant and child mortality rates are high in these nations. Because parents realize that one or more of their children may die before adulthood, they have more children to "make up" for the anticipated deaths. A third reason is that many parents in low-income nations prefer sons to daughters, and, if a daughter is born, they "try again" for a son. Fourth, traditional gender roles are often very strong in poor nations, and these roles include the belief that women should be wives and mothers above all. With this ideology in place, it is not surprising that women will have several children. Finally, contraception is uncommon in poor nations. Without contraception, many more pregnancies and births obviously occur. For all of these reasons, then, fertility is much higher in poor nations than in rich nations.

Mortality and Death Rates

Mortality is the flip side of fertility and refers to the number of deaths. Demographers measure it with the crude death rate, the number of deaths for every 1,000 people in a population in a given year. To determine the crude death rate, the number of deaths is divided by the population size, and this result is then multiplied by 1,000. In 2006 the United States had slightly more than 2.4 million deaths for a crude death rate of 8.1 deaths for every 1,000 persons. We call this a "crude" death rate because the denominator, population size, consists of the total population and does not take its age distribution into account. All things equal, a society with a higher proportion of older people should have a higher crude death rate. Demographers often calculate *age-adjusted* death rates that adjust for a population's age distribution.

Migration

Another demographic concept is migration, the movement of people into and out of specific regions. Since the dawn of human history, people have migrated in search of a better life, and many have been forced to migrate by ethnic conflict or the slave trade.

Several classifications of migration exist. When people move into a region, we call it *in-migration*, or *immigration*; when they move out of a region, we call it *out-migration*, or *emigration*. The *in-migration rate* is the number of people moving into a region for every 1,000 people in the region, while the *out-migration rate* is the number of people moving from the region for every 1,000 people. The difference between the two is the *net migration rate* (in-migration minus out-migration).

Migration can also be either domestic or international in scope. *Domestic migration* happens within a country's national borders, as when retired people from the northeastern United States move to Florida or the Southwest. *International migration* happens across national borders. When international immigration is heavy, as it has been into the United States and Western Europe in the last few decades, the effect on population growth and other aspects of national life can be significant. Domestic migration can also have a large impact. The great migration of African Americans from the South into northern cities during the first half of

the 20th century changed many aspects of those cities' lives (Berlin, 2010).Berlin, I. (2010). *The making of African America: The four great migrations*. New York, NY: Viking. Meanwhile, the movement during the past few decades of northerners into the South and Southwest also had quite an impact: the housing market initially exploded, for example, and traffic increased.

Population Growth

Now that you are familiar with some basic demographic concepts, we can discuss population growth in more detail. Three of the factors just discussed determine population growth: fertility (crude birth rate), mortality (crude death rate), and net migration. The *natural growth rate* is simply the difference between the crude birth rate and the crude death rate. The U.S. natural growth rate is about 0.6% (or 6 per 1,000 people) per year (Rosenberg, 2009).Rosenberg, M. (2009). Population growth rates. Retrieved from geography.about.com/od/popula...lationgrow.htm When immigration is also taken into account, the total population growth rate has been almost 1.0% per year (Jacobsen & Mather, 2010).Jacobsen, L. A., & Mather, M. (2010). U.S. economic and social trends since 2000. *Population Bulletin, 65*(1), 1–20.

Figure 14.10 depicts the annual population growth rate (including both natural growth and net migration) of all the nations in the world. Note that many African nations are growing by at least 3% per year or more, while most European nations are growing by much less than 1% or are even losing population, as discussed earlier. Overall, the world population is growing by about 80 million people annually.

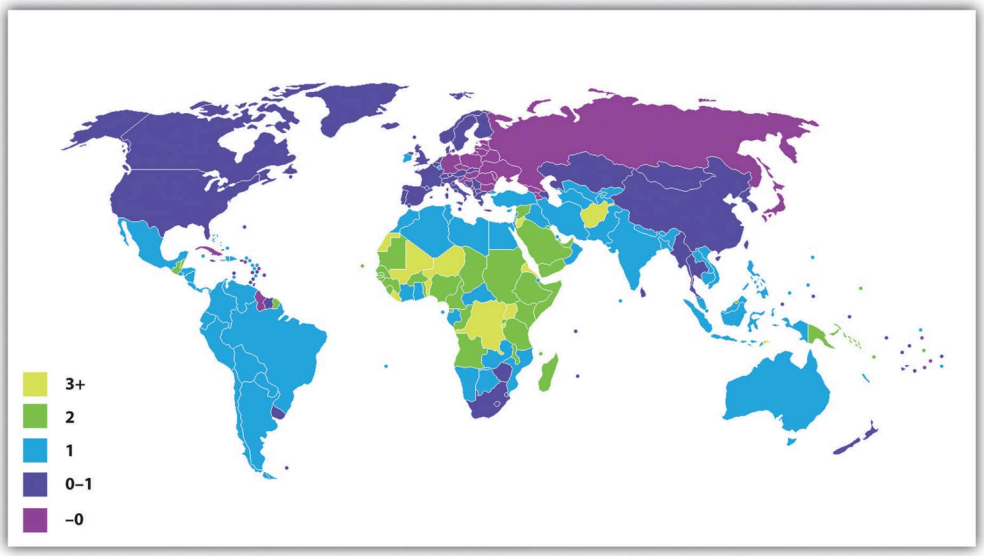


Figure 14.10 International Annual Population Growth Rates (%), 2005–2010. Source: Adapted from en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Po...05-2010_UN.PNG.

To determine how long it takes for a nation to double its population size, divide the number 70 by its population growth rate. For example, if a nation has an annual growth rate of 3%, it takes about 23.3 years (70 ÷ 3) for that nation's population size to double. As you can see from the map in Figure 14.10, several nations will see their population size double in this time span if their annual growth continues at its present rate. For these nations, population growth will be a serious problem if food and other resources are not adequately distributed.

Demographers use their knowledge of fertility, mortality, and migration trends to make *projections*about population growth and decline several decades into the future. Coupled with our knowledge of past population sizes, these projections allow us to understand population trends over many generations. One clear pattern emerges from the study of population growth. When a society is small, population growth is slow because there are relatively few adults to procreate. But as the number of people grows over time, so does the number of adults. More and more procreation thus occurs every single generation, and population growth then soars in a virtual explosion.

We saw evidence of this pattern when we looked at world population growth. When agricultural societies developed some 12,000 years ago, only about 8 million people occupied the planet. This number had reached about 300 million about 2,100 years ago, and by the 15th century it was still only about 500 million. It finally reached 1 billion by about 1850 and by 1950, only a century later, had doubled to 2 billion. Just 50 years later it tripled to more than 6.8 billion, and it is projected to reach more than 9 billion

by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010)U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab (see Figure 14.11).

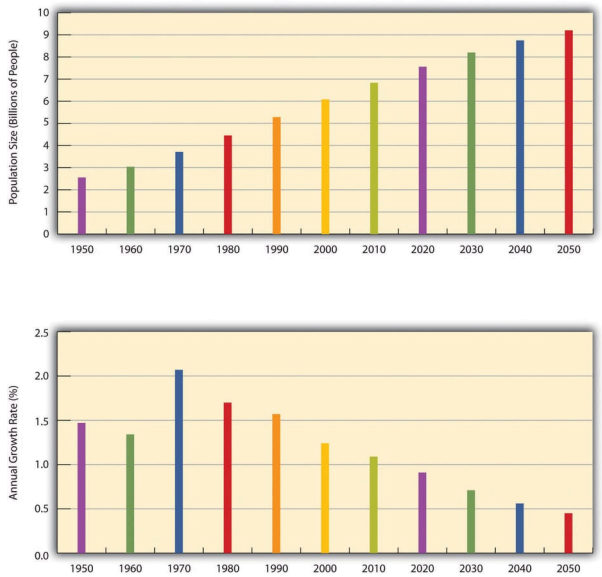


Figure 14.11 Total World Population, 1950–2050. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

Eventually, however, population growth begins to level off after exploding, as explained by *demographic transition theory*, discussed later. We see this in the bottom half of Figure 14.11, which shows the average annual growth rate for the world's population. This rate has declined over the last few decades and is projected to further decline over the next four decades. This means that while the world's population will continue to grow during the foreseeable future, it will grow by a smaller rate as time goes by. As Figure 14.10 suggested, the growth that does occur will be concentrated in the poor nations in Africa and some other parts of the world. Still, even there the average number of children a woman has in her lifetime dropped from six a generation ago to about three today.

Past and projected sizes of the U.S. population appear in Figure 14.12. The U.S. population is expected to number about 440 million people by 2050.

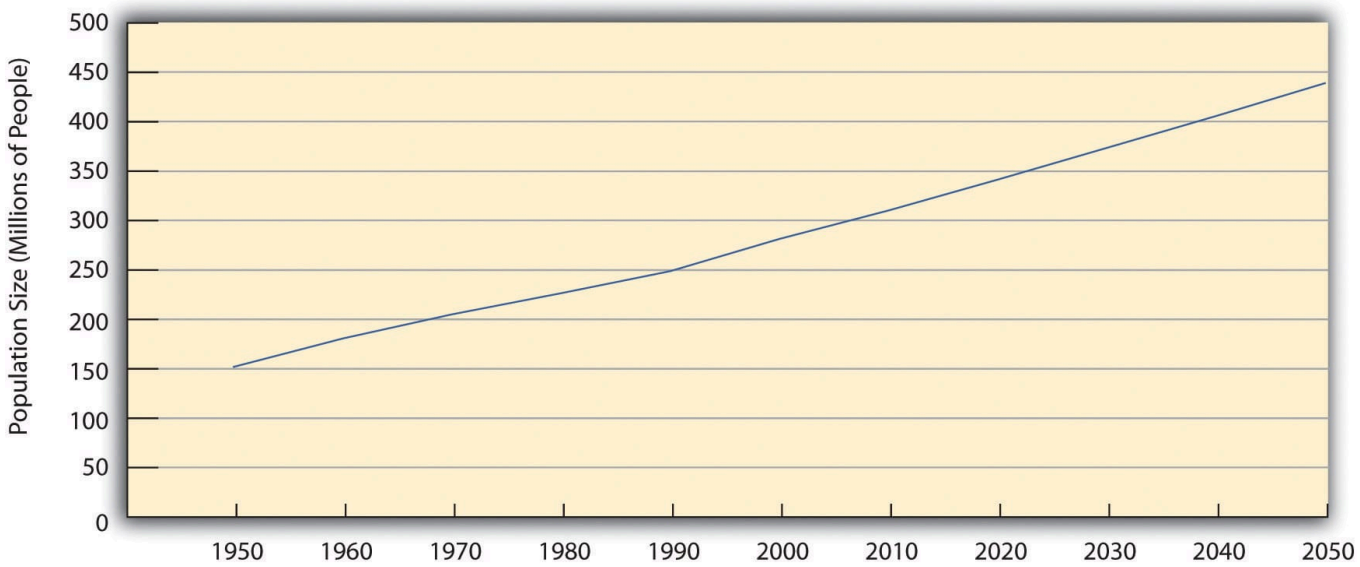


Figure 14.12 Past and Projected Size of the U.S. Population, 1950–2050 (in Millions). Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

Views of Population Growth

Earlier we talked about the zero population growth movement and concern about overpopulation that received so much attention a generation ago. Social observers have actually worried about overpopulation since the 18th century.



Figure 14.13. Thomas Malthus, an English economist who lived about 200 years ago, wrote that population increases geometrically while food production increases only arithmetically. These understandings led him to predict mass starvation. Source: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...rt_Malthus.jpg.

One of the first to warn about population growth was Thomas Malthus (1766–1834), an English economist, who said that population increases *geometrically* (2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, 1024...). If you expand this list of numbers, you will see that they soon become overwhelmingly large in just a few more "generations." Malthus (1798/1926)Malthus, T. R. (1926). *First essay on population*. London, England: Macmillan. (Original work published 1798) said that food production increases only *arithmetically* (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6...) and thus could not hope to keep up with the population increase, and he predicted that mass starvation would be the dire result.

Fortunately, Malthus was wrong to some degree. Although population levels have certainly soared, the projections in Figure 14.11 show that the rate of increase is slowing. Among other factors, the development of more effective contraception, especially the birth control pill, has limited population growth in the industrial world and, increasingly, in poorer nations. Food production has also increased by a much greater amount than Malthus predicted, although, as noted earlier, hunger remains a serious problem in poor nations because of inequalities in food distribution.

Demographic Transition Theory

Other factors also explain why population growth has not risen at the geometric rate that Malthus predicted and is even slowing. The view explaining the interaction of these factors is called *demographic transition theory* (Weeks, 2008),Weeks, J. R. (2008). *Population: An introduction to concepts and issues* (10th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. mentioned earlier. This theory links population growth to the level of technological development across three stages of social evolution. In the first stage, coinciding with preindustrial societies, the birth rate and death rate are both high. The birth rate is high because of the lack of contraception and the several other reasons cited earlier for high fertility rates, and the death rate is high because of disease, poor nutrition, lack of modern medicine, and other problems. These two high rates cancel each other out, and little population growth occurs.

In the second stage, coinciding with the development of industrial societies, the birth rate remains fairly high, owing to the lack of contraception and a continuing belief in the value of large families, but the death rate drops because of several factors, including increased food production, better sanitation, and improved medicine. Because the birth rate remains high but the death rate drops, population growth takes off dramatically.

In the third stage, the death rate remains low, but the birth rate finally drops as families begin to realize that large numbers of children in an industrial economy are more of a burden than an asset. Another reason for the drop is the availability of effective

contraception. As a result, population growth slows, and, as we saw earlier, it has become quite low or even gone into a decline in several industrial nations.

Demographic transition theory gives us reason to be cautiously optimistic regarding the threat of overpopulation. As poor nations continue to modernize—much as industrial nations did 200 years ago—their population growth rates should start to decline. Still, population growth rates in poor nations continue to be high, and, as the "Sociology Making a Difference" box discussed, inequalities in food distribution allow rampant hunger to persist. Hundreds of thousands of women die in poor nations each year during pregnancy and childbirth. Reduced fertility would save their lives, in part because their bodies would be healthier if their pregnancies were spaced farther apart (Schultz, 2008).Schultz, T. P. (2008). Population policies, fertility, women's human capital, and child quality. In T. P. Schultz & J. Strauss (Eds.), *Handbook of development economics* (Vol. 4, pp. 3249–3303). Amsterdam, Netherlands: North-Holland, Elsevier. Although world population growth is slowing, then, it is still growing too rapidly in much of the developing and least developed worlds. To reduce it further, more extensive family-planning programs are needed, as is economic development in general.

Conclusion

- Concern over population growth has declined for at least three reasons. First, there is increasing recognition that the world has an adequate supply of food. Second, people of color have charged that attempts to limit population growth were aimed at their own populations. Third, several European countries have actually experienced population decline.
- To understand changes in the size and composition of population, demographers use several concepts, including fertility and birth rates, mortality and death rates, and migration.
- Demographic transition theory links population growth to the level of technological development across three stages of social evolution. In preindustrial societies, there is little population growth; in industrial societies, population growth is high; and in later stages of industrial societies, population growth slows.

For Your Review

1. Before you read this chapter, did you think that food scarcity was the major reason for world hunger today? Why do you think a belief in food scarcity is so common among Americans?
2. The text states that the average woman must have 2.1 children for a society to avoid population decline. Some women wish to have no children, some desire one or two children, and some prefer to have at least three children. What do you think is the ideal number of children for a woman to have? Explain your answer.

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13.1.4: 14.3- Urbanization

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the views and methodology of the human ecology school.
- Describe the major types of urban residents.
- List four major issues and/or problems affecting U.S. cities today.

An important aspect of social change and population growth over the centuries has been urbanization, or the rise and growth of cities. Urbanization has had important consequences for many aspects of social, political, and economic life (Macionis & Parrillo, 2010).Macionis, J. J., & Parrillo, V. N. (2010). *Cities and urban life* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

The earliest cities developed in ancient times after the rise of horticultural and pastoral societies made it possible for people to stay in one place instead of having to move around to find food. Because ancient cities had no sanitation facilities, people typically left their garbage and human waste in the city streets or just outside the city wall (which most cities had for protection from possible enemies); this poor sanitation led to rampant disease and high death rates. Some cities eventually developed better sanitation procedures, including, in Rome, a sewer system (Smith, 2003).Smith, M. L. (Ed.). (2003). *The social construction of ancient cities*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Cities became more numerous and much larger during industrialization, as people moved to be near factories and other sites of industrial production. First in Europe and then in the United States, people crowded together as never before into living conditions that were often decrepit. Lack of sanitation continued to cause rampant disease, and death rates from cholera, typhoid, and other illnesses were high. In addition, crime rates soared, and mob violence became quite common (Feldberg, 1998).Feldberg, M. (1998). Urbanization as a cause of violence: Philadelphia as a test case. In A. F. Davis & M. H. Haller (Eds.), *The peoples of Philadelphia: A history of ethnic groups and lower-class life, 1790–1940* (pp. 53–69). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Views of the City

Are cities good or bad? We asked a similar question—is modernization good or bad?—earlier in this chapter, and the answer here is similar as well: cities are both good and bad. They are sites of innovation, high culture, population diversity, and excitement, but they are also sites of high crime, impersonality, and other problems.

Figure 14.14



During the early 20th century, social scientists at the University of Chicago began to study urban life in general and life in Chicago in particular. Although some of these scholars were very dismayed by the negative aspects of city life, other scholars emphasized several positive aspects of city life.

Source: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...5_img_2685.jpg.

In the early 20th century, a group of social scientists at the University of Chicago established a research agenda on cities that is still influential today (Bulmer, 1984).Bulmer, M. (1984). *The Chicago school of sociology: Institutionalization, diversity, and the rise of sociological research*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Most notably, they began to study the effects of urbanization on various aspects of city residents' lives in what came to be called the human ecology school (Park, Burgess, & McKenzie, 1925).Park, R. E., Burgess, E. W., & McKenzie, R. (1925). *The city*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. One of their innovations was to divide Chicago into geographical regions, or zones, and to analyze crime rates and other behavioral differences among the zones. They found that crime rates were higher in the inner zone, or central part of the city, where housing was crowded and poverty was common, and were lower in the outer zones, or the outer edges of the city, where houses were spread farther apart and poverty was much lower. Because they found these crime rate differences over time even as the ethnic backgrounds of people in these zones changed, they assumed that the social and physical features of the neighborhoods were affecting their crime rates (Shaw & McKay, 1942).Shaw, C. R., & McKay, H. D. (1942). *Juvenile delinquency and urban areas*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Their work is still useful today, as it helps us realize that the social environment, broadly defined, can affect our attitudes and behavior. This theme, of course, lies at the heart of the sociological perspective.

Urbanism and Tolerance

One of the most notable Chicago sociologists was Louis Wirth (1897–1952), who, in a well-known essay entitled "Urbanism as a Way of Life" (Wirth, 1938),Wirth, L. (1938). Urbanism as a way of life. *American Journal of Sociology, 44*, 3–24. discussed several differences between urban and rural life. In one such difference, he said that urban residents are more tolerant than rural residents of nontraditional attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles, in part because they are much more exposed than rural residents to these nontraditional ways. Supporting Wirth's hypothesis, contemporary research finds that urban residents indeed hold more tolerant views on several kinds of issues (Moore & Ovadia, 2006).Moore, L. M., & Ovadia, S. (2006). Accounting for spatial variation in tolerance: The effects of education and religion. *Social Forces, 84*(4), 2205–2222.

Life in U.S. Cities

Life in U.S. cities today reflects the dual view just outlined. On the one hand, many U.S. cities are vibrant places, filled with museums and other cultural attractions, nightclubs, theaters, and restaurants and populated by people from many walks of life and from varied racial and ethnic and national backgrounds. Many college graduates flock to cities, not only for their employment opportunities but also for their many activities and the sheer excitement of living in a metropolis. On the other hand, many U.S. cities are also filled with abject poverty, filth and dilapidated housing, high crime rates, traffic gridlock, and dirty air. Many Americans would live nowhere but a city, and many would live anywhere but a city. Cities arouse strong opinions pro and con, and for good reason, because there are many things both to like and to dislike about cities.

Types of Urban Residents

The quality of city life depends on many factors, but one of the most important factors is a person's social background: social class, race and ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation. As earlier chapters documented, these dimensions of our social backgrounds often yield many kinds of social inequalities, and the quality of life that city residents enjoy depends heavily on these dimensions. For example, residents who are white and wealthy have the money and access to enjoy the best that cities have to offer, while those who are poor and of color typically experience the worst aspects of city life. Because of fear of rape and sexual assault, women often feel more constrained than men from traveling freely throughout a city and being out late at night; older people also often feel more constrained because of physical limitations and fear of muggings; and gays and lesbians are still subject to physical assaults stemming from homophobia. The type of resident we are, then, in terms of our sociodemographic profile affects what we experience in the city and whether that experience is positive or negative.

This brief profile of city residents obscures other kinds of differences among residents regarding their lifestyles and experiences. A classic typology of urban dwellers by sociologist Herbert Gans (1962)Gans, H. J. (1962). *The urban villagers: Group and class in the life of Italian-Americans*. New York, NY: Free Press. is still useful today in helping to understand the variety of lives found in cities. Gans identified five types of city residents.

The first type is *cosmopolites*. These are people who live in a city because of its cultural attractions, restaurants, and other features of the best that a city has to offer. Cosmopolites include students, writers, musicians, and intellectuals. *Unmarried and childless* individuals and couples are the second type; they live in a city to be near their jobs and to enjoy the various kinds of entertainment found in most cities. If and when they marry or have children, respectively, many migrate to the suburbs to raise their families. The third type is *ethnic villagers*, who are recent immigrants and members of various ethnic groups who live among each other in certain neighborhoods. These neighborhoods tend to have strong social bonds and more generally a strong sense of community. Gans wrote that all of these three types generally find the city inviting rather than alienating and have positive experiences far more often than negative ones.

In contrast, two final types of residents find the city alienating and experience a low quality of life. The first of these two types, and the fourth overall, is the *deprived*. These are people with low levels of formal education who live in poverty or near-poverty and are unemployed, are underemployed, or work at low wages. They live in neighborhoods filled with trash, broken windows, and other signs of disorder. They commit high rates of crime and also have high rates of victimization by crime. The final type is the *trapped*. These are residents who, as their name implies, might wish to leave their neighborhoods but are unable to do so for several reasons: they may be alcoholics or drug addicts, they may be elderly and disabled, or they may be jobless and cannot afford to move to a better area.

Problems of City Life

By definition, cities consist of very large numbers of people living in a relatively small amount of space. Some of these people have a good deal of money, but many people, and in some cities most people, have very little money. Cities must provide many kinds of services for all their residents, and certain additional services for their poorer residents. These basic facts of city life make for common sets of problems affecting cities throughout the nation, albeit to varying degrees, with some cities less able than others to address these problems.

One evident problem is *fiscal*: cities typically have serious difficulties in paying for basic services such as policing, public education, trash removal, street maintenance, and, in cold climates, snow removal, and in providing certain services for their residents who are poor or disabled or who have other conditions. The fiscal difficulties that cities routinely face became even more serious with the onset of the nation's deep recession in 2009, as the term *fiscal crisis* became a more accurate description of the harsh financial realities that cities were now facing (McNichol, 2009).McNichol, D. A. (2009, May 1). Revenue loss putting cities in fiscal vise. *The New York Times*, p. NJ1.



Figure 14.15. Cities experience many kinds of problems, and crowding is one of them. People who live amid crowding are more likely to experience stress and depression and to engage in aggressive behavior or be victimized by it. © Thinkstock

Another problem is *crowding*. Cities are crowded in at least two ways. The first involves *residential crowding*: large numbers of people living in a small amount of space. City streets are filled with apartment buildings, condominiums, row houses, and other types of housing, and many people live on any one city block. The second type of crowding is *household crowding*: dwelling units in cities are typically small because of lack of space, and much smaller than houses in suburbs or rural areas. This forces many

people to live in close quarters within a particular dwelling unit. Either type of crowding is associated with higher levels of stress, depression, and aggression (Regoeczi, 2008).Regoeczi, W. C. (2008). Crowding in context: An examination of the differential responses of men and women to high-density living environments. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 49*, 254–268.

A third problem involves *housing*. Here there are two related issues. Much urban housing is *substandard* and characterized by such problems as broken windows, malfunctioning heating systems, peeling paint, and insect infestation. At the same time, adequate housing is *not affordable* for many city residents, as housing prices in cities can be very high, and the residents' incomes are typically very low. Cities thus have a great need for adequate, affordable housing.

A fourth problem is *traffic*. Gridlock occurs in urban areas, not rural ones, because of the sheer volume of traffic and the sheer number of intersections controlled by traffic lights or stop signs. Some cities have better public transportation than others, but traffic and commuting are problems that urban residents experience every day (see the "Learning From Other Societies" box).

Learning From Other Societies

Trains, Not Planes (or Cars): The Promise of High-Speed Rail

One of the costs of urbanization and modern life is traffic. Our streets and highways are clogged with motor vehicles, and two major consequences of so much traffic are air pollution and tens of thousands of deaths and injuries from vehicular accidents. One way that many other nations, including China, Germany, Japan, and Spain, have tried to lessen highway traffic in recent decades is through the construction of high-speed rail lines. According to one news report, the U.S. rail system "remains a caboose" compared to the high-speed system found in much of the rest of the world (Knowlton, 2009, p. A16).Knowlton, B. (2009, April 16). Obama seeks high-speed rail system across U.S. *The New York Times*, p. A16. Japan has one line that averages 180 mph, while Europe's high-speed trains average 130 mph, with some exceeding 200 mph. These speeds are far faster than the 75 mph typical of Amtrak's speediest Acela line in the northeastern United States, which must usually go much more slowly than its top speed of 150 mph because of inferior tracking and interference by other trains. Although the first so-called bullet train appeared in Japan about 40 years ago, the United States does not yet have even one such train.

The introduction of high-speed rail in other nations was obviously meant to reduce highway traffic and, in turn, air pollution and vehicular injuries and deaths. Another goal was to reduce air traffic between cities, as high-speed trains emit only one-fourth the carbon dioxide per passengers as planes do while transporting eight times as many passengers in a given distance (Burnett, 2009).Burnett, V. (2009, May 29). Europe's travels with high-speed rail hold lessons for U.S. planners; The Spanish experience has been transformative but far from inexpensive. *International Herald Tribune*, p. 16. A final goal was to aid the national economies of the nations that introduced high-speed rail. The evidence indicates that these goals have been accomplished.

For example, Spain built its first high-speed line, between Madrid and Seville, in 1992 and now has rail reaching about 1,200 miles between its north and south coasts. The rail network has increased travel for work and leisure and thus helped Spain's economy. The high-speed trains are also being used instead of planes by the vast majority of people who travel between Madrid and either Barcelona or Seville.

China, the world's most populous nation but far from the richest, has recently opened, or plans to open during the next few years, several dozen high-speed rail lines. Its fastest train averages more than 200 mph and travels 664 miles between two cities, Guangzhou and Wuhan, in just over 3 hours. The Acela takes longer to travel between Boston and New York, a distance of only 215 miles. A news report summarized the economic benefits for China:

Indeed, the web of superfast trains promises to make China even more economically competitive, connecting this vast country—roughly the same size as the United States—as never before, much as the building of the Interstate highway system increased productivity and reduced costs in America a half-century ago. (Bradsher, 2010, p. B1)Bradsher, K. (2010, February 12). China sees growth engine in a web of fast trains. *The New York Times*, p. B1.

In April 2009 President Barack Obama announced that $8 billion in federal stimulus funding would be made available for the construction of high-speed rail lines in certain parts of the United States to connect cities between 100 and 600 miles apart. The president said,

Imagine whisking through towns at speeds over 100 miles an hour, walking only a few steps to public transportation, and ending up just blocks from your destination. It is happening right now; it's been happening for decades. The problem is, it's been happening elsewhere, not here. (Knowlton, 2009)Knowlton, B. (2009, April 16). Obama seeks high-speed rail system across U.S. *The New York Times*, p. A16.

As large as it is, the $8 billion figure announced by Obama pales in comparison with an estimated $140 billion that Spain plans to further spend on high-speed rail during the next decade, and a system of high-speed rail in the United States will cost more than even this expenditure. Despite the huge expense of high-speed rail, the positive experience of other nations that are using it suggests that the United States will benefit in many ways from following their example. If it does not do so, said one scholar, "the American preference for clogged-up highways and airports will make the country look so old, so 20th-century-ish. So behind the times" (Kennedy, 2010).Kennedy, P. (2010, January 4). A trainspotter's guide to the future of the world. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from. www.nytimes.com/2010/01/05/op...20trainspotter's%20guide%20to%20the%20future%20of%20the%20world&st=cse

A related problem is *pollution*. Traffic creates pollution from motor vehicles' exhaust systems, and some cities have factories and other enterprises that also pollute. As a result, air quality in cities is substandard, and the poor quality of air in cities has been linked to respiratory and heart disease and higher mortality rates (Stylianou & Nicolich, 2009).Stylianou, M., & Nicolich, M. J. (2009). Cumulative effects and threshold levels in air pollution mortality: Data analysis of nine large US cities using the NMMAPS dataset. *Environmental Pollution, 157*, 2216–2223.

Yet another issue for cities is the state of their *public education*. Many city schools are housed in old buildings that, like much city housing, are falling apart. City schools are notoriously underfunded and lack current textbooks, adequate science equipment, and other instructional materials (see Chapter 12).

Although cities have many additional problems, *crime* is an appropriate one with which to end this section because of its importance. Simply put, cities have much higher rates of violent and property crime than do small towns or rural areas. For example, the violent crime rate (number of crimes per 100,000 residents) in 2008 was 489 for the nation's largest cities, compared to only 205 for rural counties. The property crime rate in the largest cities was 3,352 crimes per 100,000, compared to only 1,681 in rural counties (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009).Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2009). *Crime in the United States: 2008*. Washington, DC: Author. Crime rates in large cities are thus two to three times higher than those in rural counties.

Global Urbanization

Urbanization varies around the world. In general, wealthy nations are more urban than poor nations (see Figure 14.16), thanks in large part to the latter's rural economies. This variation, however, obscures the fact that the world is becoming increasingly urban overall. In 1950, less than one-third of the world's population lived in cities or towns; in 2008, more than half the population lived in cities or towns, representing the first time in history that a majority of people were *not* living in rural areas (United Nations Population Fund, 2007).United Nations Population Fund. (2007). Linking population, poverty, and development. Urbanization: A majority in cities. Retrieved from http://www.unfpa.org/pds/urbanization.htm By 2030, almost two-thirds of the world's population is projected to live in urban areas.

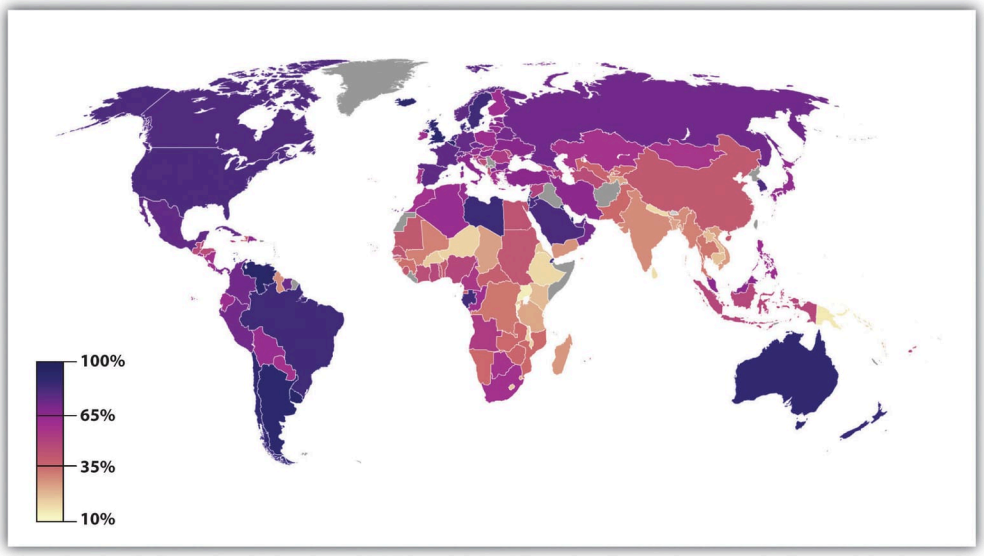


Figure 14.16 Percentage of Population Living in Urban Areas, 2005. Source: Adapted from en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ur..._world_map.PNG.

The number of urban residents will increase rapidly in the years ahead, especially in Africa and Asia as people in these continents'

nations move to urban areas and as their populations continue to grow through natural fertility. Fertility is a special problem in this regard for two reasons. First, and as we saw earlier, women in poor nations have higher fertility rates for several reasons. Second, poorer nations have very high proportions of young people, and these high rates mean that many births occur because of the large number of women in their childbearing years.

This trend poses both opportunities and challenges for poorer nations. The opportunities are many. Jobs are more plentiful in cities than in rural areas and incomes are higher, and services such as health care and schooling are easier to deliver because people are living more closely together. In another advantage, women in poorer nations generally fare better in cities than in rural areas in terms of education and employment possibilities (United Nations Population Fund, 2007).United Nations Population Fund. (2007). Linking population, poverty, and development. Urbanization: A majority in cities. Retrieved from http://www.unfpa.org/pds/urbanization.htm

But there are also many challenges. In the major cities of poor nations, homeless children live in the streets as beggars, and many people lack necessities and conveniences that urban dwellers in industrial nations take for granted. As the United Nations Population Fund (2007)United Nations Population Fund. (2007). Linking population, poverty, and development. Urbanization: A majority in cities. Retrieved from http://www.unfpa.org/pds/urbanization.htm warns, “One billion people live in urban slums, which are typically overcrowded, polluted and dangerous, and lack basic services such as clean water and sanitation.” The rapid urbanization of poor nations will compound the many problems these nations already have, just as the rapid urbanization in the industrial world more than a century ago led to the disease and other problems discussed earlier. As cities grow rapidly in poor nations, moreover, these nations’ poverty makes them ill equipped to meet the challenges of urbanization. Helping these nations meet the needs of their cities remains a major challenge for the world community in the years ahead. In this regard, the United Nations Population Fund (United Nations Population Fund, 2007)United Nations Population Fund. (2007). Linking population, poverty, and development. Urbanization: A majority in cities. Retrieved from http://www.unfpa.org/pds/urbanization.htm urges particular attention to housing:

Addressing the housing needs of the poor will be critical. A roof and an address in a habitable area are the first step to a better life. Improving access to basic social and health services, including reproductive health care, for poor people in urban slums is also critical to breaking the cycle of poverty.

Rural Life and Rural Problems

Before we leave the topic of cities and urbanization, it is important to note that one-fourth of the U.S. population and more than 40% of the world population continue to live in rural areas. The dual view of cities presented in this section also applies to rural areas but does so in a sort of mirror image: the advantages of cities are often disadvantages for rural areas, and the disadvantages of cities are often advantages of rural areas.

On the positive side, and focusing on the United States, rural areas obviously feature much more open space and less crowding. Their violent and property crime rates are much lower than those in large cities, as we have seen. The air is cleaner because there is less traffic and fewer factories and other facilities that emit pollution. On the negative side, rural areas are often poor and lack the services, employment opportunities, and leisure activities that cities have. Teens often complain of boredom, and drug and alcohol use can be high. Rural schools are often small and poorly equipped. As Chapter 13 noted, rural areas often lack sufficient numbers of health-care professionals and high-quality hospitals and medical clinics. The long distances that people must travel make it even more difficult for individuals with health problems to receive adequate medical care.

In a problem that only recently has been recognized, rural women who experience domestic violence find it especially difficult to get help and/or to leave their abusers. Rural police may be unenlightened about domestic violence and may even know the abuser; for either reason, they may not consider his violence a crime. Battered women’s shelters are also much less common in rural areas than in cities, and battered women in rural areas often lack neighbors and friends to whom they can turn for support. For all of these reasons, rural women who experience domestic violence face a problem that has been called “dangerous exits” (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2009).DeKeseredy, W. S., & Schwartz, M. D. (2009). *Dangerous exits: Escaping abusive relationships in rural America.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Conclusion

- A double-edged view of cities has long existed in sociology. In the early 20th century, social scientists at the University of Chicago adopted Émile Durkheim’s more positive view of urbanization.
- Social inequality based on social class, race and ethnicity, gender, age, and sexual orientation affects the quality of urban

experiences. In addition to differences in their sociodemographic profiles, city residents differ in other ways. Herbert Gans identified several types of urban dwellers: cosmopolites, unmarried and childless, ethnic villagers, deprived, and trapped.
- Major issues and problems confronting U.S. cities today include those involving fiscal difficulties, crowding, housing, traffic, pollution, public education, and crime.
- Cities are rapidly growing in poor nations, and this type of urbanization poses many challenges that these nations are unable to meet because of their poverty and other difficulties.

For Your Review

1. If you had your preference, would you want to eventually live in a large city, medium-sized city, small town, or rural area? Explain your answer.
2. Americans often seem to blame city residents for many of the problems affecting U.S. cities today, including low academic achievement and run-down conditions in city schools and crime in the streets. Do you think it is fair to blame city residents for these problems, or are there other reasons for them? Explain your answer.

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13.1.5: 14.4- Social Movements

Learning Objectives

- List the major types of social movements.
- Explain the micro and macro factors that lead to the rise of social movements.
- Describe the stages of the life cycle of social movements.

Social movements in the United States and other nations have been great forces for social change. At the same time, governments and other opponents have often tried to thwart the movements' efforts. To understand how and why social change happens, we have to understand why movements begin, how they succeed and fail, and what impact they may have.

Understanding Social Movements

To begin this understanding, we first need to understand what social movements are. A social movement may be defined as an organized effort by a large number of people to bring about or impede social change. Defined in this way, social movements might sound similar to special-interest groups, and they do have some things in common. But a major difference between social movements and special-interest groups lies in the nature of their actions. Special-interest groups normally work *within the system* via conventional political activities such as lobbying and election campaigning. In contrast, social movements often work *outside the system* by engaging in various kinds of protest, including demonstrations, picket lines, sit-ins, and sometimes outright violence.

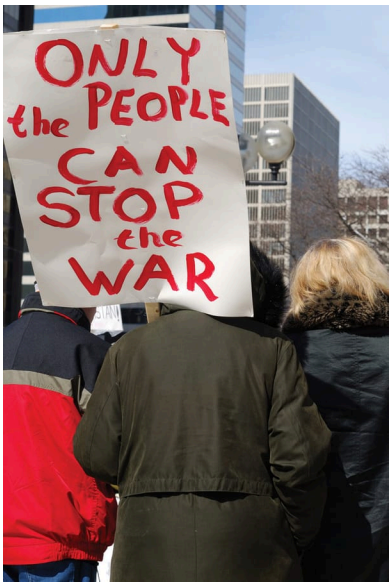


Figure 14.17. Social movements are organized efforts by large numbers of people to bring about or impede social change. Often they try to do so by engaging in various kinds of protest, such as the march depicted here. © Thinkstock

Conceived in this way, the efforts of social movements amount to "politics by other means," with these "other means" made necessary because movements lack the resources and access to the political system that interest groups typically enjoy (D. A. Snow & Soule, 2009).Snow, D. A., & Soule, S. A. (2009). *A primer on social movements*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Types of Social Movements

Sociologists identify several types of social movements according to the nature and extent of the change they seek. This typology helps us understand the differences among the many kinds of social movements that existed in the past and continue to exist today (D. A. Snow & Soule, 2009).Snow, D. A., & Soule, S. A. (2009). *A primer on social movements*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

One of the most common and important types of social movements is the *reform* movement, which seeks limited, though still significant, changes in some aspect of a nation's political, economic, or social systems. It does not try to overthrow the existing government but rather works to improve conditions within the existing regime. Some of the most important social movements in U.S. history have been reform movements. These include the abolitionist movement preceding the Civil War, the woman suffrage movement that followed the Civil War, the labor movement, the Southern civil rights movement, the Vietnam antiwar movement, the contemporary women's movement, the gay rights movement, and the environmental movement.

A *revolutionary* movement goes one large step further than a reform movement in seeking to overthrow the existing government and to bring about a new one and even a new way of life. Revolutionary movements were common in the past and were responsible for the world's great revolutions in Russia, China, and several other nations. Reform and revolutionary movements are often referred to as *political* movements because the changes they seek are political in nature.

Another type of political movement is the *reactionary* movement, so named because it tries to block social change or to reverse social changes that have already been achieved. The antiabortion movement is a contemporary example of a reactionary movement, as it arose after the U.S. Supreme Court legalized most abortions in *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and seeks to limit or eliminate the legality of abortion.



Figure 14.18. One type of social movement is the self-help movement. As its name implies, the goal of a self-help movement is to help people improve their personal lives. These tokens are used at meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, which is an example of a group involved in a self-help movement.

Source: Photo courtesy of Chris Yarzab, http://www.flickr.com/photos/chrisyarzab/4687962584.

Two other types of movements are *self-help* movements and *religious*movements. As their name implies, self-help movements involve people trying to improve aspects of their personal lives; examples of self-help groups include Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers. Religious movements aim to reinforce religious beliefs among their members and to convert other people to these beliefs. Early Christianity was certainly a momentous religious movement, and other groups that are part of a more general religious movement today include the various religious cults discussed in Chapter 12. Sometimes self-help and religious movements are difficult to distinguish from each other because some self-help groups emphasize religious faith as a vehicle for achieving personal transformation.

The Origins of Social Movements

To understand how and why social movements begin, we need answers to two related questions. First, what are the social, economic, and political conditions that give rise to social movements? They do not arise in a vacuum, and certain macro problems in society must exist for movements to begin. Second, once social movements do begin, why are some individuals more likely than others to take part in them? Answers to this question usually focus on personality and other micro factors. We will start with these micro factors and then turn to the macro conditions that make movements possible in the first place.

Micro Factors: Emphasis on the Individual

Over the years social scientists have tried to explain why some individuals are more likely than others to join social movements. Their explanations center on several factors.

The Question of Irrationality

One issue is whether social movement involvement is *rational* or *irrational*. Early thinkers such as Gustave LeBon (1841–1931), a French intellectual, thought that social movement involvement and, more generally, crowd behavior were the product of *irrational impulses*. Writing in the wake of the French Revolution of 1789, these thinkers worried that social order was breaking down. LeBon in particular blamed crowds for turning normally rational individuals into irrational and emotional actors who are virtually hypnotized by the crowd's mind-set. American sociologists early in the 20th century adopted LeBon's view. In so doing, they viewed social movement participation as more *expressive*, or emotional, than *instrumental*, or directed at achieving specific goals (Rule, 1988).Rule, J. B. (1988). *Theories of civil violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Just after the mid-20th century, Ralph H. Turner and Lewis M. Killian (1957)Turner, R. H., & Killian, L. M. (1957). *Collective behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. presented their *emergent norm*view of collective behavior, which downplayed the irrationality emphasized in earlier formulations. According to Turner and Killian, when people start interacting in collective behavior, they are not sure initially how they are supposed to behave. As they discuss their potential behavior and other related matters, norms governing their behavior emerge, and social order and rationality then guide behavior. Adopting this view, most sociologists today feel that people taking part in social movements are indeed acting rationally and instrumentally, not just expressively. Although they have emotions, that does not mean their behavior is any less rational or political (D. A. Snow & Soule, 2009).Snow, D. A., & Soule, S. A. (2009). *A primer on social movements*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Relative Deprivation

Another important line of thought has centered on relative deprivation, or the feeling by individuals that they are deprived relative to some other group or to some ideal state they have not reached. This view was popularized by James C. Davies (1962)Davies, J. C. (1962). Toward a theory of revolution. *American Sociological Review, 27*, 5–19. and Ted Robert Gurr (1970),Gurr, T. R. (1970). *Why men rebel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. both of whom built upon the earlier work of social psychologists who had studied frustration and aggression. When a deprived group perceives that social conditions are improving, wrote Davies, they become hopeful that their lives are getting better. But if these conditions stop improving, they become frustrated and more apt to turn to protest, collective violence, and other social movement activity. Both Davies and Gurr emphasized that people's *feelings* of being relatively deprived were more important for their involvement in collective behavior than their level of actual deprivation.

Relative deprivation theory was initially very popular, but scholars later pointed out that frustration often does not lead to protest, as people can instead blame themselves for the deprivation they feel and thus not protest (Gurney & Tierney, 1982).Gurney, J. N., & Tierney, K. J. (1982). Relative deprivation and social movements: A critical look at twenty years of theory and research. *Sociological Quarterly, 23*, 33–47. Scholars who favor the theory point out that people will ordinarily not take part in social movements unless they feel deprived, even if many who do feel deprived do not take part (Snow & Oliver, 1995).Snow, D. E., & Oliver, P. E. (1995). Social movements and collective behavior: Social psychological dimensions and considerations. In K. S. Cook, G. A. Fine, & J. S. House (Eds.), *Sociological perspectives on social psychology* (pp. 571–599). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Social Isolation Versus Social Attachments

A final micro issue has been whether the individuals participating in social movements are isolated from society or very much a part of it. Are they loners, or are they involved in social networks of friends, coworkers, and others? In his influential book *The Politics of Mass Society*, William Kornhauser (1959)Kornhauser, W. (1959). *The politics of mass society*. New York, NY: Free Press.wrote that because modern societies are impersonal with weak social ties, individuals who are loners become involved in social movements to provide them the friendships and social bonding they otherwise lack. Kornhauser's mass society theory was popular for a time, but much research finds that the people who join social movements are in fact very much a part of society instead of loners. They have many friends and belong to several organizations, and these friendship and organizational ties help "pull" them into social movements.

Macro Factors: Emphasis on Social Structure

Structural explanations of social movements try to understand why social movements are more likely to arise in some historical periods and locations than in others. In effect, they try to show how certain social, economic, and political conditions give rise to social movements. We discuss some of these explanations here.

Smelser's Structural-Strain Theory

One of the most popular and influential structural explanations is Neil Smelser's (1963)Smelser, N. J. (1963). *Theory of collective behavior*. New York, NY: Free Press. structural-strain theory. Smelser wrote that social movements and other collective behavior occur when several conditions are present. One of these conditions is *structural strain*, which refers to problems in society that cause people to be angry and frustrated. Without such structural strain, people would not have any reason to protest, and social movements do not arise. Another condition is *generalized beliefs*, which are people's reasons for why conditions are so bad and their solutions to improve them. If people decide that the conditions they dislike are their own fault, they will decide not to protest. Similarly, if they decide that protest will not improve these conditions, they again will not protest. A third condition is the existence of *precipitating factors*, or sudden events that ignite collective behavior. In the 1960s, for example, several urban riots started when police were rumored to have unjustly arrested or beaten someone. Although conditions in inner cities were widely perceived as unfair and even oppressive, it took this type of police behavior to ignite people to riot.



Figure 14.19. During the 1960s, several urban riots began when police were rumored to have unjustly arrested or beaten someone.

Source: Photo courtesy of Anna Tesar, http://www.flickr.com/photos/spanner/3029425939.

Smelser's theory became very popular because it pointed to several factors that must hold true before social movements and other forms of collective behavior occur. At the same time, collective behavior does not always occur when his factors do hold true. The theory has also been criticized for being a bit vague; for example, it does not say how much strain a society must have for collective behavior to take place (Rule, 1988).Rule, J. B. (1988). *Theories of civil violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Resource Mobilization Theory

Resource mobilization theory is a general name given to several related views of social movements that arose in the 1970s (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Oberschall, 1973; Tilly, 1978).McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (1977). Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory. *American Journal of Sociology, 82*, 1212–1241; Oberschall, A. (1973). *Social conflict and social movements*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall; Tilly, C. (1978). *From mobilization to revolution*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. This theory assumes that social movement activity is a rational response to unsatisfactory conditions in society. Because these conditions always exist, so does discontent with them. Despite such constant discontent, people protest only rarely. If this is so,

these conditions and associated discontent cannot easily explain why people turn to social movements. What is crucial instead are efforts by social movement leaders to mobilize the resources—most notably, time, money, and energy—of the population and to direct them into effective political action. Also important are *political opportunities*for action that arise when, say, a government weakens because of an economic or foreign crisis (D. A. Snow & Soule, 2009).Snow, D. A., & Soule, S. A. (2009). *A primer on social movements*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Resource mobilization theory has been very influential since its inception in the 1970s. However, critics say it underestimates the importance of harsh social conditions and discontent for the rise of social movement activity. Conditions can and do worsen, and when they do so, they prompt people to engage in collective behavior. As just one example, cuts in higher education spending and steep increases in tuition prompted students to protest on campuses in California and several other states in late 2009 and early 2010 (Rosenhall, 2010).Rosenhall, L. (2010, February 28). Education protests on tap this week in California. *The Sacramento Bee*, p. 1A. Critics also say that resource mobilization theory neglects the importance of emotions in social movement activity by depicting social movement actors as cold, calculated, and unemotional (Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2004).Goodwin, J., Jasper, J. M., & Polletta, F. (2004). Emotional dimensions of social movements. In D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 413–432). Malden, MA: Blackwell. This picture is simply not true, critics say, and they further argue that social movement actors can be both emotional and rational at the same time, just as people are in many other kinds of pursuits.

The Life Cycle of Social Movements

Although the many past and present social movements around the world differ from each other in many ways, they all generally go through a life cycle marked by several stages that have long been recognized (Blumer, 1969).Blumer, H. (1969). Collective behavior. In A. M. Lee (Ed.), *Principles of sociology* (pp. 165–221). New York, NY: Barnes and Noble.

Stage 1 is *emergence*. This stage is obviously when social movements begin for one or more of the reasons indicated in the previous section. Stage 2 is *coalescence*. At this stage a movement and its leaders must decide how they will recruit new members and they must determine the strategies they will use to achieve their goals. They also may use the news media to win favorable publicity and to convince the public of the justness of their cause. Stage 3 is *institutionalization* or *bureaucratization*. As a movement grows, it often tends to become bureaucratized, as paid leaders and a paid staff replace the volunteers that began the movement. It also means that clear lines of authority develop, as they do in any bureaucracy. More attention is also devoted to fund-raising. As movement organizations bureaucratize, they may well reduce their effectiveness by turning from the disruptive activities that succeeded in the movement's earlier stages to more conventional activity by working within the system instead of outside it (Piven & Cloward, 1979).Piven, F. F., & Cloward, R. A. (1979). *Poor people's movements: Why they succeed, how they fail*. New York, NY: Vintage Books. At the same time, if movements do not bureaucratize to at least some degree, they may lose their focus and not have enough money to keep on going.



Figure 14.20. Political repression sometimes leads a social movement to decline or end altogether. The mass slaughter by Chinese troops of students in Tiananmen Square in June 1989 ended a wave of student protests in that nation.

Source: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:200401-beijing-tianan-square-overview.jpg.

Stage 4 is the *decline* of a social movement. Social movements eventually decline for one or more of many reasons. Sometimes they achieve their goals and naturally cease because there is no more reason to continue. More often, however, they decline

because they fail. Both the lack of money and loss of enthusiasm among a movement's members may lead to a movement's decline, and so might *factionalism*, or strong divisions of opinion within a movement. The government may also "co-opt" a movement by granting it small, mostly symbolic concessions that reduce people's discontent but leave the conditions that originally motivated their activism largely intact. As noted earlier, movements also may decline because of government repression.

How Social Movements Make a Difference

By definition, social movements often operate outside of the political system by engaging in protest. Their rallies, demonstrations, sit-ins, and silent vigils are often difficult to ignore. With the aid of news media coverage, these events often throw much attention on the problem or grievance at the center of the protest and bring pressure to bear on the government agencies, corporations, or other targets of the protest.

As noted earlier, there are many examples of profound changes brought about by social movements throughout U.S. history (Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, & Sue, 2010; Meyer, 2007; Piven, 2006).Amenta, E., Caren, N., Chiarello, E., & Sue, Y. (2010). The political consequences of social movements. *Annual Review of Sociology, 36,* 287–307; Meyer, D. S. (2007). *The politics of protest: Social movements in America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; Piven, F. F. (2006). *Challenging authority: How ordinary people change America*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. The abolitionist movement called attention to the evils of slavery and increased public abhorrence for that "peculiar institution." The woman suffrage movement after the Civil War eventually won women the right to vote with the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920. The labor movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries established the minimum wage, the 40-hour workweek, and the right to strike. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s ended legal segregation in the South, while the Vietnam antiwar movement of the 1960s and 1970s helped increase public opposition to that war and bring it to a close. The contemporary women's movement has won many rights in social institutions throughout American society, while the gay rights movement has done the same for gays and lesbians. Another contemporary movement is the environmental movement, which has helped win legislation and other policies that have reduced air, water, and ground pollution.

Although it seems obvious that social movements have made a considerable difference, social movement scholars until recently have paid much more attention to the origins of social movements than to their consequences (Giugni, 2008).Giugni, M. (2008). Political, biographical, and cultural consequences of social movements. *Sociology Compass, 2*, 1582–1600. Recent work has begun to fill in this gap and has focused on the consequences of social movements for the political system (*political consequences*), for various aspects of the society's culture (*cultural consequences*), and for the lives of the people who take part in movements (*biographical consequences*).

Regarding political consequences, scholars have considered such matters as whether movements are more successful when they use more protest or less protest, and when they focus on a single issue versus multiple issues. The use of a greater amount of protest seems to be more effective in this regard, as does a focus on a single issue. Research has also found that movements are more likely to succeed when the government against which they protest is weakened by economic or other problems. In another line of inquiry, movement scholars disagree over whether movements are more successful if their organizations are bureaucratic and centralized or if they remain decentralized and thus more likely to engage in protest (Piven & Cloward, 1979; Gamson, 1990).Piven, F. F., & Cloward, R. A. (1979). *Poor people's movements: Why they succeed, how they fail*. New York, NY: Vintage Books; Gamson, W. A. (1990). *The strategy of social protest* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Regarding cultural consequences, movements often influence certain aspects of a society's culture whether or not they intend to do so (Earl, 2004),Earl, J. (2004). The cultural consequences of social movements. In D. A. Snow, S. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 508–530). Malden, MA: Blackwell. and, as one scholar has said, "it is perhaps precisely in being able to alter their broader cultural environment that movements can have their deepest and lasting impact" (Giugni, 2008, p. 1591).Giugni, M. (2008). Political, biographical, and cultural consequences of social movements. *Sociology Compass, 2*, 1582–1600. Social movements can affect values and beliefs, and they can affect cultural practices such as music, literature, and even fashion.

Movements may also have biographical consequences. Several studies find that people who take part in social movements during their formative years (teens and early 20s) are often transformed by their participation. Their political views change or are at least reinforced, and they are more likely to continue to be involved in political activity and to enter social change occupations. In this manner, writes one scholar, "people who have been involved in social movement activities, even at a lower level of commitment, carry the consequences of that involvement throughout their life" (Giugni, 2008, p. 1590).Giugni, M. (2008). Political, biographical, and cultural consequences of social movements. *Sociology Compass, 2*, 1582–1600.

Conclusion

- The major types of social movements are reform movements, revolutionary movements, reactionary movements, self-help movements, and religious movements.
- Both micro and macro factors influence the rise of social movements. A key micro factor is social attachment, as social movement participants tend to have friendships and organizational ties that "pull" them into movements and promote their continued participation in a movement. Macro factors include certain social, economic, and political conditions in the larger social environment that generate interest in joining a movement and/or weaken the government as it attempts to deal with a social movement.
- Four major stages in the life cycle of a social movement include emergence, coalescence, institutionalization or bureaucratization, and decline.
- Social movements may have political, cultural, and biographical consequences. Political consequences seem most likely to occur when a movement engages in disruptive protest rather than conventional politics and when it has a single-issue focus. Involvement in movements is thought to influence participants' later beliefs and career choices.

For Your Review

1. Have you ever taken part in a protest of some kind? If so, write a brief essay outlining what led you to take part in the protest and what effect, if any, it had on the target of the protest and on your own thinking. If you have not participated in a protest, write a brief essay discussing whether you can foresee yourself someday doing so.
2. Choose any U.S. social movement of the past half-century and write a brief essay that summarizes the various kinds of impacts this movement may have had on American society and culture.

Addressing Population and Urbanization Issues: What Sociology Suggests

The topics of population and urbanization raise many issues within the United States and also across the globe for which a sociological perspective is very relevant. We address of few of these issues here.

Population Issues

Perhaps the most serious population issue is world hunger. Both across the globe and within the United States, children and adults go hungry every day, and millions starve in the poorest nations in Africa and Asia. As the "Sociology Making a Difference" box in Section 14.2 discussed, sociological research indicates that it is mistaken to blame world hunger on a scarcity of food. Instead, this body of research attributes world hunger to various inequalities in access to, and in the distribution of, what is actually a sufficient amount of food to feed the world's people. To effectively reduce world hunger, inequalities across the globe and within the United States based on income, ethnicity, and gender must be addressed; some ways of doing so have been offered in previous chapters.

Population growth in poor nations has slowed but remains a significant problem. Their poverty, low educational levels, and rural settings all contribute to high birth rates. More effective contraception is needed to reduce their population growth, and the United Nations and other international bodies must bolster their efforts, with the aid of increased funding from rich nations, to provide contraception to poor nations. But contraceptive efforts will not be sufficient by themselves. Rather, it is also necessary to raise these nations' economic circumstances and educational levels, as birth rates are lower in nations that are wealthier and more educated. In particular, efforts that raise women's educational levels are especially important if contraceptive use is to increase. In all of these respects, we once again see the importance of a sociological perspective centering on the significance of socioeconomic inequality.

Urbanization Issues

Many urban issues are not, strictly speaking, sociological ones. For example, traffic congestion is arguably more of an engineering issue than a sociological issue, even if traffic congestion has many social consequences. Other urban issues are issues discussed in previous chapters that disproportionately affect urban areas. For example, crime is more common in urban areas than elsewhere, and racial and ethnic inequality is much more of an issue in urban areas than rural areas because of the concentration of people of color in our cities. Previous chapters have discussed such issues in some detail, and the strategies suggested by a sociological perspective for addressing these issues need not be repeated here.

Still other urban issues exist that this chapter was the first to present. Two of these involve crowding and housing. Cities are

obviously crowded, and some parts of cities are especially crowded. Housing is expensive, and many urban residents live in dilapidated, substandard housing. Here again a sociological perspective offers some insight, as it reminds us that these problems are intimately related to inequalities of social class, race and ethnicity, and gender. Although it is critical to provide adequate, affordable housing to city residents, it is also important to remember that these various social inequalities affect who is in most need of such housing. Ultimately, strategies aimed at providing affordable housing will not succeed unless they recognize the importance of these social inequalities and unless other efforts reduce or eliminate these inequalities.

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13.1.6: What Have You Learned From This Book?

Learning Objectives

- Explain what you have learned about the sociological perspective.
- Explain how sociology helps you know more about yourself.

Above all, you have learned the *sociological perspective*: the idea that our social backgrounds, broadly defined, profoundly influence our behavior, attitudes, and life chances. We discussed many examples of this in the early chapters, when we examined the effects of social processes such as culture, socialization, and roles and group membership; in the middle chapters, when we examined the consequences of inequalities based on social class, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and age; and in the final chapters, when we examined the importance of social institutions such as the family, education, religion, and medicine. In all of these respects, you have learned that people are not just individuals but rather are social beings and also that we can thus fully understand any one individual only by appreciating the influence of the person's social background.

Because of all this learning, you now know more about yourself than you did before you took the course for which you read this book. You know that you are who you are in part because of your gender, social class, race and ethnicity, geographical location, and many other aspects of your social background and also because of socialization by your parents and by friends, teachers, and other "agents of socialization" throughout your life.

You have also learned the importance of social inequality. More than perhaps any other academic discipline, sociology emphasizes the importance of social inequality for understanding both society and the individual. American society and, indeed, the world itself cannot be adequately understood without first understanding the importance of inequality based on social class, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and age.

Next, you have learned about the nature and importance of social institutions. The family, economy, and polity are all essential parts of the fabric of social life, as are education, religion, and medicine. Because all of these institutions affect our behavior, attitudes, and life chances, they have long been, and will continue to be, sources of significant social controversies.

Finally, you have learned about sociology and social change. Hearkening back to the roots of U.S. sociology in social reform, you have read throughout this book about the relevance of sociological insights for attempts to benefit society. This relevance derives from the *sociological imagination* as conceived by C. Wright Mills. As Chapter 1 discussed, the sociological imagination involves the recognition that "private troubles," as Mills called them, are rooted in the social structure, and especially in social inequality, and are thus better understood as "public issues."

Mills considered this type of recognition important for two related reasons. First, efforts to benefit society that neglect this recognition—that is, that neglect the structural sources of private troubles and public issues—will ultimately prove ineffective. Second, this type of recognition enables us to better understand our own experiences and life chances as we become aware of the social forces affecting our lives and those of people in similar circumstances. This awareness and self-knowledge empower us to become more effective agents of social change in our immediate social environments and also in the larger society.

If sociological insights help to guide social change, the history of social reform in the United States also shows that social change most often happens when Americans unite in small groups or larger social movements to change some aspect of society. Chapter 14 discussed important features of social movements, including their origins and impact. As that discussion highlighted, many of the rights and freedoms Americans now enjoy were won by social movements struggling against great odds. Here an often cited comment by anthropologist Margaret Mead is worth remembering: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Conclusion

- Readers of this book learned about the sociological perspective: the influence of social backgrounds and the social environment on attitudes, behavior, and life chances. This knowledge should help readers understand more about themselves.
- Readers also learned about social inequality, social institutions, and social change.
- Acquiring an appreciation of the sociological imagination enables individuals to become more effective agents of social

change.

For Your Review

1. What do you think is the most important thing you learned from this book and the course for which you read it? Explain your answer.
2. Provide one example of how an appreciation of the sociological imagination might help an individual to become a more effective social change agent.

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13.1.7: Public Sociology and Improving Society

Learning Objectives

- Describe what a sociological perspective suggests for efforts to reduce social inequality, to reduce crime, to help the family and schools, and to improve the nation's health.
- Describe what a sociological perspective implies for strategies to improve the global society.

The sociological imagination and its underpinnings for social change lie at the heart of the recent emphasis on *public sociology*—the use of sociological insights and findings to address social issues and achieve social change—as discussed in Chapter 1. This emphasis was a key theme of sociology as it developed in the United States more than a century ago, and the public sociology movement aims at bringing sociology back to its roots in social reform. This book's many chapters highlighted the importance of a sociological understanding for efforts to improve society. The remaining pages of this chapter summarize the insights these chapters offered for addressing various public issues affecting the United States and the poor nations of the world.

Reducing Social Inequality

We begin with what sociologists probably regard as the most important public issue, social inequality, which is significant for its own sake but also provides the underpinning for so many other social issues. The sociological understanding of social inequality based on social class, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and age was presented in Chapter 6 through Chapter 9. These four chapters emphasized that inequality is rooted far more in lack of opportunity from birth and in prejudice and discrimination than in culturally deficient habits or practices of the many people who find themselves at the bottom of society's socioeconomic ladder. In this regard these chapters advocated a "blaming-the-system" argument over a "blaming-the-victim" argument, to recall some terms from Chapter 1. Accordingly, efforts to reduce the extent and impact of social inequality must ultimately focus on increasing opportunity and eradicating prejudice and discrimination.

Chapter 6 through Chapter 9 discussed many examples of such efforts favored by sociologists and other scholars and public policy advocates. The most notable efforts include the following: (a) adopting a national *full employment* policy for the poor, underemployed, and unemployed; this policy would involve federally funded job training and public-works programs and increased federal aid for workers having trouble making ends meet; (b) improving the schools that poor children attend and the schooling they receive; (c) providing better nutrition and health services for poor families, perhaps especially those with young children; (d) strengthening affirmative action programs within the limits imposed by court rulings; (e) strengthening efforts to reduce residential segregation and teenage pregnancies; (f) reducing socialization by parents and other adults of girls and boys into traditional gender roles; (g) increasing public consciousness of rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography; (h) increasing enforcement of laws forbidding gender-based employment discrimination and sexual harassment; (i) increasing funding of rape-crisis centers and other services for girls and women who have been raped and/or sexually assaulted; (j) increasing government funding of high-quality day-care options to enable parents, and especially mothers, to work outside the home if they so desire; (k) passing federal and state legislation that bans employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and allows same-sex couples to marry and enjoy all the rights and benefits of heterosexual married couples; (l) expanding Social Security to aid older Americans regardless of their earnings history, which is affected by their gender and race and ethnicity; and (m) expanding educational efforts to reduce stereotyping and prejudicial attitudes based on aging.

Much theory and research strongly suggests that all of these policies and programs, if sufficiently funded and implemented, would greatly help reduce social inequality in the United States. As this book has pointed out from time to time, these strategies are already in place in many of the nations of Western Europe, which rank much higher than the United States on many social indicators. Although the United States has influenced the world in ways too numerous to mention, it ironically could significantly reduce social inequality if it adopted the policies and practices of other Western democracies. This great but flawed nation has much to learn from their example.

Enhancing Public Safety

A sociological perspective on street crime emphasizes that it is rooted in the social and physical characteristics of communities

and in structured social inequality along the lines of social class, race and ethnicity, gender, and age. It is no accident and not very surprising that street criminals tend to come from the ranks of the poor or near-poor, even if most poor people do not commit street crime. Poverty weakens social bonds and social institutions, creates frustration and feelings of relative deprivation, and causes stress and otherwise impairs family functioning and socialization of children. Crime is also ultimately rooted in the socialization of males to be assertive and aggressive, as most street criminals are male.

This sociological understanding, coupled with other knowledge that the "get tough" approach to crime used by the United States has cost tens of billions of dollars with relatively little reduction in crime during the past few decades, suggests several strategies for crime reduction. As outlined in Chapter 5, these strategies include the following, among others: (a) establishing good-paying jobs for the poor in urban areas and improving living conditions in these areas in other respects; (b) socializing males from birth to be less assertive and aggressive; (c) establishing early childhood intervention programs to help high-risk families raise their children; and (d) providing better educational, vocational, and drug and alcohol abuse services for offenders while they are in prison and after their release from incarceration. White-collar crime also undermines public safety but certainly does not stem from poverty or family dysfunction. As Chapter 5 also discussed, more effective corporate regulation and harsher punishment of corporate criminals are needed to deter such crime.

Helping the Family and Schools

As two of our most important social institutions, the family and education arouse considerable and often heated debate over their status and prospects. Opponents in these debates all care passionately about families and/or schools but often take diametrically opposed views on the causes of these institutions' problems and possible solutions to the issues they face. As presented in Chapter 11 and Chapter 12, a sociological perspective on the family and education emphasizes the social inequalities that lie at the heart of many of these issues, and it stresses that these two institutions reinforce and contribute to social inequalities.

Accordingly, efforts to address family and education issues should include the following strategies and policies, some of which were included in the previous section on reducing social inequality: (a) increasing financial support, vocational training, and financial aid for schooling for women who wish to return to the labor force or to increase their wages; (b) establishing and strengthening early childhood visitation programs and nutrition and medical care assistance for poor women and their children; (c) reducing the poverty and gender inequality that underlie much family violence; (d) allowing for same-sex marriage; (e) strengthening efforts to help preserve marriage while proceeding cautiously or not at all for marriages that are highly contentious; (f) increasing funding so that schools can be smaller and better equipped and in decent repair; and (g) strengthening antibullying programs and other efforts to reduce intimidation and violence within the schools.

Improving the Nation's Health

While recognizing that people hurt their health through many bad habits including smoking and overeating, a sociological perspective on health and health care once again emphasizes the impact of social inequality. As discussed in Chapter 13, this impact stems from the stress and other problems facing the poor and near-poor, people of color, women, and seniors. It also stems from the general lack of access to affordable, high-quality health care. Accordingly, while educational efforts to encourage people to engage in healthy practices are certainly in order, a sociological perspective suggests additional strategies to improve Americans' health. These efforts remain necessary even after the passage of federal health-care reform legislation in early 2010.

As outlined in Chapter 13, these strategies include the following: (a) reducing social inequalities as discussed in Chapter 6 through Chapter 9 and summarized in the section on social inequality and (b) moving toward the national health-care and health-insurance systems found in other Western nations such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and France.

Improving the Global Society

The issues facing the United States are considerable, but they pale in comparison with those confronting the poor and developing nations in the world today, where hunger, disease, and ethnic violence are rampant. The world is in peril in many ways. That is certainly bad news, but there is also good news. As discussed in Chapter 14, the earth actually has more than enough resources to end world hunger, providing that food-distribution systems were improved to provide access to the grain and other food that does exist.

Because of its nature, disease is more difficult to end, but here again there is potentially good news, as the disease found in poor nations is intimately linked with the very fact that these nations are poor. Better management and distribution of the

world's natural and economic resources and a more concerted effort by wealthy nations are all needed to end global poverty and the disease that inevitably accompanies it. Such efforts are possible, but until now there has not been the international will to undertake them to the extent they are needed. Much ethnic violence across the globe is also rooted in inequalities of wealth, power, and influence. Although the history of such violence indicates that it is not about to end in the near future, a sociological perspective suggests that efforts that successfully reduce global poverty and inequality will have the side benefit of also reducing global ethnic violence.

Conclusion

- Sociological insights have important implications for benefitting society in the following areas: reducing social inequality, enhancing public safety, helping the family and schools, improving the nation's health, and improving the global society.

For Your Review

1. Of the many areas in which sociological insights might benefit society, which one area do you think is most important? Explain your answer.
2. Identify which of the following statements you most agree with: (a) It is most important for sociology as a discipline to provide knowledge for its own sake; (b) It is most important for sociology as a discipline to provide knowledge to benefit society; (c) It is equally important for sociology as a discipline to provide knowledge for its own sake and to benefit society. Explain your answer.

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13.1.8: A Final Word

In addition to presenting the sociological perspective and showing you how our social backgrounds affect our attitudes, behavior, and life chances in so many ways, this book also discussed the many consequences of extensive social inequality in the United States and around the globe. We hoped to stimulate your sociological imagination to recognize the social forces affecting us all and to suggest what needs to be done to have a society where all people have equal opportunity to achieve their dreams. This is a society that, as Americans have heard since childhood, should be filled "with liberty and justice for all." With your newfound sociological imagination, perhaps you will be better able to help achieve such a society.

C. Wright Mills (1959, p. 5)Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. London, England: Oxford University Press. wrote that the awareness accompanying the sociological imagination is "in many ways...a terrible lesson; in many ways a magnificent one." It is terrible because it makes us realize that many powerful social forces affect our fate and underlie public issues. Yet it is also magnificent because it gives us the knowledge we need to begin to change these forces so that we can have a better society.

This book has shown you both the terrible and the magnificent. It has emphasized social inequality and other social forces that affect us in so many ways, but it has also emphasized how knowledge of these forces points to effective strategies for changing society for the better. With such knowledge, we are better able to heed the urging of Horace Mann, 19th-century education reformer and the first president of Antioch College, who told his students, "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity" (Mann, 1868, p. 575).Mann, M. T. P. (Ed.). (1868). *Life and works of Horace Mann* (Vol. 1). Boston, MA: Walker, Fuller, and Company. Whatever your life's pursuits, I hope that your new sociological imagination will help you win some victories for humanity in the years ahead.

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13.1.S: Population, Urbanization, and Social Movements (Summary)

Summary

1. Social change involves the transformation of cultural norms and values, behavior, social institutions, and social structure. As societies become more modern, they become larger, more heterogeneous, and more impersonal, and their sense of community declines. Traditions decline as well, while individual freedom of thought and behavior increases. Some sociologists view modernization positively, while others view it negatively. Tönnies in particular lamented the shift from the *Gemeinschaft* of premodern societies to the *Gesellschaft* of modern societies. Durkheim also recognized the negative aspects of modernization but at the same time valued the freedom of modern societies and thought they retain a good amount of social solidarity from their division of labor.
2. A functionalist understanding of social change emphasizes that it's both natural and inevitable. Talcott Parsons's equilibrium model recognized that gradual change is desirable and ordinarily stems from such things as population growth and technological advances, but that any sudden social change disrupts society's equilibrium. Taking a very different view, conflict theory stresses that sudden social change is often both necessary and desirable to reduce inequality and to address other problems in society. Such social change often stems from intentional efforts by social movements to correct perceived deficiencies in the social, economic, and political systems.
3. Several sources of social change exist. These include population growth and changes in population composition, changes in culture and technology, changes in the natural environment, and social and ethnic conflict.
4. Demography is the study of population. It encompasses three central concepts: fertility, mortality, and migration, which together determine population growth. Fertility and mortality vary by race and ethnicity, and they also vary around the world, with low-income nations having both higher fertility and higher mortality than high-income nations.
5. The world's population is growing by about 80 million people annually. Population growth is greatest in the low-income nations of Africa and other regions, while in several industrial nations it's actually on the decline because birth rates have become so low. The world's population reached 6.8 billion by the beginning of the 21st century and is projected to grow to more than 9 billion by 2050, with most of this occurring in low-income nations. The annual rate of population growth will decline in the years ahead.
6. Thomas Malthus predicted that the earth's population would greatly exceed the world's food supply. Although his prediction did not come true, hunger remains a serious problem around the world. Although food supply is generally ample thanks to improved technology, the distribution of food is inadequate in low-income nations. Fresh water in these regions is also lacking. Demographic transition theory helps explain why population growth did not continue to rise as much as Malthus predicted. As societies become more technologically advanced, first death rates and then birth rates decline, leading eventually to little population growth.
7. Urbanization is a consequence of population growth. Cities first developed in ancient times after the rise of horticultural and pastoral societies and "took off" during the Industrial Revolution as people moved to be near factories. Urbanization led to many social changes then and continues today to affect society.
8. Sociologists have long been interested in the city and have both positive and negative views of urbanization and city life. Contemporary research supports Wirth's hypothesis that tolerance for nontraditional beliefs and behaviors will be higher in urban areas than in rural areas.
9. Social movements have been important agents for social change. Common types of social movements include reform movements, revolutionary movements, reactionary movements, and self-help and religious movements.
10. Explanations of social movements address both micro and macro factors. Important issues at the micro level include the question of irrationality, the importance of relative deprivation, and the impact of social isolation. Macro theories address the social, economic, and political conditions underlying collective behavior. Two of the most important such theories are Smelser's structural-strain theory and resource mobilization theory.
11. Most social movements go through a life cycle of four stages: emergence, coalescence, bureaucratization, and decline. Decline stems from several reasons, including internal divisions and repressive efforts by the state.
12. Social movements have political, cultural, and biographical consequences. Research finds that movements are more successful in the political arena when they use more rather than less protest and when they focus on a single issue rather than multiple issues.

Using Sociology

After graduating from college, you are now living in a working-class neighborhood in a fairly large city. You enjoy the excitement of the city, but you are also somewhat troubled by the conditions you have noticed in your neighborhood. One problem that has come to your attention is the existence of lead paint in some of the buildings on your street and adjoining streets. Despite being ordered some time ago to remove this paint and repaint their buildings, four landlords have not yet done so, and the issue is slowly making its way through the courts. Angered by the situation, a new group, Parents Concerned About Lead Paint (PCALP), has hung up flyers announcing a protest rally planned for Saturday of next week. Although your own building has no lead paint and you are not (yet) a parent, you sympathize with the goal of the protest, but you were also planning to visit a friend of yours out of town on the day of the protest. What do you decide to do? Why?

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13.2: POPULATION, URBANIZATION, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

How do sociologists study population and urbanization issues? Functionalist sociologists might focus on the way all aspects of population, urbanization, and the environment serve as vital and cohesive elements, ensuring the continuing stability of society. They might study how the growth of the global population encourages emigration and immigration, and how emigration and immigration serve to strengthen ties between nations. Or they might research the way migration affects environmental issues; for example, how have forced migrations, and the resulting changes in a region's ability to support a new group, affected both the displaced people and the area of relocation? Another topic a functionalist might research is the way various urban neighborhoods specialize to serve cultural and financial needs.

13.2.1: Introduction

13.2.2: Demography and Population

13.2.3: Urbanization

13.2.4: The Environment and Society

13.2.5: Key Terms

13.2.6: Section Summary

13.2.7: Section Quiz

13.2.8: Short Answer

13.2.9: Further Research

13.2.10: References

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13.2.1: Introduction



Figure 20.1: A view from space makes it easy to see differences in population. Lighted areas are urban centers, containing larger and larger portions of the world's population. Darker areas are sparsely populated. Beyond the global scale, the differences within regions is notable. Africa is mostly empty of lights with the exception of a few densely populated areas to the south, west, and north. India is almost clearly outlined by its lights, showing a stark contrast with the nations to its north and west, with a line of light indicating the cities along the Indus River in Pakistan. The United States almost seems to be split in half at the line formed by Dallas, Oklahoma City, and Wichita. (Credit NASA Goddard Space Flight Center)

Chapter Outline

20.1 Demography and Population
20.2 Urbanization
20.3 The Environment and Society

Fracking, another word for hydraulic fracturing, is a method used to recover gas and oil from shale by drilling down into the earth and directing a high-pressure mixture of water, sand, and proprietary chemicals into the rock. While energy companies view fracking as a profitable revolution in the industry, there are a number of concerns associated with the practice.

First, fracking requires huge amounts of water. Water transportation comes at a high environmental cost. Once mixed with fracking chemicals, water is unsuitable for human and animal consumption, though it is estimated that between 10 percent and 90 percent of the contaminated water is returned to the water cycle. Second, the chemicals used in a fracking mix are potentially carcinogenic. These chemicals may pollute groundwater near the extraction site (Colborn, Kwiatkowski, Schultz, and Bachran 2011; United States 2011). Industry leaders suggest that such contamination is unlikely, and that when it does occur, it is incidental and related to unavoidable human error rather than an expected risk of the practice, but the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's study of fracking is ongoing (Environmental Protection Agency 2014). The third concern is that fracking causes minor earthquakes by undermining the seismic stability of an area, though far more induced earthquakes are caused by traditional oil and gas production (USGS n.d.) Finally, gas is not a renewable source of energy; this is a negative in the eyes of those who oppose continued reliance on fossil fuels.

Fracking is not without its advantages. Its supporters offer statistics that suggest it reduces unemployment and contributes to economic growth (IHS Global Insights 2012). Since it allows energy companies access to previously nonviable and completely untapped oil and gas reserves, fracking boosts domestic oil production and lowers energy costs (IHS Global Insights 2012). Finally, since natural gas is a lower-emission fuel than coal, fracking reduces the airborne environmental impacts of industrial energy.

One complexity of lower-priced natural gas production is that demand for coal has plummeted. Coal is both more expensive to produce and more environmentally damaging than natural gas, and the coal industry is concentrated in a few areas, such

as Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Kentucky. Automation had already depleted the employment opportunities in the industry; decades before fracking became widespread, coal companies began widespread replacement of people with machines (Vavra 2017). Although the U.S. was producing more coal than it had in previous decades, it was doing so with fewer workers than it ever had. At its peak, the coal industry employed nearly a million people, and its thriving towns drove other businesses. By 2015, the industry employs about 50,000 people (Money Illusion 2016). Inexpensive natural gas is just another factor that is contributing to the industry's continued issues. Coal companies continually shutter, and entire regions are full of newly laid off workers who cannot find employment.

As you read this chapter, consider how an increasing global population can balance environmental concerns with opportunities for industrial and economic growth. Think about how much water pollution can be justified by the need to lower U.S. dependence of foreign energy supplies. Is the economic growth associated with fracking worth some environmental degradation? As we see a related industry – coal – further diminished due to fracking, do we owe its workers some compensation or additional support?

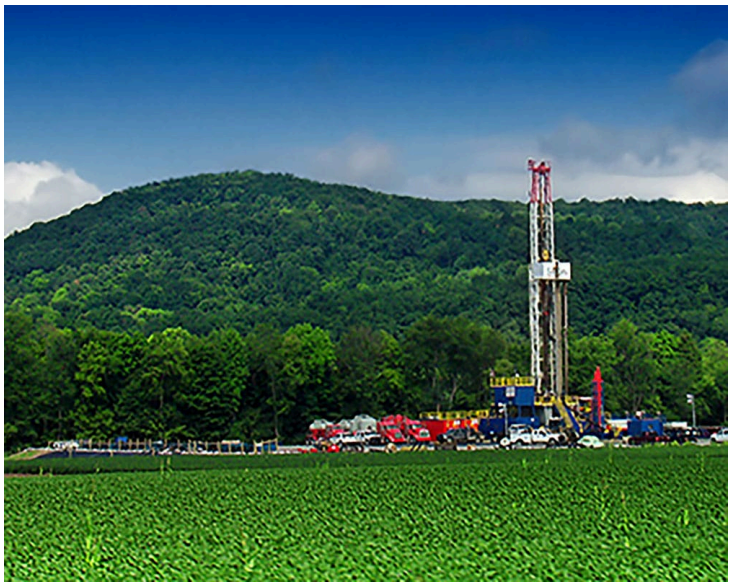


Figure 20.2: This is a Marcellus shale gas-drilling site in Lycoming County, Pennsylvania. (Credit: Nicholas A. Tonelli/flickr)

As the discussion of fracking illustrates, there are important societal issues connected to the environment and how and where people live. Sociologists begin to examine these issues through demography, or the study of population and how it relates to urbanization, the study of the social, political, and economic relationships in cities. Environmental sociologists look at the study of how humans interact with their environments. Today, as has been the case many times in history, we are at a point of conflict in a number of these areas. The world's population reached seven billion between 2011 and 2012. When will it reach eight billion? Can our planet sustain such a population? We generate more trash than ever, from Starbucks cups to obsolete cell phones containing toxic chemicals to food waste that could be composted. You may be unaware of where your trash ends up. And while this problem exists worldwide, trash issues are often more acute in urban areas. Cities and city living create new challenges for both society and the environment that make interactions between people and places of critical importance.

How do sociologists study population and urbanization issues? Functionalist sociologists might focus on the way all aspects of population, urbanization, and the environment serve as vital and cohesive elements, ensuring the continuing stability of society. They might study how the growth of the global population encourages emigration and immigration, and how emigration and immigration serve to strengthen ties between nations. Or they might research the way migration affects environmental issues; for example, how have forced migrations, and the resulting changes in a region's ability to support a new group, affected both the displaced people and the area of relocation? Another topic a functionalist might research is the way various urban neighborhoods specialize to serve cultural and financial needs.

A conflict theorist, interested in the creation and reproduction of inequality, might ask how peripheral nations' lack of family planning affects their overall population in comparison to core nations that tend to have lower fertility rates. Or, how do inner cities become ghettos, nearly devoid of jobs, education, and other opportunities? A conflict theorist might also study environmental racism and other forms of environmental inequality. For example, which parts of New Orleans society were the most responsive to the evacuation order during Hurricane Katrina? Which area was most affected by the flooding? And where (and in what conditions) were people from those areas housed, both during and before the evacuation?

A symbolic interactionist interested in the day-to-day interaction of groups and individuals might research topics like the way family-planning information is presented to and understood by different population groups, the way people experience and understand urban life, and the language people use to convince others of the presence (or absence) of global climate change. For example, some politicians wish to present the study of global warming as junk science, and other politicians insist it is a proven fact.

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13.2.2: Demography and Population

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain demographic measurements like fertility and mortality rates
- Describe a variety of demographic theories, such as Malthusian, cornucopian, zero population growth, and demographic transition theories
- Evaluate current population trends and patterns
- Differentiate between an internally displaced person, an asylum-seeker, and a refugee



Figure 20.3: At nearly 8 billion, Earth's population is always on the move, but the methods vary. As you see here, bicycles, motorcycles, and scooters are more common in Vietnam than they are in many U.S. cities. And in some countries, masks were common well before COVID-19. (Credit: Esin Üstün/flickr)

Between 2011 and 2012, we reached a population milestone of 7 billion humans on the earth's surface. The rapidity with which this happened demonstrated an exponential increase from the time it took to grow from 5 billion to 6 billion people. In short, the planet is filling up. We'll have 8 billion people in this decade. While the population is increasing overall, there are certain countries and regions where growth is slowing. Relocation and migration also change the makeup and quantity of people in an area. In order to properly understand these dynamics and make decisions regarding them, we turn to demography, or the study of populations. Three critical aspects of demography are fertility, mortality, and migration.

The fertility rate of a society is a measure noting the number of children born. The fertility number is generally lower than the fecundity number, which measures the potential number of children that could be born to women of childbearing age. Sociologists measure fertility using the crude birthrate (the number of live births per 1,000 people per year). Just as fertility measures childbearing, the mortality rate is a measure of the number of people who die. The crude death rate is a number derived from the number of deaths per 1,000 people per year. When analyzed together, fertility and mortality rates help researchers understand the overall growth occurring in a population.

Another key element in studying populations is the movement of people into and out of an area. Migration may take the form of immigration, which describes movement into an area to take up permanent residence, or emigration, which refers to movement out of an area to another place of permanent residence. Migration might be voluntary (as when college students study abroad), involuntary (as when Syrians evacuated war-torn areas), or forced (as when many Native American tribes were removed from the lands they'd lived in for generations).

Big Picture: Mass Migration Crises



Figure 20.4: This March 2021 image of dozens of children in plastic-lined holding areas was one of a group of photos that sparked public outcry in the early days of the Biden administration, years after similar scenes and situations in the 2014 and 2018 border crises. (Credit: Defense Visual Information Distribution Service)

At least once during each of the last three Presidential administrations, the United States has faced a crisis at its southern border. While images of children in crowded holding areas, covered in piles of shiny plastic emergency blankets, were often associated with the Trump Presidency, Presidents Obama and Biden saw children in the same conditions. The holding facilities, described as cages by some and often referred to as “perreras” (dog kennels) or “hieleras” (ice boxes) by the migrating people, are meant to be temporary stopovers while people await hearings or related refugee processes. But during a number of occasions, the number of people crossing the border was so large – including, at times, tens of thousands of children – that the system became overwhelmed. The conditions are deplorable. The outcomes are uncertain. But the people cross the border anyway.

How did we get here? Bipartisan legislation passed in 2008 guarantees unaccompanied minors a hearing with an immigration judge where they may request asylum based on a “credible” fear of persecution or torture (U.S. Congress 2008). In some cases, these children are looking for relatives and can be placed with family while awaiting a hearing on their immigration status; in other cases, they become involved with the foster system or are placed in of the 170 housing facilities run by nonprofit or for-profit groups. Finally, for people who turn 18 while still in the process, they may be transferred to detention centers, sometimes on their birthday (Montoya-Galvez 2021). Many people in America were either accepting or unaware of these policies and situations until crises occurred in 2014 and 2018-19. At those points of incredible influxes of migrant children, border control, refugee services, and advocacy organizations were overwhelmed by the surge. Both the Obama and Trump administrations pushed for changes in laws or guidelines for enforcement (Gomez 2014 and Kanno-Youngs 2020).

The Obama administration sought to make the decision process faster. In 2014, over 50,000 unaccompanied minors were taken into custody, creating the backlog discussed above. The Trump administration sought to discourage immigration through policies such as separating parents and children who arrived together. The policy was decried by members of Trump's own party, as well as many other organizations, and was eventually dealt a series of legal blows before the President reversed it. Later investigations determined that hundreds, if not thousands, of children remained separated from their parents for extended periods of time (Spagat 2019).

While the situations at the border are extremely threatening to children's health and safety, people and policymakers in the United States are divided on how to address the situation. In many cases, these children are fleeing various kinds of violence and extreme poverty. The U.S. government has repeatedly indicated that the best way to avoid these crises is to address those conditions in the migrants' home countries. But even with financial aid for those nations and pressure on their governments to crack down on illegal activity, it is unlikely that the situation will change quickly or consistently. The Biden administration may not be the last to face a surge of immigrant children at its border.

A functional perspective theorist might focus on the dysfunctions caused by the sudden influx of underage asylum seekers, while a conflict perspective theorist might look at the way social stratification influences how the members of a developed country are treating the lower-status migrants from less-developed countries in Latin America. An interactionist theorist might see significance in the attitude of those protesting the presence of migrant children. Which theoretical perspective makes the most sense to you?

Population Growth

Changing fertility, mortality, and migration rates make up the total population composition, a snapshot of the demographic profile of a population. This number can be measured for societies, nations, world regions, or other groups. The population composition includes the sex ratio, the number of men for every hundred women, as well as the population pyramid, a picture of population distribution by sex and age (Figure 20.5).

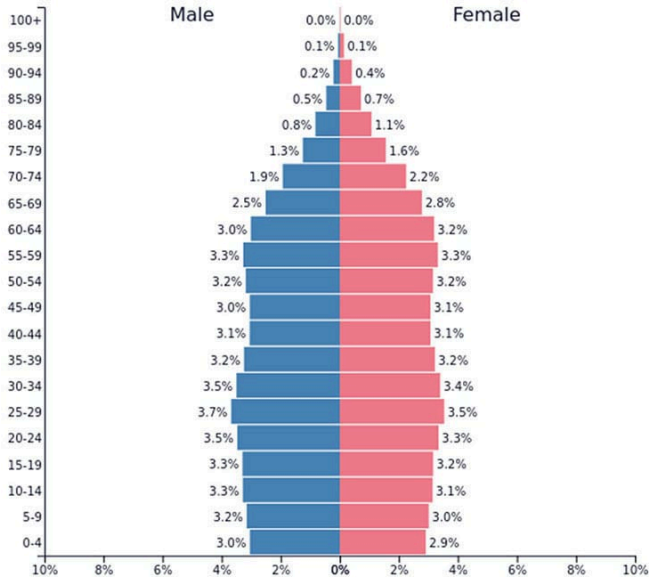


Figure 20.5: This population pyramid shows the breakdown of the 2019 U.S. population according to age and sex. (Credit: Populationpyramid.net)

Table 20.1 Varying Fertility and Mortality Rated by Country : As the table illustrates, countries vary greatly in fertility rates and mortality rates—the components that make up a population composition. This data is from 2018, and changes occur continually. For example, in 2014, the number of children per adult woman in Afghanistan was 5.4 – generally an average of one more child per family. And the U.S. was slightly higher at 2.0 (World Bank 2019)

Country	Population (in millions)	Fertility Rate (number of children per adult women)	Mortality Rate (per 1,000 births)	Sex Ratio Male to Female
Afghanistan	38.4	4.4	48	1.05
Finland	5.52	1.4	2.0	1.04
United States of America	32.8	1.7	5.7	0.97

Comparing the three countries in Table 20.1 reveals that there are more men than women in Afghanistan and Finland, whereas the reverse is true in the United States. Afghanistan also has significantly higher fertility and mortality rates than either of the other two countries. In all three cases, the fertility rates have dropped in recent years, but Afghanistan's drop (from 5.4 children per woman to 4.4) will likely be the most impactful (World Bank 2019). Do these statistics surprise you? How do you think the population makeup affects the political climate and economics of the different countries?

Demographic Theories

Sociologists have long looked at population issues as central to understanding human interactions. Below we will look at four

theories about population that inform sociological thought: Malthusian, zero population growth, cornucopian, and demographic transition theories.

Malthusian Theory

Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) was an English clergyman who made dire predictions about earth's ability to sustain its growing population. According to Malthusian theory, three factors would control human population that exceeded the earth's carrying capacity, or how many people can live in a given area considering the amount of available resources. Malthus identified these factors as war, famine, and disease (Malthus 1798). He termed them "positive checks" because they increase mortality rates, thus keeping the population in check. They are countered by "preventive checks," which also control the population but by reducing fertility rates; preventive checks include birth control and celibacy. Thinking practically, Malthus saw that people could produce only so much food in a given year, yet the population was increasing at an exponential rate. Eventually, he thought people would run out of food and begin to starve. They would go to war over increasingly scarce resources and reduce the population to a manageable level, and then the cycle would begin anew.

Of course, this has not exactly happened. The human population has continued to grow long past Malthus's predictions. So what happened? Why didn't we die off? There are three reasons sociologists believe we are continuing to expand the population of our planet. First, technological increases in food production have increased both the amount and quality of calories we can produce per person. Second, human ingenuity has developed new medicine to curtail death from disease. Finally, the development and widespread use of contraception and other forms of family planning have decreased the speed at which our population increases. But what about the future? Some still believe Malthus was correct and that ample resources to support the earth's population will soon run out.

Zero Population Growth

A neo-Malthusian researcher named Paul Ehrlich brought Malthus's predictions into the twentieth century. However, according to Ehrlich, it is the environment, not specifically the food supply, that will play a crucial role in the continued health of the planet's population (Ehrlich 1968). Ehrlich's ideas suggest that the human population is moving rapidly toward complete environmental collapse, as privileged people use up or pollute a number of environmental resources such as water and air. He advocated for a goal of zero population growth (ZPG), in which the number of people entering a population through birth or immigration is equal to the number of people leaving it via death or emigration. While support for this concept is mixed, it is still considered a possible solution to global overpopulation.

Cornucopian Theory

Of course, some theories are less focused on the pessimistic hypothesis that the world's population will meet a detrimental challenge to sustaining itself. Cornucopian theory scoffs at the idea of humans wiping themselves out; it asserts that human ingenuity can resolve any environmental or social issues that develop. As an example, it points to the issue of food supply. If we need more food, the theory contends, agricultural scientists will figure out how to grow it, as they have already been doing for centuries. After all, in this perspective, human ingenuity has been up to the task for thousands of years and there is no reason for that pattern not to continue (Simon 1981).

Demographic Transition Theory

Whether you believe that we are headed for environmental disaster and the end of human existence as we know it, or you think people will always adapt to changing circumstances, we can see clear patterns in population growth. Societies develop along a predictable continuum as they evolve from unindustrialized to postindustrial. Demographic transition theory (Caldwell and Caldwell 2006) suggests that future population growth will develop along a predictable four-stage model.

In Stage 1, birth, death, and infant mortality rates are all high, while life expectancy is short. An example of this stage is the 1800s in the United States. As countries begin to industrialize, they enter Stage 2, where birth rates are higher while infant mortality and the death rates drop. Life expectancy also increases. Afghanistan is currently in this stage. Stage 3 occurs once a society is thoroughly industrialized; birth rates decline, while life expectancy continues to increase. Death rates continue to decrease. Mexico's population is at this stage. In the final phase, Stage 4, we see the postindustrial era of a society. Birth and death rates are low, people are healthier and live longer, and society enters a phase of population stability. Overall population may even decline. For example, Sweden is considered to be in Stage 4.

The United Nations Population Fund (2008) categorizes nations as high fertility, intermediate fertility, or low fertility. The United Nations (UN) anticipates the population growth will triple between 2011 and 2100 in high-fertility countries, which are currently concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa. For countries with intermediate fertility rates (the United States, India, and Mexico all fall into this category), growth is expected to be about 26 percent. And low-fertility countries like China, Australia, and most of Europe will actually see population declines of approximately 20 percent. The graphs below illustrate this trend.

Changes in U.S. Immigration Patterns and Attitudes

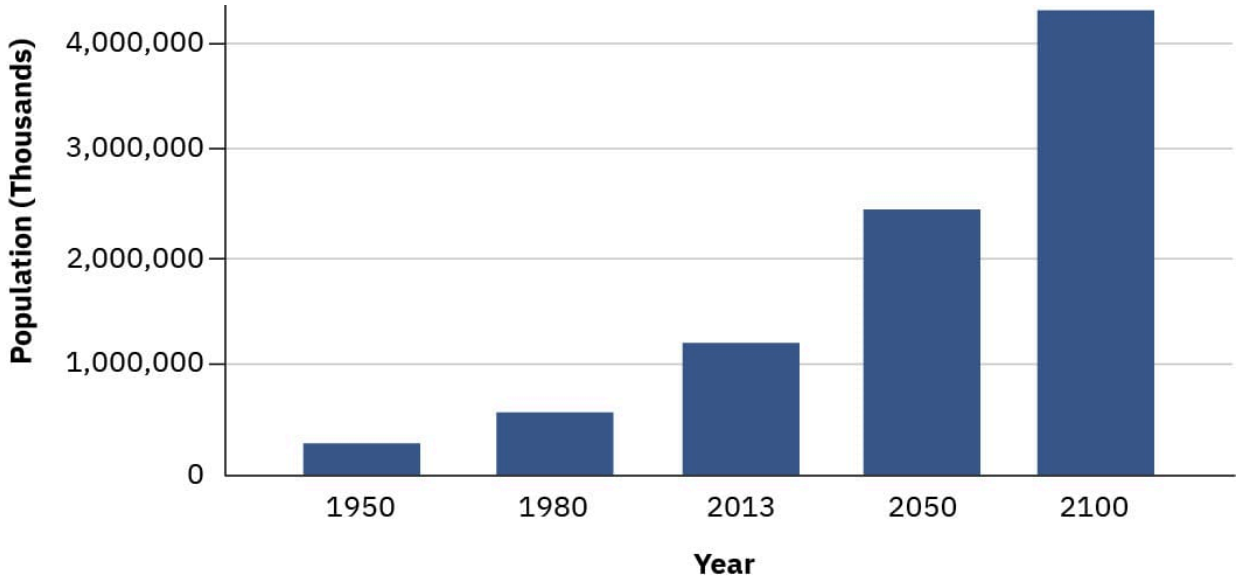


Figure 20.6 Projected Population in Africa : This graph shows the population growth of countries located on the African continent, many of which have high fertility rates. (Credit: USAID)

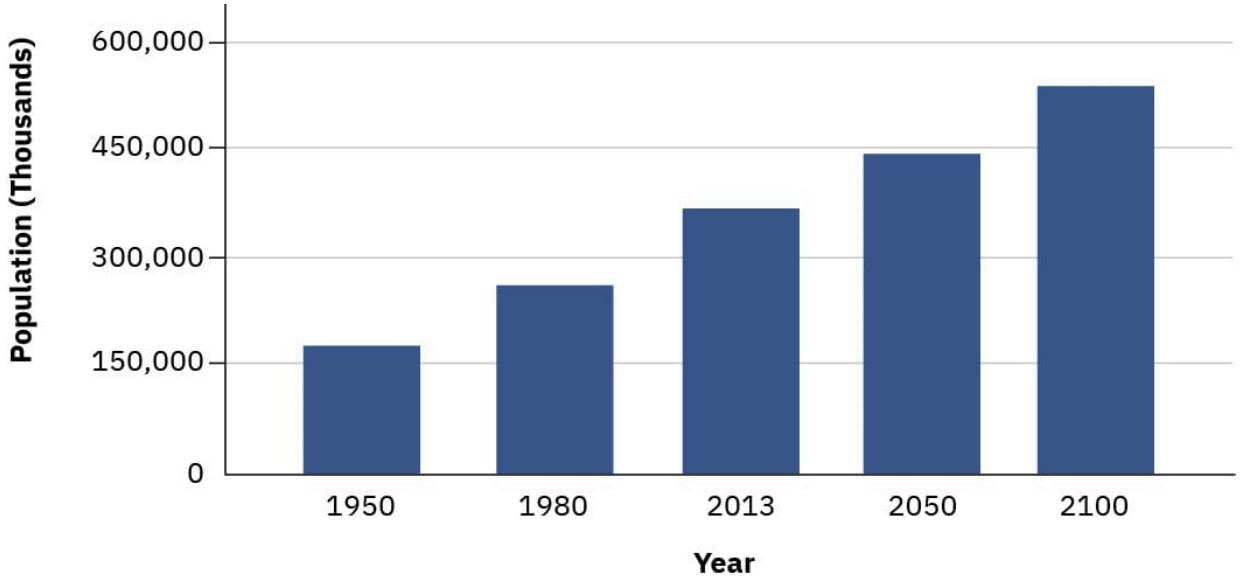


Figure 20.7 Projected Population in the United States : The United States has an intermediate fertility rate, and therefore, a comparatively moderate projected population growth. (Credit: USAID)

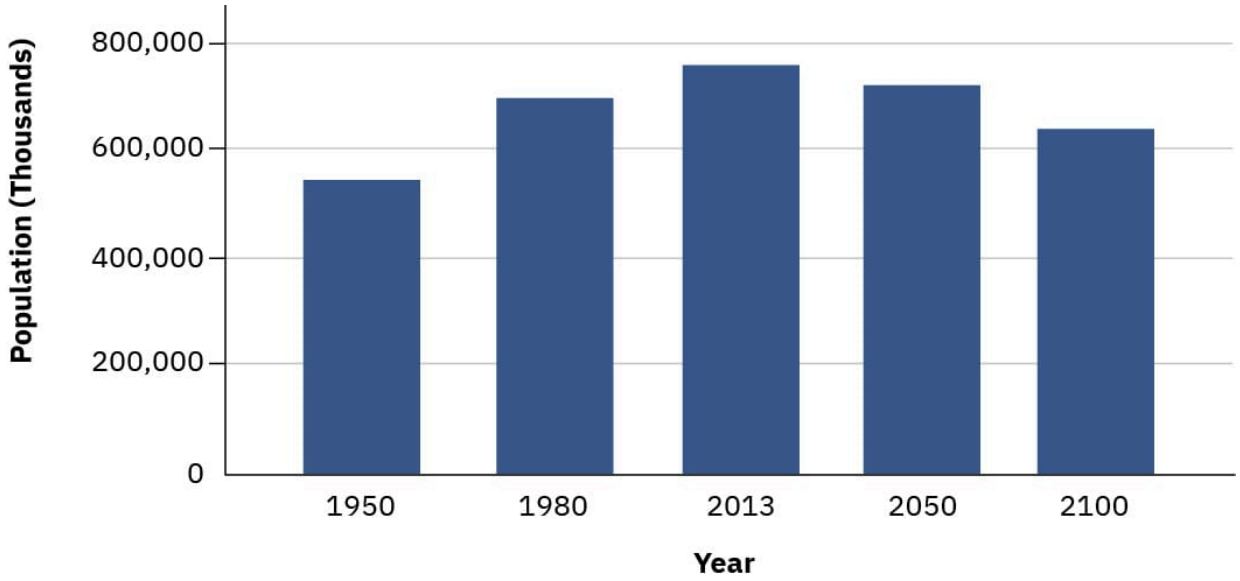


Figure 20.8 Projected Population in Europe : This chart shows the projected population growth of Europe for the remainder of this century. (Credit: USAID)

Worldwide patterns of migration have changed, though the United States remains the most popular destination. From 1990 to 2013, the number of migrants living in the United States increased from one in six to one in five (The Pew Research Center 2013). Overall, the United States is home to about 45 million foreign-born people, while only about 3 million U.S. citizens lived abroad. Of foreign-born citizens emigrating to the United States, 55 percent originated in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, over the past few years, more people from Asian countries have entered than from Latin American ones (Budiman 2020).

While there are more foreign-born people residing in the United States legally, as of 2017 about 10.5 million resided here without legal status (Budiman 2020). Most immigrants in the U.S. live in either Texas, Florida, or California.

Even before policy changes and COVID-19 affected refugee admittance, a relatively small number of people formally entered the country as refugees. In 2016, about 85,000 refugees were admitted to the U.S. (of over one million total immigrants), with the largest portion arriving from the Democratic Republic of Congo; in 2020, the number of refugees was reduced to 18,000.

Most citizens agree that our national immigration policies are need adjustment. More than two-thirds (69 percent) of those in a recent national survey believed illegal immigrants should have a path to citizenship provided they meet other requirements, such as paying taxes and passing a background check. Even more people (72 percent) supported passing a DREAM Act, which would allow people who immigrated as children to earn citizenship. In both parts of the survey, majorities of both Republicans and Democrats as well as independents supported the pathway to citizenship (Vox and Data for Progress 2021).

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13.2.3: Urbanization

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe the process of urbanization in the United States and the growth of urban populations worldwide
- Analyze the function of suburbs, exurbs, and concentric zones
- Discuss urbanization from various sociological perspectives



Figure 20.9: The lights of New York City are an iconic image of city life. (Credit: Jauher Ali Nasir/flickr)

Urbanization is the study of the social, political, and economic relationships in cities, and someone specializing in urban sociology studies those relationships. In some ways, cities can be microcosms of universal human behavior, while in others they provide a unique environment that yields its own brand of human behavior. There is no strict dividing line between rural and urban; rather, there is a continuum where one bleeds into the other. However, once a geographically concentrated population has reached approximately 100,000 people, it typically behaves like a city regardless of what its designation might be.

The Growth of Cities

According to sociologist Gideon Sjoberg (1965), there are three prerequisites for the development of a city: First, good environment with fresh water and a favorable climate; second, advanced technology, which will produce a food surplus to support nonfarmers; and third, strong social organization to ensure social stability and a stable economy. Most scholars agree that the first cities were developed somewhere in ancient Mesopotamia, though there are disagreements about exactly where. Most early cities were small by today's standards, and the largest was most likely Rome, with about 650,000 inhabitants (Chandler and Fox 1974). The factors limiting the size of ancient cities included lack of adequate sewage control, limited food supply, and immigration restrictions. For example, serfs were tied to the land, and transportation was limited and inefficient. Today, the primary influence on cities' growth is economic forces. Since the recent economic recession reduced housing prices, researchers have been waiting to see what happens to urban migration patterns in response.

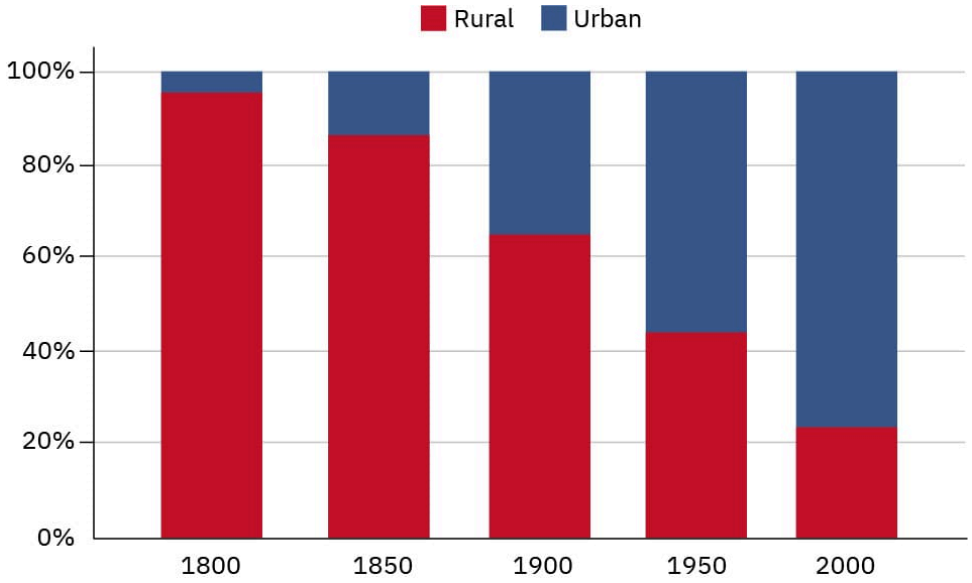


Figure 20.10: Percent of U.S. Population. As this chart illustrates, the shift from rural to urban living in the United States has been dramatic and continuous. (Credit: the U.S. Census Bureau)

Urbanization in the United States

Urbanization in the United States proceeded rapidly during the Industrial Era. As more and more opportunities for work appeared in factories, workers left farms (and the rural communities that housed them) to move to the cities. From mill towns in Massachusetts to tenements in New York, the industrial era saw an influx of poor workers into U.S. cities. At various times throughout the country's history, certain demographic groups, from post-Civil War southern Black people to more recent immigrants, have made their way to urban centers to seek a better life in the city.

Sociology in the Real World: Managing Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in the Modern World

In 2013, the number of refugees, asylum-seekers, and internally displaced people worldwide exceeded 50 million people for the first time since the end of World War II. Half these people were children. A refugee is defined as an individual who has been forced to leave his or her country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster, while asylum-seekers are those whose claim to refugee status has not been validated. An internally displaced person, on the other hand, is neither a refugee nor an asylum-seeker. Displaced persons have fled their homes while remaining inside their country's borders.

The war in Syria caused most of the 2013 increase, forcing 2.5 million people to seek refugee status while internally displacing an additional 6.5 million. Violence in Central African Republic and South Sudan also contributed a large number of people to the total (The United Nations Refugee Agency 2014).

The refugees need help in the form of food, water, shelter, and medical care, which has worldwide implications for nations contributing foreign aid, the nations hosting the refugees, and the non-government organizations (NGOs) working with individuals and groups on site (The United Nations Refugee Agency 2014). Where will this large moving population, including sick, elderly, children, and people with very few possessions and no long-term plan, go?

Suburbs and Exurbs

As cities grew more crowded, and often more impoverished and costly, more and more people began to migrate back out of them. But instead of returning to rural small towns (like they'd resided in before moving to the city), these people needed close access to the cities for their jobs. In the 1850s, as the urban population greatly expanded and transportation options improved, suburbs developed. Suburbs are the communities surrounding cities, typically close enough for a daily commute in, but far enough away to allow for more space than city living affords. The bucolic suburban landscape of the early twentieth century has largely disappeared due to sprawl. Suburban sprawl contributes to traffic congestion, which in turn contributes to commuting time. And

commuting times and distances have continued to increase as new suburbs developed farther and farther from city centers. Simultaneously, this dynamic contributed to an exponential increase in natural resource use, like petroleum, which sequentially increased pollution in the form of carbon emissions.

As the suburbs became more crowded and lost their charm, those who could afford it turned to the exurbs, communities that exist outside the ring of suburbs and are typically populated by even wealthier families who want more space and have the resources to lengthen their commute. Together, the suburbs, exurbs, and metropolitan areas all combine to form a metropolis. New York was the first U.S. megalopolis, a huge urban corridor encompassing multiple cities and their surrounding suburbs. These metropolises use vast quantities of natural resources and are a growing part of the U.S. landscape.

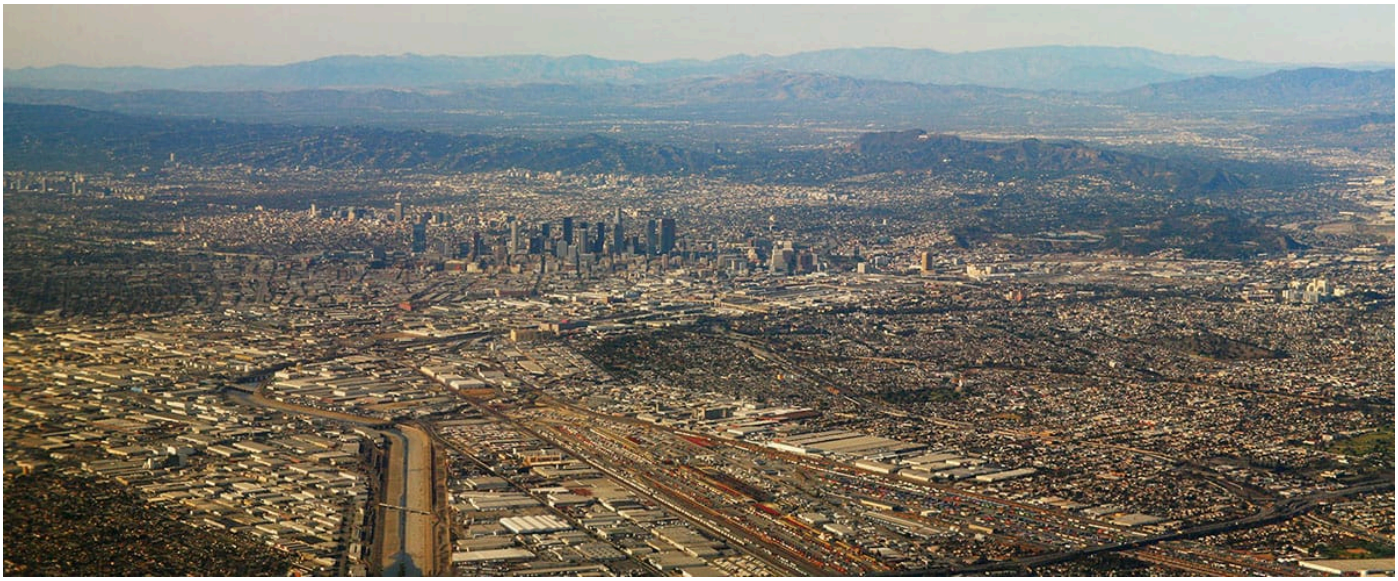


Figure 20.11: The sprawl in Los Angeles means long commutes and traffic congestion. (Credit: Doc Searles/flickr)

Social Policy and Debate: Suburbs Are Not All White Picket Fences: The Banlieues of Paris

What makes a suburb a suburb? Simply, a suburb is a community surrounding a city. But when you picture a suburb in your mind, your image may vary widely depending on which nation you call home. In the United States, most consider the suburbs home to upper— and middle—class people with private homes. In other countries, like France, the suburbs––or "banlieues"–– are synonymous with housing projects and impoverished communities. In fact, the banlieues of Paris are notorious for their ethnic violence and crime, with higher unemployment and more residents living in poverty than in the city center. Further, the banlieues have a much higher immigrant population, which in Paris is mostly Arabic and African immigrants. This contradicts the clichéd U.S. image of a typical white-picket-fence suburb.

In 2005, serious riots broke out in the banlieue of Clichy-sous-Bois after two boys were electrocuted while hiding from the police. They were hiding, it is believed, because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time, near the scene of a break-in, and they were afraid the police would not believe in their innocence. Only a few days earlier, interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy (who later became president), had given a speech touting new measures against urban violence and referring to the people of the banlieue as "rabble" (BBC 2005). After the deaths and subsequent riots, Sarkozy reiterated his zero-tolerance policy toward violence and sent in more police. Ultimately, the violence spread across more than thirty towns and cities in France. Thousands of cars were burned, many hundreds of people were arrested, and both police and protesters suffered serious injuries.

Then-President Jacques Chirac responded by pledging more money for housing programs, jobs programs, and education programs to help the banlieues solve the underlying problems that led to such disastrous unrest. But none of the newly launched programs were effective. Sarkozy ran for president on a platform of tough regulations toward young offenders, and in 2007 the country elected him. More riots ensued as a response to his election. In 2010, Sarkozy promised "war without mercy" against the crime in the banlieues (France24 2010). Six years after the Clichy-sous-Bois riot, circumstances are no better for those in the banlieues.

As the Social Policy & Debate feature illustrates, the suburbs also have their share of socio-economic problems. In the United

States, White flight refers to the migration of economically secure White people from racially mixed urban areas and toward the suburbs. This occurred throughout the twentieth century, due to causes as diverse as the legal end of racial segregation established by *Brown v. Board of Education* to the Mariel boatlift of people fleeing Cuba for Miami. Current trends include middle-class African-American families following White flight patterns out of cities, while affluent White people return to cities that have historically had a majority of Black people. The result is that the issues of race, socio-economics, neighborhoods, and communities remain complicated and challenging.

Urbanization around the World

During the Industrial Era, there was a growth spurt worldwide. The development of factories brought people from rural to urban areas, and new technology increased the efficiency of transportation, food production, and food preservation. For example, from the mid-1670s to the early 1900s, London's population increased from 550,000 to 7 million (Old Bailey Proceedings Online 2011). Global favorites like New York, London, and Tokyo are all examples of postindustrial cities. As cities evolve from manufacturing-based industrial to service- and information-based postindustrial societies, gentrification becomes more common. Gentrification occurs when members of the middle and upper classes enter and renovate city areas that have been historically less affluent while the poor urban underclass are forced by resulting price pressures to leave those neighborhoods for increasingly decaying portions of the city.

Globally, 55 percent of the world's people currently reside in urban areas, with the most urbanized region being North America (82 percent), followed by Latin America/the Caribbean (81 percent), with Europe coming in third (74 percent). In comparison, Africa is only 40 percent urbanized, though one of its nations, Nigeria, is projected to significantly urbanize in the coming years. With 37 million people, Tokyo is the world's largest city by population, and New Delhi is the second largest with 29 million. The world's most densely populated cities are now largely concentrated in the global south, a marked change from several decades ago when the biggest cities were found in the global north. In the next forty years, the biggest global challenge for urbanized populations, particularly in less developed countries, will be to achieve development that occurs without depleting or damaging the natural environment, also called sustainable development (United Nations 2018).

Theoretical Perspectives on Urbanization

The issues of urbanization play significant roles in the study of sociology. Race, economics, and human behavior intersect in cities. Let's look at urbanization through the sociological perspectives of functionalism and conflict theory. Functional perspectives on urbanization generally focus on the ecology of the city, while conflict perspective tends to focus on political economy.

Human ecology is a functionalist field of study that looks at the relationship between people and their built and natural physical environments (Park 1915). Generally speaking, urban land use and urban population distribution occur in a predictable pattern once we understand how people relate to their living environment. For example, in the United States, we have a transportation system geared to accommodate individuals and families in the form of interstate highways built for cars. In contrast, most parts of Europe emphasize public transportation such as high-speed rail and commuter lines, as well as walking and bicycling. The challenge for a human ecologist working in U.S. urban planning is to design landscapes and waterscapes with natural beauty, while also figuring out how to provide for free-flowing transport of innumerable vehicles, not to mention parking!

The concentric zone model (Burgess 1925) is perhaps the most famous example of human ecology. This model views a city as a series of concentric circular areas, expanding outward from the center of the city, with various "zones" invading adjacent zones (as new categories of people and businesses overrun the edges of nearby zones) and succeeding (then after invasion, the new inhabitants repurpose the areas they have invaded and push out the previous inhabitants). In this model, Zone A, in the heart of the city, is the center of the business and cultural district. Zone B, the concentric circle surrounding the city center, is composed of formerly wealthy homes split into cheap apartments for new immigrant populations; this zone also houses small manufacturers, pawn shops, and other marginal businesses. Zone C consists of the homes of the working class and established ethnic enclaves. Zone D holds wealthy homes, white-collar workers, and shopping centers. Zone E contains the estates of the upper class (in the exurbs) and the suburbs.

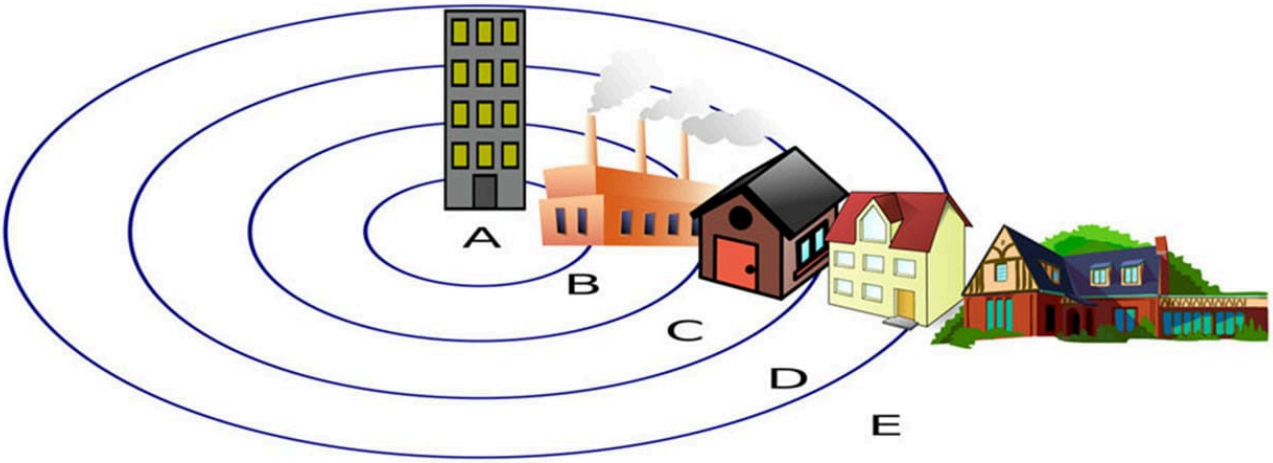


Figure 20.12: This illustration depicts the zones that make up a city in the concentric zone model. (Credit: Zeimusu/Wikimedia Commons)

In contrast to the functionalist approach, theoretical models in the conflict perspective focus on the way urban areas change according to specific decisions made by political and economic leaders. These decisions generally benefit the middle and upper classes while exploiting the working and lower classes.

For example, sociologists Feagin and Parker (1990) suggested three factors by which political and economic leaders control urban growth. First, these leaders work alongside each other to influence urban growth and decline, determining where money flows and how land use is regulated. Second, exchange value and use value of land are balanced to favor the middle and upper classes so that, for example, public land in poor neighborhoods may be rezoned for use as industrial land. Finally, urban development is dependent on both structure (groups such as local government) and agency (individuals including businessmen and activists), and these groups engage in a push-pull dynamic that determines where and how land is actually used. For example, Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) movements are more likely to emerge in middle and upper-class neighborhoods as engaged citizens protest poor environmental practices they fear will affect them, so these groups have more control over the use of local land.

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13.2.4: The Environment and Society

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe climate change and its importance
- Apply the concept of carrying capacity to environmental concerns
- Explain the challenges presented by pollution, garbage, e-waste, and toxic hazards
- Discuss real-world instances of environmental racism

The subfield of environmental sociology studies the way humans interact with their environments. This field is closely related to human ecology, which focuses on the relationship between people and their built and natural environment. This is an area that is garnering more attention as extreme weather patterns and policy battles over climate change dominate the news. A key factor of environmental sociology is the concept of carrying capacity, which describes the maximum amount of life that can be sustained within a given area. While this concept can refer to grazing lands or to rivers, we can also apply it to the earth as a whole.



Figure 20.13: Too little land for grazing means starving cattle. (Credit: newbeatphoto/flickr)

Big Picture: The Tragedy of the Commons

You might have heard the expression “the tragedy of the commons.” In 1968, an article of the same title written by Garrett Hardin described how a common pasture was ruined by overgrazing. But Hardin was not the first to notice the phenomenon. Back in the 1800s, Oxford economist William Forster Lloyd looked at the devastated public grazing commons and the unhealthy cattle subject to such limited resources, and saw, in essence, that the carrying capacity of the commons had been exceeded. However, since no one was held responsible for the land (as it was open to all), no one was willing to make sacrifices to improve it. Cattle grazers benefitted from adding more cattle to their herds, but they did not have to take on the responsibility of the lands that were being damaged by overgrazing. So there was an incentive for them to add more head of cattle, and no incentive for restraint.

Satellite photos of Africa taken in the 1970s showed this practice to dramatic effect. The images depicted a dark irregular area of more than 300 square miles. There was a large fenced area, where plenty of grass was growing. Outside the fence, the ground was bare and devastated. The reason was simple: the fenced land was privately owned by informed farmers who

carefully rotated their grazing animals and allowed the fields to lie fallow periodically. Outside the fence was land used by nomads. Like the herdsmen in 1800s Oxford, the nomads increased their heads of cattle without planning for its impact on the greater good. The soil eroded, the plants died, then the cattle died, and, ultimately, some of the people died.

How does this lesson affect those of us who don't need to graze our cattle? Well, like the cows, we all need food, water, and clean air to survive. With the increasing world population and the ever-larger megalopolises with tens of millions of people, the limit of the earth's carrying capacity is called into question. When too many take while giving too little thought to the rest of the population, whether cattle or humans, the result is usually tragedy.

Climate Change

While you might be more familiar with the phrase "global warming," climate change is the term now used to refer to long-term shifts in temperatures due to human activity and, in particular, the release of greenhouse gases into the environment. The planet as a whole is warming, but the term climate change acknowledges that the short-term variations in this process can include both higher and lower temperatures, despite the overarching trend toward warmth.

Climate change is a deeply controversial subject, despite decades of scientific research and a high degree of scientific consensus that supports its existence. For example, according to NASA scientists, 2020 essentially tied with 2016 as the warmest year on record, continuing the overall trend of increasing worldwide temperatures (NASA 2021). One effect of climate change is more extreme weather. There are increasingly more record-breaking weather phenomena, from the number of Category 4 hurricanes to the amount of snowfall in a given winter. These extremes, while they make for dramatic television coverage, can cause immeasurable damage to crops, property, and lives.

So why is there a controversy? Until relatively recently, the United States was very divided on the existence of climate change as an immediate threat, as well as whether or not human activity causes or contributes to it. But now it appears that the U.S. has joined the ranks of many countries where citizens are concerned about climate change; the nation is divided on what to do about it.

Research conducted in 2020 and 2021 indicated that at least 60 percent of Americans believe climate change is a real and immediate threat (UNDP 2021 and Global Strategy Group 2021). Citizens are also more supportive of clean energy and taking part in international efforts, such as the Paris Climate Accord, which is intended to engage countries in actions to limit the activity that leads to climate change. What's changed these opinions? It may be that younger people are more represented in these polls, and they tend to support climate change initiatives more consistently. It may be that the continued severity of weather and the costly and widespread impact is more difficult to ignore than it was previously. And part of the changing opinions might be driven by the prevalence of green energy sources, from wind power to solar power to electric cars, which are more evident to people across the country. However, deep divides remain. The addition of clean energy producers, such as offshore wind farms, typically meet stiff local opposition (similar to the "not in my backyard" discussion earlier in the chapter). And any punitive or price-raising methods of controlling emissions are unlikely to be welcome by U.S. citizens. Finally, global agreements like the Paris Accord will have limited impact because they are not strictly enforceable.

World systems analysis suggests that while, historically, core nations (like the United States and Western Europe) were the greatest source of greenhouse gases, they have now evolved into postindustrial societies. Industrialized semi-peripheral and peripheral nations are releasing increasing quantities of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide. The core nations, now post-industrial and less dependent on greenhouse-gas-causing industries, wish to enact strict protocols regarding the causes of global warming, but the semi-peripheral and peripheral nations rightly point out that they only want the same economic chance to evolve their economies. Since they were unduly affected by the progress of core nations, if the core nations now insist on "green" policies, they should pay offsets or subsidies of some kind. There are no easy answers to this conflict. It may well not be "fair" that the core nations benefited from ignorance during their industrial boom.

Pollution

Pollution describes what happens when contaminants are introduced into an environment (water, air, land) at levels that are damaging. Environments can often sustain a limited amount of contaminants without marked change, and water, air, and soil can "heal" themselves to a certain degree. However, once contaminant levels reach a certain point, the results can be catastrophic.

Water

Typhoid, cholera, and diarrhea from unsafe water kill hundreds of thousands of children each year, and over 160 million children suffer from malnutrition and growth issues due to water issues. An estimated 3 billion people do not have access to clean water at home for hand-washing (CDC 2016). Consider the impact of that, knowing that many of those without water for hand-washing live in agricultural societies in which they work with animals or live in cities with many other people.

The water crisis is exacerbated by many of the other issues we've discussed. Global pandemics, pollution, and climate change all have more severe impacts when coupled with lack of access to clean water. Finally, the cost of obtaining that clean water can interfere with other important aspects of survival and social mobility. Children serve as water haulers, traveling long distances on foot to collect potable water for their family. Those same children (as well as those who similarly collect firewood) are less able to focus on their education, either missing school or not completing the associated work (Water.org 2021). Regular water hauling–which for some people involves carrying 20 kilograms (40 pounds) for 30 minutes or more–also has negative effects on people's bodies, especially pregnant women who often undertake the task. The situation is only getting more dire as the global population increases. Water is a key resource battleground in the twenty-first century.

As every child learns in school, 70 percent of earth is made of water. Despite that figure, there is a finite amount of water usable by humans and it is constantly used and reused in a sustainable water cycle. The way we use this abundant natural resource, however, renders much of it unsuitable for consumption and unable to sustain life. Oil and natural gas production, discussed at the beginning of the chapter, require so much water that there's no safe place to put the wastewater other than deep underground. But more common activities use far more water than many people understand. The immense amount of water to produce almonds (8 percent of California's water supply, equating to roughly one gallon per individual almond) has made headlines, as have the 37 gallons that it takes to produce a cup of coffee. But all crops and livestock have a "water footprint." Dairy milk is actually known to take more water to produce than does almond milk, for example. And steak may take up to 900 gallons of water to produce (WaterCalculuator.org 2020).

Those water costs are important to consider, particularly if the crops are produced in a part of the world where access to safe water is also an issue. But reducing irrigation water usage for U.S. crops would have very limited effects in sub-Saharan Africa. Most experts focus on improving water quality and sanitation in general, as well as reducing the distance people need to travel in order to obtain safe water.

Water pollution has always been a byproduct of industrialization, increased population, and urbanization. Cleveland's Cuyahoga River caught fire several times due to pollution, and was part of what inspired the United States' turn to cleaner water. Other countries are currently undergoing the same crises. As a consequence of population concentrations, water close to human settlements is frequently polluted with untreated or partially treated human waste (sewage), chemicals, radioactivity, and levels of heat sufficient to create large “dead zones” incapable of supporting aquatic life. The methods of food production used by many core nations rely on liberal doses of nitrogen and pesticides, which end up back in the water supply. In some cases, water pollution affects the quality of the aquatic life consumed by water and land animals. As we move along the food chain, the pollutants travel from prey to predator. Since humans consume at all levels of the food chain, we ultimately consume the carcinogens, such as mercury, accumulated through several branches of the food web.

Soil

You might have read *The Grapes of Wrath* in English class at some point in time. Steinbeck’s tale of the Joads, driven out of their home by the Dust Bowl, is still playing out today. In China, as in Depression-era Oklahoma, over-tilling soil in an attempt to expand agriculture has resulted in the disappearance of large patches of topsoil.

Soil erosion and desertification are just two of the many forms of soil pollution. In addition, all the chemicals and pollutants that harm our water supplies can also leach into soil with similar effects. Brown zones where nothing can grow are common results of soil pollution. One demand the population boom makes on the planet is a requirement for more food to be produced. The so-called “Green Revolution” in the 1960s saw chemists and world aid organizations working together to bring modern farming methods, complete with pesticides, to developing countries. The immediate result was positive: food yields went up and burgeoning populations were fed. But as time has gone on, these areas have fallen into even more difficult straits as the damage done by modern methods leave traditional farmers with less than they had to start.

Dredging certain beaches in an attempt to save valuable beachfront property from coastal erosion has resulted in greater storm impact on shorelines, and damage to beach ecosystems (Turneffe Atoll Trust 2008). These dredging projects have damaged reefs, sea grass beds, and shorelines and can kill off large swaths of marine life. Ultimately, this damage threatens local fisheries,

tourism, and other parts of the local economy.

Garbage



Figure 20.14: Where should garbage go when you've run out of room? This is a question that is increasingly pressing the planet. (Credit: Department of Environmental Protection Recycling/flickr)

Where is your last cell phone? What about the one before that? Or the huge old television set your family had before flat screens became popular? For most of us, the answer is a sheepish shrug. We don't pay attention to the demise of old items, and since electronics drop in price and increase in innovation at an incredible clip, we have been trained by their manufacturers to upgrade frequently.

Garbage creation and control are major issues for most core and industrializing nations, and it is quickly becoming one of the most critical environmental issues faced in the United States. People in the United States buy products, use them, and then throw them away. Did you dispose of your old electronics according to government safety guidelines? Chances are good you didn't even know there are guidelines. Multiply your electronics times a few million, take into account the numerous toxic chemicals they contain, and then imagine either burying those chemicals in the ground or lighting them on fire.

Those are the two primary means of waste disposal in the United States: landfill and incineration. When it comes to getting rid of dangerous toxins, neither is a good choice. Styrofoam and plastics that many of us use every day do not dissolve in a natural way. Burn them, and they release carcinogens into the air. Their improper incineration (intentional or not) adds to air pollution and increases smog. Dump them in landfills, and they do not decompose. As landfill sites fill up, we risk an increase in groundwater contamination.

Big Picture: What Should Apple (and Friends) Do about E-Waste?



Figure 20.15: A parking lot filled with electronic waste, known as e-waste. (Credit: U.S. Army Environmental Command/flickr)

The mountains of broken plastic and rusty metal that plague the environment are not the most problematic types of garbage. E-waste or obsolete, broken, and worn-out electronics is the fastest growing segment of garbage production in the world. It is made up of household appliances, batteries, control devices, computers, phones, and similar products. Ironically, one of the largest potential e-waste problems will come from expended solar panels, which, although only a fraction of total waste, will require a complex recycling process (Stone 2020). All of these products have toxic chemicals and dangerous metals in them, as well as a significant amount of plastic that does not biodegrade.

So where do they go? Many companies ship their e-waste to developing nations in Africa and Asia to be "recycled." While they are, in some senses, recycled, the result is not exactly clean. In fact, it is one of the dirtiest jobs around. Overseas, without the benefit of environmental regulation, e-waste dumps become a kind of boomtown for entrepreneurs willing to sort through endless stacks of broken-down electronics for tiny bits of valuable copper, silver, and other precious metals. Unfortunately, in their hunt, these workers are exposed to deadly toxins.

Governments are beginning to take notice of the impending disaster, and the European Union, as well as the state of California, put stricter regulations in place. These regulations both limit the amount of toxins allowed in electronics and address the issue of end-of-life recycling. But not surprisingly, corporations, while insisting they are greening their process, often fight stricter regulations. Meanwhile, many environmental groups, including the activist group Greenpeace, have taken up the cause. Greenpeace states that it is working to get companies to:

1. measure and reduce emissions with energy efficiency, renewable energy, and energy policy advocacy
2. make greener, efficient, longer lasting products that are free of hazardous substances
3. reduce environmental impacts throughout company operations, from choosing production materials and energy sources right through to establishing global take-back programs for old products (Greenpeace 2011). Companies like Amazon, Samsung, Canon, Sprint, and Dell are noted for effective and forward-thinking programs (Sadoff 2019).

Air

China's fast-growing economy and burgeoning industry have translated into notoriously poor air quality. Smog hangs heavily over the major cities, sometimes grounding aircraft that cannot navigate through it. Pedestrians and cyclists wear air-filter masks to protect themselves. In Beijing, citizens are skeptical that the government-issued daily pollution ratings are trustworthy. Increasingly, they are taking their own pollution measurements in the hopes that accurate information will galvanize others to action. Given that some days they can barely see down the street, they hope action comes soon (Papenfuss 2011).

Humanity, with its growing numbers, use of fossil fuels, and increasingly urbanized society, is putting too much stress on the

earth's atmosphere. The amount of air pollution varies from locale to locale, and you may be more personally affected than you realize. How often do you check air quality reports before leaving your house? Depending on where you live, this question can sound utterly strange or like an everyday matter. Along with oxygen, most of the time we are also breathing in soot, hydrocarbons, carbon, nitrogen, and sulfur oxides.

Much of the pollution in the air comes from human activity. How many college students move their cars across campus at least once a day? Who checks the environmental report card on how many pollutants each company throws into the air before purchasing a cell phone? Many of us are guilty of taking our environment for granted without concern for how everyday decisions add up to a long-term global problem. How many minor adjustments can you think of, like walking instead of driving, that would reduce your overall carbon footprint?

Remember the "tragedy of the commons." Each of us is affected by air pollution. But like the herder who adds one more head of cattle to realize the benefits of owning more cows but who does not have to pay the price of the overgrazed land, we take the benefit of driving or buying the latest cell phones without worrying about the end result. Air pollution accumulates in the body, much like the effects of smoking cigarettes accumulate over time, leading to more chronic illnesses. And in addition to directly affecting human health, air pollution affects crop quality as well as heating and cooling costs. In other words, we all pay a lot more than the price at the pump when we fill up our tank with gas.

Toxic and Radioactive Waste

Radioactivity is a form of air pollution. While nuclear energy promises a safe and abundant power source, increasingly it is looked upon as a danger to the environment and to those who inhabit it. We accumulate nuclear waste, which we must then keep track of long term and ultimately figure out how to store the toxic waste material without damaging the environment or putting future generations at risk.

The 2011 earthquake in Japan illustrates the dangers of even safe, government-monitored nuclear energy. When disaster occurs, how can we safely evacuate the large numbers of affected people? Indeed, how can we even be sure how far the evacuation radius should extend? Radiation can also enter the food chain, causing damage from the bottom (phytoplankton and microscopic soil organisms) all the way to the top. Once again, the price paid for cheap power is much greater than what we see on the electric bill.



Figure 20.16: An aerial view of the Gulf Coast, taken in May 2010, illustrates the damage done by the BP *Deep Water Horizon* spill. (Credit: Jeff Warren/flickr)

The enormous oil disaster that hit the Louisiana Gulf Coast in 2010 is just one of a high number of environmental crises that have led to toxic residue. They include the pollution of the Love Canal neighborhood of the 1970s to the Exxon *Valdez* oil tanker crash of 1989, the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, and Japan's Fukushima nuclear plant incident following the earthquake in 2011. Often, the stories are not newsmakers, but simply an unpleasant part of life for the people who live near toxic sites such as Centralia, Pennsylvania and Hinkley, California. In many cases, people in these neighborhoods can be part of a cancer cluster

without realizing the cause.



Figure 20.17: Oil on the gulf shore beaches caused great destruction, killing marine and land animals and devastating local business. (Credit: AV8ter/flickr)

Sociology in the Real World: The Fire Burns On: Centralia, Pennsylvania

There used to be a place called Centralia, Pennsylvania. The town incorporated in the 1860s and once had several thousand residents, largely coal workers. But the story of its demise begins a century later in 1962. That year, a trash-burning fire was lit in the pit of the old abandoned coal mine outside of town. The fire moved down the mineshaft and ignited a vein of coal. It is still burning.

For more than twenty years, people tried to extinguish the underground fire, but no matter what they did, it returned. There was little government action, and people had to abandon their homes as toxic gases engulfed the area and sinkholes developed. The situation drew national attention when the ground collapsed under twelve-year-old Todd Domboski in 1981. Todd was in his yard when a sinkhole four feet wide and 150 feet deep opened beneath him. He clung to exposed tree roots and saved his life; if he had fallen a few feet farther, the heat or carbon monoxide would have killed him.

In 1983, engineers studying the fire concluded that it could burn for another century or more and could spread over nearly 4,000 acres. At this point, the government offered to buy out the town's residents and wanted them to relocate to nearby towns. A few determined Centralians refused to leave, even though the government bought their homes, and they are the only ones who remain. In one field, signs warn people to enter at their own risk, because the ground is hot and unstable. And the fire burns on (DeKok 1986).

Environmental Racism

Environmental racism refers to the way in which minority group neighborhoods (populated primarily by people of color and members of low socioeconomic groups) are burdened with a disproportionate number of hazards, including toxic waste facilities, garbage dumps, and other sources of environmental pollution and foul odors that lower the quality of life. All around the globe, members of minority groups bear a greater burden of the health problems that result from higher exposure to waste and pollution. This can occur due to unsafe or unhealthy work conditions where no regulations exist (or are enforced) for poor workers, or in neighborhoods that are uncomfortably close to toxic materials.

The statistics on environmental racism are shocking. Research shows that it pervades all aspects of African Americans' lives: environmentally unsound housing, schools with asbestos problems, facilities and playgrounds with lead paint. A twenty-year comparative study led by sociologist Robert Bullard determined "race to be more important than socioeconomic status in predicting the location of the nation's commercial hazardous waste facilities" (Bullard et al. 2007). His research found, for example, that Black children are five times more likely to have lead poisoning (the leading environmental health threat for

children) than their White counterparts, and that a disproportionate number of people of color reside in areas with hazardous waste facilities (Bullard et al. 2007). Sociologists with the project are examining how environmental racism is addressed in the long-term cleanup of the environmental disasters caused by Hurricane Katrina.

Sociology in the Real World: Native American Tribes and Environmental Racism

Native Americans are unquestionably victims of environmental racism. The Commission for Racial Justice found that about 50 percent of all Native Americans live in communities with uncontrolled hazardous waste sites (Asian Pacific Environmental Network 2002). There's no question that, worldwide, indigenous populations are suffering from similar fates.

For Native American tribes, the issues can be complicated—and their solutions hard to attain—because of the complicated governmental issues arising from a history of institutionalized disenfranchisement. Unlike other racial minorities in the United States, Native American tribes are sovereign nations. However, much of their land is held in "trust," meaning that "the federal government holds title to the land in trust on behalf of the tribe" (Bureau of Indian Affairs 2012). Some instances of environmental damage arise from this crossover, where the U.S. government's title has meant it acts without approval of the tribal government. Other significant contributors to environmental racism as experienced by tribes are forcible removal and burdensome red tape to receive the same reparation benefits afforded to non-Indians.

To better understand how this happens, let's consider a few example cases. The home of the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians was targeted as the site for a high-level nuclear waste dumping ground, amid allegations of a payoff of as high as $200 million (Kamps 2001). Keith Lewis, an indigenous advocate for Native American rights, commented on this buyout, after his people endured decades of uranium contamination, saying that "there is nothing moral about tempting a starving man with money" (Kamps 2001). In another example, the Western Shoshone's Yucca Mountain area has been pursued by mining companies for its rich uranium stores, a threat that adds to the existing radiation exposure this area suffers from U.S. and British nuclear bomb testing (Environmental Justice Case Studies 2004). In the "four corners" area where Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico meet, a group of Hopi and Navajo families have been forcibly removed from their homes so the land could be mined by the Peabody Mining Company for coal valued at $10 billion (American Indian Cultural Support 2006). Years of uranium mining on the lands of the Navajo of New Mexico have led to serious health consequences, and reparations have been difficult to secure; in addition to the loss of life, people's homes and other facilities have been contaminated (Frosch 2009). In yet another case, members of the Chippewa near White Pine, Michigan, were unable to stop the transport of hazardous sulfuric acid across reservation lands, but their activism helped bring an end to the mining project that used the acid (Environmental Justice Case Studies 2004).

These examples are only a few of the hundreds of incidents that Native American tribes have faced and continue to battle against. Sadly, the mistreatment of the land's original inhabitants continues via this institution of environmental racism. How might the work of sociologists help draw attention to—and eventually mitigate—this social problem?

Why does environmental racism exist? The reason is simple. Those with resources can raise awareness, money, and public attention to ensure that their communities are unsullied. This has led to an inequitable distribution of environmental burdens. Another method of keeping this inequity alive is NIMBY protests. Chemical plants, airports, landfills, and other municipal or corporate projects are often the subject of NIMBY demonstrations. And equally often, the NIMBYists win, and the objectionable project is moved closer to those who have fewer resources to fight it.

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13.2.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
sustainable development	development that occurs without depleting or damaging the natural environment				
asylum-seekers	those whose claim to refugee status have not been validated				
cancer cluster	a geographic area with high levels of cancer within its population				
carrying capacity	the amount of people that can live in a given area considering the amount of available resources				
climate change	long-term shifts in temperature and climate due to human activity				
concentric zone model	a model of human ecology that views cities as a series of circular rings or zones				
cornucopian theory	a theory that asserts human ingenuity will rise to the challenge of providing adequate resources for a growing population				
demographic transition theory	a theory that describes four stages of population growth, following patterns that connect birth and death rates with stages of industrial development				
demography	the study of population				
e-waste	the disposal of broken, obsolete, and worn-out electronics				
environmental racism	the burdening of economically and socially disadvantaged communities with a disproportionate share of environmental hazards				
environmental sociology	the sociological subfield that addresses the relationship between humans and the environment				
exurbs	communities that arise farther out than the suburbs and are typically populated by residents of high socioeconomic status				
fertility rate	a measure noting the actual number of children born				
fracking	hydraulic fracturing, a method used to recover gas and oil from shale by drilling down into the earth and directing a high-pressure mixture of water, sand, and proprietary chemicals into the rock				
gentrification	the entry of upper- and middle-class residents to city areas or communities that have been historically less affluent				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
human ecology	a functional perspective that looks at the relationship between people and their built and natural environment				
internally displaced person	someone who fled his or her home while remaining inside the country's borders				
Malthusian theory	a theory asserting that population is controlled through positive checks (war, famine, disease) and preventive checks (measures to reduce fertility)				
megalopolis	a large urban corridor that encompasses several cities and their surrounding suburbs and exurbs				
metropolis	the area that includes a city and its suburbs and exurbs				
mortality rate	a measure of the number of people in a population who die				
NIMBY	"Not In My Back Yard," the tendency of people to protest poor environmental practices when those practices will affect them directly				
pollution	the introduction of contaminants into an environment at levels that are damaging				
population composition	a snapshot of the demographic profile of a population based on fertility, mortality, and migration rates				
population pyramid	a graphic representation that depicts population distribution according to age and sex				
refugee	an individual who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster				
sex ratio	the ratio of men to women in a given population				
suburbs	the communities surrounding cities, typically close enough for a daily commute				
urban sociology	the subfield of sociology that focuses on the study of urbanization				
urbanization	the study of the social, political, and economic relationships of cities				
white flight	the migration of economically secure white people from racially mixed urban areas toward the suburbs				
zero population growth	a theoretical goal in which the number of people entering a population through birth or immigration is equal to the number of people leaving it via death or emigration				

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13.2.6: Section Summary

20.1 Demography and Population

Scholars understand demography through various analyses. Malthusian, zero population growth, cornucopian theory, and demographic transition theories all help sociologists study demography. The earth's human population is growing quickly, especially in peripheral countries. Factors that impact population include birthrates, mortality rates, and migration, including immigration and emigration. There are numerous potential outcomes of the growing population, and sociological perspectives vary on the potential effect of these increased numbers. The growth will pressure the already taxed planet and its natural resources.

20.2 Urbanization

Cities provide numerous opportunities for their residents and offer significant benefits including access to goods to numerous job opportunities. At the same time, high population areas can lead to tensions between demographic groups, as well as environmental strain. While the population of urban dwellers is continuing to rise, sources of social strain are rising along with it. The ultimate challenge for today's urbanites is finding an equitable way to share the city's resources while reducing the pollution and energy use that negatively impacts the environment.

20.3 The Environment and Society

The area of environmental sociology is growing as extreme weather patterns and concerns over climate change increase. Human activity leads to pollution of soil, water, and air, compromising the health of the entire food chain. While everyone is at risk, poor and disadvantaged neighborhoods and nations bear a greater burden of the planet's pollution, a dynamic known as environmental racism.

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13.2.7: Section Quiz

20.1 Demography and Population

1.

The population of the planet doubled in fifty years to reach _____ in 1999?

a. 6 billion
b. 7 billion
c. 5 billion
d. 10 billion

2.

A functionalist would address which issue?

a. The way inner-city areas become ghettoized and limit availability to jobs
b. The way immigration and emigration trends strengthen global relationships
c. The way racism and sexism impact the population composition of rural communities
d. The way humans interact with environmental resources on a daily basis

3.

What does carrying capacity refer to?

a. The ability of a community to welcome new immigrants
b. The capacity for globalism within a given ethnic group
c. The amount of life that can be supported sustainably in a particular environment
d. The amount of weight that urban centers can bear if vertical growth is mandated

4.

What three factors did Malthus believe would limit human population?

a. Self-preservation, old age, and illness
b. Natural cycles, illness, and immigration
c. Violence, new diseases, and old age
d. War, famine, and disease

5.

What does cornucopian theory believe?

a. That human ingenuity will solve any issues that overpopulation creates
b. That new diseases will always keep populations stable
c. That the earth will naturally provide enough for whatever number of humans exist
d. That the greatest risk is population reduction, not population growth

20.2 Urbanization

6.

In the concentric zone model, Zone B is likely to house what?

a. The city's industrial center
b. Wealthy commuter homes

c. Formerly wealthy homes split into cheap apartments
d. Rural outposts

7.

What are the prerequisites for the existence of a city?

a. Good environment with water and a favorable climate
b. Advanced agricultural technology
c. Strong social organization
d. All of the above

8.

In 2014, what was the largest city in the world?

a. Delhi
b. New York
c. Shanghai
d. Tokyo

9.

What led to the creation of the exurbs?

a. Urban sprawl and crowds moving into the city
b. The high cost of suburban living
c. The housing boom of the 1980s
d. Gentrification

10.

How are the suburbs of Paris different from those of most U.S. cities?

a. They are connected by public transportation.
b. There are more industrial and business opportunities there.
c. They are synonymous with housing projects and urban poor.
d. They are less populated.

11.

How does gentrification affect cities?

a. They become more crowded.
b. Less affluent residents are pushed into less desirable areas.
c. Traffic issues, including pollution, become worse.
d. All of the above

12.

What does human ecology theory address?

a. The relationship between humans and their environments
b. The way humans affect technology
c. The way the human population reduces the variety of nonhuman species
d. The relationship between humans and other species

13.

Urbanization includes the sociological study of what?

a. Urban economics
b. Urban politics
c. Urban environments
d. All of the above

20.3 The Environment and Society

14.

The “tragedy of the commons” is a reference to what?

a. Global warming
b. African landowners
c. The common grazing lands in Oxford
d. The misuse of private space

15.

What are ways that human activity impacts the water supply?

a. Creating sewage
b. Spreading chemicals
c. Increasing radioactivity
d. All of the above

16.

Which is an example of environmental racism?

a. The fact that a disproportionate percentage of people of color live in environmentally hazardous areas
b. Greenpeace protests
c. The prevalence of asbestos in formerly “whites only” schools
d. Prejudice similar to racism against people with different environmental views than one’s own

17.

What is *not* a negative outcome of shoreline dredging?

a. Damaged coral reefs
b. Death of marine life
c. Ruined sea grass beds
d. Reduction of human population

18.

What are the two primary methods of waste disposal?

a. Landfill and incineration
b. Incineration and compost
c. Decomposition and incineration
d. Marine dumping and landfills

19.

Where does a large percentage of e-waste wind up?

a. Incinerators
b. Recycled in peripheral nations
c. Repurposed into new electronics
d. Dumped into ocean repositories

20.

What types of municipal projects often result in environmental racism?

a. Toxic dumps or other objectionable projects
b. The location of schools, libraries, and other cultural institutions
c. Hospitals and other health and safety sites
d. Public transportation options

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13.2.8: Short Answer

20.1 Demography and Population

1.

Given what we know about population growth, what do you think of China's policy that limits the number of children a family can have? Do you agree with it? Why, or why not? What other ways might a country of over 1.3 billion people manage its population?

2.

Describe the effect of immigration or emigration on your life or in a community you have seen. What are the positive effects? What are the negative effects?

3.

What responsibility does the United States have toward underage asylum-seekers?

20.2 Urbanization

4.

What are the differences between the suburbs and the exurbs, and who is most likely to live in each?

5.

How will the growth in urban populations affect the world over the next ten years?

6.

Considering the concentric zone model, what type of zone were you raised in? Is this the same or different as that of earlier generations in your family? What type of zone do you reside in now? Do you find that people from one zone stereotype those from another? If so, how?

20.3 The Environment and Society

7.

After reading this section, will you change the way you treat your household waste? Explain.

8.

How do you think the issue of e-waste should be dealt with? Should the responsibility fall to the companies that make the products or the consumer who buys them? Would your buying habits be different if you had to pay to recycle old electronics?

9.

Can you think of a modern example of the tragedy of the commons, where public use without accountability has created a negative outcome?

10.

NIMBY protests occur when concerned citizens band together to speak up against something that will impact them negatively. Is this a positive or negative trend? Give an example of a NIMBY protest and whether you support it or not.

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13.2.9: Further Research

20.1 Demography and Population

To learn more about population concerns, from the new-era ZPG advocates to the United Nations reports, check out the Population Connection web site.

Explore an interactive version of the population pyramid for each country, and to see updates and changes over time: at this website.

20.2 Urbanization

Interested in learning more about the latest research in the field of human ecology? Visit the Society for Human Ecology web site to discover what's emerging in this field.

Getting from place to place in urban areas might be more complicated than you think. Read the latest on pedestrian-traffic concerns at the Streetsblog web site.

20.3 The Environment and Society

Visit the Cleanups in My Community web site to see where environmental hazards have been identified in your backyard, and what is being done about them.

What is your carbon footprint? Find out using the carbon footprint calculator.

Find out using the water footprint calculator.

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13.2.10: References

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13.3: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

13.3.1: Introduction

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13.3.1: Introduction



Figure 21.1: Activism can take the form of enormous marches, violent clashes, fundraising, social media activity, or silent displays. In this 2016 photo, people wear hoods and prison jumpsuits to protest the conditions at Guantanamo Bay Prison, where suspected terrorists had been held for over a decade without trial and without the rights of most people being held for suspicion of crimes. (Credit: Debra Sweet/flickr)

Chapter Outline

21.1 Collective Behavior
21.2 Social Movements
21.3 Social Change

When considering social movements, the images that come to mind are often the most dramatic and dynamic: the Boston Tea Party, Martin Luther King's speech at the 1963 March on Washington, anti-war protesters putting flowers in soldiers' rifles, and Gloria Richardson brushing away a bayonet in Cambridge, Maryland. Or perhaps more violent visuals: burning buildings in Watts, protestors fighting with police, or a lone citizen facing a line of tanks in Tiananmen Square.

But social movement occurs every day, often without any pictures or fanfare, by people of all backgrounds and ages. Organizing an awareness event, volunteering at a shelter, donating to a cause, speaking at a school board meeting, running for office, or writing an article are all ways that people participate in or promote social movements. Some people drive social change by educating themselves through books or trainings. Others find one person to help at a time.

Occupy Wall Street (OWS) was a unique movement that defied some of the theoretical and practical expectations regarding social movements. OWS is set apart by its lack of a single message, its leaderless organization, and its target—financial institutions instead of the government. OWS baffled much of the public, and certainly the media, leading many to ask, "Who are they, and what do they want?"

On July 13, 2011, the organization Adbusters posted on its blog, "Are you ready for a Tahrir moment? On September 17th, flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street" (Castells 2012).

The "Tahrir moment" was a reference to the 2010 political uprising that began in Tunisia and spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa, including Egypt's Tahrir Square in Cairo. Although OWS was a reaction to the continuing financial chaos that resulted from the 2008 market meltdown and not a political movement, the Arab Spring was its catalyst.

Manuel Castells (2012) notes that the years leading up to the Occupy movement had witnessed a dizzying increase in the disparity of wealth in the United States, stemming back to the 1980s. The top 1 percent in the nation had secured 58 percent of the economic growth in the period for themselves, while real hourly wages for the average worker had increased by only 2 percent. The wealth of the top 5 percent had increased by 42 percent. The average pay of a CEO was at that time 350 times that of the

average worker, compared to less than 50 times in 1983 (AFL-CIO 2014). The country's leading financial institutions, to many clearly to blame for the crisis and dubbed "too big to fail," were in trouble after many poorly qualified borrowers defaulted on their mortgage loans when the loans' interest rates rose. The banks were eventually "bailed" out by the government with $700 billion of taxpayer money. According to many reports, that same year top executives and traders received large bonuses.

On September 17, 2011, an anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution, the occupation began. About one thousand protestors descended upon Wall Street, and up to 20,000 people moved into Zuccotti Park, only two blocks away, where they began building a village of tents and organizing a system of communication. The protest soon began spreading throughout the nation, and its members started calling themselves "the 99 percent." More than a thousand cities and towns had Occupy demonstrations.

What did they want? Castells has dubbed OWS "A non-demand movement: The process is the message." Using Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and live-stream video, the protesters conveyed a multifold message with a long list of reforms and social change, including the need to address the rising disparity of wealth, the influence of money on election outcomes, the notion of "corporate personhood," a corporatized political system (to be replaced by "direct democracy"), political favoring of the rich, and rising student debt.

What did they accomplish? Despite headlines at the time softly mocking OWS for lack of cohesion and lack of clear messaging, the movement is credited with bringing attention to income inequality and the seemingly preferential treatment of financial institutions accused of wrongdoing. Recall from the chapter on Crime and Deviance that many financial crimes are not prosecuted, and their perpetrators rarely face jail time. It is likely that the general population is more sensitive to those issues than they were before the Occupy and related movements made them more visible.

What is the long-term impact? Has the United States changed the way it manages inequality? Certainly not. As discussed in several chapters, income inequality has generally increased. But is a major shift in our future?

The late James C. Davies suggested in his 1962 paper, "Toward a Theory of Revolution" that major change depends upon the mood of the people, and that it is extremely unlikely those in absolute poverty will be able to overturn a government, simply because the government has infinitely more power.

Instead, a shift is more possible when those with more power become involved. When formerly prosperous people begin to have unmet needs and unmet expectations, they become more disturbed: their mood changes. Eventually an intolerable point is reached, and revolution occurs. Thus, change comes not from the very bottom of the social hierarchy, but from somewhere in the middle (Davies 1962). For example, the Arab Spring was driven by mostly young, educated people whose promise and expectations were thwarted by corrupt autocratic governments. OWS too came not from the bottom but from people in the middle, who exploited the power of social media to enhance communication.

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13.3.2: Collective Behavior

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Describe different forms of collective behavior
- Differentiate between types of crowds
- Discuss emergent norm, value-added, and assembling perspective analyses of collective behavior

Sociology in the Real World: Flash Mobs and Challenges



Figure 21.2: Is this a good time had by all? Some flash mobs may function as political protests, while others are for fun. (Credit Richard Wood/flickr)

In March 2014, a group of musicians got together in a fish market in Odessa for a spontaneous performance of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" from his Ninth Symphony. While tensions were building over Ukraine's efforts to join the European Union, and even as Russian troops had taken control of the Ukrainian airbase in Belbek, the Odessa Philharmonic Orchestra and Opera Chorus tried to lighten the troubled times for shoppers with music and song. Spontaneous gatherings like this are called flash mobs. They are often recorded or live streamed, and are sometimes planned to celebrate an event or person.

While flash mobs are often intensely designed and rehearsed in order to give the impression of spontaneity, challenges don't always go according to plan: Cinnamon is too intense, buckets may fall on people's heads, or a bottle breaks on the floor. But successes and failures on social media can tie people together. Challenges can lead to chats, recollections, and repeats.

Humans seek connections and shared experiences. Perhaps experiencing a flash mob event enhances this bond. It certainly interrupts our otherwise mundane routine with a reminder that we are social animals.

Forms of Collective Behavior

Flash mobs are examples of collective behavior, noninstitutionalized activity in which several or many people voluntarily engage. Other examples are a group of commuters traveling home from work and a population of teens adopting a favorite singer's hairstyle. In short, collective behavior is any group behavior that is not mandated or regulated by an institution. There are three primary forms of collective behavior: the crowd, the mass, and the public.

It takes a fairly large number of people in close proximity to form a crowd (Lofland 1993). Examples include a group of people attending an Ani DiFranco concert, tailgating at a Patriots game, or attending a worship service. Turner and Killian (1993) identified four types of crowds. Casual crowds consist of people who are in the same place at the same time but who aren't really interacting, such as people standing in line at the post office. Conventional crowds are those who come together for a scheduled event that occurs regularly, like a religious service. Expressive crowds are people who join together to express emotion, often at funerals, weddings, or the like. The final type, acting crowds**,** focuses on a specific goal or action, such as a protest movement or riot.

In addition to the different types of crowds, collective groups can also be identified in two other ways. A mass is a relatively large number of people with a common interest, though they may not be in close proximity (Lofland 1993), such as players of the popular Facebook game Farmville. A public, on the other hand, is an unorganized, relatively diffused group of people who share ideas, such as the Libertarian political party. While these two types of crowds are similar, they are not the same. To distinguish between them, remember that members of a mass share interests, whereas members of a public share ideas.

Theoretical Perspectives on Collective Behavior

Early collective behavior theories (LeBon 1895; Blumer 1969) focused on the irrationality of crowds. Eventually, those theorists who viewed crowds as uncontrolled groups of irrational people were supplanted by theorists who viewed the behavior some crowds engaged in as the rational behavior of logical beings.

Emergent-Norm Perspective



Figure 21.3: According to the emergent-norm perspective, Hurricane Katrina victims sought needed supplies for survival, but to some outsiders their behavior was normally seen as looting. (Credit: Infrogmation/Wikimedia Commons)

Sociologists Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian (1993) built on earlier sociological ideas and developed what is known as emergent norm theory. They believe that the norms experienced by people in a crowd may be disparate and fluctuating. They emphasize the importance of these norms in shaping crowd behavior, especially those norms that shift quickly in response to changing external factors. Emergent norm theory asserts that, in this circumstance, people perceive and respond to the crowd situation with their particular (individual) set of norms, which may change as the crowd experience evolves. This focus on the individual component of interaction reflects a symbolic interactionist perspective.

For Turner and Killian, the process begins when individuals suddenly find themselves in a new situation, or when an existing situation suddenly becomes strange or unfamiliar. For example, think about human behavior during Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans was decimated and people were trapped without supplies or a way to evacuate. In these extraordinary circumstances, what outsiders saw as "looting" was defined by those involved as seeking needed supplies for survival. Normally, individuals would not wade into a corner gas station and take canned goods without paying, but given that they were suddenly in a greatly changed situation, they established a norm that they felt was reasonable.

Once individuals find themselves in a situation ungoverned by previously established norms, they interact in small groups to develop new guidelines on how to behave. According to the emergent-norm perspective, crowds are not viewed as irrational, impulsive, uncontrolled groups. Instead, norms develop and are accepted as they fit the situation. While this theory offers insight into why norms develop, it leaves undefined the nature of norms, how they come to be accepted by the crowd, and how they spread through the crowd.

Value-Added Theory

Neil Smelser's (1962) meticulous categorization of crowd behavior, called value-added theory**,** is a perspective within the functionalist tradition based on the idea that several conditions must be in place for collective behavior to occur. Each condition adds to the likelihood that collective behavior will occur. The first condition is *structural conduciveness,* which occurs when people are aware of the problem and have the opportunity to gather, ideally in an open area. *Structural strain*, the second condition, refers to people's expectations about the situation at hand being unmet, causing tension and strain. The next condition is the *growth and spread of a generalized belief*, wherein a problem is clearly identified and attributed to a person or group.

Fourth, *precipitating factors* spur collective behavior; this is the emergence of a dramatic event. The fifth condition is *mobilization for action*, when leaders emerge to direct a crowd to action. The final condition relates to action by the agents. Called *social control*, it is the only way to end the collective behavior episode (Smelser 1962).

A real-life example of these conditions occurred after the fatal police shooting of teenager Michael Brown, an unarmed eighteen-year-old African American, in Ferguson, MO on August 9, 2014. The shooting drew national attention almost immediately. A large group of mostly Black, local residents assembled in protest—a classic example of structural conduciveness. When the community perceived that the police were not acting in the people's interest and were withholding the name of the officer, structural strain became evident. A growing generalized belief evolved as the crowd of protesters were met with heavily armed police in military-style protective uniforms accompanied by an armored vehicle. The precipitating factor of the arrival of the police spurred greater collective behavior as the residents mobilized by assembling a parade down the street. Ultimately they were met with tear gas, pepper spray, and rubber bullets used by the police acting as agents of social control. The element of social control escalated over the following days until August 18, when the governor called in the National Guard.



Figure 21.4: Agents of social control bring collective behavior to an end. (Credit: hozinja/flickr)

Assembling Perspective

Interactionist sociologist Clark McPhail (1991) developed assembling perspective**,** another system for understanding collective behavior that credited individuals in crowds as rational beings. Unlike previous theories, this theory refocuses attention from collective behavior to collective action. Remember that collective behavior is a noninstitutionalized gathering, whereas collective action is based on a shared interest. McPhail's theory focused primarily on the processes associated with crowd behavior, plus the lifecycle of gatherings. He identified several instances of convergent or collective behavior, as shown on the chart below.

Table 21.1: Clark McPhail identified various circumstances of convergent and collective behavior (McPhail 1991).

Type of crowd	Description	Example
Convergence clusters	Family and friends who travel together	Carpooling parents take several children to the movies
Convergent orientation	Group all facing the same direction	A semi-circle around a stage
Collective vocalization	Sounds or noises made collectively	Screams on a roller coaster
Collective verbalization	Collective and simultaneous participation in a speech or song	Pledge of Allegiance in the school classroom
Collective gesticulation	Body parts forming symbols	The YMCA dance
Collective manipulation	Objects collectively moved around	Holding signs at a protest rally
Collective locomotion	The direction and rate of movement to the event	Children running to an ice cream truck

As useful as this is for understanding the components of how crowds come together, many sociologists criticize its lack of attention on the large cultural context of the described behaviors, instead focusing on individual actions.

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13.3.3: Social Movements

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Demonstrate awareness of social movements on a state, national, and global level
- Distinguish between different types of social movements
- Identify stages of social movements
- Discuss theoretical perspectives on social movements, like resource mobilization, framing, and new social movement theory

Social movements are purposeful, organized groups that strive to work toward a common social goal. While most of us learned about social movements in history classes, we tend to take for granted the fundamental changes they caused —and we may be completely unfamiliar with the trend toward global social movements. But from the antitobacco movement that has worked to outlaw smoking in public buildings and raise the cost of cigarettes, to political uprisings throughout the Arab world, movements are creating social change on a global scale.

Levels of Social Movements

Movements happen in our towns, in our nation, and around the world. Let's take a look at examples of social movements, from local to global. No doubt you can think of others on all of these levels, especially since modern technology has allowed us a near-constant stream of information about the quest for social change around the world.



Figure 21.5: Staff at University of Wisconsin protest a proposed law that would significantly reduce their ability to bargain for better pay and benfits. (Credit: marctasman/flickr)

Local

Local social movements typically refer to those in cities or towns, but they can also affect smaller constituencies, such as college campuses. Sometimes colleges are smaller hubs of a national movement, as seen during the Vietnam War protests or the Black Lives Matter protests. Other times, colleges are managing a more local issue. In 2012, The Cooper Union in New York City announced that, due to financial mismanagement and unforeseen downturns from the Great Recession, the college had a massive shortfall; it would be forced to charge tuition for the first time. To students at most other colleges, tuition would not seem out of

line, but Cooper Union was founded (and initially funded) under the principle that it would not charge tuition. When the school formally announced the plan to charge tuition, students occupied a building and, later, the college president's office. Student action eventually contributed to the president's resignation and a financial recovery plan in partnership with the state attorney general.

Another example occurred in Wisconsin. After announcing a significant budget shortfall, Governor Scott Walker put forth a financial repair bill that would reduce the collective bargaining abilities of unions and other organizations in the state. (Collective bargaining was used to attain workplace protections, benefits, healthcare, and fair pay.) Faculty at the state's college system were not in unions, but teaching assistants, researchers, and other staff had regularly collectively bargained. Faced with the prospect of reduced job protections, pay, and benefits, the staff members began one of the earliest protests against Walker's action, by protesting on campus and sending an ironic message of love to the governor on Valentine's Day. Over time, these efforts would spread to other organizations in the state.

State



Figure 21.6: Texas Secede! is an organization which would like Texas to secede from the United States. (Credit: Tim Pearce/flickr)

The most impactful state-level protest would be to cease being a state, and organizations in several states are working toward that goal. Texas secession has been a relatively consistent movement since about 1990. The past decade has seen an increase in rhetoric and campaigns to drive interest and support for a public referendum (a direct vote on the matter by the people). The Texas Nationalist Movement, Texas Secede!, and other groups have provided formal proposals and programs designed to make the idea seem more feasible. Texit has become a widely used nickname and hashtag for the movement. And in February 2021, a bill was introduced to hold a referendum that would begin formal discussions on creating an independent nation—though the bill's sponsor indicated that it was mainly intended to begin conversation and evaluations rather than directly lead to secession (De Alba 2021).

States also get involved before and after national decisions. The legalization of same-sex marriage throughout the United States led some people to feel their religious beliefs were under attack. Following swiftly upon the heels of the Supreme Court Obergefell ruling, the Indiana legislature passed a Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA, pronounced "rifra"). Originally crafted decades ago with the purpose of preserving the rights of minority religious people, more recent RFRA laws allow individuals, businesses, and other organizations to decide whom they will serve based on religious beliefs. For example, Arkansas's 2021 law allowed doctors to refuse to treat patients based on the doctor's religious beliefs (Associated Press 2021). In this way, state-level organizations and social movements are responding to a national decision.



Figure 21.7: At the time of this writing, more than thirty states and the District of Columbia allow marriage for same-sex couples. State constitutional bans are more difficult to overturn than mere state bans because of the higher threshold of votes required to change a constitution. Now that the Supreme Court has stricken a key part of the Defense of Marriage Act, same-sex couples married in states that allow it are now entitled to federal benefits afforded to heterosexual couples (CNN 2014). (Credit: Jose Antonio Navas/flickr).

Global

Social organizations worldwide take stands on such general areas of concern as poverty, sex trafficking, and the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in food. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are sometimes formed to support such movements, such as the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement (FOAM). Global efforts to reduce poverty are represented by the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), among others. The Fair Trade movement exists to protect and support food producers in developing countries. Occupy Wall Street, although initially a local movement, also went global throughout Europe and, as the chapter's introductory photo shows, the Middle East.

Types of Social Movements

We know that social movements can occur on the local, national, or even global stage. Are there other patterns or classifications that can help us understand them? Sociologist David Aberle (1966) addresses this question by developing categories that distinguish among social movements based on what they want to change and how much change they want. Reform movements seek to change something specific about the social structure. Examples include antinuclear groups, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the Dreamers movement for immigration reform, and the Human Rights Campaign's advocacy for Marriage Equality. Revolutionary movements seek to completely change every aspect of society. These include the 1960s counterculture movement, including the revolutionary group The Weather Underground, as well as anarchist collectives. Texas Secede! is a revolutionary movement. Religious/Redemptive movements are "meaning seeking," and their goal is to provoke inner change or spiritual growth in individuals. Organizations pushing these movements include Heaven's Gate or the Branch Davidians. The latter is still in existence despite government involvement that led to the deaths of numerous Branch Davidian members in 1993. Alternative movements are focused on self-improvement and limited, specific changes to individual beliefs and behavior. These include trends like transcendental meditation or a macrobiotic diet. Resistance movements seek to prevent or undo change to the social structure. The Ku Klux Klan, the Minutemen, and pro-life movements fall into this category.

Stages of Social Movements

Later sociologists studied the lifecycle of social movements—how they emerge, grow, and in some cases, die out. Blumer (1969) and Tilly (1978) outline a four-stage process. In the *preliminary stage*, people become aware of an issue, and leaders emerge. This is followed by the *coalescence stage* when people join together and organize in order to publicize the issue and raise awareness. In the *institutionalization stage*, the movement no longer requires grassroots volunteerism: it is an established organization, typically with a paid staff. When people fall away and adopt a new movement, the movement successfully brings about the change

it sought, or when people no longer take the issue seriously, the movement falls into the *decline stage*. Each social movement discussed earlier belongs in one of these four stages. Where would you put them on the list?

Social Media and Social Movements



Figure 21.8: Are these activists most likely to have a larger impact through people who see their sign from the shore, or through people who will see pictures of their event on social media? (Credit: Backbone Campaign/flickr)

As we have mentioned throughout this text, and likely as you have experienced in your life, social media is a widely used mechanism in social movements. In the Groups and Organizations chapter, we discussed Tarana Burke first using "Me Too" in 2006 on a major social media venue of the time (MySpace). The phrase later grew into a massive movement when people began using it on Twitter to drive empathy and support regarding experiences of sexual harassment or sexual assault. In a similar way, Black Lives Matter began as a social media message after George Zimmerman was acquitted in the shooting death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, and the phrase burgeoned into a formalized (though decentralized) movement in subsequent years.

Social media has the potential to dramatically transform how people get involved in movements ranging from local school district decisions to presidential campaigns. As discussed above, movements go through several stages, and social media adds a dynamic to each of them. In the the *preliminary stage*, people become aware of an issue, and leaders emerge. Compared to movements of 20 or 30 years ago, social media can accelerate this stage substantially. Issue awareness can spread at the speed of a click, with thousands of people across the globe becoming informed at the same time. In a similar vein, those who are savvy and engaged with social media may emerge as leaders, even if, for example, they are not great public speakers.

At the next stage, the *coalescence stage*, social media is also transformative. Coalescence is the point when people join together to publicize the issue and get organized. President Obama's 2008 campaign was a case study in organizing through social media. Using Twitter and other online tools, the campaign engaged volunteers who had typically not bothered with politics. Combined with comprehensive data tracking and the ability to micro-target, the campaign became a blueprint for others to build on. The 2020 elections featured a level of data analysis and rapid response capabilities that, while echoing the Obama campaign's early work, made the 2008 campaign look quaint. The campaigns and political analysts could measure the level of social media interaction following any campaign stop, debate, statement by the candidate, news mention, or any other event, and measure whether the tone or "sentiment" was positive or negative. Political polls are still important, but social media provides instant feedback and opportunities for campaigns to act, react, or—on a daily basis—ask for donations based on something that had occurred just hours earlier (Knowledge at Wharton 2020).

Interestingly, social media can have interesting outcomes once a movement reaches the *institutionalization* stage. In some cases, a formal organization might exist alongside the hashtag or general sentiment, as is the case with Black Lives Matter. At any one time, BLM is essentially three things: a structured organization, an idea with deep and personal meaning for people, and a widely used phrase or hashtag. It's possible that users of the hashtag are not referring to the formal organization. It's even possible that people who hold a strong belief that Black lives matter do not agree with all of the organization's principles or its leadership. And in other cases, people may be very aligned with all three contexts of the phrase. Social media is still crucial to the social movement, but its interplay is both complex and evolving.

In a similar way, MeToo activists, including Tarana Burke herself, have sought to clarify the interweaving of different aspects of the movement. She told the Harvard Gazette in 2020:

> I think we have to be careful about what we're calling the movement. And I think one of the things I've learned in the last two years is that folks don't really understand what a movement is or how it's defined. The people using the hashtag on the internet were the impetus for Me Too being put into the public sphere. The media coverage of the viralness of Me Too and the people being accused are media coverage of a popular story that derived from the hashtag. The movement is the work that our organization and others like us are doing to both support survivors and move people to action (Walsh 2020).

Sociologists have identified high-risk activism, such as the civil rights movement, as a "strong-tie" phenomenon, meaning that people are far more likely to stay engaged and not run home to safety if they have close friends who are also engaged. The people who dropped out of the movement—who went home after the danger became too great—did not display any less ideological commitment. But they lacked the strong-tie connection to other people who were staying. Social media had been considered "weak-tie" (McAdam 1993 and Brown 2011). People follow or friend people they have never met. Weak ties are important for our social structure, but they seemed to limit the level of risk we'll take on their behalf. For some people, social media remains that way, but for others it can relate to or build stronger ties. For example, if people, who had for years known each other only through an online group, meet in person at an event, they may feel far more connected at that event and afterward than people who had never interacted before. And as we discussed in the Groups chapter, social media itself, even if people never meet, can bring people into primary group status, forming stronger ties.

Another way to consider the impact of social media on activism is through something that may or may not be emotional, has little implications regarding tie strength, and may be fleeting rather than permanent, but still be one of the largest considerations of any formal social movement: money. Returning to politics, think of the massive amounts of campaign money raised in each election cycle through social media. In the 2020 Presidential election and its aftermath, hundreds of millions of dollars were raised through social media. Likewise, 55 percent of people who engage with nonprofits through social media take some sort of action; and for 60 percent of them (or 33 percent of the total) that action is to give money to support the cause (Nonprofit Source 2020).

Theoretical Perspectives on Social Movements

Most theories of social movements are called collective action theories, indicating the purposeful nature of this form of collective behavior. The following three theories are but a few of the many classic and modern theories developed by social scientists.

Resource Mobilization

McCarthy and Zald (1977) conceptualize resource mobilization theory as a way to explain movement success in terms of the ability to acquire resources and mobilize individuals. Resources are primarily time and money, and the more of both, the greater the power of organized movements. Numbers of social movement organizations (SMOs), which are single social movement groups, with the same goals constitute a social movement industry (SMI). Together they create what McCarthy and Zald (1977) refer to as "the sum of all social movements in a society."

Resource Mobilization and the Civil Rights Movement

An example of resource mobilization theory is activity of the civil rights movement in the decade between the mid 1950s and the mid 1960s. Social movements had existed before, notably the Women's Suffrage Movement and a long line of labor movements, thus constituting an existing social movement sector, which is the multiple social movement industries in a society, even if they have widely varying constituents and goals. The civil rights movement had also existed well before Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white man. Less known is that Parks was a member of the NAACP and trained in leadership (A&E Television Networks, LLC. 2014). But her action that day was spontaneous and unplanned (Schmitz 2014). Her arrest triggered a public outcry that led to the famous Montgomery bus boycott, turning the movement into what we now think of as the "civil rights movement" (Schmitz 2014).

Mobilization had to begin immediately. Boycotting the bus made other means of transportation necessary, which was provided through car pools. Churches and their ministers joined the struggle, and the protest organization In Friendship was formed as well as The Friendly Club and the Club From Nowhere. A social movement industry, which is the collection of the social movement organizations that are striving toward similar goals, was growing.

Martin Luther King Jr. emerged during these events to become the charismatic leader of the movement, gained respect from elites in the federal government, and aided by even more emerging SMOs such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), among others. Several still exist today. Although the movement in that period was an overall success, and laws were changed (even if not attitudes), the "movement" continues. So do struggles to keep the gains that were made, even as the U.S. Supreme Court has recently weakened the Voter Rights Act of 1965, once again making it more difficult for Black Americans and other minorities to vote.

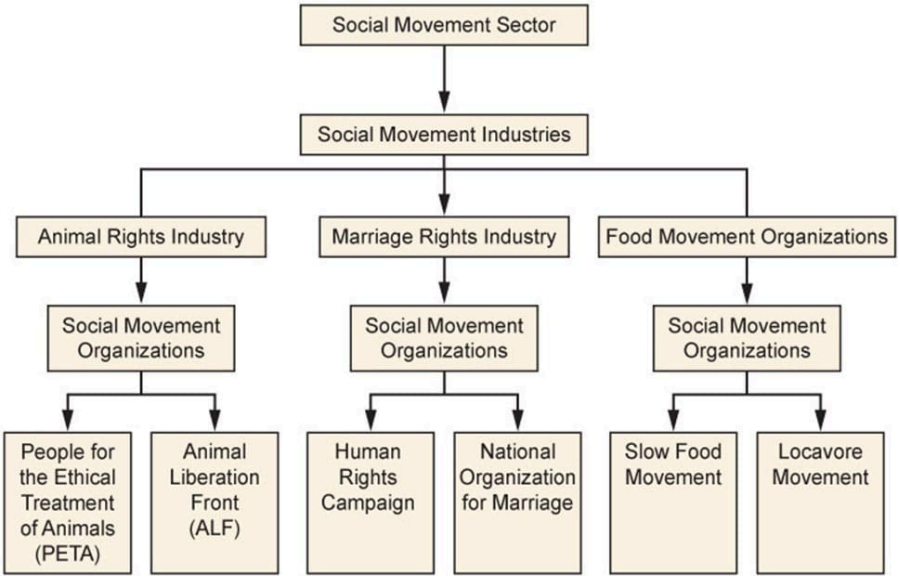


Figure 21.9: Multiple social movement organizations concerned about the same issue form a social movement industry. A society's many social movement industries comprise its social movement sector. With so many options, to whom will you give your time and money?

Framing/Frame Analysis

Over the past several decades, sociologists have developed the concept of frames to explain how individuals identify and understand social events and which norms they should follow in any given situation (Goffman 1974; Snow et al. 1986; Benford and Snow 2000). Imagine entering a restaurant. Your "frame" immediately provides you with a behavior template. It probably does not occur to you to wear pajamas to a fine-dining establishment, throw food at other patrons, or spit your drink onto the table. However, eating food at a sleepover pizza party provides you with an entirely different behavior template. It might be perfectly acceptable to eat in your pajamas and maybe even throw popcorn at others or guzzle drinks from cans.

Successful social movements use three kinds of frames (Snow and Benford 1988) to further their goals. The first type, diagnostic framing, states the problem in a clear, easily understood way. When applying diagnostic frames, there are no shades of gray: instead, there is the belief that what "they" do is wrong and this is how "we" will fix it. The anti-gay marriage movement is an example of diagnostic framing with its uncompromising insistence that marriage is only between a man and a woman. Prognostic framing, the second type, offers a solution and states how it will be implemented. Some examples of this frame, when looking at the issue of marriage equality as framed by the anti-gay marriage movement, include the plan to restrict marriage to "one man/one woman" or to allow only "civil unions" instead of marriages. As you can see, there may be many competing prognostic frames even within social movements adhering to similar diagnostic frames. Finally, motivational framing is the call to action: what should you do once you agree with the diagnostic frame and believe in the prognostic frame? These frames are action-oriented. In the gay marriage movement, a call to action might encourage you to vote "no" on Proposition 8 in California (a move to limit marriage to male-female couples), or conversely, to contact your local congressperson to express your viewpoint that marriage should be restricted to male-female couples.

With so many similar diagnostic frames, some groups find it best to join together to maximize their impact. When social movements link their goals to the goals of other social movements and merge into a single group, a frame alignment process (Snow et al. 1986) occurs—an ongoing and intentional means of recruiting participants to the movement.

This frame alignment process has four aspects: bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation. *Bridging* describes a "bridge" that connects uninvolved individuals and unorganized or ineffective groups with social movements that, though

structurally unconnected, nonetheless share similar interests or goals. These organizations join together to create a new, stronger social movement organization. Can you think of examples of different organizations with a similar goal that have banded together?

In the *amplification* model, organizations seek to expand their core ideas to gain a wider, more universal appeal. By expanding their ideas to include a broader range, they can mobilize more people for their cause. For example, the Slow Food movement extends its arguments in support of local food to encompass reduced energy consumption, pollution, obesity from eating more healthfully, and more.

In *extension*, social movements agree to mutually promote each other, even when the two social movement organization's goals don't necessarily relate to each other's immediate goals. This often occurs when organizations are sympathetic to each others' causes, even if they are not directly aligned, such as women's equal rights and the civil rights movement.



Figure 21.10: Extension occurs when social movements have sympathetic causes. Women's rights, racial equality, and LGBT advocacy are all human rights issues. (Credit: Photos (a) and (b) Wikimedia Commons; Photo (c) Charlie Nguyen/flickr)

Transformation means a complete revision of goals. Once a movement has succeeded, it risks losing relevance. If it wants to remain active, the movement has to change with the transformation or risk becoming obsolete. For instance, when the women's suffrage movement gained women the right to vote, members turned their attention to advocating equal rights and campaigning to elect women to office. In short, transformation is an evolution in the existing diagnostic or prognostic frames that generally achieves a total conversion of the movement.

New Social Movement Theory

New social movement theory, a development of European social scientists in the 1950s and 1960s, attempts to explain the proliferation of postindustrial and postmodern movements that are difficult to analyze using traditional social movement theories. Rather than being one specific theory, it is more of a perspective that revolves around understanding movements as they relate to politics, identity, culture, and social change. Some of these more complex interrelated movements include ecofeminism, which focuses on the patriarchal society as the source of environmental problems, and the transgender rights movement. Sociologist Steven Buechler (2000) suggests that we should be looking at the bigger picture in which these movements arise—shifting to a macro-level, global analysis of social movements.

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13.3.4: Social Change

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain how technology, social institutions, population, and the environment can bring about social change
- Discuss the importance of modernization in relation to social change

Collective behavior and social movements are just two of the forces driving social change, which is the change in society created through social movements as well as external factors. Essentially, any disruptive shift in the status quo, be it intentional or random, human-caused or natural, can lead to social change.

Causes of Social Change

Throughout this text, we have discussed various causes and effects of social change. Below is a recap of some major drivers, including technology, social institutions, population, and the environment. Alone or in combination, these agents can disturb, improve, disrupt, or otherwise influence society.

Technology

Some would say that improving technology has made our lives easier. Imagine what your day would be like without the Internet, the automobile, or electricity. In *The World Is Flat*, Thomas Friedman (2005) argues that technology is a driving force behind globalization, while the other forces of social change (social institutions, population, environment) play comparatively minor roles. He suggests that we can view globalization as occurring in three distinct periods. First, globalization was driven by military expansion, powered by horsepower and wind power. The countries best able to take advantage of these power sources expanded the most, and exert control over the politics of the globe from the late fifteenth century to around the year 1800. The second shorter period from approximately 1800 C.E. to 2000 C.E. consisted of a globalizing economy. Steam and rail power were the guiding forces of social change and globalization in this period. Finally, Friedman brings us to the post-millennial era. In this period of globalization, change is driven by technology, particularly the Internet (Friedman 2005).

Technology can change other societal forces. For example, advances in medical technology allow people to live longer, have more children, and survive some natural disasters or problems. Advances in agricultural technology have allowed us to alter food products, which impacts our health as well as the environment. A given technology can create beneficiaries, but that same technology—especially if it is disruptive—can lead others to lose their jobs, suffer from pollution, or be monitored or victimized.

The digital divide—the increasing gap between the technological haves and have-nots—exists both locally and globally. Added security issues include theft of personal information, cyber aggression, and loss of privacy. The constant change in technology leads to an almost inevitable lack of preparation for new risks on both personal and societal scales.

Sociology in the Real World: Crowdsourcing: Using the Web to Get Things Done

Millions of people today walk around with their heads tilted toward a small device held in their hands. Perhaps you are reading this textbook on a phone or tablet. People in developed societies now take communication technology for granted. How has this technology affected social change in our society and others? One very positive way is crowdsourcing.

Thanks to the web, digital crowdsourcing is the process of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people, and especially from an online community rather than from traditional employees or suppliers. Web-based companies such as Kickstarter have been created precisely for the purposes of raising large amounts of money in a short period of time, notably by sidestepping the traditional financing process. This book, or virtual

book, is the product of a kind of crowdsourcing effort. It has been written and reviewed by several authors in a variety of fields to give you free access to a large amount of data produced at a low cost. The most common example of crowdsourced data is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, which is the result of thousands of volunteers adding and correcting material.

Perhaps the most striking use of crowdsourcing is disaster relief. By tracking tweets and e-mails and organizing the data in order of urgency and quantity, relief agencies can address the most urgent calls for help, such as for medical aid, food, shelter, or rescue. On January 12, 2010 a devastating earthquake hit the nation of Haiti. By January 25, a crisis map had been created from more than 2,500 incident reports, and more reports were added every day. The same technology was used to assist victims of the Japanese earthquake and tsunami in 2011.

The Darker Side of Technology: Electronic Aggression in the Information Age

The U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) uses the term "electronic aggression" to describe "any type of harassment or bullying that occurs through e-mail, a chat room, instant messaging, a website (including blogs), or text messaging" (CDC, n.d.) We generally think of this as cyberbullying. A 2011 study by the U.S. Department of Education found that 27.8 percent of students aged twelve through eighteen reported experiencing bullying. From the same sample 9 percent specifically reported having been a victim of cyberbullying (Robers et al. 2013).

Cyberbullying represents a powerful change in modern society. William F. Ogburn (1922) might have been describing it nearly a century ago when he defined "cultural lag," which occurs when material culture precedes nonmaterial culture. That is, society may not fully comprehend all the consequences of a new technology and so may initially reject it (such as stem cell research) or embrace it, sometimes with unintended negative consequences (such as pollution).

Cyberbullying is a special feature of the Internet. Unique to electronic aggression is that it can happen twenty-four hours a day, every day; it can reach a child (or an adult) even though she or he might otherwise feel safe in a locked house. The messages and images may be posted anonymously and to a very wide audience, and they might even be impossible to trace. Finally, once posted, the texts and images are very hard to delete. Its effects range from the use of alcohol and drugs to lower self-esteem, health problems, and even suicide (CDC, n.d.).

Social Institutions

Each change in a single social institution leads to changes in all social institutions. For example, the industrialization of society meant that there was no longer a need for large families to produce enough manual labor to run a farm. Further, new job opportunities were in close proximity to urban centers where living space was at a premium. The result is that the average family size shrunk significantly.

This same shift toward industrial corporate entities also changed the way we view government involvement in the private sector, created the global economy, provided new political platforms, and even spurred new religions and new forms of religious worship like Scientology. It has also informed the way we educate our children: originally schools were set up to accommodate an agricultural calendar so children could be home to work the fields in the summer, and even today, teaching models are largely based on preparing students for industrial jobs, despite that being an outdated need. A shift in one area, such as industrialization, means an interconnected impact across social institutions.

Population

Population composition is changing at every level of society. Births increase in one nation and decrease in another. Some families delay childbirth while others start bringing children into their folds early. Population changes can be due to random external forces, like an epidemic, or shifts in other social institutions, as described above. But regardless of why and how it happens, population trends have a tremendous interrelated impact on all other aspects of society.

In the United States, we are experiencing an increase in our senior population as Baby Boomers retire, which will in turn change the way many of our social institutions are organized. For example, there is an increased demand for housing in warmer climates, a massive shift in the need for elder care and assisted living facilities, and growing incidence of elder abuse. Retiring Boomers may also lead to labor or expertise shortages, and (as discussed extensively in the chapter on Aging and the Elderly) healthcare costs will increase to become a larger and larger portion of our economy.

Globally, often the countries with the highest fertility rates are least able to absorb and attend to the needs of a growing population. Family planning is a large step in ensuring that families are not burdened with more children than they can care for. On a macro level, the increased population, particularly in the poorest parts of the globe, also leads to increased stress on the planet's resources.

The Environment

As discussed extensively in the chapter on Population, Urbanization, and the Environment, changes in the environment and our interaction with it can have promising or devastating effects. Access to safe water is a primary determinant of health and prosperity. And as human populations expand in more vulnerable areas while natural disasters occur with more frequency, we see an increase in the number of people affected by those disasters.

Overall health and wellbeing are deeply affected by the environment even in urbanized areas. Many types of cancers, which are collectively the leading cause of death in higher-income countries, have environmental influences (Mahase 2019).

Sociology in the Real World: Hurricane Katrina: When It All Comes Together

The four key elements that affect social change that are described in this chapter are the environment, technology, social institutions, and population. In 2005, New Orleans was struck by a devastating hurricane. But it was not just the hurricane that was disastrous. It was the converging of all four of these elements, and the text below will connect the elements by putting the words in parentheses.

Before Hurricane Katrina (environment) hit, poorly coordinated evacuation efforts had left about 25 percent of the population, almost entirely African Americans who lacked private transportation, to suffer the consequences of the coming storm (demographics). Then "after the storm, when the levees broke, thousands more [refugees] came. And the city buses, meant to take them to proper shelters, were underwater" (Sullivan 2005). No public transportation was provided, drinking water and communications were delayed, and FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (institutions), was headed by an appointee with no real experience in emergency management. Those who were eventually evacuated did not know where they were being sent or how to contact family members. African Americans were sent the farthest from their homes. When the displaced began to return, public housing had not been reestablished, yet the Superdome stadium, which had served as a temporary disaster shelter, had been rebuilt. Homeowners received financial support, but renters did not.

As it turns out, it was not entirely the hurricane that cost the lives of 1,500 people, but the fact that the city's storm levees (technology), which had been built too low and which failed to meet numerous other safety specifications, gave way, flooding the lower portions of the city, occupied almost entirely by African Americans.

Journalist Naomi Klein, in her book The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism, presents a theory of a "triple shock," consisting of an initial disaster, an economic shock that replaces public services with private (for-profit) ones, and a third shock consisting of the intense policing of the remaining public. Klein supports her claim by quoting then-Congressman Richard Baker as saying, "We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did." She quotes developer Joseph Canizaro as stating, "I think we have a clean sheet to start again. And with that clean sheet we have some very big opportunities."

One clean sheet was that New Orleans began to replace public schools with charters, breaking the teachers' union and firing all public school teachers (Mullins 2014). Public housing was seriously reduced and the poor were forced out altogether or into the suburbs far from medical and other facilities (The Advocate 2013). Finally, by relocating African Americans and changing the ratio of African Americans to whites, New Orleans changed its entire demographic makeup.

Modernization

Modernization describes the processes that increase the amount of specialization and differentiation of structure in societies resulting in the move from an undeveloped society to a developed, technologically driven society (Irwin 1975). By this definition, the level of modernity within a society is judged by the sophistication of its technology, particularly as it relates to infrastructure, industry, and the like. However, it is important to note the inherent ethnocentric bias of such assessment. Why do we assume that those living in semi-peripheral and peripheral nations would find it so wonderful to become more like the core nations? Is modernization always positive?

One contradiction of all kinds of technology is that they often promise time-saving benefits, but somehow fail to deliver. How many times have you ground your teeth in frustration at an Internet site that refused to load or at a dropped call on your cell phone? Despite time-saving devices such as dishwashers, washing machines, and, now, remote control vacuum cleaners, the average amount of time spent on housework is the same today as it was fifty years ago. And the dubious benefits of 24/7 e-mail and immediate information have simply increased the amount of time employees are expected to be responsive and available. While once businesses had to travel at the speed of the U.S. postal system, sending something off and waiting until it was received before the next stage, today the immediacy of information transfer means there are no such breaks.

Further, the Internet bought us information, but at a cost. The morass of information means that there is as much poor information available as trustworthy sources. There is a delicate line to walk when core nations seek to bring the assumed benefits of modernization to more traditional cultures. For one, there are obvious procapitalist biases that go into such attempts, and it is short-sighted for western governments and social scientists to assume all other countries aspire to follow in their footsteps. Additionally, there can be a kind of neo-liberal defense of rural cultures, ignoring the often crushing poverty and diseases that exist in peripheral nations and focusing only on a nostalgic mythology of the happy peasant. It takes a very careful hand to understand both the need for cultural identity and preservation as well as the hopes for future growth.

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13.3.5: Key Terms

Example and Directions

Words (or words that have the same definition)	The definition is case sensitive	(Optional) Image to display with the definition [Not displayed in Glossary, only in pop-up on pages]	(Optional) Caption for Image	(Optional) External or Internal Link	(Optional) Source for Definition
(Eg. "Genetic, Hereditary, DNA ...")	(Eg. "Relating to genes or heredity")		The infamous double helix	https://bio.libretexts.org/	CC-BY-SA; Delmar Larsen

Glossary Entries

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
acting crowds	crowds of people who are focused on a specific action or goal				
alternative movements	social movements that limit themselves to self-improvement changes in individuals				
assembling perspective	a theory that credits individuals in crowds as behaving as rational thinkers and views crowds as engaging in purposeful behavior and collective action				
casual crowds	people who share close proximity without really interacting				
collective behavior	a noninstitutionalized activity in which several people voluntarily engage				
conventional crowds	people who come together for a regularly scheduled event				
crowd	a fairly large number of people who share close proximity				
crowdsourcing	the process of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people				
diagnostic framing	a the social problem that is stated in a clear, easily understood manner				
emergent norm theory	a perspective that emphasizes the importance of social norms in crowd behavior				
expressive crowds	crowds who share opportunities to express emotions				
flash mob	a large group of people who gather together in a spontaneous activity that lasts a limited amount of time				
frame alignment process	using bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation as an ongoing and intentional means of recruiting participants to a movement				
mass	a relatively large group with a common interest, even if they may not be in close proximity				
modernization	the process that increases the amount of specialization and differentiation of structure in societies				
motivational framing	a call to action				

Word(s)	Definition	Image	Caption	Link	Source
new social movement theory	a theory that attempts to explain the proliferation of postindustrial and postmodern movements that are difficult to understand using traditional social movement theories				
NGO	nongovernmental organizations working globally for numerous humanitarian and environmental causes				
prognostic framing	social movements that state a clear solution and a means of implementation				
public	an unorganized, relatively diffuse group of people who share ideas				
reform movements	movements that seek to change something specific about the social structure				
religious/ redemptive movements	movements that work to promote inner change or spiritual growth in individuals				
resistance movements	those who seek to prevent or undo change to the social structure				
resource mobilization theory	a theory that explains social movements' success in terms of their ability to acquire resources and mobilize individuals				
revolutionary movements	movements that seek to completely change every aspect of society				
social change	the change in a society created through social movements as well as through external factors like environmental shifts or technological innovations				
social movement	a purposeful organized group hoping to work toward a common social goal				
social movement industry	the collection of the social movement organizations that are striving toward similar goals				
social movement organization	a single social movement group				
social movement sector	the multiple social movement industries in a society, even if they have widely varying constituents and goals				
value-added theory	a functionalist perspective theory that posits that several preconditions must be in place for collective behavior to occur				

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13.3.6: Section Summary

21.1 Collective Behavior

Collective behavior is noninstitutionalized activity in which several people voluntarily engage. There are three different forms of collective behavior: crowd, mass, and public. There are three main theories on collective behavior. The first, the emergent-norm perspective, emphasizes the importance of social norms in crowd behavior. The next, the value-added theory, is a functionalist perspective that states that several preconditions must be in place for collective behavior to occur. Finally the assembling perspective focuses on collective action rather than collective behavior, addressing the processes associated with crowd behavior and the lifecycle and various categories of gatherings.

21.2 Social Movements

Social movements are purposeful, organized groups, either with the goal of pushing toward change, giving political voice to those without it, or gathering for some other common purpose. Social movements intersect with environmental changes, technological innovations, and other external factors to create social change. There are a myriad of catalysts that create social movements, and the reasons that people join are as varied as the participants themselves. Sociologists look at both the macro- and microanalytical reasons that social movements occur, take root, and ultimately succeed or fail.

21.3 Social Change

There are numerous and varied causes of social change. Four common causes, as recognized by social scientists, are technology, social institutions, population, and the environment. All four of these areas can impact when and how society changes. And they are all interrelated: a change in one area can lead to changes throughout. Modernization is a typical result of social change. Modernization refers to the process of increased differentiation and specialization within a society, particularly around its industry and infrastructure. While this assumes that more modern societies are better, there has been significant pushback on this western-centric view that all peripheral and semi-peripheral countries should aspire to be like North America and Western Europe.

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13.3.7: Section Quiz

21.1 Collective Behavior

1.

Which of the following organizations is *not* an example of a social movement?

a. National Football League
b. Tea Party
c. Greenpeace
d. NAACP

2.

Sociologists using conflict perspective might study what?

a. How social movements develop
b. What social purposes a movement serves
c. What motivates inequitably treated people to join a movement
d. What individuals hope to gain from taking part in a social movement

3.

Which of the following is an example of collective behavior?

a. A soldier questioning orders
b. A group of people interested in hearing an author speak
c. A class going on a field trip
d. Going shopping with a friend

4.

The protesters at the Egypt uprising rally were:

a. a casual crowd
b. a conventional crowd
c. a mass
d. an acting crowd

5.

According to emergent-norm theory, crowds are:

a. irrational and impulsive
b. often misinterpreted and misdirected
c. able to develop their own definition of the situation
d. prone to criminal behavior

6.

A boy throwing rocks during a demonstration might be an example of _____.

a. structural conduciveness
b. structural strain
c. precipitating factors
d. mobilization for action

21.2 Social Movements

7.

If we divide social movements according to their positions among all social movements in a society, we are using the _____ theory to understand social movements.

a. framing
b. new social movement
c. resource mobilization
d. value-added

8.

While PETA is a social movement organization, taken together, the animal rights social movement organizations PETA, ALF, and Greenpeace are a _____.

a. social movement industry
b. social movement sector
c. social movement party
d. social industry

9.

Social movements are:

a. disruptive and chaotic challenges to the government
b. ineffective mass movements
c. the collective action of individuals working together in an attempt to establish new norms beliefs, or values
d. the singular activities of a collection of groups working to challenge the status quo

10.

When the League of Women Voters successfully achieved its goal of women being allowed to vote, they had to undergo frame _____, a means of completely changing their goals to ensure continuing relevance.

a. extension
b. amplification
c. bridging
d. transformation

11.

If a movement claims that the best way to reverse climate change is to reduce carbon emissions by outlawing privately owned cars, “outlawing cars” is the _____.

a. prognostic framing
b. diagnostic framing
c. motivational framing
d. frame transformation

21.3 Social Change

12.

Children in peripheral nations have little to no daily access to computers and the Internet, while children in core nations are constantly exposed to this technology. This is an example of:

a. the digital divide
b. human ecology

c. modernization theory
d. dependency theory

13.

When sociologists think about technology as an agent of social change, which of the following is *not* an example?

a. Population growth
b. Medical advances
c. The Internet
d. Genetically engineered food

14.

China is undergoing a shift in industry, increasing labor specialization and the amount of differentiation present in the social structure. This exemplifies:

a. human ecology
b. dependency theory
c. modernization
d. conflict perspective

15.

Core nations that work to propel peripheral nations toward modernization need to be aware of:

a. preserving peripheral nation cultural identity
b. preparing for pitfalls that come with modernization
c. avoiding hegemonistic assumptions about modernization
d. all of the above

16.

In addition to social movements, social change is also caused by technology, social institutions, population and _____.

a. the environment
b. modernization
c. social structure
d. new social movements

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13.3.8: Short Answer

21.1 Collective Behavior

1.

Discuss the differences between a mass and a crowd. What is an example of each? What sets them apart? What do they share in common?

2.

Can you think of a time when your behavior in a crowd was dictated by the circumstances? Give an example of emergent-norm perspective, using your own experience.

3.

Discuss the differences between an acting crowd and a collective crowd. Give examples of each.

4.

Imagine you are at a rally protesting nuclear energy use. Walk us through the hypothetical rally using the value-added theory, imagining it meets all the stages.

21.2 Social Movements

5.

Think about a social movement industry dealing with a cause that is important to you. How do the different social movement organizations of this industry seek to engage you? Which techniques do you respond to? Why?

6.

Do you think social media is an important tool in creating social change? Why, or why not? Defend your opinion.

7.

Describe a social movement in the decline stage. What is its issue? Why has it reached this stage?

21.3 Social Change

8.

Consider one of the major social movements of the twentieth century, from civil rights in the United States to Gandhi's nonviolent protests in India. How would technology have changed it? Would change have come more quickly or more slowly? Defend your opinion.

9.

Discuss the digital divide in the context of modernization. Is there a real concern that poorer communities are lacking in technology? Why, or why not?

10.

Which theory do you think better explains the global economy: dependency theory (global inequity is due to the exploitation of peripheral and semi-peripheral nations by core nations) or modernization theory? Remember to justify your answer and provide specific examples.

11.

Do you think that modernization is good or bad? Explain, using examples.

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