SOCIOLOGY 101 - K.HARRISON - JJC



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Detailed Licensing

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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: 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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1.2: 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.

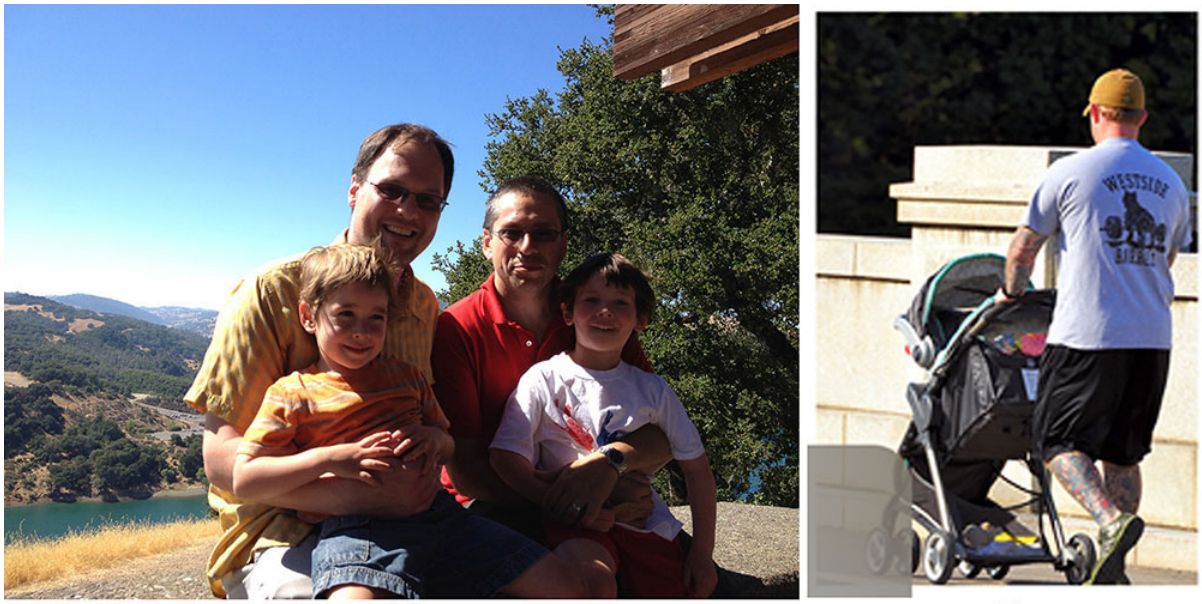


Figure 1.3: Modern U.S. families may be very different in makeup from what was historically typical. (Credit A: Paul Brody/flickr; B: Tony Alter/Wikimedia Commons)

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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1.3: 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

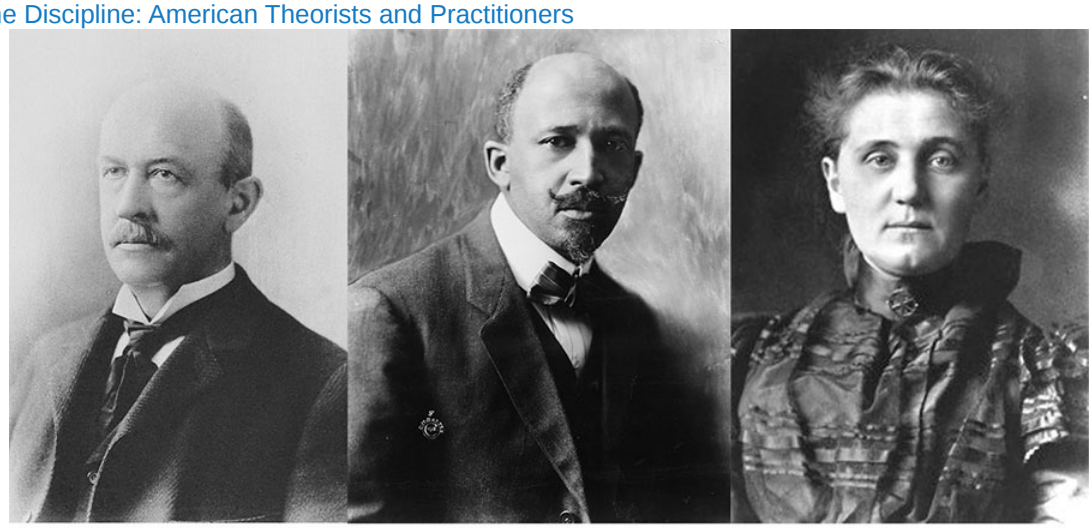


Figure 1.6: From left to right, William Sumner, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Jane Adams. (Credit A, B, and C: Wikimedia Commons.)

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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1.4: 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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1.5: 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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1.6: Key Terms

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

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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1.7: 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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1.8: 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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1.9: 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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1.10: 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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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: 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.

2.1: Introduction
2.2: What Is Culture?
2.3: Elements of Culture
2.4: High, Low, Pop, Sub, Counter-culture and Cultural Change
2.5: Theoretical Perspectives on Culture
2.6: Key Terms
2.7: Section Summary
2.8: Section Quiz
2.9: Short Answer
2.10: Further Research
2.11: References

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2.1: 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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2.2: 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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2.3: 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. *Values* are deeply embedded and are critical for learning a culture's *beliefs*, 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 13th 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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2.4: 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?



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).

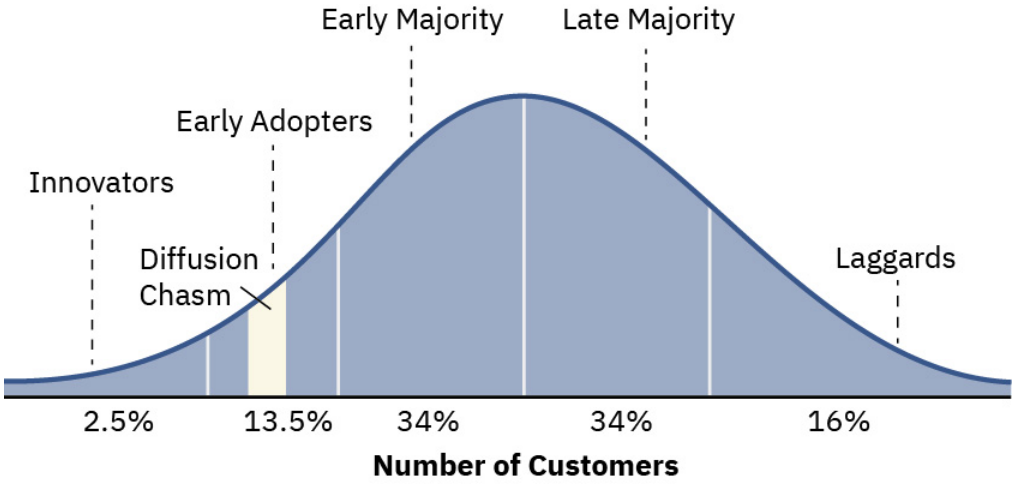


Figure 3.9: Technology Adoption Lifecycle — Sociologist Everett Rogers (1962) developed a model of the diffusion of innovations. As consumers gradually adopt a new innovation, the item grows toward 100 percent usage, or complete saturation within a society. This graph is frequently used in business, 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.

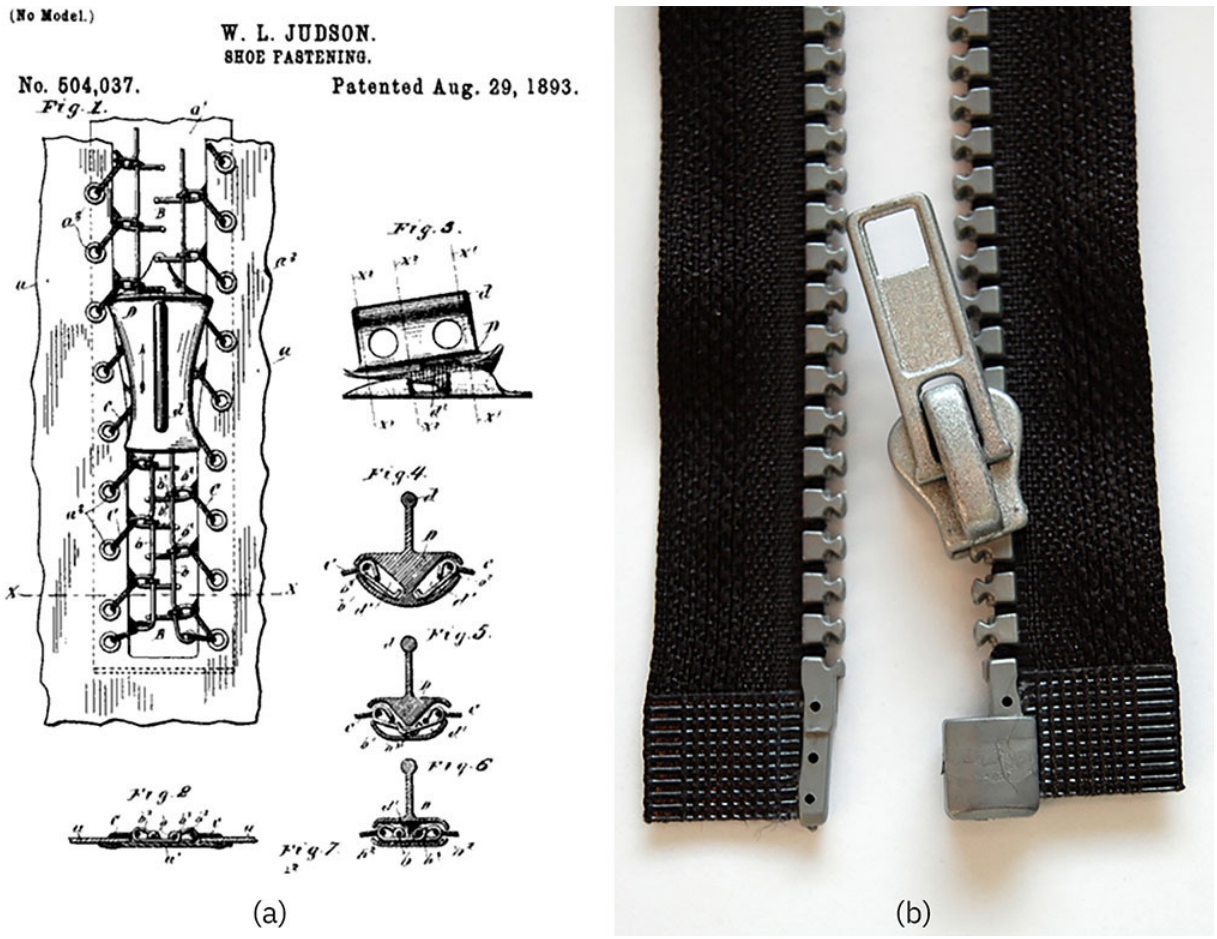


Figure 3.10: Officially patented in 1893 as the “clasp locker” (left), the zipper did not diffuse through society for many decades. Today, it is immediately recognizable around the world. (Credit: (a) US Patent Office/Wikimedia Commons; (b) Rabensteiner/Wikimedia Commons).

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2.5: 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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2.6: Key Terms

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

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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2.7: 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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2.8: 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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2.9: 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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2.10: 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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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Socialization

In the following sections, we will examine the importance of the complex process of socialization and how it takes place through interaction with many individuals, groups, and social institutions. We will explore how socialization is not only critical to children as they develop but how it is also a lifelong process through which we become prepared for new social environments and expectations in every stage of our lives. But first, we will turn to scholarship about self-development, the process of coming to recognize a sense of self, a "self" that is then able to be socialized.

3.1: Introduction
3.2: Theories of Self-Development
3.3: Why Socialization Matters
3.4: Agents of Socialization
3.5: Socialization Across the Life Course
3.6: Key Terms
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3.1: Introduction



Figure 5.1: Emergency workers are prepared to treat patients with a wide array of illnesses and injuries. Beyond their medical training, they build skills in decision making, teamwork, communication, and stress management. These abilities can be extremely valuable throughout the workers' life and careers, even if they move into other areas of employment. However, fast and efficient decision making doesn't always translate to less intense environments. (Credit: COD Newsroom/Flickr)

Chapter Outline

5.1 Theories of Self-Development
5.2 Why Socialization Matters
5.3 Agents of Socialization
5.4 Socialization Across the Life Course

When Noel was fifteen, they saw a flyer about joining the volunteer ambulance corps. Noel was intrigued: They had an interest in pursuing medicine, and liked volunteering, but ambulance work seemed like something for older people with professional training. At the information session, Noel learned that junior members of the ambulance corps could help with supplies and communications, and were allowed to ride on ambulance calls to assist the Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). Noel was thrilled and signed up right away.

Noel was amazed by how confidently the EMTs—some just a few years older than Noel—made consequential decisions. The EMTs relied heavily on their training and guidelines, but they did so quickly. And upon arriving at the hospital with a patient, Noel was similarly impacted by the efficiency of the nurses, doctors, and other staff. Noel developed a deep level of respect for that level of decisiveness and the expertise it required.

Over their college years, Noel found themselves drawn toward the more strategic aspects of medicine, and pursued a degree in healthcare administration. Meanwhile, they did get an EMT certification and joined the college emergency services team; later on, while in grad school, Noel was a part-time professional EMT in a small city. With good grades and varied experience, Noel was recruited into a great job several states away.

After interning in an urban hospital and spending years as an EMT, Noel had come to expect a degree of urgency in medicine. Hospital administration was certainly not an ambulance facility, but the slow pace of Noel's job was agonizing. Every inventory list, bill of lading, email reply, and even meeting schedule went through at several people for approval. Noel enjoyed the job, but was used to working more quickly.

One day, Noel was looking over an equipment bill and noticed a serious error that no one else had caught. Nearly $250,000 in overpayment was about to be paid to a supplier. Noel immediately called the accounting department. No answer. Then they sent a group Slack message and fired off an email to their boss and a few other people involved with the billing and payment process. Noel was about to head across the building to address the issue in person, but finally a message popped up: "Good eye, Noel. We'll hold this payment until we clear things up."

Toward the end of the day, Noel received a message from their manager, Tracy, asking them to stop by. Tracy's office was crowded with three other people, including the director of accounting. Expecting to be congratulated, Noel was shocked when Tracy began outlining all the things Noel had done wrong.

"Your frantic messaging and over-the-top language was incredibly disruptive...almost irresponsible," Tracy said.

"But I was right," Noel replied in a louder voice than they intended.

"Right or wrong," Tracy said, "you should have told your contact in accounting and waited to see the outcome. Instead, you panicked."

"I did call accounting, but when I didn't hear back, I needed to take the next step. I wasn't panicking; I was being decisive." As Noel said this, they were thinking of all the times they had saved someone's life by making good decisions.

Tracy sighed. "Decisiveness isn't good when it's disruptive. You caused five people to drop everything and start investigating. A few thought it was their fault." Noel started to protest but Tracy shook her head. "I understand that you are coming from a faster-paced environment, and I can tell you've been frustrated. But if you're going to work here, you're going to have to work within our culture. Instead of pushing against how we do things, try to appreciate them. Otherwise, no one will be happy, least of all you." Tracy told Noel to take the evening to think about it and come back for a talk the next morning.

Who was correct in this situation? Noel saved the hospital hundreds of thousands of dollars, or at least the hours of managing the refund process. Tracy, with broader responsibilities, was considering the long-term impacts of Noel's style, and how Noel, as a talented member of the team, will function within the team.

Tracy was concerned about the organization’s culture. Culture, as discussed in the chapter on the topic, is the shared beliefs, values and practices of a group. Countries, societies, religions, and sports teams all have culture, and companies do, too. When you interview for a job, it will likely come up. Researchers who study organizations find that when workers aren't properly incorporated into the corporate culture, they begin a cycle of mutual disappointment, where workers are likely to reject company values and ultimately leave or be fired (Cebollero 2019).

Why didn't Noel enjoy the job, and why were people put off by Noel's approach? For the most part, Noel wasn't prepared for the pacing and style; their previous experience was in opposition to the culture of the hospital. Company culture is easier to learn if someone is predisposed to it, while others might need time to unlearn past behaviors (Schein 1988). Experts indicate that the responsibility for such adaptation is shared between the new employee and the company.

How could Noel have learned, and what could Tracy have done to help? Company culture is learned the same way that other types of culture are learned: through observing and adapting to the norms and values, understanding and applying beliefs, and, in general, seeking to be productive as a member of the group. Just like a child learns how to behave during a play-date or school day, people learn to be productive partners through an ongoing process called socialization.

Socialization is the process through which people are taught to be proficient members of a society. It describes the ways that people come to understand societal norms and expectations, to accept society’s beliefs, and to be aware of societal values. *Socialization* is not the same as *socializing* (interacting with others, like family and friends); to be precise, it is a sociological process that occurs through socializing.

While Noel's story is about a relatively advanced stage of life, socialization is crucial for early childhood. Even the most basic of human activities are learned. Learning to crawl and then walk are major milestones, but as any parent, guardian, or family member

of a toddler knows, other minor accomplishments can be life-altering for the child: climbing stairs, safely getting out of bed, sitting in a regular chair, and drinking from a regular cup. Likewise, family behaviors and values must be learned, sometimes through observation and sometimes through active instruction.

In the following sections, we will examine the importance of the complex process of socialization and how it takes place through interaction with many individuals, groups, and social institutions. We will explore how socialization is not only critical to children as they develop but how it is also a lifelong process through which we become prepared for new social environments and expectations in every stage of our lives. But first, we will turn to scholarship about self-development, the process of coming to recognize a sense of self, a "self" that is then able to be socialized.

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3.2: Theories of Self-Development

Learning Objectives

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

- Differentiate psychological and sociological theories of self-development
- Explain the process of moral development

When we are born, we have a genetic makeup and biological traits. However, who we are as human beings develops through social interaction. Many scholars, both in the fields of psychology and in sociology, have described the process of self-development as a precursor to understanding how that "self" becomes socialized.

Psychological Perspectives on Self-Development

Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) was one of the most influential modern scientists to put forth a theory about how people develop a sense of self. He divided the maturation process into stages, and posited that people's self-development is closely linked to their early stages of development.

According to Freud, failure to properly engage in or disengage from a specific stage results in emotional and psychological consequences throughout adulthood.

Psychologist Erik Erikson (1902–1994) created a theory of personality development based, in part, on the work of Freud. However, Erikson believed the personality continued to change over time and was never truly finished. His theory includes eight stages of development, beginning with birth and ending with death. According to Erikson, people move through these stages throughout their lives. In contrast to Freud's focus on psychosexual stages and basic human urges, Erikson's view of self-development gave credit to more social aspects, like the way we negotiate between our own base desires and what is socially accepted (Erikson 1982).

Jean Piaget (1896–1980) was a psychologist who focused on the role of social interactions in child development. He recognized that the development of self evolved through a negotiation between the world as it exists in one's mind and the world that exists as it is experienced socially (Piaget 1954). All three of these thinkers have contributed to our modern understanding of self-development.

Psychologist Harry Harlow (1905–1981) is known for studying the role of social relationships in human development by observing the impact of isolation and maternal deprivation on the development of young rhesus monkeys. Harlow found that the monkeys, when subjected to isolation, exhibit disturbed behaviors, including self-harm, and had a difficult time integrating when reconnected with other monkeys. Harlow also introduced isolated monkeys to simulated surrogate mothers, some that were covered in cloth while others were constructed out of wire. Based on observed behaviors, the young monkeys appeared to develop attachment with the cloth mothers and lean on them for emotional support. More than seven decades later, this experiment continues to inform the research of psychologists, sociologists, and those interested in human development.

Sociological Research: Sociology or Psychology: What's the Difference?

You might be wondering: if sociologists and psychologists are both interested in people and their behavior, how are these two disciplines different? What do they agree on, and where do their ideas diverge? The answers are complicated, but the distinction is important to scholars in both fields.

As a general difference, we might say that while both disciplines are interested in human behavior, psychologists are focused on how the mind influences that behavior, while sociologists study the role of society in shaping behavior. Psychologists are interested in people's mental development and how their minds process their world. Sociologists are more likely to focus on how different aspects of society contribute to an individual's relationship with his world. Another way to think of the difference is that psychologists tend to look inward (mental health, emotional processes), while sociologists tend to look outward (social institutions, cultural norms, interactions with others) to understand human behavior.

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) was the first to make this distinction in research, when he attributed differences in suicide rates among people to social causes (religious differences) rather than to psychological causes (like their mental wellbeing)

(Durkheim 1897). Today, we see this same distinction. For example, a sociologist studying how a couple gets to the point of their first kiss on a date might focus her research on cultural norms for dating, social patterns of sexual activity over time, or how this process is different for seniors than for teens. A psychologist would more likely be interested in the person's earliest sexual awareness or the mental processing of sexual desire.

Sometimes sociologists and psychologists have collaborated to increase knowledge. In recent decades, however, their fields have become more clearly separated as sociologists increasingly focus on large societal issues and patterns, while psychologists remain honed in on the human mind. Both disciplines make valuable contributions through different approaches that provide us with different types of useful insights.

Sociological Theories of Self-Development

One of the pioneering contributors to sociological perspectives was Charles Cooley (1864–1929). He asserted that people's self understanding is constructed, in part, by their perception of how others view them—a process termed "the looking glass self" (Cooley 1902).

Later, George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) studied the self, a person's distinct identity that is developed through social interaction. In order to engage in this process of "self," an individual has to be able to view him or herself through the eyes of others. That's not an ability that we are born with (Mead 1934). Through socialization we learn to put ourselves in someone else's shoes and look at the world through their perspective. This assists us in becoming self-aware, as we look at ourselves from the perspective of the "other." The case of Danielle, for example, illustrates what happens when social interaction is absent from early experience: Danielle had no ability to see herself as others would see her. From Mead's point of view, she had no "self."

How do we go from being newborns to being humans with "selves?" Mead believed that there is a specific path of development that all people go through. During the preparatory stage, children are only capable of imitation: they have no ability to imagine how others see things. They copy the actions of people with whom they regularly interact, such as their caregivers. This is followed by the play stage, during which children begin to take on the role that one other person might have. Thus, children might try on a parent's point of view by acting out "grownup" behavior, like playing dress-up and acting out the "mom" role, or talking on a toy telephone the way they see adults do.

During the game stage, children learn to consider several roles at the same time and how those roles interact with each other. They learn to understand interactions involving different people with a variety of purposes. For example, a child at this stage is likely to be aware of the different responsibilities of people in a restaurant who together make for a smooth dining experience (someone seats you, another takes your order, someone else cooks the food, while yet another clears away dirty dishes).

Finally, children develop, understand, and learn the idea of the generalized other, the common behavioral expectations of general society. By this stage of development, an individual is able to imagine how he or she is viewed by one or many others—and thus, from a sociological perspective, to have a "self" (Mead 1934; Mead 1964).

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

Moral development is an important part of the socialization process. The term refers to the way people learn what society considered to be "good" and "bad," which is important for a smoothly functioning society. Moral development prevents people from acting on unchecked urges, instead considering what is right for society and good for others. Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987) was interested in how people learn to decide what is right and what is wrong. To understand this topic, he developed a theory of moral development that includes three levels: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional.

In the preconventional stage, young children, who lack a higher level of cognitive ability, experience the world around them only through their senses. It isn't until the teen years that the conventional theory develops, when youngsters become increasingly aware of others' feelings and take those into consideration when determining what's "good" and "bad." The final stage, called postconventional, is when people begin to think of morality in abstract terms, such as Americans believing that everyone has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. At this stage, people also recognize that legality and morality do not always match up evenly (Kohlberg 1981). When hundreds of thousands of Egyptians turned out in 2011 to protest government corruption, they were using postconventional morality. They understood that although their government was legal, it was not morally correct.

Gilligan's Theory of Moral Development and Gender

Another sociologist, Carol Gilligan (1936–), recognized that Kohlberg's theory might show gender bias since his research was only conducted on male subjects. Would females study subjects have responded differently? Would a female social scientist notice different patterns when analyzing the research? To answer the first question, she set out to study differences between how boys and girls developed morality. Gilligan's research suggested that boys and girls do have different understandings of morality. Boys appeared to have a justice perspective, by placing emphasis on rules and laws. Girls, on the other hand, seem to have a care and responsibility perspective; they consider people's reasons behind behavior that seems morally wrong.

While Gilligan is correct that Kohlberg's research should have included both male and female subjects, her study has been scientifically discredited due to its small sample size. The results Gilligan noted in this study also have not been replicated by subsequent researchers. The differences Gilligan observed were not an issue of the development of morality, but an issue of socialization. Differences in behavior between males and females is the result of gender socialization that teaches boys and girls societal norms and behaviors expected of them based on their sex (see "What a Pretty Little Lady").

Gilligan also recognized that Kohlberg's theory rested on the assumption that the justice perspective was the right, or better, perspective. Gilligan, in contrast, theorized that neither perspective was "better": the two norms of justice served different purposes. Ultimately, she explained that boys are socialized for a work environment where rules make operations run smoothly, while girls are socialized for a home environment where flexibility allows for harmony in caretaking and nurturing (Gilligan 1982; Gilligan 1990).

Sociology in the Real World: What a Pretty Little Lady!

"What a cute dress!" "I like the ribbons in your hair." "Wow, you look so pretty today."

According to Lisa Bloom, author of *Think: Straight Talk for Women to Stay Smart in a Dumbed Down World*, most of us use pleasantries like these when we first meet little girls. "So what?" you might ask.

Bloom asserts that we are too focused on the appearance of young girls, and as a result, our society is socializing them to believe that how they look is of vital importance. And Bloom may be on to something. How often do you tell a little boy how attractive his outfit is, how nice looking his shoes are, or how handsome he looks today? To support her assertions, Bloom cites, as one example, that about 50 percent of girls ages three to six worry about being fat (Bloom 2011). We're talking about kindergarteners who are concerned about their body image. Sociologists are acutely interested in of this type of gender socialization, by which societal expectations of how boys and girls should *be*—how they should behave, what toys and colors they should like, and how important their attire is—are reinforced.

One solution to this type of gender socialization is being experimented with at the Egalia preschool in Sweden, where children develop in a genderless environment. All the children at Egalia are referred to with neutral terms like "friend" instead of "he" or "she." Play areas and toys are consciously set up to eliminate any reinforcement of gender expectations (Haney 2011). Egalia strives to eliminate all societal gender norms from these children's preschool world.

Extreme? Perhaps. So what is the middle ground? Bloom suggests that we start with simple steps: when introduced to a young girl, ask about her favorite book or what she likes. In short, engage with her mind … not her outward appearance (Bloom 2011).

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3.3: Why Socialization Matters

Learning Objectives

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

- Describe the importance of socialization both for individuals and society
- Explain the nature versus nurture debate

Socialization is critical both to individuals and to the societies in which they live. It illustrates how completely intertwined human beings and their social worlds are. First, it is through teaching culture to new members that a society perpetuates itself. If new generations of a society don't learn its way of life, it ceases to exist. Whatever is distinctive about a culture must be transmitted to those who join it in order for a society to survive. For U.S. culture to continue, for example, children in the United States must learn about cultural values related to democracy: they have to learn the norms of voting, as well as how to use material objects such as voting machines. They may learn these through watching their parents or guardians vote, or, in some schools, by using real machines in student government elections. Of course, some would argue that it's just as important in U.S. culture for the younger generation to learn the etiquette of eating in a restaurant or the rituals of tailgate parties at football games. In fact, there are many ideas and objects that people in the United States teach children about in hopes of keeping the society's way of life going through another generation.



Figure 5.2: Can you use your hands to eat? Who should pay? Do you stand when someone else gets up, and is that dependent on their gender? The dining manners and customs of different cultures are learned by socialization. (Credit: Kurman Communications/flickr)

Socialization is just as essential to us as individuals. Social interaction provides the means via which we gradually become able to see ourselves through the eyes of others, and how we learn who we are and how we fit into the world around us. In addition, to function successfully in society, we have to learn the basics of both material and nonmaterial culture, everything from how to dress

ourselves to what's suitable attire for a specific occasion; from when we sleep to what we sleep on; and from what's considered appropriate to eat for dinner to how to use the stove to prepare it. Most importantly, we have to learn language—whether it's the dominant language or one common in a subculture, whether it's verbal or through signs—in order to communicate and to think. As we saw with Danielle, without socialization we literally have no self.

Nature versus Nurture

Some experts assert that who we are is a result of nurture—the relationships and caring that surround us. Others argue that who we are is based entirely in genetics. According to this belief, our temperaments, interests, and talents are set before birth. From this perspective, then, who we are depends on nature.

One way researchers attempt to measure the impact of nature is by studying twins. Some studies have followed identical twins who were raised separately. The pairs shared the same genetics but in some cases were socialized in different ways. Instances of this type of situation are rare, but studying the degree to which identical twins raised apart are the same and different can give researchers insight into the way our temperaments, preferences, and abilities are shaped by our genetic makeup versus our social environment.

For example, in 1968, twin girls were put up for adoption, separated from each other, and raised in different households. The adoptive parents, and certainly the babies, did not realize the girls were one of five pairs of twins who were made subjects of a scientific study (Flam 2007).

In 2003, the two women, then age thirty-five, were reunited. Elyse Schein and Paula Bernstein sat together in awe, feeling like they were looking into a mirror. Not only did they look alike but they also behaved alike, using the same hand gestures and facial expressions (Spratling 2007). Studies like these point to the genetic roots of our temperament and behavior.

Though genetics and hormones play an important role in human behavior, sociology's larger concern is the effect society has on human behavior, the "nurture" side of the nature versus nurture debate. What race were the twins? From what social class were their parents? What about gender? Religion? All these factors affected the lives of the twins as much as their genetic makeup and are critical to consider as we look at life through the sociological lens.

Big Picture: The Life of Chris Langan, the Smartest Man You've Never Heard Of

Bouncer. Firefighter. Factory worker. Cowboy. Chris Langan spent the majority of his adult life just getting by with jobs like these. He had no college degree, few resources, and a past filled with much disappointment. Chris Langan also had an IQ of over 195, nearly 100 points higher than the average person (Brabham 2001). So why didn't Chris become a neurosurgeon, professor, or aeronautical engineer? According to Macolm Gladwell (2008) in his book *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Chris didn't possess the set of social skills necessary to succeed on such a high level—skills that aren't innate but learned.

Gladwell looked to a recent study conducted by sociologist Annette Lareau in which she closely shadowed 12 families from various economic backgrounds and examined their parenting techniques. Parents from lower income families followed a strategy of "accomplishment of natural growth," which is to say they let their children develop on their own with a large amount of independence; parents from higher-income families, however, "actively fostered and accessed a child's talents, opinions, and skills" (Gladwell 2008). These parents were more likely to engage in analytical conversation, encourage active questioning of the establishment, and foster development of negotiation skills. The parents were also able to introduce their children to a wide range of activities, from sports to music to accelerated academic programs. When one middle-class child was denied entry to a gifted and talented program, the mother petitioned the school and arranged additional testing until her daughter was admitted. Lower-income parents, however, were more likely to unquestioningly obey authorities such as school boards. Their children were not being socialized to comfortably confront the system and speak up (Gladwell 2008).

What does this have to do with Chris Langan, deemed by some the smartest man in the world (Brabham 2001)? Chris was born in severe poverty, moving across the country with an abusive and alcoholic stepfather. His genius went largely unnoticed. After accepting a full scholarship to Reed College, he lost his funding after his mother failed to fill out necessary paperwork. Unable to successfully make his case to the administration, Chris, who had received straight A's the previous semester, was given F's on his transcript and forced to drop out. After he enrolled in Montana State, an administrator's refusal to rearrange his class schedule left him unable to find the means necessary to travel the 16 miles to attend classes. What Chris had in brilliance, he

lacked in practical intelligence, or what psychologist Robert Sternberg defines as “knowing what to say to whom, knowing when to say it, and knowing how to say it for maximum effect” (Sternberg et al. 2000). Such knowledge was never part of his socialization.

Chris gave up on school and began working an array of blue-collar jobs, pursuing his intellectual interests on the side. Though he’s recently garnered attention for his “Cognitive Theoretic Model of the Universe,” he remains weary of and resistant to the educational system.

As Gladwell concluded, “He’d had to make his way alone, and no one—not rock stars, not professional athletes, not software billionaires, and not even geniuses—ever makes it alone” (2008).



Figure 5.3: Identical twins may look alike, but their differences can give us clues to the effects of socialization. These twins chose the same career path, but many twins do not. (Credit: Senior Airman Lauren Douglas/U.S. Air Force)

Sociologists all recognize the importance of socialization for healthy individual and societal development. But how do scholars working in the three major theoretical paradigms approach this topic? Structural functionalists would say that socialization is essential to society, both because it trains members to operate successfully within it and because it perpetuates culture by transmitting it to new generations. Without socialization, a society’s culture would perish as members died off. A conflict theorist might argue that socialization reproduces inequality from generation to generation by conveying different expectations and norms to those with different social characteristics. For example, individuals are socialized differently by gender, social class, and race. As in Chris Langan's case, this creates different (unequal) opportunities. An interactionist studying socialization is concerned with face-to-face exchanges and symbolic communication. For example, dressing baby boys in blue and baby girls in pink is one small way we convey messages about differences in gender roles.

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3.4: Agents of Socialization

Learning Objectives

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

- Evaluate the roles of families and peer groups in socialization
- Describe how people are socialized through institutions like schools, workplaces, and the government

Socialization helps people learn to function successfully in their social worlds. How does the process of socialization occur? How do we learn to use the objects of our society's material culture? How do we come to adopt the beliefs, values, and norms that represent its nonmaterial culture? This learning takes place through interaction with various agents of socialization, like peer groups and families, plus both formal and informal social institutions.

Social Group Agents

Social groups often provide the first experiences of socialization. Families, and later peer groups, communicate expectations and reinforce norms. People first learn to use the tangible objects of material culture in these settings, as well as being introduced to the beliefs and values of society.

Family

Family is the first agent of socialization. Mothers and fathers, siblings and grandparents, plus members of an extended family, all teach a child what he or she needs to know. For example, they show the child how to use objects (such as clothes, computers, eating utensils, books, bikes); how to relate to others (some as "family," others as "friends," still others as "strangers" or "teachers" or "neighbors"); and how the world works (what is "real" and what is "imagined"). As you are aware, either from your own experience as a child or from your role in helping to raise one, socialization includes teaching and learning about an unending array of objects and ideas.

Keep in mind, however, that families do not socialize children in a vacuum. Many social factors affect the way a family raises its children. For example, we can use sociological imagination to recognize that individual behaviors are affected by the historical period in which they take place. Sixty years ago, it would not have been considered especially strict for a father to hit his son with a wooden spoon or a belt if he misbehaved, but today that same action might be considered child abuse.

Sociologists recognize that race, social class, religion, and other societal factors play an important role in socialization. For example, poor families usually emphasize obedience and conformity when raising their children, while wealthy families emphasize judgment and creativity (National Opinion Research Center 2008). This may occur because working-class parents have less education and more repetitive-task jobs for which it is helpful to be able to follow rules and conform. Wealthy parents tend to have better educations and often work in managerial positions or careers that require creative problem solving, so they teach their children behaviors that are beneficial in these positions. This means children are effectively socialized and raised to take the types of jobs their parents already have, thus reproducing the class system (Kohn 1977). Likewise, children are socialized to abide by gender norms, perceptions of race, and class-related behaviors.

In Sweden, for instance, stay-at-home fathers are an accepted part of the social landscape. A government policy provides subsidized time off work—480 days for families with newborns—with the option of the paid leave being shared between mothers and fathers. As one stay-at-home dad says, being home to take care of his baby son "is a real fatherly thing to do. I think that's very masculine" (Associated Press 2011). Close to 90 percent of Swedish fathers use their paternity leave (about 340,000 dads); on average they take seven weeks per birth (The Economist, 2014). How do U.S. policies—and our society's expected gender roles—compare? How will Swedish children raised this way be socialized to parental gender norms? How might that be different from parental gender norms in the United States?



Figure 5.4: The socialized roles of parents and guardians vary by society. (Credit: Quaries.com/flickr)

Peer Groups

A peer group is made up of people who are similar in age and social status and who share interests. Peer group socialization begins in the earliest years, such as when kids on a playground teach younger children the norms about taking turns, the rules of a game, or how to shoot a basket. As children grow into teenagers, this process continues. Peer groups are important to adolescents in a new way, as they begin to develop an identity separate from their parents and exert independence. Additionally, peer groups provide their own opportunities for socialization since kids usually engage in different types of activities with their peers than they do with their families. Peer groups provide adolescents' first major socialization experience outside the realm of their families. Interestingly, studies have shown that although friendships rank high in adolescents' priorities, this is balanced by parental influence.

Institutional Agents

The social institutions of our culture also inform our socialization. Formal institutions—like schools, workplaces, and the government—teach people how to behave in and navigate these systems. Other institutions, like the media, contribute to socialization by inundating us with messages about norms and expectations.

School

Most U.S. children spend about seven hours a day, 180 days a year, in school, which makes it hard to deny the importance school has on their socialization (U.S. Department of Education 2004). Students are not in school only to study math, reading, science, and other subjects—the manifest function of this system. Schools also serve a latent function in society by socializing children into behaviors like practicing teamwork, following a schedule, and using textbooks.



Figure 5.5: These kindergarteners aren't just learning to read and write; they are being socialized to norms like keeping their hands to themselves, standing in line, and playing together. (Credit: woodleywonderworks/flickr)

School and classroom rituals, led by teachers serving as role models and leaders, regularly reinforce what society expects from children. Sociologists describe this aspect of schools as the hidden curriculum, the informal teaching done by schools.

For example, in the United States, schools have built a sense of competition into the way grades are awarded and the way teachers evaluate students (Bowles and Gintis 1976). When children participate in a relay race or a math contest, they learn there are winners and losers in society. When children are required to work together on a project, they practice teamwork with other people in cooperative situations. The hidden curriculum prepares children for the adult world. Children learn how to deal with bureaucracy, rules, expectations, waiting their turn, and sitting still for hours during the day. Schools in different cultures socialize children differently in order to prepare them to function well in those cultures. The latent functions of teamwork and dealing with bureaucracy are features of U.S. culture.

Schools also socialize children by teaching them about citizenship and national pride. In the United States, children are taught to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Most districts require classes about U.S. history and geography. As academic understanding of history evolves, textbooks in the United States have been scrutinized and revised to update attitudes toward other cultures as well as perspectives on historical events; thus, children are socialized to a different national or world history than earlier textbooks may have done. For example, information about the mistreatment of African Americans and Native American Indians more accurately reflects those events than in textbooks of the past.

Big Picture: Controversial Textbooks

On August 13, 2001, twenty South Korean men gathered in Seoul. Each chopped off one of his own fingers because of textbooks. These men took drastic measures to protest eight middle school textbooks approved by Tokyo for use in Japanese middle schools. According to the Korean government (and other East Asian nations), the textbooks glossed over negative events in Japan's history at the expense of other Asian countries.

In the early 1900s, Japan was one of Asia's more aggressive nations. For instance, it held Korea as a colony between 1910 and 1945. Today, Koreans argue that the Japanese are whitewashing that colonial history through these textbooks. One major criticism is that they do not mention that, during World War II, the Japanese forced Korean women into sexual slavery. The textbooks describe the women as having been "drafted" to work, a euphemism that downplays the brutality of what actually occurred. Some Japanese textbooks dismiss an important Korean independence demonstration in 1919 as a "riot." In reality, Japanese soldiers attacked peaceful demonstrators, leaving roughly 6,000 dead and 15,000 wounded (Crampton 2002).

The protest affirms that textbooks are a significant tool of socialization in state-run education systems.

The Workplace



Figure 5.6: Workplace socialization occurs informally and formally, and may include material and non-material culture (Credit: U.S. Department of Agriculture/flickr).

Just as children spend much of their day at school, many U.S. adults at some point invest a significant amount of time at a place of employment. Although socialized into their culture since birth, workers require new socialization into a workplace, in terms of both material culture (such as how to operate the copy machine) and nonmaterial culture (such as whether it's okay to speak directly to the boss or how to share the refrigerator). In the chapter introduction, Noel did not fully embrace the culture of their new company. Importantly, the obligation of such socialization is not simply on the worker: Organizational behavior and other business experts place responsibility on companies; organizations must have strong onboarding and socialization programs in order to build satisfaction, productivity, and workplace retention (Cebollero 2019).

Different jobs require different types of socialization. In the past, many people worked a single job until retirement. Today, the trend is to switch jobs at least once a decade. Between the ages of eighteen and forty-six, the average Baby Boomer of the younger set held 11.3 different jobs (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). This means that people must become socialized to, and socialized by, a variety of work environments.

Religion

While some religions are informal institutions, here we focus on practices followed by formal institutions. Religion is an important avenue of socialization for many people. The United States is full of synagogues, temples, churches, mosques, and similar religious communities where people gather to worship and learn. Like other institutions, these places teach participants how to interact with the religion's material culture (like a mezuzah, a prayer rug, or a communion wafer). For some people, important ceremonies related to family structure—like marriage and birth—are connected to religious celebrations. Many religious institutions also uphold gender norms and contribute to their enforcement through socialization. From ceremonial rites of passage that reinforce the family unit to power dynamics that reinforce gender roles, organized religion fosters a shared set of socialized values that are passed on through society.

Government

Although we do not think about it, many of the rites of passage people go through today are based on age norms established by the government. To be defined as an “adult” usually means being eighteen years old, the age at which a person becomes legally responsible for him- or herself. And sixty-five years old is the start of “old age” since most people become eligible for senior benefits at that point.

Each time we embark on one of these new categories—senior, adult, taxpayer—we must be socialized into our new role. Seniors must learn the ropes of Medicare, Social Security benefits, and senior shopping discounts. When U.S. males turn eighteen, they must register with the Selective Service System within thirty days to be entered into a database for possible military service. These government dictates mark the points at which we require socialization into a new category.

Mass Media

Mass media distribute impersonal information to a wide audience, via television, newspapers, radio, and the Internet. With the average person spending over four hours a day in front of the television (and children averaging even more screen time), media greatly influences social norms (Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout 2005). People learn about objects of material culture (like new technology and transportation options), as well as nonmaterial culture—what is true (beliefs), what is important (values), and what is expected (norms).

Sociology in the Real World: Girls and Movies



Figure 5.7: Some researchers, parents, and children's advocates are concerned about the effects of raising girls within what they call "princess culture." Many place blame on entertainment companies, such as Disney, for its portrayals of girls in its movies.

Movies aimed at young people have featured a host of girls and women leads. *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* gave way to *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *and Mulan*. In many of those cases, if the character is not a princess to begin with, she typically ends the movie by marrying a prince or, in the case of Mulan, a military general. Although not all

“princesses” in Disney movies play a passive role in their lives, they typically find themselves needing to be rescued by a man, and the happy ending they all search for includes marriage.

Alongside this prevalence of princesses, many parents are expressing concern about the culture of princesses that Disney has created. Peggy Orenstein addresses this problem in her popular book, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*. Orenstein wonders why every little girl is expected to be a “princess” and why pink has become an all-consuming obsession for many young girls. Another mother wondered what she did wrong when her three-year-old daughter refused to do “nonprincessy” things, including running and jumping. The effects of this princess culture can have negative consequences for girls throughout life. An early emphasis on beauty and can lead to reduced interest in math and science among girls, as well as avoiding educational scenarios that are "typically feminine" (Coyne 2016).

Others acknowledge these issues, but find princess movies and "princess culture" less alarming. Some remind concerned parents that children have an array of media and activities around them, and the children may be happy wearing their princess outfit while digging for worms or going to hockey practice, which run counter to feminine stereotypes (Wagner 2019). Others indicate that rather than disallowing princess movies and merchandise, engaging with the children as they enjoy them might be more effective. And many people acknowledge that girls and women are often currently portrayed differently than they were in years past.

Disney seems to have gotten the message about the concerns. Its 2009 *Tiana and the Frog* was specifically billed as "a princess movie for people who don't like princess movies," and features a talented chef and business owner—who didn't need a man to rescue her—as its main character. *Brave*'s Merida and the title character in *Moana* seem to go out of their way to separate themselves from traditional princesses, and undertake great acts of bravery to help others. *Frozen* focuses on sisterly love rather than romantic love. And though she was never meant to be a princess, *Star Wars*' Rey was the go-to girls Halloween costume for years after she was introduced in the movies.

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3.5: Socialization Across the Life Course

Learning Objectives

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

- Explain how socialization occurs and recurs throughout life
- Apply socialization to age-related transition points
- Describe when and how resocialization occurs

Socialization isn't a one-time or even a short-term event. We aren't "stamped" by some socialization machine as we move along a conveyor belt and thereby socialized once and for all. In fact, socialization is a lifelong process.

In the United States, socialization throughout the life course is determined greatly by age norms and "time-related rules and regulations" (Settersten 2002). As we grow older, we encounter age-related transition points that require socialization into a new role, such as becoming school age, entering the workforce, or retiring. For example, the U.S. government mandates that all children attend school. Child labor laws, enacted in the early twentieth century, nationally declared that childhood be a time of learning, not of labor. In countries such as Niger and Sierra Leone, however, child labor remains common and socially acceptable, with little legislation to regulate such practices (UNICEF 2012).

Big Picture: Life After High School Around the World

In the United States, recent high school graduates have increasingly been focusing on college attendance. In recent years, about two-thirds of high school graduates are enrolled in college between their teen years and age twenty-four. About one-third of the same population primarily participates in the work force, meaning that they are employed or are looking for employment (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2020). Of those who attend college, most (about 69 percent) are considered immediate enrollers, meaning that they begin college in the first fall academic term immediately after their high school graduation (NCES 2020).

Other countries, especially high-income nations in Western Europe, have similar trends in college education, but fewer students start immediately. Gap years, overseas experiences, or mandatory wait times all lead students to a wide array of pre-college destinations. In Denmark, for example numbers of students who take a "year out" are so high that the government has sought to give students cash bonuses for attending immediately (Anderson 2009). For several decades, only about 25 percent of Denmark's high school graduates enrolled in college right away, and that number continued to drop in the 2010s, with a record low of only 15 percent in 2018 (Ritzau 2019). Compare that to the U.S. numbers mentioned above, where over two thirds of the students enroll in college immediately. And note that in Denmark, college is almost universally free.

In the United States, this life transition point is socialized quite differently. Taking a year off much less common than some other countries, but has certainly picked up in recent years. In most cases, U.S. youth are encouraged to select a few target colleges or potential workforce options by their late teens, and to get started on those pathways soon after high school. As mentioned above, many U.S. students do not attend college, but most of those students are in the workforce (including the military).

Other nations have entirely different approaches based on available educational institutions, financial circumstances, and family needs. In some nations, students often go to college soon after high school, but do so in other countries (including the U.S.). Dozens of nations require military conscription—military service—for men, and a few (such as Sweden, Israel, Norway, Eritrea, and Venezuela) for women as well.

How might your life be different if you lived in one of these other countries? Can you think of similar social norms—related to life age-transition points—that vary from country to country?

Many of life's social expectations are made clear and enforced on a cultural level. Through interacting with others and watching others interact, the expectation to fulfill roles becomes clear. While in elementary or middle school, the prospect of having a boyfriend or girlfriend may have been considered undesirable. The socialization that takes place in high school changes the expectation. By observing the excitement and importance attached to dating and relationships within the high school social scene, it

quickly becomes apparent that one is now expected not only to be a child and a student, but also a significant other. Graduation from formal education—high school, vocational school, or college—involves socialization into a new set of expectations.

Educational expectations vary not only from culture to culture, but also from class to class. While middle- or upper-class families may expect their daughter or son to attend a four-year university after graduating from high school, other families may expect their child to immediately begin working full-time, as many within their family have done before.

Sociology in the Real World: The Long Road to Adulthood for Millennials

Socialization differences also vary by generation. As you will see in the chapter on Aging and the Elderly, Millennials (those born from the early 1980's to the middle 1990's) have very different attitudes about when childhood ends, the prime of life begins, and when people become "old." (Preview: Millennials thought childhood ended later and people became old earlier than did Baby Boomers and Gen Xers at the same age.)

Millennials were deeply affected by the financial Recession in 2008. While the recession was in full swing, many were in the process of entering, attending, or graduating from high school and college. With employment prospects at historical lows, large numbers of graduates were unable to find work, sometimes moving back in with their parents and struggling to pay back student loans.

According to the *New York Times*, this economic stall caused the Millennials to postpone what most Americans consider to be adulthood: “The traditional cycle seems to have gone off course, as young people remain untethered to romantic partners or to permanent homes, going back to school for lack of better options, traveling, avoiding commitments, competing ferociously for unpaid internships or temporary (and often grueling) Teach for America jobs, forestalling the beginning of adult life” (Henig 2010). The term Boomerang Generation describes recent college graduates, for whom lack of adequate employment upon college graduation often leads to a return to the parental home (Davidson, 2014).

The five milestones that define adulthood, Henig writes, are “completing school, leaving home, becoming financially independent, marrying, and having a child” (Henig 2010). These social milestones are taking longer for Millennials to attain, if they’re attained at all. Sociologists wonder what long-term impact this generation’s situation may have on society as a whole.

In the process of socialization, adulthood brings a new set of challenges and expectations, as well as new roles to fill. As the aging process moves forward, social roles continue to evolve. Pleasures of youth, such as wild nights out and serial dating, become less acceptable in the eyes of society. Responsibility and commitment are emphasized as pillars of adulthood, and men and women are expected to “settle down.” During this period, many people enter into marriage or a civil union, bring children into their families, and focus on a career path. They become partners or parents instead of students or significant others.

Just as young children pretend to be doctors or lawyers, play house, and dress up, adults also engage in anticipatory socialization, the preparation for future life roles. Examples would include a couple who cohabitate before marriage or soon-to-be parents who read infant care books and prepare their home for the new arrival. As part of anticipatory socialization, adults who are financially able begin planning for their retirement, saving money, and looking into future healthcare options. The transition into any new life role, despite the social structure that supports it, can be difficult.

About a decade after the nation began to recover from the Recession, it was hit by another. Millennials, who had entered a very challenging employment situation, were saddled with debt and had very little in savings. By July 2020, the Millennial unemployment rate was 11.5 percent, which was actually higher than their unemployment rate during the 2008 Recession. Gen Z, the group of people born after the Millennials, fared even worse—with an 18 percent unemployment rate (Hoffower 2020). The cycle of financial insecurity and the potential socialization impacts may happen again in this decade.

Resocialization

In the process of resocialization, old behaviors that were helpful in a previous role are removed because they are no longer of use. Resocialization is necessary when a person moves to a senior care center, goes to boarding school, or serves a sentence in the prison system. In the new environment, the old rules no longer apply. The process of resocialization is typically more stressful than normal socialization because people have to unlearn behaviors that have become customary to them. While resocialization has a specific meaning, many organizations consider their training or retraining processes to embody elements of resocialization.

The most common way resocialization occurs is in a total institution where people are isolated from society and are forced to follow someone else's rules. A ship at sea is a total institution, as are religious convents, prisons, or some cult organizations. They are places cut off from a larger society. The 6.9 million Americans who lived in prisons and penitentiaries at the end of 2012 are also members of this type of institution (U.S. Department of Justice 2012).

Many individuals are resocialized into an institution through a two-part process. First, members entering an institution must leave behind their old identity through what is known as a degradation ceremony. In a degradation ceremony, new members lose the aspects of their old identity and are given new identities. The process is sometimes gentle. To enter a senior care home, an elderly person often must leave a family home and give up many belongings which were part of his or her long-standing identity. Though caretakers guide the elderly compassionately, the process can still be one of loss. In many cults, this process is also gentle and happens in an environment of support and caring.

In other situations, the degradation ceremony can be more extreme. New prisoners lose freedom, rights (including the right to privacy), and personal belongings. When entering the military, soldiers have their hair cut short. Their old clothes are removed, and they wear matching uniforms. These individuals must give up any markers of their former identity in order to be resocialized into an identity as a "soldier."



Figure 5.8: In basic training, members of the Air Force are taught to walk, move, and look like each other. (Credit: Staff Sergeant Desiree N. Palacios, U.S. Air Force/Wikimedia Commons)

After new members of an institution are stripped of their old identity, they build a new one that matches the new society. In the military, soldiers go through basic training together, where they learn new rules and bond with one another. They follow structured schedules set by their leaders. Soldiers must keep their areas clean for inspection, learn to march in correct formations, and salute when in the presence of superiors.

Learning to deal with life after having lived in a total institution requires yet another process of resocialization. In the U.S. military, soldiers learn discipline and a capacity for hard work. They set aside personal goals to achieve a mission, and they take pride in the accomplishments of their units. Many soldiers who leave the military transition these skills into excellent careers. Others have

significant challenges upon leaving, uncertain about the outside world and what to do next. The process of resocialization to civilian life is not a simple one.

Other types of organizations may utilize or extend the concept of resocialization with regard to changing people's behaviors. Corporate trainers (and training researchers) sometimes emphasize the need for trainees to shed their old behaviors and adopt entirely new ones. When the people return to their jobs after training, they may be called to leave their old behaviors behind. Similarly, if an entire team goes for training, they may be called to leave their culture behind (Weinbauer-Heidel 2019). Not all such training would apply the resocialization metaphor, but behavioral or personal-professional areas such as stress management or priority/project management might borrow from resocialization principles in order to make the training effective.

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3.6: Key Terms

anticipatory socialization | the way we prepare for future life roles

degradation ceremony | the process by which new members of a total institution lose aspects of their old identities and are given new ones

generalized other | the common behavioral expectations of general society

hidden curriculum | the informal teaching done in schools that socializes children to societal norms

moral development | the way people learn what is “good” and “bad” in society

nature | the influence of our genetic makeup on self-development

nurture | the role that our social environment plays in self-development

peer group | a group made up of people who are similar in age and social status and who share interests

resocialization | the process by which old behaviors are removed and new behaviors are learned in their place

self | a person’s distinct sense of identity as developed through social interaction

socialization | the process wherein people come to understand societal norms and expectations, to accept society’s beliefs, and to be aware of societal values

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3.7: Section Summary

5.1 Theories of Self-Development

Psychological theories of self-development have been broadened by sociologists who explicitly study the role of society and social interaction in self-development. Charles Cooley and George Mead both contributed significantly to the sociological understanding of the development of self. Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan developed their ideas further and researched how our sense of morality develops. Gilligan added the dimension of gender differences to Kohlberg's theory.

5.2 Why Socialization Matters

Socialization is important because it helps uphold societies and cultures; it is also a key part of individual development. Research demonstrates that who we are is affected by both nature (our genetic and hormonal makeup) and nurture (the social environment in which we are raised). Sociology is most concerned with the way that society's influence affects our behavior patterns, made clear by the way behavior varies across class and gender.

5.3 Agents of Socialization

Our direct interactions with social groups, like families and peers, teach us how others expect us to behave. Likewise, a society's formal and informal institutions socialize its population. Schools, workplaces, and the media communicate and reinforce cultural norms and values.

5.4 Socialization Across the Life Course

Socialization is a lifelong process that reoccurs as we enter new phases of life, such as adulthood or senior age. Resocialization is a process that removes the socialization we have developed over time and replaces it with newly learned rules and roles. Because it involves removing old habits that have been built up, resocialization can be a stressful and difficult process.

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3.8: Section Quiz

5.1 Theories of Self-Development

1.

Socialization, as a sociological term, describes:

a. how people interact during social situations
b. how people learn societal norms, beliefs, and values
c. a person's internal mental state when in a group setting
d. the difference between introverts and extroverts

2.

Harlow's study on rhesus monkeys showed that:

a. rhesus monkeys raised by other primate species are poorly socialized
b. monkeys can be adequately socialized by imitating humans
c. food is more important than social comfort
d. social comfort is more important than food

3.

What occurs in Lawrence Kohlberg's conventional level?

a. Children develop the ability to have abstract thoughts.
b. Morality is developed by pain and pleasure.
c. Children begin to consider what society considers moral and immoral.
d. Parental beliefs have no influence on children's morality.

4.

What did Carol Gilligan believe earlier researchers into morality had overlooked?

a. The justice perspective
b. Sympathetic reactions to moral situations
c. The perspective of females
d. How social environment affects how morality develops

5.

What is one way to distinguish between psychology and sociology?

a. Psychology focuses on the mind, while sociology focuses on society.
b. Psychologists are interested in mental health, while sociologists are interested in societal functions.
c. Psychologists look inward to understand behavior while sociologists look outward.
d. All of the above

6.

How did nearly complete isolation as a child affect Danielle's verbal abilities?

a. She could not communicate at all.
b. She never learned words, but she did learn signs.
c. She could not understand much, but she could use gestures.
d. She could understand and use basic language like "yes" and "no."

5.2 Why Socialization Matters

7.

Why do sociologists need to be careful when drawing conclusions from twin studies?

a. The results do not apply to singletons.

b. The twins were often raised in different ways.
c. The twins may turn out to actually be fraternal.
d. The sample sizes are often small.

8.

From a sociological perspective, which factor does not greatly influence a person's socialization?

a. Gender
b. Class
c. Blood type
d. Race

9.

Chris Langan's story illustrates that:

a. children raised in one-parent households tend to have higher IQs.
b. intelligence is more important than socialization.
c. socialization can be more important than intelligence.
d. neither socialization nor intelligence affects college admissions.

5.3 Agents of Socialization

10.

Why are wealthy parents more likely than poor parents to socialize their children toward creativity and problem solving?

a. Wealthy parents are socializing their children toward the skills of white-collar employment.
b. Wealthy parents are not concerned about their children rebelling against their rules.
c. Wealthy parents never engage in repetitive tasks.
d. Wealthy parents are more concerned with money than with a good education.

11.

How do schools prepare children to one day enter the workforce?

a. With a standardized curriculum
b. Through the hidden curriculum
c. By socializing them in teamwork
d. All of the above

12.

Which one of the following is *not* a way people are socialized by religion?

a. People learn the material culture of their religion.
b. Life stages and roles are connected to religious celebration.
c. An individual's personal internal experience of a divine being leads to their faith.
d. Places of worship provide a space for shared group experiences.

13.

Which of the following is a manifest function of schools?

a. Understanding when to speak up and when to be silent
b. Learning to read and write
c. Following a schedule
d. Knowing locker room etiquette

14.

Which of the following is typically the earliest agent of socialization?

a. School

b. Family
c. Mass media
d. Workplace

5.4 Socialization Across the Life Course

15.

Which of the following is *not* an age-related transition point when Americans must be socialized to new roles?

a. Infancy
b. School age
c. Adulthood
d. Senior citizen

16.

Which of the following is true regarding U.S. socialization of recent high school graduates?

a. They are expected to take a year “off” before college.
b. They are required to serve in the military for one year.
c. They are expected to enter college, trade school, or the workforce shortly after graduation.
d. They are required to move away from their parents.

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3.9: Short Answer

5.1 Theories of Self-Development

1.

Think of a current issue or pattern that a sociologist might study. What types of questions would the sociologist ask, and what research methods might he employ? Now consider the questions and methods a psychologist might use to study the same issue. Comment on their different approaches.

2.

Explain why it's important to conduct research using both male and female participants. What sociological topics might show gender differences? Provide some examples to illustrate your ideas.

5.2 Why Socialization Matters

3.

Why are twin studies an important way to learn about the relative effects of genetics and socialization on children? What questions about human development do you believe twin studies are best for answering? For what types of questions would twin studies not be as helpful?

4.

Why do you think that people like Chris Langan continue to have difficulty even after they are helped through societal systems? What is it they've missed that prevents them from functioning successfully in the social world?

5.3 Agents of Socialization

5.

Do you think it is important that parents discuss gender roles with their young children, or is gender a topic better left for later? How do parents consider gender norms when buying their children books, movies, and toys? How do you believe they *should* consider it?

6.

Based on your observations, when are adolescents more likely to listen to their parents or to their peer groups when making decisions? What types of dilemmas lend themselves toward one social agent over another?

5.4 Socialization Across the Life Course

7.

Consider a person who is joining a sorority or fraternity, attending college or boarding school, or even a child beginning kindergarten. How is the process the student goes through a form of socialization? What new cultural behaviors must the student adapt to?

8.

Do you think resocialization requires a total institution? Why, or why not? Can you think of any other ways someone could be resocialized?

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3.10: Further Research

5.1 Theories of Self-Development

Lawrence Kohlberg was most famous for his research using moral dilemmas. He presented dilemmas to boys and asked them how they would judge the situations. Visit this site to read about Kohlberg’s most famous moral dilemma, known as the Heinz dilemma..

5.2 Why Socialization Matters

Check out this article about other sets of twins who grew up apart and discovered each other later in life.

5.3 Agents of Socialization

Glassdoor.com provides reviews of companies and also articles on finding the correct fit. Take a look at what Glassdoor.com's blog has to say on these topics and explore some companies you might like in order to learn about their corporate culture and worker experience.

5.4 Socialization Across the Life Course

Homelessness is an endemic problem among veterans. Many soldiers leave the military or return from war and have difficulty resocializing into civilian life. Learn more about this problem at the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans' website.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Society and Social Interaction

In sociology, social interaction is a dynamic, changing sequence of social actions between individuals or groups A social interaction is an exchange between two or more individuals and is a building block of society. Social interactions can be studied between groups of two (dyads), three (triads) or larger social groups. By interacting with one another, people design rules, institutions and systems within which they seek to live. Symbols are used to communicate the expectations of a given society to those new to it.

4.1: Introduction
4.2: Types of Societies
4.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Society
4.4: Social Constructions of Reality
4.5: Key Terms
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4.1: Introduction



Figure 4.1: Some aspects of teenage life cross societal boundaries, while others are distinct. (Credit: USAID/flickr)

Chapter Outline

4.1 Types of Societies
4.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Society
4.3 Social Constructions of Reality

It was a school day, and Inayah woke up at 5:15 a.m, checked her phone, and began a few chores. Her aunt had gone to work, but had left a pile of vegetables for be cut for dinner. After taking care of that, Inayah gathered and organized the laundry, then woke up her younger cousin and sister. She led them in prayers, gave them breakfast, and dressed for school. Inayah was running late, so she didn't have time to record a full video. Instead she took a few pictures and posted a good-morning clip, updated her status on another platform, and went to check on the younger girls.

Twenty minutes later, Inayah was fixing her sister's uniform and calling to her cousin to hurry along. She loaded them up with their school bags and one sack of laundry each. The three girls walked the two kilometers to the bus station, dropping the laundry at the cleaner on the way. The ride to school took about thirty minutes.

Inayah had grown up about sixty kilometers away, where her parents still lived. She usually saw them on weekends. She had previously attended a boarding school, but those had become dangerous due to kidnappings or other trouble. Inayah's new school was not quite as good as the old one, but she was still learning. She did particularly well in math and economics.

After school and the bus ride back, Inayah sent her sister and her cousin to the house while she stayed in town with some friends. The girls sat at the picnic tables near the basketball courts, where groups of other teenagers and some adults usually came to play. She didn't talk to any of the boys there, but she had met several of them at her uncle's store. The girls recorded a few videos together, started on their homework, and after about an hour, headed home to help with dinner.

How does Inayah's day compare with yours? How does it compare to the days of teenagers you know? Inayah interacts with her family and friends based on individual relationships and personalities, but societal norms and acceptable behaviors shape those interactions. Someone from outside of her community might feel that her society's expectations are too challenging, while others may feel they are too lenient. But Inayah may disagree with both perspectives. She might have taken those societal expectations as her own.

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4.2: Types of Societies

Learning Objectives

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

- Describe the difference between preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial societies
- Explain the role of environment on preindustrial societies
- Interpret the ways that technology impacts societal development



Figure 4.2: How does technology influence a society? Here, a NASA engineer is working with samples of a coating typically used in space flight, and which now may play a role in preserving artifacts and scientific specimens on earth. The space program is expensive, but throughout its history it has provided the U.S. significant advantages in scientific innovations. (Credit: NASA Goddard Space Flight Center/flickr)

In sociological terms, society refers to a group of people who live in a definable community and share the same cultural components. On a broader scale, society consists of the people and institutions around us, our shared beliefs, and our cultural ideas. Typically, many societies also share a political authority.

Consider China and the United States. Both are technologically advanced, have dense networks of transportation and communications, rely on foreign trading partners for large portions of their economies, focus on education as a way to advance their citizens, and have large and expensive militaries. Both countries have citizens that may be largely satisfied with their governments and ways of life, while still holding some degree of distrust or discontent regarding their leaders. And both have a rural versus urban disparity that can cause tension and economic inequality among the population. An individual family or even a whole office full of people in one of the countries may look and act very similarly to families or offices in the other country.

But what is different? In China, a far greater percentage of people may be involved in manufacturing than America. Many of China's cities didn't evolve from ports, transit centers, or river confluences hundreds of years ago, but are newly created urban centers inhabited by recent transplants from other locations. While citizens in the U.S. can openly express their dissatisfaction with their government through social activism in person or, especially, online, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are banned in China, and the press is controlled by the government. Their appearance might be very similar, but the two countries are very different societies.

Sociologist Gerhard Lenski Jr. (1924–2015) defined societies in terms of their technological sophistication. As a society advances, so does its use of technology. Societies with rudimentary technology depend on the fluctuations of their environments, while industrialized societies have more control over the impact of their surroundings and thus develop different cultural features. This distinction is so important that sociologists generally classify societies along a spectrum of their level of industrialization—from preindustrial to industrial to postindustrial.

Preindustrial Societies

Before the Industrial Revolution and the widespread use of machines, societies were small, rural, and dependent largely on local resources. Economic production was limited to the amount of labor a human being could provide, and there were few specialized occupations. The very first occupation was that of hunter-gatherer.

Hunter-Gatherer

Hunter-gatherer societies demonstrate the strongest dependence on the environment of the various types of preindustrial societies. As the basic structure of human society until about 10,000–12,000 years ago, these groups were based around kinship or tribes. Hunter-gatherers relied on their surroundings for survival—they hunted wild animals and foraged for uncultivated plants for food. When resources became scarce, the group moved to a new area to find sustenance, meaning they were nomadic. These societies were common until several hundred years ago, but today only a few hundred remain in existence, such as indigenous Australian tribes sometimes referred to as "aborigines," or the Bambuti, a group of pygmy hunter-gatherers residing in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Hunter-gatherer groups are quickly disappearing as the world's population explodes.

Pastoral

Changing conditions and adaptations led some societies to rely on the domestication of animals where circumstances permitted. Roughly 7,500 years ago, human societies began to recognize their ability to tame and breed animals and to grow and cultivate their own plants. Pastoral societies, such as the Maasai villagers, rely on the domestication of animals as a resource for survival. Unlike earlier hunter-gatherers who depended entirely on existing resources to stay alive, pastoral groups were able to breed livestock for food, clothing, and transportation, and they created a surplus of goods. Herding, or pastoral, societies remained nomadic because they were forced to follow their animals to fresh feeding grounds. Around the time that pastoral societies emerged, specialized occupations began to develop, and societies commenced trading with local groups.

Sociology in the Real World: Where Societies Meet—The Worst and the Best

When cultures meet, technology can help, hinder, and even destroy. The Exxon Valdez oil spillage in Alaska nearly destroyed the local inhabitants' entire way of life. Oil spills in the Nigerian Delta have forced many of the Ogoni tribe from their land and forced removal has meant that over 100,000 Ogoni have sought refuge in the country of Benin (University of Michigan, n.d.). And the massive Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2006 drew great attention as it occurred in the United States. Environmental disasters continue as Western technology and its need for energy expands into less developed (peripheral) regions of the globe.

Of course not all technology is bad. We take electric light for granted in the United States, Europe, and the rest of the developed world. Such light extends the day and allows us to work, read, and travel at night. It makes us safer and more productive. But regions in India, Africa, and elsewhere are not so fortunate. Meeting the challenge, one particular organization, Barefoot College, located in District Ajmer, Rajasthan, India, works with numerous less developed nations to bring solar electricity, water solutions, and education. The focus for the solar projects is the village elders. The elders agree to select two grandmothers to be trained as solar engineers and choose a village committee composed of men and women to help operate the solar program.

The program has brought light to over 450,000 people in 1,015 villages. The environmental rewards include a large reduction in the use of kerosene and in carbon dioxide emissions. The fact that the villagers are operating the projects themselves helps

minimize their sense of dependence.



Figure 4.3: Otherwise skeptical or hesitant villagers are more easily convinced of the value of the solar project when they realize that the “solar engineers” are their local grandmothers. (Credit: Abri le Roux/flickr)

Horticultural

Around the same time that pastoral societies were on the rise, another type of society developed, based on the newly developed capacity for people to grow and cultivate plants. Previously, the depletion of a region’s crops or water supply forced pastoral societies to relocate in search of food sources for their livestock. Horticultural societies formed in areas where rainfall and other conditions allowed them to grow stable crops. They were similar to hunter-gatherers in that they largely depended on the environment for survival, but since they didn’t have to abandon their location to follow resources, they were able to start permanent settlements. This created more stability and more material goods and became the basis for the first revolution in human survival.

Agricultural

While pastoral and horticultural societies used small, temporary tools such as digging sticks or hoes, agricultural societies relied on permanent tools for survival. Around 3000 B.C.E., an explosion of new technology known as the Agricultural Revolution made farming possible—and profitable. Farmers learned to rotate the types of crops grown on their fields and to reuse waste products such as manure as fertilizer, which led to better harvests and bigger surpluses of food. New tools for digging and harvesting were made of metal, and this made them more effective and longer lasting. Human settlements grew into towns and cities, and particularly bountiful regions became centers of trade and commerce.

This is also the age in which people had the time and comfort to engage in more contemplative and thoughtful activities, such as music, poetry, and philosophy. This period became referred to as the “dawn of civilization” by some because of the development of leisure and humanities. Craftspeople were able to support themselves through the production of creative, decorative, or thought-provoking aesthetic objects and writings.

As resources became more plentiful, social classes became more divisive. Those who had more resources could afford better living and developed into a class of nobility. Difference in social standing between men and women increased. As cities expanded,

ownership and preservation of resources became a pressing concern.

Feudal

The ninth century gave rise to feudal societies. These societies contained a strict hierarchical system of power based around land ownership and protection. The nobility, known as lords, placed vassals in charge of pieces of land. In return for the resources that the land provided, vassals promised to fight for their lords.

These individual pieces of land, known as fiefdoms, were cultivated by the lower class. In return for maintaining the land, peasants were guaranteed a place to live and protection from outside enemies. Power was handed down through family lines, with peasant families serving lords for generations and generations. Ultimately, the social and economic system of feudalism failed and was replaced by capitalism and the technological advances of the industrial era.

Industrial Society

In the eighteenth century, Europe experienced a dramatic rise in technological invention, ushering in an era known as the Industrial Revolution. What made this period remarkable was the number of new inventions that influenced people's daily lives. Within a generation, tasks that had until this point required months of labor became achievable in a matter of days. Before the Industrial Revolution, work was largely person- or animal-based, and relied on human workers or horses to power mills and drive pumps. In 1782, James Watt and Matthew Boulton created a steam engine that could do the work of twelve horses by itself.

Steam power began appearing everywhere. Instead of paying artisans to painstakingly spin wool and weave it into cloth, people turned to textile mills that produced fabric quickly at a better price and often with better quality. Rather than planting and harvesting fields by hand, farmers were able to purchase mechanical seeders and threshing machines that caused agricultural productivity to soar. Products such as paper and glass became available to the average person, and the quality and accessibility of education and health care soared. Gas lights allowed increased visibility in the dark, and towns and cities developed a nightlife.

One of the results of increased productivity and technology was the rise of urban centers. Workers flocked to factories for jobs, and the populations of cities became increasingly diverse. The new generation became less preoccupied with maintaining family land and traditions and more focused on acquiring wealth and achieving upward mobility for themselves and their families. People wanted their children and their children's children to continue to rise to the top, and as capitalism increased, so did social mobility.

It was during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of the Industrial Revolution that sociology was born. Life was changing quickly and the long-established traditions of the agricultural eras did not apply to life in the larger cities. Masses of people were moving to new environments and often found themselves faced with horrendous conditions of filth, overcrowding, and poverty. Social scientists emerged to study the relationship between the individual members of society and society as a whole.

It was during this time that power moved from the hands of the aristocracy and "old money" to business-savvy newcomers who amassed fortunes in their lifetimes. Families such as the Rockefellers and the Vanderbilts became the new power players and used their influence in business to control aspects of government as well. Eventually, concerns over the exploitation of workers led to the formation of labor unions and laws that set mandatory conditions for employees. Although the introduction of new technology at the end of the nineteenth century ended the industrial age, much of our social structure and social ideas—like family, childhood, and time standardization—have a basis in industrial society.

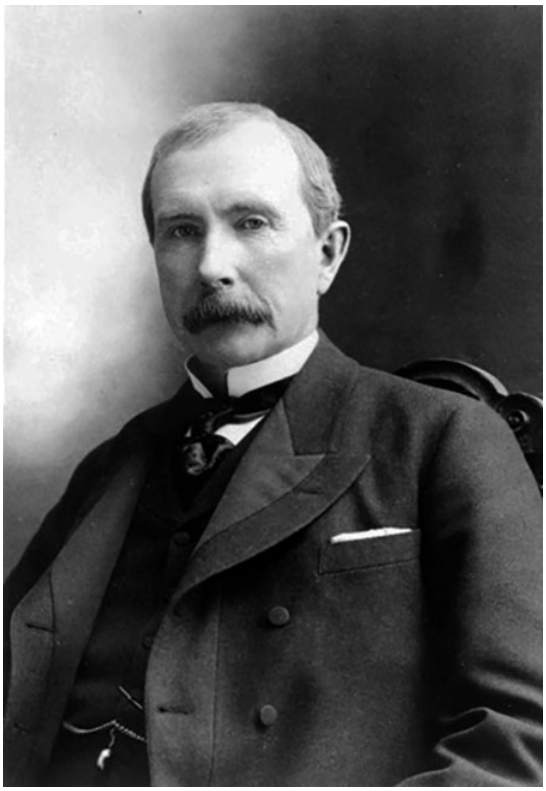


Figure 4.4: John D. Rockefeller, cofounder of the Standard Oil Company, came from an unremarkable family of salesmen and menial laborers. By his death at age 98, he was worth $1.4 billion. In industrial societies, business owners such as Rockefeller hold the majority of the power. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

Postindustrial Society

Information societies, sometimes known as postindustrial or digital societies, are a recent development. Unlike industrial societies that are rooted in the production of material goods, information societies are based on the production of information and services.

Digital technology is the steam engine of information societies, and computer moguls such as Steve Jobs and Bill Gates are its John D. Rockefellers and Cornelius Vanderbilts. Since the economy of information societies is driven by knowledge and not material goods, power lies with those in charge of storing and distributing information. Members of a postindustrial society are likely to be employed as sellers of services—software programmers or business consultants, for example—instead of producers of goods. Social classes are divided by access to education, since without technical skills, people in an information society lack the means for success.

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4.3: Theoretical Perspectives on Society

Learning Objectives

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

- Describe Durkheim's functionalist view of society
- Summarize the conflict theorist view of society
- Explain Marx's concepts of class and alienation
- Identify how symbolic interactionists understand society



Figure 4.5: Warren Buffett's ideas about taxation and spending habits of the very wealthy are controversial, particularly since they raise questions about America's embedded system of class structure and social power. The three major sociological paradigms differ in their perspectives on these issues. (Credit: Medill DC/flickr)

While many sociologists have contributed to research on society and social interaction, three thinkers form the base of modern-day perspectives. Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber developed different theoretical approaches to help us understand the way societies function.

Émile Durkheim and Functionalism

As a functionalist, Émile Durkheim's (1858–1917) perspective on society stressed the necessary interconnectivity of all of its elements. To Durkheim, society was greater than the sum of its parts. He asserted that individual behavior was not the same as collective behavior and that studying collective behavior was quite different from studying an individual's actions. Durkheim called the communal beliefs, morals, and attitudes of a society the collective conscience. In his quest to understand what causes individuals to act in similar and predictable ways, he wrote, "If I do not submit to the conventions of society, if in my dress I do not conform to the customs observed in my country and in my class, the ridicule I provoke, the social isolation in which I am kept, produce, although in an attenuated form, the same effects as punishment" (Durkheim 1895). Durkheim also believed that social integration, or the strength of ties that people have to their social groups, was a key factor in social life.

Following the ideas of Comte and Spencer, Durkheim likened society to a living organism, in which each organ plays a necessary role in keeping the being alive. Even the socially deviant members of society are necessary, Durkheim argued, as punishments for deviance affirm established cultural values and norms. That is, punishment of a crime reaffirms our moral consciousness. "A crime is a crime because we condemn it," Durkheim wrote in 1893. "An act offends the common consciousness not because it is criminal, but it is criminal because it offends that consciousness" (Durkheim 1893). Durkheim called these elements of society "social facts." By this, he meant that social forces were to be considered real and existed outside the individual.

As an observer of his social world, Durkheim was not entirely satisfied with the direction of society in his day. His primary concern was that the cultural glue that held society together was failing, and people were becoming more divided. In his book *The Division of Labor in Society* (1893), Durkheim argued that as society grew more complex, social order made the transition from mechanical to organic.

Preindustrial societies, Durkheim explained, were held together by mechanical solidarity, a type of social order maintained by the collective conscience of a culture. Societies with mechanical solidarity act in a mechanical fashion; things are done mostly because they have always been done that way. This type of thinking was common in preindustrial societies where strong bonds of kinship and a low division of labor created shared morals and values among people, such as hunter-gatherer groups. When people tend to do the same type of work, Durkheim argued, they tend to think and act alike.

In industrial societies, mechanical solidarity is replaced with organic solidarity, which is social order based around an acceptance of economic and social differences. In capitalist societies, Durkheim wrote, division of labor becomes so specialized that everyone is doing different things. Instead of punishing members of a society for failure to assimilate to common values, organic solidarity allows people with differing values to coexist. Laws exist as formalized morals and are based on restitution rather than revenge.

While the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity is, in the long run, advantageous for a society, Durkheim noted that it can be a time of chaos and "normlessness." One of the outcomes of the transition is something he called social anomie. Anomie—literally, "without law"—is a situation in which society no longer has the support of a firm collective consciousness. Collective norms are weakened. People, while more interdependent to accomplish complex tasks, are also alienated from each other. Anomie is experienced in times of social uncertainty, such as war or a great upturn or downturn in the economy. As societies reach an advanced stage of organic solidarity, they avoid anomie by redeveloping a set of shared norms. According to Durkheim, once a society achieves organic solidarity, it has finished its development.

Karl Marx and Conflict Theory

Karl Marx (1818–1883) is certainly among the most significant social thinkers in recent history. While there are many critics of his work, it is still widely respected and influential. For Marx, society's constructions were predicated upon the idea of "base and superstructure." This term refers to the idea that a society's economic character forms its base, upon which rests the culture and social institutions, the superstructure. For Marx, it is the base (economy) that determines what a society will be like.

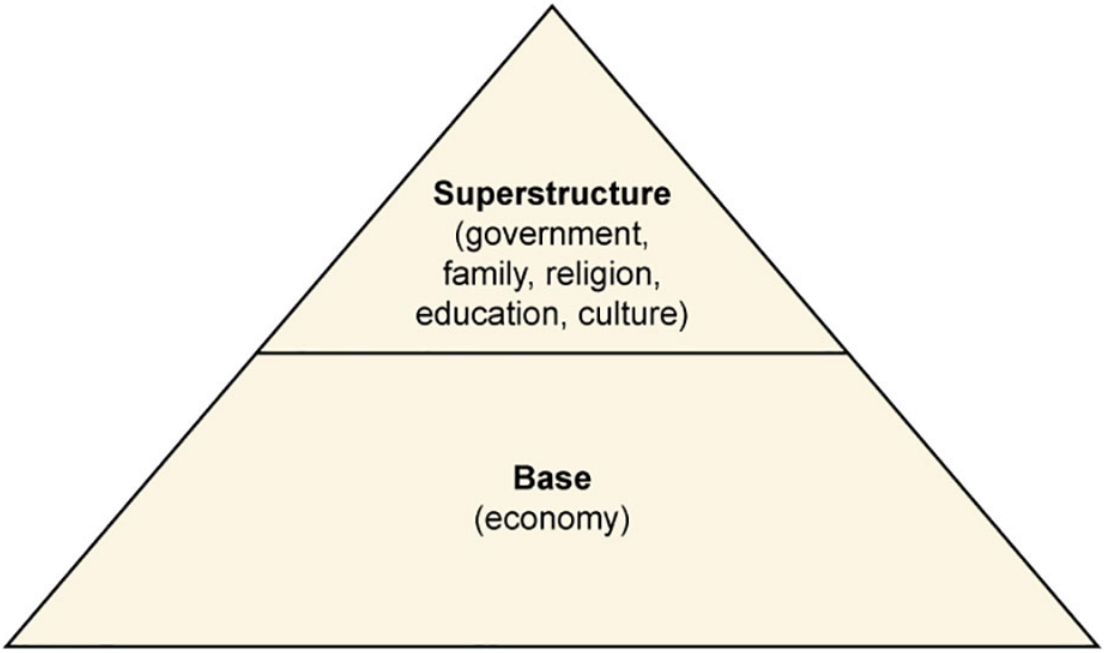


Figure 4.6: Karl Marx asserted that all elements of a society's structure depend on its economic structure.

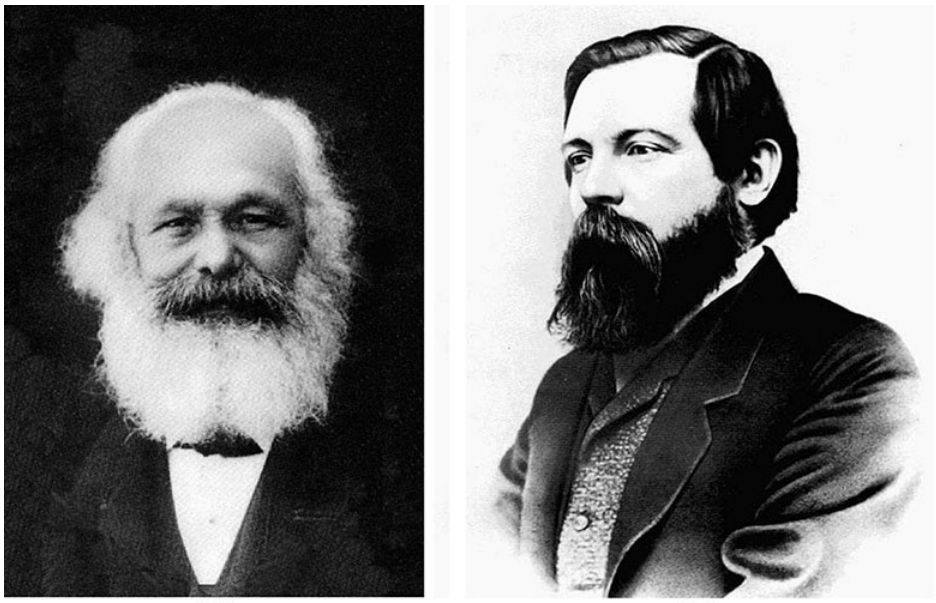
Additionally, Marx saw conflict in society as the primary means of change. Economically, he saw conflict existing between the owners of the means of production—the bourgeoisie—and the laborers, called the proletariat.

Marx maintained that these conflicts appeared consistently throughout history during times of social revolution. These revolutions or "class antagonisms" as he called them, were a result of one class dominating another. Most recently, with the end of feudalism, a new revolutionary class he called the bourgeoisie dominated the proletariat laborers. The bourgeoisie were revolutionary in the sense that they represented a radical change in the structure of society. In Marx's words, "Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other—Bourgeoisie and Proletariat" (Marx and Engels 1848).

In the mid-nineteenth century, as industrialization was booming, industrial employers, the "owners of the means of production" in Marx's terms, became more and more exploitative toward the working class. The large manufacturers of steel were particularly ruthless, and their facilities became popularly dubbed "satanic mills" based on a poem by William Blake. Marx's colleague and friend, Frederick Engels, wrote *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* in 1844, which described in detail the horrid conditions.

> *Such is the Old Town of Manchester, and on re-reading my description, I am forced to admit that instead of being exaggerated, it is far from black enough to convey a true impression of the filth, ruin, and uninhabitableness, the defiance of all considerations of cleanliness, ventilation, and health which characterise the construction of this single district, containing at least twenty to thirty thousand inhabitants. And such a district exists in the heart of the second city of England, the first manufacturing city of the world.*

Add to that the long hours, the use of child labor, and exposure to extreme conditions of heat, cold, and toxic chemicals, and it is no wonder that Marx and Engels referred to capitalism, which is a way of organizing an economy so that the things that are used to make and transport products (such as land, oil, factories, ships, etc.) are owned by individual people and companies rather than by the government, as the "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie."



(a) (b)

Figure 4.7: Karl Marx (left) and Friedrich Engels (right) analyzed differences in social power between “have” and “have-not” groups. (Credit: (a) Wikimedia Commons; Photo (b) George Lester/Wikimedia Commons)

For Marx, what we do defines who we are. In historical terms, in spite of the persistent nature of one class dominating another, some element of humanity existed. There was at least some connection between the worker and the product, augmented by the natural conditions of seasons and the rise and fall of the sun, such as we see in an agricultural society. But with the bourgeoisie revolution and the rise of industry and capitalism, the worker now worked for wages alone. His relationship to his efforts was no longer of a human nature, but based on artificial conditions.

Marx described modern society in terms of alienation. Alienation refers to the condition in which the individual is isolated and divorced from his or her society, work, or the sense of self. Marx defined four specific types of alienation.

Alienation from the product of one’s labor. An industrial worker does not have the opportunity to relate to the product he labors on. Instead of training for years as a watchmaker, an unskilled worker can get a job at a watch factory pressing buttons to seal pieces together. The worker does not care if he is making watches or cars, simply that the job exists. In the same way, a worker may not even know or care what product to which he is contributing. A worker on a Ford assembly line may spend all day installing windows on car doors without ever seeing the rest of the car. A cannery worker can spend a lifetime cleaning fish without ever knowing what product they are used for.

Alienation from the process of one’s labor. A worker does not control the conditions of her job because she does not own the means of production. If a person is hired to work in a fast food restaurant, she is expected to make the food the way she is taught. All ingredients must be combined in a particular order and in a particular quantity; there is no room for creativity or change. An employee at Burger King cannot decide to change the spices used on the fries in the same way that an employee on a Ford assembly line cannot decide to place a car’s headlights in a different position. Everything is decided by the bourgeoisie who then dictate orders to the laborers.

Alienation from others. Workers compete, rather than cooperate. Employees vie for time slots, bonuses, and job security. Even when a worker clocks out at night and goes home, the competition does not end. As Marx commented in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), “No sooner is the exploitation of the laborer by the manufacturer, so far at an end, that he receives his wages in cash, than he is set upon by the other portion of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker.”

Alienation from one’s self. A final outcome of industrialization is a loss of connectivity between a worker and her occupation. Because there is nothing that ties a worker to her labor, there is no longer a sense of self. Instead of being able to take pride in an identity such as being a watchmaker, automobile builder, or chef, a person is simply a cog in the machine.

Taken as a whole, then, alienation in modern society means that an individual has no control over his life. Even in feudal societies, a person controlled the manner of his labor as to when and how it was carried out. But why, then, does the modern working class

not rise up and rebel? (Indeed, Marx predicted that this would be the ultimate outcome and collapse of capitalism.)

Another idea that Marx developed is the concept of false consciousness. False consciousness is a condition in which the beliefs, ideals, or ideology of a person are not in the person's own best interest. In fact, it is the ideology of the dominant class (here, the bourgeoisie capitalists) that is imposed upon the proletariat. Ideas such as the emphasis of competition over cooperation, or of hard work being its own reward, clearly benefit the owners of industry. Therefore, workers are less likely to question their place in society and assume individual responsibility for existing conditions.

In order for society to overcome false consciousness, Marx proposed that it be replaced with class consciousness, the awareness of one's rank in society. Instead of existing as a "class in itself," the proletariat must become a "class for itself" in order to produce social change (Marx and Engels 1848), meaning that instead of just being an inert strata of society, the class could become an advocate for social improvements. Only once society entered this state of political consciousness would it be ready for a social revolution.



Figure 4.8: An assembly line worker installs car parts with the aid of complex machinery. Has technology made this type of labor more or less alienating? (Credit: Carol Highsmith/Wikimedia Commons)

Max Weber and Symbolic Interactionism

While Karl Marx may be one of the best-known thinkers of the nineteenth century, Max Weber is certainly one of the greatest influences in the field of sociology. Like the other social thinkers discussed here, he was concerned with the important changes taking place in Western society with the advent of industrialization. And, like Marx and Durkheim, he feared that industrialization would have negative effects on individuals.

Weber's primary focus on the structure of society lay in the elements of class, status, and power. Similar to Marx, Weber saw class as economically determined. Society, he believed, was split between owners and laborers. Status, on the other hand, was based on noneconomic factors such as education, kinship, and religion. Both status and class determined an individual's power, or influence over ideas. Unlike Marx, Weber believed that these ideas formed the base of society.

Weber's analysis of modern society centered on the concept of rationalization. A rational society is one built around logic and efficiency rather than morality or tradition. To Weber, capitalism is entirely rational. Although this leads to efficiency and merit-based success, it can have negative effects when taken to the extreme. In some modern societies, this is seen when rigid routines and strict design lead to a mechanized work environment and a focus on producing identical products in every location.

Another example of the extreme conditions of rationality can be found in Charlie Chaplin's classic film *Modern Times* (1936). Chaplin's character performs a routine task to the point where he cannot stop his motions even while away from the job. Indeed, today we even have a recognized medical condition that results from such tasks, known as "repetitive stress syndrome."

Weber was also unlike his predecessors in that he was more interested in how individuals experienced societal divisions than in the divisions themselves. The symbolic interactionism theory, the third of the three most recognized theories of sociology, is based on Weber's early ideas that emphasize the viewpoint of the individual and how that individual relates to society. For Weber, the culmination of industrialization, rationalization, and the like results in what he referred to as the iron cage, in which the individual is trapped by institutions and bureaucracy. This leads to a sense of "disenchantment of the world," a phrase Weber used to describe the final condition of humanity. Indeed a dark prediction, but one that has, at least to some degree, been borne out (Gerth and Mills 1918). In a rationalized, modern society, we have supermarkets instead of family-owned stores. We have chain restaurants instead of local eateries. Superstores that offer a multitude of merchandise have replaced independent businesses that focused on one product line, such as hardware, groceries, automotive repair, or clothing. Shopping malls offer retail stores, restaurants, fitness centers, even condominiums. This change may be rational, but is it universally desirable?



Figure 4.9: Cubicles are used to maximize individual workspace in an office. Such structures may be rational, but they are also isolating. (Credit: Tim Patterson/flickr)

Big Picture: The Protestant Work Ethic

In a series of essays in 1904, Max Weber presented the idea of the *Protestant work ethic*, a new attitude toward work based on the Calvinist principle of predestination. In the sixteenth century, Europe was shaken by the Protestant Revolution. Religious leaders such as Martin Luther and John Calvin argued against the Catholic Church's belief in salvation through obedience.

While Catholic leaders emphasized the importance of religious dogma and performing good deeds as a gateway to Heaven, Protestants believed that inner grace, or faith in God, was enough to achieve salvation.

John Calvin in particular popularized the Christian concept of predestination, the idea that all events—including salvation—have already been decided by God. Because followers were never sure whether they had been chosen to enter Heaven or Hell, they looked for signs in their everyday lives. If a person was hard-working and successful, he was likely to be one of the chosen. If a person was lazy or simply indifferent, he was likely to be one of the damned.

Weber argued that this mentality encouraged people to work hard for personal gain; after all, why should one help the unfortunate if they were already damned? Over time, the Protestant work ethic spread and became the foundation for capitalism.

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4.4: Social Constructions of Reality

Learning Objectives

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

- Interpret the sociological concept of reality as a social construct
- Define roles and describe their places in people's daily interactions
- Explain how individuals present themselves and perceive themselves in a social context



Figure 4.10: Who are we? What role do we play in society? According to sociologists, we construct reality through our interactions with others. In a way, our day-to-day interactions are like those of actors on a stage. (Credit: Jan Lewandowski/flickr)

Until now, we've primarily discussed the differences between societies. Rather than discuss their problems and configurations, we'll now explore how society came to be and how sociologists view social interaction.

In 1966 sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann wrote a book called *The Social Construction of Reality*. In it, they argued that society is created by humans and human interaction, which they call habitualization. Habitualization describes how "any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be … performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort" (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Not only do we construct our own society but we also accept it as it is because others have created it before us. Society is, in fact, "habit."

For example, your school exists as a school and not just as a building because you and others agree that it is a school. If your school is older than you are, it was created by the agreement of others before you. In a sense, it exists by consensus, both prior and current. This is an example of the process of institutionalization, the act of implanting a convention or norm into society. Bear in mind that the institution, while socially constructed, is still quite real.

Another way of looking at this concept is through W.I. Thomas's notable Thomas theorem which states, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas and Thomas 1928). That is, people's behavior can be determined by their subjective construction of reality rather than by objective reality. For example, a teenager who is repeatedly given a label—overachiever, player, bum—might live up to the term even though it initially wasn't a part of his character.

Like Berger and Luckmann in their description of habitualization, Thomas states that our moral codes and social norms are created by "successive definitions of the situation." This concept is defined by sociologist Robert K. Merton as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Merton explains that with a self-fulfilling prophecy, even a false idea can become true if it is acted upon. One example he gives is of a "bank run." Say for some reason, a number of people falsely fear that their bank is soon to be bankrupt. Because of this false notion, people run to their bank and demand all of their cash at once. As banks rarely, if ever, have that much money on hand, the bank does indeed run out of money, fulfilling the customers' prophecy. Here, reality is constructed by an idea.

Symbolic interactionists offer another lens through which to analyze the social construction of reality. With a theoretical perspective focused on the symbols (like language, gestures, and artifacts) that people use to interact, this approach is interested in how people interpret those symbols in daily interactions. Interactionists also recognize that language and body language reflect our values. One has only to learn a foreign tongue to know that not every English word can be easily translated into another language. The same is true for gestures. While Americans might recognize a "thumbs up" as meaning "great," in Germany it would mean "one" and in Japan it would mean "five." Thus, our construction of reality is influenced by our symbolic interactions.



Figure 4.11: The story line of a self-fulfilling prophecy appears in many literary works, perhaps most famously in the story of Oedipus. Oedipus is told by an oracle that he will murder his father and marry his mother. In going out of his way to avoid his fate, Oedipus inadvertently fulfills it. Oedipus's story illustrates one way in which members of society contribute to the social construction of reality. (Credit: Jean-Antoine-Theodore Giroust/Wikimedia Commons)

Roles and Status

As you can imagine, people employ many types of behaviors in day-to-day life. Roles are patterns of behavior that we recognize in each other that are representative of a person's social status. Currently, while reading this text, you are playing the role of a student. However, you also play other roles in your life, such as "daughter," "neighbor," or "employee." These various roles are each associated with a different status.

Sociologists use the term status to describe the responsibilities and benefits that a person experiences according to their rank and role in society. Some statuses are ascribed—those you do not select, such as son, elderly person, or female. Others, called achieved statuses, are obtained by choice, such as a high school dropout, self-made millionaire, or nurse. As a daughter or son, you occupy a different status than as a neighbor or employee. One person can be associated with a multitude of roles and statuses. Even a single status such as "student" has a complex role-set, or array of roles, attached to it (Merton 1957). It is important to note that status refers to the rank in social hierarchy, while role is the behavior expected of a person holding a certain status.

If too much is required of a single role, individuals can experience role strain. Consider the duties of a parent: cooking, cleaning, driving, problem-solving, acting as a source of moral guidance—the list goes on. Similarly, a person can experience role conflict when one or more roles are contradictory. A parent who also has a full-time career can experience role conflict on a daily basis. When there is a deadline at the office but a sick child needs to be picked up from school, which comes first? When you are working toward a promotion but your children want you to come to their school play, which do you choose? Being a college student can conflict with being an employee, being an athlete, or even being a friend. Our roles in life have a great effect on our decisions and who we become.



Figure 4.12: Parents often experience role strain or role conflict as they try to balance different and often urgent competing responsibilities. (Credit: Ran Zwigenberg/flickr)

Presentation of Self

Of course, it is impossible to look inside a person's head and study what role they are playing. All we can observe is behavior, or role performance. Role performance is how a person expresses his or her role. Sociologist Erving Goffman presented the idea that a person is like an actor on a stage. Calling his theory dramaturgy, Goffman believed that we use "impression management" to present ourselves to others as we hope to be perceived. Each situation is a new scene, and individuals perform different roles depending on who is present (Goffman 1959). Think about the way you behave around your coworkers versus the way you behave

around your grandparents versus the way you behave with a blind date. Even if you're not consciously trying to alter your personality, your grandparents, coworkers, and date probably see different sides of you.

As in a play, the setting matters as well. If you have a group of friends over to your house for dinner, you are playing the role of a host. It is agreed upon that you will provide food and seating and probably be stuck with a lot of the cleanup at the end of the night. Similarly, your friends are playing the roles of guests, and they are expected to respect your property and any rules you may set forth ("Don't leave the door open or the cat will get out."). In any scene, there needs to be a shared reality between players. In this case, if you view yourself as a guest and others view you as a host, there are likely to be problems.

Impression management is a critical component of symbolic interactionism. For example, a judge in a courtroom has many "props" to create an impression of fairness, gravity, and control—like their robe and gavel. Those entering the courtroom are expected to adhere to the scene being set. Just imagine the "impression" that can be made by how a person dresses. This is the reason that attorneys frequently select the hairstyle and apparel for witnesses and defendants in courtroom proceedings.



Figure 4.13: A judge's gavel is known as a prop designed to add gravity and ceremony to the proceedings. (Credit: Brian Turner/flickr)

Goffman's dramaturgy ideas expand on the ideas of Charles Cooley and the looking-glass self. According to Cooley, we base our image on what we think other people see (Cooley 1902). We imagine how we must appear to others, then react to this speculation. We don certain clothes, prepare our hair in a particular manner, wear makeup, use cologne, and the like—all with the notion that our presentation of ourselves is going to affect how others perceive us. We expect a certain reaction, and, if lucky, we get the one we desire and feel good about it. But more than that, Cooley believed that our sense of self is based upon this idea: we imagine how we look to others, draw conclusions based upon their reactions to us, and then we develop our personal sense of self. In other words, people's reactions to us are like a mirror in which we are reflected.

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4.5: Key Terms

achieved status | the status a person chooses, such as a level of education or income

agricultural societies | societies that rely on farming as a way of life

alienation | an individual's isolation from his society, his work, and his sense of self

anomie | a situation in which society no longer has the support of a firm collective consciousness

ascribed status | the status outside of an individual's control, such as sex or race

bourgeoisie | the owners of the means of production in a society

capitalism | a way of organizing an economy so that the things that are used to make and transport products (such as land, oil, factories, ships, etc.) are owned by individual people and companies rather than by the government

class consciousness | the awareness of one's rank in society

collective conscience | the communal beliefs, morals, and attitudes of a society

false consciousness | a condition in which the beliefs, ideals, or ideology of a person are not in the person's own best interest

feudal societies | societies that operate on a strict hierarchical system of power based around land ownership and protection

habitualization | the idea that society is constructed by us and those before us, and it is followed like a habit

horticultural societies | societies based around the cultivation of plants

hunter-gatherer societies | societies that depend on hunting wild animals and gathering uncultivated plants for survival

industrial societies | societies characterized by a reliance on mechanized labor to create material goods

information societies | societies based on the production of nonmaterial goods and services

institutionalization | the act of implanting a convention or norm into society

iron cage | a situation in which an individual is trapped by social institutions

looking-glass self | our reflection of how we think we appear to others

mechanical solidarity | a type of social order maintained by the collective consciousness of a culture

organic solidarity | a type of social order based around an acceptance of economic and social differences

pastoral societies | societies based around the domestication of animals

proletariat | the laborers in a society

rationalization | a belief that modern society should be built around logic and efficiency rather than morality or tradition

role conflict | a situation when one or more of an individual's roles clash

role performance | the expression of a role

role strain | stress that occurs when too much is required of a single role

role-set | an array of roles attached to a particular status

roles | patterns of behavior that are representative of a person's social status

self-fulfilling prophecy | an idea that becomes true when acted upon

social integration | how strongly a person is connected to his or her social group

society | a group of people who live in a definable community and share the same cultural components

status | the responsibilities and benefits that a person experiences according to his or her rank and role in society

Thomas theorem | how a subjective reality can drive events to develop in accordance with that reality, despite being originally unsupported by objective reality

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4.6: Section Summary

4.1 Types of Societies

Societies are classified according to their development and use of technology. For most of human history, people lived in preindustrial societies characterized by limited technology and low production of goods. After the Industrial Revolution, many societies based their economies around mechanized labor, leading to greater profits and a trend toward greater social mobility. At the turn of the new millennium, a new type of society emerged. This postindustrial, or information, society is built on digital technology and nonmaterial goods.

4.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Society

Émile Durkheim believed that as societies advance, they make the transition from mechanical to organic solidarity. For Karl Marx, society exists in terms of class conflict. With the rise of capitalism, workers become alienated from themselves and others in society. Sociologist Max Weber noted that the rationalization of society can be taken to unhealthy extremes.

4.3 Social Constructions of Reality

Society is based on the social construction of reality. How we define society influences how society actually is. Likewise, how we see other people influences their actions as well as our actions toward them. We all take on various roles throughout our lives, and our social interactions depend on what types of roles we assume, who we assume them with, and the scene where interaction takes place.

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4.7: Section Quiz

4.1 Types of Societies

1.

Which of the following fictional societies is an example of a pastoral society?

a. The Deswan people, who live in small tribes and base their economy on the production and trade of textiles
b. The Rositian Clan, a small community of farmers who have lived on their family's land for centuries
c. The Hunti, a wandering group of nomads who specialize in breeding and training horses
d. The Amaganda, an extended family of warriors who serve a single noble family

2.

Which of the following occupations is a person of power most likely to have in an information society?

a. Software engineer
b. Coal miner
c. Children's book author
d. Sharecropper

3.

Which of the following societies were the first to have permanent residents?

a. Industrial
b. Hunter-gatherer
c. Horticultural
d. Feudal

4.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Society

4.

Organic solidarity is most likely to exist in which of the following types of societies?

a. Hunter-gatherer
b. Industrial
c. Agricultural
d. Feudal

5.

According to Marx, the _____ own the means of production in a society.

a. proletariat
b. vassals
c. bourgeoisie
d. anomie

6.

Which of the following best depicts Marx's concept of alienation from the process of one's labor?

a. A supermarket cashier always scans store coupons before company coupons because she was taught to do it that way.
b. A businessman feels that he deserves a raise, but is nervous to ask his manager for one; instead, he comforts himself with the idea that hard work is its own reward.
c. An associate professor is afraid that she won't be given tenure and starts spreading rumors about one of her associates to make herself look better.
d. A construction worker is laid off and takes a job at a fast food restaurant temporarily, although he has never had an interest in preparing food before.

7.

The Protestant work ethic is based on the concept of predestination, which states that _____.

a. performing good deeds in life is the only way to secure a spot in heaven
b. salvation is only achievable through obedience to God
c. no person can be saved before he or she accepts Jesus Christ as his or her savior
d. God has already chosen those who will be saved and those who will be damned

8.

The concept of the iron cage was popularized by which of the following sociological thinkers?

a. Max Weber
b. Karl Marx
c. Émile Durkheim
d. Friedrich Engels

9.

Émile Durkheim's ideas about society can best be described as _____.

a. functionalist
b. conflict theorist
c. symbolic interactionist
d. rationalist

4.3 Social Constructions of Reality

10.

Mary works full-time at an office downtown while her young children stay at a neighbor's house. She's just learned that the childcare provider is leaving the country. Mary has succumbed to pressure to volunteer at her church, plus her ailing mother-in-law will be moving in with her next month. Which of the following is likely to occur as Mary tries to balance her existing and new responsibilities?

a. Role conflict
b. Self-fulfilling prophecy
c. Status conflict
d. Status strain

11.

According to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, society is based on _____.

a. habitual actions
b. status
c. institutionalization
d. role performance

12.

Paco knows that women find him attractive, and he's never found it hard to get a date. But as he ages, he dyes his hair to hide the gray and wears clothes that camouflage the weight he has put on. Paco's behavior can be best explained by the concept of _____.

a. role strain
b. the looking-glass self
c. role performance
d. habitualization

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4.8: Short Answer

4.1 Types of Societies

1.

In which type or types of societies do the benefits seem to outweigh the costs? Explain your answer, and cite social and economic reasons.

2.

Is Gerhard Lenski right in classifying societies based on technological advances? What other criteria might be appropriate, based on what you have read?

4.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Society

3.

Choose two of the three sociologists discussed here (Durkheim, Marx, Weber), and use their arguments to explain a current social event such as the Occupy movement. Do their theories hold up under modern scrutiny?

4.

Think of the ways workers are alienated from the product and process of their jobs. How can these concepts be applied to students and their educations?

4.3 Social Constructions of Reality

5.

Draw a large circle, and then “slice” the circle into pieces like a pie, labeling each piece with a role or status that you occupy. Add as many statuses, ascribed and achieved, that you have. Don’t forget things like dog owner, gardener, traveler, student, runner, employee. How many statuses do you have? In which ones are there role conflicts?

6.

Think of a self-fulfilling prophecy that you’ve experienced. Based on this experience, do you agree with the Thomas theorem? Use examples from current events to support your answer as well.

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4.9: Further Research

4.1 Types of Societies

The Maasai are a modern pastoral society with an economy largely structured around herds of cattle. Read more about the Maasai people and see pictures of their daily lives here .

4.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Society

One of the most influential pieces of writing in modern history was Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *The Communist Manifesto*. Visit this site to read the original document that spurred revolutions around the world.

4.3 Social Constructions of Reality

TV Tropes is a website where users identify concepts that are commonly used in literature, film, and other media. Although its tone is for the most part humorous, the site provides a good jumping-off point for research. Browse the list of examples under the entry of "self-fulfilling prophecy." Pay careful attention to the real-life examples. Are there ones that surprised you or that you don't agree with?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Groups and Organizations

Sociology often considers the study of group life, group behavior, and group processes. This chapter discusses the importance of many types of groups for understanding our behavior and attitudes and for understanding society itself. We will see that groups are necessary for many of our needs and for society's functioning but at the same time can often lead to several negative consequences.

5.1: Prelude to Groups and Organizations
5.2: Social Groups
5.3: Group Dynamics and Behavior
5.4: Formal Organizations
5.5: Groups, Organizations, and Social Change
5.S: Groups and Organizations (Summary)

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5.1: Prelude to Groups and Organizations

Social Issues in the News

“Arrests Made in Vandalism Spree,” the headline said. In March 2010, three high school students, two juveniles and one 18-year-old, allegedly spray-painted obscenities on cars, homes, and an elementary school in Muncie, Indiana. A police captain said, “I think they just started out to do a friend’s house. The thing kind of carried away after that and went nuts through the rest of the neighborhood.” The estimated damage was in the thousands of dollars and was so extensive that the 18-year-old suspect was charged with a felony. The police captain said the boys felt sorry for their vandalism. “They probably wish they could take it back, but it happened and it’s a lot of damage.” (Werner, 2010)

This news story depicts an unusual group activity, spray painting. It is likely that none of these teens would have done the spray painting by himself. If so, this news story reminds us of the importance of the many groups to which people typically belong. The English poet John Donne (1573–1631) once wrote, “No man is an island, entire of itself; Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main”. Obviously meant to apply to both sexes, Donne’s passage reminds us that we are all members of society. At the more micro level, we are all members of social groups and categories. As we have seen in previous chapters, sociologists look at us more as members of groups and less as individuals, and they try to explain our attitudes and behavior in terms of the many groups and social backgrounds from which we come. For these reasons, sociology is often considered the study of group life, group behavior, and group processes. This chapter discusses the importance of many types of groups for understanding our behavior and attitudes and for understanding society itself. We will see that groups are necessary for many of our needs and for society’s functioning but at the same time can often lead to several negative consequences, as the story of vandalism in Muncie illustrates.

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5.2: Social Groups

Learning Objectives

- Describe how a social group differs from a social category or social aggregate.
- Distinguish a primary group from a secondary group.
- Define a reference group and provide one example of such a group.
- Explain the importance of networks in a modern society.

A social group consists of two or more people who regularly interact on the basis of mutual expectations and who share a common identity. It is easy to see from this definition that we all belong to many types of social groups: our families, our different friendship groups, the sociology class and other courses we attend, our workplaces, the clubs and organizations to which we belong, and so forth. Except in rare cases, it is difficult to imagine any of us living totally alone. Even people who live by themselves still interact with family members, coworkers, and friends and to this extent still have several group memberships.

It is important here to distinguish social groups from two related concepts: social categories and social aggregates. A **social category** is a collection of individuals who have at least one attribute in common but otherwise do not necessarily interact. “Women” is an example of a social category. All women have at least one thing in common, their biological sex, even though they do not interact. “Asian Americans” is another example of a social category, as all Asian Americans have two things in common, their ethnic background and their residence in the United States, even if they do not interact or share any other similarities. As these examples suggest, gender and race and ethnicity are the basis for several social categories. Other common social categories are based on our religious preference, geographical residence, and social class.

Falling between a social category and a social group is the **social aggregate**, which is a collection of people who are in the same place at the same time but who otherwise do not necessarily interact, except in the most superficial of ways, or have anything else in common. The crowd at a sporting event and the audience at a movie or play are common examples of social aggregates. These collections of people are not a social category, because the people are together physically, and they are also not a group, because they do not really interact and do not have a common identity unrelated to being in the crowd or audience at that moment.

With these distinctions laid out, let’s return to our study of groups by looking at the different types of groups sociologists have delineated.



Figure **5.2.1**: A crowd at a sporting event and the audience at a movie or play are examples of social aggregates. © Thinkstock

Primary and Secondary Groups

A common distinction is made between primary groups and secondary groups. A primary group is usually small, characterized by extensive interaction and strong emotional ties, and endures over time. Members of such groups care a lot about each other and identify strongly with the group. Indeed, their membership in a primary group gives them much of their social identity. Charles Horton Cooley, whose looking-glass-self concept was discussed in the previous chapter, called these groups primary, because they are the first groups we belong to and because they are so important for social life. The family is the primary group that comes most

readily to mind, but small peer friendship groups, whether they are your high school friends, an urban street gang, or middle-aged adults who get together regularly, are also primary groups.

Although a primary group is usually small, somewhat larger groups can also act much like primary groups. Here athletic teams, fraternities, and sororities come to mind. Although these groups are larger than the typical family or small circle of friends, the emotional bonds their members form are often quite intense. In some workplaces, coworkers can get to know each other very well and become a friendship group in which the members discuss personal concerns and interact outside the workplace. To the extent this happens, small groups of coworkers can become primary groups (Elsesser & Peplau, 2006; Marks, 1994).

Our primary groups play significant roles in so much that we do. Survey evidence bears this out for the family. Figure 4.2 shows that an overwhelming majority of Americans say their family is “very important” in their lives. Would you say the same for your family?

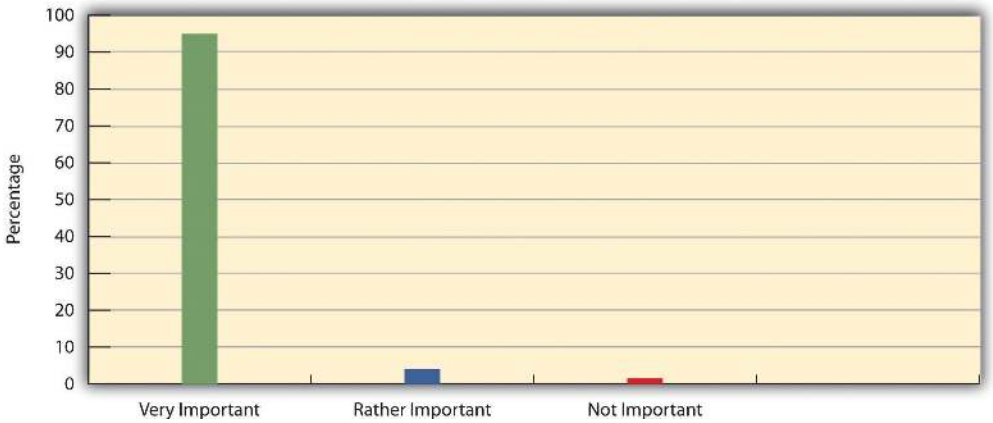


Figure **5.2.2**: Percentage of Americans Who Say Their Family Is Very Important, Quite Important, Not Too Important, or Not at All Important in Their Lives Source: Data from World Values Survey, 2002.

Ideally, our primary groups give us emotional warmth and comfort in good times and bad and provide us an identity and a strong sense of loyalty and belonging. Our primary group memberships are thus important for such things as our happiness and mental health. Much research, for example, shows rates of suicide and emotional problems are lower among people involved with social support networks such as their families and friends than among people who are pretty much alone (Maimon & Kuhl, 2008). However, our primary group relationships may also not be ideal, and, if they are negative ones, they may cause us much mental and emotional distress, as women victimized by domestic violence will attest. In fact, the family as a primary group is the source of much physical and sexual violence committed against women and children (Gosselin, 2010).

Figure 4.3



Figure **5.2.3**: A secondary group is larger and more impersonal than a primary group and may exist for a relatively short time to achieve a specific purpose. The students in any one of your college courses constitute a secondary group. © Thinkstock

Although primary groups are the most important ones in our lives, we belong to many more secondary groups, which are groups that are larger and more impersonal and exist, often for a relatively short time, to achieve a specific purpose. Secondary group

members feel less emotionally attached to each other than do primary group members and do not identify as much with their group nor feel as loyal to it. This does not mean secondary groups are unimportant, as society could not exist without them, but they still do not provide the potential emotional benefits for their members that primary groups ideally do. The sociology class for which you are reading this book is an example of a secondary group, as are the clubs and organizations on your campus to which you might belong. Other secondary groups include religious, business, governmental, and civic organizations. In some of these groups, members get to know each other better than in other secondary groups, but their emotional ties and intensity of interaction remain much weaker than in primary groups.

Reference Groups

Primary and secondary groups can act both as our reference groups or as groups that set a standard for guiding our own behavior and attitudes. The family we belong to obviously affects our actions and views, as, for example, there were probably times during your adolescence when you decided not to do certain things with your friends to avoid disappointing or upsetting your parents. On the other hand, your friends regularly acted during your adolescence as a reference group, and you probably dressed the way they did or did things with them, even against your parents' wishes, precisely because they were your reference group. Some of our reference groups are groups to which we do not belong but to which we nonetheless *want* to belong. A small child, for example, may dream of becoming an astronaut and dress like one and play like one. Some high school students may not belong to the "cool" clique in school but may still dress like the members of this clique, either in hopes of being accepted as a member or simply because they admire the dress and style of its members.

Samuel Stouffer and colleagues (Stouffer et al., 1949). demonstrated the importance of reference groups in a well-known study of American soldiers during World War II. This study sought to determine why some soldiers were more likely than others to have low morale. Surprisingly, Stouffer found that the actual, "objective" nature of their living conditions affected their morale less than whether they felt other soldiers were better or worse off than they were. Even if their own living conditions were fairly good, they were likely to have low morale if they thought other soldiers were doing better. Another factor affecting their morale was whether they thought they had a good chance of being promoted. Soldiers in units with high promotion rates were, paradoxically, more pessimistic about their own chances of promotion than soldiers in units with low promotion rates. Evidently the former soldiers were dismayed by seeing so many other men in their unit getting promoted and felt worse off as a result. In each case, Stouffer concluded, the soldiers' views were shaped by their perceptions of what was happening in their reference group of other soldiers. They *felt* deprived relative to the experiences of the members of their reference group and adjusted their views accordingly. The concept of *relative deprivation* captures this process.

In-Groups and Out-Groups

Members of primary and some secondary groups feel loyal to those groups and take pride in belonging to them. We call such groups in-groups. Fraternities, sororities, sports teams, and juvenile gangs are examples of in-groups. Members of an in-group often end up competing with members of another group for various kinds of rewards. This other group is called an out-group. The competition between in-groups and out-groups is often friendly, as among members of intramural teams during the academic year when they vie in athletic events. Sometimes, however, in-group members look down their noses at out-group members and even act very hostilely toward them. Rival fraternity members at several campuses have been known to get into fights and trash each other's houses. More seriously, street gangs attack each other, and hate groups such as skinheads and the Ku Klux Klan have committed violence against people of color, Jews, and other individuals they consider members of out-groups. As these examples make clear, in-group membership can promote very negative attitudes toward the out-groups with which the in-groups feel they are competing. These attitudes are especially likely to develop in times of rising unemployment and other types of economic distress, as in-group members are apt to blame out-group members for their economic problems (Olzak, 1992).

Networks

These days in the job world we often hear of "networking," or taking advantage of your connections with people who have connections to other people who can help you land a job. You do not necessarily know these "other people" who ultimately can help you, but you *do* know the people who know them. Your ties to the other people are weak or nonexistent, but your involvement in this network may nonetheless help you find a job.

Modern life is increasingly characterized by such networks, or the totality of relationships that link us to other people and groups and through them to still other people and groups. Some of these relationships involve strong bonds, while other relationships involve weak bonds (Granovetter, 1983). Facebook and other Web sites have made possible networks of a size unimaginable just a decade ago. Networks are important for many things, including getting advice, borrowing small amounts of money, and finding a job. When you need advice or want to borrow $5 or $10, whom do you turn to? The answer is undoubtedly certain members of your networks—your friends, family, and so forth.

The indirect links you have to people through your networks can help you find a job or even receive better medical care. For example, if you come down with a serious condition such as cancer, you would probably first talk with your primary care physician, who would refer you to one or more specialists whom you do not know and who have no connections to you through other people you know. That is, they are not part of your network. Because the specialists do not know you and do not know anyone else who knows you, they are likely to treat you very professionally, which means, for better or worse, impersonally.



Figure **5.2.4**: A network is the totality of relationships that link us to other people and groups and through them to still other people and groups. Our involvement in certain networks can bring certain advantages, including better medical care if one's network includes a physician or two. © Thinkstock

Now suppose you have some nearby friends or relatives who are physicians. Because of their connections with other nearby physicians, they can recommend certain specialists to you and perhaps even get you an earlier appointment than your primary physician could. Because these specialists realize you know physicians they know, they may treat you more personally than otherwise. In the long run, you may well get better medical care from your network through the physicians you know. People lucky enough to have such connections may thus be better off medically than people who do not.

But let's look at this last sentence. What kinds of people have such connections? What kinds of people have friends or relatives who are physicians? All other things being equal, if you had two people standing before you, one employed as a vice president in a large corporation and the other working part-time at a fast-food restaurant, which person do you think would be more likely to know a physician or two personally? Your answer is probably the corporate vice president. The point is that factors such as our social class and occupational status, our race and ethnicity, and our gender affect how likely we are to be involved in networks that can help us get jobs, good medical care, and other advantages. As just one example, a study of three working-class neighborhoods in New York City—one white, one African American, and one Latino—found that white youths were more involved through their parents and peers in job referral networks than youths in the other two neighborhoods and thus were better able to find jobs, even if they had been arrested for delinquency (Sullivan, 1989). This study suggests that even if we look at people of different races and ethnicities in roughly the same social class, whites have an advantage over people of color in the employment world.

Gender also matters in the employment world. In many businesses, there still exists an "old boys' network," in which male executives with job openings hear about male applicants from male colleagues and friends. Male employees already on the job tend to spend more social time with their male bosses than do their female counterparts. These related processes make it more difficult for females than for males to be hired and promoted (Barreto, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2009). To counter these effects and to help support each other, some women form networks where they meet, talk about mutual problems, and discuss ways of dealing with these problems. An example of such a network is The Links, Inc., a community service group of 12,000 professional African American women whose name underscores the importance of networking (www.linksinc.org/index.shtml). Its members participate in 270 chapters in 42 states, Washington, DC, and the Bahamas. Every 2 years, more than 2,000 Links members convene for a national

assembly at which they network, discuss the problems they face as professional women of color, and consider fund-raising strategies for the causes they support.

Conclusion

- Groups are a key building block of social life but can also have negative consequences.
- Primary groups are generally small and include intimate relationships, while secondary groups are larger and more impersonal.
- Reference groups provide a standard for guiding and evaluating our attitudes and behaviors.
- Social networks are increasingly important in modern life and involvement in such networks may have favorable consequences for many aspects of one's life.

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For Your Review

1. Briefly describe one reference group that has influenced your attitudes or behavior and explain why it had this influence on you.
2. Briefly describe an example of when one of your social networks proved helpful to you (or describe an example when a social network helped someone you know).
3. List at least five secondary groups to which you now belong and/or to which you previously belonged.

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5.3: Group Dynamics and Behavior

Learning Objectives

- Explain how and why group dynamics change as groups grow in size.
- Describe the different types of leaders and leadership styles.
- Be familiar with experimental evidence on group conformity.
- Explain how groupthink develops and why its development may lead to negative consequences.

Social scientists have studied how people behave in groups and how groups affect their behavior, attitudes, and perceptions (Gastil, 2009).Gastil, J. (2009). *The group in society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Their research underscores the importance of groups for social life, but it also points to the dangerous influences groups can sometimes have on their members.

The Importance of Group Size

The distinction made earlier between small primary groups and larger secondary groups reflects the importance of group size for the functioning of a group, the nature of its members' attachments, and the group's stability. If you have ever taken a very small class, say fewer than 15 students, you probably noticed that the class atmosphere differed markedly from that of a large lecture class you may have been in. In the small class, you got to know the professor better, and the students in the room got to know each other better. Attendance in the small class was probably more regular than in the large lecture class.

Over the years, sociologists and other scholars have studied the effects of group size on group dynamics. One of the first to do so was German sociologist Georg Simmel (1858–1918), who discussed the effects of groups of different sizes. The smallest group, of course, is the two-person group, or dyad, such as a married couple or two people engaged to be married or at least dating steadily. In this smallest of groups, Simmel noted, relationships can be very intense emotionally (as you might know from personal experience) but also very unstable and short lived: if one person ends the relationship, the dyad ends as well.



Figure 4.5: The smallest group is the two-person group, or dyad. Dyad relationships can be very intense emotionally but also unstable and short lived. Why is this so?© Thinkstock

A triad, or three-person group, involves relationships that are still fairly intense, but it is also more stable than a dyad. A major reason for this, said Simmel, is that if two people in a triad have a dispute, the third member can help them reach some compromise that will satisfy all the triad members. The downside of a triad is that two of its members may become very close and increasingly disregard the third member. As one example, some overcrowded college dorms are forced to house students in triples, or three to a room. In such a situation, suppose that two of the roommates are night owls and like to stay up very late, while the third wants lights out by 11:00 p.m. If majority rules, as well it might, the third roommate will feel very dissatisfied and may decide to try to find other roommates.

As groups become larger, the intensity of their interaction and bonding decreases, but their stability increases. The major reason for this is the sheer number of relationships that can exist in a larger group. For example, in a dyad only one relationship exists, that between the two members of the dyad. In a triad (say composed of members A, B, and C), three relationships exist: A-B, A-C, and B-C. In a four-person group, the number of relationships rises to six: A-B, A-C, A-D, B-C, B-D, and C-D. In a five-person group,

10 relationships exist, and in a six-person group, 15 exist (see Table 4.1). As the number of possible relationships rises, the amount of time a group member can spend with any other group member must decline, and with this decline comes less intense interaction and weaker emotional bonds. But as group size increases, the group also becomes more stable because it is large enough to survive any one member's departure from the group. When you graduate from your college or university, any clubs, organizations, or sports teams to which you belong will continue despite your exit, no matter how important you were to the group, as the remaining members of the group and new recruits will carry on in your absence.

Table 4.1: Number of Two-Person Relationships in Groups of Different Sizes

Number of members	Number of relationships
2 (A, B)	1 (A-B)
3 (A, B, C)	3 (A-B, A-C, B-C)
4 (A, B, C, D)	6 (A-B, A-C, A-D, B-C, B-D, C-D)
5 (A, B, C, D, E)	10 (A-B, A-C, A-D, A-E, B-C, B-D, B-E, C-D, C-E, D-E)
6 (A, B, C, D, E, F)	15 (A-B, A-C, A-D, A-E, A-F, B-C, B-D, B-E, B-F, C-D, C-E, C-F, D-E, D-F, E-F)

Group Leadership and Decision Making

Most groups have leaders. In the family, of course, the parents are the leaders, as much as their children sometimes might not like that. Even some close friendship groups have a leader or two who emerge over time. Virtually all secondary groups have leaders. These groups often have a charter, operations manual, or similar document that stipulates how leaders are appointed or elected and what their duties are.

Sociologists commonly distinguish two types of leaders, instrumental and expressive. An instrumental leader is a leader whose main focus is to achieve group goals and accomplish group tasks. Often instrumental leaders try to carry out their role even if they alienate other members of the group. The second type is the expressive leader, whose main focus is to maintain and improve the quality of relationships among group members and more generally to ensure group harmony. Some groups may have both types of leaders.

Related to the leader types is leadership *style*. Three such styles are commonly distinguished. The first, authoritarian leadership, involves a primary focus on achieving group goals and on rigorous compliance with group rules and penalties for noncompliance. Authoritarian leaders typically make decisions on their own and tell other group members what to do and how to do it. The second style, democratic leadership, involves extensive consultation with group members on decisions and less emphasis on rule compliance. Democratic leaders still make the final decision but do so only after carefully considering what other group members have said, and usually their decision will agree with the views of a majority of the members. The final style is laissez-faire leadership. Here the leader more or less sits back and lets the group function on its own and really exerts no leadership role.

When a decision must be reached, laissez-faire leadership is less effective than the other two in helping a group get things done. Whether authoritarian or democratic leadership is better for a group depends on the group's priorities. If the group values task accomplishment more than anything else, including how well group members get along and how much they like their leader, then authoritarian leadership is preferable to democratic leadership, as it is better able to achieve group goals quickly and efficiently. But if group members place their highest priority on their satisfaction with decisions and decision making in the group, then they would want to have a lot of input in decisions. In this case, democratic leadership is preferable to authoritarian leadership.

Some small groups shun leadership and instead try to operate by *consensus*. In this model of decision making popularized by Quakers (Brown, 2009), no decision is made unless all group members agree with it. If even one member disagrees, the group keeps discussing the issue until it reaches a compromise that satisfies everyone. If the person disagreeing does not feel very strongly about the issue or does not wish to prolong the discussion, she or he may agree to "stand aside" and let the group make the decision despite the lack of total consensus. But if this person refuses to stand aside, no decision may be possible.

A major advantage of the consensus style of decision making is psychic. Because everyone has a chance to voice an opinion about a potential decision and no decisions are reached unless everyone agrees with them, group members will ordinarily feel good about

the eventual decision and also about being in the group. The major disadvantage has to do with time and efficiency. When groups operate by consensus, their discussions may become long and tedious, as no voting is allowed and discussion must continue until everyone is satisfied with the outcome. This means the group may well be unable to make decisions quickly and efficiently.

Figure 4.6: Some small groups operate by consensus instead of having a leader guiding or mandating their decision making. This model of decision making was popularized by the Society of Friends (Quakers). Source: Photo courtesy of Guy Noir, http://flickr.com/photos/16698255@N00/25305949.

One final issue in leadership has to do with gender differences in leadership styles. Although the evidence indicates that women and men are equally capable of being good leaders, their leadership styles do tend to differ. Women are more likely to be democratic leaders, while men are more likely to be authoritarian leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Because of this difference, women leaders sometimes have trouble securing respect from their subordinates and are criticized for being too soft. Yet if they respond with a more masculine, or authoritarian, style, they may be charged with acting too much like a man and be criticized in ways a man would not be.

Groups, Roles, and Conformity

We have seen in this and previous chapters that groups are essential for social life, in large part because they play an important part in the socialization process and provide emotional and other support for their members. As sociologists have emphasized since the origins of the discipline during the 19th century, the influence of groups on individuals is essential for social stability. This influence operates through many mechanisms, including the roles that group members are expected to play. Secondary groups such as business organizations are also fundamental to complex industrial societies such as our own.

Social stability results because groups induce their members to conform to the norms, values, and attitudes of the groups themselves and of the larger society to which they belong. As the chapter-opening news story about teenage vandalism reminds us, however, conformity to the group, or peer pressure, has a downside if it means that people might adopt group norms, attitudes, or values that are bad for some reason to hold and may even result in harm to others. Conformity is thus a double-edged sword. Unfortunately, bad conformity happens all too often, as several social-psychological experiments, to which we now turn, remind us.

Solomon Asch and Perceptions of Line Lengths

Several decades ago Solomon Asch (1958) conducted one of the first of these experiments. Consider the pair of cards in Figure 4.7. One of the lines (A, B, or C) on the right card is identical in length to the single line in the left card. Which is it? If your vision is up to par, you undoubtedly answered Line B. Asch showed several students pairs of cards similar to the pair in Figure 4.7to confirm that it was very clear which of the three lines was the same length as the single line.

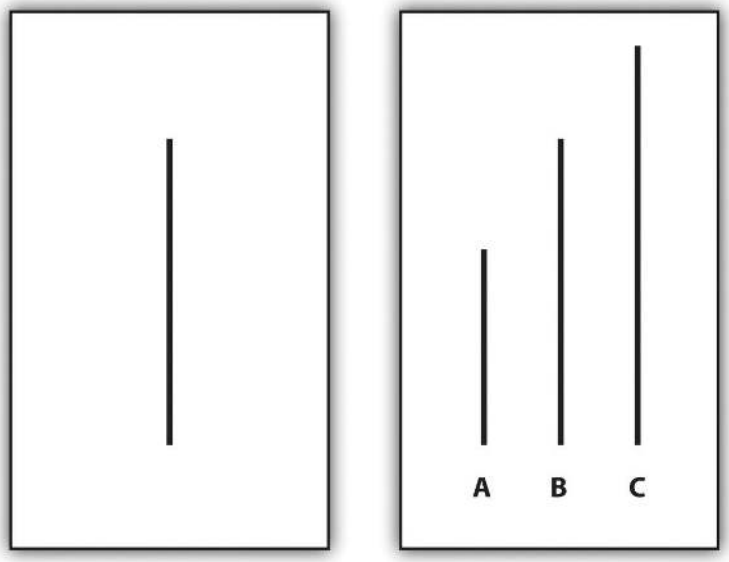


Figure 4.7 Examples of Cards Used in Asch's Experiment

Next, he had students meet in groups of at least six members and told them he was testing their visual ability. One by one he asked each member of the group to identify which of the three lines was the same length as the single line. One by one each student gave a wrong answer. Finally, the last student had to answer, and about one-third of the time the final student in each group also gave the wrong answer that everyone else was giving.

Unknown to these final students, all the other students were confederates or accomplices, to use some experimental jargon, as Asch had told them to give a wrong answer on purpose. The final student in each group was thus a naive subject, and Asch's purpose was to see how often the naive subjects in all the groups would give the wrong answer that everyone else was giving, even though it was *very* clear it was a wrong answer.

After each group ended its deliberations, Asch asked the naive subjects who gave the wrong answers why they did so. Some replied that they knew the answer was wrong but they did not want to look different from the other people in the group, even though they were strangers before the experiment began. But other naive subjects said *they had begun to doubt their own visual perception*: they decided that if everyone else was giving a different answer, then somehow they were seeing the cards incorrectly.

Asch's experiment indicated that groups induce conformity for at least two reasons. First, members feel pressured to conform so as not to alienate other members. Second, members may decide their own perceptions or views are wrong because they see other group members perceiving things differently and begin to doubt their own perceptive abilities. For either or both reasons, then, groups can, for better or worse, affect our judgments and our actions.

Stanley Milgram and Electric Shock

Although the type of influence Asch's experiment involved was benign, other experiments indicate that individuals can conform in a very harmful way. One such very famous experiment was conducted by Yale University psychologist Stanley Milgram (1974) who designed it to address an important question that arose after World War II and the revelation of the murders of millions of people during the Nazi Holocaust. This question was, "How was the Holocaust possible?" Many people blamed the authoritarian nature of German culture and the so-called authoritarian personality that it inspired among German residents, who, it was thought, would be quite ready to obey rules and demands from authority figures.

Milgram wanted to see whether Germans would indeed be more likely than Americans to obey unjust authority. He devised a series of experiments and found that his American subjects were quite likely to give potentially lethal electric shocks to other people. During the experiment, a subject, or "teacher," would come into a laboratory and be told by a man wearing a white lab coat to sit down at a table housing a machine that sent electric shocks to a "learner." Depending on the type of experiment, this was either a person whom the teacher never saw and heard only over a loudspeaker, a person sitting in an adjoining room whom the teacher could see through a window and hear over the loudspeaker, or a person sitting right next to the teacher.

The teacher was then told to read the learner a list of word pairs, such as mother-father, cat-dog, and sun-moon. At the end of the list, the teacher was then asked to read the first word of the first word pair—for example, “mother” in our list—and to read several possible matches. If the learner got the right answer (“father”), the teacher would move on to the next word pair, but if the learner gave the wrong answer, the teacher was to administer an electric shock to the learner. The initial shock was 15 volts, and each time a wrong answer was given, the shock would be increased, finally going up to 450 V, which was marked on the machine as “Danger: Severe Shock.” The learners often gave wrong answers and would cry out in pain as the voltage increased. In the 200-V range, they would scream, and in the 400-V range, they would say nothing at all. As far as the teachers knew, the learners had lapsed into unconsciousness from the electric shocks and even died.

Before his study began, Milgram consulted several psychologists, who assured him that no sane person would be willing to administer lethal shock in his experiments. He thus was shocked (pun intended) to find that more than half the teachers went all the way to 450 V in the experiments, where they could only hear the learner over a loudspeaker and not see him. Even in the experiments where the learner was sitting next to the teacher, some teachers still went to 450 V by forcing a hand of the screaming, resisting, but tied-down learner onto a metal plate that completed the electric circuit.

It turned out that the learners were not actually being shocked. Instead the voice and screams heard through the loudspeaker were from a tape recorder, and the learner that some of the teachers saw was placed there by Milgram to pretend to be in agony.

Milgram concluded that people are quite willing, however reluctantly, to obey authority even if it means inflicting great harm on others. If that could happen in his artificial experiment situation, he thought, then perhaps the Holocaust was not so incomprehensible after all, and it would be too simplistic to blame the Holocaust just on the authoritarianism of German culture. Instead, perhaps its roots lay in the very conformity to roles and group norms that makes society possible in the first place. The same processes that make society possible may also make tragedies like the Holocaust possible.

The Third Wave

In 1969, concern about the Holocaust prompted Ron Jones, a high school teacher from Palo Alto, California, to conduct a real-life experiment that reinforced Milgram’s findings by creating a Nazi-like environment in the school in just a few short days (Jones, 1979). He began by telling his sophomore history class about the importance of discipline and self-control. He had his students sit at attention and repeatedly stand up and sit down in quiet unison and saw their pride as they accomplished this task efficiently. All of a sudden everyone in the class seemed to be paying rapt attention to what was going on.

The next day, Jones began his class by talking about the importance of community and of being a member of a team or a cause. He had his class say over and over, “Strength through discipline, strength through community.” Then he showed them a new class salute, made by bringing the right hand near the right shoulder in a curled position. He called it the Third Wave salute, because a hand in this position resembled a wave about to topple over. Jones then told the students they had to salute each other outside the classroom, which they did so during the next few days. As word of what was happening in Jones’s class spread, students from other classes asked if they could come into his classroom.

On the third day of the experiment, Jones gave membership cards to every student in his class, which had now gained several new members. He told them they had to turn in the name of any student who was disobeying the class’s rules. He then talked to them about the importance of action and hard work, both of which enhanced discipline and community. Jones told his students to recruit new members and to prevent any student who was not a Third Wave member from entering the classroom. During the rest of the day, students came to him with reports of other students not saluting the right way or of some students criticizing the experiment. Meanwhile, more than 200 students had joined the Third Wave.

Figure 4.8 The Third Wave experiment was designed to have high school students in Palo Alto, California, understand how the Nazi Holocaust could have happened. The experiment illustrated that normal group processes that make social life possible can also lead people to conform to objectionable standards.© Thinkstock

On the fourth day of the experiment, more than 80 students squeezed into Jones's classroom. Jones informed them that the Third Wave was in fact a new political movement in the United States that would bring discipline, order, and pride to the country and that his students were among the first in the movement. The next day, Jones said, the Third Wave's national leader, whose identity was still not public, would be announcing a grand plan for action on national television at noon.

At noon the next day, more than 200 students crowded into the school auditorium to see the television speech. When Jones gave them the Third Wave salute, they saluted back. They chanted, "Strength through discipline, strength through community," over and over, and then sat in silent anticipation as Jones turned on a large television in front of the auditorium. The television remained blank. Suddenly Jones turned on a movie projector and showed scenes from a Nazi rally and the Nazi death camps. As the crowd in the auditorium reacted with shocked silence, the teacher told them there was no Third Wave movement and that almost overnight they had developed a Nazi-like society by allowing their regard for discipline, community, and action to warp their better judgment. Many students in the auditorium sobbed as they heard his words.

The Third Wave experiment once again indicates that the normal group processes that make social life possible also can lead people to conform to standards—in this case fascism—that most of us would reject. It also helps us understand further how the Holocaust could have happened. As Jones (1979, pp. 509–10) told his students in the auditorium, "You thought that you were the elect. That you were better than those outside this room. You bargained your freedom for the comfort of discipline and superiority. You chose to accept the group's will and the big lie over your own conviction.…Yes, we would all have made good Germans."

If you would like to know more about the experiment go to https://verdemagazine.com/the-third-wave-at-50

Zimbardo's Prison Experiment

In 1971, Stanford University psychologist Philip Zimbardo (1972) conducted an experiment to see what accounts for the extreme behaviors often seen in prisons: does this behavior stem from abnormal personalities of guards and prisoners or, instead, from the social structure of prisons, including the roles their members are expected to play? His experiment remains a compelling illustration of how roles and group processes can prompt extreme behavior.

Zimbardo advertised for male students to take part in a prison experiment and screened them out for histories of mental illness, violent behavior, and drug use. He then assigned them randomly to be either guards or prisoners in the experiment to ensure that any behavioral differences later seen between the two groups would have to stem from their different roles and not from any preexisting personality differences had they been allowed to volunteer.

The guards were told that they needed to keep order. They carried no weapons but did dress in khaki uniforms and wore reflector sunglasses to make eye contact impossible. On the first day of the experiment, the guards had the prisoners, who wore gowns and

stocking caps to remove their individuality, stand in front of their cells (converted laboratory rooms) for the traditional prison "count." They made the prisoners stand for hours on end and verbally abused those who complained. A day later the prisoners refused to come out for the count, prompting the guards to respond by forcibly removing them from their cells and sometimes spraying them with an ice-cold fire extinguisher to expedite the process. Some prisoners were put into solitary confinement. The guards also intensified their verbal abuse of the prisoners.

By the third day of the experiment, the prisoners had become very passive. The guards, several of whom indicated before the experiment that they would have trouble taking their role seriously, now were quite serious. They continued their verbal abuse of the prisoners and became quite hostile if their orders were not followed exactly. What had begun as somewhat of a lark for both guards and prisoners had now become, as far as they were concerned, a real prison.

Shortly thereafter, first one prisoner and then a few more came down with symptoms of a nervous breakdown. Zimbardo and his assistants could not believe this was possible, as they had planned for the experiment to last for 2 weeks, but they allowed the prisoners to quit the experiment. When the first one was being "released," the guards had the prisoners chant over and over that this prisoner was a bad prisoner and that they would be punished for his weakness. When this prisoner heard the chants, he refused to leave the area because he felt so humiliated. The researchers had to remind him that this was only an experiment and that he was not a real prisoner. Zimbardo had to shut down the experiment after only 6 days.

Zimbardo (1972) later observed that if psychologists had viewed the behaviors just described in a real prison, they would likely have attributed them to preexisting personality problems in both guards and prisoners. As already noted, however, his random assignment procedure invalidated this possibility. Zimbardo thus concluded that the guards' and prisoners' behavioral problems must have stemmed from the social structure of the prison experience and the roles each group was expected to play. Zimbardo (2008)Zimbardo, P. G. (2008). *The Lucifer effect: Understanding how good people turn evil*. New York, NY: Random House Trade Paperbacks. later wrote that these same processes help us understand "how good people turn evil," to cite the subtitle of his book, and thus help explain the torture and abuse committed by American forces at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq after the United States invaded and occupied that country in 2003. Once again we see how two of the building blocks of social life—groups and roles—contain within them the seeds of regrettable behavior and attitudes.

Groupthink

As these examples suggest, sometimes people go along with the desires and views of a group against their better judgments, either because they do not want to appear different or because they have come to believe that the group's course of action may be the best one after all. Psychologist Irving Janis (1972) called this process groupthink and noted it has often affected national and foreign policy decisions in the United States and elsewhere. Group members often quickly agree on some course of action without thinking completely of alternatives. A well-known example here is the decision by President John F. Kennedy and his advisers in 1961 to take part in the invasion of the Bay of Pigs in Cuba. Although several advisers thought the plan ill advised, they kept quiet, and the invasion was an embarrassing failure (Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 1997). After most Americans decided that the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 was misguided, many commentators said that the decision resulted from "collective groupthink" and regretted that they themselves had succumbed to it (Weisberg, 2008).

Figure 4.9: Groupthink may prompt people to conform with the judgments or behavior of a group because they do not want to appear different. Because of pressures to reach a quick verdict, jurors may go along with the majority opinion even if they believe otherwise. Have you ever been in a situation where groupthink occurred? © Thinkstock

Groupthink is also seen in jury decision making. Because of the pressures to reach a verdict quickly, some jurors may go along with a verdict even if they believe otherwise. In juries and other small groups, groupthink is less likely to occur if at least one person expresses a dissenting view. Once that happens, other dissenters feel more comfortable voicing their own objections (Gastil, 2009).

Conclusion

- Leadership in groups and organizations involves instrumental and expressive leaders and several styles of leadership.
- Several social-psychological experiments illustrate how groups can influence the attitudes, behavior, and perceptions of their members. The Milgram and Zimbardo experiments showed that group processes can produce injurious behavior.

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For Your Review

1. Think of any two groups to which you now belong or to which you previously belonged. Now think of the leader(s) of each group. Were these leaders more instrumental or more expressive? Provide evidence to support your answer.
2. Have you ever been in a group where you or another member was pressured to behave in a way that you considered improper? Explain what finally happened.

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5.4: Formal Organizations

Learning Objectives

- Describe the three types of formal organizations.
- List the defining characteristics of bureaucracies.
- Discuss any two disadvantages of bureaucracies.
- Explain Michels's iron law of oligarchy.

Modern societies are filled with formal organizations, or large secondary groups that follow explicit rules and procedures to achieve specific goals and tasks. Max Weber (1864–1920), one of the founders of sociology, recognized long ago that as societies become more complex, their procedures for accomplishing tasks rely less on traditional customs and beliefs and more on *rational* (which is to say rule-guided and impersonal) methods of decision making. The development of formal organizations, he emphasized, allowed complex societies to accomplish their tasks in the most efficient way possible (Weber, 1921/1978). Today we cannot imagine how any modern, complex society could run without formal organizations such as businesses and health-care institutions.

Types of Formal Organizations

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1975) developed a popular typology of organizations based on how they induce people to join them and keep them as members once they do join. His three types are utilitarian, normative, and coercive organizations.

Utilitarian organizations (also called *remunerative organizations*) provide an income or some other personal benefit. Business organizations, ranging from large corporations to small Mom-and-Pop grocery stores, are familiar examples of utilitarian organizations. Colleges and universities are utilitarian organizations not only for the people who work at them but also for their students, who certainly see education and a diploma as important tangible benefits they can gain from higher education.

Sociology Making a Difference

Big-Box Stores and the McDonaldization of Society

In many towns across the country during the last decade or so, activists have opposed the building of Wal-Mart and other "big-box" stores. They have had many reasons for doing so: the stores hurt local businesses; they do not treat their workers well; they are environmentally unfriendly. No doubt some activists also think the stores are all the same and are a sign of a distressing trend in the retail world.

Sociologist George Ritzer (2008) coined the term *McDonaldization* to describe this trend involving certain kinds of utilitarian organizations, to use a term from the chapter. His insights help us understand its advantages and disadvantages and thus help us to evaluate the arguments of big-box critics and the counterarguments of their proponents.

You have certainly eaten, probably too many times, at McDonald's, Burger King, Subway, KFC, and other fast-food restaurants. Ritzer says that these establishments share several characteristics that account for their popularity but that also represent a disturbing trend.

First, the food at all McDonald's restaurants is the same, as is the food at all Burger King restaurants or at any other fast-food chain. If you go to McDonald's in Maine, you can be very sure that you will find the same food that you would find at a McDonald's in San Diego on the other side of the country. You can also be sure that the food will taste the same, even though the two McDonald's are more than 3,000 miles apart. Ritzer uses the terms *predictability* and *uniformity* to refer to this similarity of McDonald's restaurants across the country.

Second, at any McDonald's the food is exactly the same size and weight. Before it was cooked, the burger you just bought was the same size and weight as the burger the person in front of you bought. This ensures that all McDonald's customers receive the identical value for their money. Ritzer calls this identical measurement of food *calculability*.

Third, McDonald's and other restaurants like it are fast. They are fast because they are efficient. As your order is taken, it is often already waiting for you while keeping warm. Moreover, everyone working at McDonald's has a specific role to play, and this

division of labor contributes to the *efficiency* of McDonald's, as Ritzer characterized its operations.

Fourth and last, McDonald's is *automated* as much as possible. Machines help McDonald's employees make and serve shakes, fries, and the other food. If McDonald's could use a robot to cook its burgers and fries, it probably would.

To Ritzer, McDonald's is a metaphor for the overrationalization of society, and he fears that *the McDonaldization of society*, as he calls it, is occurring. This means that society is becoming increasingly uniform, predictable, calculable, efficient, and automated beyond the fast-food industry. For example, just 50 years ago there were no shopping malls and few national chain stores other than Sears, JCPenney, and a few others. Now we have malls across the country, and many of them have the same stores. We also have national drugstore chains, such as Rite Aid or Walgreens, that look fairly similar across the country.

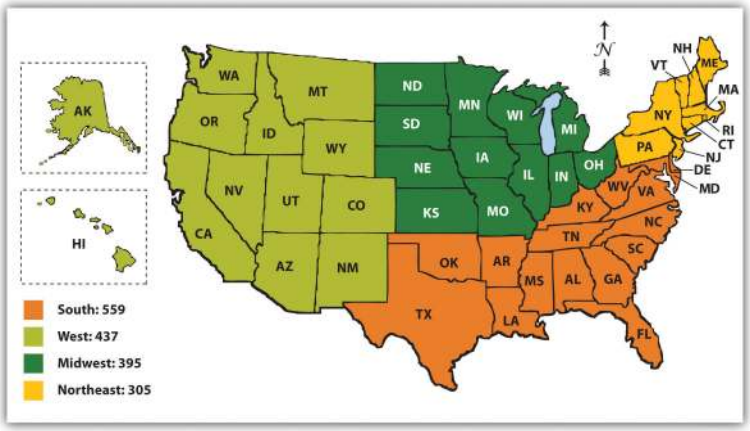
This uniformity has its advantages. For example, if you are traveling and enter a McDonald's or Rite Aid, you already know exactly what you will find and probably even where to find it. But uniformity also has its disadvantages. To take just one problem, the national chains have driven out small, locally owned businesses that are apt to offer more personal attention. And if you want to buy a product that a national chain does not carry, it might be difficult to find it.

The McDonaldization of society, then, has come at a cost of originality and creativity. Ritzer says that we have paid a price for our devotion to uniformity, calculability, efficiency, and automation. Like Max Weber before him, he fears that the increasing rationalization of society will deprive us of human individuality and also reduce the diversity of our material culture. What do you think? Does his analysis change what you thought about fast-food restaurants and big-box stores?

In contrast, normative organizations (also called voluntary organizations or voluntary associations) allow people to pursue their moral goals and commitments. Their members do not get paid and instead contribute their time or money because they like or admire what the organization does. The many examples of normative organizations include churches and synagogues, Boy and Girl Scouts, the Kiwanis Club and other civic groups, and groups with political objectives, such as the National Council of La Raza, the largest advocacy organization for Latino civil rights. Alexis de Tocqueville (1835/1994) observed some 175 years ago that the United States was a nation of joiners, and contemporary research finds that Americans indeed rank above average among democratic nations in membership in voluntary associations (Curtis, Baer, & Grabb, 2001).

Some people end up in organizations involuntarily because they have violated the law or been judged to be mentally ill. Prisons and state mental institutions are examples of such coercive organizations, which, as total institutions (see Chapter 3), seek to control all phases of their members' lives. Our chances of ending up in coercive organizations depend on various aspects of our social backgrounds. For prisons one of these aspects is geographical. Figure 4.10 examines the distribution of imprisonment in the United States and shows the imprisonment rate (number of inmates per 100,000 residents) for each of the four major census regions. This rate tends to be highest in the South and in the West. Do you think this pattern exists because crime rates are highest in these regions or instead because these regions are more likely than other parts of the United States to send convicted criminals to prisons?

Figure 4.10 Census Regions and Imprisonment Rates, 2009 (Number of Inmates per 100,000 Residents)



Source: Data from West, H. C. (2010). *Prison inmates at midyear 2009—statistical tables*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice.

Bureaucracies: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

As discussed earlier, Max Weber emphasized that modern societies increasingly depend on formal organizations to accomplish key tasks. He particularly had in mind bureaucracies, or formal organizations with certain organizational features designed to achieve goals in the most efficient way possible. He said that the ideal type of bureaucracy is characterized by several features that together maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of organizational decision making and goal accomplishment:

1. **Specialization**. By specialization Weber meant a division of labor in which specific people have certain tasks—and only those tasks—to do. Presumably they are most skilled at these tasks and less skilled at others. With such specialization, the people who are best suited to do various tasks are the ones who work on them, maximizing the ability of the organization to have these tasks accomplished.
2. **Hierarchy**. Equality does not exist in a bureaucracy. Instead its structure resembles a pyramid, with a few positions at the top and many more lower down. The chain of command runs from the top to the bottom, with the persons occupying the positions at the top supervising those below them. The higher you are in the hierarchy, the fewer people to whom you have to report. Weber thought a hierarchical structure maximizes efficiency because it reduces decision-making time and puts the authority to make the most important decisions in the hands of the people at the top of the pyramid who presumably are the best qualified to make them.
3. **Written rules and regulations**. For an organization to work efficiently, everyone must know what to do and when to do it. This means their actions must be predictable. To ensure predictability, their roles and the organization's operating procedures must be written in a manual or handbook, with everyone in the organization expected to be familiar with its rules. Much of the communication among members of bureaucracies is written in the form of memos and e-mail rather than being verbal. This written communication leaves a paper trail so that accountability for individual behavior can later be determined.
4. **Impartiality and impersonality**. The head of a small, nonbureaucratic organization might prefer to hire people she or he knows and promote them on the same basis. Weber thought that impartiality in hiring, promotion, and firing would be much better for a large organization, as it guarantees people will advance through a firm based on their skills and knowledge, not on whom they know. Clients should also be treated impersonally, as an organization in the long run would be less effective if it gave favorable treatment to clients based on whom they know or on their nice personalities. As Weber recognized, the danger is that employees and clients alike become treated like numbers or cogs in a machine, with their individual needs and circumstances ignored in the name of organizational efficiency.
5. **Record keeping**. As you probably know from personal experience, bureaucracies keep all kinds of records, especially in today's computer age. A small enterprise, say a Mom-and-Pop store, might keep track of its merchandise and the bills its customers owe with some notes scribbled here and there, even in the information technology age, but a large organization must have much more extensive record keeping to keep track of everything.

Figure 4.11



Max Weber emphasized bureaucracies as a feature of modern life. Key aspects of bureaucracies include specialization, hierarchy, written rules and regulations, impartiality and impersonality, and record keeping.

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The Disadvantages of Bureaucracy

Taking all of these features into account, Weber (1921/1978) thought bureaucracies were the most efficient and effective type of organization in a large, complex society. At the same time, he despaired over their impersonality, which he saw reflecting the growing dehumanization that accompanies growing societies. As social scientists have found since his time, bureaucracies have other problems that undermine their efficiency and effectiveness:

1. **Impersonality and alienation**. The first problem is the one just mentioned: bureaucracies can be very alienating experiences for their employees and clients alike. A worker without any sick leave left who needs to take some time off to care for a sick child might find a supervisor saying no, because the rules prohibit it. A client who stands in a long line might find herself turned away when she gets to the front because she forgot to fill out every single box in a form. We all have stories of impersonal, alienating experiences in today's large bureaucracies.
2. **Red tape**. A second disadvantage of bureaucracy is "red tape," or, as sociologist Robert Merton (1968) called it, bureaucratic ritualism, a greater devotion to rules and regulations than to organizational goals. Bureaucracies often operate by slavish attention to even the pickiest of rules and regulations. If every "t" isn't crossed and every "i" isn't dotted, then someone gets into trouble, and perhaps a client is not served. Such bureaucratic ritualism contributes to the alienation already described.
3. **Trained incapacity**. If an overabundance of rules and regulations and overattention to them lead to bureaucratic ritualism, they also lead to an inability of people in an organization to think creatively and to act independently. In the late 1800s, Thorstein Veblen (1899/1953) called this problem *trained incapacity*. When unforeseen problems arise, trained incapacity may prevent organizational members from being able to handle them.
4. **Bureaucratic incompetence**. Two popular writers have humorously pointed to special problems in bureaucracies that undermine their effectiveness. The first of these, popularly known as Parkinson's law after its coiner, English historian C. Northcote Parkinson (1957) says that work expands to fill the time available for it. To put it another way, the more time you have to do something, the longer it takes. The second problem is called the Peter Principle, also named after its founder, Canadian author Laurence J. Peter (1969), and says that people will eventually be promoted to their level of incompetence. In this way of thinking, someone who does a good job will get promoted and then get promoted again if she or he continues doing a good job. Eventually such people will be promoted to a job for which they are not well qualified, impeding organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Have you ever worked for someone who illustrated the Peter Principle?
5. **Goal displacement and self-perpetuation**. Sometimes bureaucracies become so swollen with rules and personnel that they take on a life of their own and lose sight of the goals they were originally designed to achieve. People in the bureaucracy become more concerned with their job comfort and security than with helping the organization accomplish its objectives. To the extent this happens, the bureaucracy's efficiency and effectiveness are again weakened.

Michels's Iron Law of Oligarchy

Several decades ago Robert Michels (1876–1936), a German activist and scholar, published his famous iron law of oligarchy, by which he meant that large organizations inevitably develop an oligarchy, or the undemocratic rule of many people by just a few people (Michels, 1911/1949). He said this happens as leaders increasingly monopolize knowledge because they have more access than do other organizational members to information and technology. They begin to think they are better suited than other people to lead their organizations, and they also do their best to stay in their positions of power, which they find very appealing. This latter goal becomes more important than helping the organization achieve its objectives and than serving the interests of the workers further down the organizational pyramid. Drawing on our earlier discussion of group size, it is also true that as an organization becomes larger, it becomes very difficult to continue to involve all group members in decision making, which almost inevitably becomes monopolized by the relatively few people at the top of the organization. Michels thought oligarchization happens not only in bureaucracies but also in a society's political structures and said that the inevitable tendency to oligarchy threatens democracy by concentrating political decision-making power in the hands of a few. As his use of the term *iron law* suggests, Michels thought the development of oligarchies was inevitable, and he was very pessimistic about democracy's future.

Has our society as a whole lost some of its democracy in the ways Michels predicted? Some evidence supports his prediction. For example, many large organizations, including corporations, labor unions, political parties, and colleges and universities, do resemble the types of oligarchies over which Michels despaired. In most of these, decision making is indeed concentrated in the hands of a few, who often do work, at least according to their critics, for their own interests as least as much as they do for the interests of the organization and its members. On the other hand, organizational and political leaders do not work always for

themselves and often have the interests of their organizations and the public in mind. Michels's law might not be so ironclad after all, but it does remind us to be on the alert for the undemocratic processes he predicted.

Gender, Race, and Formal Organizations

We previously outlined three types of organizations: utilitarian, normative, and coercive. What does the evidence indicate about the dynamics of gender and race in these organizations?

We have already seen that women in utilitarian organizations such as businesses have made striking inroads but remain thwarted by a glass ceiling and the refusal of some subordinates to accept their authority. The workforce as a whole remains segregated by sex, as many women work in a relatively few occupations such as clerical and secretarial work. This fact contributes heavily to the lower pay that women receive compared to men. Turning to race, effective federal and state laws against racial discrimination in the workplace arose in the aftermath of the Southern civil rights movement of the 1960s. Although these laws have helped greatly, people of color are still worse off than whites in hiring, promotion, and salaries, affirmative action efforts notwithstanding. Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 will further discuss the experiences of people of color and of women, respectively, in the workplace.

Learning From Other Societies

Japan's Formal Organizations: Benefits and Disadvantages of Traditional Ways

Although Japan possesses one of the world's most productive industrial economies, its culture remains very traditional in several ways. As we saw in the previous two chapters, for example, the Japanese culture continues to value harmony and cooperation and to frown on public kissing. Interestingly, Japan's traditional ways are reflected in its formal (utilitarian) organizations even as they produce much of the world's output of cars, electronics, and other products and provide some lessons for our own society.

One of these lessons concerns the experiences of women in the Japanese workplace, as this experience reflects Japan's very traditional views on women's social roles (Schneider & Silverman, 2010). Japan continues to think a woman's place is first and foremost in the home and with her children. Accordingly, women there have much fewer job opportunities than do men and in fact have few job prospects beyond clerical work and other blue-collar positions. Many young women seek to become "office ladies," whose main role in a business is to look pretty, do some filing and photocopying, and be friendly to visitors. They are supposed to live at home before marrying and typically must quit their jobs when they do marry. Women occupy only about 10% of managerial positions in Japan's business and government, compared to 43% of their U.S. counterparts (Fackler, 2007).

For these reasons, men are the primary subjects of studies on life in Japanese corporations. Here we see some striking differences from how U.S. corporations operate (Jackson & Tomioka, 2004). For example, the emphasis on the group in Japanese schools (see Chapter 3) also characterizes corporate life. Individuals hired at roughly the same time by a Japanese corporation are evaluated and promoted collectively, not individually, although some corporations have tried to conduct more individual assessment. Just as Japanese schools have their children engage in certain activities to foster group spirit, so do Japanese corporations have their workers engage in group exercises and other activities to foster a community feeling in the workplace. The companies sponsor many recreational activities outside the workplace for the same reason. In another difference from their American counterparts, Japanese companies have their workers learn several different jobs within the same companies so that they can discover how the various jobs relate to each other. Perhaps most important, leadership in Japanese corporations is more democratic and less authoritarian than in their American counterparts. Japanese workers meet at least weekly in small groups to discuss various aspects of their jobs and of corporate goals and to give their input to corporate managers.

Japan's traditional organizational culture, then, has certain benefits but also one very important disadvantage, at least from an American perspective (Levin, 2006). Its traditional, group-oriented model seems to generate higher productivity and morale than the more individualistic American model. On the other hand, its exclusion of women from positions above the clerical level deprives Japanese corporations of women's knowledge and talents and would no doubt dismay many Americans. As the United States tries to boost its own economy, it may well make sense to adopt some elements of Japan's traditional organizational model, as some U.S. information technology companies have done, but it would certainly not make sense to incorporate its views of women and the workplace.

Figure 4.12



The church has been a significant type of normative organization for many African Americans. During the 1960s, black churches served as an important venue for the civil rights movement's organizing and fund-raising.

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Much less research exists on gender and race in normative organizations. But we do know that many women are involved in many types of these voluntary associations, especially those having to do with children and education and related matters. These associations allow them to contribute to society and are a source of self-esteem and, more practically, networking (Blackstone, 2004; Daniels, 1988). Many people of color have also been involved in normative organizations, especially those serving various needs of their communities. One significant type of normative organization is the church, which has been extraordinarily important in the African-American community over the decades and was a key locus of civil rights activism in the South during the 1960s (Morris, 1984). Turning to coercive organizations, we know much about prisons and the race and gender composition of their inmates. Men, African Americans, and Latinos are over represented in prisons and jails. This means that they constitute much higher percentages of all inmates than their numbers in the national population would suggest. Although men make up about 50% of the national population, for example, they account for more than 90% of all prisoners. Similarly, although African Americans are about 13% of the population, they account for more than 40% of all prisoners. The corresponding percentages for Latinos are about 15% and almost 20%, respectively (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2009).

Why these patterns exist is unclear. Do they reflect discrimination against African Americans, Latinos, and men, or do they reflect higher offending rates by these groups? The next chapter explores this issue as part of its broader treatment of deviance and crime.

Conclusion

- The major types of formal organizations include those that are utilitarian, normative, and coercive.
- As one type of formal organization, the bureaucracy has several defining characteristics, including specialization, hierarchy, written rules and regulations, impartiality and impersonality, and record keeping.
- Bureaucracies also include some negative characteristics such as alienation and red tape.
- Michels's iron law of oligarchy assumes that large organizations inevitably develop undemocratic rule.

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For Your Review

1. Think of any bureaucracy with which you have had some experience. Describe evidence that it was characterized by any three of the defining characteristics of bureaucracies.
2. Do you share Max Weber's view that bureaucracies must be impersonal and alienating? Explain your answer.

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5.5: Groups, Organizations, and Social Change

Learning Objectives

- Describe the two ways in which groups and organizations play an important role in social change.
- Discuss how whistle-blowing is relevant to a discussion of groups, organizations, and social change.

As we consider ways to try to improve our society, the role of groups and organizations becomes very important. This section briefly considers this importance.

Vehicles for Social Change

One individual can certainly make a difference, but it is much more common for any difference to be made by individuals acting together—that is, by a group. In this regard, it is very clear that groups of many types have been and will continue to be vehicles for social reform and social change of many kinds. Many of the rights and freedoms Americans enjoy today were the result of committed efforts by social reform groups and social movements of years past: the abolitionist movement, the woman suffrage movement and contemporary women's movement, the labor movement, the civil rights movement, the gay rights movement, and the environmental movement, to name just a few (see Chapter 14). Their experience reflects the wisdom of anthropologist Margaret Mead's famous quote that we should "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Figure 4.13



Groups have often served as vehicles for many types of social reform and social change. Many of the rights and freedoms Americans enjoy today are the result of efforts by social reform groups of years past.

Source: Photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress, memory.loc.gov/service/pnp/cp...0/3g05585v.jpg.

In today's world, there are innumerable social service and social advocacy groups that are attempting to bring about changes to benefit a particular constituency or the greater society, and you might well belong to one of these groups on your campus or in your home community. All such groups, past, present, and future, are vehicles for social reform and social change, or at least have the potential for becoming such vehicles.

Obstacles to Social Change

Groups can bring about social reform and social change, but they can also thwart efforts to achieve a just society. For every social change and social reform effort that so many groups and organizations undertake, other groups and organizations try to block such efforts. Groups may be the building blocks of social reform and social change, but they are also the building blocks for the status quo. If the study of sociology can be said to be the study of group life, as noted earlier, the study of social reform and social change

can also be said to be the study of what groups and organizations do to try to bring about social reform or to maintain the status quo.

Changing Groups and Organizations From Within

Groups and organizations are typically set in their ways and do not often change their dynamics, goals, or other key aspects. This is especially true of the formal organizations we call bureaucracies, which, as we saw, are so committed and even "stuck" to certain procedures that they become inefficient and even alienating. Groupthink can also set in and stifle creativity and keep group and organizational members from raising concerns about certain practices and/or goals.

Whistle-blowing is now the common term for raising such concerns, especially when the concern involves illegal and/or potentially harmful behavior (Alford, 2007; Schwartz, 2009). It is not easy to be a whistle-blower, and several individuals who have "blown the whistle" have been harassed, fired, or sued for doing so. In response to such reprisals, various federal and state laws have been passed to protect whistle-blowers (http://whistleblowerlaws.com/index.php). Still, it takes a certain amount of courage and no small amount of perseverance to be a whistle-blower. It is almost certain that some readers of this book will one day find themselves in a position where they, too, might have to decide whether to become a whistle-blower when they perceive some violation of the law and/or harmful behavior to be occurring. If so, they will have great potential for changing a group or an organization from within while performing a social good for the larger society.

Conclusion

- Groups can be vehicles for social change and social reform, but they can also be vehicles for thwarting social change and social reform.
- Whistle-blowing aims at exposing illegal and/or harmful behavior of corporations and other groups and organizations.

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For Your Review

1. Have you ever disapproved of a policy, behavior, or goal of a group to which you belonged? If so what, if anything, did you do? Explain your answer.
2. Do you think an employee for a corporation has the responsibility to become a whistle-blower if the corporation is engaging in illegal and/or harmful behavior? Explain your answer.

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5.S: Groups and Organizations (Summary)

Summary

1. Social groups are the building blocks of social life, and it is virtually impossible to imagine a society without groups and difficult to imagine individuals not being involved with many types of groups. They are distinguished from social categories and social aggregates by the degree of interaction among their members and the identification of their members with the group.
2. Primary groups are small and involve strong emotional attachments, while secondary groups are larger and more impersonal. Some groups become in-groups and vie, sometimes hostilely, with people they identify as belonging to out-groups. Reference groups provide standards by which we judge our attitudes and behavior and can influence how we think and act.
3. Social networks connect us through the people we know to other people they know. They are increasingly influential for successful employment but are also helpful for high-quality health care and other social advantages.
4. The size of groups is a critical variable for their internal dynamics. Compared to large groups, small groups involve more intense emotional bonds but are also more unstable. These differences stem from the larger number of relationships that can exist in a larger group than in a smaller one.
5. Instrumental and expressive leaders take different approaches in exercising leadership. Instrumental leaders focus more on solving tasks, even at the risk of alienating group members, while expressive leaders focus more on group relations. Of the three major styles of leadership—authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire—laissez-faire leadership seems the least effective in helping a group achieve its goals.
6. Women and men are equally effective as leaders but exhibit different leadership styles. Women tend to be expressive leaders, while men tend to be more authoritarian leaders. Women leaders still face problems in securing the respect of the group members they seek to lead.
7. Processes of group conformity are essential for any society and for the well-being of its many individuals but also can lead to reprehensible norms and values. People can be influenced by their group membership and the roles they're expected to play to engage in behaviors most of us would condemn. Laboratory experiments by Asch, Milgram, and Zimbardo illustrate how this can happen, while a real-life classroom experiment called the Third Wave dramatized how a fascist atmosphere could develop from everyday group processes.
8. Formal organizations are commonly delineated according to the motivations of the people who join them. According to Etzioni's popular typology, three types of formal organizations exist: utilitarian, normative, and coercive.
9. Max Weber outlined several characteristics of bureaucracy that he felt make them the most efficient and effective type of large formal organization possible. At the same time, other scholars have pointed to several disadvantages of bureaucracies that limit their efficiency and effectiveness and thus thwart organizational goals.
10. Robert Michels hypothesized that the development of oligarchies in formal organizations and political structures is inevitable. History shows that such "oligarchization" does occur but that society remains more democratic than Michels foresaw.
11. Women and people of color have long been involved in normative organizations and continue to expand their numbers in utilitarian organizations, but in the latter they lag behind white men in rank and salary. In a major type of coercive organization, prisons, people of color and men are overrepresented. The chapter closes with the question of whether the reason for this overrepresentation is the offending rates of these two groups or, instead, discrimination against them in criminal justice processing.

Using Sociology

Suppose that in 2025 you are working as a middle-level manager at a U.S. corporation that makes baby products. You and four other managers in your unit begin to hear reports from parents that two of your company's products, one particular crib and one particular stroller, have apparently caused injuries to their children after both products collapsed as toddlers were bouncing in them. There have been a dozen reports so far, eight for the stroller and four for the crib. The other four managers and you suspect that a hinge in both products might be to blame, but you also realize that several thousand cribs and strollers have been sold in the last year with this particular hinge, with only a dozen apparent injuries resulting. The other four managers decide to keep quiet about the parents' reports for two reasons. First, the number of reports is very few compared to the number of cribs and strollers that have been sold. Second, they worry that if they bring the reports to the attention of upper management, their jobs may be at risk.

Having learned about groupthink in your introduction to sociology course, you recognize that groupthink may be operating in your present situation in a way that could lead to further injuries of toddlers across the country. Yet you also think the two reasons the other managers have for remaining silent make some sense. What, if anything, do you do? Explain your answer.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Marriage and Family

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6.1: 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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6.2: 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 (*wáipá*) 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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6.3: 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).

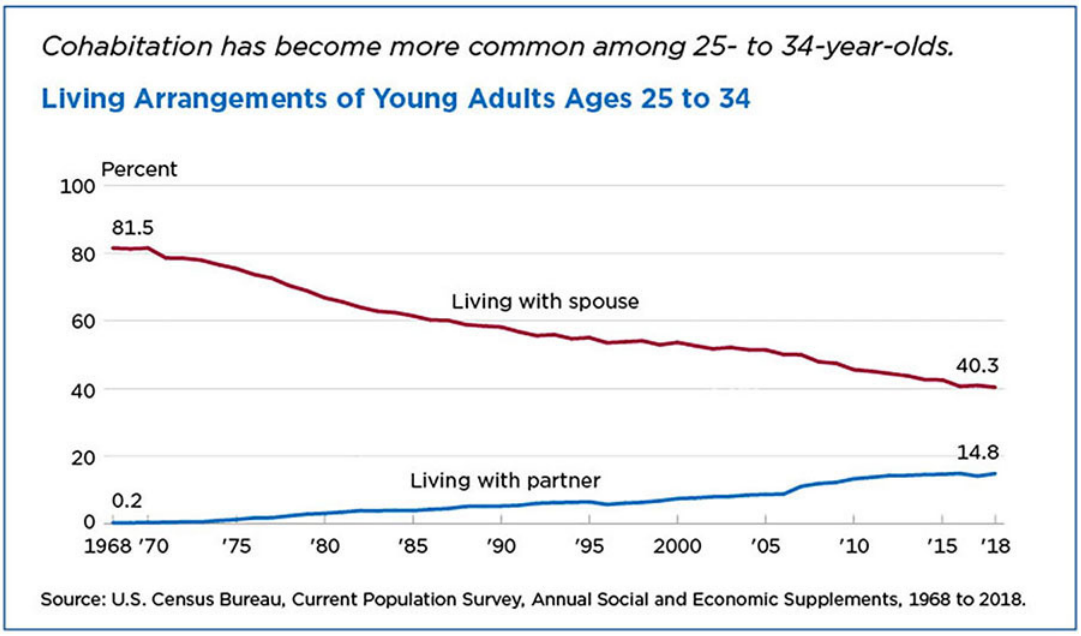


Figure 14.5: As shown by this graph of marital status percentages among young adults, more young people are choosing to delay or opt out of marriage, while the number of people living with a partner has increased. The overall number of people living with either a spouse or a partner has also declined. (Credit: U.S. Census Bureau)



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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6.4: 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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6.5: Key Terms

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

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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6.6: 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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6.7: 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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6.8: 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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6.9: 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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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Education and Religion

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7.1: 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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7.2: 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 7.2.1: 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.

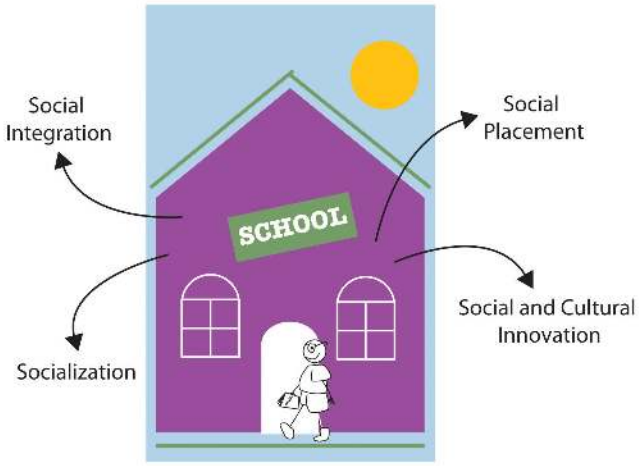


Figure **7.2.1**: The Functions of Education. Schools ideally perform many important functions in modern society. These include socialization, social integration, social placement, and social and cultural innovation.

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 **7.2.3**: 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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7.3: 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.

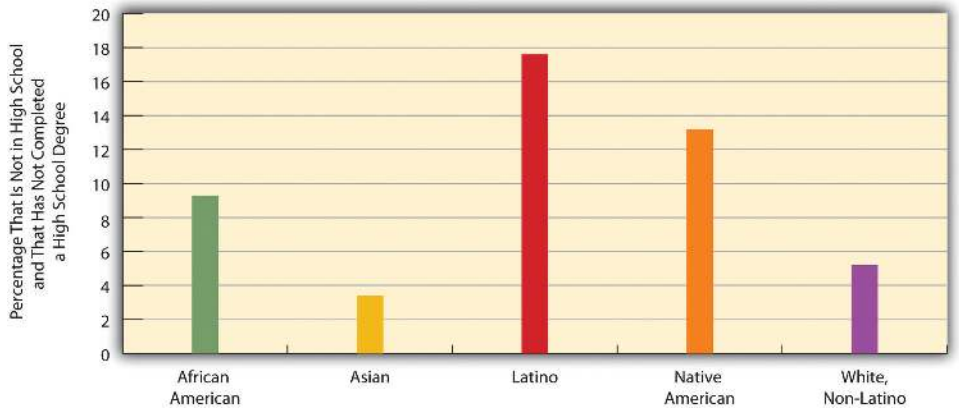


Figure **7.3.1**: Race, Ethnicity, and High School Dropout Rate, 16–24-Year-Olds, 2009. Source: Data from Aud, S., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., & Tahan, K. (2011). The condition of education 2011 (NCES 2011-033). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

Figure **7.3.1** 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 **7.3.2** 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 **7.3.3** shows, this percentage varies significantly, with African Americans and Latinos least likely to have a degree.

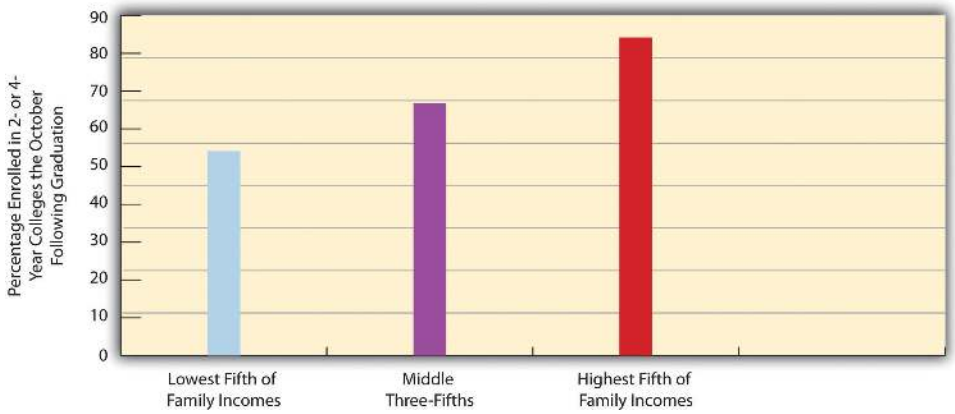


Figure **7.3.2**: Family Income and Percentage of High School Graduates Who Attend College Immediately After Graduation, 2009Source: Data from Aud, S., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., & Tahan, K. (2011). The condition of education 2011 (NCES 2011-033). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

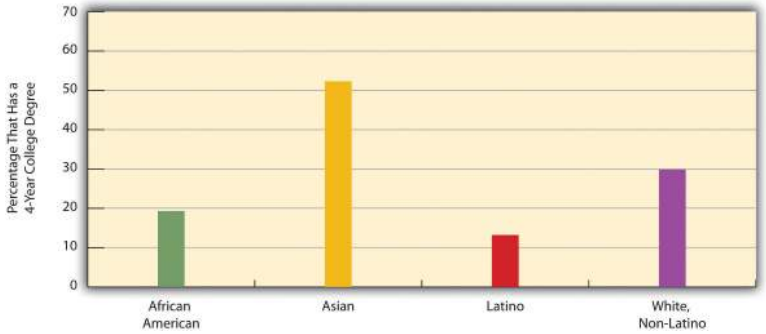


Figure **7.3.3**: Race, Ethnicity, and Percentage of Persons 25 or Older With a 4-Year College Degree, 2009Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

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 **7.3.4** "Percentage of All Bachelor's Degrees Received by Women, 1960–2009").

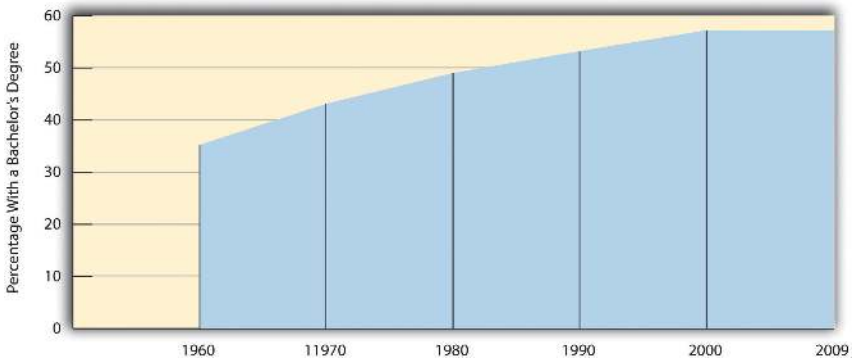


Figure **7.3.4**: Percentage of All Bachelor's Degrees Received by Women, 1960–2009. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

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 **7.3.5**. 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.

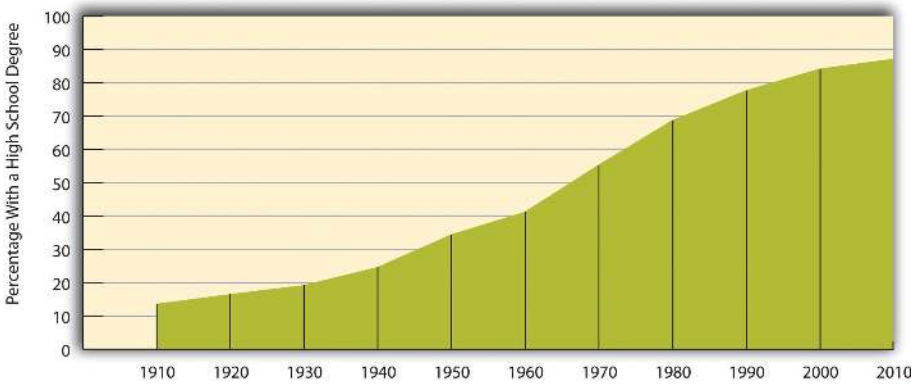


Figure **7.3.5**: Percentage of Population 25 or Older With at Least a High School Degree, 1910–2010. Source: Data from Snyder, T. D., & Dillow, S. A. (2011). Digest of education statistics 2010. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

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 **7.3.6**). 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.

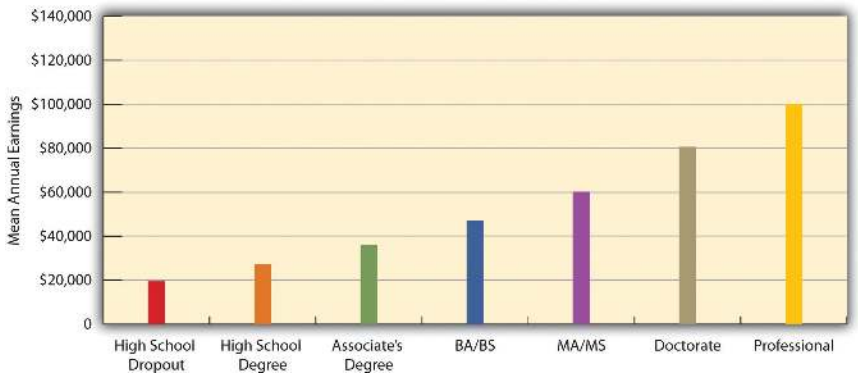


Figure **7.3.6**: Educational Attainment and Mean Annual Earnings, 2009Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

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 **7.3.7**, 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.

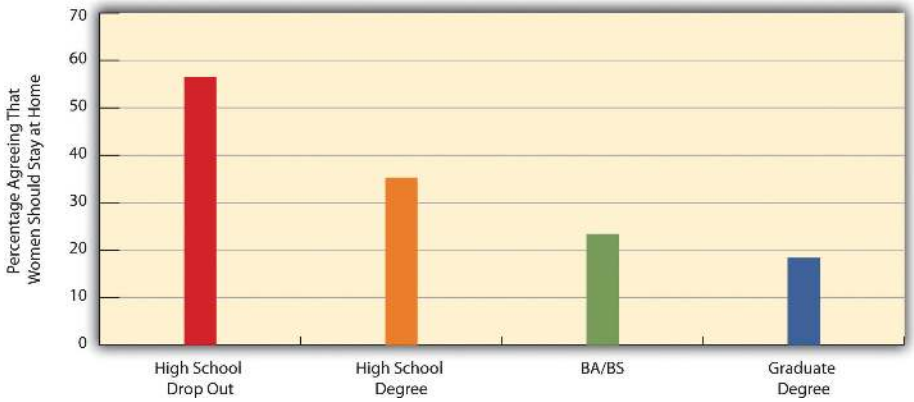


Figure **7.3.7**: Education and Agreement That "It Is Much Better for Everyone Involved if the Man Is the Achiever Outside the Home and the Woman Takes Care of the Home and Family". Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

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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7.4: 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 **7.4.1**: 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 *school 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 **7.4.2**: 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 *strong* 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 Times*, 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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7.5: 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 **7.5.1**: 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 **7.5.1** summarizes what these perspectives say.

Table **7.5.1**: 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.
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 7.5.2: 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. © Thinkstock

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 **7.5.3**: 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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7.6: 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 **7.6.1**). 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.

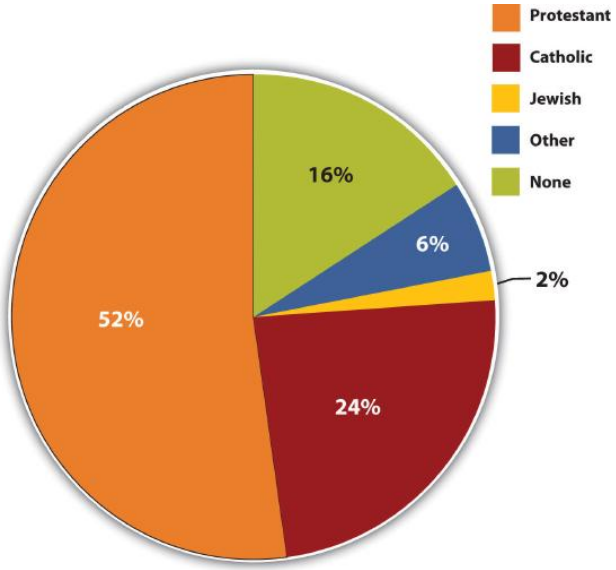


Figure **7.6.1**: Religious Preference in the United States. Source: Data from Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. (2008). U.S. religious landscape survey. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

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 **7.6.2**: 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 **7.6.3**), 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.

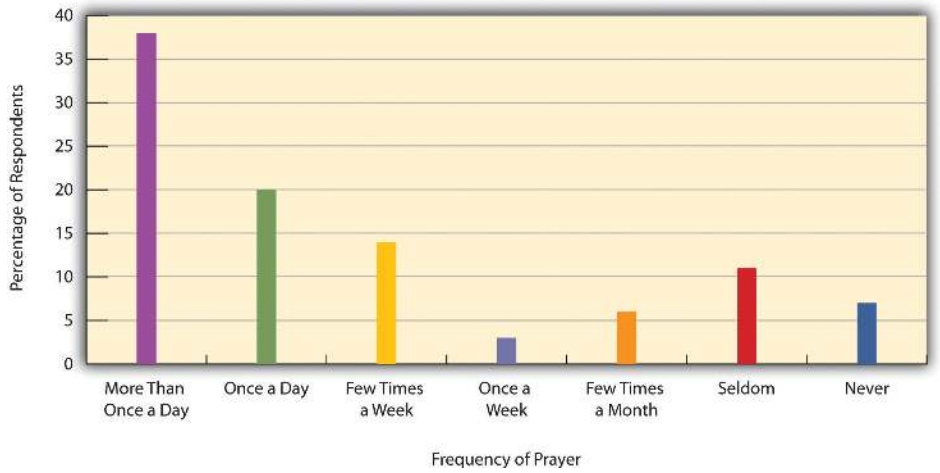


Figure **7.6.3**: Frequency of Prayer. Source: Data from Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. (2008). U.S. religious landscape survey. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

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 **7.6.1**, 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 **7.6.1**: 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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7.7: 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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7.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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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Sociological Research

Social research is research conducted by social scientists following a systematic plan. Social research methodologies can be classified along a quantitative/qualitative dimension.

8.1: Introduction
8.2: Approaches to Sociological Research
8.3: Research Methods
8.4: Ethical Concerns
8.5: Key Terms
8.6: Section Summary
8.7: Section Quiz
8.8: Short Answer
8.9: Further Research
8.10: References

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8.1: Introduction



Figure 2.1: Many believe that crime rates go up during the full moon, but scientific research does not support this conclusion. (Credit: Arman Thanvir/flickr.)

Chapter Outline

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research
2.2 Research Methods
2.3 Ethical Concerns

As sociology made its way into American universities, scholars developed it into a science that relies on research to build a body of knowledge. Sociologists began collecting data (observations and documentation) and applying the scientific method or an interpretative framework to increase understanding of societies and social interactions.

Our observations about social situations often incorporate biases based on our own views and limited data. To avoid subjectivity, sociologists conduct experiments or studies that gather and analyze empirical evidence from direct experience. Peers review the conclusions from this research and often repeat the experiments or studies or apply them to other contexts in order to validate these conclusions. Examples of peer-reviewed research are found in scholarly journals.

Consider a study on the relationship between COVID-19 and crime rates published in *Crime Science*, a scholarly journal. Researchers hypothesized that COVID-19 stay-at-home restrictions would lead to a drop both in street crimes and home burglaries. Researchers collected the data Swedish police used to track and project future crimes. They found that assaults, pickpocketing and burglary had decreased significantly (Gerell, Kardell, and Kindgren, 2020). In this way, researchers used empirical evidence and statistical analysis to answer the question how did COVID-19 restrictions impact crime rates. In this chapter, we will explore the approaches and methods sociologists use to conduct studies like this one.

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8.2: Approaches to Sociological Research

Learning Objectives

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

- Define and describe the scientific method.
- Explain how the scientific method is used in sociological research.
- Describe the function and importance of an interpretive framework.
- Describe the differences in accuracy, reliability and validity in a research study.

When sociologists apply the sociological perspective and begin to ask questions, no topic is off limits. Every aspect of human behavior is a source of possible investigation. Sociologists question the world that humans have created and live in. They notice patterns of behavior as people move through that world. Using sociological methods and systematic research within the framework of the scientific method and a scholarly interpretive perspective, sociologists have discovered social patterns in the workplace that have transformed industries, in families that have enlightened family members, and in education that have aided structural changes in classrooms.

Sociologists often begin the research process by asking a question about how or why things happen in this world. It might be a unique question about a new trend or an old question about a common aspect of life. Once the question is formed, the sociologist proceeds through an in-depth process to answer it. In deciding how to design that process, the researcher may adopt a scientific approach or an interpretive framework. The following sections describe these approaches to knowledge.

The Scientific Method

Sociologists make use of tried and true methods of research, such as experiments, surveys, and field research. But humans and their social interactions are so diverse that these interactions can seem impossible to chart or explain. It might seem that science is about discoveries and chemical reactions or about proving ideas right or wrong rather than about exploring the nuances of human behavior.

However, this is exactly why scientific models work for studying human behavior. A scientific process of research establishes parameters that help make sure results are objective and accurate. Scientific methods provide limitations and boundaries that focus a study and organize its results.

The scientific method involves developing and testing theories about the social world based on empirical evidence. It is defined by its commitment to systematic observation of the empirical world and strives to be objective, critical, skeptical, and logical. It involves a series of six prescribed steps that have been established over centuries of scientific scholarship.

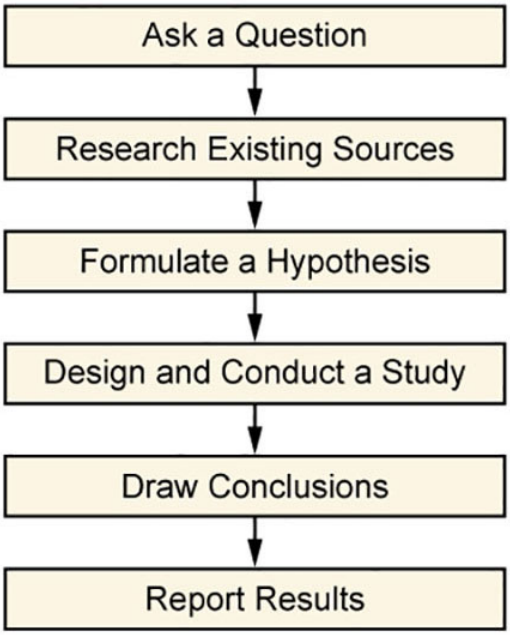


Figure 2.2: The Scientific Method. 6 steps of the scientific method are an essential tool in research.

Sociological research does not reduce knowledge to right or wrong facts. Results of studies tend to provide people with insights they did not have before—explanations of human behaviors and social practices and access to knowledge of other cultures, rituals and beliefs, or trends and attitudes.

In general, sociologists tackle questions about the role of social characteristics in outcomes or results. For example, how do different communities fare in terms of psychological well-being, community cohesiveness, range of vocation, wealth, crime rates, and so on? Are communities functioning smoothly? Sociologists often look between the cracks to discover obstacles to meeting basic human needs. They might also study environmental influences and patterns of behavior that lead to crime, substance abuse, divorce, poverty, unplanned pregnancies, or illness. And, because sociological studies are not all focused on negative behaviors or challenging situations, social researchers might study vacation trends, healthy eating habits, neighborhood organizations, higher education patterns, games, parks, and exercise habits.

Sociologists can use the scientific method not only to collect but also to interpret and analyze data. They deliberately apply scientific logic and objectivity. They are interested in—but not attached to—the results. They work outside of their own political or social agendas. This does not mean researchers do not have their own personalities, complete with preferences and opinions. But sociologists deliberately use the scientific method to maintain as much objectivity, focus, and consistency as possible in collecting and analyzing data in research studies.

With its systematic approach, the scientific method has proven useful in shaping sociological studies. The scientific method provides a systematic, organized series of steps that help ensure objectivity and consistency in exploring a social problem. They provide the means for accuracy, reliability, and validity. In the end, the scientific method provides a shared basis for discussion and analysis (Merton 1963). Typically, the scientific method has 6 steps which are described below.

Step 1: Ask a Question or Find a Research Topic

The first step of the scientific method is to ask a question, select a problem, and identify the specific area of interest. The topic should be narrow enough to study within a geographic location and time frame. “Are societies capable of sustained happiness?” would be too vague. The question should also be broad enough to have universal merit. “What do personal hygiene habits reveal about the values of students at XYZ High School?” would be too narrow. Sociologists strive to frame questions that examine well-defined patterns and relationships.

In a hygiene study, for instance, hygiene could be defined as “personal habits to maintain physical appearance (as opposed to health),” and a researcher might ask, “How do differing personal hygiene habits reflect the cultural value placed on appearance?”

Step 2: Review the Literature/Research Existing Sources

The next step researchers undertake is to conduct background research through a literature review, which is a review of any existing similar or related studies. A visit to the library, a thorough online search, and a survey of academic journals will uncover existing research about the topic of study. This step helps researchers gain a broad understanding of work previously conducted, identify gaps in understanding of the topic, and position their own research to build on prior knowledge. Researchers—including student researchers—are responsible for correctly citing existing sources they use in a study or that inform their work. While it is fine to borrow previously published material (as long as it enhances a unique viewpoint), it must be referenced properly and never plagiarized.

To study crime, a researcher might also sort through existing data from the court system, police database, prison information, interviews with criminals, guards, wardens, etc. It's important to examine this information in addition to existing research to determine how these resources might be used to fill holes in existing knowledge. Reviewing existing sources educates researchers and helps refine and improve a research study design.

Step 3: Formulate a Hypothesis

A hypothesis is an explanation for a phenomenon based on a conjecture about the relationship between the phenomenon and one or more causal factors. In sociology, the hypothesis will often predict how one form of human behavior influences another. For example, a hypothesis might be in the form of an "if, then statement." Let's relate this to our topic of crime: If unemployment increases, then the crime rate will increase.

In scientific research, we formulate hypotheses to include an independent variables (IV), which are the *cause* of the change, and a dependent variable (DV), which is the *effect*, or thing that is changed. In the example above, unemployment is the independent variable and the crime rate is the dependent variable.

In a sociological study, the researcher would establish one form of human behavior as the independent variable and observe the influence it has on a dependent variable. How does gender (the independent variable) affect rate of income (the dependent variable)? How does one's religion (the independent variable) affect family size (the dependent variable)? How is social class (the dependent variable) affected by level of education (the independent variable)?

Table 2.1 Examples of Dependent and Independent Variables: Typically, the independent variable causes the dependent variable to change in some way.

Hypothesis	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
The greater the availability of affordable housing, the lower the homeless rate.	Affordable Housing	Homeless Rate
The greater the availability of math tutoring, the higher the math grades.	Math Tutoring	Math Grades
The greater the police patrol presence, the safer the neighborhood.	Police Patrol Presence	Safer Neighborhood
The greater the factory lighting, the higher the productivity.	Factory Lighting	Productivity
The greater the amount of media coverage, the higher the public awareness.	Observation	Public Awareness

Taking an example from Table 12.1, a researcher might hypothesize that teaching children proper hygiene (the independent variable) will boost their sense of self-esteem (the dependent variable). Note, however, this hypothesis can also work the other way around. A sociologist might predict that increasing a child's sense of self-esteem (the independent variable) will increase or improve habits of hygiene (now the dependent variable). Identifying the independent and dependent variables is very important. As the hygiene example shows, simply identifying related two topics or variables is not enough. Their prospective relationship must be part of the hypothesis.

Step 4: Design and Conduct a Study

Researchers design studies to maximize reliability, which refers to how likely research results are to be replicated if the study is reproduced. Reliability increases the likelihood that what happens to one person will happen to all people in a group or what will happen in one situation will happen in another. Cooking is a science. When you follow a recipe and measure ingredients with a cooking tool, such as a measuring cup, the same results is obtained as long as the cook follows the same recipe and uses the same type of tool. The measuring cup introduces accuracy into the process. If a person uses a less accurate tool, such as their hand, to measure ingredients rather than a cup, the same result may not be replicated. Accurate tools and methods increase reliability.

Researchers also strive for validity, which refers to how well the study measures what it was designed to measure. To produce reliable and valid results, sociologists develop an operational definition, that is, they define each concept, or variable, in terms of the physical or concrete steps it takes to objectively measure it. The operational definition identifies an observable condition of the concept. By operationalizing the concept, all researchers can collect data in a systematic or replicable manner. Moreover, researchers can determine whether the experiment or method validly represent the phenomenon they intended to study.

A study asking how tutoring improves grades, for instance, might define "tutoring" as "one-on-one assistance by an expert in the field, hired by an educational institution." However, one researcher might define a "good" grade as a C or better, while another uses a B+ as a starting point for "good." For the results to be replicated and gain acceptance within the broader scientific community, researchers would have to use a standard operational definition. These definitions set limits and establish cut-off points that ensure consistency and replicability in a study.

We will explore research methods in greater detail in the next section of this chapter.

Step 5: Draw Conclusions

After constructing the research design, sociologists collect, tabulate or categorize, and analyze data to formulate conclusions. If the analysis supports the hypothesis, researchers can discuss the implications of the results for the theory or policy solution that they were addressing. If the analysis does not support the hypothesis, researchers may consider repeating the experiment or think of ways to improve their procedure.

However, even when results contradict a sociologist's prediction of a study's outcome, these results still contribute to sociological understanding. Sociologists analyze general patterns in response to a study, but they are equally interested in exceptions to patterns. In a study of education, a researcher might predict that high school dropouts have a hard time finding rewarding careers. While many assume that the higher the education, the higher the salary and degree of career happiness, there are certainly exceptions. People with little education have had stunning careers, and people with advanced degrees have had trouble finding work. A sociologist prepares a hypothesis knowing that results may substantiate or contradict it.

Sociologists carefully keep in mind how operational definitions and research designs impact the results as they draw conclusions. Consider the concept of "increase of crime," which might be defined as the percent increase in crime from last week to this week, as in the study of Swedish crime discussed above. Yet the data used to evaluate "increase of crime" might be limited by many factors: who commits the crime, where the crimes are committed, or what type of crime is committed. If the data is gathered for "crimes committed in Houston, Texas in zip code 77021," then it may not be generalizable to crimes committed in rural areas outside of major cities like Houston. If data is collected about vandalism, it may not be generalizable to assault.

Step 6: Report Results

Researchers report their results at conferences and in academic journals. These results are then subjected to the scrutiny of other sociologists in the field. Before the conclusions of a study become widely accepted, the studies are often repeated in the same or different environments. In this way, sociological theories and knowledge develops as the relationships between social phenomenon are established in broader contexts and different circumstances.

Interpretive Framework

While many sociologists rely on empirical data and the scientific method as a research approach, others operate from an interpretive framework. While systematic, this approach doesn't follow the hypothesis-testing model that seeks to find generalizable results. Instead, an interpretive framework, sometimes referred to as an *interpretive perspective*, seeks to understand

social worlds from the point of view of participants, which leads to in-depth knowledge or understanding about the human experience.

Interpretive research is generally more descriptive or narrative in its findings. Rather than formulating a hypothesis and method for testing it, an interpretive researcher will develop approaches to explore the topic at hand that may involve a significant amount of direct observation or interaction with subjects including storytelling. This type of researcher learns through the process and sometimes adjusts the research methods or processes midway to optimize findings as they evolve.

Critical Sociology

Critical sociology focuses on deconstruction of existing sociological research and theory. Informed by the work of Karl Marx, scholars known collectively as the Frankfurt School proposed that social science, as much as any academic pursuit, is embedded in the system of power constituted by the set of class, caste, race, gender, and other relationships that exist in the society. Consequently, it cannot be treated as purely objective. Critical sociologists view theories, methods, and the conclusions as serving one of two purposes: they can either legitimate and rationalize systems of social power and oppression or liberate humans from inequality and restriction on human freedom. Deconstruction can involve data collection, but the analysis of this data is not empirical or positivist.

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8.3: Research Methods

Learning Objectives

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

- Recall the 6 Steps of the Scientific Method
- Differentiate between four kinds of research methods: surveys, field research, experiments, and secondary data analysis.
- Explain the appropriateness of specific research approaches for specific topics.

Sociologists examine the social world, see a problem or interesting pattern, and set out to study it. They use research methods to design a study. Planning the research design is a key step in any sociological study. Sociologists generally choose from widely used methods of social investigation: **primary source data collection** such as survey, participant observation, ethnography, case study, unobtrusive observations, experiment, and secondary data analysis, or use of existing sources. Every research method comes with plusses and minuses, and the topic of study strongly influences which method or methods are put to use. When you are conducting research think about the best way to gather or obtain knowledge about your topic, think of yourself as an architect. An architect needs a blueprint to build a house, as a sociologist your blueprint is your research design including your data collection method.

When entering a particular social environment, a researcher must be careful. There are times to remain anonymous and times to be overt. There are times to conduct interviews and times to simply observe. Some participants need to be thoroughly informed; others should not know they are being observed. A researcher wouldn't stroll into a crime-ridden neighborhood at midnight, calling out, "Any gang members around?"

Making sociologists' presence invisible is not always realistic for other reasons. That option is not available to a researcher studying prison behaviors, early education, or the Ku Klux Klan. Researchers can't just stroll into prisons, kindergarten classrooms, or Klan meetings and unobtrusively observe behaviors or attract attention. In situations like these, other methods are needed. Researchers choose methods that best suit their study topics, protect research participants or subjects, and that fit with their overall approaches to research.

Surveys

As a research method, a survey collects data from subjects who respond to a series of questions about behaviors and opinions, often in the form of a questionnaire or an interview. The survey is one of the most widely used scientific research methods. The standard survey format allows individuals a level of anonymity in which they can express personal ideas.

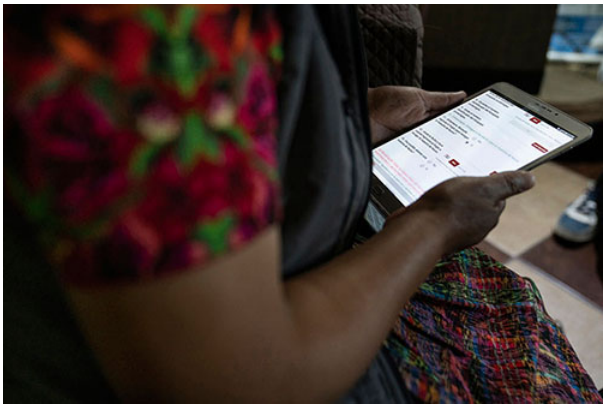


Figure 2.3: Questionnaires are a common research method. (Credit: CDC Global/flickr)

At some point, most people in the United States respond to some type of survey. The 2020 U.S. Census is an excellent example of a large-scale survey intended to gather sociological data. Since 1790, United States has conducted a survey consisting of six questions to received demographical data pertaining to residents. The questions pertain to the demographics of the residents who live in the United States. Currently, the Census is received by residents in the United Stated and five territories and consists of 12 questions.

Not all surveys are considered sociological research, however, and many surveys people commonly encounter focus on identifying marketing needs and strategies rather than testing a hypothesis or contributing to social science knowledge. Questions such as, "How many hot dogs do you eat in a month?" or "Were the staff helpful?" are not usually designed as scientific research. The Nielsen Ratings determine the popularity of television programming through scientific market research. However, polls conducted by television programs such as *American Idol* or *So You Think You Can Dance* cannot be generalized, because they are administered to an unrepresentative population, a specific show's audience. You might receive polls through your cell phones or emails, from grocery stores, restaurants, and retail stores. They often provide you incentives for completing the survey.

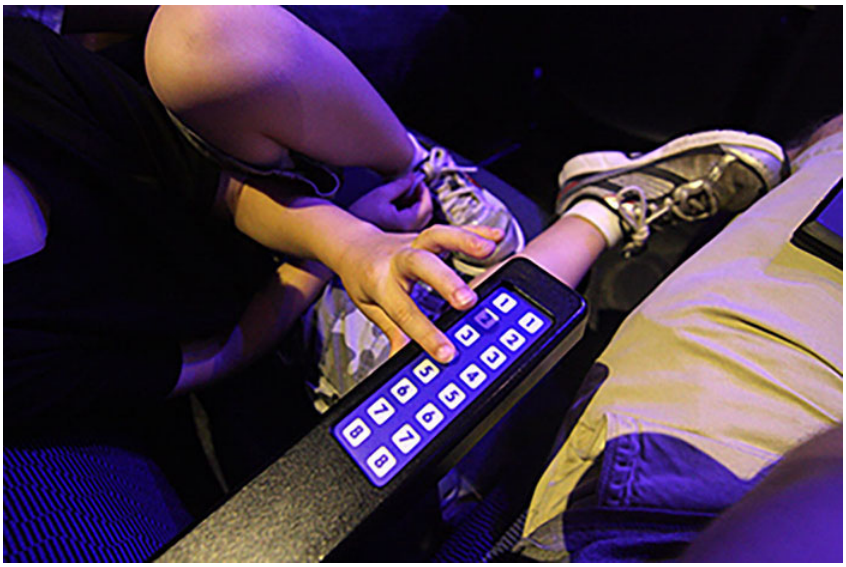


Figure 2.4: Real-time surveys are common in classrooms, live-audience events, and even popular media. Twitter polls have often replaced physical devices such as the one pictured. (Credit: Sam Howzit/flickr)

Sociologists conduct surveys under controlled conditions for specific purposes. Surveys gather different types of information from people. While surveys are not great at capturing the ways people really behave in social situations, they are a great method for discovering how people feel, think, and act—or at least how they say they feel, think, and act. Surveys can track preferences for presidential candidates or reported individual behaviors (such as sleeping, driving, or texting habits) or information such as employment status, income, and education levels.

A survey targets a specific population, people who are the focus of a study, such as college athletes, international students, or teenagers living with type 1 (juvenile-onset) diabetes. Most researchers choose to survey a small sector of the population, or a sample, a manageable number of subjects who *represent* a larger population. The success of a study depends on how well a population is represented by the sample. In a random sample, every person in a population has the same chance of being chosen for the study. As a result, a Gallup Poll, if conducted as a nationwide random sampling, should be able to provide an accurate estimate of public opinion whether it contacts 2,000 or 10,000 people.

After selecting subjects, the researcher develops a specific plan to ask questions and record responses. It is important to inform subjects of the nature and purpose of the survey up front. If they agree to participate, researchers thank subjects and offer them a chance to see the results of the study if they are interested. The researcher presents the subjects with an instrument, which is a means of gathering the information.

A common instrument is a questionnaire. Subjects often answer a series of **closed-ended questions**. The researcher might ask yes-or-no or multiple-choice questions, allowing subjects to choose possible responses to each question. This kind of questionnaire collects quantitative data—data in numerical form that can be counted and statistically analyzed. Just count up the number of "yes" and "no" responses or correct answers, and chart them into percentages.

Questionnaires can also ask more complex questions with more complex answers—beyond "yes," "no," or checkbox options. These types of inquiries use **open-ended questions** that require short essay responses. Participants willing to take the time to write those answers might convey personal religious beliefs, political views, goals, or morals. The answers are subjective and vary from person to person. *How do plan to use your college education?*

Some topics that investigate internal thought processes are impossible to observe directly and are difficult to discuss honestly in a public forum. People are more likely to share honest answers if they can respond to questions anonymously. This type of personal explanation is qualitative data—conveyed through words. Qualitative information is harder to organize and tabulate. The researcher will end up with a wide range of responses, some of which may be surprising. The benefit of written opinions, though, is the wealth of in-depth material that they provide.

An interview is a one-on-one conversation between the researcher and the subject, and it is a way of conducting surveys on a topic. However, participants are free to respond as they wish, without being limited by predetermined choices. In the back-and-forth conversation of an interview, a researcher can ask for clarification, spend more time on a subtopic, or ask additional questions. In an interview, a subject will ideally feel free to open up and answer questions that are often complex. There are no right or wrong answers. The subject might not even know how to answer the questions honestly.

Questions such as “How does society’s view of alcohol consumption influence your decision whether or not to take your first sip of alcohol?” or “Did you feel that the divorce of your parents would put a social stigma on your family?” involve so many factors that the answers are difficult to categorize. A researcher needs to avoid steering or prompting the subject to respond in a specific way; otherwise, the results will prove to be unreliable. The researcher will also benefit from gaining a subject’s trust, from empathizing or commiserating with a subject, and from listening without judgment.

Surveys often collect both quantitative and qualitative data. For example, a researcher interviewing people who are incarcerated might receive quantitative data, such as demographics – race, age, sex, that can be analyzed statistically. For example, the researcher might discover that 20 percent of incarcerated people are above the age of 50. The researcher might also collect qualitative data, such as why people take advantage of educational opportunities during their sentence and other explanatory information.

The survey can be carried out online, over the phone, by mail, or face-to-face. When researchers collect data outside a laboratory, library, or workplace setting, they are conducting field research, which is our next topic.

Field Research

The work of sociology rarely happens in limited, confined spaces. Rather, sociologists go out into the world. They meet subjects where they live, work, and play. Field research refers to gathering primary data from a natural environment. To conduct field research, the sociologist must be willing to step into new environments and observe, participate, or experience those worlds. In field work, the sociologists, rather than the subjects, are the ones out of their element.

The researcher interacts with or observes people and gathers data along the way. The key point in field research is that it takes place in the subject’s natural environment, whether it’s a coffee shop or tribal village, a homeless shelter or the DMV, a hospital, airport, mall, or beach resort.



Figure 2.5: Sociological researchers travel across countries and cultures to interact with and observe subjects in their natural environments. (Credit: IMLS Digital Collections and Content/flickr)

While field research often begins in a specific *setting*, the study's purpose is to observe specific *behaviors* in that setting. Field work is optimal for observing *how* people think and behave. It seeks to understand *why* they behave that way. However, researchers may struggle to narrow down cause and effect when there are so many variables floating around in a natural environment. And while field research looks for correlation, its small sample size does not allow for establishing a causal relationship between two variables. Indeed, much of the data gathered in sociology do not identify a cause and effect but a correlation.

Sociology in the Real World: Beyoncé and Lady Gaga as Sociological Subjects



Figure 2.6: Researchers have used surveys and participant observations to accumulate data on Lady Gaga and Beyonce as multifaceted performers. (Credit a: John Robert Chartlon/flickr, b: Kristopher Harris/flickr.)

Sociologist have studied Lady Gaga and Beyoncé and their impact on music, movies, social media, fan participation, and social equality. In their studies, researchers have used several research methods including secondary analysis, participant observation, and surveys from concert participants.

In their study, Click, Lee & Holiday (2013) interviewed 45 Lady Gaga fans who utilized social media to communicate with the artist. These fans viewed Lady Gaga as a mirror of themselves and a source of inspiration. Like her, they embrace not being a part of mainstream culture. Many of Lady Gaga's fans are members of the LGBTQ community. They see the "song "Born This Way" as a rallying cry and answer her calls for "Paws Up" with a physical expression of solidarity—outstretched arms and fingers bent and curled to resemble monster claws."

Sascha Buchanan (2019) made use of participant observation to study the relationship between two fan groups, that of Beyoncé and that of Rihanna. She observed award shows sponsored by iHeartRadio, MTV EMA, and BET that pit one group against another as they competed for Best Fan Army, Biggest Fans, and FANdemonium. Buchanan argues that the media thus sustains a myth of rivalry between the two most commercially successful Black women vocal artists.

Participant Observation

In 2000, a comic writer named Rodney Rothman wanted an insider's view of white-collar work. He slipped into the sterile, high-rise offices of a New York "dot com" agency. Every day for two weeks, he pretended to work there. His main purpose was simply to see whether anyone would notice him or challenge his presence. No one did. The receptionist greeted him. The employees smiled and said good morning. Rothman was accepted as part of the team. He even went so far as to claim a desk, inform the receptionist of his whereabouts, and attend a meeting. He published an article about his experience in *The New Yorker* called "My Fake Job" (2000). Later, he was discredited for allegedly fabricating some details of the story and *The New Yorker* issued an apology. However, Rothman's entertaining article still offered fascinating descriptions of the inside workings of a "dot com" company and exemplified the lengths to which a writer, or a sociologist, will go to uncover material.

Rothman had conducted a form of study called participant observation, in which researchers join people and participate in a group's routine activities for the purpose of observing them within that context. This method lets researchers experience a specific aspect of social life. A researcher might go to great lengths to get a firsthand look into a trend, institution, or behavior. A researcher might work as a waitress in a diner, experience homelessness for several weeks, or ride along with police officers as they patrol their regular beat. Often, these researchers try to blend in seamlessly with the population they study, and they may not disclose their true identity or purpose if they feel it would compromise the results of their research.



Figure 2.7: Is she a working waitress or a sociologist conducting a study using participant observation? A field researcher may take a job or take other steps to get firsthand knowledge of their subjects. (Credit: Gareth Williams/flickr.)

At the beginning of a field study, researchers might have a question: "What really goes on in the kitchen of the most popular diner on campus?" or "What is it like to be homeless?" Participant observation is a useful method if the researcher wants to explore a certain environment from the inside.

Field researchers simply want to observe and learn. In such a setting, the researcher will be alert and open minded to whatever happens, recording all observations accurately. Soon, as patterns emerge, questions will become more specific, observations will lead to hypotheses, and hypotheses will guide the researcher in analyzing data and generating results.

In a study of small towns in the United States conducted by sociological researchers John S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, the team altered their purpose as they gathered data. They initially planned to focus their study on the role of religion in U.S. towns. As they gathered observations, they realized that the effect of industrialization and urbanization was the more relevant topic of this social group. The Lynds did not change their methods, but they revised the purpose of their study.

This shaped the structure of *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*, their published results (Lynd & Lynd, 1929).

The Lynds were upfront about their mission. The townspeople of Muncie, Indiana, knew why the researchers were in their midst. But some sociologists prefer not to alert people to their presence. The main advantage of covert participant observation is that it allows the researcher access to authentic, natural behaviors of a group's members. The challenge, however, is gaining access to a setting without disrupting the pattern of others' behavior. Becoming an inside member of a group, organization, or subculture takes

time and effort. Researchers must pretend to be something they are not. The process could involve role playing, making contacts, networking, or applying for a job.

Once inside a group, some researchers spend months or even years pretending to be one of the people they are observing. However, as observers, they cannot get too involved. They must keep their purpose in mind and apply the sociological perspective. That way, they illuminate social patterns that are often unrecognized. Because information gathered during participant observation is mostly qualitative, rather than quantitative, the end results are often descriptive or interpretive. The researcher might present findings in an article or book and describe what he or she witnessed and experienced.

This type of research is what journalist Barbara Ehrenreich conducted for her book *Nickel and Dimed*. One day over lunch with her editor, Ehrenreich mentioned an idea. *How can people exist on minimum-wage work? How do low-income workers get by?* she wondered. *Someone should do a study*. To her surprise, her editor responded, *Why don't you do it?*

That's how Ehrenreich found herself joining the ranks of the working class. For several months, she left her comfortable home and lived and worked among people who lacked, for the most part, higher education and marketable job skills. Undercover, she applied for and worked minimum wage jobs as a waitress, a cleaning woman, a nursing home aide, and a retail chain employee. During her participant observation, she used only her income from those jobs to pay for food, clothing, transportation, and shelter.

She discovered the obvious, that it's almost impossible to get by on minimum wage work. She also experienced and observed attitudes many middle and upper-class people never think about. She witnessed firsthand the treatment of working class employees. She saw the extreme measures people take to make ends meet and to survive. She described fellow employees who held two or three jobs, worked seven days a week, lived in cars, could not pay to treat chronic health conditions, got randomly fired, submitted to drug tests, and moved in and out of homeless shelters. She brought aspects of that life to light, describing difficult working conditions and the poor treatment that low-wage workers suffer.

The book she wrote upon her return to her real life as a well-paid writer, has been widely read and used in many college classrooms.



Figure 2.8: Field research happens in real locations. What type of environment do work spaces foster? What would a sociologist discover after blending in? (Credit: Lyncconf Games/flickr)

Ethnography

Ethnography is the immersion of the researcher in the natural setting of an entire social community to observe and experience their everyday life and culture. The heart of an ethnographic study focuses on how subjects view their own social standing and how they understand themselves in relation to a social group.

An ethnographic study might observe, for example, a small U.S. fishing town, an Inuit community, a village in Thailand, a Buddhist monastery, a private boarding school, or an amusement park. These places all have borders. People live, work, study, or vacation within those borders. People are there for a certain reason and therefore behave in certain ways and respect certain cultural norms. An ethnographer would commit to spending a determined amount of time studying every aspect of the chosen place, taking in as much as possible.

A sociologist studying a tribe in the Amazon might watch the way villagers go about their daily lives and then write a paper about it. To observe a spiritual retreat center, an ethnographer might sign up for a retreat and attend as a guest for an extended stay, observe and record data, and collate the material into results.

Institutional Ethnography

Institutional ethnography is an extension of basic ethnographic research principles that focuses intentionally on everyday concrete social relationships. Developed by Canadian sociologist Dorothy E. Smith (1990), institutional ethnography is often considered a feminist-inspired approach to social analysis and primarily considers women's experiences within male- dominated societies and power structures. Smith's work is seen to challenge sociology's exclusion of women, both academically and in the study of women's lives (Fenstermaker, n.d.).

Historically, social science research tended to objectify women and ignore their experiences except as viewed from the male perspective. Modern feminists note that describing women, and other marginalized groups, as subordinates helps those in authority

maintain their own dominant positions (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada n.d.). Smith's three major works explored what she called "the conceptual practices of power" and are still considered seminal works in feminist theory and ethnography (Fensternmaker n.d.).

Sociological Research: The Making of Middletown: A Study in Modern U.S. Culture

In 1924, a young married couple named Robert and Helen Lynd undertook an unprecedented ethnography: to apply sociological methods to the study of one U.S. city in order to discover what "ordinary" people in the United States did and believed. Choosing Muncie, Indiana (population about 30,000) as their subject, they moved to the small town and lived there for eighteen months.

Ethnographers had been examining other cultures for decades—groups considered minorities or outsiders—like gangs, immigrants, and the poor. But no one had studied the so-called average American.

Recording interviews and using surveys to gather data, the Lynds objectively described what they observed. Researching existing sources, they compared Muncie in 1890 to the Muncie they observed in 1924. Most Muncie adults, they found, had grown up on farms but now lived in homes inside the city. As a result, the Lynds focused their study on the impact of industrialization and urbanization.

They observed that Muncie was divided into business and working class groups. They defined business class as dealing with abstract concepts and symbols, while working class people used tools to create concrete objects. The two classes led different lives with different goals and hopes. However, the Lynds observed, mass production offered both classes the same amenities. Like wealthy families, the working class was now able to own radios, cars, washing machines, telephones, vacuum cleaners, and refrigerators. This was an emerging material reality of the 1920s.

As the Lynds worked, they divided their manuscript into six chapters: Getting a Living, Making a Home, Training the Young, Using Leisure, Engaging in Religious Practices, and Engaging in Community Activities.

When the study was completed, the Lynds encountered a big problem. The Rockefeller Foundation, which had commissioned the book, claimed it was useless and refused to publish it. The Lynds asked if they could seek a publisher themselves.

Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture was not only published in 1929 but also became an instant bestseller, a status unheard of for a sociological study. The book sold out six printings in its first year of publication, and has never gone out of print (Caplow, Hicks, & Wattenberg. 2000).

Nothing like it had ever been done before. Middletown was reviewed on the front page of the New York Times. Readers in the 1920s and 1930s identified with the citizens of Muncie, Indiana, but they were equally fascinated by the sociological methods and the use of scientific data to define ordinary people in the United States. The book was proof that social data was important —and interesting—to the U.S. public.



Figure 2.9: A classroom in Muncie, Indiana, in 1917, five years before John and Helen Lynd began researching this "typical" U.S. community. (Credit: Don O'Brien/flickr)

Case Study

Sometimes a researcher wants to study one specific person or event. A case study is an in-depth analysis of a single event, situation, or individual. To conduct a case study, a researcher examines existing sources like documents and archival records, conducts interviews, engages in direct observation and even participant observation, if possible.

Researchers might use this method to study a single case of a foster child, drug lord, cancer patient, criminal, or rape victim. However, a major criticism of the case study as a method is that while offering depth on a topic, it does not provide enough evidence to form a generalized conclusion. In other words, it is difficult to make universal claims based on just one person, since one person does not verify a pattern. This is why most sociologists do not use case studies as a primary research method.

However, case studies are useful when the single case is unique. In these instances, a single case study can contribute tremendous incite. For example, a feral child, also called "wild child," is one who grows up isolated from human beings. Feral children grow up without social contact and language, which are elements crucial to a "civilized" child's development. These children mimic the behaviors and movements of animals, and often invent their own language. There are only about one hundred cases of "feral children" in the world.

As you may imagine, a feral child is a subject of great interest to researchers. Feral children provide unique information about child development because they have grown up outside of the parameters of "normal" growth and nurturing. And since there are very few feral children, the case study is the most appropriate method for researchers to use in studying the subject.

At age three, a Ukranian girl named Oxana Malaya suffered severe parental neglect. She lived in a shed with dogs, and she ate raw meat and scraps. Five years later, a neighbor called authorities and reported seeing a girl who ran on all fours, barking. Officials brought Oxana into society, where she was cared for and taught some human behaviors, but she never became fully socialized. She has been designated as unable to support herself and now lives in a mental institution (Grice 2011). Case studies like this offer a way for sociologists to collect data that may not be obtained by any other method.

Experiments

You have probably tested some of your own personal social theories. "If I study at night and review in the morning, I'll improve my retention skills." Or, "If I stop drinking soda, I'll feel better." Cause and effect. If this, then that. When you test the theory, your results either prove or disprove your hypothesis.

One way researchers test social theories is by conducting an experiment, meaning they investigate relationships to test a hypothesis —a scientific approach.

There are two main types of experiments: lab-based experiments and natural or field experiments. In a lab setting, the research can be controlled so that more data can be recorded in a limited amount of time. In a natural or field- based experiment, the time it takes to gather the data cannot be controlled but the information might be considered more accurate since it was collected without interference or intervention by the researcher.

As a research method, either type of sociological experiment is useful for testing *if-then* statements: *if* a particular thing happens (cause), *then* another particular thing will result (effect). To set up a lab-based experiment, sociologists create artificial situations that allow them to manipulate variables.

Classically, the sociologist selects a set of people with similar characteristics, such as age, class, race, or education. Those people are divided into two groups. One is the experimental group and the other is the control group. The **experimental group** is exposed to the independent variable(s) and the **control group** is not. To test the benefits of tutoring, for example, the sociologist might provide tutoring to the experimental group of students but not to the control group. Then both groups would be tested for differences in performance to see if tutoring had an effect on the experimental group of students. As you can imagine, in a case like this, the researcher would not want to jeopardize the accomplishments of either group of students, so the setting would be somewhat artificial. The test would not be for a grade reflected on their permanent record of a student, for example.

And if a researcher told the students they would be observed as part of a study on measuring the effectiveness of tutoring, the students might not behave naturally. This is called the Hawthorne effect—which occurs when people change their behavior because they know they are being watched as part of a study. The Hawthorne effect is unavoidable in some research studies because sociologists have to make the purpose of the study known. Subjects must be aware that they are being observed, and a certain amount of artificiality may result (Sonnenfeld 1985).

Sociological Research: An Experiment in Action



Figure 2.10: Sociologist Frances Heussenstamm conducted an experiment to explore the correlation between traffic stops and race-based bumper stickers. This issue of racial profiling remains a hot-button topic today. (Credit: dwightsghost/flickr)

A real-life example will help illustrate the experiment process. In 1971, Frances Heussenstamm, a sociology professor at California State University at Los Angeles, had a theory about police prejudice. To test her theory, she conducted an experiment. She chose fifteen students from three ethnic backgrounds: Black, White, and Hispanic. She chose students who routinely drove to and from campus along Los Angeles freeway routes, and who had had perfect driving records for longer than a year.

Next, she placed a Black Panther bumper sticker on each car. That sticker, a representation of a social value, was the independent variable. In the 1970s, the Black Panthers were a revolutionary group actively fighting racism. Heussenstamm

asked the students to follow their normal driving patterns. She wanted to see whether seeming support for the Black Panthers would change how these good drivers were treated by the police patrolling the highways. The dependent variable would be the number of traffic stops/citations.

The first arrest, for an incorrect lane change, was made two hours after the experiment began. One participant was pulled over three times in three days. He quit the study. After seventeen days, the fifteen drivers had collected a total of thirty-three traffic citations. The experiment was halted. The funding to pay traffic fines had run out, and so had the enthusiasm of the participants (Heussenstamm, 1971).

Secondary Data Analysis

While sociologists often engage in original research studies, they also contribute knowledge to the discipline through secondary data analysis. Secondary data does not result from firsthand research collected from primary sources, but are the already completed work of other researchers or data collected by an agency or organization. Sociologists might study works written by historians, economists, teachers, or early sociologists. They might search through periodicals, newspapers, or magazines, or organizational data from any period in history.

Using available information not only saves time and money but can also add depth to a study. Sociologists often interpret findings in a new way, a way that was not part of an author's original purpose or intention. To study how women were encouraged to act and behave in the 1960s, for example, a researcher might watch movies, televisions shows, and situation comedies from that period. Or to research changes in behavior and attitudes due to the emergence of television in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a sociologist would rely on new interpretations of secondary data. Decades from now, researchers will most likely conduct similar studies on the advent of mobile phones, the Internet, or social media.

Social scientists also learn by analyzing the research of a variety of agencies. Governmental departments and global groups, like the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics or the World Health Organization (WHO), publish studies with findings that are useful to sociologists. A public statistic like the foreclosure rate might be useful for studying the effects of a recession. A racial demographic profile might be compared with data on education funding to examine the resources accessible by different groups.

One of the advantages of secondary data like old movies or WHO statistics is that it is nonreactive research (or unobtrusive research), meaning that it does not involve direct contact with subjects and will not alter or influence people's behaviors. Unlike studies requiring direct contact with people, using previously published data does not require entering a population and the investment and risks inherent in that research process.

Using available data does have its challenges. Public records are not always easy to access. A researcher will need to do some legwork to track them down and gain access to records. To guide the search through a vast library of materials and avoid wasting time reading unrelated sources, sociologists employ content analysis, applying a systematic approach to record and value information gleaned from secondary data as they relate to the study at hand.

Also, in some cases, there is no way to verify the accuracy of existing data. It is easy to count how many drunk drivers, for example, are pulled over by the police. But how many are not? While it's possible to discover the percentage of teenage students who drop out of high school, it might be more challenging to determine the number who return to school or get their GED later.

Another problem arises when data are unavailable in the exact form needed or do not survey the topic from the precise angle the researcher seeks. For example, the average salaries paid to professors at a public school is public record. But these figures do not necessarily reveal how long it took each professor to reach the salary range, what their educational backgrounds are, or how long they've been teaching.

When conducting content analysis, it is important to consider the date of publication of an existing source and to take into account attitudes and common cultural ideals that may have influenced the research. For example, when Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd gathered research in the 1920s, attitudes and cultural norms were vastly different then than they are now. Beliefs about gender roles, race, education, and work have changed significantly since then. At the time, the study's purpose was to reveal insights about small U.S. communities. Today, it is an illustration of 1920s attitudes and values.

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8.4: Ethical Concerns

Learning Objectives

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

- Understand why ethical standards exist
- Investigate unethical studies
- Demonstrate awareness of the American Sociological Association's Code of Ethics

Sociologists conduct studies to shed light on human behaviors. Knowledge is a powerful tool that can be used to achieve positive change. As a result, conducting a sociological study comes with a tremendous amount of responsibility. Like all researchers, sociologists must consider their ethical obligation to avoid harming human subjects or groups while conducting research.

Pioneer German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) identified another crucial ethical concern. Weber understood that personal values could distort the framework for disclosing study results. While he accepted that some aspects of research design might be influenced by personal values, he declared it was entirely inappropriate to allow personal values to shape the interpretation of the responses. Sociologists, he stated, must establish value neutrality, a practice of remaining impartial, without bias or judgment, during the course of a study and in publishing results (Weber, 1949). Sociologists are obligated to disclose research findings without omitting or distorting significant data.

Is value neutrality possible? Many sociologists believe it is impossible to retain complete objectivity. They caution readers, rather, to understand that sociological studies may contain a certain amount of value bias. This does not discredit the results, but allows readers to view them as one form of truth—one fact-based perspective. Some sociologists attempt to remain uncritical and as objective as possible when studying social institutions. They strive to overcome personal biases, particularly subconscious biases, when collecting and analyzing data. They avoid skewing data in order to match a predetermined outcome that aligns with a particular agenda, such as a political or moral point of view. Investigators are ethically obligated to report results, even when they contradict personal views, predicted outcomes, or widely accepted beliefs.

The American Sociological Association, or ASA, is the major professional organization of sociologists in North America. The ASA is a great resource for students of sociology as well. The ASA maintains a code of ethics—formal guidelines for conducting sociological research—consisting of principles and ethical standards to be used in the discipline. These formal guidelines were established by practitioners in 1905 at John Hopkins University, and revised in 1997. When working with human subjects, these codes of ethics require researchers' to do the following:

1. Maintain objectivity and integrity in research
2. Respect subjects' rights to privacy and dignity
3. Protect subject from personal harm
4. Preserve confidentially
5. Seek informed consent
6. Acknowledge collaboration and assistance
7. Disclose sources of financial support

Unfortunately, when these codes of ethics are ignored, it creates an unethical environment for humans being involved in a sociological study. Throughout history, there have been numerous unethical studies, some of which are summarized below.



Figure 2.11: Participants in the Tuskegee study were denied important information about their diagnosis, leading to significant health issues. (Credit: Centers for Disease Control)

The Tuskegee Experiment: This study was conducted 1932 in Macon County, Alabama, and included 600 African American men, including 399 diagnosed with syphilis. The participants were told they were diagnosed with a disease of “bad blood.” Penicillin was distributed in the 1940s as the cure for the disease, but unfortunately, the African American men were not given the treatment because the objective of the study was to see “how untreated syphilis would affect the African American male” (Caplan, 2007)

Henrietta Lacks: Ironically, this study was conducted at the hospital associated with Johns Hopkins University, where codes of the ethics originated. In 1951, Henrietta Lacks was receiving treatment for cervical cancer at John Hopkins Hospital, and doctors discovered that she had “immortal” cells, which could reproduce rapidly and indefinitely, making them extremely valuable for medical research. Without her consent, doctors collected and shared her cells to produce extensive cell lines. Lacks’ cells were widely used for experiments and treatments, including the polio vaccine, and were put into mass production. Today, these cells are known worldwide as HeLa cells (Shah, 2010).

Milgram Experiment: In 1961, psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted an experiment at Yale University. Its purpose was to measure the willingness of study subjects to obey an authority figure who instructed them to perform acts that conflicted with their personal conscience. People in the role of teacher believed they were administering electric shocks to students who gave incorrect answers to word-pair questions. No matter how concerned they were about administering the progressively more intense shocks, the teachers were told to keep going. The ethical concerns involve the extreme emotional distress faced by the teachers, who believed they were hurting other people. (Vogel 2014).

Philip Zimbardo and the Stanford prison experiment: In 1971, psychologist Phillip Zimbardo conducted a study involving students from Stanford University. The students were put in the roles of prisoners and guards, and were required to play their assigned role accordingly. The experiment was intended to last two weeks, but it only last six days due to the negative outcome and treatment of the “prisoners.” Beyond the ethical concerns, the study’s validity has been questioned after participants revealed they had been coached to behave in specific ways.

Laud Humphreys: In the 1960s, Laud Humphreys conducted an experiment at a restroom in a park known for same-sex sexual encounters. His objective was to understand the diversity of backgrounds and motivations of people seeking same-sex relationships. His ethics were questioned because he misrepresented his identity and intent while observing and questioning the men he interviewed (Nardi, 1995).

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8.5: Key Terms

accuracy | using a tool makes the measuring more precise.

case study | in-depth analysis of a single event, situation, or individual

code of ethics | a set of guidelines that the American Sociological Association has established to foster ethical research and professionally responsible scholarship in sociology

content analysis | applying a systematic approach to record and value information gleaned from secondary data as it relates to the study at hand

correlation | when a change in one variable coincides with a change in another variable, but does not necessarily indicate causation

debunking | looking beyond the obvious to expose falseness by examining merit, logic, and evidence.

dependent variables | a variable changed by other variables

empirical evidence | evidence that comes from direct observations, scientifically gathered data, or experimentation

ethnography | participating and observing thinking and behavior in a social setting

experiment | the testing of a hypothesis under controlled conditions

field research | gathering data from a natural environment without doing a lab experiment or a survey

Hawthorne effect | when study subjects behave in a certain manner due to their awareness of being observed by a researcher

hypothesis | a testable educated guess about predicted outcomes between two or more variables

independent variables | variables that cause changes in dependent variables

interpretive framework | a sociological research approach that seeks in-depth understanding of a topic or subject through observation or interaction; this approach is not based on hypothesis testing

interview | a one-on-one conversation between the researcher and the subject

literature review | a scholarly research step that entails identifying and studying all existing studies on a topic to create a basis for new research

nonreactive research | using secondary data, does not include direct contact with research subjects and does not alter or influence people's behaviors

operational definitions | specific explanations of abstract concepts that a researcher plans to study

participant observation | when a researcher immerses herself in a group or social setting in order to make observations from an "insider" perspective

population | a defined group serving as the subject of a study

primary data | data that are collected directly from firsthand experience

qualitative data | non-numerical, descriptive data that is often subjective and based on what is experienced in a natural setting

quantitative data | data collected in numerical form that can be counted and analyzed using statistics

random sample | a study's participants being randomly selected to serve as a representation of a larger population

reliability | a measure of a study's consistency that considers how likely results are to be replicated if a study is reproduced

samples | small, manageable number of subjects that represent the population

scientific method | an established scholarly research that involves asking a question, researching existing sources, forming a hypothesis, designing a data collection method, gathering data, and drawing conclusions

secondary data analysis | using data collected by others and applying new interpretations

surveys | collect data from subjects who respond to a series of questions about thinking, behaviors, and opinions, often in the form of a questionnaire

validity | the degree to which a sociological measure accurately reflects the topic of study

value neutrality | a practice of remaining impartial, without bias or judgment during the course of a study and in publishing results

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8.6: Section Summary

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research

Using the scientific method, a researcher conducts a study in six phases: asking a question, researching existing sources, formulating a hypothesis, research design, collecting & analyzing data, and drawing conclusions. The scientific method is useful in that it provides a clear method of organizing a study. Some sociologists conduct research through an interpretive framework rather than employing the scientific method.

Scientific sociological studies often observe relationships between variables. Researchers study how one variable influences another. Prior to conducting a study, researchers are careful to apply operational definitions to their terms and to establish dependent and independent variables.

2.2 Research Methods

Sociological research is a fairly complex process. As you can see, a lot goes into even a simple research design. There are many steps and much to consider when collecting data on human behavior, as well as in interpreting and analyzing data in order to form conclusive results. Sociologists use the scientific methods for good reasons. The scientific method provides a system of organization to help researchers plan and conduct a study to ensure data and results are reliable, valid, and objective.

The many methods available to researchers—including experiments, surveys, participant observation, ethnography, case study, and secondary data analysis—all come with advantages and disadvantages. The strength of a study can depend on the choice and implementation of the appropriate method of gathering data. Depending on the topic, a study might use a single method or a combination of methods. It is important to plan a research design before undertaking a study. The information gathered may in itself be surprising, and the study design should provide a solid framework in which to analyze predicted and unpredicted data.

Table 2.2 Main Sociological Research Methods: Sociological research methods have advantages and disadvantages.

Method	Implementation	Advantages	Challenges
Survey	• Questionnaires • Interviews	• Yields many responses • Can survey a large sample • Quantitative data are easy to chart	• Can be time consuming • Can be difficult to encourage participant response • Captures what people think and believe but not necessarily how they behave in real life
Field Work	• Participant observation • Ethnography • Case study	• Yields detailed, accurate real-life information	• Time consuming • Data captures how people behave but not what they think and believe • Qualitative data is difficult to organize
Experiment	• Deliberate manipulation of social customs and mores	• Tests cause and effect relationships	• Hawthorne Effect • Ethical concerns about people’s wellbeing
Secondary Data Analysis	• Analysis of government data (census, health, crime statistics) • Research of historic documents	• Makes good use of previous sociological information	• Data could be focused on a purpose other than yours • Data can be hard to find

Sociologists and sociology students must take ethical responsibility for any study they conduct. They must first and foremost guarantee the safety of their participants. Whenever possible, they must ensure that participants have been fully informed consent before participating ina study.

The American Sociological Association (ASA) establishes parameters for ethical guidelines that sociologists must take into account as they conduct research. The guidelines address conducting studies, properly using existing sources, accepting funding, and publishing results. Unfortunately, the code of ethics were not in existence and in some cases researchers did not adhere to ASA guidelines resulting in unethical practices in which humans were caused either physical or psychological harm.

Sociologists must try to maintain value neutrality. They must gather and analyze data objectively and set aside their personal preferences, beliefs, and opinions. They must report findings accurately, even if they contradict personal values and convictions.

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8.7: Section Quiz

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research

1.

The 1st step of the scientific method:

a. Collect and analyze data
b. Summarize the articles
c. Ask a question about a topic
d. Create a hypothesis

2.

A measurement is considered _____ if it actually measures what it is intended to measure, according to the topic of the study.

a. reliable
b. sociological
c. valid
d. quantitative

3.

Sociological studies test relationships in which change in one _____ causes change in another.

a. test subject
b. behavior
c. variable
d. operational definition

4.

In a study, a group of ten-year-old boys are fed doughnuts every morning for a week and then weighed to see how much weight they gained. Which factor is the dependent variable?

a. The doughnuts
b. The boys
c. The duration of a week
d. The weight gained

5.

Which statement provides the best operational definition of “childhood obesity”?

a. Children who eat unhealthy foods and spend too much time watching television and playing video games
b. A distressing trend that can lead to health issues including type 2 diabetes and heart disease
c. Body weight at least 20 percent higher than a healthy weight for a child of that height
d. The tendency of children today to weigh more than children of earlier generations

2.2 Research Methods

6.

Which materials are considered secondary data?

a. Photos and letters given to you by another person
b. Books and articles written by other authors about their studies
c. Information that you have gathered and now have included in your results
d. Responses from participants whom you both surveyed and interviewed

7.

Why is choosing a random sample an effective way to select participants?

a. Participants do not know they are part of a study

b. The researcher has no control over who is in the study
c. It is larger than an ordinary sample
d. Everyone has the same chance of being part of the study

8.

What research method did John S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd mainly use in their *Middletown* study?

a. Secondary data
b. Survey
c. Participant observation
d. Experiment

9.

Which research approach is best suited to the scientific method?

a. Questionnaire
b. Case study
c. Ethnography
d. Secondary data analysis

10.

The main difference between ethnography and other types of participant observation is:

a. ethnography isn't based on hypothesis testing
b. ethnography subjects are unaware they're being studied
c. ethnographic studies always involve minority ethnic groups
d. ethnography focuses on how subjects view themselves in relationship to the community

11.

Which best describes the results of a case study?

a. It produces more reliable results than other methods because of its depth
b. Its results are not generally applicable
c. It relies solely on secondary data analysis
d. All of the above

12.

Using secondary data is considered an unobtrusive or _____ research method.

a. nonreactive
b. nonparticipatory
c. nonrestrictive
d. nonconfrontive

2.3 Ethical Concerns

13.

Which statement illustrates value neutrality?

a. Obesity in children is obviously a result of parental neglect and, therefore, schools should take a greater role to prevent it
b. In 2003, states like Arkansas adopted laws requiring elementary schools to remove soft drink vending machines from schools
c. Merely restricting children's access to junk food at school is not enough to prevent obesity
d. Physical activity and healthy eating are a fundamental part of a child's education

14.

Which person or organization defined the concept of value neutrality?

a. Institutional Review Board (IRB)

b. Peter Rossi
c. American Sociological Association (ASA)
d. Max Weber

15.

To study the effects of fast food on lifestyle, health, and culture, from which group would a researcher ethically be unable to accept funding?

a. A fast-food restaurant
b. A nonprofit health organization
c. A private hospital
d. A governmental agency like Health and Social Services

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8.8: Short Answer

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research

1.

Write down the first three steps of the scientific method. Think of a broad topic that you are interested in and which would make a good sociological study—for example, ethnic diversity in a college, homecoming rituals, athletic scholarships, or teen driving. Now, take that topic through the first steps of the process. For each step, write a few sentences or a paragraph: 1) Develop a research question about the topic. 2) Do some research and write down the titles of some articles or books you'd want to read about the topic. 3) Formulate a hypothesis.

2.

Explain the correlation between accuracy, validity, and reliability in the research method.

2.2 Research Methods

3.

What type of data do surveys gather? For what topics would surveys be the best research method? What drawbacks might you expect to encounter when using a survey? To explore further, ask a research question and write a hypothesis. Then create a survey of about six questions relevant to the topic. Provide a rationale for each question. Now define your population and create a plan for recruiting a random sample and administering the survey.

4.

Imagine you are about to do field research in a specific place for a set time. Instead of thinking about the topic of study itself, consider how you, as the researcher, will have to prepare for the study. What personal, social, and physical sacrifices will you have to make? How will you manage your personal effects? What organizational equipment and systems will you need to collect the data?

5.

Create a brief research design about a topic in which you are passionately interested. Now write a letter to a philanthropic or grant organization requesting funding for your study. How can you describe the project in a convincing yet realistic and objective way? Explain how the results of your study will be a relevant contribution to the body of sociological work already in existence.

2.3 Ethical Concerns

6.

Why do you think the American Sociological Association (ASA) crafted such a detailed set of ethical principles? What type of study could put human participants at risk? Think of some examples of studies that might be harmful. Do you think that, in the name of sociology, some researchers might be tempted to cross boundaries that threaten human rights? Why?

7.

Would you willingly participate in a sociological study that could potentially put your health and safety at risk, but had the potential to help thousands or even hundreds of thousands of people? For example, would you participate in a study of a new drug that could cure diabetes or cancer, even if it meant great inconvenience and physical discomfort for you or possible permanent damage?

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8.9: Further Research

2.1 Approaches to Sociological Research

For a historical perspective on the scientific method in sociology, read “The Elements of Scientific Method in Sociology” by F. Stuart Chapin (1914) in the *American Journal of Sociology*.

2.2 Research Methods

For information on current real-world sociology experiments, visit the Everday Sociology Blog.

2.3 Ethical Concerns

Founded in 1905, the American Sociological Association is a nonprofit organization located in Washington, DC, with a membership of 14,000 researchers, faculty members, students, and practitioners of sociology. Its mission is “to articulate policy and implement programs likely to have the broadest possible impact for sociology now and in the future.” Learn more about this organization here.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Deviance, Crime, and Social Control

A central message of this book so far is that society is possible because people conform to its norms, values, and roles. 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.

9.1: Prelude to Deviance, Crime, and Social Control
9.2: Social Control and the Relativity of Deviance
9.3: Explaining Deviance
9.4: Crime and Criminals
9.5: The Get-Tough Approach - Boon or Bust?
9.S: Deviance, Crime, and Social Control (Summary)

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9.1: 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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9.2: 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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9.3: 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

Major theory	Related explanation	Summary of explanation
		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

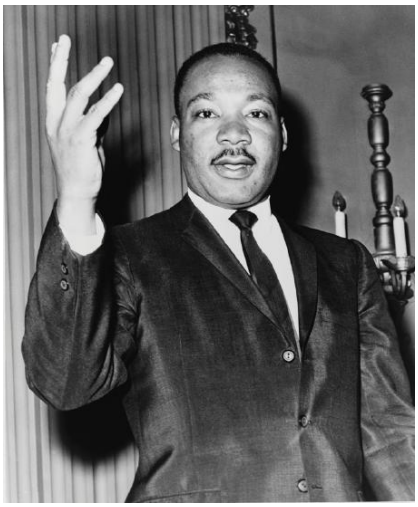
As noted earlier, Émile Durkheim said deviance is normal, but he did not stop there. In a surprising and still controversial twist, he also argued that deviance serves several important functions for society.

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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9.4: 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.

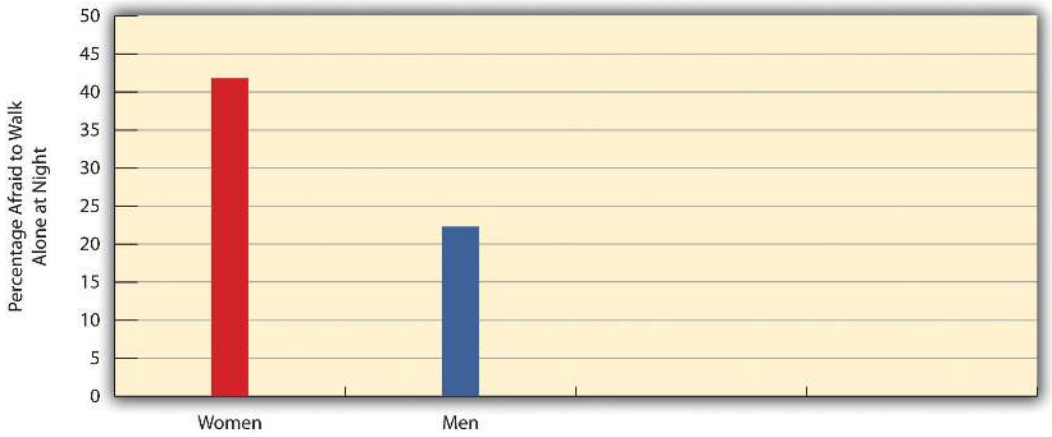


Figure **9.4.1**: Gender and Fear of Crime. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

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.

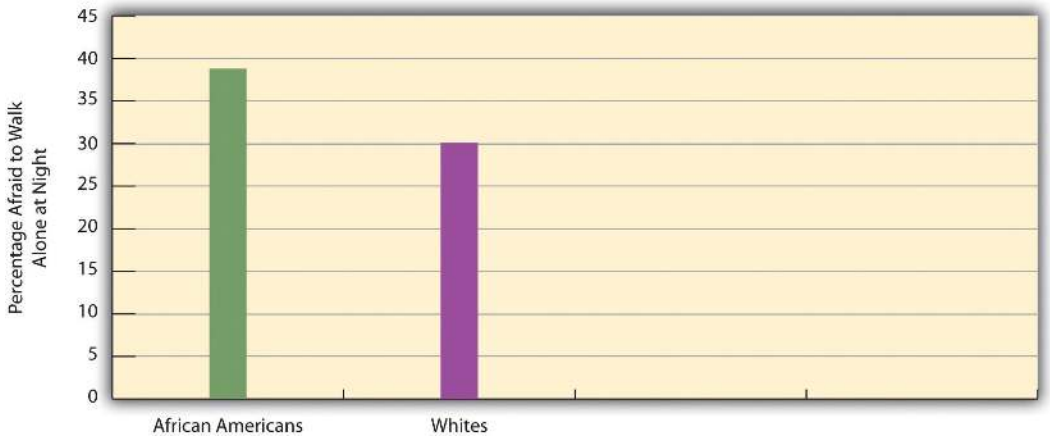


Figure 9.4.2: Race and Fear of Crime. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

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.

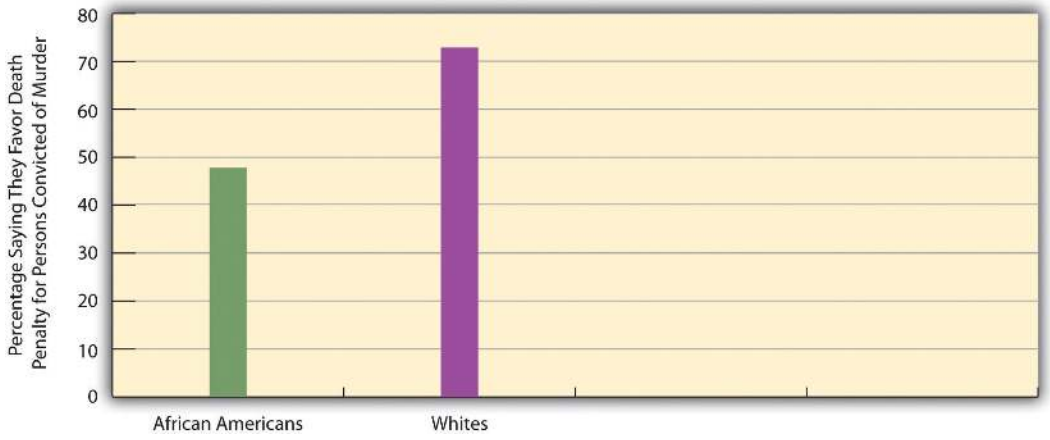


Figure 9.4.3: Race and Support for the Death Penalty. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

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 **9.4.4**: 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 **9.4.3**: 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 **9.4.5**: 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.

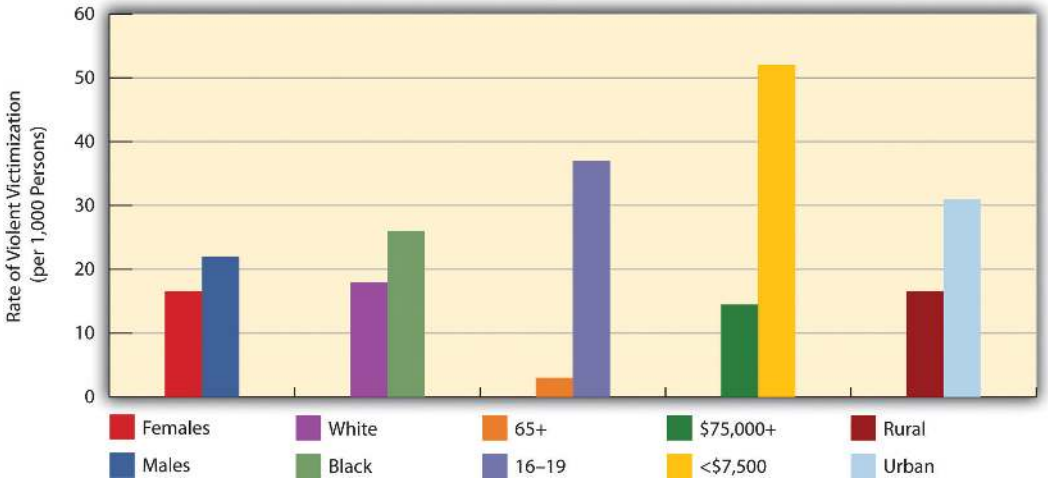


Figure 9.4.6: Correlates of Violent Crime Victimization, 2008. Note: Income data are for 2007; rural and urban data are for 2005. Source: Data from Maston, C. T., & Klaus, P. (2010). Criminal victimization in the United States, 2007—statistical tables. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. 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.

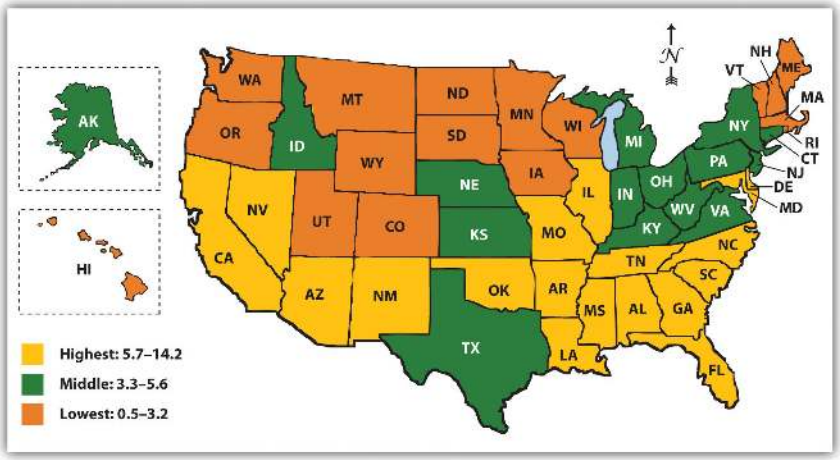


Figure 9.4.7: U.S. Homicide Rates, 2008. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

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.

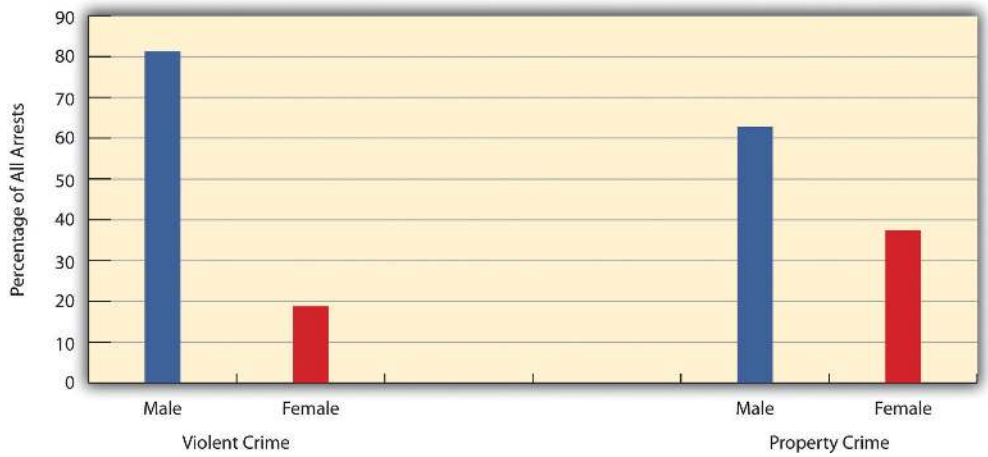


Figure 9.4.8: Gender and Arrest, 2009. Source: Data from Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2010). Crime in the United States, 2009. Washington, DC: Author.

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.

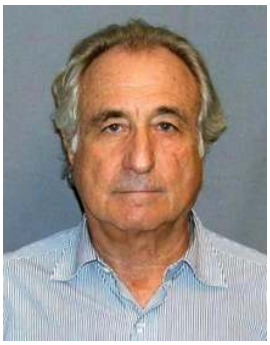


Figure **9.4.9**: In June 2009, investment expert Bernard Madoff was sentenced to 150 years in prison for defrauding thousands of investors of tens of billions of dollars. This was the largest such crime in U.S. history. Source: Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of Justice, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...nardMadoff.jpg.

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 Times*, 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 Times*, 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 Times*, 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 9.4.10: 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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9.5: 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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9.S: 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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SECTION OVERVIEW

10.1: The Experience of Illness

Topic hierarchy

10.1A: The Experience of Illness

10.1B: Gender and Health

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10.1A: The Experience of Illness

Illness, sometimes considered another word for disease, refers to a state of poor health.

Learning Objectives

- Examine the impact of illness in America and the prevalence of diagnosed illness among the population

Key Points

- Some scholars have maintained a distinction between illness and disease by describing illness as a patient's subjective perception of an objectively defined disease.
- Epidemiology is the scientific study of factors affecting the health and illness of individuals and population.
- Behavioral medicine is an interdisciplinary field of medicine concerned with the development and integration of psychosocial, behavioral, and biomedical knowledge relevant to health and illness.
- The rise of scientific medicine in the past two centuries has altered or replaced many historic health practices.
- Mental illness is a broad generic label for a category of illnesses that may include affective or emotional instability, behavioral dysregulation, and/or cognitive dysfunction or impairment.

Key Terms

- **scientific medicine**: The rise of scientific medicine in the past two centuries has altered or replaced many historic health practices.
- **behavioral medicine**: Behavioral medicine is an interdisciplinary field of medicine concerned with the development and integration of psychosocial, behavioral and biomedical knowledge relevant to health and illness.
- **epidemiology**: The branch of a science dealing with the spread and control of diseases, computer viruses, concepts, etc. throughout populations or systems.

Introduction to Illness

Illness, sometimes considered another word for disease, is a state of poor health. Some scholars have maintained a distinction by describing illness as a patient's subjective perception of an objectively defined disease. Conditions of the body or mind that cause pain, dysfunction, or distress can be deemed an illness. Sometimes the term is used broadly to include injuries, disabilities, syndromes, infections, symptoms, deviant behaviors, and atypical variations of structure and function. In other contexts these may be considered distinguishable categories.

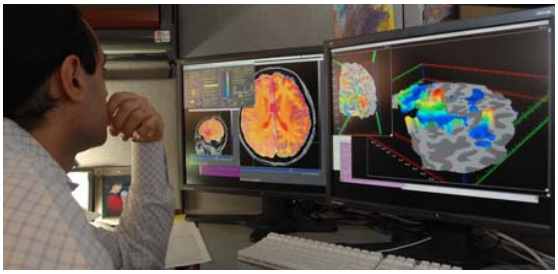
Epidemiology

Epidemiology is the scientific study of factors affecting the health and illness of individuals and populations; it serves as the foundation and logic for interventions made in the interest of public health and preventive medicine. Behavioral medicine is an interdisciplinary field of medicine concerned with the development and integration of psychosocial, behavioral, and biomedical knowledge relevant to health and illness. According to evolutionary medicine, much illness is not directly caused by an infection or body dysfunction, but is instead a response created by the body. Fever, for example, is not caused directly by bacteria or viruses but by the body raising its normal temperature, which some people believe inhibits the growth of the infectious organism. Evolutionary medicine calls this set of responses "sickness behavior. "

All human societies have beliefs that provide explanations for, and responses to, childbirth, death, and disease. Throughout the world, illness has often been attributed to witchcraft, demons, or the will of the gods—ideas that retain some power within certain cultures and communities. However, the rise of scientific medicine in the past two centuries has altered or replaced many historic health practices.

Mental illness is a broad category of illnesses that may include affective or emotional instability, behavioral dysregulation, and/or cognitive dysfunction or impairment. Specific illnesses known as mental illnesses include major depression, generalized anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, to name a few.

Statistics show that more and more people are being diagnosed with mental disorders. The National Institute for Mental Health reports that over 40 million adults are diagnosed with an anxiety disorder in a given year, accounting for 18 percent of the population. Other disorders that are prevalent are ADHD (4 percent), mood disorders (9.5 percent) and and autism (1 percent, but quickly rising).



Researcher Test: A researcher studying a part of the human body in search for illness.

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10.1B: Gender and Health

Disparities in health services play out based on different systems of stratification, such as gender.

Learning Objectives

- Examine the role gender plays in health care services, particularly for women

Key Points

- The World Health Organization defines gender as the result of socially constructed ideas about the behavior, actions, and roles a particular sex performs.
- Gender, and particularly the role of women, is widely recognized as vitally important to international development issues.
- Women's dual responsibilities as carers and income earners leaves them suffering from time poverty, and thus unable to access health and education services.
- The Gender-related Development Index (GDI), developed by the United Nations, aims to show the inequalities between men and women in the following areas: long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living.
- The Gender-related Development Index (GDI), developed by the United Nations, aims to show the inequalities between men and women in the following areas: long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living.

Key Terms

- **gender stratification**: There are a number of ways in which health disparities play out based on different systems of stratification. Researchers also find health disparities based on gender stratification.
- **World Health Organization**: The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that is concerned with international public health. It was established on April 7, 1948, with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, and is a member of the United Nations Development Group.
- **international development**: International development or global development is a concept that lacks a universally accepted definition, but it is most used in a holistic and multi-disciplinary context of human development—the development of greater quality of life for humans. It therefore encompasses foreign aid, governance, healthcare, education, poverty reduction, gender equality, disaster preparedness, infrastructure, economics, human rights, environment and issues associated with these.

The Role of Gender in Health



Immunization for Babies: Immunizations from various diseases have improved health worldwide.

Gender is a range of characteristics used to distinguish between males and females, particularly in the cases of men and women and the masculine and feminine attributes assigned to them. Depending on the context, the discriminating characteristics vary, from sex to social role to gender identity. The World Health Organization defines gender as the result of socially constructed ideas about the behavior, actions, and roles a particular sex performs. Assigning gender involves taking into account the physiological and biological attributes assigned by nature followed by socially constructed conduct. The social label of being classified into one or the other sex is obligatory to the medical stamp on the birth certificate.

There are a number of ways in which health disparities play out based on different systems of stratification. Researchers also find health disparities based on gender stratification. One study found that women are less likely than men to be recommended for knee replacement surgery, even when they have the same symptoms. While it was unclear what role the sex of the recommending physicians played, the authors of this study encouraged women to challenge their doctors in order to get care equivalent to men.

Gender, and particularly the role of women, is widely recognized as vitally important to international development issues. This often means a focus on gender-equality, ensuring participation, but includes an understanding of the different roles and expectations of the genders within the community. As recognized by the United Nations, women's dual responsibilities as carers and income earners leaves them suffering from time poverty, and thus unable to access health and education services. The Gender-related Development Index (GDI), developed by the United Nations, aims to show the inequalities between men

and women in the following areas: long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living.

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10.1C: Race and Health

Health disparities refer to gaps in the quality of health and healthcare across racial and ethnic groups.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the health disparities in the United States based on race and the implications for racial minorities

Key Points

- Race and health research, often done in the United States, has found both current and historical racial differences in the frequency, treatments, and availability of treatments for several diseases.
- In multiracial societies such as the United States, racial groups differ greatly in regard to social and cultural factors such as socioeconomic status, healthcare, diet, and education.
- There is a controversy regarding race as a method for classifying humans. The continued use of racial categories has been criticized.
- Apart from the general controversy regarding race, some argue that the continued use of racial categories in health care, and as risk factors, could result in increased stereotyping and discrimination in society and health services.

Key Terms

- **life expectancy**: The amount of time one is expected to live.
- **multiracial societies**: In multiracial societies such as the United States, racial groups differ greatly in regard to social and cultural factors, such as socioeconomic status, healthcare, diet, and education.
- **Health disparities**: Health equity refers to the study of differences in the quality of health and health care across different populations.

The Role of Race in Health

Health disparities refer to gaps in the quality of health and healthcare across racial and ethnic groups. Race and health research, often done in the United States, has found both current and historical racial differences in the frequency, treatments, and availability of treatments for several diseases. This can add up to significant group differences in variables such as life expectancy. Many explanations for such differences have been argued, including socioeconomic factors, lifestyle, social environment, and access to preventive health-care services, among other environmental differences.

In multiracial societies such as the United States, racial groups differ greatly in regard to social and cultural factors such as socioeconomic status, healthcare, diet, and education. There is also the presence of racism which some see as a very important explaining factor. Some argue that for many diseases racial differences would disappear if all environmental factors could be controlled for. Race-based medicine is the term for medicines that are targeted at specific ethnic clusters, which are shown to have a propensity for a certain disorder. Critics are concerned that the trend of research on race specific pharmaceutical treatments will result in inequitable access to pharmaceutical innovation, and smaller minority groups may be ignored.

Health disparities based on race also exist. Similar to the difference in life expectancy found between the rich and the poor, affluent white women live 14 years longer in the U.S. (81.1 years) than poor black men (66.9 years). There is also evidence that blacks receive less aggressive medical care than whites, similar to what happens with women compared to men. Black men describe their visits to doctors as stressful, and report that physicians do not provide them with adequate information to implement the recommendations they are given.

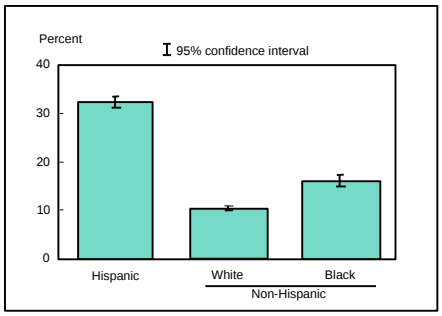
Another contributor to the overall worse health of blacks is the incident of HIV/AIDS; the rate of new AIDS cases is ten times higher among blacks than whites, and blacks are 20 times as likely to have HIV/AIDS as are whites. Health disparities are well documented in minority populations such as African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos. When compared to European Americans, these minority groups have higher incidence of chronic diseases, higher mortality, and poorer health outcomes. Minorities also have higher rates of cardiovascular disease, HIV/AIDS, and infant mortality than whites. American ethnic groups can exhibit substantial average differences in disease incidence, disease severity, disease progression, and response to treatment.

Infant mortality is another place where racial disparities are quite evident. In fact, infant mortality rates are 14 of every 1000 births for black, non-Hispanics compared to 6 of every 1000 births for whites. Another disparity is access to health care and insurance. In California, more than half (59 percent) of Hispanics go without health care. Also, almost 25 percent of Latinos do not have health insurance, as opposed to 10 percent of Whites.

There is a controversy regarding race as a method for classifying humans. The continued use of racial categories has been criticized. Apart from the general controversy regarding race, some argue that the continued use of racial categories in

health care, and as risk factors, could result in increased stereotyping and discrimination in society and health services. There is general agreement that a goal of health-related genetics should be to move past the weak surrogate relationships of racial health disparity and get to the root causes of health and disease. This includes research which strives to analyze human genetic variation in smaller groups across the world.

Figure 1.3. Age- sex-adjusted percent of persons of all ages without health insurance coverage, by race/ethnicity: United States, 2004



DATA SOURCE: Family Core component of the 2004 National Health Interview Survey.

Percentage Without Insurance, Based on Race: Age-sex adjusted percent of persons of all ages without health insurance coverage, by race/ethnicity, United States, 2004

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10.1D: Social Class and Health

Social class has a significant impact on one's physical health, ability to receive adequate medical care and nutrition, and life expectancy.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the role social class plays in access to adequate health care and health inequality

Key Points

- While gender and race play significant factors in explaining healthcare inequality in the United States, socioeconomic status is the greatest determining factor in an individual's level of access to healthcare.
- Social determinants of health are the economic and social conditions, and their distribution among the population, that influence individual and group differences in health status.
- They are risk factors found in one's living and working conditions (such as the distribution of income, wealth, influence, and power), rather than individual factors (such as behavioral risk factors or genetics) that influence the risk for a disease, injury, or vulnerability to disease or injury.
- Social determinants of health are the economic and social conditions, and their distribution among the population, that influence individual and group differences in health status.
- Health inequality is the term used in a number of countries to refer to those instances whereby the health of two demographic groups (not necessarily ethnic or racial groups) differs despite comparative access to health care services.

Key Terms

- **social determinants of health**: The economic and social conditions that influence individual and group differences in health status.
- **health inequality**: The unequal distribution of environmental health hazards and access to health services between demographic groups, including social classes.

The Role of Social Class in Health

A person's social class has a significant impact on their physical health, their ability to receive adequate medical care and nutrition, and their life expectancy. While gender and race play significant factors in explaining healthcare inequality in the United States, socioeconomic status is the greatest determining factor in an individual's level of access to healthcare.

Individuals of lower socioeconomic status in the United States experience a wide array of health problems as a result of their economic status. They are unable to use health care as often, and when they do it is of lower quality, even though they generally tend to experience a much higher rate of health issues. Furthermore, individuals of lower socioeconomic status have less education and often perform jobs without significant health and benefits plans, whereas individuals of higher standing are more likely to have jobs that provide medical insurance. Consequently, they have higher rates of infant mortality, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and disabling physical injuries.

Social determinants of health are the economic and social conditions, and their distribution among the population, that influence individual and group differences in health status. They are risk factors found in one's living and working conditions (such as the distribution of income, wealth, influence, and power), rather than individual factors (such as behavioral risk factors or genetics) that influence the risk for a disease, injury, or vulnerability to disease or injury. According to some viewpoints, these distributions of social determinants are shaped by public policies that reflect the influence of prevailing political ideologies of those governing a jurisdiction.

Health inequality is the term used in a number of countries to refer to those instances whereby the health of two demographic groups (not necessarily ethnic or racial groups) differs despite comparative access to health care services. Such examples include higher rates of morbidity and mortality for those in lower occupational classes than those in higher occupational classes, and the increased likelihood of those from ethnic minorities being diagnosed with a mental health disorder.

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10.1E: Education and Health

Health literacy is an individual's ability to read, understand and use healthcare information to make decisions about treatment.

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate the impact of health literacy on access to and understanding of health care issues, especially for certain social groups

Key Points

- Health literacy is of continued and increasing concern for health professionals, as it is a primary factor behind health disparities.
- While problems with health literacy are not limited to minority groups, the problem can be more pronounced in these groups than in whites due to socioeconomic and educational factors.
- Reading level, numeracy level, language barriers, cultural appropriateness, format and style, sentence structure, use of illustrations, scope of intervention, and numerous other factors will affect how easily health information is understood and followed.
- The mismatch between a clinician's level of communication and a patient's ability to understand can lead to medication errors and adverse medical outcomes.
- Health care professionals (doctors, nurses, public health workers) can also have poor health literacy skills, such as a reduced ability to clearly explain health issues to patients and the public.
- The eHealth literacy model is also referred to as the Lily model. This model includes basic literacy, computer literacy, information literacy, media literacy, science literacy, and health literacy.

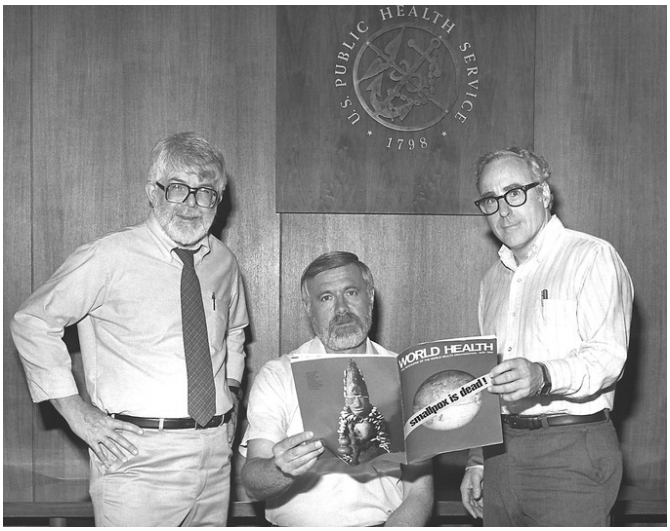
Key Terms

- **the eHealth literacy model**: The eHealth literacy model is also referred to as the Lily model, which incorporates the following literacies, each of which are instrumental to the overall understanding and measurement of eHealth literacy: basic literacy, computer literacy, information literacy, media literacy, science literacy, health literacy.
- **language barrier**: A figurative phrase for the difficulties faced when people who have no language in common attempt to communicate with each other.
- **Health literacy**: Health literacy is an individual's ability to read, understand and use healthcare information to make decisions and follow instructions for treatment.

Health literacy is an individual's ability to read, understand, and use healthcare information to make decisions and follow instructions for treatment. Health literacy is of continued and increasing concern for health professionals, as it is a primary factor behind health disparities. While problems with health literacy are not limited to minority groups, the problem can be more pronounced in these groups than in whites due to socioeconomic and educational factors.

There are many factors that determine the health literacy level of health education materials or other health interventions. Reading level, numeracy level, language barriers, cultural appropriateness, format and style, sentence structure, use of illustrations, scope of intervention, and numerous other factors will affect how easily health information is understood and followed. The mismatch between a clinician's level of communication and a patient's ability to understand can lead to medication errors and adverse medical outcomes. The lack of health literacy affects all segments of the population, although it is disproportionate in certain demographic groups, such as the elderly, ethnic minorities, recent immigrants and persons with low general literacy. Health literacy skills are not only a problem in the public. Health care professionals (doctors, nurses, public health workers) can also have poor health literacy skills, such as a reduced ability to clearly explain health issues to patients and the public.

Due to the increasing influence of the internet for information-seeking and health information distribution purposes, eHealth literacy has become an important topic of research in recent years. The eHealth literacy model is also referred to as the Lily model, which incorporates the following literacies, each of which are instrumental to the overall understanding and measurement of eHealth literacy: basic literacy, computer literacy, information literacy, media literacy, science literacy, health literacy.



Directors of Global Smallpox Eradication Program: Three former directors of the Global Smallpox Eradication Program read the news that smallpox had been globally eradicated in 1980.

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10.1F: Women in Medicine

Historically and in many parts of the world, women's participation in the profession of medicine has been significantly restricted.

Learning Objectives

- Analyze the role women play in the medical field and how gender parity affects women's choices when it comes to medicine

Key Points

- Women's informal practice of medicine in the role of caregivers and in the allied health professions has been widespread.
- The practice of medicine remains disproportionately male overall. In industrialized nations, the recent parity in gender of medical students has not yet trickled into parity in practice.
- Most countries now guarantee equal access by women to medical education. However, not all ensure equal employment opportunities, and gender parity has yet to be achieved within the medical specialties around the world.

Key Terms

- **parity**: Equality; comparability of strength or intensity.

The Role of Women in Medicine

Historically and in many parts of the world, women's participation in medicine (as physicians, for instance) has been significantly restricted, although women's informal practice of medicine in the role of caregivers and in the allied health professions has been widespread. Most countries of the world now guarantee equal access by women to medical education, although not all ensure equal employment opportunities. Gender parity has yet to be achieved within the medical specialties around the world.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century in industrialized nations, women have made significant gains, but have yet to achieve parity throughout the medical profession. Women's participation in medical professions was limited by law and practice during the decades while medicine was professionalizing. However, women kept practicing medicine in the allied health fields (nursing, midwifery), making significant gains in medical education and medical work during the 19th and 20th centuries. Women continue to dominate nursing in the 20th century. In 2000, 94.6% of registered nurses in the United States were women.

The practice of medicine remains disproportionately male overall. In some industrialized nations, women have achieved parity in medical school. Since 2003, women have formed the majority of the U.S. medical student body. However, they have yet to achieve parity in practice. In many developing nations, neither medical school nor practice approach gender parity. Moreover, there are skews within the medical profession. For example, some medical specialties like surgery are significantly male-dominated, while other specialties are or becoming significantly female-dominated.



Monique Frize, née Aubry (born 1942) is a Canadian academic and biomedical engineer known for her expertise in medical instrumentation and decision-support systems: At the beginning of the 21st century, women in industrialized nations have made significant gains, but have yet to achieve parity throughout the medical profession. In some industrialized countries, women have achieved parity in medical school. Women have formed the majority of the United States medical student body since 2003. In 2007-2008, women accounted for 49% of medical school applicants and 48.3% of those accepted. According to the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) 48.3% (16,838) of medical degrees awarded in the US in 2009-10 were earned by women, an increase from 26.8% in 1982-3.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

10.2: Sociological Perspectives on Health and Illness

Topic hierarchy

10.2A: The Functionalist Perspective

10.2B: The Conflict Perspective

10.2C: The Interactionist Perspective

10.2D: The Labeling Approach

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10.2A: The Functionalist Perspective

In the functionalist model, Parsons argued that illness is a form of deviance that disturbs the social function of a society.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the functionalist perspective on illness in society, specifically the role the sick play in a specific society and how that role affects others

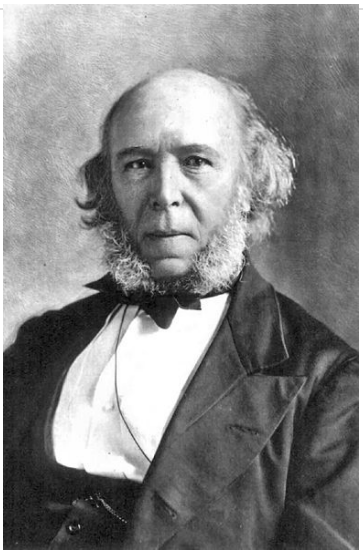
Key Points

- Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements (namely norms, customs, traditions, and institutions), much like the interacting organs within the human body.
- Prominent functionalist theorists include Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Talcott Parsons, Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore, Robert Merton, and Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell.
- Functionalism is a framework that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability.
- Functionalists argue that a sick individual is not a productive member of society; therefore this deviance needs to be policed. This is the role of the medical profession.
- Structural functionalism reached the peak of its influence in the 1940s and 1950s, and by the 1960s was in rapid decline, replaced by conflict-oriented approaches in Europe and more recently by structuralism.

Key Terms

- **deviance**: Actions or behaviors that violate formal and informal cultural norms, such as laws or the norm that discourages public nose-picking.
- **structuralism**: A theory of sociology that views elements of society as part of a cohesive, self-supporting structure.

Structural functionalism, or simply functionalism, is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. This approach looks at society through a macro-level orientation, which is a broad focus on the social structures that shape society as a whole. This approach looks at both social structure and social functions. Prominent functionalist theorists include Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Talcott Parsons, Kingsley Davis and Wilbert E. Moore, Robert Merton, and Gabriel Almond and Bingham Powell.



Herbert Spencer: Herbert Spencer was a prominent functionalist sociologist, who likened the functioning parts of society as organs within a body.

Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements; namely norms, customs, traditions, and institutions. A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as “organs” that work toward the proper functioning of the “body” as a whole. For Talcott Parsons (1902–1979), an American sociologist, “structural-functionalism” came to describe a particular stage in the methodological development of social science, rather than a specific school of thought.

The Sick Role

Sick role is a term used in medical sociology regarding sickness and the rights and obligations of the affected. It is a concept created by the American sociologist Talcott Parsons in 1951. Parsons was a functionalist sociologist who argued that being sick means that the sufferer enters a role of “sanctioned deviance”. This is because, from a functionalist perspective, a sick individual is not a productive member of society. Therefore this deviance needs to be policed, which is the role of the medical profession.

In the functionalist model, Parsons argued that the best way to understand illness sociologically is to view it as a form of deviance that disturbs the social function of the society. The general idea is that the individual who has fallen ill is not only physically sick, but now adheres to the specifically patterned social role of being sick. “Being Sick” is not simply a “condition”; it contains within itself customary rights and obligations based on the social norms that surround it.

The theory outlined two rights of a sick person and two obligations. The sick person's rights are twofold: the first one is being exempt from normal social roles; the second one is not being responsible for their condition. Conversely, the sick person's obligations included trying to get well and cooperating with the medical professionals. Parsons concluded that there are three versions of the sick role: conditional, unconditional legitimate, and illegitimate (a condition stigmatized by others).

Critics of the Functionalist Perspective

Critics of Parsons and the functionalist perspective point to different flaws they see with his argument. The model assumes that the individual voluntarily accepts the sick role. It also assumes that the individual may not comply with expectations of the sick role, may not give up social obligations, may resist dependency, and may avoid the public sick role if their illness is stigmatized. The model also blames the sick, where "rights" do not always apply.

Structural functionalism reached the peak of its influence in the 1940s and 1950s, and by the 1960s was in rapid decline. By the 1980s, its place was taken in Europe by more conflict-oriented approaches, and more recently by "structuralism". While some of the critical approaches also gained popularity in the United States, the mainstream of the discipline has instead shifted to a myriad of empirically-oriented middle-range theories with no overarching theoretical orientation. To most sociologists, functionalism is now obsolete.

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10.2B: The Conflict Perspective

Conflict theory argues that the economic and political structures of a society create social divisions, inequalities, and conflicts.

Learning Objectives

- Examine the differing views on conflict theory from various sociologists, such as Karl Marx and C. Wright Mills

Key Points

- Conflict theories are perspectives in social science that emphasize the social, political, or material inequality of a social group.
- Of the classical founders of social science, conflict theory is most commonly associated with Karl Marx, who posited that capitalism would inevitably produce internal tensions leading to its own destruction.
- Marx advocated for the rejection of false consciousness (explanations of social problems as the shortcomings of individuals rather than the flaws of society) and the claiming of class consciousness (workers' recognition of themselves as a class unified in opposition to the capitalist system).
- The Polish-Austrian sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz and the American sociologist Lester F. Ward approached conflict from a comprehensive anthropological and evolutionary point-of-view.
- C. Wright Mills has been called the founder of modern conflict theory. In Mills's view, social structures are created through conflict between people with differing interests and resources.
- Conflict theory is most often associated with Marxism, but may also be associated with other perspectives such as critical theory, feminist theory, postmodern theory, queer theory, and race -conflict theory.

Key Terms

- **functionalism**: Structural functionalism, or simply functionalism, is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability.
- **military-industrial complex**: The armed forces of a nation together with the industries that supply their weapons and materiel.
- **capitalism**: A socio-economic system based on private property rights, including the private ownership of resources or capital, with economic decisions made largely through the operation of a market unregulated by the state.

Conflict theories are perspectives in social science that emphasize the social, political, or material inequality of a social group, that critique the broad socio-political system, or that otherwise detract from structural functionalism and ideological conservatism. Sociologists in the tradition of conflict theory argue that the economic and political structures of a society create social divisions, classes, hierarchies, antagonisms and conflicts that produce and reproduce inequalities. Certain conflict theories set out to highlight the ideological aspects inherent in traditional thought. While many of these perspectives hold parallels, conflict theory does not refer to a unified school of thought, and should not be confused with, for instance, peace and conflict studies.

Of the classical founders of social science, conflict theory is most commonly associated with Karl Marx (1818–1883). Based on a dialectical materialist account of history, Marxism posited that capitalism, like previous socioeconomic systems, would inevitably produce internal tensions leading to its own destruction. Marx ushered in radical change, advocating proletarian revolution and freedom from the ruling classes. At the same time, Karl Marx was aware that most of the people living in capitalist societies did not see how the system shaped the entire operation of society. Just like how we see private property, or the right to pass that property onto our children as natural, many of members in capitalistic societies see the rich as having earned their wealth through hard work and education, while seeing the poor as lacking in skill and initiative. Marx rejected this type of thinking and termed it false consciousness, which involves explanations of social problems as the shortcomings of individuals rather than the flaws of society. Marx wanted to replace this kind of thinking with something Engels termed class consciousness, which is when workers recognize themselves as a class unified in opposition to capitalists and ultimately to the capitalist system itself. In general, Marx wanted the working class to rise up against the capitalists and overthrow the capitalist system.



Healthcare reform supporter: Karl Marx wanted to replace false consciousness with class consciousness, in which the working class would rise up against the capitalist system.

Two early conflict theorists were the Polish-Austrian sociologist and political theorist Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838–1909) and the American sociologist and paleontologist Lester F. Ward (1841–1913). Although Ward and Gumplowicz developed their theories independently, they had much in common and approached conflict from a comprehensive anthropological and evolutionary point-of-view as opposed to Marx's rather exclusive focus on economic factors.

C. Wright Mills has been called the founder of modern conflict theory. In Mills's view, social structures are created through conflict between people with differing interests and resources. Individuals and resources, in turn, are influenced by these structures and by the "unequal distribution of power and resources in the society. " Mills argued that the interests of the power elite of American society (for example, the military-industrial complex) were opposed to those of the people. He theorized that the policies of the power elite would result in the "increased escalation of conflict, production of weapons of mass destruction, and possibly the annihilation of the human race. "

Conflict theory is most commonly associated with Marxism, but as a reaction to functionalism and the positivist method, it may also be associated with a number of other perspectives, including critical theory, feminist theory, postmodern theory, post-structural theory, postcolonial theory, queer theory, world systems theory, and race-conflict theory.

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10.2C: The Interactionist Perspective

According to theorists working in the symbolic interactionist perspective, health and illness are socially constructed.

Learning Objectives

- Explain and give examples of social constructions of health according to the symbolic interactionist perspective

Key Points

- Symbolic interactionist researchers investigate how people create meaning during social interaction, how they present and construct the self, and how they define situations of co-presence with others.
- Constructivist grounded theory emphasizes the development of an interactive relationship and mutual construction of knowledge between researcher and participants.
- Medicalization of deviance refers to the process that changes "bad" behavior into "sick" behavior.
- Demedicalization refers to the process when "sick" behavior is normalized again.

Key Terms

- **medicalization of deviance**: The medicalization of deviance refers to the process that changes "bad" behavior into "sick" behavior.
- **demedicalization**: Demedicalization refers to the process when "sick" behavior is normalized again.
- **symbolic interactionist**: Symbolic interactionist researchers investigate how people create meaning during social interaction, how they present and construct the self, and how they define situations of co-presence with others.

According to theorists working in the symbolic interactionist perspective, health and illness are socially constructed. Symbolic interactionist researchers investigate how people create meaning during social interaction, how they present and construct the self (or "identity"), and how they define situations of co-presence with others. One of the perspective's central ideas is that people act as they do because of how they define situations.

Constructivist grounded theory emphasizes the development of an interactive relationship and mutual construction of knowledge between researcher and participants. Symbolic interactionists believe that objects have meaning only through people's interactions with them in the environment, that the meanings people have for things develops through social interaction and that those meanings are handled and modified by a constant and ongoing interpretive process by individuals.

An example of the social construction of health the the Rate of Perceived Exertion, or RPE. This scale measures the intensity of a person's workout on a scale of 0 to 10. This scale was developed by Gunnar Borg, and it is used by medical professionals to assess a person's health in a variety of ways.

In essence, interactionists focus on the specific meanings and causes people attribute to illness. The term "medicalization" of deviance" refers to the process that changes "bad" behavior into "sick" behavior. A related process is "demedicalization", in which "sick" behavior is normalized again. Medicalization and demedicalization affect who responds to the patient, how people respond to the patient, and how people view the personal responsibility of the patient.

An example of medicalization is illustrated by the history of how our society views alcohol and alcoholism. During the 19th century, people who drank too much were considered "bad, lazy people. " They were called drunks, and it was not uncommon for them to be arrested or run out of a town. Drunks were not treated in a sympathetic way because, at that time, it was thought that it was their own fault that they could not stop drinking. During the latter half of the 20th century, however, people who drank too much were increasingly defined as people with a disease or a genetic predisposition to addiction. With alcoholism defined as a disease and not a personal choice, alcoholics came to be viewed with more compassion and understanding. Thus, "badness" was transformed into "sickness".



Alcoholism: In this engraving from the 19th century, “King Alcohol” is shown with a skeleton on a barrel of alcohol. The words “poverty,” “misery,” “crime,” and “death” hang in the air behind him.

While interactionism does acknowledge the subjective nature of diagnosis, it is important to remember who benefits the most when a behavior becomes defined as illness. Pharmaceutical companies make billions of dollars treating illnesses such as fatigue, insomnia, and hyperactivity that may not actually be illnesses in need of treatment, but opportunities for companies to make more money.

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10.2D: The Labeling Approach

The labeling approach to health and illness claims that mental illness is manifested solely as a result of societal influence.

Learning Objectives

- Analyze the pros and cons of labeling theory, especially the implications it has for the "mentally ill" and HIV/AIDS patients

Key Points

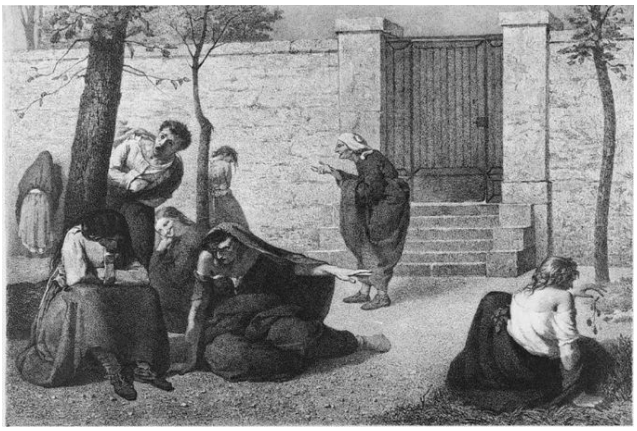
- Developed by sociologists during the 1960s, labeling theory holds that deviance is not inherent to an act. The theory focuses on the tendency of majorities to negatively label minorities or those seen as deviant from standard cultural norms.
- The social construction of deviant behavior plays an important role in the labeling process that occurs in society.
- Labeling theory was first applied to the term "mentally ill" in 1966 when Thomas J. Scheff published *Being Mentally Ill*. Scheff challenged common perceptions of mental illness by claiming that mental illness is manifested solely as a result of societal influence.
- Hard labeling refers to those who argue that mental illness does not exist. They note the slight deviance from the norms of society that cause people to believe in mental illness.
- Soft labeling refers to people who believe that mental illnesses do, in fact, exist. Unlike the supporters of hard labeling, soft labeling supporters believe that mental illnesses are not entirely socially constructed.

Key Terms

- **self-fulfilling prophecy**: a prediction that, by being voiced, causes itself to come true
- **social construction**: A concept or practice that is the construct (or artifact) of a particular group, meaning that the concept or practice is understood differently by various groups and institutions.
- **deviance**: Actions or behaviors that violate formal and informal cultural norms, such as laws or the norm that discourages public nose-picking.

Labeling Theory on Health and Illness

Labeling theory is closely related to social-construction and symbolic-interaction analysis. Developed by sociologists during the 1960s, labeling theory holds that deviance is not inherent to an act. The theory focuses on the tendency of majorities to *negatively label* minorities or those seen as deviant from standard cultural norms. The theory is concerned with how the self-identity and behavior of individuals may be determined or influenced by the terms used to describe or classify them. It is associated with the concepts of self-fulfilling prophecy and stereotyping.



1857 Lithograph by Armand Gautier: Shows personifications of dementia, megalomania, acute mania, melancholia, idiocy, hallucination, erotic mania and paralysis in the gardens of the Hospice de la Salpêtrière. A mental disorder or mental illness is a psychological pattern, potentially reflected in behavior, that is generally associated with distress or disability, and which is not considered part of normal development of a person's culture.

The social construction of deviant behavior plays an important role in the labeling process that occurs in society. This process involves not only the labeling of criminally deviant behavior—behavior that does not fit socially constructed norms—but also labeling that reflects stereotyped or stigmatized behavior of the "mentally ill." Hard labeling refers to those who argue that mental illness does not exist; it is merely deviance from the norms of society that cause people to believe in mental illness. Mental illnesses are socially constructed illnesses and psychotic disorders do not exist. Soft labeling refers to people who believe that mental illnesses do, in fact, exist, and are not entirely socially constructed.

Labeling theory was first applied to the term "mentally ill" in 1966 when Thomas J. Scheff published *Being Mentally Ill*. Scheff challenged common perceptions of mental illness by claiming that mental illness is manifested solely as a result of societal influence. He argued that society views certain actions as deviant. In order to come to terms with and understand these actions, society often places the label of mental illness on those who exhibit them. Certain expectations are placed on these individuals and, over time, they unconsciously change their behavior to fulfill them. Criteria for different mental illnesses, he believed, are not consistently fulfilled by those who are diagnosed with them because all of these people suffer from the same disorder. Criteria are simply fulfilled because the

"mentally ill" believe they are supposed to act a certain way—over time, they come to do so.

Another issue involving labeling was the rise of HIV/AIDS cases among gay men in the 1980s. HIV/AIDS was labeled a disease of the homosexual and further pushed people into believing homosexuality was deviant. Even today, some people believe contracting HIV/AIDS is punishment for deviant and inappropriate sexual behaviors.

Labels, while they can be stigmatizing, can also lead those who bear them down the road to proper treatment and recovery. The label of "mentally ill" may help a person seek help, such as psychotherapy or medication. If one believes that being "mentally ill" is more than just believing one should fulfill a set of diagnostic criteria, then one would probably also agree that there are some who are labeled "mentally ill" who need help. It has been claimed that this could not happen if society did not have a way to categorize them, although there are actually plenty of approaches to these phenomena that don't use categorical classifications and diagnostic terms (for example, spectrum or continuum models). Here, people vary along different dimensions, and everyone falls at different points on each dimension.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

10.3: Social Epidemiology and Health

Topic hierarchy

10.3A: Social Epidemiology and Health

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10.3A: Social Epidemiology and Health

Social epidemiology studies the social distribution and social determinants of health.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss epidemiolgy and its impact on American health care, as well as its beginnings based on Durkheim's work on suicide

Key Points

- Epidemiology is the study (or the science of the study) of the patterns, causes, and effects of health and disease conditions in defined populations.
- Social epidemiology is defined as "the branch of epidemiology that studies the social distribution and social determinants of health"; or in other words, "both specific features of, and pathways by which, societal conditions affect health".
- Social epidemiologists generally use social concepts in order to explain patterns of health in the population.
- The roots of social epidemiology go back to the work of Emile Durkheim on suicide, where he explored the differing suicide rates between Protestants and Catholics.
- Use of multilevel models (also known as hierarchical and mixed effects models) involves focusing on both individual-level measures and emergent social properties that have no correlation at the individual level.

Key Terms

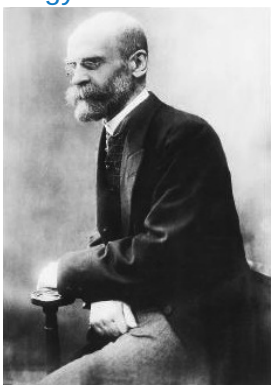
- **Emile Durkheim**: David Émile Durkheim (April 15, 1858 – November 15, 1917) was a French sociologist. He formally established the academic discipline and, with Karl Marx and Max Weber, is commonly cited as the principal architect of modern social science and father of sociology.
- **Social epidemiology**: Social epidemiology is defined as "the branch of epidemiology that studies the social distribution and social determinants of health," that is, "both specific features of, and pathways by which, societal conditions affect health. "
- **Multilevel Models**: Multilevel models are statistical models of parameters that vary at more than one level. These models can be seen as generalizations of linear models (in particular, linear regression), although they can also extend to non-linear models.

Epidemiology

Epidemiology is the study (or the science of the study) of the patterns, causes, and effects of health and disease conditions in defined populations. It is the cornerstone of public health, and informs policy decisions and evidence-based medicine by identifying risk factors for disease and targets for preventive medicine. Epidemiologists help with study design, collection and statistical analysis of data, and interpretation and dissemination of results (including peer review and occasional systematic review). Epidemiology has helped develop methodology used in clinical research, public health studies and, to a lesser extent, basic research in the biological sciences.

Major areas of epidemiological study include disease etiology, outbreak investigation, disease surveillance and screening, biomonitoring, and comparisons of treatment effects such as in clinical trials. Epidemiologists rely on other scientific disciplines like biology to better understand disease processes, statistics to make efficient use of the data and draw appropriate conclusions, social sciences to better understand proximate and distal causes, and engineering for exposure assessment.

Social Epidemiology



Émile Durkheim: Durkheim formally established the academic discipline and, with Karl Marx and Max Weber, is commonly cited as the principal architect of modern social science and father of sociology.

Social epidemiology is defined as "the branch of epidemiology that studies the social distribution and social determinants of health"; or in other words, "both specific features of, and pathways by which, societal conditions affect health" (Krieger, 2001). The roots of social epidemiology go back Emile Durkheim's work on suicide.

In *Suicide* (1897), Durkheim explores the differing suicide rates between Protestants and Catholics, arguing that stronger social control among Catholics results in lower suicide rates. According to Durkheim, Catholic society has normal levels of integration while Protestant society has low levels. Overall, Durkheim treated suicide as a social fact, explaining variations in its rate on a macro level, considering society-scale phenomena such as a lack of connections between people

(group attachment) and a lack of regulations of behavior, rather than the feelings and motivations of individuals. Despite its limitations, Durkheim's work on suicide has influenced proponents of control theory, and is often mentioned as a classic sociological study. The book pioneered modern social research and served to distinguish social science from psychology and political philosophy.

Social epidemiology may focus on individual-level measures, or on emergent social properties that have no correlation at the individual level. Simultaneous analysis at both levels may even be warranted. Use of such multilevel models is also known as hierarchical and mixed effects models. Social epidemiology overlaps with fields in the social sciences, such as medical anthropology, medical sociology, and medical geography. However, these fields often use health and disease in order to explain specifically social phenomenon (such as the growth of lay health advocacy movements), while social epidemiologists generally use social concepts in order to explain patterns of health in the population.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

10.4: Health Care in the U.S.

Topic hierarchy

10.4A: Health Care in the U.S.

10.4B: Physicians, Nurses, and Patients

10.4C: Alternatives to Traditional Health Care

10.4d: The Role of Government

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10.4A: Health Care in the U.S.

Healthcare in the United States is provided by separate legal entities, often private facilities with governmental insurance for citizens.

Learning Objectives

- Outline the problems with American health care, primarily due to privatization

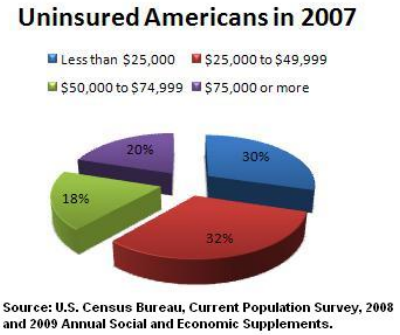
Key Points

- Healthcare facilities are largely owned and operated by the private sector.
- The United States is alone among developed nations with the notable absence of a universal healthcare system.
- Publicly-funded insurance is provided to the public through programs, such as Medicare, Medicaid, TRICARE, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Veterans Health Administration.
- Active debate about healthcare reform in the United States concerns questions of a right to healthcare, access, fairness, efficiency, cost, choice, value, and quality.
- Many of the uninsured are the working poor or are unemployed. Although some are healthy and choose to go without it, others have been rejected by insurance companies and are considered "uninsurable".

Key Terms

- **the Children's Health Insurance Program**: The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) is a program administered by the United States Department of Health and Human Services that provides matching funds to states for health insurance to families with children. The program was designed to cover uninsured children in families with incomes that are modest but too high to qualify for Medicaid.
- **private insurance**: Private insurance refers to health insurance provided by a non-governmental organization, usually a privately owned or publicly traded corporation.
- **TRICARE**: is a health care program of the United States Department of Defense Military Health System. TRICARE provides civilian health benefits for military personnel, military retirees, and their dependents, including some members of the Reserve Component.

Healthcare in the United States is provided by many separate legal entities. Healthcare facilities are largely owned and operated by the private sector. Health insurance is now primarily provided by the government in the public sector, with 60-65% of healthcare provision and spending coming from programs, such as Medicare, Medicaid, TRICARE, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Veterans Health Administration.



U.S. Uninsured in 2007, by income.: This image shows the income distribution of Americans who did not have health insurance coverage in 2007. The data comes from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey in 2008 and the 2009 Annual Social and Economic Supplements–-available here (page 21).

The United States is alone among developed nations with the notable absence of a universal healthcare system. Current estimates put U.S. healthcare spending at approximately 16% of GDP, second highest to East Timor (Timor-Leste) among all United Nations member nations. The U.S. system is primarily one of private insurance, with governmental insurance provided for citizens on the healthcare fringe. Insurance is provided by large-risk bearing corporate entities, which organize healthcare delivery by negotiating pricing and services with provider (physicians and hospitals) organizations. Most Americans under age 65 (59.3%) receive their health insurance coverage through an employer (which includes both private, as well as civilian public-sector employers) under group coverage, although this percentage is declining.

Debates about Healthcare in the United States

Active debate about healthcare reform in the United States concerns questions of a right to health care, access, fairness, efficiency, cost, choice, value, and quality. Some have argued that the system does not deliver equivalent value for the money spent. The United States pays twice as much, yet lags behind other wealthy nations in such measures as infant mortality and life expectancy. Currently, the United States has a higher infant mortality rate than most of the world's industrialized nations. Around 84.7% of Americans have some form of health insurance; either through their employer or the employer of their spouse or parent (59.3%), purchased individually (8.9%), or provided by government programs (27.8%; there is some overlap in these figures).

Furthermore, the number of persons without health insurance coverage in the United States is one of the primary concerns raised by advocates of healthcare reform. According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2009, there were 50.7 million people in the United States (16.7% of the population) who were without health insurance. Some Americans who do not qualify for government-provided health insurance are not provided health insurance by an employer, and are unable to afford, cannot qualify for, or choose not to purchase private health insurance. Many of the uninsured are the working poor or are unemployed. Although some are healthy and choose to go without it, others have been rejected by insurance companies and are considered “uninsurable.”

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10.4B: Physicians, Nurses, and Patients

The interactions between physicians, nurses, and patients are central to healthcare.

Learning Objectives

- Evaluate the importance of positive interactions between physicians, nurses and patients, in terms of satisfaction with health care services

Key Points

- Physicians in the United States include both physicians trained by medical education in the United States, and physicians that are international medical graduates who have progressed through the necessary steps to acquire a medical license to practice in a state.
- Patient's satisfaction is favored by a good doctor-patient relationship.
- Nursing is a healthcare profession focused on the care of individuals, families, and communities so they may attain, maintain, or recover optimal health and quality of life.

Key Terms

- **patient's satisfaction**: Patients' satisfaction with an encounter with health care service is mainly dependent on the duration and efficiency of care, and how empathetic and communicable the health care providers are.
- **doctor-patient relationship**: The doctor-patient relationship is central to the practice of healthcare and is essential for the delivery of high-quality health care in the diagnosis and treatment of disease.
- **medical education**: Medical education is education related to the practice of being a medical practitioner, either the initial training to become a doctor (i.e., medical school and internship), additional training thereafter (e.g., residency and fellowship), or Physician Assistant education.

Physicians

A physician is a health care provider who practices the profession of medicine, which is concerned with promoting, maintaining or restoring human health through the study, diagnosis, and treatment of disease, injury and other physical and mental impairments. They may focus their practice on certain disease categories, types of patients, or methods of treatment; such physicians are known as specialist medical practitioners. They may also assume responsibility for the provision of continuing comprehensive medical care to individuals, families and communities; these physicians are known as general practitioners.

Medical practice properly requires both a detailed knowledge of the academic disciplines (such as anatomy and physiology) underlying diseases and their treatment, and also a decent competence in its applied practice. Physicians in the United States include both physicians trained by medical education in the United States, and physicians that are international medical graduates who have progressed through the necessary steps to acquire a medical license to practice in a state. The U.S. physicians are an important part of the health care in the United States. Currently, the American College of Physicians uses the term physician to describe all medical practitioners holding a professional medical degree.

Nurses

Nursing is a healthcare profession focused on the care of individuals, families, and communities so they may attain, maintain, or recover optimal health and quality of life. There are a number of educational paths to becoming a professional nurse, which vary greatly worldwide, but all involve extensive study of nursing theory and practice, and training in clinical skills. Nursing Science is a field of knowledge based on the contributions of nursing scientists through peer-reviewed scholarly journals and evidenced-based practice. Nurses care for individuals of all ages and cultural backgrounds, who are healthy and ill, in a holistic manner based on the individual's physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual, social, and spiritual needs. The profession combines physical science, social science, nursing theory, and technology in caring for those individuals.

Patients

A patient is any recipient of health care services. The patient is most often ill or injured and in need of treatment by a physician, advanced practice registered nurse, or other health care provider. Patients' satisfaction with an encounter with health care service is mainly dependent on the duration and efficiency of care, and how empathetic and communicable the health care providers are. It is favored by a good doctor-patient relationship. Also, patients that are well informed of the necessary procedures in a clinical encounter, and the time it is expected to take, are generally more satisfied even if there is a longer waiting time.



A Doctor Performs a Cataract Surgery: A local doctor performs a cataract surgery on a patient at Zamboanga Medical Center during the U.S. Military Sealift Command (MSC) hospital ship, USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) visit to the city on a scheduled humanitarian visit.

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10.4C: Alternatives to Traditional Health Care

Alternative medicine is any practice claiming to heal "that does not fall within the realm of conventional medicine."

Learning Objectives

- Break down the various types of alternative medicine and how they fit into the health care system

Key Points

- Alternative medicine is frequently grouped with complementary medicine or integrative medicine, which, in general, refers to the same interventions when used in conjunction with mainstream techniques, under the umbrella term complementary and alternative medicine, or CAM.
- Whole medical systems cut across more than one of the other groups; examples include traditional Chinese medicine, naturopathy, homeopathy, and Ayurveda.
- Mind-body medicine takes a holistic approach to health that explores the interconnection between the mind, body, and spirit.
- Biology-based practices use substances found in nature such as herbs, foods, vitamins, and other natural substances.
- Manipulative and body-based practices feature manipulation or movement of body parts, such as is done in chiropractic and osteopathic manipulation.
- Integrative medicine is the combination of the practices and methods of alternative/complementary medicine with conventional medicine.

Key Terms

- **mind-body medicine**: Mind-body medicine takes a holistic approach to health that explores the interconnection between the mind, body, and spirit.
- **manipulative and body-based practices**: Manipulative and body-based practices feature manipulation or movement of body parts, such as is done in chiropractic and osteopathic manipulation.
- **integrative medicine**: Integrative medicine is the combination of the practices and methods of alternative/complementary medicine with conventional medicine. It may include preventive medicine and patient-centered medicine.

Non-Conventional and Conventional Medicine

Alternative medicine methods are diverse in their foundations and methodologies, and they may be based on historical or cultural traditions, rather than on scientific evidence. Methods may incorporate or base themselves on traditional medicine, folk knowledge, spiritual beliefs, or newly conceived approaches to healing. Alternative medicine is frequently grouped with complementary medicine or integrative medicine, which, in general, refers to the same interventions when used in conjunction with mainstream techniques, under the umbrella term complementary and alternative medicine, or CAM.

There is no clear and consistent definition for either alternative or complementary medicine. In Western culture, it is often defined as any healing practice "that does not fall within the realm of conventional medicine," or "that which has not been shown consistently to be effective. " There is a debate among medical researchers over whether any therapy may be properly classified as "alternative medicine. " Some claim that there is only medicine that has been adequately tested and that which has not. They feel that healthcare practices should be classified based solely on scientific evidence.

The U.S. National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) has developed one of the most widely used classification systems for the branches of complementary and alternative medicine. It classifies complementary and alternative therapies into five major groups, which have some overlap. Whole medical systems cut across more than one of the other groups; examples include traditional Chinese medicine, naturopathy, homeopathy, and Ayurveda. Mind-body medicine takes a holistic approach to health that explores the interconnection between the mind, body, and spirit. Biology-based practices use substances found in nature, such as herbs, foods, vitamins, and other natural substances. Manipulative and body-based practices feature manipulation or movement of body parts, such as is done in chiropractic and osteopathic manipulation.

Integrative medicine is the combination of the practices and methods of alternative/complementary medicine with conventional medicine. It may include preventive medicine and patient-centered medicine. It may also include practices not normally referred to as medicine, such as using prayer, meditation, socializing, and recreation as therapies. Its academic proponents sometimes recommend misleading patients by using known placebo treatments in order to achieve a placebo effect.



Medicinal Herbs: Medicinal herbs in a traditional Spanish market

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10.4d: The Role of Government

Publicly funded health care is a form of healthcare financing designed to meet the cost of healthcare needs from a publicly managed fund.

Learning Objectives

- Analyze the role of the government in the provision of health care

Key Points

- Most developed countries, with the exception of the United States, have partially or fully, publicly funded health systems.
- Publicly funded healthcare systems are usually financed in one of two ways: through taxation or via compulsory national health insurance.
- In compulsory insurance models, healthcare is financed from some combination of employees' salary deductions, employers' contributions, and possibly additional state funds. Insurance may cover other benefits, as well as health.
- When taxation is the primary means of financing healthcare, all eligible people receive the same level of cover regardless of their financial circumstances or risk factors.
- Most western industrial countries have a system of social insurance based on the principle of social solidarity covers eligible people from bearing the direct burden of most healthcare expenditure, funded by taxation during their working life.
- A range of measures, such as better payment methods, has improved the microeconomic incentives facing healthcare providers.

Key Terms

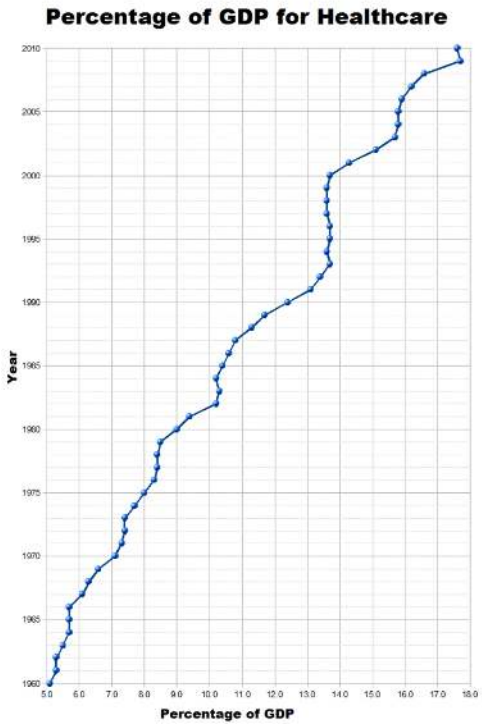
- **social solidarity**: Most western industrial countries have a system of social insurance based on the principle of social solidarity covers eligible people from bearing the direct burden of most healthcare expenditure, funded by taxation during their working life.
- **compulsory insurance models**: In compulsory insurance models, healthcare is financed from some combination of employees' salary deductions, employers' contributions, and possibly additional state funds. Insurance may cover other benefits as well as health.
- **Publicly funded health care**: Publicly funded healthcare is a form of healthcare financing designed to meet the cost of all or most healthcare needs from a publicly managed fund.

Government and Healthcare

Publicly funded health care is a form of healthcare financing designed to meet the cost of all or most healthcare needs from a publicly managed fund. The fund may be a not-for-profit trust, which pays out for health care according to common rules established by the members or by some other democratic form. In some countries, the fund is controlled directly by the government or by an agency of the government for the benefit of the entire population. This distinguishes it from other forms of private medical insurance. In the private model, the rights of access are subject to contractual obligations between an insurer and an insurance company. The latter seeks to make a profit by managing the flow of funds between funders and providers of health care services.

Publicly funded healthcare systems are usually financed in one of two ways: through taxation or via compulsory national health insurance. In compulsory insurance models, healthcare is financed from some combination of employees' salary deductions, employers' contributions, and possibly additional state funds. Insurance may cover other benefits as well as health. When taxation is the primary means of financing healthcare, all eligible people receive the same level of cover regardless of their financial circumstances or risk factors.

Most developed countries, with the exception of the United States, have partially or fully publicly funded health systems. Most western industrial countries have a system of social insurance based on the principle of social solidarity covers eligible people from bearing the direct burden of most healthcare expenditure, funded by taxation during their working life. Many OECD countries have implemented reforms to achieve policy goals of ensuring access to healthcare, improving the quality of healthcare and health outcomes, allocating an appropriate level of public sector other resources to healthcare, while at the same time ensuring that services are provided in a cost-efficient and cost-effective manner (microeconomic efficiency). A range of measures, such as better payment methods, has improved the microeconomic incentives facing providers. However, introducing improved incentives through a more competitive environment among providers and insurers has proved difficult.



Health Costs USA GDP: Total U.S. healthcare spending from 1960 to 2007 by percent of GDP (gross domestic product)

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SECTION OVERVIEW

10.5: Modern Issues in Health Care

Topic hierarchy

10.5A: Colonialism and the Spread of Diseases

10.5B: Infectious Diseases Today and in the Developing World

10.5C: HIV and AIDS

10.5D: Health Insurance

10.5E: Preventing Illness

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10.5A: Colonialism and the Spread of Diseases

European colonization contributed to the spread of disease worldwide.

Learning Objectives

- Summarize the impact of European colonialism on the spread of infectious disease and beginnings of disease control

Key Points

- Colonialism is the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.
- Encounters between explorers and populations in the rest of the world often introduced new diseases, which sometimes caused local epidemics of extraordinary virulence.
- Trade routes and new world conquests devastated indigenous populations, as they were exposed to new pathogens and newly domesticated animals.
- The leading cause of death in Europe and North America in the nineteenth century was tuberculosis.
- In the twentieth century, the world saw the biggest increase in its population in human history due to lessening of the mortality rate in many countries due to medical advances.
- In the 20th century, the world saw the biggest increase in its population in human history due to lessening of the mortality rate in many countries due to medical advances.

Key Terms

- **mortality rate**: The number of deaths per given unit of population over a given period of time.
- **tuberculosis**: An infectious disease of humans and animals caused by a species of mycobacterium mainly infecting the lungs where it causes tubercles characterized by the expectoration of mucus and sputum, fever, weight loss, and chest pain, and transmitted through inhalation or ingestion of bacteria.
- **pathogen**: Any organism or substance, especially a microorganism, capable of causing disease, such as bacteria, viruses, protozoa, or fungi. Microorganisms are not considered to be pathogenic until they have reached a population size that is large enough to cause disease.

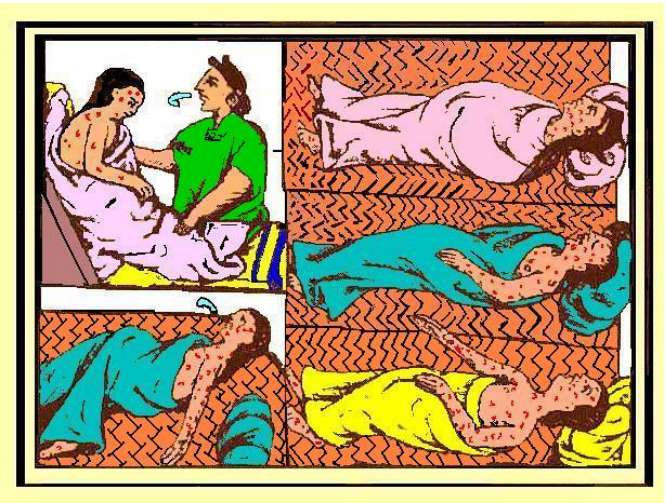
Colonialism and Health

Colonialism is the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. Historically, this has often involved killing or subjugating the indigenous population. Encounters between explorers and populations in the rest of the world often introduced new diseases, which sometimes caused local epidemics of extraordinary virulence.

European colonization contributed to the spread of disease worldwide. Trade routes and New World conquests devastated indigenous populations, as they were exposed to new pathogens and newly domesticated animals. Colonization in Africa and parts of Asia was not as simple for Europeans as it was in the Americas, because Europeans were subjected to diseases they had no prior exposure to. In response to becoming infected, European military and government officials living in African and Asian colonies were quarantined to safety in areas away from natives, who were believed to be disease carriers, and, thus, “biologically inferior. ” The leading cause of death in Europe and North America in the nineteenth century was tuberculosis.

The European contribution to global pathogen exposure created a “global homogenization of disease,” where no border was left uncrossed in the spread of infectious diseases. The ill health effects are long lasting, especially because the health of Europeans improved while the health of colonized nations worsened. Following the end of colonization, many countries continued to use and attempted to enhance their “inherited” healthcare systems, which consisted of “inadequate,” and “top-heavy” structures based on Western medical models. These same models continued to benefit elites and addressed the “rural poor” once the “needs of the urban elite were attended to. ” Hospitals in metropolitan areas were first priority, followed by small rural clinics that were underfunded, understaffed, and, thus, less effective.

From the beginning of the twentieth century onwards, the elimination or control of disease in tropical countries became a driving force for all colonial powers. The sleeping sickness epidemic in Africa was arrested due to mobile teams systematically screening millions of people at risk. In the twentieth century, the world saw the biggest increase in its population in human history due to lessening of the mortality rate in many countries due to medical advances. The world population has grown from 1.6 billion in 1900 to over 7 billion today.



Florentine Codex smallpox: Aztecs dying of smallpox, (“The Florentine Codex,” 1540–85)

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10.5B: Infectious Diseases Today and in the Developing World

Infectious diseases result from the infection, presence and growth of pathogenic biological agents in an individual host organism.

Learning Objectives

- Assess the implications of infectious diseases in terms of health care and life expectancy of individuals

Key Points

- Many infectious diseases that killed by the millions were greatly reduced in the 20th century.
- While the number of deaths due to nearly every disease has decreased, deaths due to HIV/AIDS have increased fourfold.
- Infectious pathogens include some viruses, bacteria, fungi, protozoa, multicellular parasites, and aberrant proteins known as prions.
- The top three single agent /disease killers are HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.
- Normally not a problem to North Americans, malaria is the infectious disease most deadly to children worldwide. Malaria infects 500 million people per year, killing just fewer than 3 million.
- HIV/AIDS is the world's leading cause of death; it was introduced as an infectious disease during the 20th century.

Key Terms

- **pathogen**: Any organism or substance, especially a microorganism, capable of causing disease, such as bacteria, viruses, protozoa, or fungi. Microorganisms are not considered to be pathogenic until they have reached a population size that is large enough to cause disease.

Infectious diseases, also known as transmissible diseases or communicable diseases, are clinically evident illnesses resulting from the infection, presence and growth of pathogenic biological agents. Infectious pathogens include some viruses, bacteria, fungi, protozoa, multicellular parasites, and aberrant proteins known as prions. These pathogens are the cause of disease epidemics, in the sense that without the pathogen, no infectious epidemic occurs.

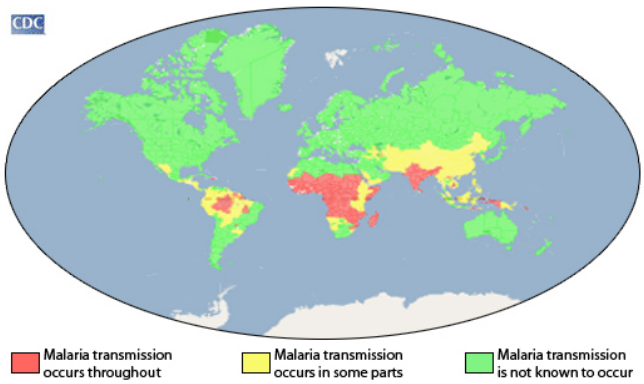
Many infectious diseases that previously killed by the millions were greatly reduced in the 20th century, with the most notable achievement being the eradication of smallpox. Other diseases, such as diphtheria, typhoid fever, tuberculosis and whooping cough were greatly reduced throughout the world due to childhood immunization programs, improved sanitation, and the use of antibiotics. However, some infectious diseases remain a problem today. The top three single agent/disease killers are HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Malaria

Normally not a problem to North Americans, malaria is the infectious disease most deadly to children worldwide. Said to be one of the world's oldest diseases, malaria is caused by one of four protozoans within the genus *Plasmodium*. The blood pulled from the bite of an Anopheles mosquito carries this disease, which infects the human or animal host and resides in red blood cells in order to reproduce. Malaria infects 500 million people per year, killing just fewer than 3 million. It is the second leading cause of death in Africa, after HIV/AIDS, and is the fifth leading cause of death from infectious diseases worldwide.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS was introduced as an infectious disease during the 20th century and deaths due to HIV have increased fourfold since. The first cases were diagnosed in the United States in the early 1980s. This misunderstood illness was originally thought to only exist among four risk groups, better known as the 4Hs: Homosexuals, Haitians, Hemophiliacs and Heroin users. However, as HIV/AIDS has become a pandemic, it is better understood and is known to not just be isoloated to certain groups of people. There are various modes of HIV transmission which include: male to male sexual contact, injection drug use, and heterosexual contact. In some developing countries where antiretroviral drugs are not affordable or readily accessible, mother-to-child transmission still poses a possible risk of infection.



Concentrations of malaria transmission worldwide.: Normally not a problem to North Americans, malaria is the infectious disease most deadly to children worldwide. Said to be one of the world's oldest diseases, malaria is caused by one of four protozoans within the genus Plasmodium.

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10.5C: HIV and AIDS

HIV/AIDS is a major health problem in many parts of the world.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the problems associated with HIV/AIDS for many societies, particularly poor countries and ethnic minorities

Key Points

- Acquired immune deficiency syndrome or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a disease of the human immune system caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). The virus and disease are often referred to together as HIV/AIDS.
- The three main transmission routes of HIV are sexual contact, exposure to infected body fluids or tissues, and from mother to fetus during the perinatal period.
- The symptoms of AIDS are primarily the result of conditions that do not normally develop in individuals with healthy immune systems.
- There is currently no publicly available HIV vaccine or cure for HIV or AIDS. The only known methods are based on avoiding exposure to the virus.

Key Terms

- **transmission**: HIV is transmitted by three main routes: sexual contact, exposure to infected body fluids or tissues and from mother to child during pregnancy, delivery or breastfeeding.
- **vaccine**: A substance given to stimulate the body's production of antibodies providing immunity against a disease, prepared from the agent that causes the disease, or a synthetic substitute.
- **perinatal period**: Of or pertaining to the time around birth.

HIV and AIDS in Health Care

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a disease of the human immune system caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). The illness interferes with the immune system, making people with it much more likely to get infections that do not affect people with working immune systems. This susceptibility gets worse as the disease continues. HIV is transmitted through sexual intercourse, contaminated blood transfusions and hypodermic needles. It can also be transmitted between mother and baby during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding. It can be transmitted by any contact of a mucous membrane or the bloodstream with a bodily fluid that has the virus in it, including blood, semen, vaginal fluid, preseminal fluid, or breast milk.

The virus and disease are often referred to together as HIV/AIDS. The disease is a major health problem in many parts of the world, and is considered a pandemic; a disease outbreak that is not only present over a large area but is actively spreading. In 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that there are 33.4 million people worldwide with HIV/AIDS; 2.7 million new HIV infections are reported per year along with two million annual deaths due to AIDS. The three main transmission routes of HIV are sexual contact, exposure to infected body fluids or tissues, and from mother to fetus during the perinatal period. It is possible to find HIV in saliva, tears and urine of infected individuals, but there are no recorded cases of infection by these secretions. Anti-retroviral treatment of infected patients also significantly reduces their ability to transmit HIV to others. This treatment reduces the amount of virus in bodily fluids to undetectable levels



AIDS awareness in Chimoio: AIDS awareness painting on a wall in Chimoio town, Mozambique.

People with AIDS also have an increased risk of developing various cancers like Kaposi's sarcoma, cervical cancer and cancers of the immune system known as lymphomas. In addition, people with AIDS often have systemic symptoms of infection like fevers, sweats (particularly at night), swollen glands, chills, weakness, and weight loss. The opportunistic infections AIDS patients develop depend in part on the prevalence of these infections in the patient's geographic area. Symptoms of AIDS are primarily the result of conditions that do not normally develop in individuals with healthy immune systems. Most of these conditions are opportunistic infections caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites normally controlled by the elements of the immune system that HIV damages. These infections affect nearly every organ system.

Many people are unaware that they are infected with HIV. Less than 1% of the sexually active urban population in Africa has been tested; this proportion is even lower in rural populations. Furthermore, only 0.5% of pregnant women attending urban health facilities are counseled, tested or receive their test results. Again, this proportion is even lower in rural health facilities. Therefore, donor blood and blood products used in medicine and medical research are screened for HIV.

There is currently no publicly available HIV vaccine or cure for HIV or AIDS. The only known methods are based on avoiding exposure to the virus or, failing that, an antiretroviral treatment given directly after a highly significant exposure. This treatment is called post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). PEP has a very demanding four-week schedule of dosage. It also has very unpleasant side effects, including diarrhea, malaise, nausea and fatigue.

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10.5D: Health Insurance

Health insurance is insurance against the risk of incurring personal medical expenses.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the use of both private and public health insurance and the implications for society's overall health

Key Points

- Two types of health insurance have developed in modern society: private health insurance and publicly funded health insurance.
- A premium is the amount a policy-holder or his sponsor must pay to a health plan in order to purchase health coverage.
- A deductible is the amount that the insured must pay out-of-pocket before the health insurer pays its share.
- Co-payment is the amount that an insured person must pay out of pocket before a health insurer pays for a particular visit or service.
- An explanation of benefits is a document that may be sent by an insurer to a patient. This document explains what was covered for a medical service, and how payment amounts and patient responsibility amounts were determined.
- The premium is the amount the policy-holder or his sponsor pays to the health plan to purchase health coverage.
- The deductible is the amount that the insured must pay out-of-pocket before the health insurer pays its share.
- Co-payment is the amount that the insured person must pay out of pocket before the health insurer pays for a particular visit or service.
- Explanation of benefits is a document that may be sent by an insurer to a patient explaining what was covered for a medical service, and how payment amount and patient responsibility amount were determined.
- The medical model of medicine science focuses on the eradication of illness through diagnosis and effective treatment.
- The social model of medicine science focuses on changes that can be made in society and in people's own lifestyles to make the population healthier.

Key Terms

- **deductible**: A deductible is the amount that the insured must pay out-of-pocket before the health insurer pays its share.
- **premium**: The premium is the amount a policy-holder or his sponsor must pay to a health plan to purchase health coverage.
- **co-payment**: A co-payment is the amount that the insured person must pay out of pocket before the health insurer pays for a particular visit or service.

Health insurance is insurance against the risk of incurring personal medical expenses. By estimating the overall risk of health care that a target group will require, an insurer can develop a routine finance structure, such as a monthly premium or payroll tax, to ensure that money is available to pay for the health care benefits specified in an insurance agreement. These benefits are administered by a central organization, like a government agency, private business, or non-profit organization.

Types of Health Insurance: Public Vs. Private

Two types of health insurance exist in modern society, private health insurance and publicly funded health insurance. Private insurance, based on free market principles, refers to health insurance provided by a non-governmental organization, usually a privately owned or publicly traded corporation. Among developed nations, the United States is the only country in which private insurance is the primary source of healthcare.

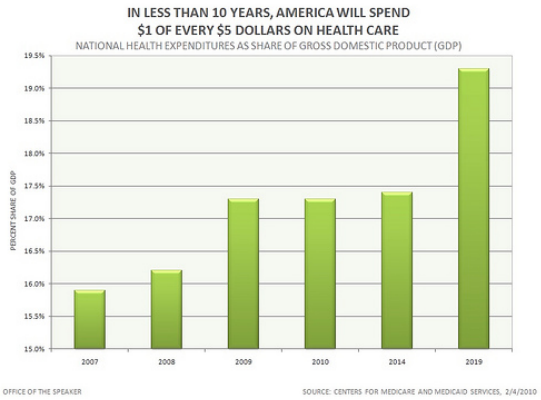
In contrast to this private method, in public insurance, health care is paid wholly or mostly by public funds. This type of health care is the most common and popular in almost every developed and developing nation in the world, except the United States. The majority of developed nations have publicly funded health systems that cover a majority of the population.

Understanding Health Insurance Terms

Some of the essential terms associated with health insurance are premiums, deductibles, co-payments, and explanations of benefits. A premium is the amount a policy-holder or his sponsor (e.g. an employer) must pay to a health plan to purchase health coverage. A deductible is the amount that an insured individual must pay out-of-pocket before the health insurer pays its share. For example, policyholders might have to pay a $500 deductible per year, before the health insurer covers any health care costs. A co-payment is the amount that an insured person must pay out of pocket before the health insurer pays for a particular visit or service. For example, an insured person might pay a $45 co-payment for a doctor's visit, or to obtain a prescription. A co-payment must be made each time a particular service is obtained. Lastly, an explanation of benefits is a document that may be sent by an insurer to a patient. This document explains what the insurer will cover, in terms of medical services. It also explains how payment amounts and patient responsibility amounts have been determined.

Healthcare and Modern Medicine

Healthcare improves as a result of advancements in medical science. Modern medicine approaches health care from two angles. The first, the medical model, focuses on the eradication of illness through diagnosis and effective treatment. The second, the social model, focuses on changes that can be made in society and in people's lifestyles to make the population healthier. This second method typically focuses on preventative care. Modern, scientific medicine has proven uniquely effective at treating and preventing disease. It is increasingly widespread and more widely accepted than other forms of medicine. Modern medicine is notably secular, and indifferent to ideas of the supernatural or the spiritual. Instead, it concentrates on the body and society to determine the causes and cures of health issues. Modern, scientific medicine is the most effective contributor to the health of humans in the world today.



In less than 10 Years, AMERICA will Spend $1 of Every $5 Dollars on Health care: Across the country, American workers, their families, and small businesses are struggling with rising health care costs and policies that put quality, affordable care out of reach. A new report by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), published in the magazine Health Affairs, estimates that spending on health care grew to 17.3 percent of the U.S. economy – a record and the largest one-year jump since 1960.

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10.5E: Preventing Illness

Preventive medicine, or preventive care, refers to measures taken to prevent diseases, rather than curing them or treating their symptoms.

Learning Objectives

- Explain the purpose of preventive medicine and how insurance companies can influence the types of preventive medicine chosen

Key Points

- Preventive care may include examinations and screening tests tailored to an individual's age, health, and family history.
- Preventive medicine or preventive care refers to measures taken to prevent diseases rather than curing them or treating their symptoms.
- Professionals involved in the public health aspect of this practice may be involved in entomology, pest control, and public health inspections.
- Intrauterine devices (IUD) are highly effective and highly cost effective contraceptives, however where universal health care is not available the initial cost may be a barrier.

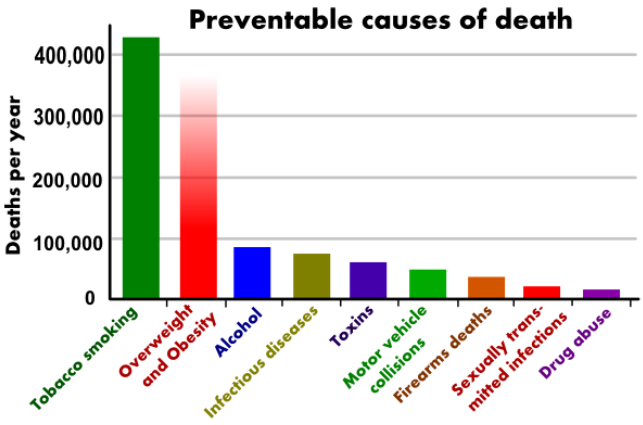
Key Terms

- **intrauterine device**: A contraceptive device consisting of a spiral or similar shape of plastic or metal inserted through the vagina into the uterus in order to prevent the implantation of a fertilized egg.
- **public health**: The science and practice of community hygiene; it includes preventive medicine, health education, sanitation and environmental safety.
- **preventive medicine**: Preventive medicine refers to measures taken to prevent diseases rather than curing them or treating their symptoms.

Preventive medicine, or preventive care, refers to measures taken to prevent diseases, rather than curing them or treating their symptoms. The term contrasts in method with curative and palliative medicine, and in scope with public health methods, which work at the level of population health rather than individual health. Simple examples of preventive medicine include hand washing, breastfeeding, and immunizations. Preventive care may include examinations and screening tests tailored to an individual's age, health, and family history. For example, a person with a family history of certain cancers or other diseases would begin screening at an earlier age and/or more frequently than those with no such family history.

Professionals involved in the public health aspect of this practice may be involved in entomology, pest control, and public health inspections. Public health inspections can include recreational waters, swimming pools, beaches, food preparation and serving, and industrial hygiene inspections and surveys.

Since preventive medicine deals with healthy individuals or populations, the costs and potential harms from interventions need even more careful examination than in treatment. For an intervention to be applied widely it generally needs to be affordable and highly cost effective. For instance, intrauterine devices (IUD) are highly effective and highly cost effective contraceptives, however where universal health care is not available the initial cost may be a barrier. Preventive solutions may be less profitable and therefore less attractive to makers and marketers of pharmaceuticals and medical devices. Birth control pills, which are taken every day and may take in a thousand dollars over ten years, may generate more profits than an IUD, which despite a huge initial markup only generates a few hundred dollars over the same period.



Leading Preventable Causes of Death in the United States.: This data is outdated and was in fact significantly revised in subsequent reports of the leading causes of deaths, especially for obesity-related diseases.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: Aging and the Elderly

The aging of the U.S. population has significant ramifications for institutions such as business, education, the healthcare industry, and the family, as well as for the many cultural norms and traditions that focus on interactions with and social roles for older people. “Old” is a socially defined concept, and the way we think about aging is likely to change as the population ages.

11.1: Introduction
11.2: Who Are the Elderly? Aging in Society
11.3: The Process of Aging
11.4: Challenges Facing the Elderly
11.5: Theoretical Perspectives on Aging
11.6: Key Terms
11.7: Section Summary
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11.11: References

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11.1: Introduction



Figure 13.1: Older people, especially family members, can foster a connection between our past and present and help build our memories and identities. But they sometimes need unexpected help, which they do not always accept. (Credit: PWRDF/flickr)

Chapter Outline

13.1 Who Are the Elderly? Aging in Society
13.2 The Process of Aging
13.3 Challenges Facing the Elderly
13.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Aging

9-year old twins Osiris and Joli loved making meals with Bibi, their grandmother. Osiris loved the cooking; Joli loved stealing the ingredients. The kids didn't get very involved with the chicken, but perked up with the fufu and almost took over the dough balls. Bibi yelled at Joli to stop eating raw batter, but she didn't mean it.

Bibi loved having them around. She sang mash-ups of 90s songs and big band music, mixing in funny mentions of their day-to-day lives. As she prepped the cassava, she'd throw the discarded pieces in a waste bowl like she was playing basketball. Bibi told them a story about how one of her schoolteachers was was so young that all the students thought she was one of them. “So when she told us her last name, I thought it was her first name and called her by it. So she sent me outside for punishment!”

The kids burst into peals of laughter. Bibi joined in as she moved a pan.

Suddenly the stove erupted in flame. The oil in the pan had spilled over. Bibi grabbed a glass of water on the table. Joli screamed at her to stop, but Bibi had already thrown the water onto the oil. The flames flared and splattered across the stove and onto the counter. A paper towel caught fire. Everyone was screaming. Osiris and Joli's mother, Gloria, was in the room a moment later. Pushing Bibi away, she turned off the stove and threw a towel on some of the flames. She took a fire extinguisher from the cabinet and, after a few seconds of fiddling with the pin and hose, emptied it onto the fire.

“Mom!” Gloria yelled. “Why would you put water on an oil fire? You know that's the last thing to do!”

Bibi, in the corner, seemed to hold on to the wall to remain standing. She shook her head and looked at the children. “It's a fire. You put water on it.”

“No you don't. You taught me never to do that. You told me to use salt...anything but water. You could have burned down the house!”

Bibi was crying. She looked at the children and sank toward the floor. “I don't remember that. I'm so sorry. It's a fire, I thought. Put water on it.” Gloria sent the children out of the room and sat her mother down.

Aside from the scare from the fire, why might Bibi be crying? What difficulties do older people face in undertaking day-to-day activities? What difficulties do their family members face? In this chapter, we will explore the identities and issues of older people in our societies, and consider our attitudes and obligations toward them.

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11.2: Who Are the Elderly? Aging in Society

Learning Objectives

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

- Differentiate between the major senior age groups (young-old, middle-old, and old-old)
- Describe the “graying of the United States” as the population experiences increased life expectancies
- Examine aging as a global issue



Figure 13.2: Elderly people may not always conform to society's expectations of their attitudes or their abilities. While we don't know whether or not these marathon participants are running competitively, it's clear the older person in the foreground is ahead of many younger people. (Credit: Mike Kaden/flickr)

Think of U.S. movies and television shows you have watched recently. Did any of them feature older actors and actresses? What roles did they play? How were these older actors portrayed? Were they cast as main characters in a love story? Did they seem fully capable, safe, productive, and happy? Or were they a challenge to those around them? Were they grouchy or overly set in their ways?

Many media portrayals of the elderly reflect negative cultural attitudes toward aging. In the United States, society tends to glorify youth and associate it with beauty and sexuality. In comedies, the elderly are often associated with grumpiness or hostility. Rarely do the roles of older people convey the fullness of life experienced by seniors—as employees, lovers, or the myriad roles they have in real life. What values does this reflect?

One hindrance to society’s fuller understanding of aging is that people rarely understand the process of aging until they reach old age themselves. This lack of understanding is in stark contrast to our perspective on childhood, something we've all experienced. And as is often the case with a lack of knowledge or understanding, it leads to myths, assumptions, and stereotypes about elderly people and the aging process. While stereotypes associated with race and gender may lead to more critical thought and sensitivity, many people accept age stereotypes without question (Levy 2002). Consider this: At your school or workplace, you have likely had the opportunity (or may be required) to attend workshops on racial equity, cultural sensitivity, sexual harassment, and so on. But even though the elderly are all around us (and increasing in number every day), very few institutions conduct similar workshops or forums about the elderly. Each culture has a certain set of expectations and assumptions about aging, all of which are part of our socialization.

While the landmarks of maturing into adulthood are a source of pride, often celebrated at major milestones like First Communion, Bar Mitzvah, or Quinceañera, signs of natural aging can be cause for shame or embarrassment. Some people avoid acknowledging their aging by rejecting help when they need it , which can lead to physical injury or problems obtaining needed items or information. For example, when vaccinations for the COVID-19 virus became available, U.S. seniors who didn't have help from family and friends lagged significantly in receiving vaccines; this occurred despite of the fact that seniors were known to be the highest risk group and were the most susceptible to illness and death if they were infected (Graham 2021). Those elderly people who were resistant to reach out for help may have waited too long, and their neighbors or other community members may not have known they needed the help. Why would they take this risk? Researchers aim to uncover the motivations and challenges that may result in these circumstances and behavior.

Gerontology is a field of science that seeks to understand the process of aging and the challenges encountered as seniors grow older. Gerontologists investigate age, aging, and the aged. Gerontologists study what it is like to be an older adult in a society and the ways that aging affects members of a society. As a multidisciplinary field, gerontology includes the work of medical and biological scientists, social scientists, and even financial and economic scholars.

Social gerontology refers to a specialized field of gerontology that examines the social (and sociological) aspects of aging. Researchers focus on developing a broad understanding of the experiences of people at specific ages, such as mental and physical wellbeing, plus age-specific concerns such as the process of dying. Social gerontologists work as social researchers, counselors, community organizers, and service providers for older adults. Because of their specialization, social gerontologists are in a strong position to advocate for older adults.

Scholars in these disciplines have learned that “aging” reflects not only the physiological process of growing older but also our attitudes and beliefs about the aging process. You’ve likely seen online calculators that promise to determine your “real age” as opposed to your chronological age. These ads target the notion that people may “feel” a different age than their actual years. Some sixty-year-olds feel frail and elderly, while some eighty-year-olds feel sprightly.

Equally revealing is that as people grow older they define “old age” in terms of greater years than their current age (Logan 1992). Many people want to postpone old age and regard it as a phase that will never arrive. For example, many older Americans keep working well past what people consider retirement age, due to financial pressures or in order to remain, in their eyes, useful. Some older adults even succumb to stereotyping their own age group (Rothbaum 1983).

In the United States, the experience of being elderly has changed greatly over the past century. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, many U.S. households were home to multigenerational families, and the experiences and wisdom of elders was respected. They offered wisdom and support to their children and often helped raise their grandchildren (Sweetser 1984).

Multigenerational U.S. families began to decline after World War II, and their numbers reached a low point around 1980, but they are consistently on the rise. A 2010 Pew Research Center analysis of census data found that 49 million people in the United States lived in a family household with at least two adult generations—or a grandparent and at least one other generation a record at the time. By 2016, that number had grown to 64 million people living in multigenerational households, roughly 20 percent of the population (Cohn 2018).

Attitudes toward the elderly have also been affected by large societal changes that have happened over the past 100 years. Researchers believe industrialization and modernization have contributed greatly to lowering the power, influence, and prestige the elderly once held. On the other hand, the sheer numbers of elderly people in certain societies can have other effects, such as older people's influence on policies and politics based on their voting influence.

The elderly have both benefited and suffered from these rapid social changes. In modern societies, a strong economy created new levels of prosperity for many people. Healthcare has become more widely accessible, and medicine has advanced, which allows the elderly to live longer. However, older people are not as essential to the economic survival of their families and communities as they were in the past.



Figure 13.3: How old are these people? In modern U.S. society, appearance is not a reliable indicator of age. In addition to genetic differences, health habits, hair dyes, and attitudes make traditional signs of aging increasingly unreliable. (Credit: Jason Hargrove/flickr)

Since its creation in 1790, the U.S. Census Bureau has been tracking age in the population. Age is an important factor to analyze with accompanying demographic figures, such as income and health. The population chart below shows projected age distribution patterns for the next several decades.

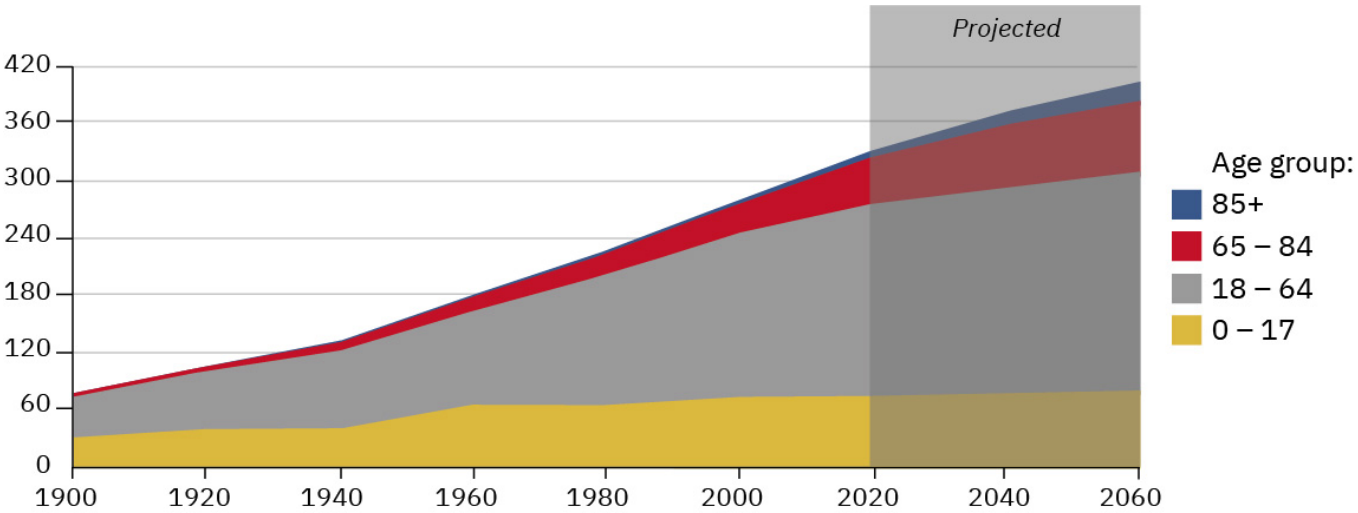


Figure 13.4: This population chart shows the population size of people in different age groups. The youngest age group, at the bottom, remains largely static. The 18-64 age group has been growing and will continue to do so. But most notable is the increasing size of the third tier (orange) representing ages 65-84. As the chapter discusses, this group is growing significantly, shown by the increasing share of the overall graph it takes up. Also of note is the group at the very top, which is also growing in size. (For comparison, can you even detect the line representing 85+ on the left side of the graph, closer to the year 1900?) (Credit: US Census Bureau.)

Statisticians use data to calculate the median age of a population, that is, the number that marks the halfway point in a group's age range. In the United States, the median age is about forty (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). That means that about half of the people in

the United States are under forty and about half are over forty. This median age has been increasing, which indicates the population as a whole is growing older.

A cohort is a group of people who share a statistical or demographic trait. People belonging to the same age cohort were born in the same time frame. Understanding a population's age composition can point to certain social and cultural factors and help governments and societies plan for future social and economic challenges.

Sociological studies on aging might help explain the difference between Native American age cohorts and the general population. While Native American societies have a strong tradition of revering their elders, they also have a lower life expectancy because of lack of access to healthcare and high levels of mercury in fish, which is a traditional part of their diet.

Phases of Aging: The Young-Old, Middle-Old, and Old-Old

In the United States, all people over eighteen years old are considered adults, but there is a large difference between a person who is twenty-one years old and a person who is forty-five years old. More specific breakdowns, such as "young adult" and "middle-aged adult," are helpful. In the same way, groupings are helpful in understanding the elderly. The elderly are often lumped together to include everyone over the age of sixty-five. But a sixty-five-year-old's experience of life is much different from a ninety-year-old's.

The United States' older adult population can be divided into three life-stage subgroups: the young-old (approximately sixty-five to seventy-four years old), the middle-old (ages seventy-five to eighty-four years old), and the old-old (over age eighty-five). Today's young-old age group is generally happier, healthier, and financially better off than the young-old of previous generations. In the United States, people are better able to prepare for aging because resources are more widely available.

Also, many people are making proactive quality-of-life decisions about their old age while they are still young. In the past, family members made care decisions when an elderly person reached a health crisis, often leaving the elderly person with little choice about what would happen. The elderly are now able to choose housing, for example, that allows them some independence while still providing care when it is needed. Living wills, retirement planning, and medical power of attorney are other concerns that are increasingly handled in advance.



Figure 13.5: Senior citizens are an important political constituency, and they may use their age to their advantage. Originating in Canada in the late 1980s, groups of Raging Grannies have protested nuclear weapons, the Iraq War, pesticides, genetically modified foods, and racial injustice. (Credit: Brave New Films/flickr)

What does it mean to be elderly? Some define it as an issue of physical health, while others simply define it by chronological age. The U.S. government, for example, typically classifies people aged sixty-five years old as elderly, at which point citizens are eligible for federal benefits such as Social Security and Medicare. The World Health Organization has no standard, other than noting that sixty-five years old is the commonly accepted definition in most core nations, but it suggests a cut-off somewhere between fifty and fifty-five years old for semi-peripheral nations, such as those in Africa (World Health Organization 2012). AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons) cites fifty as the eligible age of membership. It is interesting to note AARP's name change; by taking the word "retired" out of its name, the organization can broaden its base to any older people in the United States, not just retirees. This is especially important now that many people are working to age seventy and beyond.

There is an element of social construction, both local and global, in the way individuals and nations define who is elderly; that is, the shared meaning of the concept of elderly is created through interactions among people in society. As the table demonstrates, different generations have varying perspectives on aging. Researchers asked questions about the ages at which people reach certain milestones or new categories in life. Members of the Baby Boom generation indicate that a person is officially "old" when they turn 73 years old. Millennials, a much younger group, felt that people became old when they turned 59. The same survey asked questions about the end of youth and the prime of life (Emling 2017). Interestingly, Boomers and GenXers both felt that youth "ended" by age 31 and that the prime of life didn't start until many years later. Millennials felt that people reached the prime of life at age 36, *before* youth ended at age 40. It's worth noting that at the time of the survey, the Millennials were all 36 and younger.

Table 13.1: A survey conducted by the U.S. Trust gathered opinion data on the aging milestones and categories. Boomers, Gen X people, and Millennials had generally different views.

	Boomer response	Gen X response	Millennial response
At what age does youth end?	31	31	40
At what age is the prime of life?	50	47	36
At what age is someone old?	73	65	59

Demographically, the U.S. population has undergone a massive shift both in the overall population of elderly people and their share of the total population. Both are significant and impactful on major policy decisions and day-to-day life. In 1900, the population of U.S people over sixty-five years old was 3 million, representing about 4 percent of the total population. That number increased to 33 million in 1994, and was roughly 12 percent of the total population (Hobbs 1994). By 2016 that number had grown to 49 million, about 15 percent of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau 2018). This is a greater than tenfold increase in the elderly population, compared to a mere tripling of both the total population and of the population under sixty-five years old (Hobbs 1994). This increase has been called “the graying of America,” a term that describes the phenomenon of a larger and larger percentage of the population getting older and older. There are several reasons why the United States is graying so rapidly. One of these is life expectancy: the average number of years a person born today may expect to live. When we review Census Bureau statistics grouping the elderly by age, it is clear that in the United States, at least, we are living longer. In 2010, there were about 80,000 centenarians in the United States alone. They make up one of the fastest-growing segments of the population (Boston University School of Medicine 2014).

It is interesting to note that not all people in the United States age equally. Most glaring is the difference between men and women; as Figure 13.6 shows, women have longer life expectancies than men. In 2010, there were ninety sixty-five-year-old men per one hundred sixty-five-year-old women. However, there were only eighty seventy-five-year-old men per one hundred seventy-five-year-old women, and only sixty eighty-five-year-old men per one hundred eighty-five-year-old women. Nevertheless, as the graph shows, the sex ratio actually increased over time, indicating that men are closing the gap between their life spans and those of women (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

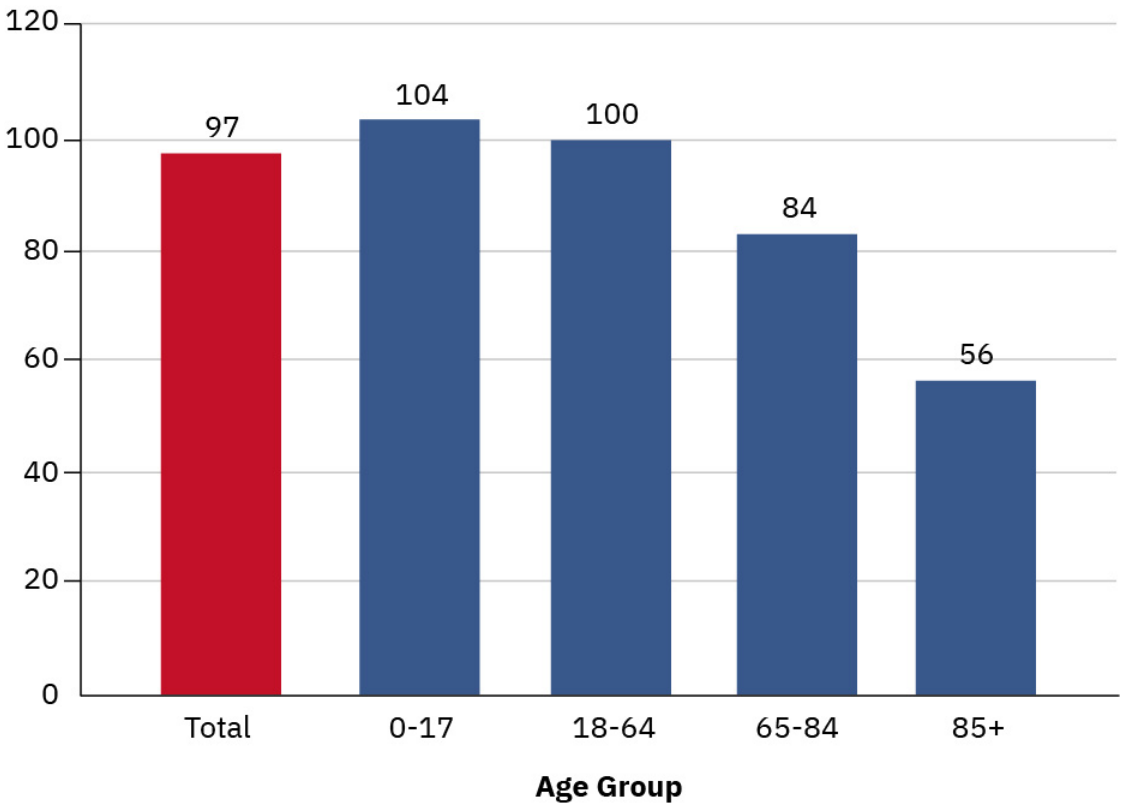


Figure 13.6: This U.S. Census graph shows the number of males per 100 females. However, over the past two decades, men have narrowed the percentage by which women outlive them. (Credit: the U.S. Census Bureau)

Baby Boomers

Of particular interest to gerontologists today is the population of Baby Boomers, the cohort born between 1946 and 1964 and now reaching their 60s and 70s. Coming of age in the 1960s and early 1970s, the baby boom generation was the first group of children and teenagers with their own spending power and therefore their own marketing power (Macunovich 2000). As this group has aged, it has redefined what it means to be young, middle-aged, and now old. People in the Boomer generation do not want to grow old the way their grandparents did; the result is a wide range of products designed to ward off the effects—or the signs—of aging. Previous generations of people over sixty-five were “old.” Baby Boomers are in “later life” or “the third age” (Gilleard and Higgs 2007).

The baby boom generation is the cohort driving much of the dramatic increase in the over-sixty-five population. Figure 13.7 shows a comparison of the U.S. population by age and gender between 2000 and 2010. The biggest bulge in the pyramid (representing the largest population group) moves up the pyramid over the course of the decade; in 2000, the largest population group was age thirty-five to fifty-five. In 2010, that group was age forty-five to sixty-five, meaning the oldest baby Boomers were just reaching the age at which the U.S. Census considers them elderly. By 2030, all Baby Boomers will be age 65 and older, and represent the largest group of elderly people.

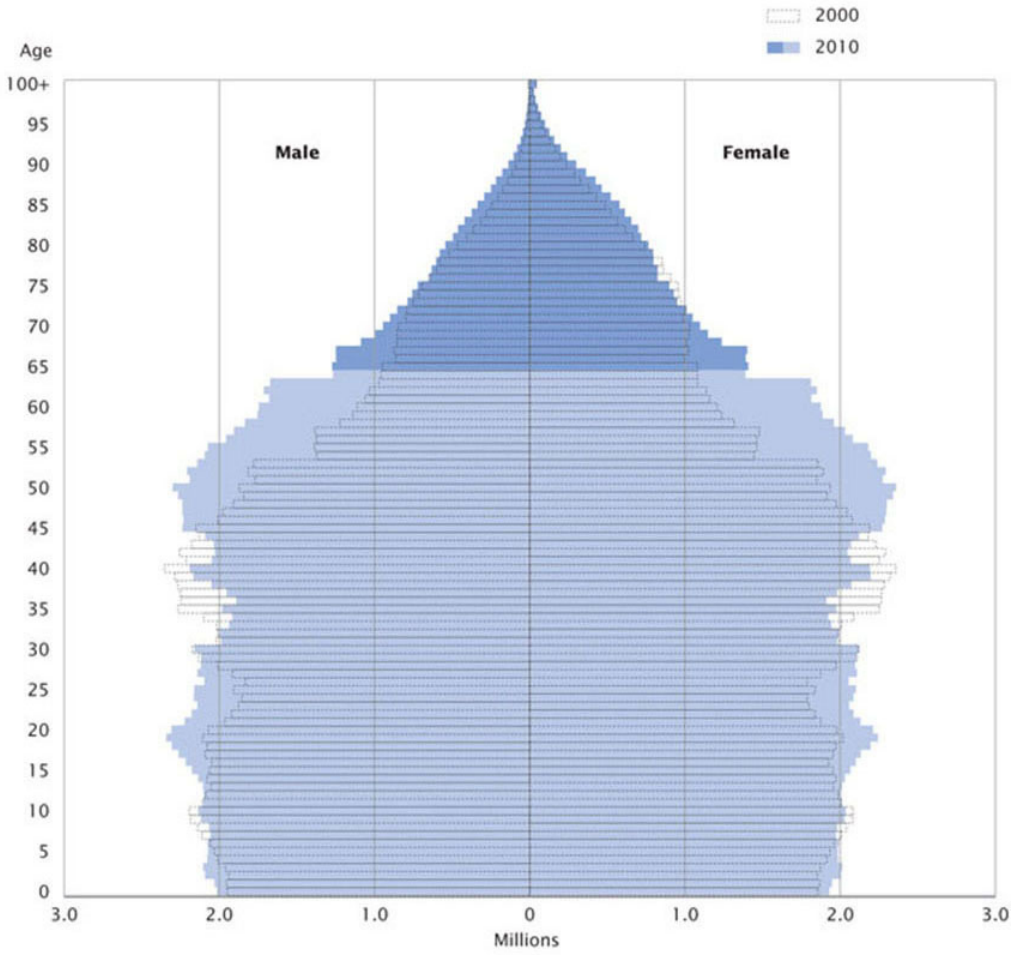


Figure 13.7: Population by Age and Sex: 2000 and 2010. In this U.S. Census pyramid chart, the baby boom bulge was aged thirty-five to fifty-five in 2000. In 2020, they were aged fifty-five to seventy-five. (Credit: the U.S. Census Bureau)

This aging of the Baby Boom cohort has serious implications for our society. Healthcare is one of the areas most impacted by this trend. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, healthcare spending is projected to grow by 5.5 percent each year from now until 2027. The portion of government spending on Medicare (a program in which the government covers some costs of healthcare for the elderly) is expected to increase from 3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009 to 8 percent of GDP in 2030, and to 15 percent in 2080 (CMS 2018).

Certainly, as Boomers age, they will put increasing burdens on the entire U.S. healthcare system. The American Geriatrics Society notes that from 2013-2025, there will be a 45 percent increase in demand for physicians who specialize in geriatrics. As a result, over 33,000 specialists will be needed to fill the healthcare needs in 2025. And in 2020, there were only 6,320 such specialists in the United States (AGS 2021).

Unlike the elderly of previous generations, Boomers do not expect that turning sixty-five means their active lives are over. They are not willing to abandon work or leisure activities, but they may need more medical support to keep living vigorous lives. This desire of a large group of over-sixty-five-year-olds wanting to continue with a high activity level is driving innovation in the medical industry (Shaw n.d.).

The economic impact of aging Boomers is also an area of concern for many observers. Although the baby boom generation earned more than previous generations and enjoyed a higher standard of living, they did not adequately prepare for retirement. According to most retirement and investment experts, in order to maintain their accustomed lifestyle, people need to save ten times their annual income before retiring. (Note: That's income, not salary.) So if a person has an income of $60,000 per year, they should have saved $600,000. If they made $100,000 per year, they should have saved $1 million. But most Baby Boomers have only saved an estimated $144,000, and only 40 percent have saved more than $250,000 (Gravier 2021). The causes of these shortfalls are varied, and include everything from lavish spending to economic recession to companies folding and reducing pension payments. Higher

education costs increased significantly while many Baby Boomers were sending their children to college. No matter what the cause, many retirees report a great deal of stress about running out of money.

Just as some observers are concerned about the possibility of Medicare being overburdened, Social Security is considered to be at risk. Social Security is a government-run retirement program funded primarily through payroll taxes. With enough people paying into the program, there should be enough money for retirees to take out. But with the aging Boomer cohort starting to receive Social Security benefits and fewer workers paying into the Social Security trust fund, economists warn that the system will collapse by the year 2037. A similar warning came in the 1980s; in response to recommendations from the Greenspan Commission, the retirement age (the age at which people could start receiving Social Security benefits) was raised from sixty-two to sixty-seven and the payroll tax was increased. A similar hike in retirement age, perhaps to seventy, is a possible solution to the current threat to Social Security.

Aging around the World



Figure 13.8: Cultural values and attitudes can shape people's experience of aging. (Credit: Tom Coppen/flickr)

The United States is certainly not alone regarding its aging population; in fact, it doesn't even have the fastest-growing group of elderly people. In 2019, the world had 703 million people aged 65 years or over. By 2050, that number is projected to double to 1.5 billion. One in six people in the world will be 65 or over (United Nations 2020).

This percentage is expected to increase and will have a huge impact on the dependency ratio: the number of citizens not in the labor force (young, disabled, or elderly) to citizens in the labor force (Bartram and Roe 2005). One country that will soon face a serious aging crisis is China, which is on the cusp of an "aging boom"— a period when its elderly population will dramatically increase. The number of people above age sixty in China today is about 178 million, which amounts to 13.3 percent of its total population (Xuequan 2011). By 2050, nearly a third of the Chinese population will be age sixty or older, which will put a significant burden on the labor force and impact China's economic growth (Bannister, Bloom, and Rosenberg 2010). On a more global scale, the dependency ratio is projected to more than double in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Africa and Western Asia, and Central and Southern Asia.

As healthcare improves and life expectancy increases across the world, elder care will be an emerging issue. Wienclaw (2009) suggests that with fewer working-age citizens available to provide home care and long-term assisted care to the elderly, the costs of elder care will increase.

Worldwide, the expectation governing the amount and type of elder care varies from culture to culture. For example, in Asia the responsibility for elder care lies firmly on the family (Yap, Thang, and Traphagan 2005). This is different from the approach in most Western countries, where the elderly are considered independent and are expected to tend to their own care. It is not uncommon for family members to intervene only if the elderly relative requires assistance, often due to poor health. Even then, caring for the elderly is considered voluntary. In the United States, decisions to care for an elderly relative are often conditionally based on the promise of future returns, such as inheritance or, in some cases, the amount of support the elderly provided to the caregiver in the past (Hashimoto 1996).

These differences are based on cultural attitudes toward aging. In China, several studies have noted the attitude of filial piety (deference and respect to one's parents and ancestors in all things) as defining all other virtues (Hsu 1971; Hamilton 1990). Cultural attitudes in Japan prior to approximately 1986 supported the idea that the elderly deserve assistance (Ogawa and Retherford 1993). However, seismic shifts in major social institutions (like family and economy) have created an increased demand for community and government care. For example, the increase in women working outside the home has made it more difficult to provide in-home care to aging parents, which leads to an increase in the need for government-supported institutions (Raikhola and Kuroki 2009).

In the United States, by contrast, many people view caring for the elderly as a burden. Even when there is a family member able and willing to provide for an elderly family member, 60 percent of family caregivers are employed outside the home and are unable to provide the needed support. At the same time, however, many middle-class families are unable to bear the financial burden of "outsourcing" professional healthcare, resulting in gaps in care (Bookman and Kimbrel 2011). It is important to note that even within the United States not all demographic groups treat aging the same way. While most people in the United States are reluctant to place their elderly members into out-of-home assisted care, demographically speaking, the groups least likely to do so are Latinos, African Americans, and Asians (Bookman and Kimbrel 2011).

Globally, the United States and other core nations are fairly well equipped to handle the demands of an exponentially increasing elderly population. However, peripheral and semi-peripheral nations face similar increases without comparable resources. Poverty among elders is a concern, especially among elderly women. The feminization of the aging poor, evident in peripheral nations, is directly due to the number of elderly women in those countries who are single, illiterate, and not a part of the labor force (Mujahid 2006).

In 2002, the Second World Assembly on Aging was held in Madrid, Spain, resulting in the Madrid Plan, an internationally coordinated effort to create comprehensive social policies to address the needs of the worldwide aging population. The plan identifies three themes to guide international policy on aging: 1) publicly acknowledging the global challenges caused by, and the global opportunities created by, a rising global population; 2) empowering the elderly; and 3) linking international policies on aging to international policies on development (Zelenev 2008).

The Madrid Plan has not yet been successful in achieving all its aims. However, it has increased awareness of the various issues associated with a global aging population, as well as raising the international consciousness to the way that the factors influencing the vulnerability of the elderly (social exclusion, prejudice and discrimination, and a lack of socio-legal protection) overlap with other developmental issues (basic human rights, empowerment, and participation), leading to an increase in legal protections (Zelenev 2008).

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11.3: The Process of Aging

Learning Objectives

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

- Explain the biological, social, and psychological changes that occur in aging
- Describe the birth of the field of geriatrics
- Examine attitudes toward death and dying and how they affect the elderly
- Name the five stages of grief developed by Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

As human beings grow older, they go through different phases or stages of life. It is helpful to understand aging in the context of these phases. A life course is the period from birth to death, including a sequence of predictable life events such as physical maturation. Each phase comes with different responsibilities and expectations, which of course vary by individual and culture. Children love to play and learn, looking forward to becoming preteens. As preteens begin to test their independence, they are eager to become teenagers. Teenagers anticipate the promises and challenges of adulthood. Adults become focused on creating families, building careers, and experiencing the world as independent people. Finally, many adults look forward to old age as a wonderful time to enjoy life without as much pressure from work and family life. In old age, grandparenthood can provide many of the joys of parenthood without all the hard work that parenthood entails. And as work responsibilities abate, old age may be a time to explore hobbies and activities that there was no time for earlier in life. But for other people, old age is not a phase that they look forward to. Some people fear old age and do anything to "avoid" it by seeking medical and cosmetic fixes for the natural effects of age. These differing views on the life course are the result of the cultural values and norms into which people are socialized, but in most cultures, age is a master status influencing self-concept, as well as social roles and interactions.

Through the phases of the life course, dependence and independence levels change. At birth, newborns are dependent on caregivers for everything. As babies become toddlers and toddlers become adolescents and then teenagers, they assert their independence more and more. Gradually, children come to be considered adults, responsible for their own lives, although the point at which this occurs is widely varied among individuals, families, and cultures.

As Riley (1978) notes, aging is a lifelong process and entails maturation and change on physical, psychological, and social levels. Age, much like race, class, and gender, is a hierarchy in which some categories are more highly valued than others. For example, while many children look forward to gaining independence, Packer and Chasteen (2006) suggest that even in children, age prejudice leads to a negative view of aging. This, in turn, can lead to a widespread segregation between the old and the young at the institutional, societal, and cultural levels (Hagestad and Uhlenberg 2006).

Sociological Research: Dr. Ignatz Nascher and the Birth of Geriatrics

In the early 1900s, a New York physician named Dr. Ignatz Nascher coined the term geriatrics, a medical specialty that focuses on the elderly. He created the word by combining two Greek words: *geron* (old man) and *iatrikos* (medical treatment). Nascher based his work on what he observed as a young medical student, when he saw many acutely ill elderly people who were diagnosed simply as "being old." There was nothing medicine could do, his professors declared, about the syndrome of "old age."

Nascher refused to accept this dismissive view, seeing it as medical neglect. He believed it was a doctor's duty to prolong life and relieve suffering whenever possible. In 1914, he published his views in his book *Geriatrics: The Diseases of Old Age and Their Treatment* (Clarfield 1990). Nascher saw the practice of caring for the elderly as separate from the practice of caring for the young, just as pediatrics (caring for children) is different from caring for grown adults (Clarfield 1990).

Nascher had high hopes for his pioneering work. He wanted to treat the aging, especially those who were poor and had no one to care for them. Many of the elderly poor were sent to live in "almshouses," or public old-age homes (Cole 1993). Conditions were often terrible in these almshouses, where the aging were often sent and just forgotten.

As hard as it might be to believe today, Nascher's approach was once considered unique. At the time of his death, in 1944, he was disappointed that the field of geriatrics had not made greater strides. In what ways are the elderly better off today than they

were before Nascher's ideas gained acceptance?

Biological Changes



Figure 13.9: Aging can be a visible, public experience. Canes, scooters, and other necessities are recognized signs of aging. Because of the meanings that culture assigns to these changes, people believe that being older means being in physical decline. Many older people, however, remain healthy, active, and happy. (Credit: Phil Dolby/flickr)

Each person experiences age-related changes based on many factors. Biological factors, such as molecular and cellular changes, are called primary aging, while aging that occurs due to controllable factors, such as lack of physical exercise and poor diet, is called secondary aging (Whitbourne and Whitbourne 2010).

Most people begin to see signs of aging after fifty years old, when they notice the physical markers of age. Skin becomes thinner, drier, and less elastic. Wrinkles form. Hair begins to thin and gray. Men prone to balding start losing hair. The difficulty or relative ease with which people adapt to these changes is dependent in part on the meaning given to aging by their particular culture. A culture that values youthfulness and beauty above all else leads to a negative perception of growing old. Conversely, a culture that reveres the elderly for their life experience and wisdom contributes to a more positive perception of what it means to grow old.

The effects of aging can feel daunting, and sometimes the fear of physical changes (like declining energy, food sensitivity, and loss of hearing and vision) is more challenging to deal with than the changes themselves. The way people perceive physical aging is largely dependent on how they were socialized. If people can accept the changes in their bodies as a natural process of aging, the changes will not seem as frightening.

According to the federal Administration on Aging (2011), in 2009 fewer people over sixty-five years old assessed their health as "excellent" or "very good" (41.6 percent) compared to those aged eighteen to sixty-four (64.4 percent). Evaluating data from the National Center for Health Statistics and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Administration on Aging found that from 2006 to 2008, the most frequently reported health issues for those over sixty-five years old included arthritis (50 percent), hypertension (38 percent), heart disease (32 percent), and cancer (22 percent). About 27 percent of people age sixty and older are considered obese by current medical standards. Parker and Thorslund (2006) found that while the trend is toward steady improvement in most disability measures, there is a concomitant increase in functional impairments (disability) and chronic diseases. At the same time, medical advances have reduced some of the disabling effects of those diseases (Crimmins 2004).

Some impacts of aging are gender-specific. Some of the disadvantages aging women face arise from long-standing social gender roles. For example, Social Security favors men over women, inasmuch as women do not earn Social Security benefits for the unpaid labor they perform (usually at home) as an extension of their gender roles. In the healthcare field, elderly female patients are

more likely than elderly men to see their healthcare concerns trivialized (Sharp 1995) and are more likely to have their health issues labeled psychosomatic (Munch 2004). Another female-specific aspect of aging is that mass-media outlets often depict elderly females in terms of negative stereotypes and as less successful than older men (Bazzini and Mclntosh I997).

For men, the process of aging—and society's response to and support of the experience—may be quite different. The gradual decrease in male sexual performance that occurs as a result of primary aging is medicalized and constructed as needing treatment (Marshall and Katz 2002) so that a man may maintain a sense of youthful masculinity. On the other hand, aging men have fewer opportunities to assert their masculine identities in the company of other men (for example, through sports participation) (Drummond 1998). And some social scientists have observed that the aging male body is depicted in the Western world as genderless (Spector-Mersel 2006).



Figure 13.10: Aging is accompanied by a host of biological, social, and psychological changes. Depending on their health, older people can engage in the same activities they always have, or even try new ones. (Credit: Forest Service Alaska Region/flickr)

Social and Psychological Changes

Male or female, growing older means confronting the psychological issues that come with entering the last phase of life. Young people moving into adulthood take on new roles and responsibilities as their lives expand, but an opposite arc can be observed in old age. What are the hallmarks of social and psychological change?

Retirement—the withdrawal from paid work at a certain age—is a relatively recent idea. Up until the late nineteenth century, people worked about sixty hours a week until they were physically incapable of continuing. Following the American Civil War, veterans receiving pensions were able to withdraw from the workforce, and the number of working older men began declining. A second large decline in the number of working men began in the post-World War II era, probably due to the availability of Social Security, and a third large decline in the 1960s and 1970s was probably due to the social support offered by Medicare and the increase in Social Security benefits (Munnell 2011).

In the twenty-first century, most people hope that at some point they will be able to stop working and enjoy the fruits of their labor. But do we look forward to this time or fear it? When people retire from familiar work routines, some easily seek new hobbies, interests, and forms of recreation. Many find new groups and explore new activities, but others may find it more difficult to adapt to new routines and loss of social roles, losing their sense of self-worth in the process.

Each phase of life has challenges that come with the potential for fear. Erik H. Erikson (1902–1994), in his view of socialization, broke the typical lifespan into eight phases. Each phase presents a particular challenge that must be overcome. In the final stage,

old age, the challenge is to embrace integrity over despair. Some people are unable to successfully overcome the challenge. They may have to confront regrets, such as being disappointed in their children's lives or perhaps their own. They may have to accept that they will never reach certain career goals. Or they must come to terms with what their career success has cost them, such as time with their family or declining personal health. Others, however, are able to achieve a strong sense of integrity and are able to embrace the new phase in life. When that happens, there is tremendous potential for creativity. They can learn new skills, practice new activities, and peacefully prepare for the end of life.

For some, overcoming despair might entail remarriage after the death of a spouse. A study conducted by Kate Davidson (2002) reviewed demographic data that asserted men were more likely to remarry after the death of a spouse and suggested that widows (the surviving female spouse of a deceased male partner) and widowers (the surviving male spouse of a deceased female partner) experience their postmarital lives differently. Many surviving women enjoyed a new sense of freedom, since they were living alone for the first time. On the other hand, for surviving men, there was a greater sense of having lost something, because they were now deprived of a constant source of care as well as the focus of their emotional life.

Aging and Sexuality



Figure 13.11: In *Harold and Maude*, a 1971 cult classic movie, a twenty-something young man falls in love with a seventy-nine-year-old woman. The world disapproves. (Credit: luckyjackson/flickr)

Although it is sometimes difficult to have an open, public national dialogue about aging and sexuality, the reality is that our sexual selves do not disappear after age sixty-five. People continue to enjoy sex—and not always safe sex—well into their later years. In fact, some research suggests that as many as one in five new cases of AIDS occurs in adults over sixty-five years old (Hillman 2011).

In some ways, old age may be a time to enjoy sex more, not less. For women, the elder years can bring a sense of relief as the fear of an unwanted pregnancy is removed and the children are grown and taking care of themselves. However, while we have expanded the number of psycho-pharmaceuticals to address sexual dysfunction in men, it was not until recently that the medical field acknowledged the existence of female sexual dysfunctions (Bryant 2004). Additional treatments have been developed or applied to address sexual desire or dysfunction, which sometimes leads members of both sexes to believe that problems are easily resolved. But emotional and social factors play an important role, and medications on their own cannot resolve all issues (Nonacs 2018).

Aging and sexuality also concerns relationships between people of different ages, referred to as age-gap relationships by researchers. These types of relationships are certainly not confined to the elderly, but people often make assumptions about elderly people in romantic relationships with younger people (and vice versa). Research into age-gap relationships indicates that social

pressure can have impacts on relationship commitment or lead to break ups. The life stages of the people can also have impacts, especially if one of them is elderly and the other is not (Karantzas 2018). A relationship between a 30-year-old and a 45-year-old most likely involves fewer discussions about serious health issues and retirement decisions than one between a 55-year-old and a 70-year-old. Both have 15-year age gaps, but the circumstances are quite different.

Sociology in the Real World: Aging "Out:" LGBTQ Seniors



Figure 13.12: As same-sex marriage becomes a possibility, many gay and lesbian couples are finally able to tie the knot—sometimes as seniors—after decades of waiting. (Credit: Fibonacci Blue/flickr).

How do different groups in our society experience the aging process? Are there any experiences that are universal, or do different populations have different experiences? An emerging field of study looks at how lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) people experience the aging process and how their experience differs from that of other groups or the dominant group. This issue is expanding with the aging of the baby boom generation; not only will aging boomers represent a huge bump in the general elderly population but also the number of LGBTQ seniors is expected to double by 2030 (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al. 2011).

A recent study titled *The Aging and Health Report: Disparities and Resilience among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Older Adults* finds that LGBTQ older adults have higher rates of disability and depression than their heterosexual peers. They are also less likely to have a support system that might provide elder care: a partner and supportive children (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al. 2011). Even for those LGBTQ seniors who are partnered, some states do not recognize a legal relationship between two people of the same sex, which reduces their legal protection and financial options.

As they transition to assisted-living facilities, LGBTQ people have the added burden of "disclosure management:" the way they share their sexual and relationship identity. In one case study, a seventy-eight-year-old lesbian woman lived alone in a long-term care facility. She had been in a long-term relationship of thirty-two years and had been visibly active in the LGBTQ community earlier in her life. However, in the long-term care setting, she was much quieter about her sexual orientation. She "selectively disclosed" her sexual identity, feeling safer with anonymity and silence (Jenkins et al. 2010). A study from the National Senior Citizens Law Center reports that only 22 percent of LGBTQ older adults expect they could be open about their sexual orientation or gender identity in a long-term care facility. Even more telling is the finding that only 16 percent of non-

LGBTQ older adults expected that LGBTQ people could be open with facility staff (National Senior Citizens Law Center 2011).

Same-sex marriage—a civil rights battleground that is being fought in many states—can have major implications for the way the LGBTQ community ages. With marriage comes the legal and financial protection afforded to opposite-sex couples, as well as less fear of exposure and a reduction in the need to "retreat to the closet" (Jenkins et al. 2010). Changes in this area are coming slowly, and in the meantime, advocates have many policy recommendations for how to improve the aging process for LGBTQ individuals. These recommendations include increasing federal research on LGBTQ elders, increasing (and enforcing existing) laws against discrimination, and amending the federal Family and Medical Leave Act to cover LGBTQ caregivers (Grant 2009).

Death and Dying



Figure 13.13: A young man sits at the grave of his great-grandmother. (Credit: Sara Goldsmith/flickr)

For most of human history, the standard of living was significantly lower than it is now. Humans struggled to survive with few amenities and very limited medical technology. The risk of death due to disease or accident was high in any life stage, and life expectancy was low. As people began to live longer, death became associated with old age.

For many teenagers and young adults, losing a grandparent or another older relative can be the first loss of a loved one they experience. It may be their first encounter with grief, a psychological, emotional, and social response to the feelings of loss that accompanies death or a similar event.

People tend to perceive death, their own and that of others, based on the values of their culture. While some may look upon death as the natural conclusion to a long, fruitful life, others may find the prospect of dying frightening to contemplate. People tend to have strong resistance to the idea of their own death, and strong emotional reactions of loss to the death of loved ones. Viewing death as a loss, as opposed to a natural or tranquil transition, is often considered normal in the United States.

What may be surprising is how few studies were conducted on death and dying prior to the 1960s. Death and dying were fields that had received little attention until a psychologist named Elisabeth Kübler-Ross began observing people who were in the process of dying. As Kübler-Ross witnessed people's transition toward death, she found some common threads in their experiences. She

observed that the process had five distinct stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. She published her findings in a 1969 book called *On Death and Dying*. The book remains a classic on the topic today.

Kübler-Ross found that a person's first reaction to the prospect of dying is *denial*: this is characterized by the person's not wanting to believe he or she is dying, with common thoughts such as "I feel fine" or "This is not really happening to me." The second stage is *anger*, when loss of life is seen as unfair and unjust. A person then resorts to the third stage, *bargaining*: trying to negotiate with a higher power to postpone the inevitable by reforming or changing the way he or she lives. The fourth stage, psychological *depression*, allows for resignation as the situation begins to seem hopeless. In the final stage, a person adjusts to the idea of death and reaches *acceptance*. At this point, the person can face death honestly, by regarding it as a natural and inevitable part of life and can make the most of their remaining time.

The work of Kübler-Ross was eye-opening when it was introduced. It broke new ground and opened the doors for sociologists, social workers, health practitioners, and therapists to study death and help those who were facing death. Kübler-Ross's work is generally considered a major contribution to thanatology: the systematic study of death and dying.

Of special interests to thanatologists is the concept of "dying with dignity." Modern medicine includes advanced medical technology that may prolong life without a parallel improvement to the quality of life one may have. In some cases, people may not want to continue living when they are in constant pain and no longer enjoying life. Should patients have the right to choose to die with dignity? Dr. Jack Kevorkian was a staunch advocate for physician-assisted suicide: the voluntary or physician-assisted use of lethal medication provided by a medical doctor to end one's life. This right to have a doctor help a patient die with dignity is controversial. In the United States, Oregon was the first state to pass a law allowing physician-assisted suicides. In 1997, Oregon instituted the Death with Dignity Act, which required the presence of two physicians for a legal assisted suicide. This law was successfully challenged by U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft in 2001, but the appeals process ultimately upheld the Oregon law. As of 2019, seven states and the District of Columbia have passed similar laws allowing physician assisted suicide.

The controversy surrounding death with dignity laws is emblematic of the way our society tries to separate itself from death. Health institutions have built facilities to comfortably house those who are terminally ill. This is seen as a compassionate act, helping relieve the surviving family members of the burden of caring for the dying relative. But studies almost universally show that people prefer to die in their own homes (Lloyd, White, and Sutton 2011). Is it our social responsibility to care for elderly relatives up until their death? How do we balance the responsibility for caring for an elderly relative with our other responsibilities and obligations? As our society grows older, and as new medical technology can prolong life even further, the answers to these questions will develop and change.

The changing concept of hospice is an indicator of our society's changing view of death. Hospice is a type of healthcare that treats terminally ill people when "cure-oriented treatments" are no longer an option (Hospice Foundation of America 2012b). Hospice doctors, nurses, and therapists receive special training in the care of the dying. The focus is not on getting better or curing the illness, but on passing out of this life in comfort and peace. Hospice centers exist as a place where people can go to die in comfort, and increasingly, hospice services encourage at-home care so that someone has the comfort of dying in a familiar environment, surrounded by family (Hospice Foundation of America 2012a). While many of us would probably prefer to avoid thinking of the end of our lives, it may be possible to take comfort in the idea that when we do approach death in a hospice setting, it is in a familiar, relatively controlled place.

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11.4: Challenges Facing the Elderly

Learning Objectives

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

- Interpret the historical and current trends of poverty among elderly populations
- Recognize ageist thinking and ageist attitudes in individuals and institutions
- Identify risks factors and outcomes regarding mistreatment and abuse of elderly individuals

Aging comes with many challenges. The loss of independence is one potential part of the process, as are diminished physical ability and age discrimination. The term senescence refers to the aging process, including biological, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual changes. This section discusses some of the challenges we encounter during this process.

As already observed, many older adults remain highly self-sufficient. Others require more care. Because the elderly typically no longer hold jobs, finances can be a challenge. And due to cultural misconceptions, older people can be targets of ridicule and stereotypes. The elderly face many challenges in later life, but they do not have to enter old age without dignity.

Poverty



(a) (b)

Figure 13.14: While elderly poverty rates showed an improvement trend for decades, the 2008 recession has changed some older people's financial futures. Some who had planned a leisurely retirement have found themselves at risk of late-age destitution. (Credit: (a) Michael Cohen/flickr; Photo (b) Alex Proimos/flickr)

For many people in the United States, growing older once meant living with less income. In 1960, almost 35 percent of the elderly existed on poverty-level incomes. A generation ago, the nation's oldest populations had the highest risk of living in poverty.

At the start of the twenty-first century, the older population was putting an end to that trend. Among people over sixty-five years old, the poverty rate fell from 30 percent in 1967 to 9.7 percent in 2008, well below the national average of 13.2 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). However, given the subsequent recession, which severely reduced the retirement savings of many while taxing public support systems, how are the elderly affected? According to the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, the national poverty rate among the elderly had risen to 14 percent by 2010 (Urban Institute and Kaiser Commission 2010).

Before the recession hit, what had changed to cause a reduction in poverty among the elderly? What social patterns contributed to the shift? For several decades, a greater number of women joined the workforce. More married couples earned double incomes during their working years and saved more money for their retirement. Private employers and governments began offering better retirement programs. By 1990, senior citizens reported earning 36 percent more income on average than they did in 1980; that was five times the rate of increase for people under age thirty-five (U.S. Census Bureau 2009).

In addition, many people were gaining access to better healthcare. New trends encouraged people to live more healthful lifestyles by placing an emphasis on exercise and nutrition. There was also greater access to information about the health risks of behaviors such as cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, and drug use. Because they were healthier, many older people continue to work past the typical retirement age and provide more opportunity to save for retirement. Will these patterns return once the recession ends? Sociologists will be watching to see. In the meantime, they are realizing the immediate impact of the recession on elderly poverty.

During the recession, older people lost some of the financial advantages that they'd gained in the 1980s and 1990s. From October 2007 to October 2009 the values of retirement accounts for people over age fifty lost 18 percent of their value. The sharp decline in the stock market also forced many to delay their retirement (Administration on Aging 2009).

Ageism



Figure 13.15: Are these street signs humorous or offensive? What shared assumptions make them humorous? Or is memory loss too serious to be made fun of? (Credit: Tumbleweed/flickr)

Driving to the grocery store, Peter, twenty-three years old, got stuck behind a car on a four-lane main artery through his city's business district. The speed limit was thirty-five miles per hour, and while most drivers sped along at forty to forty-five mph, the driver in front of him was going the minimum speed. Peter tapped on his horn. He tailgated the driver. Finally, Peter had a chance to pass the car. He glanced over. Sure enough, Peter thought, a gray-haired old man guilty of "DWE," driving while elderly.

At the grocery store, Peter waited in the checkout line behind an older woman. She paid for her groceries, lifted her bags of food into her cart, and toddled toward the exit. Peter, guessing her to be about eighty years old, was reminded of his grandmother. He paid for his groceries and caught up with her.

"Can I help you with your cart?" he asked.

"No, thank you. I can get it myself," she said and marched off toward her car.

Peter's responses to both older people, the driver and the shopper, were prejudiced. In both cases, he made unfair assumptions. He assumed the driver drove cautiously simply because the man was a senior citizen, and he assumed the shopper needed help carrying her groceries just because she was an older woman.

Responses like Peter's toward older people are fairly common. He didn't intend to treat people differently based on personal or cultural biases, but he did. Ageism is discrimination (when someone acts on a prejudice) based on age. Dr. Robert Butler coined the term in 1968, noting that ageism exists in all cultures (Brownell). Ageist attitudes and biases based on stereotypes reduce elderly people to inferior or limited positions.

Ageism can vary in severity. Peter's attitudes are probably seen as fairly mild, but relating to the elderly in ways that are patronizing can be offensive. When ageism is reflected in the workplace, in healthcare, and in assisted-living facilities, the effects of discrimination can be more severe. Ageism can make older people fear losing a job, feel dismissed by a doctor, or feel a lack of power and control in their daily living situations.

In early societies, the elderly were respected and revered. Many preindustrial societies observed gerontocracy, a type of social structure wherein the power is held by a society's oldest members. In some countries today, the elderly still have influence and power and their vast knowledge is respected. Reverence for the elderly is still a part of some cultures, but it has changed in many places because of social factors.

In many modern nations, however, industrialization contributed to the diminished social standing of the elderly. Today wealth, power, and prestige are also held by those in younger age brackets. The average age of corporate executives was fifty-nine years old in 1980. In 2008, the average age had lowered to fifty-four years old (Stuart 2008). Some older members of the workforce felt threatened by this trend and grew concerned that younger employees in higher level positions would push them out of the job market. Rapid advancements in technology and media have required new skill sets that older members of the workforce are less likely to have.

Changes happened not only in the workplace but also at home. In agrarian societies, a married couple cared for their aging parents. The oldest members of the family contributed to the household by doing chores, cooking, and helping with child care. As economies shifted from agrarian to industrial, younger generations moved to cities to work in factories. The elderly began to be seen as an expensive burden. They did not have the strength and stamina to work outside the home. What began during industrialization, a trend toward older people living apart from their grown children, has become commonplace. As you saw in the opening, children of older people can also feel guilt, sadness, and sometimes anger at both taking care of aging parents and with accepting that their parents are losing their abilities. Living apart, especially if an older person is moved to a nursing home or other facility, can often exacerbate these issues.

Mistreatment and Abuse

Mistreatment and abuse of the elderly is a major social problem. As expected, with the biology of aging, the elderly sometimes become physically frail. This frailty renders them dependent on others for care—sometimes for small needs like household tasks, and sometimes for assistance with basic functions like eating and toileting. Unlike a child, who also is dependent on another for care, an elder is an adult with a lifetime of experience, knowledge, and opinions—a more fully developed person. This makes the care-providing situation more complex.

Elder abuse occurs when a caretaker intentionally deprives an older person of care or harms the person in his or her charge. Caregivers may be family members, relatives, friends, health professionals, or employees of senior housing or nursing care. The elderly may be subject to many different types of abuse.

In a 2009 study on the topic led by Dr. Ron Acierno, the team of researchers identified five major categories of elder abuse: 1) physical abuse, such as hitting or shaking, 2) sexual abuse, including rape and coerced nudity, 3) psychological or emotional abuse, such as verbal harassment or humiliation, 4) neglect or failure to provide adequate care, and 5) financial abuse or exploitation (Acierno 2010).

The National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA), a division of the U.S. Administration on Aging, also identifies abandonment and self-neglect as types of abuse. Table 13.2 shows some of the signs and symptoms that the NCEA encourages people to notice.

Table 13.2 Signs of Elder Abuse: The National Center on Elder Abuse encourages people to watch for these signs of mistreatment. (Credit: National Center on Elder Abuse)

Type of Abuse	Signs and Symptoms
Physical abuse	Bruises, untreated wounds, sprains, broken glasses, lab findings of medication overdose
Sexual abuse	Bruises around breasts or genitals, torn or bloody underclothing, unexplained venereal disease
Emotional/psychological abuse	Being upset or withdrawn, unusual dementia-like behavior (rocking, sucking)
Neglect	Poor hygiene, untreated bed sores, dehydration, soiled bedding
Financial	Sudden changes in banking practices, inclusion of additional names on bank cards, abrupt changes to will
Self-neglect	Untreated medical conditions, unclean living area, lack of medical items like dentures or glasses

How prevalent is elder abuse? Two recent U.S. studies found that roughly one in ten elderly people surveyed had suffered at least one form of elder abuse. Some social researchers believe elder abuse is underreported and that the number may be higher. The risk of abuse also increases in people with health issues such as dementia (Kohn and Verhoek-Oftedahl 2011). Older women were found to be victims of verbal abuse more often than their male counterparts.

In Acierno's study, which included a sample of 5,777 respondents aged sixty and older, 5.2 percent of respondents reported financial abuse, 5.1 percent said they'd been neglected, and 4.6 endured emotional abuse (Acierno 2010). The prevalence of physical and sexual abuse was lower at 1.6 and 0.6 percent, respectively (Acierno 2010).

Other studies have focused on the caregivers to the elderly in an attempt to discover the causes of elder abuse. Researchers identified factors that increased the likelihood of caregivers perpetrating abuse against those in their care. Those factors include inexperience, having other demands such as jobs (for those who weren't professionally employed as caregivers), caring for children, living full-time with the dependent elder, and experiencing high stress, isolation, and lack of support (Kohn and Verhoek-Oftedahl 2011).

A history of depression in the caregiver was also found to increase the likelihood of elder abuse. Neglect was more likely when care was provided by paid caregivers. Many of the caregivers who physically abused elders were themselves abused—in many cases, when they were children. Family members with some sort of dependency on the elder in their care were more likely to physically abuse that elder. For example, an adult child caring for an elderly parent while at the same time depending on some form of income from that parent, is considered more likely to perpetrate physical abuse (Kohn and Verhoek-Oftedahl 2011).

A survey in Florida found that 60.1 percent of caregivers reported verbal aggression as a style of conflict resolution. Paid caregivers in nursing homes were at a high risk of becoming abusive if they had low job satisfaction, treated the elderly like children, or felt burnt out (Kohn and Verhoek-Oftedahl 2011). Caregivers who tended to be verbally abusive were found to have had less training, lower education, and higher likelihood of depression or other psychiatric disorders. Based on the results of these studies, many housing facilities for seniors have increased their screening procedures for caregiver applicants.

Big Picture: World War II Veterans



Figure 13.16: World War II (1941–1945) veterans and members of an Honor Flight from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, visit the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC. Most of these men and women were in their late teens or twenties when they served. (Credit: Sean Hackbarth/flickr)

World War II was a defining event in recent human history, and set the stage for America to become an economic and military superpower. Over 16 million Americans served in the war—an enormous amount on any scale, but especially significant considering that the U.S. had almost 200 million fewer people than it does today. That sizable and significant group is aging. Many are in their eighties and nineties, and many others have already passed on. Of the 16 million, less than 300,000 are alive. Data suggest that by 2036, there will be no living veterans of WWII (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs).

When these veterans came home from the war and ended their service, little was known about posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These heroes did not receive the mental and physical healthcare that could have helped them. As a result, many of them, now in old age, are dealing with the effects of PTSD. Research suggests a high percentage of World War II veterans are plagued by flashback memories and isolation, and that many "self-medicate" with alcohol.

Research has found that veterans of any conflict are more than twice as likely as nonveterans to commit suicide, with rates highest among the oldest veterans. Reports show that WWII-era veterans are four times as likely to take their own lives as people of the same age with no military service (Glantz 2010).

In May 2004, the National World War II Memorial in Washington, DC, was completed and dedicated to honor those who served during the conflict. Dr. Earl Morse, a physician and retired Air Force captain, treated many WWII veterans. He encouraged them to visit the memorial, knowing it could help them heal. Many WWII veterans expressed interest in seeing the memorial. Unfortunately, many were in their eighties and were neither physically nor financially able to travel on their own. Dr. Morse arranged to personally escort some of the veterans and enlisted volunteer pilots who would pay for the flights themselves. He also raised money, insisting the veterans pay nothing. By the end of 2005, 137 veterans, many using wheelchairs, had made the trip. The Honor Flight Network was up and running.

As of 2017, the Honor Flight Network had flown more than 200,000 U.S. veterans of World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War to Washington. The round-trip flights leave for day-long trips from over 140 airports in thirty states, staffed by

volunteers who care for the needs of the elderly travelers (Honor Flight Network 2021).

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11.5: Theoretical Perspectives on Aging

Learning Objectives

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

- Compare and contrast sociological theoretical perspectives on aging

What roles do individual senior citizens play in your life? How do you relate to and interact with older people? What role do they play in neighborhoods and communities, in cities and in states? Sociologists are interested in exploring the answers to questions such as these through three different perspectives: functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory.

Functionalism

Functionalists analyze how the parts of society work together. Functionalists gauge how society's parts are working together to keep society running smoothly. How does this perspective address aging? The elderly, as a group, are one of society's vital parts.

Functionalists find that people with better resources who stay active in other roles adjust better to old age (Crosnoe and Elder 2002). Three social theories within the functional perspective were developed to explain how older people might deal with later-life experiences.



Figure 13.17: Does being old mean disengaging from the world? (Credit: Candida Performa/Wikimedia Commons)

The earliest gerontological theory in the functionalist perspective is disengagement theory, which suggests that withdrawing from society and social relationships is a natural part of growing old. There are several main points to the theory. First, because everyone expects to die one day, and because we experience physical and mental decline as we approach death, it is natural to withdraw from individuals and society. Second, as the elderly withdraw, they receive less reinforcement to conform to social norms. Therefore, this withdrawal allows a greater freedom from the pressure to conform. Finally, social withdrawal is gendered, meaning it is experienced differently by men and women. Because men focus on work and women focus on marriage and family, when they withdraw they will be unhappy and directionless until they adopt a role to replace their accustomed role that is compatible with the disengaged state (Cummings and Henry 1961).

The suggestion that old age was a distinct state in the life course, characterized by a distinct change in roles and activities, was groundbreaking when it was first introduced. However, the theory is no longer accepted in its classic form. Criticisms typically focus on the application of the idea that seniors universally naturally withdraw from society as they age, and that it does not allow for a wide variation in the way people experience aging (Hothschild 1975).

The social withdrawal that Cummings and Henry recognized (1961), and its notion that elderly people need to find replacement roles for those they've lost, is addressed anew in activity theory. According to this theory, activity levels and social involvement are key to this process, and key to happiness (Havinghurst 1961; Neugarten 1964; Havinghurst, Neugarten, and Tobin 1968). According to this theory, the more active and involved an elderly person is, the happier he or she will be. Critics of this theory point out that access to social opportunities and activity are not equally available to all. Moreover, not everyone finds fulfillment in the presence of others or participation in activities. Reformulations of this theory suggest that participation in informal activities, such as hobbies, are what most affect later life satisfaction (Lemon, Bengtson, and Petersen 1972).

According to continuity theory**,** the elderly make specific choices to maintain consistency in internal (personality structure, beliefs) and external structures (relationships), remaining active and involved throughout their elder years. This is an attempt to maintain social equilibrium and stability by making future decisions on the basis of already developed social roles (Atchley 1971; Atchley 1989). One criticism of this theory is its emphasis on so-called "normal" aging, which marginalizes those with chronic diseases such as Alzheimer's.

Sociology in the Real World: The Graying of American Prisons



Figure 13.18: Would you want to spend your retirement here? A growing elderly prison population requires asking questions about how to deal with senior inmates. (Credit: Claire Rowland/Wikimedia Commons)

The COVID-19 pandemic placed a particular burden on prison populations and government officials who manage them. Many people unfamiliar with American prisons may have assumed this concern was due to the obvious: Prisons are by definition confined spaces, where space and freedom are in short supply. Incarcerated people often share cells, restrooms, and other

facilities. These are all contributing factors to the grave concerns about prisoners and COVID. But they were all exacerbated by the one overall comorbidity for the coronavirus: age.

Just like elderly people outside of prison generally suffered the most from the disease, the same age group was highly susceptible in prison. Perhaps the most dire circumstance is the size and percentage of that age group in prison. By the time the pandemic hit, the population of people over 50 in American prisons was, for the first time in history, larger than every other age group, and nearly 200,000 people in correctional facilities were 55 and over. That portion of the prison population tripled from 2000 to 2016 (Li 2020).

Two factors contribute significantly to this country's aging prison population. One is the tough-on-crime reforms of the 1980s and 1990s, when mandatory minimum sentencing and "three strikes" policies sent many people to jail for thirty years to life, even when the third strike was a relatively minor offense. Many of today's elderly prisoners are those who were incarcerated thirty years ago for life sentences. The other factor influencing today's aging prison population is the aging of the overall population. As discussed in the section on aging in the United States, the percentage of people over sixty-five years old is increasing each year due to rising life expectancies and the aging of the Baby Boom generation.

So why should it matter that the elderly prison population is growing so swiftly? As discussed in the section on the process of aging, growing older is accompanied by a host of physical problems, like failing vision, mobility, and hearing. Chronic illnesses like heart disease, arthritis, and diabetes also become increasingly common as people age, whether they are in prison or not. In many cases, elderly prisoners are physically incapable of committing a violent—or possibly any—crime. Is it ethical to keep them locked up for the short remainder of their lives? And is it practical?

Aging inmates require far more healthcare, which places massive burdens on prison budgets and expenditures. When the healthcare costs are considered, some officials estimate the costs of incarcerating an aging person to be three times higher than to keep a younger person in prison. On the flip side, reducing prison sentences in Maryland saved an estimated $185 million over five years. When considering that many of these elderly people have served the majority of their sentence and generally pose a lower risk to society, many people in the corrections system itself advocate for releasing them early (Reese 2019).

Conflict Perspective



Figure 13.19: At a public protest, older people make their voices heard. In advocating for themselves, they help shape public policy and alter the allotment of available resources. (Credit: longislandwins/flickr)

Theorists working the conflict perspective view society as inherently unstable, an institution that privileges the powerful wealthy few while marginalizing everyone else. According to the guiding principle of conflict theory, social groups compete with other

groups for power and scarce resources. Applied to society's aging population, the principle means that the elderly struggle with other groups—for example, younger society members—to retain a certain share of resources. At some point, this competition may become conflict.

For example, some people complain that the elderly get more than their fair share of society's resources. In hard economic times, there is great concern about the huge costs of Social Security and Medicare. One of every four tax dollars, or about 28 percent, is spent on these two programs. In 1950, the federal government paid $781 million in Social Security payments. Now, the payments are 870 times higher. In 2008, the government paid $296 billion (Statistical Abstract 2011). The medical bills of the nation's elderly population are rising dramatically. While there is more care available to certain segments of the senior community, it must be noted that the financial resources available to the aging can vary tremendously by race, social class, and gender.

There are three classic theories of aging within the conflict perspective. Modernization theory (Cowgill and Holmes 1972) suggests that the primary cause of the elderly losing power and influence in society are the parallel forces of industrialization and modernization. As societies modernize, the status of elders decreases, and they are increasingly likely to experience social exclusion. Before industrialization, strong social norms bound the younger generation to care for the older. Now, as societies industrialize, the nuclear family replaces the extended family. Societies become increasingly individualistic, and norms regarding the care of older people change. In an individualistic industrial society, caring for an elderly relative is seen as a voluntary obligation that may be ignored without fear of social censure.

The central reasoning of modernization theory is that as long as the extended family is the standard family, as in preindustrial economies, elders will have a place in society and a clearly defined role. As societies modernize, the elderly, unable to work outside of the home, have less to offer economically and are seen as a burden. This model may be applied to both the developed and the developing world, and it suggests that as people age they will be abandoned and lose much of their familial support since they become a nonproductive economic burden.

Another theory in the conflict perspective is age stratification theory (Riley, Johnson, and Foner 1972). Though it may seem obvious now, with our awareness of ageism, age stratification theorists were the first to suggest that members of society might be stratified by age, just as they are stratified by race, class, and gender. Because age serves as a basis of social control, different age groups will have varying access to social resources such as political and economic power. Within societies, behavioral age norms, including norms about roles and appropriate behavior, dictate what members of age cohorts may reasonably do. For example, it might be considered deviant for an elderly woman to wear a bikini because it violates norms denying the sexuality of older females. These norms are specific to each age strata, developing from culturally based ideas about how people should "act their age."

Thanks to amendments to the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), which drew attention to some of the ways in which our society is stratified based on age, U.S. workers no longer must retire upon reaching a specified age. As first passed in 1967, the ADEA provided protection against a broad range of age discrimination and specifically addressed termination of employment due to age, age specific layoffs, advertised positions specifying age limits or preferences, and denial of healthcare benefits to those over sixty-five years old (U.S. EEOC 2012).

Age stratification theory has been criticized for its broadness and its inattention to other sources of stratification and how these might intersect with age. For example, one might argue that an older white male occupies a more powerful role, and is far less limited in his choices, compared to an older white female based on his historical access to political and economic power.

Finally, exchange theory (Dowd 1975), a rational choice approach, suggests we experience an increased dependence as we age and must increasingly submit to the will of others because we have fewer ways of compelling others to submit to us. Indeed, inasmuch as relationships are based on mutual exchanges, as the elderly become less able to exchange resources, they will see their social circles diminish. In this model, the only means to avoid being discarded is to engage in resource management, like maintaining a large inheritance or participating in social exchange systems via child care. In fact, the theory may depend too much on the assumption that individuals are calculating. It is often criticized for affording too much emphasis to material exchange and devaluing nonmaterial assets such as love and friendship.



Figure 13.20: The subculture of aging theory posits that the elderly create their own communities because they have been excluded from other groups. (Credit: Icnacio Palomo Duarte/flickr)

Symbolic Interactionism

Generally, theories within the symbolic interactionist perspective focus on how society is created through the day-to-day interaction of individuals, as well as the way people perceive themselves and others based on cultural symbols. This microanalytic perspective assumes that if people develop a sense of identity through their social interactions, their sense of self is dependent on those interactions. A woman whose main interactions with society make her feel old and unattractive may lose her sense of self. But a woman whose interactions make her feel valued and important will have a stronger sense of self and a happier life.

Symbolic interactionists stress that the changes associated with old age, in and of themselves, have no inherent meaning. Nothing in the nature of aging creates any particular, defined set of attitudes. Rather, attitudes toward the elderly are rooted in society.

One microanalytical theory is Rose's (1962) subculture of aging theory, which focuses on the shared community created by the elderly when they are excluded (due to age), voluntarily or involuntarily, from participating in other groups. This theory suggests that elders will disengage from society and develop new patterns of interaction with peers who share common backgrounds and interests. For example, a group consciousness may develop within such groups as AARP around issues specific to the elderly like the Medicare "doughnut hole," focused on creating social and political pressure to fix those issues. Whether brought together by social or political interests, or even geographic regions, elders may find a strong sense of community with their new group.

Another theory within the symbolic interaction perspective is selective optimization with compensation theory. Baltes and Baltes (1990) based their theory on the idea that successful personal development throughout the life course and subsequent mastery of the challenges associated with everyday life are based on the components of selection, optimization, and compensation. Though this happens at all stages in the life course, in the field of gerontology, researchers focus attention on balancing the losses associated with aging with the gains stemming from the same. Here, aging is a process and not an outcome, and the goals (compensation) are specific to the individual.

According to this theory, our energy diminishes as we age, and we select (selection) personal goals to get the most (optimize) for the effort we put into activities, in this way making up for (compensation) the loss of a wider range of goals and activities. In this theory, the physical decline postulated by disengagement theory may result in more dependence, but that is not necessarily

negative, as it allows aging individuals to save their energy for the most meaningful activities. For example, a professor who values teaching sociology may participate in a phased retirement, never entirely giving up teaching, but acknowledging personal physical limitations that allow teaching only one or two classes per year.

Swedish sociologist Lars Tornstam developed a symbolic interactionist theory called gerotranscendence: the idea that as people age, they transcend the limited views of life they held in earlier times. Tornstam believes that throughout the aging process, the elderly become less self-centered and feel more peaceful and connected to the natural world. Wisdom comes to the elderly, Tornstam's theory states, and as the elderly tolerate ambiguities and seeming contradictions, they let go of conflict and develop softer views of right and wrong (Tornstam 2005).

Tornstam does not claim that everyone will achieve wisdom in aging. Some elderly people might still grow bitter and isolated, feel ignored and left out, or become grumpy and judgmental. Symbolic interactionists believe that, just as in other phases of life, individuals must struggle to overcome their own failings and turn them into strengths.

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11.6: Key Terms

activity theory | a theory which suggests that for individuals to enjoy old age and feel satisfied, they must maintain activities and find a replacement for the statuses and associated roles they have left behind as they aged

age stratification theory | a theory which states that members of society are stratified by age, just as they are stratified by race, class, and gender

ageism | discrimination based on age

baby Boomers | people in the United States born between approximately 1946 and 1964

centenarians | people 100 years old or older

cohort | a group of people who share a statistical or demographic trait

continuity theory | a theory which states that the elderly make specific choices to maintain consistency in internal (personality structure, beliefs) and external structures (relationships), remaining active and involved throughout their elder years

dependency ratio | the number of nonproductive citizens (young, disabled, elderly) to productive working citizens

disengagement theory | a theory which suggests that withdrawing from society and social relationships is a natural part of growing old

elder abuse | the act of a caretaker intentionally depriving an older person of care or harming the person in their charge

exchange theory | a theory which suggests that we experience an increased dependence as we age and must increasingly submit to the will of others, because we have fewer ways of compelling others to submit to us

filial piety | deference and respect to one's parents and ancestors in all things

geriatrics | a medical specialty focusing on the elderly

gerontocracy | a type of social structure wherein the power is held by a society's oldest members

gerontology | a field of science that seeks to understand the process of aging and the challenges encountered as seniors grow older

gerotranscendence | the idea that as people age, they transcend limited views of life they held in earlier times

grief | a psychological, emotional, and social response to the feelings of loss that accompanies death or a similar event

hospice | healthcare that treats terminally ill people by providing comfort during the dying process

life course | the period from birth to death, including a sequence of predictable life events

life expectancy | the number of years a newborn is expected to live

modernization theory | a theory which suggests that the primary cause of the elderly losing power and influence in society are the parallel forces of industrialization and modernization

physician-assisted suicide | the voluntary use of lethal medication provided by a medical doctor to end one's life

primary aging | biological factors such as molecular and cellular changes

secondary aging | aging that occurs due to controllable factors like exercise and diet

selective optimization with compensation theory | a theory based on the idea that successful personal development throughout the life course and subsequent mastery of the challenges associated with everyday life are based on the components of selection, optimization, and compensation

senescence | the aging process, including biological, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual changes

social gerontology | a specialized field of gerontology that examines the social (and sociological) aspects of aging

subculture of aging theory | a theory that focuses on the shared community created by the elderly when they are excluded (due to age), voluntarily or involuntarily, from participating in other groups

supercentenarians | people 110 of age or older

thanatology | the systematic study of death and dying

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11.7: Section Summary

13.1 Who Are the Elderly? Aging in Society

The social study of aging uses population data and cohorts to predict social concerns related to aging populations. In the United States, the population is increasingly older (called “the graying of the United States”), especially due to the baby Boomer segment. Global studies on aging reveal a difference in life expectancy between core and peripheral nations as well as a discrepancy in nations’ preparedness for the challenges of increasing elderly populations.

13.2 The Process of Aging

Old age affects every aspect of human life: biological, social, and psychological. Although medical technology has lengthened life expectancies, it cannot eradicate aging and death. Cultural attitudes shape the way our society views old age and dying, but these attitudes shift and evolve over time.

13.3 Challenges Facing the Elderly

As people enter old age, they face challenges. Ageism, which involves stereotyping and discrimination against the elderly, leads to misconceptions about their abilities. Although elderly poverty has been improving for decades, many older people may be detrimentally affected by the 2008 recession. Some elderly people grow physically frail and, therefore, dependent on caregivers, which increases their risk of elder abuse.

13.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Aging

The three major sociological perspectives inform the theories of aging. Theories in the functionalist perspective focus on the role of elders in terms of the functioning of society as a whole. Theories in the conflict perspective concentrate on how elders, as a group, are at odds with other groups in society. And theories in the symbolic interactionist perspective focus on how elders’ identities are created through their interactions.

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11.8: Section Quiz

13.1 Who Are the Elderly? Aging in Society

1.

In most countries, elderly women _____ than elderly men.

a. are mistreated less
b. live a few years longer
c. suffer fewer health problems
d. deal with issues of aging better

2.

America's baby Boomer generation has contributed to all of the following except:

a. Social Security's vulnerability
b. improved medical technology
c. Medicaid being in danger of going bankrupt
d. rising Medicare budgets

3.

The measure that compares the number of men to women in a population is _____.

a. cohort
b. sex ratio
c. baby Boomer
d. disengagement

4.

The "graying of the United States" refers to _____.

a. the increasing percentage of the population over sixty-five years old
b. faster aging due to stress
c. dissatisfaction with retirement plans
d. increased health problems such as Alzheimer's

5.

What is the approximate median age of the United States?

a. eighty-five
b. sixty-five
c. thirty-seven
d. eighteen

13.2 The Process of Aging

6.

Thanatology is the study of _____.

a. life expectancy
b. biological aging
c. death and dying
d. adulthood

7.

In Erik Erikson's developmental stages of life, with which challenge must older people struggle?

a. Overcoming despair to achieve integrity

b. Overcoming role confusion to achieve identity
c. Overcoming isolation to achieve intimacy
d. Overcoming shame to achieve autonomy

8.

Who wrote the book *On Death and Dying*, outlining the five stages of grief?

a. Ignatz Nascher
b. Erik Erikson
c. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross
d. Carol Gilligan

9.

For individual people of a certain culture, the life course is _____.

a. the average age they will die
b. the lessons they must learn
c. the length of a typical bereavement period
d. the typical sequence of events in their lives

10.

In the United States, life expectancy rates in recent decades have _____.

a. continued to gradually rise
b. gone up and down due to global issues such as military conflicts
c. lowered as healthcare improves
d. stayed the same since the mid-1960s

13.3 Challenges Facing the Elderly

11.

Today in the United States the poverty rate of the elderly is _____.

a. lower than at any point in history
b. increasing
c. decreasing
d. the same as that of the general population

12.

Which action reflects ageism?

a. Enabling WWII veterans to visit war memorials
b. Speaking slowly and loudly when talking to someone over age sixty-five years old
c. Believing that older people drive too slowly
d. Living in a culture where elders are respected

13.

Which factor most increases the risk of an elderly person suffering mistreatment?

a. Bereavement due to widowhood
b. Having been abusive as a younger adult
c. Being frail to the point of dependency on care
d. The ability to bestow a large inheritance on survivors

14.

If elderly people suffer abuse, it is most often perpetrated by _____.

a. spouses

b. caregivers
c. lawyers
d. strangers

15.

Veterans are two to four times more likely to _____ as people who did not serve in the military.

a. be a victim of elder abuse
b. commit suicide
c. be concerned about financial stresses
d. be abusive toward care providers

13.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Aging

16.

Which assertion about aging in men would be made by a sociologist following the functionalist perspective?

a. Men view balding as representative of a loss of strength.
b. Men tend to have better retirement plans than women.
c. Men have life expectancies three to five years shorter than women.
d. Men who remain active after retirement play supportive community roles.

17.

An older woman retires and completely changes her life. She is no longer raising children or working. However, she joins the YWCA to swim every day. She serves on the Friends of the Library board. She is part of a neighborhood group that plays Bunco on Saturday nights. Her situation most closely illustrates the _____ theory.

a. activity
b. continuity
c. disengagement
d. gerotranscendence

18.

An older man retires from his job, stops golfing, and cancels his newspaper subscription. After his wife dies, he lives alone, loses touch with his children, and stops seeing old friends. His situation most closely illustrates the _____ theory.

a. activity
b. continuity
c. disengagement
d. gerotranscendence

19.

What is the primary driver of modernization theory?

a. Industrialization
b. Aging
c. Conflict
d. Interactions

20.

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act counteracts which theory?

a. Modernization
b. Conflict
c. Disengagement
d. Age stratification

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11.9: Short Answer

13.1 Who Are the Elderly? Aging in Society

1.

Baby Boomers have been called the “Me Generation.” Do you know any baby Boomers? In what way do they exemplify their generation?

2.

What social issues involve age disaggregation (breakdowns into groups) of a population? What kind of sociological studies would consider age an important factor?

3.

Conduct a mini-census by counting the members of your extended family, and emphasize age. Try to include three or four generations, if possible. Create a table and include total population plus percentages of each generation. Next, begin to analyze age patterns in your family. What issues are important and specific to each group? What trends can you predict about your own family over the next ten years based on this census? For example, how will family members’ needs and interests and relationships change the family dynamic?

13.2 The Process of Aging

4.

Test Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’s five stages of grief. Think of someone or something you have lost. You might consider the loss of a relationship, possession, or aspect of your self-identity. For example, perhaps you dissolved a childhood friendship, sold your car, or got a bad haircut. For even a small loss, did you experience all five stages of grief? If so, how did the expression of each stage manifest? Did the process happen slowly or rapidly? Did the stages occur out of order? Did you reach acceptance? Try to recall the experience and analyze your own response to loss. Does your experience facilitate your empathizing with the elderly?

5.

What do you think it will be like to be ten, twenty, and fifty years older than you are now? What facts are your assumptions based on? Are any of your assumptions about getting older false? What kind of sociological study could you establish to test your assumptions?

6.

What is your relationship to aging and to time? Look back on your own life. How much and in what ways did you change in ten years and in twenty years? Does a decade seem like a long time or a short time in a life span? Now apply some of your ideas to the idea of aging. Do you think older people share similar experiences as they age?

13.3 Challenges Facing the Elderly

7.

Make a list of all the biases, generalizations, and stereotypes about elderly people that you have seen or heard. Include everything, no matter how small or seemingly trivial. Try to rate the items on your list. Which statements can be considered myths? Which frequently turn into discrimination?

8.

Have you known any person who experienced prejudice or discrimination based on age? Think of someone who has been denied an experience or opportunity simply for being too old. Write the story as a case study.

9.

Think of an older person you know well, perhaps a grandparent, other relative, or neighbor. How does this person defy certain stereotypes of aging?

10.

Older people suffer discrimination, and often, so do teenagers. Compare the discrimination of the elderly to that of teenagers. What do the groups share in common and how are they different?

11.

Remember Madame Jeanne Calment of France was the world's oldest living person until she died at 122 years old? Consider her life experiences from all three sociological points of view. Analyze her situation as if you were a functionalist, a symbolic interactionist, and a conflict theorist.

12.

Which lifestyle do you think is healthiest for aging people—activity, continuity, or disengagement theories? What are the pros and cons of each theory? Find examples of real people who illustrate the theories, either from your own experience or your friends' relationships with older people. Do your examples show positive or negative aspects of the theory they illustrate?

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11.10: Further Research

13.1 Who Are the Elderly? Aging in Society

Gregory Bator founded the television show *Graceful Aging* and then developed a web site offering short video clips from the show. The purpose of *Graceful Aging* is to both inform and entertain, with clips on topics such as sleep, driving, health, safety, and legal issues. Bator, a lawyer, works on counseling seniors about their legal needs. Log onto *Graceful Aging* for a visual understanding of aging.

13.2 The Process of Aging

Read the article “A Study of Sexuality and Health among Older Adults in the United States”.

13.3 Challenges Facing the Elderly

Veterans who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during various conflicts represent cohorts. Veterans share certain aspects of life in common. To find information on veteran populations and how they are aging, study the information on the web site of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Learn more about the Honor Flight Network, the organization offering trips to national war memorials in Washington, DC, at no cost to the veterans.

13.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Aging

New Dynamics of Aging is a web site produced by an interdisciplinary team at the University of Sheffield. It is supposedly the largest research program on aging in the United Kingdom to date. In studying the experiences of aging and factors that shape aging, including behaviors, biology, health, culture, history, economics, and technology, researchers are promoting healthy aging and helping dispel stereotypes. Learn more by logging onto it's website here.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: Race and Ethnicity

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12.1: Introduction

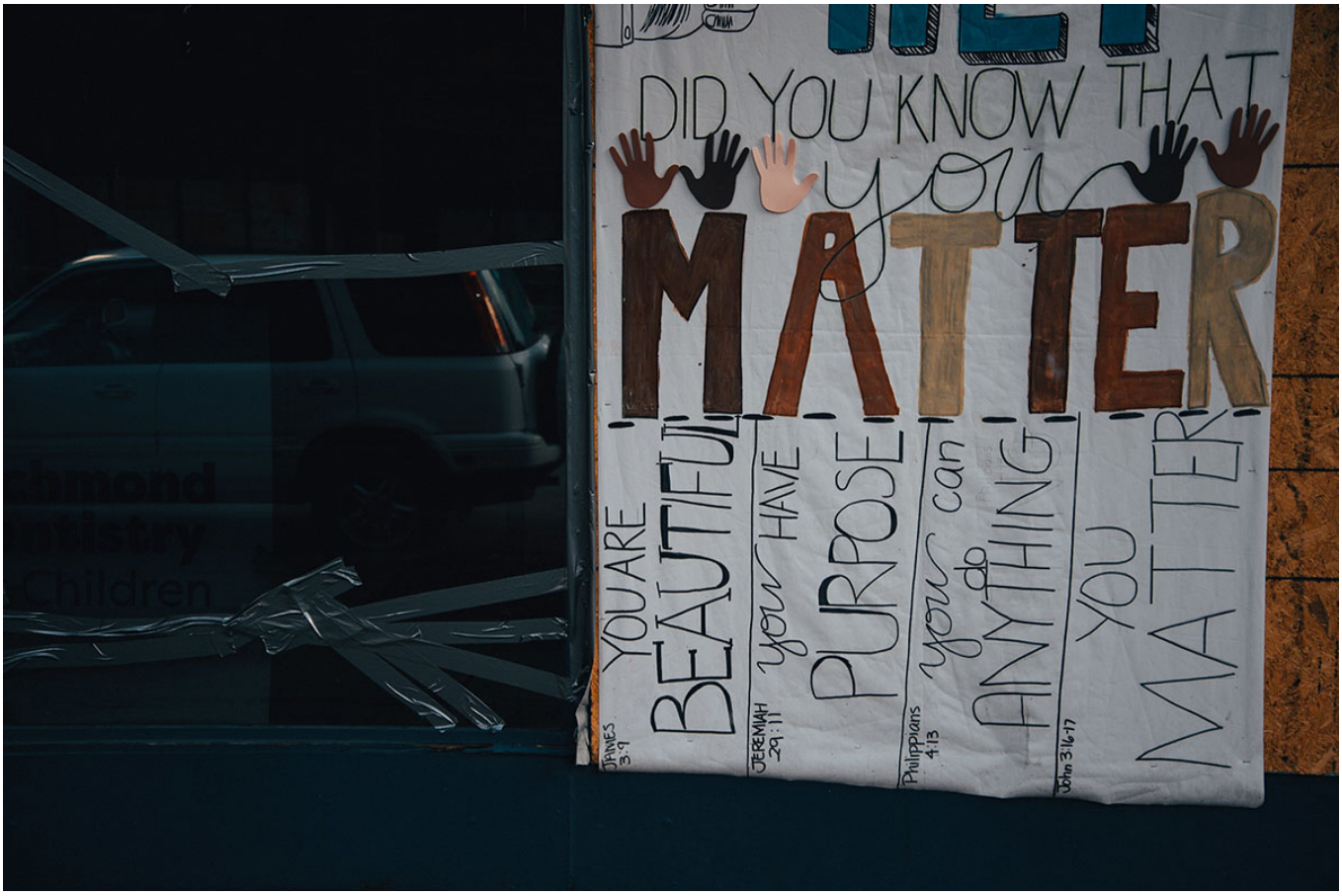


Figure 11.1: The juxtaposition of anger and hope. Over a window broken during protests in Richmond, Virginia, the business owner placed a sign that reads "Did You Know That You Matter. You are beautiful. You have purpose. You can do anything. You matter," and is accompanied with bible verses. (Credit: 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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12.2: 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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12.3: 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.

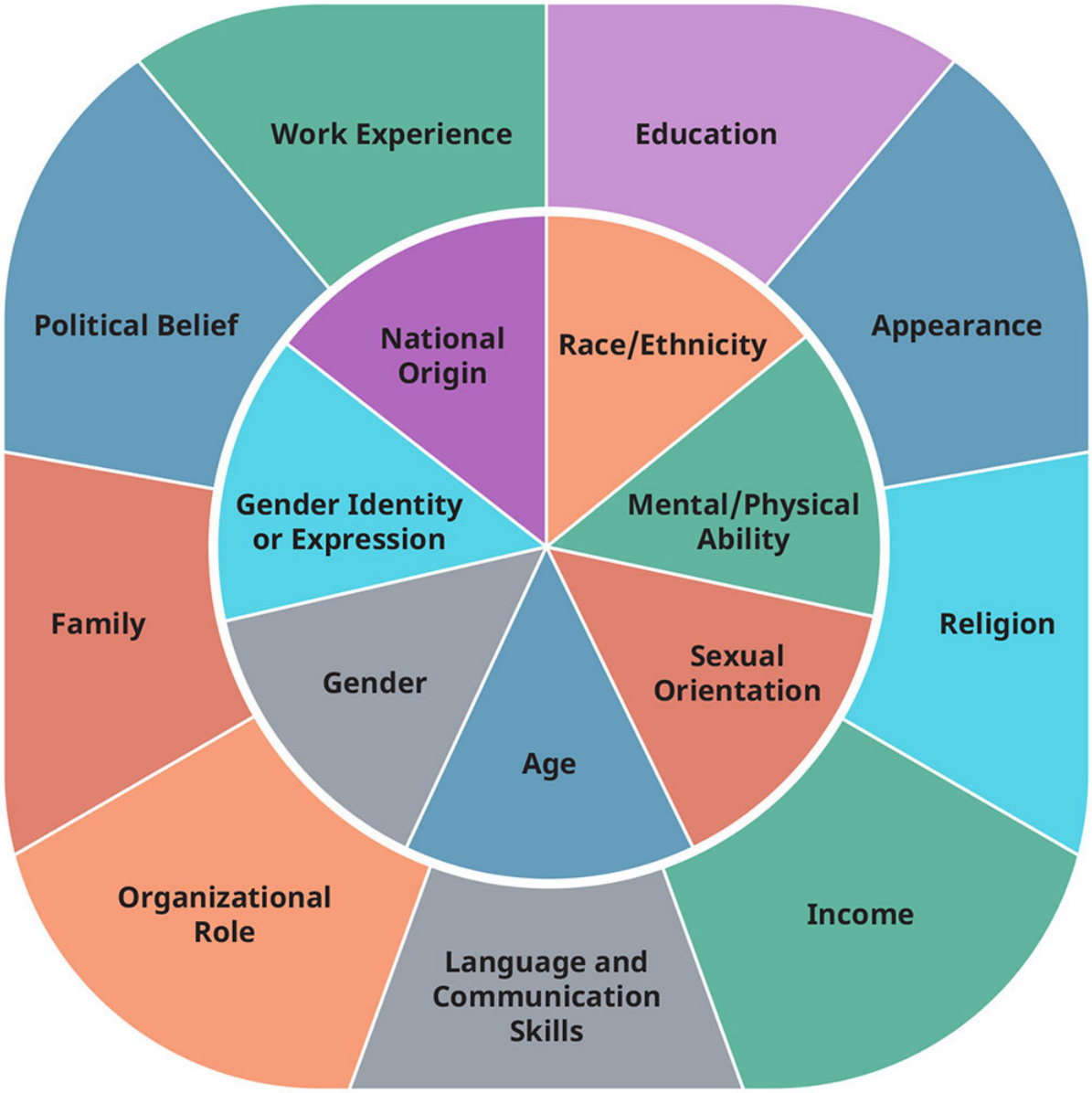


Figure 11.3: Our identities are formed by dozens of factors, sometimes represented in intersection wheels. Consider the subset of identity elements represented here. Generally, the outer ring contains elements that may change relatively often, while the elements in the inner circle are often considered 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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12.4: 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.

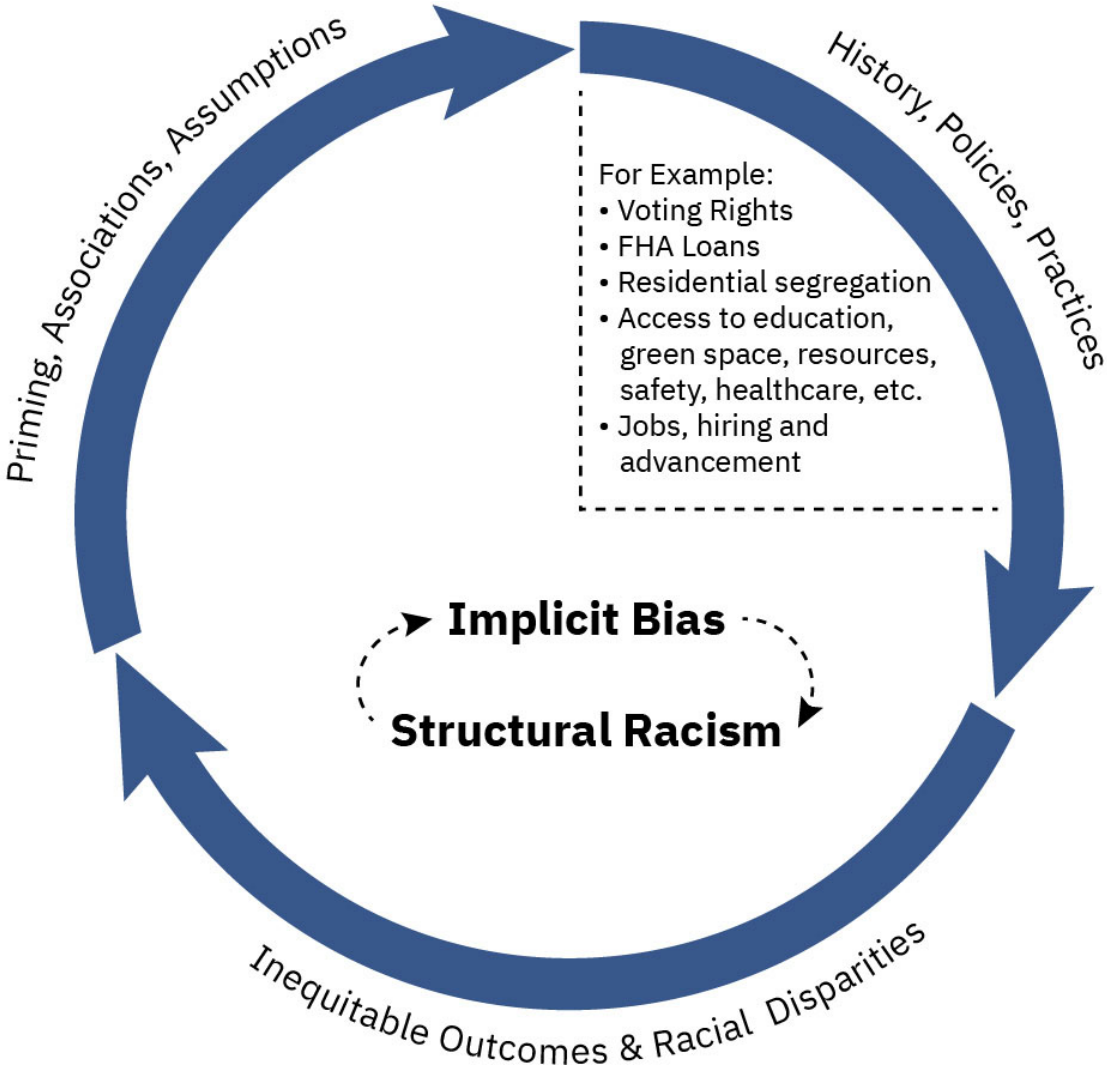


Figure 11.5: Implicit Bias and Structural Racialization (Osta and Vasquez 2021)

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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12.5: 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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12.6: 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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12.7: Key Terms

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

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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12.8: 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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12.9: 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 theorv

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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12.10: 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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12.11: 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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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: Media and Technology

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13.1: Introduction



Figure 8.1: Music fans connect in ways that overcome geographic, socioeconomic, and political differences. (Credit: whataleydude/flickr)

Chapter Outline

8.1 Technology Today
8.2 Media and Technology in Society
8.3 Global Implications of Media and Technology
8.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

When a celebrity announces that they are quitting social media, it's big news (especially on social media). Depending on the star's status and their reason for leaving, the decision is met with a blend of astonishment, dismay, concern for the individual or others they affect, and discussion about larger problems like bullying or online toxicity.

Why do they quit? Their reasons vary, and many eventually return. Lizzo left Twitter after claiming there were "too many trolls." Lorde indicated that the stress of continual updates, "having front-row seats to the hellfire" necessitated a break (Kirkpatrick 2020). Other artists, like Coldplay, never formally deactivated their accounts, but went for long periods of inactivity. Rhianna took a six month hiatus; Justin Bieber and Adele also went without for some time. No matter what the reason, if a popular artist quits social media, a slew of articles and interviews will focus on the decision and the reasons behind it.

What makes these decisions newsworthy? A person deciding not to use a particular app doesn't affect our day-to-day life. Or does it? What if that person shared intimate aspects of their life, offering a sense of connection to their followers? What if the singer provided continual updates on the progress of their new album, or gave their followers a better chance of meeting them? What if that singer posted or liked new remixes or playlists of their material, giving their fans new music to try?

Beyond the relationship with the artist, the social media presence gives fans a sense of community. Recall the discussion of groups. In traditional terms, a musician's fanbase would be a secondary group: The group creates community, but the members aren't close and are unlikely to serve expressive functions. But social media can easily turn that secondary group into a primary one. Follow a Reddit thread about a new video, and you'll see dozens of people who seem to know each other well, who affirm or argue with each other along familiar lines, as if they're cousins reuniting over a dinner table. They've never met in person and probably never will, but they may know intimate details about each other's lives; they've shared ups and downs in the manner similar to a local, close-knit group.

Selena Gomez has had a complicated relationship with social media. She has announced several times that she is quitting, and went through periods of regular downtime. She's indicated that many of her updates are posted from friends' devices. "As soon as I became the most followed person on Instagram," she said, "I sort of freaked out. It had become so consuming to me. It's what I woke up to and went to sleep to. I was an addict, and it felt like I was seeing things I didn't want to see, like it was putting things in my head that I didn't want to care about" (Haskell 2017).

This chapter will further explore the relationships, opportunities, and issues related to media and technology. While the specific products and platforms may quickly grow out of date, consider the larger implications of group dynamics, culture, socialization, and stratification as they relate to the ways we communicate and connect, and the old and new technologies that are meant to help us.

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13.2: Technology Today

Learning Objectives

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

- Define technology and describe its evolution
- Explain technological inequality and issues related to unequal access to technology
- Describe the role of planned obsolescence in technological development



(a) (b)

Figure 8.2: Throughout history, technology has been used to convey information. From petroglyphs near a Native American dwelling at Canyon de Chelly to warning signs outside of animal pens, our innovations have been used to provide the most effective delivery possible. (Credit: a: Anthony Quintano/flickr; b: tenioman/flickr)

It is easy to look at the latest virtual reality headset 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 roll our eyes at enormous and clunky computers of the 1970s that had far less storage than a free thumb drive. But chances are, twenty years from now our skinny laptops and pocket-filling phones will look just as archaic.

What Is Technology?

If someone asked your instructor what instructional technology they used, your instructor would likely assume the questioner was referring to courseware platforms, classroom response offerings, or presentation software. But if your instructor simply responded with, “pencil and paper,” they’d still be accurately describing technology. Modern paper and writing devices would have been considered fantastical creations in ancient times. And the fact that they endure, even as many other potential replacements have come into play, shows how effective those technologies are.

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 BCE 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 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 birth rates 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.

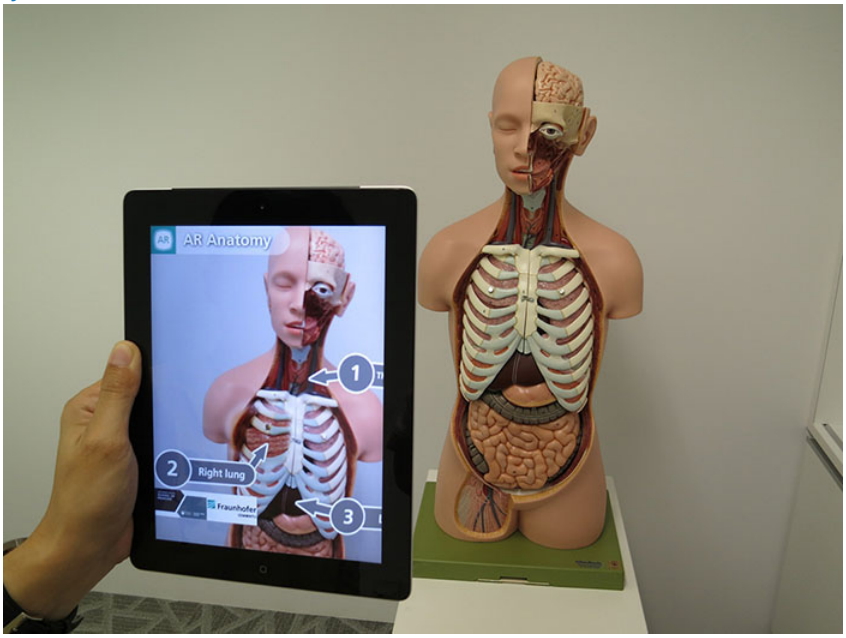


Figure 8.3: Augmented reality devices, robotics and 3D printing labs, and creatorspaces can significantly improve education. But due to their expense, they can also increase learning inequities.

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 in e-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 (Perrin 2019) suggests the emergence of yet another divide. Larger percentages of groups such as Latinos and African Americans use their phones rather than traditional computers to connect to the Internet and undertake related activities. Roughly eight in ten White people reported owning computers, in contrast to roughly six in ten Black and Hispanic people owning them. White people were also more likely to have broadband (high-speed Internet) in their homes. But approximately one in four Black and Hispanic people reported being smartphone-only Internet users, a number that far outpaces White people's reliance on the devices. 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 large-screen 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).

Another aspect of the digital divide is present in the type of community one lives in. Census data released in 2018 showed that in the study period of 2013 to 2017, 78 percent of U.S. households had Internet access, but that homes in rural and low-income areas were below that national average by 13 percent. The data was collected by county, and showed that "mostly urban" counties significantly outpaced "mostly rural" counties. "Completely rural," lower-income counties had the lowest rates of home Internet adoption, at about 60 percent (Martin 2019).

One potential outcome of reduced home Internet and computer access can be the relatively low representation of certain populations in computing courses, computing majors, and computing careers. Some school districts, often with the help of government grants or corporate sponsorships, aim to address this aspect of the digital divide by providing computers to those who need them, either at a low cost or at no charge. A number of organizations, such as Code.org, Black Girls Code, and Black Boys Code, work to overcome the disparity by offering computer science education programs and camps, collaborative instruction programs with local school districts, and (perhaps most impactful in the long term) teacher training programs. As a result, the number of Black and Hispanic students in courses like Advanced Placement Computer Science has increased dramatically in recent years, as has the number of college majors from the same populations.

As a whole, the digital divide brings some level of controversy. Some question why it still exists after having been identified more than twenty years ago. Others question whether or not it exists at all, and offer data to support the claim that it does not exist (American Press Institute 2015). However, most experts agree that the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that the digital divide has persisted, particularly in education. While millions of students were confined to home and remote instruction, they were divided by their Internet access, their familiarity with computer hardware and software, and their ability to solve their own technology issues (PRB 2020). Even when governments and educational institutions implemented improvements to the access and technology situation, there remained the qualitative aspect of unplanned remote education: Many instructors and students are not as effective while communicating only through computer screens. When considering education, policymakers faced arduous decision-making processes and contentious debates as they tried the balance the issues of safety, educational quality, teacher safety, student mental health, and the overall changing landscape of the pandemic.

Constant Contact and Replaced Relationships

How often do you check your phone for new messages or alerts? If you're typical, it might be over 100 times a day. (The number is difficult to cite with confidence, because every few months, organizations or companies release new studies claiming to have updated statistics.) What happens to your phone when you are sleeping? In 2012, researchers reported that “44% of cell phone 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). Just three years later, a frequently cited report by Bank of America indicated the number of phone-accompanied sleepers was at 71 percent (Kooser 2015). A more recent survey of 500 people found it to be 66 percent, but that survey only included adults (Abbott 2020). However, these surveys and the reaction to them might be a factor of selective memory: Prior to the rise of cell phones, many people had telephones in their rooms, often within arm's reach of their bed.

While people report that cell phones make it easier to stay in touch, simplify planning, and increase their productivity, those are not the only impacts of constant device usage 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). As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, even celebrities who have perhaps benefitted the most from increased communication and social media report stress and concern about their online presence and its related outcomes.

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 or political expression. 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). Movements such as MeToo and Black Lives Matter gained prominence partly through what is sometimes referred to as "hashtag activism." More recently, TikTok users who actively opposed Donald Trump's re-election registered for

nearly all the seats at a major rally. When they did not attend, the arena was nearly empty, after the campaign had predicted it would be overflowing. Later, Trump supporters used the social media site Parler in their own rally planning and coordination.

Such consistent and impactful usage leads to unavoidable results: Newer communication methods are replacing older ones. Speaking by phone seems archaic and almost intrusive for some people, who greatly prefer non-voice messaging apps or texts. Media observers, etiquette commentators, and friends and family may lament people beginning and ending relationships by text message, but those methods have proven more comfortable, especially for young people.

What are the effects? There have not been studies on every type of relationship, but research into romantic relationships shows interesting results. First, consider the elements of a relationship. One is attachment, or the bond that people form with each other. Research has shown that constant communication via messaging significantly increases the level of attachment. That fact seems intuitive: people who continually check in on each other, report their whereabouts, and offer support or affirmation will build a stronger bond. The same study, however, found that the respondents rated the overall quality of the relationship as weaker or less satisfying when it was dominated by text messaging instead of voice conversation (Luo 2014).

Many of us have experienced another aspect of relationships: reliance or imbalance. Researchers have found that close friends who are heavily reliant on mobile devices and associated messaging may have more issues regarding overdependence on the relationship and differing expectations regarding communication. Friendships that do not rely on mobile devices may have far less frequent contact. Research found elements of guilt and pressure to respond (called entrapment) in mobile-dependent relationships, which led to overall dissatisfaction (Hall 2012).

Online Privacy, Security, and Control

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 negative intent. Most Americans seem to accept that increased usage of online and related tools brings risks, but their perceptions of those risks are evolving. For example, people have different viewpoints on risks associated with individuals, companies, and the government. The Pew Research Center conducts frequent surveys on these topics. A recent publication indicated the following:

- 81 percent of people felt they had little control over the data collected by companies; 84 percent felt they had little control over data collected by the government.
- 62 percent felt that it was not possible to go through the day without having data collected about them by companies; 63% felt it wasn't possible to go through a day without data collection by the government.
- 79 percent were concerned about that data use by companies; 64 percent were concerned about data use by the government.

Other elements of the research demonstrate that older Americans felt more concern than younger ones, and that Black and Hispanic people were more likely than White people to believe the government was tracking them (Auxier 2019).

These attitudes may be revealed by practices or attitudes toward privacy efforts and safeguards. One person may be annoyed every time a privacy notice interrupts them, and they may simply sign the statement without thinking much about it. Another person may read every word of the agreement and carefully deliberate over whether to proceed.

Online privacy concerns also extend from individuals to their dependents. In accordance with the Child Online Privacy Protection Act, school districts must consider and control certain elements of privacy on behalf of students, meaning they cannot require or encourage students under age thirteen to provide personal information. Likewise, online platforms such as Instagram do not let children under the age of thirteen register for their sites. And where children are registered by their parents, sites like YouTube and, more recently, TikTok issue controls to prevent inappropriate portrayals by children or inappropriate behavior by other members. For example, YouTube often disables comments on videos produced by children (Moreno 2020). TikTok added privacy and protection methods in 2020, but in early 2021 was hit with allegations of violating child safety and privacy guidelines.

Although schools and companies are required to take steps to lower risks to children, parents and guardians are free to make their own choices on behalf of their children. Some parents avoid showing their children on social media; they do not post pictures, and ask family members to refrain from doing so (Levy, 2019). On the other end of the spectrum, some parents run social media accounts for their children. Sometimes referred to as "sharents," they may share entertaining videos, promote products through demos or try-ons, or post professionally produced photos on behalf of clothing companies or equipment makers. A child's (even a

toddler's) role as an influencer can be financially lucrative, and companies making everything from helmets to dancewear have taken notice (Allchin 2012).

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.

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13.3: Media and Technology in Society

Learning Objectives

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

- Describe the evolution and current role of different media, like newspapers, television, and new media
- Describe the function of product advertising in media
- Demonstrate awareness of the social homogenization and social fragmentation that occur via modern society's use of technology and media



Figure 8.4: Facebook's VP of Engineering Regina Dugan gave a talk about innovations in the platform's technologies in which she shared potential innovations, including creating text directly from our thoughts. While the prospect of drafting messages or papers by thinking about them would certainly speed up our processes, opening our thoughts directly to a social media company might have larger implications. (Credit: Anthony Quintano/flickr)

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.

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, in terms of portable data storage, the first mainstream device was a floppy disk–a square, plastic object larger than a playing card, which in its final iteration held 1.4 megabytes of data (or less than a single high-resolution photo). Until the early 2000s, these were common formats, and students and professionals would regularly carry several of them. Floppy disks were improved and upgraded, then replaced by higher-capacity Zip and Jaz disks, which 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.

Another type of evolution involves disruptive technology (or disruptive innovation), which is a product, service, or process that has a major effect on the operation of an entire industry, and/or may create new industries or new markets. In the example above, a disruptive technology might be the advent of cloud-based storage platforms like Google Drive and iCloud, which have significantly reduced the need for physical portable storage. Disruptive technology can create and destroy entire industries, sometimes in a rapid manner rather than in an evolutionary one. In one of the most famous examples, the advent of digital photography rendered film-based cameras obsolete; the change came quickly, and many companies could not adjust. In a similar manner, ride-sharing services have had a massive impact on the taxi and limousine industry. Emerging technologies such as blockchain, additive manufacturing (3D printing), and augmented reality are likely to have similar impacts. For example, if companies decide that it is more efficient to 3D print many products or components close to their destinations instead of shipping them from distant manufacturing plants and warehouses, the entire shipping industry may be affected.

The sociological impact of disruptive technology can be sudden. Digital photography, for example, resulted in the rapid decline of companies like Kodak, which had been stalwarts of the American economy and a major employer. Layoffs devastated cities like Rochester, New York. The advent of online music purchasing and subscription services resulted in the closure of thousands of record stores, both small businesses and large chains like Tower Records. Beyond the economic impact, these stores were often parts of the fabric of communities, places for fans to gather to explore and share music. Automation has likewise changed manufacturing and mining, resulting in severe job loss and drastic alterations in regions such as the Great Lakes, where many towns went from being part of the Manufacturing Belt to being part of the Rust Belt.

Sociology in the Real World: Violence in Media and Video Games: Does It Matter?



Figure 8.5: 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. (Credit: Meddy Garnet/flickr)

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).

Children's play has often involved games of aggression—from 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).

However, though the American Psychological Association and other researchers found an increase in aggressive tendencies based on video game play, several studies and conclusions indicated "scant evidence" that violent video games cause either physical violence or criminal behavior. Researchers have found correlations between those behaviors, essentially indicating that violent people may be more likely to play violent video games, but that still does not mean that video games cause violence.

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.

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.

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).



Figure 8.6: Television control rooms feature feeds from many other networks, so that producers and reporters can see different perspectives on the same events and be alerted to new developments around the world (Credit: Anthony Quintano/flickr).

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. The film industry, like other media formats, has gone through substantial change as a result of streaming services, online privacy, and the new competition for people's entertainment dollars. Because the mainstream movie industry has been so reliant on ticket sales at live theaters, the COVID-19 pandemic affected it

more dramatically than most other media categories. Highly anticipated movies slated for 2020 and 2021 releases were delayed or shifted to streaming distribution, reducing revenue. And some companies made lasting decisions regarding their future offerings.

New Media and Online Environments

New media encompasses all interactive forms of information exchange. These include social networking sites, blogs, podcasts, wikis, and virtual worlds. Many are not "new" in the sense that they were developed in the past few years (some may be older than you), but they are newer than the media mentioned above, and they rely on types of technologies that were not available until about thirty years ago. Many are ways disruptive to traditional media or to companies that rely on those other formats. Clearly, the list of new media grows almost daily, and you might feel we are missing some. In fact, the immediacy of new media coupled with the lack of oversight means we must be more careful than ever to ensure that we are making good decisions about the accuracy, ethics, and cultural responsiveness of these formats.

Sociology in the Real World: Planned Obsolescence: Technology That's Built to Crash



Figure 8.7: Many people are incredibly reliant on their devices, but in business contexts, a failing phone or computer can have impacts on customers and revenues. (Credit: Rawpixel Ltd/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.

Planned obsolescence is not always done ethically, and some companies can dictate the obsolescence after the user makes a purchase. Apple users took to social media to confirm that their older iPhones suddenly began losing power or were slowing down considerably. Many users bought new phones at high prices, and later learned that the slow downs were intended by the phone maker. Customers filed dozens of class action lawsuits, which are suits where a very large group of people can band together. Apple was found to have intentionally and improperly altered its phones through a software update in order to hide battery problems. While it never admitted guilt, Apple's $500 million settlement paid benefits to iPhone 6 and iPhone 7 users who had been affected, and a later $113 agreement with state attorneys general included provisions to behave more ethically and transparently (CNBC 2020).

Product Advertising and the Attention Economy

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 has fallen significantly, which shows that companies need new ways of getting their messages to consumers.

Brand ambassadorships can also be powerful tools for advertisers. For example, companies hire college students to be their on-campus representatives, and they may target for students engaged in high-profile activities like sports, fraternities, and music. (This practice is slightly different from sponsorships, and note that some students, particularly athletes, need to follow strict guidelines about accepting money or products.) The marketing team is betting that if we buy perfume because Beyoncé tells us to, we'll also choose our workout gear, clothing, or make-up brand if another student encourages that choice. Tens of thousands of brand ambassadors or brand evangelists work on college campuses, and such marketing approaches are seen as highly effective investments for companies. The numbers make it clear: Ambassador-referred customers provide sixteen percent higher value to companies than other customers, and over ninety percent of people indicate that people trust referrals from people they know (On-Campus Advertising, 2017).

Social media has made such influencer and ambassador marketing a near constant. Some formal ambassadors are sponsored by companies to show or use their products. In some cases, compensation arrives only in the form of the free products and whatever monetization the ambassador receives from the site, such as YouTube. Influencers are usually less formally engaged with companies than are ambassadors, relying mostly on site revenue to reward their efforts. Some influencers may overstate their popularity in order to get free products or services. For example, luxury hotels report that they are barraged by influencers (some with very few followers, and therefore questionable influence) who expect free stays in exchange for creating posts promoting the location (Locker 2019).

One ethical and perhaps relationship-oriented question is whether paid ambassadors should be required to disclose their relationship with a company, and how that works in online versus face-to-face interactions. In this case, online presence may be more "truthful" than in-person relationships. A video can formally include sponsorship information, and some ambassadors list

partners or sponsors on their profiles. But in day-to-day, in-person conversations, it might be awkward for a classmate or colleague to mention that they are wearing a particular brand or using gear based on a financial relationship. In other words, the person sitting next to you with the great bag may be paid to carry it, and you may never know.

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. Americans seem to view this phenomenon with great concern, indicating that the impact of customized or personalized news delivers worse news. Yet, they still engage with the platforms that deliver news in that manner.

The fragmentation of the news has led to an increased amount of digital tribalism. Tribalism in this sense is the state or tendency to gather and reinforce ideas belonging to a group, and to do so out of a sense of strong loyalty. Digital tribalism, then, is the tendency to do so online, and also to forge new tribes purely based on online personas or ideologies. Instead of basing these groups on the classic bonds of ethnic, religious, or geographic ideologies, they are based on politics, emotions, lifestyles or lifestyle goals, or even brands (Taute & Sierra 2014). Digital tribes can lead people to a greater sense of belonging, and can also be heavily exploited for commercial or power-attaining interests.

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13.4: Global Implications of Media and Technology

Learning Objectives

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

- Explain the advantages and concerns of media globalization
- Explain the globalization of technology

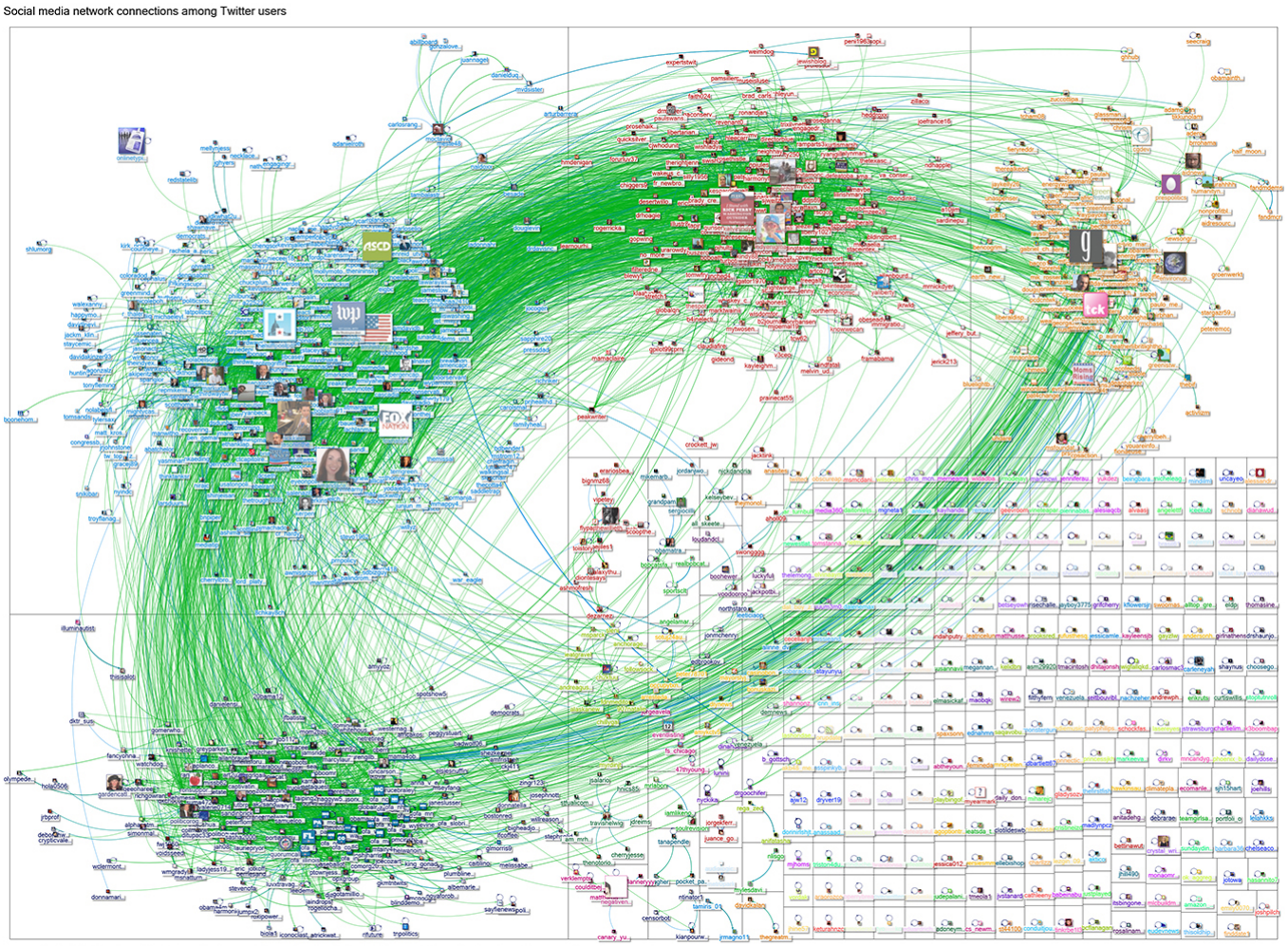


Figure 8.8: This graphic indicates the connections among people who tweeted or replied about the State of the Union address. Green lines indicate people who follow each other on the platform. (Credit Marc Smith/flickr)

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. In the early 2000s, the United States offered about 1,500 newspapers, 2,800 book publishers, plus 6,000 magazines and a whopping 10,000 radio outlets (Bagdikian 2004). By 2019, some of those numbers had changed: There were only 1,000 newspapers, but over 7,000 magazines (note that both newspapers and magazines count as such even if they publish largely online) (BBC 2019). The number of book publishers and radio outlets has generally remained static, which may seem surprising.

On the surface, there is endless opportunity to find diverse media outlets. But the numbers are misleading. Media consolidation is 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 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.

Big Picture: Authority and the Internet: An Uncomfortable Friendship



Figure 8.9: What information is accessible to these patrons of an internet café in China? What is censored from their view? (Credit: 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 governments' responses—are very different.

Other countries take a far more restrictive and directive approach to Internet regulation. 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 relationship with Hong Kong, or criticism of the government’s handling of events.

With sites like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube blocked in China, the nation’s Internet users turn to local media companies for their needs. Even so, the country exerts strong control by identifying and prosecuting some violators of the bans, and undertaking more far-reaching tactics.

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.

In early 2021, Myanmar's military launched a coup against its government. Elected leader Ang San Suu Kyi was arrested, and other top officials were detained or pushed from power. (Suu Kyi had previously spent years under house arrest.) Immediately, citizens launched widespread and persistent protests against the coup. Myanmar's military took immediate steps to quell the protests, including firing at and killing dozens of protesters and storming colleges and hospitals. But first, the government banned Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp in an effort to reduce coordination among protesters and restrain news about the crackdown. The government also arrested reporters, including foreign nationals, who were accused of violating a

public order law. Social media companies replied in what ways they could, such as deactivating the accounts of Myanmar's military so that they couldn't share their own messages.

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.

Sociology in the Real World: 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.

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13.5: Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

Learning Objectives

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

- Discuss how we analyze media and technology through various sociological perspectives

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



Figure 8.10: TV commercials can carry significant cultural currency. For some, the ads during the Super Bowl are more water cooler-worthy than the game itself. (Credit: 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 Vos (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.



Figure 8.11: Many people argue that women's portrayal in the media remains misleadingly narrow. But the advent of influencer culture may provide more agency to women, who can control their own portrayal. (Credit: Nenad Stojkovic/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 men, 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.

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13.6: Key Terms

cyberfeminism | the application to and promotion of feminism online

design patents | patents that are granted when someone has invented a new and original design for a manufactured product

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

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

gatekeeping | the sorting process by which thousands of possible messages are shaped into a mass media-appropriate form and reduced to a manageable amount

knowledge gap | the gap in information that builds as groups grow up without access to technology

media | all print, digital, and electronic means of communication

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

neo-Luddites | those who see technology as a symbol of the coldness of modern life

net neutrality | the principle that all Internet data should be treated equally by internet service providers

new media | all interactive forms of information exchange

oligopoly | a situation in which a few firms dominate a marketplace

panoptic surveillance | a form of constant monitoring in which the observation posts are decentralized and the observed is never communicated with directly

planned obsolescence | the act of a technology company planning for a product to be obsolete or unable from the time it's created

plant patents | patents that recognize the discovery of new plant types that can be asexually reproduced

technological diffusion | the spread of technology across borders

technological globalization | the cross-cultural development and exchange of technology

technology | the application of science to solve problems in daily life

technophiles | those who see technology as symbolizing the potential for a brighter future

utility patents | patents that are granted for the invention or discovery of any new and useful process, product, or machine

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13.7: Section Summary

8.1 Technology Today

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

8.2 Media and Technology in Society

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.

8.3 Global Implications of Media and Technology

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.

8.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

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.

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13.8: Section Quiz

8.1 Technology Today

1.

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.

a. a functional perspective
b. the knowledge gap
c. e-readiness
d. a digital divide

2.

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.

a. digital divide
b. knowledge gap
c. feminist perspective
d. e-gap

3.

The fact that your cell phone is using outdated technology within a year or two of purchase is an example of _____.

a. the conflict perspective
b. conspicuous consumption
c. media
d. planned obsolescence

4.

The history of technology began _____.

a. in the early stages of human societies
b. with the invention of the computer
c. during the Renaissance
d. during the nineteenth century

Short Answer

9.

5.

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?

10.

6.

Should the U.S. government be responsible for providing all citizens with access to the Internet? Or is gaining Internet access an individual responsibility?

11.

7.

How have digital media changed social interactions? Do you believe it has deepened or weakened human connections? Defend your answer.

12.

8.

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 this website with research on the digital divide.

To find out more about Internet privacy and security, check out this website on privacy rights.

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8.2 Media and Technology in Society

13.

When it comes to technology, media, and society, which of the following is true?

a. Media can influence technology, but not society.
b. Technology created media, but society has nothing to do with these.
c. Technology, media, and society are bound and cannot be separated.
d. Society influences media but is not connected to technology.

14.

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?

a. utility patent
b. plant patent
c. design patent
d. The U.S. Patent Office does not issue a patent for plants.

15.

Which of the following is the primary component of the evolutionary model of technological change?

a. Technology should not be subject to patenting.
b. Technology and the media evolve together.
c. Technology can be traced back to the early stages of human society.
d. A breakthrough in one form of technology leads to a number of variations, and technological developments.

16.

Which of the following is *not* a form of new media?

a. The cable television program *Yellowstone*
b. Wikipedia
c. Snapchat
d. A cooking blog written by Rachael Ray

17.

Research regarding video game violence suggests that _____.

a. boys who play violent video games become more aggressive, but girls do not
b. girls who play violent video games become more aggressive, but boys do not
c. violent video games have no connection to aggressive behavior

d. violent video games lead to an increase in aggressive thought and behavior

18.

Comic books, Wikipedia, MTV, and a commercial for Coca-Cola are all examples of:

a. media
b. symbolic interaction perspective
c. e-readiness
d. the digital divide

8.3 Global Implications of Media and Technology

19.

When Japanese scientists develop a new vaccine for swine flu and offer that technology to U.S. pharmaceutical companies, _____ has taken place.

a. media globalization
b. technological diffusion
c. monetizing
d. planned obsolescence

20.

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.

a. monopoly
b. conglomerate
c. oligopoly
d. technological globalization

21.

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:

a. technology
b. conglomerating
c. symbolic interaction
d. media globalization

22.

Which of the following is *not* a risk of media globalization?

a. The creation of cultural and ideological biases
b. The creation of local monopolies
c. The risk of cultural imperialism
d. The loss of local culture

23.

The government of _____ blocks citizens' access to popular new media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

a. China
b. India
c. Afghanistan
d. Australia

8.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

24.

A parent secretly monitoring the babysitter through the use of GPS, site blocker, and nanny cam is a good example of:

a. the social construction of reality
b. technophilia
c. a neo-Luddite
d. panoptic surveillance

25.

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.

a. social construction of reality
b. cyberfeminism
c. market segmentation
d. referencing

26.

_____ tend to be more pro-technology, while _____ view technology as a symbol of the coldness of modern life.

a. Luddites; technophiles
b. technophiles; Luddites
c. cyberfeminists; technophiles
d. liberal feminists; conflict theorists

27.

When it comes to media and technology, a functionalist would focus on:

a. the symbols created and reproduced by the media
b. the association of technology and technological skill with men
c. the way that various forms of media socialize users
d. the digital divide between the technological haves and have-nots

28.

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.

a. gatekeeping
b. the digital divide
c. technophilia
d. market segmentation

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13.9: Short Answer

8.2 Media and Technology in Society

1.

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?

2.

Do you believe new media allows for the kind of unifying moments that television and radio programming used to? If so, give an example.

3.

Where are you most likely to notice advertisements? What causes them to catch your attention?

8.3 Global Implications of Media and Technology

4.

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.

5.

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?

6.

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?

8.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

7.

Contrast a functionalist viewpoint of digital surveillance with a conflict perspective viewpoint.

8.

In what ways has the Internet affected how you view reality? Explain using a symbolic interactionist perspective.

9.

Describe how a cyberfeminist might address the fact that powerful female politicians are often demonized in traditional media.

10.

The issue of airplane-pilot exhaustion is an issue of growing media concern. Select a theoretical perspective, and describe how it would explain this.

11.

Would you characterize yourself as a technophile or a Luddite? Explain, and use examples.

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13.10: Further Research

8.2 Media and Technology in Society

To get a sense of the timeline of technology. Check out this website with a technology timeline.

To learn more about new media, check out the New Media Institute

To understand how independent media coverage differs from major corporate affiliated news outlets, review material from the Democracy Now! website.

8.3 Global Implications of Media and Technology

Check out more in this article about the global digital divide. openstax.org/l/Global_Digital_Divide

8.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Media and Technology

To learn more about cyberfeminism, check out the interdisciplinary artist collective, subRosa.

To explore the implications of panoptic surveillance, review some surveillance studies at the free, open source Surveillance and Society site.

Read an example of socialist media from *Jacobin* magazine.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

14: Gender and Gender Inequality

Much progress has occured the past four decades in gender equality. 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.

14.1: Prelude to Gender and Gender Inequality

14.2: Understanding Sex and Gender

14.3: Feminism and Sexism

14.4: Gender Inequality

14.5: Violence Against Women- Rape and Pornography

14.6: The Benefits and Costs of Being Male

14.S: Gender and Gender Inequality (Summary)

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14.1: 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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14.2: 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.

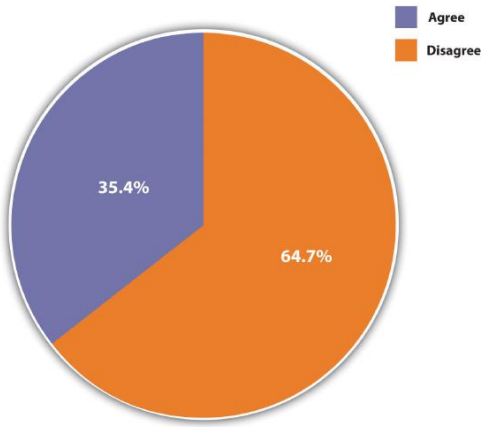


Figure 8.2 Belief That Women Should Stay at Home. Agreement or disagreement with statement that "it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family."

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.

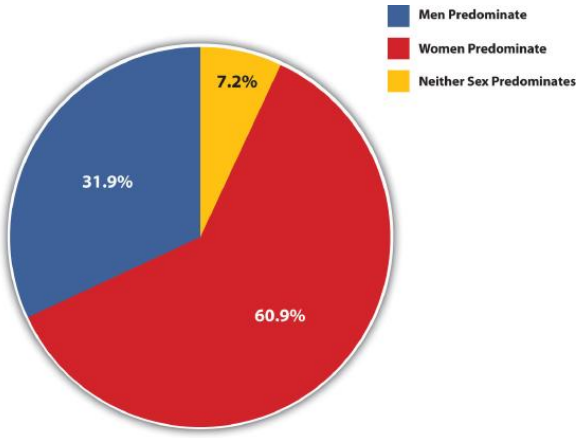


Figure 8.5 Gender Responsibility for Weaving. Source: Data from Standard Cross-Cultural Sample.

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.



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.

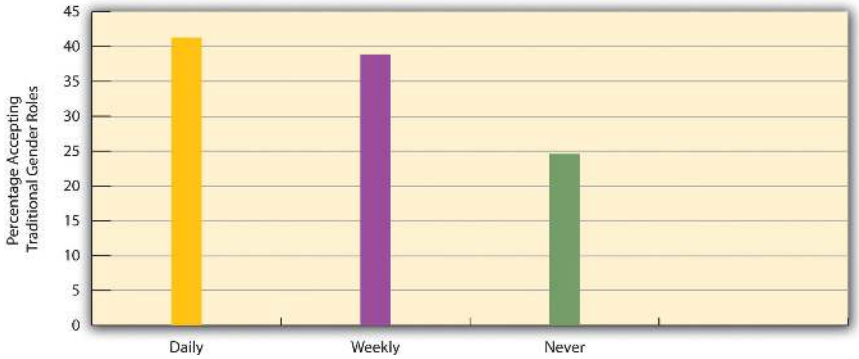


Figure 8.8 Frequency of Prayer and Acceptance of Traditional Gender Roles in the Family. Percentage agreeing that "it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family."

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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14.3: Feminism and Sexism

Learning Objectives

- Define feminism, sexism, and patriarchy.
- Discuss evidence for a decline in sexism.
- Understand some correlates of feminism.

Recall that more than one-third of the public (as measured in the General Social Survey) agrees with the statement, “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.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? If you are like the majority of college students, you disagree.

Today a lot of women, and some men, will say, “I’m not a feminist, but…” and then go on to add that they hold certain beliefs about women’s equality and traditional gender roles that actually fall into a feminist framework. Their reluctance to self-identify as feminists underscores the negative image that feminists and feminism hold but also suggests that the actual meaning of feminism may be unclear.

Feminism and sexism are generally two sides of the same coin. Feminism refers to the belief that women and men should have equal opportunities in economic, political, and social life, while sexism refers to a belief in traditional gender role stereotypes and in the inherent inequality between men and women. Sexism thus parallels the concept of racial and ethnic prejudice discussed in Chapter 7. Both women and people of color are said, for biological and/or cultural reasons, to lack certain qualities for success in today’s world.



Figure 8.9. Feminism as a social movement began in the United States during the abolitionist period before the Civil War. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott were active abolitionists who made connections between slavery and the oppression of women. Source: Stanton photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3a28976; Mott photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3a42877.

In the United States, feminism as a social movement began during the abolitionist period preceding the Civil War, as such women as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, both active abolitionists, began to see similarities between slavery and the oppression of women. This new women’s movement focused on many issues but especially on the right to vote. As it quickly grew, critics charged that it would ruin the family and wreak havoc on society in other ways. They added that women were not smart enough to vote and should just concentrate on being good wives and mothers (Behling, 2001).Behling, L. L. (2001). *The masculine woman in America, 1890–1935*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

One of the most dramatic events in the woman suffrage movement occurred in 1872, when Susan B. Anthony was arrested because she voted. At her trial a year later in Canandaigua, New York, the judge refused to let her say anything in her defense and ordered the jury to convict her. Anthony’s statement at sentencing won wide acclaim and ended with words that ring to this day: “I shall earnestly and persistently continue to urge all women to the practical recognition of the old revolutionary maxim, ‘Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God’” (Barry, 1988).Barry, K. L. (1988). *Susan B. Anthony: Biography of a singular feminist*. New York, NY: New York University Press..

After women won the right to vote in 1920, the women’s movement became less active but began anew in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as women active in the Southern civil rights movement turned their attention to women’s rights, and it is still active today.

To a profound degree, it has changed public thinking and social and economic institutions, but, as we will see coming up, much gender inequality remains. Because the women's movement challenged strongly held traditional views about gender, it has prompted the same kind of controversy that its 19th-century predecessor did. Feminists quickly acquired a bra-burning image, even though there is no documented instance of a bra being burned in a public protest, and the movement led to a backlash as conservative elements echoed the concerns heard a century earlier (Faludi, 1991).Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The undeclared war against American women*. New York, NY: Crown.

Several varieties of feminism exist. Although they all share the basic idea that women and men should be equal in their opportunities in all spheres of life, they differ in other ways (Lindsey, 2011).Lindsey, L. L. (2011). *Gender roles: A sociological perspective* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.*Liberal feminism* believes that the equality of women can be achieved within our existing society by passing laws and reforming social, economic, and political institutions. In contrast, *socialist feminism*blames capitalism for women's inequality and says that true gender equality can result only if fundamental changes in social institutions, and even a socialist revolution, are achieved. *Radical feminism*, on the other hand, says that patriarchy (male domination) lies at the root of women's oppression and that women are oppressed even in noncapitalist societies. Patriarchy itself must be abolished, they say, if women are to become equal to men. Finally, an emerging *multicultural feminism* emphasizes that women of color are oppressed not only because of their gender but also because of their race and class (M. L. Andersen & Collins, 2010).Andersen, M. L., & Collins, P. H. (Eds.). (2010). *Race, class, and gender: An anthology* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. They thus face a triple burden that goes beyond their gender. By focusing their attention on women of color in the United States and other nations, multicultural feminists remind us that the lives of these women differ in many ways from those of the middle-class women who historically have led U.S. feminist movements.

The Growth of Feminism and the Decline of Sexism

What evidence is there for the impact of the women's movement on public thinking? The General Social Survey, the Gallup Poll, and other national surveys show that the public has moved away from traditional views of gender toward more modern ones. Another way of saying this is that the public has moved toward feminism.

To illustrate this, let's return to the General Social Survey statement that it is much better for the man to achieve outside the home and for the woman to take care of home and family. Figure 8.10 shows that agreement with this statement dropped sharply during the 1970s and 1980s before leveling off afterward to slightly more than one-third of the public.

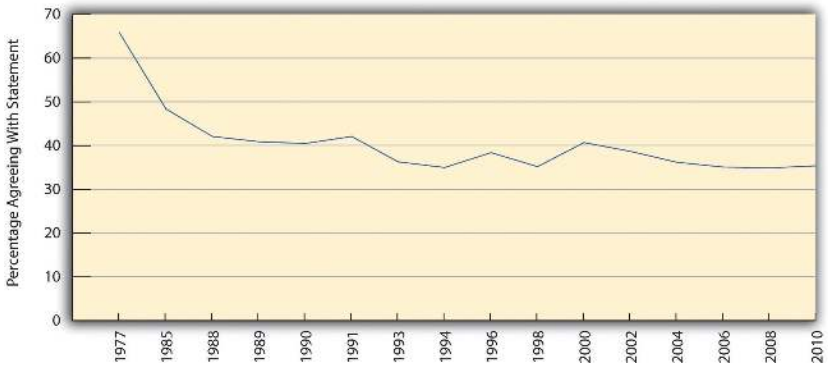


Figure 8.10 Change in Acceptance of Traditional Gender Roles in the Family, 1977–2010. Percentage agreeing that "it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." Source: Data from General Social Survey.

Another General Social Survey question over the years has asked whether respondents would be willing to vote for a qualified woman for president of the United States. As Figure 8.11 illustrates, this percentage rose from 74% in the early 1970s to a high of 96.2% in 2010. Although we have not yet had a woman president, despite Hillary Rodham Clinton's historic presidential primary campaign in 2007 and 2008 and Sarah Palin's presence on the Republican ticket in 2008, the survey evidence indicates the public is willing to vote for one. As demonstrated by the responses to the survey questions on women's home roles and on a woman president, traditional gender views have indeed declined.



Figure 8.11 Change in Willingness to Vote for a Qualified Woman for President. Source: Data from General Social Survey.

Correlates of Feminism

Because of the feminist movement's importance, scholars have investigated why some people are more likely than others to support feminist beliefs. Their research uncovers several correlates of feminism (Dauphinais, Barkan, & Cohn, 1992).Dauphinais, P. D., Barkan, S. E., & Cohn, S. F. (1992). Predictors of rank-and-file feminist activism: Evidence from the 1983 general social survey. *Social Problems, 39*, 332–344. We have already seen one of these when we noted that religiosity is associated with support for traditional gender roles. To turn that around, lower levels of religiosity are associated with feminist beliefs and are thus a correlate of feminism.

Several other such correlates exist. One of the strongest is education: the lower the education, the lower the support for feminist beliefs. Figure 8.12 shows the strength of this correlation by using our familiar General Social Survey statement that men should achieve outside the home and women should take care of home and family. People without a high school degree are almost five times as likely as those with a graduate degree to agree with this statement.

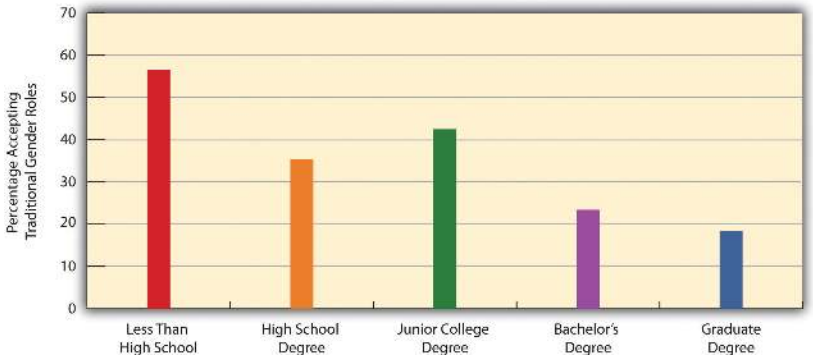


Figure 8.12 Education and Acceptance of Traditional Gender Roles in the Family. Percentage agreeing that "it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

Age is another correlate, as older people are more likely than younger people to believe in traditional gender roles. Again using our familiar statement about traditional gender roles, we see an example of this relationship in Figure 8.13, which shows that older people are more likely than younger people to accept traditional gender roles as measured by this statement.

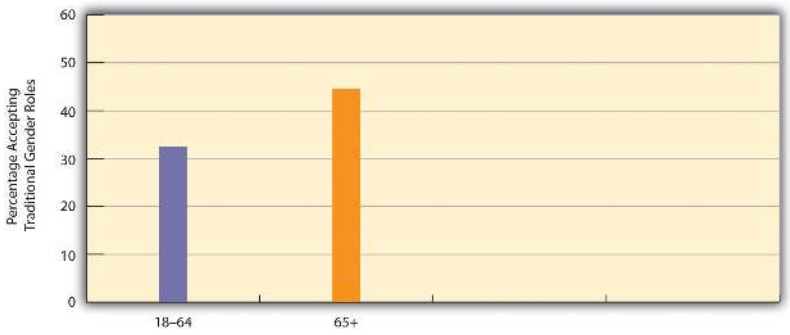


Figure 8.13 Age and Acceptance of Traditional Gender Roles in the Family. Percentage agreeing that "it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

Conclusion

- Feminism refers to the belief that women and men should have equal opportunities in economic, political, and social life, while sexism refers to a belief in traditional gender role stereotypes and in the inherent inequality between men and women.
- Sexist beliefs have declined in the United States since the early 1970s.
- Several correlates of feminist beliefs exist. In particular, people with higher levels of education are more likely to hold beliefs consistent with feminism.

For Your Review

1. Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why or why not?
2. Think about one of your parents or of another adult much older than you. Does this person hold more traditional views about gender than you do? Explain your answer.

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14.4: 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 14.4.1: 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 **14.4.1**: 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 **14.4.1**: 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 **14.4.3**: 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 **14.4.4**: 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 **14.4.2**: 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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14.5: 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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14.6: 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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14.S: Gender and Gender Inequality (Summary)

Summary

1. *Sex* 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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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

15: Politics and the Economy

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15.1: Prelude to Politics and the Economy

Social Issues in the News

In January 2010, a Republican, Scott Brown, won the U.S. Senate seat in Massachusetts that had been held for almost a half century by the late Edward M. (Ted) Kennedy, who died in August 2009 from brain cancer. Like many Democrats throughout the country, business student Danielle Safran, who campaigned for Barack Obama in his 2008 presidential election, was distraught. She began to think she should get even more involved in politics and even run for office herself, and she also thought that maybe other Democrats were feeling the same way. This led to a brainstorm: start a Web site that would list open electoral positions around the country at various levels of government for potential candidates to consult. She got together with another business student, Robert Clifford, a Republican, and the two started a Web site to accomplish this purpose: WhatCanIRunFor.com. (Special to Capital Business, 2010)Special to Capital Business. (2010, May 10). Business Rx: Seeking to become an online political matchmaker. *The Washington Post.* Retrieved from www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn...050603376.html

It was Election Day in the United States, and all over the nation people were voting for the candidates of their choice. At a high school in New York City, people carrying umbrellas lined up to vote on a cold, rainy day. Some walked quickly toward the school, while others strolled more leisurely. Not too far away, a woman in a wheelchair was wheeling herself down the street. She said she had come several blocks so that she could vote.

A few people were handing out campaign literature in front of the school. Some voters took their pamphlets, while others said they had already made up their minds. One voter said, "No thanks, don't confuse me with facts." Another took a pamphlet and said to the college student who gave it to her, "You're a fine citizen. I'm proud of you." She was about 50 years old and said she had voted in every election since she was old enough to vote.

*Nearby, someone else was handing out campaign literature. He was a retired garment worker who had fled Nazi Germany. He looked frail and spoke little English, but he stood in the cold rain on Election Day, watching and helping democracy unfold (Barkan, 1974).*Barkan, S. (1974, November 13). It takes all kinds, even on election day! *Statesman* [Student newspaper of the State University of New York at Stony Brook], p. 8.

The scene just described plays out across the United States and other democracies every election day, but voting remains only a dream in much of the world. And although the United States is one of the world's leading democracies, its economy leaves many people behind, as we have seen before in this book and will continue to see in this and later chapters. When the 20th century ended little more than a decade ago, Americans everywhere paused to reflect on its most significant events, including two World Wars, the Great Depression, the rise and fall of the Soviet Union, and the unleashing of the nuclear age. We thought about these and other events not only because they were historically important but also because they told us something about our society and the changes the last century brought. In all of these events, our political and economic institutions played a fundamental role.

In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that the polity and the economy, as two of modern society's most important institutions, intertwine day after day. When the economic recession began in the United States in 2008, it was the government that tried to deal with it by providing billions in federal stimulus money and "bailing out" huge banks and other financial institutions that had failed, among other measures. When unemployment soared in the aftermath of the recession, the government again was the institution to which Americans looked for relief. At the same time, as the recession and high unemployment continued well into 2010, political commentators predicted that the sour economy would hurt the chances of Democrats across the country to be elected or reelected. As these events suggest, the political and economic institutions cannot be fully understood without appreciating how they affect each other and work hand in hand, for better or worse, to help run the nation.

This chapter discusses what sociologists and other social scientists say about these two vital institutions. We will examine the major explanations about how they work and consider their operation within the United States and in other societies as well.

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15.2: Politics and Government

Learning Objectives

- Define *power* and the three types of authority.
- Distinguish the types of political systems.
- Discuss and assess pluralist and elite theories.

Politics refers to the distribution and exercise of power within a society, and polity refers to the political institution through which power is distributed and exercised. In any society decisions must be made regarding the allocation of resources and other matters. Except perhaps in the simplest societies, specific people and often specific organizations make these decisions. Depending on the society, they sometimes make these decisions solely to benefit themselves and other times make these decisions to benefit the society as a whole. Regardless of who benefits, a central point is this: some individuals and groups have more power than others. Because power is so essential to an understanding of politics, we begin our discussion of politics with a discussion of power.

Power and Authority

Power refers to the ability to have one's will carried out despite the resistance of others. Most of us have seen a striking example of raw power when we are driving a car and see a police car in our rearview mirror. At that particular moment, the driver of that car has enormous power over us. We make sure we strictly obey the speed limit and all other driving rules. If, alas, the police car's lights are flashing, we stop the car, as otherwise we may be in for even bigger trouble. When the officer approaches our car, we ordinarily try to be as polite as possible and pray we do not get a ticket. When you were 16 and your parents told you to be home by midnight or else, your arrival home by this curfew again illustrated the use of power, in this case parental power. If a child in middle school gives her lunch to a bully who threatens her, that again is an example of the use of power, or, in this case, the misuse of power.



Figure 10.1. Power is the ability to exert one's will over others. Police obviously have much power to exert their will over drivers suspected of traffic violations and over any individual suspected of a more serious crime. © Thinkstock

These are all vivid examples of power, but the power that social scientists study is both grander and, often, more invisible (Wrong, 1996).Wrong, D. H. (1996). *Power: Its forms, bases, and uses*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction. Much of it occurs behind the scenes, and scholars continue to debate who is wielding it and for whose benefit they wield it. Many years ago Max Weber (1921/1978),Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology* (G. Roth and C. Wittich, Eds.). Berkeley: University of California Press. (Original work published 1921) one of the founders of sociology discussed in earlier chapters, distinguished legitimate authority as a special type of power. Legitimate authority (sometimes just called *authority*), Weber said, is power whose use is considered just and appropriate by those over whom the power is exercised. In short, if a society approves of

the exercise of power in a particular way, then that power is also legitimate authority. The example of the police car in our rearview mirrors is an example of legitimate authority.

Weber's keen insight lay in distinguishing different types of legitimate authority that characterize different types of societies, especially as they evolve from simple to more complex societies. He called these three types traditional authority, rational-legal authority, and charismatic authority. We turn to these now.

Traditional Authority

As the name implies, traditional authority is power that is rooted in traditional, or long-standing, beliefs and practices of a society. It exists and is assigned to particular individuals because of that society's customs and traditions. Individuals enjoy traditional authority for at least one of two reasons. The first is inheritance, as certain individuals are granted traditional authority because they are the children or other relatives of people who already exercise traditional authority. The second reason individuals enjoy traditional authority is more religious: their societies believe they are anointed by God or the gods, depending on the society's religious beliefs, to lead their society. Traditional authority is common in many preindustrial societies, where tradition and custom are so important, but also in more modern monarchies (discussed shortly), where a king, queen, or prince enjoys power because she or he comes from a royal family.

Traditional authority is granted to individuals regardless of their qualifications. They do not have to possess any special skills to receive and wield their authority, as their claim to it is based solely on their bloodline or supposed divine designation. An individual granted traditional authority can be intelligent or stupid, fair or arbitrary, and exciting or boring but receives the authority just the same because of custom and tradition. As not all individuals granted traditional authority are particularly well qualified to use it, societies governed by traditional authority sometimes find that individuals bestowed it are not always up to the job.

Rational-Legal Authority

If traditional authority derives from custom and tradition, rational-legal authority derives from law and is based on a belief in the legitimacy of a society's laws and rules and in the right of leaders to act under these rules to make decisions and set policy. This form of authority is a hallmark of modern democracies, where power is given to people elected by voters, and the rules for wielding that power are usually set forth in a constitution, a charter, or another written document. Whereas traditional authority resides in an individual because of inheritance or divine designation, rational-legal authority resides in the office that an individual fills, not in the individual per se. The authority of the president of the United States thus resides in the office of the presidency, not in the individual who happens to be president. When that individual leaves office, authority transfers to the next president. This transfer is usually smooth and stable, and one of the marvels of democracy is that officeholders are replaced in elections without revolutions having to be necessary. We might not have voted for the person who wins the presidency, but we accept that person's authority as our president when he (so far it has always been a "he") assumes office.

Rational-legal authority helps ensure an orderly transfer of power in a time of crisis. When John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, Vice President Lyndon Johnson was immediately sworn in as the next president. When Richard Nixon resigned his office in disgrace in 1974 because of his involvement in the Watergate scandal, Vice President Gerald Ford (who himself had become vice president after Spiro Agnew resigned because of financial corruption) became president. Because the U.S. Constitution provided for the transfer of power when the presidency was vacant, and because U.S. leaders and members of the public accept the authority of the Constitution on these and so many other matters, the transfer of power in 1963 and 1974 was smooth and orderly.

Charismatic Authority

Charismatic authority stems from an individual's extraordinary personal qualities and from that individual's hold over followers because of these qualities. Such charismatic individuals may exercise authority over a whole society or only a specific group within a larger society. They can exercise authority for good and for bad, as this brief list of charismatic leaders indicates: Joan of Arc, Adolf Hitler, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Jesus Christ, Muhammad, and Buddha. Each of these individuals had extraordinary personal qualities that led their followers to admire them and to follow their orders or requests for action.

Figure 10.2



Much of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s appeal as a civil rights leader stemmed from his extraordinary speaking skills and other personal qualities that accounted for his charismatic authority.

Source: Photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress, http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3c22996.

Weber emphasized that charismatic authority is less stable than traditional authority or rational-legal authority. The reason for this is simple: once charismatic leaders die, their authority dies as well. Although a charismatic leader's example may continue to inspire people long after the leader dies, it is difficult for another leader to come along and command people's devotion as intensely. After the deaths of all the charismatic leaders named in the preceding paragraph, no one came close to replacing them in the hearts and minds of their followers.

Charismatic authority can reside in a person who came to a position of leadership because of traditional or rational-legal authority. Over the centuries, several kings and queens of England and other European nations were charismatic individuals as well (while some were far from charismatic). A few U.S. presidents—Washington, Lincoln, both Roosevelts, Kennedy, Reagan, and, for all his faults, even Clinton—also were charismatic, and much of their popularity stemmed from various personal qualities that attracted the public and sometimes even the press. Ronald Reagan, for example, was often called the Teflon president, because he was so loved by much of the public that accusations of ineptitude or malfeasance did not stick to him (Lanoue, 1988).Lanoue, D. J. (1988). *From Camelot to the Teflon president: Economics and presidential popularity since 1960*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press.

Types of Political Systems

Various states and governments obviously exist around the world. In this context, *state* means the political unit within which power and authority reside. This unit can be a whole nation or a subdivision within a nation. Thus the nations of the world are sometimes referred to as states (or nation-states), as are subdivisions within a nation, such as, in the United States, California, New York, and Texas. *Government* means the group of persons who direct the political affairs of a state, but it can also mean the type of rule by which a state is run. Another term for this second meaning of government is *political system*, which we will use here along with *government*. The type of government under which people live has fundamental implications for their freedom, their welfare, and even their lives. Accordingly we briefly review the major political systems in the world today.

Democracy

The type of government with which we are most familiar is *democracy*, or a political system in which citizens govern themselves either directly or indirectly. The term *democracy* comes from Greek and means "rule of the people." In Lincoln's stirring words from the Gettysburg Address, democracy is "government of the people, by the people, for the people." In *direct* (or *pure*) *democracies*, people make their own decisions about the policies and distribution of resources that affect them directly. An example of such a democracy in action is the New England town meeting, where the residents of a town meet once a year and vote on budgetary and other matters. However, such direct democracies are impractical when the number of people gets beyond a few hundred. *Representative democracies* are thus much more common. In these types of democracies, people elect officials to represent them in legislative votes on matters affecting the population.

As this definition implies, perhaps the most important feature of representative democracies is voting in elections. When the United States was established more than 230 years ago, most of the world's governments were monarchies or other authoritarian regimes

(discussed shortly). Like the colonists, people in these nations chafed under arbitrary power. The example of the American Revolution and the stirring words of its Declaration of Independence helped inspire the French Revolution of 1789 and other revolutions since, as people around the world have died in order to win the right to vote and to have political freedom.

Of course, democracies are not perfect. Their decision-making process can be quite slow and inefficient; decisions may be made for special interests and not “for the people”; and, as we have seen in earlier chapters, pervasive inequalities of social class, race and ethnicity, gender, and age can exist. Moreover, in not all democracies have all people enjoyed the right to vote. In the United States, for example, African Americans could not vote until after the Civil War, with the passage of the 15th Amendment in 1870, and women did not win the right to vote until 1920, with the passage of the 19th Amendment.

In addition to generally enjoying the right to vote, people in democracies also have more freedom than those in other types of governments. Figure 10.3 depicts the nations of the world according to the extent of their political rights and civil liberties.

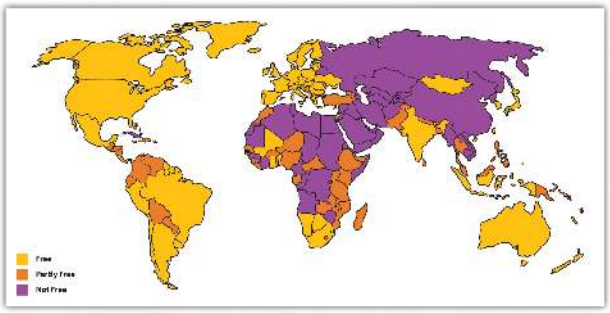


Figure 10.3 Freedom Around the World (Based on Extent of Political Rights and Civil Liberties). Source: Adapted from Freedom House. (2010). Map of freedom in the world, 2010. Retrieved from www.freedomhouse.org/template...=363&year=2010.

The freest nations are found in North America, Western Europe, and certain other parts of the world, while the least free lie in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

Monarchy

Figure 10.4



Queen Elizabeth II of England holds a largely ceremonial position, but earlier English monarchs held much more power.

Source: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...isabeth_II.JPG.

Monarchy is a political system in which power resides in a single family that rules from one generation to the next generation. The power the family enjoys is *traditional authority*, and many monarchs command respect because their subjects bestow this type of authority upon them. Other monarchs, however, have ensured respect through arbitrary power and even terror. Royal families still rule today, but their power has declined from centuries ago. Today the Queen of England holds a largely ceremonial position, but her predecessors on the throne wielded much more power.

This example reflects a historical change in types of monarchies (Finer, 1997)Finer, S. E. (1997). *The history of government from the earliest times*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. from absolute monarchies to constitutional monarchies. In *absolute monarchies*, the royal family claims a divine right to rule and exercises considerable power over their kingdom. Absolute monarchies were common in both ancient (e.g., Egypt) and medieval (e.g., England and China) times but slowly gave way to

constitutional monarchies. In these monarchies, the royal family serves a symbolic and ceremonial role and enjoys little, if any, real power. Instead the executive and legislative branches of government—the prime minister and parliament in several nations—run the government, even if the royal family continues to command admiration and respect. Constitutional monarchies exist today in several nations, including Denmark, Great Britain, Norway, Spain, and Sweden.

Authoritarianism and Totalitarianism

Authoritarianism and totalitarianism are general terms for nondemocratic political systems ruled by an individual or a group of individuals who are not freely elected by their populations and who often exercise arbitrary power. To be more specific, *authoritarianism* refers to political systems in which an individual or a group of individuals holds power, restricts or prohibits popular participation in governance, and represses dissent. *Totalitarianism* refers to political systems that include all the features of authoritarianism but are even more repressive as they try to regulate and control all aspects of citizens' lives and fortunes. People can be imprisoned for deviating from acceptable practices or may even be killed if they dissent in the mildest of ways. The purple nations in Figure 10.3 are mostly totalitarian regimes, and the orange ones are authoritarian regimes.

Compared to democracies and monarchies, authoritarian and totalitarian governments are more unstable politically. The major reason for this is that these governments enjoy no legitimate authority. Instead their power rests on fear and repression. Because their populations do not willingly lend their obedience to their political systems, and because their political systems treat them so poorly, they are more likely than populations in democratic states to want to rebel. Sometimes they do rebel, and if the rebellion becomes sufficiently massive and widespread, a revolution occurs. In contrast, populations in democratic states usually perceive that they are treated more or less fairly and, further, that they can change things they do not like through the electoral process. Seeing no need for revolution, they do not revolt.

Since World War II, which helped make the United States an international power, the United States has opposed some authoritarian and totalitarian regimes while supporting others. The Cold War pitted the United States and its allies against Communist nations, primarily the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, and North Korea. But at the same time the United States opposed these authoritarian governments, it supported many others, including those in Chile, Guatemala, and South Vietnam, that repressed and even murdered their own citizens who dared to engage in the kind of dissent constitutionally protected in the United States (Sullivan, 2008).Sullivan, M. (2008). *American adventurism abroad: Invasions, interventions, and regime changes since World War II* (Rev. and expanded ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell. Earlier in U.S. history, the federal and state governments repressed dissent by passing legislation that prohibited criticism of World War I and then by imprisoning citizens who criticized that war (Goldstein, 2001).Goldstein, R. J. (2001). *Political repression in modern America from 1870 to 1976* (Rev. ed.). Urbana: University of Illinois Press. During the 1960s and 1970s, the FBI, the CIA, and other federal agencies spied on tens of thousands of citizens who engaged in dissent protected by the First Amendment (Cunningham, 2004).Cunningham, D. (2004). *There's something happening here: The New Left, the Klan, and FBI counterintelligence*. Berkeley: University of California Press. While the United States remains a beacon of freedom and hope to much of the world's peoples, its own support for repression in the recent and more distant past suggests that eternal vigilance is needed to ensure that "liberty and justice for all" is not just an empty slogan.

Theories of Power and Society

These remarks raise some important questions: Just how democratic is the United States? Whose interests do our elected representatives serve? Is political power concentrated in the hands of a few or widely dispersed among all segments of the population? These and other related questions lie at the heart of theories of power and society. Let's take a brief look at some of these theories.

Pluralist Theory: A Functionalist Perspective

Recall (from Chapter 1) that the smooth running of society is a central concern of functionalist theory. When applied to the issue of political power, functionalist theory takes the form of pluralist theory, which says that political power in the United States and other democracies is dispersed among several "veto groups" that compete in the political process for resources and influence. Sometimes one particular veto group may win and other times another group may win, but in the long run they win and lose equally and no one group has any more influence than another (Dahl, 1956).Dahl, R. A. (1956). *A preface to democratic theory*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

As this process unfolds, says pluralist theory, the government might be an active participant, but it is an impartial participant. Just as parents act as impartial arbiters when their children argue with each other, so does the government act as a neutral referee to ensure that the competition among veto groups is done fairly, that no group acquires undue influence, and that the needs and interests of the citizenry are kept in mind.

The process of veto-group competition and its supervision by the government is functional for society, according to pluralist theory, for three reasons. First, it ensures that conflict among the groups is channeled within the political process instead of turning into outright hostility. Second, the competition among the veto groups means that all of these groups achieve their goals to at least some degree. Third, the government's supervision helps ensure that the outcome of the group competition benefits society as a whole.

Elite Theories: Conflict Perspectives

Several elite theories dispute the pluralist model. According to these theories, power in democratic societies is concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy individuals and organizations—or *economic elites*—that exert inordinate influence on the government and can shape its decisions to benefit their own interests. Far from being a neutral referee over competition among veto groups, the government is said to be controlled by economic elites or at least to cater to their needs and interests. As should be clear, elite theories fall squarely within the conflict perspective as outlined in Chapter 1.

Perhaps the most famous elite theory is the *power-elite theory* of C. Wright Mills (1956).Mills, C. W. (1956). *The power elite*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. According to Mills, the power elite is composed of government, big business, and the military, which together constitute a *ruling class* that controls society and works for its own interests, not for the interests of the citizenry. Members of the power elite, Mills said, see each other socially and serve together on the boards of directors of corporations, charitable organizations, and other bodies. When Cabinet members, senators, and top generals and other military officials retire, they often become corporate executives. Conversely, corporate executives often become Cabinet members and other key political appointees. This circulating of the elites helps ensure their dominance over American life.

Mills's power-elite model remains popular, but other elite theories exist. They differ from Mills's model in several ways, including their view of the composition of the ruling class. Several theories see the ruling class as composed mostly of the large corporations and wealthiest individuals and see government and the military serving the needs of the ruling class rather than being part of it, as Mills implied. G. William Domhoff (2010)Domhoff, G. W. (2010). *Who rules America: Challenges to corporate and class dominance* (6th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill. says that the ruling class is composed of the richest one-half to one percent of the population that controls more than half the nation's wealth, sits on the boards of directors just mentioned, and are members of the same social clubs and other voluntary organizations. Their control of corporations and other economic and political bodies helps to maintain their inordinate influence over American life and politics.

Other elite theories say the government is more autonomous—not as controlled by the ruling class—than Mills thought. Sometimes the government takes the side of the ruling class and corporate interests, but sometimes it opposes them. Such *relative autonomy*, these theories say, helps ensure the legitimacy of the state, because if it always took the side of the rich it would look too biased and lose the support of the populace. In the long run, then, the relative autonomy of the state helps maintain ruling class control by making the masses feel the state is impartial when in fact it is not (Thompson, 1975).Thompson, E. P. (1975). *Whigs and hunters: The origin of the Black Act*. London, England: Allen Lane.

Assessing Pluralist and Elite Theories

As a way of understanding power in the United States and other democracies, pluralist and elite theories have much to offer, but neither type of theory presents a complete picture. Pluralist theory errs in seeing all special-interest groups as equally powerful and influential. Certainly the success of lobbying groups such as the National Rifle Association and the American Medical Association in the political and economic systems is testimony to the fact that not all special-interest groups are created equal. Pluralist theory also errs in seeing the government as a neutral referee. Sometimes the government does take sides on behalf of corporations by acting, or failing to act, in a certain way.

For example, U.S. antipollution laws and regulations are notoriously weak because of the influence of major corporations on the political process. Through their campaign contributions, lobbying, and other types of influence, corporations help ensure that pollution controls are kept as weak as possible (Simon, 2008).Simon, D. R. (2008). *Elite deviance* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. This problem received worldwide attention in the spring of 2010 after the explosion of an oil rig owned by BP, a major oil

and energy company, spilled tens of thousands of barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico in the biggest environmental disaster in U.S. history. As the oil was leaking, news reports emphasized that individuals or political action committees (PACs) associated with BP had contributed $500,000 to U.S. candidates in the 2008 elections, that BP had spent $16 million on lobbying in 2009, and that the oil and gas industry had spent tens of millions of dollars on lobbying that year (Montopoli, 2010).Montopoli, B. (2010, May 5). BP spent millions on lobbying, campaign donations. *CBS News*. Retrieved from http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20004240 -503544.html

Although these examples support the views of elite theories, the theories also paint too simple a picture. They err in implying that the ruling class acts as a unified force in protecting its interests. Corporations sometimes do oppose each other for profits and sometimes even steal secrets from each other, and governments do not always support the ruling class. For example, the U.S. government has tried to reduce tobacco smoking despite the wealth and influence of tobacco companies. While the United States, then, does not entirely fit the pluralist vision of power and society, neither does it entirely fit the elite vision. Yet the evidence that does exist of elite influence on the American political and economic systems reminds us that government is not always "of the people, by the people, for the people," however much we may wish it otherwise.

Conclusion

- According to Max Weber, the three types of legitimate authority are traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic.
- The major types of political systems include democracy, monarchy, and authoritarianism and totalitarianism.
- Pluralist theory assumes that political power in democracies is dispersed among several veto groups that compete equally for resources and influence, while elite theories assume that power is instead concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy individuals and organizations who exert inordinate influence on the government and can shape its decisions to benefit their own interests.

For Your Review

1. Think of someone, either a person you have known or a national or historic figure, whom you regard as a charismatic leader. What is it about this person that makes her or him charismatic?
2. Do pluralist or elite theories better explain the exercise of power in the United States? Explain your answer.

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15.3: Politics in the United States

Learning Objectives

- Understand what political ideology is and how it is measured.
- List the correlates of political participation.
- Discuss the controversy over political lobbying

The discussion of theories of power and society began to examine the U.S. political system. Let's continue this examination by looking at additional features of U.S. politics. We start with political ideology and political parties.

Political Ideology and Political Parties

Two central components of modern political systems are (a) the views that people hold of social, economic, and political issues and (b) the political organizations that try to elect candidates to represent those views. We call these components *political ideology* and *political parties*, respectively.

Political Ideology

Political ideology is a complex concept that is often summarized by asking people whether they are liberal or conservative. For example, the GSS asks, "I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale?" For convenience' sake, responses to this question in the 2008 GSS are grouped into three categories—liberal, moderate, and conservative—and displayed in Figure 10.5. We see that moderates slightly outnumber conservatives, who in turn outnumber liberals.

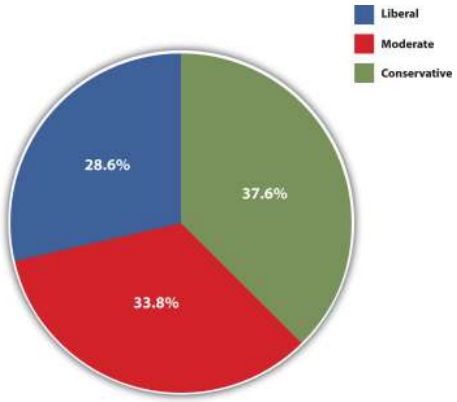


Figure 10.5 Political Ideology. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

This is a common measure of political ideology, but social scientists often advise using a series of questions to measure political ideology, which consists of views on at least two sorts of issues, social and economic. *Social issues* concern the morality of behavior and are similar to those we examined in the previous chapter's section on aging and conservatism. *Economic issues*, on the other hand, concern such things as taxes and the distribution of income and wealth. People can hold either liberal or conservative attitudes on both types of issues, but they can also hold mixed attitudes: liberal on social issues and conservative on economic ones, or conservative on social issues and liberal on economic ones. Educated, wealthy people, for example, may want lower taxes (generally considered a conservative view) but also may favor abortion rights and oppose the death penalty (both considered liberal positions). In contrast, less educated, working-class people may favor higher taxes for the rich (a liberal view, perhaps) but oppose abortion rights and favor the death penalty.

We also see mixed political ideologies when we look at African Americans' and whites' views on social and economic issues. African Americans tend to be more conservative than whites on social issues but more liberal on economic concerns. This tendency is depicted in Figure 10.6, which shows responses to GSS questions on whether premarital sex is wrong, a social issue, and on whether the government should reduce income differences between the rich and poor, an economic issue. African Americans are

more likely than whites to take a conservative view on the social issue by thinking that premarital sex is wrong but are more likely to take a liberal view on the economic issue by thinking that the government should reduce income inequality.

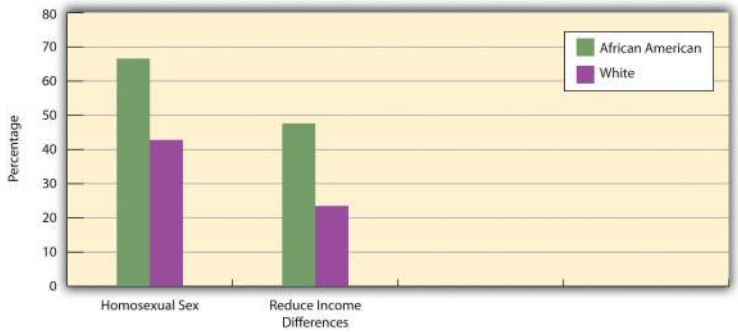


Figure 10.6 Race and Attitudes on Social and Economic Issues. Percentage saying that homosexual sex is always wrong and percentage saying that government should reduce income differences.

Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

Political Parties

People's political ideologies often lead them to align with a political party, or an organization that supports particular political positions and tries to elect candidates to office to represent those positions. The two major political parties in the United States are, of course, the Democratic and Republican parties. However, in a national poll in May 2011, 32% of Americans called themselves Independents, compared to 36% who called themselves Democrats and only 24% who called themselves Republicans. The number of Americans who consider themselves Independents, then, almost equals the number who consider themselves Democrats and exceeds the number who consider themselves Republicans (Dao & Sussman, 2011).Dao, J., & Sussman, D. (2011, May 5). For Obama, big rises in poll numbers after Bin Laden. *The New York Times*, p. A1.



Figure 10.7. The number of Americans who call themselves political independents almost equals the number who consider themselves either a Democrat or a Republican. © Thinkstock

An important question for U.S. democracy is how much the Democratic and Republican parties differ on the major issues of the day. The Democratic Party is generally regarded as more liberal, while the Republican Party is regarded as more conservative, and voting records of their members in Congress generally reflect this difference. However, some critics of the U.S. political system think that in the long run there is not a "dime's worth of difference," to quote an old saying, between the two parties, as they both ultimately work to preserve corporate interests and capitalism itself (Alexander, 2008).Alexander, S. A. (2008, January 10). Socialists emerging as Democrats, Republicans lose voter confidence. *American Chronicle*. Retrieved from www.americanchronicle.com/articles/ view/48507In their view, the Democratic Party is part of the problem, as it tries only to reform the system instead of bringing about the far-reaching changes said to be needed to achieve true equality for all. These criticisms notwithstanding, it is true that neither of the major U.S. parties is as left-leaning as some of the major ones in Western Europe. The two-party system in the United States may encourage middle-of-the road positions, as each party is afraid that straying too far from the middle will cost it votes. In contrast, because several Western European nations have a greater number of political parties, a party may feel freer to advocate more polarized political views (Muddle, 2007).Muddle, C. (2007). *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Some scholars see this encouragement of middle-of-the-road positions (and thus political stability) as a benefit of the U.S. two-party system, while other scholars view it as a disadvantage because it limits the airing of views that might help a nation by challenging the status quo (Richard, 2010).Richard, J. (2010, May 29). One cheer for the two-party system. *OpEdNews*. Retrieved from http://www.opednews.com/articles/One...r-the-Two-Part -by-Jerome-Richard-100527-148.html One thing is clear: in the U.S. two-party model, it is very difficult for a third party to make significant inroads, because the United States lacks a *proportional representation system*, found in many other democracies, in which parties win seats proportional to their share of the vote (Disch, 2002).Disch, L. J. (2002). *The tyranny of the two-party system*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Instead, the United States has a winner-takes-all system in which seats go to the candidates with the most votes. Even though the Green Party has several million supporters across the country, for example, its influence on national policy has been minimal, although it has had more influence in a few local elections.

Whether or not the Democratic and Republican parties are that different, U.S. citizens certainly base their party preference in part on their own political ideology. Evidence of this is seen in Figure 10.8, which shows the political ideology of GSS respondents who call themselves Democrats or Republicans. People's political ideology is clearly linked to their party preference.

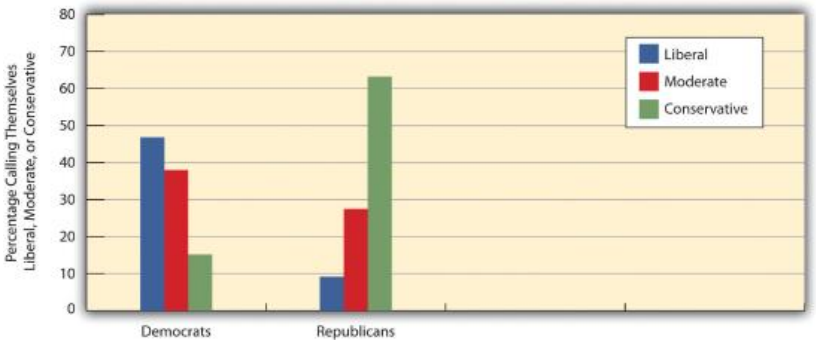


Figure 10.8 Political Ideology and Political Party Preference. Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

Political Participation

Perhaps the most important feature of representative democracies is that people vote for officials to represent their views, interests, and needs. For a democracy to flourish, political theorists say, it is essential that "regular" people participate in the political process. The most common type of political participation, of course, is voting; other political activities include campaigning for a candidate, giving money to a candidate or political party, and writing letters to political officials. Despite the importance of these activities in a democratic society, not very many people take part in them. Voting is also relatively uncommon among Americans, as the United States ranks lower than most of the world's democracies in voter turnout (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2009)International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. (2009). Voter turnout. Retrieved from www.idea.int/vt/index.cfm.

Not only is U.S. voter turnout relatively low in the international sphere, but it has also declined since the 1960s (see Figure 10.9). One factor that explains these related trends is *voter apathy*, prompted by a lack of faith that voting makes any difference and that government can be helpful. This lack of faith is often called political alienation. As Figure 10.10 dramatically shows, lack of faith in the government has dropped drastically since the 1960s, thanks in part, no doubt, to the Vietnam War during the 1960s and 1970s and the Watergate scandal of 1970s.



Figure 10.9 Trends in Voter Turnout in Nonpresidential Election Years. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2009). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2009. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.



Figure 10.10 Trust in U.S. Government. Source: American National Election Study.

Yet it is also true that voter turnout varies greatly among Americans. In general, several sets of factors make citizens more likely to vote and otherwise participate in the political process (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001).Burns, N., Schlozman, K. L., & Verba, S. (2001). *The private roots of public action: Gender, equality, and political participation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. These factors, or correlates of political participation, include (a) high levels of *resources*, including time, money, and communication skills; (b) *psychological engagement* in politics, including a strong interest in politics and a sense of trust in the political process; and (c) involvement in *interpersonal networks* of voluntary and other organizations that recruit individuals into political activity. Thus people who are, for example, wealthier, more interested in politics, and more involved in interpersonal networks are more likely to vote and take part in other political activities than those who are poorer, less interested in politics, and less involved in interpersonal networks. Reflecting these factors, age and high socioeconomic status are especially important predictors of voting and other forms of political participation, as citizens who are older, wealthier, and more educated tend to have more resources, to be more interested in politics and more trustful of the political process, and to be more involved in interpersonal networks. As a result, they are much more likely to vote than people who are younger and less educated (see Figure 10.11).

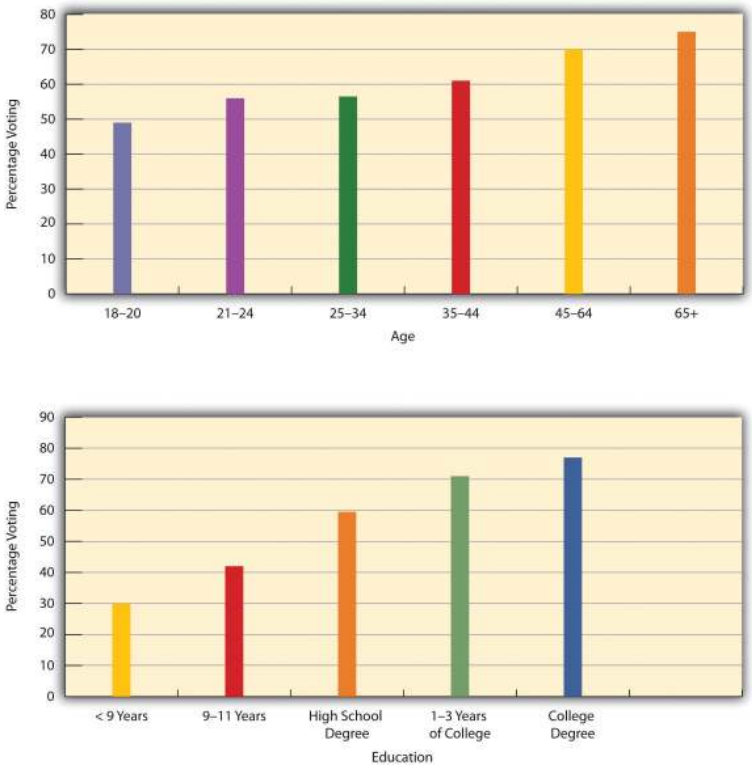


Figure 10.11 Age, Education, and Percentage Voting, 2008. Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2009). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2009. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

The lower voting rates for young people might surprise many readers: because many college students are politically active, it seems obvious that they should vote at high levels. That might be true for some college students, but the bulk of college students are normally not politically active, because they are too busy with their studies, extracurricular activities, and/or work, and because they lack sufficient interest in politics to be active. It is also true that there are many more people aged 18 to 24 (about 30 million), the traditional ages for college attendance, than there are actual college students (11 million). In view of these facts, the lower voting rates for young people are not that surprising after all.

Race and ethnicity also influence voting. In particular, Asians and Latinos vote less often than African Americans and whites among the citizen population. In 2008, roughly 65% of African Americans and 66% of non-Latino whites voted, compared to only 48% of Asians and 50% of Latinos (File & Cressey, 2010).File, T., & Cressey, S. (2010). *Voting and registration in the election of November 2008*(Current Population Report P20–562). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. The voting percentage for African Americans and Latinos was the highest for these groups since the Census Bureau began measuring citizens' voting in 1996, possibly because of the presence of Barack Obama, who considers himself an African American, on the Democratic ticket.

The impact of age, race and ethnicity, education, and other variables on voting rates provides yet another example of the sociological perspective. As should be evident, they show that these aspects of our social backgrounds affect a very important political behavior, voting, even if we are not conscious of this effect.

Special-Interest Groups and Lobbying: The Influence Industry

From 2003 through 2008, political action committees (PACs), organizations formed by special-interest groups to raise and spend money on behalf of political campaigns and various political issues, contributed more than $1 billion to the election campaigns of candidates for Congress (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).U.S. Census Bureau. (2009). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2009*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab In 2008 and 2009, special-interest groups spent more than $6.3 billion to lobby Congress, the White House, and various federal agencies. They employed some 14,000 lobbyists, who outnumbered members of Congress 27 to 1, on such issues as health care, military spending, and transportation (Center for Responsive Politics, 2009).Center for Responsive Politics. (2009). Lobbying database. Retrieved from www.opensecrets.org/lobbyists The top lobbying group in 2009 was the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which spent more than $65

million to lobby Congress, federal agencies, and other parties; in second place was Exxon Mobil, which spent more than $21 million. The pharmaceutical and health products industry as a whole spent more than $200 million in 2009, while the insurance industry spent $122 million, oil and gas companies $121 million, electric and gas utilities $108 million, and business associations $93 million.

Figure 10.12



The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other lobbying groups spent more than $6.3 billion in 2008 and 2009 on their efforts to influence federal legislation and regulations.

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Dubbed the "influence industry," these lobbying efforts have long been criticized as having too much impact on federal policy and spending priorities. It is logical to think that the influence industry spends these large sums of money because it hopes to affect key legislation and other policies. This expenditure raises an important question: are PACs, special-interest groups, and lobbying good or bad for democracy? This question goes to the heart of the debate between pluralist and elite theories, discussed earlier. Representatives of PACs and lobbying groups say it is important that elected officials hear all possible views on complex issues and that these organizations merely give money to help candidates who already think a certain way. Supporting this notion, public officials say they listen to all sides before making up their minds and are not unduly influenced by the money they receive and by the lobbying they encounter. For their part, pluralist theorists say PACs and lobbying groups are examples of the competing veto groups favored by the pluralist model and that no one special-interest group wins out in the long run (James, 2004).James, M. R. (2004). *Deliberative democracy and the plural polity*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Critics of the influence industry say that its impact is both large and unwarranted and charge that PACs, lobbyists, and the special-interest groups that fund them are buying influence and subverting democracy. Ample evidence exists, they say, of the impact of the influence industry on which candidates get elected and on which legislation gets passed or not passed. While special-interest groups for various sides of an issue do compete with each other, they continue, corporations and their PACs are much better funded and much more influential than the groups that oppose them (Clawson, Neustadtl, & Weller, 1998; Cook & Chaddock, 2009).Clawson, D., Neustadtl, A., & Weller, M. (1998). *Dollars and votes: How business campaign contributions subvert democracy*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press; Cook, D. T., & Chaddock, G. R. (2009, September 28). How Washington lobbyists peddle power. *The Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved from www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politic...dle-powerThese concerns motivated sharp criticism of a U.S. Supreme Court decision in January 2010 regarding election advertisements by corporations and unions. The decision permitted corporations and unions to use money from their general funds to pay for ads urging the public to vote for or against a particular candidate. Because corporations have much more money than unions, the ruling was widely seen as being a procorporation one. The majority decision said that prohibitions of such advertising violated freedom of political speech by corporations and unions, while the minority decision said the ruling "threatens to undermine the integrity of elected institutions across the nation" (Vogel, 2010).Vogel, K. P. (2010, January 21). Court decision opens floodgates for corporate cash. *Politico*. Retrieved from http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0110/31786.html

Conclusion

- Political ideology consists of views on social issues and on economic issues. An individual might be liberal or conservative on both kinds of issues, or liberal on one kind of issue and conservative on the other kind.

- Almost as many Americans consider themselves Independents as consider themselves either Democrats or Republicans. Although some scholars say that there is not very much difference between the Democratic and Republican parties, liberals are more likely to consider themselves Democrats, and conservatives are more likely to consider themselves Republicans.
- Voting is the most common form of political participation. Several factors influence the likelihood of voting, and socioeconomic status (education and income) is a very important factor in this regard.
- Political lobbying remains a very controversial issue, and critics continue to charge that the “influence industry” has too much sway over American social and economic policy.

For Your Review

1. Do you consider yourself to be politically conservative, moderate, or liberal? What are examples of some of your beliefs that lead you to define yourself in this manner?
2. Do you think political lobbying is good or bad overall for the United States? Explain your answer.

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15.4: The Economy

Learning Objectives

- Outline the economic development of societies.
- Distinguish the types of economic systems.
- Discuss the importance of corporations and the controversy they cause.

One of the most momentous events of the 20th century was the Great Depression, which engulfed the United States in 1929 and spread to the rest of the world, lasting almost a decade. Millions were thrown out of work and bread lines became common. In the United States, a socialist movement gained momentum for a time as many workers blamed U.S. industry and capitalism for their unemployment.

The Depression involved the failing of the economy. The economy also failed in the United States in 2008 and 2009, as unemployment soared to just under 10% in the spring of 2010, with more than 14 million Americans out of work. When we hear the term *economy*, it is usually in the context of how the economy "is doing": Is inflation soaring or under control? Is the economy growing or shrinking? Is unemployment rising, declining, or remaining stable? Are new college graduates finding jobs easily or not? All of these questions concern the economy, but sociologists define economy more broadly as the social institution that organizes the production, distribution, and consumption of a society's goods and services. Defined in this way, the economy touches us all.

The economy is composed of three sectors. The primary sector is the part of the economy that takes and uses raw materials directly from the natural environment. Its activities include agriculture, fishing, forestry, and mining. The secondary sector of the economy transforms raw materials into finished products and is essentially the manufacturing industry. Finally, the tertiary sector is the part of the economy that provides services rather than products; its activities include clerical work, health care, teaching, and information technology services.

Economic Development in Historical Perspective

Societies differ in many ways, but they all have to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services. How this happens depends heavily on the level of a society's development. Generally speaking, the less developed a society's economy, the more important its primary sector; the more developed a society's economy, the more important its tertiary sector. As societies developed economically over the centuries, the primary sector became less important and the tertiary sector became more important. Let's see how this happened.

Preindustrial Societies

When we reviewed the development of societies in Chapter 2, we saw that the earliest were *hunting and gathering* societies in which people eked out a meager existence by hunting animals and gathering plants to feed themselves. Most of their waking hours were devoted to these two tasks, and no separate economic institution for the production and distribution of goods and services existed. The *horticultural and pastoral* societies that next developed also lacked a separate economy. Although people in these societies raised animals and/or grew crops and were better off than their hunting and gathering counterparts, these tasks, too, were done within the family unit and monopolized most of their time. No separate institution for the production and distribution of these sources of food was involved.

This separate institution—the economy—finally did appear with the advent of *agricultural* societies about 5,000 years ago. These societies were able to produce food surpluses thanks to the invention of the plow and the wheel and other technological advances. These surpluses led to extensive trade within the societies themselves and also with other societies. The rise of trade was the first appearance of a separate economy. People also had to make the plows and wheels and repair them when they broke, and new *crafts* jobs arose to perform these functions. These jobs, too, marked the development of a separate economy. Despite this development, most people's work still took place in or very near their homes. Craftspeople and merchants may have been part of the new economy, but most still worked out of their homes or very near them.

Industrialization and the Division of Labor

Work and home finally began to separate in the 1700s and 1800s as machines and factories became the primary means of production with the emergence of industrial societies. For the first time, massive numbers of people worked in locations separate from their families, and they worked not for themselves and their families but for an employer. Whole industries developed to make the machines and build the factories and to use the machines and factories to manufacture household goods, clothing, and many other products. As should be clear, the secondary sector of the economy quickly became dominant. Perhaps inevitably it led to a growth in the tertiary (service) sector to respond to the demands of an industrial economy. For example, enterprises such as banks emerged to handle the money that industrialization brought to people with names like Carnegie and Rockefeller but also to a growing middle class of factory managers and the businesspeople that bought and sold the products that factories were producing.

One important consequence of industrialization was the *specialization* of work, more commonly called the division of labor. In agricultural societies, the craftspeople who made plows, wheels, and other objects would make the whole object, not just a part of it, and then sell it themselves to a buyer. With the advent of the division of labor under industrialization, this process became more specialized: some factory workers would make only one part of an object, other factory workers would make a second part, and so on; other workers would package and ship the item; and still other workers would sell it. This division of labor meant that workers became separated from the fruits of their labor, to paraphrase Karl Marx, who also worried that the type of work just described was much more repetitive and boring for workers than the craft work that characterized earlier societies. Because of these problems, Marx said, workers in industrial societies were alienated both from their work and by their work.

Postindustrial Societies

As Chapter 2 pointed out, today much of the world has moved from an industrial economy to a postindustrial economy. This is the *information age*, in which smartphones, netbooks, tablets, and other high-tech equipment have begun to replace machines and factories as the major means of production and in which the tertiary sector has supplanted the secondary sector. With the information age has also come an increasing globalization of the economy. The Internet connects workers and industries across the world, and multinational corporations have plants in many countries that make products for consumers in other countries. What happens economically in one part of the world can greatly affect what happens economically in other parts of the world. If the economies of Asia sour, their demand for U.S. products may decline, forcing a souring of the U.S. economy. A financial crisis in Greece and other parts of Europe during the spring of 2010 caused the stock markets in the United States to plunge. The world is indeed getting smaller all the time. We will return later to the implications of the postindustrial economy for U.S. workers.

Types of Economic Systems

The two major economic systems in modern societies are capitalism and socialism. In practice, no one society is purely capitalist or socialist, so it is helpful to think of capitalism and socialism as lying on opposite ends of a continuum. Societies' economies mix elements of both capitalism and socialism but do so in varying degrees, so that some societies lean toward the capitalist end of the continuum, while other societies lean toward the socialist end. For example, the United States is a capitalist nation, but the government still regulates many industries to varying degrees. The industries usually would prefer less regulation, while their critics usually prefer more regulation. The degree of such regulation was the point of controversy after the failure of banks and other financial institutions in 2008 and 2009 and after the BP oil spill in 2010. Let's see how capitalism and socialism differ.

Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system in which the means of production are privately owned. By "means of production," we mean everything—land, tools, technology, and so forth—that is needed to produce goods and services. As outlined by famed Scottish philosopher Adam Smith (1723–1790), widely considered the founder of modern economics, the most important goal of capitalism is the individual pursuit of personal profit (A. Smith, 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) As individuals seek to maximize their own wealth, society as a whole is said to benefit. Goods get produced, services get rendered, people pay for the goods and services they need and desire, and the economy and society as a whole prosper.



Figure 10.13. One important hallmark of capitalism is competition for profit. This competition is thought to help ensure the best products at the lowest prices, as companies will ordinarily try to keep their prices as low as possible in order to attract buyers and maximize their sales. © Thinkstock

As people pursue personal profit under capitalism, they compete with each other for the greatest profits. Businesses try to attract more demand for their products in many ways, including lowering prices, creating better products, and advertising how wonderful their products are. In capitalist theory, such competition helps ensure the best products at the lowest prices, again benefitting society as a whole. Such competition also helps ensure that no single party controls an entire market. According to Smith, the competition that characterizes capitalism should be left to operate on its own, free of government intervention or control. For this reason, capitalism is often referred to as *laissez-faire* (French for "leave alone") capitalism, and terms to describe capitalism include the *free-enterprise system* and the *free market*.

The hallmarks of capitalism, then, are private ownership of the means of production, the pursuit of profit, competition for profit, and the lack of government intervention in this competition.

Socialism

The features of socialism are the opposite of those just listed for capitalism and were spelled out most famously by Karl Marx. Socialism is an economic system in which the means of production are collectively owned, usually by the government. Whereas the United States has several airlines that are owned by airline corporations, a socialist society might have one government-owned airline.

The most important goal of socialism is not the individual pursuit of profit but rather work for the collective good: the needs of society are considered more important than the needs of the individual. Because of this view, individuals do not compete with each other for profit; instead they work together for the good of everyone. If under capitalism the government is supposed to let the economy alone, under socialism the government controls the economy.

The ideal outcome of socialism, said Marx, would be a truly classless or *communist* society. In such a society all members are equal, and stratification does not exist. Obviously Marx's vision of a communist society was never fulfilled, and nations that called themselves communist departed drastically from his vision of communism.

Recall that societies can be ranked on a continuum ranging from mostly capitalist to mostly socialist. At one end of the continuum, we have societies characterized by a relatively free market, and at the other end we have those characterized by strict government regulation of the economy. Capitalist nations are found primarily in North America and Western Europe but also exist in other parts of the world.

Comparing Capitalism and Socialism

People have debated the relative merits of capitalism and socialism at least since the time of Marx (Bowles, 2007; Cohen, 2009).Bowles, P. (2007). *Capitalism*. New York, NY: Pearson/Longman; Cohen, G. A. (2009). *Why not socialism?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Compared to socialism, capitalism seems to have several advantages. It produces greater economic growth and productivity, at least in part because it provides more incentives (i.e., profit) for economic innovation. It also is often characterized by greater political freedom in the form of civil rights and liberties. As an economic system, capitalism seems to lend itself to personal freedom: because its hallmarks include the private ownership of the means of production and the individual pursuit of profit, there is much more emphasis in capitalist societies on the needs and desires of the individual and less emphasis on the need for government intervention in economic and social affairs.

Yet capitalism also has its drawbacks. There is much more economic inequality in capitalism than in socialism. Although capitalism produces economic growth, not all segments of capitalism share this growth equally, and there is a much greater difference between the rich and poor than under socialism. People can become very rich in capitalist nations, but they can also remain quite poor. As we saw in Chapter 6, several Western European nations that are more socialist than the United States have fewer extremes of wealth and poverty and take better care of their poor.

Another possible drawback depends on whether you prefer competition or cooperation. As we saw in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, important values in the United States include competition and individualism, both of which arguably reflect this nation's capitalist system. Children in the United States are raised with more of an individual orientation than children in socialist societies, who learn that the needs of their society are more important than the needs of the individual. Whereas U.S. children learn to compete with each other for good grades, success in sports, and other goals, children in socialist societies learn to cooperate to achieve tasks.

More generally, capitalism is said by its critics to encourage selfish and even greedy behavior: if individuals try to maximize their profit, they do so at the expense of others. In competition, someone has to lose. A company's ultimate aim, and one that is generally lauded, is to maximize its profits by driving another company out of the market altogether. If so, that company succeeds even if some other party is hurting. The small Mom-and-Pop grocery stores, drugstores, and hardware stores are almost a thing of the past, as big-box stores open their doors and drive their competition out of business. To its critics, then, capitalism encourages harmful behavior. Yet it is precisely this type of behavior that is taught in business schools.

Some nations combine elements of both capitalism and socialism and are called *social democracies*, while their combination of capitalism and socialism is called democratic socialism. In these nations, which include Denmark, Sweden, and several other Western European nations, the government owns several important industries, but much property remains in private hands, and political freedom is widespread. The government in these nations has extensive programs to help the poor and other people in need. Although these nations have high tax rates to help finance their social programs, their experience indicates it is very possible to combine the best features of capitalism and socialism while avoiding their faults (see the "Learning From Other Societies" box).

Learning From Other Societies

Social Democracy in Scandinavia

The five Scandinavian nations, also called the Nordic nations, are Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. These nations differ in many ways, but they also share many similarities. In particular, they are all social democracies, as their governments own important industries while their citizens enjoy much political freedom. Each nation has the three branches of government with which most people are familiar—executive, judicial, and legislative—and each nation has a national parliament to which people are elected by proportional representation.

Social democracies like the Scandinavian nations are often called controlled capitalist market economies. The word *controlled* here conveys the idea that their governments either own industries or heavily regulate industries they do not own. According to social scientist Tapio Lappi-Seppälä of Finland, a "defining characteristic" of these social democracies' economy is that "inequalities in income and distribution of wealth and power are not tolerated as much as in most other countries." Employers, employees, and political officials are accustomed to working closely to ensure that poverty and its related problems are addressed as much as possible and in as cooperative a manner as possible.

Underlying this so-called *social welfare model* is a commitment to *universalism*. All citizens receive various services, regardless of their socioeconomic status or family situation, that are free or heavily subsidized, such as child care and universal health care. To

support this massive provision of benefits, the Scandinavian nations have very high taxes that, according to Lappi-Seppälä, are "accepted with little or no resistance."

This model leads political scientist Torben Iversen to observe, "Scandinavian social democracy represents one of the most systematic attempts to shape economic institutions and policies in pursuit of equality and full employment." This attempt has not been entirely free of difficulties but overall has been very successful, as the Scandinavian nations rank at or near the top in international comparisons of health, education, economic well-being, and other measures of quality of life. The Scandinavian experience of social democracy teaches us that it is very possible to have a political and economic model that combines the best features of capitalism and socialism while retaining the political freedom that citizens expect in a democracy (Berman, 2006; Iversen, 1998; Lappi-Seppälä, 2007).Berman, S. (2006). *The primacy of politics: Social democracy and the making of Europe's twentieth century*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press; Iversen, T. (1998). The choices for Scandinavian social democracy in comparative perspective. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 14*, 59–75; Lappi-Seppälä, T. (2007). Penal policy in Scandinavia. *Crime and Justice, 36*, 217–296.

Corporations

One of the most important but controversial features of modern capitalism is the corporation, a formal organization that has a legal existence, including the right to sign contracts, that is separate from that of its members. We have referred to corporations several times already and now discuss them in a bit more detail.

Adam Smith, the founder of capitalism, envisioned that individuals would own the means of production and compete for profit, and this is the model the United States followed in its early stage of industrialization. After the Civil War, however, the corporation quickly replaced individuals and their families as the owners of the means of production and as the competitors for profit. As corporations grew following the Civil War, they quickly tried to control their markets by, for example, buying up competitors and driving others out of business. To do so, they engaged in bribery, kickbacks, and complex financial schemes of dubious ethics. They also established factories and other workplaces with squalid conditions. Their shady financial practices won their chief executives the name "robber barons" and led the federal government to pass the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 to prohibit restraint of trade that raised prices (Hillstrom & Hillstrom, 2005).Hillstrom, K., & Hillstrom, L. C. (Eds.). (2005). *The Industrial Revolution in America*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.



Figure 10.14. Corporations such as Exxon dominate the U.S. economy. They employ thousands of workers, and their assets total many trillions of dollars.

Source: Photo courtesy of David Shankbone, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Fi...e_Americas.JPG.

More than a century later, corporations have increased in both number and size. Although several million U.S. corporations exist, most are fairly small, but the largest 500 each have annual revenue exceeding $4.6 billion (2008 data) and employ thousands of workers. Their total assets run into the trillions of dollars (Wiley, 2009).Wiley, H. (2009). Welcome to the 2009 *Fortune* 500. *Fortune, 159*(9), 14. It is no exaggeration to say they control the nation's economy, as together they produce most of the U.S. private sector output, employ millions of people, and have revenues equal to most of the U.S. gross domestic product. In many ways, the size and influence of corporations stifle the competition that is one of the hallmarks of capitalism. For example, several

markets, including that for breakfast cereals, are controlled by four or fewer corporations. This control reduces competition because it reduces the number of products and competitors, and it thus raises prices to the public (Parenti, 2007).Parenti, M. (2007). *Democracy for the few* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

The last few decades have further seen the rise of the *multinational corporation*, a corporation with headquarters in one nation but with factories and other operations in many other nations (Wettstein, 2009).Wettstein, F. (2009). *Multinational corporations and global justice: Human rights obligations of a quasi-governmental institution*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Business Books. Multinational corporations centered in the United States and their foreign affiliates have more than $16 trillion in assets and employ more than 30 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).U.S. Census Bureau. (2009). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2009*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab The assets of the largest multinational corporations exceed those of many of the world's nations. Often their foreign operations are in poor nations, whose low wages make them attractive sites for multinational corporation expansion. Many multinational employees in these nations work in sweatshops at very low pay and amid substandard living conditions. Dependency theorists, discussed in Chapter 6, say that multinationals not only mistreat workers in poor nations but also exploit these nations' natural resources. In contrast, modernization theorists, also discussed in Chapter 6, say that multinationals are bringing jobs to developing nations and helping them achieve economic growth. As this debate illustrates, the dominance of multinational corporations will certainly continue to spark controversy.

Another controversial aspect of corporations is the white-collar crime in which they engage (Rosoff, Pontell, & Tillman, 2010).Rosoff, S. M., Pontell, H. N., & Tillman, R. (2010). *Profit without honor: White collar crime and the looting of America* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. As we saw in Chapter 5, price fixing by corporations costs the U.S. public some $60 billion annually (Simon, 2008).Simon, D. R. (2008). *Elite deviance* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Workplace-related illnesses and injuries that could have been prevented if companies obeyed federal regulations kill about 50,000 workers each year (AFL-CIO, 2007).AFL-CIO. (2007). *Death on the job: The toll of neglect*. Washington, DC: AFL-CIO. An estimated 10,000 U.S. residents die annually from dangerous products. All in all, corporate lawbreaking and neglect probably result in more than 100,000 deaths annually and cost the public more than $400 billion (Barkan, 2012).Barkan, S. E. (2012). *Criminology: A sociological understanding* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

In sum, corporations are the dominant actors in today's economy. They provide most of our products and many of our services and employ millions of people. It is impossible to imagine a modern industrial system without corporations. Yet they often stifle competition, break the law, and, according to their critics, exploit people and natural resources in developing nations. The BP oil spill in 2010 reminds us of the damage corporations can cause. BP's disaster was the possible result, according to news reports, of many violations of federal safety standards for oil drilling (Uhlmann, 2010).Uhlmann, D. M. (2010, June 4). Prosecuting crimes against the Earth. *The New York Times*, p. A27.

Conclusion

- As a separate institution, the economy appeared with the advent of agricultural societies about 5,000 years ago. Work and family separated during the 1700s and 1800s with the advent of industrialization.
- The two major economic systems in modern societies are capitalism and socialism. In practice most societies have economies that mix elements of both systems but that lean toward one end of the capitalism-socialism continuum.
- Social democracies combine elements of both capitalism and socialism.

For Your Review

1. Write a brief essay in which you discuss the benefits and costs of industrialization during the 19th century.
2. In what ways might capitalism be a better economic system than socialism? In what ways might socialism be a better economic system than capitalism?

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15.5: Work and Labor in the United States

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the changes industrialization brought in the relationship between workers and management.
- Outline recent trends in jobs and wages.
- Assess Marx's prediction regarding the alienation of work in a capitalist society like the United States.

The history of work and labor in the United States reflects the change, discussed earlier, in economies from agricultural to industrial to postindustrial. From the time the colonies began in the 1600s until well into the 19th century, the United States was primarily an agricultural society, as people worked on their own farms, and the family was the major unit of economic production. With the advent of industrialization came machines and factories, and the secondary, manufacturing sector became dominant. In the decades after the Civil War, the Industrial Revolution transformed the nation.

Workers and Management After Industrialization

One of the most important developments accompanying industrialization was the rise of labor unions and their conflict with management over wages and working conditions (Dubofsky & Dulles, 2010).Dubofsky, M., & Dulles, F. R. (2010). *Labor in America: A history* (8th ed.). Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson. The pay that workers received was quite low, and the conditions in which they worked were often miserable. The typical employee worked at least 10 hours a day for 6 or 7 days a week, with almost no overtime pay and no paid vacations or holidays. To improve wages and working conditions, many labor unions were founded after the Civil War, only to meet determined opposition from companies, the government, and the courts. Companies told each other which workers were suspected of being union members, and these workers were then prevented from getting jobs. Strikers were often arrested for violating laws prohibiting strikes. When juries began finding them not guilty, employers turned to asking judges for injunctions that prohibited strikes. Workers who then went on strike were held in contempt of court by the judge as juries were kept out of the process.

Many strikes became violent, as companies brought in armed guards, state troopers, and strikebreakers to put down the strikes. Workers themselves rioted to protest their low wages and abject working conditions. Summarizing this period, two labor historians note that the United States "has had the bloodiest and most violent labor history of any industrial nation in the world" (Taft & Ross, 1990, p. 174).Taft, P., & Ross, P. (1990). American labor violence: Its causes, character, and outcome. In N. A. Weiner, M. A. Zahn, & R. J. Sagi (Eds.), *Violence: Patterns, causes, public policy* (pp. 174–186). San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. During an 1897 coal-mining strike in Pennsylvania, for example, 18 miners were killed and 40 wounded after being shot in the back by sheriff's deputies. Several years later, company guards and state troops in Ludlow, Colorado, opened fire on mining families as they fled from a tent city that the guards and troops had set on fire. Their bullets killed more than two dozen people, including 13 children (McGovern & Guttridge, 1972).McGovern, G. S., & Guttridge, L. F. (1972). *The great coalfield war*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.



Figure 10.15. From the 1870s through the 1930s, labor unions fought companies over issues such as low wages and substandard working conditions.

Source: Photo courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library, www.library.gsu.edu/spcoll/sp...ts/80-39_1.jpg.

Labor strife reached a peak during the Great Depression, as masses of people blamed business leaders for their economic plight. Huge sit-ins and other labor protests occurred in Detroit at auto plants. In response the Congress passed several laws that gave workers a minimum wage, the right to join unions, a maximum-hour workweek, and other rights that Americans now take for granted.

Today labor unions have lost some of their influence, especially as postindustrialization has supplanted the industrial economy and as the United States has lost much of its manufacturing base. Four decades ago, about one-fourth of all private-sector nonagricultural workers belonged to labor unions. By 1985 this figure had dropped to 14.6%, and today it stands at less than 8% (Hirsch & Macpherson, 2009).Hirsch, B., & Macpherson, D. (2009). Union membership and coverage database from the CPS. Retrieved from http://unionstats.com In response, labor unions have ramped up their efforts to increase their membership, only to find that U.S. labor laws are filled with loopholes that allow companies to prevent their workers from forming a union. For example, after a company's workers vote to join a union, companies can appeal the vote, and it can take several years for courts to order the company to recognize the union. In the meantime, the low wages, the working conditions, and other factors that motivated workers to want to join a union are allowed to continue.

Recent Trends in Jobs and Wages

Recall that the United States has joined other industrial nations in moving into postindustrial economies. If physical prowess and skill with one's hands were prerequisites for many industrial jobs, mental prowess and communication skills are prerequisites for postindustrial jobs.

This move to a postindustrial economy has been a mixed blessing for many Americans. The information age has obvious benefits too numerous to mention, but there has also been a cost to the many workers whom postindustrialization and the globalization of the economy have left behind. Since the 1980s many manufacturing companies moved their plants from U.S. cities to sites in the developing world in Asia and elsewhere, a problem called *capital flight*. This shift has helped fuel a loss of more than 1.5 million manufacturing jobs in the United States (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].

A related problem is *outsourcing*, in which U.S. companies hire workers overseas for customer care, billing services, and other jobs that Americans used to do. China, India, and the Philippines, which have skilled workforces relatively fluent in English, are the primary nations to which U.S. companies outsource their work. At least four million jobs are estimated to have been transferred to these nations from the United States and other Western countries (Thomas, 2009).Thomas, M. (2009, July 16). Outsourcing statistics: What figures will tell you. *EzineArticles*. Retrieved from ezinearticles.com/?Outsourcin...tistics---What -Figures-Will-Tell-You&id=2621948 Many call centers employ workers in India, and when you call up a computer company or some other business for technical help, you might very well talk with an Indian. Because these call centers have cost Americans jobs and also

because Americans and Indians often have trouble understanding each other's accents, outsourcing has been very controversial in the decade since it became popular.

All of these problems reflect a more general shift in the United States from goods-producing jobs to service jobs. Although some of these service jobs, such as many in the financial and computer industries, are high paying, many are in low-wage occupations, such as restaurant and clerical work, that pay less than the goods-producing jobs they replaced. Partly as a result, the average hourly wage (in 2007 dollars) in the United States for workers (excluding managers and supervisors) rose from only $16.88 in 1979 to $17.42 in 2007. This change represented an increase of just 0.1% per year during that three-decade span (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].

These wage figures mask an important gender difference. Men's median hourly wages dropped (in 2007 dollars) by 4.4% from 1979 to 2007, while women's wages rose by 24.4% (while still remaining $3.11 less per hour than men's wages in 2007) (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]. Although, as we saw in Chapter 8, women have been catching up to men in wages, some of this catching up is due to the decline in male wages.

Wage changes in recent years also depend on what social class someone is in. While the average compensation of chief executive officers (CEOs) of large corporations grew by 167% from 1989 to 2007, the average compensation of the typical worker grew by only 10%. Another way of understanding this disparity is perhaps more striking. In 1965 CEOs earned 24 times more than the typical worker; in 2007 they earned 275 times more than the typical worker (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].

The U.S. Labor Force

The *civilian labor force* consists of all noninstitutionalized civilians 16 years of age or older who work for pay or are looking for work. The civilian labor force (hereafter labor force) consists of about 154 million people, or almost two-thirds of the population, including about 72% of men and 59% of women (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009).Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2009). *Employment and earnings online*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved from www.bls.gov/opub/ee/home.htm Chapter 8 noted that women's labor force participation soared during the last few decades. This general increase is even steeper for married women with children under 6 years of age: in 2007 almost 62% of such women were in the labor force, compared to less than 19% in 1960 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009), a threefold differenceU.S. Census Bureau. (2009). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2009*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab (see Figure 10.16).

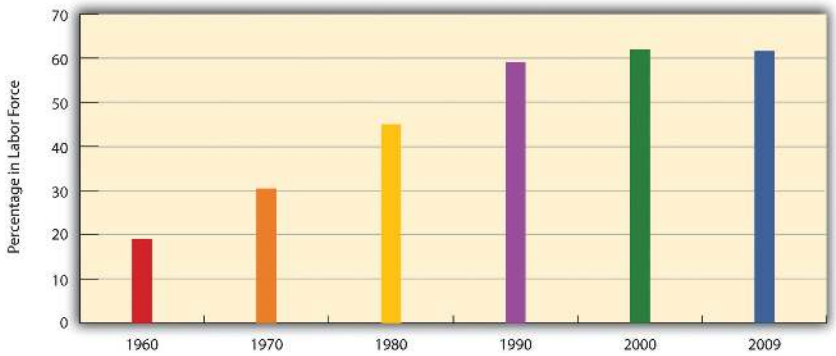


Figure 10.16 Labor Force Participation Rate, Percentage of Married Women with Children Younger Than 6 Years of Age, 1960–2009. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

Unemployment

Unemployment is a fact of life. There will always be people laid off or fired, who voluntarily quit their jobs, or who just graduated school and are still looking for work. But most unemployed people are involuntarily unemployed, and for them the financial and psychological consequences can be devastating.

Unemployment rates rise and fall with the economy, and the national unemployment rate was 10.2% in October 2009 amid the serious economic recession that began more than a year earlier and 9.1% in May 2011 as many people stopped looking for work and dropped out of the labor force. But whether unemployment is high or low, it always varies by race and ethnicity, with African American and Latino unemployment rates higher than the white rate. In May 2011, 16.2% of African Americans and 11.9% of Latinos were unemployed, compared to only 9.5% of whites. Unemployment is also higher for younger people than for older people. In May 2011, 24.2% of all teenagers (aged 16–19) were unemployed, a figure almost three times higher than that for adults. The unemployment rate for African Americans in this age group was a very high 40.1%, considerably greater than the 20.7% figure for whites in this age group (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

Unemployment figures exclude what is often called underemployment. This category includes unemployed workers and also three other types of people: (a) those who are working part-time but who want to work full-time; (b) those who have stopped looking for work because they have not been able to find a job; and (c) those who have not sought work recently but have done so in the last year. Many economists think that underemployment provides a more accurate measure than unemployment of the number of people with employment problems. For example, in September 2009, when the unemployment rate was 9.8%, the underemployment rate was 17%, equal to 26.5 million people. Reflecting the racial/ethnic disparity in unemployment, 25.1% of Hispanic workers and 23.8% of African American workers were underemployed, compared to only 14.2% of white workers (Edwards, 2009).Edwards, K. (2009). *Minorities, less-educated workers see staggering rates of underemployment*. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved from www.epi.org/economic_snapshot...ee_staggering_ rates_of_underemployment

We have just seen that unemployment rises when the economy falters and that race and ethnicity affect the probability of being unemployed. These two facts provide evidence supporting the sociological imagination. As C. Wright Mills (1959)Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. London, England: Oxford University Press. emphasized in his original discussion of this concept, it is best viewed more as a public issue than as a personal trouble. When so many people are unemployed during an economic recession and when there is such striking evidence of higher unemployment rates among the persons of color who have the least opportunity for the education and training needed to obtain and keep a job, it is evident that high unemployment rates reflect a public issue rather than just a collection of public troubles.

Several kinds of problems make it difficult for people of color to be hired into jobs and thus contribute to the racial/ethnic disparity in unemployment. The “Sociology Making a Difference” box discusses these problems.

Sociology Making a Difference

Race, Ethnicity, and Employment

Sociological research has documented that people of color face several kinds of problems in securing employment. While their relative lack of education is an obvious factor, other kinds of problems are also apparent.

One problem is racial discrimination on the part of employers, regardless of how conscious employers are of their discriminatory behavior. Chapter 7 recounted a study by 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. who had young white and African American men apply independently in person for various jobs in Milwaukee. These men wore the same type of clothing and reported similar levels of education and other qualifications. Some said they had a criminal record, while others said they had not committed any crimes. In striking evidence of racial discrimination in hiring, African American applicants *without* a criminal record were hired at the same low rate as white applicants *with* a criminal record. Pager and sociologists Bruce Western and Bart Bonikowski also investigated racial discrimination in another field experiment in New York City (Pager, Bonikowski, & Western, 2009).Pager, D., Bonikowski, B., & Western, B. (2009). Discrimination in a low-wage labor market: A field experiment. *American Sociological Review, 74*(5), 777–799. They had white, African American, and Latino “testers,” all of them “well-spoken, clean-cut young men” (p. 781), apply in person to low-level service jobs (e.g., retail sales and delivery drivers) requiring no more than a high school education; all the testers had similar (hypothetical) qualifications. Almost one-third (31%) of white testers received a call back or job offer, compared to only 25.2% of Latino testers and 15.2% of African American testers. The researchers concluded that their findings “add to a large research program demonstrating the continuing contribution of discrimination to racial inequality in the post-civil rights era” (p. 794).

Other kinds of evidence also reveal racial discrimination in hiring. Two scholars sent job applications in response to help-wanted ads in Boston and Chicago (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2003).Bertrand, M., & Mullainathan, S. (2003). Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination. *National Bureau of Economic Research* (Working Paper No. 9873). Retrieved from http://papers.nber.org/papers/w9873.pdf They randomly assigned the applications to feature either a "white-sounding" name (e.g., Emily or Greg) or an "African American–sounding" name (e.g., Jamal and Lakisha). White names received 50% more callbacks than African American names for job interviews.

Racial differences in access to the informal networks that are often so important in finding a job also contribute to the racial/ethnic disparity in employment. In a study using data from a nationwide survey of a random sample of Americans, sociologist Steve McDonald and colleagues found that people of color and women are less likely than white males to receive informal word of vacant, high-level supervisory positions (McDonald, Nan, & Ao, 2009).McDonald, S., Nan, L., & Ao, D. (2009). Networks of opportunity: Gender, race, and job leads. *Social Problems*, *56*(3), 385–402.

As these studies indicate, research by sociologists and other social scientists reveals that race and ethnicity continue to make a difference in employment prospects for Americans. This body of research reveals clear evidence of discrimination, conscious or unconscious, in hiring and also of racial/ethnic differences in access to the informal networks that are often so important for hiring. By uncovering this evidence, these studies underscore the need to address discrimination, access to informal networks, and other factors that contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in employment. For this reason, sociology is again making a difference.

Job Satisfaction and Alienation

Recall that Karl Marx thought that job alienation was a major problem in industrial societies. Following up on his concern, social scientists have tried to determine the extent of worker alienation and job satisfaction, as well as its correlates (Bockerman & Ilmakunnas, 2009).Bockerman, P., & Ilmakunnas, P. (2009). Job disamenities, job satisfaction, quit intentions, and actual separations: Putting the pieces together. *Industrial Relations*, *48*(1), 73–96. They generally find that American workers like their jobs much more than Marx anticipated, but also that the extent to which they like their jobs depends on the income their jobs bring, the degree of autonomy they enjoy in their jobs, and other factors.

One way of measuring job satisfaction is simply to ask people, "On the whole, how satisfied are you with the work you do?" The General Social Survey uses precisely this question, and 86% of respondents (2010 data) say they are satisfied with their jobs, with only 14% saying they are dissatisfied. This latter figure is probably lower than Marx would have predicted for a capitalist society like the United States.



Figure 10.17. Friendships among employees are very common and may contribute to high levels of satisfaction with one's job in the United States. © Thinkstock

One possible reason for the low amount of job dissatisfaction, and one that Marx did not foresee, is that workers develop friendships in their workplace (McGuire, 2007).McGuire, G. M. (2007). Intimate work: A typology of the social support that workers provide to their network members. *Work and Occupations*, *34*, 125–147. Coworkers discuss all kinds of topics with each other, including personal matters, sports, and political affairs, and they often will invite other coworkers over to their homes or go out with them to a movie or a restaurant. Such friendships can lead workers to like their jobs more than they otherwise would and help overcome the alienation they would feel without the friendships. Such coworker friendships are quite common, as research finds that about half of all workers have at least one close friend who is a coworker (Marks, 1994).Marks, S. R. (1994). Intimacy in the public realm: The case of co-workers. *Social Forces*, *72*, 843–858.

Conclusion

- In the aftermath of industrialization, management and labor clashed over wages and working conditions.
- During the last few decades, goods-producing jobs have declined and service jobs have increased as the United States has moved further into the postindustrial, information age.
- Job satisfaction is higher and worker alienation lower than what Karl Marx would have predicted for the United States, thanks in part to workplace friendships.

For Your Review

1. Fewer workers belong to labor unions now than just a few decades ago. Do you think this is a good development or a bad development? Explain your answer.
2. Think of a job you now have or your most recent job if you are currently not employed. On a scale of 1 = very dissatisfied to 10 = very satisfied, how satisfied are you (were you) with your job? Explain why you have (had) this level of satisfaction.

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15.6: Militarism and the Military

Learning Objectives

- Examine the extent of militarism in the United States.
- Discuss the controversy over the size of the military budget.

In democracies the political and economic institutions intersect at the military. The military is both part of the government and run and funded by the government. As C. Wright Mills recognized when he spoke of the power elite (discussed earlier in the chapter), the military in the United States involves not just the armed forces but also some of the biggest corporations that receive billions of dollars in military contracts, as well as the government leaders who approve large military budgets to fund these contracts.

The military has played a key role in some of the most significant events of the last 100 years and beyond. One of these, of course, was World War II. This war was what we now call the good war, a war fought to save the world for democracy. Millions died on the battlefield, in cities bombed by planes, and in concentration camps, and in the end Hitler and his allies were defeated. About 20 years after World War II ended, the United States began fighting another war meant to save the world for democracy, but this war was very different from the one against Hitler. This war was fought in Vietnam, and however a noble effort World War II might have been, the Vietnam War was just as ignoble to its critics. It was a war, some said, not to save the world for democracy but to help extend America's power where it did not belong. If the World War II generation grew up with a patriotic love for their nation, the Vietnam War generation grew up with much more cynicism about their government. Some members of this generation read Mills's critique of the power elite and agreed with his concern about America's military might.

Ironically Mills's concern about the military was shared by none other than President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who warned about the dangers of what he called the *military-industrial complex* in his farewell presidential address. Eisenhower himself had been a member of the military-industrial complex, having served as a five-star general and supreme commander of the Allied forces in Europe during World War II and head of Columbia University before becoming president. His military experience made him no fan of warfare, as he once observed, "I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity." He also feared that the military-industrial complex was becoming too powerful and gaining "unwarranted influence" over American life as it acted for its own interests and not necessarily for those of the nation as a whole. He warned that the "potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist" (Eisenhower, 1960, p. A1).Eisenhower, D. D. (1960). *Public papers of the presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Eisenhower's fears about the military-industrial complex reflected his more general concern about militarism, or an overemphasis on military policy and spending, which he thought was costing the nation far too much money. In a remarkable and now famous statement made early in his presidency in April 1953, Eisenhower (1960)Eisenhower, D. D. (1960). *Public papers of the presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. declared,

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron.

A half century after Eisenhower made this statement, U.S. military spending continues unabated. In 2010 it was $844 billion (including $95 billion for veterans' benefits) and accounted for almost 20% of all federal spending (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011),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 but a much higher percentage of federal spending over which the government has any control. The federal budget includes both mandatory and discretionary spending. As the name implies, mandatory spending is required by various laws and includes such things as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, food stamps, and interest payments on the national debt; much of these mandatory expenses are funded by trust funds, such as Social Security taxes, which are raised and spent separately from income taxes. Discretionary spending involves the money the president and Congress must decide how to spend each year and includes income tax dollars only. Military spending accounts for about 43% of discretionary spending (Friends Committee on National Legislation, 2009).Friends Committee on National Legislation. (2009).

How much of your 2008 income taxes pay for war? Washington, DC: Friends Committee on National Legislation. Retrieved from www.fcnl.org/issues/item.php?...53&issue_id=19



Figure 10.18. Critics say that U.S. military spending is too high and takes needed dollars from domestic needs like schooling and health care. © Thinkstock

The U.S. military budget is by far the highest in the world and dwarfs the military budgets for the nations ranking after the United States. In 2008, the latest year for which international data were available, the U.S. military budget was $607 billion; the nations ranking after the United States were China, $85 billion; France, $66 billion; United Kingdom, $65 billion; Russia, $59 billion; Germany, $47 billion; and Japan, $46 billion. U.S. military spending accounted for almost 42% of the world's military spending in 2008 (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2009).Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2009). The 15 major spender countries in 2008. Retrieved from www.sipri.org/research/armame...5majorspenders

Another dimension of militarism involves arms exports by both the U.S. government and U.S. military contractors. Combining data on both types of exports, the United States sent $12.2 billion in arms deliveries to other nations in 2008. This figure ranked the highest in the world and constituted about 38% of all world arms exports. Russia ranked second with $5.4 billion in arms deliveries, while Germany ranked third with $2.9 billion (Grimmett, 2009).Grimmett, R. E. (2009). *Conventional arms transfers to developing nations, 2001–2008*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service. Most arms exports from the United States and other exporters go to developing nations, and critics say that the exports help fuel the worldwide arms race and international discord and that they often go to nations ruled by dictators, who then use them to threaten their own people (Morgan, 2008; Stohl, Schroeder, & Smith, 2007).Morgan, M. (2008). *The American military after 9/11: Society, state, and empire*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan; Stohl, R., Schroeder, M., & Smith, D. (2007). *The small arms trade: A beginner's guide*. Oxford, England: Oneworld.

Oscar Arias, a former president of Costa Rica and winner of the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize, echoed President Eisenhower when he wrote a decade ago that U.S. military spending took money away from important domestic needs. "Americans are hurt," he warned, "when the defense budget squanders money that could be used to repair schools or to guarantee universal health care" (Arias, 1999).Arias, O. (1999, June 23). Stopping America's most lethal export. *The New York Times*, p. A19.

Cost equivalencies illustrate what is lost when so much money is spent on the military. An F-22 fighter aircraft, conceived and built to win fights with aircraft that the Soviet Union (and later, Russia) never built, costs about $350 million each (R. J. Smith, 2009).Smith, R. J. (2009, July 10). Premier U.S. fighter jet has major shortcomings. *The Washington Post*, p. A1. This same sum could be used to pay the salaries of about 11,700 new teachers earning $30,000 per year or to build 23 elementary schools at a cost of $15 million each. A nuclear submarine can cost at least $2.5 billion. This sum could provide 500,000 scholarships worth $5,000 each to low- and middle-income high school students to help them pay for college.

A key question, of course, is whether U.S. military spending is higher than it needs to be. Experts disagree over this issue. Some think the United States needs to maintain and even increase its level of military spending, even with the Cold War long gone, to replace aging weapons systems, to meet the threat posed by terrorists and by "rogue" nations such as Iran, and to respond to various other trouble spots around the world. Military spending is good for workers, they add, because it creates jobs, and it also contributes to technological development (Ruttan, 2006).Ruttan, V. (2006). *Is war necessary for economic growth? Military procurement and technology development*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Other experts think the military budget is much higher than it needs to be to defend the United States and to address its legitimate interests around the world. They say the military budget is bloated because the defense industry lobbies so successfully and because military spending provides jobs and income to the home districts of members of Congress. For these reasons, they say, military spending far exceeds the amount that needs to be spent to provide an adequate defense for the United States and its allies. They also argue that military spending actually produces fewer jobs than spending in other sectors. According to a recent estimate, $1 billion spent by the Pentagon creates 11,600 jobs, but the same $1 billion spent in other sectors would create 17,100 clean energy jobs, 19,600 health-care jobs, and 29,100 education jobs (Pollin & Garrett-Peltier, 2009).Pollin, R., & Garrett-Peltier, H. (2009). *The U.S. employment effects of military and domestic spending priorities: An updated analysis*. Washington, DC: Institute for Policy Studies.

Militarism in the American Culture

The discussion to this point has highlighted military spending, but many observers also criticize the extent of militarism in the U.S. culture. According to this critique, many aspects of the American popular culture are violent and militaristic. Innumerable video games on PlayStation, Wii, and other platforms involve military operations, including the dropping of bombs, shooting with automatic weapons, and hand-to-hand combat; these games are criticized as constituting a key part of the "military entertainment complex" (Leonard, 2004).Leonard, D. (2004). Unsettling the military entertainment complex: Video games and a pedagogy of peace. *Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education*, *4*, 1–8. Professional wrestling does not involve weapons, but its (fake) violence attracts legions of fans across the nation. Critics say that all of these aspects of the popular culture contribute to a willingness to use violent means to solve interpersonal disputes and to support for militarism in U.S. foreign policy. They also say that the militaristic video games are training youths for life in the military later. As the call for an October 2009 protest vigil at the site of a military contractor starkly claimed, "Our children are being trained through video games today to be the remote killers of tomorrow" (news.haverford.edu/blogs/cpgc).

Perhaps more seriously, hundreds of militia, survivalist, and patriot groups populate the country and have been increasing in numbers in recent years thanks to the failing economy and concern over immigration (Guarino, 2010).Guarino, M. (2010, March 30). Hutaree: Why is the Midwest a hotbed of militia activity? *The Christian Science Monitor*. Retrieved from www.csmonitor.com/USA/Justice...litia-activity Although the military-industrial complex may be cause for concern, the existence of so many of these groups shows that militarism has also penetrated American life in a rather frightening way.

As this overview of the debate over military spending and militarism in American life indicates, the military remains a hot topic more than two decades after the Cold War ended with the demise of the Soviet Union. As we move further into the 21st century, the twin issues of military spending and militarism will represent a major challenge for the U.S. political and economic institutions to address in a way that meets America's international and domestic interests.

Conclusion

- U.S. military spending amounted to almost $770 billion in 2009, reflecting the highest military budget in the world.
- Critics of the military budget say that the billions of dollars spent on weapons and other military needs would be better spent on domestic needs such as schools and day care.

For Your Review

1. Do you think the U.S. military budget should be increased, be reduced, or stay about the same? Explain your answer.

Addressing Political and Economic Issues: What Sociology Suggests

Sociological theory and research are once again relevant for addressing certain issues raised by studies of the polity and economy. We discuss this relevance briefly for each social institution.

Political Issues

Sociological work on the political institution highlights at least two related issues. The first is the possible monopolization and misuse of power by a relatively small elite composed of the powerful or the haves, as they are often called. If elite theories are correct, this small elite takes advantage of its place at the top of American society and its concomitant wealth, power, and influence to benefit its own interests. Sociological work that supports the assumptions of elite theories does not necessarily imply any

specific measures to reduce the elite's influence, but it does suggest the need for consumer groups and other public-interest organizations to remain vigilant about elite misuse of power and to undertake efforts to minimize this misuse.

The second issue is the lack of political participation from the segments of American society that traditionally have very little power: the poor, the uneducated, and people of color. Because voting and other forms of political participation are much more common among the more educated and wealthy segments of society, the relative lack of participation by those without power helps to ensure that they remain without power. Sociological research on political participation thus suggests the need to promote voting and other political participation by the poor and uneducated if American democratic and egalitarian ideals are to be achieved.

Economic Issues

Sociological work on the economy also highlights at least two related issues. The first is continuing evidence of racial and ethnic discrimination in hiring and employment. This evidence certainly suggests the need for stronger enforcement of existing laws against racial and ethnic discrimination in employment and for public education campaigns to alert workers to signs of this type of discrimination.

The second issue concerns the satisfaction that American workers find in their jobs. Although the level of this satisfaction is fairly high, sociological research highlights the importance of coworker friendships for both job satisfaction and more general individual well-being. These research findings indicate that employers and employees alike should make special efforts to promote coworker friendships. Because work is such an important part of most people's lives, these efforts should prove beneficial for many reasons.

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15.S: Politics and the Economy (Summary)

Summary

1. Politics involves the distribution of power in a society. Three types of authority, or the legitimate use of power, exist. Traditional authority is based on a society's customs and traditions, while rational-legal authority stems from a society's rules. Charismatic authority derives from an individual's extraordinary personal qualities and is the most unstable of the three types of authority, because it ends with the death of the person who possesses this type of authority.
2. The major types of political systems in the world today are democracies, monarchies, and authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. Few pure democracies exist, and most take the form of representative democracies, in which people elect officials to represent their views and interests. Monarchies are much less common than they used to be, and today's monarchs primarily serve symbolic and ceremonial functions. Authoritarian and totalitarian regimes exist in different parts of the world and typically involve harsh repression of their citizenries.
3. Pluralist and elite theories both try to explain the distribution and exercise of power. Pluralist theory says that society is composed of special-interest groups whose competition ensures that the interests of all segments of society are represented. Elite theory says that power is concentrated in the hands of relatively few individuals and organizations. Mills's power-elite model attributes power to the nation's top government, business, and military leaders, while other elite theories say that power is concentrated in the hands of a relatively few families at the top of the socioeconomic system.
4. Political ideology is usually classified along a continuum from very liberal to very conservative. It consists of social and economic views on which some people may hold inconsistent positions; for example, they may hold liberal views on social issues but conservative views on economic issues. Political participation is the cornerstone of democracy, but in the United States relatively few people vote or otherwise take part in the political process. Voter apathy and alienation help account for the lack of voting, as do low levels of education and other variables.
5. Lobbying by various special-interest groups certainly influences the political process, but the different parties disagree on whether lobbying is good or bad. To the extent that lobbying by corporate interests unduly influences the political process, elite theories of the political system are supported.
6. The type of economy characterizing societies has changed over the centuries. With the development of agricultural societies, economic functions began to be separated from family functions. Industrialization increased this separation further, and factories and machines became the primary means of production. The development of postindustrial societies in the last few decades has had important implications for the nature of work and other aspects of social and economic life in modern societies.
7. Capitalism and socialism are the two primary types of economic systems in the world today. Capitalism involves private ownership, the pursuit of profit, and competition over profit, while socialism involves the collective ownership of goods and resources and efforts for the common good. The relative merits of capitalism and socialism continue to be debated; several nations practice democratic socialism, which is meant to combine the best of capitalism and socialism.
8. Corporations are essential players in modern economic systems but remain quite controversial. They concentrate economic power in the hands of a few organizations and often act in a way that stifles competition and harms their own workers and much of the public.
9. The development of labor unions occurred amid a concerted effort by management to resist demands for wage increases and better working conditions. In the recent past, U.S. workers have faced declining wages in constant dollars, although this general trend obscures some important gender, race and ethnicity, and social class differences in wage trends. Postindustrialization has meant a loss of manufacturing jobs across the United States but especially in its large cities.
10. Unemployment, underemployment, and job alienation remain problems facing U.S. workers. Job alienation is probably less than what Karl Marx envisioned in a capitalist society, in part because workers develop workplace friendships.
11. President Eisenhower warned of the dangers of a high military budget and the militarism of the United States. In the aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union by the end of 1991, the military budget remains quite large. Experts disagree over the proper size of the military budget, and militarism will remain a major challenge as we move further into the new century.

USING SOCIOLOGY

You graduated from college a year ago and have begun working in the human relations department of a medium-sized company. You are very happy with your salary and prospects for promotion. However, part of your job involves processing application forms

from prospective employees, and you have become concerned with one part of that process. Your supervisor has told you to put applications with “black-sounding” names like Jamal and Lateesha in a separate file to be examined only if a sufficient number of employees cannot be hired from the “regular” file. What, if anything, do you do? Explain your answer.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

16: Social Change - Population, Urbanization, and Social Movements

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.

16.1: Prelude to Population, Urbanization, and Social Movements

16.2: Understanding Social Change

16.3: Population

16.4: Urbanization

16.5: Social Movements

16.S: Population, Urbanization, and Social Movements (Summary)

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16.1: 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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16.2: 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.
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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16.3: 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

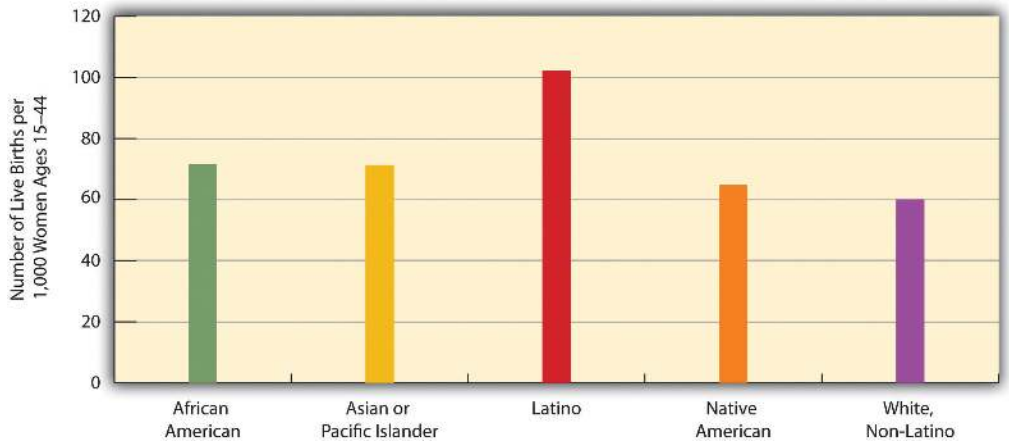


Figure 14.6 Race, Ethnicity, and U.S. Fertility Rates, 2007. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

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).

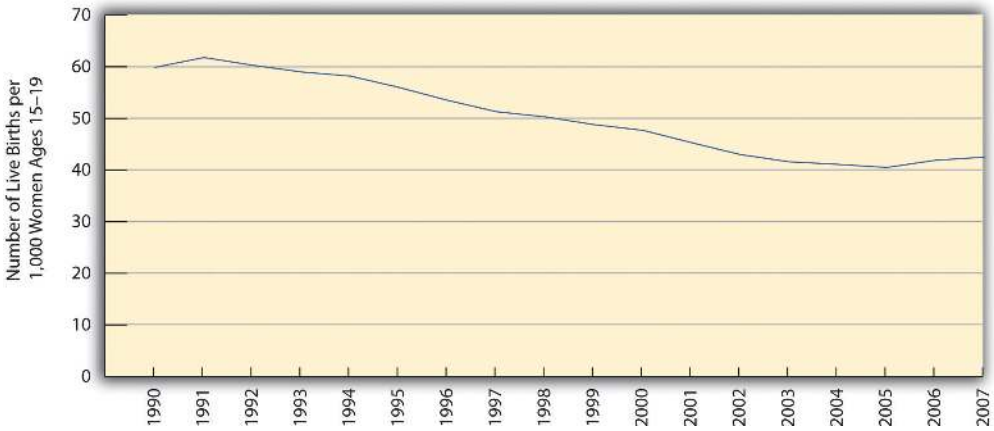


Figure 14.7 U.S. Teenage Fertility Rate, 1990–2007. Sources: Data from Martin, J. A., Hamilton, B. E., Sutton, P. D., Ventura, S. J., Menacker, F., Kirmeyer, S., & Mathews, T. J. (2009). Births: Final data for 2006. National Vital Statistics Reports, 57(7), 1–102; U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2011. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

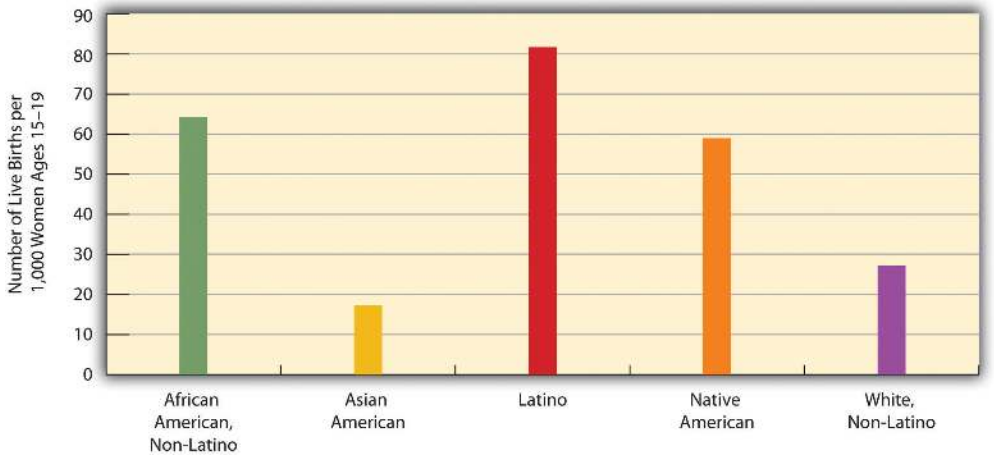


Figure 14.8 Race, Ethnicity, and U.S. Teenage Fertility Rates, 2007. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

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.

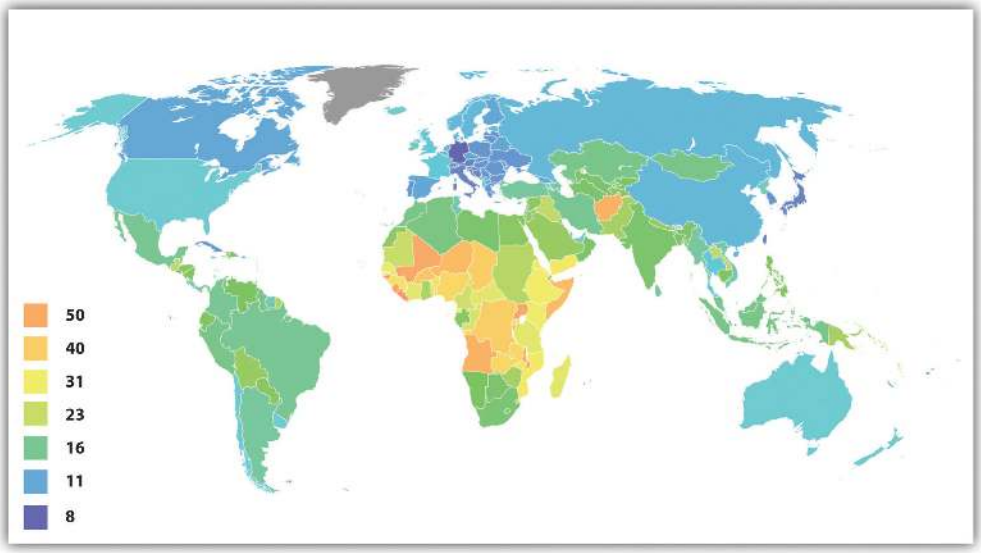


Figure 14.9 Crude Birth Rates Around the World, 2008 (Number of Births per 1,000 Population). Source: Adapted from en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bi..._countries.PNG.

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.

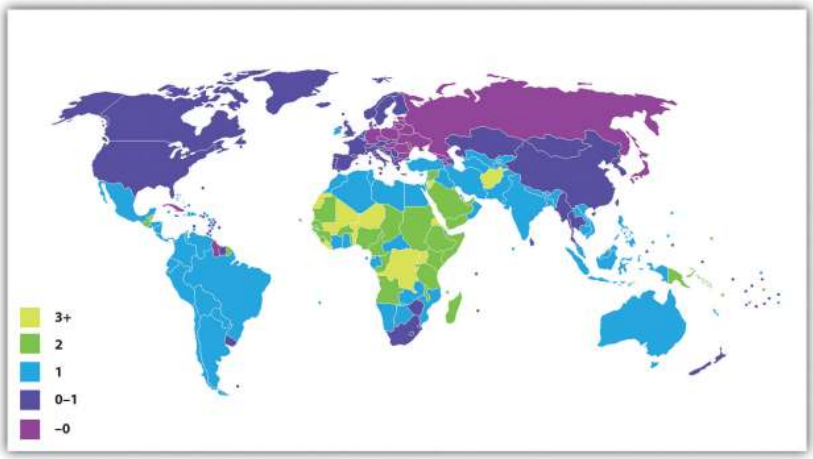


Figure 14.10 International Annual Population Growth Rates (%), 2005–2010. Source: Adapted from en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Po...05-2010_UN.PNG.

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).

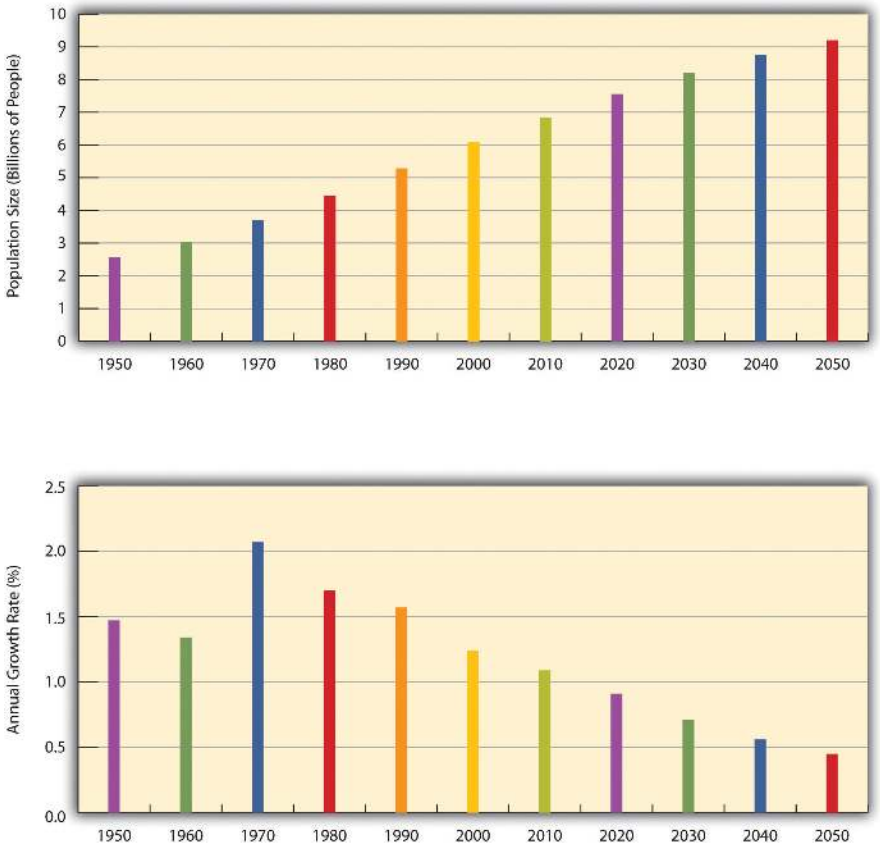


Figure 14.11 Total World Population, 1950–2050. Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

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.

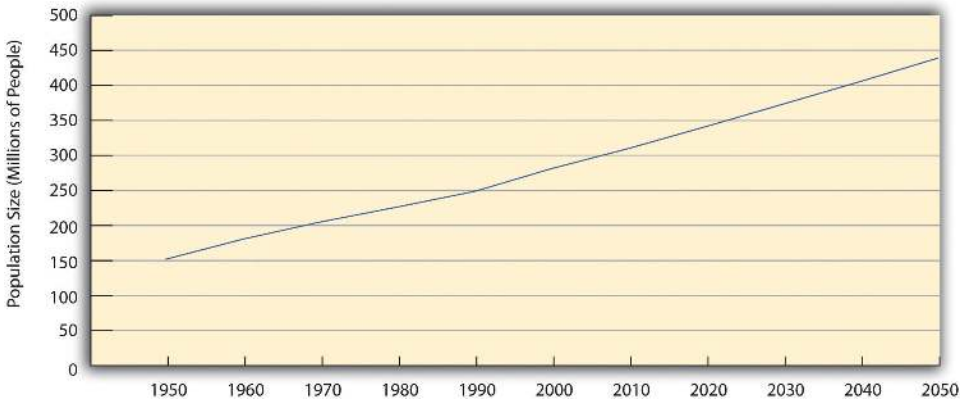


Figure 14.12 Past and Projected Size of the U.S. Population, 1950–2050 (in Millions). Source: Data from U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). Statistical abstract of the United States: 2010. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved from www.census.gov/compendia/statab.

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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16.4: 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.

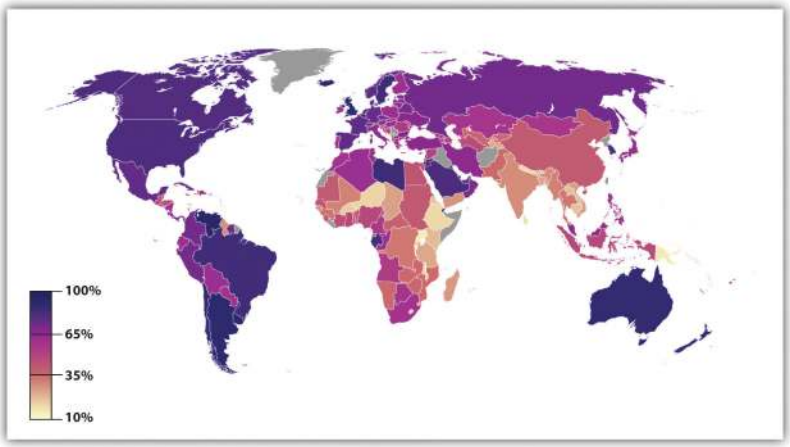


Figure 14.16 Percentage of Population Living in Urban Areas, 2005. Source: Adapted from en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ur..._world_map.PNG.

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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16.5: 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.

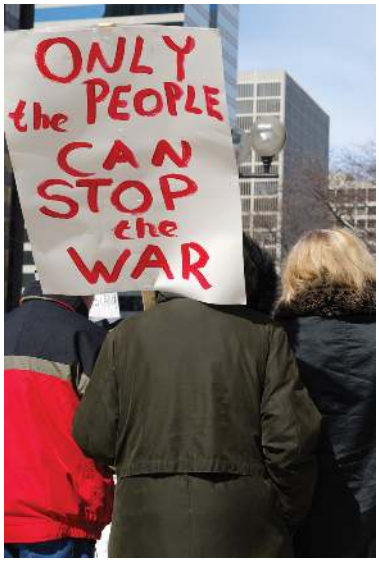


Figure 14.17. Social movements are organized efforts by large numbers of people to bring about or impede social change. Often they try to do so by engaging in various kinds of protest, such as the march depicted here. © Thinkstock

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.

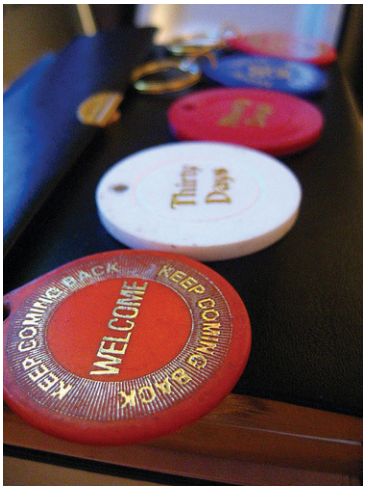


Figure 14.18. One type of social movement is the self-help movement. As its name implies, the goal of a self-help movement is to help people improve their personal lives. These tokens are used at meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, which is an example of a group involved in a self-help movement.

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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16.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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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

17: Stratification, Inequality, and Social Class in the U.S.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

17.1: Social Class

Topic hierarchy

17.1A: Social Class

17.1B: Property

17.1C: Power

17.1D: Prestige

17.1E: Status Inconsistency

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17.1A: Social Class

Society is stratified into social classes on the basis of wealth, income, educational attainment, and occupation.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the discrepancies in the formation of social classes, as identified by various sociologists

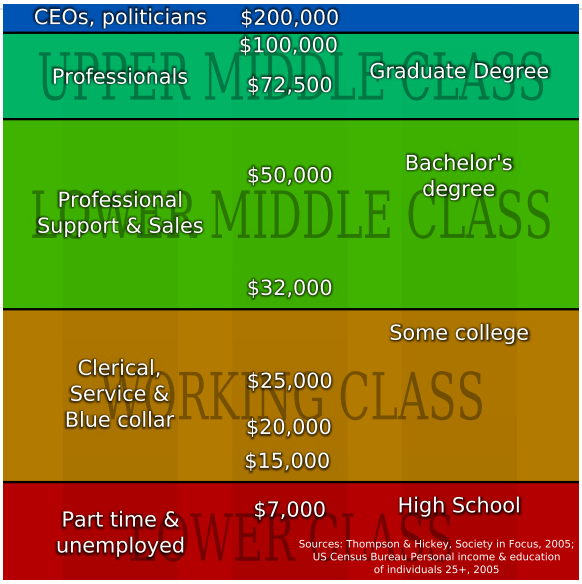
Key Points

- There are competing models for thinking about social classes in the U.S. — most Americans believe in a three tier structure that includes the upper, middle, and lower classes, but popular variations delineate an upper-middle class and a working class.
- Individuals tend to form relationships with others in their own class, and to consequently acculturate to, or learn the values of behaviors of, their own class. This process strengthens distinctions between classes as each group establishes a unique class culture.
- Due to class mobility, in some cases individuals may also acculturate to the culture of another class when ascending or descending in the social order.

Key Terms

- **social network**: The web of a person's social, family, and business contacts, who provide material and social resources and opportunities.
- **acculturate**: To acquire the culture (including systems of value and belief) of the society that one inhabits, starting at birth.
- **Class Culture**: A system of beliefs, values, and behaviors that is particular to a socioeconomic group.

Most social scientists agree that society is stratified into a hierarchical arrangement of social classes. Social classes are groupings of individuals in a hierarchy, usually based on wealth, educational attainment, occupation, income, and membership in a subculture or social network. Social class in the United States is a controversial issue, having many competing definitions, models, and even disagreements over its very existence. Many Americans believe in a simple three-class model that includes upper class, the middle class, and the lower class or working class. More complex models that have been proposed by social scientists describe as many as a dozen class levels.



United States Social Classes: While social scientists offer competing models of class structure, most agree that society is stratified by occupation, income, and educational attainment.

Meanwhile, some scholars deny the very existence of discrete social classes in American society. In spite of debate, most social scientists agree that in the U.S. there is a social class structure in which people are hierarchically ranked. Elsewhere in the world, one's social class may depend more upon race/ethnicity, position at birth, or religious affiliation. For example, in Mexico, society is stratified into classes determined by European or indigenous lineage as well as wealth. In the U.K. class position depends somewhat on family lineage, with members of the nobility traditionally belonging to the aristocracy.

Class Culture

Social class is sometimes presented as a description of how members of society have sorted themselves along a continuum of positions varying in importance, influence, prestige, and compensation. Thought of this way, once individuals identify as being within a class group they begin to adhere to the behaviors they expect of that class. Thus, a person who considers him or herself to be upper class will dress differently from a person who considers him or herself to be working class — one may wear a business suit on a daily basis, while the other wears jeans, for example. By adhering to class expectations, individuals create sharper distinctions between classes than may otherwise exist.

Sociologists studying class distinctions since the 1970s have found that social classes each have unique cultural traits. The phenomenon, referred to as class culture, has been shown to have a strong influence on the mundane lives of people,

affecting everything from the manner in which they raise their children, to how they initiate and maintain romantic relationships, to the color in which they paint their houses. The overall tendency of individuals to associate mostly with those of equal standing as themselves has strengthened class differences. Because individuals' social networks tend to be within their own class, they acculturate to, or learn the values and behaviors of, their own class. Due to class mobility, in some cases individuals may also acculturate to the culture of another class when ascending or descending in the social order. Nonetheless, the impact of class culture on delineating a social hierarchy is significant.

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17.1B: Property

Property is the total of one's possessions and, therefore, may be a better measure of social class than income.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the various forms of property – private, public and collective – and their functions

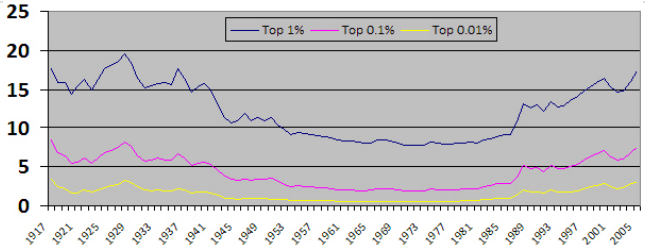
Key Points

- Property goes beyond income as a measure of social class as it reflects the accumulated wealth (e.g., homes, stocks, bonds, savings) in addition to one's earning potential.
- Private property is distinguishable from public property and collective property, which refers to assets owned by a state, community, or government rather than by individuals or a business entity.
- Economic liberals consider private property to be essential for the construction of a prosperous society.
- Socialists view private property relations as limiting the potential of productive forces in the economy.
- Libertarians believe that private property rights are a requisite for rational and efficient economic calculation.

Key Terms

- **libertarian**: A believer in a political doctrine that emphasizes individual liberty and a lack of governmental regulation and oversight both in matters of the economy ('free market') and in personal behavior.
- **economic liberals**: Economic liberalism is the ideological belief in organizing the economy on individualist lines, such that the greatest possible number of economic decisions are made by private individuals and not by collective institutions.

Property refers to the sum total of one's possessions, as well as their regular income. It goes beyond income as a measure of social class, as it reflects wealth accumulated (e.g., homes, stocks, bonds, savings) in addition to one's earning potential. Property is a better overall measure of social class than income, as many individuals who are considered wealthy actually have very small income, and those with less property tend to have less power and prestige.



Income: Income is one form of property, and contributes significantly the measures of wealth. In the United States, the top 1% of the population earns a disproportionate amount of national income, coinciding with their position at the top of the social class hierarchy.

Private property is the ownership, control, employment, ability to dispose of, and bequeath land, capital, and other forms of property by persons and privately owned firms. Private property is distinguishable from public property and collective property, which refers to assets owned by a state, community, or government rather than by individuals or a business entity. The concept of property is not equivalent to that of possession. Property and ownership refer to a socially constructed circumstance conferred upon individuals or collective entities by the state, whereas possession is a physical phenomenon.

Economic liberals consider private property to be essential for the construction of a prosperous society. They believe private ownership of land ensures the land will be put to productive use and its value protected by the landowner. If the owners must pay property taxes, this forces the owners to maintain a productive output from the land to keep taxes current.

On the other hand, socialists view private property relations as limiting the potential of productive forces in the economy. They believe private property becomes useless when it concentrates into centralized, socialized institutions based on private appropriation of revenue until the role of the capitalist becomes redundant.

Lastly, libertarians believe that private property rights are a requisite for rational economic calculation, and that without clearly defined property rights, the prices of goods and services cannot be determined in an "efficient" manner, making the most efficient economic calculation impossible.

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17.1C: Power

Power refers to someone's ability to get others to do his or her will, regardless of whether or not they want to.

Learning Objectives

- Compare the positives and negatives associated with the use of power and how power operates in society

Key Points

- Legitimate power, power given to individuals willingly by others, is called " authority ".
- Illegitimate power, power taken by force or the threat of force, is called " coercion ".
- Coercion is power taken by force or the threat of force.
- Influence, in contrast to coercion, refers to the means by which power is used.
- Because power operates both relationally and reciprocally, sociologists speak of the balance of power between parties to a relationship. All parties to all relationships have some power.

Key Terms

- **coercion**: Actual or threatened force for the purpose of compelling action by another person; the act of coercing.
- **influence**: An action exerted by a person or thing with such power on another to cause change.

Power refers to someone's ability to get others to do his or her will, regardless of whether or not they want to. It is also a measurement of an entity's ability to control its environment, including the behavior of other entities. Legitimate power, power given to individuals willingly by others, is called "authority;" illegitimate power, power taken by force or the threat of force, is called "coercion. " In the corporate environment, power is often expressed as upward or downward. With downward power, a company's superior influences subordinates. When a company exerts upward power, it is the subordinates who influence the decisions of the leader. Often, the study of power in a society is referred to as "politics. "

Power can be seen as evil or unjust, but the exercise of power is accepted as endemic to humans as social beings. The use of power need not involve coercion (force or the threat of force). At one extreme, it more closely resembles what everyday English-speakers call "influence," or the means by which power is used. Although power can be seen as various forms of constraint on human action, it can also be understood as that which makes action possible, although in a limited scope.

Because power operates both relationally and reciprocally, sociologists speak of the balance of power between parties to a relationship. All parties to all relationships have some power. The sociological examination of power concerns itself with discovering and describing the relative strengths–equal or unequal, stable, or subject to periodic change. Sociologists usually analyze relationships in which the parties have relatively equal or nearly equal power in terms of constraint rather than of power.

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17.1D: Prestige

Prestige refers to the reputation or esteem associated with one's position in society, which is closely tied to their social class.

Learning Objectives

- Compare the two types of prestige – achieved and ascribed, and how prestige is related to power, property and social mobility

Key Points

- Prestige used to be associated with one's family name, but for most people in developed countries, prestige is now generally tied to one's occupation.
- Highly skilled occupations tend to have more prestige associated with them than low skill occupations.
- Prestige is often related to the other two indicators of social class – property and power.
- Prestige is an important element in social mobility.

Key Terms

- **occupation**: A regular activity performed in exchange for payment, including jobs and professions.
- **social class**: A group of people in a stratified hierarchy, based on social power, wealth, educational attainment, and other criteria.
- **prestige**: A measure of how good the reputation of something or someone is, or how favorably something or someone is regarded.

Prestige refers to the reputation or esteem associated with one's position in society. A person can earn prestige by his or her own achievements, which is known as achieved status, or they can be placed in the stratification system by their inherited position, which is called ascribed status. For example, prestige used to be associated with one's family name (ascribed status), but for most people in developed countries, prestige is now generally tied to one's occupation (achieved status). Occupations like physicians or lawyers tend to have more prestige associated with them than occupations like bartender or janitor. An individual's prestige is closely tied to their social class – the higher the prestige of an individual (through their occupation or, sometimes, their family name), the higher their social class.

Prestige is often related to the other two indicators of social class – property and power. A Supreme Court justice, for example, is usually wealthy, enjoys a great deal of prestige, and exercises significant power. In some cases, however, a person ranks differently on these indicators, such as funeral directors. Their prestige is fairly low, but most have higher incomes than college professors, who are among the most educated people in America and have high prestige.

Prestige is a strong element in social mobility. On the one hand, choosing certain occupations or attending certain schools can influence a person's level of prestige. While these opportunities are not equally available to everyone, one's choices can, at least to a limited extent, increase or decrease one's prestige, and lead to social mobility. On the other hand, certain elements of prestige are fixed; family name, place of birth, parents' occupations, etc., are unchangeable parts of prestige that cause social stratification.



Oxford University Ceremony: The job of professor is an example of an occupation that has high prestige even though many professors do not earn incomes in the top economic bracket.

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17.1E: Status Inconsistency

Status inconsistency occurs when an individual's social positions are varied and these variations influence his or her overall social status.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the concept of status inconsistency and how this phenomena can lead to frustration for people

Key Points

- Introduced by the sociologist Gerhard Lenski in the 1950s, status inconsistency theories predict that people whose status is inconsistent will be more frustrated and dissatisfied than people with consistent statuses.
- Sociologists investigate issues of status inconsistency in order to better understand status systems and stratification.
- Max Weber articulated three major dimensions of stratification in his discussion of class, power, and status.

Key Terms

- **sociologist**: A social scientist focused on the study of society, human social interaction, and the rules and processes that bind and separate people not only as individuals, but as members of associations, groups and institutions.
- **status inconsistency**: A situation in which an individual's varied social positions can have both positive and negative influences on his or her social status.
- **Max Weber**: (1864–1920) A German sociologist, philosopher, and political economist who profoundly influenced social theory, social research, and the discipline of sociology itself.

Status inconsistency is a situation where an individual's social positions have both positive and negative influences on his or her social status. Introduced by the sociologist Gerhard Lenski in the 1950s, status inconsistency theories predict that people whose statuses are inconsistent will be more frustrated and dissatisfied than people with consistent statuses. For example, a teacher may have a positive societal image (respect, prestige, etc.), which increases her status but she may earn little money, which simultaneously decreases her status.

All societies have some basis for social stratification, and industrial societies are characterized by multiple dimensions to which some vertical hierarchy may be imputed. The notion of status inconsistency is simple: It is defined as occupying different vertical positions in two or more hierarchies. Sociologists investigate issues of status inconsistency in order to better understand status systems and stratification, and because some sociologists believe that positions of status inconsistency might have strong effects on people's behavior.

Max Weber articulated three major dimensions of stratification in his discussion of class, power, and status. This multifaceted framework provides the background concepts for discussing status inconsistency. Status inconsistency theories predict that people whose status is inconsistent, or higher on one dimension than one another, will be more frustrated and dissatisfied than people with consistent statuses.

Gerhard Lenski originally predicted that people suffering from status inconsistency would favor political actions and parties directed against higher status groups. According to Lenski, the concept can be used to further explain why status groups made up of wealthy minorities who would be presumed conservative tend to be liberal instead. Since Lenski coined the term, status inconsistency has remained controversial with limited empirical verification.



School Teacher: Teachers are often held in high esteem and exert power over students and in local policy, but they tend to have low incomes and little accumulated wealth.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

17.2: Social Class in the U.S.

Topic hierarchy

17.2A: Social Class in the U.S.

17.2B: Income

17.2C: Wealth

17.2D: Education

17.2E: Occupation

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17.2A: Social Class in the U.S.

Most social scientists agree that American society is stratified into social classes, based on wealth, education, and occupation.

Learning Objectives

- Compare and contrast two different social class models

Key Points

- There are competing models for dividing society into discrete classes, but most are based upon a basic three-tiered model that includes an upper class, middle class, and lower class.
- Each social class is thought to share particular cultural traits, such as manner of dress and speech, that reinforce divisions between different classes.
- The "American Dream" holds that U.S. society is meritocratic and status is based on individual achievement, but many social scientists tend to support the idea that inequality is persistent in America and often results from inherited advantages or disadvantages.

Key Terms

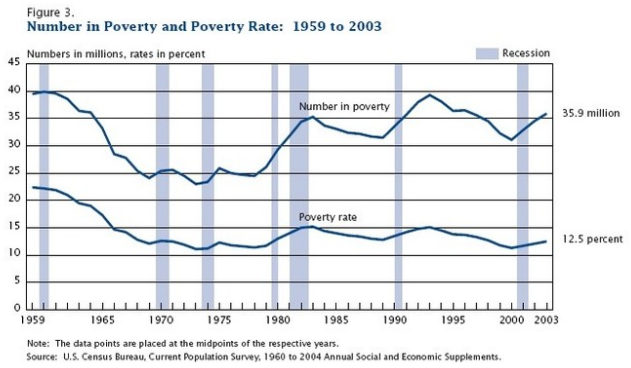
- **social network**: The web of a person's social, family, and business contacts, who provide material and social resources and opportunities.
- **acculturate**: To acquire the culture (including systems of value and belief) of the society that one inhabits, starting at birth.
- **The American Dream**: The belief that with hard work, courage, and determination, anyone can prosper and achieve success.

In the United States, most social scientists agree that society is stratified into a hierarchical arrangement of social classes. Social classes are groupings of individuals in a hierarchy, usually based on wealth, educational attainment, occupation, income, and membership in a subculture or social network. Social class in the United States is a controversial topic; there have been many competing definitions, models, and even disagreements over its very existence. Many Americans believe in a simple three-class model that includes the rich or upper class, the middle class, and the poor or working class. More complex models that have been proposed by social scientists describe as many as a dozen class levels. Meanwhile, some scholars deny the very existence of discrete social classes in American society. In spite of this debate, most social scientists agree that in the United States, there is a social class structure in which people are hierarchically ranked.

Models of U.S. Social Classes

One social class model proposed by sociologists posits that there are six social classes in America. In this model, the upper class in America (3% of the population) is divided into the upper-upper class (1% of the U.S. population), earning hundreds of millions to billions of dollars in income per year, while the lower-upper class (2%) earns millions in annual income. The middle class (40%) is divided into the upper-middle class (14%, earning $76,000 or more per year) and the lower-middle class (26%, earning $46,000 to $75,000 annually). The working class (30%) earns $19,000 to $45,000. The lower class (27%) is divided into the working poor (13%, earning $9000 to $18,000) and the underclass (14%, earning under $9000). This model has gained traction as a tool for thinking about social classes in America, but it notably does not fully account for variations in status based on non-economic factors, such as education and occupational prestige. This critique is somewhat mitigated by the fact that income is often closely aligned with other indicators of status: Those with high incomes likely have substantial education, high-status occupations, and powerful social networks.

Another model for thinking about social class in the United States attributes the following general characteristics to each tier: The upper class has vast accumulated wealth and significant control over corporations and political institutions, and their privilege is usually inherited; the corporate elite is a class of high-salaried stockholders, such as CEOs, who do not necessarily have inherited privilege but have achieved high status through their careers; the upper middle class consists of highly educated salaried professionals whose occupations are held in high esteem, such as lawyers, engineers, and professors; the middle class is the most vaguely defined and largest social class, and is generally thought to include people in mid-level managerial positions or relatively low status professional positions, such as high school teachers and small business owners; the working class generally refers to those without college degrees who do unskilled service work, such as being a sales clerk or housecleaner, and it includes most people whose incomes fall below the poverty line.



U.S. Poverty Rate 1959-2009: This chart depicts the number of people living in poverty during each year from 1959-2003. The poverty rate corresponds to what proportion of Americans live in the lowest economic strata of the hierarchical class system.

Definition of Middle Class

Since the middle class is the largest yet most vaguely defined class, it is important to think about how people come to identify themselves as "middle class." Some people define middle class by income, whereas others are more concerned with values and job description. For example, one may define themselves as middle class if they needed to go to college to obtain their job, despite having a lower income than a blue-collar worker. Another person may believe that since he makes $100,000 a year (regardless of his job *status*), he is middle class. Most people define middle class in terms of income *and* values (such as education and religion).

Class Culture

Sociologists studying class distinctions since the 1970s have found that social classes each have unique cultural traits. The phenomenon, referred to as class culture, has been shown to have a strong influence on the mundane lives of people. Class culture is thought to affect everything from the manner in which people raise their children, to how they initiate and maintain romantic relationships, to the color in which they paint their houses. The overall tendency of individuals to associate mostly with those of equal standing as themselves has strengthened class differences. Because individuals' social networks tend to be within their own class, they acculturate to, or learn the values and behaviors of, their own class. Due to class mobility, in some cases, individuals may also acculturate to the culture of another class when ascending or descending in the social order. Nonetheless, the impact of class culture on the social hierarchy is significant.

Debates over the Existence and Significance of U.S. Social Classes

According to the logic of the American Dream, American society is meritocratic and class is achievement based. In other words, one's membership in a particular social class is based on their educational and career accomplishments, and class distinctions, therefore, are not rigid. Many sociologists dispute the existence of such class mobility and point to the ways in which social class is inherited.

Social theorists who dispute the existence of social classes in the United States tend to argue that society is stratified along a continuous gradation, rather than into delineated categories. In other words, there is inequality in America, with some people attaining higher status and higher standards of living than others. There is no clear place to draw the line separating one status group from the next.

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17.2B: Income

Individual and household income remains one of the most prominent indicators of class status within the United States.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the relationship between income and class status

Key Points

- Personal income is an individual's total earnings from wages, investment earnings, and other sources, and the mostly widely cited data on personal income comes from the U.S. Census Bureau 's population surveys.
- Though individuals in a household may hold low prestige or low earning jobs, having multiple incomes can allow for upward class mobility as a household's wealth increases.
- According to the U.S. Census, men tend to have higher income than women, while Asians and whites earned more than African Americans and Hispanics.

Key Terms

- **U.S. Census Bureau**: The government agency that is responsible for the United States Census, which gathers national demographic and economic data.
- **income**: money one earns by working, or by capitalising off other people's work
- **Bureau of Economic Analysis**: The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) is an agency in the United States Department of Commerce that measures important economic statistics, including the gross domestic product of the United States.
- **personal income**: All of an individual's monetary earnings, including salary, investment gains, inheritance, and any other gains.

Income in the United States is most commonly measured by U.S. Census Bureau in terms of either household or individual income and remains one of the most prominent indicators of class status. Income is not one of its causes. In other words, income does not determine the status of an individual or household but rather reflects that status. Some say that income and prestige are the incentives provided by society in order to fill needed positions with the most qualified and motivated personnel possible.

Personal income is an individual's total earnings from wages, investment interest, and other sources. In the United States, the most widely cited personal income statistics are the Bureau of Economic Analysis's personal income and the Census Bureau's per capita money income. The Census Bureau also produces alternative estimates of income and poverty based on broadened definitions of income that include many components that are not included in money income. Estimates are available by demographic characteristics of householders and by the composition of households. According to the US Census, men tend to have higher income than women, while Asians and whites earned more than African Americans and Hispanics.

The combination of two or more incomes allows for households to increase their income substantially without moving higher on the occupational ladder or attaining higher educational degrees. Thus, it is important to remember that the favorable economic position of households in the top two quintiles is in some cases, the result of combined income, rather than the high status of a single worker.



Working class: A monument to the working and supporting classes along Market Street in the heart of San Francisco's Financial District, home to tens-of-thousands of professional upper class and managerial middle class workers.

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17.2C: Wealth

Wealth is commonly measured in terms of net worth, which is the sum of all assets, including home equity, minus all liabilities.

Learning Objectives

- Define “wealth” and explain how it differs from “income”

Key Points

- The wealth — more specifically, the median net worth —of households in the United States varies with relation to race, education, geographic location, and gender.
- While income is often seen as a type of wealth in colloquial language use, wealth and income are different measures of economic prosperity.
- Assets are known as the raw materials of wealth, and they consist primarily of stocks and other financial and non-financial property, particularly homeownership, that allows individuals to increase their wealth.
- Home ownership is one of the main sources of wealth among families in the United States, but can be inaccessible to low income households due to high interest rates.

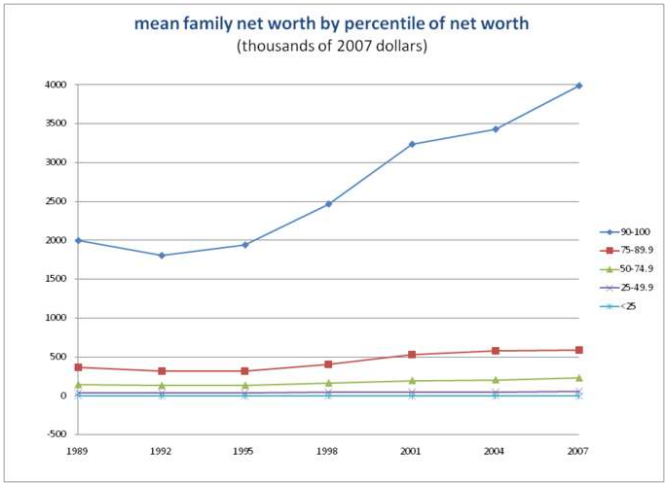
Key Terms

- **Assets**: Any property or object of value that one possesses, usually considered as applicable to the payment of one’s debts.
- **interest rate**: The percentage of an amount of money charged for its use per some period of time (often a year).
- **net worth**: The total assets minus total liabilities of an individual or a company.

Wealth in the United States is commonly measured in terms of net worth, which is the sum of all assets, including home equity, minus all liabilities. The wealth—more specifically, the median net worth—of households in the United States varies with relation to race, education, geographic location, and gender. While income is often seen as a type of wealth in colloquial language use, wealth and income are two substantially different measures of economic prosperity. While there may be a high correlation between income and wealth, the relationship cannot be described as causal.

Assets are known as the raw materials of wealth, and they consist primarily of stocks and other financial and non-financial property, particularly home ownership, that allows individuals to increase their wealth. Home ownership is one of the main sources of wealth among families in the United States. However, there are racial differences in the acquisition of housing, and this inequality reproduces stratification in wealth across race. For white families, home ownership is worth, on average, $60,000 more than it is worth for black families. A lower proportion of people of color than white people have access to the financial resources needed to purchase a home with the intention of letting its value appreciate over time to increase personal wealth. In many communities with large minority populations, high interest rates can cause roadblocks to home ownership.

Data on personal wealth in the United States shows that the inequality between the nation’s richest and poorest citizens is vast. For example, just 400 Americans have the same wealth as half of all Americans combined. In 2007 more than 37 million U.S. citizens, or 12.5% of the population, were classified as poor by the Census Bureau. In 2007 the richest 1% of the American population owned 34.6% of the country’s total wealth, and the next 19% owned 50.5%. Thus, the top 20% of Americans owned 85% of the country’s wealth and the bottom 80% of the population owned 15%.



Mean Family Net Worth by Decile: This graph shows changes in the average net worth of families in each decile of the U.S. income hierarchy. In recent years, the average net worth of high-income families has grown significantly more than that of middle and lower-income families.

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17.2D: Education

In the U.S., educational attainment is strongly correlated to income and occupation, and therefore to social class.

Learning Objectives

- Describe how higher educational attainment relates to social class

Key Points

- American society values post-secondary education very highly; it is one of the main determinants of social class, along with income, wealth, and occupation.
- Tertiary education (or "higher education") is required for many middle and upper class professions.
- Educational attainment is strongly related to income in the United States.

Key Terms

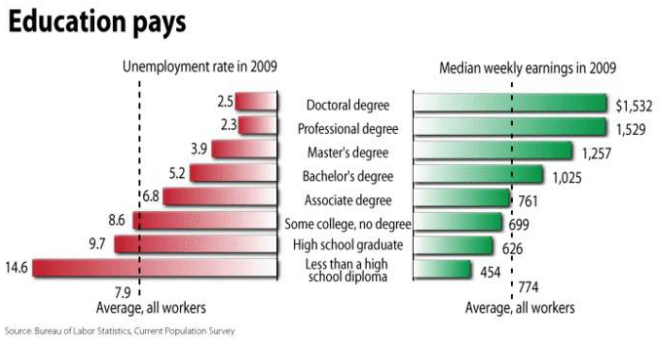
- **low-interest loans**: Money lent with only a small percentage of interest accruing as a charge, often made available to students.
- **scholarship**: Monetary aid given to a student to assist them in paying for an education.
- **tertiary education**: Higher education, including college education and vocational programs beyond high school.

The educational attainment of the U.S. population parallels that of many other industrialized countries, with the vast majority of the population having completed secondary education and a rising number of college graduates outnumbering high school dropouts. As a whole, the U.S. population is spending more years in formal educational programs. American society highly values post-secondary education, or education beyond high school; it is one of the main determinants of class and status in the U.S. In fact, the attainment of post-secondary and graduate degrees is often considered the most important feature distinguishing middle and upper middle class people from lower or working class people. In this regard, universities can be regarded as the gatekeepers of the professional middle class.

Many middle-class professions require post-secondary degrees, which are classified as tertiary education (or "higher education"). Tertiary education is rarely free, but the costs do vary widely; tuition at elite private colleges often exceeds $200,000 for a four-year program while public colleges and universities typically charge much less (for state residents). Many public institutions, such as the University of California system, rival elite private schools in reputation and quality. Many colleges and universities offer scholarships to make higher education more affordable. Government and private lenders also offer low-interest loans. Still, by all accounts, the average cost of education is increasing.

In the U.S., income is strongly related to educational attainment. In 2005, the majority of people with doctorate and professional degrees were counted among the nation's top 15% of income earners. The income of people with bachelor's degrees was above the national median, while the median income of people with some college education remained near the national median. According to U.S. Census Bureau, 9% of persons aged 25 or older had a graduate degree, 27.9% had a bachelor's degree or more, and 53% had attended at least some college. According to the same census, 85% of the U.S. population had graduated from high school. These numbers indicate that the average American does not have a college degree or higher. Having a degree is strongly linked to occupation, and therefore income; degree holders work in more highly skilled professions and earn more on average. Thus, having a bachelor's or graduate degree is a strong indicator of social class.

Income and educational levels differ by race, age, household configuration, and geography. Although the incomes of both men and women are associated with higher educational attainment (higher incomes for higher educational attainment), there remains an income gap between races and genders at each educational level.



Education Pays: This graphic, released by the US Department of Labor, shows the correlation between higher education, employment status, and income. The more education a person attains, the more likely they are to be employed in high paying occupations.

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17.2E: Occupation

In the United States, occupation and occupational prestige are primary indicators of social class, along with income, wealth, and education.

Learning Objectives

- Explain how occupation may affect a person's social class

Key Points

- High status professional occupations, such as those of a doctor, lawyer, or CEO, require high educational attainment and are associated with the upper-middle and upper classes.
- Occupation often corresponds with income and educational attainment, which combined determine a person's social class. However, occupations with high occupational prestige can increase one's social class without a corresponding increase in indicators, such as income.
- To enter the professions, a person usually must hold a professional degree. Examples of professional degrees include JDs for law, MDs for medicine, and MBAs for business.

Key Terms

- **profession**: An occupation, trade, craft, or activity in which one has a professed expertise in a particular area, especially one requiring a high level of skill or training.
- **educational attainment**: Educational attainment is a term commonly used by statisticians to refer to the highest degree of education an individual has completed.
- **occupational prestige**: The rating of a job based on the social esteem or respect granted to an occupation.

In the United States, occupation is a primary indicator of social class, along with income, wealth, and education. Occupation is closely linked to Americans' identities, and is a salient marker of status. The importance of occupation in part results from the substantial amount of time that American's devote to their careers. The average work week in the United States for those employed full time is 42.9 hours long, and 30% of the population works more than 40 hours per week.

High educational attainment is generally a pre-requisite for entering high status professional occupations. Professional occupations, sometimes called "the professions" or "white collar jobs," include highly skilled positions, such as that of a lawyer, physician, and CEO. Having a professional occupation is associated with being a member of the upper-middle or upper class. To enter the professions, a person usually must hold a professional degree. Examples of professional degrees include JDs for law, MDs for medicine, and MBAs for business. Because the professions are considered highly skilled, require high educational attainment, and provide high incomes, they are associated with high social status.

Sociologists often talk about the status associated with various occupations in terms of occupational prestige. Occupational prestige refers to the esteem in which society holds a particular occupation. Occupational prestige is one way in which occupation may affect a person's social class independent of income and educational attainment. While high status occupations often reap high incomes and require significant education, in some cases these three variables are not linked. For example, being a university professor has high status and requires high educational attainment, but does not always result in high income. Its status depends upon the high esteem in which professors are held. In large part because of high occupational prestige, university professors are generally considered members of the upper-middle class. Conversely, funeral directors generally have high incomes and often high educational attainment. Being a funeral director is not a high status job, however, because Americans do not tend to hold the occupation in high esteem it has low occupational prestige. Funeral directors are, therefore, often considered members of the middle class. As illustrated by this example, occupations with high prestige can raise one's social class even without improving one's economic status.



Occupation: The social class associated with a particular occupation can change over time as the esteem in which the occupation is held changes. In the late-nineteenth century, at the time of this painting, doctors were not members of the upper class. As the occupation has come to require increased education and to depend upon increasing technological expertise, the occupation's prestige has risen. Doctors are now commonly considered members of the upper-middle or upper class.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

17.3: The Class Structure in the U.S.

Topic hierarchy

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17.3B: The Upper Class

17.3C: The Upper Middle Class

17.3D: The Lower Middle Class

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17.3A: Class Structure in the U.S.

American society is stratified into social classes based on wealth, income, educational attainment, occupation, and social networks.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss America's class structure and its relation to the concept of the "American Dream"

Key Points

- There are competing models for thinking about social classes in the U.S. — most Americans recognize a three-tier structure that includes the upper, middle, and lower classes, but variations delineate an upper-middle class and a working class.
- High income earners likely are substantially educated, have high- status occupations, and maintain powerful social networks.
- According to the "American Dream," American society is meritocratic and class is achievement-based. In other words, one's membership in a particular social class is based on educational and career accomplishments.

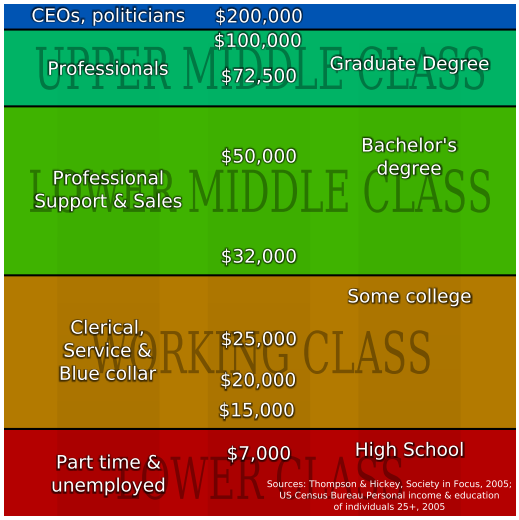
Key Terms

- **social network**: The web of a person's social, family, and business contacts, who provide material and social resources and opportunities.
- **The American Dream**: The belief that with hard work, courage, and determination, anyone can prosper and achieve success.
- **Corporate Elite**: A class of high-salaried stockholders, such as corporate CEOs, who do not necessarily have inherited privilege but have achieved high status through their careers.

Most social scientists in the U.S. agree that society is stratified into social classes. Social classes are hierarchical groupings of individuals that are usually based on wealth, educational attainment, occupation, income, or membership in a subculture or social network. Social class in the United States is a controversial issue, having many competing definitions, models, and even disagreements over its very existence. Many Americans recognize a simple three-tier model that includes the upper class, the middle class, and the lower or working class. Some social scientists have proposed more complex models that may include as many as a dozen class levels. Meanwhile, some scholars deny the very existence of discrete social classes in American society. In spite of debate, most social scientists do agree that in the U.S. people are hierarchically ranked in a social class structure.

Models of U.S. Social Classes

A team of sociologists recently posited that there are six social classes in America. In this model, the upper class (3% of the population) is divided into upper-upper class (1% of the U.S. population, earning hundreds of millions to billions per year) and the lower-upper class (2%, earning millions per year). The middle class (40%) is divided into upper-middle class (14%, earning $76,000 or more per year) and the lower-middle class (26%, earning $46,000 to $75,000 per year). The working class (30%) earns $19,000 to $45,000 per year. The lower class (27%) is divided into working poor (13%, earning $9000 to 18,000 per year) and underclass (14%, earning under $9000 per year). This model has gained traction as a tool for thinking about social classes in America, but it does not fully account for variations in status based on non-economic factors, such as education and occupational prestige. This critique is somewhat mitigated by the fact that income is often closely aligned with other indicators of status; for example, those with high incomes likely have substantial education, high status occupations, and powerful social networks.



United States Social Classes: While social scientists offer competing models of class structure, most agree that society is stratified by occupation, income, and educational attainment.

A commonly used model for thinking about social classes in the U.S. attributes the following general characteristics to each tier: the upper class has vast accumulated wealth and significant control over corporations and political institutions, and their privilege is usually inherited; the corporate elite consists of high-salaried stockholders, such as corporate CEOs, who did not necessarily inherit privilege but have achieved high status through their careers; the upper-middle class consists of highly educated salaried professionals whose occupations are held in high esteem, such as lawyers, engineers, and professors; the

middle class (the most vaguely defined and largest social class) is generally thought to include people in mid-level managerial positions or relatively low status professional positions, such as high school teachers and small business owners; the working class generally refers to those without college degrees who do low level service work, such as working as a sales clerk or housekeeper, and includes most people whose incomes fall below the poverty line. In the above outline of social class, status clearly depends not only on income, but also occupational prestige and educational attainment.

Debates over the Existence and Significance of U.S. Social Classes

According to the "American Dream," American society is meritocratic and class is achievement-based. In other words, membership in a particular social class is based on educational and career accomplishments. Many sociologists dispute the existence of such class mobility and point to the ways in which social class is inherited. For example, a son or daughter of a wealthy individual may carry a higher status and different cultural connotations than a member of the nouveau riche ("new money"). Likewise, being born into a particular social class may confer advantages or disadvantages that increase the likelihood that an adult will remain in the social class into which they were born.

Social theorists who dispute the existence of social classes in the U.S. tend to argue that society is stratified along a continuous gradation, rather than into delineated categories. In other words, there is inequality in America, with some people attaining higher status and higher standards of living than others. But there is no clear place to draw a line separating one status group from the next. Whether one ascribes to the view that classes are discrete groups or levels along a continuum, it is important to remember that all social classes in the United States, except the upper class, consist of tens of millions of people. Thus social classes form social groups so large that they feature considerable internal diversity and any statement regarding a given social class' culture should be seen as a broad generalization.

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17.3B: The Upper Class

The American upper class is the highest socioeconomic bracket in the social hierarchy and is defined by its members' great wealth and power.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the most important characteristics of the upper class in the U.S.

Key Points

- Members of the upper class accumulate wealth through investments and capital gains, rather than through annual salaries.
- Households with net worths of $1 million or more may be identified as members of the upper-most socioeconomic demographic, depending on the class model used.
- Sociologist Leonard Beeghley asserts that all households with a net worth of $1 million or more are considered "rich. " He divides the rich into two sub- groups: the rich and the super-rich.

Key Terms

- **investment**: The expenditure of capital in expectation of deriving income or profit from its use.
- **capital gain**: An increase in the value of a capital asset, such as stock or real estate.

The American upper class refers to the "top layer," or highest socioeconomic bracket, of society in the United States. This social class is most commonly described as those with great wealth and power, and may also be referred to as the capitalist class, or simply as "the rich. " People in this class commonly have immense influence in the nation's political and economic institutions as well as in the media.

Many politicians, heirs to fortunes, top business executives such as CEOs, successful venture capitalists, and celebrities are considered members of the upper class. Some prominent and high-rung professionals may also be included if they attain great influence and wealth. The main distinguishing feature of this class is their source of income. While the vast majority of people and households derive their income from salaries, those in the upper class derive their income primarily from investments and capital gains.

Households with a net worth of $1 million or more may be identified as members of the upper-most socioeconomic demographic, depending on the class model used. While most contemporary sociologists estimate that only 1% of households are members of the upper class, sociologist Leonard Beeghley asserts that all households with a net worth of $1 million or more are considered "rich. " He divides the rich into two sub-groups: the rich and the super-rich. The rich constitute roughly 5% of U.S. households and their wealth is largely in the form of home equity. Other contemporary sociologists, such as Dennis Gilbert, argue that this group is not part of the upper class but rather part of the upper middle class, as its standard of living is largely derived from occupation-generated income and its affluence falls far short of that attained by the top percentile. The super-rich, according to Beeghley, are those able to live off their wealth without depending on occupation-derived income. This demographic constitutes roughly 0.9% of American households. Beeghley's definition of the super-rich is congruent with the definition of upper class employed by most other sociologists. The top.01% of the population, with an annual income of $9.5 million or more, received 5% of the income of the United States in 2007. These 15,000 families have been characterized as the "richest of the rich. "

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17.3C: The Upper Middle Class

The upper-middle class refers to people within the middle class that have high educational attainment, high salaries, and high status jobs.

Learning Objectives

- Identify the central characteristics of the upper-middle class in the U.S.

Key Points

- Members of the upper-middle class have substantially less wealth and prestige than the upper class, but a higher standard of living than the lower-middle class or working class.
- The U.S. upper-middle class consists mostly of white-collar professionals who have a high degree of autonomy in their work. The most common professions of the upper-middle class tend to center on conceptualizing, consulting, and instruction.
- In addition to having autonomy in their work, above-average incomes, and advanced educations, the upper middle class also tends to be powerful; members are influential in setting trends and shaping public opinion.

Key Terms

- **educational attainment**: Educational attainment is a term commonly used by statisticians to refer to the highest degree of education an individual has completed.
- **salaried professionals**: White-collar employees whose work is largely self-directed and is compensated with an annual salary, rather than an hourly wage.

Sociologists use the term “upper-middle class” to refer to the social group consisting of higher-status members of the middle class. This is in contrast to the term “lower-middle class,” which is used for the group at the opposite end of the middle class stratum, and to the broader term “middle class. ” There is considerable debate as to how to define the upper-middle class. According to the rubric laid out by sociologist Max Weber, the upper-middle class consists of well-educated professionals with graduate degrees and comfortable incomes.

In 1951, sociologist C. Wright Mills conducted one of first major studies of the middle class in America. According to his definition, the middle class consists of an upper-middle class, made up of professionals distinguished by exceptionally high educational attainment and high economic security; and a lower-middle class, consisting of semi-professionals. While the groups overlap, differences between those at the center of both groups are considerable.

Among modern sociologists, the American upper-middle class is defined using income, education, and occupation as primary indicators. There is some debate over what exactly the term “upper-middle class” means, but in academic models, the term generally applies to highly educated, salaried professionals whose work is largely self-directed. The U.S. upper-middle class consists mostly of white-collar professionals who have a high degree of autonomy in their work. The most common professions of the upper-middle class tend to center on conceptualizing, consulting, and instruction. They include such occupations as lawyer, physician, dentist, engineer, professor, architect, civil service executive, and civilian contractor. Many members of the upper-middle class have graduate degrees, such as law, business, or medical degrees, which are often required for professional occupations. Educational attainment is a distinguishing feature of the upper-middle class. Additionally, household incomes in the upper-middle class commonly exceed $100,000, with some smaller one-income earners earning incomes in the high 5-figure range.

In addition to autonomy in their work, above-average incomes, and advanced educations, the upper middle class also tends to be powerful; members are influential in setting trends and shaping public opinion. Moreover, members of the upper-middle class are generally more economically secure than their lower-middle class counterparts. Holding advanced degrees and high status in corporations and institutions tends to insulate the upper-middle class from economic downturns. Members of this class are likely to be in the top income quintile, or the top 20% of the economic hierarchy.



University Campus: Advanced education is one of the most distinguishing features of the upper-middle class.

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17.3D: The Lower Middle Class

The lower-middle class are those with some education and comfortable salaries, but with socioeconomic statuses below the upper-middle class.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the differences between the lower and upper-middle class

Key Points

- The lower-middle class, also sometimes simply referred to as “middle class,” includes roughly one third of U.S. households, and is thought to be growing.
- Individuals in the lower-middle class tend to hold low status professional or white collar jobs, such as school teacher, nurse, or paralegal.
- The lower-middle class is among the largest social classes, rivaled only by the working class, and it is thought to be growing.

Key Terms

- **college education**: Education beyond secondary school, usually culminating in a bachelor’s degree and serving as a necessary credential for middle class occupations.
- **White Collar**: Describes a person who performs professional, managerial, or administrative work for a salary.
- **professional**: A person whose occupation is highly skilled, salaried, and requires high educational attainment.

In developed nations across the world, the lower-middle class is a sub-division of the middle class that refers to households and individuals who are somewhat educated and usually stably employed, but who have not attained the education, occupational prestige, or income of the upper-middle class.

In American society, the middle class is often divided into the lower-middle class and upper-middle class. The lower-middle class (also sometimes simply referred to as the middle class) consists of roughly one third of households—it is roughly twice as large as the upper-middle and upper classes. Lower-middle class individuals commonly have some college education or a bachelor’s degree and earn a comfortable living. The lower-middle class is among the largest social classes, rivaled only by the working class, and it is thought to be growing.

Individuals in the lower-middle class tend to hold low status professional or white collar jobs, such as school teacher, nurse, or paralegal. These types of occupations usually require some education but generally do not require a graduate degree. Lower-middle class occupations usually provide comfortable salaries, but put individuals beneath the top third of incomes.



Elementary School Teacher: Primary school teachers are generally considered lower-middle class. They usually hold college degrees, but often do not hold graduate degrees; they make comfortable incomes, but have low accumulated wealth; their work is largely self-directed, but is not high status.

According to some class models the lower middle class is located roughly between the 52nd and 84thpercentile of society. In terms of personal income distribution in 2005, that would mean gross annual personal incomes from about $32,500 to $60,000. Since 42% of all households had two income earners, with the majority of those in the top 40% of gross income, household income figures would be significantly higher, ranging from roughly $50,000 to $100,000 annually. In terms of educational attainment, 27% of persons had a bachelor’s degree or higher. If the upper middle and upper class combined are to constitute 16% of the population, it becomes clear that some of those in the lower middle class boast college degrees or some college education.

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17.3E: The Working Class

The working class consists of individuals and households with low educational attainment, low status occupations, and below average incomes.

Learning Objectives

- Explain how differences in class culture may affect working-class students who enter the post-secondary education system

Key Points

- Members of the working class usually have a high school diploma or some college education, and may work in low-skilled occupations like retail sales or manual labor.
- Due to differences between middle and working-class cultures, working-class college students may face "culture shock" upon entering the post-secondary education system, with its "middle class" culture.
- Working classes are mainly found in industrialized economies and in the urban areas of non-industrialized economies.

Key Terms

- **working class**: The social class of those who perform physical or low-skilled work for a living, as opposed to the professional or middle class, the upper class, or the upper middle class.
- **Blue Collar**: Describes working-class occupations, especially those involving manual labor.
- **manual labor**: Any work done by hand; usually implying it is unskilled or physically demanding.

Working class is a term used in the social sciences and in ordinary conversation to describe those employed in lower tier jobs (as measured by skill, education, and income), often extending to those who are unemployed or otherwise earning below-average incomes. Working classes are mainly found in industrialized economies and in the urban areas of non-industrialized economies.

In the United States, the parameters of the working class remain vaguely defined and are contentious. Since many members of the working class, as defined by academic models, are often identified in the vernacular as being middle class, there is considerable ambiguity over the term's meaning. In the class models devised by sociologists, the working class comprises between 30 percent and 35 percent of the population, roughly the same percentage as the lower middle class. Those in the working class are commonly employed in low-skilled occupations, including clerical and retail positions and blue collar or manual labor occupations. Low-level, white-collar employees are sometimes included in this class, such as secretaries and call center employees.

Education, for example, can pose an especially intransigent barrier in the United States. Members of the working class commonly have only a high school diploma, although some may have minimal college courses to their credit as well. Due to differences between middle and working-class cultures, working-class college students may face "culture shock" upon entering the post-secondary education system, with its "middle class" culture. Research showing that working-class students are taught to value obedience over leadership and creativity can partially account for the difficulties that many working-class individuals face upon entering colleges and universities.



Battle Strike: Class War: Workers battle with the police during the Minneapolis Teamsters Strike of 1934.

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17.3F: The Lower Class

The lower class consists of those at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy who have low education, low income, and low status jobs.

Learning Objectives

- Differentiate between the terms “lower class,” “working poor,” and “underclass”

Key Points

- Low educational attainment and disabilities are two of the main reasons individuals can either struggle to find work or fall into the lower class.
- Generally, the term lower class describes individuals working easily-filled employment positions. These positions typically have little prestige or economic compensation, and do not require workers to have a high school education.
- Lower class households are at the greatest risk of falling below the poverty line if a job holder suddenly becomes unemployed.

Key Terms

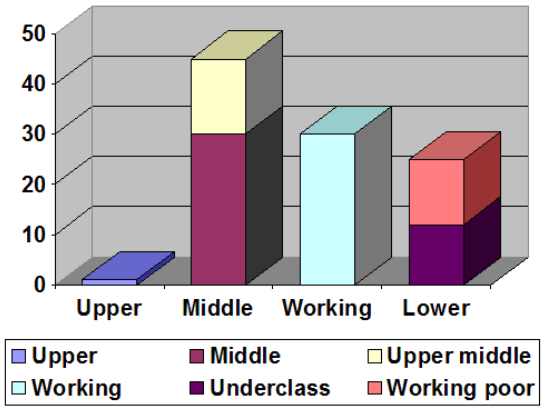
- **Poverty line**: This is the threshold of poverty used by the U.S. Census Bureau to define the minimum income one must earn to meet basic material needs.
- **public assistance**: the various forms of material aid provided by the government to those who are in need
- **underclass**: the poorest class of people in a given society
- **manual labor**: Any work done by hand; usually implying it is unskilled or physically demanding.

Defining the Lower Class

The lower class in the United States refers to individuals who are at, or near, the lower end of the socioeconomic hierarchy. As with all social classes in the United States, the lower class is loosely defined, and its boundaries and definitions are subject to debate. When used by social scientists, the lower class is typically defined as service employees, low-level manual laborers, and the unemployed. Those who are employed in lower class occupations are often colloquially referred to as the working poor. Those who do not participate in the labor force, and who rely on public assistance, such as food stamps and welfare checks, as their main source of income, are commonly identified as members of the underclass, or, colloquially, the poor. Generally, lower class individuals work easily-filled employment positions that have little prestige or economic compensation. These individuals often lack a high school education.

Unemployment and the Poverty Line

A number of things can cause an individual to become unemployed. Two of the most common causes are low educational attainment and disabilities, the latter of which includes both physical and mental ailments that preclude educational or occupational success. The poverty line is defined as the income level at which an individual becomes eligible for public assistance. While only about 12% of households fall below the poverty threshold at one point in time, the total percentage of households that will, at some point during the course of a single year, fall below the poverty line, is much higher. Many such households waver above and below the line throughout a single year. Lower class households are at the greatest risk of falling below this poverty line, particularly if a job holder becomes unemployed. For all of these reasons, lower class households are the most economically vulnerable in the United States.



Gilbert Model: This is a model of the socio-economic stratification of American society, as outlined by Dennis Gilbert.

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17.3G: Income Distribution

The United States has a high level of income inequality, with a wide gap between the top and bottom brackets of earners.

Learning Objectives

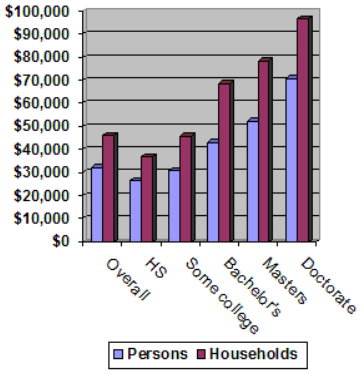
- Explain the development of income distribution in the US since the 1970's and what is meant by the "Great Divergence"

Key Points

- Since the 1970s, inequality has increased dramatically in the United States.
- Different groups get different compensation for the same work. The discrepancy in wages between males and females is called the " gender wage gap," and the discrepancy between whites and minorities is called the "racial wage gap".
- While earnings from capital and investment are still a significant cause of inequality, income is increasingly segregated by occupation as well. Of earners, 60% in the top 0.1% are executives, managers, supervisors, and financial professionals.

Key Terms

- **Race Wage Gap**: The difference in earnings between racial or ethnic groups.
- **Gender Wage Gap**: The difference between male and female earnings expressed as a percentage of male earnings.
- **great divergence**: Refers to the growth of economic inequality in America since the 1970s.



Income Distribution by Education: This graph illustrates the unequal distribution of income between groups with different levels of educational attainment. Education is an indicator of class position, meaning that unequal distribution of income by education points to inequality between the classes.

Unequal distribution of income between genders, races, and the population, in general, in the United States has been the frequent subject of study by scholars and institutions. Inequality between male and female workers, called the "gender wage gap," has decreased considerably over the last several decades. During the same time, inequality between black and white Americans, sometimes called the "race wage gap," has stagnated, not improving but not getting worse. Nevertheless, data from a number of sources indicate that overall income inequality in the United States has grown significantly since the late 1970s, widening the gap between the country's rich and poor.

A number of studies by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Congressional Budget Office (CBO), and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) have found that the distribution of income in the United States has become increasingly unequal since the 1970s. Economist Paul Krugman and journalist Timothy Noah have referred to this trend as the "Great Divergence." Since the 1970s, income inequality has grown almost continuously, with the exceptions being during the economic recessions in 1990-91, 2001, and 2007. The Great Divergence differs in some ways from the pre-Depression era inequality observed in the early 1900s (the last period of great inequality). Before 1937, a larger share of top earners' income came from capital (interest, dividends, income from rent, capital gains). Post-1970, a higher proportion of the income of high-income taxpayers comes predominantly from employment compensation–60% of earners in the top 0.1% are executives, managers, supervisors, and financial professionals, and the five most common professions among the top 1% of earners are managers, physicians, administrators, lawyers, and financial specialists. Still, much of the richest Americans' accumulated wealth is in the form of stocks and real estate.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

17.4: Social Mobility

Topic hierarchy

17.4A: Social Mobility

17.4B: Growing Gap Between Rich and Poor

17.4C: Open vs. Closed Stratification Systems

17.4D: Types of Social Mobility

17.4E: Social Mobility in the U.S.

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17.4A: Social Mobility

Social mobility is the movement of an individual or group from one social position to another over time.

Learning Objectives

- Assess how different factors facilitate social mobility

Key Points

- A person's ability to move between social positions depends upon their economic, cultural, human, and social capital.
- The attributes needed to move up or down the social hierarchy are particular to each society; some countries value economic gain, for example, while others prioritize religious status.
- Social mobility typically refers to vertical mobility, movement of individuals or groups up or down from one socio-economic level to another, often by changing jobs or marriage.

Key Terms

- **Relative Social Mobility**: A measure of a person's upward or downward movement in the social hierarchy compared to the movement of other members of their inherited social class.
- **meritocratic**: Used to describe a type of society where wealth, income, and social status are assigned through competition.
- **social mobility**: the degree to which, in a given society, an individual's, family's, or group's social status can change throughout the course of their life through a system of social hierarchy or stratification
- **Intergenerational Mobility**: Refers to the phenomenon whereby a child attains higher or lower status than their parents.

Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups in social positions over time. Most commonly, social mobility refers to the change in wealth and social status of individuals or families. However, it may also refer to changes in health status, literacy rate, education, or other variables among groups, such as classes, ethnic groups, or countries.

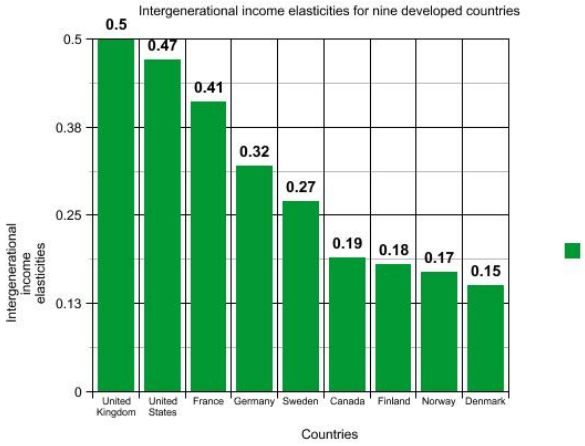
Social mobility typically refers to vertical mobility, movement of individuals or groups up or down from one socio-economic level to another, often by changing jobs or marriage. Nonetheless, social mobility can also refer to horizontal mobility, movement from one position to another within the same social level, as when someone changes between two equally prestigious occupations.

In some cases, social mobility is intergenerational, as when children attain a higher or lower status than their parents held. Other times, social mobility is intra-generational, meaning that a person changes status within their lifetime. A high level of intergenerational mobility is often considered praiseworthy and can be seen as a sign of equality of opportunity in a society.

A distinction can also be drawn between absolute social mobility, which refers to the total observed movement of people between classes, and relative social mobility, which is an estimate of the chance of upward or downward movement of a member of one social class in comparison with a member from another class. An example of absolute social movement is when a region's economic development provides quality education to a social group that previously did not have access to education, thus raising the group's literacy level and socioeconomic status. Relative social mobility might refer to the opportunities presented to a middle class child born in a particular area of the United States, who might be predicted to attain a college level education and a maximum income of $80,000, for example.

Social mobility can be enabled to varying extents by economic capital, cultural capital, human capital, and social capital. Economic capital includes a person's financial and material resources, such as income and accumulated wealth. Cultural capital includes resources ranging from holding a graduate degree to having a grasp of a group's customs and rituals, both of which may confer an advantage in job markets and social exchanges. Human capital refers to such individual traits as competence and work ethic, which may enable increased educational or professional attainment. Social capital includes the advantages conferred by one's social network, such as access to professional opportunities and insider knowledge. These types of capital facilitate mobility by providing access to opportunities and the tools to acquire wealth and status.

Societies present different opportunities for mobility depending on their systems of value. For example, Western capitalist countries are generally meritocratic. In such countries, social standing is based on such personal attributes as educational attainment, income, and occupational prestige. Thus, the degree of mobility in Western capitalist states depends on the extent to which individuals have access to educational and economic opportunity. By contrast, in countries where religious devotion is valued over economic standing, mobility may depend upon individuals' access to religious rituals and shows of piety. In different countries or regions, the extent to which individuals have social mobility depends upon different factors.



Source: Economic Mobility Project, Corak, Miles. 2006. "Do Poor Children Become Poor Adults? Lessons from a Cross Country Comparison of Generational Earnings Mobility." Research on Economic Inequality, 13 no. 1: 143-188.

Intergenerational Mobility in a Sample of Developed Countries: This graph shows the results of a study on how much intergenerational social mobility there is in a sample of developed countries. Countries with higher intergenerational income elasticity have lower social mobility — in countries on the left of the graph, children are likely to attain the same social status as their parents.

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17.4B: Growing Gap Between Rich and Poor

Economic inequality (also known as the gap between rich and poor) consists of disparities in the distribution of wealth and income.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the causes of economic inequality

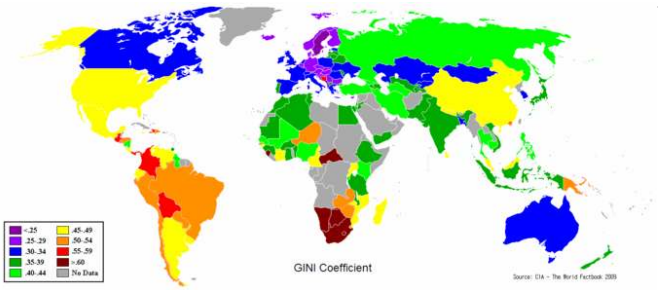
Key Points

- Economic inequality refers to inequality among individuals and groups within a society, but can also refer to inequality among countries.
- Inequality is most often measured using the Gini coefficient, a statistic used to demonstrate the dispersion of wealth in a group.
- Both the capitalist market and government interventions can increase or decrease the level of inequality in a society.

Key Terms

- **supply and demand**: An economic model of price determination in a market based on the relative scarcity or abundance of goods and services.
- **gini coefficient**: A measure of the inequality of a statistical distribution, ranging from zero (total equality) to one (maximal inequality), used in various disciplines but especially in economics to compare incomes or wealth.
- **Capitalist Market**: Refers to an economic system in which supply and demand determines the cost of goods and wages for services.

Economic inequality (also known as the gap between rich and poor, income inequality, wealth disparity, or wealth and income differences) consists of disparities in the distribution of wealth (accumulated assets) and income. The term typically refers to inequality among individuals and groups within a society, but can also refer to inequality among countries. The issue of economic inequality is related to the ideas of equity: equality of outcome and equality of opportunity. There are various numerical indices for measuring economic inequality, but the most commonly used measure for the purposes of comparison is the Gini coefficient (also known as the Gini index or Gini ratio for Italian statistician and sociologist Corrado Gini). The Gini coefficient is a statistical measure of the dispersal of wealth or income. A Gini coefficient of zero indicates that there is perfect equality—assets are equally divided between all people in the group. A Gini coefficient of one indicates that all of a group's wealth is held by one individual. Most countries fall toward the middle of this range.



Map of Global Gini Coefficients: Using Gini coefficients, this map illustrates the extent to which each country in the world has internal inequality, or a gap between its richest and poorest citizens.

There are many reasons for economic inequality within societies, and they are often interrelated. Acknowledged factors that impact economic inequality include, but are not limited to:

- Inequality in wages and salaries;
- The income gap between highly skilled workers and low-skilled or no-skills workers;
- Wealth concentration in the hands of a few individuals or institutions;
- Labor markets;
- Globalization;
- Technological changes;
- Policy reforms;
- Taxes;
- Education;
- Computerization and growing technology;
- Racism;
- Gender;
- Culture;
- Innate ability

A major cause of economic inequality within modern economies is the determination of wages by the capitalist market. In the capitalist market, the wages for jobs are set by supply and demand. If there are many workers willing to do a job for a great amount of time, there is a high supply of labor for that job. If few people need that job done, there is low demand for that type of labor. When there is high supply and low demand for a job, it results in a low wage. Conversely, if there is low supply and high demand (as with particular highly skilled jobs), it will result in a high wage. The gap in wages produces inequality between different types of workers.

Apart from market-driven factors that affect wage inequality, government sponsored initiatives can also increase or decrease inequality. Social scientists and policy makers debate the relative merits and effectiveness of each approach to regulating

inequality. Typical government initiatives to reduce economic inequality include:

- Public education: Increasing the supply of skilled labor and reducing income inequality due to education differentials.
- Progressive taxation: The rich are taxed proportionally more than the poor, reducing the amount of income inequality in society.
- Minimum wage legislation: Raising the income of the poorest workers
- Nationalization or subsidization of products: Providing goods and services that everyone needs cheaply or freely (such as food, healthcare, and housing), governments can effectively raise the purchasing power of the poorer members of society.

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17.4C: Open vs. Closed Stratification Systems

In an open class system, people are ranked by achieved status, whereas in a closed class system, people are ranked by ascribed status.

Learning Objectives

- Differentiate between open and closed stratification systems

Key Points

- Social stratification describes the socioeconomic levels of a society as "layers," with the wealthiest and most powerful citizens being at the top.
- An achievement-based economic system with social mobility and relations between classes is known as an open class system.
- By contrast, people in a closed class system have been confined to their ancestral occupations, and their social status has mostly been prescribed by birth. Most closed class systems are found in less industrialized countries.
- Ascribed status is the social position one is born into and personal characteristics beyond one's control, such as race and gender. Achieved status is one's social standing that depends on personal accomplishments.

Key Terms

- **achieved status**: A social status of a person that is acquired, such as being an Olympic athlete, being a criminal, or being a college professor.
- **structural mobility**: Opportunity for movement in social class that is attributable to changes in the social structure of a society, rather than to changes in an individual.
- **ascribed status**: The social status of a person that is given from birth or assumed involuntarily later in life.

Social stratification describes the socioeconomic levels of a society as "layers," with the wealthiest and most powerful citizens being at the top. Typically, the top layer of society tends to have lots of property, as well as prestige and social influence.

Sociologists who study stratification have identified open class systems and compared them to closed class systems. The difference between these types of class systems are their structural mobility. In a class system that has high structural mobility, it's easy to move around between social classes based on the way the society is structured, regardless of your individual achievements.

In an open class system, the hierarchical social status of a person is achieved through their effort. These types of class systems are achievement-based economic system with social mobility and relations between classes. Status based on family background, ethnicity, gender, and religion, which is also known as "ascribed status," is less important. In an open class system, there is no distinct line between the classes, and there is a wide range of positions within each status level. Core industrial nations seem to have more of an ideal open class system than less industrialized countries, in which there are fewer opportunities for economic advancement.



Steve Jobs' Childhood Home: The United States exhibits an open stratification system, where individuals can move between social statuses based on achievement. Pictured is the middle class home of Steve Jobs' parents, where he founded the technology company that eventually made him one of the world's wealthiest people.

Compared with industrialized open systems, pre-industrial societies have mostly been found to be closed class systems where there is low social mobility. People in such societies may be confined to their ancestral occupations, and their social status is largely prescribed by status at birth. A society in which traditional or religious caste systems dominate, opportunity for social mobility is unlikely.

Achieved status is a position gained based on merit or achievement (used in an open system). An open system describes a society with mobility between different social classes. Individuals can move up or down in the social rankings; this is unlike closed systems, where individuals are set in one social position for life despite their achievements. Ascribed status is based on who a person is, not what they can do. In closed class systems, people tend to be ranked by ascribed status. When ascribed status is used to determine social position, fixed roles develop, such as those of lord and serf in feudal Europe. Roles are assigned at birth, and there is little change over one's lifetime. Social mobility is much more frequent in countries that use achievement as the basis for status.



The French Estates: This fifteenth-century woodcutting illustrates the closed stratification system of the three estates of the French Ancien Régime. People were divided into clergy, nobility, and commoners. These categories were discrete, and there was little interaction or mobility between them.

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17.4D: Types of Social Mobility

Social mobility can be vertical and horizontal, absolute and relative, and between generations.

Learning Objectives

- Describe several types of social mobility

Key Points

- Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups in social position over time.
- Social mobility may refer to classes, ethnic groups, or entire nations, and may measure health status, literacy, or education; however, more commonly it refers to individuals or families, and to their change in income.
- Movement up or down the social hierarchy is called vertical social mobility.
- Movement between two equally ranked social positions is called horizontal mobility.
- Intra-generational mobility ("within" a generation) is defined as change in social status over a single lifetime.
- Absolute mobility measures whether (and by how much) living standards in a society have increased; this is often measured by what percentage of people have higher incomes than their parents.
- Relative mobility refers to how likely children are to move from their parents' place in the social hierarchy.

Key Terms

- **meritocratic**: Used to describe a type of society where wealth, income, and social status are assigned through competition.
- **vertical mobility**: Movement of individuals or groups up or down from one socioeconomic level to another, often by changing jobs or through marriage.
- **intra-generational mobility**: Change in social status over a single lifetime.

Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups in social position over time. Most commonly, social mobility refers to the change in wealth and social status of individuals or families. However, it may also refer to changes in health status, literacy rate, education, or other variables among groups such as classes, ethnic groups, or countries.

Social mobility typically refers to vertical mobility, which is the movement of individuals or groups up or down from one socioeconomic level to another, often by changing jobs or through marriage. In some instances though, social mobility is used to refer to horizontal mobility, which is the movement from one position to another within the same social level, as when someone changes between two equally prestigious occupations.

Social mobility can be intergenerational, such as when children attain a higher or lower status than their parents held. Other times, social mobility is intra-generational, meaning that a person changes status within their lifetime. A high level of intergenerational mobility is often considered praiseworthy, and can be seen as a sign of equality of opportunity in a society.

A distinction can be drawn between absolute social mobility, which refers to the total observed movement of people between classes, and relative social mobility, which is an estimate of the chance of upward or downward movement of a member of one social class in comparison with a member from another class. An example of absolute social mobility is when a region's economic development provides education to a social group that previously did not have access to education, thus raising the group's literacy level and socioeconomic status. Relative social mobility might refer to the opportunities presented to a middle class child born in a particular area of the United States, who might be predicted to attain a college level education and a maximum income of $80,000, for example.

Social mobility can be enabled to varying extents by economic capital, cultural capital, human capital, and social capital. Economic capital includes a person's financial and material resources, such as income and accumulated wealth. Cultural capital includes resources ranging from holding a graduate degree to having a grasp of a group's customs and rituals, both of which may confer an advantage in job markets and social exchanges. Human capital refers to such individual traits as competence and work ethic, which may enable increased educational or professional attainment. Social capital includes the advantages conferred by one's social network, such as access to professional opportunities and insider knowledge. These types of capital facilitate mobility by providing access to opportunities and the tools to acquire wealth and status.

Each society presents different opportunities for mobility depending on its system of values. For example, Western capitalist countries are generally meritocratic. In these countries, social standing is based on such personal attributes as educational attainment, income, and occupational prestige. Thus, the degree of mobility in Western capitalist states depends on the extent to which individuals have access to educational and economic opportunity. By contrast, in countries where religious devotion is valued over economic standing, mobility may depend upon individuals' access to religious rituals and shows of piety. In different countries or regions, the extent to

which individuals are socially mobile depends upon different factors.

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17.4E: Social Mobility in the U.S.

Strong social and economic mobility is considered part of American Dream, though there is relatively low social mobility in the U.S.

Learning Objectives

- Explain how the “glass ceiling” and other factors lower social mobility in the United States

Key Points

- Socioeconomic mobility in the United States refers to the movement of Americans from one social class or economic level to another, often by changing jobs or marrying.
- The ” glass ceiling ” effect is the upper limit on the mobility of minorities, such as African-Americans and women, that prevents them from occupying more than a very small percentage of high status positions.
- For women, another explanation for the glass ceiling effect in the American work force is the job- family trade off.

Key Terms

- **The American Dream**: The belief that with hard work, courage, and determination, anyone can prosper and achieve success.
- **Socioeconomic Mobility**: The movement of Americans from one social class or economic level to another, often by changing jobs or marrying.
- **glass ceiling**: An unwritten, uncodified barrier to further promotion or progression for a member of a specific demographic group.

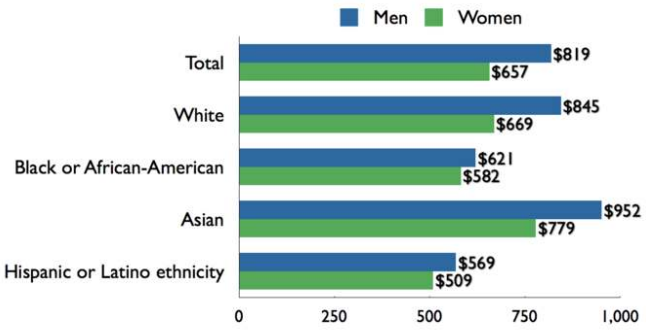
Socioeconomic mobility in the United States refers to the movement of Americans from one social class or economic level to another, often by changing jobs or marrying. This “vertical” mobility can be the change in socioeconomic status between parents and children (“inter-generational”), or over the course of a lifetime (“intra-generational”). It typically refers to “relative mobility”—the chance that an American’s income or status will rise or fall compared to others in another income or status group; however, mobility can also be “absolute”—whether (and by how much) living standards in America have increased. The belief that there is significant social mobility in America, or in other words, that Americans can and do rise from humble origins to riches, is called the American Dream.

Researchers have found that in fact, there is relatively low social mobility in the United States. Explanations for this phenomenon include the following:

- The fact that affluent children have better access to superior schools in an economy where pay is higher for educated workers
- The low rate of unionization, which leads to lower wages among the least skilled workers
- Public health problems, like obesity and diabetes, which can limit education and employment
- The sheer size of the income gap between the rich and poor, which makes it harder to climb the proverbial income ladder because the rungs are far apart
- Poverty, since those with low income have significantly lower rates of mobility than middle and higher income individuals

Despite the increased presence of African Americans and women in the work force over the years, women and non-whites hold jobs with less rank, authority, opportunity for advancement, and pay than men and whites. The limit to women’s and minorities’ upward mobility is called the glass ceiling. The glass ceiling is thought to prevent women and minorities from occupying more than a very small percentage of top managerial positions. One reason for the persistence of the glass ceiling, even as explicitly discriminatory policies are eliminated, is the small proportion of high status individuals in the social networks of women and ethnic minorities. The more managers there are in an employee’s immediate work environment, the higher the employee’s chances of interacting and spending time with high status and high income employees. Consequently, the more likely these employees are to be drawn on for promotion.

For women, another explanation for the glass ceiling effect in the American work force is the job-family trade off. While both men and women feel that a conflict exists between work life and family life, women with children, particularly married women, are more likely to either temporarily leave the labor force or cut back on employment by using flex time, working part-time, or working only part of the year. Statistically, men have been willing to accept job conditions that women do not, such as working outside in extreme weather, working where you can become physically dirty on a regular basis, working extra hours, and other such undesirable conditions.



US Gender Pay Gap, by Race/Ethnicity: In the United States, white males have greater social mobility than women and racial/ethnic minorities, whose mobility is limited by the glass ceiling.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

17.5: The Impacts of Social Class

Topic hierarchy

17.5A: Consequences of Social Class

17.5B: Physical Health

17.5C: Mental Health

17.5D: Family Life

17.5E: Education

17.5F: Religion

17.5G: Politics

17.5H: Crime and Criminal Justice

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17.5A: Consequences of Social Class

One's position in the the social class hierarchy has far-reaching effects on their health, family life, education, etc.

Learning Objectives

- Describe how socioeconomic status (SES) relates to the distributiuon of social opportunities and resources

Key Points

- While sociologists debate exactly how social classes are divided, there is substantial evidence that socioeconomic status is tied to tangible advantages and outcomes.
- Social class in the United States is a controversial issue, with social scientists disagreeing over models, definitions, and even the basic question of whether or not distinct classes exist.
- Many Americans believe in a simple three-class model that includes the rich or upper class, the middle class, and the poor or working class.

Key Terms

- **hierarchy**: Any group of objects ranked so that everyone but the topmost is subordinate to a specified group above it.
- **socioeconomic**: Of or pertaining to social and economic factors.

In the United States, a person's social class has far-reaching consequences. Social class refers to the the grouping of individuals in a stratified hierarchy based on wealth, income, education, occupation, and social network (though other factors are sometimes considered). One's position in the social class hierarchy may impact, for example, health, family life, education, religious affiliation, political participation, and experience with the criminal justice system.

Social class in the United States is a controversial issue, with social scientists disagreeing over models, definitions, and even the basic question of whether or not distinct classes exist. Many Americans believe in a simple three-class model that includes the rich or upper class, the middle class, and the poor or working class. More complex models that have been proposed by social scientists describe as many as a dozen class levels. Regardless of which model of social classes used, it is clear that socioeconomic status (SES) is tied to particular opportunities and resources. Socioeconomic status refers to a person's position in the social hierarchy and is determined by their income, wealth, occupational prestige, and educational attainment.

While social class may be an amorphous and diffuse concept, with scholars disagreeing over its definition, tangible advantages are associated with high socioeconomic status. People in the highest SES bracket, generally referred to as the upper class, likely have better access to healthcare, marry people of higher social status, attend more prestigious schools, and are more influential in politics than people in the middle class or working class. People in the upper class are members of elite social networks, effectively meaning that they have access to people in powerful positions who have specialized knowledge. These social networks confer benefits ranging from advantages in seeking education and employment to leniency by police and the courts. Sociologists may dispute exactly how to model the distinctions between socioeconomic statuses, but the higher up the class hierarchy one is in America, the better health, educational, and professional outcomes one is likely to have.

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17.5B: Physical Health

Social class is a strong social determinant of health.

Learning Objectives

- Describe how a low socioeconomic status (SES) can impact the health status of individuals

Key Points

- Social class is correlated to environmental hazards that increase one's risk of contracting a disease or sustaining an injury; low access to fresh produce, exercise facilities, and preventative health programs are all environmental hazards that negatively impact health outcomes.
- Health inequality refers to the unequal distribution of environmental hazards and access to health services between demographic groups, including social classes, as well as to the disparate health outcomes experienced by these groups.
- In addition to environmental hazards, lower socioeconomic classes have lower levels of health insurance than the upper class. Much of this disparity can be explained by the tendency for lower status occupations to not provide benefits to employees.

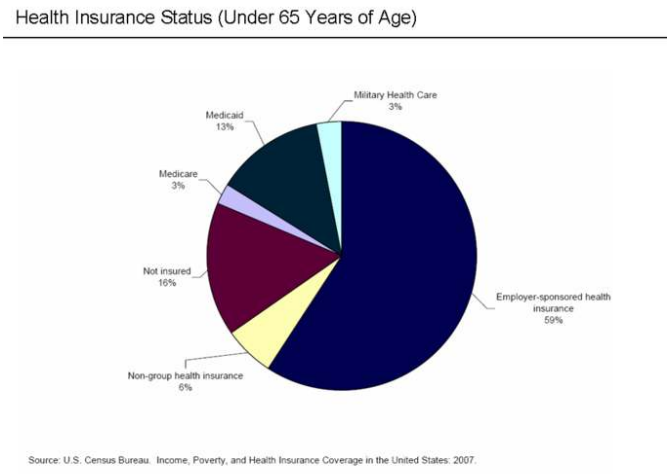
Key Terms

- **Environmental Hazards**: Risk factors related to social and economic conditions that may produce negative health outcomes, including pollution and distribution of grocery stores, for example.
- **health inequality**: The unequal distribution of environmental health hazards and access to health services between demographic groups, including social classes.
- **social determinants of health**: The economic and social conditions that influence individual and group differences in health status.

A person's social class has a significant impact on their physical health, their ability to receive adequate medical care and nutrition, and their life expectancy. While gender and race play significant roles in explaining healthcare inequality in the United States, socioeconomic status (SES) is the greatest social determinant of an individual's health outcome. Social determinants of health are the economic and social conditions that influence individual and group differences in health status. Social determinants are environmental, meaning that they are risk factors found in one's living and working conditions (including the distribution of income, wealth, influence, and power), rather than individual factors (such as behavioral risk factors or genetics). Social determinants can be used to predict one's risk of contracting a disease or sustaining an injury, and can also indicate how vulnerable one is to the consequences of a disease or injury. Individuals of lower socioeconomic status have lower levels of overall health, less insurance coverage, and less access to adequate healthcare than those of higher SES.

Individuals with a low SES in the United States experience a wide array of health problems as a result of their economic position. They are unable to use healthcare as often as people of higher status and when they do, it is often of lower quality. Additionally, people with low SES tend to experience a much higher rate of health issues than those of high SES. Many social scientists hypothesize that the higher rate of illness among those with low SES can be attributed to environmental hazards. For example, poorer neighborhoods tend to have fewer grocery stores and more fast food chains than wealthier neighborhoods, increasing nutrition problems and the risk of conditions, such as heart disease. Similarly, poorer neighborhoods tend to have fewer recreational facilities and higher crime rates than wealthier ones, which decreases the feasibility of routine exercise.

In addition to having an increased level of illness, lower socioeconomic classes have lower levels of health insurance than the upper class. Much of this disparity can be explained by the tendency for middle and upper class people to work in professions that provide health insurance benefits to employees, while lower status occupations often do not provide benefits to employees. For many employees who do not have health insurance benefits through their job, the cost of insurance can be prohibitive. Without insurance, or with inadequate insurance, the cost of healthcare can be extremely high. Consequently, many uninsured or poorly insured individuals do not have access to preventative care or quality treatment. This group of people has higher rates of infant mortality, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and disabling physical injuries than are seen among the well insured.



Health Insurance Distribution (under 65 years): As seen in this graph, with insurance needed for most health services, access to healthcare is not evenly distributed among Americans. The largest group of insured Americans consists of middle and upper class employees who receive health insurance through employers. As of 2007, 16% of the population had no health insurance coverage and, thus, had greatly limited access to healthcare.

Health inequality refers to the unequal distribution of environmental health hazards and access to health services between demographic groups, including social classes. For example, poor and affluent urban communities in the United States are geographically close to each other and to hospitals. Still, the affluent communities are more likely to have access to fresh produce, recreational facilities for exercise, preventative healthcare programs, and routine medical visits. Consequently, affluent communities are likely to have better health outcomes than nearby impoverished ones. The role of socioeconomic status in determining access to healthcare results in heath inequality between the upper, middle, and lower or working classes, with the higher classes having more positive health outcomes.



Farmers Market: Farmers markets are visible sources of fresh produce and healthy foods. These markets are concentrated in middle to upper income neighborhoods and are not found in food deserts.

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17.5C: Mental Health

Different classes have different levels of access to treatment and encounter different mental health stressors.

Learning Objectives

- Define mental health and explain why it is regarded as a socially constructed concept

Key Points

- Mental health describes a person's level of psychological well-being, or the presence/absence of mental disorder. Mental health can include one's ability to enjoy life and demonstrate psychological resilience.
- Mental health is socially constructed and defined; it is determined by both scientific and cultural knowledge, and it is understood differently by various groups, institutions, and professions.
- The evaluation of which mental states can be considered healthy and which require medical intervention also varies by class.

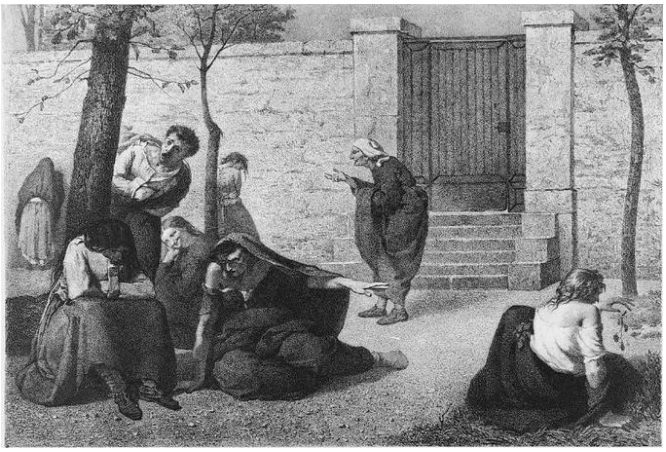
Key Terms

- **mental disorder**: A psychological pattern, potentially reflected in behavior, generally associated with distress or disability, not considered part of normal development in a person's culture.
- **mental health**: Emotional well-being, especially with reference to outlook on life, ability to cope with stress, or the absence of a mental disorder.

Mental health describes a level of psychological well-being or the presence/absence of a mental disorder. From the perspective of "positive psychology" or "holism," mental health may include an individual's ability to enjoy life and to demonstrate psychological resilience when confronted with challenges. The World Health Organization defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. "

What counts as healthy enjoyment and resilience depends upon one's class perspective. Members of different classes encounter different stressors—lower class people likely face more financial stress as it pertains to day-to-day sustenance and well-being, while upper class people might experience stress from the intense social pressures associated with elite circles. The evaluation of which mental states can be considered healthy and which require medical intervention also varies by class.

Mental health is a socially constructed and socially defined concept; different societies, groups, cultures, institutions, and professions have very different ways of conceptualizing its nature and causes, determining what is mentally healthy, and deciding what interventions are appropriate. Definitions of mental health depend on cultural understandings in addition to biological and neurological findings. Members of different social classes often hold different views on mental health. Similarly, different social classes have different levels of access to mental health interventions and to information about mental health. Thus, the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders varies widely by social class.



Mental Disorders (1837): To say that mental health is socially constructed means that its definition and criteria can change across time and culture. This lithograph illustrates the eight mental health disorders that were thought to be prominent in England during the early-19th century: dementia, megalomania, acute mania, melancholia, idiocy, hallucination, erotic mania, and paralysis. Since 1837, many of those disorders have been erased from medical textbooks or modified in light of changing social norms.

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17.5D: Family Life

Family life, including marriage, childbearing and household composition are strongly influenced by social class.

Learning Objectives

- Give examples for effects of social class on marriage, birth rates, and family composition

Key Points

- In the United States, the probability of a first marriage ending is substantially higher for couples with low socioeconomic statuses than for those in the middle or upper class.
- Globally, the birth rate in countries with large impoverished populations is much higher than in wealthier countries.
- In nations with high levels of fertility, upper class individuals tend to have more children than their lower class peers, while in nations with low levels of fertility, upper class families exhibit even lower fertility than average.
- Social class has both a cause and an effect relationship with family composition, and lower social class is often correlated with one-parent households.

Key Terms

- **birth rate**: The birth rate is typically the rate of births in a population over time.
- **Family Life**: A general term that refers to marriage and childbearing patterns, household composition and home stability.
- **overpopulation**: A situation which occurs when the number of occupants of an area exceeds the ability of that area to provide for those occupants.

Family life – marriage and childbearing patterns, household composition, and home stability – are strongly influenced by social class. In the United States, the probability of a first marriage ending is substantially higher for couples with low socioeconomic statuses than for those in the middle or upper class. Research shows that the higher rates of divorce for individuals in lower social classes can often be attributed to the greater financial stress these couples face, though factors like class expectations can also play a role.

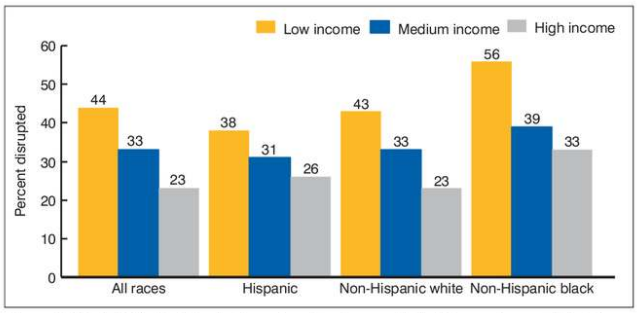


Figure 27. Probability that the first marriage breaks up within 10 years by race/ethnicity and median family income in the community: United States, 1995

Probability of First Marriage Dissolution by Race/Ethnicity and Income (1995): This graph shows that among all races and ethnicities, low income households are more likely to experience divorce than middle and high income households are. Thus, social class bears on rates of marriage dissolution.

Globally, the birth rate in countries with large impoverished populations is much higher than in wealthier countries, indicating that income and wealth play a role in shaping family structures. Demographers have identified a direct relationship between average number of children per household and the economic development of a nation. Today, less developed countries struggle with overpopulation while many governments in developed countries are instituting policies to deal with low birth rates. In nations with high levels of fertility, upper class individuals tend to have more children than their lower class peers. In nations with low levels of fertility, upper class families exhibit even lower fertility than average.

Social class has both a cause and an effect relationship with family composition. For example, single-parent households are likely to have a lower social class because they violate social norms. At the same time, single-parent families can contribute to financial and social instability. A single parent will often face higher costs (in the form of paid childcare), lower earnings (loss of the second parent's income or loss of time spent at work), or both.

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17.5E: Education

Educational attainment is tied to social class, with upper class individuals acquiring higher degrees from more prestigious schools.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss three factors contributing to educational inequality

Key Points

- Those in high social classes are likely to have greater educational attainment than those in low social classes.
- Educational inequality is also perpetuated by legacy admission.
- Because members of high social classes tend to be better educated and have higher incomes, they are more able to provide educational advantages to their children as well.
- Educational inequality is one factor that perpetuates the class divide across generations.

Key Terms

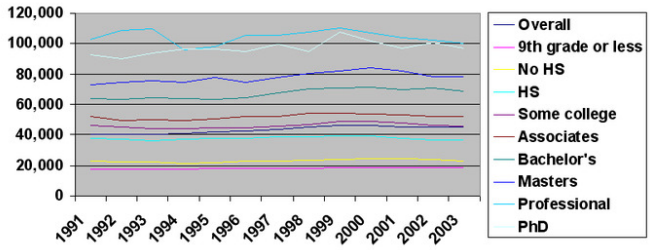
- **educational attainment**: Educational attainment is a term commonly used by statisticians to refer to the highest degree of education an individual has completed.
- **private school**: A fee-charging private or independent school.
- **legacy student**: A student who is admitted to a school (often a college or university), primarily because one or both of their parents are alumni of the same institution.

Education is a major component of social class, both directly and indirectly. Directly, individuals from higher social classes are more likely to have the means to attend more prestigious schools, and are therefore more likely to receive higher educations. Indirectly, individuals who benefit from such higher education are more likely to land prestigious jobs, and in turn, higher salaries. Just as education and social class are closely intertwined, stratification in education contributes to stratification in social class.

Educational attainment refers to the level of schooling a person completes — for instance, high school, some college, college, or a graduate degree. Upper class individuals are likely to attend schools of higher quality and of greater prestige than those attended by their lower class counterparts. Because members of high social classes tend to be better educated and have higher incomes, they are able to offer greater educational advantages, such as private schooling, to their children as well.

Upper-class parents are better able to send their children not only to exclusive private schools, but also to public state-funded schools. Such schools are likely to be of higher quality in affluent areas than in impoverished ones, since they are funded by property taxes within the school district. Wealthy areas will provide more property taxes as revenue, which leads to higher quality schools. Educational inequality is one factor that perpetuates the class divide across generations.

Such educational inequality is further reinforced by legacy admission, the preference given by educational institutions to applicants who are related to alumni of that institution. Germane to to university and college admissions (particularly in the United States), this practice emerged after World War I, primarily in response to the resulting immigrant influx. Ivy League institutions admit roughly 10% to 30% of students from each incoming class based on this factor.



Educational Attainment and Income (1991-2003): Households with higher educational attainment are likely to have higher incomes than those with low educational attainment — members of the lowest income bracket tend to have no more than a high school education, while the highest income bracket members tend to hold graduate degrees.

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17.5F: Religion

Social class is associated with individuals' religious affiliations and practices but not with religiosity itself.

Learning Objectives

- Explain how social class relates to religious affiliation, denomination and religiosity

Key Points

- Social class is an indicator of religious affiliation, with upper class members concentrated in formal denominations and lower class members concentrated in informal denominations.
- Social class is not an indicator of religiosity; members of each social class practice their faiths with a range of intensities.
- Income, and therefore social class, is related to an individual's denomination. Religion is also strongly linked to level of education.

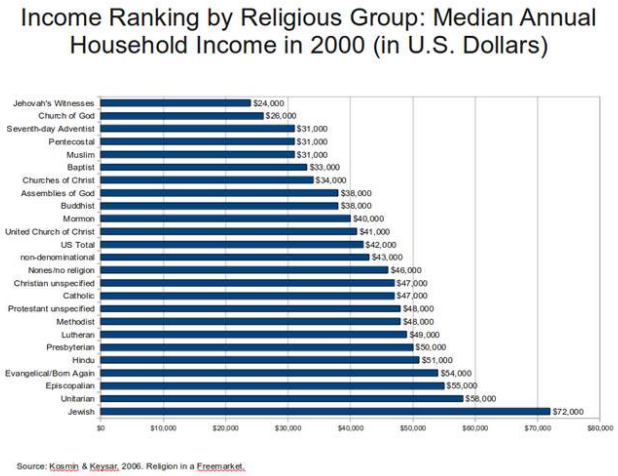
Key Terms

- **Religious Affiliation**: The measure of which religious denomination a person identifies with or practices
- **religiosity**: An index of how strongly religious a person is

Social class, measured by socioeconomic status, is associated with individuals' religious affiliations and practices. This affiliation has more to do with how religion is practiced rather than degree of religiosity. Members of lower classes tend to be affiliated with more fundamentalist religions and sect-like groups. Members of the middle class tend to belong to more formal churches. For example, American Presbyterians and Episcopalians (two highly formal Protestant denominations), tend to have above average socioeconomic statuses. Methodists and Lutherans (two moderately formal Protestant denominations) tend to have about average SES. Baptists and members of Protestant fundamentalist sects (which tend to be decentralized and informal) have below average SES. Variations in SES across denomination reveal a correlation between religious affiliation and social class.

Social class is not significantly correlated to religiosity, an index of how strongly religious a person is. Religiosity is measured by tracking frequency of church attendance, church group involvement, frequency of prayer, and other such markers of strength of religious practice. Members of each social class show a range of religiosity.

On the other hand, income, and therefore social class, is related to an individual's denomination. When one looks at average income by religion, there are clear differences. The highest-earning religion on average is Judaism, with an average income of $72,000 in 2000. This is dramatically higher than average; the next highest-earning denomination is Unitarianism at $56,000. Jehovah's Witness, Church of God, and Seventh Day Adventists are at the bottom of the income distribution, with $24,000, $26,000, and $31,000 respectively.



Religious Affiliation by Median Household Income (2000): Household income, an indicator of social class, can also indicate what religious denomination a person is likely to embrace. America's top income bracket is more likely than other groups to be Jewish, while the lowest bracket is more likely to be Jehovah's Witnesses.

Religion is also linked with education. 72% of Unitarian and 67% of Hindu adherents are college graduates, while only 12% of Jehovah's Witness and 15% of Church of God members graduated from college.

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17.5G: Politics

The higher one's social class, the higher their levels of political participation and political influence.

Learning Objectives

- Evaluate how social class impacts political participation and political influence

Key Points

- Political office holders tend to be of high socioeconomic status, furthering the impact of class on American politics.
- Wealthy, well-educated Americans are more likely to vote and to donate money to politicians than lower class individuals are.
- Those who vote as members of a social class can be said to be participating in identity politics.

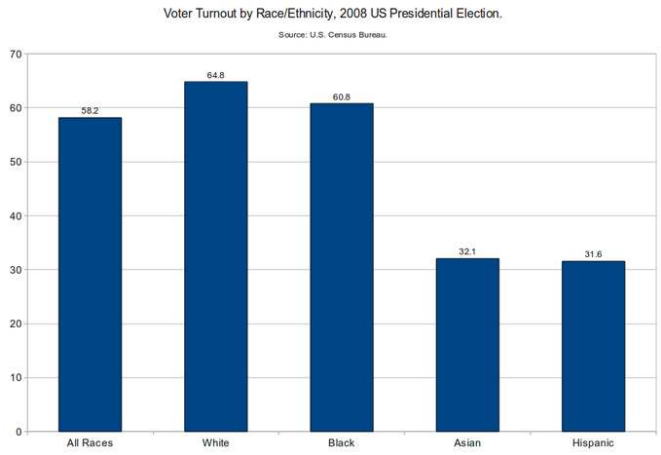
Key Terms

- **Political Influence**: The extent to which one's political participation achieves its desired results, or the amount of power a political actor has to achieve his or her will.
- **Political Participation**: A measure of whether or not a person votes in elections, donates to campaigns, or attends public forums where decisions are made.

Social class impacts one's level of political participation and political influence. Political participation refers to whether or not a person votes in elections, donates to campaigns, or attends public forums where decisions are made, such as town meetings or city council meetings, for example. Political influence refers to the extent to which one's political participation achieves its desired results. For example, if one attends a public forum, is their opinion likely to be heard, or if they donate money, is a politician likely to support their desired policy?

Wealthy, well-educated Americans are more likely to vote and to donate money to politicians than lower class individuals. This trend means that middle and upper class individuals have greater political participation and greater political influence than those in lower positions. Additionally, higher status people are more likely to hold political positions than lower class people. An illustration of this is the presidential election between George W. Bush and John Kerry in 2004. Both had millions of dollars of accumulated wealth, and they had higher degrees from Harvard and Yale, respectively.

Those who vote as members of a social class can be said to be participating in identity politics. Identity politics is a phenomenon that arose first at the radical margins of liberal democratic societies in which human rights are recognized, and the term is not usually used to refer to dissident movements within single-party or authoritarian states. Some groups have combined identity politics and Marxist social class analysis and class consciousness. During the 1980s, the politics of identity became very prominent and was linked with new social movement activism.



Voter Turnout by Educational Attainment –2008 Presidential Election: Educational attainment, an indicator of social class, can predict one's level of political participation. Those with high educational attainment are more likely to vote in elections than those with little education.

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17.5H: Crime and Criminal Justice

Criminal justice is the system of practices and institutions of governments directed at deterring and mitigating crime.

Learning Objectives

- Describe how the administration of punishment has changed throughout history

Key Points

- When a person is suspected of violating a law, they are processed through the criminal justice system.
- The criminal justice system includes law enforcement (such as police or sheriffs), the courts, and corrections authorities (such as prison wardens and social workers).
- Legislation can attempt to refocus and restructure the criminal justice system in the United States, as when the 1967 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice issued recommendations to improve the efficacy of criminal justice.
- These reforms reflected a change in the purpose of the criminal justice system. Historically it had been used as a way to deter crime and punish criminals, but now has the added goal of rehabilitating offenders.

Key Terms

- **court**: A tribunal established for the administration of justice, through which legal issues are adjudicated.
- **adjudication**: The process of reaching a judgment or sentence in a legal proceeding.
- **law enforcement**: The various government agencies involved in the prevention of crime and the apprehension of criminals.

Criminal justice is the system of practices and government institutions directed at upholding social control, deterring, and mitigating crime, or sanctioning those who violate laws with criminal penalties and rehabilitation efforts. The American criminal justice system consists of three main parts: (1) enforcement; (2) adjudication; and (3) corrections. These distinct agencies are the principal means of maintaining the rule of law within society.

The first contact an offender has with the criminal justice system is usually with law enforcement, most often the police who investigate a suspected violation and make an arrest. Next, the courts carry out adjudication or the legal processing of offenders. The courts serve as the venue where disputes are settled and justice is administered. Depending on the offense, either a judge or a jury determines whether the suspect violated the law and what their punitive sentence will be. If found guilty by the court, offenders are then turned over to correctional authorities. Correctional authorities may include prison wardens or social workers, depending on the type of offense.



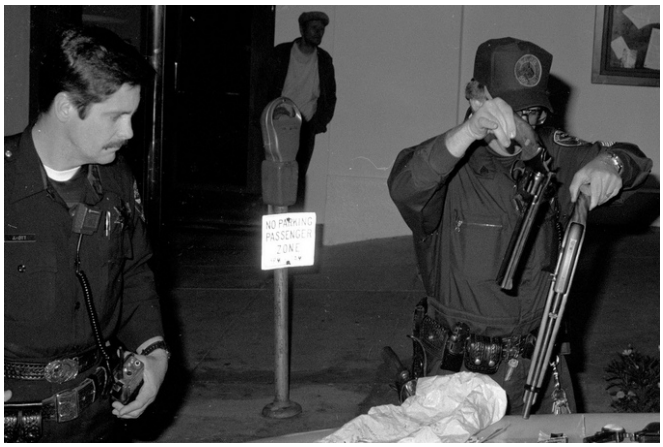
Courtroom: The criminal justice system includes adjudication, wherein the courts legally process suspects to determine their guilt or innocence and sentencing.

Like all other aspects of criminal justice, the administration of punishment has taken many different forms throughout history. Early on, when civilizations lacked the resources necessary to construct and maintain prisons, exile and execution were the primary forms of punishment. Historically shame punishments have also been used as forms of censure.

The most publicly visible form of punishment in the modern era is the prison. Prisons may serve as detention centers for prisoners after trial. Jails are used for containment of the accused before trial. Early prisons were used primarily to sequester criminals and little thought was given to living conditions within their walls. In America, the Quaker movement is commonly credited with establishing the idea that prisons should be used to reform criminals. This can also be seen as a critical moment in the debate regarding the purpose of punishment.

In the United States, criminal justice policy has been guided by the 1967 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, which issued a ground-breaking report titled "The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society. " This report made more than 200 recommendations as part of a comprehensive approach toward crime prevention. Some of those recommendations found their way into the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968. The commission advocated a "systems" approach to criminal justice, with improved coordination among law enforcement, courts, and correctional agencies. The commission defined the criminal

justice system as the means for society to “enforce the standards of conduct necessary to protect individuals and the community. ”



Police Confiscate Gun: Police officers are the most visible members of the law enforcement branch of the criminal justice system, and are charged with maintaining social order by arresting offenders who violate the law.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

17.6: Poverty

Topic hierarchy

17.6A: Poverty

17.6B: Measuring Poverty

17.6C: Explaining Poverty- The Sociological Debate

17.6D: Social Exclusion

17.6E: The Dynamics of Poverty

17.6F: The Feminization of Poverty

17.6G: Government Assistance Programs

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17.6A: Poverty

Poverty is the condition of not having access to material resources, income, or wealth.

Learning Objectives

- Assess how poverty relates to social mobility

Key Points

- The United States officially defines poverty using the poverty line. The poverty line is set at an income level that is three times the approximate cost of a subsistence level food budget.
- Poverty can also refer to the lack of opportunity to improve one's standard of living (or poor life chances).
- The term " near poverty " refers to earnings that are above the poverty line, but by no more than 25%.
- Social mobility describes a person's flexibility to change their economic status.
- If there is a high level of social mobility, it is relatively easy for people to escape poverty; if social mobility is low, it is very challenging for people to escape poverty.

Key Terms

- **The Poverty Line**: The threshold of poverty, below which one's income does not cover necessities.
- **Near Poverty**: The classification "near poverty" describes a demographic group in the United States that earns 25% above the poverty line.

Poverty describes the state of not having access to material resources, wealth, or income. The United States officially defines poverty using the poverty line. The poverty line is set at an income level that is three times the approximate cost of a subsistence level food budget. This definition has been in use in the United States to track demographic changes and allocate welfare aid since the 1960s.

"Near poverty" is the term for an income level that is just above the poverty line; it refers to incomes that are no more than 25% above the poverty line.

"Relative poverty" refers to economic disadvantage compared to wealthier members of society, whereas " absolute poverty " refers to a family (or an individual) with an income so low that they cannot afford basic necessities of survival, such as food and shelter.

Poverty may correspond not only to lack of resources, but to the lack of opportunity to improve one's standard of living and acquire resources. "Life chances" is a term used to describe someone's access to marketplace resources—essentially, how likely it is in their environment that they might be able to find employment or have a social safety net. Someone who is living in poverty but has high life chances may be able to improve their economic standing, but someone with low life chances will likely have a consistently low standard of living. The term for a person's ability to change their economic status in a society is known as "social mobility. "

If there is a high level of social mobility, it is relatively easy for people to leave poverty. Easy access to higher education and prevalence of well-paying jobs contribute to social mobility. While some factors that contribute to poverty are the result of individual choices, such as dropping out of school or committing a crime, other factors affect poverty that are beyond individual control. In the United States, minorities and women are more likely to be living in poverty.

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17.6B: Measuring Poverty

Poverty is defined by deprivation, and can be measured with economic or social indicators.

Learning Objectives

- Compare the differences between absolute and relative poverty

Key Points

- Economic measures of poverty include access to material needs, typically necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, and safe drinking water, measures of income, or measure of wealth.
- Social measures of poverty include access to information, education, health care, or political power.
- Absolute poverty refers to a fixed threshold based on access to income and material resources, while relative inequality is measured using a region's median income and standard of living and therefore reflects income inequality.
- Relative poverty explains poverty as socially defined and dependent on social context. Usually, relative poverty is measured as the percentage of the population with income less than some fixed proportion of median income.

Key Terms

- **World Bank**: A group of five financial organizations whose purpose is economic development and the elimination of poverty.
- **absolute poverty**: A measure of poverty based on a set standard that is consistent over time and between countries, referring to the ability of individuals or groups to meet their basic needs.
- **relative poverty**: A measure of wealth inequality, describing an individual or group's wealth relative to an other individual or group.

Economic measures of poverty focus on material needs, typically including the necessities of daily living such as food, clothing, shelter, or safe drinking water. Poverty in this sense may be understood as a condition in which a person or community is lacking in the basic needs for a minimum standard of well-being, particularly as a result of a persistent lack of income.

Social measures of poverty may include lack of access to information, education, health care, or political power. Poverty may also be understood as an aspect of inequitable social relationships, experienced as social exclusion, dependency, and/or diminished capacity to participate in society.

According to the World Bank, definitions of poverty include low income and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life.

Poverty is usually measured as either absolute or relative poverty. Absolute poverty refers to a set standard which is consistent over time and between countries. The World Bank uses this definition of poverty to label extreme poverty as living on less than US $1.25 per day, and moderate poverty as less than $2 or $5 a day.

Relative poverty explains poverty as socially defined and dependent on social context. Usually, relative poverty is measured as the percentage of the population with income less than some fixed proportion of median income. Relative poverty measures are used as official poverty rates in several developed countries and are measured according to several different income inequality metrics, including the Gini coefficient and the Theil Index. Measurements are usually based on a person's yearly income and frequently take no account of total wealth.

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17.6C: Explaining Poverty- The Sociological Debate

Sociologists take two opposing approaches to explaining economic stratification: structural-functionalism and conflict theory.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the critiques of structural-functionalist approaches to social stratification

Key Points

- According to structural-functionalists, stratification and inequality are actually constructive phenomena that benefit society —specifically, that the privileges attached to high-status incentive motivated, qualified people to work to achieve those positions.
- According to this logic, inequality ensures that the most functionally important jobs are filled by the best qualified people.
- Conflict theorists argue that stratification is dysfunctional and harmful to society, and that it results in competition between the rich and the poor as individuals act for their own economic advantage.
- Conflict theorists hold that competition and inequality are not inevitable but are created and maintained by people trying to gain access to scarce resources.

Key Terms

- **social stratification**: The hierarchical arrangement of social classes, or castes, within a society.
- **structural-functionalist approach**: A sociological approach to poverty that maintains that all parts of society (even poverty) contribute in some way or another to the larger system's stability.
- **conflict-theory approach**: A sociological theory of poverty that argues that stratification is dysfunctional and harmful to society but persists because it benefits the rich and powerful.

Two classic sociological approaches to poverty and social stratification are structural-functionalism and conflict theory.

The structural-functionalist approach to stratification asks the question: what function or purpose does stratification serve? The theory's answer is that all parts of society, even poverty, contribute in some way or another to the larger system's stability. According to structural-functionalists, stratification and inequality are actually constructive phenomena that benefit society: they ensure that the best people are at the top of the hierarchy and those who are less worthy are at the bottom. Those at the top are given power and rewards because of high abilities, and the high rewards exist to provide incentive for qualified people to do the most important work in high status occupations. According to this logic, inequality ensures that the most functionally important jobs are filled by the best qualified people.

The conflict-theory approach offers a critique of structural-functionalism. First, the critique asserts that it is difficult to determine the functional importance of any job, as a system of interdependence makes every position necessary to the functioning of society. Second, this approach assumes that the system of stratification is fair and rational, and that the 'best' people end up on top because of their superiority. But, according to conflict theorists, in reality the system does not work so easily or perfectly and there are barriers to qualified people ascending the hierarchy.

In contrast to structural-functionalists, conflict theorists argue that stratification is dysfunctional and harmful in society. According to this theory, stratification benefits the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor—those in high-status positions continually build on their wealth, only further entrenching the gap between high-status and low-status people. For example, many wealthy families pay low wages to nannies to care for their children, gardeners to tend to their yards, and maids to clean their homes. Conflict theorists believe that this competitive system, together with structural barriers to upward mobility ends up creating and perpetuating stratification systems. Conflict theorists hold that competition and inequality are not inevitable but are created and maintained by people. Meanwhile, structural-functionalists rebut that people do not always act solely out of economic self-interest.



Surgeons: The job of a surgeon is highly regarded and well compensated but requires years of training, long work hours, and high stress. Structural-functionalists argue that the high status that comes with the job acts as incentive for highly qualified people to pursue it.

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17.6D: Social Exclusion

Social exclusion occurs when individuals and communities are blocked from rights and opportunities that are available to others.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the causes of social exclusion

Key Points

- Social exclusion is distinct from poverty. Poverty is a distributional outcome, whereas exclusion can be defined as the process of declining participation, solidarity, and access to opportunities.
- Unemployment or lack of transportation can be causes of social exclusion.
- The problem of social exclusion is usually tied to that of equal opportunity, as some people are more subject to such exclusion than others.
- Sociologists see strong links between crime and social exclusion in industrialized societies such as the United States.

Key Terms

- **equal opportunity**: equal opportunity is a stipulation that all people should be given access to opportunities for advancement and treated similarly when competing for jobs, housing, and other resources.
- **Social exclusion**: processes through which individuals and entire communities of people are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities, and resources that are normally available to members of society and that are key to social integration.
- **due process**: a legal concept where a person is ensured all legal rights when deprived of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for a given reason.

Social exclusion is a concept used in many parts of the world to characterize forms of social disadvantage. It refers to processes through which individuals and entire communities of people are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities, and resources that are normally available to members of society and that are key to social integration. These include housing, employment, healthcare, civic engagement, democratic participation, and legal due process.

Poverty and exclusion are two different concepts. Poverty is a distributional outcome, whereas exclusion can be defined as process of declining participation, solidarity, and access. It is quite difficult to measure social exclusion quantitatively, as social exclusion is relative, sensitive, and variable.

The causes of social exclusion vary from country to country, but there are general causes that social scientists have identified. In modern industrialized societies, paid work is not only the principal source of income with which to buy goods and services, but is also the fount of individuals' identity and feelings of self-worth. Therefore, unemployment is considered a cause of social exclusion. In some circumstances, lack of transportation can lead to social exclusion. For instance, if lack of access to public transport or a vehicle prevents a person from getting to a job, training course, job center, school, or entertainment venue they may be shut out from opportunities.

The problem of social exclusion is usually tied to that of equal opportunity, as some people are more subject to exclusion than others. Marginalization of certain groups is a problem even in many economically developed countries, including the United Kingdom and the United States, where the majority of the population enjoys considerable economic and social opportunities.

Sociologists see strong links between crime and social exclusion in industrialized societies including the United States. Growing crime rates may reflect the fact that an increasing number of people do not feel valued or included in the societies in which they live. Socially excluded populations may not benefit from the avenues for income and advancement that are open to others, so they resort to illegal means of obtaining resources.



Punk: Punk social groups are often considered marginal and are excluded from certain mainstream social spaces.

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17.6E: The Dynamics of Poverty

Poverty operates in a dynamic cycle, with the effects of poverty increasing the likelihood that it will be transferred between generations.

Learning Objectives

- Explain the cyclical impact of the consequences of poverty

Key Points

- Poor people are less likely than others to have financial capital, education, and social capital (connections to people with specialized knowledge or in powerful positions). Without these resources, poverty -stricken individuals experience disadvantages which in turn increase their poverty.
- The cycle of poverty can trap families in poverty for generations, and often becomes widespread when economies undergo restructuring from manufacturing-based economies to service-based economies.
- Low-quality education, hunger, and homelessness can all perpetuate poverty by creating barriers to individual economic advancement.

Key Terms

- **economic restructuring**: Economic restructuring refers to the phenomenon of shifting between two types of economies, such as from a manufacturing to service economy or agricultural to manufacturing economy.
- **Cycle of poverty**: The idea that poverty operates in a dynamic cycle, with the effects of poverty increasing the likelihood that it will be transferred between generations.

The basic premise of the poverty cycle the idea that poverty is a dynamic process—its effects may also be its causes. In economics, the cycle of poverty has been defined as a phenomenon where poor families become trapped in poverty for at least three generations. These families have either limited or nonexistent social and economic resources. There are many disadvantages that collectively work in a circular process to make it virtually impossible for individuals to break the cycle of poverty. Definitionally, poor people are less likely to have financial capital, education, and social capital (connections to people with specialized knowledge or in powerful positions). Without these resources, poverty-stricken individuals experience disadvantages that, in turn, increase their poverty.

Sociologists have argued that the economic restructuring of the U.S. and other developed nations from manufacturing to service-based economies has led to chronic joblessness in inner cities. In a service economy, there is a higher proportion of high-skill jobs than in a manufacturing economy. Thus, people who have lost their manufacturing positions are unqualified for the jobs available in the new economy. This disparity between available jobs and workforce skill is a driver of cyclical poverty.

Research shows that schools with students who perform worse than the norm are also those hiring the least-qualified teachers, because teachers tend to work in schools in the area where they grew up—teachers who are educated in poor schools come back to teach in the same low quality schools, keeping the schools from improving. Students who attend these low quality schools graduate with little human capital (skills and knowledge), and are thus unqualified for high status occupations. In this way, inadequate or lack of education can perpetuate poverty.

Additionally, those living in poverty suffer disproportionately from hunger, or in extreme cases starvation, and also exhibit disproportionately high rates of disease. These illnesses can be disabling, preventing people in poverty from working in certain occupations or at certain capacities, thus reducing one's opportunities to improve their social and economic status.

Finally, poverty increases the risk of homelessness. Slum-dwellers, who make up a third of the world's urban population, live in poverty no better, if not worse, than rural people, who are the traditional victims of poverty in the developing world. People who are homeless or live in slums have low access to neighborhood resources, high status social contacts, or basic services such as a phone line. This limits their ability to improve their economic position, again perpetuating poverty.



Afghan Girl Begging: A young Afghan girl begging in the street in Kabul, 8 September 2008. Photo by Mikhail Evstafiev



Children in Poverty: Street Child, Srimangal Railway Station, Srimangal, Maulvi Bazar, Bangladesh.

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17.6F: The Feminization of Poverty

The feminization of poverty refers to the fact that women represent a disproportionate share of the world's poor.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss three causes of female poverty

Key Points

- The feminization of poverty is not only a consequence of lack of income, but is also the result of the deprivation of opportunities and gender biases present in both societies and governments.
- Women's increasing share of poverty is related to the rising incidence of lone mother households.
- Women in poverty have reduced access to health care services and resources.
- The education of women and children, especially girls, can create greater opportunities for women to lift themselves out of poverty and increase their social position.
- Women's jobs are more likely than men's to be forms of informal employment, which takes place in small, unregistered enterprises and is not protected by government regulation.

Key Terms

- **informal employment**: Employment that takes place in small, unregistered enterprises without external regulation.
- **formal employment**: Employment that is government regulated, such that workers are insured a wage and certain rights.
- **lone mother households**: Households where a single female acts as the sole head of household; in lone mother households, there is usually no adult male present.
- **feminization of poverty**: a phenomenon in which women represent disproportionate percentages of the world's poor

The feminization of poverty describes a phenomenon in which women represent a disproportionate percentage of the world's poor. This trend is not only a consequence of lack of income, but also of lack of opportunities due to gender biases and fixed gender roles in some societies. Gender biases often deprive women of opportunities to independently pursue education or careers and are often linked to the expectation that women are responsible for childbearing and childrearing. Women's increasing share of poverty is related to the rising incidence of lone mother households.

Many factors place women at higher risk of poverty than their male counterparts. Though low income is the primary cause of female poverty, there are many interrelated sources of this problem. Lack of income deprives women of basic needs, such as food and shelter, and limits their opportunities for advancement. As women disproportionately earn less income than men, they are deprived of basic education and healthcare, which lowers their lifetime earning potential. The responsibilities associated with motherhood further limit women's economic attainment. Lone mother households, or households without a second parent or guardian, are the households with the highest risk of poverty. Female headed households (where no male is present) are most susceptible to poverty because they have fewer income earners to provide financial support within the household. Lone mother households relate to gender inequality issues as women are more susceptible to poverty and lack essential life needs in comparison to men.

Women in poverty also have reduced access to healthcare services and resources. Partly due to the toll of childbearing, women are disproportionately afflicted with poor health outcomes. Poor health reduced women's ability to earn income, and, thus, is a key factor increasing and perpetuating household poverty. Increasing health services to women could, therefore, mitigate the feminization of poverty. The education of women and children, especially girls, can create greater opportunities for women to lift themselves out of poverty and increase their social position. Countries with strong gender discrimination and social hierarchies limit women's access to basic education. Even within the household, girls' education is often sacrificed to allow male siblings to attend school.

Employment opportunities are limited for women worldwide. Women are often barred from materially controlling their environment due to unequal access to profitable and fulfilling occupational opportunities. Employment can be divided into informal and formal occupations. Formal employment is government regulated, and workers are insured a wage and certain rights. Informal employment takes place in small, unregistered enterprises. A large proportion of women are employed in informal workplaces, reducing the regulation of their employment. This makes it more difficult for women to address workplace grievances and ensure safe and legal working conditions.



Microcredit Lending to Women: Microcredit, a system of providing small loans to individuals and families in impoverished areas in an attempt to reverse the cycle of poverty, is almost always distributed to women.

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17.6G: Government Assistance Programs

Federal assistance is defined as any program that directly assists the public in areas, such as education, health, and public welfare.

Learning Objectives

- Explain the organizational structure of federal assistance in the United States

Key Points

- The assistance is provided and administered by federal government agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through special programs to recipients.
- Programs administer assistance by “granting” or “awarding” a portion of the assistance to recipients. These are called federal grants or awards.
- Recipients of federal grants include state governments, local governments, territories and possessions, Native American tribal governments, non-profit organizations and institutions, and private individuals.

Key Terms

- **Earmark Grants**: Federal funds that have been designated for specific projects in appropriations of funding for general programs.
- **Formula Grants**: Grants include a specified formula, as a rule, that tells potential recipient governments precisely how they can calculate the quantity of aid to which they are entitled under the provisions of law.
- **single audit**: An annual examination of an aid recipient’s operations and records in order to determine whether or not the recipient complied with laws and regulations applicable to the assistance received.

In the United States, federal assistance is defined as any federal program, project, service, or activity provided by the federal government that directly assists or benefits the American public in the areas of education, health, public safety, public welfare, and public works, among others. The assistance is provided and administered by federal government agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through special programs to recipients.



Department of Housing and Urban Development: In the U.S., the Department of Housing and Urban Development administers many government assistance programs, most notably federal public housing.

In order to provide federal assistance in an organized manner, the federal government provides assistance through federal agencies. It is the agency’s responsibility to adequately provide assistance, as well as manage, account, and monitor the responsible use of federal funds which were utilized for that assistance. The agencies then supply the assistance to beneficiaries, such as states, hospitals, poverty-stricken families, etc., through hundreds of individual programs.

Programs administer assistance by “granting” or “awarding” a portion of the assistance to recipients. These are called federal grants or awards. Recipients must first apply for the award directly to the federal agency which administers the program. The agency must then determine the amount of assistance to be awarded and notifies the recipient of the award. Given the enormous size of federal assistance provided, the Federal government has designed different types of grants, each with its own unique way of awarding and operating. These include project grants, formula grants, and earmark grants.

Due to the extensive amount of assistance provided by the federal government, the Federal agencies rely on numerous monitoring activities performed by themselves, pass-through entities, and external sources. The most common monitoring procedure used is the single audit, which is an annual examination of a recipient’s operations and records in order to determine whether or not the recipient complied with laws and regulations applicable to the assistance received.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

18: 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?

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18.2: Global Stratification and Classification
18.3: Global Wealth and Poverty
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18.5: Key Terms
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18.1: 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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18.2: 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.

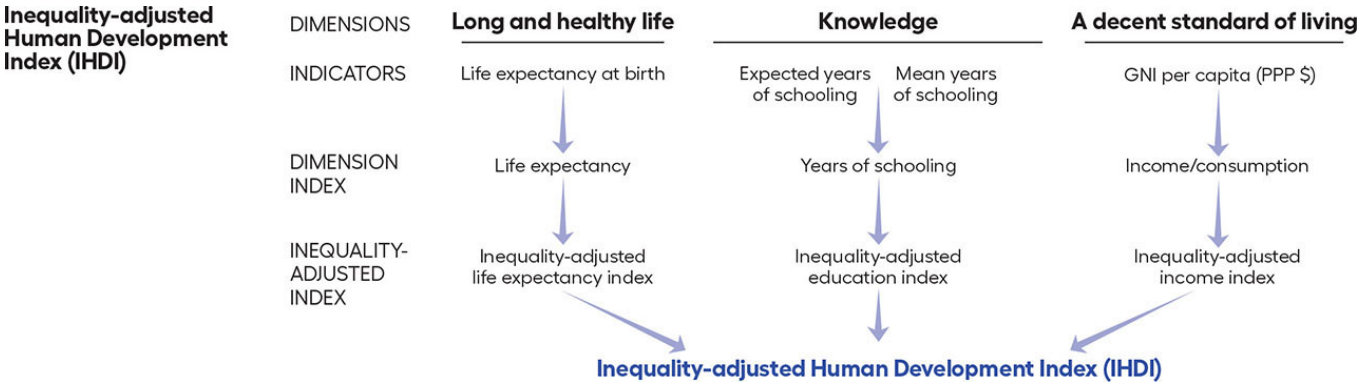


Figure 10.2: The Human Development Index and its derivative, and extensions like the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), were developed to center people—not just finances—as the core determinants of a nation's or region's discussions about economic opportunities, support, and policies. 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
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.

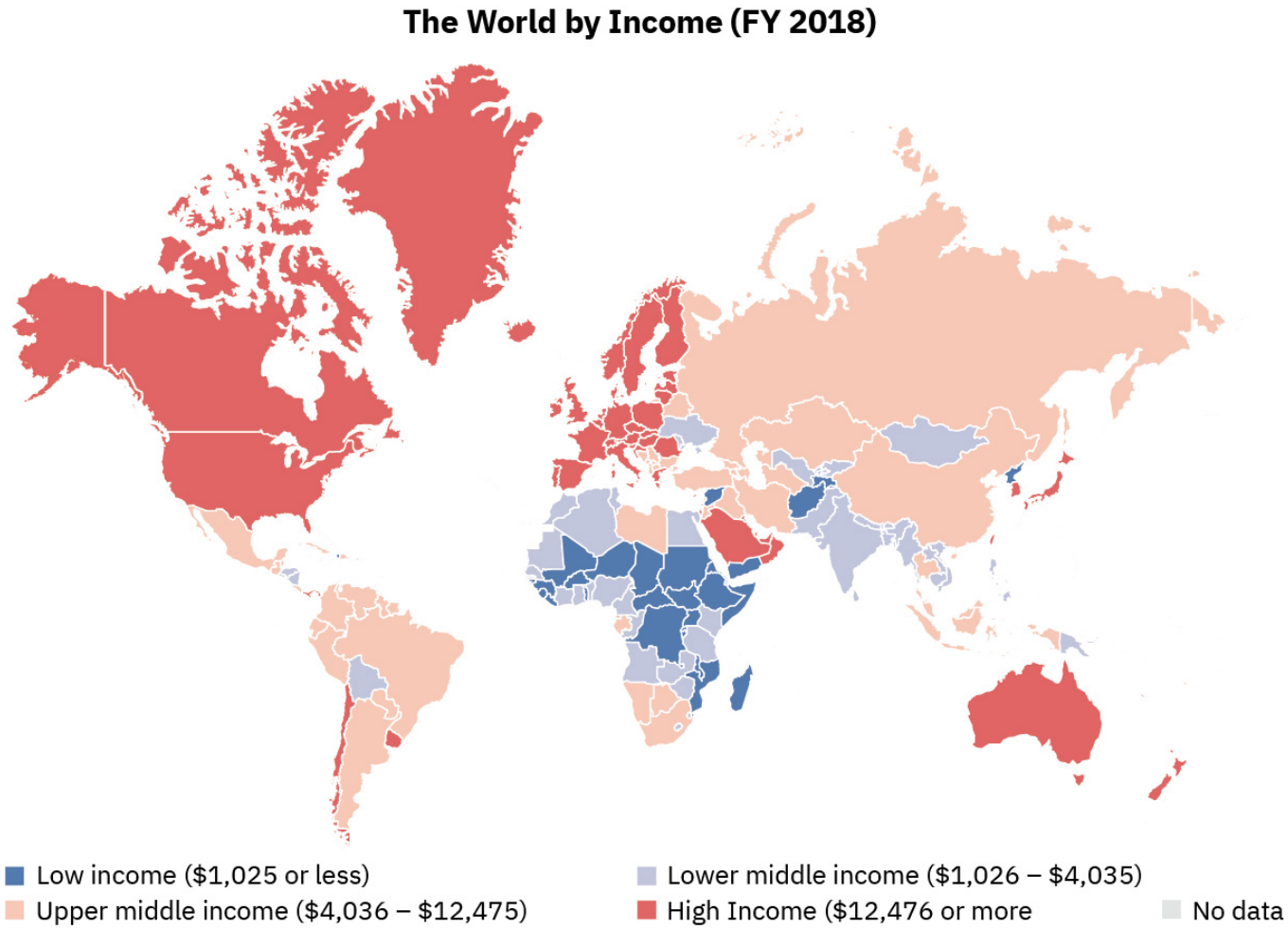


Figure 10.3: This world map shows advanced, transitioning, less, and least developed countries. Note that the data in this map is one year older than the data presented in the text below. (Credit: Sbw01f, data obtained from the CIA World Factbook/Wikimedia Commons)

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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18.3: 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.



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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18.4: 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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18.5: Key Terms

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

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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18.6: 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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18.7: 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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18.8: 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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18.9: 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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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

19: Conclusion - Understanding and Changing the Social World

19.1: What Have You Learned From This Book?

19.2: Public Sociology and Improving Society

19.3: A Final Word

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19.1: 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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19.2: 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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19.3: 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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