

SOCIOLOGY

EIGHTH EDITION



JOHN E. FARLEY, MICHAEL W. FLOTA,
AND J. SCOTT CARTER



Sociology

This best-selling textbook returns for an eighth edition with material on the most fundamental issues in sociology today. The authors continue their tradition of focusing on the big picture, with an emphasis on race, class, and gender in every chapter—building on the seventh edition’s discussion of reproductive justice after the revocation of *Roe v. Wade*, social movements such as Black Lives Matter and #MeToo, a discussion of the COVID-19 pandemic, and Donald Trump and Joe Biden.

The text frames sociological debates around the major theoretical perspectives of sociology and focuses on capturing students’ imaginations with cutting-edge research and real-world events. The hallmark of the book continues to be clear writing that helps students understand the intricacies of the discipline like no other textbook on the market.

New to the eighth edition

Thinking outside the box (or inside it . . .)

Selected chapters contain thematically linked boxed inserts aimed at bringing analytical and expositional focus to certain issues, as follows:

- *Sociological Insights*: These boxes focus on how sociology can help us better understand a variety of issues and how examples from everyday life can help us to understand sociological principles, illustrating how topics are carefully linked to that material.
- *Global Sociology*: One of the most pronounced social changes of the past century has been globalization—a transition from the dominance of nation-states and national economies to global interactions. These boxes examine how social change moves around the world.
- *Sociological Surprises*: One common criticism of sociologists is that we sometimes expend a great deal of effort to prove things that are obvious. On the contrary, the reality is that what we find often goes against what people commonly believe and even against what sociological researchers expect to find. These boxes focus on such unexpected findings, analyzing why the social reality turns out to be something different from what is expected.
- *Understanding Race, Class, and Gender*: These boxes give added emphasis to the book’s focus on race, class, and gender inequality. In every issue that sociologists study, race, class, and gender play a key role—and these boxes provide students with clear and concrete examples of how this occurs.
- *Student Life*: These boxes, which discuss student life from a sociological viewpoint, show how sociology is relevant to students in their everyday lives, covering race relations to dating to paying for college, and draws out their sociological implications.
- *Putting Sociology to Work*: These boxes focus on application: How can sociology be used to solve a social problem or to make an important decision?

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Sociology

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**John E. Farley, Michael W. Flota,
and
J. Scott Carter**

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*To Alice Farley, JoAnna Conley-Flota, and Shannon Carter
With love and gratitude*

Brief Contents

<i>List of Photographs</i>	xxiii
<i>Preface</i>	xxix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xxxv
<i>About the Authors</i>	xxxvii
Part I Introduction	
Chapter 1 Sociology: The Discipline	3
Chapter 2 How Sociology Is Done	23
Part II Society and Human Interaction	
Chapter 3 Perspectives on Society and Interaction	43
Chapter 4 Culture and Social Structure	67
Chapter 5 Socialization	101
Part III Social Structure and Inequality	
Chapter 6 Stratification: Structured Social Inequality	131
Chapter 7 Race and Ethnic Relations	171
Chapter 8 Sex, Gender, and Society	213
Chapter 9 Groups, Organizations, and the Workplace	257
Chapter 10 Deviance, Crime, and Social Control	293
Part IV Social Institutions	
Chapter 11 Economy and Society	335
Chapter 12 Politics, Power, and Society	377
Chapter 13 Marriages and Families	409
Chapter 14 Education	447
Chapter 15 Religion	475
Chapter 16 Health, Population, and Aging	509
Part V Social Change	
Chapter 17 Urban Society: City Life and Collective Behavior	549
Chapter 18 Social Movements and Change	595
🔗 Web-Based References	
<i>Glossary</i>	613
<i>References</i>	629
<i>Index</i>	631

Contents

<i>List of Photographs</i>	xxiii
<i>Preface</i>	xxix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xxxv
<i>About the Authors</i>	xxxvii

Part I Introduction

Chapter 1

Sociology: The Discipline 3

What Is Sociology? 3

Characteristics of Sociology 3

Sociology and Common Sense 3

Sociology as a Science 4

Science as a Way of Thinking 4

The Norms of Science 5

Sociology as a Social Science 5

Can Human Behavior

Be Studied Scientifically? 5

An Analogy: Meteorology 7

Complications in the Study of Human Behavior 8

The Sociological Imagination 9

Sociology and the Other Social Sciences 10

Sociology 10

The Emergence and Development of Sociology 11

The Nineteenth Century 11

Early Sociologists 11

The Development of Sociology in the United States 15

The Chicago School 15

Symbolic Interactionism 16

1940–1960: A Turn From Activism 16

The 1960s: Return to Activism 16

The 1970s: Into the New Millennium: Diversity in Sociological Perspectives 17

Putting Sociology to Work 17

How Sociology Can Be Used to Solve Real-Life Problems 17

Summary 21

Key Terms 22

Exercises 22

Chapter 2**How Sociology Is Done****23****Social Theory and Research 23**

- Cause and Effect 23
- Theory and Values 23
- Theories Versus Values: Why Does It Matter? 24
- The Relationship Between Theory and Research 25

Using and Measuring Variables 26

- Independent Variables 26
- Dependent Variables 27
- Operational Definitions 27
- Validity and Reliability 27
- Correlation 28
- Control Variables 29

Key Research Methods in Sociology 30

- Quantitative and Qualitative Methods 30

Experiments 30

- Experimental and Control Groups 30
- Field Experiments 31

Survey Research 31

- Questionnaires 32
- Telephone Interviews 32
- Personal Interviews 33
- Survey Questions 33
- Sampling 34

Field Observation 34

- Field Observation and Theory Generation 34
- Participant Observation 35
- Unobtrusive Observation 36

Use of Existing Data Sources 36

- Data Archives 36
- The U.S. Census 37
- Content Analysis 37

Reading Tables 37**Summary 38****Key Terms 38****Exercises 39****Part II Society and Human Interaction****Chapter 3****Perspectives on Society and Interaction****43****Perspectives in Sociology 44****Macrosociology and Microsociology 44**

Macrosociology I: The Functionalist Perspective 44

- The Functionalist Perspective Defined 44
- Key Principles of the Functionalist Perspective 45
- Consensus and Cooperation 46
- Functions and Dysfunctions 47

Macrosociology II: The Conflict Perspective 47

- The Conflict Perspective Defined 48

Macrosociological Perspectives: Is Synthesis Possible? 49

- Functional for Whom? Another Look 50
- Simultaneous Forces for Cooperation and Conflict 51
- Macrosociological Perspectives: A Final Note 51

Microsociology: The Symbolic-Interactionist Perspective 53

- The Interactionist Perspective Defined 54
- Interpreting Situations and Messages 54
- The Social Construction of Reality 54
- Social Roles 58
- Sending Messages: The Presentation of Self 58

Micro- and Macrosociology: Is Synthesis Possible? 60

- Simultaneous Effects of Function, Conflict, and Interaction 60
- Exchange Theory 62
- Using All Three Perspectives: An Example 63
- The Three Perspectives and This Book 64

Summary 64**Key Terms 65****Exercises 66****Chapter 4****Culture and Social Structure****67****Society, Culture, and Social Structure 67****What Is Culture? 68**

- Shared Truths: Knowledge, Language, and Beliefs 68
- Shared Values 71
- Ideology 72
- Social Norms 72

What Is Social Structure? 73

- Social Status 73
- Roles 74
- Division of Labor 75
- Stratification 76
- Relationships Between Roles and Statuses 76
- Institutions 77

Perspectives on Culture and Social Structure 78

- The Functionalist Perspective: Adaptation of Culture and Social Structure to the Environment 78
- Cultural and Structural Variation: Do Cultural or Structural Universals Exist? 79

Universal Social Tasks 80
The Conflict Perspective and Culture 82

Incompatibilities Between Culture and Social Structure 85

Sewell's Duality of Structure Theory 85
Culture Against Structure: The Functionalist Perspective 86
Subcultures in Mass Society 87
Culture Against Structure: The Conflict Perspective 90

Putting Sociology to Work 92

Multiculturalism: A Pathway to Cooperation in a Diverse Society? 92

American Culture 94

Core American Values and Beliefs 94
Ideal Versus Real Culture 94
Recent Changes in American Values and Beliefs 96

Summary 98

Key Terms 98

Exercises 99

Chapter 5

Socialization

101

Becoming "Human" Through Socialization 102

Learning About Norms and Social Roles 102

Theories of Socialization and Development 103

Nature Versus Nurture 103
Interactionist Theories of Socialization: Mead and Cooley 103
Theories About Social Expectations and Personal Dilemmas: Freud and Erikson 107
Cognitive-Developmental Theories of Socialization: Piaget and Kohlberg 108
Overview of Theories of Socialization 114

Agents of Socialization 114

The Family 115
Schools 116
Religion 116
Peers 117
The Media 117
How Socialization Works 119
Conflicting Messages 120

Socialization in Adulthood 122

Life-Cycle Roles 123
Role Change, Adult Socialization,
and Stress 124
Resocialization in Total Institutions 124

Functionalist and Conflict Perspectives on Socialization 126

The Functionalist Perspective 126
The Conflict Perspective 126

Summary 127

Key Terms 128

Exercises 128

Part III Social Structure and Inequality

Chapter 6

Stratification: Structured Social Inequality 131

What Is Stratification? 132

- Dimensions of Stratification 132
- The Economic Dimension 132
- The Political Dimension 132
- The Social Prestige Dimension 133

The Distribution of Wealth and Income in the United States 133

- The Distribution of Income 133
- The Distribution of Wealth 136

Socioeconomic Mobility 137

- Caste Systems 138
- Estate or Feudal Systems 138
- Class Systems 139

Social Class in U.S. Society 141

- The Marxian Definition of Social Class 142
- The Composite Definition of Social Class 143
- Contradictory Class Locations 143
- The Subjective Definition of Social Class 144
- Occupational Prestige 145
- Class Consciousness in the United States 147

Poverty in the United States 149

- How Poverty Is Defined 149
- Who Is Poor? 151

Causes of Poverty 153

- Poor People Themselves? Work, Family Structure, and Poverty 153
- Unemployment 156
- Low Wages 157

Government Policy 158

Consequences of Poverty 159

- Functionalist and Conflict Perspectives on Stratification 160
- The Functionalist View: Davis and Moore 160
- The Conflict View 160
- Is Stratification Really Functional? 161
- Synthesis 162

Summary 166

Key Terms 168

Exercises 168

Chapter 7**Race and Ethnic Relations****171****Racial and Ethnic Groups: What Is the Difference? 171**

Majority and Minority Groups 172

Racism 173

Ideological Racism 173

Racial and Ethnic Prejudice 173

Individual Discrimination 174

Institutional Discrimination 174

Theories About the Causes of Racial and Ethnic Inequality 175

Social-Psychological Theories of Race Relations 175

The Relationship Between Prejudice and Discrimination 177

Social-Structural Theories of Race Relations 178

Racial and Ethnic Relations: An International Perspective 183

Ethnic Inequality and Conflict: How Universal? 184

Racial Caste in South Africa and the United States 184

Racial Assimilation in Latin America 185

Racial and Ethnic Groups in the United States 185**Minority Groups: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans 186**

Economic Exploitation and the Origins of Intergroup Inequality 187

Segregation and Attacks on Culture 188

The Status of Minority Groups Today 190

Intermediate-Status Groups: Asian Americans, Jewish and Muslim Americans, and
“White Ethnics” 194**The Majority Group 197****Current Issues in U.S. Race Relations 199**

The Significance of Race Versus Class 202

Putting Sociology to Work 204

The Affirmative Action Debate 204

Is Affirmative Action Reverse Discrimination? 204

Is the System Fair Without Affirmative Action? 205

How Effective Is Affirmative Action? 207

The Legal and Political Status of Affirmative Action 208

Summary 210**Key Terms 210****Exercises 211****Chapter 8****Sex, Gender, and Society****213****What Are Sex and Gender Roles? 213**

Sex and Gender Roles 214

Sexism 214

Traditional American Gender Roles 214

Cultural Variation in Gender Roles 216

Gender-Role Socialization: An Interactionist Analysis 218

How Gender Roles Develop 219

Teaching Gender Roles in the Home	219
Teaching Gender Roles in the School	220
Teaching Gender Roles on Television	222
How Peers Teach Gender Roles	223
How Gender Roles Are Learned	224
The Looking-Glass Self and Gender-Role Socialization	224
Modeling and Gender-Role Socialization	225
Structured Sexual Inequality: Power	225
Men, Women, and Positions of Authority	225
Women in Politics	227
Women in the Business World	227
Men, Women, and Power in the Home	228
“Doing” Gender: The Social Construction of Gender and Sex	229
Structured Sexual Inequality: Income	230
Some Possible Reasons for Women’s Low Wages	231
Putting Sociology to Work	236
Understanding and Preventing Sexual Harassment	236
Functionalist and Conflict Perspectives on Gender Roles	238
The Origins of Gender Inequality	238
The Functionalist Perspective	239
The Conflict Perspective	241
Feminism: A Challenge to Male Power	242
Feminist Social Theory	246
How Are Gender Roles Changing in America?	246
Sexual Double Standard	246
Employment Discrimination	247
Sexual Assault	247
Limitations of Change	247
Public Opinion and Future Prospects for Gender Equality	248
Intersexuality, Sexual Orientation, and the Politics of Being “Different”	251
Sexual Orientation	251
Summary	253
Key Terms	254
Exercises	255

Chapter 9

Groups, Organizations, and the Workplace 257

Groups and Organizations: What Is the Difference? 257

Group Characteristics and Dynamics 258

Group Size	258
Primary and Secondary Groups	259
Conformity Within Groups	259
Outside Threats and Group Cohesion	260
Dysfunctional Group Processes	262

Organizations 263

Why Study Organizations?	263
Characteristics of Organizations	263

Social Networks and the Strength of Weak Ties 264**Oligarchy Versus Democracy 265**

Michels's Iron Law of Oligarchy 265

Oligarchy: Iron Law or Just a Tendency? 266

Leadership in Groups and Organizations 266

Instrumental and Expressive Leadership 266

Characteristics of Leaders 268

Bureaucracy 269

Why Do Bureaucracies Develop? 270

Bureaucracy and Democracy 271

Karl Marx on Bureaucracy 272

The Pervasiveness of Bureaucracy 272

Evaluating Bureaucracy 274

Dysfunctions of Bureaucracy 274

An Interactionist View of Bureaucracy 279

Informal Structure 279

Negotiated Order 280

Globalization and New Trends in Work Organization 283

Globalization and Work 283

Japanese Work Organization 285

Scandinavian Workplace Innovations 286

Workplace Change in the United States 288

Alternatives to Bureaucracy 290

Summary 290**Key Terms 290****Exercises 291****Chapter 10****Deviance, Crime, and Social Control****293****How Sociologists View Deviance 294**

The Sociology of Rule Making 294

Social Control 296

Putting Sociology to Work 298

Does Capital Punishment Deter Murder? 298

Crime 299

Street Crime 300

Victimless Crime 304

White-Collar and Corporate Crime 304

Organized Crime 306

Political Crime 307

Characteristics of Criminals 310

Crime Statistics: A Closer Look 310

Race, Class, and Crime Statistics 311

Explaining Deviant Behavior 315

Kinds of People: Biological and Psychological Theories of Deviant Behavior 315

Societal Explanations of Deviant Behavior 316

Anomie and Deviant Behavior 316

Subcultural Explanations of Deviance	318
Labeling Tradition	322
Assigning Deviant Labels	324
Functionalist and Conflict Perspectives on Deviance	325
The Functionalist View: Durkheim	325
The Dysfunctions of Deviance: Parsons	326
The Conflict View	326
Feminist Criminology	327
Summary	330
Key Terms	331
Exercises	331

Part IV Social Institutions

Chapter 11

Economy and Society 335

Economic Systems	335
Sectors of the Economy	335
Economic Change and Social Change	336
Economic Development and Society	336
Hunting-and-Gathering Economies	337
Agricultural Economies	337
Industrial Economies	338
The Shift to Postindustrial Economies	340
Effects on the Labor Force and Stratification	341
The Rise of Professions	342
The Role of Science and Education	342
Postmodernism: A Challenge to Science and Technology	343
Modern Economic Systems	344
Capitalism	346
Socialism	347
Karl Marx and Communism	348
Mixed Economies	350
Social Consequences of Modern Economic Systems	350
Does Capitalism Promote Greed?	351
Socialism, Capitalism, the Market, and Productivity	352
Is Socialism Dead?	352
The Changing Scale of Modern Economies	354
Concentration in Corporate Capitalism	354
Consequences of Concentration	356
Multinational Corporations	358
Globalization and Its Consequences	358
Unemployment and the Economic Cycle	361
Financial Systems	363
Voice or Exit	364
Financial Crises	365
Derivatives: Financial Insurance or Weapons of Mass Destruction?	366

Karl Polanyi and the New Economic Sociology 368

The Sociological Study of the Economy 368

Karl Polanyi and Adam Smith 369

The Embedded Economy and the Impossibility of the Self-Regulating Market 371

Summary 373**Key Terms 374****Exercises 375****Chapter 12****Politics, Power, and Society****377****Power in Modern Societies 377**

Legitimate Power and Authority 377

Other Sources of Power 378

Wealth, Income, and Power 379

Who Has Power in America Today? 379

Measuring Power 379

The Distribution of Power in the United States 380

Three Key Interest Group Coalitions 380

Who Governs? 381

Who Benefits? 381

Who Wins? 382

Overview 383

The State 383

Types of Systems 385

Putting Sociology to Work 386

Welfare Reform: An Effective Tool Against Poverty? 386

Welfare Around the World 389

Liberal Welfare States: The United States, Canada, the United Kingdom 389

Corporatist-Statist Welfare States 390

Social Democratic Welfare States 390

Evaluating the Welfare States 391

Political Ideology 393**Political Parties and Special Interest Groups 395**

Lobbyists and Special Interest Groups 396

Voting Patterns of the Major Social Groups 397

The Apathetic Voter 399

The Politics of Development in the Third World 401

Perspectives on Uneven Development in the Third World 401

Modernization Theories 401

Dependency Theories 402

World-System Theory 403

Summary 406**Key Terms 407****Exercises 407**

Chapter 13**Marriages and Families****409****Family and Marriage Defined 410**

- Extended and Nuclear Families 410
- Growth of Nuclear Families in the United States 411
- Family Memberships 411
- Marriage Patterns 412
- Mate Selection 412
- Romantic Love and Mate Selection 414

Patterns Within Marriages 416

- Power and Authority in Marriages 416
- Residency Patterns 416
- Inheritance and Descent Patterns 417

Functions of Families 420

- Changing Functions 420
- The Family as a Regulator of Sexual Behavior 421
- AIDS 423

A Conflict Analysis of the Family 424

- Role Inequality Within the Family 424
- Violence in the Family and in Courtship 424
- The Family in the Larger Social Structure 426

Changing Patterns of Marriages and Families 427

- Changing Roles Within Marriages 427
- Delayed Marriage and Permanent Singlehood 428
- Cohabitation 429
- Gay and Lesbian Couples 430
- Fewer Children, No Children 432

Marital Disruption and Divorce 433

- Divorce in the United States 433
- Causes of Divorce 435
- Changing Divorce Laws 436

Putting Sociology to Work 437

- Should Couples Stay Together “for the Sake of the Kids”? 437

Remarriage 438**Single-Parent Families 439**

- Race, Poverty, and the One-Parent Family 440

The Future of Marriages and Families 443**Summary 444****Key Terms 444****Exercises 445****Chapter 14****Education****447****The Origins of Mass Education 447****Mass Education in the United States 447**

The Functionalist Perspective on Education 447

Manifest Functions of Education 447

Latent Functions of Education 449

Race, Class, and Education: Equal Opportunity or Inequality? 450

Compensatory Education 452

The Conflict Perspective on Education 452

Schools and Unequal Mobility 452

Unequal Funding of Schools 453

Symbolic Interaction and Educational Inequality 454

The Effect of Teacher Expectations 454

Factors Affecting Teacher Expectations 454

Teacher Expectations: The Schoolwide Level 454

Tracking and Ability Grouping 455

Testing 458

The Hidden Curriculum: A Conflict Analysis 460

Social Class and School Orientation 460

Schooling and Job Status 461

Higher Education 462

Community Colleges 462

Recent Trends in Access to College 462

Higher Education for Students of Color 463

Does College Pay? 465

Is the Quality of American Education Declining? 467

Have Educational Changes Reduced Achievement? 467

Summary 471**Key Terms 473****Exercises 473****Chapter 15****Religion****475****What Is Religion? 475****Forms of Religion 475****Religion and Society 476****Religion: The Sociological Perspective 476****A Functionalist Analysis of Religion 476**

Social Solidarity 476

Meaning 477

Social Control 477

Identity and Psychological Support 477

Social Change 479

Dysfunctions of Religion 479**A Conflict Analysis of Religion 479**

Religion and Inequality 480

Religious Conflicts 480

Major World Religions 480

Monotheism, Polytheism, and Sacred Philosophies 481
History, Beliefs, and Practices of the Major Religions 481

- Hinduism 481
- Buddhism 482
- Confucianism 482
- Judaism 483
- Christianity 484
- Islam 484

Religion in the United States and the World 487

Types of Organized Religion 488

- Churches and Sects 488
- Denominations 489
- Institutionalized Sects 490
- Cults 491

Religion and the Economy: Weber and the Protestant Ethic 491

- Impact of Weber's Theory 492

Church and State in America 493

Civil Religion 494

Religion and Politics in America 494

- The Nineteenth Century 494
- The Twentieth Century 495

Fundamentalism and the New Religious Right 495

- Televangelism 496
- Direct Mail 498
- Mobilizing Congregations 498
- Christian Schools 498

Religion and Politics: The Current Scene 499

Two Opposing Trends: Secularization and Fundamentalist Revival 500

A Trend Toward Secularization? 500

Fundamentalist Revival? 501

Why Secularization and Revival? 502

Summary 505

Key Terms 506

Exercises 506

Chapter 16

Health, Population, and Aging

509

Health and Society: A Functionalist View 510

- The Sick Role 510
- Criticisms of the Sick Role 511
- The Health Benefits of Modernization 511

Health and Society: A Conflict View 512

- Power, Environmental Quality, and Health 513
- Modernization and Health: The Epidemiology of Cancer 513
- Social Inequality and Health 514

Health and Society: An Interactionist View 516

The Meaning of Health, Sickness, and Illness 516

Gender and Health 517

Personal Outlook and Health 517

Mental Health 518

Changing Views of Mental Disorders 519

The Institution of Medicine 520

Traditional and Scientific Medicine 520

Modern Medicine: The Medicalization of Everything? 522

Roles and Stratification in the Medical Institution 524

Care Based on Ability to Pay 526

Alternative Approaches to Health Care 527

National Health Insurance 528

National Health Service 529

The Affordable Care Act 531

Demography: The Study of Population 531

Three Basic Demographic Variables 532

The Basic Demographic Equation and Population Projections 534

World Population Growth 535

The Demographic Transition in Europe and North America 537

Third World Demographic Transition 539

Summary 542**Key Terms 544****Exercises 545****Part V Social Change****Chapter 17****Urban Society: City Life and Collective Behavior 549****The Rise of Cities Throughout the World 550****Technology, Industrialization, and Urbanization 552**

Social Change and Urbanization 552

The Demographic Transition and Urbanization 553

Urbanization in the United States 554

Economics of Urban Growth 554

Functional Specialization 555

Urban Hierarchy 556

Urbanization in the Third World 556**Urban Life 557**

Differences Between Rural and Urban Life 557

Wirth on Urban Life 558

Decline of Community: Myth or Reality? 561

Urban Life and "Getting Involved" 562

Cities and Social Conflict 564

Collective Behavior 565

Causes of Collective Behavior 565

Types of Collective Behavior 566

- Collective Behavior in Crowds 566
- Types of Crowd Behavior 567
- Mass Behavior 571
- Types of Mass Behavior 571
- Fashions and Fads 574

The Structure of the City 575

- Human Ecology 575
- Urban Social Segregation 577

The Changing City in Postindustrial America 582

The Rise of the Suburbs 583

- Causes of Suburbanization 584
- Life in the Suburbs 584

The Crisis of the Central Cities 586

- Population Decline 586
- The Urban Underclass 587
- The Urban Fiscal Crisis 588

Uneven Development Among American Cities 588

- Different Processes or Different Stages? 589
- The Conflict Theory of Uneven Development 590

Summary 591

Key Terms 593

Exercises 593

Chapter 18

Social Movements and Change

595

Social Movements 596

- Types of Social Movements 597
- The Causes of Social Movements 598
- Political-Process Theory 600
- Necessary Conditions for Social Movements 600
- Life Course of a Social Movement 601

Social Change 603

What Is Social Change? 603

Theories of Social Change 604

- Equilibrium (Functionalist) Versus Conflict Theories of Social Change 604
- Evolutionary Versus Cyclical Changes 605

Modernization: Escalating Social Change 606

- Consequences of Rapid Social Change 606

Summary 609

Key Terms 610

Exercises 610

Web-Based References

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<i>Glossary</i>	613
<i>References</i>	629
<i>Index</i>	631



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Photographs

Chapter 1

- 1.1 Karl Marx. 11
- 1.2 Max Weber. 13
- 1.3 Émile Durkheim. 14
- 1.4 Jane Addams pioneered the collection and mapping of data for cities and urban neighborhoods. 15
- 1.5 and 1.6 Events such as the *Challenger* space shuttle disaster cannot be fully understood by looking only at technological factors. Social and organizational processes often play a role in such disasters. 21

Chapter 2

- 2.1 An interviewer conducts a personal interview survey. Surveys are one of the most widely used research methods in sociology. 33
- 2.2 In unobtrusive observation, the researcher observes human behavior from a position that is out of sight or relatively unnoticeable. 36
- 2.3 When people take action, such as participating in a demonstration, they are expressing value judgments—views about how things ought to be. 38

Chapter 3

- 3.1 Many conservative football fans boycotted the NFL for some time. Despite the fact that the U.S. constitution guarantees freedom of expression and the right to peaceably protest, Kaepernick was treated harshly by his critics and remains a spectator to the sport he loves to this day. *Why did this happen?* 43
- 3.2 The largely destroyed city of Idlib in Syria. When a society loses any sense of consensus, it may cease to function as a society and descend into chaos or civil war. 47
- 3.3 The concept of the looking-glass self points out that we use messages from others, like a mirror, to form an image of ourselves. 57
- 3.4 Small groups, such as students working on a project, can be good places to view the processes of presentation of self and impression management. 59
- 3.5 As long as both partners' needs are being met, it doesn't matter who takes care of the house and who goes to the office. However, if a point is reached where either partner's needs are not being met, the marriage could be in trouble. 65

Chapter 4

- 4.1 Language both reflects and influences culture. In the past, this sign might have said "Flagman Ahead," but through the use of graphics, as on this sign, signs can be gender neutral and understandable in any language. 70

- 4.2 McDonald's Western-style fashion clothing ads in Louyang, China. As contact among different cultures increases throughout the world, the potential for misunderstanding and tensions increases. 71
- 4.3 In the classroom, there are distinct roles, student and teacher, each of which carries a set of expectations. In addition, stratification is attached to the roles: The teacher has greater prestige and power than the students. 76
- 4.4 Although hip-hop culture began with African American youth in central cities, some aspects of it have been adopted by white suburban youths. This is an example of how cultural diffusion can occur within a society. 89
- 4.5 Older, working-class, and rural white people, feeling left behind by the rapid social changes of recent decades and often struggling economically, played a key role in the election and popularity of Donald Trump. 96
- 4.6 Many jobs that were once considered male-only are now open to women. However, it is still common for women and men to be segregated in separate occupations. In education, women predominate in the lower grades, where pay, benefits, and work autonomy are less generous. 97

Chapter 5

- 5.1 A child has reached the game stage when the child can interact with roles rather than merely with individuals. 106
- 5.2 It is much more common today than in the past for both parents in two-parent families to work full time. 107
- 5.3 At the sensorimotor stage, children develop a physical understanding of the environment, as shown by this child's examination of and experimentation with a toy cell phone. 110
- 5.4 Stage 6 moral reasoning is most often found in people with formal training in philosophy, such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 112
- 5.5 Going to school or nursery school may be a difficult transition for some children because it is their first experience interacting with equals rather than authority figures. 116
- 5.6 and 5.7 With the proliferation of cable networks with opposing views on the news as well as numerous websites that promote different political agendas, it is easier than ever to expose yourself only to sources of news that reinforce what you already believe. 118
- 5.8 It matters little where this college campus is located. It is evident that a nationwide informal dress code for college students prevails. Is this a peer-group norm, something created by the media or by marketing, or both? 122

Chapter 6

- 6.1 and 6.2 Global inequality—the gap between rich and poor worldwide—is by many measures today the greatest in the history of the world. 131
- 6.3 Heat, cold, fires, and vermin are among the risks faced by poor families that live in housing like this home in New Mexico. 137
- 6.4 Managers, professionals, and small business owners do not fit neatly into Marx's classification of social classes. In some ways they resemble the bourgeoisie but in others, the proletariat. 145

Chapter 7

- 7.1 Scottish Highlander wearing a kilt and playing bagpipes. If it were not for his dress, could you identify the ethnic group of this person? 172

- 7.2 Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders won a number of primaries and caucuses in the 2016 campaign, making him the first Jewish American to ever win a presidential primary. 196
- 7.3 Through much of the twentieth century, white people used a variety of techniques to exclude racial and ethnic minorities from the neighborhoods where they lived. Some such techniques, such as restrictive covenants, were at one time supported by federal policy and backed by the courts. 197
- 7.4 Unarmed persons shot and killed by police are very disproportionately African American. This disparity, along with several incidents that dramatized it, gave rise to a powerful Black Lives Matter social movement. 203

Chapter 8

- 8.1 By the age of five years, boys and girls play with different toys and can identify different occupations as “men’s jobs” or “women’s jobs”. 220
- 8.2 While the gender gap has narrowed compared to the past, women still spend more time on household work than men. When both partners work full time, the result is that men have more leisure time than women. 232
- 8.3 Occupations dominated by one sex, such as STEM occupations dominated by males, can often be difficult for the other sex to flourish in. Women in STEM occupations, for example, have encountered considerable resistance. 235

Chapter 9

- 9.1 and 9.2 Donald Trump was uninterested in the details of policy but inspired his supporters, while Hillary Clinton demonstrated impressive levels of expertise and experience but was personally disliked by large numbers of the public. 267
- 9.3 The presence of a leader is characteristic of all organizations. Even organizations that try to be leaderless usually end up with leaders. 269
- 9.4 Galaxy Note 7 smartphones repeatedly overheated and caught fire, sometimes leading to serious injuries. Organizational pressure to meet deadlines, even if it means cutting corners, is often an underlying factor when dangerous products are put on the market. 276
- 9.5 When the potter finishes his job, he can take pride in a visible product that he has designed and created. In contrast, factory workers may participate in a process only by adding one part to a larger machine or device. 278

Chapter 10

- 10.1 Although tobacco kills nearly 20 times as many people every year as all illegal drugs combined, its use remains legal and brings millions in profits to large, powerful corporations. 296
- 10.2 For a variety of reasons, fear of legal punishment is not very effective in deterring crime. Informal sanctions from disapproving friends and family members may be more effective in many cases. 299
- 10.3 The easy availability of assault weapons in the United States plays a role in our high rate of mass shootings. Since an assault weapons ban was allowed to expire in 2004, mass shootings are up sharply. 302

Chapter 11

- 11.1 Nowhere has the demand for services in the postindustrial economy been more evident than in the growth of fast-food and carryout food establishments. These businesses have created many jobs, but most offer low pay and limited benefits. 341
- 11.2 The headquarters of Google. For the past century or more, most productive capability in the United States has been controlled by corporations. In recent years, corporations in information-related businesses have become particularly dominant on a global scale. 346
- 11.3 This KFC near Beijing's Tiananmen Square illustrates the wide reach of multinational corporations. 348
- 11.4 One prediction by Marx that largely has come true is automation: the replacement of workers by machines, a worldwide trend in today's high-technology age. 350

Chapter 12

- 12.1 Power theorists contend the system is biased toward the wealthy. When President Obama signed the financial bailout into law, some saw this act as saving the national, and possibly global, economy from a Great Depression type of downward spiral. But power theorists might point out that the same group of wealthy investors who created the financial crisis were also the ones to receive the bailout funds. Who do you think is right? Can both views be right? 382
- 12.2 Starting in the 1840s, the state increased its role in American life by obtaining land for railroads and creating uniform standards for railroads in the United States. 384
- 12.3 Gerrymandered congressional districts like this one have created more districts that are "safe" for one party and fewer "swing" districts that might vote for either party. This has increased political polarization and decreased the voting influence of moderates and independents. 396

Chapter 13

- 13.1 An engaged couple on a prewedding photo shoot in Beijing's Beihai Park. As marriage in China has become associated with modern concepts such as romantic love, the country's divorce rate has soared. 416
- 13.2 Men have taken on more child-care responsibilities than in the past, but these duties tend to be those that are less routine and more "fun". 428
- 13.3 Homosexual couples are among the many new types of marriage and family relationships that have emerged in American society. 432
- 13.4 With today's high divorce and remarriage rates, a growing number of marriages result in families in which one or both of the partners bring children from previous marriages. 439

Chapter 14

- 14.2 Effects of teacher expectations on student achievement, though small for most students, are nonetheless real, and tend to be greater for minority and lower-income students. 468

Chapter 15

- 15.1 Religious institutions often provide social networks that can be sources of friendship and support. 478
- 15.2 Muslim worship at the Grand Mosque in Mecca is an example of a religious ritual. 486
- 15.3 The involvement of Americans in organized religion is greater than it was in early American history, but less than it was a few decades ago. Still, Americans are more involved than citizens of most other industrialized countries. 488
- 15.4 In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriage is legal nationwide. Since then some religious groups have shifted away from opposition to it, while others have argued that businesses should have a right, based on religious beliefs, to refuse service to same-sex weddings. 498

Chapter 16

- 16.1 As demand for health care has risen and gender roles have changed, the status and incomes of nurses have improved, and the “doctor-nurse game” has become less common. 525
- 16.2 With the election of a Republican president and Congress in 2016, the possibility of a repeal of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) became real. With the realization that up to 20 million Americans could lose health insurance, protests against repeal spread quickly. 533
- 16.3 Fertility is harder to predict than mortality, because we do not know if women will choose to have more or fewer babies in the future. 534
- 16.4 In parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the standard of living has been slow to rise, and fertility has been slow to decline. 540
- 16.5 This woman has moved beyond the normal retirement age of sixty-five and thus is considered to have reached old age, a social category originally created to open jobs for younger workers. But this does not mean she is incapable of work. Today official retirement ages are rising as government policies change. 543

Chapter 17

- 17.1 The pyramids and temples of Teotihuacan are typical of the religious monuments that characterized preindustrial cities. 550
- 17.2 An “alternative” night club above a Vietnamese restaurant in Montreal. The diversity of cities leads urbanites to be somewhat more accepting of different ethnic groups and cultural lifestyles than rural populations are. 564
- 17.3 Subprime loans were a major cause of the 2008 housing crisis, resulting in widespread foreclosures. These loans were often targeted to minority neighborhoods and were made knowing that the loan could not be repaid or that the house was not worth the amount of the loan. The loans were then quickly sold to banks or loan consolidators, who got stuck with worthless paper. 580
- 17.4 Collectivities sometimes develop norms that give members of the group alternative guidelines for behavior. Would these people (most of whom are college professors) dress like this outside the group context? 584

- 17.5 All this expansion outward from the central city has been an effort to avoid the problems associated with central cities. Yet, as previously stated, exurbs and edge cities seem to be developing some of the same issues as the cities they have sought to escape. However, it is still in the central cities where these problems have been most severe, a pattern to which we now turn our attention. 585

Chapter 18

- 18.1 and 18.2 The Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, pictured above, are recent examples of organized social movements, although their goals and objectives varied greatly from one another. 597
- 18.3 Social change, in the form of urbanization and rapid population growth in the Rocky Mountain states, is transforming Utah ranch country into Salt Lake City suburbs. 604
- 18.4 Cyberbullying is a problem that has arisen as cyber life has become a more important part of people's lives, especially for young people. 608

Preface

John E. Farley and Michael W. Flota

We are thrilled to offer a new edition of this successful and unique textbook and are honored to have our new publisher, Routledge. This eighth edition of *Sociology* incorporates many new updates and changes that bring the book up to the current moment with the latest research and important world events, as well as responding to feedback from readers of earlier editions. We are also very proud to add a new author to the mix, J. Scott Carter whose outstanding work on racial and gender inequality and methods have made him an invaluable contributor to this new edition. Importantly, however, the book retains those features that readers have found useful in past editions. In particular, three features have made this book different from other introductory textbooks, and we have made every effort to retain and strengthen each of these features.

Three Key Features

First, from the initial edition of the book, the text has featured sociology's three major perspectives—functionalist, conflict, and symbolic-interactionist—as a way of linking the very diverse topics, issues, and theories that sociology addresses. Many other introductory sociology texts briefly introduce these perspectives in a small part of an early chapter and then, at most, mention them occasionally in later parts of the book. In contrast, this book devotes a full chapter—Chapter 3—to an in-depth examination of these perspectives and how they have been used and increasingly combined to develop a better understanding of society. And throughout the rest of the book, the perspectives are used to show linkages among theories and issues throughout sociology; in every chapter in the remainder of the book, one

or more of these perspectives is used to analyze and understand the subject matter. Wherever a specific sociological theory about a particular topic can be readily linked to one of the broader sociological perspectives, we have done so. The end result is a more integrated and less fragmented understanding of sociology. A second advantage of this approach is that it encourages critical thinking about how research findings in sociology support, challenge, or lead to modifications in sociological theory. Specifically, students are invited to consider how sociological research findings and data are consistent or not consistent with the claims of the broad perspectives or of more specific theories arising from these perspectives.

Second, in every edition a strong emphasis on race, class, and gender has been featured throughout the book. Reviewers of the book have noted that, while many books in effect segregate coverage of race, class, and gender to the chapters on those particular topics, this book addresses these issues in its coverage of every topic. Issues of race, class, and gender are discussed and illustrated in every chapter, thus showing their pervasive impact on every area of society from health to education to deviance and from social control to urban society. In this new edition, this emphasis throughout the textual material of every chapter has been augmented by a set of boxed inserts focusing specifically on issues of race, class, and gender in the different subject areas of sociology.

Third, in the first edition, a conscious decision was made to cover slightly fewer topics than other introductory sociology texts but to cover those featured in somewhat greater depth. In addition, we place a greater emphasis than do other textbook authors on showing how one topic in sociology relates to another. In

part, this is done through the theoretical linkages and the emphasis on issues of race, class, and gender. However, it is also facilitated by the decision to cover slightly fewer topics in greater depth, which provides the opportunities to make those linkages. The end result of this approach is to make the book more integrated and less disjointed than other introductory texts and to encourage students to think and reason more deeply about sociological issues, principles, and theories.

Organization: Continuity and Change in the Eighth Edition

As in earlier editions, we have divided the book into five parts. Part I introduces sociology as a discipline. Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of what sociology is all about: What insights can we gain through sociology that we may not be able to gain through other ways of knowing? What is the sociological way of knowing, and where does it fit within the broader picture of science and the social sciences? The key theories and theorists of sociology are briefly introduced, along with the social conditions that gave rise to sociology and that continue to make sociology relevant in the new millennium. Chapter 2 provides an overview of how sociology is done. The concept of the scientific method is introduced, along with an overview of the various types of methods used in sociology and key concepts such as variables. Attention is given both to the role of values in sociology and to the relationship between theory and research. Emphasis is also placed on the notion that different methods, including quantitative and qualitative methods, have trade-offs: something is gained and something is lost in the choice of any method as opposed to another.

Part II focuses on society and interaction. Chapter 3 is devoted entirely to the three sociological perspectives—describing and presenting each one within a broader context of micro- and macrosociology and exploring efforts to combine two or all three of the perspectives. A strength of this book has always

been its focus on theory, and we have an extensive discussion of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim and their connection to the larger sociological perspectives. No other introductory text of which we are aware provides such a thorough discussion of the sociological perspectives, and this chapter lays the groundwork for all that follows. Chapter 4 provides combined coverage of culture and social structure. While this book was one of the first to treat culture and social structure together in the same chapter, it is gratifying to see that other books are now adopting this organization. We believe this to be essential because culture and social structure are so interconnected that neither can be understood outside the context of the other. The third chapter in Part II, Chapter 5, covers socialization, the process by which human beings become members of human societies.

As before, Part III focuses on social structure and inequality. Chapter 6 introduces the concept of stratification as structured social inequality. It provides a detailed examination of class inequality (including wealth, income, and the problem of poverty). Chapter 6 also features an enhanced discussion of global stratification and the theories used to explain its persistence. Finally, we give considerable focus to the unequal impact the COVID-19 global pandemic had on different class groups. Chapter 7 provides an in-depth analysis of race, ethnicity, and racial inequality and features expanded coverage on the historical explanations theorists have posited for the rise of racism, and considerable coverage of the election of the first African American president, Barack Obama, and the rise of hate groups that followed it, as well as the marked increase of hate crimes in the weeks following the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and the events that have followed, including the murder of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter protests, and the rollback of Affirmative Action programs by the United States Supreme Court. We also discuss the other numerous instances of unarmed African Americans killed by police officers—many of which have been captured on video. Continuing a theme developed in Chapter 7, Chapter 8 has a discussion of the historical explanations that have been offered for the

rise of gender stratification. Our discussion of these theories gives students an opportunity to wrestle with a fundamental debate in social science that is too often presented as a series of answers rather than the enduring questions that make up the heart of the discipline. This edition also expands the discussion of gender as a social construction, including Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity. Chapter 8 also discusses sexual orientation, the struggle for marriage equality, and the Supreme Court's decision to legalize gay marriage in 2015, as well as the nature-nurture debate over what determines sexual preferences, the politics surrounding the rights of transgender people, the decision to override *Roe v. Wade*, and more.

This section of the book also includes Chapter 9, on groups, organizations, and the workplace. We have discussions of social networks, including Mark Granovetter's concept of the strength of weak ties as well as the continuing impact of globalization on work and the strategies to increase worker engagement, productivity, control, and job satisfaction in the globalized workplace. We also include a new section on the COVID-19 pandemic and its transformation of the workplace and our organizations. This section also contains Chapter 10, on deviant behavior, crime, and social control. This edition includes expansive coverage of gun violence in the United States, including the many instances of mass shootings that have occurred in the country in recent years. This organization of chapters reflects the intricate linkage of these subject areas with race, class, and gender inequality. It is impossible to study groups, organizations, or the workplace without addressing social inequality, and inequality is and always has been a major emphasis of this chapter. Similarly, inequalities along the lines of race, class, and gender are a critical element in defining, labeling, and punishing deviant behavior and crime, and many sociologists argue that a major function of social control is the preservation of such inequalities. Both work/organizations and deviance/crime are key arenas in which processes involving social inequality are played out, and such inequality has been emphasized in these chapters in

each edition of the book. This emphasis provides a direct linkage of material in the stratification, race, and gender chapters to material in the work/organizations and deviance/crime chapters. The organization of Part IV focuses on major social institutions, with chapters on economy and society, on politics and power, on marriages and families, and three chapters on education, religion, and health, population, and aging. These chapters also contain extensive material on race, class, and gender inequality within each of these major institutional areas. Chapter 11 offers a distinctive focus on the economic sociology of financial systems in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis and the global pandemic, a particular focus on theorist Karl Polanyi, a fierce critic of unregulated markets, and an expanded explanation of financial derivatives and the role they played in the 2008 crash. There is a new feature on Modern Monetary Theory and the social construction of money. Chapter 12 covers politics and power, the continuing political divisiveness in the United States, and an extended discussion of the history and expansion of the state in the United States. Chapter 13 continues its focus on what is new in marriage and family trends. Chapter 14 looks at education, Chapter 15 is devoted to religion, and Chapter 16 covers health, population, and aging. It focuses on the changes taking place in the three main themes of the chapter as the United States undergoes a shift in its health-care system via the Affordable Care Act, and as changing demographics strain every country's ability to care for the welfare and health of its population. We also include a wide-ranging analysis of immigration, looking at the history and contemporary impact of immigration into the United States. This includes the controversial immigration law in Arizona and the most recent research on the controversy over crime and illegal immigration.

As before, Part V focuses on social change. Chapter 17 covers collective action in the globe's rapidly growing urban environment, and Chapter 18 focuses on social movements with coverage of the new social movements such as the Tea Party, Occupy Wall Street, and Black Lives Matter.

Key Features in the Eighth Edition

Thinking Outside the Box (or Inside It . . .)

Selected chapters contain several thematically linked boxed inserts aimed at bringing further analytical and expository focus to certain issues. The boxes are focused as follows:

- *Sociological Insights*: These boxes focus on how sociology can help us better understand a variety of issues and how examples from everyday life can help us to understand sociological principles. They also explore the contributions of key sociologists to the development of the discipline. They are used to illustrate and elaborate on topics covered in the accompanying text material and are carefully linked to that material.
- *Global Sociology*: One of the most pronounced social changes of the past century has been globalization—a transition from the dominance of nation-states and national economies to global interactions. Whether we realize it or not, global processes affect nearly every aspect of our lives and are a key factor in social inequality not only worldwide but also “at home,” wherever “home” is. These boxes examine social change around the world and how change in one part of the world brings changes in other parts.
- *Sociological Surprises*: One common but (we believe) unjustified criticism of sociologists is that we sometimes expend a great deal of effort to prove things that are obvious. On the contrary, the reality is that what we find often goes against what people commonly believe and even sometimes against what we as sociological researchers expect to find. These boxes focus on such unexpected findings and analyze why the social reality turns out to be something different from what most people believe or would have expected to find.
- *Understanding Race, Class, and Gender*: These boxes give added emphasis to the book’s focus on race, class, and gender

inequality. In every issue that sociologists study, race, class, and gender play a key role—and these boxes provide students with clear and concrete examples of how this occurs.

- *Student Life*: These boxes, which discuss student life from a sociological viewpoint, show how sociology is relevant to students in their everyday lives. They cover a range of issues that directly affect today’s students, from race relations to dating and mating to paying for college, and they draw out the sociological implications so students can use their own personal experiences to gain sociological understanding.
- *Putting Sociology to Work*: These boxes focus on application: How can sociology be used to solve a social problem or to make an important decision?

Up-to-Date References and Resources

A point of pride for this book has always been the currency of each new edition. With each edition, hundreds of new sociological studies and data sources have been added to keep the book as up-to-the-minute as possible. This eighth edition is no exception.

Additional Features

As in earlier editions, the book includes a variety of *pedagogical aids*, including *end-of-chapter lists of key terms*, which appear in bold print where they are first introduced and in a *glossary* at the end of the book. Each chapter begins with a *real-life vignette*, often based on actual sociological findings or data. Some have been updated for the eighth edition, and some are entirely new. Each chapter ends with a *summary*, designed to provide a succinct wrap-up of the main points of the chapter.

We have strived mightily to *write clearly* in language students can readily understand, always keeping in mind the introductory sociology student as the reader. Where we have failed

to do this as well as possible, skillful editors have bailed us out. Yet, while writing in as clear and direct a way as possible, we also have called upon students to *reason sociologically* and to explore the relationship between theory and research in a sophisticated way. We believe that this is something introductory-level students can and should do, but we also know they will only have the opportunity to do so if encouraged by their textbooks and instructors.

The Sociological Imagination

We now come to what we believe is the most important pedagogical feature of this book. It is not to be found in boxes, lists of key terms, or opening or closing sections of chapters, as important as all of these are. Rather, it is found

throughout the book, in clearly written material with a constant emphasis on sociological thinking. In every chapter, students are encouraged to discover how ideas and concepts relate to one another. They are encouraged to reason sociologically to see whether the research evidence is consistent with the ideas advanced by one or the other of the three major perspectives. We believe that students can do this if we give them the proper tools in clear, understandable language. That is what we have tried to do, and we believe that if successful, the lives of the students who read this book will be enriched by their newfound ability to use the sociological imagination.

Also, on the Web: a full list of references used in the book and PowerPoint slides of tables and figures from the text.

See all of these materials here: www.routledge.com/9781032423593.



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Acknowledgments

John E. Farley: Now retired for 17 years. Farley spends his time in the mountains and canyons of Colorado and New Mexico where he enjoys skiing, fishing, and weather and nature photography and spending time with his wife Alice, to whom he has now been married for more than 26 years. He is proud of his daughter Megan, who has now also attained a doctoral degree, and his grandson and granddaughter, now in college and high school, respectively. After sole authorship of the first five editions of this book and heavy involvement in the revisions of the book for the sixth and seventh editions, Farley is now fully retired from sociological writing and has turned over full responsibility for the revisions for this edition to the able hands of his outstanding former student Michael W. Flota and newest coauthor, J. Scott Carter.

Michael W. Flota: I have always considered this book the best sociology textbook on the market. First as a student who was lucky enough to have John as my professor, and then later as a teacher using it to teach my own students. When John agreed to let me join as a coauthor, it became one of the highlights of my career. I continue to be in awe of John's enormous breadth and depth of knowledge of the field of sociology. I thank him deeply for his patience and support in our collaboration. I am equally thrilled to have been able to add a third author to this project—J. Scott Carter. He brings his incredible talent for research, statistics, and writing that this edition of the book has benefited greatly from. He is as wonderful a person and friend as he is a talented sociologist. It is the privilege of a lifetime to be able to share the author duties with these two collaborators, and I thank them so much for their friendship, help, and guidance. Nick Petropouleas is also due a great deal of gratitude

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J. Scott Carter: I want to start out by thanking Professors John E. Farley and Michael W. Flota for bringing me on this project. I have known and appreciated the work of these two great scholars for years and believe this to be one of the best introductory textbooks on the market. The breadth of information and topics covered in this book is unmatched. I would like to note that Professor Farley's textbook *Majority-Minority Relations* was a staple in my race and ethnicity courses for many years even before this venture began. That textbook and my appreciation for it served as a motivational reason to work on this book. John and Michael, thanks for thinking of and including me on this very important book for sociology. I would also like to thank my wife and fellow sociologist Shannon K. Carter at the University of Central Florida. We have collaborated on many projects over the years, and her attention to detail and sharp wit have helped me grow immensely as

a scholar and person. I'm sure my many discussions about the inner workings of this book without complaint was not easy. Not only is she a top scholar in her field and leader at our university, but she is also a great mother and friend. I dedicate this book to her because I would not be where I am today without her guidance and support. I would also like to acknowledge the great scholars that I have been blessed to work

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expert testimony in a number of federal court cases pertaining to racial discrimination and segregation in housing, and he has served as a member of the editorial board of *Urban Affairs Quarterly*. He headed a research team studying public response to Iben Browning's prediction of an earthquake in the Midwest in 1990 and was editor of a special issue of the *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* on that topic. His book *Earthquake Fears, Predictions, and Preparations in Mid-America*, which reports the results of the three-year study, was published by Southern Illinois University Press in 1998. Farley conducted research on racial housing segregation based on each U.S. Census from 1980 through 2000. He has received research grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Mental Health, and SIUE's Graduate School and Institute for Urban Research. Farley has received a number of awards for his work, including the SIUE Outstanding Scholar Award for his research on race relations and racial housing segregation, the SIUE Kimmell Community Service Award for his efforts in creating a fair-housing organization in the St. Louis metropolitan area, and SIUE's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. University Humanitarian Award for his efforts in the community. He has served as president of the SIUE Faculty Senate and the Illinois Sociological Association. In 2000–2001, he was president of the Midwest Sociological Society, one of the largest and most active regional sociological organizations in the United States. Farley enjoys fishing, snow skiing, travel, and nature and weather photography, especially when sharing these activities with his wife, Alice, his daughter, Megan, and now his two grandchildren, whom he does his best to spoil and to teach to ski (although one of them, alas, has switched to snowboarding).

About the Authors

Michael W. Flota



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Part I

Introduction



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Chapter 1

Sociology: The Discipline

Sociology studies human groups and societal arrangements. There is great diversity within sociology in terms of methods, theories, and the exact subject matter studied, but there are also two core commonalities. First, sociologists believe that questions can be answered through systematic observation. Second, sociologists believe that to answer such questions adequately, we must examine the influences of human groups and societal arrangements on behavior. Thus, these two shared beliefs or viewpoints make up what sociologists often call the **sociological perspective**, a belief that questions about human social behavior can be answered through systematic observation of human groups and societal arrangements.

What Is Sociology?

Sociology is the systematic study of society, human social behavior, and social groups. It is different from other approaches to understanding human behavior in two key ways. First, its major emphasis is on how social groups and the larger society influence behavior. In this regard, it is different from psychology, for example, which primarily looks within the individual for explanations of human behavior. Second, sociology does not focus on certain specific areas of human behavior (as, for example, do political science and economics) but rather seeks to explain all human behavior that it is influenced by social groups and society. The behavior studied by sociology includes the collective actions of groups and societies, not just the actions of individuals.

Characteristics of Sociology

As previously stated, the sociological perspective holds that questions about human behavior

can be answered through systematic observation. Because it uses systematic observation as its way of answering such questions, sociology is regarded as a *science* by most sociologists. **Science** is an approach to understanding reality that asks and answers questions based on systematic observation, generalization, and interpretation. In the next section, we contrast science with another way of understanding reality, common sense. But first there are two other characteristics of sociology we need to mention. One is that sociology is one of a group of sciences known as the **social sciences**. The social sciences use the methods of science to understand human social behavior. The other characteristic is that sociology focuses primarily on the influences of human groups and of the larger society on behavior. By human groups, we mean collectivities of people who share something in common, such as race, educational level, gender, or profession.

Sociology and Common Sense

Sociology, or any science, differs from common sense in its approach toward understanding the world. The main difference is that common sense takes things for granted and is based on what one believes to be sound personal judgment, while science does not. In a science, such as sociology, any assumption is up for question and debate; nothing is taken for granted. This is not to dispute the value of common sense. Years ago, a man in Minneapolis fell off his roof trying to get a better look at a tornado passing through the city. Clearly, common sense tells us that it is not wise to stand on a roof during a tornado. But there are other things it may not be able to tell us. Try using common sense to answer the true/false questions that appear in the box “A Common Sense Quiz.”



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

A Common Sense Quiz

Like everything else, common sense is good for some things and not for others. Try using common sense to decide whether the following statements are true or false:

- 1 Making contraceptives available to teenagers through school clinics will push them to be more sexually active because they won't have to worry about pregnancy.
- 2 People who live in the southern part of the United States drink less alcohol than people who live in the North.
- 3 When exiting a "burning theater" or some similar emergency in a confined space, people are often trampled when trying to escape, because everyone thinks only of themselves in such a life-and-death situation and will trample others to save themselves.
- 4 When a disaster is forecast, the best predictor of whether people will plan and take actions to protect themselves is whether or not they believe the forecast.
- 5 The higher the percentage of people in a population who drink, the higher the percentage of alcoholics there will be in that population.
- 6 During the days immediately following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Americans were unified in their confidence that a military response to the attacks would be effective.
- 7 Now that we have civil rights laws, the gap between black and white family incomes in the United States has considerably narrowed.
- 8 Juvenile delinquents generally commit the same kinds of crime as adult criminals.
- 9 Overcrowding in American cities is an important reason for the much higher urban crime rates in the last three decades as compared with earlier decades.
- 10 The incidence of homosexuality in the United States today is no greater relative to the population than it was 40 or 50 years ago.

Common sense probably suggested an answer to many of these questions. But was it the right answer? Turn ahead now to the box "A Common Sense Quiz: The Answers" to find out.

How did you do? If you are like most students, you got several answers wrong. In fact, based on similar quizzes we've given in our introductory classes, we are sure that some of you got half or more of the answers wrong. The point? Common sense is great for some things (like telling you to stay off a roof during tornadoes), but in many other situations, it is totally inadequate, and we must use other means of understanding the world. Sociology is one such way.

Sociology as a Science

Science as a Way of Thinking

We have said that most sociologists view sociology as a science. Science is one of several possible ways

of understanding reality. As we have already seen, common sense is another way of understanding reality, and faith and tradition are yet others. Each of these ways is useful for understanding certain kinds of things. However, as the previous commonsense example illustrated, each also has its limitations and can lead to judgment errors.

Science is based on systematic observation or measurement, called **research**. While this enables us to answer questions that can't be reliably answered by common sense or faith and tradition, it has its limitations, as does any way of understanding reality. For one, it can only answer questions about things that can be observed, such as human behavior. It cannot answer questions, for example, about the existence of heaven and hell or about the meaning of life. In addition, the meaning or significance of what is observed is almost always open to some debate, particularly in the social sciences that study complex human behavior. In spite of these limitations, science has become the most

widely used way of understanding reality in modern industrial societies.

Through research, scientists look for regular and systematic patterns, a process called generalization. They try to find relationships in which the presence of one condition often or usually leads to some other condition. When they find such regularities, scientists try to explain them by developing a **theory**—a set of interrelated arguments that seek to describe and explain cause-effect relationships. Good theory offers new explanations for patterns that have been observed through research or predicts findings that might be expected based on the theory's argument. Good research may test a relationship proposed in a theory, or it may identify new patterns or relationships in need of explanation by a theory. Thus, science—including sociology—becomes an ongoing cycle of *observation*, which leads to *generalization* that describes regular patterns based on what has been observed. The next step is *explanation* of these patterns through theories, which in turn engage in *prediction* regarding relationships to be found in other situations or about new relationships that logically follow from the explanations offered by the theory. After this, the cycle begins again with a new round of research (observation) to see whether the theory's predictions can be confirmed. This basic method, used in sociology and all other sciences, is called the scientific method. Its use in sociology is more fully discussed in Chapter 2.

The Norms of Science

Organized Skepticism

The basic approach described previously—a cycle of inquiry consisting of observation, generalization, explanation, and prediction—is shared by both the **natural sciences**, such as physics, chemistry, astronomy, and biology, which study natural phenomena, and the social sciences, such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, and political science, which study human behavior. Certain norms or expectations are shared in all of the sciences (Merton, 1973). The most important of these is **organized skepticism**, which states that science

accepts nothing on the basis of faith, common sense, or because someone claims it is true. Rather, it must be demonstrated by systematic observation. While science is often marked by several competing theories, each purporting to offer the true explanation for something, scientists will not believe any of the theories until the things predicted by the theory have been consistently shown by research to be true. If scientists observe patterns that are not consistent with the theory, it will be either modified or rejected.

Sociology as a Social Science

Can Human Behavior Be Studied Scientifically?

All of the social sciences share the common assumption that human social behavior can be studied scientifically, although there are great debates concerning how best to accomplish this. Social scientists believe that certain patterns and regularities in human behavior enable them to predict and explain human behavior to a substantial extent. Is this assumption true? Can human behavior be studied scientifically?

Many people would argue that it cannot. Because each person is an individual, capable of making free choices about an almost infinite number of things, how can we view human behavior as regular and predictable? The best answer is that every one of you experiences the regularities and predictable elements of human behavior every day. Every time you drive a car, you rely on the predictability of the other people on the road. You assume that they will go in the right direction, stop at stop signs, wait for lights to turn green, and so on. In most cases, they do. Only on the infrequent occasions when people behave *unpredictably* are accidents likely to occur. The behavior of people in other situations is similarly predictable. Imagine yourself in class, at religious services, at a football game. In each of these situations, your behavior and that of the other people present is for the most part predictable. Even less-structured situations such as parties and nightclubs have fairly regular patterns of behavior. These regularities in

behavior occur because there are general rules about how to behave in these situations that the participants know and for the most part follow. In each case, if you have had a reasonable amount of experience, you have a pretty good idea of how you are “supposed to” behave, and you will usually act accordingly.

Beyond such obvious cases of predictable behavior, however, social scientists have developed an impressive record of predicting behavior based on careful and systematic (scientific) measurement. In a large population of newly married couples, for example, a social scientist could predict with reasonable accuracy what kinds of couples are at the highest risk of divorce. A social scientist would predict—on

the basis of findings of past research—that those couples with lower income and education levels, those who marry at a younger age, those in which the wife has a high income relative to her husband, and those with partners from sharply different social backgrounds have a higher risk of divorce than couples with the opposite characteristics. Not every couple with “high-risk” characteristics will get a divorce, but a social scientist could predict that a large group of couples with these characteristics will experience a higher divorce rate than a similar-sized group of couples without them. On this large scale, divorce is predictable, even though it is harder to predict whether a *particular* couple will get a divorce.



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

A Common Sense Quiz: The Answers

- 1 **False** The limited number of studies of the effects of distributing contraceptives in high school clinics have all shown that this practice either had no effect on, or slightly reduced, the amount of teenage sexual activity. The apparent reason is that students in schools with clinics became more informed about the consequences of their sexual behavior and felt more in control of their sexual behavior and thus were more willing to say no (Kirby, 1997; Moore and Caldwell, 1977; Schorr and Schorr, 1988, pp. 54–5; Zabin et al., 1986). During the 1990s, teen pregnancy rates fell *both* because fewer teens were having sex and because more of those who did used contraceptives. The former accounts for about one-fourth of the decline; the latter accounts for about three-fourths (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1999).
- 2 **True** Among those who do drink, there is little regional difference in the amount of alcohol consumed. Average per-person alcohol consumption in the South, however, is lower because a significantly larger proportion of the southern population does not drink at all. The apparent reason for this is that more people in the South practice religions that forbid or discourage drinking (see Gallup, 1984; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988).
- 3 **False** Research has shown that the majority of people exiting a burning building or some other similar emergency do so with calm urgency. The problem is that many confined public spaces do not have adequate exits for everyone to use at once. So, two things begin to occur: First, a “crush at the exit” begins as more people than can fit through try to exit at once. This leads to someone slipping and falling. Second, people in the back can’t see this, so they continue to push forward, knocking down anyone in the front trying to help those who have fallen to get up. And thus, a tragic chain of events occurs in which many people are trampled. In hindsight, it appears that people simply ran over others to save themselves. But the evidence indicates that it is almost completely the opposite.
- 4 **False** Survey research in several instances of disaster predictions has shown that the best predictor of people’s plans and actions is what they see their friends and neighbors doing. In the case of an inaccurate but widely believed prediction of a central U.S. earthquake, what friends and neighbors planned to do made even more difference than whether people believed the forecast (Farley, 1998). Similar findings were obtained in several studies of evacuation behavior during hurricane warnings (Baker, 1979).

An Analogy: Meteorology

An analogy can be seen in the natural science of *meteorology*, the study of weather. Over a large area (such as a state), meteorologists can make fairly accurate predictions that, for example, thunderstorms will occur and will affect about one-third of the area. However, they are far less accurate at pinpointing exactly where the storms will occur. This does not mean that meteorology is not scientific or that weather is totally unpredictable. Rather, it means that the large pattern is easier to predict than the isolated experience of one location.

The same is true of the social sciences: The overall behavior patterns in groups of people are frequently predictable; the exact behavior of a given individual is less so. In individual situations, predictions of behavior become much more probabilistic: Given what we know about an individual, we can state a rough level of probability that the individual will think or behave in a particular way, but we cannot predict the exact behavior with complete certainty, just as the meteorologist can predict the weather in a particular location with a probability (e.g., a 30 percent chance of rain) rather than with complete certainty.

5 **False** Some populations, such as Italians and Jews, have very high incidences of drinking (nearly all adults drink), but their rates of alcoholism are well below the average. Other groups, such as some fundamentalist Protestants in the United States, contain relatively few drinkers, but those who do drink exhibit very high alcoholism rates, in part because they do their drinking on the sly. Among some of these groups, the alcoholism rate is well above that of Italians and Jews (Clinard, 1974, pp. 446–71, 479–84).

6 **False** Americans were indeed unusually unified (around 90 percent) in favoring a military response, but their confidence in the effectiveness of such a response varied widely. Most confident were men, white people, Southerners, and people with less than a college education. Women, college graduates, African Americans, and people who were most worried about personally becoming a victim of terrorism were significantly less confident that a military response would be effective in preventing terrorism (Pew Research Center, 2001).

7 **False** Median family income among African Americans has consistently been around 55 to 60 percent of median white family income ever since the major civil rights laws were passed in the 1960s. The processes of discrimination that produce or perpetuate such inequalities are apparently more subtle than those addressed by the laws (Carter and Lippard 2020).

8 **False** By and large, young people and adults commit different types of crimes. Adult criminals

are more likely to commit serious assaults, major thefts, and fraud and are responsible for the great majority of homicides. Juvenile delinquents are likely to commit smaller thefts, vandalism, and joyriding, as well as status offenses—things that are legal for adults to do but illegal for juveniles (e.g., drinking, curfew violation, running away) (Barlow, 2000, pp. 76–7; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1999, p. 220).

9 **False** The crime rates of American cities have been higher over the past few decades than in the past, though they have fallen since the mid-1990s. The higher rates in recent decades, however, cannot be blamed on overcrowding, because by any measure (e.g., people per square mile in the city or people per room in housing units), American cities have been getting progressively *less* crowded since 1960 or earlier and are much less crowded now than they were in the past. For example, Chicago, New York, Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, and St. Louis all have far fewer people now than they had in 1950 (Macionis and Parillo, 2001, p. 78), but their crime rates are higher than they were in 1950.

10 **True** Ever since the famous Kinsey Reports on sexual behavior were published in the late 1940s and early 1950s, survey data have found that the proportion of people with a predominantly homosexual preference has remained steady at around 3 or 4 percent for males and 2 or 3 percent for females. The proportion with some homosexual experience is considerably larger, but it, too, has remained constant.

Complications in the Study of Human Behavior

Although human behavior does display considerable regularity and predictability, certain elements of complexity are present in the social sciences that are not present in the natural sciences. These complexities make human behavior somewhat more difficult to study than natural processes, and they help to explain why the predictions of social scientists are frequently less precise than those of natural scientists. These complexities also help explain why social scientists disagree sharply about the best methods for studying human behavior, even when they do agree that it can be systematically studied.

Reactivity

One problem in the social sciences is **reactivity**—that is, the tendency of people to behave differently when they are being studied than they normally would. In most social-science research, the people being studied know they are being studied, interact with the person studying them, or both. In surveys, most experiments, and some participant observation (three common methods of social-science research described in Chapter 2), the people being studied know they are the subjects of some kind of research project. Consequently, they might try to please the researcher, make themselves look good, cover up their faults, or act defensively. Thus, what the researcher observes is not normal, everyday behavior, but, in part, a reaction to the research process. Even if the subjects don't know they are being studied, their interactions with the researcher can shape the way they behave. Natural scientists generally don't have to worry about these difficulties. For example, under specified temperature and atmospheric conditions, two chemicals will react with one another the same way whether anyone is watching or not. The same is *not* true of two people. Thus, one of the great challenges of social-science research is to measure correctly what the researcher intends to measure—not the reaction of the person being studied to the research and not the social scientist's sometimes incorrect interpretation of the meaning of that person's behavior.

Change Over Time and Place

Another complicating factor in the social sciences is that relationships can change significantly over time, and even from one place to another. This problem can be illustrated by the relationship between race and voter turnout. At one time, it was almost universally true that white voters turned out at a higher rate than black voters in the United States. In the 1980s, however, as black majorities emerged in many local electorates and black candidates became influential on the local, state, and national levels, black voter turnout surpassed white turnout in many areas. Thus, the finding that white people are more likely to vote than black people, while once true, is no longer valid. It is still true in some situations, but the opposite is now true in others.

This complication exists to a much lesser extent, if at all, in the natural sciences. Fifty years ago, protons had a positive electrical charge and electrons had a negative charge, and they still do today and still will 50 years from now. Moreover, this will hold true whether you are in Detroit, New York, St. Louis, Houston, or San Francisco, whereas the pattern of African Americans turning out to vote at a different rate than white people will not be so stable. This adds another complication to the study of human behavior, and it underlines two important points about the social sciences:

- 1 Research must be kept up to date; only current research can indicate whether patterns demonstrated to be true in the past still hold true in the present.
- 2 Research findings generated in one locality might not hold for another locality. Thus, large-scale national research is preferable to local studies for many purposes, and caution should always be used in generalizing social-science findings to or from a particular local area.

Studying Ourselves

Compared with the natural sciences, it is harder to approach the social sciences in a detached manner, because we are, in effect, studying ourselves. Social scientists often have strong personal feelings about the material they are

studying. As has been illustrated by Thomas Kuhn (1962), natural scientists also can have strong feelings about the subject matter they are studying and even set out to “prove a point.” But this is probably even more true of the social sciences, where the scientist, as a human being, is often very close emotionally to what they are studying (Lieberson, 1992). As Kuhn points out, this does not in any way invalidate science (either natural or social), but it increases the need for social scientists to adhere to the principle of organized skepticism.

By now, some of you probably agree that human behavior can be studied scientifically, and some do not. Even sociologists disagree on the *extent* to which sociology constitutes a science (Collins, 1987; Denzin, 1987), and some have argued that the difficulties of observing and interpreting human behavior make sociology one of the liberal arts more so than a science (Denzin, 1989). Keep in mind that one limitation of science is that the *meaning* of what is observed is open to debate. This is especially true in the social sciences. Accordingly, what sociologists “observe” may not so much be behavior as it “really happens” but rather the sociologists’ *understanding* of what they have observed. Thus, two sociologists observing the same behavior can and do sometimes “see” different things (Denzin, 1989, p. 67). Beyond the difficulties of observation, most social scientists do *not* accept the idea that human behavior is governed by some set of laws such that, if only we could discover all of them and measure people’s social and psychological characteristics perfectly, we could totally predict human behavior. It’s just too complex and spontaneous for that.

Even so, the majority of sociologists do subscribe to the view that much human behavior *can* be observed and understood through the methods of science, even though certain difficulties make the social world harder to study than the natural or physical world (Collins, 1995, 1974). Similarly, although no set of “laws” exists that totally determines human behavior, there *are* patterns and regularities to human behavior that make it largely, if far from totally, predictable.

Finally, that behavior is not always linear and predictable arguably makes sociology *more*

valuable, because it is only through social research that the surprising and sometimes unpredicted consequences of our actions are revealed.

The Sociological Imagination

One source of discomfort to nonsociologists is that sociology often tells us things that we believe are not true (and seemingly goes against common sense). For this very reason, sociology can be a source of very useful insights. Sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) refers to such insights as the **sociological imagination**. By using the sociological imagination, we gain understandings that we could not achieve through other modes of reasoning. The sociological imagination helps us understand how the social situation shapes our private realities—often in ways over which we have limited control. In many societies, but especially in the United States, people usually think in terms of *individuals* and what *individuals* do. From this viewpoint, when something good happens to you, it is because of what you have accomplished or what some other person (e.g., a parent or friend) has done for you. Similarly, when something bad happens, it is because of your own failing, or perhaps because some other individual has treated you unfairly. Such a perspective has its limitations and often ignores social context.

Divorce and the Sociological Imagination

Consider the case of divorce, mentioned earlier in this chapter. If you are ever divorced, you will likely ask yourself “Where did I go wrong?” or perhaps “Why did my spouse treat me that way?” Undoubtedly, thinking about such questions will give you some useful insights. At the same time, though, there is another part of understanding why you got a divorce that such questions can’t answer. The fact is that divorce has become much more common in the United States than it was in the past, for a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with how you or your spouse treat each other. These causes of divorce, which are explored in greater detail in Chapter 13, invoke social context and include changes in the economic meaning of the family, longer life expectancy, changes in the roles of

men and women, changes in the views of marriage, and changes in the law. Today, you are getting married in a very different social situation from that of people a few generations ago, such as your grandparents or great grandparents, and in today's social conditions, far more marriages end in divorce. Thus, your divorce results only in part from your behavior or your spouse's behavior; in the past, similar behavior would not have resulted in divorce. Rather, part of the reason for your divorce has to do with social changes that have increased *everyone's* risk of divorce.

Using the sociological imagination is helpful for understanding a wide variety of events that occur in your life. The sociological imagination, for example, can be used to understand such diverse events as obtaining a college degree, losing a job, and getting sick. This can be tremendously useful to both individuals and the larger society. From a societal viewpoint, it can be a very useful tool for alleviating problems that arise from human behavior or human social arrangements.

Finally, if you are still skeptical about the usefulness of sociology, consider this: Like it or not, you live in a world where "scientific" claims about human behavior are made all the time. This is done in advertising, in politics, even in sports and entertainment. Some such claims are based on sound social research, but many are not and are merely intended to persuade (or in some cases entertain) you. The ability to distinguish valid social science from hucksterism and propaganda is a useful tool in the media and Internet age.

Sociology and the Other Social Sciences

Sociology shares some important things with the other social sciences: the use of the scientific method; the assumption that human behavior has patterns and regularities; and the belief that behavior can be studied and largely understood through systematic observation, generalization, and interpretation. Sociology also differs in certain ways from the other social sciences, which include psychology, economics, political

science, and social anthropology. (Some people also include history, whereas others classify it as one of the humanities.) Several applied professions, including social work and urban planning, rely heavily on knowledge generated by the social sciences. In colleges and universities, programs in these professions are sometimes located under schools or divisions of the social sciences or of the arts and sciences, and sometimes in separate professional schools.

Sociology

Sociology is concerned with virtually all aspects of human social behavior. In this sense, it is less specialized than some of the other social sciences, particularly political science and economics. The second feature that distinguishes sociology from the other social sciences is its scale: Its emphasis is on *societies* and groups within society rather than on individuals. Among the things that sociologists consider in any society they study are the major forms of organization and ways of doing things that become accepted in that society, which sociologists call institutions. Sociologists are interested in how these institutions address basic needs in society and how they relate to the interests, needs, and desires of the various groups of people within societies (racial and ethnic groups, gender groups, religious groups, social classes). Sociologists also study such social groups to see how they develop, how they relate to one another, and how they divide (and sometimes struggle over) the society's scarce resources. In addition, they study the beliefs, values, and rules about behavior that emerge in a society, as well as how and why these things differ among the various social groups within the society. Finally, sociologists examine the ways in which both societies and social groups train and indoctrinate new members, as well as the ways in which some social groups recruit new members. As you can see, the subject matter of sociology is nearly limitless. About the only limit is that sociology generally addresses these issues at least partly on a collective level—that of the society or social group—rather than entirely on the individual level.

The Emergence and Development of Sociology

The Nineteenth Century

The term “sociology” was coined only about 175 years ago. That period—the nineteenth century—witnessed some of the most profound social change in all of human history, particularly in Europe. For the first time, cities were becoming the dominant influence in what had always been rural societies. After thousands of years of relative stability, the world’s population had entered a period of rapid growth that has continued to the present (what we now call the population explosion). Tradition and religion were being displaced by science and economic rationalism as ways of understanding reality and as forces shaping people’s lives. Perhaps most dramatic of all was the effect of the Industrial Revolution on the lives of ordinary people. As the urban industrial economic order replaced the rural agricultural order, thousands flocked to the cities of Europe and, later, North America. In the cities, the migrants often endured horrible working conditions, child labor, low wages, and filthy, overcrowded neighborhoods that could not begin to accommodate them. Of course, urbanization made conditions such as these more visible, and some of the great minds of the era turned their attention to trying to understand why society was changing in the ways it was. Much of their concern was focused on new social problems, such as overcrowding, poverty, crime, depersonalization, and suicide, that seemed to be outgrowths of industrialization, urbanization, and related changes.

Early Sociologists

The Frenchman Auguste Comte (1798–1857) first used the term “sociology.” He set the stage for future developments within the discipline when he argued that societies contained both forces for stability and cooperation, which he called *social statics*, and forces for conflict and change, which he called *social dynamics*. Even today, one of the greatest debates in sociology—and one we consider throughout

this book—concerns the relative influences upon societies of forces for change versus forces for stability.

Comte also believed strongly that society and human behavior were governed by regular laws and principles that could be understood using the scientific method—in the same way that the natural world could be understood by natural scientists and physicists. He referred to this approach as positivism, a term that is still used to describe the belief that both social and natural forces can be measured accurately and precisely through scientific observation, and *only* through scientific observation. Many sociologists today would agree that the “only” part is too extreme, so the idea of positivism is today a controversial one. Moreover, the difficulty of making purely objective measures that are not affected by the perspectives and preconceptions of the observer is better recognized among today’s sociologists. Still, the basic notion that social and natural forces are patterned and subject to systematic observation remains the underpinning of sociology 150 years after Comte’s lifetime. Like many subsequent sociologists, Comte was also a social reformer who believed applying the scientific method to society was the way to bring about social betterment.

Although Comte named the discipline and to a large extent set the agenda for its debates, even more lasting early influences on sociology came from three other great social thinkers: the Germans Karl Marx and Max Weber and the Frenchman Émile Durkheim. We briefly discuss their contributions here; more detailed discussions of their influence on sociological thought appear in Chapter 3.

Karl Marx

Karl Marx (1818–1883), the earliest of the three, was an economist and a political philosopher as much as a sociologist. His influence on world politics has probably not been exceeded by any other individual. Although

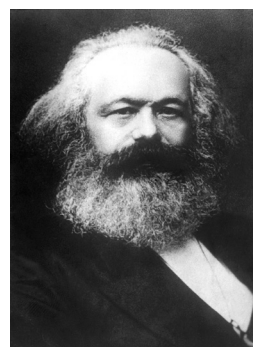


Photo 1.1 Karl Marx.
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GLOBAL SOCIOLOGY



Using the Sociological Imagination: College Women Faculty and Household Work in the United States and China

Who does the housework has become an increasing source of conflict for married couples when both partners work outside the home. Looking at the problem from an individualist standpoint, it seems that many women are angry at their husbands because they don't do a larger share of the work. They may ask, "Why is he so selfish and lazy?" But if we use the sociological imagination to look at this problem, we can get a better explanation of why housework is a source of conflict between husbands and wives. It turns out that although the gap has narrowed over the past 20 years, women still do the majority of housework among most married couples in the United States, even when both husband and wife work full time (Coltrane and Adams, 2008). But the same thing is also true in societies that are very different from the United States, if they are undergoing similar changes in the roles of men and women. The sociological imagination tells us that conflicts over who does the housework do not arise simply because one or the other individual involved "has problems or a bad attitude." Conflicts arise societywide when there is uneven change within a society—for example, both husband and wife are now working outside the house, but their roles have yet to be redefined within the home.

That's what Cui-xia Zhang, a graduate student from the People's Republic of China studying in the United States, found out when she surveyed female college faculty members in China and the United States. Zhang surveyed two samples of married women faculty, one sample teaching at a university in the United States, the other at a university in China. Despite the vast differences between the United States and China, Zhang found striking similarities in how housework was divided between the women and their husbands in both countries. In the United States, for example, the women did 65 percent of the cooking, on average, while their husbands did only 25 percent. In China, the women did 63 percent of the cooking, while their husbands did only 24 percent. In both countries, the women also did a larger share than their husbands of washing dishes, doing laundry, shopping, housecleaning, and taking care of children. The only area in which husbands did more was in making repairs, of which they did 63 percent in the United States and 56 percent in China.

In fact, there were only two areas in which there were sizable differences in the share of household

work done by college faculty women in the two samples. American women did a larger share of dishwashing than Chinese women (60 percent versus 44 percent), but they did a smaller share of housecleaning (56 percent compared to 72 percent). These differences, however, had nothing to do with help they got from their husbands. American husbands did only 31 percent of the dishwashing and 19 percent of the housecleaning, and their Chinese counterparts did virtually identical shares: 34 percent of the dishwashing and 18 percent of the housecleaning. Rather, the difference in the share of these jobs done by American and Chinese women resulted from the different ways housekeepers are used in the two countries. Chinese housekeepers largely help in the kitchen, whereas American housekeepers mainly do housecleaning. Hence, it was help from housekeepers, not husbands, that reduced housecleaning for American women and dishwashing for Chinese women.

Why is the household division of labor so similar in the two countries? It turns out that, despite their otherwise great differences, China and the United States have undergone similar changes in gender roles in recent decades. Both countries had a clear history of social and legal support for male supremacy through much of their history, as discussed further in Chapters 4 and 8. But since World War II, both countries have legislated against sex discrimination, and in both, women have shifted from a predominantly home-centered role into a full-time employment role. However, as Zhang's research shows, the notion that home responsibilities fall first and foremost upon women has survived in both countries, despite the legal changes and despite the movement of women into the paid labor force. As recent trends in the United States suggest, the gap in housework may eventually decrease the longer both men and women are mostly in full-time employment, but this shift will be, at best, a very gradual process.

Source: The preceding is based on Cui-xia Zhang, *The Relationship Between Family Life and Academic Career: A Comparison of American and Chinese College Married Women Faculty*. Master's Thesis, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, 1991. A summary of this research can be found in Zhang and Farley (1995).

Marx did not consider himself a sociologist, his theories have been as influential in sociology as in philosophy or any of the other social sciences. Marx was deeply angered by the brutal treatment of workers and their families during the Industrial Revolution. He sought to understand the causes of this situation in order to change it. Thus, as Comte had done previously, Marx combined the roles of social scientist and social activist; in fact, he saw the two as inseparable. Emphasizing what Comte called social dynamics, Marx saw virtually all societies as being shaped by a struggle between those who owned the **means of production** (whatever you need to own in order to produce something that can be sold) and those who did not. He then developed theories about the dynamics of this struggle in the emerging industrial capitalist societies of his time. In such societies, the owners of the means of production were those who possessed industrial capital—the **bourgeoisie**. The rest of the society, whom he called the **proletariat**, worked for this group in exchange for wages and salaries that Marx saw as being less than the value that the workers added to the goods they produced. Marx saw these two groups as having fundamentally opposing interests, as well as very unequal power. He developed theories about the ways that the bourgeoisie acted to keep its great wealth and about how the proletariat could force a fair distribution of that wealth. Marx then applied those theories to assume a position of leadership on the proletarian side of that struggle. Marx accepted Adam Smith's notion that capitalism would be extremely efficient, though it gained that efficiency through the exploitation of the proletariat. He also thought that the efficiency of the capitalist system made its adoption inevitable. And he saw how machines were replacing both human and animal labor and how much more efficient they were than either. He saw how capitalism could create more machines and technology and thought the logical conclusion was some kind of “robot economy” doing practically anything we humans wanted it to in the future. But Marx was imagining no utopia. The market's competitive nature would cause capitalists to cut workers so deeply to keep ahead of their competitors in the marketplace that, eventually, workers would

be automated out of existence in the modern workplace. This would produce a surplus army of unemployed workers who would eventually rise up and realize their class interests and overthrow the system. Once the proletariat learned how to administer this highly advanced economy, equality and prosperity would be available to all, and what Marx called a “classless communist society” would prevail.

Max Weber

Like Marx, Max Weber (pronounced “Vaber”) (1864–1920) was highly interested in the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Like Marx, too, he was aware of the forces for alienation that were being unleashed by these changes. However,

Weber focused on potential benefits in these changes that Marx recognized but did not emphasize because of his concerns with the problems of the new industrial order. Weber saw a great potential for increased productivity and, as a result, an increased standard of living in what he called **rationalization**—the replacement of tradition and favoritism with a model of choice based on who and what works best in achieving a given objective. Weber saw this process of rationalization as the cornerstone of modern economic and political systems. Yet, at the same time, he recognized that such systems could only flourish within a cultural and social context favorable to their development. In particular, he developed an important theory about the role of the Protestant Reformation in bringing about a social climate favorable to the emergence of capitalism. Thus, whereas Marx saw society as largely a product of economic forces (especially economic struggle), Weber saw economic systems as being heavily influenced by the society and culture in which they developed. We can think of Weber as focusing on ideas and values, while Marx focused on material self-interest in the form of class



Photo 1.2 Max Weber.

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conflict. Primarily, Weber argued that people were after prestige and status, not just money. Prestige and status are ideas, and they cannot be equalized—by their very natures. No perfect socialist society like Marx envisioned was possible if the conflict was actually over status. This leaves Weber with a darker vision of the future. Because Marx and Weber offered opposite views on several important social issues, Weber has sometimes been described as carrying on a debate with the ghost of Karl Marx. Another important difference between Marx and Weber is that whereas Marx felt that social scientists should base their work on their values, Weber felt that they should attempt to be value-neutral. Even so, Weber realized that total value neutrality in the social sciences is an impossible ideal. He recognized that values inevitably influence the choice of topics chosen for study, and he also saw the usefulness of personal experiences and viewpoints for developing insights about human social behavior. Like other aspects of the disagreements between Marx and Weber, debate about the role of values in sociology continues today.

Émile Durkheim

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), the third great social thinker of this era, was less interested in economic change than either Marx or Weber. Perhaps Durkheim's greatest accomplishment was to do what Comte had said could be done—apply the scientific method to the study of human social behavior. In his analysis of the social factors that contribute to suicide, Durkheim was the first to carry out a study involving the large-scale collection of data to test a social theory. Durkheim, however, was important not only as the first social researcher but also as a theorist par excellence. In contrast to Marx, Durkheim focused on the forces

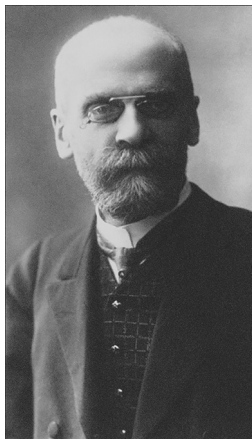


Photo 1.3 Émile Durkheim.

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that hold society together and bond its members in common interest. A particular interest of Durkheim's was how these forces change as a society evolves from a traditional, rural, agrarian society into a complex, interdependent, urban society. He believed the answer lies in the changing division of labor in industrial societies. Durkheim argued that society was held together by one of two fundamental forces. The first he called mechanical solidarity. In an agricultural society, everyone does the same thing like a simple machine. Solidarity is based on similarities in lifestyle, beliefs, and values. Most people were farmers who got up and did the exact same things as their neighbors, went to bed at the same times (sundown), attended the same churches, ate the same foods, etc. Durkheim contrasted this with what he called organic solidarity. In the industrial age, everyone specializes into different tasks/lifestyles—each is dependent on each other. Solidarity is based on interdependency and diversity. Too much similarity would doom industrial society. So, like an organism, many different systems all work together to keep the larger organism alive. We have become interdependent on our differences and specialties. But Durkheim also argued that solidarity based on differentiation usually developed imperfectly. Society had changed too rapidly under capitalism, and social rules and traditions had not kept pace with the changes in the economy. Once again, Durkheim agrees with Marx and Weber about the efficiency of the market system—that markets create change so quickly and efficiently that social regulation of norms and values can't keep up. In contrast to Weber, who taught that greed and competition would take over, Durkheim argued that many social actors would simply become confused about what societal norms really were. This created a situation that Durkheim labeled anomie. Anomie is the lack of societal consensus on the rules and values that bind the members of society together. Durkheim saw this as having intense personal costs on individual members of society, for instance, leading to an increase in suicide rates in certain instances, as well as more structural social problems, including poverty, inequality, and hopelessness among less powerful social groups. Thus, as with

both Marx and Weber, important elements of Durkheim's work concentrate on the effects of modernization on society, which was one of the prime intellectual questions of his era.

The Development of Sociology in the United States

The conditions that brought sociology into being in Europe developed somewhat later in the United States. As a result, the development of sociology in the United States also lagged somewhat behind European sociology. The vast American frontier acted as a safety valve in the early industrial era by giving people a choice between moving to the cities and heading west. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the Industrial Revolution and urban growth were well under way. In fact, the Civil War was in part a struggle between the agricultural interests of the rural South and the industrial interests of the urban North. American intellectuals, like their European counterparts, focused on the consequences of these trends: By the turn of the twentieth century, sociology had begun to find its way into the curriculum of American colleges and universities. The discipline ultimately flourished in this country to a greater extent than almost anywhere else.

The Chicago School

The first department of sociology in the United States was established at the University of Chicago in 1893, and it dominated American sociology for more than half a century thereafter. The American Sociological Association (ASA) was founded in 1905. (It was originally called the American Sociology Society, but the name was changed because of jokes about the initials.)

From the establishment of the discipline until around World War II, American sociology for the most part adopted an activist, reformist orientation (Feagin and Vera, 2001). Urban problems such as crime, overcrowding, drug abuse, and poverty were a central focus of the Chicago School of sociologists. The tone for this reformist

orientation was set by the earliest major American sociologist, Lester Ward (1841–1913). Ward saw sociology as a tool for understanding and trying to solve these problems. It was also shaped by the actions and writings of Jane Addams, sociologist and founder of Hull-House, the famous Chicago settlement house. There, she and other Hull-House residents published a groundbreaking sociological text in 1893, *Hull-House Maps and Papers*, which used observation and documentation of sociological data in Chicago to make the case for social change (Deegan, 1991).

At the University of Chicago, early American sociologists such as Robert E. Park (1864–1944), Ernest W. Burgess (1886–1966), and Louis Wirth (1897–1952) continued this philosophy by studying such problems as juvenile delinquency and, in some cases, by setting up institutes to apply sociology to alleviating social ills. The burgeoning city of Chicago served as a natural laboratory for these sociologists by providing opportunities both to study urban problems and to try out solutions that were suggested by their research. (For an overview of the work of the early Chicago School sociologists, see Faris, 1979.)

It would be a mistake, of course, to imply that early sociology in the United States was entirely a product of the Chicago School. One of the earliest uses of survey research, for example, was a study of African Americans in Philadelphia by W. E. B. Du Bois (1873 [orig. 1899]). Like his counterparts in Chicago, Du Bois (1868–1963) combined sociological research with social activism. In addition to his positions in higher education and his important research and theorizing concerning the unique situation of black people in the United States, Du Bois was also a founder and longtime leader of the



Photo 1.4 Jane Addams pioneered the collection and mapping of data for cities and urban neighborhoods.

Library of Congress

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and editor of its journal, *The Crisis*.

Symbolic Interactionism

By the 1920s, another rather different branch of sociology was also blossoming at the University of Chicago. Rooted in social psychology, it asked questions about how individuals learn, fit into, interact with, and alter the *roles* that exist within the social system. Discussed more fully in Chapter 3, this school of thought, known as symbolic interactionism, has remained a dominant influence in social psychology (or at least the sociological branch) ever since. The early leader of this school of thought was University of Chicago sociologist George Herbert Mead (1863–1931). Interestingly, Mead hated to write and therefore never wrote a book. His graduate students, however, recognizing the brilliance and importance of his work, published a book entitled *Mind, Self, and Society* (Mead, 1934) based on their notes from his lectures. Much of Mead's thinking constituted an elaboration of ideas that had been developed around the turn of the century by Charles Horton Cooley of the University of Michigan.

1940–1960: A Turn From Activism

By the 1940s and 1950s, sociology had become established in most major American universities. During this time, it also underwent two important changes: It began to make greater use of numbers and statistics, and it became dominated by the view that it should be value-neutral rather than activist. In part, these changes reflected the desire of sociologists to gain acceptance of their field as a legitimate science in an era when the prevailing view was that science should be value-free. These changes also reflected the economic recovery sparked by World War II that produced an era of prosperity, relative social stability, and economic growth. In the 1950s, social problems were further from the public mind than they had been in earlier decades, and sociology turned its attention

away from them. This illustrates an important point: *To a large extent, the concerns and values of sociology reflect the concerns and values of the society within which it operates.* In the 1950s, public interest centered on growth, science, and technology, not on social problems—and sociology generally followed this trend.

The most influential American sociologist of this time was Talcott Parsons (1902–1979). Parsons viewed society as a stable, though complex, system of interdependent parts, each of which performed a function important to the system. He was influenced by several of the early European sociologists, particularly Durkheim, and his work in turn influenced that of other important American sociologists, such as Robert Merton. Parsons's approach was challenged by C. Wright Mills (1916–1962), one of the few major sociologists of this era who retained an activist bent. Mills, influenced by the intellectual tradition of Karl Marx, argued that the decision-making process within the U.S. government occurred largely behind the scenes and was dominated by a narrowly defined interest group composed of corporate, political, and military officials whom he called the power elite. Although Mills's influence on American sociology was limited throughout most of his life, today he is regarded as one of the more influential American sociologists, and his theories about the power elite set the stage for a good deal of important research on the American power structure. It was also Mills who wrote about the now widely recognized concept of the sociological imagination, discussed earlier in this chapter.

The 1960s: Return to Activism

Sociology's retreat from social activism did not last. By the mid-1960s, the nation's attention had again turned to social problems, as exemplified by the civil rights movement and the Johnson administration's War on Poverty. The conflicts generated by these social changes were intensified by the sometimes violent disputes over the Vietnam War. Suddenly, it was not science and prosperity but burning cities, disrupted campuses, a "sexual revolution," and an explosive increase in the use of illegal

drugs that held the attention of the public and of sociologists. Many sociologists and their students (some of whom are today's sociologists) were very much caught up in the conflict, and activism and reformism again became important forces within the profession. As had happened in the past, the sudden emergence of social change and upheaval brought a surge of interest in sociology, and in the late 1960s and early 1970s, sociology became one of the most popular majors on campus.

The 1970s: Into the New Millennium: Diversity in Sociological Perspectives

After the early 1970s, conflict and upheaval in American society declined for a time but appeared to be increasing again by the early 1990s. Enrollment in sociology courses also decreased for a time to its pre-1960s levels on many campuses but has increased again since the late 1980s. By the year 2000, the number of sociology majors on many campuses was again comparable to the peak enrollments of the 1960s. The effect of the 1960s and early 1970s on sociology has been lasting. American sociology in the past several decades has been very diverse: Some sociologists have followed the activist tradition of Comte, Marx, Ward, and Mills, while others have followed the value-free science tradition of Weber, Durkheim, and Parsons. Still others have chosen the interactionist tradition of Cooley, Mead, and, more recently, Herbert Blumer. No single theoretical perspective has dominated sociology over the past several decades, nor has any one sociologist or small group of sociologists influenced the field to the extent that Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Mead, and Parsons did in the past. Important sociological voices have emerged, nonetheless. Probably nobody has had a greater influence on the field than William Julius Wilson, whose analyses of urban poverty (Wilson, 1996, 1987) have stimulated new research in sociology and helped gain greater recognition of the value of sociology among policymakers and the general public. A hallmark of Wilson's work, as well as that of contemporary sociological theorists such as Randall Collins, has been an effort to draw

on insights from different sociological perspectives rather than drawing mainly on one perspective, as often was the case in the past.

This diversity of perspective has both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the lack of a core body of theory and knowledge generally accepted in the discipline is seen by some as a sign of incoherence (Huber, 1995). But there is also a healthy side to current sociology's diversity of thought. No single approach has all the answers, and the challenges that the different approaches offer to one another help bring out the best in sociologists of every theoretical orientation. Indeed, the failure of the sociologists of the 1950s to predict the upheavals of the 1960s is a good illustration of what happens when one view comes to dominate the field excessively: It goes unchallenged not only when it is right but also when it is wrong, as nearly every theoretical orientation is, at least part of the time.

Putting Sociology to Work

How Sociology Can Be Used to Solve Real-Life Problems

At a time when many serious challenges face our society and societies all over the world, it seems reasonable to ask, as many new students do, "What can sociology be used for? Can it help us understand and possibly solve some of the social problems and issues that confront us today? Can it be applied in practical ways to help us solve problems?" Asking these questions is also a first step in developing critical thinking skills that will be useful to you in your academic career and beyond it, as you read the news articles describing various social crises around the world, or see the news specials on television detailing problems in various aspects of society and its institutions, or are called upon by your employer to apply your skills and knowledge to solve problems.

Consider the following examples:

- A county government is seeking federal funds for housing. One requirement for such assistance is that the county address the housing needs of its disabled

population. The county officials have no idea how many people with disabilities live in their county, much less what their housing needs are. The solution is to hire a sociologist to review various sources of data and develop an estimate of the number of people with disabilities in the county as well as to review the findings of social research on the appropriateness of various types of housing arrangements for people with various types of disabilities.

- Faced with a declining patient clientele, the administrators of a university hospital want to purchase physician practices to attract admissions. However, they do not know which locations are good places to purchase these practices in terms of attracting the maximum number of patients. The solution is to hire a team of sociologists to obtain and analyze data on population, physician supply, physician productivity, and the frequency of visits to the doctor, for the purpose of identifying various locations as medically overserved or underserved.
- A university campus is beset with racial problems. A racist joke is told on the campus radio station, antiblack leaflets are passed under dormitory doors, many black students at the school are dropping out, and both black and white students refuse to interact with each other. A sociologist points out that neither racial group really sees things from the perspective of the other. White people assume that the passage of civil rights laws means that opportunities for black people are equal when, in fact, black people still must overcome disproportionate poverty, poor education, inadequate medical care, and high rates of unemployment. Black people assume that white people are genuinely aware of all these things and simply don't care. The solution is a required course on race relations for all students to correct the misperceptions that each group has about the other. In this example, teaching students some of the sociology of race relations could go a long way toward easing the tensions.

As these examples illustrate, sociology is a problem-solving tool. In fact, the examples are not made up: They are all real-life situations with which we are personally familiar. Throughout the text, we periodically illustrate ways in which sociology can be or has been applied to problems like the ones described previously.

Because it is relevant to a variety of practical concerns, ranging from easing racial unrest to encouraging people to recycle, applied sociology is one of the fastest-growing areas of sociology. **Applied sociology** is the use of sociological knowledge and methods to solve problems, design policy, and obtain information relevant to making decisions. Applied sociologists work as consultants, researchers, and managers for a wide range of organizations, such as businesses, schools, nonprofit organizations, and governmental agencies. In this chapter's Personal Journeys Into Sociology box, sociologist Diane Vaughan provides an example of applied sociology, explaining how social and organizational processes within the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) contributed to the *Challenger* and *Columbia* space shuttle disasters. While such disasters have proximate technical causes, such as the failure of O-rings due to cold weather, Vaughan demonstrates powerfully that they also have underlying social and organizational causes, and if these are not addressed, a disaster can happen again with different proximate technical causes but the same underlying social and organizational causes.

As important as sociology has become as a problem-solving tool, its greatest usefulness probably still lies in its use of the sociological imagination described earlier in this chapter. Sociology enables us to gain a new perspective on the forces that define our situation, thereby enabling us to see that our society sometimes acts in ways that severely limit human opportunity. It allows us to step back and look at ourselves. In so doing, it makes us aware of the presence and extent of such conditions as poverty, unemployment, crime, family conflict, racism, and sexism—conditions that, at one time or another, affect nearly all of us. It allows us to act as constructive social critics of our (or any)



PERSONAL JOURNEYS INTO SOCIOLOGY

How Theory Travels: A Most Public Sociology

The tragic disintegration of the Space Shuttle *Columbia* on February 1, 2003, set me on an unexpected and remarkable eight-month journey in public sociology. In the hours after the accident, I was deluged with calls from the press. I had studied the causes of the 1986 *Challenger* disaster and written the book *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NASA* (Chicago, 1996). I was defined as an expert whom the press could consult to give them bearings on this latest accident. Viewing this as both a teaching opportunity and professional responsibility, I tried to respond to everyone.

What I was teaching was the theoretical explanation and key concepts of the book, linking them to data about *Challenger* and *Columbia* as the changing press questions dictated. Because the investigation went on for months, these conversations became an ongoing exchange where the press brought me new information, and I gave a sociological interpretation. I noticed that the concepts of the book—the normalization of deviance, institutional failure, organizational culture, structure, missed signals—began appearing in print early in the investigation and continued, whether I was quoted or not.

The book also led to my association with the *Columbia* Accident Investigation Board. Two weeks after the accident, the publicity director at Chicago sent a copy of *The Challenger Launch Decision* to retired Admiral Harold Gehman, who headed the board's investigation. As the admiral later told me, he read it mid-February, along with a jargon-free but theoretically accurate condensation I published in a management journal. Persuaded of the relevance of the sociological perspective and analysis for *Columbia*, he had copies of both sent to the board and its staff. Equally important, the admiral and the eight original board members were experienced accident investigators, trained to look beyond technical causes to human factors. The organizational focus and concepts of the book, new to them, helped make sense of their data, and led them to search other social science sources.

Further, one of the editors had some sociology background. In early editorial sessions drafting the preliminary report outline with the admiral, this editor interjected examples from the book that meshed with the investigation findings. Before the final four board members were appointed, the admiral already

thought that a large part of the report should focus on social causes. The initial outline of chapter topics, based on their data, paralleled my data and causal model: NASA's political/economic history, its organizational structure and culture, and its decision-making processes.

The new centrality of sociological ideas and the connection with the *Challenger* accident were not lost on the media. In press conferences, Admiral Gehman stressed the importance of the social causes and used the book's central concepts. When he announced that I would testify before the board in Houston, the field's leading journal, *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, headlined "*Columbia* Board Probes the Shuttle Program's Sociology," while *The New York Times* ran "Echoes of *Challenger*." Unaware of the extent of the book's influence on the board's thinking, however, I arrived in Houston in late April anxious about the public grilling to come.¹

But subsequent events showed me the board was receptive to sociological analysis. I met separately with the Group 2 investigators assigned the decision-making and organization chapters to discuss their data and analysis, then gave the board a pre-testimony briefing, which turned into a three-hour conversation. My testimony covered the social causes of the *Challenger* accident, compared it to the *Columbia* incident, and identified systemic institutional failures common to both. The book's theory and concepts traveled farther as my testimony—like that of other witnesses—was shown live on NASA TV and video-streamed into television, radio, and press centers, and the Internet.

When the board began writing the report in June, I was invited to work with Group 2. The outline, then in revision 6, identified the *Columbia* foam debris hit as the proximate cause in Part I. Part II announced the board's expanded causal model but distinguished the three social cause chapters by declining importance: "Beyond the Proximate Cause," "Factors That Contributed to the Loss," "The Accident's Underlying Causes." Emboldened by the admiral's openness to sociology (witness my presence) and democratic practices that defied military stereotypes, I proposed a different outline that gave these chapters substantive names, made the social causes equal, and showed they were causally connected.

The admiral endorsed the outline but believed that history was a scene-setter, not a cause. Citing examples from the *Challenger* case, I explained how historic decisions in NASA's political and budgetary environment changed the organizational structure and culture, ultimately affecting risk decisions, thus contributing to both accidents. He was dubious, so I proposed a writing experiment, to be used or not at the board's discretion, that showed the causal links between the political environment, organization, and decision-making chapters. "How do you know you can do that?" he asked. "I'm trained to do that," I said.

So, the experiment began—not only because the admiral, the major general heading Group 2, and an editor believed in the potential of sociology but also because I, a sociologist, became part of this large team of board and staff, working under deadline. Information and ideas flew fast and freely between people and chapters. Their extraordinary investigative effort, data, analysis, and insights were integrated into my writing experiment; sociological connections and concepts became integrated into their chapters. The admiral, it turned out, was "delighted" with what I wrote. The board, too, accepted "History as Cause: *Columbia* and *Challenger*" as a chapter, along with its implications for the expanded causal model.

The admiral kept the press informed of report changes, so prior to report publication, *The New York Times* announced the equal weight the report would give to technical and social causes, identifying me as the source of the board's approach and author of chapter 8. Upon the August 26 release, the language of sociology became commonplace in the press. The theory of the book traveled to one more place that week. An *AP* wire story, "NASA Finally Looks to Sociologist," revealed that NASA had invited me to headquarters to talk with top officials, who had shifted from denial to acknowledging that the systemic institutional failures that led to the *Challenger* incident also caused the *Columbia* incident.

Never did I foresee the extent of my involvement or the impact that I ultimately had. My experience is surely idiosyncratic in its very publicness, but it seems appropriate in this column, which celebrates and explores the varieties of public sociologies, to think about the principles at work that bring sociology alive, out of textbooks, academic monographs, and classrooms into the public consciousness and policy debates.² Sociology was the instigator of it all.

The theory and concepts that explained *Challenger* were an analogical fit with the *Columbia* data and made sense of what happened for journalists and the board. Analogy was the mechanism that enabled the theory and concepts of the book to travel.³ My book and university affiliation gave me the opportunity to engage in ongoing dialogic teaching—akin to daily grassroots activism—but with two tribunals of power with an authoritative voice. Together, the press and the board were a "polished machinery of dissemination," as Burawoy calls powerful advocacy groups,⁴ translating the ideas of the book into grist for critical public dialogue.

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Notes

- 1 To give an idea of the extent of public and press interest in a sociological interpretation of the disaster's causes, by the end of May, I had been quoted in print 50 times, according to Boston College Office of Public Affairs.
- 2 For examples and critical consideration of disciplinary context, see M. Burawoy, W. Gamson, C. Ryan, S. Pfahl, D. Vaughan, C. Derber, J. Schor. 2004. "Public Sociologies: A Symposium from Boston College." *Social Problems* 51(1): 103–130. doi: 10.1525/sp.2004.51.1.103.
- 3 Vaughan, D. (1998), "How Theory Travels: Analogy, Models, and the Diffusion of Ideas," Paper presented, American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, California.
- 4 Burawoy, M. (January 2003), "Public Sociologies: Reply to Hausknecht," Public Forum, *Footnotes*, January.



Photos 1.5 and 1.6 Events such as the *Challenger* space shuttle disaster cannot be fully understood by looking only at technological factors. Social and organizational processes often play a role in such disasters.

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society by enabling us to seek and discover, for example, the forces that throw people out of work or lead them to behave violently.

Although such discovery can be painful—we sometimes learn things about ourselves and our society that frighten or disappoint us—we cannot improve things unless we understand what is wrong. Precisely because such insight is often threatening or disappointing, people, particularly those with wealth and power, often prefer to avoid it. In Hitler's Germany, for example, university sociology departments were disbanded, and sociology has been severely restricted in a number of undemocratic countries in our own time. Even in the United States, the wealthy and powerful have often questioned the value of sociology, or at best valued it only for its practical applications. When it is allowed the freedom to do so, sociology can serve as a voice of dissent, asking important questions that otherwise would go unasked. In the long run, this is every bit as beneficial as—perhaps even more so than—the more obvious and practical social engineering applications discussed in the preceding section. The point is that, in different ways, sociology is useful both to individuals or organizations confronted with specific problems and to all of us in the larger society, by helping us to see and understand problems of which we might otherwise remain unaware.

Summary

Sociology operates on two basic principles. First, human social behavior has important elements of regularity and predictability. Second, this behavior is patterned and strongly influenced by group affiliations—organizations; informal groups; race, class, and gender; and society. Sociology uses scientific methods of observation and generalization to describe, explain, and predict human behavior. Sociology is useful because there are distinct limits to what common sense can tell us about human behavior: Some things that make sense turn out, on careful observation of behavior, to be wrong. Sociology is one of the social sciences, and it is distinguished from the others by the broad range of behavior with which it is concerned and by its emphasis on understanding human behavior on the group or societal level. It emerged in the nineteenth century out of a desire to understand the rapid social changes associated with urbanization and the Industrial Revolution. However, as society has changed, the concerns and emphases of sociology have changed with it. Sociology can be applied to a wide range of problems and issues of concern to government, business, education, labor, and religion. Employment opportunities for people trained in sociology exist in all of these areas,

although an undergraduate degree does not prepare a student for any specific sociologist job. Nonetheless, most people who earn a bachelor's degree in sociology get a job in a field related to their training, where they frequently outperform co-workers with professional degrees.

Key Terms

applied sociology
 bourgeoisie
 means of production
 natural sciences
 organized skepticism
 proletariat
 rationalization
 reactivity
 research
 science
 social sciences
 sociological imagination
 sociological perspective
 sociology
 theory

Key terms in this chapter and in all succeeding chapters are defined in the glossary that begins on p. 613.

Exercises

- 1 Many people think that the only careers open to sociologists involve teaching and research. Many occupational specialties

may be pursued with a bachelor's degree in sociology. Do an Internet search for the term "applied sociology." You will find several links to sites that describe careers for those with degrees in applied sociology. Also check out the career opportunities page for undergraduate sociology degrees from the American Sociological Association (www.asanet.org/career-center/careers-sociology). Write a brief report on the types of career opportunities you found.

- 2 The text explains how sociology is a science and the vast difference between sociology and the scientific method versus common sense. Think about a subject that you would like to know more about. How would you go about applying the scientific method to that subject?
- 3 In the past three decades, movies about superheroes have become increasingly popular. Starting with *Superman* in 1978, this trend has accelerated in pace in the last several years. What might the sociological perspective tell us about why superhero films have become more popular since 1978? Some commentators have noted that the number of such films greatly increased after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Can you think of any changes that have taken place in American society that might have produced a wave of such films?

For a full list of references, please visit the book's Support Material at www.routledge.com/9781032423593.

Chapter 2

How Sociology Is Done

In doing social research, sociologists try to explain how and why one society differs from another, as well as how societies change over time. They also identify differences in social and economic outcomes as well as attitudes and beliefs between groups of people within a society and seek to explain the causes of these differences. For example, in most countries, men are more likely to give blood than women. The cause of this appears to be linked to the influence of traditional cultural values about gender roles. In Greece and Portugal, with more traditional gender roles, women are only about half as likely as men to give blood. In Norway and Denmark, where popular beliefs favor feminism and gender equality, men and women are equally likely to give blood. Hence, if we measure the right things, we can learn a great deal about societal, group, and individual factors that influence human behavior.

Social Theory and Research

Sociology is largely concerned with cause and effect. Sometimes it seeks to *explain*: Why do so many more people in France give blood than in Luxembourg? Sometimes, too, it seeks to *predict*: Under what conditions is there likely to be a larger or smaller effect of religion or of sex on the likelihood of giving blood? Of course, there are also times when sociology merely seeks to *describe*: How many people actually give blood in different countries, and what groups have higher or lower rates of blood donation? Most of the time, though, description is a step toward either explanation or prediction, both of which involve the notion of cause and effect.

Cause and Effect

By **cause and effect**, social scientists mean that the presence of one condition (the cause) makes the occurrence of some other condition (the effect) more likely than it would otherwise have been. This is a somewhat broader definition than the popular notion of cause and effect. To social scientists, the cause does not *always* have to be followed by the effect, but the effect does occur more often when the cause is present than when it is absent. Consider the example of unemployment and divorce. Social research has indicated that unemployment is a cause of divorce. By this, we mean that when one of the breadwinners in a family becomes unemployed, the family is more likely to experience a divorce than it would have been had that unemployment not occurred. It does *not* mean that a divorce will *always* follow the loss of a job, nor does it mean that the absence of unemployment guarantees that a couple will not get divorced. It simply means that, all other things being equal, divorce is more likely in the presence of unemployment than in its absence.

Theory and Values

As explained in Chapter 1, a theory can be defined as a set of statements that describe reality. Usually, theories describe relationships of cause and effect, as discussed in the preceding paragraph. The most important characteristic of a theory is that if you can get the right information, it can be tested. In other words, you can collect information that will help you to tell whether or not the theory is correct (Lanski, 1988). Collecting such information is what is

done in sociological research. Usually such research is done either to test a theory or to get ideas for developing a new theory.

In contrast to theories are **values**, personal judgments or preferences about what is good or bad or about what is liked or disliked. Unlike theories, values cannot be proven true or false, no matter how much information you might collect. That is because values do not try to describe a factual reality like theories do. Rather, they reflect personal preferences or judgments.

Theories Versus Values: Why Does It Matter?

Why do you need to know the difference between theories and values? The answer is that, in reality, nearly all of our discussions about society and human behavior are influenced by both. This is true for sociologists as well as for ordinary people. On the one hand, the sociologist is more systematic in their measurement of social characteristics and human behaviors than the average person. On the other hand, sociologists are still people with values, and these values influence what subjects they study, what theories they find appealing, and so forth.

Consider the following argument: Conflict is bad because it usually leads to violence and rarely changes anything anyway. This is a perfect example of an argument that contains both theoretical statements and value statements. The ideas that “conflict usually leads to violence” and that “conflict rarely changes anything” are statements of theory that can be tested by sociological research. Assuming we can agree on what constitutes “conflict” and on what constitutes “violence,” we can conduct sociological studies to find out whether or not conflict usually leads to violence. Similarly, it is possible to determine the truth of the statement that “conflict rarely changes anything.” On the other hand, we can never prove that “conflict is bad.” That is a value judgment. Some people think it is bad; others think it is good. Even if sociological research proved that conflict usually leads to violence and rarely leads to change, a reasonable person might still see some good

in conflict—for example, because it might lead to greater unity within a group that has been threatened by some other group.

For these reasons, you should ask yourself two questions when you encounter statements or arguments about society:

- 1 *What parts of the statement or argument are expressing values?* These parts cannot be proven true or false by any amount of observation or measurement.
- 2 *What parts of the statement or argument are statements of theory?* These are the parts that make claims about reality and are therefore subject to testing through observation or research.

Values and the Social Sciences

The preceding discussion holds true whether you are studying the works of social scientists, reading a newspaper, watching a television program, or having a discussion with your friends. Although social scientists place a primary emphasis on theory and research—that is, on addressing factual questions about the realities of human behavior—they, too, are human, and their work is often influenced by their values. Inevitably, the topics that social (or natural, for that matter) scientists choose to study will be influenced by their values. We want to emphasize, scientists are not value-free concerning their theories and research interests. Science today is very competitive, and every scientist wants to gain recognition and get grant money and be published by developing a theory and research that garners them recognition above others. Consequently, scientists sometimes try to interpret their results to fit their theories. Finally, because social scientists study human beings, they frequently bring strong values to their research that can influence their interpretations of their findings. Both social scientists and natural scientists often have a strong interest in applying their research for some useful purpose, and they also frequently make policy recommendations. These recommendations can be influenced by both their research findings and their values. All of this is fine as long as social and natural scientists share their results and methods completely and honestly with their professional

communities. The scientific community can then debate their findings, methods, interpretations, and recommendations. Such debate strengthens rather than weakens science, and therefore, few people today argue that science can or should be totally separated from values.

The Relationship Between Theory and Research

Recall from Chapter 1 that science consists of a cycle that includes observation (research), generalization, explanation, and prediction. This leads to a new round of the research cycle that may begin with new research to test the predictions generated from the previous round. This cycle is illustrated in Figure 2.1. This diagram illustrates the reciprocal relationship between research and theory. Research findings are most meaningful when considered in the context of a theory, which explains the findings by proposing cause-effect relationships that can account for them. Similarly, theory is of little use unless it can be shown by research to be correct, at least under some specified set of conditions (Lieberson, 1992, p. 4).

Explanation Versus Prediction

Consider the top half of Figure 2.1, which shows research being used to *generate* theory.

Here, a research finding is obtained and found to be generally true, and a theory is then developed to *explain* it.

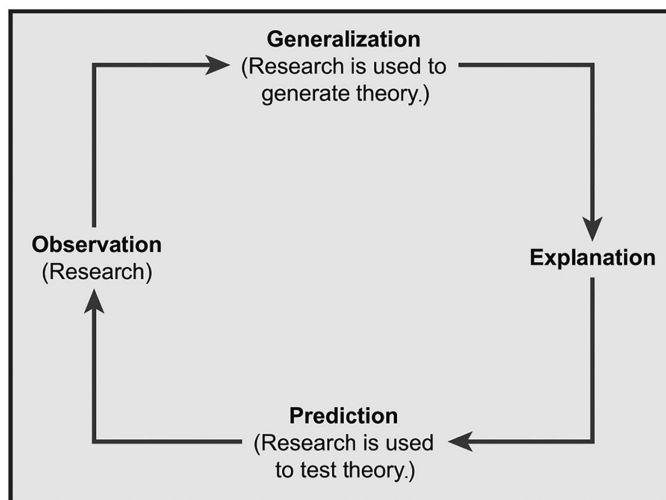
Now, consider the bottom half of the figure. Here, research is being used to test theory. The theory predicts a particular result, and the scientist does the research to see if the predicted result can be obtained.

As shown in Figure 2.1, the relationship between theory and research works two ways. Sometimes, as in the top half of the figure, scientists do research in order to develop theories, or develop theories in order to explain research findings. In this case, the scientists are engaging in a process of *explanation*, or *theory generation*. Other times, as in the bottom half of the figure, scientists do research in order to test a theory. In this case, the scientists are engaging in a process of *prediction*, or *theory testing*.

Research and Theory Testing

When social scientists use research to test a theory, they usually use a hypothesis. A **hypothesis** is a single statement about reality that can be tested. Usually, it is used to test a piece of a theory. When we say that a hypothesis can be tested, we mean that it is possible to observe whether or not things happen the way that the hypothesis claims they will. A hypothesis is always a statement, never a question. Usually, it describes a cause-effect relationship, such as, if

Figure 2.1 The cycle of scientific inquiry.



condition *X* is present, then condition *Y* is more or less likely to follow.

The reason a hypothesis is used for testing is that a theory is usually too large and complex to test in its entirety at one time. Hence, scientists test one piece of a theory at a time by developing a hypothesis that seems to follow from that part of the theory. Thus, a hypothesis can be thought of as an educated guess about how a research project will turn out, based on the theory the scientist is trying to test. When research is done for the purpose of theory testing, the researcher develops a hypothesis from a theory and then conducts research to see if the hypothesis can be confirmed by actual observation.

Case Study: Durkheim on Suicide. This process can be illustrated by one of the first sociological studies conducted according to the scientific model, Émile Durkheim's *Suicide* (1964a [orig. 1897]). Durkheim sought to explain why some people commit suicide and others don't. Although suicide is often thought of as an act by an individual, Durkheim thought that social factors could help to explain who commits suicide and who doesn't. Durkheim developed the theory that suicide is often the result of people not being well-integrated into social groups. This theory suggests several hypotheses. If we can identify groups of people who are more individualistic and less integrated into some type of group life, we would expect such people to have a higher rate of suicide. Durkheim identified three such groups of people: Protestants, men, and unmarried people. Protestant religions emphasize an individual relationship with God rather than the community orientation stressed by Catholics and Jews. Men are expected to be "strong" and do things on their own, whereas the traditional female role emphasizes family and community relationships. Unmarried people may be alone much of the time and often do not have the kinds of relationships that married people have with their spouse and (usually) children.

Thus, Durkheim developed three hypotheses: Suicide rates would be higher among Protestants than among Catholics and Jews, higher among men than among women, and higher among unmarried people than among married people. He then tested the hypotheses

by examining data archives on suicide cases and computing suicide rates for different categories of the population in several European countries. As he expected, he found higher suicide rates among Protestants, men, and unmarried people than among Catholics and Jews, women, and married people. These findings supported his hypotheses. Moreover, they offered an important piece of evidence in support of his larger theory.

Research and Theory Generation

Researchers who are interested in topics about which there is no well-developed theory are likely to engage in research for the purpose of theory generation. The main purpose of such research is to develop a theory to explain some pattern of behavior. Rather than use a hypothesis to predict the research result, the researcher conducts research as a way of generating or developing hypotheses. These hypotheses can then be used to build a theory.

Using and Measuring Variables

As previously stated, social scientists are interested in identifying relationships of cause and effect. To do this, they use variables. A **variable** is a concept that can either take on different values or has two or more categories. Income is an example of a variable. Your income could be \$100,000 per year, or it could be \$10,000, for instance. (Now, there are two values that are definitely different!) Religion is also a variable. It can be broken down into categories such as Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, other, or none. It is important to know the difference between a variable and a category of a variable. "Catholic" and "Muslim," for example, are not variables. Rather, they are categories of the variable "religion."

Independent Variables

Because social science research usually involves cause-effect relationships among variables, most hypotheses describe cause-effect relationships. Hence, some variables represent causes,

whereas others represent effects. In a hypothesis or research project, a variable that the researcher thinks is a cause is called an **independent variable** (or sometimes, a predictor variable). In a study involving a relationship between two variables, then, the independent variable is the one that the researcher thinks influences the other variable or precedes it in time. Keep in mind that the cause must always come before the effect: you cannot do something today that will cause something to happen yesterday.

Dependent Variables

A variable that a researcher thinks is the effect or outcome is called the **dependent variable**. This variable is thought to follow the independent variable in time or to be influenced by the independent variable. It is called the dependent variable because, if the researcher is right, its value in part depends on the value of the independent variable. If education is the independent variable and income is the dependent variable, for example, then a person's income depends, in part, on the amount of education that person has. In this example, education represents the cause and income the effect.

Operational Definitions

Once it has been decided which variables will be included in a study, the researcher must decide how the variables will be measured. This is done by developing operational definitions of the variables we want to measure. An **operational definition** is a precise definition developed for the purpose of measurement. It must be sufficiently precise that anyone could use it and get the same result. An operational definition of income, for example, could be the adjusted gross income that a survey respondent reported on their income tax return in the most recent tax year. This would work as an operational definition because this amount should be the same no matter who is asking the questions in the survey. There is always more than one possible way to operationally define a variable. The way that is used in any given study will depend on

how the researcher conceptualizes the variable and its relevance to the cause-effect relationship being studied. Any way of doing it is acceptable, as long as the following three things are true:

- 1 The operational definition is precise and clear enough that anyone could use it and get the same result.
- 2 The researcher tells you clearly how the variable was operationally defined.
- 3 The operational definition makes sense. In other words, its relationship to the concept the researcher is trying to measure is evident or can be explained convincingly by the researcher.

Validity and Reliability

However social researchers measure their variables, there are two criteria their measures must meet for measurement to be successful. The first, validity, is illustrated by the third condition in the preceding list. **Validity** means that a measure is correctly measuring the concept the researcher intends it to measure. Consider again the example of using the income reported on a tax return as an operational definition of income. This approach could raise problems from a standpoint of validity, because there is a sizable amount of off-the-books income that is not reported on tax returns. Obvious examples are money from illegal drug sales or unreported legal income such as that from odd jobs that are paid in cash. For people with such unreported income, using the tax return figure would present a validity problem—the tax return income would be too low. One way of judging validity is illustrated by the third item in the preceding paragraph—you should be able to see some connection between a measure and what the researcher is trying to measure. This is called face validity.

The other criterion a measure must meet is **reliability**, which means that a measure gives consistent results. Consider the method used by the United States Census Bureau to measure race. People are given a choice of different racial categories and asked to mark the one that best describes their race. This approach to measuring race has good reliability as long as people

are consistent in how they mark their race when they fill out questionnaires. As a practical matter, reliability is usually good on things people usually “know,” such as their race or sex, but as the questions address more subjective issues, reliability decreases.

Finally, it is important to remember that a measure can be reliable but not valid. Using the tax return figure as a measure of income might be a good example of this. If people remember the income they reported or can look it up easily, they might answer such a question very

consistently. However, their answer might be consistently too low. This can be a problem, since it is usually easier to assess the reliability of a measure than it is to assess its validity.

Correlation

When they try to determine whether or not there is a cause-effect relationship between two variables, one thing researchers look for is correlation. **Correlation** means that when one



PERSONAL JOURNEYS INTO SOCIOLOGY

Changing Times

Joan McCord

My high school boyfriend and I married as Stanford undergraduates and went to Harvard together. I taught elementary school in winter and attended Harvard for summer school while my husband earned his PhD. Classroom teaching provided an opportunity for me to learn more about children. Occasionally, I used my sixth graders to experiment with theories about learning. The students also proved useful for pretesting measures we intended to use for a book on delinquency that reflected our experiences at the Wiltwyck Reform School in New York.

The year 1956 was a beginning of sorts, for me. I had become a full-fledged graduate student, and H. L. A. Hart was teaching a seminar entitled “Causation and the Law.” Most of the faculty and students in the seminar maintained the Humean position that causes could not be known and beliefs about them depended on the correlation of events. Hart suddenly slid a heavy glass ashtray across the table against the stomach of Henry Aiken, a philosopher well known for his support of Hume’s argument. “I caused that!” Hart announced, thereby issuing the challenge that drives my interest in research.

How can we learn that one event causes another? Despite the appeal of causal skepticism, it was impossible to reject the idea that at least sometimes, people cause things to happen. And, as Hart’s gesture indicated, detection of causal relations cannot be entirely dependent on perceiving constancy of conjunction. Hart had not previously shoved anything across the conference table—much less an ashtray. Yet it seemed clear that Hart caused his colleague’s pain.

Also in 1956, I became a research assistant at Palfrey House, the study center for Child Psychology at Harvard. My first assignment introduced me to the Human Relations Area Files then being created. I coded the child-rearing section of these cross-cultural resources. We classified societies on the basis of reports for which, often, only one or two cases had been described. I could not overcome my doubts about generalizing from what might well be atypical families or erroneous reports. We rated such things as maternal warmth, use of physical punishment, and permissiveness of aggression. After classifying a culture on a particular dimension, we recorded our confidence in the rating as representing a picture of the society. My constant rating of “doubtful” led to a reassignment!

I became Eleanor Maccoby’s research assistant, learning much from her about the importance of careful specification of variables. Data for the classic Sears, Maccoby, and Levin study had been collected by asking parents to evaluate their children and to respond to questions about their own child-rearing techniques. Although the authors assumed the reports were valid, the source of information both for the child’s behavior and for the home environment had been the mother. I was skeptical. Mothers’ reports about their children might merely reflect justifications of their own behavior. Alternatively, the reports might reflect biases about idealized parent-child relationships. Records from social workers participating in the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study provided a means by which to overcome the problem of using mothers as informants regarding their own and their children’s behavior.

variable changes, the other also tends to change. For example, there is a correlation between growing up in a single-parent family and having a baby while still a teenager. Girls who grow up in single-parent families are more likely to become parents as teenagers than girls who grow up in two-parent families. Correlation by itself is never enough to prove causation, for reasons we see in more detail shortly. On the other hand, if a study finds that there is no correlation between two variables, it is rather unlikely that one of them could be causing the other.

Control Variables

A **control variable** is a third variable that is introduced to determine whether or not a correlation between two variables can be accounted for by some alternative explanation. So, in the previous example, can you think of some other variable that might explain teen pregnancy? Maybe the education level of the parent? If so, researchers might control for this by holding this constant (seeing if there is variation within the same education level of parents, for

My husband and I had begun to evaluate the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study, a program designed to prevent delinquency that had included random assignment of high-risk children to treatment and control groups. Evaluating almost a decade earlier, Edwin Powers and Helen Witmer had concluded that no beneficial effect had been demonstrated. We hoped that a delayed effect would be found. On December 10, 1956, I put the finishing touches on our book, *Origins of Crime*. Then I went to the hospital to deliver the first of our two sons. Geoffrey's birth made understanding cause-effect relationships in personality development both more interesting and more urgent. In 1957, I obtained a grant to recode information from the social workers' records in order to use it for further investigation into personality development.

In 1957, I received the Josiah Royce Fellowship in Philosophy. Shortly after this fellowship began, my husband was invited to become Assistant Dean of Humanities and Sciences at Stanford. We moved west. I directed studies of personality development as a research associate at Stanford, where my second son, Rob, was born in 1959. The family spent most of 1961 in France. Upon our return, I resumed studies aiming toward a PhD in philosophy. At about that time, our marriage broke down. I struggled to keep food on the table. Without a PhD, I could not get the positions for which my experience and training had qualified me, yet employers were unwilling to hire me in assistant positions because, they said, "You will be bored." I rented rooms, tutored children, and became a consultant. Finally in 1965, the National Institute of Mental Health funded my return to graduate studies. I earned a PhD in sociology from Stanford in 1968.

By the late 1970s, boys from the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study had become middle-aged. The coded records included detailed information about how fathers, mothers, and siblings interacted. The lure of discovering long-delayed benefits of treatment in combination with the possibility of a more adequate

study of the influence of child-rearing on adult behavior drove me to apply for funds to do what was then an unpopular form of study: longitudinal research. Together with a small cadre of assistants, although 30 years had passed without contact, I retraced the 506 former members of the Youth Study. We learned that despite their descriptions of how the treatment had been beneficial, men in the treatment group actually turned out worse than those in the matched control group. We learned also that child-rearing differences predict many features of adult behavior. I continue to analyze data from the Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study, in part because the data help to test whether investigations based on contemporary conditions should be viewed as bounded by current culture. The data also are unique for having been collected through repeated observations of many families in a variety of conditions over an extended period of time. My studies based on these data include information about the behavior of two generations.

Apart from my work with data from the Cambridge-Somerville project, my empirical studies have been based on longitudinal research of children from the Woodlawn community in Chicago and from a crime-cohort study of co-offending in Philadelphia. Many of my newer projects focus on a theory of intentional action that combines my training in philosophy with the empirical focus of work in socialization.

The late *Joan McCord*, Professor of Criminal Justice at Temple University, received a PhD in sociology from Stanford University in 1968. Her contributions to research were honored with the Prix Émile Durkheim from the International Society of Criminology (1993) and the Edwin H. Sutherland Award from the American Society of Criminology (1994). She served as president of the American Society of Criminology and coeditor of the National Academy of Sciences Panel Report on juvenile crime and justice. Professor McCord passed away in 2004 at the age of 73 years.

instance). Such a result can make researchers more confident that there is some cause-effect relationship between the two variables under study. However, they can never be completely sure, because it is always possible that another researcher might find some other control variable that eliminates the correlation completely.

Sociologists devote considerable effort to identifying cause-effect relationships. Most sociological research is aimed at understanding why society operates as it does. For an example of a sociological career revolving around such inquiry, see the Personal Journeys Into Sociology of Joan McCord.

Key Research Methods in Sociology

The principles discussed thus far in this chapter are applicable to all of the social sciences and often to the natural sciences as well. Now, we narrow our focus somewhat to consider the particular research methods that are used in sociology. Once a sociologist has selected a research problem and reviewed the sociological literature to identify theories and past research that relate to the topic, the next task is to design and carry out the research. Sociologists use four major approaches to research: experiments, surveys, field observation (often combined with in-depth interviews), and analysis of existing data.

Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

Sociological research methods vary on a quantitative-qualitative dimension. At one end is **quantitative research**, which expresses results as numbers and uses statistical techniques to sort out cause-effect relationships among a number of variables. Often, this type of research is used to test hypotheses and theories. At the other end of the dimension is **qualitative research**, which uses in-depth observation and interviewing techniques to find beliefs, meanings, and social behaviors that lie beneath the easily observable surface. These two approaches have different strengths and allow us to see different pieces of social reality.

In general, surveys and experiments tend to be more quantitative, whereas observational research techniques tend to be more qualitative, although there are exceptions to the rule with all research methods. Methods involving use of existing data can be either qualitative or quantitative, depending on the nature of the data.

Experiments

An **experiment** is research that is carried out in a situation, such as a laboratory or classroom, that is under the control of the researcher. In an experiment, the researcher changes or manipulates the independent variable, tries to keep everything else constant, and then measures the dependent variable both before and after the change in the independent variable. Suppose, for example, that a researcher wanted to find out if seeing a movie advocating tolerance would reduce people's levels of racial prejudice. The researcher could give a group of people a questionnaire measuring prejudice, then show them the movie, and then give them a questionnaire again to see if their attitudes had changed. If so, there would be evidence both of *correlation* between seeing the movie and changes in their prejudice scores and of *correct time order*.

Experimental and Control Groups

To be really confident of their results, however, researchers must use not one but two groups of people in their experiments. One group, called the **experimental group**, goes through an experience like that described previously. Members of the group are given a "before" measure of the dependent variable (called the pretest); the independent variable is changed or manipulated (as in the showing of the movie); and the dependent variable is measured again (the posttest). The other group, the **control group**, goes through the pretest and posttest, but there is no manipulation of the independent variable. In the preceding example, the control group would be given the "before" and "after" prejudice questionnaire but would *not* be shown the movie. Why is this necessary?

Without the control group, the scientist would have no way of knowing whether people's attitudes changed because of seeing the movie or for some other reason. It could be, for example, that their attitudes changed because answering the questionnaire made them think in ways that changed their minds. Using the control group eliminates this alternative explanation because that group also took the questionnaire twice. If the experimental group (the group that saw the movie) changed more than the control group, it was clearly influenced by something more than just taking the test—most likely by seeing the movie.

Of course, other possibilities exist. Perhaps the people in the experimental group were more easily persuaded than the people in the control group and thus were more likely to change their minds. Social researchers can minimize the likelihood of this kind of problem by *randomly assigning* each person who participates in the experiment as a subject to either the experimental group or the control group. If these two groups are large enough, such random assignment will ensure that the groups have a similar mix of social characteristics. If the groups are thus similar, differences in the experiment's results between the two groups cannot be attributed to preexisting differences between the groups.

Field Experiments

Although true experiments are conducted in situations where the researcher can control all the elements, the experimental technique is sometimes taken into situations not fully under the control of researchers in an approach called *field experiments*. This type of experiment is particularly common in sociology, which places a greater emphasis on understanding larger social patterns than on trying to predict the behavior of individuals.

Natural Experiments

Two common types of field experiments are natural experiments and social experiments. Natural experiments use pretests and posttests with naturally occurring events to assess the effects of such events on some dependent variable. My

own (Farley's) PhD dissertation can serve as an example of a natural experiment. I was interested in the effect of different types of housing on children's day-to-day activities. I was permitted to use data from a survey conducted at the University of Toronto (Michelson, 1977), which had asked questions of both children and their parents about their daily activities before and after they moved into either single-family houses or high-rise apartments. By so doing, I was able to compare the activities of children both before (pretest) and after (posttest) they moved into one type of housing or the other. In this example, the naturally occurring event of the family's move substituted for the manipulation of the independent variable that would have taken place in a true experiment.

Social Experiments

In social experiments, some type of social policy is tried out in a real-life setting, and a pretest, posttest, and control group are used to assess its effects. An example of this can be seen in the federal government's Housing Allowance Experiment of the mid-1970s (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1979). In this study, low-income families in the experimental group were given housing allowances—money to be used for the purpose of helping them pay for their housing. In pretests and posttests, the amount of money spent on housing by the experimental and control groups was measured to see if the people in the experimental group used their housing allowances to increase what they spent on housing and thereby increase the quality of their housing. For the most part, the experiment found that they did not. Instead, by paying for their housing with the housing allowance, they freed up personal funds to cover other expenses besides housing expenses.

Survey Research

Actually, both of the preceding housing examples (like most field experiments) did not strictly use the experimental method of research. Rather, they combined that method with survey research, which is the most widely used type of research design in sociology. **Survey**

research is any research in which a population or a sample of a population is asked a set of questions that are worked out in advance by the researcher. In survey research, the variables are constructed from individuals' responses to the survey questions. Researchers attempt to measure all of the independent and control variables that might be relevant to whatever dependent variable they are interested in. An advantage of survey research is that it allows researchers the opportunity to study a large number of variables at once. In particular, they can introduce many independent variables at the same time and measure the relative correlation of each with the dependent variable. They can also conduct tests to see if an independent variable still correlates with a dependent variable, even while adjusting for the influence of many control variables at the same time. Survey research is conducted in three common ways: the questionnaire, the telephone interview, and the personal interview.

Questionnaires

In the questionnaire, the people answering the survey read the questions and mark or write their answers on the survey form or an answer sheet. Questionnaires are simple and inexpensive to administer. However, the researcher might not always know when people have a problem understanding questions. Also, depending on how the survey is administered, the response rate can be low. Mail-out/mail-back questionnaires frequently have low response rates, often well under 50 percent and sometimes as low as 10 percent. The response rate can be improved if the survey is handed out to a group and people fill it out on the spot. As we see later, however, both of these methods present problems in terms of obtaining a sample that is representative of the population of interest to the researcher.

Telephone Interviews

A second way of doing survey research is the telephone interview. This method is particularly advantageous if quick results are needed,

because answers can be entered immediately into the computer by the interviewer and analyzed quickly. Telephone interviews can produce a better response rate than questionnaires, though telephone answering machines and voicemail have presented an increasing problem in this regard. Biases can occur because of people not owning phones or having unlisted numbers, but these problems have decreased. Random-dialing computer programs can reach unlisted numbers, and only about 3 percent of households lack phones today. For these reasons, use of telephone surveys increased sharply in the 1980s and 1990s (Babbie, 1992, p. 275) but more recently has become more challenging because of the proliferation of cell phones and unlisted home phones that make potential respondents more difficult to reach (Keeter et al. 2017).

During the 1930s and 1940s (when more households lacked telephones than today), telephone polls occasionally made incorrect predictions of election outcomes because Democrats, with lower average incomes, were less likely to have telephones. Consequently, the polls predicted Republican victories in elections that were won by the Democrats. A classic case is the famous *Literary Digest* presidential election poll of 1936. Although it was not a telephone poll, it got into trouble by drawing much of its sample from telephone directories. Because the poll greatly overrepresented Republicans, it predicted that Alf Landon would defeat Franklin D. Roosevelt by about 15 percentage points. Roosevelt subsequently won in a landslide, carrying every state but two.

This type of problem is less common today, when nearly everyone has phones, but still can be an issue if a survey is attempted in an area with a high poverty rate, where more households are without phones. The more serious problems today are that many people are able to block phone calls using voicemail, answering machines, caller ID, and similar technologies, and cellular phones are being used in addition to or instead of home landline phones, making valid sampling more difficult (Cox et al., 1999; Steeh et al., 1999; Oldendick and Link, 1999; Kempf and Remington, 2007). Moreover, people who have unlisted phones or who use cell phones instead of landlines may be

systematically different from people who do not, creating potential biases (Pew Research Center, 2006). It is also possible that with the increasing frequency of telephone surveys, respondents have become more resistant to answering them—something that voicemail, caller ID, and answering systems make very easy to avoid. Today, it is not uncommon for telephone surveys to have response rates of lower than 10 percent. This does not necessarily make such surveys severely unrepresentative, if the surveys are designed to include both landlines and cell phones, and if sophisticated demographic statistical weighting techniques are used to adjust for different response rates among different groups. But it does make telephone surveys much more challenging than a decade or two ago (Pew Research Center, 2015b).

Personal Interviews

The third way of doing survey research is the personal interview. Unless results are needed very quickly, the personal interview is usually the most thorough and reliable method of survey research. If done properly, most of the intended sample can be reached, interviewers can recognize ambiguous questions, and visual aids can be used. The main drawback of this method of research is its expense. Each

interview can take an hour, and another hour or more may be spent traveling. The researcher must pay trained interviewers for this work. Someone must also code the results and enter them into the computer for analysis. Thus, one of the biggest factors researchers must take into consideration when they decide what kind of survey research to do is what they can afford.

Survey Questions

Two general types of questions are commonly used in survey research: fixed response and open ended. Fixed-response questions are like multiple-choice exam questions: The respondent (the person answering the survey) is asked a question and then chooses one of several possible answers listed on the questionnaire or by the interviewer. Advantages of this approach are that the results are easy to process, and the respondent picks the category that their answer will be placed in, rather than having that done by the researcher. The disadvantage, of course, is that none of the categories may represent the respondent's true feelings about the question.

The other kind of question is the open-ended question. This type of question has no fixed choices; rather, the respondent states or writes an answer to the question in their own words. This offers the advantage of enabling respondents to say what they really think without limiting them to a preconceived set of categories. However, in order to analyze large numbers of such responses, researchers must usually code each response according to its meaning, so that similar responses from different people can be grouped together. This process involves a great deal of work, and there is always the risk that the coder will interpret the response differently from what the respondent intended. Thus, open-ended and fixed-response questions both have their advantages and disadvantages.

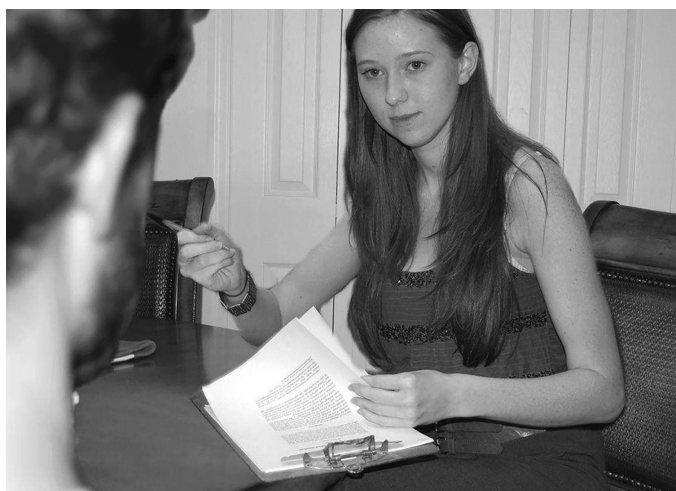


Photo 2.1 An interviewer conducts a personal interview survey. Surveys are one of the most widely used research methods in sociology.

Courtesy of Michael W. Flota

Sampling

Although some surveys include everyone in the population the researcher is interested in, most surveys are based on samples. A **sample** is a subset of a population that is used to represent the entire population. If a sample is properly drawn, it can produce a result that is almost as trustworthy as if the entire population had been surveyed—and at a tremendously lower cost. A poorly drawn sample can render a research project useless. In order to be trustworthy, a sample must have two key characteristics. It must be *representative*, and it must be *large* enough to give reliable results.

A sample is representative of the population when everyone in the population has the same chance of being included in the sample. Thus, the mix of social characteristics in a representative sample must be similar to that of the general population. If you were interested in learning about the opinions of students at your college or university, for instance, you could not obtain a representative sample by doing the survey only in your introductory sociology class. Assuming that you are attending a four-year school, such a survey would mainly shut out juniors and seniors, and you would therefore oversample freshmen and sophomores, because they are the people who usually take introductory classes. And, regardless of whether you are in a two-year school or a four-year school, you would have too many people in your sample who are interested in sociology and not enough who are interested in other subjects. Thus, your sample would not be representative of the student body of your school. A better strategy would have been to randomly draw names (or student numbers) from a list of all students at your school. In general, representative samples are best obtained through random sampling of the population the researcher wishes to study.

Besides being representative, a sample must be *large* enough to give reliable results. What matters most is the number of people in the sample, not the percentage of the population that is sampled. Even in a small local area, a sample size of several hundred will usually be needed to ensure reliable results. At the same time, a sample of 2,000 to 3,000 people is

adequate for a population as large as the United States. Keep in mind, however, that even the largest sample will not give an accurate result if it is not representative of the population that it is chosen to represent. If this is the case, the sample will be reliable, but it will not be valid. It will give misleading results, because some parts of the population are overrepresented while others are underrepresented.

Field Observation

Field observation is a method of research in which human behavior is observed by researchers as it occurs in ordinary real-life situations. It is the only method of research that permits social scientists to see directly how people actually behave in ordinary situations not under the control of the researcher. In experiments, the behavior is ordinarily observed in artificial settings such as classrooms or laboratories, so the researcher cannot assume that people will behave the same way in real-life situations. In survey research, researchers must depend on what respondents tell them. We know that when it comes to behavior, people do not always know how they would behave in some situations, so the answers they give survey-takers are not always accurate. Even accounts of what people have actually done in the past frequently contain considerable inaccuracies. Field observation gets around these problems by observing carefully and systematically how people actually behave in ordinary real-life situations.

Field Observation and Theory Generation

Field observation is especially useful for theory generation. Often, if a researcher does not have a clear theory or a body of past research findings to work with, field observation can disclose patterns that can be used to generate hypotheses. Field observation is similar in some ways to the ordinary observations of the behavior of others that we all make. The difference is that field observations are more systematic. Field observers take care to make prompt and detailed notes

about their observations and to distinguish *observations* (“The woman was smiling”) from *interpretations* (“The woman was happy”).

Although field observation has an important advantage over other research methods in that the social scientist sees real behavior in uncontrived situations, this method also has some limitations. Most important is that the observer is never sure whether the behavior observed is representative of anyone beyond the people actually observed. In field observations, there is no way to draw a random sample of the population. The observer must, rather, observe the behavior of those with whom the observer comes into contact in the situation in which the observation is being done.

Participant Observation

The two main types of field observation are participant observation and unobtrusive observation. In **participant observation**, the researcher participates in some way in the behavior being observed. This can be accomplished by attending a meeting, participating in a group activity, or perhaps living for a time with the people being studied. A critical question here is whether the researcher should reveal their identity. There are arguments both for and against doing this. The main argument against it is that when people realize that they are being studied, they behave differently. Those in favor of revealing their identity argue that people may alter their behavior even more if they suspect they are secretly being studied. There is also an ethical argument in support of researchers revealing their identities: Some social scientists feel that people have a right to know when they are being studied and a right not to be studied if they don't want to be. Others, however, argue that when people are in a public place, social scientists have the same right to observe them that anyone else has.

In most cases, participant observation is less quantitative and more qualitative than other methods of research. Whereas surveys and experiments produce numbers that can be used to test hypotheses and clarify relationships between variables, participant observation is often more subjective in nature. It offers less

precise numbers, but it allows far greater depth of knowledge. No matter what group of people a sociologist is trying to study, there are some things that the sociologist will not find out simply by asking questions as an “outsider.” Every group of people has its informal norms and “inside information.” It is not likely that the answers given to a survey-taker will reveal much about this aspect of group life. To get this information, a sociologist must literally become a part of the group and often must remain so for some time. Participant observers have moved into neighborhoods, or even lived with families, for periods ranging from one year to four or five years.

Many social scientists feel that no other method can gain the degree of insight that is possible through ongoing intimate contact. Many of sociology's most important studies have been based on participant observation, and they have often produced results that have contradicted conventional wisdom—even sometimes the conventional wisdom of sociologists. Sociologists William F. Whyte (1981 [orig. 1943]) and Herbert Gans (1962) conducted long-term participant observation studies in Boston's low-income Italian neighborhoods. They found that the neighborhoods, which were generally regarded as disorganized, vice-ridden slums, were actually stable, well-organized neighborhoods where the residents worked hard and took care of one another. The residents had low incomes and were uninvolved in the city's political life, but these neighborhoods were nothing like the dens of social pathology that they were widely believed to be. Some of the things Whyte learned were surprising even to him.

Whyte's discoveries illustrate another important aspect of participant observation—it is often combined with a research technique known as **qualitative interviewing**. The qualitative interview is a little like the open-ended questions used in survey research, except that there is more attention to the depth of the answers and less to standardization or to completing the interview in a fixed time frame. After having gained the trust of the people being studied, the qualitative interviewer asks questions aimed at getting certain information the researcher wants to obtain. But the possibility is always kept open of asking new questions

suggested by the respondent's answer to the initial ones. Through this process, information is obtained that the researcher may not have originally thought to ask about.

In spite of its advantages, participant observation, like other methods of research, is subject to problems of reactivity. The mere presence of an observer may, for example, alter people's behavior. To lessen this problem, a researcher may try to remain as uninvolved as possible or may try to act like most of the people being observed. There is, however, one method of field observation that entirely avoids reactivity problems—unobtrusive observation.

Unobtrusive Observation

Unobtrusive observation can be defined as field observation in which the researcher does not in any way become involved in the behavior being observed. One type of unobtrusive observation is observing human behavior from a position out of sight—through a window, across the street, and so forth. Another type is observation of physical traces—evidence that people leave behind them. A sociologist might, for example, get an idea of how safe people feel in a neighborhood by examining the proportion of cars that are locked. Frequently, such methods lead to the development of *unobtrusive*

measures, which are quantifiable measures such as the percentage of males and females entering a grocery store at a certain time of day, that result from unobtrusive observation.

The great advantage of unobtrusive observation over all the methods of research discussed thus far is that, if done properly, it avoids problems of reactivity. The disadvantage is that it tends to be somewhat lacking in depth. One can obtain only so much information without any direct interaction with other people. Still, unobtrusive observation is an important social research tool, particularly in urban sociology, where researchers are interested in the characteristics of people living in and using different kinds of city neighborhoods.

Use of Existing Data Sources

A final type of research that is of great importance in sociology is the use of existing data sources. Very often a social scientist does not need to collect original data to study an issue or a problem because the necessary data have already been collected by someone else and are available. There are three main sources of existing data: various public and private data archives, the U.S. Census and related sources, and published or broadcast media suitable for content analysis. Let us consider each further.



Photo 2.2 In unobtrusive observation, the researcher observes human behavior from a position that is out of sight or relatively unnoticeable.

Courtesy of Michael W. Flota

Data Archives

As you are probably aware, thousands of surveys have been taken in recent decades by college- and university-based researchers, private organizations and corporations, and various government agencies. Most of these surveys have resulted in computerized data archives, many of which are available to researchers. Professional organizations often conduct surveys of participants in their professions

and sometimes make such data available to researchers with related interests. Many government agencies conduct surveys and other forms of research and then sell computer archives of the data at cost. The U.S. government also has a registration system that records births, deaths, marriages, and divorces as they occur, which is an important source for researchers interested in these topics. An increasing amount of material from many of these sources is being made directly available over the Internet to anyone who wants to use it. In the case of government agencies, the entire databases can sometimes be downloaded free of charge.

The U.S. Census

A second major source of data, available to anyone with access to a good library or the Internet, is the U.S. Census. The Census, conducted every ten years, includes comprehensive data on population and housing characteristics for areas as small as a city block and as big as the entire country. A glance through any major sociological journal will reveal that the Census is one of the most important sources of data for sociological research.

The population Census is only conducted every ten years, however, and there is a need for more current data. This need is met, in part, by the United States Census Bureau's *Current Population Survey*. This survey, conducted on an ongoing basis, provides annual updates on such things as population size, age structure, racial composition, income, household and family characteristics, education, and employment and unemployment.

Content Analysis

A slightly different approach to using existing data sources is content analysis. **Content analysis** involves some type of systematic examination of the content of books, articles, speeches, movies, television programs, or other communications. Such analysis can look for regular patterns, or it can examine the handling

of some area of subject matter. One might, for example, compare the number and types of roles filled by male and female characters in a set of television programs. Is there any difference, for example, in the proportion of males and females who are portrayed as people in a position to make important decisions? Such portrayals can tell a good deal about how the writers of the television programs feel about the roles of men and women in society. They also say a lot about what television is teaching youngsters about men and women in society. An advantage of content analysis is that it can be either *quantitative* (e.g., counting the number of words devoted to female characters as opposed to male) or *qualitative* (e.g., a detailed description and analysis of how male and female characters are presented).

Reading Tables

In reports of sociological research, results are often presented in tables. Thus, being able to read tables is an essential skill for anyone who wishes to make sense of sociological research. It is also a skill of some broader usefulness because many other kinds of information also appear in tables. In fact, in many sociological research reports, most of the actual research findings appear in the tables rather than in the text. As one of our professors in graduate school put it, "If you don't have time to read both the tables and the verbiage, skip the verbiage and read the tables."

Whether you are reading materials from tables or from the text of a journal article, it is important when working with research findings to be aware of the precise meaning of the data that were used. This means, for example, knowing the wording of the questions asked—small changes in wording can make a big difference. It also means paying attention to the circumstances under which the research was done—in interview studies concerning race and gender, for example, the race and gender of the person doing the interviewing can have significant effects on the responses that person gets in the interview. Finally, it means knowing and understanding exactly what statistics mean when they are taken from an existing data source like the Census.

Summary

In this chapter, we elaborated upon the scientific method and explored the relationship between theory and research. Research generates theory, as theorists seek to explain research findings. These theories then stimulate new research by predicting what such research may be expected to find. When researchers operate in the mode of prediction and theory testing, they often use hypotheses. Hypotheses are specific statements about reality, derived from theories as a way of testing parts of those theories. A hypothesis usually contains one or more independent variables (presumed causes) and a dependent variable (presumed effect). Scientists test for such cause-effect relationships by looking for correlation between independent and dependent variables, by checking the time order (cause must precede effect), and by eliminating alternative explanations, often through the use of control variables.

In sociology, the major methods of research are experiments, survey research, field observation, and the use of existing data sources. Which of these methods a sociologist will use depends in part on that sociologist's purpose in research (e.g., theory testing versus theory generation), and in part on the sociologist's judgment concerning the strengths and weaknesses of each method. Sociologists use both quantitative methods involving numbers and statistics and qualitative methods involving less quantifiable but more in-depth observations and interviews. Each method has different strengths, and a combination of the two often presents the most complete and accurate sociological picture.

Results derived from social research are commonly expressed as numbers. Such results frequently are presented in tables; being able to read tables correctly is an essential skill for anyone trying to make sense of sociological research. And with or without numbers, the



Photo 2.3 When people take action, such as participating in a demonstration, they are expressing value judgments—views about how things ought to be.

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reader of sociological research reports must have a good understanding of the methods used and the meaning of the findings presented, taking a critical view that asks how the results were obtained and what they really mean. This can only be done well if the reader has some baseline of knowledge about social research methods, which is why this kind of knowledge is important for an educated and informed citizenry.

Key Terms

cause and effect
values
hypothesis
variable
independent variable
dependent variable
operational definition
validity
reliability
correlation
control variable
quantitative research
qualitative research
experiment
experimental group
control group
survey research

sample
field observation
participant observation
qualitative interviewing
unobtrusive observation
content analysis

Exercises

1 Nearly everyone has heard of the *Gallup poll*, but few people have any idea of how a social science survey, or poll, is conducted. Check out www.pollingreport.com or www.gallup.com, and look over some of the survey questions. How might slight variations in the language of the questions end up creating bias in the answers? Think of an issue that interests you greatly that is also high-profile, like abortion, stem cell research, human trafficking and slavery, economic growth, global warming, evolution, or the budget deficit. Now, compile a list of questions you would like to

ask others about your issue and compare it to the questions asked of the same topic on the Polling Report or Gallup website. How do survey makers avoid bias in their questions?

2 The United States Census Bureau is a fountain of information relevant to sociology and the social sciences. This exercise is designed to introduce you to the United States Census Bureau and provide some experience in using its resources. Check out www.census.gov. From the opening screen, select “Topics” on the navigation bar. Select a specific demographic variable of interest (e.g., age and sex, race, education, income and poverty, or families and living arrangements). Why did you choose this particular demographic variable? How might this variable impact individuals’ experiences within society?

For a full list of references, please visit the book’s Support Material at www.routledge.com/9781032423593.



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Part II

Society and Human Interaction



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Chapter 3

Perspectives on Society and Interaction

In 2016 San Francisco quarterback Colin Kaepernick decided to kneel during the playing of the national anthem to protest police violence against African Americans, and although he was condemned by many, many others supported him, including other players. By mid-season, numerous players were kneeling with him prior to games. The NFL chose to take no action against Kaepernick. But soon enough he was cut from his team and has still, to this date, never been re-signed with an NFL team despite expressing interest in returning. Then-president Donald Trump and others made his



Photo 3.1 Many conservative football fans boycotted the NFL for some time. Despite the fact that the U.S. constitution guarantees freedom of expression and the right to peaceably protest, Kaepernick was treated harshly by his critics and remains a spectator to the sport he loves to this day. *Why did this happen?*

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protests about the American flag and support for our military and police, ignoring his pleas to end unnecessary deaths of young black men and police brutality. Unsurprisingly, Kaepernick and his silent protest became a major political issue and very divisive in the years that followed. Many conservative football fans boycotted the NFL for some time. Despite the fact that the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and the right to peaceably protest, Kaepernick was treated harshly by his critics and remains a spectator to the sport he loves to this day. *Why did this happen?*

Although the 1964 Civil Rights Act forbids discrimination on the basis of gender, it remains true that women are paid less than men for the same type of work. For each dollar that a man working year-round, full time is paid, a woman working year-round, full time is paid just about 80 cents (Blau and Kahn 2020). This is true even if the man and the woman have the same level of education. *Why is this the case?*

International comparisons show that Americans are more religious than people in almost all other industrialized countries. Americans are more likely than people in other industrialized countries to attend religious services on a weekly basis (although the majority do not), and Americans are more likely to say that religion is a major force influencing their day-to-day thoughts and actions. *Why are Americans more religious than people in other industrialized countries?*

Sociology is about the business of answering “why” questions like these—and each of these questions has more than one possible answer. Where sociologists will look for answers to questions like these—and what they think the answers are likely to be—depends largely on the sociological perspectives with which the sociologists identify. In this chapter, you will

learn about three perspectives that, individually or jointly, influence much of the work that modern sociologists do—including how they go about answering questions such as those previously posed. In this chapter we also illustrate the usefulness of sociology in answering the first question, and later chapters use sociology to answer the second and third questions.

Perspectives in Sociology

Each of the questions previously posed can be answered in different ways, reflecting the different perspectives that have been influential in sociology. A **perspective** can be defined as an overall approach or viewpoint toward a subject, including (1) a set of *questions* to be asked about the subject, (2) a general *theory* or theoretical approach to explaining the nature of the subject, and often (3) a set of *values* relating to the subject. (The difference between theories and values is explained in Chapter 2.)

Sociologists propose dozens of important theories and ask thousands of questions, but to a large extent these theories and questions can be linked to one or more of the three major perspectives in the field. These perspectives are the *functionalist perspective*, the *conflict perspective*, and the *symbolic-interactionist perspective*. Each of these perspectives offers a distinct theory concerning the key social forces that shape human behavior and society. *In other words, they offer different explanations for why people behave as they do.* Accordingly, sociologists of different perspectives disagree not only about theory but also about what questions are important to ask.

A sociologist's preference for one or the other of these perspectives may also reflect their values to some extent. Here, we are referring to two kinds of values: views about what society should be like and a personal interest in asking and answering some kinds of questions as opposed to others.

Macrosociology and Microsociology

Two of the three perspectives we consider, the functionalist perspective and the conflict

perspective, fall under the category of **macrosociology**. In other words, they are mainly concerned with explaining large-scale social patterns. Often they study entire societies as opposed to small groups or individuals. They may compare different societies, or they may compare different historical periods in the same society. The third perspective, the symbolic-interactionist perspective, is more interested in **microsociology**. This means that it is more concerned with processes that work at the individual level and are concerned with interactions between individuals and the larger society. For this reason, it is largely concerned with the sub-field of sociology known as social psychology, introduced in Chapter 1.

We begin our discussion with the two macrosociological perspectives, the functionalist and the conflict perspectives. Both of these approaches ask the same basic question: Why does a society take the form it does? For example, consider religion, a key factor in two of the questions that opened this chapter. Some societies, such as Iran and to a lesser extent Israel, are centered on religion. Others, such as the United States, are not, but religion still plays a major role in people's lives. Still others, like many European and Latin American societies, are more nominally religious: People do identify with a religion but rarely attend church and do not see religion as a central feature in their lives. *Why do societies vary so much in the extent to which they are shaped by religious forces?* It is questions like these that the two macrosociological perspectives try to answer.

Macrosociology I: The Functionalist Perspective

The Functionalist Perspective Defined

The **functionalist perspective** (also sometimes called the *order perspective* or *systems theory*) assumes that *any society takes its particular form because that form works well for the society, or helps to preserve the society, given its particular situation*. Societies exist under a wide range of environmental situations. Some, for example, exist in harsh arctic, desert, or

mountain climates, whereas others exist in temperate climates and fertile environments. Levels of technology also vary widely. Some societies have highly advanced industrial technologies, whereas others engage in subsistence farming. Societies also differ in terms of their interactions with other societies. Some have hostile neighbors; others have friendly neighbors.

All of these elements make up the total environment within which a society must exist, and each combination of these elements forces a society to adapt in a particular set of ways. Thus, what works for one society cannot necessarily be expected to work for another.

For any society, however, the functionalist theoretical perspective makes one basic argument. Whatever the characteristics of the society, *those characteristics have developed because they meet the needs of that society in its particular situation*. By so doing, they help the society to survive. The early sociologist who probably had the greatest influence on this school of thought was Émile Durkheim. Talcott Parsons and Robert Merton have been influential modern American functionalist theorists.

Having now provided a general statement describing the functionalist perspective, let us look at several of its key principles in greater detail. These principles include *interdependency*, *functions of social structure and culture*, *consensus and cooperation*, and *equilibrium*.

Key Principles of the Functionalist Perspective

Interdependency

One of the most important principles of functionalist theory is that society is *made up of interdependent parts*. This means that every part of society is dependent to some extent on other parts of society, so that what happens at one place in society has important effects elsewhere. Early social thinkers in this tradition often likened the operation of society to that of a living organism. Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, and Émile Durkheim all used this analogy. Think of your own body. Your entire body depends on your heart, brain, lungs, stomach, and liver for its survival. Each of these

organs provides a vital function. A malfunction in any one of them can affect the health of your entire body. These early sociologists saw society as operating in much the same way.

If this was true a century ago when Comte and Spencer were developing their social theories, it is even more true today. Society has become more complex and more interdependent, not less so. Just think for a moment of all the people upon whom your participation in your introductory sociology course depends. Obviously, the class requires a faculty member to teach it and students to take it. However, it also depends on many other people and organizations. Someone has to provide the electricity to light the room, and in order for that electricity to be provided, someone had to build a dam, a wind farm, or solar panels, or mine some coal, oil, or uranium and get that fuel to the power plant. Someone also had to decide when the class would be held and in what room, communicate that information to you, and enroll you in that class. Someone had to write this book, and with the assistance of many other people—printers, editors, proofreaders, salespeople, and bookstore employees—it has arrived in your hands. Thus, a class that seems to involve just you, your fellow students, and your professor is in fact the product of the efforts of hundreds of people. Consider also that a failure on the part of any element of this complicated system could affect your participation in this class. Your name could be left off the instructor's class list; the book could arrive late or in insufficient numbers at the bookstore; there could be a power failure; the class could be scheduled in the same room as another class.

Functions

Closely related to interdependency is the idea that each part of the social system exists because it serves some **function**. In other words, it meets some need in society or somehow contributes to the effective operation and continuation of the society. Here again, the analogy to a living organism is apparent: Just as each organ has its function to perform, so does each part of society. Consider, for example, the *postpartum sex taboo*, a common rule in many preindustrial societies. This rule specifies that

a woman may not have sex for some set period after the birth of a child. The length of time covered by the postpartum taboo has ranged from a few weeks to several years. Although few people realized it, this rule was very useful. When the mother is breastfeeding her baby and her own diet is barely adequate, becoming pregnant could so deplete the nutrients in her breast milk that her baby could become seriously malnourished. Thus, in such societies, the health of babies—and consequently, the perpetuation of the society itself—depended on the mother's not becoming pregnant again too soon after giving birth. The postpartum sex taboo prevented this. Therefore, whatever religious or mystical beliefs may have served as the basis for this rule, it turns out that the rule performed an important function for society.

Societal functions that are obvious and openly stated are referred to as **manifest functions**. A manifest function of education, for example, is to teach children about such subjects as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Sometimes, however, functions are not obvious or openly acknowledged. These are called **latent functions**. A latent function of education is babysitting: School relieves parents of the responsibility of taking care of their children. Thus, the parents are free to pursue other efforts or simply to take a break from child care. Latent functions are often unintentional: The school system was not set up for the purpose of babysitting, but it does serve that purpose. Although latent functions are less obvious than manifest functions, they can be just as important to society. For this reason, sociologists operating out of the functionalist perspective have devoted much effort to identifying the latent functions of social structure and culture.

Consensus and Cooperation

Another key principle in functionalist theory is that societies have a tendency toward *consensus*; that is, to have certain basic values that nearly everyone in the society agrees on. Americans, for example, nearly all agree that they believe in freedom and democracy. They may not agree on exactly what they mean by either

freedom or democracy, and they also may disagree on the extent to which the United States has attained these ideals. However, as ideals or principles that a society ought to strive for, the overwhelming majority of Americans express support for freedom and democracy.

According to functionalists, societies tend toward consensus in order to achieve *cooperation*. As we have already seen, the interdependency in society requires that people cooperate. If people in even one part of such an interdependent system fail to cooperate with people elsewhere in the system, the effects will be felt throughout the entire system. People are more likely to cooperate when they share similar values and goals. According to Durkheim (1947 [orig. 1893], 1953 [orig. 1898]), they are especially likely to cooperate when they feel that they share things in common with one another; he referred to such unity as *solidarity*.

What happens when a society lacks consensus? According to functionalists, inability to cooperate will paralyze the society, and people will devote more and more effort to fighting one another rather than getting anything done.

A society that lacks any consensus whatsoever will have a very hard time surviving as a society. This dynamic has been seen recently in Syria. Beginning with clashes between its dictatorship under Bashar al-Assad and those who wanted a more democratic society, and then exacerbated by religious splits between Sunni and Shiite Islam and among various tribal factions, order collapsed and protests escalated into civil war. Cities were bombed and shelled, and civilians died by the thousands as opposing factions battled for control of the country, and what once was one nation has been split up into areas controlled by opposing factions. This has been further exacerbated by support for various factions by a variety of foreign powers including Russia, Turkey, and the United States.

Equilibrium

A final principle of functionalist theorists is that of *equilibrium*. This view holds that once a society has achieved the form that is best adapted to its situation, it has reached a state of balance or equilibrium, and it will remain in that condition until it is forced to change by some



Photo 3.2 The largely destroyed city of Idlib in Syria. When a society loses any sense of consensus, it may cease to function as a society and descend into chaos or civil war.

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new condition. New technology, a change in climate, or contact with an outside society are all conditions to which a society might have to adapt. When such conditions occur, social change will take place: Society will change just enough to adapt to the new situation. However, once that adaptation has been made, the society has attained a new state of balance with its environment, and it will not change again until some new situation requires further adaptation. The picture that emerges from the functionalist perspective, then, is that of a basically stable, well-functioning system that changes only when it has to, and then only enough to adapt to changes in its situation. In short, the natural tendency of society is to be stable, because society is a smoothly operating, interdependent system.

Functions and Dysfunctions

An important refinement of the functionalist perspective has been made by Robert Merton (1968). Merton has argued that even social arrangements that are useful to society can have **dysfunctions**, or consequences that are harmful to society. No matter how useful something is, it can still have negative side effects. In

general, functionalist theory argues that when the functions outweigh the dysfunctions, a social arrangement will likely continue to exist because, on balance, it is useful to society. However, because situations change, a condition that is functional today can become dysfunctional in the future. Thus, when studying any element of social structure or culture, sociologists typically raise questions about its possible functions and dysfunctions.

Macrosociology II: The Conflict Perspective

Although the conflict perspective can trace its intellectual roots to ancient Chinese, Greek, and Arabian philosophers, modern conflict theory is largely an outgrowth of the writings of Karl Marx. There are many kinds of conflict theories today, a number of which disagree in important ways with Marx's analysis. Nonetheless, the basic Marxian notion of different groups in society having conflicting self-interests remains influential in most modern conflict theories. Over the years, a number of scholars have refined conflict theory and applied it to a widening variety of issues. Among the most

influential and important conflict theorists have been the German theorist Ralf Dahrendorf (1959) and the American sociologists W. E. B. Du Bois (1903), C. Wright Mills (1956), and Randall Collins (1979, 1974).

The Conflict Perspective Defined

Like the functionalist perspective, the **conflict perspective** is a macrosociological perspective that addresses the question, Why does society take the form that it does? However, the conflict perspective gives a very different answer to this question. Its answer is that *different groups in society have conflicting self-interests, and the nature of the society is determined by the outcome of the conflict among these groups*. To conflict theorists, the most important force shaping society is conflicting self-interests among different groups within society.

Conflicting Self-Interests

Why, according to conflict theorists, do different groups in society have conflicting self-interests? The reason is that every society experiences competition over **scarce resources**. A scarce resource is anything that does not exist in sufficient amounts for everyone to have all that each person wants.

The most important scarce resources in society, those that produce the greatest competition, are money (and the things it can buy) and power. Whenever a resource is scarce, one person's gain is potentially another's loss. If you have more money or power, the result may very well be that I have less, because there is only so much to go around. It is this feature that produces conflict: Groups struggle with one another to increase their share of money and power, often by reducing the money and power of others. In this struggle, the interests of those who have a good deal of money and power conflict with the interests of those who do not. The self-interest of those who have money and power is to keep things as they are so that they can continue to enjoy an advantaged position. This group will attempt to preserve the **status quo**—the existing set of arrangements. The self-interest of those who lack money and power is just the opposite.

They want to create *change* so that they can get a bigger share of wealth and power.

This point of view differs significantly from the functionalist perspective. Whereas the functionalist perspective sees the various elements of society as being interdependent, conflict theorists believe that the various human elements of society are in conflict with one another because one group's gain is potentially another group's loss.

Society: Functional for Whom?

As noted previously, the distribution of scarce resources such as money and power is usually unequal. Those who have money often have power, and vice versa. There are many debates among conflict theorists about the precise relationship between money and power, but there is one key point on which most conflict theorists agree: Those who have a great deal of money and power can use their power to hang on to their advantaged position. In other words, they have the power to shape society to their own advantage. The result of this is that a society tends to take on characteristics that work to the further advantage of the dominant groups within that society.

Here, too, there is an important parallel to functionalist theory. As we saw, functionalists argue that societies assume the characteristics they do because those characteristics are functional—useful to the society. Conflict theorists agree up to a point—but they ask the question, functional *for whom*? In other words, they believe that social arrangements exist because they are useful—but *not* to the whole society. Rather, they are useful to the dominant group in society—whatever advantaged group has the power to shape society according to its own interests. This power can be exercised in a variety of ways. The wealthy are frequently in positions to influence public opinion. Dominant groups in many societies try (often successfully) to gain control of the media, which is why freedom of the press is repressed in much of the world. Even where it is not, those with money have a better chance than others of being able to communicate through the media. The wealthy may be overrepresented in governments or may even control them directly. Other key

institutions such as education and religion are often disproportionately influenced by dominant groups, or if not, they may be unwilling to challenge such groups. Finally, there is always the possibility of a dominant group using force to shape a society to its own interests.

Conflicting Values and Ideologies

Because different groups in society have conflicting self-interests, it is virtually certain, according to conflict theory, that they will have different views about social issues. In short, their values and ideologies—systems of beliefs about reality—will be based in large part on what serves their self-interests. Those who are advantaged use their power to influence the opinions of others, so that, for a time, people tend to believe in values and ideologies that support the existing order (Mannheim, 1936 [orig. 1929]; Marx, 1964). When the advantaged groups succeed, as they often do, those without power accept the beliefs promoted by the wealthy and powerful. (This condition, which Marxists call false consciousness, are explored further in Chapter 4.) Sooner or later, however, the less advantaged groups in society come to see that their interests conflict with those of the wealthy and powerful. When this happens, they develop their own values and beliefs, which naturally conflict with those advocated by the dominant group. Thus, the inherent tendency of society is toward conflict, not consensus. Conflict comes from within society because different groups have conflicting self-interests and thus try to shape society and its values in different and conflicting ways.

Conflict Versus Violence. It is very important to stress here that *conflict does not mean the same thing as violence*. Certainly, conflict can be violent, as in the case of riots and revolutions. However, nonviolent conflict is more common. Conflict occurs in legislatures, as opposing interest groups seek to pass laws and policies from which they can benefit. It occurs in the courts, as different groups pursue legal strategies to get the law interpreted in their interests. Collective bargaining and civil rights panels are other mechanisms for dealing with conflict. All of these processes reflect the **institutionalization** of conflict. They reflect that

society has recognized that conflict will occur and has developed ways of dealing with it. You can argue, as many conflict theorists do, that dominant groups develop institutions for dealing with conflict that favor their own interests. Even so, conflict does often occur in peaceful, institutional settings. It also sometimes occurs peacefully outside such institutional settings, as in the case of mass demonstrations and nonviolent civil disobedience. In general, when institutional means of resolving conflict exist, *and* when disadvantaged groups perceive that such institutional settings offer a fair opportunity for resolving conflict, these groups will use them. If such means do not exist, however, or if disadvantaged groups believe that these means favor the advantaged groups, conflict will occur outside institutional settings (Coser, 1956). In this situation, violence becomes more likely.

The Roles of Conflict. Conflict theorists see conflict not only as natural and normal but also as useful to society. Conflict, they argue, brings social change, which makes two things possible. First, it offers disadvantaged groups an opportunity to improve their position in society through a more equitable distribution of scarce resources. Second, it offers society an opportunity to function better, because conflict creates the possibility of eliminating social arrangements that are harmful to the society as a whole but that serve the interests of the dominant group.

Conflict and Social Change. Functionalist and conflict theorists disagree, however, about the role played in social change by conflicts within society. Functionalists see social change as coming largely from outside society. They see it as a response to some new technology, some change in the environment, or some interaction with another society. Conflict theorists, however, see change as coming from within society. Different groups have opposing interests and thus engage in conflict; that conflict produces change.

Macrosociological Perspectives: Is Synthesis Possible?

The differences between the functionalist and conflict schools are summarized in Table 3.1. These differences have led sociologists to ask

Table 3.1 Compare and Contrast: Basic Assumptions of the Functionalist and Conflict Perspectives

<i>Issue</i>	<i>The Functionalist Perspective</i>	<i>The Conflict Perspective</i>
Reasons for social arrangements	Social arrangements are useful to the society.	Social arrangements are useful to those who hold wealth and power.
Consensus and conflict	Society tends toward consensus.	Society tends toward conflict.
Dominant values	Shared values support cooperation.	Dominant group imposes or promotes values that justify inequality.
Equilibrium and change	Society tends toward balance and equilibrium; change occurs gradually to adapt to changing needs or environment.	Society is an engine of change; conflict of interests within society produces constant and sometimes dramatic change.

an important question: Are the two theories incompatible, or are societies sufficiently complex so that both theories could be right at the same time?

This question has not been answered to the satisfaction of all sociologists, and debate continues concerning the compatibility or incompatibility of the two perspectives. However, we believe—and we think most sociologists believe—that although they disagree on key points, the functionalist and conflict perspectives are not totally incompatible. In the first place, certain social arrangements might be useful to society in some ways and useful to the dominant group in others. Society might also contain forces for both consensus and conflict; under different conditions, one or the other can predominate. Let us examine each of these ideas a bit further.

Functional for Whom? Another Look

Can social arrangements be useful for the dominant group at the expense of others (as conflict theory argues), yet in other ways be useful for the society as a whole (as functionalist theory argues)? *Can both of these things be true at the same time?* How might a conflict theorist or a functionalist answer this question? Think of the athletes kneeling during the national anthem. From the standpoint of conflict theory, it could be seen as a way in which an advantaged group in society asserts its superiority and control over other groups. A conflict theorist might argue that if they do so, they are, in effect,

honoring the society that discriminates against them. Moreover, if the dominant group in the society did not insist that they stand during the national anthem, such rebelliousness might spread. Before long, people who are discriminated against might refuse to participate in all kinds of social rituals until they get a fairer share of society's resources.

A functionalist would see it differently. From the standpoint of functionalism, a society must share a common identity in order for cooperation to occur. The flag and the national anthem are symbols of that common identity and thus must be held sacred. At the point at which such symbols are no longer commonly accepted, the consensus necessary for cooperation breaks down, and disorder and confusion reign. When respect for a symbol of common identity—such as a nation's flag—breaks down, functionalists argue, a society may be taking the first steps down the road toward the kind of chaos that has erupted in places like Syria.

Which side do you think is right in this debate? Or could it be that each side is partially correct? To a group of people that has experienced repeated discrimination, a symbol sacred to the people that are discriminating against them *could* be seen as oppressive. And to the group that is in power, the refusal of others to salute that symbol *could* be seen as threatening. Thus, there is considerable merit in the conflict theory's position that a dispute over the national anthem represents a power struggle between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. At the same time, the functionalists also have a valid point. Cases such as Syria make evident

the dangers of a total loss of national consensus. Thus, any society has a stake in maintaining the common allegiance and support of its citizens. At the start of this chapter, we posed a question: Why was Colin Kaepernick denied the opportunity to play football for kneeling during the national anthem? You may be better able to answer that question if you consider ideas from *both* the functionalist and conflict perspectives than if you consider only one of the perspectives.

Simultaneous Forces for Cooperation and Conflict

There is another reason why both the functionalist and conflict perspectives contribute to an understanding of society. Each of them may well be partially right in its views about whether society tends toward stability and cooperation (the functionalist perspective) or toward tension and conflict (the conflict perspective). There clearly are forces in society that lead people to cooperate: Almost any task in a large-scale modern society would be impossible without cooperation. We already used the example of your introductory sociology course to illustrate this. At the same time, in any society where there is inequality, there will be a potential for conflict. From this point of view, there are always forces at work in society for both cooperation and conflict (Etzioni, 1996). Which one dominates depends on the circumstances of the time.

In the 1950s, for example, the U.S. economy was undergoing unprecedented growth, and optimism ruled. In such an environment, it is not surprising that a functionalist viewpoint emphasizing stability, cooperation, and growth would dominate—and it did. But the seeds of conflict were there too: Already at the beginning of the decade, the stirrings of unrest caused by the racial discrimination and segregation in the U.S. South were evident. By the 1960s, the civil rights movement had revealed America's racial injustice for all to see, as police forces in the South beat and fire-hosed small children who asked only to be allowed to attend the same school as children of other races. Later

in that decade, the country became embroiled in a deadly and seemingly unwinnable war in Vietnam that few understood. In that context, the forces of conflict dominated, and riots and protests swept the country. Yet, even in this context, the forces of cooperation and stability were present: The nation held together in spite of the troubles.

To a large extent, sociology reflects these shifting trends. The functionalist perspective enjoyed almost unchallenged dominance in American sociology in the 1950s and early 1960s, but by the end of the 1960s, a new generation of sociologists rediscovered the conflict perspective with great enthusiasm. Since that time, both American society and sociology have been more balanced. Although societal tensions and turmoil ebbed in the 1980s and surged again in the 1990s and since, the more recent decades have not entirely resembled either the “silent generation” of the 1950s or the rebelliousness of the 1960s. And sociology has largely reflected that: It has been marked by considerable debate between sociologists of the functionalist and conflict perspectives. At times, that debate has been heated and intense. Nonetheless, recent decades have also been marked by a greater willingness of sociologists to incorporate insights from both theoretical viewpoints.

This willingness is not entirely new in sociology. In fact, the early roots of this synthesis lie in the work of Max Weber, who clearly drew upon ideas from both schools of thought. In fact, Weber is not easily classified with either perspective. It is also reflected in the work of two men, the modern theorists Gerhard Lenski and Lewis Coser, and of many women in the field of sociology today, including Mary Jo Deegan. The views of these sociologists are discussed in the box “Eclectic Macrosociology: Some Key Thinkers.”

Macrosociological Perspectives: A Final Note

As we finish our discussion of macrosociological perspectives, we have seen important areas of consistency and overlap between functionalist

and conflict thinking. We have seen, too, that social arrangements can be useful to society in some ways but—at the same time—useful to special interests and perhaps even dysfunctional to society in other ways. Forces for conflict and forces for cooperation are both present in society, and each may dominate under different conditions. Moreover, as Coser notes, even conflict can in some ways be useful for the larger society. Finally, society is in part shaped by relationships of exchange that involve elements of both cooperation and domination. All of these things suggest that the most useful macrosociology may be one that incorporates ideas from both theoretical perspectives.

Even so, the debate goes on between functionalist and conflict sociologists. This is not just a debate about theories; it is also a debate about values. Functionalism, because it notes

society's tendencies toward stability and balance, appeals to conservatives and cautious liberals. It stresses the advantages of the status quo, which appeals to those who oppose major change. Its emphasis on conformity has a similar appeal, warning of the dangers of a divided society and opposing suggestions to do things in any radically different way.

Similarly, conflict theory appeals to radicals and strong liberals who favor fundamental changes in social institutions. It stresses society's inequalities, which liberals and radicals see as society's unfairnesses. It is favorable to new ideas and to social change, which appeals to those who think society needs to change.

Although political views may well influence sociologists' preferences for one perspective or the other, it is important to distinguish such views, which represent *values*, from what



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

Eclectic Macrosociology: Some Key Thinkers

Max Weber (1864–1920)

No sociologist has had a greater influence on the field than the social theorist Max Weber (pronounced “Vaber”). Weber’s thinking drew on a variety of ideas, some associated with conflict theory, some with what we now call the functionalist perspective, and some with neither. Thus, he cannot be clearly linked to any particular perspective.

Like other sociologists of his time, Weber was greatly interested in the process of modernization associated with urbanization and the Industrial Revolution. A key element of modernization, according to Weber (1962), is rationalization—a process whereby decisions are made on the basis of what is effective in helping people attain their goals rather than on the basis of tradition. This notion is similar to functionalist theory in the sense that it focuses on what works. Weber was aware of conflicts and competing interests in society, however, and rationalization included the notion of what is effective for one group in its competition or conflict with another, a concept that borrows heavily from the conflict perspective.

Gerhard Lenski (1924–2015)

The American sociologist Gerhard Lenski (1966) drew upon the functionalist and conflict theories to explain social inequality. He agreed with the functionalists—but only up to a point—that inequality creates incentives and rewards people in accordance with their skills. He also argued, however, that much inequality exists beyond what can be accounted for on this basis and that the power arising from wealth allows the advantaged to hang on to their wealth long after their advantages serve any use to society. Lenski also noted that the degree of inequality in any society is linked to its system of production. As societies advance from the hunting-and-gathering stage to agriculture (and, usually, some form of feudalism), the degree of social inequality increases dramatically. Once society industrializes, however, this trend is reversed. Although modern industrial societies have considerable inequality, they have less than pre-industrial societies. The reasons for this include the complexity of the division of labor and the presence of a large skilled and educated segment that pushes society in the direction of democratization.

the two perspectives say about social reality, which is a matter of *theory*. One can never prove that a conservative, moderate, liberal, or radical political view is “right” or “wrong,” because that is a matter of values. However, sociology has gone a long way toward understanding the forces that shape society, and the evidence here suggests that both the functionalist and the conflict perspectives have important insights to offer in this regard. Thus, it would be very inaccurate to say that these perspectives are “just a matter of opinion.”

Microsociology: The Symbolic-Interactionist Perspective

Almost from the time sociology emerged as an academic discipline, some people within the field felt that to understand even large-scale patterns of human behavior, it was not enough

to study only the characteristics of society. Rather, these social theorists argued that you must study the *processes by which human interaction occurs*. These processes of interaction involve social psychology or microsociology in that they often include interactions *between individuals and the larger society*. Societies do present situations, send messages, and give rules to individuals, but it is on the individual level that these situations, messages, and rules are interpreted. Moreover, how these situations, messages, and rules are interpreted is a key factor in determining how people behave. These realizations have given rise to the third major perspective in sociology, the **symbolic-interactionist perspective**. Because of its concern with the interaction between the individual and the larger society, it is also sometimes called the microinteractionist perspective (Collins, 1985b), or simply the interactionist perspective.

Lewis Coser (1913–2003)

The American sociologist Lewis Coser was interested in group dynamics, although he defined a group as everything from a small gathering to an entire social system. Much of his work focused on ways that conflict—both within groups and between groups—can improve the functioning of those groups (Coser, 1956). Thus, it could be said that Coser conducted a functional analysis of conflict. He argued that conflict within groups can benefit the group as long as it does not challenge the group’s purpose for existence. He saw the normal state as a combination of consensus on core values and conflict over specifics. Conflict offers groups ways to adapt to changing needs and can also increase long-run group cohesion by offering a way to address dissatisfactions. Conflict in general is more likely to produce breakdown in small, close-knit groups, and adaptation in large, diverse ones. Conflict over many unrelated issues is also less disruptive than sustained conflict over one issue. Conflict between groups (external conflict) can perform the functions of defining group boundaries and promoting cohesion within groups.

Mary Jo Deegan (1946–)

A prolific author who has devoted much of her career to examining how women have influenced

the field of sociology, Mary Jo Deegan argues that female sociologists do not fit neatly into the largely male-created paradigms such as the functionalist and conflict perspectives. She sees such paradigms as presenting a false duality, and she calls for a “multilectic” model that “assumes that ideas, practices, and groups are sometimes complementary and supportive of one another, sometimes in conflict, and sometimes isolated or indifferent to one another” (Deegan, 1991, p. 24). In this statement, she epitomizes the emerging notion of eclectic macrosociology, drawing on both the functionalist and conflict perspectives but at the same time pointing out that some things can be explained by neither.

Her historical research shows that often ideas and methods are developed by others than those who commonly receive credit for them and that the contributions of women and minorities in sociology have been undervalued. For example, mapping urban population characteristics to understand urban social problems is often associated with the University of Chicago’s sociology department, founded in 1893. Deegan shows, however, that Jane Addams and her colleagues at Hull-House did it first, publishing their results in *Hull-House Maps and Papers* in the same year the Chicago sociology department was founded.

The Interactionist Perspective Defined

If the interactionist perspective could be summarized in one general statement, then that statement might begin with the notion that the *interpretation* of reality can often be an important factor in *determining* the ultimate reality. As previously noted, society continually presents individuals with situations, messages, and rules. Taken together, these elements, and the *meaning* given to them by the individual, define the individual's experience of social reality. Sometimes the meaning of these situations, messages, and rules is clear, and to the extent that this is the case, the individual's social reality is obvious to the individual. Usually, however, the meaning of the situations, messages, and rules is not completely clear to the individual, and the individual must *interpret* them as best they can (Blumer, 1969a). This interpretation occurs, of course, in the context of past messages the individual has received from society. Nonetheless, it is interpretation, and individuals with different sets of past experiences frequently interpret the same message or situation differently. Hence, the individual's understanding of social reality depends in part on the content of the messages and situations the individual encounters and in part on how the individual interprets those messages and situations. How the individual understands reality, of course, will have an important effect on how the individual will behave, which can further alter the situation. For these reasons, the interactionist perspective focuses *first* on how messages are sent and received and on how social situations are encountered by individuals, *then* on how people interpret the meanings of these messages and situations, and *finally* on how these processes shape human behavior and society. A study by sociologist Jack Katz illustrates this in an unusual way, as shown in the box "Doing (and Being Done by) the Funhouse Mirrors."

Interpreting Situations and Messages

As previously noted, one key concern of the interactionist perspective is how people interpret the messages they receive and the situations they

encounter. Interactionists believe these issues are important because people's interpretations of reality are an important factor in determining how they will behave. Consider an example. You are waiting at the bus stop, and the person next to you says, "Hello. Isn't this a nice day?" Your behavior in response to this message will depend on your interpretation of the message, which in turn will be a product of past messages and experiences. If, for example, your experience has been that people at the bus stop like to chat to pass the time while waiting for the bus, you will probably respond in a friendly way and carry on a conversation with the person until the bus arrives. If, however, your experience has been different, you will probably respond differently. Suppose your experience has been that people at the bus stop usually don't talk to one another but keep to themselves. On the few occasions when people did try to strike up a conversation with you, it turned out they were trying to sell you something, begging for money, or seeking to convert you to their religious beliefs. In this case, you would interpret the situation differently, assume the person wanted something from you, and likely try to avoid further interaction.

The Social Construction of Reality

What is significant about the preceding example is that *the real intentions of the person speaking to you were not important*. Even the person's behavior does not give us the entire explanation of why you experienced the reality of the situation as you did. Rather, it was your understanding of the meaning of the person's behavior, including your interpretation of the person's intentions, that determined the reality that you experienced (Charon, 1989). Sociologists refer to this process as the **social construction of reality** (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). By this, they mean that the reality that you experience is not simply determined by what goes on in an objective sense; rather, it is determined by your understanding of the meaning of what happens. Thus, depending on that understanding, the reality you experienced could have been either "This person is friendly" or "This person is trying to hit me up for something."

There are two additional important points concerning this process. First, the meaning you attribute to the person's behavior is largely a product of your past experiences in similar social situations. Thus, there is a clear social influence on your interpretation of situations you encounter. Second, how you interpret the meaning of the situation you encounter will influence how you respond to it. This principle was recognized as early as the 1920s by W. I. Thomas, in a statement today known as the **Thomas theorem**: "If men [*sic*] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas, 1966, p. 572). In other words, whatever the objective reality, people behave on the basis of their *understanding* of reality, and that behavior in turn shapes subsequent realities, including objective realities of human behavior. As Collins (1985a, p. 199) put it, "If the definition of reality can be shifted, the behavior it elicits will switch, sometimes drastically."

Ethnomethodology

Symbolic-interactionist theory, then, argues that your interpretations of reality are in part socially determined and that these interpretations in turn partly determine how you will behave. To put this a bit more broadly, human behavior is in part a product of the structure of society and in part a product of how individuals interpret that social structure. Attempting to understand the forces that influence how individuals interpret the situations and messages they encounter has developed into a major subfield within the interactionist perspective known as **ethnomethodology**. It was given this name by Harold Garfinkel, who has written extensively about it (see Garfinkel, 1967; Lauer and Handel, 1983). It is strongly influenced by a theory in philosophy known as phenomenology, generally associated with Edmund Husserl (1965, 1969).

Ethnomethodology takes the basic idea of symbolic interactionism a step further. Symbolic interactionism holds that what people understand about the meaning of a social situation largely determines how they behave, and that in turn alters the situation. Ethnomethodologists go further and argue that the only social reality that exists is what people create in a given

situation (Antonio, 1975; Dreitzel, 1970). To a large extent, ethnomethodology challenges the positivist view, dominant in the early twentieth century, that there is an objective reality that can be quantified and measured. In this regard, it is similar to *postmodernism*, an approach discussed in Chapter 11 that has gained influence in all of the social sciences since the late 1980s.

In contrast to positivists, ethnomethodologists hold that the only reality "out there" is what one can see, and different people looking at the same thing will "see" different things (Antonio, 1975). What they see depends on their previous perceptions and experiences, upon which they build a set of assumptions. They are largely unaware of these assumptions, but the assumptions determine how they see and define reality (Garfinkel, 1967). For example, men and women watching a video of marriage partners arguing will often offer very different descriptions of the video. Because men and women have had different life experiences that have led them to different assumptions about the underlying patterns of relationships between men and women, they "see" the video differently. The viewer looks at the video as a documentation of underlying patterns, which are assumed or presupposed on the basis of the viewer's experiences.

Ethnomethodologists point out that even well-trained scientists are not immune to this. All of us—even scientists—will to some extent see things in ways that are influenced by our background and conditioning (Cicourel, 1974; Handel, 1993). Thus, our experiences and interpretations create our reality. And, because everyone's assumptions are subject to change as life experiences change, reality is constantly under construction and is constantly changing. Returning to the example of the video, because people's experiences have changed, their assumptions about marriage and about the roles of men and women have changed over time. In fact, this change has been quite dramatic in the years since World War II. Hence, men and women viewing the video today would "see" something quite different than men and women viewing it 30 or 40 years ago. Moreover, the changes were created by people as their experiences and their assumptions underwent constant change.



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

Doing (and Being Done by) the Funhouse Mirrors

When people laugh, it is because something is funny, right? Possibly so, but a study by sociologist Jack Katz (1996) shows that finding something funny is a *social* process. Some “get it” and some don’t, and “getting it” is a social process. Katz illustrated this by setting up a hidden camera near the “funny mirrors” in a funhouse at a Paris amusement park. The videotape clearly revealed that, while some laugh uproariously at the mirrors, others don’t laugh at all. Some “experiment” with the mirrors by looking at their images from different heights and angles, some use them in more demonstrative ways (e.g., kissing in front of them), and some just walk by. One key difference is that people in the company of others frequently laughed, while people walking through alone almost never did. On the rare occasions when people by themselves did laugh, it was almost always an invitation to someone nearby to join them to see whether they would share the view that the mirror was funny.

By watching the tapes, Katz could observe that in order to laugh, people walking through together had to come to the shared conclusion, through interaction with one another, that the images in the mirrors were funny. For people to share a collective laugh, they had to “see what the other sees” and agree that it is funny. Moreover, when this happened, people sometimes “did” laughter and sometimes laughter “did” them. When people “did” laughter, they laughed to show someone else that they “got it.” Sometimes, but not always, this was transformed into “being done by” laughter. When this happened, the laughter changed, “for example, in a shift from exhale laughter to inhale laughter or from an initial exclamatory bleat or chuckle to an ascending riff that takes off from a markedly higher octave” (Katz, 1996, p. 1198). This occurred when the person had truly come to share another’s view of the mirrors as funny.

According to Garfinkel, the only way sociologists can understand the reality of a situation is by learning what assumptions about the situation are being made by the people involved. One way to do this is to upset the situation, so that the people involved give accounts that reveal the assumed rules under which they were operating. Garfinkel encouraged his students to conduct experiments aimed at doing this. For example, the experimenter might stop a person in a hallway and ask, “How do you feel?” The person might reply “very well.” The experimenter would then upset the situation by asking “Why?” and relentlessly insisting upon being given more information, all the while observing the behavior of the person being questioned, whose assumptions about the situation have presumably been upset. Most often, people being interrogated in this way would display increasing anger. This showed not only that people made assumptions about how the experimenter would respond to their initial reply of “very well” but also that they viewed getting the expected response (e.g., “I’m fine”) as a right or expectation.

One reason for this, according to Garfinkel, is that people understand that requests for more details could go on endlessly. In other words, more detail is always possible, but people protect their right to limit the amount of detail offered (Collins, 1988). Garfinkel contended that we all do this because the search for precise objective detail is endless, which is why we construct our reality based on assumptions.

In another experiment, Garfinkel had a person play the role of a therapist and recruited students to volunteer to try out a “new therapeutic technique.” At Garfinkel’s instructions, the “therapist” offered random “yes” and “no” responses when the students asked questions that could be answered in this manner. Nonetheless, the students had no trouble making sense out of what was, in fact, completely random advice. Every student was able to make thematic sense of the advice given by the “therapist,” even when it was contradictory. And not one student doubted the authenticity of the “therapist.” Hence, even when our expectations

are upset, the assumptions we make (in this case, about the authority of the medical profession) allow us to construct a reality that makes sense to us.

Ethnomethodology has been applied to a variety of topics in sociology. It has been suggested, for example, that one factor influencing people's scores on intelligence tests is their interpretation of the meaning and importance of the test and what it will be used for (Ogbu, 1978).

The Looking-Glass Self

Another important concept that has long been used by symbolic-interactionists is the **looking-glass self**. This concept was developed by the early symbolic-interactionist theorist Charles Horton Cooley. The basic notion of the looking-glass self could be summed up as follows: we see ourselves as others see us. In other words, we come to develop a self-image on the basis of the messages we get from others, as we understand them. If your teachers and fellow students give you the message, in various ways, that you are “smart,” you will come to think of yourself as an intelligent person. If others tell you that you are attractive, you will likely think of yourself as attractive. Conversely, if people repeatedly laugh at you and tease you about being clumsy, you will probably come to decide that you are clumsy. Over the years, you gradually develop a complex set of ideas about what kind of person you are, and to a large extent, these ideas are based on the messages you get from others (Matsueda, 1992). In Cooley's terms, you use other people as a mirror into which you look to see what you are like.

Of course, the message we get from others about ourselves is partly a product of the intended content of the message and partly

a product of how we perceive the message. To Cooley, an important part of the looking-glass self was how we understand the messages we get from others. In Cooley's terms, we *imagine* what others think of us on the basis of our understanding of the messages we get from them. Thus, if we misunderstand the messages of others, we may form our self-image on the basis of a different message than what was intended. For this reason, processes of communication—the sending and receiving of messages about our personal characteristics—play a key role in the formation of self-image.

The kind of self-image this process produces, moreover, will influence many aspects of your life. Self-esteem, clearly part of this process, has been shown to be linked to success in business life and in personal life, and the lack of it has been linked to substance abuse, unemployment, suicide, and a host of other personal and social problems.

The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

A concept closely related to the looking-glass self, but applicable to an even broader range of human behavior, is the **self-fulfilling prophecy**.



Photo 3.3 The concept of the looking-glass self points out that we use messages from others, like a mirror, to form an image of ourselves.

Courtesy of Michael W. Flota

The self-fulfilling prophecy is a situation in which people *expect* something to happen, and because they expect it to happen, they behave in such a way that they cause it to happen. Sociologists have discovered numerous examples of self-fulfilling prophecies. The best known concerns teacher expectations and student achievement (Brophy, 1983; Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968). Generally speaking, students will outperform others of equal ability when teachers have higher expectations of them. (For a more detailed discussion, see Chapter 14.) Similarly, countries sometimes engage in military build-ups because they expect to be attacked, which their potential enemies interpret as an aggressive move that requires a response. A cycle of this type between two polarized alliances in Europe was one of the causes of World War I (Farrar, 1978). Another example concerns the often poor relations between inner-city black and Hispanic youths and the police. The police view the youths as troublemakers who must be shown the “force of the law.” The youths see the police as brutal and often racist, and they frequently respond with behavior to show them that “Nobody’s going to push us around.” In other words, both the police and the youth “act tough” toward each other because each expects trouble from the other. These responses virtually ensure conflict between the two groups (Kuykendall, 1970). Very likely, such dynamics underlie many of the recent situations that have led to police killings of young black and Hispanic men and to the rise of Black Lives Matter and similar social movements.

Social Roles

An important concept in symbolic-interactionist sociology is the notion of **social roles**: sets of expectations about how people are supposed to behave, which are attached to positions within the social system. Human interaction is defined by the relationships among various roles, such as student, teacher, parent, and school bus driver. Each day, everyone fills a variety of roles such as these, and each role carries a set of expectations about how people are supposed to behave in various situations. The exact content

of these roles depends on the nature of the particular social system. Moreover, knowledge of how to behave in roles is learned through contact with others and through the messages we receive from others about (1) what expectations are attached to a particular role and (2) how well we are meeting the expectations associated with the roles we fill. The latter process, of course, is part of what Cooley meant by the looking-glass self.

A related concern of symbolic-interactionists has been determining how people learn the relationships among various roles in the social system, such as the relationship between teachers and students. As with learning the content of roles, this learning occurs largely through the messages people receive from others as well as through observation. These learning processes have a large impact on how people behave: People usually try to behave in ways that fulfill the expectations of their roles as they understand them, and that interact in the expected way with other roles. The contributions of George Herbert Mead have been particularly important in this area. Symbolic-interactionists have been particularly interested in the childhood socialization process because the learning of social roles is such a critical part of that process.

Sending Messages: The Presentation of Self

The symbolic-interactionist perspective is not just concerned with how people receive and interpret social messages. It is also concerned with the messages that people send to others. We send messages both by the roles we choose to emphasize in our lives and the way that we play those roles. Politicians running for office, for example, will often put out brochures or television ads showing them with their families to present an image of themselves as “family people” rather than “politicians.” Why do they do this? Because the role of “family person” is viewed more favorably in our society than the role of “politician.” Thus, politicians often seek to present themselves as supporting “family values,” while portraying their opponents as



Photo 3.4 Small groups, such as students working on a project, can be good places to view the processes of presentation of self and impression management.

Courtesy of Michael W. Flota

“playing politics.” Research has confirmed that one way people manage the self-image they project is by choosing what roles to emphasize in their lives (Backman and Secord, 1968; Kemper and Collins, 1990). People also manage their self-image by presenting to other people the image they feel is appropriate to the particular role that they are in at any given time.

The early Chicago School sociologist Robert Park (1927, p. 738) put it this way:

One thing that distinguishes man from the lower animals is the fact that he has a conception of himself, and once he has defined his role, he tries to live up to it. He not only acts, but he dresses the part, assumes quite spontaneously all the manners and attitudes he conceives as proper to it.

Sociologists refer to this process as the *presentation of self or impression management*.

The Dramaturgical Perspective

The analogy of human behavior to acting is made most explicitly by a particular interactionist theory known as the **dramaturgical perspective**. This theory, generally identified with Erving Goffman (1959, 1967, 1971), argues that in each role we fill, we try to convince people that we are filling it in a particular way, generally the way to which we think they will respond positively.

Thus, the self-image a person attempts to project at work will be different, for example, from the impression that person would likely try to project on a weekend “singles” ski excursion. In Goffman’s terms, people give different performances on different occasions. These performances, however, are always shaped by what people think others expect and will respond to positively. Thus, it is only through messages from others that we develop our ideas of what is a proper image to project at work or on a ski trip.

Front-Stage and Back-Stage Behavior. An important distinction in the dramaturgical approach is that of “front-stage” and “back-stage” behavior (Goffman, 1959). Front-stage behavior—the performances aimed at impression management—takes place in settings where others can see us. However, there are also private settings in which we “let our guard down” and behave in ways that we would not want others to see. Goffman called this “back-stage” behavior. Collins (1985b) illustrated the distinction this way:

[Front stage]: is the storefront where the salesperson hustles the customer, [back stage] the backroom where the employees divide up their sales territories, establish their sales line, and let their hair down after the manipulation they have gone through. In another sphere, there is an analogous distinction between the cleaned-up living room and a carefully laid table where the ritual of a dinner party is to reaffirm status membership with one’s guests, and the backstage of bathroom, kitchen, and bedroom before and afterwards, where emotional as well as physical garbage is disposed of.

(p. 157)

A fascinating aspect of the process of impression management is that we generally assist one another with our performances (Goffman, 1959). Most of us are sufficiently insecure about

our own performances that we do not make others aware of the flaws in theirs. Imagine, for example, that your professor or a classmate enters your classroom with his zipper open or her blouse unbuttoned. There may be a bit of snickering, but most people will try to spare the person involved embarrassment by pretending nothing is wrong. In fact, some people will experience discomfort or embarrassment over the situation, even though it is someone else whose performance is flawed. This embarrassment or discomfort will probably increase if anyone says anything about it in front of the class. Many people will think “That could just as easily be me.” Therefore, people usually engage in what Goffman called “studied non-observance”: They go out of their way to ignore flaws in others’ performances. To create or even acknowledge awareness of flaws in performances is to “create a scene”: It leads to embarrassment, not only for the person whose performance is flawed but for others as well.

The dramaturgical perspective has sometimes been criticized for attempting to reduce human behavior to a continuous process of impression management. To do this would clearly be an oversimplification, for two reasons: First, as macrosociology tells us, a person’s position in the larger social structure clearly is an important force in shaping behavior. By position in the social structure, we are referring to the functions a person’s roles must fill (as stressed by the functionalist perspective) and the resources attached to those roles (as stressed by the conflict perspective). Second, whatever self-image we try to project to others, we are likely to influence our own self-image in the attempt. In other words, if we “act” to

impress others, we will often come to believe our own act. This will be particularly true if *others* respond positively to the act. In other words, the messages from others are once again affecting our own self-images.

Micro- and Macrosociology: Is Synthesis Possible?

Simultaneous Effects of Function, Conflict, and Interaction

Some key differences in the assumptions of macrosociology and microsociology are summarized in Table 3.2. As we saw earlier, there has been considerable effort among sociologists to combine the insights of the functionalist and conflict perspectives in order to understand social situations more fully. Is it similarly possible to combine the microsociological interactionist perspective with the two macrosociological perspectives? Increasingly, sociologists like George Homans and Randall Collins have been attempting to reconcile these differences by developing themes that combine insights of both approaches (see the box “Micro-Macro Links: Two Key Thinkers”). It is our view that most social situations can be more fully understood by using all three perspectives (or theories that combine them) rather than by using just one or two (see Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994). We briefly outline the reasons why we think this is so, discuss some examples of theories combining the perspectives, and then give a concrete example of a common social situation that is best understood by using all three perspectives.

Table 3.2 Compare and Contrast: Basic Assumptions of Macrosociology and Microsociology

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Macrosociology</i>	<i>Microsociology</i>
What drives society and human behavior?	Needs and self-interests of groups and societies	Socially generated perceptions about reality
The nature of social reality	A structure of institutions, social positions, and rewards	An agreed-upon, negotiated understanding
Interaction between society and individual	Individuals are products of their society and social positions.	Individuals act upon society through their communications and understandings.
Key research interests	Social arrangements, culture, power, social inequality	Communication, socialization, perception, self-presentation



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

*Micro-Macro Links: Two Key Thinkers***George C. Homans (1910–1989)**

The American sociologist George Homans (1961) has been one of the leading advocates in sociology of exchange theory, discussed in the text. He argues that in any human exchange, the objective is to maximize profit, which he defines broadly as reward minus cost. Because people bring unequal resources into such exchanges, they often expect and receive unequal profits.

Homans (1950) has also devoted a good deal of effort to studying group dynamics. He believes that human interaction within groups is shaped by an external system and an internal system. The external system refers to the interactions of the group with its larger environment, including other groups: an environment to which the group must adapt if it is to survive. The internal system refers to the interactions of individuals and coalitions within the group, which define group sentiment and lead to the development of a group culture. These processes involve elements of both cooperation and conflict.

Randall Collins (1941–)

Randall Collins has been one of the most prolific writers among sociological theorists over the past several decades. His early work centered on the conflict perspective, addressing a wide range of issues

relating to that perspective. In *Conflict Sociology* (1974), he discusses ways in which the propositions arising from conflict theory (and other sociological theories as well) can be scientifically tested, and he assesses the contribution of the conflict perspective to the understanding of several areas of social life. He has applied the conflict perspective to religion (1974), marriage (1985b), gender inequality (1971a), and education (1971b).

More recently, however, Collins has sought to combine insights from the conflict perspective with those from microsociology. Like other sociologists in recent years, he stresses the idea that individual actions shape social structures.

His interaction ritual chain theory is one example of this thrust. This theory holds that interaction rituals, like those described by Goffman's dramaturgical perspective, are influenced by the level of resources each participant brings to the interaction. But at the same time, the process of the interaction may increase or decrease each participant's resources. Thus, both the level of resources (as conflict theory would emphasize) and the interaction ritual (as interactionist theory would emphasize) influence the outcome of the process of interaction. Collins (1986) also notes that all three sociological perspectives have common intellectual roots: All three of them were influenced by several philosophical viewpoints that were prominent in the early days of sociology.

Although most sociologists operate primarily as either macrosociologists or micro-sociologists, we believe that there is one sense in which few would dispute the usefulness of both types of approach. To put it simply, the different approaches may be useful for understanding different aspects of the social situation. Any social arrangement may exist in part because it is useful to the society—as argued by the functionalist perspective. At the same time, it may also exist partly because it meets the needs of some particular interest group within the society—as argued by the conflict perspective. It may, in fact, even be harmful to other

interest groups or, in some way, to the larger society. Despite these larger societal influences, though, the exact form of the social arrangement is likely to be shaped by the understandings of reality held by those participating in it. These understandings largely determine how people subsequently behave. Thus, as argued by the interactionist perspective, these understandings are very real in their consequences. Such understandings are partly a product of the objective reality of the larger social structure, but they are also partly a product of people's response to that reality (Handel, 1979, pp. 863–7).

Exchange Theory

One important theory that represents a linkage between macro- and microsociology is **exchange theory** (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961, 1984; for examples of recent work in this tradition, see Mortensen, 1988; Molm, 1991; Uhara, 1990; Yamagishi, Gilmore, and Cook, 1988; Molm, Quist, and Wiseley, 1994; Lawler and Yoon, 1996; Molm, Peterson, and Takahashi, 1999). Exchange theory, like conflict theory, begins with the assumption that people seek to advance their self-interests. These interests sometimes conflict and sometimes coincide with those of other people. According to this theory, people enter into relationships with one another when each participant has something to offer that the other desires. Thus, each person has something to give and something to gain. Exchange theory has been applied to a wide range of relationships, from pure business relationships such as that between buyer and seller to intimate personal relationships such as that between husband and wife. In the latter case, for example, consider the personal needs of two individuals who get married. One partner may primarily have a need for companionship, whereas the other seeks status through the marriage relationship. According to Blau, people assess their needs and pick their partners accordingly, and as long as these needs stay the same and each partner meets the other's need, the relationship is likely to remain stable. Of course, should either partner's needs change or should one partner stop meeting the other's needs, the marriage could be in trouble.

Exchange relationships also can operate between groups and individuals. Consider the case of an individual joining a club. The club gains increased membership, dues money, and possibly someone new to work on its projects. The individual gains the personal interaction the club provides as well as whatever activities and programs it offers members. However, if the relationship does not prove to be mutually beneficial, it will likely end.

Exchanges and Power

Ideally, social exchanges are equal. Each partner in the exchange gets a fair "return" for what

that partner puts in. Many business and personal relationships in our society are governed by an expectation of reciprocity—the view that a fair exchange is one in which there is a more or less even trade. When this is the case, the commitment of each partner to the relationship increases (Lawler and Yoon, 1996). Similarly, studies of attractiveness show that, in the majority of cases, partners in love relationships rate fairly similarly to one another on attractiveness (Berscheid et al., 1971; Penrod, 1986, pp. 189–90; Walster and Walster, 1969). Thus, attractiveness operates as a resource for which partners in courtship make an "even" trade. Sometimes, however, people accept a lower level of attractiveness in their mate in order to get more of something else, such as money or prestige.

Exchange theorists also note that many exchange relationships are characterized by *unequal power*, in which one partner sometimes brings greater resources to the exchange than the other, as in the case of the relationship between employer and employee. When this happens, the more powerful partner usually expects and gets more (Molm, 1990). Those who lack resources—the poor, the sick, the unattractive—may have little choice but to enter relationships of unequal exchange. This concept also explains one reason why women have traditionally been more concerned about appearance than men: In a sexist society, they have had fewer alternative resources like wealth and power to offer to a potential mate. Thus, although exchange theory resembles functionalism in the sense that each partner often benefits from the exchange, it resembles conflict theory in the sense that one partner can benefit much more than the other. Although it resembles the macrosociological theories in some regard, its focus is on the actions of individuals (Alexander, 1988, p. 87), which arise largely from their perceptions about what they have to gain or lose in a relationship.

Although exchange theory has been influential in both macrosociology and social psychology and acts as something of a bridge between the two, it has its critics. The strongest criticism is that it reduces all human interactions to calculated, rational exchanges. The

critics argue that in reality, people enter into social relationships for all kinds of reasons—some rational, some based heavily on emotion. A more balanced view, then, might be that people enter into relationships with one another partly for reasons of exchange and partly for other reasons.

We have seen, then, that there are some cases in which ideas arising from two or all three of the sociological perspectives are combined, as in exchange theory, and other cases in which different perspectives make competing claims. Through the cycle of theory and research discussed in Chapter 2, claims arising from each perspective are put to the test: Some are supported by research findings; others are not. Let us now consider an everyday example where the three perspectives combined can give us insights that go beyond those of any perspective by itself.

Using All Three Perspectives: An Example

Every Saturday morning from late spring through early fall, hundreds of thousands, perhaps even millions, of Americans participate in an event that takes place in big cities and small towns, in rural areas and suburbs, in all 50 states. We are referring to the yard sale or garage sale (also known in various areas as a “rummage sale” or “tag sale”). This is an ordinary event, not the stuff of which headline news or path-breaking sociological studies are made. Nonetheless, it is important to millions of Americans. Moreover, it is precisely for the ordinary, everyday event like the yard sale that sociology is useful for giving us special insights. Hence, we choose the yard sale, not only as an event about which sociology offers interesting insights but also as one that illustrates the usefulness of each of the three perspectives for letting us see a part of the social reality that is occurring.

Consider how a yard sale might be analyzed from the functionalist perspective. A yard sale performs the important function of allowing things that would otherwise go to waste to be used and, for the seller, to be turned into a little

extra cash. These are the functions of a yard sale that readily come to mind—in other words, its *manifest functions*. Consider, though, some *latent functions* of yard sales. For one, they offer people an enjoyable outing, an opportunity to get out of the house. In addition, they may perform the important social function of enabling people to see one another on a regular basis.

Yard sales also can be analyzed from a conflict perspective. In fact, Farley first became aware of this when he saw an article about yard sales in an “underground” newsletter published by a group of politically radical students on the campus where he teaches. The article touted yard sales as “striking a blow at capitalism through people’s recycling.” In a sense, it was right. Those who attend yard sales can be seen as an interest group; specifically, people with limited incomes who have a particular interest in getting things inexpensively rather than purchasing “flashy and new” merchandise. Surely this interest runs contrary to that of another set of interest groups: the manufacturers, advertisers, and retail stores, whose interests lie in persuading people to buy the “newest and best,” even if something older and less flashy would work equally well. Thus, shopping at yard sales could be seen as being in the interest of those with limited incomes, and there is evidence suggesting that this is the case. In the 1970s and 1980s, as people’s purchasing power failed to grow as it had in the past, the popularity of yard sales soared. Some evidence does indicate that the established business interests have come to see yard sales as a threat. In Farley’s town, for example, several city council members called for a crack-down on the posting of signs advertising yard sales, proclaiming them to be an unsightly nuisance. (Interestingly, no similar argument had been made by the city council a few months earlier when the town was flooded with political campaign signs!)

Finally, yard sales can be analyzed from a symbolic-interactionist perspective. They are often characterized by considerable bargaining between buyer and seller, and the course of this bargaining is certainly shaped by the perceptions the buyer and seller have of each other. If the seller is perceived as “wanting too much,”

the entire interaction can come to a quick end. Evidence of “wanting too much” can include not only prices that are too high but also an unwillingness to bargain. As symbolic-interactionists point out, it is the person’s perception of the meaning of the other’s behavior that is critical. In other words, the reality that each of us experiences is socially constructed. It may be that the seller is having their first yard sale and doesn’t know what prices to charge or that one is supposed to bargain. That doesn’t really matter to the buyer, though, because it is the buyer’s perception that determines their behavior. If the buyer misinterprets the seller’s lack of experience as greed, the buyer experiences the seller as “wanting too much” rather than not knowing you’re supposed to bargain. With this subjective understanding of reality, the buyer will likely end the interaction.

Of course, the seller’s behavior is also influenced by the process of interaction. A novice seller may realize, after a few such interactions, that something is wrong. If the disgruntled buyers give the seller the right set of messages, the seller may learn from them that buyers expect the prices to be lower and to be subject to bargaining. Once the seller lowers their prices and begins to bargain, the entire interaction may be different. In short, the communication that occurs between buyer and seller, as well as how each interprets the other’s messages, has a crucial impact on the outcomes of the yard sale. To put it in Blumer’s terminology, behavior has been influenced by the meanings of the yard sale situation to the participants, which in turn is largely a product of their communication with one another.

We have seen, then, that each perspective—functionalist, conflict, and interactionist—has added something to our understanding of the yard sale. Each has helped us understand a somewhat different part of its reality. In this particular case, none of the three perspectives is in any sense “wrong,” even though proponents of the three perspectives can and do debate their relative usefulness for understanding reality. Rather, as noted, each helps us understand a slightly different aspect of what is taking place. Most important, our understanding of the

social meaning and significance of the yard sale is greater when we use all three perspectives than when we use any one, because each offers us part of the “big picture.”

The Three Perspectives and This Book

We provided an extensive introduction to the three sociological perspectives in this chapter because we believe that they give greater meaning to the more specific theory and research that is discussed in the remainder of this book. The rest of the book presents a number of major topics that make up the key subject matter of sociology. Each of these topics has a number of specific theories and lines of research pertaining to it. Many of these theories and lines of research, though specific to the topic of interest, arise in large part from one of the three perspectives introduced here. Some go further and attempt to combine insights from two or all three of the perspectives and to apply them to a particular topic. We believe that your understanding of sociology will be enhanced if you see how a theory about, for example, race relations, may relate to theories about aging, or drug use, or formal organizations. The best way to do this is to try throughout the book to link specific theories to the larger sociological perspectives from which they arise. Thus, in virtually every chapter in this book, that linkage will be made. As you read this text, we hope you will see that at least one of the major perspectives, and often all three, can be used to gain important insights about every major topic discussed in the rest of this book.

Summary

In this chapter, we examined the three theoretical perspectives that have had the greatest influence in sociology. Two of them, the functionalist and conflict perspectives, are macrosociological, focusing mainly on large-scale societal processes. The functionalist perspective holds that social arrangements exist because they meet needs in society, and it

stresses interdependency, the functions of social structure and culture, consensus, cooperation, and equilibrium. The conflict perspective holds that society is made up of competing interest groups with unequal power and that social structure exists because it meets the needs of interest groups, usually those with power. It stresses conflicting interests, the relationship of culture and social structure to group interests, and the inevitability of conflict and change.

In part, these perspectives reflect competing values that cannot be judged scientifically. In larger part, though, they reflect different theories about human behavior and society, which are subject to scientific evaluation. Although the two macrosociological perspectives disagree on some key points, many sociologists believe that the two schools are not incompatible. Social structure, for example, may meet society's needs in some ways and the needs of dominant groups in other ways. Similarly, it is reasonable to argue that forces for both stability and change are always present in society, but that under different social conditions, different forces predominate.

The microsociological symbolic-interactionist perspective gives greater attention to processes involving individuals. It holds that people's understanding of reality is determined by the messages they get from others and by how they interpret these messages. This, in turn, is an important influence over how people behave. Among key concepts stressed by interactionists are social roles, the looking-glass self, the self-fulfilling prophecy, and the social construction of reality.

Attempts have been made to build links between microsociology and macrosociology. As illustrated by the example of the yard sale, each perspective—the functionalist, conflict,



Photo 3.5 As long as both partners' needs are being met, it doesn't matter who takes care of the house and who goes to the office. However, if a point is reached where either partner's needs are not being met, the marriage could be in trouble.

Courtesy of Michael W. Flota

and interactionist—can add to our understanding of a social situation. In large part, this is true because each addresses a different piece of the reality of that situation.

Key Terms

perspective
 macrosociology
 microsociology
 functionalist perspective
 function
 manifest function
 latent function
 dysfunction
 conflict perspective
 scarce resources
 status quo
 institutionalization
 symbolic-interactionist perspective
 social construction of reality
 Thomas theorem
 ethnomethodology
 looking-glass self
 self-fulfilling prophecy
 social roles
 dramaturgical perspective
 exchange theory

Exercises

1 Consider the following questions:

- What are the core assumptions of each major theoretical perspective: functionalist, conflict, and interactionist? What do you see as the major strengths and weaknesses of each perspective and why?
- All of the early social theorists, such as Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber, had certain concerns in common. What are some of these common concerns, and how do they relate to the perceived social problems during the time periods involved?

2 Go to one of the free major news sites on the Internet, like Yahoo or Google. Find a current news story that interests you. Write a brief report on how the functionalist, conflict, and interactionist perspectives would explain the news story you chose. Are there some news stories that are better explained by one of the perspectives than by another?

For a full list of references, please visit the book's Support Material at www.routledge.com/9781032423593.

Chapter 4

Culture and Social Structure

In the United States, women were once considered attractive only if they wore a corset—a rigid, tight-fitting garment that made the waist appear narrower and the bust larger. In ancient China, the definition of a beautiful woman included tiny, dainty feet; thus, from childhood, Chinese women tightly bound their feet to keep them from growing. In the modern world, practices such as foot binding and the wearing of corsets have disappeared, but virtually every country still has standards of attractiveness for women.

Standards of attractiveness are one part of what sociologists call culture. They are a set of ideas that are shared within a society. As the previous examples illustrate, culture is widely shared within a society, yet it also changes over time. If we think of standards of attractiveness only as a part of culture, however, we miss an important part of their significance. Standards of attractiveness also tell us something about the positions of men and women in society. The wearing of corsets and the practice of foot binding, for example, were both physically painful. Foot binding often led to serious physical deformity. It is highly significant that women in many societies have had to endure painful and sometimes harmful practices to make themselves attractive to men, while men in the same societies had to do no such thing to make themselves attractive to women. Thus, the wearing of corsets and the binding of feet reflect the subordinate social position of women in traditional American and Chinese societies. Such positions are a part of social structure, the system of social positions and rewards (or lack thereof) that are attached to these positions. The popular term “gaslighting” also uses a similar process whereby male abusers use the social bias of equating femininity with irrationality to

subjugate and alter the realities of their female partner to serve the male’s benefit (Sweet, 2019).

Just as culture changes, so does social structure. The elimination of corsets and foot binding suggests that the position of women has improved in both these societies. However, women continue to be judged more than men on the basis of physical attractiveness; for example, a number of women in America today make themselves physically and emotionally ill trying to become or stay thin. The change has been far from complete.

In this chapter, we explore culture and social structure in greater detail. To understand these concepts, we must first understand the concept of **society**. A society can be defined as a relatively self-contained and organized group of people interacting under some common political authority within a specific geographic area. Societies exist over an extended period of time, outliving the individual people of whom they are composed. A society can refer to a nation-state with millions of people, such as the United States, Russia, China, Nigeria, France, and Chile. It can also refer to tribal groups with a population of only a few hundred. If a group has some type of governmental system, if its members interact with one another while limiting contact with outsiders, if it exists within some reasonably well-defined territory and persists over time, that group fits the definition of a society.

Society, Culture, and Social Structure

Every society, large or small, has a culture and a social structure. **Culture** refers to the shared knowledge, beliefs, values, and rules about

behavior that exist within a society. **Social structure** refers to the organization of society—its social positions and the ongoing relationships among these social positions; the different resources allocated to these social positions; and the social groups that make up the society (Smelser, 1988). Although culture and social structure are distinct, they are not separate. Each influences and is influenced by the other. This linkage is a major focus of this chapter.

What Is Culture?

Social scientists use the term “culture” in a somewhat different way than it is commonly used. In popular use, we often talk of people as being “cultured” or “uncultured.” “Cultured” people are well-read and knowledgeable, and enjoy literature, art, and classical music. In the social scientific sense, however, there are no “uncultured” people. Rather, the term refers to those things that are *shared* within a group or society: shared truths (that is, knowledge and beliefs), shared values, shared rules about behavior, and material objects that are shared in the sense that they are widely used or recognized. Sociologists generally recognize two kinds of culture: nonmaterial and material. **Nonmaterial culture** consists of abstract creations: knowledge, beliefs, values, and rules concerning behavior. **Material culture** consists of physical objects that are the product of a group or society: buildings, works of art, clothing, literary and musical works, and inventions. The two, of course, are linked: A society whose nonmaterial culture is based on scientific knowledge may, for example, produce a material culture including space shuttles and computers. In contrast, a society whose nonmaterial culture consists primarily of religious beliefs and traditions may produce elaborate temples and religious writings or music.

One final important point is that no society is without culture. For reasons explored in greater detail later in this chapter, every society requires some degree of common understanding of reality and common rules for behavior in order to function. Without this, people could not cooperate or even interact in

a meaningful way, and nobody would know how to behave.

Shared Truths: Knowledge, Language, and Beliefs

The first item mentioned in our definition of nonmaterial culture is shared truths; that is, shared knowledge and beliefs. This item is mentioned first because knowledge and belief are at the core of the definition of culture. More than anything else, culture is a matter of what people in a society know or believe to be true (Goodenough, 1957). The concepts of *knowledge* and *beliefs* are very similar to each other in the sense that both refer to shared understanding of truth. Both concern what people believe to be true, and both are subject to testing, if the right information is available. However, in terms of understanding cultures, it does not really matter whether the knowledge and beliefs ever get tested, or even whether they are true in an objective sense. What matters is that people within a society *agree* on a certain reality, a certain set of knowledge and beliefs. If “everybody knows” that something is true, then it might as well be true, because people will behave as though it were.

When sociologists and anthropologists study cultures, they are interested in such social agreements about truth and reality. These social agreements are what shape people’s behavior, and they are what determine how people understand their world. At one time in human history, “everybody knew” that the earth was flat. Hence, everyone behaved as though it were, and for many years nobody was so foolish as to attempt to travel around the earth. The first people who suggested that the earth might be round were treated the way you would be treated today if you said the earth was flat. Today, in modern industrial societies, “everybody knows” that the earth is round. Thus, shared knowledge and beliefs, and not reality, determine human behavior. Each society has its culture, and each culture is composed of a distinct set of knowledge and beliefs. Cultures can and do change over time, and what people “know” at one time will not necessarily be the

same as what people in the same society will “know” at some other time.

Language

One particularly important area of knowledge carried by culture is **language**. Language can be defined as the set of symbols by which the people who share a common culture communicate. Language makes possible a type of communication among human beings that is unknown to animals, because of its use of **symbols**—in this case, words, which are used to represent concepts and ideas. Language also serves the function, through written records or oral traditions, of passing information from generation to generation. (Sociologists even study how ideas and language have “careers” that evolve over time as they are used by the public, see Hallett, Stapleton and Sauder, 2019.) In this book, for example, use of the English language permits you to learn about the ideas of great social thinkers like Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, even though they have been dead for many years. Although language’s main functions are to make communication possible and to preserve ideas across the generations, it also has important symbolic functions. Speaking the same language is an important symbol of cultural unity. For this reason, conquered or subordinate minority groups often cling vigorously to their language as a means of preserving their culture, and dominant groups try with equal vigor to get the minorities to speak their languages.

Language as a Cultural Symbol: An Example. An example of the cultural symbolism attached to language can be seen in Canada (Porter, 1972). Most of Canada’s people belong to one of two major cultural groups, English and French. About two-thirds of the country’s population is English speaking; about one-third is French speaking. The French-speaking group is concentrated almost entirely in one province, Quebec. In recognition of the desire of both groups to preserve their cultural heritage, Canada has proclaimed itself to be officially bilingual. Both English and French are official languages of Canada, and all activities of the national government are carried on in both languages. In spite of this, it is hard to describe Canada as a truly bilingual country. Although most

Quebecois can speak English, the province has declared French to be its only official language. In the remainder of Canada, the overwhelming majority of the population speaks English, and nobody but the federal government makes any serious attempt to be bilingual. In fact, official attempts at bilingualism are usually treated with scorn. In the province of Ontario, for example, some stop signs have the French *ARRET* printed below the English *STOP*. More often than not, the *ARRET* is covered with spray paint.

The ethnic and linguistic conflict in Canada has been severe. Canada’s ability to survive as a nation was threatened in the early 1990s when various provinces were unable to agree on a constitution. Negotiations to create a new constitution recognizing Quebec as a “distinct society” and giving it autonomy on matters of language broke down in 1990; in 1992, changes proposed to address the concerns of both Quebecois and Native Canadians (who also sought autonomy) were rejected by several provinces, including Quebec, which viewed them as insufficient, as well as others that viewed them as excessive. At the beginning of the new century, the long-term ability of Canada to remain one country continues to be uncertain.

A similar conflict has developed recently in the United States with the growth of the Hispanic population. Like the French Canadians, many Hispanic Americans have sought to preserve their native culture by speaking Spanish.

Just as the English-speaking majority in Canada opposes bilingualism, the English-speaking majority in the United States has reacted strongly to the growing use of Spanish. Several cities and states, for example, have passed legislation specifying English as their only official language, and in a 1998 referendum, California voters severely restricted the use of bilingual education.

Another example can be seen in the intense debates about “Ebonics” (or black English) that arose in Oakland, California, and elsewhere in 1997. Some advocates of Ebonics saw it as a way of affirming pride in African American culture. Most of its supporters, though, favored its use in the schools as a way of communicating with black youth in their own language so as to more effectively teach them to speak and write standard



Photo 4.1 Language both reflects and influences culture. In the past, this sign might have said “Flagman Ahead,” but through the use of graphics, as on this sign, signs can be gender neutral and understandable in any language.

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English (Williams, 1997; McMillen, 1997). However, even the latter idea came under attack by many, who saw any use of Ebonics as a move away from affirming the importance of learning and speaking standard English. Moreover, most of the debate ignored academic research by linguists on whether or not using Ebonics might be helpful in teaching standard English. This is not surprising, given the intensity of feeling about language as a cultural symbol. Though the academic research is not conclusive (Baron, 1997), some studies suggest that using Ebonics may lead to improved learning of standard English (McMillen, 1997; Williams, 1997).

The Linguistic-Relativity Debate. Clearly, language can operate as an important symbol of a culture. Equally clearly, it can tell us a good deal about what is important in a culture. Inuits have 12 different words to describe different types of snow; the Sami of Lapland have 80. This reflects the fact that snow is important in the Eskimo and Sami experiences and that differences in

snow that would be unimportant to most people are noticeable to them. Americans have a large number of words to describe different types of automobiles. Although cultures where cars are not so common have only one word, it is important for Americans—the most automobile-oriented society in the world—to distinguish among different types of cars. Thus, we speak of convertibles, station wagons, SUVs, compacts, subcompacts, sport models, sedans, coupes, four-by-fours, T-tops, and clunkers.

Having said this, it is also important to note that the extent to which language tells us what is important in a culture can be debated. While it is true that Inuits have around 12 words for snow, it is questionable how many more words than other cultures they really have. For example, Eskimo language is structured differently than English (Martin, 1986; Pullum, 1991), and a more appropriate comparison to English would be to compare Eskimo words for snow to English words *related* to snow, such as “blizzard,” “flurry,” and “avalanche.” When this comparison is made, the difference is greatly reduced: The Eskimo language has about a dozen words; English has about ten relating to snow.

The example of Eskimo words for snow does, however, tell us something else important about culture—the influence of oral traditions in shaping and perpetuating cultural beliefs, even among “trained experts.” According to Martin (1986), the example of Eskimo words for snow began with a brief passage written by anthropologist Franz Boas in 1911 noting four Eskimo words for snow. Over the years, other anthropologists picked up the example, with the reported number of words gradually growing. By the 1950s, every anthropology student learned that Inuits had a large number of words for snow. By the following decade, sociology and psychology students were learning the same thing, with teachers sometimes telling them that Inuits had as many as 100 words for snow. The myth spread to the media, with *The New York Times* repeating the 100 figure and a Cleveland television station raising the number to 200. Two lessons can be learned from this: First, what is important in a culture can influence language, but the extent to which this is true varies widely. Second, oral traditions are



Photo 4.2 McDonald's Western-style fashion clothing ads in Louyang, China. As contact among different cultures increases throughout the world, the potential for misunderstanding and tensions increases.

Courtesy of John E. Farley

powerful in shaping cultural beliefs, even among "experts" who are expected to be skeptical.

We know, then, that to varying degrees, the language spoken in a society may reflect that society's culture. However, does it also *influence* aspects of that culture? A group of specialists known as **linguistic-relativity** theorists (Sapir, 1921; Whorf, 1956) believe that it does. They argue that different languages categorize things differently, thus forcing people to create different categories in their own thinking. Different societies, for example, define colors differently. Where we see a spectrum of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, other societies in the world see only two or three colors. Some, for example, lump together what Americans consider the "warm" colors in one category and the "cool" colors in another category. To cite another example, we already noted the multiple words for snow among Inuits and Laplanders. In contrast, some warm-weather cultures have only one word to cover snow, ice, frost, and cold. Finally, tenses vary. Some languages contain tenses that English lacks, and others lack tenses that we have, such as the past and future tenses. Sapir and Whorf argued that these differences affect

how people think and, thus, what they can know. How, for example, can people conceptualize the future if their language has no tense for it?

In the sense of language *strictly* determining knowledge, however, the linguistic-relativity hypothesis is difficult to accept. Social scientists disagree over the extent to which language affects our perception of reality (Bickerton, 1995). Cognitive science critics argue that language is hard-wired into the human species (Pinker, 2002) and that some concepts exist prior to learning language. The most important might be the concept of family (Pinker, 1994). Linguistic relativists undermine their own argument to a certain

extent when they can explain the meaning of different Eskimo words for snow, or of tenses in one language that do not exist in another language. Hence, language probably does not *determine* the content or organization of our knowledge and beliefs. However, language almost certainly does *influence* our knowledge and beliefs. For example, the English language often uses "black" and "dark" to represent evil and hopelessness. This usage undoubtedly has subtle influences on people's thinking about race. In fact, experiments with schoolchildren have indicated strongly that this is the case (Williams and Stabler, 1973). Thus, although a determinist notion that language defines what we *can* know and think is clearly an overstatement, there is good evidence that language can influence how we *do* think and know.

Shared Values

In addition to the shared realities represented by common knowledge and beliefs, cultures also carry common values. This is not to say that

people within a society agree on everything, merely that there are certain common values in their culture that most or all people agree on. In another society with a different culture, the commonly held values will be different.

Ideology

The system of knowledge, beliefs, and values that is shared in a society is often referred to by sociologists as an **ideology**—that is, a set of ideas. In fact, the term “ideology” is very similar in meaning to the term “culture,” except that culture also includes rules concerning behavior. The term “ideology” has one additional use, however. In the conflict-theory tradition of Marx (1967) and Mannheim (1936 [orig. 1929]), ideology is often taken to mean a set of knowledge, values, and beliefs that support, or give legitimacy to, the social structure. Such ideology is promoted by those in influential positions in the society, but it may be widely accepted throughout the society. Although this notion is associated with conflict-theory sociologists, the basic idea that the culture supports the social structure is something that sociologists of both the functionalist and the conflict perspectives generally acknowledge. This is one reason that functionalist theorists stress the need for consensus: They believe that society works best when people’s values and beliefs are consistent with the organization of their society. In any stable society, what people believe to be true will generally support their social arrangements. If this is not the case, the society will experience pressure for change. Attempts may be made by the elite of the society to impose a new ideology, or the people in the society will attempt to change the social structure to match their ideology. Very often, both things happen.

Social Norms

Besides shared realities and shared values, culture also involves shared expectations about behavior. These expectations about behavior are called social **norms**. Sociologists commonly

recognize three types of social norms. The most informal are **folkways**—informal, minor norms that usually carry only minor and informal *sanctions*, or punishments, when they are violated. Being over- or underdressed for an occasion is an example of a behavior that violates folkways. Another type of informal norm called **mores** (pronounced “morays”) may or may not be written into law, but violations are usually taken seriously. This is so because mores are more likely than folkways to be viewed as essential to society. Reverence in church and respect for the flag are examples of mores. The flag is a symbol of the society and what it stands for; to challenge it is to challenge the very rightness of the society. Because mores are often seen as being critical to the maintenance of society, violations often evoke an emotional response. The sanctions for violating mores include ostracism, angry words, and sometimes physical violence. Finally, there are **laws**: formal, codified norms of which everyone is expected to be aware. Violations of laws carry specific sanctions, such as fines or imprisonment, that are usually stated as part of the law. Laws are usually consistent with mores.

As is the case with values and beliefs, each culture contains some social norms that are held in common by most or all of the people in the society. Moreover, the norms that are held in common in one culture are different from those in another culture. This can lead to misunderstandings when people with different cultures come into contact with one another, as in international travel. It has been frequently observed, for example, that when North Americans interact with South Americans, different norms are at work concerning the proper distance between two people speaking to each other. South Americans stand closer together when speaking than do North Americans. This leads to an interesting dynamic when a North American and a South American get into a conversation. The South American will keep approaching, and the North American will keep backing away because the South American is “too close.” Thus, the two may move across the room or around in circles as the South American keeps trying to get closer and the North American farther away.

Farley had a similar experience while attending an international research conference in Sweden. At lunch one day, some Americans commented on the “rudeness” of people in Sweden. He was surprised at this statement because he had found everyone he had spoken to or done business with to be pleasant and polite. That evening, however, when a group attending the conference went out to a crowded nightclub, he realized the source of his fellow Americans’ feelings. Almost immediately upon entering the nightclub, he was bumped by another person, who made no attempt to excuse himself. His reaction was, “that was rude.” In fact, had the same act occurred in the United States, it easily could have caused a fight. A few minutes later, it happened again, and Farley soon noticed that it was not uncommon for people gently to push aside a person in their way without saying anything. Significantly, he also noticed that nobody (except the foreign visitors) seemed bothered by it.

As the week went on, he noticed that in any crowded situation gentle bumping and pushing without comment was common and accepted behavior among the Swedes. Not once did he see anyone get angry over it. From the American viewpoint, one could explain this behavior in two ways. One way was to conclude that “Swedes are rude.” The other way was to conclude that “Swedes are exceptionally patient” because they never became upset over being bumped. Either conclusion, however, would reflect a misunderstanding of Swedish culture, as a result of looking at it only from the viewpoint of American culture. The correct explanation simply was that Swedes and Americans have different social norms about behavior in crowded places. In the United States, you are expected to avoid bumping people and to excuse yourself when you do. In Sweden, gentle bumping in crowded situations is acceptable and does not require excusing yourself. Imagine for a moment a Swede in the United States unfamiliar with American norms. If that Swede bumped someone and got yelled at, they would undoubtedly conclude that “Americans are impatient and belligerent.” Any time people interpret the actions of people of another culture in terms of their own cultural norms, such misunderstandings can occur.

What Is Social Structure?

Recall our discussion of corsets and foot binding at the start of this chapter. This discussion showed us that culture and social structure are closely related to each other. By way of review, the concept of social structure refers to the organization of society, including its social positions, the relationships among those positions, and the different resources attached to those positions. Social structure also includes the groups of people who make up society and the relationships that exist among those groups (Smelser, 1988). We begin our discussion of social structure by discussing social positions.

Social Status

Society can be thought of as being made up of a set of social positions. Sociologists refer to such a position as a **status**. Imagine that you are a single, black, 20-year-old female who is working part time, attending college, and majoring in physics. You are occupying a number of social positions, or statuses. You are a young single female, an employee, an African American, and a college student majoring in physics. Each of these social positions is defined, in part, by its relationship to other positions in society, which are occupied by other people. Moreover, each of these social positions, or statuses, is occupied by a number of other people besides yourself. There are other black women, other physics majors, other part-time employees. You share a common status with these people, and you are very likely to share with them some common experiences and behaviors.

Continuing with the same example, some of your statuses were ones that you were born into. You were, for example, born black and female. Statuses that people are born into are called **ascribed statuses** (Linton, 1936). Besides race and sex, other ascribed statuses include characteristics of the family into which you were born, including your parents’ family name, their economic level, their religion, and their national ancestry. In addition to ascribed statuses are statuses that result from something you did. You decided to go to college, to major

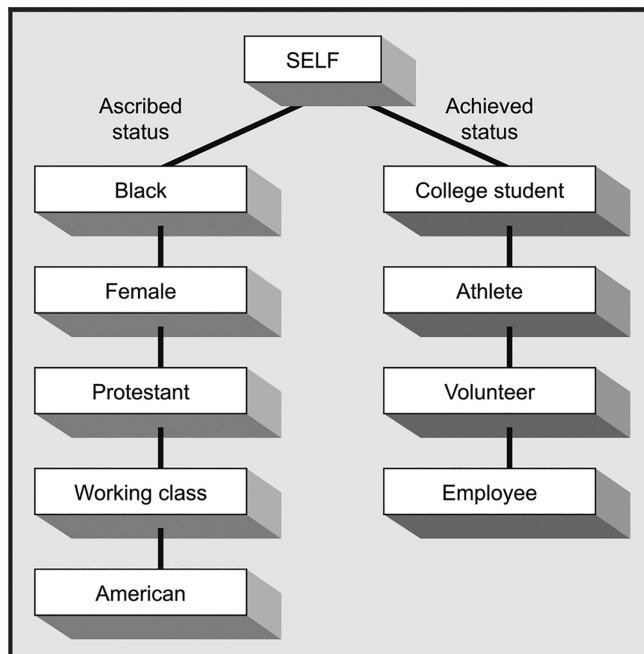
in physics, and to work part time. Statuses that people get at least partially as a result of something that they do are called **achieved statuses** (Linton, 1936). Among the most important achieved statuses are occupations, educational levels, and incomes. Your religion (or lack of it) could also be an achieved status, if you changed at some time from the religion you were born into. Achieved statuses need not be things that are seen by society as positive. You might, for example, become a school dropout, a runaway, or a prison inmate. These, too, are achieved statuses, because they result, at least in part, from things that people do. Figure 4.1 depicts ascribed and achieved statuses.

Obviously, some statuses are more central and important in people's lives than others. For most people, one status stands above all others in terms of its influence over the person's life. Such a status is called a **master status**. For adults, the master status is most likely to be occupation, or possibly a position in the family such as parent, husband, or wife. For children, it may be the status of student or simply that of male or female.

Roles

Each social status, in turn, is attached to one or more *social roles*. As pointed out in Chapter 3, a social role is a set of expectations for behavior that is attached to a status. Thus, a status is a social position, and a role is a set of behaviors that are expected of anyone who fills the position. As Linton (1936) put it, we *occupy* statuses, but we *play* roles. Each role in society is related to other social roles, through relationships of interdependency and cooperation (as noted by functionalist theory) and through relationships of competition, domination, and subordination (as noted by conflict theory). These roles, of course, are played by people—but the roles and the relationships between them persist independently of which people are playing the roles. Different people may play the same role somewhat differently, but there are certain things that anyone playing a given role (such as that of a physics major) must accomplish and certain other roles with which that person must interact in socially defined ways.

Figure 4.1 This diagram depicts the statuses occupied by a black female college undergraduate who works part time, does volunteer work, and belongs to the track team. How many of these statuses do you share?



Role Conflict and Role Strain

Each person must play a number of different roles, and sometimes these roles carry conflicting expectations. Returning to our example, you might experience conflicting expectations between your roles of college student, part-time worker, and single woman. These conflicting expectations are called **role conflict**. Sometimes even the same role contains conflicting expectations. This condition is called **role strain**. Thus, you are told that the expectations of you as a college student include academic achievement and enjoying what is supposed to be one of the most “fun” times of your life. Obviously, too much of one can get in the way of the other.

One reason for role strain is that any given role often calls for interaction with a variety of other statuses. Thus, what appears to be one role may in some aspects really be several roles. Consider, for example, the status of retail sales employee. At first, this status seems to give you a clear role to play: Sell things to the customers in the manner expected by your supervisor. However, this role actually involves interacting with several different statuses: supervisor, fellow employee, customer. To some extent, each of these interactions defines a different role because it carries different expectations. What pleases the boss might not please your fellow employees, and what pleases the customer might not please either your boss or your co-workers. Yet, to some extent, you must please all of them in order to succeed in your job. Thus, the status of retail sales employee in one sense carries several roles: that of subordinate (with respect to your supervisor), that of co-worker (with respect to your fellow employees), and that of seller (with respect to your customers). Merton (1968, pp. 41–5) refers to these combined roles attached to one status as the **role set** of that status.

Roles and Social Structure

In large part, the organization of society, or what we call social structure, is determined by the nature of these roles, the relationships between them, and the distribution of scarce resources among the people who play them. Different societies define, organize, and reward their activities in different ways, and thus each society has its own distinct social structure.

Although each society has its own distinct social structure, almost all social structures contain certain common elements. Any society more complex than a simple hunting-and-gathering society, for example, has some system of division of labor and some system of stratification. These differences mean, among other things, that different roles exist, they carry different expectations, and the people who play them are rewarded in different ways. Moreover, the social structure is arranged into some set of social institutions. Let us address each of these areas in somewhat more detail.

Division of Labor

One reason for the existence of diverse roles in any social structure is that any society more complicated than a simple hunting-and-gathering society requires a **division of labor**, or specialization. In other words, there are a variety of jobs to be done, and it is more efficient for each person to do one job than it is to try to teach everyone to do all of the jobs. The larger and more complex the society is, the more essential and complex the division of labor becomes. Each job can be thought of as a social role in that it has a particular set of expectations that must be met if the job is to be done properly. Moreover, in large, interdependent societies, each of these jobs or roles relates in some way to a number of other jobs or roles. Thus, the social structure becomes, in part, a *system of roles that divides labor into specialized tasks, all of which are interdependent*. How labor is divided will vary, even among societies (and organizations within the same society) that are otherwise similar. In other words, the content of work roles and the relationships between them will not always be the same. There is no set formula for the division of labor.

One factor that has a major influence on the division of labor is the level of development of a society. As societies develop economically, their division of labor becomes more complex. Thus, modern industrial societies have far more complex divisions of labor than do pre-industrial societies. This issue, along with a number of other ways that the level of development influences society, is discussed in detail

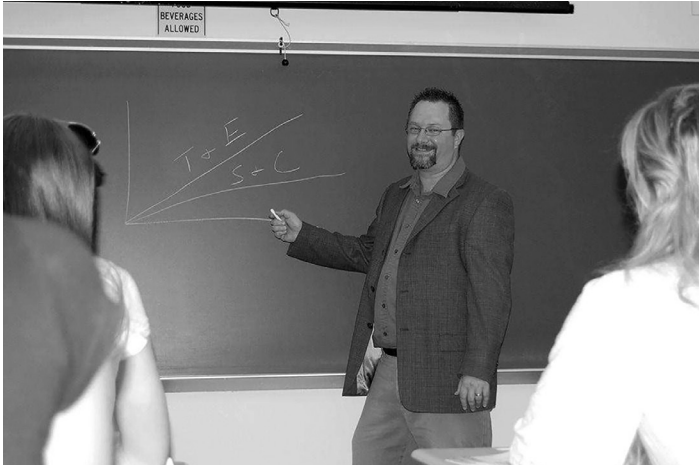


Photo 4.3 In the classroom, there are distinct roles, student and teacher, each of which carries a set of expectations. In addition, stratification is attached to the roles: The teacher has greater prestige and power than the students.

Courtesy of Michael W. Flota

in Chapter 11. However, even at a given level of economic development, there is no one formula for the division of labor. Exactly how that division is accomplished is a key question to be answered whenever a sociologist tries to describe or understand a social structure.

Stratification

Besides carrying different expectations, different roles carry different rewards. As we see in much greater detail in Chapter 6, different occupations carry different levels of prestige and different economic rewards. Ascribed statuses also vary widely in prestige and in economic rewards. This system of inequality is called social **stratification**, and it is an important part of virtually every social structure. Social stratification is related in part to a society's division of labor. Some jobs that require detailed technical training are more difficult to learn than others. In part, such jobs are rewarded because they are harder to fill with qualified people, and some incentive is required to encourage people to get the necessary training (Davis and Moore, 1945). However, stratification exists for reasons independent of the division of labor. Even in modern societies, a good deal of economic inequality is inherited and is thus a product of an ascribed status: the family that a person was born into (Tumin, 1953).

Relationships Between Roles and Statuses

Because of social stratification, relationships of inequality exist between different roles and statuses in the social structure. Because of the division of labor, relationships of cooperation and interdependency also exist among different roles and statuses. These relationships largely define social structure. Imagine again that you are a single, black, female college student, 20 years old, majoring in physics, and employed part time. We can see that you fit into both a stratification

system and a system for the division of labor. You are in relationships of social inequality, or stratification, on the basis of both your ascribed statuses and your achieved statuses. Because of your ascribed statuses of race and sex, your society has placed you in a disadvantaged position relative to others with different ascribed statuses (white people and males). In other words, your opportunities may be restricted, or you may be discriminated against because of your race and sex. The roles linked to your achieved statuses also in part define your position in the stratification system. You are in a subordinate, or lower, position relative to your professors and your supervisors. However, you are in an advantaged position relative to your peers who did not go to college, because going to college gives you a certain degree of prestige and a better chance of finding a well-paying job.

Besides fitting into a stratification system, you fit into a system of division of labor. In your part-time job, you fulfill a set of expectations (a role) that relates in some way to the work roles of others and performs some function within the larger system of division of labor. In the role of student, you are undergoing preparation for some new, and possibly more central, role within that system of division of labor.

In short, social structure is composed of systems of stratification and division of labor,

each of which is an interrelated system of roles and statuses. Each person living in a society occupies a number of statuses and plays a number of roles within both of those systems, which define the social structure of that society.

Institutions

Another key element of social structure is that of **social institutions**. Institutions can be defined as forms of organization that perform basic functions in a society, are strongly supported by that society's culture, and are generally accepted as essential elements of the social structure. Like the larger social structure, institutions are made up of relationships among statuses and roles that involve both division of labor and stratification. However, each institution consists of a particular

set of such interrelated statuses and roles as well as specific systems of division of labor and stratification. Also, each institution is tied to a particular function or set of functions. Table 4.1 illustrates some of the key institutions in the social structure of the United States and identifies the functions those institutions perform. It also cross-references chapters in this book in which these institutions are discussed in greater detail.

As the definition indicates, a society's institutions are strongly supported by its culture. As a result, people learn to regard these institutions as essential and frequently take them for granted. Specific individuals who play roles within institutions may be criticized, but it is less common for the institution itself to be questioned. Americans might, for example, deplore the behavior of abusive parents, but their disapproval would be directed at the people involved

Table 4.1 American Institutions and Their Key Functions

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Key Functions</i>
Family (monogamous) (Chapter 13)	Replacement of generation Socialization of young/cultural transmission Status transmission Shelter; care for young and older adults Emotional support
Capitalist economic system (Chapter 11)	Economic production Provision of goods and services Means to distribute scarce resources Means to determine what is produced
Government (Chapter 12)	Provision of needed public services Representation of interest groups Protection from foreign powers Symbols of national unity Social control
Legal system (Chapter 10)	Protection of members of society from illegal actions by other members of society Orderly settlement of disputes Source of legitimacy for government Social control
Education (Chapter 14)	Socialization of young/cultural transmission Passage of knowledge between generations Creation of new knowledge through research (universities) Allocations of individuals to careers Personal development/enhancement of awareness
Health-care system (Chapter 16)	Treatment of illness Extension of life Development of new medical technology
Religion (Chapter 15)	Provision of societal belief system Socialization of young/cultural transmission Social control Personal support

and not at the traditional American family. Suppose, for a moment, that you heard the following argument:

The American family is by its nature a brutal, authoritarian institution that encourages abuse by making parents all-powerful authority figures over children. Therefore, abuse is not a problem of bad individuals, but is inherent in the family. If you want to stop abuse, stop blaming the people who abuse their children and put the blame where it belongs: on an authoritarian, antiquated structure that by its very nature encourages abuse. As long as parents have authority over their children, abuse will result in a sizable number of cases.

Most of you would not accept this argument, and some of you would be angry at the person who made it. Although a well-reasoned counterargument could be developed against this argument, many of you would not respond this way but, instead, would reject the argument out of hand. Why? Because, beyond whatever logical flaws it may have, this argument attacks a cherished institution that is close—important—to most of us. In other words, the importance of the family (and other key social institutions) is strongly supported by our social norms and is something that we don't have to think about because we take it for granted.

Institutions are so strongly supported by social values and norms that when a practice or social arrangement becomes widely accepted in society, sociologists say that it has become *institutionalized*. Some sociologists even include the values and norms supporting an institution as part of the definition of an institution. At the very least, for a form of organization to qualify as an institution, it must be central to the culture of the society in which it exists.

Perspectives on Culture and Social Structure

As we already noted, social structure and culture are closely linked, and the normal condition is for a society's culture to be compatible with, and supportive of, its social structure. There

are, however, at least occasional periods when culture and social structure are not compatible, and these are the times when social change is most likely to occur. Significantly, sociologists of both the functionalist perspective and the conflict perspective developed explanations of the conditions that produce compatibility and incompatibility between culture and social structure. Not surprisingly, these explanations are often at odds, or at least emphasize very different processes.

The Functionalist Perspective: Adaptation of Culture and Social Structure to the Environment

As we saw in Chapter 3, functionalists see society as basically a stable, interdependent system that has adopted a particular form because that form works well. To maintain this stability requires a consensus in support of the society's basic social arrangements. Culture performs this function. It promotes cooperation by creating solidarity and provides specific support for the social structure, which operates to meet the basic needs of the society. This basic paradigm of an interdependent and harmonious social structure and culture has been recognized by sociological functionalists dating back at least to Émile Durkheim.

It is functionalists in the tradition of social anthropology, however, who have best addressed the closely related question of cultural and structural variation. If social structure and culture exist because they are basically functional, then why is there so much variation in social structure and culture among different societies? In brief, their answer is that different societies have developed different structures and cultures as adaptations to the different environments in which they exist. Social structure and culture, then, are seen as being in harmony with each other, and both of them are adapted to the environment of the social system (Buckley, 1967).

Much of the early insight on this issue is attributable to social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, who conducted extended field observation in the Trobriand Islands in the

South Pacific during the early twentieth century (Malinowski, 1922, 1926, 1948, 1967). Malinowski noted that arrangements among the people he studied existed not because they were merely functional but because *they were functional given the presence of a particular environment*. An example of this can be seen in the Trobriand Islanders' use of magic. Although they used magic extensively, they seemed to use it primarily when they were entering situations they perceived as dangerous. For example, they used magic when fishing on the treacherous open seas but not when fishing in protected lagoons. Thus, Malinowski concluded that the function of magic was to alleviate fears and make fishing on the open seas seem less threatening.

Malinowski focused primarily on the individual, psychological function of magic in relieving anxiety in the context of a dangerous environment. However, because magic also enhanced the Trobriand Islanders' willingness to fish in the bountiful open seas, it also performed the clear function *on the social level* of helping the Trobriand Islanders deal with their environment. The idea that culture (in this case, a belief in magic) can be useful to a society in helping it adapt to its environment is generally associated with the theorist A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, who had been trained in the theories of Émile Durkheim. Radcliffe-Brown (1935, 1950, 1952), like Durkheim, saw society as being much like a biological organism, made up of many interrelated parts and having evolved in a way so as to adapt to its environment. To Radcliffe-Brown, then, the important aspect of magic was not its contribution to the individual (to alleviate anxiety) but its contribution to the larger society (to facilitate fishing on the open seas). Implicit in the work of both Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, as well as in that of theorists such as Walter Buckley (1967), is the idea that what is functional for a society depends on that society's environment, so that the social structure and culture that develop in any society will be in sizable part a product of that society's environment.

Aspects of the Environment

What do we mean by a society's environment? The concept includes the full range of realities

to which the society must adapt. There is the *physical environment*, which includes climate, terrain, plant and animal life, and presence or absence of bodies of water. There is the *social environment*, which includes any other societies with which a society must interact. Finally, there is the *technological environment*, which is defined by the level of technology available to a society. All of these represent realities to which a society must adapt, and they interactively define the conditions to which a society must respond. It is obvious that a society in a cold, wet climate will have different needs for shelter and clothing and different ways of obtaining or producing food than one in a desert. However, it is also true that for either the desert or the cold-climate society, reality will be quite different if it is a modern society with electric heating and cooling devices than it would be if it were a hunting-and-gathering society with no technological means of indoor temperature control. Hence, it is the *combination* of the physical, social, and technological environments that defines the total environment to which a society must adapt. Functionalists see social structure and culture as reflecting adaptation to this total environment and believe that this accounts for variation in culture and social structure from place to place and over time.

Cultural and Structural Variation: Do Cultural or Structural Universals Exist?

One question that sociologists and anthropologists have asked for many years is whether cultural or structural *universals* exist. The answer to this question probably depends on how specific something has to be in order to count as a cultural pattern or a structural arrangement. Consider the example of attempts to modify weather, cited by Murdock (1945) as a cultural universal. Are Native American rain dances really a common cultural element with modern cloud-seeding techniques? On the one hand, both are intended to induce rain. On the other hand, the assumptions and worldview behind the two are almost diametrically opposed. The Native American rain dances were based on tradition, religion, and mysticism: If one pleased

Table 4.2 Cultural Universals Identified by George Peter Murdock

<i>Age Grading</i>	<i>Ethnobotany</i>	<i>Inheritance Rules</i>	<i>Personal Names</i>
Athletic sports	Etiquette	Joking	Population policy
Bodily adornment	Faith healing	Kin groups	Postnatal care
Calendar	Family	Kinship nomenclature	Pregnancy usages
Cleanliness training	Feasting	Language	Property rights
Community	Fire making	Law	Propitiation of
organization	Folklore	Luck superstitions	supernatural being
Cooking	Food taboos	Magic	Puberty customs
Cooperative labor	Funeral rites	Marriage	Religious ritual
Cosmology	Games	Mealtimes	Residence rules
Courtship	Gestures	Medicine	Sexual restrictions
Dancing	Gift giving	Modesty about body	Soul concepts
Decorative art	Government	functions	Status differentiation
Divination	Greetings	Mourning	Surgery
Division of labor	Hair styles	Music	Tool making
Dream interpretation	Hospitality	Mythology	Trade
Education	Housing	Numerals	Visiting
Eschatology	Hygiene	Obstetrics	Weaning
Ethics	Incest taboos	Penal sanctions	Weather control

Source: George Peter Murdock, "The Common Denominator of Culture," in *The Science of Man in the World Crisis*, edited by Ralph Linton. Copyright © 1945 by Columbia University Press. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

the spirits, one could induce rain. Modern cloud seeding, in contrast, is based on rationalism, science, and technology.

When we speak of cultural universals, then, it makes sense to speak of broad patterns found in all societies. A list of these is shown in Table 4.2. Beyond these broad patterns, however, there are few, if any, specific cultural or structural universals. Weather is important, so people try to change it. But when we get down to *how* they try to change it, we find tremendous variation.

Universal Social Tasks

As already noted in our discussion of social structure, there are certain issues that must be addressed in every society. We already discussed the most critical ones: division of labor and stratification. In addition, there are other key tasks that every society must accomplish. Thus, every culture must carry some knowledge about these tasks, and every social structure

must provide a means for accomplishing them (Aberle et al., 1950). Among these tasks are the following:

- *Dealing with the physical environment:* Getting food and shelter, adapting to the physical terrain, and protecting oneself from weather, disease, and natural hazards
- *Governing reproduction and relations between the sexes:* Establishing some rules ensuring that the society will reproduce itself and some ground rules for sexual behavior
- *Role assignment:* Deciding who will play what roles within society's system of division of labor and how the stratification system will reward those who play various roles
- *Communication:* Enabling people to communicate with one another through language and other symbols
- *Government:* Having some system through which rules are established, disputes resolved, and common goals set up

- *Norms concerning violence:* A set of rules specifying conditions under which violence is and is not acceptable
- *Socialization:* Some way of teaching children and anyone else entering the society how to function and survive within its culture

Although these issues must be addressed by all societies, how they are addressed is almost limitlessly diverse. Thus, it can be said that cultural universals exist in two broad senses. First, there are regular practices or norms that occur in virtually all societies, although in different forms. Many of the items on Murdock's list fall into this category. Even the incest taboo, sometimes cited as the "only true cultural universal," is an example of this: There is no regularity among societies about what is considered incest and what is not. Second, there are issues that must be addressed by all societies, although in practice each society addresses them in different ways. Thus, cultural variation is much more the pattern than cultural or structural universals. Various aspects of cultural and structural variation, such as religion, sex roles, and marriage and family systems, are discussed in greater detail in later chapters.

Cultural Integration

However much culture varies from one society to another, it is true that within any given culture various aspects of the culture tend to be fairly consistent with one another. This tendency is called *cultural integration*. An example can be seen in the consistencies between religious beliefs and the family system in Judeo-Christian societies. Christians and Jews believe that the law of God calls for monogamous marriage, as reflected in the Commandments "thou shalt not commit adultery" and "thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." Family norms are likewise supportive of religion, as expressed in the saying "the family that prays together stays together." And, indeed, this particular saying appears to be largely true: Divorce rates are significantly lower among devoutly religious people than among the nonreligious.

As noted elsewhere in this chapter, there is also a tendency for the culture and the

social structure to be fairly consistent with one another in any given society. A study by Frank, Meyer, and Miyahara (1995) illustrates this. They examined different societies to measure the extent to which their cultures stressed individualism, and they measured the size and influence of the profession of psychology in each society. Because psychology stresses the value and mental health of the individual, we would expect to find that the more individualistic a society's culture, the greater is the institutionalization of professional psychology. And that is exactly what the researchers found, even after controlling for other relevant variables, such as a society's level of economic development. Delhey, Newton, and Welzel (2011) examined survey respondents in 51 nations and found that trust in others varies systematically across cultures. In wealthier nations, like the United States, the term "most people" is used to mean a much wider circle of people than in less-wealthy nations—usually used to mean a majority of people in the society in wealthy nations. People living in Confucian nations, on the other hand, tend to see the term as meaning "most people they personally know." By these measures, wealthier nations, Latin America, and Eastern Europe tend to be more trusting, while Asian and less-affluent cultures tend to be less so.

Ethnocentrism

Recall the example of the Americans in Sweden who misinterpreted the behavior of Swedes in crowded situations as rude. This example illustrates a pattern known as **ethnocentrism**, in which people, consciously or unconsciously, view their own culture as normal and natural and judge other cultures accordingly. Throughout history, people of various cultural backgrounds have labeled those of different backgrounds as "savage," "barbaric," "hedonistic," and "primitive" because these people's behaviors differed from their own.

Ethnocentrism exists in all societies, for several reasons. First, we take much of our behavior for granted, not really thinking about why we do certain things and don't do other things. To many Americans, eating pork or beefsteak is appetizing, but the thought of

eating worms or grasshoppers is repulsive. In other cultures, though, these same things are viewed very differently. Worms and grasshoppers are eaten in many societies, and in some societies, few things could be more repulsive than eating the meat of a pig or a cow. In many Middle Eastern societies, eating pork is strictly forbidden; it is against the rules of the stricter segments of both Judaism and Islam. In India, cows are considered to be sacred, and people would be horrified at the thought of killing a cow, much less eating it.

Functions of Ethnocentrism. A second reason for the universality of ethnocentrism is that it performs a function: In a society where people have a common culture, ethnocentrism in relation to other societies helps to promote solidarity (Sumner, 1906). To a certain extent, any society can promote internal unity and cooperation by comparing itself favorably to those outside. Significantly, the ever-present tendency toward ethnocentrism becomes most pronounced during wartime, as each country in the conflict emphasizes its righteousness and civility as contrasted with its evil and barbaric enemy. From a conflict perspective, ethnocentrism is also useful for justifying or rationalizing one group's exploitation of another. "After all," the colonizers tell themselves, "they're just helpless primitives whom we're actually civilizing"—in the process of making them slaves or taking their land. With this type of thinking, even the most brutal exploitation can be made to seem acceptable.

Dysfunctions of Ethnocentrism. Despite the fact that it is functional in certain ways, most sociologists see ethnocentrism as generally dysfunctional, and they try to discourage it. For one thing, it can be a major source of conflict and inequality in any society with a significant degree of cultural diversity—which, in today's world, means most societies. Second, it is a major cause of international conflict because societies that view one another ethnocentrically create international conflicts through self-fulfilling prophecies. Third, as previously noted, it is often used as an excuse for one group to treat another in a brutal and exploitative manner. Finally, ethnocentrism creates misunderstanding of social reality. In fact, one of the greatest

challenges of social-science research is to avoid a tendency toward ethnocentrism when studying human behavior.

Cultural Relativism

In contrast to ethnocentrism, social scientists try to look at human behavior and culture from a viewpoint of **cultural relativism**. Cultural relativism recognizes that cultures are different but does not view difference as deficiency. Rather, it realizes that different societies develop different cultures and different social structures in response to the different environmental conditions they face. Thus, even if our ways seem natural and are best for us, they are not natural but a social product, and they certainly may not be best for someone else. Cultural relativism also means trying to understand the behavior of people in other cultures according to what the behavior means to them and not what it would mean to someone in *our* culture. Even for social scientists trained in detached observation, this is not easy to do.

It should be stressed that cultural relativism does *not* always mean value neutrality. Occasionally, cultures become despotic, as in the case of Nazi Germany. Sociologists do not carry cultural relativism to the point of accepting the values espoused by such cultures, but they do try to understand the social forces that produce them.

The Conflict Perspective and Culture

Recall from Chapter 3 that, to the conflict theorist, a society's social structure is arranged so that whatever group holds power in that society controls a disproportionate share of scarce resources. To the conflict theorist, the function of culture is to justify such social arrangements—to get people in society to accept the notion that those who have a disproportionate share of scarce resources *should* have that large share. This viewpoint is expressed most clearly in the theories of Karl Marx (1964 [orig. 1867]).

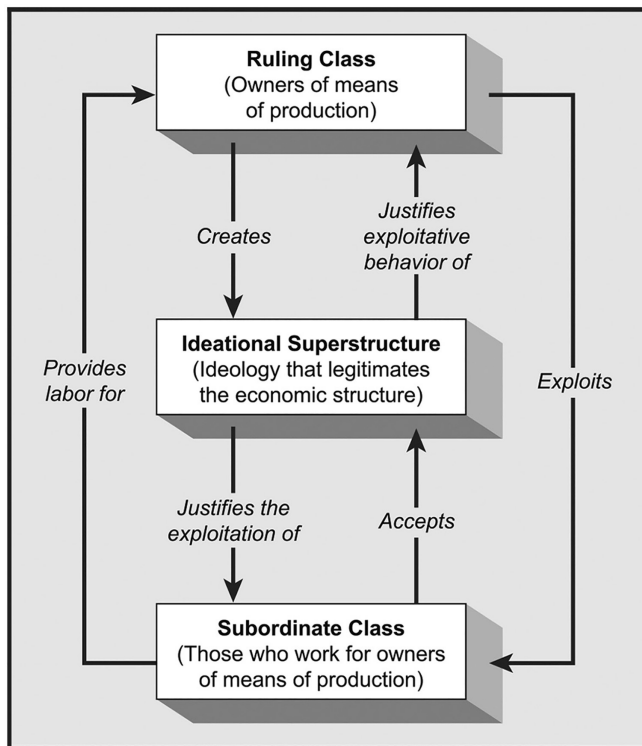
Marx on Social Structure and Culture

Marx believed strongly that any society's culture is an outgrowth of its social structure. In other

words, the basic social and economic arrangements in a society largely determine what people in that society will know and believe. All societies, Marx argued, have an *economic structure* and an *ideational superstructure*. By **economic structure**, Marx was referring to those elements of social structure that relate to production, wealth, and income. It includes the economic stratification system—the distribution of income and particularly wealth—but it also is defined by the society's production system (e.g., industrial versus agricultural). By **ideational superstructure**, Marx was referring to those aspects of culture that we have called ideology. Marx used the term “superstructure” because he saw ideology and culture as arising from the social structure, not having a life of their own. The true structure of a society is defined by its distribution of wealth; culture, he argued, is simply a product of that economic structure.

Social Structure. The relationship between social structure (or in Marxian terms, economic structure) and culture (or ideational superstructure) is depicted in Figure 4.2. The blocks at the top and bottom of the figure represent the social or economic structure. As the figure shows, this structure is composed of a ruling class and a subordinate class. The ruling class is the group that owns the means of production, and the subordinate class is everyone else. In general, people in the subordinate class work for people in the ruling class. Thus, as shown on the left side of Figure 4.2, the subordinate class provides labor for the ruling class. Those in the ruling class are able to sell the products of that labor for more than the cost of the labor, and this profit—or surplus value of labor, as Marx called it—enables the ruling class to enjoy a much higher standard of living than everyone else. Marx saw this as exploitation because the actual work is done by

Figure 4.2 The relationship between economic structure and ideational superstructure (ideology) in Marxian theory.



Source: From *The Study of Sociology*, I/E. Copyright © 1974, The Dushkin Publishing Group/Brown & Benchmark Publishers, a division of McGraw-Hill Higher Education Group, Guilford, CT. All rights reserved.

the subordinate class, who suffer a low standard of living, while the ruling class monopolizes the products of their labor and thereby enjoys a luxurious standard of living. Thus, as shown at the right side of the figure, the ruling class exploits the subordinate class.

Ideology. Of course, because the social structure is fundamentally one of inequality and exploitation, according to Marx, the ruling class always faces the risk of an uprising by the subordinate class. The function of ideology, or ideational superstructure, is to prevent this. A culture's ideology thus explains why the ruling class should enjoy disproportionate wealth. In other words, it promotes the view that the ruling class *deserves* their great wealth. In Figure 4.2, culture or ideology is represented by the middle block. Note the arrows between the top two blocks. The ruling class creates the ideology, and the ideology justifies its exploitative relationship with the subordinate class.

How ideology justifies such exploitative relationships will depend, of course, on the broader characteristics of the society. Traditional, preindustrial societies might justify the social structure on the grounds that it is the will of God. Thus, the royalty and nobility of preindustrial Europe—the owners of wealth in feudal society—were protected by an ideology known as the *divine right of kings*, which held that kings received their authority from God. In a modern industrial society, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few might be justified on the grounds of productivity and incentive: Placing any limit on the wealth that people can earn might take away their incentive to come up with innovations that improve productivity. If this sounds more persuasive to you than God's willing that the king should rule, that is not surprising. You live, after all, in a modern society that values rationality, productivity, and innovation. However, Marx and those who follow his theories would hold that this argument is merely a cultural mechanism designed to uphold the great wealth of the economic ruling class, and that society could be just as productive without so much concentration of wealth. The relationship between inequality and productivity is explored further in Chapter 6, which deals with social inequality.

False Consciousness

As the bottom half of Figure 4.2 illustrates, not only does the ruling class create and promote an ideology that justifies its exploitative behavior, but the subordinate class accepts this ideology. Marx referred to this acceptance as false consciousness. In medieval society, for example, what was critical was that people *believed* in the divine right of kings. Such a belief served the interest of the king, but it went directly against the interests of the serfs and peasants, who labored for long hours day after day, only to see the wealth that they produced taken away by a noble or king. **False consciousness**, then, can be defined as acceptance by a group of people—usually a subordinate group of people—of a belief or value that works against that group's self-interests.

False consciousness is a critical concept in conflict theories about culture and social structure because it is the key means by which the ruling class prevents protest or revolution. *Why* do subordinate groups so often accept ideologies that go against their own interests? According to Marx, the answer lies in the power of the ruling class over key institutions and sources of information.

False Consciousness and Social Structure. Consider again the example of medieval European society. In that time and place, the key social institution was the Church. Kings were crowned in cathedrals, and bishops were consecrated in the presence of the king. Bishops, like kings and nobles, were often major landowners. Thus, the Church and royalty shared a common position in the ruling class, and because religion was the source of truth in such traditional societies, the ruling class could promote its interests through the Church. Thus, the divine right theory was not seriously questioned until the beginnings of urbanization and industrialization created a new and powerful capitalist class whose interests often conflicted with those of the rural landowners.

In modern societies, false consciousness can be promoted through other means. Conflict theorists point out, for example, that the media are owned and controlled by large corporations, who are the wealthiest class in contemporary capitalist societies (Molotch, 1979). This does

not mean that the media will speak with a unified voice, or even that they will not criticize the wealthy. However, conflict theorists do argue that there is a definite limit to how far the media will go in advocating fundamental change in the economic system, and that the media encourage people to take certain economic arrangements for granted. Often, too, the media focus heavily on entertainment rather than information, giving people largely what they want but also giving them little real information. According to some conflict theorists, this policy distracts the public from social issues that might lead to conflict that could threaten the ruling class (Gouldner, 1976, especially pp. 167–78).

Incompatibilities Between Culture and Social Structure

Maybe no two terms are more important or more difficult to define than “structure” and “culture.” In this book, we defined the two as how society is organized and what society believes, respectively. But many sociologists point out that the line between even these definitions is fuzzy. What we do know is that *culture and structure are very closely interrelated*. A classroom, for instance, is part of the social structure, but it also is a product of the culture that produced it and the ideas that motivated its construction. The fact that classrooms are set up so that the teacher stands at the front of the room and can move about freely while the students are seated below the teacher and organized in rows and are not supposed to move is not only a reflection of the authority relationship between teacher and students but also a product of the values, beliefs, and ideologies of our society—in other words, our culture.

When only looking at the concept of culture, we acknowledge this problem by defining different kinds of culture: the idea side as nonmaterial or cognitive culture and the material side as material culture. But what about structure? Doesn't the idea of material culture encroach on the idea of social structure? Many would say yes. And this is the problem. We know the two things are different, as discussed later in the chapter on the conflicts between

culture and structure. Yet we also recognize that the line between the two is tricky. And none of this helps us to understand how culture and structure work together.

Enter William Sewell. Sewell (1992) argues that we should, in essence, simply change the language by which we are debating these issues. By changing our language, maybe we can use Sewell's ideas to illuminate the structure/culture relationship.

Sewell's Duality of Structure Theory

According to Sewell, reality is made up of two elements: resources and schemas. **Schemas** are defined as virtual frames of reference, ideas that help us to understand and organize other ideas—sort of like mental bookshelves. The importance of schemas is that they could be anything. There are no limits to what humans might believe. We used to think the world was flat, for instance (some people still do).

Resources, on the other hand, are actual; they exist in the material world and can be human or nonhuman. The key thing is resources always have limits—things they can do and things they cannot do. The chair you are seated in may be able to do a lot of things if you need it to; if you had to, you could probably use it as a weapon or a shield, but it probably cannot fly you to the moon. We may never know exactly what these limits are for any given resource, but they are always there. We are simply assuming your chair could not fly you to the moon; maybe we're wrong.

When the limits of resources come up against the limitlessness of our schemas, we may see that what we believed is not true and change our minds. This is how social change takes place. This is also the importance of the structure-culture debate. In Sewell's model, resources correspond to structure, and schemas correspond to culture, loosely. By changing the terms, Sewell gives us a way to see the importance of the culture-structure debate.

Of course, this process does not always work. Research has also shown that support for ideas that are held by individuals for emotional reasons rather than logical reasons actually

increase when those individuals are exposed to evidence their ideas are wrong; in contrast, those who hold ideas for logical reasons are far more likely to change their minds if they can be shown their ideas are factually incorrect.

Finally, both the functionalist and conflict perspectives agree that under certain circumstances, culture and social structure are at odds with each other. We examine this issue from the viewpoints of the two schools.

Culture Against Structure: The Functionalist Perspective

Functionalist theory holds that a society's social structure and culture will help it adapt to its physical, social, and technological environment. This would seem to suggest that society could be very stable once it reached a state of equilibrium with that environment. The environment, however, is always changing. The society comes into contact with societies it did not have to deal with before, which represents a change in the social environment. New technologies are invented, which represent a change in the technological environment. Even the physical environment can change and force a society to adapt. In 1986, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster contaminated the reindeer herd of northern Sweden and Norway with radiation, which forced many people who had been herding reindeer for centuries to change their lifestyle. Although this is a particularly dramatic change in the physical environment, there are many more gradual changes that require societies to adapt. Changes in climate, environmental damage, the depletion of natural resources or the discovery of new ones, changes in the mix of animal life, and even changes in lake or ocean levels can all require substantial adaptation by human societies. Thus, they can all be important sources of social and cultural change.

Cultural Lag

When a society must change in response to its environment, its social structure and culture often do not change at the same rate. The social structure, for example, can often adapt quickly to new technology. However, the culture is

usually slower to change because people resist giving up important values and beliefs. This creates a condition sociologists call **cultural lag**. When this situation exists, a value, norm, or belief that once was functional persists even though it is no longer functional or has become dysfunctional. Cultural lag occurs any time a society's culture fails to keep up with changes in its social structure, or when one part of the culture changes and another part does not (Ogburn, 1966 [orig. 1922]). Numerous examples of cultural lag can be found in American society.

You can see an example of cultural lag every time that you eat. Americans, after they cut their meat, put down the knife and switch the fork from the left hand to the right. Only then do they put the food in their mouths. This differs from the European practice of simply raising the food to the mouth with the fork in the left hand after cutting the meat with the right. Why did Americans change this practice? Some experts conjecture that the change originated on the frontier, where people needed to keep one hand free in case they had to grab a weapon to fight off an attacker. Today, the frontier is gone, and putting down the knife and switching the fork to the other hand has no practical use. Americans continue to do it anyway, however, and to eat in the European style is considered to be "bad manners."

Cultural Diffusion

Another condition that can produce incompatibilities between culture and social structure is **cultural diffusion**, a condition that occurs when aspects of the culture of one society are gradually adopted by other societies. Examples of cultural diffusion abound. One is the worldwide popularity of American and British rock music, which is often sung in English regardless of the local language.

Like cultural lag, cultural diffusion can produce situations where the culture and social structure are incompatible. The culture of one society may not work very well with the social structure of another. In this case, the process happens in the opposite way from cultural lag: The culture changes in some way that may make it incompatible with the social structure. In

recent decades, for example, many Americans have been influenced by mystical Asian religious philosophies. Transcendental meditation, Buddhism, and other forms of Eastern mysticism, stressing inner peace and self-knowledge, have attracted sizable interest. To other Americans, however, a mode of thinking that emphasizes introspection and inner peace seems out of place in an economic system that requires achievement motivation and a certain amount of interest in material wealth. Some have even seen the spread of these new ideas as a threat to the productivity of the American economy.

When either cultural lag or cultural diffusion produces a situation where the culture and social structure are incompatible, several things can happen. The culture or the structure can change in ways that make the two more compatible. Sometimes a *subculture* will develop. In the case of cultural lag, some people will continue to hang on to the old culture, while others adopt new ways of thinking that are more consistent with the new structural realities. In the case of cultural diffusion, some people are usually quicker than others to borrow ideas from other cultures. In both of these cases, society becomes more culturally diverse as different belief systems and different sets of norms emerge among different groups of people in society. This can bring conflict if the groups confront one another, but it also can be an important source of social adaptation.

Subcultures in Mass Society

A **subculture** can be defined as a set of cultural characteristics shared among a group within a society that (1) are distinct in some ways from the larger culture within which the group exists but (2) also have some features in common with the larger culture. Usually, a group that forms a subculture has some sense of identity, some recognition that people in the group share something among themselves that others in the larger society do not. A subculture can develop any time a group of people share some situation or experience that is different from that of others in their society. Some of the groups of people that commonly form subcultures are

age groups; racial and ethnic groups; religious groups; people in a particular geographic area; and people with a common occupation, recreational interest, or economic situation. Each of these examples involves some common situation or experience among people in the group that is not shared with the larger society. It is important to stress that the preface “sub” does *not* imply that subcultures are inferior to, or less fully developed than, cultures. Rather, it is used to convey the notion that subcultures exist *within* some larger cultural context. An illustration of the relationship between subcultures and the common culture of the larger society can be seen in the reaction of Americans to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. On the one hand, the country was unified by the attacks, as often happens. Americans of all races, religions, and cultural backgrounds died in the attacks, and to a great extent, all Americans had a common reaction of shock, disgust, and anger. When the U.S. government took military action in Afghanistan to bring to justice those responsible for the attacks, Americans initially supported it with greater unanimity than had been the case in any military action since World War II. At the same time, however, there were some ways in which cultural norms based on gender, race, class, and region still shaped the response of Americans to the attacks. This issue is explored further in the box, “Responding to Terror: A Common Norm or Group Differences?”

Case Studies: Hip-Hop and “Computer Geeks”

In some cases, the values, norms, and beliefs of a subculture are in conflict with those of the larger culture, whereas in other cases, they are largely irrelevant to those of the larger culture. An example of conflict can be seen in the “hip-hop” subculture that emerged among inner-city African Americans in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Through rap music and other symbols, hip-hop expresses anger toward American society over racism, poverty, and lack of opportunity, and it rejects many of the values of the larger, mostly white, middle-class culture. Much of rap music’s language and content seems intended to shock those who adhere to that culture. In contrast, an example of a subculture



UNDERSTANDING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

Responding to Terror: A Common Norm or Group Differences?

When terrorists attacked the United States on September 11, 2001, it brought an unusual degree of unity in one regard: In the days immediately following the attack, an overwhelming proportion of Americans, 90 percent or more, supported a military response and supported President George W. Bush's handling of the crisis. In fact, the president's approval rating in the weeks immediately after the attack was the highest ever recorded. Even among African Americans, a group from which Bush had previously received little support, his approval rating soared from just 32 percent in early September to 70 percent after the attacks (Pew Research Center, 2001). In such a context, reactions were in some cases quite strong against people who did not express support for the president. For example, at California State University at Chico, a professor who said that Bush administration policies may have contributed to the attack received over 70 hate-mail letters, and he was interrupted and heckled when he attempted to speak in public. The president of the university received numerous letters demanding that he fire the professor. This example shows that in the atmosphere of anger and fear following the attacks, *support for President Bush and his policies had, to a large extent, become a norm among Americans.*

At the same time, though, social differences among Americans did not disappear, even with this broad consensus. While an overwhelming majority of Americans favored some form of military response to the terrorist attacks, their confidence in the effectiveness of such a response varied widely, often along lines of race, class, and gender. And it did so in sociologically predictable ways. For example, white people, males, people in the South, and people with lower levels of education have been the groups that have always had the highest levels of confidence in the military and in military action. This was again true in the context of the terrorist attacks. Among men, 46 percent were "very confident" that military action would be effective in stopping terrorism, compared to just 33 percent of women. Among people who had never attended college, 42 percent

were very confident, compared to just 33 percent of college graduates. Among people from the South, nearly half, 47 percent, felt very confident; in all other regions, the percentage who said they were very confident was below 40 percent. And among African Americans, 39 percent were doubtful that military action would be effective, compared to just 20 percent of white people (Pew Research Foundation, 2001).

Other differences followed similar lines. For example, when asked whether military action or homeland defense should be the top priority, men chose military action over homeland defense by a two-to-one margin, while women were evenly divided on which should be the top priority. And when asked whether prevention of future terrorism or punishment of the September 11 attackers is higher priority, two-thirds of college graduates said prevention should be a higher priority, compared to just half of those who had never attended college. Worry about future terrorism also varied along lines of race and gender. Generally, groups with a less advantaged or more vulnerable position in society worried more: Hispanics and African Americans were more concerned than white people and—consistent with past studies of response to natural hazards—women were more concerned than men. Significantly, the more worried people were about additional attacks, the less confident they were that military action would be effective in preventing such attacks (Pew Research Foundation, 2001). Similarly, when asked in October 2014 whether they supported the use of ground troops to fight the terrorist organization ISIS in Syria and Iraq, 47 percent of men said they did, compared with only 30 percent of women; 41 percent of white people supported the use of troops, while only 30 percent of black people did (Pew Research Center, 2015a).

These findings show that even on an issue where a strong norm exists, as in how to respond to the September 11 terrorist attacks, the factors of race, class, gender, and other social characteristics still make real differences in many aspects of people's opinions about the issue.

with norms largely irrelevant to the larger culture can be seen in what are commonly called “computer geeks.” Like the inner-city hip-hop culture, this group speaks a language different from that of most Americans. It speaks of bits, bytes, and bandwidth, as well as RAM, ROM, and FTP downloads. However, this group uses such terms not to rebel against middle-class culture but because of its special interest in the details of computers that ordinary English doesn’t describe very well. Computer geeks are not really in conflict with the larger culture. Rather, they are, at times, totally absorbed in their own subculture.

Though both the hip-hop and computer subcultures share knowledge, beliefs, values, and norms that are different from those of the larger society, neither is totally apart from the larger American culture. Their members, for example, are for the most part capable of speaking ordinary, standard English when the situation calls for it and they wish to do so. Despite its rebelliousness, hip-hop still incorporates some basic American values, ranging from material consumption to a desire for fairness. Moreover, people in both groups watch some of the same television shows and eat at some of the same chain restaurants. Thus, computer geeks and even the hip-hop culture of inner-city youth fit into the larger culture in some ways. That is what makes them subcultures rather than totally independent cultures.

A subculture’s norms may conflict with those of the larger society, or they may gradually filter into the larger society through the process of cultural diffusion, as has happened to some extent with both the hip-hop and computer geek subcultures. They may also be largely irrelevant to the larger society, as is the case with some recreational subcultures. Although such recreational subcultures do not conflict with the larger culture, they do have distinct norms that are well understood by those familiar with the subculture but largely unknown to people outside it.

Jargon in Subcultures

We have already seen examples of language and symbol variation in our discussion of hip-hop and computer geeks. When a subculture



Photo 4.4 Although hip-hop culture began with African American youth in central cities, some aspects of it have been adopted by white suburban youths. This is an example of how cultural diffusion can occur within a society.

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develops its own distinct terminology, this terminology is often referred to as jargon. Jargon has both manifest and latent functions. Its manifest function can be seen in the example of the computer geeks. There are areas of particular interest to people sharing the subculture, such as technical computer procedures, that ordinary language is not sufficiently detailed to describe easily. The professions—including sociology—also have extensive jargon, for much the same reason. Sociology, chemistry, law, medicine, and other professions involve detailed and specialized subject matter that requires precise terminology.

Besides this manifest function of describing specialized concepts, jargon has the important latent function of setting boundaries concerning who is “in” and who is “out of” a particular subculture. This process of *boundary maintenance* is important to the group identity of those who share a subculture. Thus, part of becoming accepted among the community of professional sociologists is the ability to use the jargon. Similarly, computer geeks and other recreational subcultures use knowledge of the jargon to distinguish novices and outsiders from “insiders.”

Functions of Subcultures

We already identified one of the functions of subcultures: permitting specialized activity. As we saw earlier in this chapter, the division of labor is essential in any society and becomes more so as society becomes larger and more complex. Because subcultures (particularly occupational subcultures) carry the knowledge necessary to perform specialized tasks, they are essential to the division of labor.

Identity in Mass Society. Subcultures also provide a source of identity in mass society, thus preventing feelings of isolation and **anomie** (see Chapter 3). In modern mass societies, where the same chain stores and restaurants are everywhere, and where your account number, student number, and social security number are often more important than your name, it is easy for anomie to occur (see, e.g., Ritzer, 2008). People want to distinguish themselves from the crowd in order to feel that “I am somebody” (Riesman, 1961). Subcultures permit this by enabling people with a common interest, situation, or set of experiences to stand out from the crowd. They provide effective norms for the small group when the norms of the larger society seem meaningless.

Cultural Adaptation and Change. Another important function of subcultures is to serve as a *source of adaptation* in society. Recall our previous discussion of cultural lag and cultural diffusion. Often a subculture is the mechanism through which cultural diffusion occurs. In such cases, some groups of people in the society—often the young, the well-educated, or those at the forefront of developing new technologies—adopt a new set of values and beliefs that are better adjusted to the new realities. This group thus develops a subculture in response to the new conditions. Eventually, a process of cultural diffusion occurs within the society, and the values of this subculture spread to the larger society.

A process very much like this has taken place in the United States with respect to the roles of men and women. In today’s highly technological and automated society, the notion of determining social roles by sex, which may once have had some basis in differences in physical strength, no longer makes much sense. The idea

of more equal roles for men and women was first adopted by young, urban, well-educated people, particularly women (Yankelovich, 1981, 1974). Because the idea of different roles for men and women has been with us for centuries, there was considerable resistance to this new idea. Gradually, though, the notion that women belong in the workplace and can perform most jobs spread to the mainstream (Roper Organization, 1980; Yankelovich, 1981). Thus, what had been an adaptation to a new social and technological environment by a particular subculture gradually became accepted in mainstream American culture through a process of cultural diffusion.

Dysfunctions of Subcultures

Although subcultures perform important functions in society, they can also be dysfunctional. The most important potential dysfunction, from the point of view of the functionalist perspective, is that they can erode society’s consensus. If a culture contains subcultures whose attitudes are too different from one another, or who are excessively at odds with the larger culture, cooperation can be inhibited. Each group may think of itself first and the concerns of the larger society only later. Hence, functionalists generally seek to place bounds on cultural diversity, opposing policies that encourage it, such as bilingual education (Glazer, 1981; Thernstrom, 1980), and criticizing social programs that emphasize group rights rather than individual rights or the needs of the larger society (Bolce and Gray, 1979; Glazer, 1976; Steele, 1990).

Culture Against Structure: The Conflict Perspective

Unlike functionalists, conflict theorists see incompatibility between culture and social structure as something more fundamental than adaptation to the society’s environment. They see such incompatibilities as inherent in the nature of the society itself. As we saw, conflict theorists hold that social structure is shaped in the interests of the dominant group in the society and that it survives because of the *false consciousness* of other groups. Eventually, however,

the people in the society may come to attain **class consciousness**: That is, they will recognize that their true interests do not lie in maintaining the social structure as it was created by the dominant group. In other words, they have now adopted beliefs, values, and norms that support their objective self-interests. This, of course, places their culture at odds with the social structure, and as a group, the subordinate class is in conflict with the dominant group. To conflict theorists, this conflict offers the possibility of social change.

Class Consciousness and Symbolic Interaction

The process by which people's consciousness is altered involves communication within disadvantaged or oppressed groups, which leads people in those groups to redefine the meaning of their situation. Until rather recently, a short-coming of conflict theories was their failure to focus sufficiently on the process by which such changes of consciousness occur. Several contemporary theorists who began as conflict theorists have set out to combine the insights of the symbolic-interactionist perspective with those of conflict theory in order to understand this process (Collins, 1981, 1985b; Giddens, 1978, 1985). These theorists point out that individual interpretations of meaning collectively define how groups view their situation. They argue that in order for us to understand such changes as shifts from false consciousness to class consciousness, we must understand the processes of communication and interpretation through which individual views of reality are changed.

Subculture as a Weapon in Group Conflict

Because class consciousness develops in groups that share a common interest among themselves (and an interest opposed to that of the dominant group), it is clear that subcultures play an important role in social change. Conflict theorists emphasize the idea that subcultures develop among groups that share a common self-interest. To the conflict theorists, the most important function of subcultures is to enable groups to act on behalf of a common self-interest. Consider the hip-hop example again. From a functionalist perspective, this

subculture would give black inner-city youth a sense of identity in a mass society. However, from a conflict perspective, hip-hop does more than that. It forms a basis for people to act upon the common self-interests they share as young, poor, inner-city African Americans. Thus, hip-hop becomes more than a mere source of identity in mass society; it becomes a political statement that black youth reject the dominant culture and demand the opportunity to control their own destiny. To conflict theorists, such articulation of group interests and political expression is the most important function of subcultures.

Cross-Cutting and Overlapping Cleavages

Although diversity of culture can lead to conflict in some cases, it can also help to keep conflict under control. This depends on how the various subcultures in a society divide on the basis of different issues and social characteristics. If they always divide the same way, severe conflict is likely. If they divide differently, conflict is usually more manageable. When the divisions are always the same (or very similar), a society is said to have **overlapping cleavages**: issues that divide people generally along similar lines. An example of this is Northern Ireland. Americans think of Northern Ireland as being divided by religion: Protestants versus Catholics. However, the social characteristics of ethnicity, class, and religion divide the population almost identically. Nearly all the Protestants are of British ancestry (either Scottish or English) and nearly all the Catholics are of Irish ancestry. Moreover, the British conquered Ireland and annexed it to the United Kingdom (UK), which is the original source of the conflict. The Republic of Ireland gained its independence, but Northern Ireland remains part of the UK today. Thus, religion and nationality divide the population identically, and both divisions have their origin in force and conquest. Social class is also closely related to ethnicity, with the poorest groups being concentrated among the Irish Catholics and the wealthiest among the English-ancestry Protestants. The Scottish-ancestry Protestants fall between and perceive themselves to be threatened by the Catholics. The result of all this is that whether society divides along

the lines of religion, ethnicity, or social class, the lines of division are much the same. Thus, Northern Ireland's subcultures were, for a long time, almost literally at war with one another.

This can be contrasted to **cross-cutting cleavages**, situations in which divisions or issues of conflict divide a society in different ways on different issues. There are ethnic differences between Catholics and Protestants in the United States, too, but here, both religions are composed of a wide diversity of ethnic groups. Irish, Italian, Polish, and Mexican American Catholics may have little in common besides their religion; in Northern Ireland, however, all Catholics share a common ethnic background. The mix of social classes is also quite similar among American Catholics and Protestants. In short, ethnicity, religion, and class all divide the American population into subcultures in *different* ways, so everyone has different loyalties, depending on the issue. This situation of cross-cutting cleavages tends to keep conflict manageable (Lipset, 1959).

Countercultures

Sometimes, particularly when cleavages are overlapping rather than cross-cutting, subcultures become so opposed to the larger culture that sociologists call them **countercultures** (Roszak, 1969; Yinger, 1982). A counterculture exists when a subculture adopts values and beliefs that are predominantly in opposition to those of the larger society. Examples of countercultures are religious cults such as the Hare Krishnas, and the Branch Davidian and Heaven's Gate cults of the 1990s. Countercultural political groups include the Ku Klux Klan and the Aryan Nations on the right and on the left, the Weather Underground of the 1960s and 1970s and today's anarchist youth movements. In fact, young people have been found to be more open to new ideas than older individuals, generally speaking, so it is hardly surprising that many countercultures are disproportionately composed of younger individuals (Kiley and Vaisey, 2020). The concept of counterculture also includes groups espousing radically different lifestyles, such as the Hell's Angels or the facial tattoo movement. Some groups combine lifestyle with politics, such as

the hippies of the 1960s and today's "alternative" youth culture or, at the opposite end of the political spectrum, neo-Nazi skinheads. All of these groups challenge authority and the established order, and most have engaged in direct conflict with authority—sometimes with violent consequences.

At times, countercultures become widespread and influential in society, as in the 1960s when diverse groups of young people seemed to challenge nearly every social norm. Although these groups were popularly referred to as "the counterculture," it is not clear whether it was really one counterculture or many. Each of these groups had very different lifestyles, experiences, and concerns. Some, for example, were out to change society (and not always in the same ways), whereas others were simply seeking to withdraw from it (Kenniston, 1971).

It should be mentioned that some social scientists question the entire notion of countercultures. They argue that even countercultures reflect a mix of rejection and acceptance of the larger culture. Extreme rightist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, Posse Comitatus, Aryan Nations, and various "militia" groups may engage in violence against the police and fellow citizens, but they also carry the American flag and call themselves "true patriots." From this perspective, these elements of acceptance and rejection of the dominant culture make it very hard to draw the line between a subculture and a counterculture. Regardless of terminology, however, the development of subcultures that at least partly oppose the larger culture is an important source of social change.

Putting Sociology to Work

Multiculturalism: A Pathway to Cooperation in a Diverse Society?

Today, more than one in three Americans is a person of color from a non-European background. This percentage will continue to grow in the coming decades for two reasons. First, the birth rate of these groups tends to be somewhat higher than that of Americans of European ancestry. Second, today's immigrants are

coming mainly from Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean, in contrast to earlier eras when most immigrants came from Europe.

It is clear that in order to be productive, the United States must offer full opportunities to people of color to become well educated and to fill the jobs of the future, which will be more and more technically demanding. Unfortunately, patterns of discrimination and institutionalized inequality, described in greater detail in Chapter 7, have excluded many people of color—particularly African Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, and Native Americans, from such opportunities.

To combat such exclusion, many colleges and businesses have established programs in support of diversity and **multiculturalism**. Multiculturalism can be defined as a viewpoint that values and embraces cultural diversity. Such diversity is valued for several reasons. First, our society is becoming more culturally diverse, and people in all cultures value their own traditions and viewpoints. When people, in turn, feel valued by others, they are more likely to be motivated to cooperate and achieve in the school and workplace. Second, diversity frequently offers new and insightful ways of looking at a variety of subjects, which would be missed if one approached these subjects only from the viewpoint of one group.

Diversity programs are also based in part on research findings about the effects of living and working in situations dominated by a culture different from one's own. Often, this situation, along with the cultural conflicts it frequently generates, leads people of color to encounter difficulty in predominantly white workplace or school settings. They may feel unwanted and unaccepted—in some cases with good reason. These feelings have led many people of color to leave or avoid such situations or have created tensions that have made it difficult for them to succeed. Studies have shown, for example, that social processes such as these are among the major reasons for retention problems among black college students and that even the most successful black professionals and managers do not feel fully accepted in the places where they work (Allen, Epps, and Haniff, 1991; Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, 1991). The objective of

diversity and multiculturalism programs is to encourage greater respect for people of diverse cultural backgrounds as a means of promoting both greater racial and ethnic harmony and a more hospitable workplace and school environment for people of color.

Some people—mainly social scientific functionalists and political conservatives—have criticized multiculturalism on the grounds that it encourages divisions by encouraging people to maintain their cultural differences rather than to assimilate. These critics hold that if people would assimilate, they would have more in common with one another and would thus be more likely to cooperate. On the other hand, when people maintain greater cultural differences, the result may be conflict that divides different groups and discourages cooperation. Thus, in this view, too much cultural diversity can be dysfunctional. These critics argue that other societies with which the United States is competing, such as Japan and many European countries, are less ethnically diverse than the United States, and that this facilitates cooperation and productivity among their people. According to this view, different groups in the United States should be encouraged to assimilate into one common culture, and multiculturalism inhibits this.

There is, however, one important problem with this argument: There may be good reasons why some groups do not want to assimilate and why it may not be in their interest to do so. A variety of researchers have pointed out that groups whose original entry into a society is not voluntary nearly always resist giving up their own values and lifestyles in favor of those of the majority (Blauner, 1972; Lieberman, 1980; Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, 1991). Such groups have almost always been historically oppressed, and they do not want to accept the values of a group that has discriminated against them and economically exploited them. Moreover, conflict theorists argue that it may not be in their interests to do so; it may be a case of the false consciousness discussed earlier in this chapter. In the United States, most people of color fall into this category. African Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans all were, historically speaking, brought

under American rule involuntarily and subjected to widespread discrimination and economic exploitation. Only Asian Americans originally came to the United States voluntarily, and they are indeed more culturally assimilated than other Americans of color. Hence, whatever the theoretical merits of a society with cultural consensus, it may be unrealistic to expect that to occur for many groups in the United States given its history.

In part because cultural consensus is unlikely to occur in a society as diverse as the United States, the overall society's productivity will increase if people from all groups learn to work and cooperate with others from different cultural backgrounds. In order for this to happen, research and experience suggest that workplace diversity programs must address the fears and perceptions of the dominant group—that is, of white males. All of us tend to generalize to others from the experience of our own group. White Americans, for example, often assume that the experiences of other groups are similar to their own—in other words, fairly open to opportunity and relatively free of discrimination (Kluegel, 1990; Schuman and Krysan, 1999; Gallup Organization, 2001a). For this reason, they often perceive multiculturalism, affirmative action, and other diversity programs as conferring special favors for minorities. But if they are shown ways in which others do not have the same opportunities they enjoy, white Americans will often become more supportive of efforts to increase opportunity and address inequality. Accordingly, studies have found that the more that white people perceive that equal opportunity is not a reality for people of color, the more likely they are to support affirmative action and similar diversity initiatives (Kluegel, 1990; Herring et al., 2000). For this reason, making members of the majority group more aware of the different experiences of other groups may be a crucial step toward greater social harmony (Advisory Board to the President's Initiative on Race, 1998). In fact, such heightened awareness of the experiences of others has been a key aspect of successful diversity plans at Monsanto and other companies (Galagan, 1993). In addition, it makes a difference in majority workers'

attitudes when employers take a strong stand in support of diversity. For example, white people who have had the greatest personal contact with affirmative action in their own workplaces are the most supportive of it (Taylor, 1995), and the same appears to be true with respect to college students and affirmative action on campus (Bowen and Bok, 1998).

The real question, then, may come down to people's ability to respect and understand cultural and experiential differences, which will help them to cooperate despite such differences. Initial successes with cultural diversity programs in such companies as Monsanto and Kodak suggest that these programs can help to bring about such cooperation if it is made clear that it is valued and expected by the organization. Research has shown that as people become more educated and as society continues to urbanize, the tendency is for people to become more accepting of diversity (Tuch, 1987). Thus, the present social context may well be creating an environment favorable to the success of programs like those at Monsanto and Kodak.

We turn now to a broader discussion of American culture, with which we conclude the chapter.

American Culture

Core American Values and Beliefs

What are the beliefs and values associated with American culture, and how do they differ from those of other cultures? A number of sociologists have addressed this question and have achieved a fairly broad consensus on some of the core values and beliefs that are shared by the majority of Americans. Table 4.3 lists some of the most basic American values.

Ideal Versus Real Culture

The core values contained in Table 4.3 raise certain questions and issues. Clearly, some of these values conflict with others. For example, our humanitarian belief in helping the "deserving poor" is not always compatible with our

Table 4.3 Core American Values and Beliefs

Freedom	Belief in personal rights, as expressed in the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution, and the need to extend and defend these rights around the world.
Democracy	The belief that people should be free to choose their own government and that government decisions should be a product of the public will.
Individualism and individual responsibility	The belief that success and failure are individual, and not governmental or societal, responsibilities. People should support themselves and their families and not rely on “welfare.”
Religion and morality	A concern with issues of rights and wrong, which permeates most political issues Might reflect the fact that Americans are more religious than most industrialized peoples.
Science and technology	The belief in solving problems through the application of scientific knowledge.
Equality of opportunity	The belief that all people should have the chance to succeed according to their own abilities, rather than because of special privileges.
Competition	Strong belief in outperforming others, as expressed by current rhetoric concerning the “failure” of U.S. schools and businesses to compete with foreign nations.
Work ethic	A major emphasis on achievement through hard work; tied to the idea that success is measured in terms of material wealth.
Humanitarianism	Belief in assisting “deserving poor” as well as the victims of serious diseases and natural disasters (flood, famines, earthquakes).
Practicality	Americans value those things they consider “useful.” Business and the natural sciences are seen as more valuable than the humanities and social sciences.
Nationalism	Americans are highly patriotic and frequently label as “un-American” ideas that violate the public ethos.
Romantic love	Marriage is associated with romance and love; differs from preindustrial societies, where marriage was often seen as an economic arrangement.
Sexual restriction	Despite changes in attitudes toward sexuality, Americans maintain more restrictive attitudes toward sex than most Western (and many non-Western) nations.

Source: Ford and Beach (1951); Henslin (1975); Jones et al. (1986); Kluegel and Smith (1986); Myrdal (1944); Williams (1970).

emphasis on self-sufficiency and our disdain for “welfare.” To resolve this tension, our society continually distinguishes between those we consider to be victims of misfortune and those we feel are responsible for their situation, however unfortunate it might be.

In examining this list, you might also have concluded that our actions, both as individuals and as a nation, frequently do not reflect these values. Although we claim to believe in equal opportunity, we have erected numerous obstacles, such as racism, sexism, and poverty, that prevent entire sections of the population from competing on equal terms (Myrdal, 1944). We consider ourselves a “freedom-loving” people, but we sometimes prevent dissenters from expressing unpopular views, and

our government has supported, and in some cases helped to install, authoritarian regimes throughout the world. These examples illustrate the gap between **ideal culture**, the norms and beliefs that a people accept in principle, and **real culture**, those norms and principles that are actually practiced (Myrdal, 1944). Look again at Table 4.3. What other discrepancies between real and ideal culture can you think of?

As was previously suggested, there is evidence of some change in American core values over the past three decades. Some sociologists see the 1960s and 1970s as a time in which some key American values underwent rather fundamental change. We conclude our discussion of American culture by looking at some of these changes.

Recent Changes in American Values and Beliefs

Seeds of Cultural Change: The 1960s and Early 1970s

In large part, the social and political activism of the 1960s and early 1970s developed out of opposition in a large segment of the population to the Vietnam War and racism within U.S. society. This activism was most pronounced among young, well-educated children of the middle class (particularly college students) and minority-group members (Bensman and Vidich, 1984, chapter 16). These two groups, of course, had somewhat different concerns, but they did share a sense of rebellion against the system, and they were targets of efforts by the government to restore order and repress dissent. Thus, both middle-class college youth and minority-group activists increasingly thought in terms of “us versus them,” creating a situation in which it was easy to challenge a wide variety of cultural norms, values, and beliefs.

Before long, issues of conflict in American society had expanded from war and racism to include the roles of men and women; norms about sexuality, drug use, and the importance of work; the role of authority; and such cultural elements as music, style of dress, and hair length.

Cultural Diffusion and Lasting Effects: The 1980s to the New Century

By the late 1970s, the counterculture appeared to have faded. Young people returned to their historic pattern of low voting rates and limited political participation. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and 1984 brought an era of conservatism, and many young people were among Reagan’s strongest supporters. Nonetheless, the effect of the youth and minority subcultures of the 1960s has been lasting. By the early 1970s, new values in the areas of gender roles, race relations, human sexuality, and self-fulfillment had spread from college students into the larger group of noncollege youth (Yankelovich, 1974). These values continued to spread to the point that they became the dominant point of view



Photo 4.5 Older, working-class, and rural white people, feeling left behind by the rapid social changes of recent decades and often struggling economically, played a key role in the election and popularity of Donald Trump.

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among younger adults by the beginning of the 1980s (Yankelovich, 1981), a classic example of cultural diffusion. Moreover, by the 1990s, many of the values and lifestyles of the 1960s were enjoying resurgent popularity among young people, and issues such as the environment, racism, and women's rights were receiving renewed attention.

In 1992 and 1996, the election of Bill Clinton and Al Gore, who stressed multicultural unity and environmental issues and played rock music at campaign rallies, occurred with strong support of younger voters. In the year 2000, youth support was split among the Democrat Al Gore, the Republican George W. Bush, and the Green Party candidate Ralph Nader. Nader, whose campaign centered on issues of environmental and labor concerns and the abuse of corporate power, drew much of his support from college students. Young people were also

enthusiastic supporters of Barak Obama in the 2008 election, giving him “rock star” turnouts at his rallies. His opponents even tried to use this against him, implying that he was a “celebrity” with no substance behind his rhetoric. An increasing number of those under the age of 30 years are voting, and the partisan advantage in this group had risen to a two-to-one Democratic advantage (Page, 2008). This group also supported Senator Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primary in 2016 and were strongly opposed to Republican candidate Donald Trump in the general election, though young white voters did support Trump by a narrow margin in the 2016 general election (see more on this in Chapter 12). It is clear that in many areas of life, the influence of the cultural rebellion of the 1960s has been lasting.

In fact, the clash between the new values of the 1960s and older, more traditional values has become a dominant theme in American political debates (Dionne, 1991), as illustrated by debates in recent presidential campaigns over issues such as “freedom of choice” and “family values.” Older, white, and less-educated Americans continue to see the cultural changes since the 1960s as a threat and feel perhaps even more threatened by the growing population of people of color in the United States, who will be the majority of the American population by midcentury. These factors, combined with economic trends that have disadvantaged rural areas, industrial areas, and people without college educations, have led to growing backlash in recent years. They were a major factor in Republican Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election. Trump's message was that many Americans—often working-class and rural white people—were not enjoying the benefits of the economic recovery following the Great Recession—and that illegal immigrants and cultural changes were part of the reason. Although it must be pointed out that three million more Americans voted for the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton, and Trump won in part because the geographic distribution of his supporters favored him in the electoral college, there is no doubt that anger, resentment, and fear among a segment of the white population allowed him to carry the day in states with



Photo 4.6 Many jobs that were once considered male-only are now open to women. However, it is still common for women and men to be segregated in separate occupations. In education, women predominate in the lower grades, where pay, benefits, and work autonomy are less generous.

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large numbers of working-class and rural white people such as Iowa, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Pennsylvania—all states that had mostly voted Democratic in recent presidential elections. At the same time, those segments of the population who had favored the cultural changes since the 1960s—young people, minority groups, many women, and the more educated segments of the population—saw Trump and his comments about race, religion, and gender as a grave threat. Among other things, this led to the rare (for the United States) event of widespread protests the day after the election in many large urban areas, where the cultural changes in recent decades had been most pronounced.

Summary

In this chapter, we have seen that every society has a culture and a social structure that are closely linked to each other. Culture consists of common knowledge, beliefs, values, and norms, whereas social structure consists of a set of social arrangements. These arrangements consist of interlinked social positions organized into a set of institutions. Each social position, or status, carries behavioral expectations known as roles. Social positions also carry unequal rewards, which are a part of society's system of stratification by which scarce resources are distributed unequally.

Both functionalists and conflict theorists agree, for different reasons, that culture and social structure are usually in harmony with each other but sometimes at odds. The functionalist perspective sees social structure and culture as meeting basic needs, the specifics of which depend largely on the society's outside environment. For this reason, harmony between the culture and the social structure is important. To conflict theorists, the social structure is seen as providing disproportionate wealth and reward to the dominant group, or ruling class. Culture serves the function of justifying this privileged position. Its success in doing so is illustrated by false consciousness: the tendency of disadvantaged groups to accept the dominant group's ideology, even though it is against their self-interests to do so.

According to functionalists, culture and structure can become imbalanced with respect to each other through the combination of structural change and cultural lag. Cultural diffusion resulting from contact with another society can bring a similar result. When this happens, either the culture or the structure must change to restore the balance but must not change so much that key functions can no longer be performed. Conflict theorists, in contrast, see opportunities for society to change and improve when culture and social structure become incompatible. Often this occurs when subordinate groups attain class consciousness: They become aware of their true interests and reject the dominant group's ideology.

Both the functionalist and conflict perspectives recognize the importance of subcultures, which arise among groups in society with some shared experience that is different from that of others in the society. Through cultural diffusion, the values of subcultures can spread into the larger society; thus, subcultures are important sources of cultural change. This has been the case in the United States, as certain values that began with youth and minority subcultures have spread into the larger culture. Still, a number of enduring features distinguish American culture from the cultures even of other industrial, democratic societies.

Key Terms

- society
- culture
- social structure
- nonmaterial culture
- material culture
- language
- symbol
- linguistic relativity
- ideology
- norms
- folkways
- mores
- laws
- status
- ascribed status
- achieved status

master status
 role conflict
 role strain
 role set
 division of labor
 stratification
 social institution
 ethnocentrism
 cultural relativism
 economic structure
 ideational superstructure
 false consciousness
 schemas
 resources
 cultural lag
 cultural diffusion
 subculture
 anomie
 class consciousness
 overlapping cleavages
 cross-cutting cleavages
 counterculture
 multiculturalism
 ideal culture
 real culture

Exercises

1 *Values* are a very important ingredient of any culture. In American society over the past decade or so, there has been a resurgence of interest in “traditional values.” Some religious organizations have called for a return to a more conservative and traditional way of thinking.

- What does the phrase “traditional values” mean to you? How do you feel about “traditional values” in our society? Do you favor an emphasis on such values? Why or why not?
- Find a copy of the short story *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson. Read this story, keeping in mind the concept of traditional values. Why do you think the townspeople created the lottery in the first place? Why do they still use it? What, if anything, is Jackson saying about traditional values? Do you think that the value system within American culture is on shaky ground? Why or why not?

2 *Gender stereotypes* are a controversial element within our culture. The cultural messages that are sent to males and females regarding masculinity and femininity continue to be a concern for parents as they rear their children.

- In your judgment, what are the major gender stereotypes that are present in American culture?
- Are gender stereotypes an inherent part of culture, or can they be changed? What evidence can you find to support your position? What evidence can you find that might undermine your position?

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Chapter 5

Socialization

Human history abounds with legends of lost or deserted children who were raised by wild animals. Legend has it, for example, that Rome was founded by Romulus and Remus, who had been raised in the wild by a wolf. More recently, in the 1970s, CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite once reported that a child in Africa had been raised by monkeys. Legend and reality are quite different, however. Very few such cases have ever been authenticated. Cronkite, for example, was obliged to report the next night that news reporters had been unable to verify the story about the child raised by monkeys. However, one case that may be real involves two children, later named Amala and Kamala, who were found by Reverend J. A. L. Singh in 1920 in a jungle in India (Candland, 1995). The two girls were found living in a cave with wolf cubs, apparently being cared for by wolves. The older of the two girls, who survived for several years, was about eight years old when she was discovered; the younger girl was under two years old. Both to some degree behaved like the animals they lived with, baring their teeth at humans and making threatening sounds. About a year after they were found, both girls became ill with diarrhea and dysentery, and the younger girl died. The older girl survived and lived for eight more years, and over a period of several years developed a very limited vocabulary of about 30 words. While they were words in the sense of referring to particular objects, they were not English words like those used by the children around her in the orphanage where she had been placed. In this regard and many others, she became somewhat socialized into human society, but only in a very limited way. And, like many isolated children, she did not survive to adulthood.

More common than children raised by animals are cases in which children are raised in

isolation, locked alone in rooms by cruel, inattentive, or mentally ill parents. These isolated children are sometimes called “feral children” (wild children) because, like Amala and Kamala and the legendary Romulus and Remus, they were raised essentially without human contact. Like Amala and Kamala, but unlike the legend of Romulus and Remus, such children usually are unable to participate in human society in a normal way.

One more recent case is that of “Genie” (Curtiss, 1977; Pines, 1981). She had been kept harnessed to a potty seat until the age of 13 years in a small room in a California house, hidden away to avoid the wrath of her father, who hated children. She was fed only milk and baby food and was never spoken to by anyone. Occasionally, in fits of rage, her father beat her, usually when she tried to speak or made noise. After her mother fled with her, following a fight with her father, she was discovered and placed in a children’s hospital. At that time, Genie could not stand straight, chew, or see beyond ten feet. She blew her nose into the air and urinated and masturbated in the presence of others. Like Kamala, she was later able to learn a few words and also used a few phrases. However, she did not learn to ask questions or speak sentences. She did, however, use gestures well and was able to learn sign language. She was inquisitive, and after seven years in the hospital, her IQ score had increased from 38 to 74. When her mother eventually removed her from the hospital, she still had not come close to normality in many aspects of her behavior and development.

The cases described in the opening vignette show that while a newborn baby has the capacity to become a member of human society, this capacity can be realized only through

interaction with other human beings. In the first few years of life, a baby is completely dependent on other human beings for survival. In the first few months, a baby can literally survive for only a matter of hours without assistance from other people. In addition to assistance with physical needs, a newborn baby requires consistent social interaction with other human beings. This need is so great that if a baby is deprived of it for an extended period, the baby may never be capable of becoming “normal.” As illustrated by Amala and Kamala and “Genie,” the total absence of interaction with other human beings produces personalities that cannot participate in human society or even display what would be regarded as normal behavior. Even a partial absence of interaction can be quite harmful: Babies whose parents do not isolate them but who largely ignore them over an extended time typically show poor intellectual development and high rates of personality difficulties, as do institutionalized children who have sometimes been deprived of interaction because their harried caretakers simply don’t have time to provide it (Goldfarb, 1945; Spitz, 1945). Such children typically experience ongoing developmental and emotional problems, even if they receive all the necessary physical care (Crouch and Milner, 1993; Culp et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994; Kurtz et al., 1993).

Becoming “Human” Through Socialization

These effects of social isolation dramatically illustrate the human need for **socialization**. Socialization is the process whereby people learn, through interaction with others, that which they must know in order to survive and function within their society. In other words, it is the means by which people learn the roles, knowledge, beliefs, language, and values of their culture. To participate in the culture, you must be socialized.

Even among animals, studies have shown the need for interaction. The best-known example is a series of studies of monkeys by Harry Harlow and his colleagues (Harlow, 1958;

Harlow and Harlow, 1970, 1962; Harlow and Zimmerman, 1959). Two key findings of these studies illustrate the importance of interaction for normal development.

First, monkeys raised in isolation from other monkeys did not develop normal behavior. Rather, they were withdrawn, responded to other monkeys with fear or aggression, and did not engage in sex. If the females were artificially impregnated, they usually neglected or abused their offspring. Among the behaviors observed were sitting on the baby monkeys, holding them upside down, and attacking them. Significantly, the effects of such isolation became harder to reverse the longer the monkeys were kept in isolation.

Second, consistent patterns were observed when monkeys in isolation were given a choice between a cloth “dummy mother” and a wire “dummy mother.” Even when the wire “mother” had a feeding bottle and the cloth “mother” did not, the monkeys preferred the soft cloth “mother.”

Learning About Norms and Social Roles

Studies like the ones just discussed show that primates, including human beings, have an innate need for interaction with others of their kind. Thus, we have seen that babies are dependent on others for (1) meeting basic physical needs, without which they cannot survive; and (2) meeting the need for social interaction, without which their learning capacity is lost, and normal behavior is impossible. Initially, the two key functions of the socialization process, then, are to provide needed care and needed interaction. The third key function of socialization is to teach people the basic information they need in order to survive in their society. Everyone must learn the social roles that exist in their society and how to “play” or fulfill these roles. Furthermore, everyone must learn the norms of their society. (Roles and norms are discussed in Chapter 4.) As social animals, people must know how to participate in the society into which they are born.

Theories of Socialization and Development

Social scientists have developed a number of theories about how this process of learning norms and roles takes place. Although these theories disagree on some key points, many of the differences arise because different theories emphasize different aspects of the socialization and development process. Among the most important and influential theories of socialization and development are *interactionist theories*, *theories about social expectations and personal dilemmas*, and *cognitive-developmental theories*.

Nature Versus Nurture

In psychology and, to a lesser extent, sociology, there has been considerable debate about the relative importance of nature versus nurture in shaping human behavior. The term “nature” refers to natural or biological influences over human behavior. Those who argue on behalf of nature as the more significant force shaping human behavior believe that human behavior is in substantial part a product of the following:

- the individual’s genetic or hormonal make-up (Pines, 1982; Udup, 2000)
- natural instincts or drives that act as influences on the behavior of all human beings (Freud, 1970 [orig. 1920], 1962 [orig. 1930]; Lorenz, 1966; E. Wilson, 1978)
- physiological processes of development that place limits on the range of thought and behavior of which a person is capable at any given age (Piaget, 1952, 1926; Piaget and Inhelder, 1969)

Although these theories do not all argue that human behavior is *entirely* a product of nature, they do argue that nature has extensive influence over human behavior.

The term “nurture” refers to the influence of social forces in shaping human behavior. Those who emphasize nurture as the major influence

over human behavior argue that behavior is a product of interactions with other people (emphasized by symbolic-interactionists such as Mead, 1934, and Cooley, 1964 [orig. 1902]) and of the social situations in which people find themselves. These include their share of limited resources such as wealth, status, and power, and the relationship of their situations to larger societal needs. Increasingly, scientists are finding links between nature and nurture and how the two may work together to influence behavior. Perry (2016), for instance, found that an unstable social environment may accelerate—and a stable social environment reduce or prevent—the risk of addictive behavior and cravings for individuals with a genetic susceptibility for addiction.

In no area of human behavior has this debate been more intense than in childhood socialization. All schools of thought agree that what happens in childhood has important influences throughout a person’s life, because it is in childhood that people first develop their patterns of thought and behavior. Although sociologists generally give greater attention to nurture than to nature, the theories we will be considering disagree about the relative importance of nature versus nurture. We consider first the interactionist theories of socialization that weigh in heavily on the side of nurture.

Interactionist Theories of Socialization: Mead and Cooley

The symbolic-interactionist perspective has probably had more influence over the study of socialization than over any other area of sociology, and in sociology, it is probably also the most influential of the various theories about socialization. As we saw in Chapter 3, interactionists see human behavior as the result of how people understand their situations, which in turn is the result of messages they get from others and how they interpret those messages. Because a child is born without *any* understanding of their situation, it is clear that these processes are especially important in childhood socialization. Thus, interactionist theories of

socialization focus on the ways that messages from others do the following things:

- 1 Provide the child with an understanding of their situation.
- 2 Teach the child about the roles that they will be expected to play.
- 3 Teach the child the norms that will govern their behavior and the ways that some of these norms differ from role to role.
- 4 Provide the child with messages concerning how well the child is doing at playing their roles.

These messages, in turn, lead to the development of the child's self-image.

Mead on Socialization

One of the first sociologists to examine the socialization process from the interactionist perspective was George Herbert Mead, whose ideas were introduced briefly in Chapter 3. They continue to rank among the most influential theories about socialization. As we saw in our examples of feral children, normal human development is impossible without human interaction. Mead believed, in fact, that human behavior is almost totally a product of interaction with others. As he put it:

The self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience . . . it is impossible to conceive of a self arising outside of social experience.

(Mead, 1934)

Thus, to Mead, social, not biological, forces are the primary source of human behavior. To a large extent, he accepted the notion that a newborn baby is a *tabula rasa*, or a “blank slate,” without predispositions to develop any particular type of personality. The personality that develops is thus a product of that person's interactions with others.

Mead referred to the spontaneous, unsocialized, unpredictable self as the *I*. In the process of socialization, others interact with the individual, developing in that individual the attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs needed to fit

in to society. Mead referred to the socialized self that emerges from this process, reflecting the attitudes of others, as the *me* (Mead, 1934, pp. 175–8). Although the *me* becomes predominant with socialization, the *I* still exists and is the source of the spontaneous and seemingly unpredictable side of a person's behavior (Mead, 1934).

The Play Stage. Social interactions begin in early childhood—a period Mead referred to as the **play stage**—with contacts with **significant others**. These are particular individuals with whom a child interacts on a regular basis early in life, including parents, teachers, and schoolmates. In the play stage, which begins with the acquisition of language, typically around the age of one year, children learn several important things through interaction with significant others. First, they learn that they exist as a separate object. Sociologists refer to the awareness of that separate identity as the **self**.

Children also learn at this stage that others, too, have separate identities, separate selves. They learn that different people behave differently, and that different people also expect children to behave in different ways. This leads to the third key role of significant others at this point: They teach children social norms. Children learn norms both through concrete messages given by significant others (“Do this, but don't do that”) and by using significant others as **role models**—persons from whom children learn how to play roles. In other words, children learn what is appropriate behavior in part by observing the behavior of significant others and then trying out that behavior themselves.

Why does Mead call this the “play stage”? Essentially, the reason is that the child at this stage is capable only of play and cannot yet engage in the organized activity necessary, for example, to participate in a game such as baseball. To put it a bit differently, at the play stage children are interacting with particular *individuals* (Mommy, Daddy, Kelly, Christopher) and not *roles* (mother, father, big sister, outfielder). They do not yet really understand that, to a large extent, how they are expected to behave toward people is determined by those people's roles. Rather, they just know

that different people act differently and expect them to act differently.

The Game Stage. As they get older and interact with a wider range of significant others, children move beyond thinking merely in terms of particular individuals. They begin, in effect, to learn the concept of social roles. They learn that certain positions, such as mothers, fathers, salespeople, and teachers, are each occupied by a variety of people. At the same time, they learn that there are regular patterns of behavior associated with each of these positions, regardless of who fills them. Finally, they learn that they are expected to behave in particular ways toward people in various positions such as parent, teacher, or salesperson, again regardless of who is in that position. When a child has learned these things, the child has moved beyond interacting with particular individuals and has begun to interact with roles. In Mead's terms, the child has gone from interacting with significant others to a new and higher stage of interacting with the *generalized other*. At this stage, the child has generalized from the behavior and expectations of particular individuals to those of anyone playing various roles that relate to whatever role the child is playing at the time. The child has, in effect, learned to respond to the expectations of their society.

When the child has learned to do this, the child has reached the **game stage**—the ability to play roles and to interact with other roles, which makes organized activity, such as games, possible. Take, for example, the game of baseball. Each position in the game, such as shortstop or outfielder, has a set of expectations—a role—attached to it. If you play shortstop, you must know not only that you are expected to stop the ball if it is hit to you but also what base you should throw to. Anybody playing shortstop needs to know this; the expectations are the same regardless of who plays the position. The same is true of any other organized activity.

A person attains this game stage through repeated messages from others. It is also through communication with others that the specific expectations of each role, such as shortstop, are learned. Through social interaction, the child learns to play different roles

attached to positions that the child occupies at various times, and to respond appropriately to the behavior of others playing various roles. People's ability to play and respond to various roles is essential in order for them to participate in society. And, as has been shown by Moen, Dempster-McClain, and Williams (1992), it also turns out that playing a wide variety of roles is good for your health.

Socialization and the Looking-Glass Self

Interactionists believe that in addition to teaching us to play our own social roles and to respond appropriately to the roles of others, the socialization process helps us develop a self-image—a sense of what kind of person we are. This self-image relates closely to the various roles that we play. We normally come to think of ourselves as being very good at playing some roles and not so good at playing others. This self-image is developed through the process of the looking-glass self (Cooley, 1964 [orig. 1902]), which was introduced in Chapter 3. As children try out playing new roles, they try to imagine how they appear to others, and they pay attention to others in order to get messages about how well they are doing in these roles. More recent research has applied the concept of the looking-glass self to a wide variety of settings and issues, both in childhood and in adult life. These include judgments about the musical ability of bar bands (O'Connor, 1993) and the competence of lawyers (Stubbs, 1993); changes in self-concept (Tice, 1992); understanding eating disorders (Wax and Cassell, 1990); and family influences on teenagers' self-esteem (Margolin, Blyth, and Carbone, 1988).

In child socialization, children try to imagine what other people think about how they are doing in their various roles and look for both clear and subtle messages from others to find out. Once they get such messages, they develop ideas about what kind of person they are based on their interpretation of these messages. This process, in turn, affects how they think of themselves. Two elements are critical to this process: the *content* of the messages a child gets from others, and the child's *interpretation* of these messages.

Self-Esteem and Significant Others

As we indicated, a child will normally come to think of himself as being good at playing some roles and not as good at playing others. In most cases, this process leads to the gradual development of a balanced self-image. Sometimes, though, children are intentionally or unintentionally given messages that are harmful to their overall self-image. Excessive criticism, for example, can lead a child to think of himself as not very good at anything, which produces low self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to your judgment of yourself: Do you look upon yourself positively or negatively? This can refer to your overall judgment of yourself—called global self-esteem—or to your judgment of your performance in a particular role. How well we perform in a role affects our self-esteem, at least as it relates to that role. At the same time, however, self-esteem also affects how well we perform in a role (Rosenberg, Schooler, and Schoenbach, 1989). This suggests that if children are given negative messages that harm their self-esteem, their achievement will suffer. Poor achievement can lead to further erosion of their self-esteem.

Overly busy parents who consistently fail to take time to do things with their children and to respond to their children's concerns can unintentionally give their children such

messages. To a young child, "I'm too busy" can easily sound like "I don't want anything to do with you" or "You're a pest." A child who comes to think of himself in these terms might never develop good self-esteem. More children today may be getting such messages: Demographic and economic changes have led to greater social isolation of children from adults in their households (Crites, 1989). For example, Schor (1997) reports that, among dual-earner families, annual time spent at work increased by more than 600 hours between 1967 and 1989, which leaves less time to be spent with the children. And the percentage of two-parent families in which both parents work full time rose sharply between 1970 and 2000 and has been fairly steady since then except for a slight and temporary dip during the Great Recession. In 1970, both parents worked in 31 percent of two-parent families; in 2015, that percentage was 46 percent (Pew Research Center, 2015c). How this affects children undoubtedly varies: In some cases, interaction with other adults such as relatives and child-care workers may offset reduced interaction with parents, while in others that may not be the case. This issue is explored further in Chapter 13.

Young children develop images of themselves that, to a substantial degree, will influence how they think of themselves throughout life. Thus, poor global self-esteem at this stage can be a source of lifelong difficulties (see Clausen, 1991). This does not mean that children need to be told they are good at everything. A balanced self-image is much healthier than one that cannot accept any shortcomings. However, it is important for children to get sufficient attention and emotional support from their parents and others to know that they are loved and wanted, be given credit and praise when they do things well, and be reassured that it is not necessary to be good at everything.



Photo 5.1 A child has reached the game stage when the child can interact with roles rather than merely with individuals.

Courtesy of John E. Farley



Photo 5.2 It is much more common today than in the past for both parents in two-parent families to work full time.

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Theories About Social Expectations and Personal Dilemmas: Freud and Erikson

Whereas symbolic-interactionists such as Mead and Cooley see human behavior and personality as almost totally the product of social interaction, their contemporary Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) saw behavior and personality as being the product of the interaction between nature and nurture. Freud believed that human beings are born with certain innate natural drives, or behavioral impulses, including some aggressive tendencies and the desire for physical (particularly sexual) pleasure (Freud, 1962 [orig. 1930]). Freud called these natural drives, which he believed to be present in some form from infancy on, the **id**. Opposing the id are the requirements of society that we control our aggression and our pleasure seeking. Society's norms restricting these natural drives were referred to by Freud as the **superego**, which he saw as a socially learned *conscience* arising from messages we get from others about acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. According to Freud, everyone experiences an *inner conflict* between the id, which says “I want to do that,” and the superego, which says “You can't do that.” The dynamics of this conflict and the way an individual resolves them form the basis of one's personality.

Depending on the strictness of a child's home environment, and to a lesser extent the restrictiveness of other childhood environments, each person develops a somewhat different balance between the id and the superego. This balance is managed by the **ego**, the ultimate expression of the personality each person develops. The more restrictive the childhood environment is, the stronger the influence of the superego will tend to be. When the environment is too restrictive, Freud believed, natural drives are repressed but do not go away. Rather, they build up

pressures that lead to increased frustration until they may eventually surface in a destructive way. Depressed people, Freud believed, felt anger and frustration because they were made to repress too much of their aggressive and sexual selves. They became depressed because they turned this anger and frustration against themselves.

Less commonly, too little restriction of the natural drives may lead a person to behave amorally—exhibiting no sense of right or wrong and no sense of guilt or remorse for anything the person does.

Today, most social scientists would agree that how conflicts between individual drives or desires and societal expectations are resolved in childhood does have some effect on behavior later in life. At the same time, most sociologists argue that the situations people encounter in later life are important social forces in their own right, and they reject the notion that *all* behavior in adulthood is a product of childhood experiences. Research supports the notion that both sociological and biological influences are at work in shaping human behavior (Perry, 2016; Udry, 1988, 2000; Udry and Billy, 1987).

Erikson's Eight Stages of Life

Like Freud, Erik Erikson felt that children face dilemmas involving choices between two opposites. However, Erikson argued in *Childhood and*

Society (1950) that the dilemmas people face at different stages of their lives are related more to social expectations and self-identity than to natural drives. Erikson argued that people experience a series of *psychosocial stages*, each of which contains opposing positive and negative components. At each stage, people face a dilemma or crisis as they make choices between the two components. As Mead and Cooley suggested, the choices that are made are largely a product of the social environment and messages that children receive from significant others. In the first several stages, children who receive encouragement and positive messages about themselves tend to achieve healthy modes of adaptation; children who are ignored or who get excessively negative messages tend to adapt poorly.

Erikson's eight stages are summarized in Table 5.1, which also compares Erikson's theories of socialization with other theories. We can use Erikson's second stage, autonomy versus shame, to illustrate the type of dilemma children encounter. At this stage, which occurs between the ages of one and two or three years, children are trying out their physical skills through walking, climbing, manipulating objects, and toilet training. If they master these skills—and are given the message that they have done so—they become more autonomous and self-confident. If they do not, they face shame and self-doubt. A sense of inferiority often results, and the child may either become compulsive about following fixed routines or reject all controls. Note that Erikson's approach shares something in common with interactionist theories such as those of Mead and Cooley: Whether or not a child resolves these dilemmas successfully is based in large part on the messages the child gets from significant others.

Although Erikson's stages effectively outline some of the major dilemmas that must be addressed in socialization, they should not be seen as exact descriptions of the process of development. Discrete stages have not for the most part been scientifically validated, and to the extent that they occur in a sequence, they overlap considerably. While an unresolved issue at one stage often has effects at later stages, there always remains some possibility that it can be addressed successfully later in life.

Cognitive-Developmental Theories of Socialization: Piaget and Kohlberg

Cognitive-developmental theories resemble the theories of Freud and Erikson in two important ways. First, they rely on the idea that people move through a series of stages as they develop and experience the socialization process. Second, they include a place for the forces of nature as well as those of nurture. However, they also differ in two important ways. First, rather than dilemmas or choices, cognitive-developmental theories focus on **cognitive processes**: learning, reasoning, and the actions by which knowledge is obtained and processed. Second, they relate the role of nature to physiological development in that they acknowledge that the development of the body and brain places an upper limit on the child's capacity to learn, reason, and process knowledge at any given age.

However, although the limits on human potential may be physiologically defined, the actual level and process of learning and reasoning in any individual is mostly a function of social influences. For most of us, learning and modes of reasoning and information processing are very much influenced by the social environment. To see how this occurs, let us begin with the cognitive theories of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget.

Piaget: Stages of Cognitive Development

Central to Piaget's theory of development was the concept of a *schema*—a behavior sequence involving recognition of a stimulus (sight, sound, object, person, or message) in the environment and a motor (behavioral) response to that stimulus based on our understanding of its meaning. As new information becomes available, it is assimilated into existing schemas, and these schemas may be modified to accommodate new information that does not fit the existing schemas. Thus, cognitive reasoning becomes a process of incorporating new information into existing schemas, which become increasingly complex as new information becomes available. According to Piaget (1926), this process of cognitive reasoning develops through the following four stages:

Table 5.1 Summary of Key Theorists on Socialization and Development

	<i>Mead</i>	<i>Freud</i>	<i>Erikson</i>	<i>Piaget</i>	<i>Kohlberg</i>
Socialization viewed as process of:	Learning roles and self-concept through interaction with others	Struggle between natural drives and societal expectations	Series of dilemmas to be resolved, relating to social expectations and self-identity	Development of increasingly sophisticated interpretations of physical and social environment	Development of increasingly sophisticated moral reasoning, through cognitive development and interaction with others
Views on nature (natural/biological influences) versus nurture (social influences)	Emphasized nurture, little if any consideration of nature	Socialization seen as struggle between nature and nurture	Emphasized nurture, in context of natural development	Emphasized natural development of reasoning ability which allows understanding of social environment	Reasoning seen as joint outcome of natural development and social interaction
Stages of socialization and development, with typical age range	Play stage: ¹ interaction with specific persons, "I" predominates. Game stage: interaction WILM 1 Ulco, Ille predominates.	Oral (0–1 years) Anal (1–3 years) Phallic (3–4 years) Oedipal (4–6 years) Latency (6–11 years) Genital (11 years and up)	Trust vs. mistrust (0–1 years) Autonomy vs. doubt, shame (1–2 years) Initiative vs. guilt (3–5 years) Industry vs. inferiority (6–11 years) Identity vs. role confusion (12–18 years) Intimacy vs. isolation (young adult) Generativity vs. self-absorption (middle adult) Integrity vs. despair (old age)	Sensorimotor (0–2 years) Preoperational (2–7 years) Concrete operations (7–11 years) Formal operations (12 years and up)	Preconventional level ² Stage 1: Punishment avoidance Stage 2: Need satisfaction Conventional level Stage 3: Good boy, good girl Stage 4: Law and order Postconventional level Stage 5: Social contracts Stage 6: Universal ethical principles

¹ Stages are not strongly limited to age; they depend on social interaction.

² Stages are not strongly limited to age; they depend on social interaction.

- 1 *Sensorimotor stage* (until age 2 years): This stage involves the development of a physical understanding of the environment by touching, seeing, hearing, and moving around. At this stage, schemas involve purely physical objects and properties. Children learn *object permanence*—if you show a child something and then hide it, the child will learn that it is still there and look for it.
- 2 *Preoperational stage* (ages 2–7 years): Children learn to represent schemas in their minds. They engage in symbolic play, using one object as a symbol to represent another. They may, for example, pretend that a block is a car and move it around the way a car would move. At this stage, children also develop *language*—not merely saying words but putting them together in sentences that express increasingly complex ideas. This clearly demonstrates that they are using mental, not purely physical, schemas. They still, however, look at things from their own viewpoint, not that



Photo 5.3 At the sensorimotor stage, children develop a physical understanding of the environment, as shown by this child's examination of and experimentation with a toy cell phone.

Courtesy of John E. Farley

of someone else, and they have trouble with any task that requires them to look at themselves or their environment from someone else's viewpoint. A boy at this stage, for example, may report having two brothers, Henry and Paul. If asked how many brothers Henry has, however, the child will mention only Paul, not himself (Foss, 1974).

- 3 *Stage of concrete operations* (ages 7–11 years): At this stage, children gain several new capabilities. Although they still think mainly in terms of concrete, readily visible objects rather than abstract concepts, they are able to think in terms of cause and effect. They can draw conclusions about the likely physical consequences of an action without always having to try it out. They also learn that quantities can remain constant even if they take different shapes and forms. They understand, for example, that if a given amount of milk is poured from a tall thin glass into a short wide one, or from a large glass into two small ones, it is still the same amount of milk. Finally, as stressed earlier in our discussion of George Herbert Mead, children at this stage can respond to the roles of others, consider things from the viewpoint of others, and play different roles themselves. Thus, it is now possible for them to play games.
- 4 *Stage of formal operations* (ages 12 years and up): When they reach this stage, children can reason not only in terms of the physical world but also in terms of abstract concepts, such as love, happiness, wealth, intelligence, and remorse. They can think in terms of future consequences and evaluate the probable outcomes of several alternative courses of action. They can also evaluate their own thoughts and self-image. Finally, they can begin to think about major philosophical issues, such as why pain and suffering exist.

Social and Cultural Influences on Cognitive Development

As indicated earlier, cognitive theorists believe that the *capacity* to attain these stages is defined by physiological development but that

the actual extent to which people attain them, and the ages at which they attain them, are socially determined. The ability to do these things is learned from others, and if a child is not exposed to others engaging in the type of reasoning that normally occurs at a given stage, the child may have difficulty developing that reasoning ability on their own. Both the larger culture in which a child grows up and the child's immediate social environment influence this process. If a culture places little value on abstract reasoning—for example, a culture in which reality is determined by tradition and not by scientific discovery—a child is much less likely to develop abstract reasoning skills. Similarly, studies have shown that neighborhood plays a significant role in the development of children's skills (Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson, 1994; Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993). At the more immediate level, if a child's parents do not think in terms of abstract concepts, and this skill is not emphasized in school, the child has little or no way of learning it. For this reason, a sizable part of the population—even in countries like the United States where scientific knowledge is valued—never reaches the cognitive stage of formal operations. The four stages of cognitive reasoning appear to occur in sequence, but how far people get through that sequence seems to vary.

Piaget on Moral Reasoning

Cognitive reasoning enables people to make moral judgments—that is, to distinguish between right and wrong. Piaget (1932) offered the important insight that how children (and adults) distinguish right from wrong is greatly influenced by their process of cognitive reasoning. A child at the preoperational stage, for example, cannot and will not make judgments about right and wrong in the same way as a child at the stage of formal operations.

The Morality of Constraint. According to Piaget, children at young ages act on the basis of reward and punishment: They avoid behaviors that bring punishment and repeat ones that are rewarded. They see rules as existing for their own sake (not some larger social purpose), and they do not realize that rules are subject to change. Because it is the punishment

or consequence that makes something bad, the rightness or wrongness of an act is judged purely on the basis of its consequences, not its intent. In one experiment, for example, Piaget (1932) found that children thought it was worse to break 15 cups left behind a door where they could not be seen than to break one cup climbing to get some jam that had been placed out of reach. In other words, the *consequences* were greater in the first case. Significantly, the younger children typically paid little attention to the fact that in the second case the child's *intentions* had been worse—to get at something his mother had intended him not to have. Piaget referred to this stage of moral behavior as the morality of constraint.

The Morality of Cooperation. Piaget argued that given the appropriate social environment, children will move from the morality of constraint to the morality of cooperation. As Piaget's theory suggests, young children will often admit that they only do the right thing because it brings reward or avoids punishment. Among older children, *intention* becomes a more important factor in determining right and wrong. In Piaget's experiments, for example, older children were more likely to say that the child climbing up to get the jam had behaved worse because he was doing something he knew his mother didn't want him to do.

Most sociologists agree that for the majority of people, moral behavior is more than a matter of reward and punishment. Most crimes—particularly minor ones like petty theft—are not solved, and the offenders are never punished. Even so, most people most of the time do not steal. According to Piaget, the reason they don't is that they realize that stealing is wrong. If everyone stole, nobody would be secure in their property, and the world would be a miserable place. Thus, the recognition that stealing prevents cooperation and hurts everyone's quality of life keeps most people from stealing. This is what is meant by the morality of cooperation.

Unfortunately, many people never fully develop the morality of cooperation. Even among some adults, consequence and punishment are the main factors influencing moral behavior. At the same time, some very young children have been shown to understand intention and

take it into consideration (Shultz, Wells, and Sarda, 1980). Morality of constraint always appears to precede morality of cooperation, but the age at which morality of cooperation develops, if it develops at all, is quite variable. Thus, moral reasoning, like other aspects of cognitive development, is heavily influenced by social interaction. This is clearly shown in the work of Lawrence Kohlberg, who has elaborated on Piaget's theories of moral reasoning.

Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg (1984, 1969) expanded on Piaget's ideas by conducting research in which people were presented with moral dilemmas and asked what they would do and why they would do it. In one such dilemma, a man's wife was dying, and the druggist who had invented the only medicine that could save her was charging ten times what the medicine cost to produce—far more than the man could afford. As a result, the man stole the drug. Subjects in Kohlberg's experiments were then asked questions such as whether the man was right to steal the drug, and why. It was the “why” part that was of greater interest to Kohlberg. He found that, based on the *reasons* they gave for their responses to his moral dilemmas, his subjects could be classified into three general levels of moral reasoning (Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg, 1989), each of which could be subdivided into two more specific stages of moral reasoning. Kohlberg argues that these six stages generally occur in a set sequence: One must pass through Stage 1 before going on to Stage 2, and so forth. However, many people never develop beyond Stage 3 or 4, and some do not even get that far.

The Preconventional Level. Subjects at the preconventional level, consisting of Stages 1 and 2, are self-centered. They view the world in terms of their own interests, needs, and desires, without giving much consideration to the views of others. In Stage 1, *punishment avoidance*, people are concerned with avoiding that which brings punishments or bad consequences. It is very much like Piaget's morality of constraint. In the sample story, a Stage 1 subject might say “Steal the drug if you can get away with it; don't if it looks like you'll get caught.” At Stage 2,

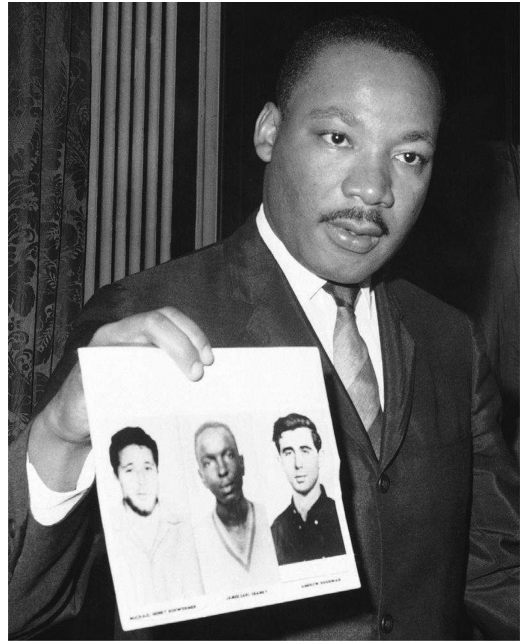


Photo 5.4 Stage 6 moral reasoning is most often found in people with formal training in philosophy, such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

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need satisfaction, moral reasoning is a little more developed but remains very self-centered. At this stage, behavior is acceptable if it satisfies your wants or desires. A Stage 2 subject might say the man should steal the drug because his wife needs it, without addressing the druggist's behavior at all.

The Conventional Level. At the *conventional level*, which Kohlberg believes characterizes most adult behavior in industrialized countries, behavior is considered right if it is approved by others. Thus, a Stage 3, *good boy/good girl*, subject might say stealing is acceptable behavior because the druggist is a bad man, or not acceptable because stealing “isn't nice.” A bit more developed is Stage 4, *law and order*. At this stage of moral reasoning, right and wrong are defined on the basis of rules and laws. By and large, such rules and laws are not thought of as changeable, and to violate any of them is nearly always seen as wrong. This group would be more likely than others to say that stealing the drug is wrong because stealing is against the law. It appears that Stage 4 is the most prevalent in the adult U.S. population (Colby et al., 1983).

The Postconventional Level. People at the postconventional level of morality realize that laws and the approval of others do not simply happen; rather, they often have some basis in people's needs and the general welfare. The stages in this level are harder to define because relatively few people—only about one in five Americans—reach this level (Kohlberg, 1975; see also Colby et al., 1983; Kohlberg, 1986, 1984). In Stage 5, people are governed by *social contracts*—agreements, implicit or explicit, that they enter into for their mutual benefit. People have an obligation, out of fairness, to live up to their end of the bargain. Stage 5 people recognize that laws exist for a reason and that there are bad laws that—even if one obeys them—can and should be changed. In Stage 6, *universal ethical principles*, people live by principles based on human rights that transcend government and laws. Stage 6 people believe that sometimes these ethical or moral principles obligate them to violate laws that work against basic human rights. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is often cited as an example of a person with Stage 6 moral reasoning (Penrod, 1986, p. 74; Kohlberg, 1984, p. 270). In later formulations of his theory, Kohlberg raised questions about whether or not Stage 6 truly exists among the general population: Tests of the later, more refined versions of his theory were unable to find such people, except among those with formal training in philosophy, such as Dr. King (Kohlberg, 1984).

Like most of the other theories we have considered, Kohlberg's theory sees social interaction as highly important. Although the sequence always begins with Stage 1 and develops in order, when and how far it develops depends on the messages and examples a child gets from others. In general, urban and well-educated children attain higher levels in Kohlberg's classification system than rural and poorly educated children. Overall, people in modern industrial societies outscore those in rural and less economically developed ones. In addition, experiments reveal that even the same people will use different moral reasoning when speaking to different audiences, such as to businesspeople as opposed to philosophers (Carpendale and Krebs, 1992).

Kohlberg's work has been criticized as containing both social class and sex biases. In fact, a general problem with all developmental theories is that the stages may vary among different groups and societies (Dannefer, 1984). Middle-class people score higher on Kohlberg's scale than those of lower socioeconomic status, a difference that no doubt reflects both real differences in reasoning and social-class differences in self-expression. Men also score higher than women. This may reflect Kohlberg's system of classification. Men tend to emphasize "justice," which is closely linked to Kohlberg's Stages 5 and 6. Women, however, emphasize "caring," which also reflects a concern with the welfare of others but is not as highly rated by Kohlberg's coding system (Gilligan, 1982; Stander and Jensen, 1993). Thus, both people's actual mode of moral reasoning and the way they express or conceptualize their reasoning are socially influenced.

Moral Reasoning and Moral Behavior

Does moral reasoning affect human behavior? In other words, do people who display different levels of moral reasoning respond differently when confronted with a real-life moral dilemma? Evidence that they do is supplied by a study of student participation in the Free Speech Movement (FSM) at the University of California at Berkeley in 1964, the first of the major student demonstrations of the 1960s.

The FSM began when the university announced that it would no longer permit students and student organizations to set up tables in a specified area of the campus. By the time the university capitulated and permitted the tables, its administration building, Sproul Hall, had been taken over by student demonstrators, and a police car had been surrounded by a crowd of several thousand students and abandoned by the officers.

Haan, Smith, and Block (1968) interviewed a large sample of students on the campus, administering moral-reasoning tests developed by Kohlberg and asking the students what they thought of the FSM. In this college population, virtually everyone had reached at least Stage 2, and the sample included people from Stages 2 through 6. Students who supported or participated in the protest were more likely to have

achieved certain stages of moral reasoning than other students. Although the majority of students at every stage expressed support of the movement, the percentage who did so was much higher among those at Stages 2, 5, and 6 than among those at Stages 3 or 4. It is not surprising that those at Stage 3 (be nice) or Stage 4 (follow rules) would be less likely to participate.

Of particular interest were the reasons for support or participation given by those at various stages of moral reasoning. The Stage 2 people participated out of self-centered motivation, as Kohlberg's theory predicts: "No university administrator is going to tell *me* what I can and can't do." Protestors in Stage 3 or 4 who supported the movement emphasized bad university administrators who violated the university's own rules or those of the U.S. Constitution concerning free speech. The Stage 5 and 6 students emphasized the basic human right to free speech. Thus, both the probability of supporting the FSM and the reasoning of those who did support it were greatly influenced by where students fell in Kohlberg's six-stage model.

These findings suggest that although moral reasoning is related to behavior, it is more closely related to the process by which people decide *how* to behave when confronted with a moral dilemma, such as fellow students requesting their support for the FSM. In fact, a review of the literature on moral development and behavior by Blasi (1980) indicates that the relationship between moral development, as defined by Kohlberg, and moral behavior is far from consistent. Although the majority of studies have found such a link, others have not (see also Kutnick, 1986). Certainly, other factors, such as peer pressure and the particular characteristics of a situation, also have important effects on behavior. However, even if people at different stages of moral development do not always *behave* differently, they do appear to *reason* differently in their decisions about how to behave—in real life as well as the laboratory.

Overview of Theories of Socialization

As is evident from the preceding material, theorists such as Mead, Freud, Erikson, Piaget, and

Kohlberg emphasized different aspects of the socialization process and had different ideas about the roles of nature and nurture and their relative importance in the socialization process. The ideas of these theorists are summarized in Table 5.1. Although they do offer us very different views of the socialization process, these theories cannot be classified as "right" or "wrong." In an important sense, they are all at least partially "right" in that they emphasize different aspects of socialization and development and seek to understand different processes that contribute to the overall course of socialization and development.

Agents of Socialization

All the theories that we discussed agree that significant others play a prominent role in the socialization process. What we have not yet addressed is the fact that *social institutions* also play an important role. In fact, both people and institutions can act as **agents of socialization**. Agents of socialization influence the development of people's attitudes, beliefs, self-images, and behavior. In a sense, it could be said that they carry out the process of socialization, interacting with the individual in a way that permits the individual to become a participating member of human society. Agents of socialization may or may not have the primary purpose of carrying out the socialization process, but they always have that effect.

The most important agents of socialization are the family (particularly parents), the school, religion, peers, and the media. Some of these—the family, religion, the school—are institutions whose *manifest function* is, at least in part, to be agents of socialization. They exist at least partly to provide children with knowledge, values, or—most often—both. These are not the only influential agents of socialization, however. Peers and the mass media also play an important role. Neither peers nor the media exist for the *purpose* of socialization; that is, socialization is not their manifest function. However, they do have the *effect* of shaping knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes—in some cases just as much as the family, religion, or school. Thus,



UNDERSTANDING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

The Making of the Southern Belle

A fascinating example of schools as an agent of socialization can be seen in a sociohistorical study by Christie Farnham (1994) of women's schools and colleges in the South before the Civil War. These schools played a key role in the socialization of women in the elite, landowning class of that era. And by so doing, they helped to assure that white males would retain their dominant role in antebellum Southern society.

Southern women's education was different from Northern women's education in one key way that, ironically, allowed it to flourish. In the North, women who attended college were typically seeking preparation for a period of professional work before marriage or, less often, as an alternative to it. Though not poor, they were frequently not the daughters of the economic elite. After graduation, many worked, at least for a time, in teaching or social work. The South was different. There, it was understood that genteel women did not work, and with few exceptions, only the daughters of the elite planter class and other wealthy families attended college. The messages of college reinforced the role model of a woman educated in the classics, who would make a desirable partner for a man of the upper class. This model also reinforced the class and racial inequality of the old South—only a white woman of “good breeding” could presume to seek such a role. Because educated Southern women were not being prepared for

employment, the education of women in the South was not a threat to male dominance of the professions, as it was in the North. As a result, women's colleges flourished to a greater extent in the South than in other parts of the country, but they also taught a somewhat different message to women.

Farnham uses the crowning of the May Queen as an example to illustrate how Southern women's education socialized women in a way that reinforced the inequalities of the era. The May Queen's crowning was an annual ritual extremely popular among students in all Southern women's schools. She describes the crowning as “a Durkheimian collective enactment of society's definition of femininity, whereby men offered women protection in exchange for deference” (Farnham, 1994, p. 168). The May Queen was literally placed on a pedestal to be admired, while nearby stood a detachment of young men in full military regalia—there to honor her but also to represent the notion that they were her protectors, thus teaching a message of male power and female dependency. The power these men held was noted by calling them the “lords of creation,” and in Farnham's words, the May Queen always knew that “despite her magical charms, it was clear that the lords had the last word.” And of course, the system of racial inequality was also reinforced, since only white people could serve in the May Queen's court or honor guard.

socialization can be described as an important *latent function* of peers and the media.

The Family

In the early years, the family is the most important agent of socialization. This is especially true of parents, but it is also true to a lesser extent of older siblings who are present. More than anyone else, the parents define the attitudes and beliefs of a young child. In large part, truth to preschool children is what their parents tell them. Parents remain important as agents of socialization throughout childhood and adolescence, although as children age, parents

increasingly share their role with other agents of socialization.

The effects of socialization in the family are often lifelong. The family's religion usually becomes the child's, and the child's political attitudes, world view, and lifestyle are substantially influenced by those of the family. Children who encounter undesirable behaviors or attitudes in the home are more likely than other children to exhibit them in adulthood and face socioeconomic disadvantages that not only follow them the rest of their lives but can be passed onto the next generation (Ferraro, Schaffer and Wilkinson, 2015). Child and spouse abuse, alcoholism and drug abuse, and racial prejudice are all passed on through the family.



Photo 5.5 Going to school or nursery school may be a difficult transition for some children because it is their first experience interacting with equals rather than authority figures.

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Even within the same family, however, not all children are treated the same way. Boys and girls usually experience socialization differently, as we see in a later chapter. First-born and only children receive greater attention and often grow up to be greater achievers, on average. A child who is highly active from infancy on is usually treated differently than one who is less active. The child's size and health status also influence parental behavior. Thus, although certain common patterns appear in every family, even brothers or sisters in the same family do not have the same socialization experience.

Social class also plays a role through what sociologists call cultural capital. Children of upper- and middle-class parents typically experience more opportunities to visit museums, foreign countries, and so on than do the children of the working class. This not only affects how children see the world but also gives them a leg up in school as well as in social interactions.

Schools

As we see in Chapter 14, the school is an institution with a profound effect not only on children's knowledge but also on their self-image, their understanding of reality, and their mode

of reasoning. The school also plays an important role in teaching students the beliefs and values of their society, including reinforcing existing inequalities of all kinds. For instance, one study found that behaviors such as rule breaking by boys were generally rewarded at a higher level than for girls by teachers, allowing the boys to monopolize classroom conversations, challenge girls' opinions, and appear smarter to their peers (Musto, 2019). The role of the school in the socialization process has become more important in modern industrial societies, as the amount

of specialized technical and scientific knowledge has expanded beyond what parents could possibly teach in the home. Some of the teaching of both knowledge and values that used to occur in the home today takes place in the school. Even more recently, as the two-career family and single-parent family have become more commonplace, school influences children at an early age in the form of day care. Although the school is more important as a socialization agent today than it was in the past, schools have engaged in socialization as long as they have been in existence, as illustrated in the box "The Making of the Southern Belle."

Religion

The influence of religion as an agent of socialization varies widely. Although most Americans identify with some organized religion, fewer than half typically attend religious services at some time during the week. Of those who do, however, many bring their children to religion classes, and some children attend religious rather than public schools. Among people who are religious, religion is a powerful agent of socialization because it specifies what is right and what is wrong. Moreover, in religious families, religion and the family

frequently (though not always) give similar messages. Religion is an important influence on the values and beliefs of the parents, who join with it to pass those values on to their children.

Peers

Peers begin to be an influence at a very young age, as children form friendships with other children (Corsaro and Rizzo, 1988, 1990). However, it is in the junior high/middle school and high school years that peer influence is the greatest, as young people seek to establish their independence by turning to influences other than the home and the school. Although peer subcultures are often at odds with those of the parents and the school, peers in another sense demand a tremendous amount of conformity. Race, class, and gender all play important roles in this process. One study found that for ethnic minorities, being friends with people from the same ethnicity depends on how much each person identifies with their ethnicity. This sense of identity may then become the litmus test for the peer group (Leszczensky and Pink, 2019). Often, little deviation from the peer-group norm in dress, speech, attitude, and behavior is tolerated. The price the peer group exacts for nonconformity is high: ridicule, bullying, or ostracism precisely at a time when a young person must gain acceptance from a group outside the family in order to establish independence from it (Faris, Felmlee, and McMillan, 2020). Because of this need and because of the strong pressure for conformity, the influence of the peer group on attitudes and behaviors is, for a time during adolescence, very high—perhaps greater than that of any other agent of socialization. This effect is greatest in the areas of dress, speech, entertainment preferences, and leisure activity. The effect has even been found in depression, which can be passed on from peer to peer (Lee and Lee, 2020). Often, it can extend to attitudes and behaviors in the areas of sexuality and drug and alcohol use as well. However, it is somewhat weaker (though often still significant) in such areas as religious and political beliefs.

The Media

In recent decades, the media, particularly television, but now also increasingly the Internet, have become very influential as agents of socialization. The average American child spends well over three hours per day watching television—in many cases, more time than the child spends talking with parents or siblings. The spread of cable television, VCRs, DVD and DVR players, and now direct streaming of movies and access to the Internet over devices including smartphones, laptops, and tablets has probably enhanced the influence of the media by encouraging people to spend more time looking at a screen. Many young people now spend as much or more time on the Internet as they do watching television. Overall, U.S. children on average spend five to seven hours a day looking at screens of some kind, and in the UK, the average is also around six hours a day (Screen-free Parenting, 2016; Wakefield, 2015).

One of the more fundamental effects of the mass media on the socialization process has been to provide nearly everyone—regardless of their social status or where they live—with access to the same entertainment, information, and imagery. As a result, *place*, either geographic or social, has come to be less important in some regards (Meyrowitz, 1985). Whether you are a teenager on an Iowa farm, a New York stockbroker, or an assembly-line worker in Detroit, you can watch the same television programs, see the same movies, and access the same material over the World Wide Web. You can communicate with people far away and different from yourself by telephone, fax, or computer link. According to Meyrowitz, this has broken down boundaries and traditional status distinctions, made us in many ways more similar to one another, and weakened local influences, such as family, neighborhood, and religious congregation, on the socialization process. On the other hand, the variety of material on the Internet, as well as the choice of cable TV news outlets that present different political viewpoints, allows us to pick and choose, so that it is increasingly easy for people to selectively view material that supports their own viewpoint while avoiding viewpoints with which they disagree. This has been



Photos 5.6 and 5.7 With the proliferation of cable networks with opposing views on the news as well as numerous websites that promote different political agendas, it is easier than ever to expose yourself only to sources of news that reinforce what you already believe.

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cited as a factor in the increasing political polarization in the United States and other countries (Mitchell et al., 2014). Another effect of the visual media, particularly television, is that we have come to expect entertaining messages and attractive personal images in everything—just like TV and the movies (Postman, 1985). Thus, an unattractive politician has a more difficult time getting elected regardless of their message or abilities, and a teacher must be entertaining in order to keep students' attention.

The Media and Sexual and Violent Behavior

Although there is great debate over precisely how television and the Internet influence attitudes and behavior, there is no doubt that they have become important means by which young people come to understand their world. As children grow into adolescence, rock music and motion pictures also play some role in the socialization process.

One area of particular concern has been media portrayals of sexuality and violence. Most Americans have seen thousands of people killed in television dramas and in movies, and there is some evidence that this desensitizes people to violence and, at least in the short term, increases aggressive behavior (Felson, 1996; Murray, 2008; National Institute of Mental Health, 1982; Polermo, 1995; Paik and Comstock, 1994). There also appears to be a longer-term correlation between viewing

media violence and engaging in violent behavior (Eron, 1995; Comstock and Strasburger, 1990; Murray, 2008). However, debate continues over whether such viewing *causes* people to be violent or whether, for example, people with a tendency toward violence also prefer watching violent shows (Wiegman, Kuttschreuter, and Baarda, 1992; Campbell, 1990; Langley, Neal, and Craig, 1992). A growing number of studies in recent years *do* suggest there is some cause and effect relationship (Zillman and Weaver, 1999; Dill and Dill, 1998; Murray, 2008; Smith and Donnerstein, 1998). It is also true, however, that other factors, such as personal exposure to violent behavior, have stronger effects on violent behavior than does exposure to violence in the media.

American children, like children in many other societies where television is widespread, also view a great deal of actual or implied sexual activity. An analysis of several studies suggests that the majority of all daytime and evening programs contain sexual dialogue, and one in eight depicts or implies sexual intercourse (Kunkel, Cope, and Biely, 1999). Similarly, about one in eight commercials involves some degree of undressing (Lin, 1998). In contrast to most European countries, however, in the United States television provides little information concerning how to avoid the undesired consequences of sexual activity, such as unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted

diseases (Jones et al., 1986), and entertainment programs make little mention of risks or responsibilities associated with sex (Kunkel, Cope, and Biely, 1999). Also, in contrast to the practice in most European countries, the advertising of condoms was forbidden on American television until 1987. Even now the great majority of stations refuse to accept such advertising. You are much more likely to see ads for Viagra or Cialis on television than for condoms. This gives American youngsters a mixed message—sex is glamorized, but its consequences are not discussed frankly. Significantly, survey research has found substantial and growing public support for providing information on television about condom use, even in largely rural and conservative states such as Indiana (Yarber and Torabi, 1999).

One-Way Communication

A significant difference between the media and all other agents of socialization is that the media usually communicate one way. Unlike all other agents of socialization, the people we experience through television, movies, radio, and music videos are not personal acquaintances, and we cannot really exchange ideas with them. All of the communication is in one direction—from the media to the viewer or listener. An exception to this is the Internet. Through popular social networking sites like Facebook, Snapchat, and Twitter, Internet users are able to communicate with each other in a manner similar to face-to-face communication. In addition, since a good deal of Internet communication is about the forms of mass media (TV shows, popular music, politics, current events, or movies), the Internet may also reduce the amount of one-way communication with the other forms of mass media. The protests over the disputed Iranian presidential election in the summer of 2009 were fueled by Internet communication over a variety of platforms, such as video, social networking sites, and email. A recent study also found that exposure to Internet news sources increased political participation (Tolbert and McNeal, 2003). Thus, the Internet would seem to represent a shifting terrain for the mass media, the full implications of which have yet to be seen (DiMaggio et al., 2001).

How Socialization Works

How do agents of socialization shape the thinking and behavior of those being socialized? Social scientists have focused on these main processes: *selective exposure and modeling*, *reward and punishment*, and *nurturance and identification*. Let us consider each.

Selective Exposure

One of the ways that agents of socialization influence attitudes and behaviors is through selective exposure. Children are exposed to those behaviors and attitudes considered desirable and sheltered from those regarded as undesirable. Parents do this by the ways they speak and behave in front of their children and by the reading material and television shows to which they expose their children. Parents try to maximize exposure to “good influences” and protect their children from “bad influences.”

It is not only parents who do this. Peer cultures, for example, expose children to certain modes of dress, speech, and behavior, and not to others. Schools attempt—through the content of classroom materials, for example—to expose children to sets of ideas and role models that are supportive of core cultural values. In the United States, such values include individual rights, hard work, and private ownership. Even the media, in the content of their entertainment, largely reinforce such values, although there may be other areas—most notably sex and violence—where their content differs from what children experience in the home.

Modeling

We know that children often exhibit behavior to which they are repeatedly and systematically exposed through a process called **modeling** (Bandura, 1977). Modeling begins with observing the behavior of significant others and with retention of the images of such behavior in a person's memory. The next stage is imitation, or reproduction, of that behavior. Eventually, however, this goes beyond mere imitation: The behavior is repeated until it becomes a matter of habit, and it is repeated in situations beyond that in which it was originally observed (Bandura, 1977). Moreover, the child comes to

develop attitudes and beliefs that are supportive of the behavior. Obviously, you cannot model behaviors to which you are not exposed, which is what makes selective exposure such a powerful tool of socialization. Of course, what agents of socialization *say* and what they *do* are not always the same, and when there is a discrepancy between the two, what they *do* seems to have a greater effect than what they say (Bryan and Walbek, 1970a, 1970b; Rushton, 1975). If, for example, a parent preaches patience but shows a child impatience, the child will likely learn impatience to a greater extent than patience.

Reward and Punishment

When children imitate and repeat behaviors they learned from significant others, these significant others respond with approval. Approval can be verbal or nonverbal, sometimes taking the form of a concrete reward, such as a cookie or a trip to the beach. Thus, the processes of reward and punishment reinforce what is already being learned through selective exposure and modeling (Sears, MacCoby, and Lewin, 1957; Skinner, 1938, 1968). Both behavior and the expression of attitudes can be rewarded or punished by agents of socialization. Because merely expressing an attitude increases the probability that we will come to believe that attitude (see Festinger and Carlsmith, 1959), the process of reward and punishment acts to shape not only behavior but attitudes and beliefs as well (Insko and Melson, 1969).

Reward and punishment are not always as obvious as giving or denying a child a cookie. Peer groups, for example, have a variety of ways to reward conformity and punish nonconformity. A friendly slap on the back or an invitation to join a group activity may be a reward for an approved action or viewpoint. Conversely, peer groups can be very harsh in their punishment of nonconformity, through ridicule, collective expressions of anger, or—worst of all—ostracism. In fact, with the exception of the mass media, which can only communicate one way, all agents of socialization use some form of reward and punishment to shape attitudes and behavior.

Nurturance and Identification

Both of the processes just discussed—selective exposure and modeling, and reward and punishment—are more effective if the child *identifies* with the person who is acting as an agent of socialization. By **identification**, we mean positive feelings toward the individual that lead the child to want to be like that person. These feelings are built in large part by the agent of socialization's nurturant behavior toward the child. These agents love and care about the child and, in the case of parents, are the child's main source of support. When they help the child, the child has an obligation to cooperate. All of this leads the child to love, admire, and want to please these agents.

Besides teaching and reinforcing desired behavior and beliefs, agents of socialization also give children important messages about how well they are playing their roles as well as about what kind of person they are overall. Several of the theories of socialization we considered earlier, such as those of Mead, Cooley, and Erikson, hold that developing a healthy self-image and making normal progress through the steps and stages of life depend on the messages given by agents of socialization. Thus, what kind of person a child grows up to become is shaped in no small part by such messages about self and role performance received from agents of socialization.

Conflicting Messages

Agents of socialization do not always give you the same message, either about what kind of person you *are* or what kind of person you *should be*. The kind of person your parents want you to be is not always the same kind of person your teachers, your clergy, or your peers want you to be. The media, too, present you with images of the ideal person, which may vary widely depending on what you read or watch. Handling these conflicting messages and expectations is a very important part of the socialization process. How do you respond when your parents want you to go to a family gathering, your athletic coach wants you to work out, your teacher expects you to do homework, and your

friends want you to party with them, *all at the same time*? More fundamentally, how do you respond when different agents of socialization want you to be a different kind of person? What happens when you have to decide whether you want to be fun-loving and carefree or serious and achievement oriented? These choices present both opportunities and difficulties.

Conflicting Agents and Stress

Clearly, these conflicting pressures from significant others can be a real source of stress in life. For many, they are the first experience with the condition of role conflict introduced in Chapter 4. In some cases, it is simply impossible to do what all of the agents of socialization are demanding. When this happens, there are two possible responses. One is to try to do part of what each agent of socialization wants: Go to the family event this week, party with your friends next week, work out for your sport at some other available time, and stay up late to finish your homework. If the demands are too many, you can wind up exhausted or burned out, but most people seem to manage without reaching these extremes.

One strategy people use is to cite the demands of one agent of socialization as the reason for not complying with those of another: “My parents say I can’t go with you because we have to go to my family reunion,” or “If I don’t go to this dance when all my friends are going, people will think there’s something wrong with me!” The alternative is to block out or withdraw from some agents of socialization. To please your parents, you may stop seeing your friends and classmates socially. Or, to please your friends, you may skip your homework or even drop out of school. To use this mode of adaptation with the most important agents of socialization, such as family, school, and peers, is risky and often results in problems.

Sometimes, the messages of different agents of socialization are so different that, in addition to creating stress and conflict within the individual who is being socialized, the agents of socialization come into direct conflict with one another. Take, for example, the many controversies over books and films used in elementary and secondary school classrooms. Frequently,

these conflicts have pitted teachers seeking to broaden students’ viewpoints against parents seeking to protect their children from what they see as harmful influences. Another example is illustrated in a study by Curry (1993; Curry and Strauss, 1994) of the socialization of athletes to accept sports injuries as a normal part of life—a message of “No pain, no gain” that conflicts with the larger society’s message of “Don’t do that, you might get hurt.”

Conflicting demands among agents of socialization may give children different messages about themselves. Parents value children for *who they are* and love them unconditionally, while teachers (and in some ways, peers) value them for *what they do*, and approval and liking are not automatic. This can make going to school a difficult transition for some children. In addition, one agent of socialization may give a child a positive message at the same time that another is giving that child a negative message—sometimes in relation to the same behavior. Finally, peer socialization is different from other kinds of socialization in that it is the child’s first experience of interacting with equals. To be integrated successfully into peer cultures, in both childhood and later life, children must discover how to learn from equals as well as from authority figures.

Conflicting Agents and Choice

While these conflicts among agents of socialization can be stressful, they also make choices possible, and indeed help teach us how to make choices. Suppose, for example, that you find that tuition, rent, and other expenses are exceeding your limited income as a college student, so you decide to save money by buying your clothes at a secondhand store. The next time your parents see you, they ask, “What’s the matter with you? Are you trying to look like some kind of bum?” In the meantime, however, a friend tells you, “I like the way you’re dressing lately. It’s so much less pretentious than the way you used to dress.” While you are in the process of changing your appearance, your parents and friends have offered you some new ideas to consider about the meaning of how you dress.

These different messages also help us develop beliefs, values, and skills in many areas



Photo 5.8 It matters little where this college campus is located. It is evident that a nationwide informal dress code for college students prevails. Is this a peer-group norm, something created by the media or by marketing, or both?

Courtesy of John E. Farley

of life. Political, religious, and goal-related attitudes are largely learned in the home. Lifestyle, entertainment, and leisure preferences are more likely to be learned from peers, as are skills related to cooperation, intimacy, and interpersonal relations (Davies and Kandel, 1981; Youniss, 1980). Work habits and how to participate in organizations are largely learned in school (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Jackson, 1968). However, in all these areas, our ultimate values and habits are usually a product of some combination of the different agents of socialization.

Conflicting Agents and Social Change

In addition to offering choices at the individual level, the messages of different agents of socialization perform an important function at the societal level: They can act as a source of social change. The college student peer group, for example, functioned as a source of opposition to the Vietnam War, offering young college students in the 1960s a contrasting viewpoint about the war from what most were getting from authority figures. During the 1950s and 1960s, the black churches in the United States offered African Americans an alternative to the dominant view of race relations as well as a forum for social change (Morris, 1984). In both cases, the media took these messages and presented them to a larger audience. The broadcast media reported and televised the brutalization of black civil rights marchers in the South, and Hollywood began to produce antiwar movies

and music. Eventually, these other agents of socialization spread the values associated with the peace movement and the civil rights movement through much of American society (Yankelovich, 1974, 1981). Thus, the new messages from an agent of socialization that conflicted with messages from mainstream society eventually became part of the mainstream.

An important side lesson of this experience is that what appears to be nonconformity often is not. While the college student participating in a protest or the African American marching for racial equality may be seen as violating the expectation of some agents of socialization (e.g., their parents, school authorities, or the police), they are in most cases conforming to the expectations of other agents of socialization (e.g., a college student peer group or an African American church group).

Socialization in Adulthood

Thus far, we have spoken of the socialization process primarily with reference to how it works in childhood and adolescence. It is in childhood that we encounter the most new roles and new situations, and thus it is in childhood that the socialization process is experienced most intensely. For this reason, childhood socialization is sometimes referred to as *primary socialization*. Socialization, however, does not end when one becomes an adult. Although many attitudes, beliefs, and behavior patterns have become fairly well established by this time, the process of socialization continues throughout life. Every time we enter a new situation or learn to play a new role, we go through a socialization process.

One example of adult socialization can be seen in the parenting process. While parents are socializing their children concerning how to take care of themselves and participate in

society, their children are also socializing *them*. The adults are, in effect, learning the role of parent. In part, parents learn this role from their children, as they find out what “works” and what doesn’t in the rearing of their children.

Life-Cycle Roles

The adult life cycle presents us with numerous new situations that require the learning of new roles. In each of these, a socialization process occurs. Among these situations are leaving home to live on your own, entering college, beginning a career, changing jobs, getting married or cohabiting, becoming a parent, getting divorced or “breaking up,” adjusting when your children grow up and leave home, retiring, and losing parents or a spouse through death. Not everyone experiences all of these things, and others experience some of them more than once. Thus, these changes should not be thought of as a clearly defined cycle through which everyone passes. In fact, the life cycle has become less uniform today than it was in the past. Even so, every adult experiences *some* of these changes, and every change requires a socialization process. The nature of this process is influenced by, among other things, the type of role change. For example, role changes may be voluntary or involuntary, may occur once or repeatedly, may or may not be reversible, may be made alone or along with other people, may occur quickly or gradually, and may occur alone or along with other role changes (Glaser and Strauss, 1971).

All of these factors influence the specific kind of socialization process that occurs with any given role change. For purposes of illustration, we examine the socialization processes that occur when you get a new job or start a family. Other situations requiring socialization are discussed in later chapters.

Getting a Job

When you complete your college education, many of you will embark on a career. Doing so will mean entering a new phase of socialization. You will have to learn what it really means to be a teacher, police officer, salesperson, accountant, or whatever role you choose. This will

require you to assess what aspects of your prior education and training apply to your new role and what aspects do not. For many people starting out in a new job, it is distressing to hear “Forget everything you learned in college” (or in law school, police academy, sales training, or wherever you have been trained).

To survive in any career or profession, you must learn the norms of that career or profession and how to play the role in an acceptable way. To do so requires learning and accepting the profession’s definition of that career as opposed to the public’s definition. The meaning of a “good cop” from the viewpoint of other police officers may be different from the public’s meaning of that term or from the meaning learned in the police academy. Similarly, a teacher who meets only the expectations of their students, and not those of other teachers, is not likely to feel accepted as a teacher and may doubt their success in that role (see, e.g., Reynolds, 1992).

This leads to a second point: Every place of employment has its own subculture that must be learned by any new employee who wants to succeed. To be effective, even new supervisors must learn this subculture. To complicate matters further, there may be more than one subculture to which the new employee must accommodate. The employee must please not only co-workers but also supervisors, whose norms may be quite different. For some, there are also customers, clients, voters, patients, or students to keep happy. In a very real way, all of these different groups act as agents of socialization, and their messages concerning the work role are usually different.

Marriage and Family Changes

No matter how much two people may be “in love,” getting married or even cohabiting requires major adjustments that in turn require a good deal of socialization. Different ideas concerning such things as money, orderliness of the house, division of housework, and even food preferences can be major sources of conflict unless both parties can learn to compromise or find a mutually satisfactory way of doing things. Those who have lived on their own experience a loss of freedom. Those who have not run the

risk of dependency. Some young people who have lived with their parents for all their lives until getting married risk becoming dependent on their spouses the same way they were dependent on their parents. Clearly the most important agent of socialization at this stage is the partner. However, to adjust successfully to this new reality, most young people also must interact with peers who are facing the same issues. Parents (and now in-laws) continue to act as agents of socialization at this stage and can be either helpful or a source of additional problems.

Becoming a Parent. When people become parents, time management can become a critical issue, particularly if both parents are employed full time. Conflicts between spouses or with parents over child-rearing can require additional adjustment. As noted, children are important agents of socialization concerning how to be a parent. Typically, parents and peers also play a major role in this socialization process, as do the media, with their abundant material on parenting techniques.

An increasing number of American women now enter the role of parent before marriage, in which case they often must both support and raise the child by themselves. When teenagers become parents, this may be the first adult role to which they must become socialized, and they must learn this difficult role under highly adverse conditions.

Return to Singlehood. Another new role that large numbers of Americans now face is returning to singlehood after a divorce or the end of a “live-in” relationship. About half of all marriages in the United States now end in divorce, so this is an adjustment that a large number of people must make. An important part of this socialization process is the development of a new (uncoupled) self-image or identity (Vaughan, 1990).

Role Change, Adult Socialization, and Stress

We undergo a socialization process whenever we *leave* a social role as well as when we enter one (Ebaugh, 1988). Senior athletes playing

their last game, students graduating from college, and workers retiring all go through a process of role exit that bears some similarities to uncoupling. So do ex-nuns, people who change careers, and people who get sex-change operations—Ebaugh’s research indicates that all of these people go through a similar process. Leaving one social role usually means entering another, but part of entering a new role involves giving up the behaviors and identities associated with the old one. This involves challenges of disengagement and letting go. At the same time, the old role retains some influence over the person’s identity, as illustrated by our frequent use of terms like ex-wife, ex-nun, and ex-president.

Role change is not entirely stressful. Learning a new role can be fun and exciting, and leaving behind old roles often involves leaving behind some stress as well. Wheaton (1990) studied people who went through nine kinds of role transitions including new job, job loss, marriage, divorce, having a child, and having one’s children move out, among others. For seven of the nine, the degree of stress in one’s *old* role was important in determining whether learning the new role presented emotional difficulties. Similarly, marital happiness—and sometimes overall life satisfaction—improves with the arrival of the “empty nest” when the last child moves out of the home (White and Edwards, 1990). Thus, while there is a socialization process involved in learning a new role, it can lead to increased happiness. Finally, recent studies suggest that young adults are now putting off many of the preceding tasks, like getting a job, getting married, or starting a family, until later in life, preferring instead to take their time and experiment with different professions or life paths (Furstenberg, 2010).

Resocialization in Total Institutions

A less ordinary type of adult socialization, which some experience and others do not, is resocialization in **total institutions**. The term “total institution,” developed by Irving Goffman (1961), refers to any group or organization that has almost total, continuous control over the

individual and that attempts to erase the effects of the individual's previous socialization and instill a new set of values, habits, and beliefs. This process is referred to as **resocialization**. There are many examples of total institutions. One is the military, which takes people who generally believe that killing is wrong and seeks to convert them into fighting machines who will kill and risk their lives on order, without asking questions. Prisons, which seek to eliminate criminal habits and tendencies and convert offenders into law-abiding citizens, are another example. Other examples are religious cults, "deprogramming" aimed at weaning people away from religious cults, prisoner-of-war camps, many boarding schools, orphanages, some residential substance-abuse programs, reform schools, some nursing homes, and the environments created by kidnappers.

Case Study: The Korean War

How do total institutions accomplish this? It is often said that they brainwash people. Thus, American prisoners of war (POWs) on occasion defected to the North Koreans and North Vietnamese; Patty Hearst joined her kidnappers in robbing a bank; peace-loving people have turned into fierce fighters after being drafted and put through boot camp. Actually, though, what goes on in total institutions—"brainwashing," if you will—bears some striking similarities to ordinary socialization processes. Consider, for example, studies of the "brainwashing" of American POWs during the Korean War. It is said that the Chinese POW camps were especially effective at this. How did they do it?

Studies of Americans who returned from Chinese POW camps revealed several important findings (Bauer, 1957; Schein, 1957, 1961). First, reward and punishment were used. Those who behaved and expressed ideas consistent with the desires of their captors were given somewhat greater freedom, whereas those who rebelled were placed in solitary confinement and, in some cases, were physically punished. Second, selective exposure was used. Some POWs were allowed to spend as many hours as they wanted reading in libraries, as good a way as any to pass a very boring time. These

libraries, of course, were stocked only with materials sympathetic to the Chinese and North Korean viewpoints. Contacts with their own culture were forbidden to the prisoners. Mail, for example, was not allowed to go through. The one exception was "bad mail"—unpaid bills, repossession notices, "Dear John" letters. The effect of this program, of course, was to foster a positive image of the Chinese and North Koreans, while isolating POWs from all but the unpleasant aspects of their own background.

Most effective of all, perhaps, was the Chinese policy of "lenience" (Schein, 1957). This was intended to create an atmosphere of nurturance, a sense of obligation. Most American POWs had originally been captured in North Korea and were later taken to Chinese POW camps. Because they had been captured in the immediate war zone, conditions in Korea were harsh. Long forced marches were the rule, and they were fatal to many POWs. Scarce food and clothing went to Chinese and North Korean soldiers before it went to prisoners. In the Chinese prison camps behind the lines, however, conditions were somewhat better. Food and shelter were generally adequate, and forced marches were unnecessary. The Chinese military used this to considerable advantage. First, many POWs became grateful for being treated better in China than in Korea and wanted to cooperate for that reason alone. Second, the fear of being sent back to Korea was enough to get most of the rest to cooperate, even if they didn't really want to.

We see, then, that the POW camp used some of the same techniques that are used in ordinary socialization processes—selective exposure and modeling, reward and punishment, and nurturance and identification.

Ordinary Socialization Versus Total Institutions

There are, however, four very important differences between resocialization in total institutions and ordinary socialization. First, the total institution seeks to eliminate the effects of previous socialization, whereas ordinary agents of socialization do not usually do this intentionally. Second, the total institution seeks to resocialize the individual strictly in accordance with its

objectives. In short, the goal is to make a “good soldier,” “communist sympathizer,” or “cooperative inmate” out of the person. Thus, the objectives of the total institution, as opposed to the wishes or self-interests of the individual, are the entire purpose behind the process. Third, the total institution has complete, round-the-clock control of the individual and therefore does not have to compete with other agents of socialization. Finally, some total institutions use fatigue and physical brutality as additional ways of wearing people down. Endless questions and indoctrination and sleep deprivation are common. Eventually, the individual becomes so worn down that the individual has no energy left to resist the forced socialization, at least outwardly. Despite these very important differences, it remains true that there are important parallels between resocialization in total institutions and ordinary socialization.

Functionalist and Conflict Perspectives on Socialization

While the theories of socialization discussed earlier in this chapter describe and analyze the *process* of socialization, we should also address the functions and purposes of socialization within the larger society. Let us take a closer look at two perspectives that help us understand the role and the importance of socialization. The functionalist perspective addresses ways in which the socialization process helps to preserve and meet the needs of society, while the conflict perspective sees the socialization process as a key mechanism for preserving social inequality, and ensuring that the wealthy and powerful can pass on their advantages to their children.

The Functionalist Perspective

From a functionalist standpoint, there are several ways in which socialization preserves and meets the needs of society. It provides knowledge about adaptation to a society’s physical and social environment. This knowledge, passed

from generation to generation, helps the society survive and meet the demands of its environment. As we discussed in Chapter 4, *culture* carries this knowledge, and socialization is the means by which culture is passed from generation to generation. Culture, of course, also includes values and norms that are widely shared in a society, and as we have seen, functionalists see such shared values and norms as being essential to solidarity and cooperation.

On the other hand, society must be able to change to adapt to new situations. The fact that there are different agents of socialization, and that these agents often give somewhat different messages, offers a means by which this can occur. Because these agents of socialization offer different messages, the individual has the opportunity to choose the message that promotes change. The youthful peer group and the media may play particularly important roles in this process (Corsaro and Rizzo, 1988, 1990; Meyrowitz, 1985).

The Conflict Perspective

From a conflict perspective, the socialization process helps the wealthy and powerful preserve and pass on their advantages. In general, the socialization process teaches people to accept, not challenge or question, the ways of their society. Recall that conflict theorists see the values, beliefs, and practices of society as serving the interests of the dominant group in society. To ask, “Do things have to be this way?” or “Isn’t there a better way?” would be to challenge a status quo that works to the advantage of the wealthy and powerful. Rather than do this, socialization generally teaches children to value the greatness of their society: “This is a great country” and “Be grateful that you live here.” Significantly, virtually all societies include such content in their socialization process.

Nonetheless, it is important to point out that opposition groups do sometimes form within and as a result of socialization processes. Black churches, for example, became organizing bases for the civil rights movement (Morris, 1984), and universities for the movement

against the Vietnam War. Thus, agents of socialization *can* act as agents of social change, but that is probably not their usual or predominant effect.

Finally, conflict theory argues that socialization operates as a process of **social channeling** (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). It prepares the children of the wealthy and powerful for lives of wealth and power by teaching them the values, beliefs, behaviors, and information they will need for such life. On the other hand, the children of the poor are channeled toward a life of poverty. We discuss this process in detail in Chapter 14. Because of the linkages between social class and race, this process also helps perpetuate racial inequality. Finally, “gender-role socialization,” discussed in Chapter 8, similarly prepares women and men for different and unequal roles, thereby helping pass from generation to generation the social and economic advantages enjoyed by males. An illustrative study shows how long-lasting the effects of gender-role socialization can be. Women received the right to vote in the United States in 1920. But as recently as the 1980s, women who came of age before or just after women received the right to vote remained less likely to vote than women who grew up in later generations (Firebaugh and Chen, 1995).

Summary

This chapter has explained that social interaction is necessary for normal human development and that such interaction plays a central role in all theories about socialization. Besides meeting the need for interaction, socialization also teaches people the things they need to know in order to survive and develop in their physical and social environments. Particularly critical is the learning of social roles and norms.

Social scientists disagree about the roles nature and nurture play in human development. Interactionists see nurture—social interaction—as the dominant force, with personality being determined by the messages you get from others and your interpretation of those messages. As children develop, they learn the

concept of roles, and they shift from interacting with individuals to playing roles and interacting with other roles played by other people. Freudian theory, in contrast, sees the expectations of society in fundamental conflict with basic drives such as aggression and sexuality. It holds that the ways in which these conflicts are resolved (or left unresolved) in childhood have a major impact on adult personality.

The cognitive-developmental approach, which focuses on reasoning processes, sees the child’s physiological development as a factor limiting their cognitive development. But one’s ability to reason also is affected by environmental or situational influences and experience. People develop through a series of stages with social interaction determining to a great degree how far a person proceeds and when. Closely related are theories concerning moral reasoning, such as those of Kohlberg. These theories see moral reasoning as progressing through a similar series of stages linked to reasoning ability. However, the ability to relate to the roles of others is necessary in order to move to higher stages. This, as well as a good part of the individual’s reasoning ability, is gained through interaction with others.

The socialization process is carried out by agents of socialization, which include the family, schools, religion, peer groups, and the media. Although the family is probably the most influential of these agents, different agents predominate at different stages of life. To a greater or lesser extent, all of them shape behavior through processes of selective exposure and modeling, reward and punishment, and feedback and identification. Most agents of socialization also deliver messages to the individual that play a critical role in defining the individual’s self-image.

Socialization is a lifelong process, even though it occurs most intensively during the childhood period of primary socialization. In adulthood, people undergo a new socialization process each time they enter a new role, such as leaving their parents’ home, starting college, getting a job, getting married or divorced, having children, retiring, or experiencing the death of a spouse. In extraordinary

circumstances, they may experience resocialization in a total institution, such as a prison, which uses its complete control over the individual to erase old values and beliefs and instill new ones.

The functionalist and conflict theories offer different explanations of the meaning and purpose of the socialization process. To functionalists, the process helps people learn to participate in society, perpetuates social knowledge and culture, and supports consensus and solidarity. To conflict theorists, it tends to serve the interests of the dominant group by bringing about false consciousness and social channeling. Both perspectives, however, recognize that conflicting messages from different agents of socialization can act as an important source of social change. It is this social change that allows society to adapt to new conditions and also offers a source of opportunity for disadvantaged groups to improve their position in society.

Key Terms

socialization
 play stage
 significant others
 self
 role model
 game stage
 id
 superego
 ego
 cognitive-developmental theories
 cognitive processes
 agents of socialization
 modeling
 identification
 total institution

resocialization
 social channeling

Exercises

- 1 The text discusses the *nature vs. nurture issue*. One very interesting example of the nature-nurture debate involves the cause(s) of *alcoholism*. To what extent do people *learn* to be alcoholics, or are they biologically predisposed to become alcoholics? WebMD has medical information on alcoholism. Do a search on the causes of alcoholism on WebMD, and contrast that with a search of your library's sociological database (e.g., The Sociological Abstracts). Write a short essay on where you stand on the preceding questions.
- 2 One of the best-known sociological theories of socialization is Charles H. Cooley's looking-glass self (see Chapter 3). In 1902, Cooley explained this concept in his book *Human Nature and the Social Order*.
 - Try to visualize an example of your own socialization experiences involving the *looking-glass self*.
 - Can you recall a situation where you imagined how others were reacting to your behavior and you were *incorrect*? For example, you might have felt that other people were reacting *positively* to something you said or did, when, in fact, you found out later that they were reacting negatively.

For a full list of references, please visit the book's Support Material at www.routledge.com/9781032423593.

Part III

Social Structure and Inequality



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Chapter 6

Stratification: Structured Social Inequality

In January 2023, Oxfam released a report showing that the world's wealthiest 1 percent of individuals owned as much wealth as the other 99 percent combined and had "gained nearly two-thirds of all new wealth worth \$42 trillion created since 2020" (Oxfam, 2023). That is nearly twice as much as the bottom 99 percent. In addition, during the past decade the top 1 percent of the world has gained half of all new wealth created. By many measures, global inequality is the highest ever recorded (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2015; Qureshi, 2023). The same can nearly be said for inequality in the United States. By many measures, inequality has reached levels not seen since just prior to the Great Depression in 1928 (Desilver, 2013).

So, just how unequal is the United States? The gap between the highest earners and everyone else has been getting bigger for a long time. Even among the rich, most of the money is going to those at the very top. Income and wealth inequality in the United States is much higher than in most other developed countries,

and it's getting more so. This surge in inequality can be traced back to the 2008 financial crisis, the slow recovery that followed, and the economic jolt from the COVID-19 pandemic, the effects of which were made worse by inequality as many poorer folks were forced to keep working during the heights of the pandemic and had to put themselves and their families at risk of infection.

To see this inequality in action, look at chief executive officer (CEO) pay. In 1965, the average CEO made about 20 times more money than a regular worker. By 2018, that number was a whopping 278 times more, according to the Economic Policy Institute (2019). So, CEOs saw their pay increase significantly, while workers' pay stagnated.

It's not just about how much you make in a year. It's also about how much you own. In 2021, the top 10 percent of Americans had nearly 70 percent of all the wealth in the country. Back in 1989, they had about 61 percent. That means that the next 40 percent of Americans had less wealth over time, and the



Photos 6.1 and 6.2 Global inequality—the gap between rich and poor worldwide—is by many measures today the greatest in the history of the world.

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bottom 50 percent owned just 2.5 percent of the wealth in 2021.

And when we compare the United States to other rich countries, we see that our inequality is higher. We can measure it using something called the Gini coefficient, which goes from 0 (totally equal) to 100 (totally unequal). In 2019, the United States had a Gini coefficient of 40, which is similar to many less-developed countries and much higher than other wealthy countries like Canada, France, and Germany (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022).

Clearly, these figures indicate the existence of increasing inequality in American society. Although inequality is more extreme in the United States than in other industrialized nations, the United States has no monopoly on social inequality. In this chapter, we examine the nature, causes, and consequences of social stratification: structured inequality in the distribution of scarce resources. A scarce resource can be anything people want that is not abundant enough for all people to have as much as they want. Money, power, and fame are all examples of scarce resources.

What Is Stratification?

Some form of social stratification exists in all societies. These patterns of stratification can be thought of as ranking systems within societies. People can be ranked on the basis of how much of the society's scarce resources they own and control. Those with a large share of scarce resources rank high; those with a small share rank low.

Dimensions of Stratification

Different kinds of scarce resources are distributed unequally in society. A person could, for example, have a great deal of money, yet have a low status in the community—a situation humorously portrayed in the television series *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

These different ranking systems, based on the distribution of different scarce resources, have been referred to by sociologists as

dimensions of stratification. A major contribution of the classic social theorist Max Weber (1968 [orig. 1922]) was his recognition that most societies have three major dimensions of stratification: an economic dimension (wealth and income), a political dimension (power), and a social prestige dimension (status). Let us consider each.

The Economic Dimension

The economic dimension of stratification concerns money and the things it can buy. It involves two key variables, *income* and *wealth*, which are related but are not the same.

Income refers to the amount of money that a person or family receives over some defined period of time, usually a calendar year. Essentially, it is what you report on your income tax form in April. Data on income in the United States are readily available because the United States Census Bureau asks Americans about their incomes in annual surveys and in the decennial Census.

Wealth refers to the total value of everything that a person or family owns, minus any debts owed. It is similar in meaning to “net worth.” Thus, wealth refers not to what you receive over some time period but to what you have at a particular point in time. Data on wealth are collected less often but are becoming more available than in the past.

The Political Dimension

Power can be defined as the ability to get people to behave as you want them to behave. Power usually is exercised through the political system, at least to some extent. Thus, voting, office holding, lobbying, contributing to campaigns, boycotting, striking, and demonstrating are all means by which people can exercise power. Because power is an abstract concept, it is hard to measure. But sociologists often study it indirectly by looking at who wins when different groups conflict, or by who occupies decision-making positions. We examine this dimension further in Chapter 12.

The Social Prestige Dimension

The third dimension of stratification is social **prestige**, sometimes referred to as *status*. This dimension has to do with what people think of you. If people think highly of you and you are well known, you have a high level of status or prestige. If people think poorly of you, you have a low level of prestige. By definition, prestige is a scarce resource. Being “well regarded” is always a relative or comparative matter. It would be meaningless to be well regarded if everyone were equally well regarded. Then everyone would be the same, and nobody would stand out.

There are numerous ways to gain prestige or status. People can get status on the basis of their family name, if, for example, they happen to be a Rockefeller or a Kennedy, or, perhaps, a Hilton or a Kardashian. They can get it on the basis of their education or occupation—as we see later, occupation is one of the most consistent determinants of status. Accomplishments, titles, and public exposure can be sources of status or prestige. Hahl and Zuckerman (2014) find that the status of “hero” is more likely to be conferred on individuals who engage in pro-social behavior if others perceive that the individual had nothing to gain from their actions or that increases in prestige are unintended by-products of the person’s actions.

The products and services we buy can confer status. The concept of **conspicuous consumption** refers to people making lavish purchases of expensive goods and services simply so that they will be noticed doing so (Veblen, 1994 [orig. 1899]). The more extravagant, unnecessary, and wasteful the purchase, the better. A related concept is that of **distinction**, whereby elites in a society develop exclusive styles and tastes with the express purpose of separating themselves from the mass of society (Bourdieu, 1984). For instance, purchases of yachts and rare art tend to increase during economic recessions—exactly the time most consumers are cutting back on their purchases (Nunes, Drèze, and Han, 2011; Ash, 2012). And this process itself has been found to increase inequality. Wilmers (2017) found that high-income consumers often opt for products and services that are considered superior

or more exclusive (like yachts), which are often associated with higher prices. The demand for these high-end offerings creates a dynamic where certain workers, particularly those in the service industry, are pressured to deliver an elevated level of service. When these consumers insist on more refined and exclusive offerings, it often leads to higher wages for workers in positions that cater to their preferences, like chefs, personal trainers, or hospitality staff. However, on the other hand, the intensified pressure and competition can lead to stagnated or even reduced wages for those who cannot meet these elevated demands, thus increasing inequality.

Ridgeway (2014) argues that status reinforces the other dimensions of stratification through a self-reinforcing loop at the macro and micro levels. For example, if men have more power and resources than women in a society, they will develop a superior status. Thus, from there on, men are likely to be seen as “better” than women simply *because* they are men. In a similar fashion, it is seen as more acceptable in society for a successful businessperson to sit on the board of a college than a janitor who works at that college, even if the janitor shows an interest and is knowledgeable about college policies; and the businessperson may have no experience with higher education at all but holds a higher status than the janitor. (We expand on these themes in the Sociological Insights box “Who Has Your Back, the Rich or the Poor?” later in this chapter.) Ultimately, however, prestige is a matter of what people think. Thus, the best way to measure it is to ask. Surveys of occupational prestige, most admired person, most recognized name, and so forth, are important ways of measuring prestige.

The Distribution of Wealth and Income in the United States

The Distribution of Income

In 2021, the median household income in the United States was \$70,874 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). As you recall from Chapter 2, median household income is the income level that is in the middle of the distribution: half of

all households have incomes above the median; half have incomes below the median. Looking at the statistics from the United States Census Bureau, it is clear that aggregate income is distributed quite unequally in the United States. In 2021, as can be seen in Figure 6.1, the top 5 percent of households received over 23 percent of all income, more than 12 times the share that went to the bottom 20 percent (2.9 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). The gap only grows starker when looking at the top 20 percent of earners relative to the bottom 20 percent.

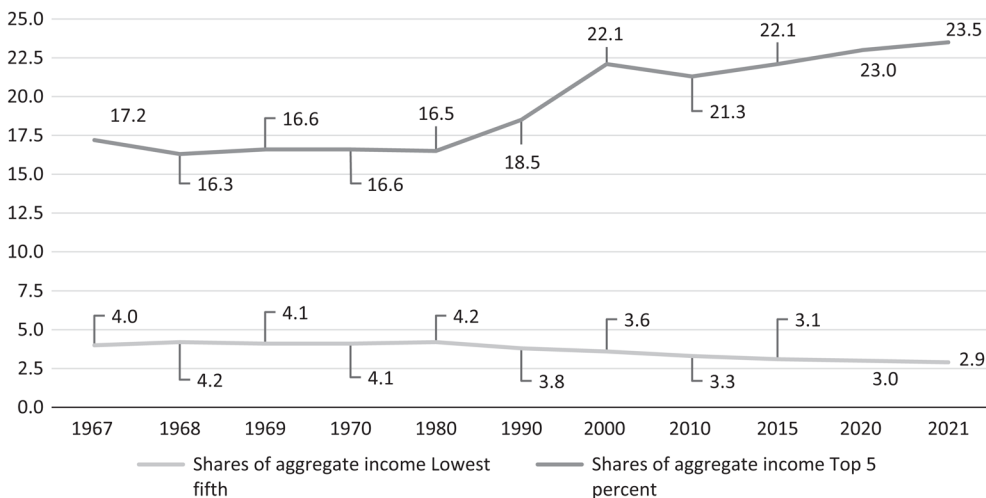
The Trend: More or Less Equal?

Do these figures represent more or less inequality than in the past? The answer is that, over the long run, there has not been a great deal of change, but since the mid-1970s, as illustrated in Figure 6.1, the distribution has clearly shifted in the direction of inequality (Olsen, 1990; Burtless, 1990). This trend accelerated particularly rapidly in the late 1980s, 1990s, and again during the Great Recession that began in 2008 and continues today. Over the longer term of American history, there has been some limited change in the degree of inequality.

There was some shift toward greater equality between about 1929 and 1944 (Fusfeld, 1976, p. 630)—a period roughly corresponding to Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and World War II. For the next 30 years, there was little change. Since the 1970s, there appears to be some shift back to the pre-Roosevelt pattern, as the rich have gotten richer and the poor poorer. Looking at Figure 6.1 once again, the percentage share of income for the bottom 20 percent remains quite stable and low from 1967 to 2021 (ranging from 2.9 to 4.2 percent); while the percentage of income for the top 5 percent is only growing over time (ranging from 16.6 to 23.5 percent in 2021).

A major cause of this shift can also be seen in the decline of labor unions in the United States (Jacobs and Dirlam, 2016). A recent study found that this decline accounts for somewhere between one-fifth and one-third of the growth in inequality during this period (Western and Rosenfeld, 2011; Volscho and Kelly, 2012). Additionally, a more conservative congress, lower taxes on the very wealthy, greater trade abroad, and the rise in the share of income and wealth gained from stock and real estate for the

Figure 6.1 Share of Income Going to Highest 5% and Lowest 20%, United States, 1967–2020.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1968 to 2022 Annual Social and Economic Supplements (CPS ASEC). Income in the United States: 2021 (census.gov). www.census.gov/data/tables/2022/demo/income-poverty/p60-276.html.

very rich have also contributed to this increase in inequality (Volscho and Kelly, 2012). This is a fairly significant change, given the relatively small changes across the longer term of American history (Bartlett and Steele, 1992). In fact, recent analysis of Internal Revenue Service data by Saez (2009b) shows that the share of total income going to the top 10 percent of the population in income had, by 2007, reached a higher point than in any year since 1917. And this share is greater today than it was in 2007, indicating that current income inequality is the highest it has been in the past century.

Income Inequality: A Comparative View

How does the United States compare to other countries in its distribution of income? First, it is important to point out that virtually all industrialized countries distribute income more equally than most preindustrial, less economically developed countries (Fusfeld, 1976, p. 630). As countries industrialize and modernize, their inequality tends to decrease (Lenski, 1966; Nolan and Lenski, 2008). The appropriate standard of comparison for the United States, then, is other countries that have already industrialized.

The United States has greater income inequality than virtually all such countries. Table 6.1 shows that income inequality in the

United States is far above average for industrialized countries. Hoffman, Lee, and Lemieux (2020) find both labor income (earned from working) and capital income (earned from private stock of physical and financial assets) contribute to the inequality gap we see in the United States today, with the capital-to-labor income ratio being greatest among those individuals with the highest income. Notably, there has been a shift over time. In the 1980s and 1990s, inequality was mainly driven by inequality in labor income; however, in the 2000s, capital income seems to be the biggest factor in producing inequality. The wealthiest 10 percent of Americans receive a larger share of total income than do the wealthiest 10 percent in any of the other countries, and the poorest 10 percent of Americans receive a smaller share than their counterparts in any of the other countries. Overall, the top 10 percent in the United States receive about 16 times as much as the bottom 10 percent, more than in any other country. Indeed, the top 10 percent in the United States receive double the income of the lower 40 percent. This is about twice as much as the average for the other countries. Thus, in the United States, the wealthy receive more income relative to the poor or the middle class than in other industrialized countries, and this gap has widened in recent years.

Table 6.1 Income Inequality in 11 Industrialized Countries

<i>Country</i>	<i>Ratio of Highest 10 Percent to Lowest 40 Percent</i>	<i>Gini Index</i>
Sweden	0.9	26.1
Norway	0.9	26.8
Denmark	0.9	26.9
Netherlands	1.0	26.9
Germany	1.1	30.6
Ireland	1.2	32.1
Switzerland	1.2	32.4
Canada	1.3	33.7
Australia	1.3	34.0
United Kingdom	1.7	38.0
United States	2.0	41.1

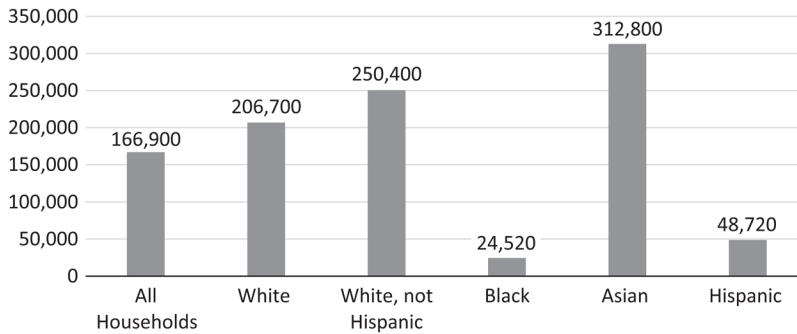
Source: United Nations (2015). Human Development Report, 2015 Statistical Index, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr_2015_statistical_annex.pdf (downloaded February 4, 2015).

The Distribution of Wealth

As unequal as the distribution of income is in the United States, wealth is even more unequally distributed. A 2012 study showed that the top one-tenth of 1 percent of the U.S. population owned as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent (Saez and Zucman, 2015; The Economist, 2014). Overall, the top 10 percent of the population own nearly 80 percent of the wealth, and the top 1 percent own 42 percent of the wealth. Wealth is sharply divided by race: The median non-Hispanic white household (\$250,400) is more than ten times as wealthy as the median African American household (\$24,520) and more

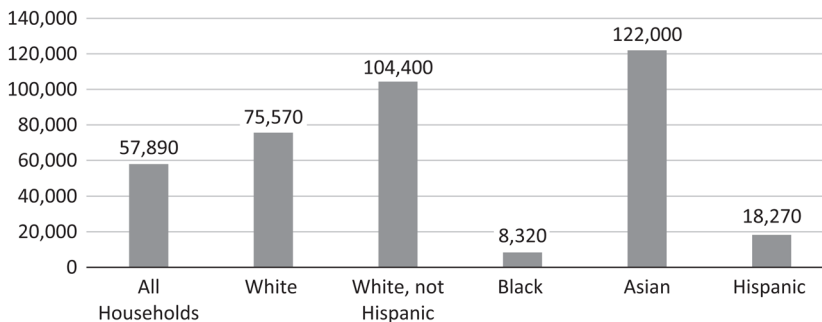
than five times as wealthy as the median Hispanic household (\$48,720) when considering home ownership; see Figure 6.2 (U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2022). This disadvantage is even more when considering the median Asian household (\$312,800). And if we leave out equity in owned homes, the median African American household has only a little over \$8,000 in assets and the median Hispanic household only a little more than \$18,000, far below the white non-Hispanic household median of around \$104,000 and Asian household median of 122,000 (Figure 6.3). Furthermore, the racial disparity between those maintaining zero or

Figure 6.2 Median Household Net Worth by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2021.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, Survey Year 2022, Public Use Data. Median Net Worth 2021 with Equity in Home included. www.census.gov/data/tables/2021/demo/wealth/wealth-asset-ownership.html (Downloaded September 6, 2023).

Figure 6.3 Median Household Net Worth, excluding Equity in Own Home, by Race and Hispanic Origin, 2021.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, Survey Year 2022, Public Use Data. Median Net Worth 2021, Excluding Equity in Own Home. www.census.gov/data/tables/2021/demo/wealth/wealth-asset-ownership.html (downloaded September 6, 2023).



Photo 6.3 Heat, cold, fires, and vermin are among the risks faced by poor families that live in housing like this home in New Mexico.

Courtesy of John E. Farley

negative wealth was also significant in 2021, with some 23.6 percent of black households and 14 percent of Hispanic households holding zero or negative net worth as compared to only 5 percent of non-Hispanic white people (U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2022).

It is important to note that wealth is becoming more concentrated. According to Saez and Zucman (2015), the share of wealth owned by the top one-tenth of 1 percent was three times as great in 2012 as it was in 1978, while the share of wealth owned by the bottom 90 percent fell from 35 percent in the mid-1980s to 23 percent in 2012. The researchers attribute this change largely to the erosion of progressive income and estate taxation and of financial regulation in the 1980s, which has made it much easier for the super-rich to accumulate wealth at the expense of the bottom 90 percent (and to some extent even the bottom 99.9 percent) since that time (Saez and Zucman, 2015, p. 24).

For financial assets, assets other than homes and pensions, wealth is even more concentrated. For these kinds of assets, the top 10 percent owned more than 85 percent of all such assets in 2012, and the top 1 percent owned more than half (Saez and Zucman, 2015, Figure IV). This is

crucial, because these are the kinds of assets that can produce additional wealth (Volcho and Kelly, 2012).

Socioeconomic Mobility

Thus far, we described the degree of economic inequality found in the United States. A separate, although related, question about the degree of inequality concerns **socioeconomic mobility**: the frequency with which people move up and down in the society's economic hierarchy. In a society with very high socioeconomic mobility,

it would not be unusual for a person to be born very poor and end up very wealthy as an adult—or the other way around. In sociological terms, a society such as this would have an **open stratification system**. In this type of system, achieved statuses have substantial influence over the social status a person attains in adulthood. In a society with very low mobility, those born poor nearly always stay poor, and those born wealthy nearly always stay wealthy. This type of society is said to have a **closed stratification system**. In a closed stratification system, ascribed statuses largely determine a person's social position throughout life.

Among all societies, there is generally greater mobility in societies that have less inequality. The main reason for this is that as preindustrial societies modernize and become industrialized societies, inequality declines and mobility increases over the long run. However, among societies at any given level of industrialization, the relationship between the degree of inequality and the amount of mobility is much weaker.

Sociologists have classified societies into three types, based on their degree of mobility. The least mobility is found in *caste systems*, with only modestly greater mobility in *estate* or *feudal*

systems. Both of these types of society are typically found in preindustrial societies. *Class systems*, usually found in industrialized societies, have greater, but far from unlimited, mobility.

Caste Systems

As previously noted, the least mobility is found in a **caste system**. A caste system has formally defined and unequal groupings that are determined by birth and inheritance and are not subject to change. A person born into a particular **caste** remains in that caste for life, can marry only other members of the same caste, and passes this caste status on to that person's children. In sociological terms, the ascribed status of the caste you are born into completely determines your position throughout life; achieved statuses make no difference.

Although caste systems have existed in some form in many societies, the two best-known examples are systems once found in India and South Africa. India's caste system was based on religion and existed for thousands of years until it was officially abolished in 1949. South Africa's caste system was a **racial caste system**, that is, a caste system in which caste membership was determined by race. This system, known as **apartheid**, was established by law in 1948 and lasted for more than four decades until, officially speaking, it was gradually dismantled in the 1990s.

In India, different roles were assigned by caste for centuries—ranging from the priestly functions of the highest caste, the Brahmins, to a life of common labor for the lowest castes. These lowest castes were defined as “untouchable” by higher castes, meaning that all contact was forbidden—even looking at one another. In South Africa's caste system, the groups were defined on the basis of race, with white people, black people, Asians, and “coloreds” (people of mixed race) defined as legal categories. Rules of separation were very strict: For example, it was a crime to even conspire to have sex with a person of a different race—whether or not any sex actually occurred. Voting and holding political office were initially permitted only to white people (less than 10 percent of the population),

though some of these rights were later extended to Asians and coloreds.

Because such rigid systems are hard to maintain in urban, industrial societies, and because of intense external pressure for change, both India and South Africa have officially abolished their caste systems. However, vestiges remain in both countries. In India, lower castes remain overrepresented among the poor, and in many rural areas, people still pay a good deal of attention to caste membership. And in South Africa, where the abolition of apartheid led to black majority rule in 1994, economic inequality is still very much tied to race. Educational levels are lower, poverty rates are much higher, and health is significantly worse in the black population than it is in the white population, with Asians and coloreds still occupying an intermediate status.

Even in the United States, a caste system once existed—the Jim Crow system of the South during much of the twentieth century. Like South Africa, where one could go and what one could do was determined by race in a strict system of legally defined segregation. Similar laws also existed in some northern areas. Today, the law forbids such discrimination, but as discussed in Chapter 7, vestiges of the old system remain in the form of sharp socioeconomic inequalities between white people and African Americans.

Estate or Feudal Systems

The **estate system**, also called the feudal system, offers slightly more mobility than the caste system. In an estate system, status is determined on the basis of land ownership, often accompanied by some type of formal title. In general, the high-status groups are those who own land, and the rest of the population generally works for them. Some variety of the estate system has been found in most of the world at some point in history, including the feudal systems of medieval Europe and of China and Russia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the *hacienda* systems of Latin America, some of which remain largely intact today. The American South before the Civil War, where

wealth and power were concentrated in the hands of large-scale plantation owners, is often regarded as a form of feudal or estate system, although slavery also made it a type of racial caste system.

In a feudal system, your position throughout life is usually determined by the ascribed status of whether you were born into the land-owning class. Occasionally, however, titles that permit entry into this elite class may be conferred. In the European feudal system, for example, a peasant could occasionally be knighted or admitted to the clergy, which gave him the privileges associated with these landowning classes. However, this was the exception to the rule. Because of their link to land ownership, estate systems are found in agricultural, pre-industrial societies. When societies begin to urbanize, the feudal system almost inevitably breaks down.

Class Systems

The highest degree of mobility is found in **class systems**. In a class system, both ascribed statuses and achieved statuses have significant effects on people's income, wealth, and social position. In other words, people who are born into affluent families generally enjoy a higher status as adults than people who are born into poorer families, but what people do—the amount of schooling they attain and the success of their personal and economic decisions—also influences their status as adults. Class systems are typically found in modern industrial societies. The present-day United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, and most countries in Europe are examples of class systems.

Achieved and Ascribed Statuses

Many people have the misunderstanding that only achieved statuses matter in a class system. This is clearly not true. The difference between class systems and the other two systems (caste and estate) is not that ascribed statuses don't matter but rather that achieved statuses do. This can be seen by examining studies of socioeconomic mobility in class societies. Most such studies look at **intergenerational mobility**;

that is, they compare a person's status with that of their parents. The majority of these studies have compared the status of sons to that of their fathers, because in previous generations, mothers usually did not work outside the home and derived their social and economic status from their husbands. Recently, however, such studies have begun to include both women and men (e.g., DiPrete and Grusky, 1990). What all these studies show is that mobility is quite limited in class systems. In other words, most people have statuses quite close to those of their parents (Blau and Duncan, 1967; see also Featherman and Hauser, 1978). Even among those who are well educated, individuals from working-class backgrounds tend to earn less than their middle-class counterparts. This class-based pay gap persists despite educational achievements and experience, highlighting the persistence of social-class disparities in the workplace, even in high-status professions (Laurison and Friedman, 2016; Rivera and Tilcsik, 2016). In most cases, the status of the offspring is slightly higher than that of the parent, but this mainly reflects what sociologists call **structural mobility**—there has been growth in better-paying, more pleasant, higher-status, white-collar jobs, and a decline in the number of blue-collar jobs (Featherman, 1979).

Exchange Mobility

In contrast to structural mobility is **exchange mobility**—movement up or down *relative* to the positions of others. Consider a man who has a white-collar job in contrast to his father's blue-collar job, and whose income is higher than his father's, even controlling for inflation. Yet, as was true for his father, his income and job status remain below that of 70 percent of the population. This individual may have benefited from structural mobility, but he has *not* experienced exchange mobility—he is still in the same place relative to everyone else.

Research shows that exchange mobility is quite limited. In periods of sustained economic growth, people may, on the average, move up to better jobs than those of their parents—but most of them do not experience large changes in their status *relative* to that of others (Rytina, 1989, 1992). The most widely cited study of

intergenerational mobility in the United States found that only one out of ten sons of manual laborers attains professional status—compared to seven out of ten sons of professional workers (Blau and Duncan, 1967). More recent research also shows that you will get a better education (and therefore in most cases a better job) if your mother has more education and a higher job status (Kalmijn, 1994a). And your chances of getting a good job are especially low if you are born into poverty—rather, you have an above-average chance of experiencing poverty as an adult. Research by Duncan (1996) shows that people are more likely than in the past to move either down from middle income to lower income, or up from middle income to upper income. However, they are *less* likely to move into the middle-income group from either high or low income. College may not offer the answer that many assume, either. Zhou (2019) found that, when accounting for family background, the mobility of college graduates is not significantly different than those of nongraduates. Instead, the socioeconomic status of parents continues to exert a significant influence on students' access to and success in college, and attending a prestigious college or majoring in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields can significantly enhance the future income prospects of students. This calls into question the extent to which education can truly level the playing field. And there is evidence that the academic achievement gap between higher- and lower-status students is increasing across the world (Chmielewski, 2019). Hence, the income distribution is becoming more polarized: more people at the top, more at the bottom, and fewer in the middle.

Race, Gender, and Class Mobility

Race and gender are closely intertwined with economic inequality, and mobility is restricted by both. Women and racial or ethnic minorities receive lower pay and work at lower-status jobs than white males do, even when their parents have similar status (Levanon and Grusky, 2016; Mandel and Semyonov, 2016). Further, studies have shown that completing college increases the probability of male graduates having a child

who goes on to graduate from college, but this effect is not observed for female graduates. The gender difference is primarily attributed to college having negative effects on women's chances of getting married and having children (Lawrence and Breen, 2016). Studies looking at hiring in education have found that being married and having a partner benefits male candidates during the hiring process; however, for female candidates, being married or having a partner can be detrimental, as they are often seen as having less commitment to their academic careers or research. This indicates a gender disparity in how relationship status is perceived during hiring (Rivera, 2017). Women are also judged more on friendliness rather than competence during job interviews when compared to male candidates (Quadlin, 2018). Thus, race and sex biases compound the influence of ascribed statuses in class societies. Another important point is that ownership of major, income-producing wealth is even more likely to be based on the luck of birth. For all these reasons, then, the status into which you are born makes a big difference, even in a class society.

A final point relates to the great inequalities in wealth noted earlier in this chapter: The overwhelming majority of income-producing wealth in the United States has, over time, remained in the hands of a small proportion of the population. Also, wealth ownership is strongly tied to race. All recent studies show that the median wealth of white people is from six to as much as 16 times that of African Americans or Latinos, and the disparity is even greater for income-producing assets (Kennickell, 2000; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995; Oliver and Shapiro, 1995).

International Comparisons of Mobility

How does the United States compare to other class societies with regard to mobility? It is often argued that the greater class inequality of the United States is offset by greater mobility. The actual findings of research suggest that this may be true but only to a very limited extent. In general, there is little difference in the degree of mobility in different class societies (Lipset and Bendix, 1960; Tyree, Semyonov, and Hodge,

1979; Ishida, Goldthorpe, and Erikson, 1991; Grusky and Hauser, 1984; Lin and Bian, 1991; Ishida, Muller, and Ridge, 1995). All have some mobility, yet movement from very low statuses to very high statuses is much more the exception than the rule—including in the United States. Movement within and out of the middle strata, in contrast, appears more common (Grusky and Hauser, 1984). Within this general observation, a case can be made that there is a little more mobility in the United States than in other industrialized countries (Krymkowski, 1991). For example, the proportion of people who move from manual labor to professional occupations—although a tiny minority everywhere—is higher in the United States than in most other countries. This may reflect high structural mobility owing to white-collar job growth rather than high exchange mobility (see Slomczynski and Krauze, 1987, p. 605; but also Hauser and Grusky, 1988). There is also evidence of a more recent increase in intragenerational occupational mobility, compared to earlier generations (Jarvis and Song, 2017).

A precise answer to the question of whether the United States has more mobility than other countries, however, depends on how you measure mobility and what countries you use for comparison. The United States does appear to have more mobility than Great Britain, for example (Yamaguchi, 1986), but that may be more a reflection of the unusually low level of mobility in Great Britain (Wong, 1990). Comparisons with Japan show conflicting results depending on the measure of mobility used (Yamaguchi, 1986), but overall the difference between the United States and Japan is not large (Wong, 1990). At the very least, then, it would be inaccurate to say that the United States has much greater mobility than most other industrialized countries. The similarities—particularly for exchange or relative mobility—are much greater than the differences (Ishida, Goldthorpe, and Erikson, 1991), and different measures do not give highly consistent results. In a more recent study, Beller and Hout (2006) find that with the slowdown in economic growth and rise of inequality in recent decades, mobility rates have also slowed in the United

States. And they find that the United States is in the midrange of comparable countries in occupational mobility but near the bottom in terms of income mobility.

Although the United States may have a little more mobility than most other industrialized societies, the fact remains that Americans believe we have considerable mobility. The Horatio Alger myth that anyone, no matter how poor, can succeed on a grand scale is alive and well. Seventy percent of Americans agree, for example, that “America is the land of opportunity where everyone who works hard can get ahead” (Kluegel and Smith, 1986, p. 44). Although over 80 percent agree that “people who grew up in rich families” have a better than average chance of getting ahead, two-thirds also think that “people who grew up in poor families” have an average or better than average chance of getting ahead (Kluegel and Smith, 1986, p. 49). The majority also believe the same about black people and women, and over 90 percent feel that way about “people who grew up in working-class families.” The fact is that all of these groups have a considerably poorer than average chance of getting ahead, yet most Americans persist in believing otherwise. In short, the reality is that there is significantly less mobility in American society than most Americans believe. Data from Gallup show that Americans’ beliefs in opportunity declined modestly after the turn of the new century and temporarily took a larger hit at the peak of the Great Recession. But by 2016, the percentage saying that there is “plenty of opportunity” was back up to 70 percent, not all that far below its 80 percent-plus level in 1999 and earlier years (Gallup Organization, 2001a). The result of these beliefs is that many Americans oppose efforts to reduce poverty because they incorrectly place most of the blame for poverty on poor people themselves: If there is plenty of opportunity, they just are not working hard enough (Kluegel, 1990; Kluegel and Smith, 1986).

Social Class in U.S. Society

Sociologists refer to a group of people who are similar in terms of level of income or wealth as

a social class. Inequalities in income and wealth are called class stratification, and your position within that system of inequality is called your **social class**. A term similar in meaning to social class is **socioeconomic status**. Social class and socioeconomic status are often taken to include not only your levels of income and wealth but also the prestige of your occupation and the amount of education you have attained. Sociologists do not agree on the relative importance of these various factors in defining social class. Partly for this reason, they cannot agree on any uniform system for defining or identifying social classes. We focus on three common formulations of social class: the Marxian definition, the composite approach, and subjective class, recognizing at the start that none of these is accepted by all sociologists.

The Marxian Definition of Social Class

Karl Marx made the most important early contribution to thinking about social class and made the study of social class a key item on the agenda for sociology. Marx's entire analysis of society centers on social class. He believed that all aspects of a society are an outgrowth of—but also help to perpetuate in any type of society—the society's **class structure**. To Marx, there were only two classes that really mattered in any type of society: the ruling class, who owned the means of production, and the subordinate class, who did not.

In a feudal agricultural society, the landowners are the ruling class, and the subordinate class consists of peasants, serfs, tenant farmers, sharecroppers, or slaves—those who work land they do not own and turn over the products of their labor to the landowning class. When urbanization and industrialization arrive, such an economy is replaced by a new system with a new class structure. In a capitalist society—any industrial society where the means of production are privately owned—the ruling class is the bourgeoisie, the class that owns capital. By capital, we mean productive capacity—factories, mineral resources, land, or money that can be converted into these things.

Most of the population, however, belongs not to the bourgeoisie but to the proletariat: those who do not own capital but work for those who do. Much of the value of what is produced by the proletariat goes not to the proletariat but to the bourgeoisie. The only thing that really matters in the Marxian definition of class is ownership of the means of production. No matter how much money salaried employees earn, they still do not belong to the ruling class because they do not own the means of production and hence do not gain the benefits of wealth and income produced by the labor of others. At the time Marx wrote, most people who worked for wages or salaries had very low incomes, so the exclusion of this group from the ruling class was probably more obvious than it is today. Nonetheless, modern Marxist theorists argue that this definition continues to be appropriate for two reasons. First, even today, most who work for wages or salaries have standards of living well below those few who own most of the corporate wealth. Second, even those with high salaries do not receive most of their income from the work of others, unless they use their high salaries to purchase capital on a large scale.

According to this definition of social class, even today the ruling class is very small, and the subordinate class is very large. One problem with using Marx's definition is deciding how to classify what he called the *petit bourgeoisie*; people, such as “ma and pa” convenience store owners, who own small businesses that produce only marginal income. Most Marxist sociologists exclude this group from the true ruling class because their wealth produces a limited amount of income and, usually, little additional wealth. Today, most wealth that generates income and additional wealth is to be found in the **corporations**—large-scale organizations with multiple owners. Moreover, although many people own some corporate stock, the great bulk of corporate wealth is held by a small fraction of the population. In 2013, for example, the top 1 percent of the population owned more than 49 percent of all stock, and the top 10 percent owned 91 percent (Wolff, 2014; Inequality.org, 2016).

The Composite Definition of Social Class

One problem with the Marxian definition of social class is that it places a salaried person receiving \$125,000 a year in the same social class with a person working for the minimum wage. Clearly, these two people would have very different life experiences as a result of their large difference in income, although neither would live in the style of a Ford or a Rockefeller. Moreover, income is not the only thing that defines social class. For example, a highly experienced assembly-line worker with a high school diploma in a large manufacturing corporation might earn \$50,000. A beginning professor with a PhD at a small college might earn \$45,000. Should the assembly-line worker be placed in a higher social class than the professor in this example? Many would say no, because the college professor has the advantage of a much greater education and enjoys far more freedom, autonomy, and opportunity for creativity on the job. In fact, this case illustrates the ambiguities of social class: The assembly-line worker enjoys an advantage in some areas of life, and the professor does in others.

Sociologists have attempted to deal with this problem by developing a composite approach to defining social class that considers wealth, income, prestige, education, job status, and other factors. This approach is consistent with Max Weber's view, discussed earlier in this chapter, that there are different dimensions of stratification that vary independently from one another. The composite approach does not use hard-and-fast rules for placing people into categories, and the boundaries between categories are often vague. What it does do is create groupings of people who, on the basis of a variety of considerations, are relatively similar. The first such effort, which has guided all subsequent efforts, was that of W. Lloyd Warner et al. (1949) in a study of a community they nicknamed "Yankee City." Warner's categories, defined on the basis of wealth, income, prestige, possessions, lifestyle, and community participation, defined six classes: upper-upper, lower-upper, upper-middle, lower-middle,

upper-lower, and lower-lower. The majority of the population fell into the two lowest groups, about 40 percent into the two middle groups, and just 3 percent into the two highest groups. Since then, sociologists have used a variety of classification systems, most of which have involved five or six classes, labeled in different ways, always with unclear boundaries. Some of these studies have indicated a shrinkage of the lower categories and a growth of the middle ones, partly as a result of the decline in blue-collar employment and the growth of white-collar employment. The truly wealthy elite, however, has changed little in size since the time of Warner's study. Roughly speaking, the use of this type of classification system today would yield something like the six groupings shown in the box titled "American Social Classes Today." A recent study found that the "sociability" of classes—that is, who they associate with and generally share their lives with—has not changed in any substantial way since Warner's time (Petev, 2013).

Contradictory Class Locations

A third way to deal with problem has been to recognize that some class positions are "contradictory" (Wright, 1978, 1979, 1985, 1997). That is, they have some of the characteristics of the bourgeoisie and some of the proletariat. According to sociologist Erik Olin Wright, class relations are best conceived of in terms of exploitation and control. The bourgeoisie exploit the proletariat and control three critical elements: capital or money, the means of production, and laborers themselves. The proletariat, on the other hand, have control over none of these. But a few class locations have control over some of these factors but not others. Wright lists three, summarized in Table 6.2: (1) managers and supervisors, who have control over workers but are still controlled by the owners of capital and machinery; (2) professionals and semiautonomous employees, who may have a great degree of autonomy and possess skills that allow them to demand higher wages; and (3) small employers who hire somewhere in the

Table 6.2 Wright's Class Model: Consistent and Contradictory Locations

<i>Consistent Class Locations</i>	<i>Contradictory Class Locations</i>
Capitalist class	Small employers
Proletariat	Managers and supervisors
Petit bourgeoisie	Professional and semiautonomous employees

range of ten to 50 workers and may oppose government regulations and taxation due to their limited resources. (This should not to be confused with the *petit bourgeoisie*, who work for themselves but employ no one.)

Therefore, according to Wright, these three locations contradict each other, a hybrid between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. They are neither one nor the other. Wright argues there are two key elements to these contradictory class locations. The first is the possession of skills and expertise, and the second is the relationship to authority. Specialized skills give professionals, for instance, a more autonomous location within the class system than non-skilled workers.

The Subjective Definition of Social Class

Another way to approach social class is to let people define their own social class. We refer to this self-defined social class as **subjective class**. In the United States, people do not like to think in terms of class distinctions and tend to place themselves and nearly everyone else in or around the middle. Thus, most studies of subjective class reveal that most people view themselves as middle or lower class. Conversely, very few—just under 1 percent—ever admit to being “upper class” or “lower class.” This tendency is supported by a national survey that found around 47 percent of Americans consider themselves “middle class” and about 52 percent “working class” (National Election Study 2020). In our own classes, authors have given anonymous surveys to our students, and we have had

people who reported family incomes as high as \$250,000 label themselves “middle class,” even though such a figure at the time the students were surveyed put them in the upper 2 percent of all families. Because nearly all Americans call themselves “middle class” or “working class,” this method obviously has the disadvantage of classifying people less precisely than the composite method. However, it does tell us a good deal about how Americans think about class. Although the tendency for people with wide variations in income to identify as “middle class” is particularly strong in the United States, recent research by Kelley and Evans (1995) has shown that it occurs in other modern industrialized nations as well. In countries where the working class is strong politically, however, people with lower incomes are more likely to identify as “working class” and less likely to identify as “middle class.”

What factors determine how people define themselves? The answer appears to be a combination of income, education, and occupation. Those with high incomes, a college education, and a white-collar occupation nearly always answer “middle class,” whereas those with a below-average income, a high school education or less, and a blue-collar job generally answer “working class.” Men and women define class in somewhat different ways. Men nearly always define their social class on the basis of their own characteristics, while married women define their social class partly according to their own characteristics and partly according to those of their husbands (Simpson, Stark, and Jackson, 1988). More women today, however, define their class on the basis of their own characteristics (Davis and Robinson, 1988). This is occurring not only in the United States but also in other industrialized countries, such as Australia, Norway, and Sweden (Baxter, 1994).

The least predictable answers come from those with status inconsistencies—people who rank high in one area but low in another. In our class surveys, for example, people from blue-collar families with incomes at or above the median family income are about as likely to call themselves “middle class” as “working



Photo 6.4 Managers, professionals, and small business owners do not fit neatly into Marx's classification of social classes. In some ways they resemble the bourgeoisie but in others, the proletariat.

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class.” This is because while their parents’ occupations are typical of the working class, their family income is typical of the middle class.

Occupational Prestige

Closely related to subjective class is occupational prestige. In fact, we already saw that occupation is one of the key factors that determines how people see their own social class. Different occupations clearly carry different levels of prestige, and the work people do has a major effect on the entire prestige or status dimension of stratification. Significantly, the relative prestige of various jobs has remained similar over time and across different places. Surveys done over the past half-century show that jobs that had high status in the 1940s continue to have high status today. In fact, the relative status of a wide range of jobs has changed very little over the past 50 years (Davis and Smith, 1994; Rossides, 1997). About the only source of change is in the creation of new jobs or the elimination of old ones. In 1920, for example, there was no such thing as a computer programmer or a television camera operator. Similarly, technology has largely eliminated other jobs, such as keypunch and elevator operators. Even jobs that have been created by technology have later been eliminated by it, such as keypunch

operators and, increasingly today, television camera operators. Rather than having each studio camera operated by a cameraperson, entire sets of cameras today are operated through remote-control robotics.

Additionally, studies comparing job status across different societies have shown that the relative status of different jobs is quite similar in a number of different industrialized societies (see Hodge, Treiman, and Rossi, 1966).

Thus, a doctor, a lawyer, or an airline pilot has high status not only in the United States but in Canada, Sweden, and Great Britain as well. A janitor or taxi driver, in contrast, has low status in all these societies. In addition, the relative status of these jobs in all these societies is similar today to what it was decades ago. Even in some less-industrialized countries, the same patterns hold. Research by Nan and Wen (1988) has revealed that the prestige of jobs in China is similar to the prestige of jobs in other countries. There also seems to be considerable agreement among people in different countries that higher-status jobs should be paid more (Kelley and Evans, 1993).

What determines the prestige of a job? As is true of subjective class, several factors are relevant. In general, better-paid jobs have higher prestige. Prestige also depends on the educational requirements of the job and the amount of physical labor it entails. Thus, even though college professors are paid less than people in a number of other occupations that require less education, they consistently rank near the top in occupational prestige. The very highest ranked jobs, such as physician and airline pilot, are professional occupations associated with both high incomes and high levels of education. Similarly, the jobs with the lowest prestige, such as garbage collector, janitor, and shoe shiner, involve hard physical work, require little or no

Table 6.3 Occupational Prestige Ratings: United States Compared to 60-Country Average (out of 100)

<i>Average, Occupations</i>	<i>60 Countries (1970s)</i>	<i>United States (1974–1975)</i>	<i>United States (1989)</i>
Physician	78	81.5	86.05
Physicist	76	73.8	73.48
Lawyer	73	75.7	74.77
Architect	72	70.5	73.14
Dentist	70	73.5	71.79
Chemist	69	68.8	73.33
Sociologist	67	65.0	60.75
Airline pilot	66	70.1	61.02
High school teacher	64	63.1	73.51
Clergy member	60	70.5	68.96
Personnel director	58	57.8	53.85
Artist	57	57.0	52.38
Classical musician	56	55.0	46.56
Social worker	56	52.4	51.50
Journalist	55	51.6	59.75
Professional nurse	54	61.5	66.48
Secretary	53	45.8	46.08
Actor or actress	52	55.0	57.62
Real estate agent	49	44.0	48.82
Professional athlete	48	51.4	64.66
Farmer	47	43.7	40.39
Motor vehicle mechanic	44	35.8	39.64
Policeman or policewoman	40	47.8	59.99
Railroad conductor	39	40.9	42.16
Telephone operator	38	40.4	39.55
Carpenter	37	42.5	38.92
Firefighter	35	33.2	52.87
Sales clerk	34	27.1	33.60
Truck driver	33	31.3	30.23
File clerk	31	30.3	36.06
Assembly-line worker	30	27.1	31.47
Construction worker	28	26.2	36.43
Gas station attendant	25	21.6	21.44
Waiter	23	20.3	28.08
Janitor	21	16.1	22.33
Farm worker	20	21.4	23.28
Garbage collector	13	12.6	27.72

Source: From *Occupational Prestige in Comparative Perspective*, by Donald J. Treiman. Copyright © 1977 by Academic Press. Reprinted by permission of Academic Press.

Note: In a limited number of instances, there were slight differences in job titles between Appendix A (worldwide average) and Appendix D (United States). In these instances, the closest job title was used. The same principle applies to comparison of the 1989 data to data for the earlier period.

education, and pay poorly. A list of some jobs and their occupational prestige ratings from surveys in the United States and other countries is presented in Table 6.3. Note that the ratings

are pretty similar across countries and at different times, although a few occupations such as firefighter and professional athlete have enjoyed increasing prestige.

Class Consciousness in the United States

One important aspect of class in America is the extent to which Americans are aware of, and identify with, the social classes to which they belong. Such awareness and identification is called *class consciousness*. Americans seem to be less class-conscious than people in many other societies. We already noted that nearly all Americans think of themselves as “middle class” or “working class.” This contrasts with some other societies where, for example, the wealthy readily identify themselves as upper class. U.S. society was founded as a result of a rebellion against title and monarchy and was based on the principle that “all men are created

equal.” Although, as we have seen, the reality is that there is great social inequality in America, most Americans prefer not to acknowledge that openly. Rather, we prefer to believe that people have similar statuses and similar situations in life—that we are all pretty much alike (DeMott, 1990). America’s entertainment media abet this belief as they either gloss over social-class differences, or present them as easily surmountable. The Horatio Alger myth that anyone who tries can succeed, and the assertion that love will easily overcome social-class differences between people, is still popular, as we can see in such movies as *Pretty Woman*, *Dirty Dancing*, *White Palace* (DeMott, 1991), and more recently, *The Pursuit of Happyness*, *The Internship*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Maid In Manhattan*, *21*, or *Lawless*.



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

American Social Classes Today

At the early twenty-first century, Americans can be roughly classified into six social classes, each of which is briefly described.

Corporate Elite (“The 1 Percent”)

The corporate elite consists of two rather distinct subgroups, which together make up about 1 percent of the population. They own the bulk of the country’s corporate wealth and usually own assets well in excess of \$1 million. The two subgroups of the elite are the “old rich” and the “new rich.” The “old rich” gain prestige from their name alone (Rockefeller, Ford, Carnegie, Danforth) and have been wealthy for generations. They tend to look down upon, and sometimes exclude, the “new rich.” The “new rich” have gained corporate wealth more recently, as a result of skillful investment, foresight, or “being in the right place at the right time.” They may have more money than the “old rich” but less prestige. Examples include Gates as well as the late Sam Walton (founder of Walmart), whose net worth stood at \$7 billion after he lost \$1 billion in one day in the 1987 stock market crash. Computer technology has created a number of “new rich” billionaires, including the founders of Hewlett-Packard, Gateway 2000, Facebook, and Oracle, in addition to Microsoft’s Bill Gates. Some of these new billionaires lost a lot of

money in the high-tech slump of 2000–2001 and the crash of 2008 but remained fabulously rich.

Lower-Upper Class

Amounting to about 2 to 5 percent of the population, people in this group differ from the corporate elite in that they are less wealthy and more likely to have gained their wealth as a result of a high salary or the investment of earned income than by ownership of key corporate capital. The successful rock singer and professional athlete would fall into this diverse group, as would many corporate executives and some owners of smaller-scale businesses. Although this group includes a good number of millionaires, many of them are newcomers to wealth. And unlike even the “new rich” in the corporate elite group, their income usually comes from their own labor rather than from the labor of others.

Upper-Middle Class

Accounting for perhaps 15 to 20 percent of the U.S. population, this group is made up of better-paid management and professional employees: doctors, lawyers, airline pilots, middle- and upper-corporate management, and owners of the more successful small businesses. Most people in this group are

college educated, and many have graduate or professional degrees. It is taken for granted that their children will attend college and, increasingly, graduate or professional school. This group is likely to live in bigger than average homes in the more prestigious suburbs. Incomes run above the median household income of about \$54,000 but generally not into the hundreds of thousands of dollars typical of the lower rungs of the upper class.

Lower-Middle Class

This group, which is now becoming smaller, amounts to about 25 to 30 percent of the population. Members of this group hold the lower-status white-collar jobs, which may or may not require a college degree. Some of the best-paid blue-collar workers, such as skilled building crafts workers and autoworkers, could also be included in this group, largely because of their relatively high incomes. In general, the incomes in this group are fairly close to the median household income of about \$54,000. People in this group tend to own their own homes and live in "good" suburbs but not in the most prestigious areas. As in the upper-middle class, it is common for both the husband and wife to be employed full time, but here it is more likely that the wife will be working out of economic necessity and less likely that she will be "moving up" in her career. Though still diverse, this group tends to be a bit more conservative than the upper-middle class, particularly when it comes to "social issues," such as abortion, sexual freedom, and freedom of expression. The children of this group are often expected to attend college, but it is more likely to be a two-year school or the local commuter university, and fewer of them will go on to graduate or professional school.

Working Class

This group, around 30 to 35 percent of the population, works at blue-collar or clerical jobs and has incomes at or, more often, below the average level. More often than not, both the husband and wife must work to support the family. They typically have

high school diplomas but no college training. They often own homes in older and less prestigious suburbs, small towns, or the nonpoor areas of the central city, although many rent. They live an adequate, though by no means extravagant, lifestyle, but they must worry more often than middle- and upper-class people about how to pay their bills. Although their attitudes may be liberal on economic issues, they tend to be conservative socially and are sometimes fearful of losing economic ground to other groups. Their children are less likely to go to college. In some families, however, where education is seen as the hope for upward mobility for the next generation, the children do attend college, particularly two-year and commuter schools in their local area. For this group, a crisis such as a divorce or the loss of a job can mean falling into poverty, and there is in general less feeling of security about life than in the middle class.

Lower Class

Amounting to 15 to 20 percent of the population, this group is always struggling just to make it. Depending on such factors as being employed, marital status, and wage level, people in this group have incomes around the poverty level or a little above it. Finding adequate food, shelter, clothing, and medical care ranges from difficult to impossible for them. Many people in this group lack even a high school education, and although their children have a better chance of completing high school than they did, many do not, and very few go on to college. Most rent rather than own their own homes, and they more frequently live in a central city, rural area, or small town than in the suburbs. Divorce and separation rates are high, as are the number of single-parent families. At the bottom of this group is the chronically poor and unemployed underclass, whose children rarely know anyone who has a stable job, a decent education, or the opportunity for upward mobility. Thus, they are psychologically prepared to be the next generation of poor and near-poor.

The widespread presence of the Horatio Alger myth in the American media and popular culture illustrates another important point: It is in the class interests of the wealthy to promote the image of America as a society where

class doesn't really matter and where anyone can "make it." When people perceive that there is not equal opportunity, they criticize the system and support change; when they believe that anyone can succeed, they accept the system as

fair and legitimate (Kluegel and Smith, 1986; Kluegel, 1990). In other words, as long as people think the system is fair, they won't demand changes that threaten the wealthy and powerful. Thus, it is in the interests of those with wealth—who include the people who own and control newspapers, television networks, and publishing companies—to promote the idea that the system is fair.

While this undoubtedly happens to some extent in all capitalist societies, there is some evidence that people who question the accepted view that the system is fair are treated more harshly in the United States than elsewhere. For example, Sexton (1991) has amassed historical evidence that labor unions and labor organizers have been repressed more harshly in the United States than in most European countries. For example, prior to 1930 there was much use in the United States of the military, police, and private security companies to interfere with strikes, often with great violence against striking workers. Hiring of strikebreakers was commonplace before 1930 and has become so again since the 1980s. According to Sexton, these attacks have been largely successful in limiting the power of labor unions in the United States.

Two other reasons have been suggested to explain why Americans are less class-conscious than people in other industrialized countries. First, although educational attainment in the United States is in reality quite strongly tied to social class (see Chapter 14), this connection is less formalized than in other countries, such as Great Britain. This leads Americans to think of themselves as more similar to one another. Second, until the early 1970s, the United States had more structural mobility than other countries because it experienced more economic expansion. Hence, people saw class boundaries as more permeable in the United States. However, as other countries around the world have developed and become able to compete effectively with the United States, the rate of expansion has slowed, and structural mobility has decreased. In fact, by 2015 the United States had the lowest rates of movement across income categories of any country in the Organization for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD), an organization of advanced industrialized countries (Leicht, 2016).

Poverty in the United States

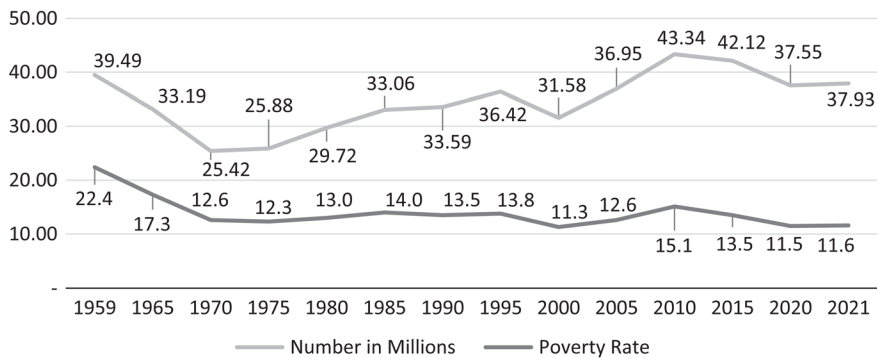
The extremes of social and economic stratification are the easiest to see—and the most difficult to deny. We turn our attention now to those at the bottom of the economic stratification system: the poor. We begin our discussion of poverty by examining some different ways of defining poverty; then we see how poverty is officially defined and measured in the United States.

How Poverty Is Defined

Generally, statistics on poverty are based on the *poverty level* as defined by the federal government. To make sense of these statistics, we must understand (1) what is meant by the term “poverty” and (2) how the federal poverty level is determined.

Relative Versus Absolute Concepts of Poverty

Poverty can be defined as the condition of having a very low income and standard of living. However, such a definition immediately raises a question: What do we mean by low? Low could mean “low compared with almost everyone else,” or it could mean “below the level sufficient to buy necessities.” For this reason, poverty can be defined in either a relative (low compared with others) or an absolute (lacking necessities) manner. In the case of relative poverty, a person's standard of living is low compared with that of others who enjoy a higher standard of living. By this definition, every society with social inequality will have some poverty. However, some societies have greater degrees of poverty than others. In the United States, where the poorest 20 percent of the population has about 5 percent of the income, poverty in a relative sense is more extreme than in Sweden, Japan, or Finland where the poorest 20 percent has about 10 percent of the income (World Bank, 2000).

Figure 6.4 Number in Poverty and Poverty Rate: 1959–2021.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1960 to 2022 Annual Social and Economic Supplements (CPS ASEC). Figure 6.4 Poverty numbers and percents. www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-people.html

Now, consider the absolute definition of poverty. By this definition, poverty exists whenever people lack some basic necessities of life. Thus, it is possible, at least in theory, for a country to have no poverty at all, even if it has considerable social inequality. If everyone gets all the basic necessities, there is no poverty.

The Official Definition of Poverty in the United States

The U.S. government's official definition of poverty is intended to delineate poverty in the absolute sense. In other words, it is meant to represent a level of income below which people are unlikely to be able to buy all of the necessities of life. The official definition of poverty in the United States originated in the 1950s, when the government estimated the cost of the minimum diet necessary to get a person or a family through a limited period of financial difficulty in good health. As a result of a 1961 government study showing that the average low-income family spent one-third of its income on food, the poverty level was set at roughly three times the cost of this minimum diet. (Because of differences in their cost of living, this multiplication factor is a little more than three for individuals and smaller families, and a little less than three for rural families.) Since 1961, the poverty level has been adjusted upward each year to take account of inflation. Questions have been raised about the extent to which this

standard correctly measures poverty. Although some critics disagree, the dominant opinion among economists, home economists, and sociologists is that the official definition fails to include many people who are poor in the absolute sense (see Rodgers, 1978; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1976).

Poverty in America: The Current Situation

In 2014, the most recent year for which data are available, 47.6 million people, or 14.8 percent of the population, were living below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). This amounts to more than one out of every eight people living in the United States today. Just how large a group is this? It is equal to more than the entire population of California, more than twice the population of Florida, or about four times the population of Michigan. Clearly, we are talking about a very large number of people.

Is the number of poor people growing? As shown in Figure 6.4, the number of poor people has fluctuated considerably with the ups and downs of the economy, but overall, there has been an upward trend since the late 1970s, with high points during the recession of the early 1990s and the recent Great Recession. In fact, the nearly 47 million poor people in 2014 represented the largest number of poor people on record in the United States, millions more than before the War on Poverty of the Johnson administration. In 2021, that number fell to

37.9 million but is still very large and destructive to individual lives as noted earlier. The poverty *rate*, on the other hand—the percentage of Americans below the poverty level—fell substantially during the 1960s as a result of the War on Poverty but has fluctuated irregularly with the ups and downs of the economy since the late 1960s—but it remains well below the poverty rate of the 1950s. In 2021, we saw a poverty rate of 11.6 while, in 1959, the poverty rate was almost double (22.4).

The failure of poverty to decline further since the 1970s reflects two underlying conditions: increasing economic inequality and stagnation in the economy. We already discussed the fact that as middle-income jobs have disappeared, the middle class has shrunk. Some people have risen into better-paying jobs, but many others have fallen into lower-paying jobs or unemployment. The COVID-19 pandemic forced many businesses to shut down temporarily or even permanently, leading to a record number of job losses. Tens of millions of Americans found themselves unemployed, with many still struggling to find work. The pandemic also exposed and deepened economic inequalities. Lower-income workers, especially in service industries, were hit the hardest, while higher-income individuals often had the luxury of working from home. Low pay is clearly a significant factor in the stubbornness of poverty. Growing numbers of poor people—the so-called working poor—are poor because they have jobs that do not pay enough to keep them above the poverty level. The number of poor people who worked year-round and full time roughly doubled between 1978 and 1994 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996a). As Duncan's (1996) study clearly shows, real wages fell during that period for those in the lower part of the income distribution range, and they rose for those at the top of this range. This trend has continued since then. Brady, Baker, and Finnigan (2013) found that the most significant cause of this trend is declining share of unionized employment in the United States. By comparing the United States to other wealthy advanced economies from 1991 to 2010, they found higher rates of unionization had a greater impact in reducing working poverty than either

a nation's economic performance or its social policies. As unions weaken, working poverty increases (VanHeuvelen, 2020). In other words, the American economic pie is being divided in a way that is more unequal today than it was in the past.

At the same time, the pie itself has not been growing for much of the past 40 years or so. Real wages and incomes have been relatively flat since 1973. In many cases, the only thing that prevented serious declines in family income in that time was that growing numbers of women entered the workforce, often doing so to keep their family's standard of living from falling (Olsen, 1990; Jencks, 1991).

Because it has more economic inequality than other industrialized countries, the United States has more poverty, even by the standard of absolute poverty. Smeeding, Torrey, and Rein (1988) compared the United States to seven other industrialized countries, using the U.S. government's methods for comparing poverty rates. In five of the seven countries, the poverty rates averaged a full five percentage points lower than in the United States. Perhaps most disturbing is the difference in poverty among children: The United States had the highest child poverty rate of any of the countries and was about ten percentage points above the child poverty rates of most of the other countries (Peterson, 1991) and remains so today (Rank, 2021; OECD, 2019).

Who Is Poor?

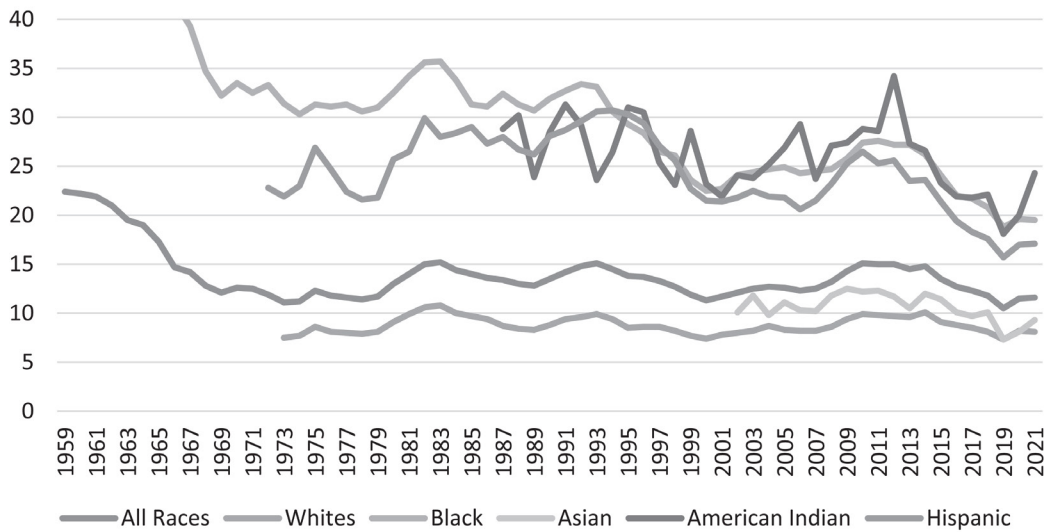
A number of social characteristics increase the risk that people will be poor. In general, the groups with disproportionate amounts of poverty are black people, Hispanics, and Native Americans; women; people living in female-headed families; children; and people who live in central cities and rural areas (as opposed to suburbs). To a large extent, this reflects the lower status accorded to these groups by society and their relative lack of power. The poverty rates of people with various characteristics are shown in detail in Table 6.4, with the poverty trends by race and ethnicity shown in Figure 6.5. On the one hand, as the table and

Table 6.4 Number of People Living Below the Poverty Level and Poverty Rate, Selected Groups in U.S. Population: 2022

<i>Population Group</i>	<i>Number Below Poverty Level (in millions)</i>	<i>Poverty Rate (%)</i>
Total U.S. population	379.3	11.6
<u>Race</u>		
White Americans	24.9	10.0
Non-Hispanic white Americans	16.0	8.1
Black Americans	8.60	19.5
Asian Americans	1.92	9.3
Hispanic Americans	10.7	17.1
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	17.0	10.5
Female	20.9	12.6
<u>Education</u>		
Total, aged 25 years and older	22.6	10.0
No high school diploma	5.42	27.2
High school, no college	8.5	13.2
Some college	5.23	9.2
Bachelor's degree or higher	3.47	4.1
<u>Age</u>		
Children under 18 years	11.1	15.3
Adults 18 to 64 years	20.9	10.5
Adults 65 years and over	5.8	10.3
<u>Work Experience</u>		
Total, aged 18 to 84 years	20.9	10.5
Worked full time, year-round	2.10	1.8
Worked less than full time, year-round	5.10	12.2
Did not work at least one week	13.8	30.0
<u>Disability Status</u>		
Total, aged 18 to 64 years	20.96	10.5
With a disability	3.99	24.9
With no disability	16.9	9.3
<u>Residence</u>		
Inside metro areas	31.6	1.0
Inside principal cities	14.90	14.3
Outside principal cities	16.60	9.2
Outside metro areas	6.10	15.0
<u>Region</u>		
People living in Northeast	5.7	10.1
People living in Midwest	7.0	10.4
People living in South	16.6	13.2
People living in West	8.6	11.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2021 and 2022 Annual Social and Economic Supplements (CPS ASEC). Poverty in the United States: 2021 (census.gov) www.census.gov/library/publications/2022/demo/p60-277.html (downloaded September 28, 2023).

Figure 6.5 Poverty rates by race and Hispanic origin: 1959–2021.



Source: Table A-1. People in Poverty by Selected Characteristics: 2020–2021. Data is from the U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1960 to 2022. Annual Social and Economic Supplements (CPS ASEC). www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-people.html (downloaded September 28, 2023).

figure show, poverty rates of African Americans and Hispanic Americans are about 2.5 times as high as the poverty rate of non-Hispanic white people. Hence, your chances of being poor are much greater if you are African American or Latino, and this has been the case as long as poverty has been measured. Nonetheless, the *number* of non-Hispanic white people who are poor (about 19.7 million) is almost as great as the number of poor black people and poor Hispanics *combined* (about 24.7 million). This is because about 62 percent of the total U.S. population is non-Hispanic white.

The single biggest risk factor for poverty is living in a family with a female-householder and no husband present. Over one-third of all poor people live in such families, even though fewer than one American out of seven lives in a female-householder family. It is also significant that children have a relatively high risk of poverty (Duncan and Rodgers, 1991). About one in six were poor in 2000, and more than one in three will experience poverty at some time during their childhood (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001a; Ellwood, 1987).

Causes of Poverty

Poor People Themselves? Work, Family Structure, and Poverty

It is widely believed that people often experience poverty as a result of their own actions or inactions—unwillingness to work, drunkenness, welfare dependency, and sexual promiscuity leading to out-of-wedlock births (Feagin, 1972; see also Kluegel, 1990; Kluegel and Smith, 1986; Schuman, 1975). A careful examination of the characteristics of the poor, however, indicates that these factors are relatively unimportant as causes of poverty (the poverty rate of major social groups is summarized in Table 6.4).

Work Experience of the Poor

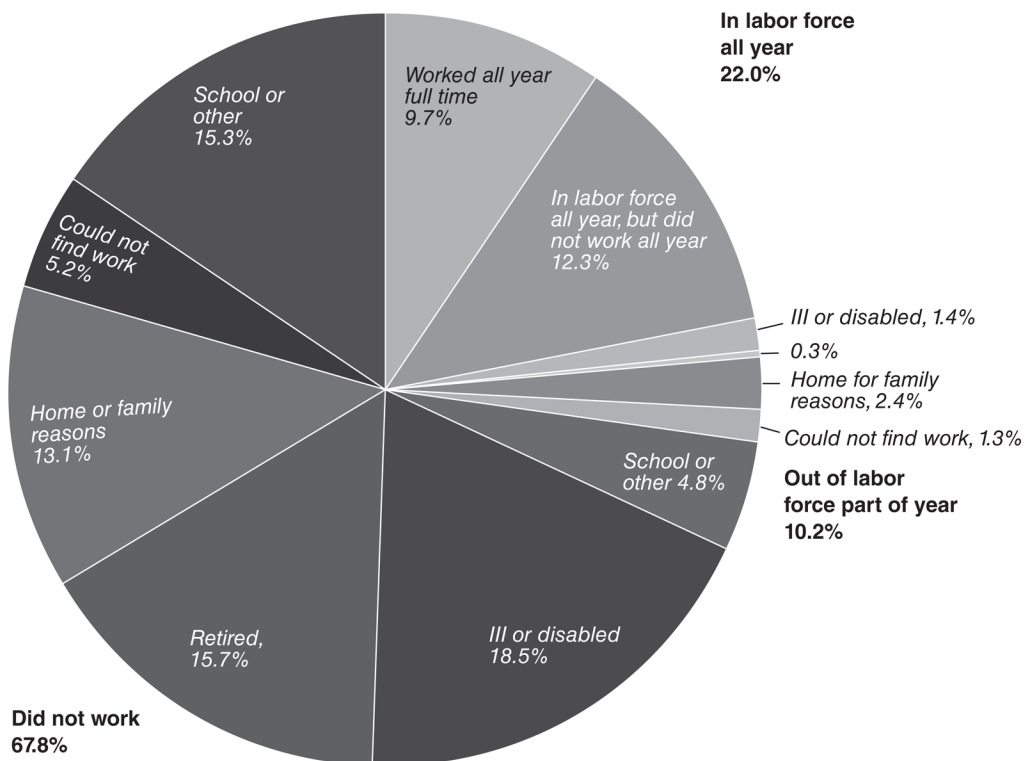
It is true that the majority of poor people are not employed. In fact, in 2014, about two-thirds of poor people over age 15 years did not work. At first glance, this might appear to support the popular explanation that poor people are “unwilling to work.” However, if we examine the

reasons these people did not work, we get a different picture. To begin with, according to the Census Bureau (data as shown in Figure 6.6), nearly three-fourths of those who did not work were ill, disabled, retired, or attending school—all of which are generally regarded as legitimate reasons for being out of the workforce. In fact, these groups combined account for nearly half of all poor people over 15 years old.

Another sizable group (nearly 5 percent) of the nonworking poor had looked for work but were unable to find it. Almost all of the rest of the nonworking poor—about 13 percent of all poor people—did not work because of home or family reasons. About half of these were female single parents with children, and most of the rest were nonemployed wives with children.

In addition to the fact that a mother staying home to take care of her children has always been acceptable in American society (and until recently was the norm), we must consider here the cost of day care and medical care. As we see later, many poor people have no employment available except minimum-wage jobs, most of which include no medical benefits. By the time a poor mother pays for day care for her children (which can cost well over \$1,000 per month per child), she may already have used up all the income from a minimum-wage job. And in many states, if she remains employed long enough, she must give up Medicaid, at least for herself, although with the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), she can now at least get care for her children. In many cases, she

Figure 6.6 Work Status of Poor People Age 16 and Over: 2014.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015. Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Poverty Tables, Tables POV22, POV25, https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032015/pov/pov22_100_1.xls, https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032015/pov/pov24_100_1.xls.

literally can't afford to take a job—the costs of day care and medical care are simply too great.

We have now accounted for nearly all of the two-thirds of poor people who, according to the United States Census Bureau, did not work in 2014.

These statistics are consistent with research findings reported by Tienda and Stier (1991). In a study of Chicago's poorest neighborhoods, they found that only 6 percent of the population could be characterized as shiftless, that is, unwilling to work. The rest were either employed, caring for children, disabled, students, or looking for work.

Out-of-Wedlock Births

Single-parent, female-headed families are at very high risk for poverty. As the percentage of such families rose in the 1970s and 1980s, the poverty rate also rose (Eggebeen and Lichter, 1991). Many female-householder families are the result of out-of-wedlock births, although many others are the result of divorces and separations. However, to say that out-of-wedlock childbearing (or, for that matter, divorce) is one of the most important causes of poverty is to ignore several key realities. First, the rate of out-of-wedlock births is far higher among people who are *already* poor or who grew up in poverty than among the general public (see Hayes, 1987a; Skolnick and Rosenkrantz, 1994; Luker, 1991; Hernandez, 1993). Wu (1996) found that both low income and declining income were associated with increased risk of giving birth outside marriage, for young women between ages 14 and 21 years, both black and white. Thus, poverty appears to be at least as much a cause of out-of-wedlock births as a consequence. One reason for this is that poor people are less likely to be familiar with, or have access to, birth control, which increases their non-marital birth rates. In addition, because of high unemployment, urban minority poor women—the ones most likely to give birth out of wedlock—have a strikingly small pool of employed, marriageable men (Wilson, 1987, pp. 95–100; see also Mare and Winship, 1991; Lichter, LeClere, and McLaughlin, 1991). As a result, a

larger proportion of these women never marry, and those who do marry do so later and wait longer to remarry after a divorce. This means that more of them are at risk of a nonmarital pregnancy. Like the great majority of nonmarried women of all socioeconomic levels, they are usually sexually active, but they are unmarried for a longer part of their lives, and they know less about contraception.

Research also shows that poverty affects self-image and attitudes in ways that increase the likelihood of out-of-wedlock pregnancy, especially among teenagers (Anderson, 1991). Poor people experience less control over their lives and may feel less able to control whether they get pregnant—so they are less likely to try. To an impoverished teenage girl, a baby can sometimes be a source of self-esteem, a way of feeling grown-up. Among poor teenage boys, sexual conquest (which is valued to some extent among young males of all social classes) may be one of the few ways of feeling a sense of accomplishment, when most legitimate opportunities for achievement are blocked. Thus, however much out-of-wedlock childbirth may perpetuate poverty, it is probably more a consequence of poverty than a cause. Moreover, there is much that we could do to prevent teenage pregnancy but have chosen not to do as a result of misperceptions about the likely consequences, as well as because of religious objections. Finally, as discussed in Chapter 8, the low wages of women are a major reason for the high poverty rate among female-householder families.

These findings clearly indicate that poor people themselves are not, by and large, the cause of their own poverty. Most of them are employed, are looking for work, or have a good reason not to be working. In fact, of all people over 15 years old who did not work in 2014, more than 90 percent were retired, ill, or disabled; in school; or caring for children (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015b). And although poor people do have high rates of divorce, separation, and non-marital childbearing—and although a large number of poor people live in female-householder families—these characteristics appear to

be much more a consequence than a cause of poverty. Moreover, as we see in Chapter 8, the economic situation of female-householder families would be far less difficult if women were simply paid at the same rate for their work as men are, and if day care and health care were publicly funded, as they are in nearly all other industrialized countries.

What, then, are the causes of poverty, and why has the number of poor people increased since the mid-1970s? Among the explanations are unemployment and low wages, both of which have become more prevalent as socioeconomic inequality has increased in the United States since the 1970s. In addition, certain public policies have contributed to the spread of poverty or to the worsening of its impact.

Unemployment

Consider again Figure 6.6. It shows that in 2014, 12.3 percent were in the labor force all year but only worked part of the year. In other words, they were unemployed for at least part of the year, and another 1.3 percent said they were out of the labor force because they could not find work. So, around 14 percent of poor people are poor partly or entirely due to unemployment. In addition, many who work part time do so because they cannot find a full-time job. Thus, unemployment still plays an important role as a cause of poverty.

Recent Unemployment Trends

Unemployment has been more prevalent since 1980 than it was in previous decades. Generally, it has fluctuated in the 5.5 to 7.5 percent range, reaching peaks of over 10 percent in the recession of the early 1980s and in 2009, and reached a post–Great Depression high of 14.7% in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic delivered a seismic blow to U.S. unemployment, shattering records and reshaping the world of work. In a matter of weeks, millions of Americans found themselves without jobs as businesses shut their doors to slow the virus's spread. The pandemic led to an unparalleled surge in layoffs and furloughs

across various industries, with leisure and hospitality among the hardest hit. By the spring of 2020, the U.S. unemployment rate had skyrocketed to levels not seen since the Great Depression.

To help struggling Americans, the U.S. government initiated historic stimulus packages, providing direct payments and extending unemployment benefits. These efforts aimed to buffer the economic impact and offer support to those grappling with financial hardships. The pandemic's economic fallout exposed inequalities in the labor market. While some professionals were able to shift to remote work, lower-wage workers in service industries faced disproportionate job losses and difficulties making ends meet. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work and digitization across industries, changing the landscape of how and where work is done. Since then, unemployment has fallen, but the continued increase in economic inequality has in part offset the effects of falling unemployment.

One reason unemployment rose in the 1970s and 1980s can be tied to rising numbers of people entering the labor force—baby boomers who reached working age in the 1970s and 1980s and women who entered the labor force in many cases because their family income could not keep up with inflation without two income earners. However, other factors are more important than the growth of the labor force.

Deindustrialization

A cause of declining wages, as well as rising unemployment, is **deindustrialization** (Harrison and Bluestone, 1988; Wilson, 1987), a decline in the importance of heavy industry as a source of employment. Deindustrialization is a result of automation, international competition, and relocation of jobs—sometimes out of the United States. It is closely related to the trend of economic globalization noted earlier in this chapter. Because of more efficient operations and, in some cases, lower wages, many countries can produce cars, televisions, machine tools, and other products comparable or superior to American producers at lower cost. American companies also have contributed

to deindustrialization in the United States. In search of low wages, American companies have often moved assembly operations to Third World countries, depriving Americans of jobs in the process (Harrington, 1984). Thousands of manufacturing jobs have been shifted from the United States to northern Mexico for this reason. Of the 1,400 manufacturing plants in Mexico near the border in 1988, for example, 90 percent were American owned (Rohan, 1989). By eliminating higher-paying jobs, deindustrialization has resulted in growing inequality and rising poverty since the late 1970s.

The effects of deindustrialization have been particularly devastating for central cities, particularly manufacturing cities in the Midwest and Northeast (Kasarda, 1990; Wilson, 1987, 1991a, 1991b). The increasingly African American and Hispanic populations in these cities, devastated by the loss of jobs, also find it difficult to move into the still-segregated suburban areas, where jobs are often more readily available (Farley, 1987b; Kasarda, 1980, 1985, 1989; Massey and Eggers, 1990; Massey and Denton, 1993; Yinger, 1995; Leonard, 1987). An experiment in Chicago shows the impact of such exclusion: When poor black people were given the opportunity to move from the city to the suburbs, their employment rose relative to others who remained behind in the city (Rosenbaum and Popkin, 1991; Popkin, Rosenbaum, and Meaden, 1993). But as a result of job losses in the inner city, the proportion of black people and Hispanics in older cities who live in neighborhoods of highly concentrated poverty has risen. This phenomenon may further perpetuate poverty by undermining inner-city neighborhood institutions and depriving young people of successful role models (Anderson, 1991; Crane, 1991a, 1991b; Wilson, 1987, 1991a; Massey and Denton, 1993).

In some cities, manufacturing employment losses have been offset by growth of employment in the service and administrative sectors (Kasarda, 1990). However, this has been of limited benefit, for two reasons. First, these industries are highly automated and computerized and often do not employ as many people relative to their size as manufacturing did. Second,

many of the jobs they do offer require a high level of education, so they are not available to displaced industrial workers or the inner-city poor (Wilson, 1987, pp. 39–42). Moreover, the service jobs that do not have high educational requirements pay much lower wages than the industrial jobs that were lost. These jobs grew rapidly during the 1990s, but because of their low wages, so did the ranks of the working poor.

Low Wages

One striking feature of Figure 6.6 is the number of people who worked but were poor anyway. In fact, nearly one poor adult out of every eight in 2000 worked full time all year. The number of people in this situation has roughly doubled since 1978. How is it possible for these people to be poor? A little math will show you. Begin with the \$7.25 minimum wage in effect in 2015. Assume that someone works at the minimum wage 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year. Such a person would earn \$15,080. In 2015, if this person was the sole source of support for a family as small as two people (including the wage earner), that person's earnings would have only brought the family to about \$900 below the poverty level. For any family of three or larger, the earnings would have left the family well below the poverty level. For a family of four in 2015, the annual pay based on the minimum wage would have been more than \$9,000 below the poverty level. Such poverty, even when a breadwinner is working full time, has become a critical issue since welfare reform moved thousands of Americans from welfare to work. Unfortunately, it did not at the same time move so many of them out of poverty. Hence, welfare reform, in the absence of new laws raising the minimum wage (which has changed only twice in nearly 20 years: It remained unchanged between 1997 and 2007 and has remained at its current level since 2009) or mandating the provision of benefits, has led to growth in the number of Americans who work full time yet still suffer poverty. Across developed countries, the trend of declining rates of unionized employment has resulted

in an increase in working poverty. Not even the rate of economic growth or social policies have had as great an effect (Brady, Baker, and Finigan, 2013).

An important reason for the increasing number of working poor has been the failure of Congress to adjust the minimum wage for inflation. Despite considerable increases in the cost of living, the minimum wage has been adjusted only twice in the past 25 years, in 1997 and in 2009. In fact, changes in the minimum wage since the 1960s have been infrequent and small. This has major consequences, given the reality of inflation. For example, the minimum wage in early 1996 had only two-thirds of the purchasing power it had in 1968 (AFL-CIO, 1995).

Low-wage jobs were among the fastest-growing areas of employment during the 1980s and 1990s and since. In fact, most of the job growth during that period occurred either in dead-end, low-wage jobs or in well-paid, high-tech jobs that required a high level of education. There was little job growth in between, which meant there were far fewer opportunities for a person with a limited education to get a decent-paying, stable industrial job. Hence, many displaced workers ended up working for less.

Government Policy

Both low wages and, at times, rising unemployment during recent decades have resulted partly from policies pursued by the federal government. Specifically, the government during much of this period chose to fight inflation rather than unemployment and refused for years to adjust the minimum wage for inflation. Also contributing to poverty during this period was a very substantial cutback in government antipoverty programs. Beginning in the late 1970s, and to a greater extent under the Reagan administration in the 1980s, benefits in government poverty programs were curtailed as part of an effort to reduce both federal spending and the budget deficit. (Actually, both government spending and the deficit increased because of a massive increase in military spending in the early 1980s.) Benefits in many programs were not adjusted to keep

up with inflation, and standards of eligibility were tightened. Significantly, subsequent research has shown that those who were most severely hurt by these cutbacks were the working poor and the near-poor (Institute for Social Research, 1983). Many people were forced into poverty, and for many others, the impact of poverty became more severe as they were no longer able to supplement their meager incomes with government benefits such as food stamps. A study by Jacobs and Myers (2014) found that unions lost their ability to combat inequality in the United States during and after the Reagan administration's successful shift of U.S. politics to a more conservative, free-market orientation that lasted until the economic crisis of 2007–2009. Further cuts were implemented in the mid-1990s, as President Clinton and congressional Republicans competed over who was more serious about balancing the federal budget and reducing the size of government. The “welfare reform” legislation of the 1990s, sometimes called “workfare” (requiring able-bodied recipients to work for their benefits), led to more growth in the ranks of the working poor, whatever other benefits it may have had (we look at this policy in more depth in Chapter 12). In response to the economic turmoil brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States introduced a series of ambitious stimulus packages. These measures were aimed at rescuing the economy and providing financial relief to struggling Americans. The government's response was characterized by historic levels of spending, with trillions of dollars directed toward a variety of relief programs. These packages included direct payments to individuals, extended unemployment benefits, aid to small businesses, and funding for health-care initiatives. Millions of Americans received direct stimulus payments, providing critical financial support during the crisis. These payments were intended to help cover essential expenses and stimulate consumer spending. Small businesses received assistance through programs like the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), designed to keep workers on payrolls and businesses afloat. The massive spending associated with these stimulus packages led to concerns about the nation's growing debt. Debates about fiscal

responsibility and the long-term economic consequences continue to be part of the national political debate.

Finally, it must be noted that the failure of the American public sector to provide certain necessities, which are taken for granted in most industrialized countries, also increases the extent and impact of poverty. Virtually all other industrialized countries, for example, use tax revenues to fund health care and day care for all who need them. As we see in Chapter 16, one consequence is that other industrialized countries do not have 12 to 16 percent of their population totally lacking health insurance, as was the case in the United States until the health-care reforms passed in 2010 took effect several years later. And even then, although 20 million Americans gained health coverage because of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), millions of others did not. Finally, we already addressed the role day-care expenses play in making it hard for impoverished single parents to seek employment. Thus, not only does the United States have more poverty than other modern industrialized countries, but because of lack of governmental support for health care and day care, the impact of poverty in the United States is greater than in other industrialized countries.

In summary, the relatively high level of inequality in the United States compared with other industrialized countries results in a high level of poverty. This situation worsened in the 1980s and 1990s, as deindustrialization, the growth of low-wage employment, and government policies resulted in greater inequality and more poverty. It worsened again, at least for a time, following the economic crash of 2008 and following the COVID-19 global pandemic of 2020. Finally, the impacts of poverty are greater in the United States than in other industrialized countries because the United States provides far less assistance than other countries in areas such as health care, day care, and housing.

Consequences of Poverty

If the causes of poverty are complex, its consequences are clear. In virtually every way imaginable, life is more difficult for poor people.

They are ill more often, receive poorer and more limited medical care, and live shorter lives. They also have a higher rate of mental illness, particularly for the more serious illnesses such as depression, schizophrenia, and personality disorders (Dohrenwend, 1975; Warheit, Holzer, and Schwab, 1973). The effects of poverty on children's mental health are particularly severe when poverty persists over time (McLeod and Shannahan, 1993). The poor also report lower levels of personal happiness than the non-poor (Campbell, Converse, and Rogers, 1976; Luscombe, 2010) and higher levels of sadness (Kushlev, Dunn, and Lucas, 2015). The children of the poor are at greater risk of dying in infancy, and if they survive, they have a greater risk than nonpoor children of getting in trouble with the law or becoming pregnant as teenagers—and these risks are far more likely to translate into further serious health problems later in life (Ferraro, Schafer, and Wilkinson, 2016). They will receive a much poorer education than non-poor children, and they are far less likely to complete high school (Wilson, 1987, p. 57).

Poor people will spend more of their income on food and housing than the nonpoor, but they still will be less adequately fed and housed.

Poor people are more likely both to commit street crimes and to be the victims of such crimes (H.D. Barlow, 1993). Crime rates are highest in poor neighborhoods, for criminals tend to victimize those who are close by and available. As a result, a highly disproportionate number of robbery, assault, and homicide victims are poor. So high is the incidence of crime in some poor neighborhoods that poor people are afraid to venture outside their homes (Rainwater, 1966). Summer after summer in several major cities, older poor people have died from heat-related illnesses because they could not afford air conditioning and were afraid to open their windows because of crime.

In the winter, the risks become cold and fire. Dozens of poor people die every winter as a result of fires started by makeshift heating arrangements, some of which were attempted after their gas or electricity had been turned off because they could not pay the bill. Perhaps the greatest impacts of poverty fall on those who

have no home at all. Estimates of the number of homeless in the United States vary widely, but a recent survey found that somewhere between 2.5 and 3.5 million Americans will be homeless at some point during a given year (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2015). Many more—about 7 percent of the population, according to survey data—experience homelessness at some time in their lives (Link et al., 1994; Interagency Council on the Homeless, 1994). This would amount to about 22 million Americans, nearly double the size of New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago *combined*.

Functionalist and Conflict Perspectives on Stratification

In this final section, we turn to the larger sociological issue of why economic inequality and poverty exist in society. As with other questions of this nature, the two macrosociological perspectives, functionalist and conflict theories, offer starkly different answers. Let us first consider the functionalist answer.

The Functionalist View: Davis and Moore

In one of the most widely cited and debated pieces ever to appear in a sociology journal, Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore presented a functionalist theory of socioeconomic inequality in their 1945 article “Some Principles of Stratification.” Davis and Moore argued that economic stratification exists because it meets society’s needs for productivity by motivating people. Davis and Moore started with the notions that some jobs are more critical to society’s needs than others, and that some jobs—often the most critical ones—require longer and more difficult training than others. Such jobs also carry greater responsibility, are frequently very stressful, and often require people to work longer hours than other jobs. If the highly capable people needed to fill such jobs are to get the extra training and work the extra hours required, Davis and Moore argued, they must be motivated by the prospect of higher

pay. Otherwise, why would people want these jobs, with all the training, stress, and extra hours they entail? More specifically, would people sacrifice current income in order to get the years of training some of these jobs require? Suppose a person could get the same money as a doctor by working seven or eight hours a day sweeping streets—with no after-hours responsibility and no long, expensive period of training, including four years of college, four years of medical school, and four years of internship/residency. Would it not be harder to get people to become doctors if they could earn just as much money doing something much easier—and earn it now, rather than 12 years from now?

The Conflict View

Although conflict theorists generally acknowledge that socioeconomic inequality occurs in nearly all societies, they do not think it exists because it meets a social need for productivity. They note, for example, that more economically developed and productive societies generally have less inequality than others, not more (see Lenski, 1966; Nielson and Alderson, 1995). In general, conflict theorists see socioeconomic inequality as existing because the wealthy and powerful—usually a small group in any society—benefit from it and have enough power to make the social system work to protect their interests.

As a result of this great inequality, conflict theorists—in the tradition of Karl Marx—see a tendency in most societies for class conflict: conflict between the wealthy and those who lack wealth. It is in the interest of the wealthy to keep things as they are, whereas those without wealth have an interest in social change. Marx predicted that this conflict of interest would eventually lead to the overthrow of most capitalist societies, as the subordinate class realized its own interest and seized the wealth from the ruling class.

In fact, this has not happened, for many reasons. One important reason is that the expansion of economies under capitalism, at least until recently, raised the standard of living of the working classes substantially,

despite continued inequality. Another is that democratic reforms curtailed the more blatant excesses of the owners of wealth and afforded some protection to the rights of even those with little wealth and power. Marxists would argue that a third reason is that the wealthy use their influence over government, the media, and other key institutions to promote beliefs and ideologies that inhibit class consciousness. (The role of class conflict as a source of social change is explored in Chapter 18.) According to the conflict perspective, then, the interests of the wealthy—not the needs of the society as a whole—are served by inequality.

Is Stratification Really Functional?

In an article that is among the most widely cited in sociology, conflict theorist Melvin Tumin pointed out what he saw as several shortcomings in the logic used by Davis and Moore (Tumin, 1953; see also Tumin, 1970). First, he questioned whether some of the better-paying and more prestigious jobs are really more critical to society than others. For example, is the physician really more essential to the health of the public than the garbage collector? Without garbage collectors, the hazard of contagious disease would be tremendous. Significantly, historical demographers agree that public sanitation systems were able to increase people's life expectancies at an earlier point in history than were medical doctors. The medical treatment of illness was too unscientific to accomplish much before about 1900. Only then, for example, was the practice of washing one's hands before performing surgery becoming widespread. By around 1850, the establishment of garbage-collection systems and sanitary sewers, however, had replaced the common practice of throwing garbage and human waste in the nearest street or river in many areas, and it was certainly a key factor in the steady fall in American and European mortality rates between 1800 and 1900. (For more discussion of the effects of medicine and public sanitation on mortality, see Thomlinson, 1976, pp. 98–107.) In a similar vein, Tumin points out that if factories had all managers and engineers and no line workers,

they could produce nothing. Thus, low-status, poorly paid workers can be as essential as those whose jobs carry status, power, and big paychecks.

Second, wealth is distributed more unequally than income, and a large share of wealth is inherited rather than earned (Barlow, Robin, and Brazer, 1966; Lundberg, 1968). It is hard to see how inherited wealth could motivate people to do anything except be born into rich families (something that we have yet to figure out a way to control!). About half of America's 400 wealthiest people in 1989 became wealthy through either inheritance or the investment of inherited wealth (Miller, 1997). To the extent that wealth is concentrated through inheritance, it is very difficult to see how it could serve to motivate people to enter critical jobs. A related point is that parental income has a substantial effect on a person's ability to obtain the education necessary to do the most demanding jobs. If stratification were really to work the way Davis and Moore argued it did, ability and motivation would have to be the main factors determining the amount of education obtained. In fact, family income plays a large role, making it easy for the wealthy to educate their children for the best jobs and hard for the poor to do so (Hällsten and Pfeffer, 2017).

Third, the training required for getting better-paying jobs often is far from unpleasant; many people, for example, find college a highly rewarding time of their lives. In addition, attending college—and even more so, attending law, medical, or graduate school—gives a person a certain prestige. At the least, there is a good side as well as a bad side to the training that people must go through to get the better jobs, and that in itself can serve to motivate them.

Finally, Tumin points out that although the highest-paying jobs often require great training and long hours, they also carry considerable nonmaterial rewards, including autonomy, sense of accomplishment, prestige, and—in many cases—the ability to set your own hours. This has been confirmed by recent research by Jencks, Perman, and Rainwater (1988), who found that there are many rewards to a

good job besides high pay. We do, moreover, have no shortage of people in certain occupations that require great training but pay relatively poorly—for example, social workers and college professors. There are a number of jobs people with a high school degree can get that pay as well as that of a college professor, which requires four years of college and, typically, four to six years after that to obtain a PhD. Even so, the supply of recent PhDs has continued to outstrip the number of new college faculty positions available. Clearly, a major reason for this is that the job carries considerable nonmonetary rewards.

Synthesis

To conclude our discussion of the debate between functionalist and conflict sociologists about the causes of economic stratification, it may be useful to examine the relationship between social inequality and productivity among industrialized societies. This information is provided in Table 6.5. As a measure of

inequality, the table shows the ratio of income going to the top 10 percent of the population to the share going to the bottom 20 percent. The larger this ratio, the greater is the inequality of a society. The countries are ranked for inequality, with the countries with the most *equal* income distributions at the top. As a measure of productivity, the table shows gross national income (GNI) per capita for 2013. The table indicates there is little relationship between the inequality measure and the productivity measure. The country with the least inequality, Norway, had the highest productivity—exactly the opposite of what the functionalist theory predicts. However, high productivity was also found in Switzerland (one of the most unequal). In general, countries with both high and low productivity can be found at all levels of inequality. The United States, with by far the highest inequality, is in about the middle with regard to productivity. Thus, the conclusion is unavoidable that, among these industrialized countries, the degree of economic inequality has little to do with the level of productivity.

Table 6.5 Economic Inequality and Economic Productivity, Selected Industrial Countries: 2013

Country	Inequality, Latest Data Available in Ratio of Income of Top 10 Percent to That of Bottom 20 Percent	Productivity, 2013, Per Capita Gross National Income (GNI)	Average Annual Growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (%)	
			2000–2009	2009–2013
Norway	2.25:1	\$102,700	1.9	1.5
Finland	2.37:1	\$48,820	2.4	0.7
Sweden	2.47:1	\$61,710	2.4	2.2
Netherlands	2.52:1	\$51,060	1.8	0.1
Belgium	2.56:1	\$46,340	1.8	1.1
Denmark	2.76:1	\$61,670	1.2	0.4
Germany	2.82:1	\$47,250	1.0	2.0
United Kingdom	3.29:1	\$41,680	2.2	1.4
Japan	3.35:1	\$46,330	0.9	1.6
France	3.44:1	\$43,520	1.5	1.2
Canada	3.62:1	\$52,210	2.1	2.3
Italy	4.24:1	\$35,620	0.6	–0.6
Switzerland	5.33:1	\$90,680	2.2	1.8
United States	5.92:1	\$53,470	2.1	2.1

Source: World Bank (2015), World Development Indicators, Table 2.9, Distribution of income or consumption, <http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/2.9>, World Development Indicators 2015, Tables 1 and 4, <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators/wdi-2015> (both downloaded February 19, 2016).



UNDERSTANDING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

Herbert Gans and the Functions of Poverty

A discussion of functionalist and conflict analyses of stratification could not be complete without a review of the writings of Herbert Gans (1971, 1972) concerning the functions of poverty. Gans's insights are useful not only for understanding poverty but also for seeing the similarities between functionalist and conflict theories. In an article titled "The Positive Functions of Poverty," Gans listed a number of ways in which poverty is "functional," some of which are given here:

- It provides people to do unpleasant "dirty work" that others don't want to do.
- It provides a source of employment for police and penologists, Pentecostal ministers, pawnshop owners, social workers, heroin pushers, and other legal and illegal occupations that depend on the poor.
- It provides people to buy spoiled and damaged goods at a reduced price that otherwise would have to be thrown out.
- It provides a convenient group of people to punish in order to uphold society's rules. (In Chapter 10, we explore how the War on Drugs has victimized African Americans—even though their overall rate of drug use is no different from that of white people.)
- It reassures the nonpoor of their status and worth.
- It enhances educational opportunities for the middle class by ensuring that a sizable part of the population will not compete with them.
- It is a source of popular culture that others enjoy and make money on. Jazz, blues, rock, gospel, hip-hop, and country music all had their origins among the poor.
- It provides people to absorb the costs of social change in the form of unemployment, cheap labor, and residential displacement—so others won't have to.

Although some people have interpreted this article as making a functionalist argument—and Gans certainly wrote it to sound that way—it has more commonly been seen as a spoof of functionalist theory written by someone who really identifies with the conflict perspective. An earlier and similar article by Gans, "The Uses of Poverty: The Poor Pay All" (1971), supports this interpretation. Whether Gans identifies with functionalist theory or conflict theory, however, his articles make a key point: A good many Americans—nonpoor and often wealthy—benefit from the continued existence of widespread poverty. Thus, the fact that influential special interest groups benefit from poverty may be one reason that poverty persists. In essence, this is what conflict theorists have always argued: Inequality exists because some group benefits from it. It would appear that this is true to some extent, not only of overall socioeconomic inequality, but also of the widespread poverty existing amid affluence in the United States.

The Dysfunctions of Inequality

From a functionalist viewpoint, we also must consider the possible dysfunctions of a condition such as social inequality along with its possible functions. Functionalists see a need for order and cooperation in society—yet economic inequality is one of the most important causes of conflict and disorder in society (Tumin, 1953). Beyond this, those who are at the bottom often become hopeless and alienated and thus "drop out" of any economically productive role. Thus, whatever benefits inequality may have, it also clearly has its costs, to the larger society as well as to those at the bottom of the stratification system.

Does all this mean that the functionalist explanation of inequality is simply wrong? Probably not. For one thing, all of the countries in Table 6.5 do have a significant amount of inequality, although the levels vary widely. In Norway, with the least inequality, the wealthiest 10 percent still receive two-and-a-quarter times as much income as the poorest 20 percent. The fact that economic inequality exists in all modern countries—even socialist ones—is certainly consistent with the functionalist viewpoint. What the data do suggest, though, is that although inequality may be functional up to a point, most countries have far more of



GLOBAL SOCIOLOGY

Global Stratification

As unequal as the United States is between the rich and the poor, this gulf is dwarfed by the vast chasm between the world's poor and affluent. While about 20 percent of the world's human population lives in countries of great wealth and abundance, the other 80 percent lives in societies with far fewer material comforts. About 40 percent of humanity lives in societies in which starvation is often commonplace. In these latter countries, 50 percent of the population at any one time lives in absolute poverty, meaning they do not have enough resources, shelter, and food to meet their basic survival needs. Famine, disease, and short life expectancies are commonplace. Even among "middle-income" countries, the differences with the rich nations is striking. According to the World Bank (2010), high-income countries, less than 20 percent of the global population, earned an average of about \$38,000 a year per person. Middle-income nations did much worse at about \$3,000 per year, and low-income nations, making up the bottom 40 percent, came in at under \$500 per year, per person.

A more recent study by the World Bank (2014) found that 11.5 percent of the human population lives in what the World Bank calls "extreme poverty," which it defines as living on less than the equivalent of \$1.25 per day, or about \$455 per year. And while extreme poverty around the world is falling, from a rate of 36.4 percent of the human population in 1990, to 11.5 percent in 2015, this fall hides the fact that due to the population explosion in some of the world's poorest areas, a larger number of human beings live in extreme poverty today in some of these regions than in 1990. Those who are above it in the poor countries are barely above it. In fact, while all regions of the world have seen a fall in extreme poverty, most of the global fall can be attributed to the remarkable economic growth in China and other East Asian nations in that period that went from the highest in 1990 (57 percent) to one of the lowest today (4.1 percent).

Theories of Global Stratification

Modernization theory views cultural, institutional, and political impediments to development as the cause of poverty in low-income nations. The solution it promotes is to mimic the paths taken by the high-income nations, which in this theory's view is to transform cultural values that place science and capitalism at the top of the list, eliminate government corruption and interference in the marketplace, and promote saving and investing at levels reminiscent of the high-income nations.

Dependency theory is a conflict theory that states the poverty of the low-income nations was caused by their exploitation by the now high-income nations. The history of colonialism and resource extraction, followed by often-thoughtless division of countries after colonialism that left ancient enemies working side by side, lend credence to this theory.

World systems theory conceptualizes the world as a single economic and stratification class system, not just a group of nations. It argues that the global economy must be understood as a system with an upper class (core) set of wealthy nations, a working class (periphery) of many more poor nations, and a middle class (semi-periphery). The theory's primary architect, Immanuel Wallerstein, describes the working of this international system in much the same way as a class system within a single nation.

Global commodity chain theory is closely related to world systems theory, but its focus is on the "chains" of global capital, labor, raw materials, production, and consumption that are closely linked in networks across the world. Manufacturing has shifted from high-income countries to middle- and low-income countries. In these nations, the ability to export goods to the rest of world becomes paramount. While the final assembly of products may occur in poorer countries, the most lucrative aspects of global trade, finance, continues to occur in the rich nations.

it than they need. This is especially true of the United States, which had far more economic inequality (by the measure in Table 6.5) than Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands or Canada, yet did the same or worse in terms

of productivity. As Lenski (1966) put it, the functionalist theory probably explains a certain amount of stratification, but it cannot count for anywhere near all of it. Undoubtedly, much of the rest exists for the reasons outlined by

The Institutions of Global Finance

Three institutions in charge of global financial conditions have had an enormous impact on the fates of poor countries across the globe since the end of World War II. These are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO). When poor nations get into economic straits, these institutions, through various means, are designed to assist them. The World Bank provides loans to such countries to help them develop stronger economies. The IMF makes recommendations to countries, provides technical assistance and expertise, and can make loans to countries in economic distress. The WTO facilitates trade by encouraging and developing trade agreements between nations. It can also serve as arbiter between countries when trade disputes arise.

While the goal of these institutions is to create greater economic growth and stability across the global economy, critics charge that they just as often do harm to poorer countries. Many detractors see them as most benefiting the core (wealthy) countries at the expense of the poor (peripheral) countries. The World Bank and IMF, for instance, are often charged with hurting the countries they seek to help through what it calls its Structural Adjustment Programs. The programs are said by critics to benefit global investors at the expense of the populace. Requirements for low- or no-interest loans often include deep cuts to social spending to reduce budget deficits or to repay foreign banks from wealthy countries. Frequently, they also include a move from crops that sustain the local population to “cash crops” that can be exported across the globe. While supporters claim these moves will pay off in the long run, the short- to medium-term effect is often devastating on the local population. The WTO, on the other hand, is often accused of encouraging a “race to the bottom,” whereby the least restrictive trade agreements are favored in negotiations and arbitrations between countries. The effect, critics charge, is a weakening of labor laws and therefore living standards as well as environmental protections.

Sleeping Giants Awaken

In recent years, a great deal of focus has fallen upon the emerging nations of India and China because of their massive populations (1.3 and 1.4 billion, respectively), growing economies, and geostrategic importance. While both nations are still very much developing, each is growing at a rapid pace and will play an increasingly important role in a world characterized by scarce resources and an exploding human population. Both countries might choose to develop massive militaries, or perhaps they will focus on knocking the United States out of its role as most important economy. No matter what road they decide to take, they are sure to shape the events of the twenty-first century and beyond in crucial ways. India, a nation known for its traditional caste system, is quickly becoming a more class-based society, especially in the urban centers of the country. Similarly, China, formally a communist state, is rapidly developing a market economy, and a new set of elites seem to be gathering power: a business elite that will either compete with or find new ways to cooperate with the old political elite of the Communist Party (Bian, 2002).

Human Trafficking

A second issue that has gathered a lot of attention around the world, not least in the world of sociology, is the various forms of slavery and human trafficking that take place across the globe. Human beings are routinely smuggled across national borders for profit. Many of the victims are children. Some are virtual or literal slaves. The heart of this activity takes place in the low-income nations, and while some practices can be blamed on ancient customs of marriage or women and children traditionally being seen as property in a few societies, much of the demand and money fueling the operation of the illegal markets in human beings comes from wealthier nations.

conflict theorists—the disproportionate power of the wealthy, and their use of that power to keep their economic advantage.

The wealthy are not the only people among the nonpoor who benefit from poverty and

therefore have a stake in the confirmation of poverty. To see how others benefit—as well as to get some enlightening insights about functionalist and conflict theories—see the box “Herbert Gans and the Functions of Poverty.”



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS: WHO HAS YOUR BACK, THE RICH OR THE POOR?

Erik Olin Wright and the Parable of the Schmoo

Who has the best interests of society at heart, the rich or the poor? Who would do a better job of looking out for everyone, the people at the top or the people at the bottom?

Our society's answer is clear: People with high incomes and wealth sit atop the boards of businesses, churches, schools, and hospitals alike. In fact, wealthy people routinely sit on governing bodies of organizations that have little if anything to do with the business or activity that made them wealthy. Low-income individuals rarely if ever sit upon such governing boards. Further, many people assume that those at the bottom of the income ladder, certainly those in poverty or who are homeless, got that way because they in some sense deserve it. Such "lazy" individuals could never be counted on to lead society or to look out for important, let alone everyone's, interests, some believe. What if we could demonstrate which social class comes the closest to holding everyone's best interest at heart?

A case could be made for the people at the top of our organizations. If a business, for instance, is profitable, not only do those who own the business prosper, so do those who work for the business. More prospering businesses are obviously better for society than fewer prospering businesses. And the people at

the top got there, at least in part, by being successful. Don't we want society to be led by those who are successful?

Okay, so a case for the people at the top having our backs may be strong. Can a case be made for those at the bottom? Is it possible that the janitor at your university has the best interests of your university at heart more than does the president of the university? Most of us would want to dismiss this thought out of hand. After all, the people on the bottom got there, at least in part, by being less successful than the people at the top. When owners of businesses strive for more profit, we usually cheer them on as being good capitalists. But when low-paid employees ask for a raise, go on strike, or campaign for increases to the minimum wage, they are often seen as greedy and shortsighted. Is this the case?

Sociologist Erik Olin Wright (1997) answers these questions in a very interesting way. Using a story from the comic strip *Li'l Abner* from the late 1940s, Wright examines the universal interests of capitalists and workers. The story takes place in a fictional town called Dogpatch, where wages are low, profits are high, and men dominate over women at home. Suddenly magical little creatures called Shmoos arrive and change everything. The Shmoo can provide not

Summary

Sociologists use the term "stratification" to refer to the unequal distribution in society of scarce resources. Stratification has many dimensions. In this chapter, we looked at the economic dimension (the distribution of income and wealth) and a social prestige dimension, sometimes called *status*. In the United States, income (what a person receives annually) is distributed more unequally than in most other industrialized countries, and the distribution of wealth (the total value of everything a person owns) is even more unequal. Although the distributions

of income and wealth in the United States have not changed dramatically over time, there has recently been a shift toward greater inequality.

Another area in which stratification systems vary is mobility. Open stratification systems have relatively high mobility—people can move "up" or "down"—whereas closed systems have low mobility. The most closed type of stratification system is the caste system; the estate or feudal system has slightly greater mobility. The highest level of mobility is found in class systems, but even there, ascribed statuses—those into which we are born—play an important role. The mobility that does exist is frequently

just the basic material necessities of life but also enough that workers won't "have to work hard anymore" (Wright, 1997, p. 7). Workers may still choose to have jobs, the story explains, but they will no longer have to put up with bad working conditions. Similarly, women will no longer have to be dependent on men for financial security. As Wright points out, this creates two diverging interests and preferences for capitalists and workers. There are four possible options for what to do about these Shmoos.

Wright lays out the possibilities as such:

- 1 Everyone gets the shmoos.
- 2 Only capitalists get the shmoos.
- 3 Only workers get the shmoos.
- 4 Destroy the shmoos.

For capitalists, the best situation would be if only the capitalists themselves got the shmoos. Then they would have their material interests already met by the magical little creatures, but they could still employ the workers at low wages and enjoy high profit margins to continue their extravagant lifestyles. The second best option for capitalists is to destroy the shmoos to protect their economic interests and profits. Third, they would prefer everyone gets the shmoos and last that only workers get the shmoos. So, the capitalist preferences look like this:

- 1 Only capitalists get the shmoos.
- 2 Destroy the shmoos.
- 3 Everyone gets the shmoos.
- 4 Only workers get the shmoos.

For workers, Wright points out, the best option is if everyone gets the shmoos—because workers will be slightly better off if capitalists will have a little extra money for investment, having to no longer purchase their basic necessities—than if only workers got shmoos. The same could be said for workers' third option. They might not get the shmoos themselves, but they are still better off even if only capitalists get shmoos. The worst option for workers is if no one gets a shmoo. So, it looks like this:

- 1 Everyone gets the shmoos.
- 2 Only workers get the shmoos.
- 3 Only capitalists get the shmoos.
- 4 Destroy the shmoos.

Thus, Wright argues that workers have class interests that best align with universal human interests. The people on the bottom are most likely to advocate for things that will help the largest number of people. Wright points out that this does not mean that individual capitalists can't support "shmoo-like" policies, but, he argues, it would not be in their class interests to do so. Thus, as a class, the workers of the world are better positioned to advocate for the betterment of us all.

What do you think? Are you persuaded? Do the shmoos prove those on the bottom are more likely to have your back? Would we all be better off if we had more janitors and other working people on the boards of schools, colleges, and hospitals rather than bankers, businesspersons, and lawyers? Or do the elite in society see further than the rest of us from their higher perches?

structural—that is, a result of an increase in the number of better-paying jobs rather than of some people moving up while others move down. Although it is widely believed that the United States has high mobility compared with other class systems, the fact is that industrialized countries do not vary widely in their degree of mobility. The degree of mobility found in the United States is similar to that of most other industrialized societies.

Social class can be defined in a number of ways. To Karl Marx, there were only two classes: those who owned the means of production and those who did not. Many modern sociologists

prefer a composite approach, which considers such factors as income, wealth, education, and occupational status. Another approach—subjective class—is to allow people to classify themselves. In the United States, most people call themselves middle class or working class because Americans don't like to divide themselves into classes and thus tend to identify with the middle.

Poverty can be defined in either a relative sense (being poor compared with others in the same society) or an absolute sense (lacking necessities). By either definition, there are a large number of poor people in the United States, despite its relative affluence, and this

number has increased since the late 1970s. Most poor people are non-Hispanic white people, but black people and Hispanics have disproportionately high poverty rates, as do female-headed families and people who live in either central cities or rural areas. Among the key causes of poverty are unemployment, low wages, and the inability of single mothers to earn sufficient wages to pay the costs of day care and medical care and support their families. In addition, parents who temporarily leave work to care for family and then try to re-enter the labor market find they face significant disadvantages in hiring prospects compared to other job applicants (Weisshaar, 2018). Thus, it appears that relatively few people are poor because they prefer welfare to work. Although welfare dependency does occur, it is less widespread than is commonly believed, and most of the nonworking poor have good reasons to be out of the labor force. During the late 1970s and particularly the 1980s, government policies both raised the poverty rate (by allowing unemployment to increase in order to fight inflation) and made the impact of poverty more severe (by cutting back aid to the poor). The effects of poverty are devastating in nearly every aspect of life, ranging from decreased educational opportunities to shortened life expectancy to the likelihood of being a victim of crime.

Functionalist and conflict theorists disagree about the causes of social stratification. In the view of functionalists, stratification exists because it is useful for society. It motivates people to get the training and work the long hours required for certain critical and difficult jobs. Conflict theorists, however, argue that stratification exists mainly because those with wealth and power benefit from it. At the least, it does appear that there is greater inequality in most societies than can be explained purely on the basis of the need for motivation. In the United States, with its particularly high degree of economic inequality, this seems to be especially true.

Key Terms

dimensions of stratification
income

wealth
prestige
conspicuous consumption
distinction
socioeconomic mobility
open stratification system
closed stratification system
caste system
caste
racial caste system
apartheid
estate system
class system
intergenerational mobility
structural mobility
exchange mobility
social class
socioeconomic status
class structure
corporations
subjective class
poverty
deindustrialization
modernization theory
dependency theory
world systems theory
global commodity chain theory

Exercises

- 1 In our global world, some very different ways of looking at social inequality have emerged. For example, the gap between people who have access to the Internet and those who do not has been referred to as the *digital divide*. Do an Internet search for the term “digital divide.” You will find the Internet buzzing with information about the issue. What are your personal thoughts about this *new form* of social inequality? What do you believe are the potential social consequences of this socioeconomic division?
- 2 Social scientists have long observed that poverty is often *invisible* in American society; socioeconomically disadvantaged areas are seldom accessed by people other than the poor who live in these locations. One very visible form of social inequality is *homelessness*. Sociologists who study the

homeless find that a great deal of the homeless population is composed of children and families. Do an Internet search for the National Coalition for the Homeless and check out the link “Homelessness in the US” along with the other links they have on the causes of homelessness. Then answer the following questions:

- People often react to the homeless with the attitude, “Get a job!” Now that you know more about the homeless in

American society, do you think the problem is this simple? Why or why not?

- What are some potential root causes of homelessness in the United States, and how do these factors interact with each other? What do you think can be done to solve the problem of homelessness in our society?

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Chapter 7

Race and Ethnic Relations

North American black bears, like people, come in a wide variety of colors. They formed the basis of an interesting experiment about race by Lawrence Hirschfeld (1996), professor of anthropology and psychology at the University of Michigan. Hirschfeld showed Americans pictures of a light bear and a dark bear, and three bear cubs—one light, one dark, and one in between. Most people, children and adults, correctly predicted that the intermediate-colored bear would be the most likely offspring.

Then, Hirschfeld performed the same experiment, except that instead of pictures of bears, he used pictures of people. He showed his subjects pictures of a white person and pictures of a black person. He then showed them pictures of three babies—white, black, and an intermediate skin color. When he asked them which baby was the most likely offspring, most people from the age of nine years up gave the wrong answer. Although they could correctly answer this question for bears, they could not do so for humans. Most people incorrectly said the black baby was the most likely offspring. In other words, they believed that if one of the parents is black, the baby must also be black. In fact, the right answer in the case of people is the same as it is in the case of bears: The intermediate-colored baby is the most likely offspring.

This experiment says a lot about race. First and foremost, it shows us that race is *socially constructed*: What matters when it comes to race is not so much biological fact as social agreement and learned. And it also tells us a lot about how race is socially defined in the United States: For example, if someone has any identifiable black ancestry or characteristics, most Americans will regard that person as black or African American.

In this chapter, we explore some of the reasons that racial and ethnic conflicts have been so widespread throughout history. In order to address this issue, we must first understand what is meant by *race* and *ethnic group*.

Racial and Ethnic Groups: What Is the Difference?

There are similarities between a racial group and an ethnic group. Both are socially defined categories of people who share a common ascribed status. Membership in both is hereditary. However, there are also differences. A **racial group** can be defined as a category of people who (1) share some socially recognized physical characteristic (such as skin color or facial features) that distinguishes them from other such categories and (2) are recognized by themselves and others as a distinct status group (Cox, 1948, p. 402). An **ethnic group**, in contrast, is a category of people who are recognized as a distinct status group entirely on the basis of social or cultural criteria such as nationality or religion. There is no reliable way to identify a person's ethnic group by their physical appearance.

Although physical characteristics play a role in identifying racial groups, race is much more a social concept than a physical one, as illustrated by the opening material for this chapter. A crucial part of the definition of *both* racial and ethnic groups is that they must be *socially recognized* as distinct groups. Human societies choose to pay attention to a particular physical characteristic, which then becomes the basis for defining a racial group. In fact, there is no good scientific basis for even saying how many races there are. There is no one gene for

race, and different genes affect different aspects of physical appearance (Thernstrom, Orlov, and Handlin, 1980, p. 869). For this reason, social scientists and biologists have never been able to agree on the number of races—different schemes have identified as few as three or more than 100 races. Moreover, racial classifications vary in different societies and in different times. In the United States, until recently, you were considered black if you had any identifiable African American ancestry or physical appearance. However, many people considered African American in the United States would be placed in a mixed group, often identified as “mulatto” or “colored,” in many other countries. This way of looking at race may now be becoming more common in the United States. In the 2000 Census, for the first time, Americans were able to identify themselves as belonging to more than one race. An interesting spin on this issue has been identified by Saperstein and Penner (2012). They found evidence that race is not as “fixed” a concept as many believe. Over a 19-year period, one in five persons studied changed their racial identification at

least once. Not only can a person’s race change over time, that change is often associated with social status, they learned. Their research has shown that high-status achieving individuals are often defined, by both themselves and others, as white (or not black), while low-status achieving people tend to be defined as black (or not white). Other studies have shown that social factors like gender, socioeconomic status, and religious identity have a big impact on how biracial people in the United States choose to identify racially, with women more likely to identify as multiracial (Davenport, 2016). So not only do we sometimes project behavior onto other races and ethnicities, we also sometimes define people’s races and ethnicities by their perceived actions; yet we can be nuanced in how we define our own identity.

For both racial and ethnic groups, membership is usually involuntary and lifelong; in other words, it is an ascribed status. In addition, it is usually passed from parent to child, although in some instances it may change for the offspring of marriages whose partners are of different racial or ethnic groups. The characteristics used to define races are usually ones that are consistently and reliably passed from generation to generation, which explains, for example, why skin color is commonly used to define races, and eye color is not.

Majority and Minority Groups

As we have seen, many societies that have two or more racial or ethnic groups experience inequality and conflict. One or more groups are in an advantaged or dominant position with the power to discriminate, while other groups are in disadvantaged or subordinate positions and are often the victims of discrimination. Those in the advantaged or dominant positions are called **majority groups**; those in disadvantaged or subordinate positions are called **minority groups**. Often, the majority group in this sociological sense is also a majority in the numerical sense, as with white people in the United States and people of British ancestry in Canada and Northern Ireland. However, a numerical minority can be a majority group in the



Photo 7.1 Scottish Highlander wearing a kilt and playing bagpipes. If it were not for his dress, could you identify the ethnic group of this person?

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sociological sense, and vice versa. One example is South Africa, where until recently five million white people dominated more than 25 million native South Africans in politics, economics, and every other aspect of life. Hence, many sociologists believe the terms *dominant group* and *subordinate group* are more accurate, but the majority group/minority group terminology is still more commonly used.

Besides race and ethnicity, minority groups may be defined on the basis of other ascribed social characteristics such as sex, physical disability, or sexual orientation. While these minority groups are discussed in other chapters, it is significant to note that prejudice and discrimination against them is often closely linked to racial and ethnic bias.

Racism

Whenever prejudice, discrimination, or systematic social inequality occurs along the lines of race or ethnicity, we have an example of racism. Social scientists have used the term in so many ways that some have questioned its very usefulness (cf. Wilson, 1987, p. 12). Still, the reality of racial and ethnic conflict and inequality is so pervasive in the world that some powerful social processes must be responsible for it. Thus, we select a broad definition of racism and then specify some distinct types of racism. For our purposes, **racism** is any attitude, belief, behavior, or social arrangement that has the intent or ultimate effect of favoring one racial or ethnic group over another. As we see later, this definition implies that although racism is often open, conscious, and deliberate, it can also exist in subtler forms. Sometimes, in fact, people can be racist without even being aware of it.

Ideological Racism

At one time, the term “racism” referred to the belief that one race or ethnic group is naturally superior (or inferior) to another. Today, in recognition of the variety of forms that racism can take, this type of belief is referred to as **ideological racism**, or *racist ideology*. It includes

such notions as Hitler’s concept of a “master race,” the belief of slaveholders that black people were uncivilized and incapable of anything more than physical labor (Jordan, 1968, chap. 2; Wilson, 1973, pp. 76–81), and the conviction among southwestern Anglos of the late nineteenth century that the partial Native American ancestry of Mexican Americans predisposed them to “savagery” and “banditry” (Mirande, 1987). It also includes repeated (though consistently unsuccessful) efforts by some scientists in the United States to prove that white people are more intelligent than other races (Feagin, 2000, pp. 82–95). Ideological racism can become institutionalized to the point where it has the status of an unquestioned “truth” that few people (in the majority group, at least) challenge. That has been the case at various points in U.S. history (Feagin, 2000). The rise of genetic research, some of which fails to acknowledge the role that social inequality plays in health disparities, could unintentionally give new energies to these efforts by reviving “age old beliefs in essential racial differences” (Phelan, Link, and Feldman, 2013).

An important function of ideological racism is to justify the exploitation of the minority group (Bonilla-Silva 2018; Carter and Lippard 2020; Cox, 1948). As Davis (1966) has pointed out, to enslave a human being like yourself is a terrible thing that most people cannot accept. If you can convince yourself and others that the one you are enslaving is less than fully human, however, then you can probably convince yourself and others that slavery is not so bad. This helps to explain why, for example, racist ideologies against black people became more extreme and were invoked more frequently *after* slavery was established in the U.S. South than *before* (Wilson, 1973, pp. 76–81).

Racial and Ethnic Prejudice

Still in the realm of racist *thinking* (as opposed to action) is racial and ethnic **prejudice**: any categorical and unfounded overgeneralization concerning a group. It can take the form of beliefs about a group, negative feelings toward a group, or the desire to discriminate against a

group. In each of these cases, prejudice involves an automatic reaction to a group or to a person's group membership. If I automatically don't like you because you are white, if I want to discriminate against you because you are black, or if I think you are greedy because you are Jewish, I am prejudiced, because I am responding to you entirely on the basis of your race or ethnicity. I am choosing to ignore or disbelieve the influence of everything else about you except the fact that you are white, black, or Jewish.

One common type of prejudice is the **stereotype**, an exaggerated belief concerning a group of people. A stereotype assumes that anyone in a group is very likely to have a certain characteristic. American culture is full of stereotypes, such as the narrow-minded and authoritarian German; the greedy Jew; the lazy, musical, or sports-minded black; the hard-drinking Irish; the gang-prone Chicano; and the bigoted Southern white. Every one of these stereotypes, like all others, is a gross overgeneralization. Undoubtedly, some people in any group do fit the stereotype, but many others do not. The point is not that stereotypes do not apply to *anyone* in the group at which they are aimed but that they are never true for *everyone* in that group. Stereotypes are commonly reinforced by the media.

Stereotypes can be positive or negative, but even the positive ones are a mixed blessing. It is, for example, undoubtedly good to be musical, athletic, or a good dancer, which are common stereotypes about African Americans. However, if white people believe that these are the only areas in which black people can achieve, then they will probably behave in ways that close off opportunities for African Americans in professions other than sports and entertainment. Equally significant, if young African Americans internalize the message that the areas for them to get ahead in are sports and music, they can be directed away from other areas in which they could be equally or more successful.

Individual Discrimination

Although prejudices of any type concern what people think, **discrimination** concerns what they *do*. **Individual discrimination** is any

behavior that treats people unequally on the basis of race, ethnicity, or some other group characteristic. Individual discrimination is usually conscious and deliberate. Examples are a restaurant owner who refuses to serve a Chinese person, or a taxi driver who passes a man by because he is black. In the United States, most discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, or disability is illegal. Nonetheless, some types of individual discrimination are hard to prove, and in some areas, such as housing, employment, shopping, and public accommodations, this kind of discrimination remains all too common (Baird et al., 2019, 2019b; Carter et al., 2019; Carter and Lippard, 2020; Carter et al., 2006; Feagin, 2000; Feagin and Sikes, 1994; Kirschenman and Neckerman, 1991; Khallouq et al., 2022; Mathews, 1992; Vegara et al., 2023; Yinger, 1995; Storer, Schneider, and Harknett, 2020).

Institutional Discrimination

The most subtle form of racism, yet perhaps the one with the most serious consequences today, is **institutional racism**, or **institutional discrimination** on the basis of race (Bonilla-Silva 2018; Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967; Carter and Lippard 2020; Carter, Lippard, and Baird 2019; Embrick et al., 2020; Farley, 2010; Feagin and Feagin, 1986; Lippard et al. 2020). This form of discrimination occurs whenever widespread practices and arrangements within social institutions have the intent or effect of favoring one race (usually the majority group) over another (usually the minority group). Institutional discrimination can be very deliberate, as in the system of school segregation and denial of voting rights to black people that existed throughout the U.S. South until the early 1960s. A more contemporary example of deliberate institutional discrimination is the widespread practice in the real estate industry of **racial steering**—showing white customers houses in white neighborhoods and black customers houses in racially mixed or all-black neighborhoods (Lake, 1981; Pearce, 1976; Yinger, 1995).

Today, institutional discrimination is often unconscious and unintentional, though its

consequences can be just as devastating as if it were deliberate. In the educational system, for example, teachers often expect less achievement from black and Hispanic students than they do from white students (Brophy, 1983; Brophy and Good, 1974; Ferguson, 1998; Hurn, 1978; Harvey and Slatin, 1975; Leacock, 1969; Moore and Pachon, 1985). In schools that are predominantly black or Hispanic, such low expectations often become generalized to the entire student body. When teachers expect less, they demand and get less, and achievement falls (Brophy, 1983). As a result, black and Hispanic students frequently learn less, are graded lower, get a poorer education, and consequently lose out on job opportunities when they grow up. Although none of this may be intentional discrimination, its consequences are every bit as serious. This issue is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 14.

Another important example of institutional discrimination is the movement of jobs out of predominantly black and Hispanic central cities and into predominantly white suburbs. This trend takes job opportunities away from the minority groups and gives them to white people (Squires, 1989; Holzer and Ihlanfeldt, 1996; Storer, Schneider, and Harknett, 2020). Evidence shows that where jobs have become suburbanized in this manner, black and Hispanic men have higher unemployment rates than white men (Farley, 1987b; Lichter, 1988; Kain, 2004; Kasarda, 1989), and when black people do get opportunities to move to the suburbs, their unemployment rate declines (Rosenbaum and Popkin, 1991). To compound the problem, institutional discrimination within the real estate industry can make it very difficult for minorities to follow the jobs to all-white suburbs. In addition, the lack of automobiles in many black and Hispanic households, combined with poor mass transit, often makes commuting to jobs next to impossible (see Alexis and Di Tomaso, 1983).

Theories About the Causes of Racial and Ethnic Inequality

We now turn to a more detailed exploration of the causes of racial and ethnic discrimination, conflict, and inequality. Social scientists offer

three general explanations for these behaviors. One set of theories is based on social psychology; the other two are sociological in nature, arising, respectively, from the functionalist and conflict perspectives. We turn our attention first to social-psychological theories.

Social-Psychological Theories of Race Relations

Most social-psychological theories about race relations center around the concept of prejudice (Wilson and See, 1988, p. 226). Recall that *prejudice* refers to unfounded and inflexible over-generalizations concerning a racial or ethnic group. Social-psychological theories argue that people's situations and social experiences influence their attitudes and beliefs. These experiences lead some people to develop prejudiced attitudes and beliefs, usually through *personality need* or *social learning*.

Personality Need

The theory of **personality need** arises largely from the work of Theodor Adorno et al. (1950), discussed in Chapter 2. In his content analysis of speeches and writings of right-wing extremists such as Nazis and Ku Klux Klan members, Adorno uncovered a number of themes that were not logically related but nonetheless appeared repeatedly. Sensing that these themes might reflect a certain personality type, he developed a personality measure to rate nine distinct attitudes and beliefs, including excessive respect for authority, superstition, aggression against nonconformers, cynicism, worry about sexual "goings-on," opposition to looking inward to understand oneself, and a belief that the world is a dangerous place. Moreover, Adorno's research found that this personality type scored a good deal higher on anti-Semitic and antiblack prejudice than did others. Over the past half-century, many additional studies have confirmed Adorno's original findings (Dru, 2007; Heaven et al., 2006) and extended them to other kinds of prejudice such as sexism (Case, Fishbein, and Ritchey, 2008; Rigby, 1988), prejudice against homosexuals and/or people with AIDS (acquired immune deficiency

syndrome) (Cunningham et al., 1991; Laythe, Finkel, and Kirkpatrick, 2001), opposition to immigrants (Quinton, Cowan, and Watson, 1996), and hostility toward people with disabilities (Jabin, 1987). Thus, having a certain personality type—which Adorno called the **authoritarian personality**—does indeed appear to be associated with prejudice.

Scapegoats

Why are such people prejudiced? It appears that prejudice meets two kinds of personality needs in such people. The first of these needs refers back to our discussion of personality theories of socialization in Chapter 5. Recall Freud's (1962 [orig. 1930]) theory that society's expectations, the *superego*, are in conflict with the child's natural drives, the *id*. If the superego is so powerful that it represses natural drives, these drives can surface later in other forms. Adorno applied this notion to prejudice. He found, from questions he asked his subjects, that adults with authoritarian personalities usually had experienced harsh discipline as children. As a result, they built up a good deal of frustration and aggression because they did not have the necessary outlets for their natural drives. However, because respect for authority was so deeply ingrained in them, they could not take out their aggression on the true source of their anger—their parents and other authority figures. Instead, they took it out on **scapegoats**—racial, ethnic, or religious minorities, or other groups who displayed nonconformity in their dress or lifestyle. These scapegoats were not the true source of prejudiced people's anger, but they did serve as effective targets.

Projection

The second personality need met by prejudice is also related to childhood experiences. Prejudiced people had been taught that the world is made up of good and bad people, and you must always think, act, and behave as the good people do. People who adopt this good/bad worldview cannot admit any fault in themselves, because to do so would be to put themselves in the “bad” category. Using open-ended questions, Adorno et al. (1950) found that prejudiced people were much less willing than nonprejudiced people to

admit faults in either themselves or their parents. Moreover, their prejudices helped them to deny their faults. By exaggerating the faults of others, they could deny or minimize their own. In particular, they tended to exaggerate the faults of minority groups. Thus, they could deny or minimize their own greed by pointing to “greedy Jews” or forget about their own violent tendencies by talking about “Mexican gangs.” This process is called **projection**. As with scapegoating, other researchers besides Adorno have confirmed its presence among many prejudiced people (Allport, 1954, chaps. 21 and 24; Simpson and Yinger, 1985, pp. 73–8).

Social Learning

Although personality-need theories explain why some people are prejudiced, they do not explain all cases of prejudice. One need only look at the U.S. South during the 1950s to see this. Although the overwhelming majority of southern white people displayed relatively high levels of antiblack prejudice, the incidence of authoritarian personalities in the South was not much higher than that found in the rest of the country (Pettigrew, 1971, chap. 5; Prothro, 1952). Clearly, something other than personality need was responsible for antiblack feelings. A large part of the answer is to be found in culture and **social learning**. The social-learning theory of prejudice is much like the subcultural theory of deviance discussed in Chapter 10. According to this view, people are prejudiced because they grow up in prejudiced environments where they learn prejudice from their significant others. This learning occurs through the processes of selective exposure and modeling, reward and punishment, and identification that were introduced in Chapter 5. When your family, neighbors, and playmates are all prejudiced, you will probably be prejudiced too. If you are exposed only to prejudiced attitudes and beliefs, they seem like unquestioned truths. You are informally rewarded when you express such attitudes but laughed at or teased if you express contrary attitudes. Finally, if all the people you respect and love hold prejudiced beliefs, could such beliefs really be wrong?

All of these social-learning processes tend to produce prejudice. Research has shown that

those whose parents and other childhood significant others were prejudiced tend themselves to be more prejudiced as adults (Ehrlich, 1973; Garcia-Coll and Vazquez-Garcia, 1995). However, this type of prejudice is different in an important way from prejudice based on personality need in that it is easier to change. Very often, when people whose prejudices are based on social learning move to environments where their significant others are relatively unprejudiced, their prejudice levels fall. In other words, people can conform to nonprejudice as well as to prejudice (De Fleur and Westie, 1958; Ewens and Ehrlich, 1969; Fendrich, 1967). For people who have a personality need to be prejudiced, however, that need remains regardless of their social environment.

The Relationship Between Prejudice and Discrimination

The relationship between prejudice and discrimination is not always clear. As illustrated in Table 7.1, sociologist Robert Merton (1949) has shown that not everyone who is prejudiced discriminates, and some people who are *not* prejudiced do discriminate. Social pressures and the costs of discriminating or not discriminating determine whether racial attitudes will be translated into behavior. If the costs of discriminating are great (complaints, legal hearings, and penalties), prejudiced people will often not discriminate. Similarly, relatively unprejudiced people may discriminate if pressured to do so by, say, the threat of losing white customers if they welcome black customers.

Attitudes also may be changed by behavior. Prejudice, at least as measured by people's responses to questionnaires, *fell* considerably in the U.S. South after desegregation was ordered by federal law. In general, it was more satisfying

for southerners to say, "We know now that segregation is wrong," than to say, "We did what those Yankee bureaucrats in Washington told us to do." This is very consistent with a social-psychological theory called **cognitive-dissonance theory**, which states that if behavior changes, attitudes will often change to become consistent with the new behavior (Festinger, 1957; Festinger and Carlsmith, 1959).

Thus, we cannot assume that behavior is always the result of attitudes. However, this does not mean that prejudiced attitudes are unrelated to actual racial discrimination. Prejudice has decreased considerably in the United States (R. Farley, 1984, 1977; Farley and Frey, 1992; Firebaugh and Davis, 1988; National Opinion Research Center, 1983, 1991; Owen, Eisner, and McFaul, 1981), but it has not disappeared. For example, recent research shows that beliefs in stereotypes remain common among white people (Anti-defamation League, 1993; Sniderman and Piazza, 1993; Gilens, 1995; Tilcsik, 2020). Moreover, there is evidence that these stereotypes are an important cause of discrimination against African Americans in employment (Kirschenman and Neckerman, 1991; Wilson, 1996) and in housing (Farley and Frey, 1994; Tilcsik, 2020), and that they do influence public policy through their influence on political opinion (Gilens, 1995; Tilcsik, 2020). As shown in the box "Popular Music as a Threat: The Role of Race," stereotypes can affect behavior in ways we sometimes would not expect.

In addition, many researchers believe that modern prejudices have taken on a subtle form called **symbolic racism** (Kinder and Sears, 1981; Kluegel and Smith, 1986, 1982; McConahay, Hardee, and Batts, 1981). Symbolic racism refers to a pattern in which people do not express overtly prejudiced or racist ideas but oppose any social policy that would eliminate or reduce racial inequality, such as affirmative

Table 7.1 Robert Merton's Typology on Prejudice and Discrimination

<i>Status</i>	<i>Does Not Discriminate</i>	<i>Discriminates</i>
Unprejudiced	1. All-weather liberal	2. Fairweather liberal
Prejudiced	3. Timid bigot	4. All-weather bigot

Source: From p. 41 in *Majority-Minority Relations*, 2nd ed. by John E. Farley. Copyright © 1988 by John E. Farley. Reprinted by permission of Prentice Hall, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

action, government spending to assist minorities, school busing to desegregated schools, and minority scholarships. Surveys show that the majority of white people do oppose most such policies (Kluegel and Smith, 1986; National Opinion Research Center, 1991; Schuman and Bobo, 1988). There has been only a slight change in these attitudes over nearly four decades (Kluegel, 1990; Valentino and Sears, 2005). Why do so many people oppose such policies?

A possible answer is that people believe that white people as well as minorities experience discrimination. For example, 42 percent of white people, according to a recent Gallup poll, believe discrimination against white people is widespread (Jones, 2008). This could mean that white people see discrimination as something not unique to racial minorities; by comparison, 51 percent of white people in the same poll said discrimination against black people was widespread. Thirty-six percent of black people and Hispanics (almost the same percentage as white people) also believe discrimination against white people is widespread. Because of the similarities in attitudes between white people and minorities on this issue, it seems unlikely that this accounts for the much greater opposition among white people to affirmative action and other policies designed to reduce racial inequality. This leaves us with only one plausible answer: White people believe that the system is fair, that there is equal opportunity, and that accordingly, minorities are mainly at fault for whatever disproportionate disadvantages they suffer (Kluegel, 1990; Hoschschild, 1995). Again, these beliefs have been persistent among white people since the late 1960s or early 1970s (Schuman and Krysan, 1999). And indeed, if, as white people widely believe, minorities enjoy the same opportunities as white people, then affirmative action *would* amount to reverse discrimination.

This belief, however, is not supported by the facts. With 35 percent of black children and 29 percent of Hispanic children living below the poverty level, compared to fewer than 9 percent of non-Hispanic white children (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009), it is evident that large racial differences in poverty rates exist from birth. Clearly, these differences indicate that people

born into different racial groups do not experience equal opportunity: Both poverty and institutional discrimination keep many of these children from enjoying the opportunities that the average non-Hispanic white child enjoys. (The effects of poverty on life opportunity are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.)

Social-Structural Theories of Race Relations

Social-structural theories see racial and ethnic inequality as arising from characteristics of societies, not individual attitudes and beliefs. Conflict theorists emphasize competition, economic motives, and unequal power, while functionalists emphasize cultural differences and ethnocentrism.

Conflict Theories

It is probably fair to say that the conflict perspective is the predominant approach today among sociologists specializing in race and ethnic relations. In fact, there are at least three important contemporary conflict theories about intergroup relations, which we explore shortly. These theories share certain elements. Unlike the functionalist approach, they do not see racial or ethnic inequality as resulting simply from cultural differences and ethnocentrism. Rather, they believe the critical factor is that *one group gains advantages by holding another group down*. When groups are in competition for scarce resources, or when one group has something (land, labor, wealth) that another wants, an essential condition for inequality exists. However, this by itself does not produce intergroup inequality. A second condition must also be present: unequal power, which means one group can take what it wants from another (Noel, 1968). Without this condition, inequality does not occur, and conflict may even be less likely, because groups often calculate their chances of winning before initiating a fight. However, when both competition or opportunity for gain *and* unequal power between groups exist, racial or ethnic inequality is likely to occur (Semyonov, 1988; see also Bélanger and Pinard, 1991). This is especially likely

when the conditions noted by functionalists—ethnocentrism and cultural differences—are also present.

Although conflict theorists share the belief that competition and unequal power play key roles in racial and ethnic inequality, they disagree about the nature of that competition. Most societies experience competition along both racial/ethnic and economic lines, and different conflict theories offer different ideas about the precise roles of race and economics.

Internal Colonialism Theory and Critical Race Theory. One conflict theory of race and ethnic relations is *internal colonialism*. Most of us are familiar with the concept of colonialism in its traditional meaning—a powerful country establishes control of a foreign area and its people. Typically, the native people of the colony are assigned a status lower than that of the colonizers. The natural resources of the colony are taken and used, often along with its people's labor, to enrich the colonizing country. In the case of internal colonialism, much the same thing happens but within the borders of the colonizing country. In both cases, the colonized groups are placed under the colonizing country's control *involuntarily* (Blauner, 1972).

Once the colonized group takes on the status of a conquered people, certain things occur. Colonized minorities are subjected to intense attacks on their culture. Because they are defined as inferior, they are subjected either to isolation or to forced assimilation. They are also kept outside the mainstream of economic activity to ensure that they will not compete with members of the colonizing groups. Blauner (1972) points out that these experiences of colonized minorities make them different from immigrant minorities. The latter enter a society voluntarily and are not subjected to the same levels of attack on their culture or economic isolation as are colonized minorities.

The four major groups who became "American" involuntarily are African Americans, Chicanos (Mexican Americans), Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans. The experiences of these groups generally fit those of colonized minorities, which helps to explain why even today they occupy the most disadvantaged positions of all American racial and ethnic groups, including

immigrant groups whose arrival is much more recent (Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, 1991, chap. 7).

An approach closely related to internal colonialism is *critical race theory*. This theory holds that assumptions of white superiority and social mechanisms that maintain white advantage and minority disadvantage are so deeply ingrained in society that they can be hard to see, particularly if you are not in one of the groups that is disadvantaged by these assumptions and mechanisms. For this reason, critical race theorists emphasize the importance of understanding how society is experienced by African Americans, Latinos/Latinas, and other oppressed groups—a point on which researchers who are members of these groups may be particularly well positioned to shed light (Taylor, 2000; Bell, 1992; Delgado and Stefaniec, 2000; Valdes, Culp, and Harris, 2002).

Internal colonialism theory and critical race theory are different from other conflict theories of race and ethnic relations in one important regard—they focus almost exclusively on inequalities and conflicts that occur *between* (rather than *within*) racial groups. Consequently, they see race as having a greater impact on society than class: All people in colonized groups share a common experience of being discriminated against that makes their life experiences unlike those of anyone in the majority group. Two other important conflict theories of intergroup relations focus in part on economic inequalities and conflicts *within the majority group*, pointing out that such tensions may have an important effect on majority-minority relations.

Split-Labor-Market Theory. The first such theory is *split-labor-market theory*, which lists three economic interest groups: employers (owners of capital), higher-paid labor, and lower-paid labor (Bonacich, 1972). In multiethnic or multiracial societies, higher-paid labor is often made up of majority-group members, while minority-group members are concentrated in the lower-paid labor category (Bonacich, 1975, 1976; W. J. Wilson, 1978). According to this theory, the majority-group members who hold the higher-paying jobs attempt to protect their position by demanding hiring discrimination against minorities. In the United States,

for example, white workers have demanded discrimination against African Americans, Chicanos, and Asian Americans. Certain jobs were defined as “white men’s work,” and any minority person who aspired to them encountered blatant hostility from white workers. (For a personal account of such discrimination, see Wright, 1937, pp. 5–15.)

According to split-labor-market theory, majority-group workers demand and benefit from discrimination because it protects their favored position in the labor force. Employers, on the other hand, are often hurt by discrimination, both because it drives up wages by reducing the labor pool and because it deprives them of the opportunity to hire the best worker (on this point, see Becker, 1971).

How accurate is this view? Many white workers undoubtedly *believe* that discrimination works to their advantage. However, majority-group workers can only benefit from discrimination if they (rather than their employers) control the hiring process. To a certain extent, white workers did this in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by threatening to “cause trouble” if minorities were hired. However, when the costs of discrimination became high enough, employers resorted to hiring tactics that used racism to the disadvantage of both majority- and minority-group members. The reality is that, except in occupations with union hiring halls, workers do not control the hiring process. Hence, most sectors of the economy operate more in accordance with a third theoretical model, to which we now turn.

Marxist Theory. The *Marxist theory of racism* holds that racism exists mainly because it benefits the ruling economic class (Cox, 1948). Today’s Marxist theorists see two key economic interest groups, not three, as envisioned in split-labor-market theory. Marxist theory denies that there is any real conflict of interest between higher-paid and lower-paid labor. Rather, as wage laborers, both groups share a common interest that is in conflict with that of the owners of capital. Marxists believe that racial antagonisms are primarily a mechanism that is used by the owners of capital to

divide the working class. Thus, they argue that employers encourage white workers to think that they are threatened by black people and other minorities, because they then come to see the minority workers rather than the employer as their enemy. This divides the working class along the lines of race and ensures that employers will not have to confront a unified workforce.

The labor history of the early twentieth century in the United States offers considerable support for this viewpoint. Between 1910 and 1920, all-white labor unions conducted strikes in the railroad, meatpacking, aluminum, and steel industries. The employers played on racial antagonisms to break these strikes. Through a combination of deception (southern black people were offered “good jobs up North” without being told they would be strikebreakers) and skillful exploitation of black antagonism toward all-white unions, thousands of black people were recruited to break these strikes (Bonacich, 1976; Foster, 1920; Kloss, Roberts, and Dorn, 1976; Rudwick, 1964). These tactics, of course, hurt both black people and white people over the long run: White strikers were defeated, and black workers were restricted to low-paying nonunion jobs. These incidents of strikebreaking, along with a general fear of black economic competition, led to perhaps the worst wave of race riots in American history. Between 1906 and 1921, mobs of white people in a number of cities attacked and murdered at least 125 African Americans (Farley, 2000, p. 160). In many cities and towns, all African American residents were violently forced out of their homes and made to permanently leave town (Loewen, 2005). A study by Susan Olzak (1989) has confirmed that much of this antiblack violence was linked to labor conflict.

By the 1930s, white workers increasingly realized that their approach of demanding discrimination was hurting them more than it was helping them. Industrial workers formed the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which, especially in the North, frequently supported policies, laws, and labor contracts forbidding racial discrimination. Even today the evidence suggests that racial inequality hurts white workers more than it helps them.



UNDERSTANDING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

Popular Music as a Threat: The Role of Race

You've probably seen it on CD cases, maybe even your own: PARENTAL ADVISORY—EXPLICIT LYRICS. For years, rock music and its various derivatives have been seen by some people as a threat to youth or to society. Even Elvis Presley (once known by his critics as "Elvis the pelvis") was seen by some as a corrupter of youth. So it's no surprise that when rap music and heavy metal music hit the scene in the 1980s, there would be some who would see them as a threat and would try to censor them. But when sociologist (Binder, 1993, p. 53) studied attacks on rap and heavy metal music, she came up with some findings that might surprise you. Although many people saw both musical styles as dangerous and sought to censor them, the nature of the threat that they saw in rap and heavy metal music was very different. Moreover, much of that difference can be tied to race.

Binder's analyses of speeches and writings about the two styles show that most of the concern about heavy metal music was either that it was a "corrupter of youth" or that it was something dangerous from which children needed to be protected. She points to an example of the corruption theme in testimony to Congress by heavy metal music critic Joe Steussy, who warned that "Its principal themes are, as you have already heard, extreme violence, extreme rebellion, substance abuse, sexual promiscuity and perversion, and Satanism." The need for protection theme can be seen in a column by William Safire arguing that "Kids get special protection in law . . . and deserve protection from porn-rock profiteers" (Binder, 1993, p. 758). The message: If we don't protect our children, they will surely be corrupted by this terrible, Satanic music. In fact, many writers, like *Newsweek's* Kathy Stroud, wrote about their own children.

The attacks on rap were different. Rather than "corruption" or "need for protection," they focused on the music as a "danger to society." But here, the danger that was emphasized was not to the people listening to the music. Rather, the concern was about what people who listened to rap music would do to others. Consider this editorial attack by columnist George Will on the rap music of 2 Live Crew, a group that was arrested over its music in Florida in 1990: "Fact: Some members of a particular age and social cohort—the one making 2 Live Crew rich—stomped and raped [a] jogger to the razor edge of death, for the fun of it" (Will, 1990). And Tipper Gore, who had testified before Congress urging restrictions on popular music, informed the public that after the attack one of the attackers had, in jail, whistled the tune of a popular rap song.

Why would people worry about what *heavy metal* music does to harm its *listeners*, but worry about what *rap* music listeners would do to *someone else*? Binder suggests it is directly tied to race and to white America's fears and racial stereotypes. Most heavy metal performers and audiences were white. And in 1990, most rap performers and listeners were African American, though the white audience for rap became much larger in subsequent years. If it was white kids who were listening, the concern of those who wrote and testified was that the kids themselves might be harmed. But with black kids, the main fear of those who wrote and testified was that those kids might hurt someone else. This reflects white society's fears about black crime and the racial stereotypes that white people have about African Americans. And this says a lot about the state of race relations in the United States.

Comparisons of states and metropolitan areas by Reich (1981, 1986b) and Szymanski (1976) in 1970 and 1980 showed that those with greater racial inequality were also characterized by lower wages for white workers, higher corporate profits, and weaker unions. From the mid-1970s through the mid-1990s, as the minority poor and working class lost ground, inequality also grew within the white population. Both the

white working class and much of the middle class lost income even as the wealthiest white people gained. Although the boom economy of the late 1990s slowed these trends somewhat, the gap between rich and poor today is much greater both in the overall society and within each racial group than was the case 25 years ago. While white workers worried about the perceived threat of affirmative action, their real

incomes shrank—but it wasn't minorities who gained. Rather, there was a considerable shift of wealth and income to the wealthiest segment of the white population (Kennickell, 2000). This trend has continued since 2000, likely exacerbated by the economic crash of 2008. But to a large extent, white workers have continued to blame affirmative action and, more recently, immigration for their woes, rather than their wealthy employers. Hence, anti-immigrant politicians such as Donald Trump have drawn much of their support from white working-class voters. Indeed, it was working-class white people in rust-belt states such as Wisconsin, Iowa, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania that allowed him to amass a majority of the electoral vote and be elected president in 2016, despite losing the popular vote by about three million votes. Fear of competition from minorities and immigrants certainly is not the only reason that many working-class white people supported Trump, but it is almost certainly part of the reason (Flitter and Kahn, 2016; Klinkner, 2016). Research by sociologist Arlie Hochschild (2016) on working-class and rural white people found that many of them perceive that while they “played by the rules,” minorities and immigrants “cut in line,” and many who felt this way supported Trump. As is addressed in the section on affirmative action later in this chapter, the reality is that, even at comparable levels of education, African Americans and Hispanics remain economically disadvantaged relative to white people. But as some minorities have made gains while deindustrialization has hurt the white (as well as minority) working class, it has been easy for working-class white people to see minority gains as coming at their expense. Today, a much larger percentage of African Americans are members of private-sector unions than are white people, and this has been true for several decades. Evidence suggests that African Americans join unions as a form of protection against discrimination in the labor market (Rosenfeld and Kleykamp, 2012). On the other hand, white workers, as noted, often see the source of their problems in competition from minority workers and immigrants rather than in employers who pay them the lowest wage possible; hence, white worker support for unions has declined.

Functionalist/Assimilationist Theories About Race and Ethnic Relations

Although conflict theories predominate in the sociology of racial and ethnic relations today, the functionalist viewpoint also has some influence on thinking about racial and ethnic relations in sociology, and considerable influence in popular opinion. Generally, this viewpoint attributes racial and ethnic conflict and inequality largely to *cultural differences* among groups. These differences are usually accompanied by **ethnocentrism**, an attitude in which each group considers its own values and ways of doing things to be the natural, right, and superior way. According to functionalists, ethnocentrism contributes to racial and ethnic inequalities, because each group thinks it is better than the others. Hence, many functionalists favor **assimilation**—a process whereby differences between groups are reduced so that the different groups share a common set of values and a common social structure (Gordon, 1964).

Assimilationists believe that as societies modernize, assimilation occurs, and racial inequality tends to decrease because interdependency in society increases as society becomes more complex. There is evidence from a variety of countries, including the United States, Brazil (Telles, 1994), and South Africa, that prejudice and discrimination do, sooner or later, decline (but not disappear) when modernization occurs. However, several cautionary notes are in order.

First, it can take a very long time for this to happen, and it may happen only after a period of escalating conflict and, sometimes, violence (Blumer, 1965). The United States and South Africa clearly illustrate this; both had formal systems of segregation that only broke down after long and sometimes violent struggles. In addition, discrimination sometimes becomes subtler and less open but continues to occur (Feagin and Sikes, 1994). Second, many conflict theorists have criticized assimilation on the grounds that, as a practical matter, it is the minority groups that are expected to do most of the changing to fit into the majority group's way of doing things (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967; Ryan, 1971). In the United States, this tendency has been referred to as *Anglo-conformity*. The idea of

assimilation has been popular with white Americans, and they have exerted strong pressures on minorities and immigrants to “fit in.”

Third, sociohistorical studies show that cultural differences alone do not cause great racial inequality; economic motivations also play an important role in the creation of systems of racial inequality such as slavery in the United States (Noel, 1968, 1972). Finally, a variety of studies have shown that assimilation occurs more readily among immigrant minorities, who have chosen to enter a society, than it does among colonized minorities, who have no choice in the matter (Lieberson, 1980; Zweigenhaft and Domhoff, 1991).

For all these reasons, increasing numbers of sociologists have seen **pluralism** or **multiculturalism** as a better societal model than assimilation. Under this model, some social and cultural characteristics are shared in common throughout a society, but differences among groups also exist and are accepted. Such differences are seen as a basis of unity and pride for groups that have experienced discrimination and as a source of adaptability in society (Watson, Kumar, and Michaelsen, 1993). In fact, many racial and ethnic minority groups over the past several decades have moved in the direction of pluralism or multiculturalism, emphasizing the unique histories, cultures, and accomplishments of their groups over integration or assimilation with the majority group. Concepts such as Black Power and Afrocentrism among African Americans, Chicanismo and Brown Power among Latinos/Latinas, and the rediscovery of tribal traditions and the preservation of native languages and religion among Native Americans have all been a part of this trend, as has increased ethnic consciousness among white ethnic groups such as Irish, Italian, and Polish Americans, among many others. In general, the idea of a cultural *mosaic*, in which society is composed of many different groups with different culture and traditions, has gained favor over the idea of mass assimilation, in which all groups become culturally similar.

Historical Explanations

Although tales of contact between alien peoples have long been filled with ethnocentric qualities

and things we would today label as racist, some argue that the nature of the language in journals and public records dating back thousands of years made an important qualitative change around the time that more powerful countries began to colonize the peoples of Africa and South America. This point is disputed to be sure, but there does appear to at least be an uptick in the “we are superior; they are inferior” quality of discussion after this period (Loewen, 2005). Before that, the description of encounters between peoples seems to have been characterized more by an “exotic” quality. That is, “those other people are very exotic!” A Marxist would argue that the draw of material resources located in these nations led to the idea that these “exotic people” needed to be subjugated and exploited. Therefore, an ideology of their being inferior was created to justify stealing their resources.

Loewen (2004) further explains that the concepts of good and evil had already been associated with white and black or light and dark long before more fair-skinned peoples encountered darker-skinned people and began to desire their resources. In this interpretation, the preexisting symbols of good and evil helped shape and justify the imperialist designs of the lighter-skinned invaders. How might a symbolic-interactionist approach this issue? Could we hypothesize that the concept of good being associated with light and evil associated with dark may be an ancient idea, stemming possibly from early humans’ vulnerability at night?

Racial and Ethnic Relations: An International Perspective

Most societies with racial and ethnic diversity experience some degree of racial conflict and inequality. Discrimination and social inequality are encountered by Chinese in Vietnam; Aborigines in Australia; Catholics in Northern Ireland; Arabs in Israel; Jews in much of Eastern Europe; black people, Pakistanis, and East Indians in Great Britain; Asians in several African countries; French-speaking people in Canada; native Indians in several Latin American

countries; and a variety of immigrant groups in Germany. In many places, violence has erupted between racial or ethnic groups.

Ethnic Inequality and Conflict: How Universal?

Does this mean that ethnic inequality and conflict are inevitable whenever different groups come into contact? It does not. In Switzerland, a variety of ethnic and language groups have gotten along in relative harmony for years. In Hawaii, racial diversity is greater than anywhere else in the United States—no race is a majority there—and interracial relations, though far from perfect, are in general more harmonious than elsewhere in the United States. British Protestants and Irish Catholics, who hate one another in Northern Ireland, get along in the United States. Ethnic and racial conflict, then, are not inevitable; rather, they are the product of certain social conditions. We already identified some of them. One is colonization, which is as evident in other societies as it is in the United States. Other examples of societies that must cope with racial and ethnic diversity arising from a history of colonization are South Africa and Latin America.

Racial Caste in South Africa and the United States

Until recently, South African law spelled out where people could live, whom they could marry, what jobs they could have, and even where they could travel, all on the basis of legally codified racial categories. In many regards, this system—called apartheid—resembled the U.S. South prior to the civil rights movement. There, too, elaborate rules of segregation and denial of the vote were used to keep black people in a separate and subordinate position.

In both the U.S. South prior to the 1950s and South Africa prior to the 1990s, long periods of social upheaval were the result of legally mandated segregation and inequality. Such upheavals demonstrate that caste systems are very difficult to maintain without great conflict

in modern urban societies. The greater diversity and weaker social control of the city, along with mass communications, make it more likely that people will rise up in protest against oppression (Blumer, 1965; Morris, 1984; Tilly, 1974; Williams, 1977). If the system continues to resist change, the conflict can become quite violent, as illustrated by the 2,100 deaths that resulted in South Africa between the summers of 1984 and 1986 (Cowell, 1986). Similarly, many African Americans were murdered by white people in the U.S. South from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. In the last 16 years of the nineteenth century, there were more than 2,500 lynchings in the United States—mostly in the South and mostly with black victims (Franklin, 1969, p. 439). Lynchings were seen by white people as a way to keep African Americans who challenged the system of racial inequality “in their place.” As Blumer (1965) pointed out, in such periods upheaval does not always lead to the same outcome. Sometimes, stiffening resistance by the majority group leads to great violence but keeps the caste system in place. This occurred in the U.S. South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and in South Africa in the mid-twentieth century. In other cases, change comes, and the caste system is altered, as later happened in the U.S. South in the 1950s and 1960s and in South Africa in the 1990s. Sociologists have sought to explain both why formal systems of segregation persisted so long in South Africa and the U.S. South and why they finally collapsed.

A major reason the caste systems persisted so long is because the black population is a large majority in South Africa, and also a much larger proportion of the population in the U.S. South than elsewhere. In general, the larger the minority population is, the more threatening it seems, and the more the dominant group will perceive it has to gain through discrimination (Glenn, 1966; Dowdall, 1974). South African white people, who controlled the country for many decades, knew that majority rule meant black rule and a loss of power for white people. This made the one-person, one-vote principle highly threatening to the white minority that controlled South Africa for so long (Sparks,

1995). Similarly, keeping black people from voting through a variety of illegal means was a cornerstone of Jim Crow segregation in the U.S. South, and efforts to keep black people from voting persisted even after legal segregation ended, as illustrated by discrimination against African Americans seeking to vote in the 2000 presidential election (NAACP, 2000). And it is clearly established from a variety of sociological studies that fear and perceived threat are major causes of prejudice and discrimination: When people perceive a group as threatening, they tend to discriminate against it (Blalock, 1967; Quillian, 1995), and they are even more likely to engage in violence against its members (Jacobs and Wood, 1999). Some observers see this as part of what has animated moves by supporters of former President Donald Trump to restrict voting and even institute levers of a new “minority rule” for white people who feel they are being replaced by racial and ethnic minorities (Rubin, 2020).

Thus, while legal segregation was abolished and cooperation increased, informal segregation and considerable racial inequality persist today in both the United States and South Africa.

Racial Assimilation in Latin America

A number of Latin American countries present a striking contrast to race relations in the United States. Like the United States, they were colonized by Europeans (who imported black people from Africa to serve as slave labor and who took land from the Native Americans) (Van den Berghe, 1978, pp. 63–5). Yet, the outcome has been ultimately very different. Both culturally and racially, such countries as Mexico and Brazil experienced a two-way assimilation that produced new cultures and ethnic groups that are not European, African, or Native American. A key element of this process was **amalgamation**—repeated intermarriage and interbreeding between racial groups to the point that the various groups became largely indistinguishable. In both Mexico and Brazil, a large portion of the population is of mixed European, Native American, or African ancestry. As a result, relatively few people can be

identified as strictly European, black, or Native American. The great majority belong to a mixed group that is often thought of as simply “Brazilian” or “Mexican.”

Why did this happen in Mexico and Brazil and not in the United States? One factor is population composition. The overwhelming majority of the Portuguese who came to the colony of Brazil were male. This led to widespread intermarriage early on, which became sufficiently accepted to continue when more European women did arrive. In the United States, by contrast, more English colonists came as families, which discouraged intermarriage. White people in North America did, of course, have sexual contacts with Indians and black slaves—often highly sexist and exploitative ones. However, the children that resulted from these contacts were designated as part of the minority group, whereas in Brazil, they became part of the majority group.

The differences among the United States, South Africa, and Latin America show the myriad ways in which cultural, demographic, and historical factors interact to bring about very different patterns of race and ethnic relations in different times and places.

Racial and Ethnic Groups in the United States

Because the United States is a nation of immigrants, it is one of the most diverse nations of the world in terms of race and ethnicity. Although many of these groups entered American society voluntarily through immigration, some did not (Blauner, 1972). Africans were brought here as slaves, and the Mexican American group was created by the conquest of a large area of northern Mexico (now California, Texas, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona). Puerto Rico became a U.S. colony after the Spanish-American War of 1898, and the entire United States was Native American territory before the arrival of the Europeans. Because we have such great racial and ethnic diversity, and because a number of groups became “American” involuntarily, the United States has experienced greater racial and ethnic inequality and conflict than many other countries.

Minority Groups: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans

The groups that have experienced and continue to experience the greatest systematic disadvantage in the United States are the ones we would consider *colonized minorities* according to Robert Blauner's (1972) theory, discussed earlier in this chapter. These groups include African Americans, most Hispanic or Latino Americans, and Native Americans. As can be seen in Table 7.2, these three groups account for over one-third of the U.S. population, a proportion that has been increasing in recent years and will continue to do so.

Historically, the largest of these groups has been African Americans, but today there are more Latino Americans than African Americans, and the former group is growing more rapidly. The great majority of African Americans live in urban areas, and over half of all African Americans still live in the South. Within the urban areas, African Americans are more likely than any other group to live in the central cities rather than in the suburbs; a major reason for this is a longtime pattern of discrimination in the sale and rental of housing that has limited access to many suburban areas. The African American population continues to grow more rapidly than the white population but not as rapidly as that of other minority groups.

The most rapidly growing of these minority groups is Hispanic, or Latino, Americans, whose population increased by about 58 percent (an increase of almost 13 million people) between 1990 and 2000, and by another 15 million people (a 43 percent increase) between 2000 and 2010. The Latino population is now larger than the African American population, and it is growing faster. However, Hispanic Americans are not really one group, but many. They include Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, and others. As shown in Figure 7.1, however, the majority are Mexican American, and nearly three-fourths of Hispanics are either Mexican American or Puerto Rican American.

These groups are distributed differently, with most Mexican Americans living in the Southwest, Puerto Ricans in the Northeast, and Cuban Americans in Florida. Like African Americans, most Hispanic Americans live in large metropolitan areas, particularly in central cities.

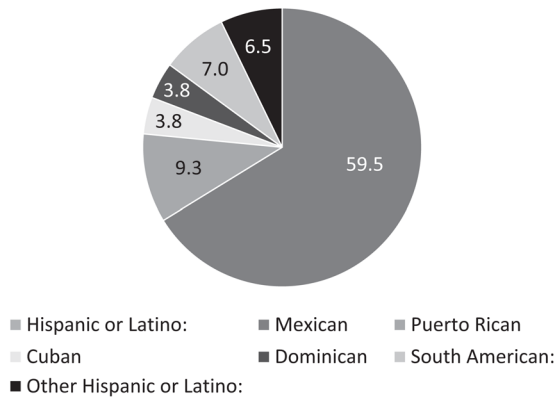
It is also true that Native Americans are made up of a number of distinct groups—hundreds, in fact. The total shown in Table 7.2 includes Alaskan Natives (Inuits and Aleuts) as well as American Indians, but American Indians in fact comprise hundreds of different nationalities (commonly referred to as tribes). The largest of these, the Cherokee tribe, makes up less than 20 percent of the total. Only five tribes, the Cherokee, Navajo (Diné), Choctaw,

Table 7.2 U.S. Racial and Ethnic Group Populations: 2020

<i>Racial/Ethnic Group</i>	<i>Population (in millions)</i>	<i>Percentage of Total</i>
White, not Hispanic*	204.3	61.6
African American	41.1	12.4
Hispanic/Latino*	62.1	18.7
Asian	19.9	6.0
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.689	0.2
American Indian and Alaska Native Population	3.7	1.1
Two or more races	33.8	10.25
Total U.S. population	335.4	

*Hispanic persons may be of any race (e.g., white or African American). Accordingly, the group percentages sum to more than 100 percent because Hispanic persons are included in the totals for African Americans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans as well as the Hispanic total.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020), DEC Demographic and Housing Characteristics <https://data.census.gov/table?q=P3&g=010XX00US&d=DEC+Demographic+and+Housing+Characteristics&tid=DECENNIALDHC2020.P3> (downloaded September 11, 2023).

Figure 7.1 US Hispanic Population, 2021 (in millions).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimate. ACS 1-Year Estimates Detailed Tables data.census.gov/tables?q=ACSDT1Y2018.B03001&tid=ACSDT1Y2021.B03001.

Sioux (Lakota), and Chippewa (Ojibwa), had populations over 100,000 in 2010 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012, Table 7). Almost half of all Native Americans live in rural areas, more than almost any other racial or ethnic group. Many of these live on reservations. Even so, the number of American Indians living in urban areas is at an all-time high, and is continuing to increase.

As Blauner points out in his definition of a colonized minority, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans all became part of American society involuntarily through conquest or forced immigration. All of them were systematically exploited for their labor, their land, or both. As a result of that history and of continuing institutionalized discrimination, these groups today remain at a collective disadvantage compared with all others. These facts distinguish them from other groups in American society that have experienced discrimination but not the same conquest, systematic economic exploitation, and continuing experience of disadvantage to the present day.

Economic Exploitation and the Origins of Intergroup Inequality

Economic motivations played a key role in the creation of the systems of racial and ethnic inequality that placed all three of these groups

in disadvantaged positions in American society. In the case of African Americans, it is important to understand that the slavery that was imposed on them was a creation of the wealthy, landowning elite of the South, which sought a cheap and reliable source of labor to maximize profits in a highly labor-intensive plantation system. As Noel (1968), Boskin (1965), and Jordan (1968) have pointed out, black people did not become slaves simply because the British colonists in America were prejudiced against them. Rather, Africans were one of many groups against whom the colonists were prejudiced, and antiblack prejudices became much stronger after slavery became institutionalized (Cox, 1948; Noel, 1972). Black slavery was a product of economic motivations and of the fact that black people were in a weaker position to resist it than were other groups (Noel, 1968; see also Stinchcomb, 1994). The role of the economic interests and the power advantage of the southern “planter class” can be clearly seen by looking at what happened in the North. Slavery was, for a time, legal there too—but it never became widespread because no economic elite depended on it for their wealth. Between 1780 and 1804, the northern states that had once allowed slavery outlawed it, but it took the Civil War to get rid of slavery in the South. This is a rather clear example of the conflict theorists’ argument that social inequality occurs because it benefits the wealthy and powerful.

Both Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans also came under U.S. rule involuntarily, through military conquest. Approximately the northern third of what was once Mexico became part of the United States as a result of the Mexican-American War in the 1840s. At that time, many Mexicans in what became the Southwestern United States were ranchers who owned large tracts of land, and most of them eventually lost their land after the war. This occurred despite a protocol accompanying the treaty that ended the war which said that Mexican landowners would keep their land. The economic motivation behind this displacement can be seen in the close correspondence between the influxes of white people into an area and the loss of land by the Mexican Americans (Farley, 2010). After they lost their land, Mexican Americans came to be treated as a cheap source of labor in western agriculture and other enterprises, and they have been among the lowest-paid American workers.

Like the Southwestern United States, Puerto Rico became part of the United States as a result of war. The Spanish-American War began when Cuba and Puerto Rico rebelled against their Spanish rulers in the 1890s. The United States joined the war against Spain in 1898. The end result was that Cuba became independent, but Puerto Rico became a U.S. territory. Thus, military outcomes, not voluntary immigration, account for both Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans coming under U.S. rule. Many Mexicans have since emigrated to the United States, and many Puerto Ricans have migrated to the mainland, but the history of both groups has been strongly shaped by their colonial history.

American Indians were not only attacked and displaced from their land; they were also subjected to genocidal attacks that wiped out at least three-quarters of their population. There is a lot of debate about how many native people were present in North America when the Europeans arrived; most estimates indicate at least a million, with two or three million a common figure (Collier, 1947; Garbarino, 1976; Josephy, 1968; Spicer, 1980a). By 1900, that number had been reduced to about 240,000 (Spicer, 1980a,

p. 59). This occurred due to wars with white people, massacres of Native Americans by white people, and the exposure of Native Americans (often accidental but sometimes deliberate) to European diseases against which Native Americans had no immunity. Some Native American tribes were completely wiped out, and others lost up to 90 percent of their population. In the early to mid-1700s, colonial governments sometimes offered bounties for Native American scalps, including those of women and children. In a number of instances, white people who were victorious in battles with Native Americans killed them rather than taking them prisoner. Thousands of other Native American people died as a result of forced moves, such as the Trail of Tears forced march of the Cherokees from Georgia to Oklahoma in 1838.

The major reason for these attacks against Native American people was white people desire for their land. As long as only limited numbers of white people were present in any given area, they usually coexisted peacefully with the Native Americans. However, when larger influxes of white people increased the demand for land, Native Americans were repeatedly attacked and pushed aside. Treaties were made specifying certain areas as "Indian territory," but whenever farmland was in short supply or precious metals were discovered on those lands, the white people violated the treaties (Lurie, 1985; Spicer, 1980b). In 1871, Congress abolished the concept of treaties altogether. Official U.S. practice became one of placing Native American reservations on remote tracts of undesirable land that bore little ecological resemblance to the Native Americans original homeland. As a result, farming, fishing, hunting, or gathering methods that worked in the original homeland often became useless.

Segregation and Attacks on Culture

Because the dominant group viewed any expression of independent thought by colonized minorities as a threat, the minority cultures came under systematic attack (Blauner, 1972). African American families were deliberately

broken up in the slavery era, and groups that spoke different languages were mixed to prevent communication. Native American children on reservations around the turn of the century were forcibly taken from their homes and families and placed in boarding schools where they were forbidden to speak their language or practice their religion. Both African American slaves and Native Americans on the reservations were forbidden to leave or travel by themselves. Mexican American schoolchildren in Texas and California were, for a time, punished if they spoke Spanish, even on the playground. Even well-intended policies, such as allotment, a program begun in 1887 to provide land to Native Americans, failed because of assumptions about the inferiority of non-European cultures. The idea of allotment was to make Native Americans into farmers, “just like the American family farmer.” This policy was a miserable failure, because it attempted to impose white concepts of landownership and gender roles, and because it was applied even to tribes with little history or knowledge of agricultural practices. Its main effect was that Native Americans lost about two-thirds of their land due to indebtedness (Guillemin, 1978; Lurie, 1985; Spicer, 1980b, p. 117).

At one time or another, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans all encountered systems of segregation that kept them separated from the white, Anglo majority group. The Jim Crow system, which segregated black people and white people, lasted from shortly after the Civil War until the period following World War II. Although it was the dominant social, and in some cases legislated, pattern in the North even before the Civil War, it became a legalized system throughout the South after the Civil War. Under segregation, forced separation of the races and social isolation of African Americans was the rule. Segregation existed in both the North and the South, although it broke down somewhat sooner in the North and was stricter and more formal in the South. Segregation meant separation of the races in everything from bathrooms, bus and theater seats, lunch counters, and waiting rooms to—in some places—fishing lakes and public

baseball diamonds. By law, black and white children attended separate schools in many states, and housing segregation was enforced by federal policy and by deed covenants forbidding the sale of property to black people (and in many cases, Jews, Asians, Hispanics, and other “unwanted” groups). The races actually became more separated from one another in the South after the end of slavery. Though the master-slave relationship disappeared with the Thirteenth Amendment, white people sought to preserve the role of a master race by excluding black people entirely from their social and economic world.

In fact, segregation most typically occurs in periods of early urbanization, such as in the U.S. South in the decades after the Civil War. In these situations, majority groups have used segregation as a new way to keep their advantages as the old systems of inequality, such as slavery, break down, and as the majority and minority groups compete in new settings. Thus, formal, legally mandated segregation emerged in the United States about 20 years after the end of the Civil War, and in South Africa around 1910, as that society also began to urbanize and industrialize (Cell, 1982).

Of course, the Native American reservation was by its very nature an attempt to separate Native Americans from white people, to get them “out of the way” so that white agricultural, mining, and railroad interests could grow and profit unimpeded. Latino Americans, too, encountered formal systems of segregation. Even in “liberal” San Francisco, it was at one time illegal for Mexican American, Asian American, or African American children to attend school with white children. When the rules of segregation were violated, white people retaliated violently. Thousands of black people were lynched in the South, as were many Mexican Americans in the West. And from the Civil War through the World War II era, black people, Mexican Americans, and Asian Americans were all the targets of mob attacks by white people in “race riots” in cities large and small. In the East St. Louis riot of 1917, 48 people were killed; all but a few of them were African Americans killed by white mobs (Rudwick, 1964).

The Status of Minority Groups Today

Although deliberate racial discrimination is no longer legal, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans remain in a disadvantaged position in American society today. All three groups, for example, receive lower wages and are more likely to be unemployed than white people. In 2014, the median household income of Hispanics was about 71 percent of the income of non-Hispanic white people; for black people it was 59 percent of the income of non-Hispanic white people (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2015a). The median household income of American Indians in 2010 was around 70 percent of that of the nation as a whole (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b). The poverty rate of all three groups—African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans—is around 2.5 times that of non-Hispanic white people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a, 2011b). In the first half of 2016, the unemployment of African Americans was about twice that of white people, while the Latino unemployment rate was about 1.3 to 1.4 times the white rate (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). The differences in wealth—the total value of all that people own—between these racial groups and non-Hispanic white people are even larger than differences in income—much larger (Oliver and Shapiro, 1995). In 2011, the median white household had nearly 16 times as much wealth as the median black household, and more than 13 times as much wealth as the median Hispanic household (Sullivan et al., 2015). Members of all three minority groups remain less likely to enter and graduate from college than people in the non-Hispanic white group. In 2015, about 37 percent of white people between 25 and 29 years of age were college graduates, compared to about 21 percent among black people and 16 percent among Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016e). Recent statistics on Native American college graduates are limited, but in 1990 Native Americans were only half as likely to be college graduates as were non-Hispanic white people. More recently, in 2006, 26 percent of Native people between the ages of 18 and 24 years were enrolled in college, compared

to 41 percent of white people (National Center for Education Statistics, 2008b).

For many people in these groups, conditions have gotten worse, not better, in recent years. During the 1980s, poor black people became poorer relative to the rest of the population, and they have become increasingly isolated in inner cities, where jobs have become virtually nonexistent (Waquant and Wilson, 1989; Massey and Eggers, 1990; Massey and Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1987, 1996). African Americans, as a result, have been shown to have lower upward mobility and higher downward mobility than white people, and this is a vicious cycle as economic stress contributes to broken families, and one-parent families struggle to stay afloat economically (Bloome, 2014). Automation, globalization, and movement of jobs to suburban and rural areas have combined to eliminate thousands of industrial jobs from the inner cities, where most African Americans and many Hispanic Americans live. Among Hispanics, median income fell and poverty rose relative to non-Hispanic white people in the early 1990s, though the gap narrowed again later in that decade. For African Americans, one factor that perpetuates their economic disadvantages is a wall of housing segregation that goes beyond anything encountered by any other minority group (Massey and Denton, 1993; Yinger, 1995). This restricts black access to good jobs and good schools, which are increasingly to be found in suburban locations (Mouw, 2000; Yinger, 1995; Kasarda, 1989; Farley, 1987b). Black-white housing segregation has declined only modestly in recent decades; most black people and most white people continue to live in separate neighborhoods where opportunities are highly unequal (Farley and Frey, 1994; Massey, Gross, and Shibuya, 1994; Logan and Stults, 2011). The practice of steering black and white home purchasers to different neighborhoods, and the discrimination found in mortgage lending, continue to perpetuate segregation and create barriers to black home ownership. In addition, many white people avoid moving into neighborhoods that have even small numbers of African Americans (Farley and Frey, 1994; Quillian, 1999). This

segregation can have surprising effects. Despite the well-publicized troubles ex-convicts often have when they are released from prison, for instance, it is only white ex-cons, as a group, who live in substantially more disadvantaged neighborhoods after they are released (Massoglia, Firebaugh, and Warner, 2013). For black people and Hispanics, the neighborhoods they live in are already so disadvantaged, being an ex-con does not seem to have a significant impact on neighborhood disadvantage (Elliot and Reid, 2019). This residential segregation also significantly affects homicide victimization risk, with segregation increasing the risk for black individuals and decreasing it for white individuals, ultimately contributing to racial disparities in homicide mortality (Light and Thomas, 2019).

Today, federal and state civil rights laws make racial discrimination in housing, lending, public accommodations, and employment illegal. Many employers and businesses have responded to these laws by establishing procedures to protect minorities from discrimination (Dobbin et al., 1993). This has resulted in some real improvements in the treatment of minorities. In states with the strongest civil rights protections, for example, minority employees do fare better than elsewhere relative to white males (Beggs, 1995). And changes in attitudes and beliefs about race in recent decades have made some real differences, as evidenced by the election of Barack Obama to the presidency in 2008 and his reelection in 2012, discussed later in this chapter.

Nonetheless, testing studies show that significant amounts of racial and ethnic discrimination still do occur. In these testing studies, two people who are similar except for their race or ethnicity seek housing or employment, or they may shop or try to get a loan. Careful observation is done to determine whether they are treated similarly or differently. If testing studies show that people who are similar in all regards except their race are consistently treated in different ways, there is strong evidence that discrimination is taking place. In recent years, testing studies have found evidence of discrimination in employment

(Mathews, 1992; Kennedy, 1992; Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2002; Pager, 2003a, 2003b, 2007; Pager and Shepherd, 2008), housing (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1991; Galster, 1990a, 1990b; Yinger, 1995; Feagin, 2000, pp. 155–6), lending (Canner, Gabriel, and Woolley, 1991; Goering and Wienk, 1996), insurance (Smith and Clous, 1997), and auto sales (ABC News, 1991; Ayres, 1990). These and other studies indicate that African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans still encounter discrimination frequently, even though it is illegal. In fact, there is as much discrimination against black job seekers as against people with prison records, and people discriminate on the basis of what race a voice sounds like, as well as on the basis of a “common black name” versus a “common white name” (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2002; Pager, 2007). As a result of this ongoing discrimination, Pager and Pedulla (2015) find that African American job seekers cast a much wider net across occupations when looking for employment than do similarly situated white applicants in the job market. In other words, one strategy black people use to combat ongoing labor market discrimination is to engage in much broader job searches than white people. And there is good evidence that they need to. Mobasseri (2019) finds that employers who have had recent exposure to nearby violent crimes, if only through local news coverage, decreased callbacks to black applicants by ten percentage points. This was not observed for white or Hispanic applicants. Conversely, the children of European immigrants who have more “American” sounding first names tend to have higher occupational achievement, although this effect varies by ethnic group, with Russian immigrants, predominantly Jewish, benefiting from ethnic naming (Goldstein and Stecklov, 2016).

Even in voting, racial discrimination continues to be quite common. In the 2000 presidential election, testimony at public hearings revealed widespread discrimination in Florida and several other states. African Americans attempting to vote in Florida were asked for multiple forms of identification while white

people were asked for none, and black people with no criminal record were told that they could not vote because they were felons. Also, in predominantly black precincts, voters were told they could not vote because they had already voted by absentee ballot when they had not. Numerous black voters were removed from the rolls (including some who had voted a month earlier in the primary), and police roadblocks were set up near some polling places (NAACP public hearing, November 11, 2000). Today's discrimination has gone underground, however, because of the

legal consequences—which makes such discrimination harder to detect than the blatant discrimination of the past. When discrimination occurs today, nobody says, for example, that “you can't vote because you are black”; rather, they quietly act in ways that systematically treat black people differently from white people, all the while denying that they are discriminating.

As noted earlier in this chapter, institutional practices also perpetuate racial and ethnic inequality. For example, the U.S. health-care system is the only one in the industrialized

STUDENT LIFE



Informal Segregation: The “Invisible Wall” and the “Black Table”

Informal racial segregation remains pervasive in American society today. At the university where I (Farley) taught for many years, a recent university president spoke of the “invisible wall” in the cafeteria, separating the tables occupied by white students and black students. In the following article from *The New York Times*, New York attorney Lawrence Otis Graham explores this issue. He describes how he realized that while African Americans and other minorities are often seen as choosing such informal segregation, the reality is that both majority and minority groups choose such segregation, and that people segregate themselves on the basis of all kinds of social characteristics. In fact, such informal segregation is an almost inevitable outgrowth of a society in which our neighborhoods, our schools, our social clubs, and our churches are made up mostly of people who are “our kind”—no matter who we are. Unless this societal segregation is reduced, the “black table” will continue to be a part of our social reality.

The “Black Table” Is Still There

Lawrence Otis Graham

During a recent visit to my old junior high school in Westchester County, I came upon something that

I never expected to see again, something that was a source of fear and dread for three hours each school morning of my early adolescence: the all-black lunch table in the cafeteria of my predominantly white suburban junior high school.

As I look back on 27 years of often being the first and only black person integrating such activities and institutions as the college newspaper, the high school tennis team, summer music camps, our all-white suburban neighborhood, my eating club at Princeton, or my private social club at Harvard Law School, the one scenario that puzzled me the most then and now is the all-black lunch table.

Why was it there? Why did the black kids separate themselves? What did the table say about the integration that was supposedly going on in home rooms and gym classes? What did it say about the black kids? The white kids? What did it say about me when I refused to sit there, day after day, for three years?

Each afternoon, at 12:03 p.m., after the fourth period ended, I found myself among 600 12-, 13-, and 14-year-olds who marched into the brightly lit cafeteria and dashed for a seat at one of the 27 blue formica lunch tables.

No matter who I walked in with—usually a white friend—no matter what mood I was in, there was one

world that does not provide universal health insurance coverage. The health reforms of 2010 substantially broadened coverage, with 20 million people gaining insurance coverage because of the ACA (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). However, even with these gains, millions remain uninsured. Because those without insurance tend to be people with low-paying jobs or people who are unemployed, minorities are overrepresented among people without health insurance. As of early 2016, for example, 10 percent of African Americans and 30.5 percent of Hispanic Americans had no

health insurance of any type—compared to just 7 percent of non-Hispanic white people (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). The number of uninsured white people and African Americans was cut about in half by the ACA, but the gain was smaller for Hispanics, whose uninsured rate fell by only about 25 percent.

Thus, while American race relations have improved over the past in some regards, serious inequalities remain. This has led white people and minorities to have very different perceptions about race and ethnic relations, because

thing that was certain: I would not sit at the black table.

I would never consider sitting at the black table.

What was wrong with me? What was I afraid of?

I would like to think that my decision was a heroic one, made in order to express my solidarity with the theories of integration that my community was espousing. But I was just 12 at the time, and there was nothing heroic in my actions.

I avoided the black table for a very simple reason: I was afraid that by sitting at the black table I'd lose all my white friends. I thought that by sitting there I'd be making a racist, antiwhite statement.

Is that what the all-black table means? Is it a rejection of white people? I no longer think so.

At the time, I was angry that there was a black lunch table. I believed that the black kids were the reason why other kids didn't mix more. I was ready to believe that their self-segregation was the cause of white bigotry.

Ironically, I even believed this after my best friend (who was white) told me I probably shouldn't come to his bar mitzvah because I'd be the only black and people would feel uncomfortable. I even believed this after my Saturday afternoon visit, at age 10, to a private country club pool prompted incensed white parents to pull their kids from the pool in terror.

In the face of this blatantly racist (antiblack) behavior, I still somehow managed to blame only the black kids for being the barrier to integration in my school and my little world. What was I thinking?

I realize now how wrong I was. During that same time, there were at least two tables of athletes, an Italian table, a Jewish girls' table, a Jewish boys'

table (where I usually sat), a table of kids who were into heavy metal music and smoking pot, a table of middle-class Irish kids. Weren't these tables just as segregationist as the black table? At the time, no one thought so. At the time, no one even acknowledged the segregated nature of these other tables.

Maybe it's the color difference that makes all-black tables or all-black groups attract the scrutiny and wrath of so many people. It scares and angers people; it exasperates. It did those things to me, and I'm black.

As an integrating black person, I know that my decision not to join the black lunch table attracted its own kind of scrutiny and wrath from my classmates. At the same time that I heard angry words like "Oreo" and "white boy" being hurled at me from the black table, I was also dodging impatient questions from white classmates: "Why do all those black kids sit together?" or "Why don't you ever sit with the other black people?"

The black lunch table, like those other segregated tables, is a comment on the superficial inroads that integration has made in society. Perhaps I should be happy that even this is a long way from where we started. Yet, I can't get over the fact that the 27th table in my junior high school cafeteria is still known as the black table—14 years after my adolescence.

Source: "The 'Black Table' Is Still There," by Lawrence Otis Graham, February 3, 1991, Op-Ed. Copyright © 1991 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.

their experiences are so different (Kluegel, 1990; Hoschschild, 1995; Blauner, 1989). These differences became highly visible in 1995 in the very different reactions of white and black Americans to the O. J. Simpson trial and, more recently, to the arrest of African American scholar Henry Louis Gates for allegedly breaking into his own house. Another consequence of such differences in perceptions is a significant amount of self-segregation by both majority and minority-group members, as illustrated by the box “Informal Segregation: The ‘Invisible Wall’ and the ‘Black Table.’”

An additional concern in recent years has been the resurgence of hate crimes. These have occurred at increasing rates in recent years against not only groups that clearly fit the definition of minority groups, but also against some of the intermediate-status groups discussed in the next section. The problem of increasing rates of hate crimes is discussed in greater detail at the end of the next section.

Intermediate-Status Groups: Asian Americans, Jewish and Muslim Americans, and “White Ethnics”

Although African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans most clearly fit the sociological definition of a minority group, there are a number of other American racial and ethnic groups that occupy an intermediate status between a minority group and a majority group. Most of these groups can be gathered together under two broad groupings—Asian Americans and “white ethnics” from Eastern and Southern Europe. Jewish and Muslim Americans are also examples of groups with intermediate status.

The most rapidly growing of these groups is the Asian American community. Asians numbered over 19 million, or 5.9 percent of the U.S. population in 2020, as shown in Table 7.2. There are more than 11 times as many Asian Americans today as there were in 1970, with growth occurring due to high immigration rates and, to a lesser extent, relatively high birth rates. Like Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans are not really one group, but several. The

populations of the six largest Asian American groups according to the 2016–2020 American Community Survey are shown in Table 7.3.

People of Jewish heritage have been present in the United States since 1654. The largest Jewish immigration to the United States occurred from 1880 to 1924, and again in the World War II period (Goren, 1980). Today, there are about six million Jewish Americans, representing about 40 percent of the world’s Jewish population. Like Asian Americans, Jewish Americans are highly urban, with over 95 percent of the total population living in cities or suburbs. Muslim presence in substantial numbers has occurred more recently in the United States. Muslims are diverse: Some are Asian, some are African Americans or African immigrants, some are from the Middle East, and some European Americans have also converted to Islam. Contrary to common belief, only a small minority of the five to seven million Muslims in the United States are of Arab ethnicity.

Another set of groups to immigrate from Europe were the so-called white ethnics. Generally, this term refers to Americans of Southern

Table 7.3 Population of Selected Asian American Groups: 2016–2020, 5 year ACS estimates.

Group	Alone
Chinese Americans	4,151,009
Filipino Americans	2,884,210
Japanese Americans	768,985
Asian Indian Americans	4,143,134
Korean Americans	1,477,325
Vietnamese Americans	1,852,906
Other Asian Americans	6,085,805
Total Asian Americans	19,886,049

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016–2020 American Community Survey 5-year estimates:

<http://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=%3DACSDT5Y2020.BO2015>. More information about ACS is available at <https://census.gov/acs>. Report: 20.6 Million People in the U.S. Identify as Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander www.census.gov/library/stories/2022/05/aanhpi-population-diverse-geographically-dispersed.html#:~:text=originated%20in%20Asia-,Race,in%20combination%20with%20another%20race. (downloaded September 28, 2023).

and Eastern European ancestry. It includes Italian, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Greek, and Ukrainian Americans. Like Jewish Americans, but unlike immigrants from northern and western Europe, these groups generally immigrated in the largest numbers between the late nineteenth century and the imposition of immigration quotas in 1924. To a large extent, these groups were employed in manufacturing in the early twentieth century, settling in the industrial Northeast and Great Lakes regions. The largest of these groups today are Italian Americans and Polish Americans. Over 17 million Americans reported Italian ancestry in 2010, and over 9.5 million reported Polish ancestry (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008, American Community Survey). Also numbering over a million each were Americans of Russian, Czech, Hungarian, Portuguese, Greek, and Slovak ancestry.

Certain features distinguish all of these groups from the minority groups discussed in the previous section. First, all of them immigrated to the United States voluntarily. In other words, they chose to be Americans. Although all were discriminated against, they were not subjected to systematic economic exploitation comparable with slavery or the displacement of Native Americans and Mexican Americans from their land. The one exception to this is the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Many Japanese Americans did permanently lose their homes and businesses as a result of that experience. A total of 110,000 Americans were imprisoned for up to two years during World War II for no reason other than their Japanese ancestry. Clearly the motivation for this was at least partly racial: Although the United States was also at war with Germany, there was no such imprisonment of German Americans.

In general, however, discrimination against Jewish Americans, Muslim Americans, Asian Americans, and “white ethnics”—though very real at various times in the past and present—has been less systematic and less persistent than discrimination against African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and American Indians. Much of the discrimination the former groups have encountered over the years has been aimed at

preventing them from competing economically with the more established populations of western and northern European white people. Some discrimination, too, has been related to international conflicts—the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during World War II; attacks against Muslim Americans during the Iran hostage crisis; the Gulf War; following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington; and with the rise of the “Islamic State” (ISIS or ISIL) terrorist group the last few years. This, of course, is still discrimination, and it is misguided: The great majority of Japanese Americans during World War II were loyal Americans, and so are the great majority of Americans who practice Islam today, and they are appalled as anyone else by attacks on the United States.

Still, as noted, Asian, Jewish, and Muslim Americans and “white ethnics” have no history of conquest or colonization in the United States. Consequently, all of these groups today are in a much less disadvantaged position than black and Hispanic Americans and American Indians. In fact, due to their high levels of education, Jewish and Asian Americans today have somewhat above-average incomes. And the income and education distribution of “white ethnics” today is not greatly different from that of the population as a whole. For these reasons, these groups have, in part, moved away from ethnic communities and intermarried at a relatively high rate with other ethnic groups. Studies show that this is continuing to occur with Asian immigrants, the most recently arrived of these groups (Nee, Sanders, and Sernau, 1994). Although as groups they are all doing reasonably well economically, Asian Americans, Jewish Americans, Muslims, and “white ethnics” are not well-represented among the owners and managers of great corporate wealth, nor have top elected U.S. officials such as the president and vice president been chosen from these groups. (Senator Joseph Lieberman, the Democratic nominee for vice president in 2000, came the closest. He was the first Jewish American ever nominated for president or vice president. In 2016, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders was the



Photo 7.2 Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders won a number of primaries and caucuses in the 2016 campaign, making him the first Jewish American to ever win a presidential primary.

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first Jewish American to ever win a presidential primary in either party.)

Hate Crimes and Violence Against Minority Groups

In spite of the progress that intermediate-status groups have made, stereotypes, prejudices, and hate crimes against all of these groups, as well as against groups that clearly fit the definition of minority groups, persist and appear to be on the increase. Sometimes there is violence among minority and intermediate-status groups, as in the 1992 riots in Los Angeles when black and Hispanic rioters targeted Korean-owned stores because of cultural clashes and anger over Korean ownership of ghetto and barrio stores. More often, the attacks have come from white people who feel threatened by the improving position of minority groups and/or the growth in minority populations. Attacks on Jewish synagogues and community centers occurred repeatedly in the 1990s, and extremist elements in the right-wing militia movement in the 1990s railed against what they call the ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government). During the week after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, there were over 300 incidents in which Muslim or Middle Eastern Americans were attacked or

harassed, including two fatal attacks. In recent decades, “white ethnics” have frequently complained that they are portrayed as “rednecks” by the white intellectual elite and as “racists” by that group and by minority groups. They are quick to point out that they do not have the power to determine how American institutions are run, so they should not be blamed for America’s problems (Novak, 1971). In this regard, they have something of a point: Right-wing extremist groups have risen in numbers at alarming rates since the election of the country’s first African American president. The

election of an African American president, high rates of immigrations from Latin America and Asia, and the growing incidence of terrorism by Islamist extremists have all led to a backlash among white people who view these developments as a threat. This has contributed to a surge in hate crimes and hate group activity. While overall hate groups in the United States rose consistently from 1992 to 2020 (see Figure 7.2), this rise masks the explosive growth in right-wing “patriot” movements. Sometimes referred to as militia movements, they first emerged in 1994 under the last Democratic administration but by the end of the Clinton presidency had dwindled to “fewer than 150 relatively inactive groups” (Potok, 2012). In 2008 this trend reversed itself. The combination of a collapsing economy and the election of the nation’s first African American president sent the numbers of these so-called patriot groups soaring. According to Potok (2012), the numbers of these groups went from 149 in 2008 to reach an all-time high of 1,360 in 2012. These groups declined a bit in 2013 and 2014 but have seen a resurgence since 2015 and are still nearly ten times what they were prior to the 2008 election of President Obama. In some cases, extremists carried out terrorist attacks. Such attacks were

targeted against a Sikh temple in Wisconsin in 2012 with six killed, an African American church in South Carolina in 2015 with nine killed, and a Jewish Community Center and Jewish retirement home in Kansas in 2014 with three killed, among many others.

In the 2016 presidential campaign, Republican candidate Donald Trump called Mexican immigrants “rapists,” said that a judge could not be fair because of his Mexican ancestry, and called at one point for a total ban on Muslims entering the United States. In spite of this or perhaps in part because of it, Trump won the election. During the first week after the election, more than 400 incidents of hateful intimidation and harassment were reported across the United States. The largest number of incidents were directed against African Americans and immigrants, but there were also multiple incidents directed at Muslims, LGBTQ+ (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, queer or questioning individuals, plus) people, Jewish people, and women. There were also incidents directed against Trump supporters, although these were fewer than 10 percent of the total number of incidents reported (Southern Poverty



Photo 7.3 Through much of the twentieth century, white people used a variety of techniques to exclude racial and ethnic minorities from the neighborhoods where they lived. Some such techniques, such as restrictive covenants, were at one time supported by federal policy and backed by the courts.

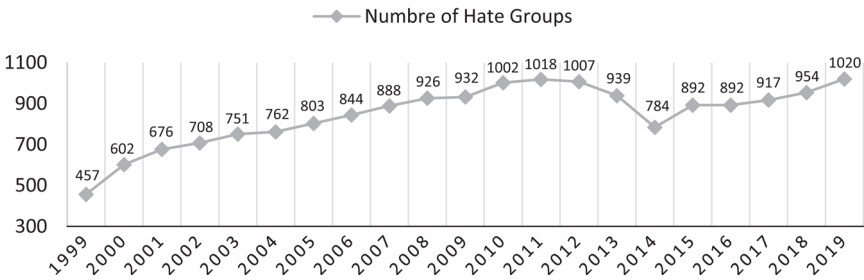
© Bettmann/Corbis

Law Center, 2016). Unsurprisingly, as can be seen in Figure 7.2, a spike in the number of hate groups occurred during this period.

The Majority Group

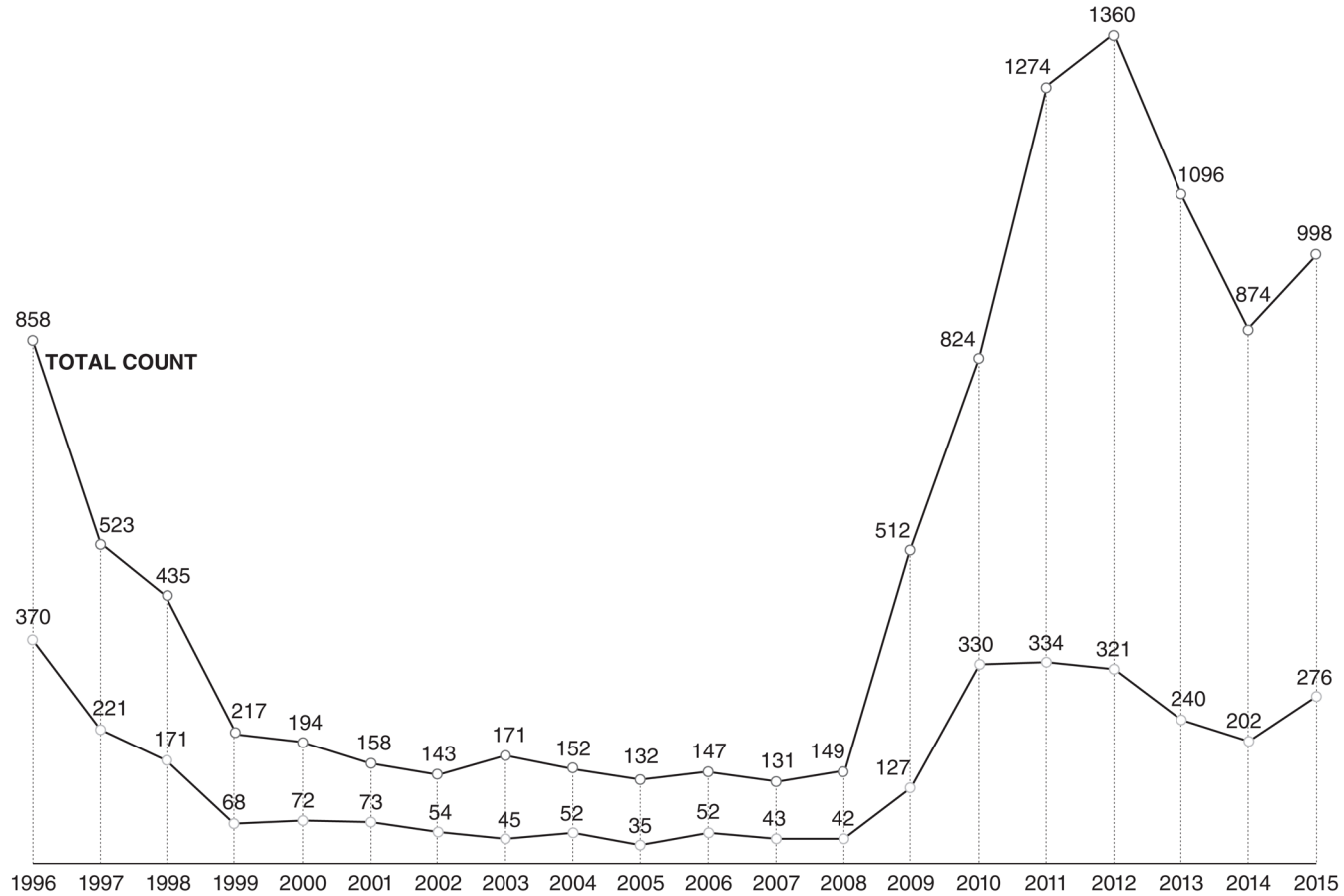
In the United States, the most advantaged societal position has always been occupied by white people from northern and western Europe. These groups include Americans of British, German, Irish, Scandinavian, French, and Dutch ancestry. They are predominantly

Figure 7.2 SPLC chart: hate groups: 1992–2019.



Source: Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). Hate Groups Reach Record High, 2019. www.splcenter.org/news/2019/02/19/hate-groups-reach-record-high (Downloaded September 26, 2023).

Figure 7.3 SPLC chart: patriot groups: militia groups and total count: 1996–2015.



Source: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016. Used by permission. <https://www.splcenter.org/active-antigovernment-groups-united-states> (Downloaded July 2, 2016).

Protestant, except for the Irish and French, most of whom are Catholic. Although virtually all of these groups except the British met with at least some prejudice and discrimination, it was less intense than that encountered by more recent immigrants, with the exception of Irish Catholics. Even they, however, are no longer the object of significant prejudice or discrimination, and they are thoroughly integrated into the population and culture of the United States. Northern and Western European groups have intermixed and intermarried so much that today most of them are of mixed ancestry and no longer identify exclusively with any one country of origin (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983a, pp. 12–14).

Besides enjoying high educational levels and desirable managerial and professional occupations, the majority group to a large extent controls the politics and business of the United States. Most corporate executives are males of western and northern European ancestry, as was every president of the United States from George Washington to George W. Bush.

There is very little growth in the majority group because of a low birth rate and because few people today emigrate from that part of the world. Thus, in the future, the numerically dominant position of this group in American society will fade.

Current Issues in U.S. Race Relations

It was an unlikely occurrence. On the night of November 4, 2008, a multitude of seasoned television commentators—many with tears in their eyes—remarked on an event many had doubted they would ever see come to pass. Forty years after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the United States elected Barack Hussein Obama II its first African American president. In an election season that saw a white woman take on a black man for the Democratic nomination in the longest, most drawn-out primary season in history, this conclusion might have been anticlimactic. Obama led his rival Senator John McCain for much of the contest and, after the financial meltdown in mid-September,

never trailed him in the polls. But as the returns came in on the night of the general election, the reality began to sink in. After such a long and difficult history of race relations, an African American was being elected president. Obama's election was a watershed event in race relations in the United States, but it is still far too early to tell its full significance.

Yet, despite such apparent progress, racial inequality persists in contemporary America. While some argued the United States had entered a postracial period with Obama's election, the vast economic gulf between the races still exists. The very real change indicated by the willingness of Americans to elect (and, in 2012, reelect) an African American to the presidency does not undo the simultaneous reality of large racial inequalities in wealth, income, poverty, education, access to health care, or even the probability of surviving the first year of life. And it is no doubt true that, in some quarters, President Obama was disrespected and challenged in ways that previous white presidents were not (Dyson, 2016a, 2016b). Among other things, his citizenship was challenged until he produced a copy of his birth certificate, a congressman shouted, "You lie!" during one of his State of the Union addresses, and a U.S. senator prayed (jokingly, he later claimed) for his early death.

Additionally, as the Latino population grows, so do conflicts over issues such as immigration. Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump promised to build a wall between the United States and Mexico, further polarizing the debate on illegal immigration and immigration in general. How will racial and ethnic relations change in response to such issues? A recent study found interesting differences in how black people and white people in the United States respond to the issue of increased Latino immigration and population growth. Abascal (2015) found that when black people are exposed to stories about Hispanic population growth, they identify more as "Americans" than as a control group. White people, however identified more with their race. For both groups, subjects responded by identifying with their most privileged identity, which also excluded the third group (Hispanics). Abascal (2019) later found that white individuals are less likely



PERSONAL JOURNEYS INTO SOCIOLOGY

How Societal Changes Helped Shape My Views on Race Relations and Urban Poverty

Unlike many who enter a field of specialization on the basis of graduate training, I did not pursue race and ethnic relations and urban poverty as major fields of study in graduate school at Washington State University. My graduate study focused mainly on sociological theory and the philosophy of the social sciences. However, my concentration on these fields of study could not be sustained in a period dominated by events in the black protest movement.

In my last two years as a graduate student in the mid-1960s I, like most black people, was caught up in the spirit of the Civil Rights revolution and was encouraged by the changes in social structure that led to increasing opportunities for black Americans. I also followed with intense interest the ghetto riots in Watts, Newark, and Detroit. And although at this point I had not developed a serious academic interest in the field of race and ethnic relations, my intellectual curiosity for the subject, fed by the escalating racial protest and my sense of the changing social structure for black people in America, was rising so rapidly that by the time I accepted my first full-time academic job as an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in the fall of 1965, I had firmly decided to develop a field of specialization in that area.

It was not until later, after I moved to Chicago and joined the sociology faculty at the University of Chicago in 1972, that my views on the intersection of class with race in the United States sufficiently crystallized. My thinking about intraracial divisions in America during the 1970s was in no small measure shaped by my perception of the changing social environments in Chicago's variegated ethnic neighborhoods. At one extreme were the upper middle-class black professional neighborhoods in parts of the South Side; at the other extreme were the communities of the ghetto poor, plagued by long-term joblessness, in other parts of the South Side and on the West Side.

The widening gap between the haves and have-nots among African Americans would have been obvious to any student of urban life who cared to take the time to drive around the Chicago neighborhoods at different points in time, as I did in the early to mid-1970s.

It is one thing to recognize and describe these intragroup differences; it is quite another thing to account for their evolution and relate them not only to the problems of intergroup relations, but, more importantly, to the broader problems of societal organization in America.

To study problems of race in terms of societal organization entails an investigation of not only the political, economic, and other institutional dimensions of societal organization that affect intra- and intergroup experiences but the technological dimensions as well. This approach guided my writing of *The Declining Significance of Race*. The basic theoretical argument presented in *The Declining Significance of Race* is that different systems of production in combination with different policies of the state impose different constraints on racial-group relations by producing dissimilar contexts, not only for the manifestation of racial antagonisms but also for racial-group access to rewards and privileges.

I had hoped that my major academic contribution would be to explain racial change by applying this framework to historical developments of race relations in the United States. But there was another contribution I had wished to make—I wanted to highlight the worsening condition of the black underclass, in both absolute and relative terms, by relating it to the improving position of the black middle class.

The Declining Significance of Race generated an even greater controversy than I had originally anticipated. In the initial months following the book's publication, it seemed that critics were so preoccupied with what I had to say about the improving conditions of the black middle class that they virtually ignored my more important arguments about the deteriorating position of the black urban poor. The view was often expressed that since all black people from all socioeconomic class backgrounds are suffering, there is no need to single out the black poor.

During the controversy over *The Declining Significance of Race*, I committed myself to doing two things: (1) I would address the problems of the ghetto poor in a comprehensive analysis, and (2) I would spell out, in considerable detail, the policy implications of my work. These two commitments provided direction for the writing of *The Truly Disadvantaged*:

The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy, published in 1987 by the University of Chicago Press.

The first commitment grew out of my personal and academic reaction to the early critics' almost total preoccupation with my arguments concerning the black middle class. It was only after I began writing *The Truly Disadvantaged* that serious scholars began to focus on my previous analysis of the underclass in *The Declining Significance of Race* (1978), particularly those scholars who are working in fields such as urban poverty, social welfare, and public policy.

The second commitment stemmed from my reaction to those critics who either labeled me a neo-conservative or directly or indirectly tried to associate *The Declining Significance of Race* with the neo-conservative movement. Although I am a social democrat, and probably to the left politically of the overwhelming majority of these critics, and although some of the most positive reviews and discussions of *The Declining Significance of Race* have come from those of the democratic left, the title of my book readily lends itself to an assumption that I am a black conservative. Nonetheless, because I did not spell out the policy implications of *The Declining Significance of Race* in the first edition, it was possible for people to read selectively my arguments and draw policy implications significantly different from those that I would personally espouse. In the second edition of *The Declining Significance of Race*, published in 1980, I wrote an epilogue in which the policy implications of my work were underlined in sharp relief, but by then, the views of many readers of the first edition had already solidified.

If the idea for *The Truly Disadvantaged* grew out of the controversy over *The Declining Significance of Race*, the former also generated controversy. *The Truly Disadvantaged* challenges liberal orthodoxy in analyzing inner-city problems; discusses in candid terms social dislocations of the inner city; establishes a case for moving beyond race-specific policies to ameliorate inner-city social conditions to policies that address the broader problems of societal organization, including economic organization; and advances a social democratic public-policy agenda

designed to improve the life chances of truly disadvantaged groups such as the ghetto underclass by emphasizing programs to which the more advantaged groups of all races can positively relate.

The Truly Disadvantaged enjoys the unique distinction of generating a lot of attention both within and outside academia. And in contrast to *The Declining Significance of Race*, the scholarly attention it has attracted is not focused mainly on controversy but on the theoretical and substantive arguments raised in the book. Indeed, *The Truly Disadvantaged* has generated a new research paradigm that has stimulated studies not only in sociology, but in economics, psychology, anthropology, education, social work, history, philosophy, and political science as well.

Arguments in *The Truly Disadvantaged* also guided the research for a later book, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*, published in 1996. This book focuses on the growing joblessness in the inner city and its effect on individuals, families, and neighborhoods. Discussions in the book, including those dealing with public policy, highlight the following point: The unprecedented level of inner-city joblessness represents a severe form of the broader economic and social dislocations that cut across racial and ethnic groups in the United States.

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to classify people who are ambiguously white or Latino as "White" when under a perceived threat of "demographic decline," where a group perceives a decline in its share of the population. On the political far right, this has been called "Replacement Theory" (Cineas, 2022).

We conclude this chapter by examining two current issues concerning U.S. race and ethnic relations. The first is the growing debate over the relative importance of race versus class as causes of the disadvantaged position of many African Americans and Hispanic Americans.

The second is the appropriateness of affirmative action as a means of improving opportunities for minority-group members.

The Significance of Race Versus Class

In 1978, William Julius Wilson published one of the most influential and controversial sociology books written in recent years, *The Declining Significance of Race*. Since then, he has elaborated on his ideas in two more books (Wilson, 1996, 1987). Wilson (1978) argued that current racial discrimination has become relatively unimportant as a cause of the economic disadvantages experienced by many black people (and Hispanics). Rather, these groups are disadvantaged by their disproportionate presence in the **underclass**, a chronically impoverished group whose position has been worsened by recent changes in the American economy. Many black people and Hispanics are part of this underclass largely because of disadvantages resulting from *past* racial discrimination. However, Wilson argues, their continued presence in this class results not so much from current racial discrimination as from aspects of the American economy that make it hard for members of this class to escape.

Changes in the Job Market

One of the key reasons that escape from the underclass is so difficult today is because well-paying jobs that do not require an advanced education are disappearing from the American economy, especially from the inner cities of the Midwest and Northeast where black people are most concentrated (Wilson, 1996; 1987, p. 148). At one time, heavy industry provided many such jobs and was an important source of mobility, first for immigrant groups, and more recently for black people and Hispanics. However, in the 1970s, American industry began to lose jobs, and thus a promising opportunity for black people and Hispanics with limited education was lost (Kasarda, 1989). This trend, known as *deindustrialization*, is discussed at greater length in Chapter 6.

Such processes first create an underclass and then work to sustain it. As unemployment

in the ghettos and barrios rises, so does street crime, and many young males are arrested and imprisoned. Discrimination itself sets the stage for increased crime through mechanisms such as depression, a hostile view of relationships, loss of hope for the future, and disengagement with conventional norms (Burt, Simons, and Gibbons 2012; Thomas, 2017). Many other young males, of course, are not arrested but are unemployed. Wilson (1987, pp. 83–92) points out that this situation raises the incidence of separation and divorce and reduces the pool of appropriate marriage partners in the black community (see also Anderson, 1991; Bennett, Bloom, and Craig, 1989; Bloome, 2014; Lichter, LeClere, and McLaughlin, 1991; Mare and Winship, 1991; Schoen and Kluegel, 1988). This pattern has become much more pronounced over the past 20 years, and as a result, black women have far less opportunity to get married than white women. Moreover, because over 90 percent of unmarried adult women of either race are sexually active, many black children are born outside of marriage. This, of course, produces more female-householder black families, which have a very high risk of poverty for the reasons discussed in Chapter 6.

Finally, Wilson (1987, pp. 46–62) points out that black and Hispanic poor people are much more likely to live in neighborhoods with large concentrations of poor people than are poor white people (see also Massey and Eggers, 1990; Quillian, 1999). Thus, they are less exposed to successful role models, and more prone to see illegal activities as their only hope for upward mobility (see, e.g., Anderson, 1991; Crane, 1991a, 1991b; Greenstone, 1991). This perception is reinforced by the fact that most sources of stable employment have left such neighborhoods, so job opportunities are few and far between (Wilson, 1996). Once a sizable number of people in a neighborhood have turned to illegal sources of income, strong pressures are created for “decent” people trying to do the right thing to join the tough “street” culture surrounding these illegal activities (Anderson, 1999). Finally, at the opposite end of the scale, there are advantages of living in areas of concentrated affluence, and just as minorities are overrepresented in areas of concentrated

poverty, they are underrepresented in areas of concentrated affluence, which further limits their opportunities (Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls, 1999).

For all these reasons, Wilson sees the growing disadvantage of poor black people and Hispanics as a product of the lack of stable, well-paying job opportunities in their neighborhoods. He argues that we must create large numbers of decent-paying jobs and provide the support poor people need to get and keep such jobs. He also sees a need for job training and for providing day care and medical insurance to employed low-income workers.

Although Wilson has made a major contribution to our understanding of the forces that have perpetuated and worsened the conditions of poor black people and Hispanics, some critics have questioned his claim that race is declining in significance as a cause of poverty among inner-city black people (Hill, 1978; Willie, 1979; Feagin, 2000). In more recent work, Wilson has placed greater emphasis on the problem of hiring discrimination against black people that results from stereotypes about poor, inner-city black people (Wilson, 1996). As noted earlier, several studies have documented the continuing effect of prejudice and discrimination (Feagin, 1991; Kirschenman and Neckerman, 1991; National Opinion Research Center, 1991; Feagin and Sikes, 1994; Yinger, 1995). Mandel and Semyonov (2016) find that racial pay gaps decreased from 1970 to 2000 but began to grow again at the turn of the millennium, primarily due to increased income inequality, stagnant occupational segregation, and an increase in unexplained pay disparities, which are attributed to economic discrimination. As a result, Wilson now places greater emphasis on the concentration of black people and Hispanics in areas that are losing jobs, whereas white people are more likely to be in areas of job growth. This pattern, arising in large part from racial housing segregation and discrimination, tends

to elevate the unemployment rates of black people and Hispanics (Bloome, 2014; Farley, 1987b; Kasarda, 1989; Lichter, 1988; Massoglia, Firebaugh, and Warner, 2013; Mouw, 2000; see also Rosenbaum and Popkin, 1991; Massey and Denton, 1993). Finally, it is important to recognize that African Americans of all social classes experience discrimination on a frequent and regular basis. This has been documented by surveys, discrimination-testing studies, and a variety of studies in which African Americans have been interviewed about their experiences of discrimination (Agiesta, 2015; Feagin, 2000; Feagin and Sikes, 1994; Pew Research Center, 2016).

In many instances, this kind of discrimination has deadly consequences. Police, as well as private security organizations, often engage in *racial profiling*; that is, they stop and investigate African Americans and Hispanics to a greater extent than white people, independent of the behavior of these individuals. Sometimes, these encounters become violent, and in a disturbing number of cases, lethal force is used. In 2015, about 1,000 Americans were killed by the police. The majority of those killed by police after displaying or using a weapon were white, but among those who behaved in a *less* threatening way, around 60 percent of those killed by



Photo 7.4 Unarmed persons shot and killed by police are very disproportionately African American. This disparity, along with several incidents that dramatized it, gave rise to a powerful Black Lives Matter social movement.

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the police were either black or Hispanic, even though these groups combined make up only 31 percent of the population. Among unarmed persons shot and killed by police, 40 percent were black males, who make up only 6 percent of the population (Kindy et al., 2015). In addition, Legewie (2016) found, using data from 3.9 million pedestrian stops in New York City, when two police officers were fatally shot by black suspects, there was a significant increase in the use of police force against black individuals in the days that followed. However, there was no corresponding change in the use of force against white and Hispanic individuals. The study also found no evidence of an effect when the suspects were white or Hispanic. These disparities, dramatized by highly publicized incidents such as the shooting by police of the unarmed teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014, have given rise to a powerful Black Lives Matter social movement across the United States, as well as a broader debate on the use by police of lethal force. In many cases, as in July 2016 when black men who did not appear to be resisting the police were shot on consecutive days in Baton Rouge and near Minneapolis, the shootings were captured by citizens on cell phone videos and widely disseminated on social media and TV news programs. This undoubtedly has fueled protest and debate, making the shootings visible in a way that they were not in the past. There is not yet evidence, though, that such shootings by police are on the decline, and in the first half of 2016, there was a 6 percent increase from the same period in 2015. As in 2015, African Americans were 2.5 times as likely to be killed by police as white people (Kindy et al., 2016). One problem is that we often do not have good data on the circumstances surrounding such shootings. For example, the Kindy et al. (2015) study, carried out by *Washington Post* reporters, found twice as many instances of killings by police than were present in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) supposedly national database. The main reason: Many police departments do not report such incidents to the FBI. The FBI is now developing a new, more reliable data system; perhaps between that and citizen videos, there will be an improvement in the amount and quality of

information about these incidents. Whether that will lead to fewer such incidents remains to be seen. What does seem clear is that such publicized instances of police violence have a chilling effect on citizens calling on the police for help (Desmond, Papachristos and Kirk, 2016). Research finds that after one such case, the beating of Frank Jude, was widely publicized, residents in Milwaukee's neighborhoods, especially black neighborhoods, were significantly less likely to report crimes to 911. This effect persisted for over a year and resulted in a substantial decrease of approximately 22,200 calls for police service.

Putting Sociology to Work

The Affirmative Action Debate

No issue has generated more controversy in recent years than affirmative action. **Affirmative action** can be defined as special efforts by employers to increase the number of minority or female employees, or by colleges to increase the number of minority or female students. It may include special recruitment efforts, or the more controversial practice of considering the race or gender of applicants along with other factors, as a way of increasing opportunity for underrepresented groups. It is the latter type of affirmative action that has generated the most controversy, because some see it as merely reverse discrimination against white males.

Is Affirmative Action Reverse Discrimination?

Those who oppose the use of affirmative action argue that preferences given to minority and female candidates constitute discrimination that gets in the way of choosing the most qualified person. They cite statistics showing that in many instances white male law or medical school applicants have been turned down in favor of minority or female applicants who had lower test scores (Sindler, 1978). They also argue that white males who had nothing to do with past discrimination should not be singled out



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

What Makes a Fair Footrace?

Imagine two runners in a 20-mile race. One of the runners must start with a ten-pound weight on each of her feet. As a result, she cannot run as fast, tires more quickly, and falls far behind. Almost anyone would agree that this is not a fair race. So, halfway through the race, the judges decide that she can take off the weights. Is this enough to make the race fair? Does she have any realistic chance to win from her present position? Would it not be fairer to allow her to move ahead to the position of the other runner to compensate for the disadvantage of wearing the weights for the first half of the race?

This analogy has been used to illustrate the reasoning behind affirmative action (Farley, 2010, pp. 387, 468). The runner represents a member of a group that has experienced discrimination, now seeking a good job or entry into graduate or professional school. The weights represent the effects of disadvantages resulting from past discrimination against her group and the institutional discrimination

she personally has encountered in her elementary and secondary education. Examples of such institutional discrimination, which may or may not be intentional, include low teacher expectations, tracking, biased tests and classroom materials, lack of minority and female role models, limited availability of college-preparatory or advanced-placement courses, and underfunded and segregated schools. Just as the other runner was not encumbered by weights in the first half of the race, the white male applicant was not burdened by these disadvantages in early life. Most people would agree that it would not be fair to expect the runner to catch up after having to run half the race with weights. Could the same argument be made in the case of the minority applicant who often has to run the first half of the “race” of life with the “weights” of poverty and educational disadvantage? Is it fair, when that minority person applies for college or employment, to say, “Now the weights are gone, so it’s a fair race”?

to pay for discrimination caused by others and that such policies hurt overall societal achievement by considering factors other than who is the most qualified person (Glazer, 1976). Public opinion polls indicate that such views are quite common among white Americans, the majority of whom feel that the system is basically fair as it is without affirmative action (Kluegel, 1990; Hoschschild, 1995). However, there is some evidence this may be changing as more white people in recent surveys have said more changes need to be made to give black people equal rights with white people (Pew Research Center, 2016). In any case, it is significant that the white people who have had the greatest personal contact with affirmative action in their workplaces are the most supportive of it (M. C. Taylor, 1995). From a minority-group viewpoint, some have criticized affirmative action on the grounds that it devalues minority achievement: White people will believe that the only reason a minority person “got in” was because of affirmative action preferences, not

because of the minority person’s own achievements (Steele, 1990; Sowell, 1990). A particular concern of affirmative action opponents is that it can sometimes amount to a quota system, in which a specified number or percentage of minorities must be hired or admitted. The reality, however, is that this happens infrequently—most affirmative action programs involve monitoring, outreach efforts, or consideration of race or gender along with many other factors (Crosby, 1995).

Is the System Fair Without Affirmative Action?

Supporters of affirmative action believe equally strongly that it is unfair *not* to have affirmative action, because without it, minorities do not really have equal opportunities. They cite two reasons. The first is the lingering effects of past discrimination, which have left minorities at a disadvantage. For example, the

overrepresentation of African Americans among the nation's poor is linked to past discrimination, even by those who think present-day discrimination is not a major cause of this poverty (W. J. Wilson, 1978, 1987). A second reason given as to why equal opportunity is not possible without affirmative action is *current* discrimination. As noted earlier, recent testing studies show that deliberate discrimination continues to occur on a regular basis. In addition, more subtle and less conscious forms of institutional discrimination abound. Supporters of affirmative action particularly point to a variety of processes that create unequal opportunities in education. These include segregation, unequal school funding, low expectations of minority students by teachers, tracking, and, in many cases, a curriculum that values and emphasizes the views and accomplishments of Euro-Americans over others. As discussed further in Chapter 14, so long as these deeply institutionalized practices remain in place, it will be very difficult for black, Hispanic, and Native American students to obtain the same educational opportunities that most white students do. The argument for affirmative action is explored further in the Sociological Insights box, "What Makes a Fair Footrace?"

Some opponents of affirmative action say that reforming the schools so that they come closer to the ideal of creating equal opportunity is a better approach than affirmative action. In Chapter 14, some approaches to doing this, including desegregation of schools through busing, are discussed. However, those who support affirmative action point out that school reform is a long-term effort that will not help the current generation of disadvantaged adults.

It has also been suggested by some that affirmative action might be implemented on the basis of social class rather than race. This would help to address the criticism that affirmative action does nothing to make the system more fair for working-class and poor white people, who are clearly also impacted by some of the educational practices noted in the preceding paragraph. However, studies have shown that the number of minority students admitted would fall significantly using such an approach (Lively et al., 1995).

Another alternative in undergraduate colleges has been to admit all students who are in a certain percentage of their high school class, such as the top 10 percent. Because many high schools are racially segregated, such a policy will increase the number of minority students who are eligible for admission. At the University of Texas, where affirmative action was dropped temporarily after a 1997 court order (which was later reversed by the Supreme Court), such a policy kept undergraduate minority enrollments at the University of Texas fairly close to what they were before affirmative action was suspended (Carnevale, 1999), though Harris and Tienda (2012) point out that much of this success has been due to changes in population growth and distribution across Texas; while the old policy of affirmative action would have benefited the state's minority students more. Such policies have also been criticized because they depend on schools being racially segregated (Berry, 2000). And in California and Florida, where they only guarantee admission to *some* public institutions, not the top schools, they have failed to bring minority enrollment at top schools to what it was before affirmative action was ended in those states (Celing, 2000).

Supporters of affirmative action also contend that some of the tests used to assess people's qualifications contain racial or sexual biases. Moreover, these tests are not very accurate predictors of future success. Law school admission criteria, for example, typically explain only about 25 percent of the variation in first-year academic performance of law students (Sindler, 1978, pp. 115–16), and college admissions tests are only about half that accurate (Owen, 1985; Slack and Porter, 1980). Standardized tests of general knowledge are problematic by their very nature and, at times, constitute a **stereotype threat**. Steele and Aronson (1995) have shown that African American college students performed worse than white people on standardized tests that were described as a judgment of intellectual ability; however, they did just as well as white people when the same test was described as a problem-solving task, not as being used for evaluation. (We discuss this in more detail in Chapter 14.) The key element at work here is the activation of a stereotype that

is threatening to the group in question, in this case the false belief of black people “not being as smart as other groups.”

Thus, determining who is “best qualified” is a haphazard process subject to great error. In fact, the National Academy of Sciences concluded that testing that is unadjusted for possible racial biases was a poor predictor of employment performance and that it excluded capable black and Hispanic applicants (Kilborn, 1991). In general, research shows that high school class rank or grade point average is a much better predictor of college success than scores on standardized tests like the SAT and ACT (Geiser and Santelices, 2007; Lavergne and Walker, 2002), and these indicators also do not vary by race or class to the same extent as the standardized test scores. Yet many colleges and universities continue to give considerable weight to the SAT or ACT in admissions decisions. As previously noted, an important cause of such differences in test scores is that minorities may internalize widespread negative stereotypes about their academic ability (Steele and Aronson, 1995). This makes affirmative action something of a double-edged sword: On the one hand, it may reinforce such stereotypes, but on the other hand, how can admissions be fair without it if test scores are artificially lowered by such stereotypes?

How Effective Is Affirmative Action?

Has the policy of affirmative action actually changed things to the point that minority-group members and women enjoy an advantage over white males? Examination of income figures does *not* support this. Among young adults, white males continue to enjoy higher incomes than black and Hispanic males and women of any race, and black and Hispanic unemployment rates remain well above those of white people. Moreover, white people continue to graduate from college and enter medical, law, and graduate schools at substantially higher rates than black people and Hispanics. Women also remain underrepresented in law and medical schools, although their presence there has increased significantly. All these things suggest

strongly that the effects of past and institutional discrimination outweigh any advantage affirmative action may bring to minorities or women. Even when we consider only those who complete college, minorities and women *still* do not appear to enjoy any overall advantage owing to affirmative action. In addition, Emmons and Noeth (2015) found that a four-year degree did not protect African American and Hispanic families from economic distress after the 2008 financial crash the way it did for white families. Research has also shown that physical attractiveness, for which being white is the standard, plays a significant role in shaping various life outcomes, including employment, education, and earnings (Monk, Esposito and Lee, 2021). Attractiveness is associated with social advantages and privileges. Attractive women tend to experience advantages in education and employment, while attractive men tend to have higher incomes. However, attractiveness appears to be more influential for white women than for black and Hispanic women.

Even so, it does appear that affirmative action has helped certain segments of the minority and female populations a good deal. A definite narrowing of the income gap between black people and white people has occurred among people who do have jobs, particularly those with relatively high education levels. Law and medical schools are enrolling significantly more black people, Hispanics, and women than they did before affirmative action, even though most of their students are still white males. Firms with government contracts, which are covered by federal affirmative action requirements, have nearly twice the percentage of minority employees as firms without government contracts (Pear, 1983). Finally, the effectiveness of affirmative action can be seen in what has happened in states where it was eliminated, either by court rulings or public referenda, including California, Texas, Florida, Michigan, and Washington. In California, it took four years for the number of minority freshmen admitted to the University of California (UC) system to get back up to what it was when affirmative action was abolished in 1997 (Celing, 2000). Even by 2011, just 2 percent of students at UC-Berkeley and 3 percent at

UCLA were black, compared to around 7 percent before affirmative action was eliminated. Similarly in Michigan where affirmative action was banned in 2008, African American enrollment at the University of Michigan fell from 8 percent in 2005 to 5 percent in 2011, and at Michigan State from 9 percent in 2005 to 7 percent in 2011, even as the percentage of black people in the state's college-age population rose from 17 to 19 percent (New York Times, 2015). And the impact of eliminating affirmative action has been even bigger in professional schools. For example, the percentage of black students in the University of Texas at Austin's law school fell from 6.8 to 2.9, and the percentage of Hispanic students fell from 10.8 to 8.9 after affirmative action was temporarily eliminated (Berry, 2000).

Still, it is mainly the more educated segments of the minority and female populations that have truly benefited from affirmative action (Wilson, 1978). This may benefit the next generation as middle-class minority youth enjoy the educational benefits of middle-class status. So far, affirmative action has done little for the chronically impoverished underclass, many of whom are lucky to get a high school diploma. Affirmative action has probably contributed to a trend that was already under way in the black and Hispanic populations: The middle class is rising in status, while the situation of the poor is worsening (Wilson, 1978, 1987). For this reason, Wilson (1978, 1987) has argued that to achieve racial equality we must implement policies to improve the situation of the chronically poor, which affirmative action does not do.

Another highly practical reason for having affirmative action is that our future productivity as a nation may depend on it. The vast majority of new entrants into the labor force in coming decades will be people of color and women (Toossi, 2012; U.S. Department of Labor, 1987). If these new employees do not get the opportunity to develop their skills and make important contributions in the workplace, the entire economy will likely suffer, becoming less able to keep up with international competitors. Some companies, such as Corning and Monsanto, have responded to this reality—with

striking success—by combining affirmative action programs with programs to make the workplace more hospitable to minorities and women. At Corning, for example, nearly two-thirds of newly hired salaried employees were minorities and/or women, as were well over a third of all salaried employees (Kilborn, 1990). According to the company's chairman, this was not only the right thing to do, but it served the company's interest by giving it new sources of managers when the pool of white males, the traditional group from which such employees were drawn, was shrinking.

The Legal and Political Status of Affirmative Action

The legal and political fate of affirmative action was effectively decided when Trump, an opponent of affirmative action, was able to replace three Justices in the Supreme Court, including a supporter in Ruth Bader Ginsberg, giving the Supreme Court a super majority for conservatives. Regardless of persuasive arguments by students, educators, politicians, and many more interested individuals and groups in support of the policy, the use of affirmative action in higher education was ruled to be unconstitutional by a right-leaning Supreme Court in 2023 (*Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. Harvard College* and *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. University of North Carolina*).

Most interestingly, affirmative action initially had a great deal of support. Since it was first instituted in the 1960s by President Lyndon Johnson, it had the support of every administration, Democrat and Republican, until Ronald Reagan became president. In a series of decisions from 1978 to 1987, the Supreme Court consistently supported the notion that race and (in later rulings) gender can be considered as a way of increasing diversity or increasing representation of underrepresented groups. Recently, however, the situation has been in a state of flux. The Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations opposed affirmative action preferences and tried, mostly without success, to reverse earlier Supreme Court rulings. The

Clinton administration, in contrast, supported affirmative action, while the administration of George W. Bush largely continued the efforts of George H. W. Bush to reverse earlier court actions, but again with little success. The latter Bush was a strong proponent of the so-called 10 percent solution (admitting the top 10 percent of every high school class to top universities) after affirmative action in Texas public college admissions was overturned by a court ruling (discussed later in the chapter). With the Obama administration, the federal government again became more supportive of affirmative action. However, that is unlikely to remain the case. President Trump placed three Supreme Court justices who oppose affirmative action, leaving open a possibility for 5–4 or 6–3 rulings by the court against affirmative action in the near future.

Additionally, significant challenges to affirmative action in the states, the courts, and the Congress have threatened its future and eliminated it in some places. Beginning in 1989, the Supreme Court began to take a more ambivalent approach to affirmative action. In 1995, it ruled that some types of affirmative action designed to help minority firms get contracts with the government were illegal. And, in 1996, it refused on a technicality to review the anti-affirmative action *Hopwood* ruling—a lower court decision reversing the 1978 Supreme Court decision of *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, which had upheld minority preferences in higher education admissions. While the lower court decision was only binding in three states (Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi), it raised questions about the future of affirmative action everywhere until it was reversed by the Supreme Court in 2003 in a case involving the University of Michigan, discussed later in the chapter. Through initiative and referendum, California, Washington, Michigan, and Nebraska have eliminated all forms of affirmative action that involve taking race into consideration in public college admissions or public hiring, and the Florida legislature eliminated affirmative action in public college admissions. These efforts have taken a toll on

minority enrollment. At Berkeley, for instance, minority enrollment fell to 17 percent, while nearby Stanford, a private school that is not affected by propositions disallowing race to be used as a criterion for admissions, is at 26 percent (Asimov, 2010). In 2003, the University of Michigan was challenged on its affirmative action policies by a white woman who argued that while only 9 percent of white applicants with similar test scores as herself were admitted to the law school, 100 percent of African Americans were admitted. The issue here was not that unqualified applicants got into the program but that race was a determining factor for equally qualified applicants. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the woman, saying the university had an interest in increasing student diversity and supported individualized review of each applicant. However, in the same ruling, the court also struck down the school's undergraduate admission policy that was based on a point system where race was given a point-based handicap. These decisions declared yet again the court's tendency to support measures to increase racial diversity but oppose strict quota-like systems and schemes that do not consider each individual as a separate case. In most other states, affirmative action remains legal, but as previously noted, the future of affirmative action in the United States appears highly uncertain. It is interesting to note recent research by Zhang (2021) that examined thousands of mergers and acquisitions in the United States over several decades and found that such events not only favor higher-skilled workers but also improve the representation of racial minorities and women in managerial positions while reducing racial and gender segregation in the workplace. These findings imply that radical organizational changes have the potential to significantly reduce racial and gender inequality within organizations, thus showing there are other powerful social forces that can promote racial and gender equity besides affirmative action. It is not clear, however, what role affirmative action itself played in these organizational changes or how it might play out in the future if affirmative action were to go away.

Summary

Races are defined according to a combination of physical appearance and social criteria, whereas ethnic groups are defined on a purely cultural basis. Some of these groups occupy a dominant position in society and are called majority groups, while others occupy a subordinate position and are called minority groups. Racism takes a number of forms, including racist thought (racial prejudice) and racist behavior (racial discrimination). Ideological racism refers to the belief that one group is in some way naturally superior to another. The most subtle, but often the most important, form of racism is institutional racism, which occurs when social institutions operate in ways that favor one group (usually the majority group) over another. This process is also called institutional discrimination.

Social psychologists emphasize prejudice in their studies of race and ethnic relations. For some people, prejudice meets personality needs that may date to childhood experiences, while other people are prejudiced largely out of conformity to the attitudes of significant others in their past or present social environment. The functionalist and conflict perspectives see prejudice and discrimination as arising from society rather than from the experiences of individuals. Functionalists view prejudice as largely the outgrowth of cultural differences and ethnocentrism. They see assimilation as the solution because it eliminates the cultural differences that form the basis of prejudice and discrimination. Conflict theorists see racial inequality as an outgrowth of economic conflict, both within and between racial groups.

Much can be learned about the conditions that produce and alter patterns of racial and ethnic relations by examining other societies such as the former Soviet Union, South Africa, the former Yugoslavia, and various Latin American countries. Each of these areas has its own set of social conditions that shape its pattern of intergroup relations.

The United States is one of the most diverse nations of the world in terms of race and ethnicity. The largest minority group in the United States is African Americans, but the rapidly

growing Hispanic population may soon catch up. Hispanics are not really one group but several, of which Mexican Americans, or Chicanos, are the largest group. African Americans, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans, along with Native Americans, have each in their own way endured conquest and internal colonization. As a result, they have experienced prejudice and discrimination far beyond that encountered by most American groups.

Groups whose status falls between that of the majority and minority groups include Asian Americans, Jewish Americans, and “white ethnics” from Eastern and Southern Europe. All have experienced discrimination, yet all are largely middle class today. The educational and professional achievement of Asian and Jewish Americans is particularly notable. Even so, most of America’s political and economic elite continues to be drawn from the long-standing American majority group, white people from northern and western Europe.

In the United States, current sociological debates on race relations concern the relative importance of racial discrimination and social-class inequality and the use of affirmative action as a means of bringing about racial equality.

Key Terms

- racial group
- ethnic group
- majority group
- minority group
- racism
- ideological racism (or, racist ideology)
- prejudice
- stereotype
- discrimination
- individual discrimination
- institutional racism
- institutional discrimination
- personality need
- authoritarian personality
- scapegoat
- projection
- social learning
- cognitive-dissonance theory
- symbolic racism

ethnocentrism
 assimilation
 pluralism
 multiculturalism
 amalgamation
 underclass
 affirmative action
 stereotype threat

Exercises

1 Social critics charge that it is very difficult for the affluent to appreciate the plight of the *underclass* in America. Read the section on the underclass again (“The Significance of Race Versus Class”), then answer the following questions:

- Do people who are part of the underclass have the same “life chances” in comparison with their more socioeconomically fortunate counterparts?
- Critically analyze media portrayals of the underclass. How do media representations shape public perceptions of

individuals in the underclass, and what impact might this have on public policy and societal attitudes? How can media literacy contribute to a more nuanced understanding of these issues? Do you think the underclass can be eliminated in American society? Why or why not?

2 The practice of *racial profiling* by law enforcement agencies continues to be extremely controversial. Some African Americans have referred to their plight as DWB (Driving While Black).

- Do you agree or disagree with the practice of racial profiling and why? What about racial profiling to catch potential terrorists? Are such practices likely to be successful?
- What do you think will be the long-term implications of this practice? How does racial profiling potentially come into play in efforts to enforce immigration laws?

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Chapter 8

Sex, Gender, and Society

Imagine two people, both born in 1970. Both are from upper-middle-class backgrounds, and both graduated in 1992 from a well-known state university. Both obtained full-time employment when they graduated, got married in 1994, and had two children between then and 1998. Both got divorced in early 2002. Both still work today for the employer that hired them when they graduated from college. So far, they seem alike in every regard. But there are important differences. Although both have the same education level and have been working full time, one has an annual salary of \$68,000, while the other makes only \$47,000. The person with the higher salary also enjoys more autonomy and opportunity for creativity at work, while the one with the lower salary works in a more structured situation and is more closely supervised.

There are also differences in the amount of time these two people spend working and at leisure. For most of the time since college graduation, the one with the higher income had *more* leisure time than the one with the lower income. Despite the higher income, this person's total work week—employment and household work combined—was 63 hours per week, compared with 67 hours for the person with the lower income. When both people got divorced, another big difference in their situations developed. After the divorce, the standard of living of the person with the higher income stayed about the same, while the standard of living of the other person *fell* by about 30 percent.

How could two people with such similar backgrounds and education have such different experiences in life? All of it can be explained by one thing: One of them is male and one of them is female. All of the differences previously described are based on average statistical

differences between the situations of men and women in the United States. In other words, what happened to these two individuals reflects what happens to men and women in the United States *on average*. Even when their education and social background is identical, women on average are paid less, have less autonomy at work, spend more time working and less at leisure, and suffer financially from divorce (while men may experience either gains or losses, but on average, do not experience much change in their standards of living).

In this chapter, we explore how and why society defines the roles of men and women as being different and unequal, and we consider in greater detail the socialization processes that prepare men and women for these different roles. At the same time, we see that society's expectations concerning the roles of men and women have in some ways changed dramatically over the past 40 years. Indeed, this is one of the more profound social changes of our age. Nonetheless, we also see that a good deal has not changed, and we cannot yet say that equality of the sexes has been attained in the United States or in most other industrialized countries.

What Are Sex and Gender Roles?

To begin our discussion, we should define several important terms. The chapter title mentions *sex* and *gender*, but precisely what is the difference between the two? Basically, sex is biologically defined, whereas gender is socially defined. Thus, **sex** refers to the biological fact that a person is either a man or a woman. **Gender** refers to socially learned traits associated with, and expected of, men or women (Giele, 1988, p. 294).

Therefore, to be *male* or *female* is a matter of sex, but to be *masculine* or *feminine* is a matter of gender. Gender, in short, refers to socially learned behaviors and attitudes, such as mannerisms, styles of dress, and activity preferences.

Sex and Gender Roles

These socially learned behaviors often are specified by **gender roles**. Gender roles can be defined as roles society expects people to play on account of their sex. Although differences based on sex exist, sociologists believe that most of the variation we attribute to men and women are in fact learned traits and behaviors. In fact, both in psychological abilities and physical abilities, men and women are remarkably similar to one another (Hyde, 2005). Culturally, however, every society divides the sexes according to differing gender traits, a process that leads to gender roles. Like all roles, gender roles are made up of sets of expectations, so they can be thought of as sets of expectations that are attached to sex. One example of gender roles can be seen in the world of work (Spence, Deaux, and Helmreich, 1985). Society expects women to fill certain occupations and men to fill others. Thus, male nurses and female firefighters are still the exception to the rule. Men wishing to be nurses and women wishing to be firefighters will discover that their wishes go against the expectations of many people and that they can become the objects of ridicule or hostility.

Gender roles also exist with respect to interpersonal behavior (it is still more common for men to ask women for dates than vice versa), the family (the wife and mother is still expected to take primary responsibility for matters pertaining to the home, even if she is employed), and recreational activities (how many women are on your college football team, and how many men do you know who sew because they enjoy it?). In fact, men and women are expected to fill different roles in virtually every area of life. Even if these roles are less rigidly defined than in the past, they are still influential. In 2001, for example, a Gallup poll asked a national sample about ten traits—did people think the traits were generally more true of men or of women?

Of the ten, five (emotional, affectionate, talkative, patient, and creative) were clearly associated with women by most respondents, and two (aggressive, courageous) with men. Only three traits (intelligent, ambitious, easygoing) were about equally likely to be associated with men or women (Newport, 2001).

Sexism

Gender roles are not only *different*, they are often *unequal*. Structured inequality between men and women, and the norms, roles, and beliefs that support such inequality, are called **sexism**. Sexism takes a variety of forms. One form is ideological sexism, the belief that one sex is inferior to another. Ideological sexism is often used to justify sexual discrimination, unequal treatment on the basis of sex. Some men believe incorrectly that women are “too emotional” for certain jobs that require high levels of responsibility—an example of ideological sexism. They then use that belief as an excuse or justification for sexual discrimination—refusal to hire or promote women into jobs with high levels of responsibility. Today, however, the most important form of sexism is probably **institutional sexism**. This term refers to systematic practices and patterns within social institutions that lead to inequality between men and women. One such pattern, which is discussed later in this chapter, is the relatively low pay of occupations in which most workers are women—even compared to predominantly male occupations with similar educational requirements and levels of responsibility.

Traditional American Gender Roles

Different and unequal gender roles have long been a part of Western culture. In the United States and most other Western societies, social positions involving leadership, power, decision-making, and interacting with the larger world have traditionally gone to men. Positions centering around dependency, family concerns, child care, and self-adornment have traditionally gone to women.

The Male Role

These unequal gender roles mean that men and women are expected to behave differently in a number of situations (Broverman et al., 1972; Deaux and Lewis, 1983, 1984). Men are expected to be leaders, to take control, to make decisions, and to be active, worldly, unemotional, and aggressive. Through his actions, a man is said to determine his own status. At the same time, men are not expected to talk about (or even necessarily understand) their inner feelings. They are permitted to be blunt, loud, and a bit sloppy. In their relationships with women, men are expected to take the initiative, and sexual gratification is often a higher priority than interpersonal intimacy.

However, the most important characteristic of the male role in the United States is probably that it carries disproportionate power. It is this feature of the male role that allows men to be paid more for the work they do, while simultaneously enjoying more leisure time. As Barbara Reskin (1988) puts it, "Dominant groups remain privileged because they write the rules." She points out that as circumstances change, powerful groups such as men find new reasons to justify their advantage. When most breadwinners were male, men argued that their higher pay was justified because they had to support families. Today, with the large number of single female heads of households, the justification is different: Men's higher wages are justified on the basis that men are typically in different occupations than women (Reskin, 1988).

The male role carries power in a variety of ways—elected public offices and corporate boards and management positions are occupied mostly by males, while the higher income that most husbands receive often relegates wives to a position of economic dependency in the home. This was particularly true in the past when most middle-class women did not work outside the home, but women's lower pay still keeps many of them financially dependent on their husband's income. Even the emotional inexpressiveness of men has been seen by some sociologists as a source of power, because it is a mechanism many men use to withhold their true feelings from their partners (Sattel, 1989). In fact, such use of power is so much a part of the male role

and the male subculture that men similarly withhold feelings from one another. They do this because they believe that to do otherwise would make them vulnerable and let other men gain advantage over them (Sattel, 1989).

The Female Role

Women have traditionally been expected to be dependent, emotional, and unable to exercise leadership, excel at math, or make decisions. As a result, their status in life was often seen as a product not of their own actions but of the actions of the man to whom they were married. Women have also been expected to be neater and more considerate than men, to have a better understanding of their own feelings and those of others, to have a higher standard of morality, and to be more appreciative of art, religion, and literature (Beutel and Marini, 1995). In relationships, they have been expected to view intimacy as more important than sexual gratification. Women who take the initiative have traditionally been regarded as "pushy."

Although a perception of basic differences in gender roles is deeply embedded in U.S. culture, some changes have occurred. In early American history, for example, property ownership and the right to vote were reserved for males. Even in the area of child-rearing—where the day-to-day work was done by women—ultimate authority lay with males. Today, women, in theory, enjoy the same rights of voting and property ownership as men, although, in reality, both politics and material wealth remain disproportionately controlled by males. Our view of the female role has evolved greatly over the past two or three decades. As we see in much of the discussion in the rest of the chapter, though women may not have succeeded yet in ridding themselves of all aspects of the traditional female role (nor would they necessarily want to), they have expanded it to include behaviors that are much more self-determining.

Gender-Role Variations in the United States

While gender roles have always been unequal, there has been considerable variation in the specific nature of gender roles, both over time and among different groups within the United States. In early America, for example, both men

and women were involved in producing salable goods—and both worked at home, farming or making products that could be sold (Degler, 1980). Although both men and women were involved in child-rearing and home care, the majority of this work fell to women. The authority over children, however, as well as property rights, belonged to men.

Later, for middle-class women, the housewife role became predominant. As work moved outside the home, it was the men who moved with it—which preserved their economic control. The role of housewife was justified on the basis that it protected women from the harsh realities of the workplace, and many women saw it as a gain in that they no longer had responsibility for both taking care of the home and children and producing goods to be sold. In reality, however, it limited what women could become, by prohibiting them from taking on careers.

For working-class women and most African American women, the situation was different. Economic realities forced them to work outside the home, so most of them never experienced an exclusive housewife role (Glenn, 1980; Jones, 1985; Seifer, 1973). Many of them worked at hard, low-paying jobs in textile mills and other industries, and many others cleaned the houses and cared for the children of the more affluent.

Today, the situation has changed somewhat, with far fewer women in the housewife role. The change has been most notable for middle-class women, many of whom are moving into more challenging and lucrative careers. However, as we soon see in greater detail, women continue to be paid less than men with comparable education. Today women employed full time are still paid only about 79 percent as much as men employed full time. Women in the workplace often encounter a “glass ceiling” that limits their chances to move up in the organization; thus, the jobs with the greatest status and power are usually occupied by males (De Prete and Soule, 1988). Moreover, there has been less change for women who lack a college education: They continue to be concentrated in low-paying clerical, household, and fast-food and other service jobs. Finally, women continue to shoulder

most of the responsibility for household work and child-rearing, which is the main reason men enjoy more leisure time.

Cultural Variation in Gender Roles

Gender Roles: A Cultural Universal?

As we have seen, gender roles have always existed in the United States, and, although they have changed over time, they have always been marked by inequality. Is this the case throughout the world? The answer appears to be that nearly all societies have gender roles, though the nature of those roles varies widely. In most societies, gender roles are unequal; nevertheless, there are clear examples of societies in which this is not the case.

In a classic study, Murdock (1935) found that the overwhelming majority of societies do divide at least some tasks by sex. However, the *content* of those gender roles—that is, precisely what men and women are expected to do and to be—varies widely. Murdock found only a few tasks that are nearly always done by men or by women. In over 80 percent of the societies he studied, hunting, fishing, and trapping were predominantly or exclusively the jobs of males, whereas cooking, carrying water, grinding grain, and gathering roots and seeds were primarily female chores. However, most tasks were done by males in some societies, by females in others, and by both sexes in yet others. Examples of such tasks are various farming activities, constructing shelter, starting and maintaining care of fires, carrying objects, and preparing drinks and medicine.

The housewife role, once so ingrained in American society, is far from universal, even among modern industrial societies. In the former Soviet Union, both men and women have long been expected to contribute to the financial support of the household through employment. In Japan, Thailand, and the Philippines, the majority of adult women are employed outside the home, and in China, virtually all women are. Similarly, patterns of occupational segregation vary considerably. In the former Soviet Union, for example, over two-thirds of all medical doctors are women. As we see shortly,

however, all of the aforementioned societies still have sexual inequality, despite the absence of the housewife role.

Androgynous Societies

There are at least a few societies where the roles of men and women differ little, if at all. Social scientists refer to such societies as **androgynous societies**. Margaret Mead's (1935) famous studies of three societies in New Guinea present two such examples. In one of them, the Arapesh, both men and women play what in America would be considered a feminine role. Both are gentle, strongly child oriented, and giving. In the second, the Mundugumor, both men and women play a role we would consider masculine. They are loud and aggressive, fight a great deal, and are very uninterested in children. In the third society she studied, the Tchambuli, sex roles exist, but they are the opposite of what we are familiar with in industrialized countries. Economic production is the role of women, whereas men concern themselves with self-adornment and trying to gain favors and approval from women. In fact, this society could be defined as female dominant.

At least as common as androgynous societies, however, are societies in which gender roles are different but relatively equal. One example of this can be seen in Native American groups that were primarily horticulturalist, including several Southeastern tribes. Among these groups, women were often responsible for raising crops and often provided the majority of the group's food—giving them power and status comparable to that of men in their societies. Studies of Native American societies reveal that the more women's roles involve the production of the essentials of life, the higher their status has tended to be (Nordstrom, 1992).

Are Societies Becoming More Androgynous?

There is evidence that many societies are becoming more androgynous than they were in the past. The proportion of women in the paid labor force has risen across much of the world over the past few decades. China today proclaims the legal equality of men and women, yet just a few generations ago women were virtually the property of men and were expected

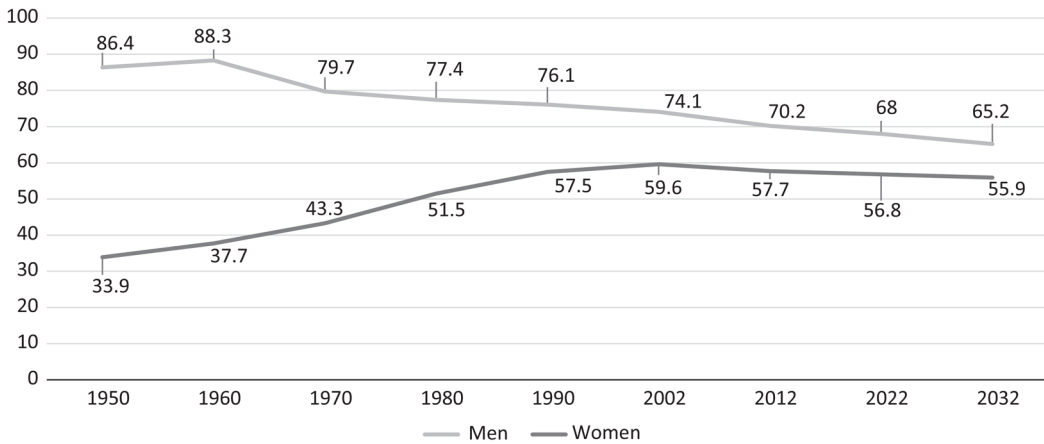
to live for the purpose of serving their husbands. Although China is a dramatic case that undoubtedly changed more than most countries because of the communist revolution that occurred there after World War II, its direction of change parallels that of much of the world. In most countries, including the United States, modernization eventually has been accompanied by the large-scale entry of women into the paid labor force and by increased legal recognition of the rights of women. In fact, looking at Figure 8.1, projections for 2032 predict quite similar labor force participation rates for men and women in the United States. Dozens of countries today have laws forbidding sex discrimination in at least some areas of life. As recently as a century ago, such laws were unheard of in many of these countries.

While modernization usually leads toward greater gender equality, the influence of modern societies on less-developed ones sometimes has the opposite effect. In the Third World, colonialism in its various forms, including the influence of multinational corporations, has often led to *increased inequality* between men and women (Boserup, 1970). When private property systems were introduced in land ownership, for example, women more often than men lost traditional land-use rights (Sen and Grown, 1987). Investment by multinationals has tended to displace women from their traditional occupations, while most of the new jobs created have gone to men (Ward, 1984).

Male Dominance: A Cross-Cultural View

The vast majority of the world's societies have historically been *male dominant* and remain so. Although many societies are becoming more androgynous, they have yet to eliminate either distinct gender roles or gender inequality. In Russia, for example, where most doctors are women, that profession enjoys neither the prestige nor the high pay that it does in the United States. In Russian society, the leadership of both the national government and the republics has remained a male domain. Women have been almost totally absent from important Soviet and Russian government posts. In China, which unlike Russia remains communist, women are not much better represented. In parts of the

Figure 8.1 Labor force participation rates of men and women in the United States: 1950–2032 (projected).



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Table 3.3 Civilian labor force participation rates by age, sex, race, and ethnicity, 2002, 2012, 2022, and projected 2032 (in percent) www.bls.gov/emp/tables/civilian-labor-force-participation-rate.htm.

world, especially Africa, women are subject to surgical removal of their clitoris, referred to as female genital mutilation, simply to make them more desirable to men. The surgery is painful, often leads to medical complications, and, of course, alters a woman's sexual functioning for life. Well over 100 million women are estimated to have undergone genital mutilation across the globe. The Scandinavian countries have long been regarded as leaders in the effort to bring about equality between the sexes, yet significant inequalities exist even there. Their parliaments are just less than three-fifths male, except in Sweden, where the percentage of women is about 44 percent (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2016). Swedish and Norwegian women earn around 87 percent of what men in those countries earn—better than women in the United States or Canada but still not equality (Swedish Institute, 2016; Statistics Norway, 2000).

In virtually all societies studied by Murdock (1935) and others, political structures are controlled more by males than by females. This remains true today even though women such as Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher, and Golda Meir have been prominent world leaders, and even though the proportion of women in government has risen in a number of countries. The significance of these findings is that, in most societies, *power* is predominantly in the

hands of males. In many societies, too, economic activities performed away from the home are largely a male domain, whereas the home and family are more the domain of women. Until the past few decades, whenever women did engage in economic production, it was usually in the home. Even today, when women are active in the labor force in many societies, they nearly always earn less on average than men. Taking all this into consideration, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that male dominance, though not universal, is much more the rule than the exception among the world's societies. (Examples of studies illustrating this include Wright and Baxter, 1995; Sorensen and Trappe, 1995; Casper, McLanahan, and Garfinkel, 1994; Zhang and Farley, 1995.)

Note that although rates for men still substantially exceed those for women, the gap has closed significantly. What implications does this hold for the U.S. economy as we move deeper into the twenty-first century?

Gender-Role Socialization: An Interactionist Analysis

Gender roles, like all social roles, are learned through socialization (Bem, 1993). There are probably some behavioral differences between

the sexes that reflect biological influences. Males may, for example, have a slight natural tendency to be more aggressive than females (Frieze et al., 1978; Gove, 1985). This tendency is almost a cultural universal (Whiting and Edwards, 1976), and even newborn males tend to be slightly more active than females. Part of the reason may be hormonal (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974). For example, Udry (2000) found that hormonal variations, both prenatal and in adulthood, could explain around 16 percent of the variation in the femininity/masculinity of young adult women's behavior, and that high exposure to male hormones prior to birth made the women less sensitive to variations in how their mothers raised them. Udry suggests that an implication of this is that female behavior may more easily change to become more like traditional male behavior than the reverse. This is because nearly all males have as much in the way of male hormones as did the females in his study who had the highest levels of male hormones. Still, it is important to keep in mind that most variation in female adult behavior was left unexplained by Udry's measurements of hormonal differences. In addition, there are wide variations among societies in the levels of aggressiveness of both men and women, and male-female differences in aggression are highly situation specific (Maccoby, 1980). These facts indicate the importance of social factors in shaping gendered human behavior.

There may also be a slight biological basis for the development of different skills in men and women (Halpern et al., 2007; Ngun et al., 2010; Rossi, 1985). Girls usually develop somewhat earlier than boys, while boys have slightly better visual-spatial perception (Stockard and Johnson, 1992). These small differences may be the product of either hormonal differences or differences in brain hemisphere dominance (D. Halpern, 1992). Differences in verbal and mathematical achievement, on the other hand, seem to be socially induced and are not the product of innate differences in ability. Such differences are not consistent across cultures (Tobias, 1978), and in the United States, they have been decreasing to the point that, on many tasks, there is no longer a demonstrable gender difference (American Psychological Association,

2014; Hyde and Linn, 1988; Hyde, Fennema, and Lamon, 1990; Linn and Hyde, 1989).

Although the evidence concerning moral development is inconsistent, there is no evidence of innate differences between males and females in such areas as conformity, social orientation, and overall achievement. Thus, social experiences are a major factor, and perhaps the dominant factor, in explaining sexual differences in how we think and behave.

How Gender Roles Develop

Given the limits to what biological differences can explain, how do males and females learn such different roles? As we saw in Chapter 5, the values and expectations of society are transmitted through the socialization process. From infancy through adulthood, male and female human beings are treated differently and given different messages. The result is that small natural differences in behavioral predisposition become greatly exaggerated, and men and women come to think of themselves in different ways and to play different roles in life. The process by which different and, in many cultures, unequal, gender roles are transmitted is called **gender-role socialization**. In this part of the chapter, we examine how gender roles are taught by four key agents of socialization: the family, the school, the media, and the peer group.

Teaching Gender Roles in the Home

For the most part, parents in the United States today do not try to teach boys to be aggressive or girls to be submissive or dependent (Lytton and Romney, 1991; Johnson, 1988). However, there is gender-typing in how children are expected to play, in what chores they are expected to do around the house, and in the toys that are chosen for them. Significantly (since men are the group that stands to gain from gender inequality), these differences in gender-typing are greater among fathers than among mothers (Blackmore and Hill, 2008; Bradley and Gobbart, 1989; Holub, Tisak, and Mullins, 2008;

Lytton and Romney, 1991; Roest, Dubas, and Gerris, 2010). There are also differences in how rooms are decorated (Rheingold and Cook, 1975) and in the amount of freedom given (boys get more, particularly in father-dominant families) (Hagan, Simpson, and Gillis, 1987). Parents today are probably less likely than in the past to consciously socialize their boys and girls in different ways, but they still sometimes do so unconsciously. Campbell and Beaudry (1998) illustrate this in a study of socialization and math achievement. They found that, even among high achievers, girls had less confidence in their math ability and received a greater amount of dysfunctional help from their parents. They suggest that the parents meant well and tried to help their daughters but in doing so conveyed an unintentional message that, no matter how good they actually were, they still “needed help.” Such messages were not conveyed to boys of comparable ability.

Some gender-role socialization also occurs through modeling—children see their parents in gender-typed roles and behavior. Fathers, for example, have less contact with their children on average than mothers do, and the contact they have is more likely to involve play activities rather than directing mundane activities such as brushing teeth or getting ready for school (Stockard and Johnson, 1992). Some research suggests that modeling of peers and media images may be a more significant factor than modeling of parents, since not much correlation has been found between the degree of gender-typing in parents and their children (Whiting and Edwards, 1988). Even so, gender roles observed in the home do tell children a good deal about how men and women are expected to behave and thus may contribute to the long-term development of gender roles.

Some effects of gender-role socialization develop quite early. By the age of five years,



Photo 8.1 By the age of five years, boys and girls play with different toys and can identify different occupations as “men’s jobs” or “women’s jobs”.

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boys and girls prefer different toys and can identify different occupations as being “men’s jobs” and “women’s jobs” (Garrett, Ein, and Tremaine, 1977; Masters and Wilkinson, 1976). They can identify stereotypical male and female traits even earlier—sometimes as young as three years old (Reis and Wright, 1982). In large part, this is because of what their parents teach them, sometimes unconsciously (Witt, 1997). Even recent studies show that parents still buy action-oriented toys for boys but home- and family-oriented toys like dolls and dishes for girls (Doskoch and Jones, 1996). Sweet (2013) found that advertisers have used gender stereotyping in children’s toys to increase sales and alter consumer behavior in ways favorable to them. This has meant that in some eras the gendered nature of children’s toys has been stronger than in others. In the early twentieth century, for instance, the influence of gender was slight, but by midcentury it was pervasive. In the 1970s, it had died down again, but current toys were found to be as gendered as ever (Sweet, 2013).

Teaching Gender Roles in the School

Gender-role socialization continues when children reach school. The tendency to prefer different kinds of toys—which symbolize

different roles in life—continues. One study, for example, showed that in kindergarten, girls are encouraged to play with dolls, and boys are encouraged to play with wheeled toys and building blocks (Best, 1983). Girls' toys thus come to represent a domestic, child-oriented role, whereas boys' toys represent going out into the world, doing and building. Children also often see different images of males and females in their school books and materials, although there has been some improvement in recent years. Studies of these materials indicate a number of ways they teach gender inequality. The main characters, for example, are more likely to be male than female, particularly in older books that remain in use in some schools (Grauerholz and Pescosolido, 1989; *Women on Words and Images*, 1974). Male characters display creativity, bravery, achievement, and similar themes, while female characters display emotion, fear, and dependency (Key, 1975; Kolbe and LaVoie, 1981; Williams et al., 1987). Good things that happen to male characters result from their own efforts, while good things that happen to female characters result from luck or the actions of others (Penrod, 1986, p. 88). Sex stereotypes have been found in books ranging from math books (Federbush, 1974) to introductory sociology textbooks (Feree and Hall, 1990).

Stereotyping did decrease during the 1970s and 1980s, as women's groups and social researchers pointed out the stereotypes that appeared in many books and school materials. Still, recent studies show that stereotyping has not been eliminated (Feree and Hall, 1990; Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989; Williams et al., 1987). One study found male lead characters still two to three times as common as female lead characters in the 1980s (Grauerholz and Pescosolido, 1989), while another study found gender equity in lead characters but still an overrepresentation of males in subsidiary characters (Paterson and Lach, 1990). Yet another recent study found gender equity in lead characters, slight and declining male predominance (compared to earlier studies) in all human characters, but a persistence of a strong male predominance among personified animal characters (Oskamp, Kaufman, and Wolterbeek, 1996).

Children also get a message about gender from what they see firsthand in their schools. Although the teaching profession has historically been a largely female occupation, the proportion of women in the profession falls as the importance and status of the job increase. As you move from kindergarten through grade school, junior high school, high school, and on to college, there are progressively fewer female teachers and more male teachers. At every level of education, the proportion of women among principals and administrators is lower than it is among teachers. The message children get from this is clear: The most important and highest-status jobs are for men.

Another process that takes place in schools is subject channeling. Boys are expected to excel in math, science, and logic; girls are expected to excel in reading, art, and music. These expectations occur in the home and in school. Parents frequently believe that learning math and science is more important for boys than for girls (Parsons, Adler, and Kaczala, 1982) and thus do more to encourage boys to learn these subjects. In school, teachers and counselors have similar beliefs. They sometimes encourage boys to take more math and science than girls, and they often expect higher achievement from boys than from girls in these subjects (Coakley, 1972; Curran, 1980; Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson, 1994; Campbell, 1992; Oakes and The Rand Corporation, 1990; Shroyer et al., 1994). One study found that when boys do well in math, teachers attribute it to ability, whereas when girls do well, teachers attribute it to effort (Fennema et al., 1990). In recent years, differences in mathematics grades between boys and girls have decreased, but there has been very little change in the tendency for girls to take less high school math than boys, and the same pattern holds for men and women in college (Callas, 1993). An important consequence of such channeling is that young men and women choose different college majors, which prepare them for different occupations. Gender differences in the choice of major have narrowed considerably over the past half-century, but they have not disappeared (Table 8.1).

Such different treatment of children on the basis of gender sometimes combines with

Table 8.1 Percentage of Bachelor's Degrees Awarded to Women by Discipline: 1966, 1981, 1989, 1998, 2007, and 2014 (Selected Fields)

<i>Discipline</i>	<i>1966* (%)</i>	<i>1981 (%)</i>	<i>1989 (%)</i>	<i>1998 (%)</i>	<i>2007† (%)</i>	<i>2014 (%)</i>
Agriculture	2.7	30.8	31.1	41.7	46.8	53.2
Architecture	4.0	18.3	39.3	35.1	44.5	42.1
Biological sciences	28.2	44.1	50.2	55.1	60.2	60.1
Business	8.5	36.7	46.7	48.5	49.2	47.2
Computer and information science	13.01	32.5	30.7	26.7	18.6	18.0
Education	75.3	75.0	77.7	75.2	78.7	79.4
Engineering	0.4	10.3	13.6	16.9	18.4	19.8
English and English literature	66.2	66.5	—	66.9	68.3	68.6
Foreign languages	70.7	75.6	73.3	70.0	69.6	69.2
Health	76.9	83.5	84.9	82.9	85.9	84.4
Home economics	97.5	95.5	90.6	87.6	—	—
Mathematics	33.3	42.8	46.0	46.5	44.1	43.0
Physical sciences	13.6	24.6	29.7	39.4	40.9	39.1
Psychology	41.0	65.0	70.8	74.4	77.4	76.7
Social sciences	35.0	44.2	44.4	49.2	49.8	51.1
Economics	9.8	30.5	—	31.7	—	30.5
History	34.6	37.9	—	39.1	41.3	39.7
Sociology	59.6	69.6	—	68.8	—	68.7

*Data are for 1969, the earliest year available.

†Data are for the 2006–2007 period.

Note: —, not available. Note that women are most highly represented in home economics and health, which reflect the traditional female role, and are most underrepresented in such “technical” areas as engineering and architecture. However, note also the rapid changes in such areas as architecture, biology, and business, particularly in the 1966–1989 period.

Source: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, “Earned Degrees Conferred: 1965–66”; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, “Earned Degrees Conferred, 1980–81”; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, “Trends in Bachelor's and Higher Degrees, 1975–1985”; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1992; National Center for Education Statistics. 2001. *Digest of Education Statistics* (2000), Table 257. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo>, National Center for Education Statistics (2016a). *Digest of Education Statistics*, Table 318.30, Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor's Degrees Conferred by Postsecondary Institutions, by Sex of Student and Discipline Division: 2013–14, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_318.30.asp?current=yes (downloaded March 6, 2016). National Center for Education Statistics (2008), table 285. <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d08/tables/dt08-285.asp> (data may not be available online).

unequal treatment based on race, creating special problems for African American girls. Observations of a first-grade classroom revealed that black female students, more than any other group, received attention based on their social skills rather than their academic skills. Similarly, they were the most likely to act as “go-betweens” in negotiations among teachers and students—particularly when the negotiators were of different race or gender. This may direct black females toward maintaining peace among others rather than developing their own skills—a stereotypical role of black women (Grant, 1984).

Teaching Gender Roles on Television

Most children in the United States today spend more time watching television than they spend either in school or talking to their parents. What kinds of messages do they get from television about the roles of men and women? Whether we consider television entertainment or television advertising, the evidence is that they often get stereotyped messages.

Television entertainment, for example, often gives messages that reinforce the segregation of men and women into separate occupations.

Between 1950 and 1980, 95 percent of doctors on television were men, and 99 percent of nurses were women (Kalisch and Kalisch, 1984). In general, television roles that involve leadership and decision-making have historically been played by men, whereas women's roles have been either to be home centered or, if at work, to be in a following rather than leading role. There has been some change in these stereotypes over the past few decades. Women have appeared on television in recent years as tough cops, savvy lawyers, and private investigators, but some who have researched these trends argue that new stereotypes have appeared. Although women are now portrayed more often in roles involving accomplishment or "toughness," they are playing such roles differently than men play them (Roman, 1986). Female police officers, for example, may be portrayed as either more caring than male officers or more devious and conniving; male officers are shown as more aggressive and quicker to use force—thus perpetuating gender stereotypes. Rapping (2000) points out that while strong, successful women appear more often on TV today, their lives often center around traditional male-female relationships or family obligations. She cites as examples shows such as *Providence* where successful professional women return to their hometowns to meet family obligations (thereby subtly conveying the message that such obligations are the responsibility of women). The shift in recent years to "reality" shows has also brought renewed stereotyping. A study of *America's Most Wanted*, for example, showed that women were portrayed as victims in need of assistance, while men were portrayed either as brutal attackers or as "protectors" who used their expertise to protect female victims (Cavender, Bond-Maupin, and Jurik, 1999). Two other patterns are worth noting. First, women are consistently portrayed on television as younger than men (Elasmar, Hasegawa, and Brain, 1999; Milner and Collins, 2000). This reinforces the notion that youthful good looks are important for women, while experience and accomplishment may be more valued in men. Finally, despite some improvement, women remain underrepresented on prime-time TV. By the early 1990s, fewer than 40 percent of prime-time TV characters were

female, the same proportion found in 2011—up from less than 20 percent in the early 1970s but still an underrepresentation (Bahadur, 2012; Elasmar, Hasegawa, and Brain, 1999).

Although sex stereotyping may have become more subtle in television entertainment, it is hardly subtle in television advertising. Very attractive and often thinly clad females are used to sell everything from cars to shaving products to electronic gadgets. Sometimes the message is more about sex than about the product. When a woman is the lead in a commercial, the message is much more likely to be based on attractiveness than when a man is the lead (Downs and Harrison, 1985). In contrast, the voice of authority on most commercials is male (Klemesrud, 1981). Significantly, male voice-overs are most common when the actors on the commercial are attractive women (Downs and Harrison, 1985). The hidden message is that women are pretty, and men are knowledgeable and authoritative. Besides being attractive, women are also portrayed as engaging in rather mindless behaviors, usually in the home. They frequently become excited about a small improvement in a detergent or floor cleaner or about the softness of facial tissues or toilet paper.

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that social scientists have found that children who watch more television are more stereotyped in their own thinking than children who watch less (Berk, 1974; Frueh and McGhee, 1975; see also Tan, 1979). Moreover, those who are exposed to stereotypical television become more stereotyped in their own thinking, whereas those who see counter-stereotypical television become less stereotyped (Geis et al., 1984; Johnson, Ettema, and Davidson, 1980; Johnson and Davidson, 1981; McArthur and Eisen, 1976; Miller and Reeves, 1976). Taking all this into consideration, there is no doubt that television has been and remains an important means by which gender roles are taught.

How Peers Teach Gender Roles

Some of the strongest pressures for gender-role conformity come from peers. The peer group enforces the principle that boys and girls are

supposed to enjoy different activities and play different roles. The reward for conforming to such norms is approval and inclusion; the costs of violating them include rejection, ridicule, and social isolation. In general, peer pressures for gender-role conformity are stronger among boys than among girls (Hartley, 1974). It is worse for a boy to be labeled a “sissy” than for a girl to be labeled a “tomboy.” The “tomboy,” after all, is only seeking to move from what society has defined as an inferior role into one that society views more favorably; the “sissy” is doing the reverse. In fact, boys are sometimes so negative toward the traditional female role that as a result even girls look down upon it. Best (1983), for example, has noted cases in which girls became reluctant to be seen playing with dolls by the third grade. Why? Because boys made fun of them. The message here, of course, is that the traditional female role of domesticity is inferior and is therefore to be avoided.

Pressures for conformity to “boys’ play” and “girls’ play” start young; they have even been found among preschoolers as young as three years old (Lamb, Easterbrooks, and Holden, 1980). However, these pressures increase as children move through their education, and by the third or fourth grade, they are reinforced by a strong system of sex segregation in play: Boys play with boys and girls play with girls. Within each group, strong pressures exist for “sex-appropriate” behavior. Peer pressures for boys to be masculine and for girls to be attractive appear to be strongest in adolescence (Bernard, 1981, p. 137; Coleman, 1961). In addition, on the “borders” of sex segregation, when boys and girls do interact at school or day care, it is often in the form of chasing, “pollution rituals” (such as giving “cooties”), and invasions, in which interactions between boys and girls establish male dominance and aggressiveness and female submission and victimization (Thorne, 1993; Voss, 1997).

How Gender Roles Are Learned

We have seen that the family, the school, the media, and the peer group all send children messages about the different roles of men and women. We now explore further the process by

which these sex roles are learned, and we see evidence that if the socialization process were different, girls and boys would not be channeled toward different roles in life in the ways that they are now.

The Looking-Glass Self and Gender-Role Socialization

Recall from Chapters 3 and 5 Charles Horton Cooley’s (1929 [orig. 1909]) concept of the *looking-glass self*.

According to Cooley, our self-image is a product of the messages we receive from others and the ways we understand and interpret those messages. When the messages are different and unequal, as messages given to boys and girls often are, it is hardly surprising that boys and girls come to see themselves differently. Girls are often told that they are understanding, attractive, well-behaved, and good in art and reading, while boys are told that they are hardy, mischievous, and good at math, science, and building things. On the other hand, girls are told that they are delicate and not so good at math and science, and boys are not expected to be understanding or good at art or creative writing. These messages create a self-fulfilling prophecy: Very often, boys and girls do become different kinds of people. Thus, for example, boys *become* better than girls at math and science. Although there is no difference in their ability test scores in the early grades, boys do score higher than girls by seventh or eighth grade, with the difference increasing until high school graduation (see Benbow and Stanley, 1980; Curran, 1980; Fairweather, 1976). However, these differences are smaller today than in the past, with the National Assessment of Educational Progress showing that in recent years among high school seniors, boys have on average outscored girls in math by about three points (The Nation’s Report Card, 2016a). On the other hand, girls average about ten points higher in reading (The Nation’s Report Card, 2016b).

Moreover, a variety of evidence suggests that when boys and girls are exposed to similar expectations and messages, such differences either do not develop or can be largely reversed (Coser,

1986; Newcombe, Bandura, and Taylor, 1983; Tobias, 1978). For example, such differences do not develop in societies that do not channel girls away from jobs involving math, science, and reasoning, even if other types of sexual inequality exist. The Soviet Union was one example of such a society (Tobias, 1978). In addition, such differences do not develop in some schools even in the United States, quite possibly because these schools make efforts not to channel boys and girls toward separate occupations. Finally, girls who, for whatever reason, resist the message and develop a sufficiently strong interest in math and science to take advanced courses do just as well as the boys in these courses (College Entrance Examination Board, 1974).

Modeling and Gender-Role Socialization

As we saw in Chapter 5, repeated and selective exposure to a particular behavior pattern leads to modeling of that behavior pattern. This is particularly true when children identify with the model, as they do with their parents. It is clear from the foregoing discussion that in nearly every aspect of their lives, children are exposed to images of men and women in very different roles. Does this selective exposure lead to modeling, as we would expect? Evidence suggests that it does.

Modeling and Occupations

One example of modeling can be seen in the occupational aspirations of boys and girls. Despite all the recent changes in the roles of men and women, most boys and girls still plan on seeking jobs that have traditionally been held by people of their sex (Sellers, Satcher, and Comas, 1999). Gender effects on job expectations interact with effects of race and class. Being a member of two or more minority statuses is sometimes called **double or triple jeopardy**, as individuals may experience multiple forms of discrimination and prejudice at the same time. For instance, a gay African American woman might be said to experience triple jeopardy because she would be a member of three distinct minority groups.

At the same time, it is true among all social classes that boys and girls aspire to different kinds of jobs (Sellers, Satcher, and Comas, 1999). In general, the more that children are exposed to sexual stereotypes at home or through the media, the more stereotyped their thinking is (Hoyenga and Hoyenga, 1979, pp. 214–18). Robb and Raven (1982), for example, found that children of mothers who are employed full time see fewer sex-stereotyped roles in the home than other children, and these children in fact become less stereotypical in their own thinking. And these stereotypes do matter: Research confirms that the different occupational goals and expectations of young men and women frequently lead them into different lines of work (Okamoto and England, 1999).

Structured Sexual Inequality: Power

As stated earlier, gender roles, as they exist in the United States, are not just *different*; they are also *unequal*. Whether you consider power, income, or occupational status, men in the United States are an advantaged group compared to women. Let us consider each of these areas in greater detail.

Although we examined the concept of *power* in Chapter 6 in considerable detail, and we look at it again in Chapters 9, 10, and 12, we briefly introduce and define it here, because it is an important area in which men and women experience social inequality. Power can be defined as the ability to get other people to behave in ways that you desire. Power is often exercised through the political system. It frequently rises from authority—the right to make certain decisions that is attached to a certain social position. We focus on power as it relates to men and women in two key areas: positions of authority and power within the family.

Men, Women, and Positions of Authority

One way to judge the power of a social group is to gauge whether that group is well represented

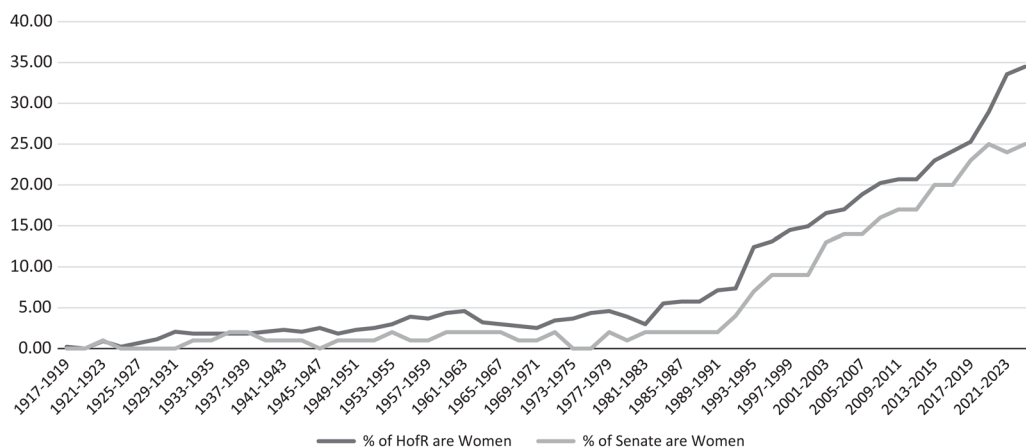
among people known to hold power. Clearly, power in the form of authority is held by people in certain positions in business and government. CEOs of businesses, political officials, and certain public administrators, such as city managers and school administrators, have considerable power.

How well-represented are women in these positions of power? Part of the answer can be found in Figure 8.2a-b. Even today, women are almost completely absent from the most important positions of power. Although more than one in five elected officials overall is

female, the percentage is smaller, although it has grown, when we look at the most important positions such as governors and U.S. senators and representatives. When we consider the top political levels, we find that only one woman has ever even been nominated for president by a major party, Hillary Clinton, in 2016; and it was not until the election of 2020 that a woman, Kamala Harris of California, became the vice president of the United States in 2021.

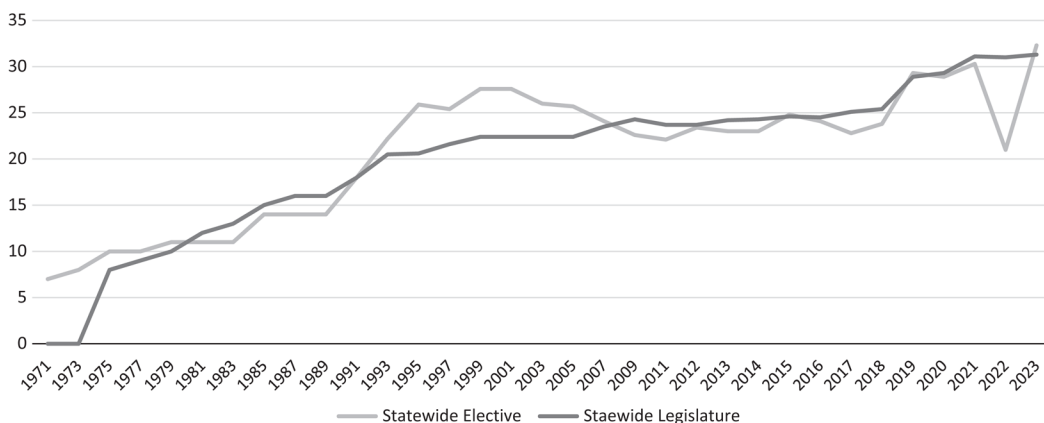
Despite some improvement in recent years, women remain severely underrepresented in top corporate executive positions and boards, and

Figure 8.2(a) Percentage of Women Among U.S. Senators and Representatives, 1980–2023.



Source: Center for American Women and Politics. <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/levels-office/congress/history-women-us-congress>.

Figure 8.2(b) Percentage of Women Among Statewide Office Holders and State Legislators, 1980–2023.



Source: Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP). Women in Elective Offices 2023. cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/current-numbers/women-elective-office-2023 (Downloaded September 28, 2023).

among the biggest companies, women are almost totally missing from top positions. Overall, just 6 percent of U.S. commercial organizations have women in their highest leadership positions (Guthrie and Roth, 1999). In 2016, just 23 of the Fortune 500 companies had female CEOs—fewer than 6 percent of the companies but still almost 12 times as many as in 2001 (*USA Today*, 2009; Catalyst, 2001, 2016). Also, female CEOs are paid less on average than male CEOs (*USA Today*, 2009; Lowen, 2009). In 2008, 15.2 percent of the members of the boards of directors of the 500 largest companies were women—a small proportion but still a 50 percent increase since 1984 (Catalyst, 2008).

Women in Politics

No longer can it be said that women are under-represented in positions of power because few women seek out such positions. Women may still be somewhat less likely than men to run for political office, but more and more have done so in recent years. More have been elected, too, and a majority of Americans say that it would be good for the country to have more women in political office (Simmons, 2001). In 2020, Kamal Harris became the first female vice president of the United States. However, women still have a hard time getting elected to the highest offices.

In 2016 a major political party finally nominated the first woman to represent the party for president, Hillary Clinton. She won the popular vote by around a million votes, demonstrating the willingness of U.S. voters to support a woman for president. However, the geographic distribution of those votes was such that her opponent, Donald Trump, won more electoral votes and thus defeated her in the election.

Women in the Business World

In the business world, the absence of women in part reflects the reluctance of male boards of directors to appoint women to top executive positions. And the boards do remain male dominated. In 2015, only 19.9 percent of the seats

on the boards of the S&P 500 corporations were filled by women (Catalyst, 2016b)

This represents progress, since in the past, men were more likely to have these jobs than women. Today, there are many women in lower- and middle-level management, but as previously noted, women still have difficulty rising to the highest levels of management that have real organizational decision-making power. Too often, their opportunities to move into such positions have been blocked by an informal **glass ceiling** that limits how high women can move in the organization. In contrast, men who work in traditionally female-dominated occupations often experience an advantage at hiring time and in promotions, and make higher salaries and incomes, a pattern sometimes known as the **glass escalator**.

Women in the corporate world encounter barriers that inhibit their opportunities to gain real power. In corporations with relatively few women managers, women in management are often responded to more as women than as managers, thus being deprived of the full opportunity to be evaluated and responded to on the basis of the work they do (Kanter, 1977). As the number of women increases, male managers become more accustomed to women and treat them more as they would any other employee—up to a point. However, when the number of women begins to approach a majority, male workers often feel threatened, which may inhibit opportunities for the women workers (Harlan and Weiss, 1981). Until such attitudes change, women are not likely to fill many positions of real power.

What ultimately may lead to the placement of more women in such positions is the evident economic rationality of doing so. Increasing evidence suggests that women may be particularly effective as managers in today's changing workplace, because they may be more likely than men to break down hierarchy and involve workers in decision-making (Helgesen, 1990; Holusha, 1991; Rosener, 1990). As discussed further in Chapter 9, this style of management generally leads to increased productivity.

While well-educated, middle-class women are limited by the glass ceiling, it is economic

survival, not career, that is the main concern of working-class and poor women. Virtually all of these women are employed out of sheer economic necessity; this is particularly the case for the lowest-income segment among women of color. The concentration of low-income black and Hispanic women in industries such as fast-food service and hotel housekeeping has resulted in steadier employment than what has been available to inner-city men in recent years, but it is difficult and very low-paying work (Collins, 2000). In an earlier era, when divorce and single parenthood were much less common than today, such women could combine their incomes with the somewhat higher incomes of their husbands to provide fairly adequate support for their families. Today, when many women are the sole breadwinners for their families, however, the wages paid for such work—which remain well below the pay of men with comparably low levels of education—are woefully inadequate.

Men, Women, and Power in the Home

The relative powerlessness of women in the worlds of government and business is largely mirrored in the home. Even in homes where both the husband and wife are employed full time, several realities give greater power to the husband. For one thing, even when both partners work full time, the husband typically provides 60 percent or more of the family's income, because men's wages substantially exceed those of women. Where the wife works only part time or not at all, this discrepancy is even greater (Sorensen and McLanahan, 1987). The power of the purse within the family, then, is disproportionately in the hands of the male. Even today, women must often seek money from their husbands for various types of purchases. Until recently, married women usually could not borrow money unless they applied jointly for credit with their husbands. Today, the law has changed, but women's incomes are often too low for them to get substantial credit lines on their own, so they must still sometimes depend on their husbands.

Also limiting the power of women in the home is the continuing influence of the norm that providing income through employment is the first responsibility of the husband, while taking care of the household is the first responsibility of the wife. For one thing, even women who have good jobs must often put their husbands' jobs first when questions of relocation arise (Bielby and Bielby, 1992). Families are far more likely to move for the husband's career opportunities than for the wife's. In addition, the wife, not the husband, is expected to miss work for such household emergencies as taking care of sick children and letting in repairpersons. (For a discussion of both of these issues, see Duncan et al., 1984, pp. 156–61.)

Finally, the primacy of the woman's responsibility for the home means that women employed full time have a longer work week than men employed full time. A review of over 200 studies between 1989 and 1999 showed that although the gender gap in housework had narrowed a little, women still spend twice as many hours a week on household work as men do (Coltrane, 2000). According to one study (Peskin, 1982), the total (employment and home) work week of a typical female full-time employee was 67 hours, compared with 63 hours for the typical male full-time employee. The difference: Women put in considerably more hours working around the house than men did. The pervasive nature of employed women taking on the primary role of homemaker as well has even been called a **second shift** by some scholars (Hochschild and Machung, 1989). The gap may have narrowed since then, but studies still show that full-time working women have less leisure time and experience more stress than full-time working men. And this trend has been noted across the globe and is mediated by the economic development of a nation (Heisiga, 2011). Rich women do less housework than poor women, but economic development shrinks this difference (Heisiga, 2011). Inequality, in both developed and developing countries, however, tends to increase the difference (Heisiga, 2011).

Men have increased their work around the house, and such tasks as cooking, washing dishes, grocery shopping, and laundry are

shared in far more households today than in the past. Thus, as women have entered the labor force, men have increased their share of household work to a certain extent. For many men, this is a dramatic role change from what they saw their fathers doing when they were children. In most households, however, men have still not increased their share of the household work to anywhere near an equal share, even when both husband and wife are employed full time (Coltrane, 2000). Researchers have found that the more wives work outside the home and the more earning they bring into the home, the more likely their partners or husbands are to take equal or more responsibility for child care (Raley, Bianchi, and Wang, 2012). Husbands also tend not to take the initiative to do various household tasks—their wives usually have to ask them. They tend not to be concerned with matters such as doctors' appointments, household tasks, clothing purchases, or scheduling their children's engagements, for instance, unless their wives direct them to do so (Stockard and Johnson, 1992, p. 63). Studies disagree on whether this is because men are uninterested in these tasks or because women view themselves as household "managers" and are unwilling to give up this role; perhaps it is some of both (Coltrane, 2000).

There is conflicting evidence on how the division or sharing of household labor affects other aspects of marriage. At least one study (Kornrich, Brines, and Leupp-Brines, 2013) found that men and women who perform more traditional gender work in the home engage in a greater frequency of sexual intercourse than couples who share a more egalitarian workload. Other studies (e.g., Gager and Yabiko, 2010) have found the opposite. Carlson et al. (2014) suggest that couples with the most equal work division have sex at a modestly higher frequency than couples with traditionally unequal work division and at a considerably higher frequency than the rare couples with counter-traditional work division where the male partner does most of the household work. Couples with relatively equal work division also report greater satisfaction with sex. In general, there is evidence that more egalitarian couples have

more satisfying marriages, less conflict, and lower divorce rates (Amato et al., 2003; Coltrane, 2000; Cooke, 2006; Daminger, 2019; Stevens, Kiger, and Mannon, 2005) which might explain the increase in sexual intimacy. Even so, many men and some women still find appeal in traditional displays of gender.

Gender inequality in the home is starkly illustrated by studies that compare the household work of men and women in a variety of marital statuses and living arrangements. Of the various possible living arrangements, women do the most household work when they are married or cohabiting, while men in these situations do the least (Grigoryeva, 2017; South and Spitze, 1994). Men, in contrast, do the most work if they are divorced or widowed—which may help to explain why men are quicker to remarry than women. Similarly, having an adult son living in the household increases his mother's household work, while having an adult daughter at home decreases it. This pattern extends through life to the care of older parents, with adult daughters giving more care and adult sons giving less (Grigoryeva, 2017).

Finally, Schneider (2012) found strong connections between the work men and women do *outside* the home to the work they do *inside* the home. Men who do "women's work," such as being a nurse or receptionist, tend to do more male-typical work at home than men who work in typical male occupations. Women who do "men's work," on the other hand, tend to do more female-typical work at home than other women who work in more balanced occupations (Schneider, 2012).

"Doing" Gender: The Social Construction of Gender and Sex

Some researchers have come to see gender socialization theories as not going far enough (Vincent, 2006; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Instead, they argue that differences between men and women, both cultural and biological, are almost all socially constructed and cannot meaningfully be understood as anything other than social constructions. We learn to "do"

gender through our daily interactions (West and Zimmerman, 1987). These scholars often point to the idea that gender is a “performance” that each of us not only must learn but continue to perform every day of our lives (Butler, 1990). The term used to describe this is “gender performativity” (Butler, 1990). We are often rewarded for good performances and punished for bad ones. Thus, gender is in a constant state of creation and alteration. Gerstel and Clawson (2014) found an occupational connection in how men and women “do” gender. Looking at four occupations—female nurses, male doctors, female nursing assistants, and male emergency medical technicians—the researchers found that the nurses and doctors used the flexibility in their work hours to reinforce their gender expectations. That is, the nurses prioritized family responsibilities, and the doctors prioritized their careers. In contrast, the nursing assistants and emergency technicians had little flexibility in their work schedules and as a result had more difficulty fulfilling usual gendered expectations (Gerstel and Clawson, 2014). This brings up possibly the most important theoretical point about doing gender. If

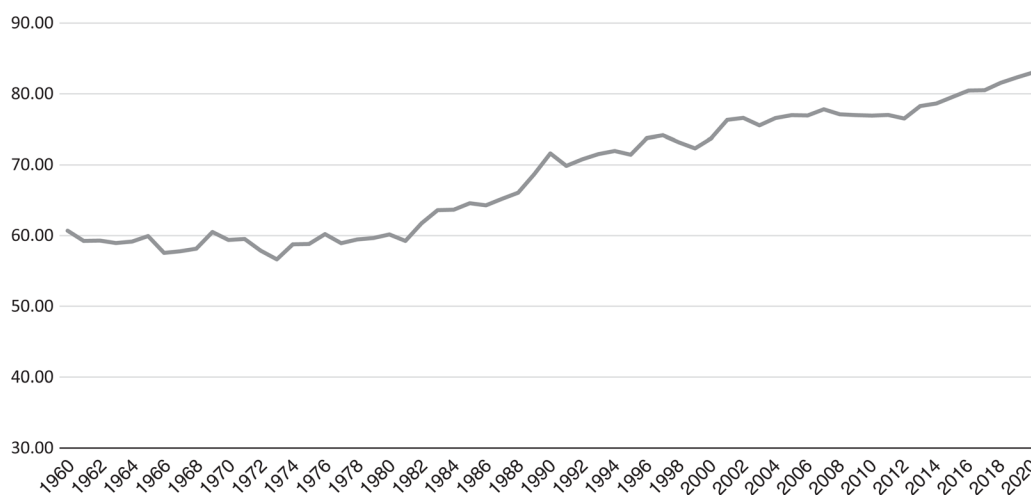
gender is constantly under reinterpretation, it is hypothetically possible to change it. Some critics of the concepts of gender performativity and “doing” argue that the concept is too limiting to create real social change (Nussbaum, 1999). By staying at the level of symbols and interactions, these concepts do not point a path forward toward concrete changes in structures, laws, or the institutions of society, these critics charge.

Structured Sexual Inequality: Income

Today, the average woman employed full time receives about 79 percent of the income of her male counterpart. As shown in Figure 8.3, this represents some narrowing of the gap since the early 1970s, when women received only 57 percent of the income of men when both worked full time—although the narrowing of the gap has been slower since about 1990.

The difference between men’s and women’s incomes is not the result of educational differences between men and women: As shown in

Figure 8.3 Median Women’s Income as a Percentage of Median Men’s Income, Year-Round Full-Time Workers, 1970–2020.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1961 to 2021 Annual Social and Economic Supplements (CPS ASEC). Table A-7.

Number and Real Median Earnings of Total Workers and Full-Time, Year-Round Workers by Sex and Female-to-Male Earnings Ratio: 1960 to 2020 (Downloaded September 28, 2023).

Table 8.2 Median Annual Income of Year-Round Full-Time Workers, by Sex and Level of Education: 2022

<i>Educational Level Completed</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Percentage of Male Income (%)</i>
Eighth grade or less	\$26,620	\$15,710	59.0
One to three years of high school	\$29,430	\$17,220	58.5
High school grad or GED	\$39,960	\$25,360	63.5
Some college, no degree	\$49,550	\$31,000	62.5
Associate's degree	\$53,730	\$35,770	66.6
Bachelor's degree	\$76,520	\$51,430	67.2
Master's degree	\$94,280	\$67,130	71.2
Professional degree	\$113,400	\$82,890	73.1
PhD	\$107,700	\$90,420	83.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1992 to 2023 Annual Social and Economic Supplements (CPS ASEC). Table P-16. Educational Attainment—People 25 Years Old and Over by Median Income and Sex: 1991 to 2022. www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-income-people.html (downloaded September 12, 2023).

Table 8.3 Median Income of Year-Round, Full-Time Workers, by Sex and Age: 2022

<i>Age (Years)</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Percentage of Male Income (%)</i>
All ages	\$48,450	\$32,790	67.7
15–24	\$18,510	\$15,200	82.1
25–34	\$51,020	\$41,250	80.9
35–44	\$61,460	\$46,470	75.6
45–54	\$65,230	\$47,130	72.3
55–64	\$56,740	\$36,140	63.7
65 and over	\$37,430	\$24,630	65.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1948 to 2023 Annual Social and Economic Supplements (CPS ASEC). Table P-8. Age—All People, by Median Income and Sex: 1947 to 2022. www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-income-people.html (downloaded September 12, 2023).

Table 8.2, the difference in men’s and women’s wages is substantial at all levels of education.

It is true, as shown in Table 8.3, that gender differences in income are smaller among younger workers and greater among older workers. This fact could be interpreted in two ways. The optimistic interpretation is that sexual wage inequality is decreasing, and that young women now entering the labor market are receiving fairer treatment. A less optimistic interpretation is that women do not get advanced to higher-paying jobs as quickly as men do. We have already seen that women are often excluded from the top managerial jobs. Even more important, many women work in clerical and service occupations that offer little chance for promotion to substantially higher-paying jobs. Finally, even though younger women do better relative to men than

older women in terms of income, they still earn considerably less than men in their age group.

Some Possible Reasons for Women’s Low Wages

Why do women continue to be paid so much less than men? A number of possibilities have been suggested, including the competing role of women in the home, wage inequality in the same job, hiring patterns, and occupational segregation. Let us consider each.

Competing Expectations of Working Women

Certainly, part of the answer is to be found in women’s role in the home. As we already saw, women are less able than men to move to take



Photo 8.2 While the gender gap has narrowed compared to the past, women still spend more time on household work than men. When both partners work full time, the result is that men have more leisure time than women.

Courtesy of Michael W. Flota

a job and are more likely to miss work because of household emergencies. Both of these things impede their ability to move up to better-paying jobs. Women who breastfeed their infants for more than six months have lower earnings than women who breastfeed for a shorter period or not at all, even though breastfeeding has been shown to be healthier for the infant (Rippeyoung and Noonan, 2012). Moreover, women are more likely than men to leave the job market temporarily, especially to take care of young children. (Again, if anyone quits work for this reason in a family, it is usually the wife.)

How important are these factors as a cause of low income? They are part of the reason, but not most of it, and may be declining in importance. National studies have shown that differences in work experience, work continuity, self-imposed limits on work hours and location, and absenteeism combined explain less than half the difference between men's and women's salaries (Duncan et al., 1984; Wellington, 1994). More recent research shows that women are not more likely than men to have jobs that allow them flexibility to meet family needs (Glass and Camarigg, 1992; see also Desai and Waite, 1991). With the passage of the Family Leave Act in 1993, however, both men and women may now find it possible to

give up their jobs temporarily to care for their families in crisis situations. The practice of leaving the labor force to care for young children has also become less common, as (1) fewer and fewer families can afford to give up the income, (2) growing numbers of mothers are single parents and the only source of their family's income, and (3) even when women can afford to leave the workforce, many are reluctant to do so out of fear that they will compromise their chances of career advancement (Blair-Loy, 1999). Research suggests these women are correct.

Not only do mothers pay a "wage penalty" compared to childless women, this penalty accumulates through their career in the form of lowered chances at promotion and reduced future earnings (Abendroth, Huffman, and Treas, 2014). In fact, research has revealed that women devote more effort, not less, to their jobs than similarly situated men (Bielby and Bielby, 1989) as a result of these challenges. Wei-hsin Yu and Janet Chen-Lan Kuo (2017) find that the wage penalty for mothers is smaller in occupations with greater autonomy, lower teamwork requirements, and less competitive pressure, which supports the idea that improving job conditions can help alleviate work-family conflict for mothers.

Wage Inequality Within Occupations

Even when they work in the same occupation, women are paid less than men (Bergmann, 1986; Huffman and Cohen, 2004; Jarrell and Stanley, 2004; Kemp and Beck, 1986; Stockard and Johnson, 1992). There are a number of reasons for this. Because of employer stereotypes about women's commitment to the labor force, a woman is less likely to be offered on-the-job training—even when she has been with the firm for the same amount of time as a man (Duncan et al., 1984). Also, men are more likely to be given supervisory and/or hiring and firing

authority than are women—and are paid better as a result (Cohen and Huffman, 2007; Hill and Morgan, 1979; Duncan et al., 1984). Women are also promoted less often, which also contributes to their lower pay. Within occupations, women are frequently channeled into lower-paying specialties. Female physicians are more likely to specialize in pediatrics or public health, while male physicians more often specialize in cardiology or gastroenterology; female lawyers more often specialize in domestic relations and males in corporate or criminal law; and in construction, women are less likely than men to get on-site jobs such as operators of heavy equipment (Stockard and Johnson, 1992). In each case, the disproportionately “male” specialization is paid more, even though the occupation is the same (see Bellas, 1994). Such differences often reflect discrimination and gender channeling by mentors, employers, and, in some occupations, unions. Another contributing factor is “overwork,” which involves working 50 or more hours per week (Cha and Weeden, 2014). Men are assigned or engage in overwork in far greater numbers than women, and overwork is normally paid more than regular work. Researchers have found that overwork alone contributes as much as 10 percent of the gap between men and women’s income (Cha and Weeden, 2014).

Hiring Patterns

It appears that another reason for wage inequality reflects the relative powerlessness of women: They are often tied to a locality by their husband’s occupational choice. As noted earlier, if a family relocates on the basis of job availability, it is usually the husband’s job that determines where they will live (Bielby and Bielby, 1992). This means that women must take what is available in the locality of the husband’s job. In the case of a town with one university, for instance, wives of faculty and administrators may be forced to take whatever is available if they want a job. Because their job choices are limited, women must work for less (Blau and Ferber, 1986). Some firms take advantage of this by hiring mostly women and paying them less than they would pay men in the same occupation. Currie and Skolnick (1984, p. 219),

for example, have pointed out that accounting firms that hire mainly female accountants pay less than firms that hire mainly male accountants. As mentioned in Chapter 6, studies have found that hiring in higher education often benefits married men but punishes married women, as women are often seen by potential employers as having less commitment to their academic careers or research. This is indicative of the gender disparity in how relationship status is perceived during hiring (Rivera, 2017). However, this pattern may not be generalizable to the entire economy. Ludwig and Bruders (2018) found that the male wage premium was an effect of, not a cause of, higher wages. That is, men on successful career tracks were more likely to marry, not the other way around. This, of course, still does not change the fact of a marriage penalty existing for women at hiring time.

In addition, educational achievements of men and women are weighed differently and unequally at hiring time. High-achieving men are called back for interviews significantly more often than high-achieving women—especially when women major in math—due to employers’ gendered standards for applicants. These unequal standards tend to prioritize “likability” for women over competence and commitment, thus creating unequal returns to academic performance in the labor market (Quadlin, 2018). Women can also face bias when up for annual evaluations at work (Brewer, et al., 2020; Correll, et al., 2020). Research has found that longer evaluation scales can disadvantage women when ratings are assessed on a ten-point scale rather a six-point scale. This seems to be due to the cultural association between “brilliance” and receiving a “ten out of ten,” which disadvantages women, at least in fields dominated by men, possibly for the reasons already discussed. Therefore, using a smaller scale, such as a six-point scale, may reduce the gender gap in performance evaluations (Rivera and Tilcsik, 2019).

Finally, recent research shows that the trend toward greater use of part-time and temporary employees had a particular impact on working-class women (Inanc, 2018). The gap between the incomes of college graduates and noncollege graduates has widened for both men and women, but the causes are different. Men

without college degrees have suffered because technology and industrial restructuring have forced them into lower-paying jobs, while women without college degrees have suffered because permanent and full-time jobs have gotten harder to get (England, Bearak and Budig, 2016; McCall, 2000). This has impacted even women still working in full-time jobs, because the low cost of part-time labor has held wages down even on full-time jobs at lower skill levels. It has also reduced the job security of less-educated women, which further depresses their wages. Women often end up working in part-time, temporary, or contract-based work, sometimes due to child-care duties but also the worry on the part of managers that women will have child-care duties (England, Bearak and Budig, 2016). Research shows this kind of “nonstandard” employment often leads to an underutilization of the skills of these employees. Pedula (2016) finds that skills underutilization can be as damaging as unemployment. There is at least one advantage that women have however—the findings show that men are penalized at hiring time for part-time employment histories, while women typically are not.

Occupational Segregation

Although women typically receive lower wages than men even in the same occupation, a major cause of income inequality is **occupational segregation**. This term refers to the concentration of men and women into different occupations, even when they have similar levels of skill and training. Occupational segregation has significant impacts, in terms of both the incomes and the occupational choices and opportunities for men and women (Petersen and Morgan, 1995).

Considerable occupational segregation is evident even if we look at broad categories of jobs that the United States Census Bureau and other statistical agencies use to classify occupations. Women are more likely than men to work in clerical and service jobs. This affects women's earnings, since clerical workers receive relatively low pay on average, while service workers are near the bottom in terms of wages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a, pp. 30–1).

However, even when men and women are evenly represented in one of these broad

categories, they often work at different specific jobs within the category (Bielby and Baron, 1986). Most physicians, lawyers, engineers, dentists, and architects are men. These men are better paid than are nurses, teachers, and social workers—professional employees who are mostly women.

Such differences can exist even within the same industry. In general, it has been shown that the greater the number of women in an occupation, the lower the pay of that occupation (England et al., 1988, 1994; Mellor, 1984; Kilbourne et al., 1994). And when occupations once dominated by men become dominated by women, the pay drops (Miller, 2016).

Why do jobs typically held by men so often pay better than jobs typically held by women? There seem to be several reasons. First, unequal pay is probably a carryover from the days when it was widely believed that men should be paid more because they were more likely to be supporting a family. Although this is no longer true today and deliberate sexual pay discrimination by an employer within the same occupation is illegal, there is nothing to stop unequal pay in different occupations. Custom and bureaucratic inertia also seem to play a role in perpetuating such inequalities (Bridges and Nelson, 1989). Research by Rivera and Tilcsik (2016) suggests that even in elite labor markets like law firms, men still carry an advantage over equally skilled women. Higher-class men are seen as better fits with the elite culture and clientele of these firms, while higher-class women face a competing, negative stereotype that portrays them as less committed to intensive careers, resulting in no class-based advantage for women even in this elite labor market. Another study looking at the top 1 percent of household incomes found that only one in 20 would still be in the top 1 percent based on the women's income (Yavorsky, et al., 2019). When pressures for change are exerted on such organizations, they are more likely to change than when there is no such pressure (Baron, Mittman, and Newman, 1991).

Second, predominantly male occupations are more highly unionized than predominantly female occupations. As a result, their pay tends to be better. In part, these differences

may reflect different attitudes among men and women toward unionization, but they probably also reflect that, until recently, most unions were more interested in organizing predominantly male occupations.

Finally, Reskin (1988) has argued that predominantly male jobs are paid more than predominantly female jobs for the same reason that occupational segregation exists in the first place: Men—the more powerful group in society—benefit from both arrangements. She points out that in the past, when men were the main source of support for most families, that fact was used to justify their higher income. But today, when that is no longer the case, occupation has become the basis for assigning wages.

Comparable Worth

Clearly, occupational segregation is an important cause of male-female income inequality. Even when they require similar levels of skill and training, “men’s jobs” usually pay better than “women’s jobs.” England (1999) cites several examples: secretaries (mostly female) being paid less than car-washers (mostly male) by the city of San Jose; Denver nurses being paid less than tree trimmers, even though nurses have to be better educated; and Philadelphia practical nurses being paid less than gardeners. One short-term measure that has been proposed to address this income inequality is comparable worth legislation. *Comparable worth* states that men and women who work in different occupations that require similar skills and education should receive similar wages. To implement such a policy, an employer must first conduct a comparable worth study to evaluate the relative education, skill, knowledge, and responsibility required for different occupations. This study establishes sets of occupations that are similar in these regards. The employer must then adjust the pay scale

so that people in occupations that fall within the same category receive similar or equal wages.

Most of the employers that have instituted such policies are state and local governments. Most of the states have conducted comparable worth studies, but only a minority of the states and a few municipalities have actually adjusted wages on the basis of these studies. Moreover, the adjustments that have taken place as a result have been smaller than anticipated, and the overall effect on wage differences between men and women has not been large (Bridges and Nelson, 1989). One reason comparable worth policy has not been more effectively implemented may be that men continue to have power over the bureaucratic structures responsible for implementing comparable worth laws (Stockard and Johnson, 1992). Of course, the political institutions that would have to legislate it are similarly male dominated, which may be one reason why federal comparable worth legislation has languished in the Congress since 1994. In this regard, the U.S. policy is different from that of other countries. Ontario province in Canada, for example, has required pay to be based on comparable worth in both public and private employment (England, 1999).



Photo 8.3 Occupations dominated by one sex, such as STEM occupations dominated by males, can often be difficult for the other sex to flourish in. Women in STEM occupations, for example, have encountered considerable resistance.

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Causes of Occupational Segregation

This leads to the question, of course, of why women are so absent from many jobs. One reason turns out to be the effect of gender-role socialization—men and women are taught to aspire to different jobs and thus end up in different jobs. Another answer is that, until recently, open discrimination was common against women seeking to enter historically male occupations. This was true both of employers and of educational programs required for entry to an occupation. Although illegal today, such discrimination has lingering effects. An occupation composed primarily of members of one sex can be quite uncomfortable for a person of the opposite sex to enter. Thus, male nurses and secretaries and female firefighters and auto mechanics may face reactions ranging from ridicule to resistance to ostracism. Cech et al. (2011) found that women who enter high-paying STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) occupations tend to be far less confident than men that they could perform their expected professional roles and that this factor more than any other contributed to their lack of persistence in the career.

A more serious problem, dramatically illustrated during the confirmation hearings for Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas and the firing of Roger Ailes at Fox News, is sexual harassment of women in predominantly male occupations and workplaces. This includes both unwanted sexual advances and the creation of a hostile environment through sexual jokes and comments, the display of nude pictures, and so forth (Ollenburger and Moore, 1992; Lewin, 1992). These attitudes alone tend to perpetuate occupational segregation, particularly when they operate in combination with the effects of gender-role socialization. Also, as previously discussed, many young people still aspire to sex-typed occupations (Bain and Fottler, 1980; Barrett, 1979; Sellers, Satcher, and Comas, 1999; Okamoto and England, 1999), although the extent to which this is true is declining, especially among women (Jacobs, 1989). As we would expect, occupational segregation appears to be most intense in the kinds of places where attitudes about gender roles are most traditional (Abrahamson and Sigelman, 1987). And research by Okamoto and England

(1999) shows that the different occupational aspirations of young boys and girls do contribute to occupational segregation in adulthood, though other factors are probably more important.

Finally, there is evidence that occupational segregation may exist in part because it does perpetuate gender wage inequality (Reskin, 1988). From this view, it is a means by which men maintain their pay advantage. Several studies support this view (Bielby and Baron, 1986; Bielby and Bielby, 1988, Tables 29 and 30). Strang and Baron (1990), for example, found that in a state civil service system, the more women there were in an area of similar job content such as civil engineering or legal counsel, the more job titles there were—which permitted more occupational segregation and thereby greater wage inequality. Reskin (1988) has argued that so long as men retain disproportionate power, wage inequality will persist. She points out that in occupations that have become gender integrated, men have retained the more desirable and lucrative specializations. Also, changes in work content, autonomy, and/or pay had often taken place, which made these occupations less desirable prior to the time at which more women entered them. These jobs then opened up to women as men looked elsewhere for work (Reskin and Roos, 1990).

As previously noted, one thing that sometimes discourages women from entering predominantly male, high-status occupations is the increased risk of sexual harassment in such male-dominated work settings. This issue is explored further in this chapter's Putting Sociology to Work section.

Putting Sociology to Work

Understanding and Preventing Sexual Harassment

The arrival of women in the workforce, notably in fields previously dominated by men, and the collapse of the old code of manners between men and women have led to a situation where the acceptable rules of behavior in an office, in the field, or on campus are not always clear and

are frequently violated. As occupational segregation has lessened, and awareness of sexual harassment has increased.

Sexual harassment is defined as deliberate or repeated unsolicited verbal comments, gestures, or physical contacts of a sexual nature that are unwelcome by the recipient and create an intimidating or hostile work environment. An employer or supervisor may threaten an employee with getting fired if the employee doesn't comply with their sexual request. Most often, however, there is not an explicit threat. Rather, harassment consists of repeated requests for dates or sexual favors, explicit sexual language, or fondling.

Three out of four victims of sexual harassment are women. Several studies suggest that over the course of a year or two, around half of women and 15 percent of men experience some form of sexual harassment at work (Crocker and Kalemba, 1999; Wallis, 2000). Reports of sexual harassment increased in the 1990s but have since modestly declined. Reports of sexual harassment to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission more than doubled between 1990 and 1996, to more than 15,000 per year (Fisher, 1998). But by 2011, the number of complaints annually was down to around 11,400 (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2016).

Harassment is most common when women enter traditionally all-male environments, like the military, medicine, or engineering. Past evidence has suggested that harassment was probably experienced more frequently by rank-and-file workers and middle management than by higher-ranking executives; one study, for example, found that among chief executive officers, chief operating officers, vice presidents, and department heads in health care, 29 percent of women and 5 percent of men reported having experienced sexual harassment within the past five years (Burda, 1996). While this still amounts to a large number of people, it is a lower rate than had been found among broader samples of workers. However, a 2012 study found higher rates of sexual harassment among women supervisors than women at lower ranks (McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone, 2012). The researchers theorize that women

in authority may be more frequent targets of harassment as a way of countering women's increasing workplace power.

Victims of sexual harassment report feelings ranging from embarrassment and humiliation to depression, anxiety, and powerlessness, and they also report psychosomatic illnesses. One difficulty with this issue is the subjective nature of the offense: What one person calls sexual harassment may be considered flattery or harmless banter by another. In other words, it's only harassment if the victim (usually a woman) feels the behavior is inappropriate, and that might depend on her ethnic, religious, and/or cultural background and tolerance for outspoken sexual innuendos. Some men, on the other hand, may be unable or unwilling to understand where to draw the line between harmless sexual banter and grossly inappropriate or threatening behavior in a work environment. One young doctor at the University of California medical school complained of harassment when she was asked on dates by two doctors who were supposed to write letters of recommendation for her. Another woman might have felt flattered or might have wanted to go out with the doctors. Some physical contact, like hugging or putting an arm around a colleague, can be viewed as harassment by women of a certain ethnic background or in certain circumstances but may be considered a warm gesture or harmless flirting by other women. If a woman feels a colleague's behavior is inappropriate, then it is her obligation to say so, verbally or in writing. Once she has done so, the colleague is obligated to stop the behavior. However, in the atmosphere of intimidation that often accompanies sexual harassment, speaking out can be difficult to do. This is particularly the case because the person doing the harassing is usually more powerful than the person who is harassed. In such a situation, victims often fear that if they object to the harassment, they will be penalized.

Because of the ambiguities sometimes involved, it can be difficult for a court to determine if sexual harassment has actually taken place. Courts have generally determined that it is not necessarily the advances themselves that violate the Civil Rights Act, but the continuation of such advances once it is known that they

are unwanted. The loss of tangible job benefits or the existence of an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment also have been recognized by courts as illegal sexual harassment.

Some analysts contend that sexual harassment is a way for some men who feel threatened by the emergence of women in the workplace to tell them, "You don't belong here. You're not welcome here." According to that theory, harassment isn't about sex but about power and intimidation of women—making them feel unwelcome and undermining their job competence by treating them as sex objects. In fact, the most serious cases of harassment, involving threats of job loss or repeated sexual overtures, usually involve advances by a supervisor.

Many of the same issues also apply to student-faculty relationships in colleges and universities. Just as is the case between supervisors and workers, an unequal power relationship exists between professors and their students that can easily be abused. Is accepting a date truly voluntary when a student is asked out by a professor (or teaching assistant), knowing that the professor or teaching assistant controls the grade the student will get? Most researchers on sexual harassment argue that it is not and cite many cases where students felt they had little choice but to say yes. For this reason, growing numbers of colleges and universities have adopted sexual harassment policies that forbid or discourage relationships between instructors and students for whom they have grading responsibility.

Functionalist and Conflict Perspectives on Gender Roles

Thus far, our discussion of sexism has focused on the forces that maintain sexual inequality. Another fundamental question is this: *Why does sexism exist in the first place?* To understand the fundamental causes of sexism, it is useful to consider the functionalist and conflict perspectives. These perspectives address such questions as what purpose or purposes are served by sexism, why societies establish social roles and social inequality along the lines of gender, and why societies teach these unequal roles to succeeding generations.

The Origins of Gender Inequality

No one has the answer of how gender stratification began in human societies, but there are a few theories (Blumberg, 1984; Chafetz, 1990; Collins, 1986; Huber and Spitze, 1983). The most common theory goes something like this: When humans were in hunting-and-gathering societies, women had a great deal of power and influence. Stratification was nearly nonexistent in general, and while there was some inequality based on sex, it was not as great as what would come later in agricultural and industrial societies. Evidence suggests that in a few tribes, women may have been nearly equal to the men. There seems to have been a good deal of gender variance in terms of power and status. Women played a central role in the two most important functions of hunter-and-gatherer life. They gave birth to and cared for the children, and they did the majority of the gathering, which was what sustained the bands. This put them at the heart of economic production in these societies.

But as societies developed agriculture, something happened. The work got more physical, further from the domestic sphere (out into the fields), and more dangerous. It was not the kind of labor that could be done while also caring for the children or while pregnant as was the case with gathering. Warfare became necessary to defend families and communities from outsiders. It is during the agricultural ages that surplus, wealth, and power are developed in human societies for the first time. Thus, women are separated from the means of production just at the time that wealth, power, and inequality rear their heads in human societies. This leaves men with nearly complete control over these crucial resources. And thus, the theory goes, the stage is set for gender inequality.

In many ways, women began to gain more equality back during the industrial age, but not initially. At first, they lost even more ground as jobs became further removed from the home and women's secondary status increased. Only later did this begin to recede as women fought for their rights during the Suffragette movements and other struggles. Yet this process of male dominance is not inevitable, as the societies discovered by Margaret Mead prove

(discussed earlier). There is no denying, however, that such societies remain very much the exception not the rule. Mead's research has also been challenged by some, and it seems clear that the societies she discovered have now been changed by contact with the outside world, but her main point remains solid. Gender is socially constructed. It does not have to look like it does in our society. A few ancient societies like the Minoan Crete had very peaceful, wealthy, more feminine societies that might have created very different gender stratification patterns had their cultures survived to evolve across time to the present day. We will never know. Natural disaster or more militarized societies eventually wiped them out. We now take a look at what the modern sociological perspectives have to say about the development of modern gender roles that stemmed from the mysterious origins of stratification.

The Functionalist Perspective

One common school of thought among functionalist sociologists is that whether or not gender roles perform any important functions for society today, they certainly did in the past. These sociologists note that until about a century ago, most women spent much of their young adult lives either pregnant or taking care of infants. Infant and child mortality was very high, and in order to have two or three children survive to adulthood, a woman often had to give birth to five or six. In those days, of course, there was no baby formula, so having babies meant breastfeeding. For these reasons, women had to remain in the home with the children a large part of the time, which probably explains, among other things, why hunting has been consistently performed by males across different societies.

A second consideration is physical strength. Because of their larger physical size, men are, on average, more capable of tasks that involve heavy lifting or moving large objects. At a time when most work was physical in nature, this difference probably led to some gender-role specialization. Thus, frequent pregnancy and long periods of breastfeeding, together with

differences in physical strength, explain why gender-role specialization was functional in the past. But what of today?

Gender Roles as Cultural Lag

Some sociologists believe that gender roles exist today mainly as a result of *cultural lag*. Gender roles were functional in the past but have no use to society today, according to this view. Nonetheless, they persist because society is slow to change. Gender roles, and the norms that support them, have become ingrained in our culture, which is passed from generation to generation through the socialization process. Thus, they disappear only gradually. This viewpoint suggests that if gender roles are no longer functional, they will persist for some time but will become weaker with each new generation, because they have no use in today's society. A case can be made that this is in fact happening. As we see in more detail later, there have been major changes in the gender-role attitudes of Americans and people in many other modern societies. Nonetheless, many sociologists disagree with this interpretation. Some argue that gender roles are beneficial to society in other ways; others explain their existence from the conflict perspective. Let us consider the former group first.

Are Gender Roles Still Functional?

Most functionalists who argue that gender roles are still useful focus on the family. Some argue that gender roles permit a desirable form of specialization within the family, and others argue that traditional gender roles are conducive to family cohesiveness.

Gender Roles and Family Specialization. The notion that gender roles facilitate specialization within the family is largely associated with the writings of Talcott Parsons and Robert Bales (1955). They based their arguments on research showing that in organizations and groups performing tasks, two types of leaders typically emerge: instrumental leaders, whose main concern is getting the job done, and expressive leaders, whose role is to address the feelings of people in the group and the relations among those people. (This issue is addressed in greater detail in Chapter 9.) Parsons and Bales argued

that, as a small group, the family needs both instrumental and expressive leadership. They saw the traditional male role as filling the family's need for instrumental leadership and the traditional female role as providing expressive leadership. Thus, a role division that emphasizes the man's getting the jobs done and providing income and the woman's taking care of social and emotional needs is seen as functional for the family.

Parsons and Bales's functionalist explanation of gender roles has been strongly criticized by other sociologists for two reasons. First, even though the family might need both instrumental and expressive leadership, there is no clear reason why the instrumental leadership must come from the male and the expressive leadership from the female. It could just as well happen the other way around. Second, this functionalist explanation does not consider the possible dysfunctions of restricting women to the expressive role, which is addressed shortly.

Gender Roles and Family Cohesion. A more contemporary functionalist argument centers on the cohesiveness of the family. This argument holds that traditional, male-dominated families experienced less divisiveness because women did not think and act independently of their husbands. Thus, as women have become more free and independent, family conflict has increased. Those who support this view often cite statistics showing that as women obtain work outside the home, the likelihood of their marriages ending through divorce rises. Finally, some people argue that when mothers work outside the home, their children suffer. These people claim that when children are in day care or must come home from school to an empty house, their mental health suffers, and they become at high risk for juvenile delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse, and teenage pregnancy.

Although some of these issues are addressed in later chapters, several important facts relevant to these arguments can be noted here. First, time-budget studies have long established that full-time working mothers interact with their children about as much as do full-time housewives (Farley, 1977, pp. 197–202; Goldberg, cited in Hodgson, 1979; Robinson, 1977; Nock and Kingston, 1988; Benokraitis,

1993, pp. 318–19), although housewives may spend more time on care-related tasks (Hodgson, 1979; Vanek, 1973, pp. 138, 172). Women's satisfaction with their roles, whether in the home or at work, seems to be a much better predictor: Women who are more satisfied spend more time interacting with their children (Hodgson, 1979). Sometimes there are problems of supervision of children, but as we see in greater detail in Chapter 14, these are largely the product of the limited availability of quality day care. In general, children in properly planned and supervised day-care centers do as well as children raised at home (Hayes and Kamerman, 1983; Hoffmann, 1989; Phillips, McCartney, and Scarr, 1987; Berg, 1986). There may be an increasing tendency among adults to put their own concerns ahead of the welfare of their children (Popenoe, 1988). This tendency exists among both men and women, however, and cannot simply be attributed to changing gender roles.

With respect to family cohesion, it is true that women who work outside the home are at greater risk of divorce than housewives. This might be because dual-earner couples have less time to spend together (see Kingston and Nock, 1987). However, a more important reason is that working women are financially more able to leave an unhappy marriage. Killewald (2016) finds that financial considerations, such as wives' economic independence and household income, are not significant predictors of divorce. Instead, the division of labor within the household, specifically husbands' lack of full-time employment, is associated with a higher risk of divorce, particularly for couples married after 1975. Interestingly, wives' full-time employment or their share of household labor is not linked to divorce risk, suggesting that while expectations of wives' homemaking may have changed, the traditional norm of husbands as breadwinners persists in influencing marital stability. There is no clear evidence that families with the wife in the labor force are any less happy than families where the wife remains at home (Freedman, 1984, pp. 27–8; Killewald, 2016). Thus, changing gender roles may have altered how women *respond* when they find themselves in an unhappy or troubled home

situation, but there is no evidence that the actual incidence of such situations has increased. There is, however, evidence that husbands have a tendency to be more unfaithful in their marriages if they are dependent on a breadwinner wife (Munsch, 2015). Interestingly, researchers also find that wives tend to be more faithful to their husbands if they are breadwinners than nonbreadwinner wives. This may be evidence that both men and women aim to “balance” their gender roles: men by staking some independence and distance from their breadwinner wives to compensate for their perceived lack of power, and women by showing loyalty and deference to their dependent husbands by remaining faithful and minimizing any tension that might result from their husbands’ lack of power (Munsch, 2015).

Dysfunctions of Gender Roles

Any functionalist analysis of gender roles must also consider their dysfunctions. In what ways do they *inhibit* the effectiveness of society, the family, or the individual? One area in which there is evidence of such dysfunctions is psychological well-being. Among both men and women, people with a *mix* of masculine and feminine personality traits have higher self-esteem and better mental health than those in whom traditional gender traits predominate (Deutsch and Gilbert, 1976; Lamke, 1982; Major, Deaux, and Carnevale, 1981; Orlovsky, 1977; Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp, 1975). Moreover, *androgynous* individuals—those with some of the traditional traits of each sex—display greater flexibility in various aspects of behavior (Ickes and Barnes, 1978; LaFrance and Carmen, 1980). These findings suggest that in terms of personal adjustment, self-esteem, and flexibility, adherence to a traditional gender role can be dysfunctional. These researchers conclude that women show better self-esteem, flexibility, and role performance when they have both masculine and feminine traits. Specifically in terms of roles, there is also evidence that women who are employed outside the home either part time or full time are happier on average and less at risk for depression than those who are full-time homemakers (National Center for Health Statistics, 1980; Hoffmann, 1989; Baruch, Barnett,

and Rivers, 1983; Gallup, 1989, pp. 164–5; Hoyenga and Hoyenga, 1979).

From a broader functionalist perspective, one might raise serious questions about the benefits to society of denying half of its adult population the opportunity to develop fully their creativity, productive capacity, and freedom of choice. From a purely economic standpoint, the only thing that saved the typical American family from a substantial decline in its standard of living during the economically difficult 1970s and 1980s was the massive entry of women into the labor force (Olsen, 1990). Productivity growth and real hourly wages (hourly pay adjusted for the effects of inflation) generally lagged from the mid-1970s until several years into the 1990s. Millions of wives and mothers entered the labor force in part to compensate for the resultant loss of income. Had this not occurred, the standard of living of many Americans would have declined substantially between about 1973 and 1993. For many American families, the standard of living would still be lower today than 40 years ago had women not entered the labor force and thereby provided a substantial part of their families’ incomes.

The Conflict Perspective

Conflict theorists ask: Who benefits from gender roles as they exist in America? The answer, they believe, is that men benefit from them. (For comprehensive statements of this view, see Collins, 1971a; Reskin, 1988.) Conflict theorists also ask: Does the group that benefits have disproportionate power, so that it can arrange society to its advantage? With respect to gender roles, they note the great power of men, something we already discussed in reference to the political system, the family, and the world of work. Thus, gender roles persist because men use their power to maintain a system from which they benefit.

How do men benefit from traditional gender roles? We have already seen many ways in this chapter. Men receive higher wages than women and have a better chance of getting jobs that offer status, autonomy, and authority. Men enjoy greater mobility and freedom in choosing

how to spend their time—their jobs take them outside the home, and if the family owns just one automobile, it is likely to be the husband's. Even in today's typical two-worker, two-car family, men still enjoy advantages. For example, when both husband and wife are employed full time, the total work week of men—on the job and in the home—is shorter than that of women. In terms of income, wealth, status, power, and free time, all indications are that traditional gender roles work to the advantage of men. As shown in the box titled “The Costs of the Male Gender Role to Men (and Women?),” there are other areas in which men pay a price for these benefits. Even so, the material benefits of gender roles to men are real. Thus, it is hardly surprising that men would use their power to maintain such gender roles.

Sources of Male Power

One question that conflict theorists ask is this: How did males achieve unequal power in the first place? One explanation, which involves a combination of functionalist and conflict theory, is that male power is the outgrowth of a role specialization that was once useful to society. Although assigning roles to men that took them outside the home was originally useful, it also gave men certain power that women didn't have. It gave them greater freedom of movement and more contact with the outside world, and it made women dependent on them for basic food supplies obtained through hunting or through agricultural labor in the fields. All this translated into male power, and once males had this power, they began to use it to their advantage, setting up a society that became increasingly male dominated.

Some conflict theorists add a second line of reasoning to this. They argue that size and physical strength were sources of power that males used to get what they wanted from women. In the United States, China, and many other societies, wives used to be seen largely as their husbands' property. Certainly, the use or threat of violence is an important source of power, and it probably played a major role in the establishment of male dominance.

Today, of course, the law forbids violence by men against women, although even now the courts and police are often reluctant to intervene

if such violence occurs within the family. Physical strength is largely irrelevant to most jobs, so occupational specialization by sex is far less functional than it once was. Yet today, there are other mechanisms by which men retain disproportionate power. To a large extent, we have already seen what these are—disproportionate political power and control of money within the family.

Feminism: A Challenge to Male Power

In the United States and many other societies throughout the world (particularly those with higher levels of industrialization), one of the major social changes of recent decades has been the emergence of **feminism** on a large scale. Essentially, the governing principles of feminism as an ideology and social movement are that women should enjoy the same rights in society as men and that they should share equally in society's opportunities and in its scarce resources, such as income, power, status, and personal freedom.

Origins of Feminism in America

In the United States, feminism can be traced back more than 150 years. The movement is generally regarded as having begun with an 1848 meeting in Seneca Falls, New York, which set forth a statement of women's rights modeled after the Declaration of Independence. For the next 70 years, the major objective of this movement was to obtain the vote for women (only men were allowed to vote in the national elections in the United States until 1920). The early feminist movement didn't succeed in changing other aspects of sex discrimination in America, however, for several reasons (Degler, 1980). First, women in that era saw some advantages in the housewife role, which was then something new. As income-producing work shifted from the home to separate workplaces, men pursued it. Their wives often remained at home, feeling protected from the dangers of the workplace, which at that time were very real. Second, just getting women the vote was a tremendous battle because opponents (as well as many supporters) of women's suffrage believed that if women got the vote, they would overturn

the political order by voting in ways radically different from men. (They didn't.) After the suffrage battle was won, feminism as an issue faded for a time, only to resurface in the 1960s and 1970s in a form that amounted to a much wider and more fundamental challenge to traditional gender roles.

Contemporary Feminism

By the 1970s, U.S. feminists were challenging the housewife role in a way the earlier movement never did, and they had some real successes. For example, women have moved out of the home and into the paid labor force in unprecedented numbers over the past four decades. As



SOCIOLOGICAL SURPRISES

The Costs of the Male Gender Role to Men (and Women?)

Although men benefit from sexism in terms of income, wealth, and power, sexism exacts some high costs in other areas of their lives. Men as well as women are denied certain freedoms by sexism, and research has shown that both men and women can suffer health consequences due to the stress created by sexism (Homan, 2019; Taylor 2016). In fact, the pressure to “be a man” that males experience from early childhood probably exceeds anything that women encounter, and it takes a toll on men in a variety of ways, including their health. And similarly, as women slowly gain ground on men in terms of wealth, income, and power, they may also be suffering consequences from some of the harmful aspects of the expectations tied to what once were male roles.

The traditional expectation has been that men are supposed to be in control of every situation (which, of course, is not always possible) and to avoid any public display of emotion. Neither expressions of tenderness nor emotional breakdowns or outbursts have traditionally been seen as acceptable male behavior. Such pressures on men exact a high cost in terms of mental and physical health. In all likelihood, they are at least part of the reason why men are more likely than women to abuse alcohol and other drugs and are far more inclined to commit violence—the overwhelming majority of assaults and murders are committed by males, usually against other males. Many stress-related illnesses are also more common among men than among women, including heart disease, high blood pressure, and ulcers. Although men are often under less stress than women, they are expected to handle stress differently, always maintaining outward calm and control. Women, in contrast, have traditionally had more opportunities to release the tension by expressing their emotions. Compared to men, women also receive much more

encouragement to talk with their friends about feelings, emotions, and personal concerns and problems. Men, in contrast, are usually encouraged to keep such feelings inside, in order to appear “in control.” Rather than viewing their friends as confidants, they are more likely to see them as “playmates”—for example, golfing, bowling, or fishing buddies. These are among the reasons that women outlive men by more than five years on average.

Thus, a move toward a more androgynous society may offer opportunities for men and risks for women, depending on how it occurs. Men today undoubtedly feel more free to express their emotions than they did in the past. There is a growing recognition of the role of emotional expression in the mental health of both men and women. Conversely, as women move into traditionally male roles, they may experience some of the same pressures men feel, especially if they simply adopt those roles rather than define them in new ways. In fact, there is startling evidence already of the harm that may occur if women merely adopt male gender roles “as is.” While women do still live longer than men, the gap has narrowed significantly over the past two decades as the roles and expectations of women and men have become more similar. Between about 1980 and 1999, the life expectancy of men in the United States increased by about 3.9 years; in the same period the life expectancy of women increased only about 2.0 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000c; National Center for Health Statistics, 2001b). Thus, the life-expectancy gap between women and men was narrowed by nearly two years. In 2014 average life expectancy for a woman was 81.2 years, and for men, it was 76.4 years (Arias, 2016). In 1980, the average woman outlived the average man in the United States by about seven and a half years; today, the gap is down to less than five years.

Table 8.4 Percentage of Women in the Paid Labor Force, by Marital Status and Presence and Age of Children: 2021

<i>Women's Marital Status and Age of Children</i>	<i>Percentage of Women in Paid Labor Force (%)</i>
All women 16 years old and over	52.9
Married, spouse present	55.4
All other marital statuses	50.7
With children 17 years old or younger:	
All marital statuses	67.8
Married, spouse present	67.3
All other marital statuses	69.0
With children 6–17 years old, none younger:	
All marital statuses	71.7
Married, spouse present	70.9
All other marital statuses	73.6
With children under six years old:	
All marital statuses	62.5
Married, spouse present	62.6
All other marital statuses	62.2
With children under three years old:	
All marital status	60.0
Married, spouse present	61.2
All other marital statuses	56.7
With no children 17 years old or younger:	
All marital statuses	48.0
Married, spouse present	48.4
All other marital statuses	47.7

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2021 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-databook/2022/home.htm (downloaded September 12, 2023).

shown in Table 8.4, a clear majority of married women are in the paid labor force, and by 2021, over half of the U.S. labor force was composed of women. Even among women with young children, a sizable majority work outside the home for pay. In large part, this trend reflects economic necessity as well as changed views about the role of women. For working-class and poor women, economic necessity is the main force behind the trend, while for wealthier, more educated women, the desire to have a career is more important. Among all classes, however, the notion that women should remain in the home has lost favor, particularly among younger women.

As more and more women left the role of housewife for that of paid worker, the feminist movement increasingly addressed other issues. The right to equal pay for equal (or comparable) work has been a major issue, as has been the right to be free from sexual harassment at work and at school. Issues outside the workplace have also taken on increased importance, as feminists have increasingly objected to the fact that women do a disproportionate share of housework. Feminists have also placed a high priority on reproductive freedom, emphasizing issues such as the right to choose whether to have an abortion and opposition to any restrictions on the availability of birth control.

Some feminist issues have been of particular concern among women of color and working-class women. For example, the issue of sexual harassment has had special importance for African American women, because in addition to the risk of sexual harassment that all women face, African American women have often been expected to submit to white males because of *racial* inequality as well as gender inequality. This, in turn, “contributed to images of black women as fair game for all men” (Collins, 1991, p. 54).

African American and Hispanic women must also face low-wage work—often in service occupations—that results from a lack of opportunity arising from both racial and gender inequality. The loss of jobs in many black and Hispanic neighborhoods has also resulted in a shortage of potential mates for inner-city black and Hispanic women (Wilson, 1987, 1996). The reason for this is that as manufacturing jobs have left inner cities, black and Hispanic men have experienced rising joblessness, rendering growing numbers of them unable to provide support for a family. In an era in which most unmarried adults are sexually active, in a context of poverty that limits access to and knowledge of contraceptives, and in a society where birth outside marriage has become increasingly accepted, the result of this gender imbalance in inner cities has been predictable: a rise in the number of single-parent, female-householder families. At the same time, as low-paying service jobs have replaced the old manufacturing jobs, black and Hispanic women have often been hired for these low-paying jobs (Wilson, 1996). One consequence is that those women are more likely to be the sole support of their families—and the low-wage work available to them is often inadequate for this purpose. This trend, already in place, has likely been worsened by welfare reform, which has increased the supply of service workers with limited education (and thereby holds down their wages).

The result of these different experiences has been the emergence of different modes of feminist thought among women of color and working-class women. While they emphasize some of the same issues that feminism has

always stressed, these varieties of feminism also raise issues of particular concern to working-class women and women of color (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981, 1991; Davis, 1981; Lorde, 1992; Higginbotham, 1992).

The growing influence of feminism has not been limited to the United States. Other countries had suffrage movements during the nineteenth century parallel to that of the United States (Flexner, 1975). Since the 1960s (and in some cases earlier), resurgent feminist movements have been important social forces throughout the industrialized world, and feminism has been a growing influence in the Third World as well (Ward, 1984, pp. 36–7).

Social Origins of the New Feminism

Why has feminism become so influential? Although the reasons vary somewhat from country to country, certain conditions have appeared in a number of countries. First, traditional gender roles have become less functional in modern societies, for reasons noted earlier in this chapter. Conditions also developed in many countries that made women less satisfied with their traditional roles. Women were becoming more educated but were not getting the opportunity to use that education. During World War II, women were pressed into nontraditional roles in many countries, including performing manual labor in defense plants, and they found that they could be effective in those roles (Milkman, 1987). They also found that under the right conditions, they could be rewarded well for work outside the home. Although many women were happy to return to their traditional roles after the war, they realized that they could succeed in other roles, and this may have had the long-term effect of making them more interested in nontraditional roles. Also during this time, the growth of mass media throughout the world enhanced communication, which made it easier for feminist leaders to transmit their message to other dissatisfied women.

Finally, the 1960s was a period of worldwide social upheaval that witnessed the antiwar and civil rights movements in the United States, the student and labor upheavals in France, the Cultural Revolution in China, the struggle for

political freedom in Czechoslovakia, and the beginning or reemergence of several ongoing struggles: the separatist movement in Quebec, the religious conflict in Northern Ireland, and movements that led to majority rule in South Africa and Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia).

Women were involved in all of these struggles, but they often found themselves relegated to such nonleadership roles as preparing meals, stuffing envelopes, and running errands. This had three effects. First, involvement in these movements made women realize that they, too, could create a movement. Second, the limited role allowed to women in many of these social movements heightened their dissatisfaction. Third, these movements brought dissatisfied women together, so they could communicate with each other and organize a movement of their own (Freeman, 1973). Together, these conditions greatly accelerated the development of feminist movements in many countries.

Feminist Social Theory

While feminism has been an influential social movement, it has also been a major influence on theory in sociology and the other social sciences in recent decades. **Feminist theory** can in many ways be linked to the conflict perspective, but it is different from other conflict theories in that it places greater emphasis on understanding the causes and consequences of gender inequality. In so doing, it offers us a fuller understanding of social processes than other theories—even other conflict theories—that have often left gender out. The ways in which feminist theory adds to our understanding of society can be seen throughout this book. For example, Meda Chesney-Lind (see the box “Doing Feminist Criminology,” Chapter 10) shows us that theories about the causes of juvenile delinquency—based on studies of male delinquents—cannot explain female delinquency. One reason for this is that the processes by which youth are labeled delinquent are very different for boys and girls. In Chapter 17, we explore the important contributions of feminist theory to the development of conflict theories about urbanization and urban

life. In fact, the physical character of the modern city can be tied to the division of labor by gender: Downtown financial districts became largely a male domain, whereas residential areas became a female domain. This could not have happened had modernization not led to a gendered division of labor, when work was taken outside the home. But this change in the location and gender division of work in turn had profound effects on the form and activities of the city.

How Are Gender Roles Changing in America?

In this final section, we assess the meaning of recent changes in sex and gender roles in America and address some information that may give us an idea where our society is headed. We begin by noting areas in which norms concerning relations between men and women have changed.

Sexual Double Standard

Society's views concerning the sexual freedom of men and women have changed dramatically over the past few decades. The Victorian sexual double standard assumed that sex was to be enjoyed by men and that it was normal for unmarried men to want to “fool around.” Women, however, were expected to remain pure and were considered “too good” to enjoy sex. As a result, sexual activity among unmarried males was largely taken for granted (even if somewhat disapproved of). For unmarried women, though, it was much more seriously forbidden, and a good deal less common. By the late 1960s, however, that system had changed (Christiansen and Gregg, 1970). Since then, norms about sexual behavior have been more similar for men and women than in the past, as have the behaviors themselves (Hunt, 1974). Yet the old patterns have not completely disappeared. Recent research into the sexual patterns of today's college-age adults has found that women are more likely to experience orgasms during relationship sex than in “hookup” sex (Armstrong, England,

and Fogerty, 2012), but men are equally likely in both. Researchers found that both men and women agreed men had the right to orgasm during hookups but were more questioning of a women's right to orgasm.

Employment Discrimination

Another area in which there has been major change is the law. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbade deliberate discrimination against women in hiring and wages. Since then, it has been illegal to refuse to hire a person because of sex, unless the employer can prove that sex is a bona fide factor in a person's ability to perform a particular job, which is rarely the case. Similarly, you cannot pay an employee less (or, for that matter, more) than other employees in the same job with similar qualifications simply on the basis of that person's sex. Has the law worked? Research suggests yes, but with a caveat. When individuals sue, using the law, lawsuit resolutions that are resolved with additional market and legal-regulatory pressures do the best and can promote gender and race equality among the targeted firms (Hirsh and Cha, 2018). It takes consumers or advertisers voting with their wallets to make a lasting impact. Moreover, the government has often interpreted this law as requiring employers to take affirmative action to ensure that women have the same opportunities as men to get the more desirable jobs. Since 1980, this policy has been reversed several times, with Republican administrations generally rejecting the notion that employers should take such affirmative action, while Democratic administrations have supported it. Its future remains in doubt, as it is being challenged in both the legal and political arenas.

Sexual Assault

At the level of state law, there have been important changes in the rules of evidence concerning sexual assault. In the past, a rape victim practically had to prove to the court that she did not bring on the rape by her own behavior. She was asked questions about her past sexual behavior,

as well as her past relationship with the person charged with raping her. Often, if a woman indicated that she had been sexually active in the past or had previously been involved with the accused, it was assumed that she really had engaged in sex voluntarily, or at least had misled the accused person into thinking she really wanted to have sex. In some cases, assumptions were made about the victim's sexual availability simply on the basis of how she dressed. In a sense, the victim was on trial, and if her past or present behavior was found wanting, judges and juries rejected the possibility that a crime might have taken place. Most states, however, have recently passed laws restricting the kinds of questions that can be asked of rape victims. It can no longer be assumed in most states that if a woman once wanted to have sex, she always will in the future, which is what the old patterns of questioning tended to assume. Still, rape victims are often subjected to personal and embarrassing questioning, and as a result many rapes still go unreported and thus unprosecuted.

Limitations of Change

Despite some changes, women's efforts to improve their status have met with limited success. The effect of civil rights legislation on the actual pay received by men and women, for example, has been limited. We have seen that there have been changes, but only modest ones, in the wages of women relative to those of men and in the prevalence of occupational segregation. Thus, the biggest actual change in the status of women, so far, has been the movement of many women out of the housewife role and into the labor force. Although this movement has given women a measure of freedom and independence they did not enjoy in the past, the low pay of employed women remains a major barrier to full sexual equality. In fact, when combined with the increased divorce rate, changes in divorce law, and increased childbearing outside marriage, this low pay has led to a new problem: Being a woman has increasingly become associated with being poor in the United States. A major reason for this is that the consequences of divorce differ sharply for men and women.

Public Opinion and Future Prospects for Gender Equality

What are the prospects for a move toward greater equality between American men and women in the future? There are a number of ways we can look for answers to this question. We can start with the attitudes of Americans. It does appear that, in many ways, American attitudes are supportive of gender equality. For example, a national survey in 2000 found the majority of both men and women agreeing that American society must go further in establishing equal rights and equal wages for women (RIS-MEDIA, 2000). In what Faludi (1991) referred to as a backlash against the women's movement, it was suggested that many women

were frustrated that their jobs took them away from their families. However, she points out that the polls for the most part did not support such a view: Women were no more likely than men to express such frustrations, and by a margin of more than 70 percent, women from the mid-1980s to 1990 indicated a preference for high-pressure jobs with advancement opportunities over low-pressure jobs with less opportunity, and rejected the so-called mommy track—less-demanding work with shorter hours—because they saw it as a way of paying women less (Faludi, 1991, p. 91).

Since that time, there has been some increased acceptance of the viewpoint that work hours have gotten too long and family and personal life have suffered as a result.

GLOBAL SOCIOLOGY



Treatment of Women: Comparing the Western and Islamic Traditions

As many feminists point out, the belief that it is natural for men to dominate women is deeply rooted in Western religion and philosophy. In Athens, in ancient Greece, for example, arranged marriages were common, and daughters had to accept the husbands chosen for them by their parents. And in Rome, when a woman married, her property passed to her husband, and women were forbidden from having any role in government or law. Among the Jews in the era of the Old Testament, a common arrangement was "betrothal," under which a woman was purchased from her parents to become a man's wife. Men, but not women, could divorce their spouses. And among early Christians, women were seen as evil, because the Bible portrays Eve as tempting Adam to eat the forbidden fruit. For example, in the Catholic version of the Bible, the following verse is found: "No wickedness comes anywhere near the wickedness of a woman . . . Sin began with a woman and thanks to her we all must die" (Ecclesiasticus 25:19, 24). Both the Christians and the Jews had the same inheritance rule as the Romans: Women could inherit nothing. Although Western nations, Judaism,

and Christianity all, to varying degrees, view women in a more positive light today, their historical roots are full of unabashed sexism.

Despite this history, today it is not the West but rather Islam that is often portrayed as subjugating women. Perhaps this is the case because of the harsh treatment of women under the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, or perhaps it is a reaction to the wearing of veils by some Muslim women. But how well does this portrayal fit reality? Not well at all, historically, and very unevenly today. Ironically, in light of Islam's image, Islam was the first of today's major world religion to take the view that marriage should be a choice between a man and a woman, not imposed on women by men (Azeem, 1995). And unlike the Christian and Jewish scriptures, the Qu'ran's version of the Adam and Eve story portrays their sin as a decision of both, not something that Eve did first, then convinced Adam to do. And it was Islam that broke from the long-standing tradition (true also among Arabs before Islam) of male-only inheritance: Thirteen hundred years before Europe recognized female inheritance, the Qu'ran proclaimed that both male

However, it is significant that these concerns have arisen among both men and women and may represent more of a backlash against the increased length of the work week than against the changed roles of women. A 2001 Gallup poll showed that most Americans did not think it was good for both parents to work full time outside the home—but when asked who, if anyone, should stay home, more than two-thirds said it did not matter whether the mother or father stayed at home (McComb, 2001). This is a dramatic change from the past, when many more said the father should work full time and the mother should stay home.

Of course, generalized support for equal opportunity does not always translate into the reality of equal opportunity. In the economic

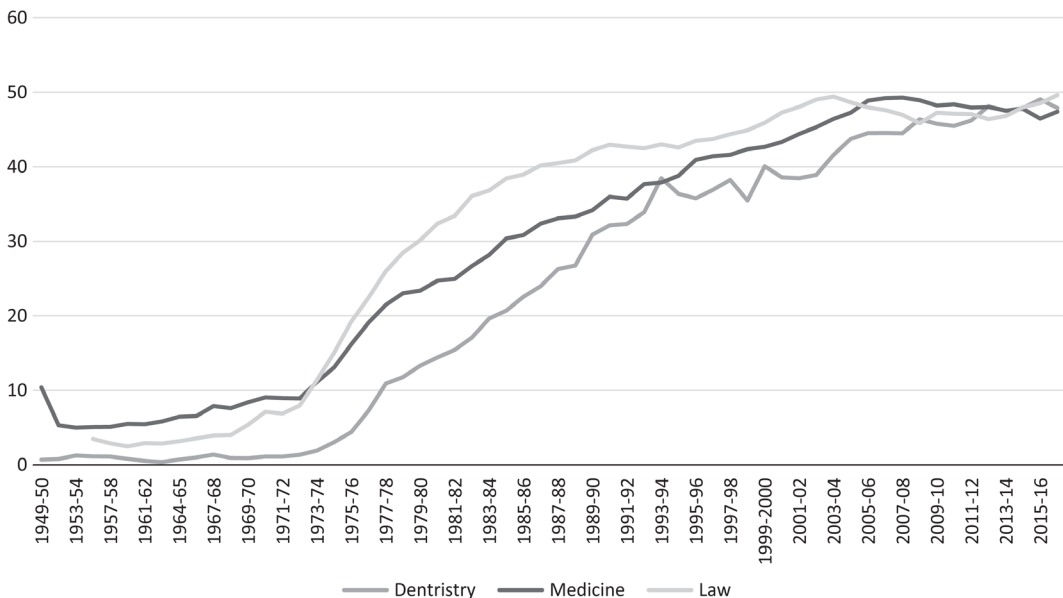
arena, for example, true equality of opportunity for men and women would require fundamental social changes. One such change would be a major change in current patterns of occupational segregation. Is there any sign that this is happening? In keeping with the finding noted earlier that gifted girls are most likely to aspire to traditionally male occupations, there was a sharp rise between about 1970 and 2000 in the number of women training for certain prestigious fields such as law and medicine (see Figure 8.4), with about half of law, medical, and dentistry students now women. However, overall occupational segregation has declined only modestly, and many occupations remain overwhelmingly male or female (Levanon and Grusky, 2016). As late as 1980, for example,

and female children should receive a share of all inheritances.

One might, of course, point out that the preceding comparisons of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam come from the past. What of today? The answer is that among peoples of all religions, actual treatment of women varies widely from place to place. Certainly that is true of Islam. The roles and statuses of Muslim women in such far-flung places as Afghanistan, Egypt, several of the countries that emerged out of the Soviet Union, Bosnia, and the United States (which has around six million Muslims) vary widely, as the status of women varies widely among these different societies. In some traditional societies, such as Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan under the Taliban, Muslim women have been severely restricted and subjugated. In others, such as the republics south of Russia, they are well educated and career oriented. And in yet others, such as some Western nations, they have become caught up in the same consumerism and “looking good to please men” pattern as is found among women of many religious and ethnic backgrounds in those societies. However, these various cultural characteristics reflect differences among these larger societies, not rules of Islam. And there are similar variations in views about the role of women within other religions, including Christianity. Just among Protestants in the United States, the range of views runs from fundamentalist Christian groups who believe that the place for the woman is in the home and that abortion is murder, to liberal sects that ordain women as

bishops and oppose any legal restrictions on abortion. So what, exactly, is the “Christian” position today?

Finally, even the veil, today associated with Muslims, turns out to be Judeo-Christian in origin. According to Rabbi Dr. Menachem M. Brayer of Yeshiva University, ancient Jewish women were required to wear veils whenever in public, sometimes exposing only one eye. Brayer (1986) quotes ancient Rabbis as saying, “It is not like the daughters of Israel to walk out with heads uncovered.” As for Christianity, St. Paul had this to say, “If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or shaved off, she should cover her head” (1 Corinthians 11:3–10). In addition, one should not equate the veil with subjugation of women. Among Muslim women who choose to wear it, many report that they do so because it frees them from being treated as a sexual object by men (Nichols, 2001). A non-Islamic reporter for the BBC found much the same when she filed this report about her interview with two women from the household of an Islamic cleric in Nigeria: “The women talked and in their answers I saw the seeds of my own reevaluations. They argued that the veil signified their rejection of an unacceptable system of values, which debased women, while Islam elevated women to a position of honour and respect. It is not liberation where you say women should go naked. It is just oppression, because men want to see them naked” (Walker, 2001).

Figure 8.4 Percentage of Women Among Degree Recipients, Selected Professions, 1949–2017.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Degrees and Other Formal Awards Conferred," 1985-86; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Completions Survey" (IPEDS-C:91-99); and IPEDS Fall 2000 through Fall 2017, Completions component. (This table was prepared January 2019.) nces.ed.gov/search/index.asp?q=selected+professions+degree+by+sex&btnG=Search#gsc.tab=0&gsc.q=selected%20professions%20degree%20by%20sex&gsc.page=1 (Downloaded September 27, 2023).

over 95 percent of nurses, secretaries, receptionists, and kindergarten teachers were female, but less than 5 percent of construction workers, engineers, firefighters, and airplane pilots were (Blau and Ferber, 1986, p. 167). Public opinion suggests, though, that occupational segregation will likely continue to decline as long as public values change in the direction of more equality between the genders.

Although full workplace equality probably cannot occur as long as occupational segregation persists, major reductions of income inequality could occur even without a change in occupational segregation. For this to happen, however, something similar to comparable worth legislation would have to be implemented. In other words, men and women with comparable skills, education, and experience would have to be paid equal wages, even when they work at different jobs.

Comparable worth is unlikely to happen voluntarily in the private sector, however, because any company that decided to pay

women the same as comparably skilled and educated men would experience an increase in labor costs and therefore would be at a disadvantage vis-à-vis companies that had no such policy. In this sense, a conflict theorist could argue that our economic system, with its profit orientation, is inhibiting the move toward economic equality of the sexes.

In noneconomic areas, the prospects for change also remain uncertain. Although men have changed their thinking concerning their role in the home, it is not clear that they are willing to share fully in domestic chores. Moreover, different patterns of communication continue to both reflect and reinforce inequalities between men and women.

Although there are serious questions about the adequacy of her sample, Hite's (1987) survey of American women does strongly suggest that lack of communication is one of the biggest complaints women have about their husbands. In general, men interrupt far more than women (Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz, 1985;

Zimmerman and West, 1975), and women are expected to spend more time listening while men talk (Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz, 1985), a concept popularized as “mansplaining.” Women are also more likely than men to use gestures associated with low status, such as nodding, smiling, and holding their arms close to their bodies (see McKenna and Denmark, 1978). So long as these patterns exist, men and women will not interact as equals, and it is unlikely that women will attain equal access to desirable roles in life. Thus, although gender roles have changed considerably in some ways, they have not changed much in other ways. More importantly, gender roles remain not only different but also unequal.

The likelihood that this inequality between the roles of men and women will be eliminated at any time in the foreseeable future appears dubious at best. Our society has moved in that direction, perhaps more dramatically in the past two decades than at any previous time in our history. However, it has a very long way to go before true sexual equality is attained.

Intersexuality, Sexual Orientation, and the Politics of Being “Different”

At the start of this chapter, we stated that sex refers to whether you are either a male or a female. But what if you are clearly neither? **Intersexual** people is the current term used for those born with both male and female genitalia. In the past, the term “hermaphrodite” was often used. A recent distinction is that the latter term is being reserved for the very rare cases in which the full male testes and female ovaries are present in the same individual, while intersexuality refers to the much more common occurrence of being born with some aspects, but not all, of both genitalia. This can vary greatly across individuals and does not appear to have any set pattern. A growing consensus among medical and other professionals is that while intersexuality is a rare phenomenon, it is a natural part of human sexual diversity (Blackless et al., 2000; Dreger, 1998). In societies in which the dominant social definition of sex is either male or female, living as an intersexual person can be

confusing and complicated. However, not all cultures see intersexual people in this way. The Navajo tribe, for instance, view intersexuality as a higher status than either male or female.

Sexual Orientation

While the bulk of this chapter has discussed heterosexual relationships, a growing and important field of gender studies has to do with homosexual and bisexual relationships. **Sexual orientation** refers to the nature of sexual attraction we have toward others. There are four main types of orientations: **heterosexual**, an attraction to members of the opposite sex; **homosexual**, attraction to members of the same sex; **bisexual**, attraction to members of both sexes; and **asexual**, no attraction to either sex. Finally, a **transgender** person is someone whose gender identity is different than his or her sex. A person is born male, for instance, but feels in every way that he is female. Transgendered persons who take the step of going through hormone therapy or surgery to change their sex are often referred to as **transsexual**. Collectively, all these identities (except for heterosexual) are referred to as **LGBTQ+** (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, queer or questioning individuals, with the + symbolizing the expanding and new understanding of different parts of diverse gender and sexual identities.). Sociologists and other social scientists have long struggled to measure the number of LGBTQ+ people in the general population. Estimates have normally varied anywhere from 1 to 10 percent. However, a recent National Health Interview Survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found less than 3 percent of respondents reporting as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Somashkekhar, 2014). Some 1.6 percent reported themselves as gay or lesbian, while 0.7 percent reported as bisexual. What seems clear from data across the globe is that LGBTQ+ individuals are a regularly occurring, if small percentage of the human population. That is, they are a normal part of human diversity. As people come to feel this is the case, evidence suggests attitudes toward LGBTQ+ issues become more supportive.

While rights for LGBTQ+ people are expanding across the globe, there are still

countries in which one's life could be threatened if found not to be heterosexual. In fact, LGBTQ+ people or homosexual acts are still punished by death in Yemen, Iran, Mauritania, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates (Bearak and Cameron, 2016).

Any sexual orientation other than heterosexual has long been a point of controversy and discrimination in American society. However, like intersexuality, not all cultures or time periods have treated homosexuality this way. And evidence suggests that Americans are growing increasingly accepting of LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as the movement for gay civil rights.

For instance, the Pew Research Center (2016) has been conducting surveys on Americans' views of same-sex marriage for over a decade. From 2003 to 2016, Americans' attitudes shifted dramatically from 32 percent in support of and 59 percent opposed to same-sex marriage in 2003, to today, where 55 percent support same-sex marriage and 37 percent oppose it. Pew conducted their surveys accounting for a host of social demographic factors. One of those factors was by age cohort. Their findings confirm what many suspect: Younger Americans are more supportive than older Americans of same-sex marriage and, by extension, of LGBTQ+ rights in general. Yet the Pew research also shows that all age groups have experienced a dramatic attitude change from 2003 to 2016. For instance, Millennials (defined as those born after 1981) have changed their level of support for same-sex marriage from 51 percent in 2003 to 71 percent in 2016. Generation X (born 1965–1980) went from 40 percent in 2003 to 56 percent in 2016. Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964), who as a group remain slightly opposed to same-sex marriage, nonetheless increased their support from only 33 percent in 2003 to 46 percent in 2016; while the least supportive and oldest age cohort, the Silent Generation (born 1928–1945) went from just 17 percent in 2003 to more than double at 38 percent in 2016. Note that today the oldest and most opposed age cohort is more supportive of same-sex marriage (38 percent) than the national average (32 percent) of 2003. Similar changes can be seen by political affiliation, gender, race, and religion. Democrats and

Independents are strongly in support, while Republicans are strongly opposed. Women are slightly more supportive than men. White people are supportive, while African Americans are slightly opposed. Evangelical Protestants are strongly opposed, while mainline Protestants and Catholics are supportive. Yet all these groups, just as we saw with older Americans, are dramatically more supportive of same-sex marriage than they were in 2003.

The United States Supreme Court has recently led the way on this front by declaring same-sex marriage as legal nationwide in its June 26, 2015, ruling on the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case, which overturned all state-level bans on same-sex marriage, making it the law of the land. In making their decision, the court followed a global trend. The following countries have legalized gay marriage in the years indicated: the Netherlands (2000), Belgium (2003), Canada (2005), Spain (2005), South Africa (2006), Norway (2009), Sweden (2009), Argentina (2010), Iceland (2010), Portugal (2010), Denmark (2012), Brazil (2013), England and Wales (2013), France (2013), New Zealand (2013), Uruguay (2013), Luxembourg (2014), Scotland (2014), Ireland (2015), United States (2015), and Finland (effective 2017) (Waxman, 2015). Yet there is evidence that despite the remarkable shift in attitudes supporting formal rights for LGBTQ+ couples, studies have found many Americans less comfortable with granting LGBTQ+ couples the “informal privileges” that heterosexual couples enjoy, such as public displays of affection (Doan, Loehr, and Miller, 2014). Additionally, a portion of the country still views any other orientation than heterosexual as deviant and possibly even sinful. Sometimes, this is seen as a question of religious belief versus civil rights, that is, a matter of values. However, sociology can offer a few facts and data that can help clarify some of the murkiness of the debate.

Many cast homosexuality as a “deviant lifestyle choice.” While this label may have much to do with cultural judgments about gay relationships, it implies that being gay is a choice. While conclusive scientific proof remains, to this date, elusive, the weight of scientific evidence seems to be pointing to a biological cause

for homosexual orientation (Hamer and Cope-land, 1994; Wheeler, 1992; Suplee, 1991). This should hardly be surprising. First, most gay and bisexual individuals will report that they have felt their orientation for most, if not all, of their lives (Lever, 1994). Second, one must consider what is being proposed by the idea that sexual orientation is a “choice.” Many times, when this rhetorical device of choice is deployed, it is done so without considering that if homosexual orientation is a choice—meaning one could simply choose not to be homosexual—then it must be true that heterosexual orientation is also a choice. There is an easy way to test this proposition for yourself, if you are a heterosexual. Imagine that tomorrow the government decrees that starting at noon the next day, all sexual activity performed with another person must be homosexual. Would heterosexuality feel like a choice then? This is essentially the reverse of the situation gays and lesbians have faced every day of their lives in the United States for many years. And while this thought experiment cannot prove sexual orientation is hard-wired, it may provide enough evidence for many.

Finally, sociological theory can give us a variety of ways to view the debates and changes associated with issues of sexual orientation. Some conflict theorists argue that one of the reasons gay males have been persecuted is because equating femininity with “male,” as is sometimes done with gay males, threatens the basis of male power and masculinity. Thus, by devaluing gay men, straight men devalue the feminine and thereby strengthen male power. Of course, to a conflict theorist, this also means that the success of the gay rights movement is slowly undermining the basis of male power and gender inequality. Functionalists, on the other hand, have traditionally seen homosexuality, or even nonprocreation sexual activity among heterosexuals, as dysfunctional to the family unit and therefore society. However, sociologists following in Durkheim’s tradition have long seen deviations from the norm as having a beneficial effect on society by pointing out weaknesses in the social fabric. By challenging norms of sexuality and relationships in society, LGBTQ+ movements may force everyone

to reassess what is truly valuable in their own relationships and force a recommitment to those values. Finally, focused as they are on meaning and social construction, symbolic-interactionists are interested in how sexuality is defined and learned through socialization and interactions through the life course. And once a person is labeled as gay, lesbian, bi, or transgendered, that status can become their master status (a concept we introduced in Chapter 4). This is a distinctive aspect of the LGBTQ+ experience. Unlike straight people who may be most likely defined by their occupational status (especially if they are members of the racial majority group), LGBTQ+ individuals are often primarily recognized “by what they do in bed” (Esterberg, 1997).

Summary

Sex refers to the biological characteristic of being male or female, whereas *gender* refers to socially learned traits that are attached to sex in society. Most societies have a system of gender roles, in which men and women are expected to play different parts. In most societies, including the United States, these roles are unequal, and male dominance is the rule. Some societies, however, are androgynous, and a few are even female dominant. Moreover, even though male dominance is widespread, its form varies from one society to another, and it changes over time. In the United States and other Western societies, for example, the housewife role that emerged with the Industrial Revolution faded in importance after World War II.

In the United States and other industrial societies, women are increasingly entering the paid labor force. However, women work at different jobs than men, usually for lower pay. Despite some improvements, the typical American woman still receives only about three-fourths the wages of the typical man. Differences in the wages and salaries of men and women cannot be explained by differences in education or skills, or even by the greater tendency of women to work part time and to leave the labor force temporarily. Rather, they are a product of the different jobs of women, their

lesser opportunity to be promoted into jobs with supervisory authority, and their frequent need to subordinate their own careers to those of their husbands.

Some of this inequality is also the result of gender-role socialization, the process by which men and women are taught to expect and seek different and unequal roles in life. Achievement, strength, and independence are stressed for boys, while girls are taught to be nice and to look attractive. Clothes, games, children's books, television, parents, and teachers all give these messages. Through the process of the looking-glass self, boys and girls are taught different self-images. They come to believe that their skills lie in different subjects, and by high school, this process has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Children also see men and women in different jobs (in the media, in school materials, and in their own experiences), and as a result boys and girls aspire to different jobs themselves. Recent research suggests that these differences are decreasing, but they have not disappeared.

Some functionalists see gender roles as a case of cultural lag—something that was useful in the past but no longer is today. They predict that society will gradually move toward androgyny. Other functionalists, however, see gender roles as essential to the cohesiveness of the family and blame such problems as the soaring divorce rate on the declining influence of traditional gender roles. Conflict theorists argue that gender roles exist because men benefit from them. According to conflict theories, men use their disproportionate power to maintain a system of unequal gender roles. Feminism offers the possibility of changing this system of inequality. Conflict theorists also argue that families with traditional gender roles are no happier or more functional than are more androgynous families, and that the ability of working women to afford divorce may not be all bad.

Increasingly since World War II, women in a number of countries, including the United States, have challenged unequal gender roles through powerful feminist movements. These recent movements have been more

broad-based and influential than earlier women's movements. They have been facilitated by the increased education of women, improved mass communication, and the participation of women in a number of other social movements. Feminism has not eliminated gender roles or sexual inequality, but it has brought significant legal changes in many countries, as well as some important changes in public opinion concerning the appropriate roles of men and women.

Intersexuality refers to the rare instance in which one is born with some combination of both male and female genitalia. While such individuals have had difficulty living a normal life in American culture, not all societies have treated them this way. The Navajo, for instance, considered them the ultimate expression of sexuality. Sexual orientation is a growing and important field of gender studies in sociology. Though still a point of debate and controversy, gay, bisexual, and lesbian orientations are meeting with increasing acceptance among Americans. While no firm scientific evidence exists to suggest that one's sexual orientation is biologically determined, much circumstantial evidence suggests it. This contradicts the widespread idea that one's sexual orientation is a choice.

Key Terms

sex
gender
gender roles
sexism
institutional sexism
androgynous societies
gender-role socialization
double or triple jeopardy
glass ceiling
glass escalator
second shift
occupational segregation
feminism
feminist theory
intersexual
sexual orientation

heterosexual
 homosexual
 bisexual
 asexual
 transgender
 transsexual
 LGBTQ+

Exercises

- 1 One very interesting dimension of studying gender roles is the relationship between *gender* and *language*. Deborah Tannen is a well-known authority on communication differences between men and women, and her *genderlect* styles have become widely quoted in the gender studies literature.
 - Tannen refers to male-female conversation as cross-cultural communication. Do you agree with her that males and females are *that* far apart from one another in the use of language and communication?
 - Explain how the classic film *When Harry Met Sally* is an illustration of gender communication differences. Check it out if you haven't seen it. Another that

explores both gender and age differences is *The Intern*.

- 2 Sexual harassment, particularly in the workplace, continues to be a very controversial topic in American society.

- Do you believe you have ever been victimized by sexual harassment, or do you know someone who has? If you have experienced sexual harassment, how did it make you feel? If you know someone who has had this experience, make a point of asking them how they felt. Be sure to approach the issue in a sensitive manner and respect their wishes if they prefer not to discuss it.
- Your college or university should have a sexual harassment policy, and it is probably stated in the institution's catalog or handbook. Access this document and read it carefully. Do you think enough is being done in our society to combat sexual harassment? If not, what more can be done?

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Chapter 9

Groups, Organizations, and the Workplace

From the time we are born, we humans rely on others to survive. We are social creatures, so we naturally come together and create groups. When we work together in a group, we become stronger. There are things we can achieve as a group that we can't do on our own. This applies to many aspects of life, whether it's using our brains or our physical strength. Groups consistently do better and make better decisions than individuals.

Of course, we know that group decision-making does not always work this way. Sometimes, groups undertake risky and dangerous behaviors that their individual members would never choose on their own. You have all heard of cases in which a group of teenagers has broken into a museum or trophy room, stolen something, and put it somewhere—perhaps at their school—for people to see. Sometimes, group actions take a deadly turn, as in fraternity initiations or student drinking contests that have led to accidental deaths. Group dynamics sometimes lead to bad decisions being made under pressure, as happened when the U.S. warship *Vincennes* mistakenly shot down an Iranian airliner. And pressures to meet deadlines or cost targets can create dynamics within organizations that lead to deadly results, as occurred in the ValuJet crash in 1996 (Matthews and Kauzlarich, 2000).

From these examples and similar ones, we can see that group processes have important effects on human behavior. Groups can empower us to accomplish things we cannot do as individuals, and we depend on the cooperative efforts of groups of people to provide everything from our food and shelter to our entertainment. Yet, at the same time, groups also have the power to shape our behavior in

various ways that can lead to bad decisions and destructive actions. In this chapter, we examine how and why people group together, along with the various kinds of human groups and their impacts on our lives.

Sociologists use the term “group” in a number of ways. Sometimes it is used to refer to a *status group*, a category of people who share some common, socially important status, such as race, ancestry, sex, or social class. When sociologists use the term “social group,” however, they usually mean something a bit more specific. A **social group** can be defined as a set of two or more people who interact regularly and in a manner that is defined by (1) some common purpose, (2) a set of norms, and (3) a structure of statuses and roles within the group. By this definition, a college class, a family, a softball team, and a workplace all qualify as social groups. In contrast, people standing on a corner waiting for a stoplight do not qualify, even if they do interact. There is no regularity to these people's interaction, nor any division of roles and statuses. They share a common purpose only to the extent that they all want to cross the street, but once across, they will all go their separate ways. Sociologists refer to such a cluster of people as an *aggregate*.

Groups and Organizations: What Is the Difference?

A particular kind of group that is of great importance in modern society is the **formal organization**, which is defined as a relatively large-scale group having a name, some official purpose or goals, and a structure of statuses and roles and a set of rules designed to promote these goals.

What distinguishes formal organizations from other kinds of groups is the official—and usually written—nature of the goals, rules, and statuses. The structure of a formal organization is sufficiently clear that it can be put on paper in the form of an organizational chart; in contrast, other kinds of groups are much less formal. Imagine, for example, making an organizational chart of your family or of a group of friends who meet once a week to bowl or swim.

Formal organizations can be grouped into three broad types, according to Etzioni (1975). Some organizations are normative or voluntary organizations—people choose to join them because they are interested in the group's purpose or activities. Examples are recreational clubs, political groups, and professional associations. Another type, overlapping somewhat with voluntary organizations, is the utilitarian organization—an organization designed to accomplish some task. Businesses and neighborhood improvement associations are examples of this type, as are large-scale organizations such as corporations, governments, and labor unions. Finally, there are coercive organizations—organizations that people are compelled to participate in. This category includes the institutions discussed in Chapter 5—prisons, the military, and mental hospitals, for example. For children, however, a wider range of organizations are experienced as coercive organizations, most notably schools and religious institutions. We now turn to a more detailed examination of groups and organizations, beginning with groups.

Group Characteristics and Dynamics

Group Size

One of the most important characteristics of a group is its size. You can, for example, interact much more intensively with one other person than with 50 others. The smallest possible group is a **dyad**, which consists of two people. In a dyad, only one interpersonal relationship exists in the group—that between the two members. If either member withdraws from

interaction in a dyad—by daydreaming, for example—the group's interaction stops. Moreover, the group itself comes to an end if either member chooses to depart. The effects of group size on group dynamics can be seen by comparing the dyad with the **triad**, a group consisting of three people. In a triad, three relationships exist. In a group consisting of Bill, Mary, and Sue, for example, there is one relationship between Bill and Mary, one between Bill and Sue, and one between Mary and Sue.

The presence of three relationships as opposed to one makes an important difference in several ways. First, one person can withdraw without stopping the group's interaction. Bill might daydream, but that would not stop interaction between Mary and Sue. Second, coalitions can be formed when disagreements arise within the group. Bill and Mary might, for example, form a coalition against Sue. They want to see one movie, while Sue wants to see another. In this situation, they would likely cooperate with each other to put pressure on Sue to go to the movie they want to see. And, in many cases, Sue will give in, in order to remain an accepted member of the group.

A third characteristic of triads is that they can be balanced or unbalanced (Heider, 1946, 1958; Zajonc, 1960). As long as Mary, Sue, and Bill remain friendly, the group is balanced: All of its relationships are positive. But suppose that one day Mary and Bill have a terrible fight and come to hate each other. The triad has now become unbalanced. Consider Sue's position: She likes both Bill and Mary, who hate each other. If she chooses to do something with Bill, Mary will likely respond, "Why do you want to spend time with that jerk instead of me?" If she goes somewhere with Mary, she will likely get a similar response from Bill. Both Bill and Mary may try to get her to take "their side" in their conflicts. Sue is thus placed in an impossible position, and the likely result is that she will back away from her relationship with either Mary or Bill, thereby ending the triad.

Complexity and Group Size

Obviously, the complexity of relationships in a triad is far beyond that of a dyad. This complexity continues to increase as small groups become

larger, until eventually a size is reached where, rather than one small group, there is a large group with several smaller subgroups within it. At this point, which is reached at a group size of somewhere between about seven and 12, several important changes occur. One is that it becomes commonplace to have two or more coalitions rather than one, as in a triad. (This dynamic can be readily seen on “reality” TV shows, such as *Survivor*.) The possibilities for the group to become unbalanced increase in larger groups, although the pressures on individuals may decrease because they have more potential relationships to choose from. Another important difference is the need for a system of formal recognition of speakers—deciding who “has the floor.” Often, one or more side conversations go on while one person attempts to address the group. (You can probably observe this dynamic in your next sociology class.) Also, in this more formal situation, people speak differently: Rather than talking to others, they address the group, using a different vocabulary and style of speech. At this point, the group has become less like a small group and more like a formal organization.

Primary and Secondary Groups

Another way that groups vary is in the degree of closeness of their members. Some groups, such as families and good friends, are very close. The people in such groups interact because they value one another—the interpersonal relationships are the primary purpose of the group’s existence. This type of group is called a **primary group** (Cooley, 1929 [orig. 1909]). Primary groups are always small because intimate relationships cannot develop throughout a large network of people. In large group and formal organizations, relationships between members are less personal. This type of group is called a **secondary group**. Examples of secondary groups are businesses, schools, and political organizations. In these groups, interpersonal contacts occur for the purpose of conducting business, gaining an education, or influencing politics—not for the sake of the contacts themselves. A secondary group may be either large or small.

As illustrated by Figure 9.1, the line between primary groups and secondary groups is not always clear, and real-life groups can be placed along a range or continuum from clear-cut primary groups through ambiguous cases to clear-cut secondary groups. Also, primary groups can and do form within a larger secondary group. In fact, a large secondary group typically includes many primary groups. Most formal organizations are secondary groups, but within them, primary groups often develop among members or co-workers.

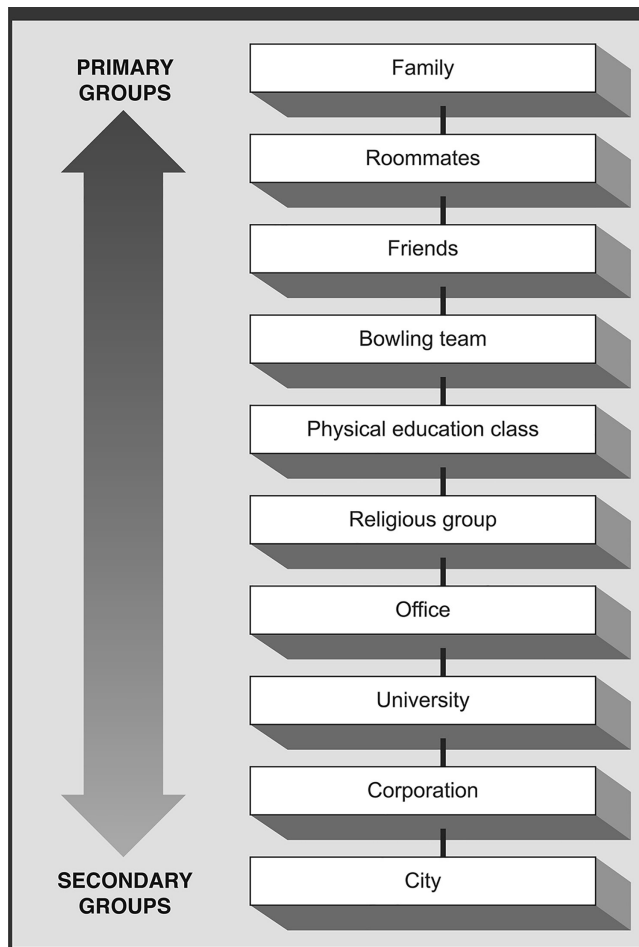
Historically, secondary groups have proliferated as society has modernized. Prior to industrialization, people spent most of their time in small, informal primary groups centered on family, kin, neighborhood, and religious affiliation. Today we come into contact with far more people, and most of this contact is impersonal and revolves around business, education, government, or some other large formal organization.

Although secondary groups have become much more important in modern society, they have not replaced primary groups. Rather, they have been added on, so that we come into contact with a far greater diversity of people than was the case in the past. Even in modern urban society, friends and families remain important to most people, and primary-group relationships still play an important role in people’s lives (Fischer, 1982, 1984; Reiss, 1959).

Conformity Within Groups

Pressures for conformity are present in any group. Observations of small groups show that if a clear majority holds a certain position at the start, the group generally will move toward consensus. Pressures on a dissenting individual are particularly strong, as was demonstrated by a fascinating experiment by Solomon Asch (1956). In this experiment, a group of eight people were asked, one by one, to choose which of three lines on a card matched the length of a line on another card. Actually, only one person in the group—the last to answer—was a subject of the experiment; the rest were confederates—that is, part of the experiment. After a few

Figure 9.1 The continuum from primary to secondary groups.



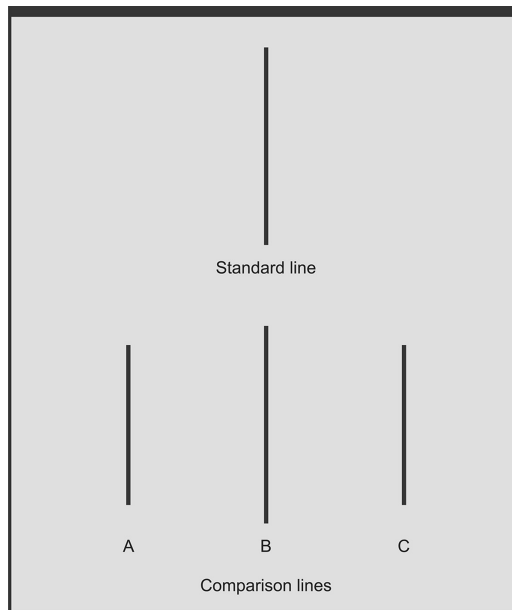
examples in which the confederates made the correct choice, they all gave an obviously wrong answer, such as choosing line A as the matching line in Figure 9.2. When it came time for the subject to answer, about one in three conformed to the obviously wrong opinion of the others and picked the incorrect line. (In a control group without a confederate, only 1 percent answered incorrectly.) In most cases, the conformity was only outward, but for some, it was more than that. When debriefed afterward, the majority said they knew better but went along to avoid ridicule or ostracism from the rest of the group. However, some actually disbelieved what they were seeing, and they offered such explanations as “I guess I just couldn’t see it right.” Fortunately, recent research indicates

that such erroneous decisions often self-correct, as individuals who initially conform to the popular opinion later correct their opinion based on new information or feedback (van de Rijt, 2019). Controlled experiments have shown that self-correction occurs more frequently when individuals are exposed to diverse opinions and when they receive feedback on their opinions (van de Rijt, 2019).

Outside Threats and Group Cohesion

Conflicts of values, personality, or interest can lead to divisions within any group. Often, however, these divisions can be overlooked because of some greater outside threat or conflict with

Figure 9.2 An example of the cards used in Solomon Asch's experiment.



Source: Adapted from "Opinions and Social Pressure," by Solomon Asch from *Scientific American*, November 1955. Copyright © 1995 *Scientific American*.

another group. In such situations, sociologists refer to the group to which a person belongs as the **ingroup** and to other groups as **outgroups**. Outgroups are often seen as threatening to the ingroup. They may be potential competitors, or they may simply do things differently. Because of the widespread tendency toward ethnocentrism discussed in Chapter 4, an outgroup that does things differently will often be seen as inferior. To acknowledge that an outgroup's way could be just as good would threaten the solidarity of the ingroup, so usually the opposite happens: The extent to which the outgroup is actually threatening or different is often exaggerated to promote ingroup unity.

Although the standard line clearly corresponds to line B, many subjects were pressured into selecting the wrong choice.

The extent to which an outside threat can serve as a unifying force can be seen in the response of people to natural disasters and wars. The usual tendency is to pull together to combat the threat or deal with the emergency. An example of this can be seen in the cooperative efforts of people from many backgrounds and ethnic groups in the response to the

September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania. (Unfortunately, people who in the public mind are associated with the threat can also be mindlessly targeted, as occurred in the hundreds of attacks and incidents of harassment against Arab and Muslim Americans after the terrorist attacks.)

The tendency to pull together in the face of a threat is so strong that leaders sometimes take advantage of it to strengthen their own positions. On the societal level, national leaders sometimes encourage conflicts that lead to warfare in order to make people forget about divisive internal issues or about mistakes made by the leadership (Burrowes and Spector, 1973, p. 295; Lang, 1972). This process appears to have been part of the dynamic that led to World War I, as various national leaders whipped up fervor against neighboring countries to distract people from problems in their own countries (Farrar, 1978, p. 169).

Despite this general tendency, sometimes divisions within the group are too deep to be put aside, even in the face of an outside threat. In such cases, the outside threat may even deepen the conflict. The response of families to a crisis

such as a major illness or a breadwinner's loss of employment serves as an example. If a family is relatively strong, a crisis of this type will usually bring it closer together. However, the crisis may be too much for a weak or deeply divided family, in which case it often leads to a divorce.

Dysfunctional Group Processes

Groupthink

Certain processes and dynamics that occur in groups often result in dangerous or inappropriate decisions. Two such processes are groupthink and group polarization.

Groupthink is a process whereby a group collectively arrives at a decision that individual members privately oppose but do not challenge. This usually happens in small, cohesive groups with powerful leaders. Although individual members of the group believe the decision to be unwise, they do not speak out against it because they do not want to break the group consensus or challenge the leader. The result is that the group makes an unwise decision with little debate, which it might not have made had there been more discussion.

A commonly cited example of groupthink is the 1962 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, in which the United States sponsored an unsuccessful attempt by a group of Cuban exiles to overthrow Premier Fidel Castro. Social psychologist Irving Janis (1972; see also Janis and Mann, 1977) examined the decision-making process that led to the Kennedy administration's support of the Bay of Pigs invasion. It turns out that many of Kennedy's advisers privately saw the foolishness of what was being contemplated but did not speak up. The result was a resounding military defeat and a diplomatic embarrassment. Another example may be the 2003 invasion of Iraq in which members of the George W. Bush administration seemed to have convinced themselves, despite a preponderance of disconfirming evidence, that Iraq contained an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. In the coming years, this case may prove as fruitful as the famous cases of groupthink from the past. For instance, were officials so convinced that they would find the weapons that they

knowingly used unreliable evidence to make the case for war? Or was some other agenda at work? Future researchers will be looking into these questions to determine if groupthink was the culprit.

Group Polarization

Closely related to groupthink is a process known as group polarization, in which a group moves toward a stronger position or more extreme course of action than its members individually favor. This process can lead to either excessively risky or excessively cautious courses of action.

The Risky Shift. The effects of group polarizations were first discovered in the form of the risky shift (Stoner, 1961; Wallach, Kogan, and Bem, 1962). The risky shift can be illustrated by an incident that occurred in an organization to which I (Farley) belong. Some years ago, I served for a year on the governing board of a ski club. One of the jobs of the board was to plan the club's ski trips for the coming year. Each trip has a group leader, and it so happens that one of these leaders (I'll call him "Wayne") was so popular that his trips filled quickly no matter where they went. Late in the meeting, someone suggested that we could fill a "mystery trip" with Wayne as the leader, listing on the brochure a price for the trip but not telling people the destination. After some further discussion, it was decided that it would be a clever idea to make this a trip to Florida, ending with a one-day stop at a very small local ski area a few miles outside of our town, so we could legitimately call it a ski trip. People would have so much fun, we concluded, that they wouldn't really mind spending hundreds of dollars and their precious vacation time to go to Florida when they wanted, and had paid for, a ski vacation. After loading up their ski equipment, and lots of winter sweaters and coats, we thought, they would react cheerfully to finding themselves in Florida without warm-weather clothes, and finally coming back to a place near home where they could ski any time they want for \$20. We actually believed at the time that this was a good idea! Fortunately, we left the meeting without finalizing our plans, and once apart from the group, we individually realized the folly of our thinking.

Why does a group move toward such risky decisions that individuals would probably never make? Often there is a feeling that “we need to do something bold and different.” The group wants to think it is being dynamic and creative, rather than doing the same old thing. In addition, there is frequently a tendency to rally around an idea that seems clever and adventurous, without considering what could go wrong. I know that both of these things happened in the ski trip example. Finally, people may try to enhance their status in the group by going along with what others suggest, which tends to move the group toward whatever idea someone suggests first (Laughlin and Early, 1982). This process may be particularly likely if the person suggesting the action has high status in the group, and may personally benefit from the decision, and research shows that such shifts are often products of inequalities of influence within the group (Pernell, Jung and Dobbin, 2017; Friedkin, 1999).

Not all group shifts are risky, however. Some groups shift toward an overly cautious approach, shunning even moderate actions that the individual members of the group would take (Moscovici and Zavalloni, 1969). Thus, group polarization may lead a group toward a position that is either riskier or more cautious than individual members would take. Group polarization has been shown to occur in a wide variety of groups, including such diverse examples as bargaining and negotiation groups (Lamm and Sauer, 1974), groups of gamblers (Blascovich, Ginsburg, and Howe, 1975), juries (Myers and Kaplan, 1976), and school discussion groups (Myers and Bishop, 1970).

Organizations

Why Study Organizations?

A sociologist who gave suggestions on this chapter for an earlier edition of this book commented that a chapter on organizations is hard to write. He described organizations as “stodgy and boring”—certainly not as inherently interesting as other topics covered in this book, such as sexual behavior, racial conflict, or why

people get divorced. Why, then, do virtually all introductory sociology books devote so much to organizations? Sociologist Richard Hall (1996) provides the answer in the opening of his book on organizations: They surround and influence us every day of our lives, with the certainty of death and taxes. Hall points out that most of us are born and die in organizational settings (hospitals). Almost all of the time between is spent under their influence. You might be alone in your room reading this book right now—surely something that appears to be away from the influence of organizations. But you are still under their influence. An organization (Routledge) produced this book. And most likely, someone in an organization (your college or university) told you to read it, so the organization could give you course credit for introductory sociology. Even our recreation involves organizations. Richard Hall enjoys downhill skiing. And he points out that this activity would be very hard to do without an organization (a ski area) to make it available. Thus, it is important to understand organizations because their influences on us are so all-encompassing.

Characteristics of Organizations

Although their purposes vary widely, all formal organizations share certain characteristics. First, they have some purpose or goal, which just about any member of the organization can recognize. The purpose may be nothing more than to have fun (e.g., a social club), but it is a recognized purpose. Sociologists describe this characteristic of formal organizations by saying that they are instrumental. Because organizations have a purpose, they usually involve some process of coordination to ensure that the various people in the organization are to at least some degree working toward that common purpose (Hall, 1996). In addition to these characteristics, organizations are self-perpetuating. This means they have a life above and beyond that of individual members. Old members may leave and new members may join, but the organization continues. Both of these characteristics distinguish formal organizations from other kinds of groups. Many informal groups do not



STUDENT LIFE

The Organization of Security

In the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks, the U.S. government stepped up its efforts to monitor potentially threatening behavior within its own borders. The passage of legislation such as the Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001 (USA Patriot Act) greatly expanded the powers of the federal government to snoop into the lives of its citizens. More than one commentator has remarked on the irony of eroding the freedoms of citizens to protect freedom. But our society has long been permeated by technologies and practices that limit our privacy. Every time you use your credit card, swipe a discount card, or withdraw money from an ATM, your movements and actions are being monitored. Social theorist Michel Foucault predicted that society was evolving into a “surveillance society.”

The image he evoked was of a Panopticon, a round prison in which the guards could see all of the prisoners all of the time without being seen themselves. Has society reached such a level? In 2006, it was revealed that nearly all of the email traffic in the United States is going through a secret room in California where it is scanned by a program looking for certain “red flag” words that would presumably warrant further examination by officials. College students routinely post the photographic record of their social activities on the Internet through various social networking sites such as Facebook or MySpace, and occasionally, such photos are used to fire or refuse to hire prospective employees. In many ways, we are more visible to each other than ever before. One might think this would make us safer. But Foucault argues that visibility is a trap; it makes us all easier to track and follow.

have a formally defined purpose (though they usually do have some informal purpose), and many informal groups continue to exist only as long as a given set of individuals continues to participate. A group of four people who meet to play cards on Saturday night, for example, may stop meeting if two of its members move out of town.

A third characteristic of organizations, which is shared with other kinds of groups, is the presence of a leader or leaders. Often organizations try to institutionalize the presence of leaders by creating an authority structure: a set of positions, each of which carries some recognized function and decision-making power. A formal authority structure, however, is not necessary for leadership to develop: It turns out that even organizations that attempt to be leaderless usually end up with leaders.

A final characteristic of organizations is that they have boundaries (Hall, 1996). In other words, they have ways of delineating who is in the organization and who is not. Sometimes boundaries are highly visible, as in the case of a police force. Police wear uniforms to identify themselves as police officers, and it is against

the law for someone who is not a police officer to wear such a uniform. In other cases, the boundaries may be fuzzier. A counselor employed by a hospital may provide counseling services at a high school. In this case, the counselor may to some extent be part of both organizations. However, even in this case the counselor is quite different from someone with no ongoing work relationship to either organization.

Social Networks and the Strength of Weak Ties

Social networks are the collections of people and groups you have some social connection to. We might think of close family and friends as the strongest of these, but also work colleagues, casual acquaintances, friends of friends, and distant relatives, not to mention members of groups we are members of who do not yet know us. The common phrase “Who you know is just as important as what you know” illustrates the importance of social networks. Increasingly, networks are encompassing a virtual component with the rise of so-called social networking

sites, such as Facebook or Twitter. Networks are not the same thing as groups. Groups contain some sense of a shared identity. A network could include you, the people you work with, and the *friends* of the people you work with—most of whom you do not know but who could come to your aid (thanks to your colleague) in a crisis or particular situation, if needed. The stronger the connection you have to someone in your network, the stronger tie we would say you have; the weaker that connection, the weaker the tie. Granovetter (1973) argued that there can often be more benefit in having a lot of *weak ties* than in having a few strong ties. Partly, this is because the number of strong ties that one individual can have is always limited. But the number of weak ties is nearly limitless. Another reason is that casual acquaintances (weak ties) are likely to have a much more diverse set of social circles compared to a person's close friends or family (strong ties), who tend to have very similar social connections to one another. The broader the net one can cast, the more likely one is to find what one is looking for.

These principles of networking happen for both individuals and groups. Sometimes there can be a gap in the connections of weak ties among groups or individuals that would be beneficial to all involved if that gap were filled. Thus, a “broker” is needed to link the two individuals or groups. When other individuals or groups fill that gap, they are said to be filling a *structural hole* (Burt, 1995). Great benefits can flow to brokers who fill structural holes and establish the weak ties of a network. Yet not everyone has access to equally powerful networks, and this is related to the major social characteristics in society we have already examined, for instance, class, race, or gender. Men tend to have more ties in the job market, for instance, than do women (Moore, 1990). Further, networks themselves can alter the behavior of social actors. Schifeling (2013) found that during four recessions from 1950 to 1970, U.S. companies managed the uncertain environment concerning investment and employment by mimicking their peer organizations and using their corporate networks to coordinate information with one another. This illustrates some of the main

potential weaknesses of networks: mimicry and segregation. Melmad et al. (2020) found that while many have assumed that cooperative networks are always diverse and inclusive, many times they are instead homogenous and segregated from the larger group. This segregation can lead to the formation of further segregated subgroups and an eventual reduction in cooperation and lower levels of trust and reciprocity, ultimately undermining the effectiveness of the cooperative network. All of this gets us back to Granovetter's original point: strong ties are not always good for an organization, and weak ties may actually be more important.

Oligarchy Versus Democracy

The tendency for leadership to develop in organizations is so strong that it often results in oligarchy, or rule by a small group of leaders, with little or no effective influence on the part of the members. Even in organizations that try to be democratic, certain members often end up making the important decisions.

Michels's Iron Law of Oligarchy

This insight arises from the work of political sociologist Robert Michels (1967 [orig. 1911]). Early in his life, Michels was a member of political organizations that were strongly committed to democracy and social equality. He noticed that no matter what the organizations preached, they in fact were run by their leaders and not by the ordinary members. Michels became convinced that this tendency to be run by the leadership was a characteristic of all formal organizations, a principle that he called the **iron law of oligarchy**.

According to Michels, there are clear reasons why all organizations exhibit this tendency. All organizations have certain tasks that members must *delegate* to their leaders. This delegation of work helps concentrate power in the hands of leaders for several reasons. First, leaders gain access to information that others don't have, and information is a source of power. Second, leaders benefit from a sense

of obligation on the part of the organization's members. Because the leaders have spared the membership the burden of doing the work, most members feel obligated to cooperate with whatever policies the leaders suggest. As the leaders accumulate power, they frequently use it to advance or protect their own interests, sometimes even at the expense of the interests of the membership. Frequently, even in political organizations committed to social change, leaders become more conservative over time, more oriented to maintaining their own power, and thus more supportive of the status quo. As a result, when revolutions or new political movements succeed, they often have the ultimate result of merely replacing one group of powerful leaders with another because their original democratic ideals are lost or forgotten.

Oligarchy: Iron Law or Just a Tendency?

If Michels were entirely correct, his discovery would be depressing for anyone who favors democracy because it leads to the inevitable conclusion that democracy is an impossible ideal. Fortunately, Michels seems to have overstated his argument. Although leaders in all organizations do have disproportionate power, that power is not unlimited. Many organizations have challenged and even removed their leaders. Moreover, as shown in the box titled "What Makes a Union Democratic?" we do know that certain elements can make organizations less oligarchic and more democratic.

A self-conscious effort to keep an organization democratic can sometimes succeed if the organization does not become too large. An example can be found in *cooperatives* and *collectives*, small organizations that provide goods or services and that are strongly committed to a democratic ideal. Rothschild and Whitt (1986) conducted field observations of five such organizations in California in the 1970s, all of which were made up of well-educated, middle-class people committed to liberal and democratic political principles. Among the features that kept these organizations democratic were avoidance of the written rules characteristic

of most modern organizations, small size, and shunning of specialization. In effect, one way they prevented the leadership from gaining too much power was by eliminating formal positions of authority. Such organizations required a great deal of time for decision-making because every decision had to be discussed and debated among the entire membership. They had to keep to a narrow path between failure on the one side and "too much success" on the other. Organizations that failed often did so because of disorganization or conflict, which easily became personalized because every member was by definition deeply involved in it. Organizations that became "too successful" grew to the point that work had to be delegated and rules formalized, and at this point, oligarchic tendencies took over. Some organizations, though, were able to remain democratic and to continue to function effectively. Cox (2021) found that while attempts to redistribute power can be challenging due to resistance from those who already have power, attempts to redistribute power within organizations can succeed by using two different methods: creating a level playing field where all parties have equal power and influence; and by creating a sense of community and shared purpose among individuals or groups where all parties feel included and valued. Both are needed. We return to these issues later in this chapter.

Leadership in Groups and Organizations

Instrumental and Expressive Leadership

Although all groups and organizations have leaders, not all leaders have the same role and function within the group. Research on small groups by Bales (1953) and Slater (1955) uncovered two kinds of leaders who play different roles within the group. One type is the **instrumental leader**, also known as the task leader. This type of leader helps the group define its job and determine how best to do it. The other kind of leader is the **expressive leader**, also known as the socioemotional leader, or inspirational

leader. This leader helps maintain the cohesiveness of the group and looks out for the emotional well-being of its members. This leader may tell a joke to relieve tension or help soothe the feelings of a member who was criticized.

A successful group needs both instrumental and expressive leaders. Groups that have only instrumental leaders are likely to bog down in dissension and lose their common identity. The members may feel that their leaders are insensitive to their concerns and cease to cooperate with the group (or, in extreme cases, cease to participate). Groups having only expressive leaders may get along very well but get nothing done. Even routine tasks essential to the maintenance of the group may go undone, thus threatening the group's very existence. A recent study found that while organizations need both styles of leadership, how effective that leadership ultimately is may depend on the personalities of the followers, with some responding better to one kind of leader than the other (Moss and Ngu, 2006).

Although a group needs both types of leadership to be effective, it is rare to find both types in the same individual. Some groups initially rate the same person high on both qualities, but this estimation seldom lasts for long (Slater, 1955). Because instrumental leaders tend to upset people in the process of promoting their ideas, someone else must step forward to provide expressive leadership. Some societies have implicitly recognized this problem by

institutionalizing separate roles for instrumental and expressive leadership. In constitutional monarchies such as Great Britain, Norway, and Sweden, the king or queen plays the expressive role, while the prime minister plays the instrumental role. The king or queen acts as a symbol of national pride and unity and performs a ceremonial function, while the parliament and the prime minister make the day-to-day political decisions.

Some sociologists believe that one of the characteristics of people who gain the reputation of being "great leaders" is their ability to offer both instrumental and expressive leadership. Franklin Roosevelt is sometimes cited as an example. As an instrumental leader, he developed a plan to get the country out of the Great Depression, and he got more legislation through Congress in his first 100 days in office than any of his predecessors. As an expressive leader, he soothed people with his "fireside chats," assuring them that "[t]he only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Most leaders, though, are clearly either instrumental or expressive. Ronald Reagan, the "Great Communicator" who often couldn't keep his facts straight and left important decisions to subordinates, was clearly an expressive leader. Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon, who planned and analyzed everything but ultimately failed during their presidencies to inspire much besides public distrust and ridicule, were examples of instrumental leaders.



Photos 9.1 and 9.2 Donald Trump was uninterested in the details of policy but inspired his supporters, while Hillary Clinton demonstrated impressive levels of expertise and experience but was personally disliked by large numbers of the public.

Characteristics of Leaders

What are the personal characteristics of people who become leaders? The surprising answer is that it is not always easy to predict who will become a leader. Personality differences between people who become leaders and people who don't are rather small (Yukl, 1981). Leaders tend to be more intelligent, more extroverted, more psychologically balanced, more dominant, more self-confident, and more liberal than other group members (the last is true even in conservative groups), but the differences are minor, and many nonleaders have similar qualities (Hare, 1976; Mann, 1959; Stogdill, 1974; Yukl, 1981). Leaders also

tend to be somewhat taller (Keyes, 1980) and more physically attractive than nonleaders. Becoming a leader, however, may be as much a product of a situation as of any individual characteristics, and different kinds of people emerge as leaders in different situations (Cooper and McGaugh, 1969). To some extent, becoming a leader is probably a product of being in the right place at the right time. For example, research by Friedkin (1993) suggests that a person's position in the social networks within an organization makes a big difference. When a key issue arises, the person's position in these networks strongly shapes the amount of influence that person is able to exercise. Such influence is a product of (1) being part



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

What Makes a Union Democratic?

The general membership of a group has more influence relative to the leaders in some organizations than in others. A classic study by Lipset, Trow, and Coleman (1956) of the International Typographical Union shows some of the characteristics associated with democratic rather than oligarchic decision-making. Lipset and his colleagues discovered that workers had distinctly more power relative to union leaders in the typographers' union than was the case in large-scale industrial unions such as the United Auto Workers. In other words, the typographers had much more influence over major decisions and day-to-day operations than did the autoworkers. Lipset accounted for this difference on the basis of the following characteristics of the typographers' union that made it different from many other unions:

- The small size of the typographers' union and its locals. This meant that most workers knew one another and their leaders fairly well, rather than just as faces at union meetings.
- The specialized nature of the typographers' work. This created a sense of community among the workers, a feeling that they constituted a distinct group of people.
- The tendency among typographers to socialize outside the job setting, so that the union members and leaders interacted in situations where their job and union status were irrelevant. This reduced the social distance between leaders and members.

- Limits on terms of office, especially on officers' serving successive terms. This institutionalized a rotation of leadership, which kept any one person from becoming too powerful.
- The development of organized political groupings, which became institutionalized within the union. Therefore, whoever was in office always faced an organized opposition.

These observations can be extended to other groups and organizations besides labor unions, including political systems. They partly explain why a two-party or multiparty system is usually more democratic than either a one-party or a nonpartisan system. The strong inference is that any group wanting to stay democratic should place strict limits on the amount of time its officers can serve and should encourage real elections, using an internal system of political parties, if possible. The influence of this view on the American political scene can be seen in the term limits that have been established for elected officials in many states. Another inference is that the larger and more geographically dispersed a group or organization becomes, the harder it will be for that organization to remain truly democratic. In large organizations, the need for delegation is so great that the forces that led Michels to proclaim that "whoever says organization says oligarchy" are simply too strong to overcome.

of a cohesive group within the organization, (2) being in a position similar to others in the organization, and (3) being in a central position that offers contacts with many members in the organization.

Styles of Leadership

There are also important differences of style among leaders (Lewin, Lippitt, and White, 1939; White and Lippitt, 1960). Some leaders are democratic; they attempt to get the group to move on its own toward their ideas, but they do not force things. Ultimately, the decision is left to the group. Others are authoritarian; they tell the group what to do. Still others are laissez-faire; they leave things up to the group, without providing any particular direction. Under ordinary circumstances, the democratic style of leadership seems to work best, at least in industrialized countries with democratic governments. Group members are happier, more group oriented, and feel more involved, and consequently they are more cooperative and productive (Lewin, 1943; White and Lippitt, 1960). Some research has suggested that women are more likely than men to use a democratic style of leadership, and as a result they are often highly effective managers (Rosener, 1990; Helgesen, 1990).

In some situations, however, such as emergencies and wartime, decisions must be made quickly. Then authoritarian decision-making may be preferable, which may explain the authoritarian structure of such organizations as the military, police, prisons, and hospitals. In societies with a strong tradition of authoritarian government, such as dictatorships and traditional monarchies, the authoritarian style of leadership may also be more effective (Bass, 1960) because people may be unaccustomed to making decisions and may prefer to let someone else do so. The laissez-faire style, in contrast, is rarely effective because it leaves the group without any form of instrumental leadership.



Photo 9.3 The presence of a leader is characteristic of all organizations. Even organizations that try to be leaderless usually end up with leaders.

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Bureaucracy

The dominant type of formal organization in modern society is the **bureaucracy**. Although the term as commonly used often has negative connotations, sociologists employ it purely as a descriptive term. The best definition of bureaucracy is probably still to be found in Max Weber's (1968 [orig. 1922]) ideal-type bureaucracy. An **ideal type** is an abstract description that actual entities will fit to a greater or lesser extent. It lists a set of characteristics; the greater the extent to which something has those characteristics, the better it fits the ideal type. Weber's ideal-type definition of a bureaucracy includes six characteristics:

- 1 *Division of labor*: Different people specialize in different jobs. Each person has responsibility for a given area of activity.
- 2 *Hierarchy*: Authority is specified according to a top-down chain of command. Each supervisor has specific authority, limited to specific people and areas of activity. A specific person is responsible for performance in each area of the organization.
- 3 *Formal rules and regulations*: Rules and policies are specific, official, and written rather than informal or oral. Records are kept in writing.

- 4 *Impersonality and universalism*: People are evaluated and rewarded on the basis of what they do, not who they are. Authority is linked to positions, not to individuals. Everyone in a given type of position is evaluated on the basis of a specified set of rules or performance factors; there are no special favors.
- 5 *Managerial or administrative staff*: There is a group of workers whose job is entirely to keep the organization operating. They are not involved in producing whatever it is that the organization produces.
- 6 *Lifelong careers*: It is assumed that people will continue throughout life in the same general type of career. Although the reality is that people often switch employers (especially in the United States), the ideal is that people “work their way up” in a career within an organization.

Most large-scale organizations in industrialized countries fit this definition reasonably well. Corporations, universities, government agencies, labor unions, and large religious denominations are all examples of bureaucracies. Large organizations will not have every one of the six traits to an equal extent and may be without one or more of them entirely (Hall, 1963–1964; Udy, 1959). In particular, there has been a shift away from lifelong careers. In recent years, people have switched jobs and even changed the kind of work they do with increasing frequency. This appears to reflect a declining commitment of worker and employer to one another; a major cause of this has been corporate “downsizing” that has led to the elimination of many jobs. In recent years, large corporations have eliminated jobs in some kinds of work while creating them in others. Overall, smaller firms have created more jobs in recent decades than big corporations (Ritzer, 1989), though often at lower wages and with fewer benefits (Kalle and Van Buren, 1996). As a result, many people have lost their old jobs and had to find new ones, and workers have probably also become more willing to change jobs when they find something better. Although lifelong careers appear to be on the wane, most of the traits of a bureaucracy will still be present in most large-scale formal organizations.

Why Do Bureaucracies Develop?

Rationalization

Three-quarters of a century ago, Max Weber correctly predicted that bureaucracy would become the dominant form of organization in modern society. How did he know this, and why has it happened as he predicted? The answer is to be found in what Weber called **rationalization**. By rationalization, he meant a shift toward making all decisions purely on the basis of what will accomplish organizational goals. Weber saw rationalization as one of the most significant trends in modern society and bureaucracy as the means by which it occurs. Bureaucracy facilitates rationalization in several ways. First, it eliminates tradition and personal favoritism as influences in decision-making. As discussed in the box “Organizational Practices and Opportunities for Female Managers,” research shows that by eliminating such favoritism, rationalization can be an effective way of opening opportunities for groups that have been excluded, such as women in management. Second, it identifies the tasks that need to be done, assigns someone to do them, and provides a way of monitoring how well they get done. Third, it provides a way to coordinate the activities of a large number of people working on different tasks, so that each person’s efforts contribute to some common task, goal, or product, rather than working at cross-purposes.

Bureaucracy and Large-Scale Tasks

The larger the scale of an organization and its tasks, the more crucial these tasks become. Many tasks are of such a large scale that there is no other way to do them except through a bureaucracy. Consider the steps that are involved in manufacturing and selling an automobile. Natural materials must be obtained and shipped to some central location. Thousands of parts must be manufactured and then assembled to make the car. Market research must be conducted to determine what people want so that the company doesn’t produce a car nobody will buy. Thousands of workers must be hired, evaluated, and provided with benefits. Cars of various colors and

design must be manufactured and shipped in accordance with customer orders, which in turn requires a large system of dealerships throughout the country. An extremely complex division of labor is necessary for any such task, and once a system of division of labor is devised, it becomes crucial to make sure that every part of the operation is working in a way that ultimately meets the organization's goals. Bureaucracy makes this possible, which is an important reason why it is so widespread. This is illustrated in a study of developing countries by Evans and Rauch (1999). They found that when the core economic development agencies of these countries use meritocratic criteria and offer rewarding lifelong careers—two of the key characteristics of bureaucracy, according to Weber—the economies of these countries fared better.

Weber's thinking on the topic of bureaucracy reflects the functionalist perspective, though he never used that term. To Weber, bureaucracy would inevitably spread because it had to. Large-scale tasks required rationalization, and bureaucracy made rationalization possible. Weber even went a step further, arguing that bureaucracy was essential to democracy itself.

Bureaucracy and Democracy

How does bureaucracy make democracy possible? Consider a presidential election in the United States. Such an election requires decisions concerning who is to be on the ballot in 50 states and the District of Columbia and who is eligible to vote. As was shown dramatically in the 2000 election, there must be a way to resolve disputes about the eligibility of voters and the validity of votes. Someone has to operate hundreds of thousands of voting places throughout the country and enforce the voting laws. After the election, millions of votes must be reported to central locations to be counted. Someone must determine who has won in every state and, ultimately, who has the most electoral votes. Can you imagine performing all these tasks without a division of labor? Can you imagine conducting an election without career

officials who know how to run elections? Can you imagine doing it without a written set of rules concerning who is eligible to vote and how elections are to be run? Even the lack of uniformity in such rules caused serious problems in the 2000 election, in part because different states and even different counties in the same state used different methods of counting ballots. In Florida, where the worst problems happened, a law was passed in 2001 mandating one statewide method of voting, using optical-scanning ballots like the forms you use to take standardized tests. Doing this means more standardized statewide rules for conducting elections, and more hierarchical state control over the election process—basic characteristics of bureaucracy. And some have called for similar reforms on the national level.

The need for bureaucracy to ensure democracy goes further than elections, however. According to Weber, every political and economic right requires a bureaucracy to enforce it. If people have the right of free speech, we need a court system to determine when that right has been violated. If workers have the right to join labor unions, we need a labor relations board to conduct elections or verify card signatures to see if workers want a union. If we declare that financial security in old age is a right, we need a social security administration (or something like it) to collect taxes and distribute benefits according to a set of rules.

All of this might lead you to think that Max Weber considered bureaucracy to be a wonderful invention that would lead to the improvement of everyday life. He didn't. He actually looked upon it as a necessary evil. He perceived it as essential to accomplish tasks of any size and to protect democratic rights. At the same time, though, he saw it as depersonalizing. People would come to be treated as positions or numbers rather than as people. Many jobs would be repetitious and boring. People and their individual needs and concerns would become secondary to the goals of large, uncaring organizations. Weber did see some possibilities, such as charismatic movements (see Chapters 14 and 15), for humanizing bureaucracy somewhat. In the end, though, he saw no way for modern societies to avoid bureaucracy.

Karl Marx on Bureaucracy

Unlike Weber, Karl Marx saw bureaucracy as an *unnecessary* evil. Marx analyzed bureaucracy from a conflict perspective, arguing that it does not meet a societal need, only the needs of the rich and powerful. According to Marx, bureaucracy enables the owners of the means of production to maintain *control* of organizations. Through hierarchy, the ruling class ensures that everyone in the organization works in a way that maximizes the owners' profits. If anyone in the organization fails to do this, the top-down chain of command ensures that that person will be corrected or eliminated from the organization.

To the extent that maximizing efficiency maximizes profits, you could argue that Marx and Weber are saying much the same thing: Bureaucratic organization exists because it works. You could argue further that efficient work organizations are in the interests of both the larger society and the ruling class. Indeed, very much like Weber, Marx (1967 [orig. 1867]) emphasized the ruling class's need for efficient, low-cost labor that could mass produce a variety of products with a minimum of training. However, modern Marxist social scientists have added a very important insight: What is most profitable to the owners of the means of production is *not* always what maximizes efficiency (Blumberg, 1973; Gintis, 1974; Melman, 1983). In fact, productivity studies consistently find that giving workers more control of their work situation usually *increases* productivity (Bernstein, 1976; Blumberg, 1973; Le Boeuf, 1982, chap. 6; Melman, 1983, chap. 13; Schooler and Naoi, 1988; Zwerdling, 1978). This implies that reducing or eliminating the hierarchical features of bureaucratic organizations should raise an organization's productivity, not lower it. However, this does not mean that the business or factory will thereby become more profitable *for its owners*. If workers are made more powerful by eliminating hierarchical control, they may use that power to bring about higher pay, more fringe benefits, better working conditions, and other workers' benefits. In short, because the most efficient organization is not always the most profitable one for the owners, owners often

sacrifice efficiency in order to maintain control (Edwards, 1979; Gintis, 1974; Hecksher, 1980; Melman, 1983). From this perspective, then, bureaucracy is functional for a specific interest group (owners of the means of production) but dysfunctional for the larger society.

Work by Wright (2000), however, suggests that once workers reach a certain level of power, it may be in the interests of both workers and employers to cooperate. In other words, once workers are powerful enough to be able to disrupt a work organization, it may well be in the interests of their employers to move toward cooperation rather than bureaucratic control. Not only will disruption be reduced, but both workers and employers may enjoy benefits from the increased productivity that results from a less top-down, more cooperative way of organizing the workplace. In other words, the work organization may be more profitable for its owners *even with* higher levels of worker pay and benefits.

Because they believed that the main purpose of bureaucracies was to enable the ruling class to maintain control, Marx and his coauthor Friedrich Engels believed that bureaucracies would "wither away" once class inequalities were eliminated through common ownership of the means of production. They wrote this explicitly about government bureaucracies, but Marx appears to have believed much the same about private bureaucracies, because he saw them, too, as a tool by which the ruling class controls and dominates the masses. In fact, Marx even questioned the need for specialization, viewing it as a means by which the masses of workers were deprived of knowledge that could make them too threatening to the ruling class.

The Pervasiveness of Bureaucracy

It appears that functionalist and conflict viewpoints both have useful insights as to the reasons bureaucracy has become so pervasive in the modern world. Every society that has industrialized has experienced the dramatic growth in organizations that fit Weber's definition of a bureaucracy. It is, in fact, very hard to



UNDERSTANDING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

Organizational Practices and Opportunities for Female Managers

Some companies have a lot of women working in management positions, and others have few or none. Sociologists Barbara Reskin and Debra Branch McBrier (2000) were interested in finding out why. Specifically, they were interested in what characteristics of the companies might explain the difference. One thing they looked for was *bureaucratic organization*—specifically, the use of formal rules and procedures in recruitment, hiring, and promotion. Weberian theory about bureaucracy holds that such formal procedures prevent favoritism through *rationalization*: making the choice purely on the basis of factors that make a difference in an individual's usefulness to an organization. This is supposed to eliminate favoritism, and—given that the majority of managers in most organizations are male—eliminating favoritism should work to the advantage of women seeking jobs in management. Thus, Weberian theory would predict that firms that use formal rules and procedures in hiring and promotion would have a higher proportion of women among their managers.

Did it turn out this way? In short, yes, it did. Using a national sample of work organizations, Reskin and McBrier looked at the effects of formal versus informal recruitment methods, and the extent to which the firms use formal personnel rules and procedures. The proportion of managers who were women did indeed vary widely among the firms. One in four had fewer than 10 percent women among their managers, while at the other end of the scale, nearly 45 percent of the employers had at least 40 percent

women among their managers. And nearly half of this variation could be explained by differences in the personnel practices of the firms. To begin with, those employers that used informal means of recruitment, such as asking current employees for referrals or contacting people they knew about and asking them to apply, had fewer women in management. Those who used more formal and open methods, such as advertisements or recruiting through employment agencies, had more women in management. Those who used formal personnel rules and procedures also had more women in management, though this difference was most evident toward the upper end of the range—that is, those who had average or above-average numbers of female managers. Among firms in this range, the more formal the procedures, the more female managers they had. Additionally, those who recruit outside the organization have more women in management than those who recruit only from within. Thus, organizational practice *does* make a difference in managerial employment opportunities for women, and those firms that follow formal and open procedures, along the lines of Weber's bureaucratic model, do employ more women in management. Finally, on an ironic note, having more women in management does not appear to help reduce the pay gap between women and men. In fact, Srivastava and Sherman (2015) found that the pay for female employees actually declined when moving from a male supervisor to a female supervisor—something that did not happen to male employees in the same situation.

see how any large-scale task could be accomplished without the coordination that bureaucracy makes possible. Factories using division of labor and mass-production assembly lines (impossible without bureaucratic organization) are far more efficient than ones where each worker makes the whole product. In every task from manufacturing to governing to waging war, organizations that fit Weber's general model appear more efficient than organizations that don't. Consequently, industrialized

countries have turned to bureaucratic organizations to perform all of these tasks.

It therefore appears that the Marxian claim that bureaucracies will “wither away” is an impossible dream. Modern technology has made the need for specialization far greater today than it was over a century ago when Marx wrote. Moreover, attempts to level out socioeconomic inequalities and guarantee equal political and economic rights nearly always require more complex organization, not less. Thus,

bureaucracies seem to be a growing feature of modern societies regardless of whether they are capitalist, socialist, or something in between.

Evaluating Bureaucracy

This having been said, it must be acknowledged that some features of bureaucracy seem to have developed well beyond the point where they could be considered functional. Again, this is a feature of both capitalist and socialist societies, as those in charge seek to hold on to their power and economic advantage through hierarchical control. In the Soviet Union, a policy of centralized control for years stifled the economy because of insistence that decisions be made or approved in Moscow, without regard for market forces or local needs. The resulting economic stagnation was a major cause of the collapse of the Soviet Union. In capitalist countries, a similar problem can occur when the owners of capital retain hierarchical control, even though granting their workers more autonomy would increase productivity. In these countries, too, the need for change is beginning to be recognized. In the United States, which has lost considerable ground economically to international competition, more and more companies have experimented with less centralized forms of work organization developed in Japan, Sweden, and elsewhere. These are discussed later in this chapter.

The extent to which bureaucracy is an efficient form of organization also depends on the task being performed. In general, bureaucracy works better for complex yet routine and repetitious tasks (such as manufacturing and distributing automobiles) and less well for tasks that are nonroutine and require imagination (such as designing and building a space shuttle).

Dysfunctions of Bureaucracy

While bureaucracies tend to be more functional for routine tasks than others, there are some potential dysfunctions in bureaucracy, regardless of the task.

A bureaucracy, by definition, is a group. Therefore, it is subject to the same problems

and dysfunctions as other groups, such as groupthink and group polarization. Bureaucracies also are subject to additional dysfunctions arising from their size, formality, complexity, and hierarchical organization.

Decision Avoidance

One problem of bureaucracies is that sometimes they have a hard time making decisions. Most bureaucratic organizations are designed to handle routine matters according to a known set of guidelines. When they encounter a situation that falls outside the guidelines, often they have a hard time handling it. One reason is the tendency for each person in the organization to pass such decisions along to someone else because nobody wants to be responsible for a decision that might “go wrong” or be questioned later. If you have ever encountered a billing error, a lost file, or a “mistake on the computer,” you probably experienced this problem.

Trained Incapacity

In those instances when they are faced with an unfamiliar situation, people in bureaucracies may try to make the situation fit into one for which they do have guidelines. The result is a failure to adapt to the new situation, a condition sociologists sometimes call *trained incapacity* (Veblen, 1921). This tendency to “force” situations to fit the guidelines results in part from the tendency toward conformity in groups and organizations. For an individual to make a bold or innovative decision in such situations would implicitly challenge “the way we do things,” a risk many people in organizations are unwilling to take. A result is that organizations that may be very good at handling *familiar* situations often cannot handle change, because the old ways of doing things tend to be self-perpetuating (Kanter, 1983, chaps. 3, 4). An example of this may be seen in the slow initial response of federal disaster agencies to Hurricane Andrew in 1992: The agencies were experienced in handling localized disasters that were severe but limited in scope and had effective procedures for handling such disasters. However, these procedures were inadequate for the widespread devastation over hundreds of square miles that

Andrew caused in Florida. This pattern was tragically repeated in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. As levees broke in New Orleans and residents watched helplessly as floodwaters drowned the city, aid from local, state, and federal levels failed to adequately respond to the emergency. A major roadblock in this incident was the recent reorganization of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the authority of the newly created Department of Homeland Security. The reorganization created a new layer of bureaucracy that slowed down response time (Tierney, 2006). In addition, infighting between the new agency, competitor agencies, and old agencies that had fallen under Homeland Security's purview, such as FEMA, seems to have contributed to the slow response. Homeland Security's focus was squarely on terrorism, not natural disasters. Add to that the many political appointees that had little to no disaster experience running FEMA, and a recipe for a disaster within a disaster was created (Dyson, 2006; Tierney, 2006). As more than one commentator put it, the hurricane was a natural disaster, but the real tragedy was entirely man-made and occurred after the hurricane had passed. From the levees that were not designed to withstand the water surge to the failure to respond after their breach, human factors, as much as the hurricane itself, contributed to the massive loss of life and the slow and inadequate response. The sociologist Harvey Molotch (2006) points out that people in government agencies normally follow bureaucratic rules, but in times of emergency or other urgent need for action, there is a need to set the rules aside to act as quickly as possible, and in other cases, officials have done so. In such situations, they do what is necessary to get the job done. According to Molotch, however, there was very little of this in the case of Katrina: No person in a position of high authority pushed the panic button and ordered that things just get done. Molotch suggests that an additional factor contributing to this may have been race: Most of the victims were black, whereas most of the government officials with the ability to set the rules aside were white, and this may have reduced their sense of urgency.

Normalization of Deviance

In recent years, a number of sociologists have examined how misconduct, often with deadly consequences, can frequently become the norm within organizations (Vaughan, 1996, 2005; Kauzlarich and Kramer, 1998; Matthews and Kauzlarich, 2000). The 1986 *Challenger* space shuttle disaster is a good example of this. Sociologist Diane Vaughan spent nearly ten years examining public and private documents and interviewing people involved in the Space Shuttle program to find the underlying causes of the disaster. Her work indicates strongly that the organization, not the individuals involved, was the main cause of the disaster, *because potentially dangerous violations of procedure had become routine in the shuttle program*. This occurred for three reasons: (1) the environment within which the program operated, which generated pressures to break rules in order to meet goals; (2) organizational structures and processes that made it possible to break the rules; and (3) a regulatory environment in which the relationship between regulators and the organizations they regulate made control and deterrence of violations unlikely. The shuttle program was under strong pressure to cut delays, and NASA wanted the first teacher in space to be orbiting during President Reagan's State of the Union address. NASA had identified many conditions that could be serious enough to stop a launch, but in the past, they had launched in spite of such conditions without problems, and the professional judgment of NASA personnel had long been relied on to decide whether a condition was serious enough to cancel a launch. This made it both possible and tempting to launch despite a known problem with the shuttle's rubber joint seals, especially at low temperatures. Add to this two truths about those who were supposed to regulate NASA, and you have a recipe for disaster: First, the autonomy of NASA and secrecy associated with the space program made it hard for regulators to know what was going on, and second, as in most cases of regulation, regulators and the people they were supposed to regulate were interdependent, so that incentives ran more to cooperation than to regulators "policing" the agency. Similar forces have been

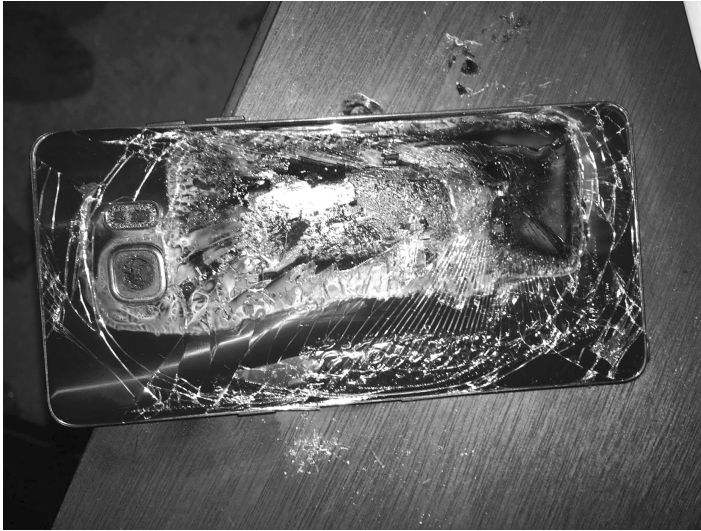


Photo 9.4 Galaxy Note 7 smartphones repeatedly overheated and caught fire, sometimes leading to serious injuries. Organizational pressure to meet deadlines, even if it means cutting corners, is often an underlying factor when dangerous products are put on the market.

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at work in many other cases of deadly organizational deviance, such as the ValuJet crash in Florida in 1996 (Matthews and Kauzlarich, 2000), nuclear experimentation by the U.S. government (Kauzlarich and Kramer, 1998), and the continued sale of dangerous sport utility vehicles by Ford even after deaths associated with their Bridgestone-Firestone tires had been brought to the company's attention (Healey and Woodyard, 2000). They may also have been at work in the 2010 BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, and the repeated problems of the Galaxy Note 7 smartphone overheating and catching fire in 2016. And, as discussed in Chapter 1, the kinds of organizational problems that caused the *Challenger* space shuttle disaster continued in NASA after that disaster, and the tragic result was that the *Columbia* space shuttle disaster 17 years later was the result of similar kinds of organizational problems.

Self-Perpetuation and Goal Displacement

A U.S. senator once remarked that if he believed in reincarnation, he would pray to come back as a temporary Senate subcommittee because he could then enjoy eternal life. Modern organizations do tend to persist, for several reasons. First, within any organization that has

employees, a primary goal quickly becomes the preservation of the organization, which in turn preserves people's jobs (Selznick, 1957, p. 21). Sociologists refer to this process as goal displacement—whatever the original goals of the organization, its primary goal quickly becomes to preserve the organization. Consider the temporary Senate subcommittee. It has a staff whose jobs depend on the continued existence of the committee. Moreover, the senators who serve on the committee may gain status with other senators as a result of their role as committee members. They also may appear to constituents back home to be

“doing something about the problem” the subcommittee was created to deal with.

The incentives for self-preservation are so strong that organizations often continue even when the problem that originally brought them into existence is gone. The American Lung Association, founded as the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis, was formed to reduce the incidence of tuberculosis in American society. It was successful in these efforts, to the point that very few Americans get tuberculosis today. Did the organization declare itself a success and disband? Not at all. It turned its attention to a new set of problems and works today to combat lung cancer.

Tendency to Expand

Organizations tend not only to survive but also to grow. In a bureaucracy, a supervisor's prestige is largely determined by the number of people that they supervise. Thus, the manager of a large department has more prestige than the manager of a small department. It therefore becomes in every manager's interest to think of more things that “need” to be done and to get authorization to hire more employees to do them. Once more workers are hired, more supervisors must be hired to supervise them,

and more secretaries must be hired to keep track of their files. A principle called Parkinson's law reveals why it is never any problem to keep them busy (Parkinson, 1957). According to Parkinson's law, work expands to use the time or personnel available. If people are available, something will be found for them to do. A job can always be done in greater detail if more time is available.

Nowhere is this principle clearer than in the case of computerization. Because computers are far more efficient than older methods of doing things, it would seem that computers could reduce the need for administrators and record keepers. Studies of organizations that have used computers to "automate their offices," however, have disproved this idea (Heskiaoff, 1977). What actually happens is that new information is collected and processed. As one study of the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) revealed, computerization actually can lead to an increase in the number of administrators, as new people are hired to work with the additional information that is generated (Melman, 1983, p. 76).

Ritualism

Another dysfunction of bureaucracies is the tendency of some workers to engage in ritualism—placing the procedures of the organization ahead of the purposes for which the procedures were designed (Merton, 1968). The main objective of such workers becomes following the correct rules and procedures rather than getting the job done properly. Workers who think and behave in this manner are sometimes said to have a bureaucratic personality. Supervisors sometimes encourage such behavior because following procedures is the "safe" thing to do. Fortunately, though, it appears that only a minority of workers in organizations develop such behavior (Kohn, 1978). Rather than devoting themselves to the rules, most workers develop an informal structure that bends the rules—a pattern that we explore in more detail shortly.

Alienation of Workers

Worker **alienation** is a dysfunction that was recognized in different ways by both Marx and

Weber. Marx was more explicit, defining alienation as the result of separating the worker from the product of their labor. In large, specialized organizations, each worker does only a small part of the job, and the finished product is not the product of any one worker's efforts. Contrast the auto assembly-line worker with the cabinet maker. When a car rolls off the assembly line, the autoworker cannot look at it and say "I made that" in the same sense that the cabinet maker can when finished handcrafting a piece of furniture. Modern workers in bureaucracies cannot see that they have produced an item of value, and as a result, they may come to doubt their own value (see Schooler and Naoi, 1988).

Weber also recognized this problem. He saw bureaucracy as an "iron cage," necessary yet inevitably trapping workers in a depersonalized situation. Both Marx and Weber recognized that lack of control over their work situation would be a key source of frustration to modern workers. Bureaucracy has similar effects in higher education. In addition, education also plays a role in worker alienation. To well-educated people who value the chance to use their creative talents, jobs over which they have little control can be especially frustrating. As the average educational level of even assembly-line workers has risen, alienation among such workers seems to have increased since around 1970, leading to greater effects on productivity (Ritzer and Walczak, 1986, pp. 355–7). At the same time, we know that some workers are in far more alienating situations than others, and that women, people of color, and people with lower-than-average education levels are particularly likely to end up in alienating jobs.

The Pandemic and the Need for Change

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted organizations and brought forth several relevant issues for organizations that sociologists are paying attention to. The following are key issues that the pandemic brought focus to:

Remote Work and Digital Transformation. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work and highlighted the importance of digital transformation. Organizational sociologists are interested in studying how these changes affect communication patterns, team dynamics,



Photo 9.5 When the potter finishes his job, he can take pride in a visible product that he has designed and created. In contrast, factory workers may participate in a process only by adding one part to a larger machine or device.

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and the overall organizational culture (Nagel, 2020). Questions about the impact on work-life balance, job satisfaction, and the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life are also relevant.

Organizational Resilience and Adaptability. The pandemic underscored the need for organizational resilience and adaptability. Sociologists may explore how different organizations coped with the crisis, the role of leadership in navigating uncertainty, and the impact on employee morale and commitment (Li, et al., 2022). Understanding the factors that contribute to organizational resilience can be crucial for future crisis management.

Inequality and Diversity. The pandemic highlighted existing inequalities within and across organizations. Sociologists may examine how different groups of employees were affected, considering factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and job roles. Issues related to remote work accessibility, disparities in job security, and the disproportionate impact on certain demographic groups are important areas of study (Li, et al., 2022).

Employee Well-Being and Mental Health. The pandemic brought attention to the mental

health challenges faced by employees (Henke, 2022). Sociologists may investigate how organizational policies, communication strategies, and support systems influence employee well-being. This includes studying the effectiveness of mental health programs, the stigma surrounding mental health in the workplace, and the role of social support networks.

Organizational Culture and Values. The crisis prompted a reevaluation of organizational culture and values. Research has shown that the pandemic has led to significant changes in organizational culture, with a shift toward emphasizing flexibility, transparency, supportiveness, decisiveness, and confronting conflict, while de-emphasizing elements such as customer orientation, individualism, detail orientation, results orientation, and collaboration (Brown, et al., 2021). Sociologists may explore how organizations communicated their values during the pandemic, the role of corporate social responsibility, and the impact on employee engagement. Understanding how organizational culture evolves during times of crisis is a key aspect of this research.

Globalization and Supply Chain Resilience. The pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in global supply chains. Research has highlighted the importance of making supply chains more resilient, collaborative, and agile in response to the substantial negative effects of the pandemic (Harapko, 2023). Sociologists may investigate how organizations responded to disruptions, the role of global interconnectedness, and the implications for future organizational strategies. This includes studying the balance between globalization and the need for local resilience.

Technology and Surveillance. The shift to remote work also raised concerns about increased surveillance and the use of technology to monitor employee productivity. The pandemic breached fundamental expectations of privacy as organizational surveillance extended into private and public spaces, exposing challenges in digitalization and the limits of technology and organizing (Faraj, Renno and Bhardwaj, 2021). Furthermore, the pandemic amplified the potential for surveillance in the home, particularly impacting individuals and communities with low status and few

resources, thus exacerbating social inequalities. Sociologists may examine the ethical implications of such technologies, their impact on trust within organizations, and the potential for a shift in power dynamics between employers and employees.

Crisis Communication and Trust. Effective communication during a crisis is crucial for maintaining trust. Sociologists may explore how organizations communicated information about the pandemic, the role of transparency, and the impact on employee trust. Understanding how crisis communication strategies influence organizational trust can provide valuable insights for future crises.

Sociologists play a vital role in examining these issues to better understand the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the structure and dynamics of organizations and our broader society. And while the dysfunctions of organizations can be significant challenges—especially in times of crisis like the pandemic—people in organizations have some ability to shape informally what really goes on in the organization, which partially offsets the negative features of bureaucracy. We now turn to some of the ways they do this.

An Interactionist View of Bureaucracy

Informal Structure

We have seen, in Weber's ideal-type definition of bureaucracy, what the formal structure of complex organizations looks like. However, the symbolic-interactionist perspective reminds us that organizations also have an **informal structure**—the things people actually do on a day-to-day basis, in contrast to what the official rules say they are supposed to do (Blau and Meyer, 1971, chap. 3). Although the formal structure of a bureaucracy consists of a complex set of positions with norms about how they are supposed to interact, these positions are filled by people, each of whom has their own personality, objectives, and understanding of the organization and their position within it. Each person acts on the basis of these factors (Blumer,

1969a). Moreover, each person has a particular reaction to the other people with whom they work. Any two individuals will play a particular role in the organization differently and will thus evoke different reactions from co-workers. One boss might be identified as supportive and democratic, whereas another in the same position might be seen as authoritarian and critical. The former is more likely to inspire hard work from their subordinates, whereas the latter may get only loafing, avoidance, and “bitching” (Follett and House, 1969; Hall, 1996, p. 145). The degree to which a supervisor appears to know their job will also affect employee output and cooperativeness.

Whatever the official rules of the organization, workers have their own ideas and will collectively develop informal norms (Fine, 1992). Productivity, for example, is usually governed by such norms, as Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939) discovered in their famous study of production workers at the Hawthorne plant of Western Electric. Workers who either exceed or fall below their co-workers' productivity norms will likely be made to feel uncomfortable. Those who work too hard relative to the group norm will be labeled as “rate-busters,” and those who do not work hard enough will be labeled “lazy” or “goof-offs.”

Flexibility

Another reason for informal structure is that the formal rules don't always work. If everyone engaged in ritualism—following all the rules all the time—most organizations would grind to a halt. In fact, a familiar tactic of labor unions that want to pressure an employer without going so far as to strike is “working to rule”—following every regulation literally and exactly. Almost inevitably, this practice leads to a big drop in productivity as workers spend most of their time filling out forms and following procedures. Usually, though, workers follow informal norms rather than strictly obeying the official rules because that works best. Because no policy can cover every possibility, in order for the organization to work, employees must use their judgment, creativity, and even deception in unusual situations (Shulman, 2006). They often do so, deciding how to handle any given

situation as it comes up, and the decision is not always “by the rules.”

Similarly, the official channels of communication can be very slow and inefficient. The “official” way for a person in an organization to consult with someone in another department is to send a memo through their supervisor to the other person’s supervisor, who then passes on the message to the person for whom it is intended. A simple phone call or email is much quicker. Similarly, you may know that you are “supposed to” communicate with one person concerning a given problem, but past experience tells you that someone else will be more helpful. Chances are, you will communicate with that “someone else.”

Primary Groups and Informal Structure

Finally, we noted that primary groups frequently develop within large organizations, even though the organizations themselves are secondary groups. Friendship networks, “buddies,” and cliques form within every organization, and whether any given worker is “in” or “out” of another worker’s informal group will influence how the two workers relate to one another. Workers often protect and exchange favors with co-workers they consider friends, when they would treat someone else in the same situation differently.

Negotiated Order

These examples illustrate a key point: Regardless of the formal structure, people ultimately make the organization (Scott, 1992, p. 54). These people, with their needs, objectives, and experiences of others in the organization, create a **negotiated order**. They push to get what they want, try things out, and test the limits of the rules. This reality was illustrated in a now-classic study of mental hospitals by Anselm Strauss and his colleagues (1964). Strauss found that the nature of the hospital at any given time was the outcome of pressures, actions, and reactions of the many people who made the organization: doctors, attendants, nurses, administrators, and patients. Each person in each of these groups had their own objectives, understanding of

reality, and ideas about mental illness, which governed their behavior and relationships to others. Compromises, “looking the other way,” and “agreements to disagree” were abundant, but they were always subject to change as the characters changed and new negotiations took place. Thus, “the hospital” today is not the same as “the hospital” last month, even if the formal structure remains unchanged, because the process of negotiating order continues as long as the organization does. Although Strauss et al. used the mental hospital to illustrate this process, the evidence indicates that such negotiation occurs in most kinds of organizations (Lauer and Handel, 1983). The interaction of this process with the formal and informal structures of the organization and with the goals and objectives of organizational leaders produces an *organizational culture*. This culture is unique to each organization and cannot be understood merely by examining the organization’s formal structure (Fine, 1984; Ouchi and Wilkins, 1985). As with any culture, new members must be socialized into organizational cultures, and new employees who do not become appropriately socialized usually experience a very difficult time.

Case Studies: Roles in the Workplace. Because each worker occupies a particular position within the work organization, each worker experiences the organization differently. This is in part a product of the worker’s personality and desires, but it also reflects the worker’s situation within the organization. According to Millman and Kanter (1975), an organization can be seen as an interrelated set of groups, each with its own style, culture, norms, political allegiances, and internal hierarchy. As illustrated by the following case studies, portions of which draw largely on the research of Rosabeth Moss Kanter, different classes of workers experience and respond to the organization in different ways.

The Professional

Professionals, such as doctors, scientists, professors, and engineers, generally enjoy a good deal more autonomy on the job than most workers. This is because their jobs require extensive, specialized training, and it is assumed that nobody else in the organization knows their work as well as they do (Parsons, 1947, 1951).

Professionals tend to be supervised less closely than other workers. Unlike many other workers, they are not usually evaluated to any great extent on how well they follow established procedures. Rather, the evaluation is based mainly on the outcome: Has a professional been successful in accomplishing what they were hired to do? Frequently, this judgment is arrived at through a process of peer evaluation, as when college professors judge their colleagues' worthiness for tenure or promotion (Blau and Meyer, 1971, pp. 76–7; Scott, 1992, p. 254).

Professionals not only enjoy more autonomy than other workers, they expect it. When subjected to extensive bureaucratic rules and regulations, they are often the first to rebel. Moreover, they seek to secure their autonomy through the process of professionalization, in which they establish accepted procedures to obtain credentials and accreditation. These procedures serve to certify their expertise and justify both their autonomy (Collins, 1979; Wilensky, 1964) and the power they often enjoy over related occupations (Halpern, 1992). The growing importance of professionals in our economy may be having the effect of reducing the influence of formal bureaucratic hierarchy in modern organizations. Similarly, research suggests that as technology-based enterprises have become more dominant in the economy, the power of the professionals who carry out research and development has grown (Harpaz and Meshoulam, 1997).

Even with professionals, though, the organization makes a difference. Perrow (1979, pp. 50–5) points out that professionals in private corporations are more tolerant of hierarchy and regulations than are those in universities or research organizations. But even the latter institutions have broad rules and regulations within which professionals must operate. Perrow also notes that professionals with aspirations to move into management—where the best salaries frequently are—are often willing to sacrifice autonomy in exchange for upward mobility, money, and organizational prestige.

The Secretary

The role of the secretary (often referred to as administrative assistants today) stands in sharp

contrast to that of the professional (Kanter, 1977; Millman and Kanter, 1975). Typically, secretaries enjoy very little autonomy unless they work for a top executive. However, interaction with the boss, and not bureaucratic rules, determines the secretary's working conditions. This interaction is still more often than not a male-female relationship and is shaped heavily by societal gender inequality and its supporting norms (Mills, 1951; Mesmer, 1998; Sotirin and Gottfried, 1999). A male managerial worker may be judged on the attractiveness, educational level, and personality of his secretary, and having a private secretary is an important status symbol in many organizations (Burger, 1964). In a sense, secretaries are often treated as the personal property of their bosses, expected to do personal favors and to move within the organization when the boss moves, and are evaluated on the basis of the boss's personal judgment rather than bureaucratic or procedural criteria. In many organizations, a promotion for a secretary does not mean new job responsibilities but rather a higher-status boss. In such cases, a secretary's job status is not defined by anything the secretary does but rather by what the boss does. This practice, sometimes known as rug-ranking, was challenged in a 1993 lawsuit against ESPN by Secretary Elaine Truskoski (Hirsh, 1993; Soukhanov, 1994). In general, research also shows that it is difficult for secretaries to move into management positions, even when other types of employees do get hired into management (Phalen, 2000; Mesmer, 1998). This is true even though longtime secretaries of top managers often know more about how the organization works than most people in the firm.

The Middle Manager

The middle manager, moving up in the organization, is probably the type of worker who conforms best to the formal bureaucratic model. Such workers seek to prove their worth by upholding the company's ways of doing things and by demonstrating their loyalty to their supervisors. This behavior is frequently successful because top managers—who actually deal with unpredictable market conditions outside the organization—are often uncertain

about their decisions. To reduce their own uncertainty and to free them to deal with the external environment, these top managers need loyal, predictable subordinates (Kanter, 1977). For the most part, middle managers with upward aspirations recognize this need, comply, and seek compliance from their employees.

What is good for individuals, however, is not always good for the organization. This tendency toward compliance in management can be so strong that it can prevent the company from adapting to changing conditions. In this sense, hierarchical command can be dysfunctional rather than serving the function of rationalization claimed by Weber. If blind obedience leads people to follow the unwise policies of an organization's leader, everyone can be led down a path of failure. As Blau and Meyer (1971, p. 35) put it: "To overcome bureaucratic inertia seems to require new organizations or new managers, unencumbered by traditions and personal loyalties, and not enmeshed in the social processes that characterize the interpersonal relations in the organization."

On the other hand, some recent research has suggested that hierarchical control over middle-management personnel can be useful to the organization (Prechel, 1994). Because middle-management employees act as a link between the top leadership and the front-line management and production workers in various departments, they are the one means that top management has to assure that the various departments are working in a coordinated manner. Thus, to assure such coordination, the work of middle managers may be highly controlled even when other workers experience greater autonomy.

This and other realities have made the lives of many middle-management workers difficult in recent years. They often remain tightly controlled by top management, while at the same time, they have lost authority over workers lower in the hierarchy. This has happened as the workers over whom they used to have authority have gained greater autonomy as a part of workplace reforms, which we discuss in the next section. In addition to this, middle-management workers have been among the

hardest hit as companies have downsized to cut costs in the face of global competition.

The Lone Minority

Yet another distinct role in the organization is that of the lone or token minority: the only woman on a board of directors; the only black professor in a university department. This individual will face issues that others entering the same job will not. In part, co-workers will react to this person as a woman or as a black person—a role they may not be used to seeing in combination with the role of executive or professor (Kanter, 1977, chap. 8). In their attempt to deal with this combination, colleagues may insist on fitting the lone minority into a role they associate with the person's group. They may treat a female colleague, for example, as they would their mother, or as a sex object, or as something akin to a mascot (Millman and Kanter, 1975). Or, they may expect that a female university professor will be more nurturing and caring toward her students than a male professor (Acker and Feuerverger, 1996). At the other extreme, some may view her as an "iron maiden," concluding that only a woman who fits the toughest male stereotype could rise to such heights (Kanter, 1977). Others may mistake the person's role entirely, as when female executives or professors are mistaken for secretaries (Lynch, 1973). Finally, they may put such individuals on display as tokens, rewarding them for their positions ("our woman manager" or "our black vice president") but not for what they accomplish (Kanter, 1977, pp. 213–14). When interviewed, people who are the first or only person from their group in a work situation often report that they experience extreme pressures to succeed because they are perceived by others as indicators of what people in their group can or cannot do (Phalen, 2000). Finally, several studies indicate that it is not unusual for lone minorities to be excluded from informal interactions and networking, and sometimes from opportunities for training and advancement (Yoder and Aniakudo, 1997; Burke and McKeen, 1995).

All of this means that the lone minority must spend time working to define their role to colleagues in a way that others do not have

to (Epstein, 1970). This burden diminishes the lone minority's ability to "take charge" of the job, makes interaction with colleagues clumsy, and leads to feelings of frustration and isolation. Ultimately, it means that until they become a substantial proportion of the workforce in any given work setting, women and minorities may take longer than others to establish secure working relationships with colleagues based on their competence. This probably reduces the rate at which even the most capable women and minority-group members can move up the corporate ladder. It is also an important reason why it is better both for the work organization and for women and people of color when their presence in the workplace goes well beyond the kind of tokenism that produces lone minorities (see, e.g., Watson, Kumar, and Michaelsen, 1993; Livingston, 1991; Wingfield and Chavez, 2020).

Globalization and New Trends in Work Organization

We have seen that the bureaucratic form of organization has become pervasive in modern society because of its efficiency in handling large-scale tasks, but that bureaucracy has also tended to be more formal and hierarchical than what is required for such efficiency. Especially, but not only, in democratic societies, the informal structure is often as influential as the official, formal structure, and studies show that less hierarchy and more worker autonomy usually lead to better productivity. As more countries have modernized and industrialized in recent years, pressures to be efficient have increased. **Globalization** of the economy—a transition to a worldwide economy that transcends national boundaries—has occurred at an increasing rate. Efficient mass production of some products is possible virtually anywhere in the world, so that today rather than operating on a local, regional, or national scale, economic competition is on a global scale. This means that companies and their workforces must compete not only with their traditional domestic rivals but also with growing numbers of competitors worldwide.

Globalization and Work

Globalization has led to both positive and destructive tendencies in work organizations. Among the more destructive have been the closely related trends of *downsizing* and *outsourcing*, which together have shrunk the supply of good-paying jobs, particularly for people with less than a college-level education. This has occurred during some recent periods of overall job growth when lower-paying jobs have grown at a rate equal to or greater than the shrinkage of higher-paying jobs. Some higher-paying jobs, especially in larger corporations, have fallen victim to "downsizing," a process whereby employers have reduced the size of their workforce through (1) automation; (2) relocation of jobs to areas with cheaper labor, often overseas; and (3) outsourcing. *Outsourcing* is a process whereby work that had been done by employees of a company is contracted out to some external company. This has led to reductions in workers' pay, because the jobs that are eliminated are usually full-time jobs with benefits and, often, the protections of a union contract. In the general workforce, men and never-married women have been hit particularly hard by this trend, though at least one study suggests that married mothers have not. This may be because norms have become more accepting of married working mothers, partly protecting them from an otherwise clear decline in the workforce (Hollister and Smith, 2014). This trend may have impacted the economic recovery after the 2008 financial crash, as many commentators have noted what some have called a "h recession" in which men apparently suffered more unemployment and underemployment than did women (Folbre, 2011; Patterson, 2009).

When outsourcing occurs, the jobs that are outsourced are usually contracted out to employers who pay lower wages, offer fewer benefits, and often use part-time and/or non-union labor (Henson, 1996). In the public sector, much the same has happened through "privatization," in which jobs that had been done by public employees are contracted out to private employers, who typically offer less in the way of wages, benefits, and union representation. As outsourcing has occurred, there

is often an increasing number of managers or supervisors per worker. The number of line workers has decreased as jobs were outsourced, but the number of supervisors has often remained the same or increased. U.S. corporations in this period grew “lean” but also “mean” as they employed a “low road” business model that emphasized close monitoring and punishment of workers, rather than a “high-road” strategy of better pay and positive incentives for workers. In such a situation where control over workers is valued, shareholders came to view managers as more valuable than they had been before. Thus, jobs, wages, and benefits flowed from the many at the bottom to the few nearer the top (Benton, 2016; Gordon, 1996; Goldstein, 2012). However, when downsizing does happen in management, there tends to be a reduction in diversity (unlike the general workforce, as previously discussed). This is because formalized rules, usually tied to seniority (last in, first out), end up targeting newer hires: often women and other minorities, unless there are specific protections in place to prevent it (Kalev, 2014). The ironic outcome of this is that rules made to keep hiring and firing “objective” and “rational” in order to protect equality actually end up making managerial workforces less equal when reductions in managerial positions occur.

In part for these reasons, real (inflation-adjusted) wages have been relatively flat since around 1973. From then until the mid-1990s, the three-fourths of U.S. workers without college degrees lost ground, and those with college degrees have had, on the average, no wage growth (Bluestone, 1995). Only those with master’s degrees or more education gained ground. As a result of all these trends, economic inequality has risen steadily over the past four decades (Duncan, 1996; Saez, 2009a, 2009b).

According to Mishel (1995), two-thirds of this increase in inequality can be attributed to two factors: globalization and declining union representation. The latter, with the resultant loss of wages and benefits, is closely tied to outsourcing. The growth in part-time and temporary work, closely tied to the practice of contracting out, continued through the mid-1990s and beyond. Conflict over outsourcing has been an increasing source of workplace

tension. Because globalization has created similar pressures in all industrialized countries, outsourcing, privatization, and the weakening of unions have occurred not only in the United States but in other nations as well. One study of 18 industrialized countries showed that unions were weakened in all of them during the 1980s (Western, 1995). Kristal (2013) found that technological change involving the computerization of the U.S. private-sector workplace has evolved in such a way as to take 6 percent of the national income share away from labor since the 1970s and increase corporate profits in the same period.

Since the late 1990s, however, workers and their supporters have responded to these trends with increasing protest against the economic effects of globalization and unrestrained free trade, and this activism may be reversing the trend of unions weakening. Some unions are starting to see the building of broader coalitions with like-minded groups, such as activists, as keys not only to political power but also to success during labor events, like strikes or lockouts (Dixon and Martin, 2012). On the other hand, workers have also sometimes responded to their reduced job security by lashing out at minorities and immigrants, who are perceived as competition. This likely played some role in the swing of large numbers of Midwest blue-collar workers from Democrat to Republican in 2016. This political shift, which occurred despite the support of union leadership for Democrats, flipped a number of Midwest states from Democratic to Republican, allowing Republican Donald Trump to amass enough electoral votes in that region to win the election despite losing the popular vote by about three million votes.

On the positive side, increasing numbers of employers have responded to the pressures of global competition by experimenting with new forms of work organization that offer greater efficiency than the traditional hierarchical model. Despite the “leaner and meaner” trend discussed earlier, these strategies have sometimes included granting workers more control at the workplace. As we discuss, there is a strong correlation between worker control and greater levels of efficiency, effectiveness,

and quality. Lyness et al. (2012) found that the countries where workers have more control are associated with certain national, worker, and job characteristics. These include general affluence, the generosity of the welfare state, and percentage of workers in unions. They also varied by the attributes of the workers themselves with “being male, being older, and being better educated”; as well as certain job characteristics, those being “working part-time, being self-employed, having higher earnings, and having more advancement opportunities” (Lyness, 2012). While the relationship between generally better economic outcomes and more worker control are well established, the researchers also found that having low levels of worker control are generally associated with lower levels of work satisfaction, commitment to one’s place of employment, and work-family strain or conflict, especially for women. Job satisfaction can also be enhanced by offering incentives to current employees to recruit new members, creating a sense of community and collaboration among members, offering flexible work schedules, and providing opportunities for career advancement (Roscigno, Sauer and Valet, 2018). These efforts have gone the furthest in Japan and the Scandinavian countries, but they are becoming increasingly influential in the United States as well. The common features of these efforts are to change the structure of work organization so that they (1) shift some decision-making authority from management to workers and (2) organize workers into groups or teams that make or recommend those decisions.

Japanese Work Organization

From the 1970s through the 1990s, Japanese products gained a worldwide reputation for high quality and reasonable cost. In the 1970s and 1980s, productivity of the Japanese economy grew faster than that of most other industrialized countries, and the result was a rapid improvement of the economic standard of living of the Japanese worker. A major reason for this is that in Japan, more than in most other industrialized nations, a cooperative relationship between workers and management developed

that involved workers in shaping decisions about the work process. One way this has been done is through the quality control circle (QC circle), a small group of usually about five to ten workers who meet regularly to assess the group’s performance. This serves three purposes. It contributes to the improvement of the product or enterprise, improves human relations and worker satisfaction, and allows workers the opportunity to express their full potential (Ishikawa, 1984). QC circles are based on the idea that involving workers in shaping the work process on the basis of their experiences and knowledge will lead to higher productivity. This stands in contrast to the traditional American view that the route to improved productivity is hierarchical control and automation that simplifies the worker’s job and speeds the work process. Obviously, Japan has extensively automated as well, but the objective has not been to make the job simpler so much as to make the overall process more efficient, using the problem-solving skills of the workers.

Part of the principle of QC circles is to reward workers directly for their commitment to productivity. When a worker comes up with ideas that save the company money, the benefits are often passed on to the worker. As a result, Japanese workers enjoyed wage growth well above that of American workers over an extended time from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s (Karatsu, 1984, pp. 10–1; Kmitch, Laboy, and Van Damme, 1995; Taira and Levine, 1996). Japanese wages were hurt after 1995 by the general slump in the Asian economy, and Japan, like other industrialized countries, has been impacted by globalization in the form of competition from low-wage countries such as South Korea and China. Nonetheless, Japanese workers experienced lasting gains in their standards of living as a result of their large wage increases in the 1970s and 1980s.

Some Japanese workers are also rewarded for their commitment to their employer through lifetime employment: In many Japanese firms, once workers complete a probationary period, they are guaranteed that their job will not be eliminated, even if the company has to cut costs. In some cases, top management employees in Japan have taken large pay cuts in order to

avoid laying off workers (Le Boeuf, 1982). This, however, carries a reciprocal responsibility for the worker: The worker must not jump ship to another employer. Just as the employer commits to the worker, so must the worker commit to the employer. A case such as that of Lee Iacocca, who served as chief executive of both the Chrysler Corporation and Ford Motors at different times in his career, would be unheard of in Japan. It should be noted, however, that the lifetime employment system has been threatened by hard economic times, as some Japanese firms reconsidered this policy during the chronic recession of the 1990s. As a result, the percentage of long-tenure employees in the Japanese workforce does seem to be declining. While some firms went to great lengths during the 1990s to avoid layoffs of regular employees who were covered by lifetime employment guarantees (Taira and Levine, 1996), others

are ending the system. Today, less than one in five Japanese workers—mainly male employees with large employers—still enjoy lifetime employment (Hirakubo, 1999; Ono, 2006).

Scandinavian Workplace Innovations

Japanese workplace innovations are limited in one sense: While they empower workers in certain ways, that is not their main objective (the main purpose is to improve efficiency). Furthermore, there is a definite limit: Management typically sets production goals, and QC groups plan ways to meet those goals (Cole, 1979). In Sweden and Norway, however, empowering workers was part of the reason that decision-making was shifted from management to groups of workers. To a large extent, workplace changes in Scandinavia were the outgrowth



PERSONAL JOURNEYS INTO SOCIOLOGY

Work Without Bosses: Organizational Democracy as the Alternative to Bureaucracy

My investigation into worker cooperatives was born, I suppose, out of my personal frustration with bureaucracy. Who has not encountered, in the daily course of events, some functionary telling us what can or cannot be done? If we respond that this makes little sense, that the proscribed or prescribed action runs contrary even to the stated goals of the organization, the bureaucrat remains undaunted: "I'm sorry; it is our rule; it is our policy."

There may be tremendous costs associated with running everything bureaucratically—for example, millions of employees, surveys tell us, hold back their best energies and ideas because they feel they have no real voice in the workplace decisions that affect their lives. Several social movements have shed new light on this issue. During my undergraduate years, antiwar activists defended the right of the Vietnamese people to decide their own fate. The women's movement was asserting the right of women to redefine their rights and roles in modern society. The civil rights movement, too, was about self-determination.

Everywhere people seemed to be demanding the opportunity to decide for themselves the fundamental conditions of their lives.

The heated debates of the day, however, seemed to present a choice between the Soviet model of state-owned industry and the American model of private investor-owned industry. I reasoned that a socialist bureaucracy was not likely to be any more satisfying for the average working person than capitalist bureaucracy had been. Both models located the centers of power way up in the hierarchy of the organization, far removed from the input of the average individual. If people wanted a voice in the decisions that affected their lives, I concluded that it was in their workplaces that they most needed to be heard. Any institution that absorbs this much of our time and energy as adults and that so shapes our sense of ourselves simply cannot be forfeited to hierarchical control.

In short, it seemed to me that a third path would have to be found in the world. Both socialist and

capitalist economies would need to find a way to go beyond bureaucracy, or to dismantle bureaucracy if necessary, in order to include the voice of working people in crucial workplace decisions. This was a requirement if work organizations were to provide the sort of self-managed or autonomous work that people said they wanted, and if organizations were to remain responsive to their customer base and therefore competitive.

These observations led me to read about bureaucracy and to wonder whether a cooperative form of organization—one that was owned and run by its workers—might be a practical alternative. In my reading I discovered that bureaucracy and centralized control over organizations were accepted as a necessity, if not an inevitability, in social science. Weber had argued convincingly that bureaucratic authority would become a permanent and indispensable characteristic of modern society. Once firmly established, bureaucracy would be revolution-proof: Modern societies might undergo changes in who controls the bureaucratic apparatus, but the structure of bureaucratic control would remain intact. Domination (*Herrschaft*), in Weber's view, would always require an administrative apparatus to execute commands, and conversely, all administration would require domination. Robert Michels took Weber's philosophy one step further. His "iron law of oligarchy" asserted that organizational democracy would inevitably yield to oligarchy. Michels's law became a cornerstone of twentieth-century social science, which subsequently dismissed the possibility of democracy in large organizations.

As I became immersed in the literature and traditions in organizational studies, I could not help but notice that right outside my window worker co-ops—or "collectives," as they were called—were appearing all over. These collectives were organized to do what the social science literature said was impossible: to throw out accepted notions about bureaucracy with its chain of command, its written rules, and its strict separation of labor and management. In its place they wanted to create organizations where everyone had an opportunity to participate in decisions, where those who did the work of the organization also did the managing.

In their experimentation, the cooperatives offered a glimpse into how real-life functioning democracies would operate. I chose to examine a number of these organizations from different domains in order to identify the key organizational structures and processes that are essential to democratic organizations. Just as Weber had identified the key characteristics of bureaucracy, we needed to learn if there were

key characteristics of democracy. From my study, it became evident that the characteristic practices of democracies were made cohesive by the basic values of their participants (what Weber had called "substantive rationality"), just as the practices of bureaucracies are unified by their formal rules and procedures (which Weber calls "formal rationality"). In other words, to the three bases of authority put forward by Max Weber (traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational) would have to be added a fourth basis of authority: value-rationality or substantive-rationality. In the bureaucratic model, authority resides in office incumbency that ideally is based in expertise; but in the collectivist-democratic model authority rests in the collectivity as a whole whose decisions are based on allegiance to their values or substantive purposes, and it requires a consensus-based decision system to ascertain the collective will.

Beyond allowing me to see that a fourth basis of organization was possible, the very existence of the co-ops as participatory-democratic entities permitted me to search for the specific conditions that appeared to favor organizational democracy. I ended up identifying ten conditions that support democracy within an organization. There are inherent trade-offs, however, that go with the pursuit of democracy. For each condition I identify as supporting democracy, I show the problems that it raises for the organization in terms of productivity and efficiency. Cooperative enterprises must get a job done while retaining a democratic form. Although they do not always succeed, my study showed that, contrary to the iron law of oligarchy, they do not always fail.

Thus, my research both specified the key characteristics of a whole new model of organization and identified some of the conditions that facilitate or undermine this model. Since this original research, many other worker-owned and worker-run enterprises have been developing around the United States and around the globe. As a result of this research, any viable social science must now consider democratic forms of organization as legitimate alternatives to bureaucracy.

Years after my study of the grassroots collectives and co-ops, I asked myself what people who were equally values-driven would do if they found themselves working in a bureaucracy, be it public or private. I concluded that these employees would become the "whistleblowers," exposing wrongful or illegal corporate conduct. I set out to discover what drives these people and what happens to them. I learned that many employees (about a third) witness some things that trouble them in the workplace, but not all of these people blow the whistle. What

distinguishes the whistleblowers is that they are stirred by strongly held substantive values like the desire to protect the public from health or environmental dangers or the desire for a discrimination-free workplace. For their trouble, they usually encounter a management campaign to discredit and fire them. I found that this is what happens in two-thirds of these cases. I conclude that our standard bureaucracies have a long way to go in learning how to tolerate, much less to constructively change, on the basis of internal criticism and dissent.

Source: Excerpted from *The Cooperative Workplace: Conditions and Dilemmas of Organizational Democracy* by Joyce Rothschild and J. Allen Whitt. Reprinted by permission of Cambridge University Press.

Joyce Rothschild is a professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in the departments of Sociology and Government and International Affairs. This account reports on her book, with J. Allen Whitt, *The Cooperative Workplace: Conditions and Dilemmas of Organizational Democracy*, published by Cambridge University Press. In the three decades since this award-winning book was first published, she has conducted extensive research and theory construction on nonhierarchical and cooperative organizations. She has also conducted extensive research on organizations with the opposite characteristics—bureaucratic and hierarchical. Her research in these organizations has focused on managerial secrecy and the treatment of whistleblowers.

of national policies, and they involved a joint effort of government, management, and labor unions (Ritzer and Walczak, 1986, p. 357; Cole, 1979, 1989). In the late 1970s, an innovation known as the cooperative work agreement was widely adopted. It arranged workers into small groups, called “work teams” or “autonomous work groups,” which made decisions about work conditions and assignments that had once been reserved to management. As with QC circles (which were also widely adopted in the Scandinavian countries in the 1980s), workers received some of the benefits when their ideas saved companies money.

Workplace Change in the United States

Both QC circles and work teams have been increasingly used in the United States but not on the scale of Japan or the Scandinavian countries. There are a variety of reasons for this. One is that, in different ways, both the Japanese and Scandinavian cultures are more collective and less individualistic than that of the United States. The Scandinavian countries have long emphasized the notion that society should meet certain basic needs of its citizens, as reflected in their comprehensive network of social services. In Japan, the notion that individuals should commit to the organization—and only by so doing will their needs be met—has long been

an important belief. This is reflected in a variety of ways, such as company songs and uniforms and group exercises, as well as company-sponsored recreation and housing, that would seem quite unfamiliar to Americans. Similar practices are common in other Asian countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, and China. In several of these countries, QC circles were quickly and widely adopted.

The United States, by contrast, places great emphasis on individual rights and responsibilities, so there is less willingness on the part of both organizations and individuals to commit to one another. Would you agree to stick with the same employer for the rest of your life, for example? Would you enjoy singing the company song every morning? One result of this difference is that in both Japan and Sweden, the driving force behind workplace change has been corporate (and to some extent government) commitment. In contrast, the main advocates of group work in the United States have been individual efficiency consultants trying to sell the idea to corporations (Cole, 1989). The result is that, compared with Japan and Sweden, the United States has “tried less and accomplished less” (Cole, 1989, p. 308).

Nonetheless, American workplaces have increasingly emphasized work teams and decentralization of the workplace because, to some extent, they have been forced to do so by

international competition. QC circles were tried with mixed results in some American companies in the 1980s. Today, work teams have become commonplace in American work organizations, though their power to make decisions varies widely. These teams seem to have one advantage over QC circles: Entire organizations can be organized into teams, whereas QC circles have typically involved only a fraction of the workforce, even in Japan (Townsend, 1990). The case seems strong that the autonomous, cooperative work group can improve organizational efficiency (Pugh, Hickson, and Hinings, 1985, p. 89; Scott, 1992, p. 251; Shonk, 1992). The question is whether the United States, with its strong traditions of hierarchy and individualism and its highly concentrated wealth, is prepared to empower workers in this manner (Baron, Jennings, and Dobbin, 1988). There has also been some resistance by labor leaders, who fear that work teams and worker autonomy are sometimes established to co-opt workers and reduce worker solidarity. However, research by Hodson et al. (1993) suggests that this is not the usual result, and that participation in work groups may even enhance worker solidarity, and work by Wright (2000) suggests that under some circumstances, both workers and employers may benefit from cooperation (on this point, see also Finkelstein, 2004). In addition, the sharing of a firm's financial information with such teams has been found to increase the bargaining power of workers, indicating that not only is their work more valuable to the company when they are included in important information flows but that employers are forced to acknowledge this with compensation (Rosenthal and Denice, 2015)

Another strategy that has characterized American workplaces in recent decades falls under what economists sometimes call the paying of *efficiency wages*. This is the practice of hiring workers at a higher rate than required in order to attract the best employees possible, induce deep loyalty in those employees, and elicit a higher level of effort. This strategy works well in combination with *internal labor markets*, the practice of promoting from within a firm instead of hiring from outside: A company's best workers get employment security and

promotion possibilities. The most prominent example of this today is Google. Google offers not just highly lucrative salaries to its employees but also an array of benefits and perks unrivaled anywhere in the world. Employees have multiple free restaurants, recreational facilities, on-site laundromats, nap areas, in-house physicians, hybrid vehicles that can be borrowed at no charge, and a host of other freebies, not to mention the traditional benefits of health insurance and retirement. In exchange, companies like Google expect extraordinary effort from its employees. They also hope to inspire a large dose of loyalty.

Does this work? In a word, yes. At least as long as times are good. This strategy can be very expensive, and in troubled times it may not be as flexible as a more low-cost strategy. In fact, there are several potential problems with what is otherwise a highly efficient and effective way to organize a workplace. First, widespread use of efficiency wages could lead to inflation. If everyone is being paid more than they have to be, prices might rise to cover the increased costs to employers. However, it is possible that improved technology—often a by-product of the best workers working as hard as they can to improve efficiency—may offset these inflationary tendencies; the research is inconclusive. Second, people tend to take the good pay for granted after a while; therefore, employees still require supervision, which is expensive given how much employers are already paying for all the employee perks. And resentment toward the higher-ups remains, especially around issues of conception, control, and authority, since, although the idea is for these employees to feel they are part of the team, they find that their opinions are still not as valued as those of their supervisors. This is especially problematic for technically advanced employees with specialized knowledge. Finally, these firms can often experience rigidity in the hierarchy: They can't just replace a sick worker with anyone off the street. Once an employer already has the best workers working as hard as they can, an injured or sick worker means a loss of productivity and possibly money. Nevertheless, there is a reason firms like Google use this strategy: Overall, it works.

Alternatives to Bureaucracy

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, some people have sought to develop forms of organization completely different from bureaucracy, in the form of cooperatives and collectives. Although such organizations risk either failing for lack of decision-making or evolving into bureaucracies, some of them do neither. These forms are probably not suitable for all types of tasks, but for some kinds of economic production, they have been effective. In the Personal Journeys Into Sociology box for this chapter, sociologist Joyce Rothschild discusses how a democratic belief system can form the basis of a successful, nonbureaucratic organization.

Summary

We began this chapter by contrasting social groups and formal organizations. Formal organizations are different from other kinds of groups in that they have a stated purpose and an official role structure and set of rules. They are self-perpetuating; that is, they have a life beyond that of their individual members. Formal organizations are but one example of secondary groups—groups that exist for some purpose beyond the group itself or the individuals that constitute the group. A primary group, in contrast, is a close-knit group of people who interact for the sake of the interaction itself—for example, families and friends. Secondary groups and formal organizations have grown tremendously in importance as a result of modernization, but primary groups—once the main form of group life—remain important.

Groups and organizations usually have leaders, whether or not they are so designated. Some are instrumental leaders, who focus on the job to be done, others are expressive leaders, who focus on the social and emotional needs of the group and its members. Groups and organizations usually tend to be oligarchic—that is, ruled largely by their leaders. Groups can do certain things to minimize this tendency, but as a group becomes larger, the tendency toward oligarchy increases. Groups also create strong pressures on their members to conform.

Pressure to conform increases when the group comes into conflict with another group, referred to by social scientists as an outgroup.

The form of organization that has become most common in modern society is bureaucracy—a large, formal organization characterized by specialization, hierarchy, formal rules, impersonality, lifelong careers, and a specialized administrative staff. Max Weber developed what amounted to a functionalist analysis of bureaucracy, arguing that it has spread because it permits rationalization, making decisions on the basis of what best gets the job done. Conflict theorists, however, argue that bureaucracy also concentrates control over the organization in the hands of those at the top, which is one reason it is so widespread. Bureaucratic organization apparently is necessary for large-scale tasks, but most organizations are more formal and more hierarchical than is necessary in order to maximize efficiency. Bureaucratic organization also has many undesirable side effects, a reality that even Weber recognized.

Whatever the formal structure, there is always an informal structure—what people “really do”—that differs in significant ways from “official policy.” In any organization, the reality of the situation is always the product of social negotiation among the people in the organization, each of whom has a different understanding of the organization and a different set of concerns and interests. A person’s position and function in the organization, individual personality, and social characteristics such as sex, class, and race all influence the response to the organization. As a result, organizations are best understood as changing, rather than static, entities.

Key Terms

- social group
- formal organization
- dyad
- triad
- primary group
- secondary group
- ingroup
- outgroup

social network
iron law of oligarchy
instrumental leaders
expressive leaders
bureaucracy
ideal type
rationalization
alienation
informal structure
negotiated order
globalization

Exercises

- 1 One very important component of formal organizations in today's society is *bureaucracy*. Sociologist Max Weber identified a number of key features of bureaucracy. After you have read the material on bureaucracy in this chapter, respond to these questions:

- Why do bureaucracies develop? What are the primary functions of bureaucracies?
- What are the primary dysfunctions of bureaucracies?

- 2 Think of the place that you or a loved one is employed or the college or university that you attend. How is the workplace organized? Do you see elements of bureaucracy? What about organizational democracy? An interesting exercise is to create an "organization chart" of your workplace. Do an image search for the term "organization chart" in an Internet search engine. Based on the models you find, chart out the workplace you have chosen. Based on your chart, would you say it is overly bureaucratic? Or is it "lean," with only a few layers?

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Chapter 10

Deviance, Crime, and Social Control

Prison. It is now home to well over two million Americans—a number that has risen dramatically in recent years. In 1973, 98 of every 100,000 Americans were serving a prison sentence. This number had risen to 573 per 100,000 in 2022 (Sawyer and Wagner, 2022) nearly six times as many as in 1973! This reflects the dramatic increase in crime over the past few decades—right? No, wrong! In fact, both police reports and victim surveys indicate that crime rates fell between the 1970s and 2008 (Barlow, 2000; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009). In addition, from 1993 to 2014, the rate of violent crime in the United States declined from 79.8 to 20.1 per 1,000 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015). Now, consider this. In Germany between 1970 and 1984, there was a 75 percent increase in the crime rate, but the imprisonment rate rose only 50 percent—and then it fell after 1984. In 1968, the U.S. imprisonment rate was only slightly higher than Germany's—but by 1991, it was five times as high as Germany's. And, as we've seen, these differences can't be explained by differences in crime trends in the two countries.

These findings come, in part, from a comparative study by sociologist Joachim Savelsberg (1994). They illustrate a key point in this chapter: The definition, creation, labeling, and punishment of crime—as well as other types of deviant behavior—are socially defined. Differences in institutions in the United States and Germany, not differences in crime trends, are what explain the dramatically different trends in imprisonment in the two countries. For example, public opinion plays a greater role in policy in the United States, whereas the bureaucracy of Germany's stronger political parties influences policy there. This meant that in the United States, public perceptions about a “crime wave,” which have often been tied to

racial fears and stereotypical attitudes held by the majority white population, have easily led to harsher treatment of crime. In Germany, public opinion plays a smaller role in the punishment of crime (Savelsberg, 1994). Even within the United States, such differences can be seen. The imprisonment rate for drugs is six times as high in California as it is in Oregon, and five times as high in Illinois as in Oregon. This is true even though Oregon and California have similar rates of illegal drug use, and Illinois has much *less* illegal drug use than Oregon (Fellner, 2000). Again, racial fears and stereotypes seem to play a role: Both Illinois and California are much more racially diverse than Oregon. As we see later, drug use is seen and treated differently when it occurs in minority populations than when it occurs among white people, and this has become increasingly true since the so-called War on Drugs began in the 1980s.

On the other hand, some crimes can go unnoticed for years, even decades, because they are committed by the most powerful members of our society. These perpetrators are often shielded from detection by the cover of the resources they possess and the legitimacy of their positions in society. For instance, in 2008, it was discovered that investor Bernard Madoff had been running a fraudulent Ponzi scheme in which he paid off old investors with the money from new investors. The size of the Ponzi scheme is truly mind-boggling: nearly \$65 billion lost from 4,800 clients. Madoff was able to get away with this fraud for nearly 30 years because he was able to hide his activities behind a veil of complex accounting rules and the wall of legitimacy that his billionaire status accorded him. The socially constructed category of criminal is not supposed to include billionaires like Bernie Madoff.

Crime and illegal drug use are forms of **deviance**, which is any behavior disapproved by a large or influential portion of society. Deviance is *socially defined*: It is behavior that does not conform to the expectations or norms in a group or society. For example, Peter Conrad and Joseph Schneider (1980, p. 3) define deviance as “behavior that is negatively defined or condemned in our society.” Kai T. Erikson (1987 [orig. 1962], p. 21) argues, “Deviance is not a property *inherent* in certain forms of behavior; it is a property *conferred* upon these forms by the audiences which directly or indirectly witness them.”

As discussed in Chapter 4, social norms are rules that govern behavior. Sociologists recognize three major categories of norms: folkways, mores, and laws. Laws, which are defined and enforced by the state, are the most serious and formal. Failure to conform to a law constitutes a **crime**.

In this chapter, we examine how and why some behaviors come to be defined as deviant. We examine why and to what extent people engage in deviant behaviors, and how and why society attempts to control such nonconformity. We also examine the role of deviance in the larger society.

How Sociologists View Deviance

Sociologists view deviance as defined by society rather than as a violation of absolute norms for several reasons. First, cross-cultural analysis demonstrates that notions of right and wrong change from culture to culture. Among some preindustrial societies in warm climates, for example, wearing clothing, except perhaps for ornamental dress, was considered deviant. *Not* wearing clothing is deviant in the United States.

Second, historical analysis demonstrates that notions of deviance change over time. For example, women’s rights advocate Susan B. Anthony was arrested and convicted for casting a ballot in the presidential election of 1872. Today, female voting is considered normal, if not a patriotic duty. In precapitalist Christian societies, lending money for interest (usury) was considered sinful. Modern societies consider such behavior not only moral but necessary.

Third, observations of social interaction reveal that definitions of deviance tend to vary according to who performs the act. In other words, actions performed by one person may be condemned as deviant, but when performed by another they are acceptable. For example, violent international behaviors such as bombings, invasions, assassinations, and espionage are often described as “heroic” when conducted by “our side,” while similar activities by “the enemy” constitute “terrorism.”

Finally, behavior is evaluated according to the context in which it appears. Few people in the United States recognize competitive boxing as assault or killing by military personnel or the execution of a convicted criminal as murder. Under certain circumstances, assault, theft, and killing are not considered deviant. And social actors can take steps to reduce the perceived deviance of an act by obscuring it with a more acceptable act (Schilke and Rossman, 2018), for example, a company offering a bribe to a government official in exchange for a contract, but bundling the bribe with a legitimate business proposal, say a consulting contract, to make it seem less transactional and more acceptable. Thus, whether a given behavior is considered deviant depends on the situation. For this reason, sociologists view deviance as a violation of socially defined rules rather than a violation of absolute moral standards. As Kai T. Erikson (1966) put it:

Behavior which qualifies one man for prison may qualify another for sainthood, since the quality of the act itself depends so much on the circumstances under which it was performed and the temper of the audience which witnessed it.

(pp. 5–6)

The Sociology of Rule Making

Because rule breaking requires rule making, sociologists have studied history to learn how definitions of deviance develop. These studies suggest that what is defined as deviant is often the outcome of political processes. In other words, notions of deviance are the consequence

of struggle between competing ideas and interests. Political struggles occur in the form of moral crusades or interest group politics. Whenever individuals or groups attempt to define a behavior as deviant for the “moral” good of the community, a moral crusade is under way.

In addition to moral crusades, group interests play an important role in defining what behaviors are considered deviant. As stressed by the conflict perspective, individuals and groups often seek to define behaviors of others as deviant so as to enhance their own political, social, or economic position. Interest groups can do this to the extent that they control significant political or economic resources.

Studies on the origins of law tend to focus on public order statutes and abuse of political (law-defining) power. Howard Becker (1963), in a study of the 1937 Marijuana Tax Act, discovered that the Bureau of Narcotics conducted a moral crusade to criminalize marijuana. The crusade used pseudoscientific language and assertions to argue that marijuana caused everything from madness to murder. These assertions were treated as fact by the popular press. Articles warning of death, insanity, and murder helped move the U.S. Congress to pass the 1937 act.

A study by Handel (1997) suggests that ethnic prejudice also played a key role in the passage of the act. At that time, marijuana smokers came largely from three groups—African Americans, Mexican Americans, and the intellectual-bohemian subculture. As Becker (1973, p. 145) has pointed out, marijuana smokers were an unorganized and therefore relatively powerless group. They sent no representatives to the congressional hearings. As a result, their viewpoint was not heard, and the legislation that was passed created a new group of deviant people—marijuana users (Becker, 1973, p. 145).

Power, Rule Making, and the Definition of Deviance

Note Becker's emphasis on the relative powerlessness of marijuana smokers. This illustrates two important points about the sociology of rule making. First, power plays a major role in determining what behavior gets defined

as deviant and what does not (Goode, 1990, p. 20). Second, by defining behaviors or people as deviant, powerful people try to protect their advantaged status—sometimes successfully, sometimes not.

Elite interests also can cause behavior that was once considered deviant to be redefined as socially acceptable. In the 1970s, when the practice of marijuana smoking had become widespread among middle-class youth, a movement backed by the middle class was successful in reducing penalties for first-time marijuana possession in a number of states (Galliher and Cross, 1983). Recently, as a number of states have partially legalized the drug for medical treatment, and some also have legalized it for recreational use, Americans' opinions in favor of legalization have been steadily on the rise. Yet, Milhorn et al. (2009) find that Americans also increasingly favored harsher penalties for those in possession of small amounts. Trevino and Richard (2002) find that support for legalization is strong among drug users themselves, which leads to the possibility that as the generation of the 1960s has entered into the elite themselves, they are leading the way toward eventual legalization. Indeed, in 2012, the voters of Colorado and Washington made those the first two states to legalize the recreational use of marijuana, and in subsequent years, Alaska, Oregon, and the District of Columbia also did so.

Power, Race, Gender, and the War on Drugs

A prime example of the role that power plays in defining deviance can be seen in the treatment of drugs in America today. The two deadliest drugs used in the United States are tobacco, which kills about 480,000 people a year, and alcohol, which causes about 88,000 deaths a year (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015, 2014). While both of these drugs are legal (and the main source of income for some of the nation's largest corporations), we wage a War on Drugs aimed at illegal drugs, none of which kills even one-tenth the number who die from alcohol abuse. In fact, all illegal drugs combined kill about 17,000 people per year—only one-fifth the number who die as a result of alcohol abuse (Mokdad et al., 2004).



Photo 10.1 Although tobacco kills nearly 20 times as many people every year as all illegal drugs combined, its use remains legal and brings millions in profits to large, powerful corporations.

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Moreover, the illegal drugs that are most targeted by the War on Drugs are the ones used by the least powerful. For example, penalties—and arrest rates—are much higher for crack cocaine (used largely by the poor and people of color) than for powder cocaine (used more often by the upper classes). Hence, as the rate of imprisonment soared in the United States due to the War on Drugs, so did the proportion of prisoners who are black or Hispanic. During the 1980s—the peak years of the War on Drugs—the number of African Americans admitted to state and federal prisons per year rose by 190 percent, while the number of white people rose by 81 percent (Fellner, 2000). In fact, by the end of the decade, more black people than white people were being admitted to prison even though just 12 percent of the population was black and about 75 percent was white. The War on Drugs has also had a disproportionate impact on women, whose rate of imprisonment rose twice as fast as that of men during the early 1990s. Drug cases accounted for nearly all of this growth: Between 1986 and 1996, the number of women imprisoned on drug charges rose by 888 percent, compared to a 129 percent increase for all other offenses. Clearly, the main casualties in the War on Drugs have been African Americans and women. This is true even though the rate of illegal drug use varies little by race (9.2 percent of black people, 8.1 percent

of non-Hispanic white people, and 7.4 percent of Hispanic Americans reported illegal drug use during the past month in 2004 and 2005) and even though men are nearly twice as likely as women to use illegal drugs (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2008; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1999). Finally, in the early years of the new century, there was an increasing reaction against the imprisonment of nonviolent drug offenders, in no small part because of the high costs of imprisoning so many

people. The imprisonment rate in the United States peaked at around 510 per 100,000 in 2007 and 2008 and has been falling since, to around 470 per 100,000 in 2014 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016), but it is still the highest in the world.

Social Control

Social control refers to all social processes used to minimize deviance from social norms (see Black, 1984, pp. 4–5). These processes can be divided into indirect and direct social control. Indirect control is regulation through ideological or cultural influences. It is the most pervasive and effective means of social control, and because it is accomplished through *socialization*, people generally do not view it as repressive. The institutions of family, religion, education, and government present people with a largely, if not totally, consistent definition of morality. People then come to judge themselves in terms of how well they conform to these expectations. We gain psychological pleasure when we do things “right,” and we often experience guilt when we violate social norms. Thus, social control becomes self-control (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). In most circumstances, people conform to social expectations because they perceive them as legitimate constraints on

their behavior, not because they are physically coerced. For example, it is not merely fear of getting caught that keeps people from stealing. Most people don't steal because they believe stealing is wrong.

Formal and Informal Sanctions

Socialization can never entirely eliminate deviance, however. Therefore, direct control, or **sanctions**, are also necessary to ensure social conformity. Sanctions consist of rewards for conforming behavior and punishments for nonconforming behavior. They fall into four categories: informal positive, informal negative, formal positive, and formal negative.

Informal sanctions take the form of gestures, frowns, and smiles; locution (gossip and praise); companionship; avoidance; and occasionally, violence. They are frequent, spontaneous reactions to behaviors that anyone can administer and are applied to violations of folkways and, sometimes, mores. Informal-negative sanctions include the gossip and condemnation traditionally associated with unwed teenage motherhood, whereas the praise and attention connected with "legitimate births" constitute informal-positive sanctions.

Formal sanctions, in contrast, are well defined and can be applied only by people with proper institutional credentials, such as priests, police, and judges. Formal sanctions are far less frequently applied than informal sanctions. Receiving a diploma or winning a gold medal at a track meet are examples of formal-positive sanctions. Excommunication from a religious organization, expulsion from high school, and criminal punishment, which today also includes criminal justice surveillance, are types of formal negative sanctions. Criminal sanctions constitute the most powerful negative sanctions a society can apply.

Just as it affects what is defined as deviant, power also affects the type of sanctions that are used in response to deviance. Formal sanctions, particularly law, are used most often by the powerful against the relatively powerless (Black, 1984). Historically, many societies have identified groups with limited or nonexistent legal rights (e.g., children and slaves). On the other hand, in some societies, wealthy and

powerful groups such as the landowning nobility in feudal societies are essentially above the law. Even in modern democracies formal and legal sanctions are most often applied against the poor and powerless (Black, 1976, 1984, p. 3). In contrast, relatively powerless people rarely use the law to apply social control to the deviant acts of the wealthy (Baumgartner, 1984). In fact, formal and especially legal sanctions are rarely used except when the powerful seek to control the behavior of the powerless (Black, 1984). Baumer and Martin (2013) found that formal sanctions for murder are more lengthy and severe when a community is more fearful of the case and has a higher level of fundamentalist religious values, demonstrating how the social environment, not just the facts of a case, can influence the content of formal sanctions.

The United States uses formal and legal sanctions more than most countries, and that use is increasing. On a per capita basis, the United States now imprisons more people than any other country in the world. Moreover, as was noted at the beginning of this chapter, the use of imprisonment has grown rapidly in the United States, with the prison population doubling during the 1980s. Today, the U.S. imprisonment rate surpasses those of Russia and South Africa, which until a little more than a decade or so ago had the highest rates of imprisonment (New York Times, 1991a; British Broadcasting Corporation, 2009).

Do Formal Sanctions Deter Deviant Behavior?

Although formal sanctions are less widely used than informal sanctions, it is clear that they are more widely used in the United States than in other societies. One of the main purposes for having formal negative sanctions is **deterrence**. The belief that formal negative sanctions deter deviant behavior comes from the classical criminology school of thought. Dating back to the late eighteenth century, classical criminology held that deviant behavior represents rational decisions made by free-willed individuals who calculate the potential gains and risks of engaging in such behavior (Vold and Bernard, 1986). This school of thought also held that if the

costs of deviant and criminal behavior could be made high enough, through formal and legal sanctions, people would avoid such behavior. A recent study (Brayne, 2014) found that individuals who have been convicted of crimes and who have therefore interacted with law enforcement's increased methods of surveillance often seek to avoid such surveillance once they are released from detention. While this may serve to keep them off of law enforcement's radar for a time, it also isolates them from some of society's major institutions such as "medical, financial, labor market, and educational institutions" (Brayne, 2014, p. 367).

In classical criminology, the *certainty* of punishment was seen as a more likely deterrent to deviant behavior than the *severity* of punishment. If, for example, potential criminals know that they will be caught and punished, they will avoid criminal behavior, even if the punishment is not too severe. On the other hand, a severe penalty will not deter deviant behavior if potential deviants know that they are not very likely to be caught and punished. This belief led even the earliest classical criminologists, such as Cesare Beccaria, to oppose capital punishment. Whether or not capital punishment in fact does deter homicide rates has been the subject of many sociological studies, which are discussed in this chapter's Putting Sociology to Work section.

Putting Sociology to Work

Does Capital Punishment Deter Murder?

Over the years, many studies have attempted to determine whether capital punishment, as opposed to life imprisonment, deters people from committing murder. Some studies have compared states with the death penalty to adjacent states without it; most such studies find little or no difference in homicide rates. One of the most thorough of these studies, by Sellin (1980, 1959), compared "matched groups" of adjacent states with similar economic and population characteristics across various periods between 1920 and 1955. Consistently, little difference

in murder rates was found. For example, in the 1940–1955 period, Iowa had the death penalty. Its homicide rate was 1.4 per 100,000. In nearby Minnesota and Wisconsin, which did not have the death penalty, the homicide rates were 1.4 and 1.2, respectively (Sellin, 1959, pp. 25, 28). One difference Sellin did find is that states with the death penalty had somewhat *more* killings of police officers than states without it (Sellin, 1980). Studies of more recent periods have also found little difference in homicide rates in states with and without the death penalty (Peterson and Bailey, 1988). If anything, recent studies suggest *higher* rates of homicide in states *with* capital punishment (Fessenden, 2000; Bonner and Fessenden, 2000).

In the mid-1970s, a study using multivariate statistical techniques examined the relationship over time in the United States between execution rates and homicide rates (Ehrlich, 1975). This study caused quite a stir, because unlike earlier studies, it appeared to show a relationship between capital punishment and murder rates. However, this study has been widely criticized as methodologically flawed. It used national rates rather than state rates; thus, it involved the questionable assumption that executions in states with capital punishment could influence the homicide rate in states without it. It also did not control for policy changes. In the 1960s, the execution rate fell as capital punishment was increasingly challenged in the courts. At the same time, crime rates were rising for all types of crimes. Importantly, the deterrence effect showed up only if years after 1962 were included in the analysis—there was no correlation before that year (Paternoster, 1991). Moreover, the homicide trend after 1962 was the same in states with and without the death penalty, so it is hardly likely that it was caused by the declining use of the death penalty (Zeisel, 1976; Zimring and Hawkins, 1986; Nathanson, 1991). Finally, most other crimes, for which there had been no death penalty, rose faster than homicide.

Other studies have compared the rates of homicide before and after executions. A nationwide study showed no relationship in either direction between publicized executions and homicides in the United States from 1976 to 1987

(Bailey, 1990). This further supports the view that capital punishment does not deter murder. (Some regional studies have shown brutalization effects according to Paternoster [1991], but Bailey's national study did not.) There is also no evidence that abolition, institution, or reinstatement of the death penalty by states is associated with changes in homicide rate (Ehrenfreund, 2014; Paternoster, 1991). All this has led two researchers to conclude that "there is room for debate only about whether the marginal deterrent effect is nil or very small in relation to total homicide volume" (Zimring and Hawkins, 1986, pp. 180–1; see also Fagan, 2006).

While research does suggest that certain punishment is more likely to deter crime than severe punishment (Blumstein, Cohen, and Nagin, 1978; Barlow, 1990, p. 520), there are limits on the ability of even certain punishment to deter crime. For one thing, violent crimes are often crimes of passion that involve little or no calculation of costs and benefits (Chambliss, 1967; Minor, 1978). This is probably another reason why capital punishment does not deter homicide. Even for property crimes, however, deterrence does not always work, for two reasons. First, some property crimes are undoubtedly committed on impulse. Second, some are committed by career criminals. People who have chosen crime as a way of life are not usually deterred by the threat of punishment—it is

merely something they have learned to live with (Chambliss, 1967; Piliavin et al., 1986; Barlow, 1993). Loughran et al. (2013) found that even among adolescent offenders there exists a kind of "criminal capital." That is, increased experience and specialization that aid them in their criminal activities. For more casual criminals, who are not as committed to crime as a way of life, deterrence may be more effective.

Looking at crime as a whole, studies on the effect of deterrence are inconsistent at best. Although certain punishment may deter casual property crime, there are many kinds of crime for which even certain punishment is not a very effective deterrent (Chiricos and Waldo, 1970; Gibbs, 1981). In general, informal sanctions seem to be more effective than formal sanctions in deterring crime. According to research by Paternoster et al. (1983), it is fear of the disapproval of significant others, rather than fear of legal punishment, that keeps people from engaging in deviant and criminal behavior.

These findings, combined with high crime rates despite a high and rapidly rising rate of imprisonment in the United States, call into serious question the "commonsense" notion that formal sanctions deter crime. According to criminologist Elliott Currie (1985, pp. 28–9), the high crime rates of the United States are hard for deterrence theorists to explain.



Photo 10.2 For a variety of reasons, fear of legal punishment is not very effective in deterring crime. Informal sanctions from disapproving friends and family members may be more effective in many cases.

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Crime

As previously explained, crime is any deviant act that violates a law. When the media, politicians, and citizens speak of "the crime problem," however, they are usually referring to street crime—illegal acts generally carried out by members of the lower classes. Nonetheless, white-collar crimes account for much larger economic losses and, in some instances, greater human misery (Kramer, 1984; Barlow, 1990, pp. 289–92).

Street Crime

The FBI divides **street crime**, or predatory crime, into two categories: violent offenses and property offenses. Violent offenses include murder, forcible rape, assault, and robbery; property crime includes burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft.

Patterns in Street Crime

In a typical year, up to 25 percent of U.S. households are touched by some form of street crime. Property crime is at least six times as common as violent crime, but the rates of violent crime are nonetheless staggering. About 254 people are murdered, 1,500 women raped, and 13,000 people assaulted every week in the United States (computed from FBI statistics for 2014)—and these totals include only those crimes reported to police. The majority of both violent and property crimes go unreported (National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 1996). FBI statistics show peaks in crimes reported to police in 1980 and again in 1991. Between these two years, crime reports fell and then rose again; since 1991, overall crime rates have been declining modestly, according to both police reports and victim surveys. The number of violent crimes committed by juveniles, however, rose sharply between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s. This continued even after overall crime rates began to decline in the early 1990s, but after about the mid-1990s, violent crime among juveniles also declined, as did overall crime (Ehrenfreund and Lu, 2016; FBI, quoted in U.S. News Online, 1996; FBI, 2000). However, violent crime rates increased on average in the 50 largest cities in 2015, though the rate is still half what it was in 1991 (Ehrenfreund and Lu, 2016). And while many cities had increases in violent crime in 2015 and the first half of 2016, other cities had decreases.

Compared with other industrialized countries, the United States has a very high rate of violent crime. In 2013, for example, the homicide rates per 100,000 in Japan, England, Germany, Denmark, and Canada ranged from 0.29 in Japan to 1.44 in Canada (Kiersz and LoGiurato, 2015). The U.S. rate of 3.82 in 2005 was 165 percent higher than Canada's rate and about 13 times as high as Japan's. Rapes, robberies,

and serious assaults are also much more common in the United States than in other industrialized countries. Differences in property offenses (burglary, theft, and auto theft) are less pronounced. Burglaries are about equally common in the United States and Europe, though the numbers vary widely in European countries. U.S. rates of theft and auto theft, however, are about double those of European nations (National Institute of Justice, 1988a, p. 2).

Murder, the rarest of criminal offenses, and assault, the most common violent offense, are most often unplanned and impulsive. Nonetheless, both crimes arise from similar circumstances. They tend to evolve out of spontaneous quarrels between neighbors, drinking partners, and family members. Roughly 60 percent of assaulters and murderers are relatives or acquaintances of their victims (National Institute of Justice, 1987, pp. 170, 262). One factor that contributes to the high rate of interpersonal violence in the United States is the availability of handguns. When a gun is present, a dispute that would otherwise lead to only minor violence can quickly become deadly (Branas et al., 2009; R. Farley, 1980; Newton and Zimring, 1969; Fisher, 1976; Sloan, Kellerman, and Reay, 1988). The United States is unique across the globe in its level of gun-related death for countries not engaged in civil war. For rich, developed countries, it is an outlier of violence. Of the 23 rich nations that make up the OECD, the United States accounted for 80 percent of all gun deaths and has a rate of firearm-related deaths that is 19.5 times higher than the other developed countries (Kenny, 2013). In the same study, researchers found that 87 percent of all children killed by firearms in the developed countries were American children (Kenny, 2013).

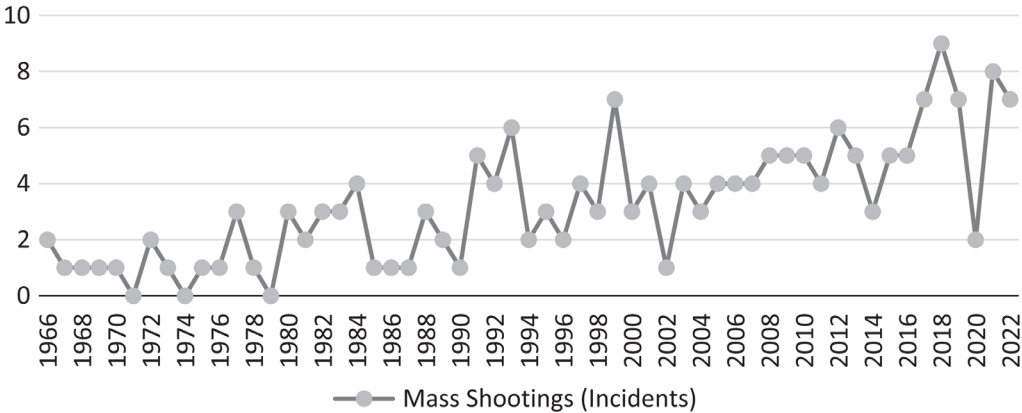
Another uniquely American criminal offense is the mass shooting. While homicide and violent crime rates overall are on a long-term decline, mass shootings in the United States occur with a frequency and regularity like nowhere else on earth that isn't engaged in civil war. Figure 10.1 shows the rise in mass shootings from 1966 to 2015. Note that this chart does not include the Pulse nightclub shooting in the summer of 2016 where 49 victims and the shooter were killed, the worst mass shooting in modern American history.

From Columbine in 1999, to Virginia Tech in 2007, to Sandy Hook Elementary in 2012, to the Pulse nightclub in 2016, and so many others, a variety of motives and causes have been identified. Issues range from the widespread availability of guns and the need for gun control, to mental health issues and substance abuse, to the threat of domestic and international terrorism. All of these have played a role in the rise of these horrific events. It is unclear exactly what it would take to stop these mass killings in the United States, but one thing that Figure 10.2 does make clear, these shootings are increasing in frequency, regularity, and lethality.

What causes these mass shootings, and how do we stop them? The shooters themselves are almost universally male and usually from

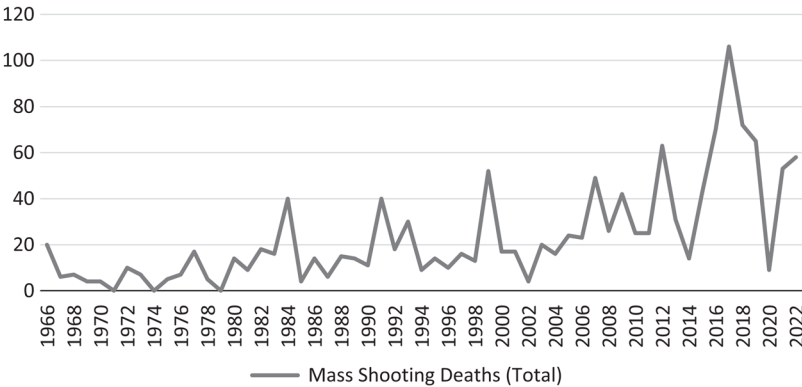
the middle class. An examination of American masculinity and the gun culture that is so closely intertwined with it cannot be ignored. The ready availability of semiautomatic military-style weapons capable of shooting large numbers of people in a short time almost certainly plays a role: Mass shootings are up sharply since an assault weapons ban in the United States was allowed to expire in 2004 (Tures, 2016). It is unlikely that these events will ever be prevented entirely, but to slow them, some combination of gun control, more effective mental health screening and treatment, substance-abuse counseling, and a containment of international and domestic terrorism will be needed. Many, if not all of these, would be greatly assisted with a renewed focus on rolling

Figure 10.1 Number of Mass Shootings in the U.S. by Year, 1966–2023.



Source: Peterson, J., & Densley, J. (2023). The Violence Project database of mass shootings in the United States (Version 7). www.theviolenceproject.org (Downloaded September 27, 2023).

Figure 10.2 Number of victims of U.S. mass shootings: 1966–2015.



Source: Peterson, J., & Densley, J. (2023). The Violence Project database of mass shootings in the United States (Version 7). www.theviolenceproject.org (Downloaded September 27, 2023).



Photo 10.3 The easy availability of assault weapons in the United States plays a role in our high rate of mass shootings. Since an assault weapons ban was allowed to expire in 2004, mass shootings are up sharply.

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back the growing levels of social stratification (examined in previous chapters) that create frustration and sometimes a desire to lash out at others.

The Great Decline: 1990–2014

Violent crime in the United States has exhibited a long-term pattern of decline. Specifically, the homicide rate underwent a substantial decline, plummeting from over 30 per 100,000 people in the 1700s to fewer than ten by the 1900s (Fischer, 2010). Nonetheless, following World War II, crime rates experienced a surge in the United States, reaching their zenith from the 1970s through the early 1990s. During this period, violent crime escalated nearly fourfold between 1960 and its peak in 1991, while property crime more than doubled over the same span.

The United States has experienced a significant decline in violent crime since the 1990s. Crime fell sharply in the United States in the 1990s until 2014, in all categories of crime and all parts of the nation. Homicide rates plunged 43 percent from 1991 to 2001, for instance, while violent crime decreased by one-third (Levitt, 2004). This decline in violent crime has been a topic of interest for sociologists and criminologists, and several factors have been identified as contributing to this trend, though it is important to note that no scholarly consensus exists on why the decline occurred. Levitt (2004) argues four main factors have

been theorized to explain the decline.

First, some argue the use of technology, such as surveillance cameras and DNA analysis, has helped law enforcement agencies to solve crimes and prevent them from happening (Levitt, 2004). Second, the number of police officers increased in the 1990s, which helped to deter crime and catch criminals. Third, the use of crack cocaine decreased in the 1990s, which may have contributed to the decline in violent crime. Finally, the number of people in prison increased in the 1990s, which

some believe helped to keep criminals off the streets. While not all scholars agree that these are—or to what degree these are—the causes of the great decline, there is a strong sense that the evidence rules out several popular explanations as serious causal factors (Levitt, 2004). These include the economy, gun control, and increased use of the death penalty.

Nevertheless, this decline in violent crime has come at a substantial cost, characterized by aggressive policing and a surge in mass incarceration (Sharkey, 2018). So, while scholars have identified several factors that contributed to the decline in violent crime, there is still much to be explored. One thing we know for certain is that the decline has been a positive trend that has made communities safer, even if that safety has come at a cost. We explore this further in the box “*The Uneasy Peace*.”

Victims of Street Crime

Some Americans are much more likely to be victims of street crime than others. While white females and older adults express great fear of crime, their victimization rates are relatively low. In 1994, only one person out of 196 over the age of 65 years was a victim of violent crime—compared to one out of nine between the ages of 12 and 15 years. One out of 16 black people was victimized, compared to one out of



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

The Uneasy Peace

In his book *Uneasy Peace: The Great Crime Decline, The Renewal of City Life, and the Next War on Violence*, sociologist Patrick Sharkey explores the decline in violent crime in the United States since the 1990s and the factors that contributed to this trend. Sharkey argues that the decline in violent crime has been a result of a combination of factors, including changes in policing strategies, the decline of the crack-cocaine epidemic, and the increase in incarceration rates. However, Sharkey also acknowledges that the decline in violent crime has come at a high cost, including aggressive policing and mass incarceration. Sharkey argues that the great crime decline has remained a mystery until now, and he uncovers the multiple forces that brought about this sweeping transformation in modern urban life.

One of the main messages of Sharkey's book is that efforts from public, private, and nonprofit groups resulted in an immense decline in violence, one that has most affected the most vulnerable of city dwellers, African American men. Sharkey also makes clear why this public health triumph is precarious: our unrelenting focus on criminal justice to the exclusion of community investments. This is a mistake, he argues, because community investments carry no serious downside, but the focus on criminal justice does. Sharkey also documents the "social costs of violence," the ways in which its effects

radiate beyond victim and perpetrator, corroding neighborhoods and communal control over public spaces, and even showing up in the test results of children living near where violence has occurred. Sharkey argues that those who have benefited most from violence's retreat are people living in what have traditionally been the most marginalized communities. He regards the reduction in violence as one of the signal public health victories in recent decades.

Sharkey explains that some of the forces that brought about safer streets have been positive, such as the intensive efforts made by local organizations to confront violence in their own communities. However, the drop in violent crime has also come at the high cost of aggressive policing and mass incarceration (Sharkey, 2018). Sharkey draws on original data and textured accounts of neighborhoods across the country to document the most successful proven strategies for combating violent crime and to lay out innovative and necessary approaches to the problem of violence. Sharkey lays out an ambitious agenda for consolidating what he sees as the incomplete and fragile gains in the struggle against violence. He concedes mass incarceration and a more aggressive "broken windows" style of policing played a role, but he contends the inequities and moral cost of the punitive model render it unsustainable.

20 white people. And one out of 17 men was victimized, compared to one out of 24 women (National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 1996). The poor are also more likely to be victimized. In 1994, women in households with incomes under \$15,000 were three times as likely to be raped as women in households with higher incomes, and this pattern was found to still be true in a study looking at the period from 1995 to 2011 (Rennison, 2014). And low-income people were twice as likely to be robbed and one and a half times as likely to be assaulted (National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 1996). While poverty itself is a large factor in who becomes a victim of crime, immigrant status can also make individuals more vulnerable due to factors such as cultural differences and

language barriers (Light and Ulmer, 2016). This same research points out that despite high levels of poverty, and the popular perception that immigration increases violent crime, the evidence shows quite the opposite: immigration may have played a key role in the decline of violent crime since the early 1990s, even among the poor, as immigrants commit less violent crimes per capita than the native-born population. To boot, despite popular perception that "sanctuary cities," increase crime, Martínez-Schuldt and Martínez (2021) find that Latinos are more likely to report violent crime victimization to law enforcement in areas with sanctuary policies, highlighting the potential positive effects of these policies on community safety and trust among immigrant communities. In

terms of gender, while males remain more likely to be attacked than females, the gap is narrowing. And women are about six times as likely as men to be attacked by their domestic partners or former partners (Lewin, 1991). From 2003 to 2012, 34 percent of women who were murdered were killed by their husbands or boyfriends; just 2.5 percent of men who were murdered were killed by their wives or girlfriends (Scheller, 2014). It is significant to note, however, that annual rates of domestic violence against women have fallen 64 percent since the passage of the 1994 Violence Against Women act that increased funding for investigation and prosecution for domestic violence and automatic, mandatory restitution against those convicted (Scheller, 2014). When women do commit violent crime, they are far more likely than men to be doing so in response to violence committed against them by their domestic partner (Browne, 1987; Browne and Williams, 1987). The problems of courtship violence and spousal abuse are discussed further in Chapter 13.

Victimless Crime

Victimless crime refers to illegal acts in which all direct participants are consenting adults. In other words, they are engaging in legally forbidden personal conduct, such as drug use, illegal sexual acts between consenting adults, and use of illegal sexually explicit materials. The term “victimless crime” does not mean that these crimes never have victims, simply that they do not require a victim. In some cases, there are indeed victims, such as the young men or women whose poverty or sexual abuse is manipulated to recruit them into prostitution or the family members of a person dependent upon drugs. On the other hand, there are instances in which no one except possibly the person doing the behavior is harmed, as in the case of someone smoking one marijuana cigarette, viewing a sexually explicit film, or engaging in an illegal sex act with another consenting adult.

To be sure, some “victimless” crimes do harm people, and it is in some ways functional for society to define and punish deviance. (This issue is discussed in greater detail later in the

chapter.) On the other hand, victimless crime laws are often largely a product of what group has power, as we saw earlier in our discussion of Prohibition and other legislation. The same is often true of the enforcement of these laws, as illustrated by the fact that prostitutes are arrested more often than the men who patronize them. Moreover, victimless crime laws can be dysfunctional. They can, for example, divert considerable resources of the criminal justice system away from crimes with clear victims. Between 25 and 30 percent of all arrests are for victimless crimes, and more than *four times* as many people are arrested each year for drunkenness and drug violations than for burglary, robbery, and auto theft combined (FBI, 2000, Section IV). Also, because there are no victims to report these crimes, police often must use intrusive measures to detect them, which may represent a threat to privacy and freedom of expression. Examples of intrusive measures are decoys, buggings, and “working the bus”—a practice, approved by the Supreme Court in 1991, in which police enter buses and ask permission to search the possessions of everyone on the bus, without telling the passengers that they have the right to say no.

Finally, some argue that victimless crime laws can increase crime and lawlessness by creating a lucrative market for that which is illegal. According to Handel (1988), making drugs illegal makes them profitable and thereby breeds organized crime, with annual drug revenues of \$100 billion to \$150 billion. Finally, drug laws may also lead to street crime, as addicts steal to support their habits, which are much more expensive because drugs are illegal.

White-Collar and Corporate Crime

The term **white-collar crime** was coined by the criminologist Edwin Sutherland (1940) to refer to illegal acts carried out by “respectable” members of the community. Sutherland’s work exposed an inherent class bias in traditional explanations of criminality. The notion of “white-collar crime” brought the middle and upper classes into the “crime problem.”

Sutherland’s (1983 [orig. 1949, p. 7]) original conception of white-collar crime as an

act “committed by a person of respectability and high status in the course of his occupation” has been modified to include almost any crime committed by high-status people. Thus, it is useful to distinguish between white-collar crimes motivated by individual interests and those motivated by organizational or corporate interests (corporate crime and state crime).

White-Collar Crime: Individual Offenders

Individually motivated white-collar crimes are nonviolent offenses carried out by people of relatively high social status who attempt to gain money, property, or personal benefit through deceit (Sykes, 1978, p. 86). Employers, organizations, and the general public are victimized by these activities. White-collar crimes directed toward employers include larcenies of time (getting paid and not working), embezzlement (stealing money from employers), and padding expense accounts. Income tax evasion, insurance fraud, credit-card fraud, and computer theft victimize organizations such as government and businesses. Consumer fraud in health care, real estate, and automotive sales victimizes the general public (Bloch and Geis, 1970, p. 301). The economic losses from white-collar offenses are far greater than those from street crimes. For example, conservative estimates of the cost of consumer fraud alone are five times higher than the combined economic costs of all street crimes (Hagan, 1985, p. 103). Recent estimates of the cost of white-collar crime have ranged from \$300 billion to \$660 billion per year (Kane and Wall, 2006, p. 5) to \$426 billion to \$1.7 trillion (Helmkamp, Townsend, and Sundra, 2016). In human terms, a California director of public health stated that medical quackery causes more deaths in the United States than all crimes of violence (in Geis, 1974, p. 125). Nevertheless, the media, politicians, and enforcement agencies express little concern over white-collar offenses. Most go unnoticed or unreported, and when white-collar offenders are apprehended, they tend to avoid significant punishment (Eitzen and Timmer, 1985, pp. 196–9). Even so, one national survey found that more than one-third of individuals, and someone in nearly half of U.S. households, was aware of being victimized within the past year (Kane and Wall, 2006, p. 2).

Corporate Crime

Corporate crimes are unique in that offenders are large organizations—corporations rather than individuals. Such crimes result from deliberate decisions made by corporate personnel to increase or maintain organizational resources or profits. The general public, employees, and organizations are victimized by corporate crime. Crimes against the general public include multinational bribery (paying foreign officials to obtain business), price fixing, the sale of unsafe products, and polluting the environment. Requiring people to work in an unhealthy or life-threatening environment and illegal or violent suppression of union activities are examples of corporate crimes against employees. Tax evasion and industrial espionage are examples of corporate offenses against other organizations. Even though the FBI does not collect data on corporate crimes, several studies suggest that corporate deviance is common (Clinard and Yeager, 1980; Sutherland, 1983 [orig. 1949]). According to Marshall Clinard and Peter Yeager (1980, pp. 116–19), during 1976 and 1977 three-fifths of the largest U.S. manufacturing firms had at least one administrative, civil, or criminal action initiated against them. Forty-two percent faced multiple actions. A small percentage of corporations, however, committed a disproportionately high number of offenses. Large corporations accounted for nearly three-fourths of all serious corporate offenses. The annual economic impact of corporate crime likely exceeds \$200 billion (Simon and Eitzen, 1993, p. 290), over 14 times the cost of street crime (McCollister, French, and Fang, 2011). Human misery associated with corporate crime is no less dramatic.

Examples of serious corporate crime abound. For instance, in 2015, Volkswagen was exposed for employing deceitful tactics to manipulate emissions tests for their diesel vehicles. The company had surreptitiously installed software capable of identifying when the car was undergoing an emissions examination, prompting it to reduce emissions to comply with the test. However, during routine driving, these cars spewed pollutants at levels up to 40 times the legal limit of nitrogen oxides. In another high-profile case, Bernie Madoff,

a former stockbroker and investment adviser, orchestrated a colossal Ponzi scheme that swindled thousands of investors out of billions of dollars. His egregious actions earned him a 150-year prison sentence. In 2016, it was revealed that Wells Fargo's employees had surreptitiously opened millions of fictitious accounts to meet sales targets and secure bonuses. As a consequence, the bank faced a hefty fine of \$185 million for its complicity in this unethical scheme. Pharmaceutical company Purdue Pharma found itself embroiled in controversy for aggressively promoting its opioid painkiller, OxyContin, despite being well aware of the associated risks of addiction and overdose. This led to a barrage of lawsuits and settlements targeting both the company and its owners, the Sackler family, in connection with their role in the opioid crisis. In 2010, a catastrophic explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico unleashed the largest marine oil spill in history. BP, the company responsible for the rig, was found to have taken shortcuts on safety measures, incurring penalties and settlements amounting to billions of dollars. Another deadly example of corporate crime can be found in the 1996 ValuJet crash in Florida, which took 110 lives. The box "A Criminological Analysis of an Airplane Crash" shows how this event might better be thought of as a crime rather than an accident.

During the 1980s, widespread fraud in the savings-and-loan industry contributed to the failure of hundreds of lending institutions. Fraud contributed to between 35 and 60 percent of savings-and-loan failures (Hayes, 1990; Lohr, 1992). The fraudulent activities included using savings-and-loan assets for personal purposes, illegally making loans for projects from which savings-and-loan officers personally benefited, paying savings-and-loan officers high salaries while the institution was insolvent (and lying about it), and making illegal and unsafe investments that resulted in large losses (New York Times, 1992; Lohr, 1992). The cost of savings-and-loan failures to U.S. taxpayers ultimately came to about \$124 billion, with an additional cost of about \$29 billion to private entities (Curry and Shibut, 2000, p. 31). In contrast, the annual cost of property crimes such as larceny and burglary at that time ran around \$5 billion (Michalowski, 1985). One thing that

made it easy for savings and loans to make risky and sometimes illegal investments was federal deposit insurance. Savings-and-loan officials knew that if they made bad loans that resulted in losses, the government would bail out their depositors (Kane, 1992).

It has become clear that fraud and other similar crimes were major factors contributing to the 2008 financial crash. Numerous bad mortgages were knowingly sold to unknowing buyers, and a number of large banks falsified their records to cover up growing losses (Eisinger, 2014; Cohan, 2015). The cost of the crash that resulted largely from the collapse of bad mortgages was massive: The General Accounting Office (2013) estimated the cost of the financial crisis in the United States to be in the trillions of dollars. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, one person alone (Bernie Madoff) was responsible for \$65 billion in losses. Yet only one Wall Street executive went to jail. Around \$190 billion in fines and settlements were paid by banks, but keep in mind that bank investors, not the executives who committed the violations, pay the cost of these (Cohan, 2015). Some of the very executives who actually committed the crimes got big raises. For example, Jamie Dimon, CEO of JP Morgan Chase, got a 76 percent raise weeks after he settled that bank's case with the Justice Department, bringing his salary to \$20 million.

As was the case with the 2008 crash, punishment for corporate crimes is generally limited to fines. It is, after all, impossible to put a corporation in prison. Moreover, because offenses generally involve large numbers of corporate officials over extended periods of time, it is difficult to attach individual blame (Shapiro, 1990). Finally, because corporate offenders are usually white, middle class, and highly educated, they generally are not viewed as "criminal types." That label is reserved for street criminals. Thus, corporate lawbreakers, like other types of white-collar offenders, often tend to go unpunished (Clinard and Yeager, 1980, pp. 272–98).

Organized Crime

Organized crime is similar to corporate crime in that it involves large-scale organizations

rather than individuals, but it differs in that these organizations exist mainly for the purpose of conducting illegal activity. Often, groups involved in organized crime also are involved in legitimate businesses, but these activities are incidental to their large-scale illegal activities or serve as a cover or protection for them. Organized crime usually provides some type of illegal service for which there is a market, including the importation and distribution of illegal drugs, prostitution, gambling, and loan-sharking (making loans at illegally high interest rates) (Cressey, 1969).

Organized crime gains control of these activities by a combination of threats and promises. People engaged in drug-running or prostitution, for example, may be threatened with violence if they try to compete with organized crime or fail to make the required payoffs. On the other hand, organized crime provides protection from the law in exchange for the right to control such illegal activities. Such protection can be offered because of organized crime's substantial penetration of state and local governments as well as elements of the federal government. So crucial is this political influence that organized crime probably could not exist without it (Barlow, 1993).

Historically, organized crime has been dominated by immigrant and working-class ethnic groups for whom more traditional means of upward mobility have been less available (Ianni, 1974, 1975). Through much of the mid-twentieth century, it was dominated by Italian Americans (mainly of Sicilian origin), largely because that group happened to be the dominant group in organized crime when Prohibition was enacted after World War I. By creating a situation in which there was a huge market for an illegal commodity (alcohol), Prohibition led to a massive increase in organized crime activity and allowed the groups then in control to consolidate their power and amass tremendous illegal wealth. In earlier periods, when they were new immigrants, Irish Americans and Jewish Americans similarly had substantial involvement in organized crime.

As immigrant and economically disadvantaged groups have changed, so has the face of organized crime. In more recent years, black, Hispanic, and Asian involvement has grown.

Today, drug prohibition creates similar markets for illegal goods to those once created by alcohol prohibition. Some Cuban Americans and immigrants from Central and South America, as well as new Russian and Asian immigrants, have been involved in the lucrative illegal drug trade. It is important to stress, however, that among all the ethnic groups previously mentioned, only a small minority of each group has been involved in organized crime.

Political Crime

Related to both corporate and organized crime is political crime—the abuse of a government or political office or position, or crime carried out to gain office or political influence. Political crime includes a wide variety of activities. Some, such as bribery and influence peddling, are directed toward personal gain. This type of political crime is sometimes referred to as political white-collar crime. After being accused of engaging in this type of activity as governor of Maryland, Spiro Agnew had to resign the vice presidency in 1973. In 1990 and 1991, five U.S. senators were investigated for accepting contributions from indicted savings-and-loan official Charles Keating Jr. in exchange for protecting him from investigation for fraud. And, of course, in 1998 President Clinton was impeached by the House of Representatives (but acquitted by the U.S. Senate) on charges that he committed perjury and interfered with an investigation in order to cover up his sexual relationship with a White House intern. In 2006, former Illinois governor George Ryan was convicted of selling trucking licenses, steering contracts to friends and accepting payments in return, and illegally directing campaign funds to family members, and he was sentenced to six and a half years in prison. Two years later, Ryan's successor, Rod Blagojevich, was arrested for similar offenses, including trying to sell Barack Obama's Senate seat after Obama was elected president. In early 2009, Blagojevich was impeached and removed as Illinois's governor.

When political crime is committed by governmental organizations for organizational gain, it is often called state crime (Kauzlarich and Kramer, 1998). Some state crime is

ideological in nature: Illegal attempts are made to support some cause that officials favor. One example is the Iran-Contra case, which involved unlawful diversion of government funds to the Nicaraguan contras under the Reagan administration—a use of tax money that was explicitly banned by a law passed by Congress.

A great deal of state crime is aimed at preventing or controlling dissent. Activities of this type range from wiretapping, opening mail, and other forms of illegal spying to the use of provocateurs to induce opponents to violate the law so that they can be discredited. Often, illegal attempts to suppress dissent are more direct: Protestors are beaten, illegally arrested, or even shot. One instance occurred in 1969, when police attacked the Black Panthers' headquarters in Chicago, apparently while the people inside were sleeping; this action led to two

deaths (Farley, 2010, pp. 195–6). Ultimately, those who survived the attack and relatives of those who were killed sued and received over \$2 million in damages (Simpson and Yinger, 1985, p. 424). In a case that attracted great attention, FBI agents shot and killed the 14-year-old son and unarmed wife of white supremacist Randy Weaver in 1992 at Ruby Ridge, Idaho. Subsequent investigations revealed that the agents had been given unusual rules of engagement that they interpreted to mean “shoot on sight.” At a later Senate hearing, FBI director Louis Freeh described the rules of engagement as “contrary to law and FBI policy.”

Another common type of state crime involves governmental sponsorship of activities harmful to the public, for research or political purposes. There have been numerous cases in which unknowing citizens have been exposed



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

A Criminological Analysis of an Airplane Crash

On May 11, 1996, ValuJet Airlines Flight 592 caught fire and crashed in the Everglades 17 miles northwest of Miami International Airport, killing all 110 people on board. The cause of the crash was a fire triggered by explosions of oxygen generators being shipped in boxes in the plane's cargo hold. The oxygen generators, which are used to produce oxygen in emergencies on airplanes, were old ones that had been replaced on ValuJet planes and were being shipped for disposal. When an oxygen generator is set off, it creates great heat capable of starting a fire—that's why they are behind heat barriers when used. When one or more of the generators activated in the cargo bin, it started the fire that brought down the plane. While we commonly use the word “accident” to describe events like this, sociologists Rick Matthews and David Kauzlarich (2000) argue that “crime” is a more appropriate description in this case, and probably others.

In their study, Matthews and Kauzlarich discuss several acts of organizational deviance that were revealed to have contributed to the crash. First, the contractor, SabreTech, did not follow proper procedures in shipping the oxygen generators. Before shipping, the generators must be expended or capped in

order to prevent them from starting fires, and neither procedure was done. This is clearly stated in the McDonnell Douglas maintenance manual, and several SabreTech mechanics asked if the generators had been or would be capped. But, under pressure from a contract specifying a \$2,500 daily penalty for missing the deadline for replacing the generators, SabreTech ended up packing them for shipping without either expending or capping them. Federal aviation law also states clearly that any airline that uses a contractor like SabreTech is legally responsible for ensuring that proper procedures are followed. No one from ValuJet, however, paid enough attention to how SabreTech was doing its job to know that the generators were packed without proper preparation. Hence, both SabreTech and ValuJet violated aviation safety laws. But that is not all. Matthews and Kauzlarich point out that had the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) done the job it is mandated by law to do, the crash could have been prevented. This agency is mandated to ensure that the nation's airlines are safe. For example, the FAA knew that the rate of emergency landings on ValuJet was doubling every year, to the point that in 1996 up to the date of the crash,

to diseases or to substances known to be dangerous, either for purposes of medical experimentation or weapons development (Kauzlarich and Kramer, 1998). And in 2000, an investigation by the newspaper *USA Today* revealed that hundreds of private contractors were hired by the government to process nuclear materials in the 1940s and 1950s, knowingly exposing thousands of workers, without telling them, to radiation levels the government recognized as dangerous (Eisler, 2000). The government even produced classified reports detailing radiation levels hundreds of times above the upper limit regarded as safe.

Other political crimes, such as illegal wiretapping and political “dirty tricks” may contain elements of both political white-collar crime and state crime, because they are intended for both individual and organizational gain. These crimes are usually aimed at gaining political office or influence. The Watergate burglary, which eventually led to the resignation of

President Richard Nixon in 1974, is an example of this. In this case, burglars who were hired by people in Nixon’s campaign broke into his opponent’s campaign headquarters, and Nixon, along with many of his aides, later participated in an illegal cover-up to prevent the facts from becoming public. Former President Donald Trump and his associates are facing multiple criminal charges related to his business and political activities, further blurring the line between political and white-collar crimes. Trump has been charged in four separate criminal cases, bringing his total criminal charges to date to 91. The charges against him include conspiracy to defraud the United States, conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding, obstruction of justice, falsifying business records, hoarding classified documents, soliciting a public official to violate his oath of office, racketeering, conspiring to commit forgery, making false statements, violating state racketeering laws, conspiring to file false documents, conspiring

there was an emergency landing nearly every other day. It also was aware, or should have been, that a review by the Department of Defense had concluded that ValuJet was so unsafe that the department could not safely use it to transport government employees. Furthermore, the FAA also knew from two previous incidents that if flammable materials are stored in the D cargo hold (as was done with the oxygen generators), fires could spread from the cargo hold to other parts of the plane. This had caused the crash of a Saudi airliner in 1981 and caused a fire on an American Airlines plane in 1988 (which did not cause a crash because it started minutes before the plane landed and there was time to evacuate the passengers). Yet in spite of these circumstances, the FAA ordered no changes in the cargo holds and continued to certify ValuJet as safe.

Because the FAA, ValuJet, and SabreTech all failed to live up to their obligations under the law, Matthews and Kauzlarich argue that this case is an example of *state-corporate crime*—crime that is committed, for reasons of organizational goals, with the involvement and interaction of both public and private organizations. In this case, they argue, the crime was committed because organizational goals were placed ahead of safety laws and obligations. Both SabreTech and ValuJet acted in response to pressures to make a

profit, and the FAA acted in response to pressures to make its deregulation program look successful. Specifically, ValuJet *outsourced*—hired contractors like SabreTech to do its maintenance rather than doing its own work—because it was cheaper, and then did not spend the necessary money and resources to properly supervise them. SabreTech wanted to avoid the \$2,500 daily penalty for lateness, so it rushed to complete the job, causing the improper shipping of the generators. And the FAA ignored warning signs about ValuJet’s safety record because it wanted to make its deregulation program look successful in creating low-cost start-up airlines like ValuJet. In all three cases, pressures to meet organizational goals took precedence over legal obligations and safety concerns. Kauzlarich and Kramer compare this case to that of the *Challenger* disaster, discussed in Chapter 9. As Diane Vaughan (1996) found in her study of the *Challenger* disaster, *normalization of deviance* occurred in the ValuJet case. In their pursuit of organizational goals, ValuJet, SabreTech, and the FAA had all gotten in the habit of cutting corners and being careless about safety rules and laws. In the end, this organizational deviance had disastrous results, just as was the case with the *Challenger*.

to impersonate a public officer, conspiring to make false statements, conspiring to obstruct the investigation, and conspiring to subvert his narrow loss to Mr. Biden in Georgia.

In addition to the above charges, Trump's associates and allies also face various charges. The cases are expected to play out over the coming months, setting up a long string of legal battles that will overlap presidential primaries as Trump runs for president again in 2024. The allegations against Mr. Trump are relatively straightforward, and the indictment cites an abundance of concrete evidence to support them. The charges are not novel applications of laws that raise untested issues but rather statutes that have been invoked in this way many times—albeit not against such a high-profile defendant.

The charges against Trump and his associates are serious and could result in significant legal consequences. The cases are ongoing, and it remains to be seen how they will ultimately be resolved. However, the charges against Trump and his associates highlight the importance of transparency and accountability in government and business, and the need to hold those in positions of power to the highest ethical standards.

Characteristics of Criminals

Describing the “typical” criminal is an impossible task. Most people, regardless of their criminal record, conform to most norms. They tend to stop at traffic signals, get married, love their families, believe in private property, and respect human life. It is rare indeed to find an offender with no redeeming human qualities. The evil criminals portrayed on television and movie screens are intended to entertain, not to describe reality. Further, most people with no arrest record do violate laws at one time or another in their lives. Thus, human beings do not fit into distinct criminal versus noncriminal categories. Differences, where they exist, are of degree.

Only one-sixth of approximately 13 million arrests made in the United States each year are for street crimes (Bureau of Justice Statistics,

2012). Thus, the vast majority of people processed by the U.S. criminal justice system are not accused of predatory crimes (National Institute of Justice, 1988b, p. 67). The people described in arrest, jail, and prison statistics tend to be predominantly male and disproportionately young and black. About 21 percent of all people arrested for street crime in 2010 were less than 21 years old, 65 percent were male, and 63 percent were white. For violent crimes, 16 percent were under age 18 years, 75 percent were male, and 64 percent were white. However, 33 percent were black, even though only about 12 percent of the population is black. The latter statistic supports studies showing that black people are arrested in numbers that are out of proportion to the amount of crime they commit: In victim surveys, just under 24 percent of the offenders in violent crimes were reported to be black (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011, Table 42). And, as we saw in Chapter 7, crimes that are committed by African Americans can, at least in part, be linked back directly to discrimination. Burt, Simons, and Gibbons (2012) found that discrimination sets the stage for increased crime through mechanisms such as depression, a hostile view of relationships, and disengagement with conventional norms. According to Mobasseri's research (2019), employers who have been recently exposed to nearby violent crimes, even if solely through local news reports, reduce the chances of black applicants receiving callbacks by ten percentage points, a contrast to the effect on white or Hispanic applicants.

Crime Statistics: A Closer Look

There are additional problems with assuming that official statistics describe the majority of offenders (see Table 10.1). Only about 58 percent of violent crimes and 40 percent of property crimes are even reported to the police (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2012). Additionally, most crimes that are reported to the police are never solved. Only about 47 percent of violent crimes and 20 percent of property crimes are cleared by arrest (FBI, 2015). Of those arrested, many never face a judge or jury because charges

Table 10.1 Reported Crimes Cleared by Arrest or Exceptional Means*: 2019

Violent Crimes	45.5%
Murder	61.4%
Aggravated assault	52.3%
Rape	32.9%
Robbery	30.5%
Property Crimes	17.2%
Larceny/theft	18.4%
Motor vehicle theft	13.8%
Burglary	14.1%
Arson	23.8%

*“Exceptional means” refers to situations where the offender is identified but cannot be arrested, for example, because the offender died before he or she could be arrested or was identified but could not be extradited.

Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation (2019), *Uniform Crime Reports: Offenses Cleared*. ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/topic-pages/clearances.

are dropped. And of those who do go to court, many are not convicted. Data from large urban counties suggest that about 60 percent of those charged with violent offenses and 72 percent of those charged with property crimes are convicted (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001). Since the characteristics of the offenders are unknown if the offender is not caught, prosecuted, and convicted, we are left with the conclusion that offender characteristics are unknown in nearly 95 percent of all property crimes and even in the large majority of violent crimes.

Race, Class, and Crime Statistics

Official statistics also reflect widespread class and racial biases. Chambliss (1969) summarized findings of research on such bias as follows:

The lower-class person is (1) more likely to be scrutinized and therefore be observed in any violation of the law, (2) more likely to be arrested if discovered under suspicious circumstances, (3) more likely to spend the time between arrest and trial in jail, (4) more likely to come to trial, (5) more likely to be found guilty, (6) if found guilty, more

likely to receive harsh punishment than his middle- or upper-class counterpart. (p. 86)

Later studies suggest that these biases continue to exist in many, if not all, geographic areas (Farley, 2010). For example, a study of Wing County, Washington, felony cases (Lotz and Hewitt, 1976) found that people with “unsteady” work histories were five times more likely to be imprisoned as those with “steady” work histories. Black people and people with little formal education were most likely to be sentenced to prison. Studies of juvenile processing have produced similar findings. Barry Krisberg et al. (1987, p. 200) reported that minority youths were several times more liable to be arrested than white youths for the same delinquent behaviors. A study of juvenile offenders found that minority youths received harsher prison sentences than white youths (Fagan, Slaughter, and Hartstone, 1987, p. 250). And as previously noted, the “War on Drugs” has widened racial discrepancies in imprisonment in recent years. Research on sentencing disparities between white people and Latinos found huge disparities between citizens and noncitizens in the severity of the sentences handed down for a variety of criminal offenses (Light, Massoglia, and King, 2014). These effects were much greater than race or ethnicity alone. In fact, when citizenship was corrected for, the differences between white people and Latinos was largely reduced. Skin tone also plays a role in how harsh criminal sentences are for individuals convicted of similar offenses, with darker skin tones and Afrocentric facial features receiving harsher penalties. This effect was particularly pronounced among white defendants (King and Johnson, 2016). African Americans and Hispanics are not only arrested and imprisoned out of proportion to their populations and their crime rates, they also are disproportionately victims of violence by police, including lethal violence. Sometimes this can result in police themselves becoming targets for violence, which can result in a spiral of increasing violence. According to Legewie’s research (2016), an analysis of 3.9 million pedestrian stops in New York City revealed that when two police officers were fatally shot by

black suspects, there was a noteworthy uptick in the application of police force against black individuals in the subsequent days. However, this surge in the use of force was not mirrored in the case of white and Hispanic individuals, and

the study did not detect any discernible impact when the suspects were white or Hispanic. This issue along with the powerful Black Lives Matter movement to which it has given rise in recent years are discussed further in Chapter 7.



UNDERSTANDING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

Racial Profiling to Death: The Police Killing of Unarmed Black People in America, Its Impact and Response

In recent years, the issue of racial profiling has taken on a more ominous tone, as police-involved killings of often unarmed African Americans, frequently by white police officers, have been caught on camera and/or spread over social media. In response to these incidents, the social movement Black Lives Matter has sprung up along with massive protests in cities across the country (all of which we look at more deeply in Chapter 18). However, not all response has been peaceful. The year 2016 saw a marked rise in deadly incidents targeting police officers themselves. In Dallas, Texas, on July 7, 2016, and just ten days later in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on July 17, 2016, police officers were specifically targeted and mass-murdered by gunmen seeking revenge for these incidents. Similar incidents have been reported in Ballwin, Missouri, Bristol, Tennessee, and Valdosta, Georgia.

While evidence suggests that, like all industries and professions, most police officers are law-abiding, honest, and hard-working individuals, there are always a few bad apples. Unlike most professions, however, even just one bad apple, with the enormous power of being armed with a gun and entrusted with the legal purview to use it, can cause tragic outcomes when that power is misused. Add to that the focus in recent decades on military-style tactics and the reduction of community-policing strategies, we find that the state of police-and-community relations in poor and especially minority areas of the United States is in crisis. Accusations of racial profiling, police brutality, and discrimination in terms of arrest rates and legal outcomes have existed for the entire span of U.S. history. But the existence of social media and easy access to video has brought light to these events in ways not possible in the past.

These incidents can have a ripple effect in the communities that are impacted. Instances of police

violence have a chilling effect on citizens calling on the police for help. One study found that after the widely publicized beating of Frank Jude Jr., residents in Milwaukee's neighborhoods, especially black neighborhoods, were significantly less likely to report crimes to 911. The study suggests that high-profile cases of police violence, disproportionately experienced by black men, may present a serious threat to public safety if they lower citizen crime reporting (Desmond, Papachristos and Kirk, 2016). In addition, aggressive policing, particularly in high-crime areas, can have a negative impact on the educational performance of minority youth in the form of lower test scores (Legewie and Fagan, 2019).

Next, we review some of the most well-known and impactful cases of recent police-involved killings of African Americans that have involved racial profiling by law enforcement officers or others involved in these incidents.

On the evening on February 26, 2012, in Sanford, Florida, Trayvon Martin, 17 years old, was spotted wearing a dark "hoodie" walking home from a convenience store by neighborhood watch coordinator George Zimmerman. Zimmerman was evidently concerned about a string of robberies in the large apartment complex where he lived and where Martin was staying with his father. This string of crimes had been reportedly committed by a young black male or group of males. Zimmerman called 911 to report Martin as a "suspicious person" as he tailed him in his vehicle along the street. Though instructed not to do so by the 911 operator, Zimmerman left his vehicle to pursue Martin on foot. What happened next is a matter of some controversy, but what is clear is that Martin and Zimmerman had some kind of altercation in which Zimmerman shot the young Martin to death. In his pockets were the items Trayvon Martin

had purchased from the store: an iced tea and a pack of Skittles. Zimmerman was later arrested after demonstrators took to the street demanding it. Zimmerman was found not guilty in the subsequent trial. And while the Martin case isn't technically a police-involved killing, Zimmerman's desire to be a police officer, his role as an armed neighborhood watch volunteer, and the role racial profiling played in the confrontation between Zimmerman and Martin did begin the widespread focus on racial profiling that would come to dominate the incidents that followed.

On July 17, 2014, in Staten Island, New York, Eric Garner was detained by police on the sidewalk for illegally selling loose cigarettes. Locked in a choke hold by NYPD Officer Daniel Pantaleo, Garner could be heard stating "I can't breathe" at least 11 times before he died, thanks to a video of the incident taken by a bystander. Officer Pantaleo was not indicted. On August 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri, Michael Brown, 18 years old, was shot by Officer Darren Wilson on the street after a struggle and confrontation. Brown was unarmed at the time, though Wilson claimed he was going for the officer's gun as the two struggled. Though efforts were eventually made to conceal it, police left Brown's body in the street for hours as they conducted their initial investigation. Officer Wilson was not indicted.

On October 20, 2014, in Chicago, Illinois, police approached Laquan McDonald, 17 years old, while responding to a call about a man carrying a knife and reportedly breaking into vehicles. McDonald was walking away from police when Officer Jason Van Dyke shot him 16 times. Officer Van Dyke was charged with first-degree murder 13 months later—on the same day that a dashcam video of the incident was released to the public. At press time, he was still awaiting trial. The other officers on the scene may yet end up with legal troubles of their own. Officer accounts of the incident varied widely from what can be seen on the video, sparking a separate investigation into their conduct.

On November 23, 2014, in Cleveland, Ohio, 12-year-old Tamir Rice was playing with a toy gun in a city park when someone called police to report a man with a gun. During the call, the caller stated twice they thought the weapon was probably a toy and that the "man" was probably a juvenile, but this information was not initially reported to the responding officers. Within two seconds after pulling up, officers opened fire as they eyed Rice drawing a weapon from his waist and pointing it toward them. Rice was killed more or less instantly. No one was charged. A wrongful death suit was settled by the Rice family against the city of Cleveland, but the city has never admitted guilt or fault in the boy's killing.

On April 4, 2015, in North Charleston, South Carolina, Walter Scott was pulled over for a broken brake light. The unarmed Scott exited his car quickly and began to make a run for it. A bystander video showed what happened next. Officer Michael Slager ran forward, set his feet, and fired multiple rounds at Scott's back, hitting him eight times. The officer was charged with murder and awaits an October 2016 trial date. On April 12, 2015, in Baltimore, Maryland, Freddie Gray, 25 years old, was arrested by police for possessing an illegal switchblade. Though arresting officers have denied it, several eyewitnesses reported what they thought was an excessive amount of force used during the arrest of Gray. He was then handcuffed and placed into the back of a police van, but he was not secured inside for his own protection—a requirement that had gone into effect only six days prior after previous incidents of individuals being injured during transport. A week later, Gray died from a spinal cord injury that the medical examiner determined resulted from his transport while in police custody. The death was ruled a homicide, and six police officers were indicted in Gray's death. Four of the six were tried, and none were found guilty. After that, charges on the others were dropped.

On July 10, 2015, in Prairie View, Texas, Sandra Bland, 28 years old, was pulled over for a minor traffic violation by Officer Brian Encinia. The dashcam video from the officer's car shows a situation that escalated rapidly between Bland and Encinia. After running her information, the officer approaches her and asks her if she is irritated. She admits she is, explaining that she felt like he had been tailing her and speeding up behind her, so she moved out of his way, but as she did so, he pulled her over. He then tells her to put out her cigarette, but she refuses. He then orders her out of the car repeatedly. After the officer threatens to tase her, she complies, and he pins her to the ground with his knee to her neck, according to eyewitnesses. Bland was arrested for assaulting an officer and booked into jail. Three days later, she was found dead in her jail cell in what the coroner ruled as a suicide. Officer Encinia was fired from his job after being indicted for perjury statements he made regarding the incident. No one was charged in Bland's death.

On Tuesday, July 5, 2016, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Alton Sterling, 37 years old, was selling CDs outside a convenience store. Police arrived, answering a 911 call regarding a man at the scene with a gun; some reports indicated a man in a red shirt selling CDs and brandishing a gun—a report describing Sterling. Two officers detained Sterling by tasing him, slamming him onto the hood of sedan, and then

pinning him onto the ground. At least one of the officers shot him as they were heard saying they think he is going for the small handgun that was found in his pocket. Officers Blane Salamoni and Howie Lake II were placed on administrative leave following the shooting.

On Wednesday, July 6, 2016, in Falcon Heights, Minnesota, Philando Castile was pulled over for a broken taillight, with his girlfriend and their small child in the car with them. Castile reportedly told the officer he was armed and had a permit for the weapon. He was shot while he was apparently reaching for his license. His girlfriend live-streamed the moments just after the shooting, while Castile was apparently succumbing to his wounds, on Facebook Live. The officer who fired the shots, Jeronimo Yanez, as well as the other officer on the scene, Joseph Kauser, were both put on administrative leave.

On Monday, July 18, 2016, in North Miami, Florida, Charles Kinsey, a behavioral therapist, was shot by North Miami police as he tried to help an autistic patient under his care. The patient had wandered into a heavily trafficked street. Kinsey had raced out to help the man. Police arrived after receiving a 911 call about a man with a gun. The patient was actually playing with a toy truck. Kinsey was shot while lying flat on his back with his arms up. He could be heard on a bystander video telling his patient to lie down and stop moving. At press time, police indicated they did not intend to shoot Kinsey but were instead aiming for his unarmed, autistic patient.

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, a 46-year-old black American man, was murdered in Minneapolis by Derek Chauvin, a 44-year-old white police officer. Floyd had been arrested after a store clerk alleged that he made a purchase using a counterfeit \$20 bill. Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck for over nine minutes while Floyd was handcuffed and lying face-down in a street. Two other police officers, J. Alexander Kueng and Thomas Lane, assisted Chauvin in restraining Floyd. Floyd's murder resulted in a global protest movement against historic racism and police brutality. In the United States, protests of racial injustice in mid-2020 were the largest since the civil rights movement of the 1960s and gave way to widespread

civil unrest. Protests began locally on May 26 in the Minneapolis–Saint Paul metropolitan area before quickly spreading nationwide, and in over 60 countries internationally, supporting the group Black Lives Matter. The protests were largely peaceful, with simple demands handwritten on torn pieces of cardboard, but there were also incidents of violence and looting. The protests sparked a global reckoning with racism, with countries across the globe having some of the largest Black Lives Matter protests in the organization's history, all inspired by the video of Floyd's brutal death in police custody.

In all of these incidents, the victims of the police actions were African American. In most cases, they were unarmed or were legally licensed to carry their weapons. Some were also juveniles. There have been several incidents where Hispanic men or homeless individuals have similarly died at the hands of the police. It was widely perceived that these incidents represented an undue use of force and that the victims were treated differently than middle-class white people would have been. In response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the social movement Black Lives Matter was formed to keep public attention focused on racial profiling, police brutality, and the larger issues of racial inequality. The movement picked up steam after organizing protests around the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner. Demonstrations occurred nightly for months in Ferguson (Martino-Taylor, 2016) and repeatedly in a number of other cities where the shootings occurred. Eventually, Black Lives Matter protests occurred not only in the United States but in major cities around the world, especially following the death of Floyd. For the most part, the demonstrations were peaceful, but serious violence erupted in Ferguson and Baltimore, and, as previously mentioned, police officers were targeted and murdered in Dallas and Baton Rouge.

Data indicate these social movements make a difference. Protests against police brutality, like those of Black Lives Matter, serve as a signal of the issue's importance, empower disadvantaged communities, and exert pressure on elites, ultimately reducing officer-involved fatalities for African American and Latino individuals (Olzak, 2021).

Finally, relatively few white-collar or corporate criminals are arrested, despite the high costs of corporate and white-collar crime. This is the case both because of the difficulty of detecting and identifying the persons responsible for this type of crime (Shapiro, 1990)

and because white-collar criminals possess greater resources for avoiding punishment. As respected "pillars of the community," white-collar criminals are able to gain the sympathy of police, prosecutors, judges, and juries (Galanter, 1974; Mann, 1985; Wheeler, Mann, and Sarat,

1988). Since those who have the opportunity to commit white-collar and corporate crimes are disproportionately upper class and white, these people are, overall, less likely to be arrested or imprisoned than poor and minority criminals.

Explaining Deviant Behavior

We can offer many explanations of why people do not conform to social norms. Early thinkers tended to blame deviant behavior on the influence of evil spirits. Modern theories about deviant behavior and crime emphasize biological, psychological, and sociological causes. Biological and psychological theories are described as “kinds of people” theories because they locate the causes of deviant behavior in characteristics of the individual. Sociological theories, in contrast, emphasize social situations as the main cause of deviant behavior.

Kinds of People: Biological and Psychological Theories of Deviant Behavior

Biological theories of crime and deviant behavior became influential during the late nineteenth century. These theories have argued that physical abnormalities (Lombroso, 1972 [orig. 1911]), body type (Sheldon, 1949), or genetic makeup (Jacobs, Brunton, and Melville, 1965) are associated with crime and deviant behavior. Often, these theories have been based on crude or uncontrolled examinations of prison populations. Usually, once more carefully controlled studies have been done, these theories have turned out to be groundless (Goring, 1913; Katz and Chambliss, 1991, p. 257).

Consider, for example, Sheldon’s body-type theory. Sheldon held that *mesomorphs*—people with stocky, muscular builds—were more inclined to commit crimes, and both his research and a later study by Glueck and Glueck (1956) seemed to show higher proportions of mesomorphs among convicted male juvenile delinquents than among other young males. However, this does not prove that body type causes crime. Research has shown that this

relationship does not hold for all populations. For example, body type seems to be correlated with delinquency among white people but not among black people (Harris, 1991; McCandless, Persons, and Roberts, 1972). Also, there is no evidence of correct time order between the presumed cause (body type) and the presumed effect (crime). It might be, for example, that a culture of “toughness” encourages people to engage in bodybuilding, resulting in muscular, “mesomorphic” builds, and that the same culture also encourages aggressive behavior. Finally, nearly all the studies addressing this issue have been limited to juvenile males (Harris, 1991).

Overall, these and other biological theories share certain shortcomings and are not generally relied on by sociologists today (Gould, 1981). In addition to problems previously mentioned, they fail to recognize that all crime and deviance is socially constructed: In other words, human decisions define what is deviant and what is not (Katz and Chambliss, 1991). In addition, the biological theories often are used for the political purpose of blaming the powerless for crime—rarely are they applied to, nor do they appear useful for explaining, deviance and crime committed by the wealthy and powerful (Katz and Chambliss, 1991; Lewontin, Rose, and Kamin, 1984).

Although it is widely believed that people “would have to be sick” to commit many of the heinous crimes we hear about, psychological theories about crime and other deviant behavior also do not stand up well to empirical testing. Criminals as a group do not have more mental illness than other social groups (Monahan and Steadman, 1983; Lunde, 1970), nor have psychological categories been very useful in identifying violent people before they act (Morris and Hawkins, 1970; Kozol, Boucher, and Garofalo, 1972). Similarly, research seeking to identify an “addictive personality” that leads people to become dependent on drugs or alcohol has not been fruitful: Substance abusers, like others, are diverse with respect to personality type (Institute of Medicine, 1990, p. 258), and whatever differences do exist may develop after rather than before dependency (Clinard, 1974). A technique known as profiling, used by

the FBI in recent decades, is based in part on the notion that people who commit a particular crime may leave patterns that allow them to be identified on the basis of distinct psychological characteristics (although social characteristics are also used) (Barlow, 2000, pp. 177–8). However, this technique, too, has its limits and has not yet shown convincingly that personality makeup has much to do with crime. An FBI survey of 192 cases in which profiling had been used found that the offender had not been caught in the majority of cases, and in fewer than one out of five cases could it be said that the profiles had led directly to identification of the offender (Levin and Fox, 1985, p. 176).

Finally, an interesting recent study found a connection between biological, psychological, and social conditions (Simons et al., 2011). Researchers found that a relatively common genetic variation affecting emotions made individuals with the variation more susceptible to environmental influences. That is, when exposed to stressors, these individuals exhibited more aggression than did others. Yet, when exposed to more positive social stimuli and environmental support, these individuals were also the most susceptible to positive change (Simons et al., 2011). Thus, it may be that biology and psychology play important roles in causing or preventing antisocial or deviant behavior when combined with important social factors. We now explore those factors.

Societal Explanations of Deviant Behavior

Societal theories of deviance differ from biological and psychological explanations in that they locate the causes of crime in the social order rather than in individual psychologies or anatomies.

Anomie and Deviant Behavior

The term **anomie**, coined by Émile Durkheim, refers to a condition in society of normlessness—a lack of effective norms governing people's behavior. When social norms are

ineffective—in other words, when there is a situation of anomie—there is nothing to restrain people from taking whatever they want (Durkheim, 1964a [orig. 1897]). Because society does not contain enough resources to satisfy all the desires of its members, criminality increases in anomic situations.

According to Durkheim, conditions of anomie are most likely to occur during periods of rapid social change. Old rules break down or are rejected, and behaviors once considered deviant spread. At the same time, new rules often have not yet become widely accepted. Thus, it is predicted that during periods of rapid social change, nonconforming behaviors will increase.

Merton and Anomie

Although Durkheim coined the term “anomie,” Robert Merton's work focuses most directly on the relationship between anomie and deviant behavior. According to Merton (1938, 1968), anomie develops when society teaches people to want or need certain things but fails to provide legitimate opportunities to get those things. In effect, society creates appetites that cannot be satisfied by complying with its norms. For example, television programs and advertisements often portray and glorify an affluent lifestyle that most viewers cannot attain, at least through any legal means. According to Merton, this situation is anomic because when following society's rules does not lead to society's rewards, people may disregard or disobey the rules in a variety of ways.

According to Merton's reasoning, deviance is prevalent in the United States because all social participants are taught to desire and strive for economic success, while individual variation and class structure prevent many from achieving that goal. Socially approved means of achieving the “American Dream”—an education, a good job, homeownership, inherited wealth—are systematically denied to low-income and minority people. Assets of the lower classes, especially the ability and willingness to do hard physical labor, count for little.

Confronted with this anomic situation, excluded people often respond with deviant behavior (Farnsworth and Leiber, 1989). An

important implication of Merton's theory is that it is not poverty itself that generates deviant behavior, but poverty surrounded by wealth, in a society where wealth is the norm.

Merton identified four deviant adaptations people make to the anxiety and frustration of anomic situations: innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion.

Innovation. Innovation occurs when people remain committed to economic success but reject legitimate methods. Innovators use alternative methods, including criminal ones, to achieve legitimate ends. Thus, innovation often leads to crimes such as theft, burglary, and embezzlement, as well as such activities as drug dealing, illegal gambling, and prostitution. Although the ringleaders of these activities do not always come from disadvantaged backgrounds, those who directly provide them very often do. To those who cannot find a job or whose wages fall below the poverty level, the promise of "big money fast" that is frequently offered by such criminal activities can be very alluring.

Ritualism. Ritualism occurs when people reject or give up on the goal of economic success but continue to follow the rules—often in a very compulsive way. This reaction is exemplified by the middle-level bureaucrat, unable to rise further in the hierarchy, who mindlessly follows organizational rules. Such people are concerned with neither the purpose of the rules nor personal advancement. Ritualists simply want to put in their time, receive their pay, and "punch out" (go home). They follow every small detail of the rules but are uncommitted to the process. Ritualism illustrates the point that deviance is not always a matter of people

breaking rules; sometimes it is a matter of people *overconforming* to rules.

Retreatism. People who practice retreatism reject and withdraw from both the goals and the means of society. In this category, Merton places hobos, alcoholics, and drug addicts, among others. They are the "dropouts" of society. They are criminal only to the degree that society criminalizes victimless behaviors.

Rebellion. The final adaptation, rebellion, is exhibited by people who, like retreatists, turn away from accepted goals and means of achieving them. However, unlike retreatists, rebels seek to substitute a different set of goals and means. They may use illegal tactics, either non-violent (civil disobedience) or violent (rioting, sabotage, vandalism). Unlike innovators, their purpose is not to attain society's goals; they seek to change society, or at least to express a complaint about the unfairness of society. (The various adaptations to anomie are summarized in Table 10.2.)

Anomie and Gang Behavior

Albert Cohen (1955) modified Merton's notion of rebellion to account for the often violent behavior of lower-class youth. Cohen argued that these young people react to their shared frustration and resentment of the dominant society by forming subcultures that turn middle-class values upside down. For example, the middle-class value of delayed gratification is replaced by a commitment to short-term pleasure seeking. Deviant value systems allow socially disadvantaged youth to strike out at middle-class society and satisfy their status needs. Through violence, drug use, and theft, gang members earn the respect of their peers,

Table 10.2 Typology of Deviant Adaptation to Anomie

	<i>Acceptance of Goals</i>	<i>Acceptance of Institutionalized Means</i>
Innovation	Accepts	Rejects
Ritualism	Rejects	Accepts
Retreatism	Rejects	Rejects
Rebellion	Rejects and substitutes	Rejects and substitutes

Source: Adapted from *Social Theory and Social Structure, Revised and Enlarged Edition*, by Robert K. Merton. Copyright © 1968, 1967 by Robert K. Merton. Reprinted by permission of The Free Press, a Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc.

even though such behaviors are considered deviant by the dominant society.

As poverty rates have risen and poverty has become more concentrated since the 1970s, delinquent youth gangs have become an increasing problem in American cities. These gangs have become more violent than in the past, with gun-related youth homicide rates much higher than in the past in inner cities (Froehlke, 1990). They also are more seriously involved in drug dealing, a behavior clearly related to Merton's concept of innovation. As large, quick profits from dealing crack came to far exceed anything inner-city youth could earn from available "straight" jobs, the lure became almost irresistible. The increased involvement of youth gangs in drug dealing clearly illustrates Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin's (1960) argument that opportunity structure is a major determinant of delinquent gang behavior: When environmental conditions make delinquent activities profitable, delinquent youths tend to form profit-oriented criminal gangs. As poverty rose in the 1980s, legitimate opportunities for employment declined (Wilson, 1987; Anderson, 1990), and illegal opportunities such as crack dealing increased.

During the 1980s, the concentration of poverty increased along with the rate of poverty. In urban areas more and more of the poor lived in neighborhoods where other people were also poor (Wilson, 1987; Massey and Eggers, 1990; Jargowsky and Bane, 1991). This further reduced the legitimate opportunities for employment and probably enhanced young poor people's exposure to illegal activities. Crane (1991a, 1991b) found that as poverty becomes more concentrated and high-status workers scarcer in urban neighborhoods, youths in those neighborhoods become increasingly likely to drop out of school, placing them at greatly increased risk for becoming involved in delinquent gangs. These factors help to explain why violent crime by juveniles, much of it linked to gang activity, continued to rise until the mid-1990s, even after violent crime by adults had leveled off. Racial discrimination has also been found to increase crime through psychological mechanisms such as depression, a hostile view of relationships, and disengagement with conventional norms

(Burt, Simons, and Gibbons, 2012) and has undoubtedly played an important role in the anomie in many of these neighborhoods.

Evaluating Anomie Theory

Although the anomie theory presents a plausible explanation for a good deal of deviance in the United States, its implicit assumption that deviance is fundamentally a lower-class phenomenon is inconsistent with empirical facts. Accordingly, although Merton's anomie theory is useful for understanding deviant behavior by people whose opportunities for advancement have been blocked, it may be less applicable to much deviant behavior among those who have "made it" in our society, and who account for the majority of deviant behavior (Goode, 1990, p. 43). However, research on state crime by Kauzlarich and Kramer (1998) does suggest that when organizations are unable to attain their goals by legitimate means, they do often substitute illegitimate means if such means are readily available to them.

To the extent that anomie theory is correct, its social-policy implications are quite clear, at least with regard to crimes committed by the poor: If we continue to block the aspirations of certain groups to share in our wealth, we will continue to have high levels of crime and deviant behavior. In this regard, the current trend of increasing economic inequality is a cause for concern.

Subcultural Explanations of Deviance

Subcultural explanations of deviance contend that deviance arises from membership in one or more "deviant" groups. In other words, people are not deviant because they have antisocial or unsocialized personalities; rather, they are deviant because they learn and conform to the expectations of deviant or criminal subcultures instead of the norms and values of the dominant society.

Differential Association

The subcultural approach to deviance is indebted to the notion of **differential association** developed by Edwin Sutherland. Central to this notion is the assumption that deviance,

like any behavior, is learned. Primarily, people learn attitudes within the context of intimate personal groups. One reason is that such groups reward behavior of which they approve and punish behavior of which they disapprove. If a group approves behavior defined as deviant by the larger society, it will reward that behavior (Akers, 1985). The effect of contact with criminal behavior is determined by the intensity and duration of exposure of that contact. People are more likely to be influenced by deviant attitudes of close friends or relatives than of strangers. Exposures occurring in childhood and adolescence have greater influence than those occurring later in life. Long-term associations with attitudes that condone lawbreaking have more influence than do brief exposures. If intimate contacts with criminal and non-criminal behaviors are equal in intensity and duration, people are less likely to participate in criminal behavior (Sutherland, 1947, pp. 5–9).

Lower-Class Culture and Crime

Walter B. Miller (1958) contended that lower-class people in the United States constitute a unique subculture. He argued that the disproportionate number of female heads of households among poor families forces lower-class males to develop masculine identities through peer-group association in gangs. These gangs promote “machismo,” an exaggerated sense of maleness that encourages delinquent behavior. Whereas middle-class socialization encourages and rewards such values as achievement, lower-class youth culture encourages and rewards toughness, thrill-seeking, being able to trick others, and being able to avoid being tricked or bossed around. One possible flaw of Miller’s theory is that, when asked whether they have participated in delinquent behaviors, nonpoor youth are just as likely to reply in the affirmative as poor youth (Goode, 1990, p. 48). However, it also appears that delinquency among poor youth is more serious and more frequent than among nonpoor youth (Elliott and Ageton, 1980; Goode, 1990, p. 49; O’Brien, 1985, pp. 63–9). Thus, the evidence is fairly consistent with the concept of a delinquent subculture among some low-income youths, although it is important to keep in mind that the majority

of low-income youths do not become involved in serious delinquent behavior (Goode, 1990). Nonetheless, the influence of delinquent subcultures has probably increased as urban poverty became more concentrated in the latter half of the twentieth century (Wilson, 1996, 1987; Massey and Denton, 1993). In areas of concentrated poverty and joblessness, opportunities to get ahead through legitimate activities have become less and less, so people have turned to the illegitimate, as predicted by Merton’s theories. And when the illegitimate “street” culture becomes dominant, its effect is powerful, because even those who try to be “decent” must show toughness and “heart” to avoid getting hassled or even physically threatened (Anderson, 1999).

Subculture of Violence

The notion of a violent subculture also has been used to explain high rates of unplanned murder among low-income males (Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1981). This view holds that values placed on “toughness” and masculinity lead—indeed may require—these men to respond violently to remarks and actions that most people in other groups would ignore (Anderson, 1999). Similarly, some argue that a violent subculture, including an emphasis on gun ownership, in the southern United States can explain that region’s higher rates of violent crime (Reed, 1972). However, such theories are hard to confirm, because there are always alternative explanations for why a group may have high rates of violence. Hence, the notion that subcultures of violence lead to high rates of homicide remains a hotly debated theory, and it is important for research to measure both cultural attitudes and actual rates of violence (see Corzine and Huff-Corzine, 1989; Dixon and Lizotte, 1987, 1989; Ellison and McCall, 1989).

Corporate Culture and Crime

Although the notion of criminal or deviant subcultures has most often been applied to the poor, it is equally applicable to some forms of corporate crime. Often, norms within corporate organizations are at odds with the larger society’s norms about acceptable behavior (Clifford and Yeager, 1980; Ermann and Lundman,

1978). In such cases, the attitude of corporate officials toward such crimes is “everybody does it” or “you have to do it to make a profit.” When a General Electric official was convicted of violating the antitrust laws, his response was “sure collusion was illegal, but it wasn’t unethical” (Nader and Green, 1972). Similarly, in the late 1990s, when defective Firestone-Bridgestone tires on Ford sport utility vehicles were causing fatal accidents, 18 months passed between the time when Ford employees first warned of a problem and any action was taken. In January 1999, a Ford employee wrote, “Is it possible that Firestone is not telling us the whole story to protect them from a recall or lawsuit? I feel it is possible, and we owe it to our customers and our shareholders to investigate this for our own (peace) of mind.” Yet, in corporate cultures that valued public image over safety, neither company’s officials took any action to warn the public

about the tires until July 2000. In the meantime, over a hundred people in the United States and 47 in Venezuela had died in accidents believed to be linked to the tires (Healey and Woodyard, 2000). Cost cutting also seems to have led to the worst environmental disaster in U.S. history when the BP oil rig Deepwater Horizon exploded and sank off Louisiana’s Gulf Coast in 2010. In the wake of the spill, many critics charged BP was more concerned with repairing its damaged public image than the oil well. In general, in organizational cultures where attainment of goals is emphasized more than the means by which the goals are obtained, the risk for such deviance is high (Kauzlarich and Kramer, 1998, chap. 7).

Evaluating Subcultural Explanations

A fundamental problem with subcultural theory is its failure to explain why some groups



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

A Culture of Cheating?

The United States has long been known for its competitive culture. With a spate of high-profile instances of official wrongdoing in recent years, some cultural critics are beginning to ask if a “culture of cheating” has developed in its place. Just search “culture of cheating” on the Web, and you’ll see what we mean. A decade ago, the marital indiscretions of a sitting president and the subsequent legal and political maneuvering that behavior created fostered claims from both sides of the political aisle about a loss of national morals. Enron and other companies followed with financial scandals that would impact the lives of thousands of employees. Martha Stewart became the poster-girl for insider trading of financial information and spent time in prison. The Catholic Church found itself under scrutiny for covering up sexual abuse among its clergy for decades. Soon, an initially popular war in Iraq was rocked by charges that the administration lied about the reasons for starting hostilities in the first place. Finally, with the collapse of the global financial system in 2008, the largest pyramid scheme in history was discovered to have been perpetrated for decades by millionaire

Bernie Madoff, one of the most powerful players on Wall Street. The world of professional sports has been rocked by scandals involving performance-enhancing drugs.

Cheating in politics has become more brazen if not also more common. Congressman George Santos, a Republican representing New York, has found himself entangled in a string of controversies since assuming office in 2020. He is currently facing charges related to fraud, money laundering, misappropriation of public funds, and making materially false statements to the House of Representatives (Honderich, 2023). Santos has admitted to embellishing various aspects of his background, including his educational qualifications, professional experience, and cultural heritage (Shabad et al., 2023). Moreover, he has been accused of sexual harassment by a former staff member and is currently under investigation by local prosecutors and the New York attorney general’s office (Jacobs, 2023).

Senator Robert Menendez and his spouse Nadine have been formally accused of accepting bribes totaling “hundreds of thousands of dollars” in exchange

share deviant subcultures and others do not. A deviant subculture may perpetuate deviant behavior through differential association, but how did that subculture develop in the first place? Consider the case of the poor. A growing body of research suggests that criminal subcultures among the poor, to the extent that they are real, are a response to social conditions such as unemployment, poverty, and inequality. Thus, the ultimate cause of deviant behavior is to be found in these conditions (see Braithwaite, 1979; Loftin and Hill, 1974; Anderson, 1999). Sometimes, too, cultural characteristics believed to cause crime are misinterpreted. A cultural value is not always what it appears to be on the surface. This is illustrated by a classic study by Elliot Liebow (1967) in which, over time, he observed and gained the trust of a group of poor, inner-city black males. Liebow found that characteristics identified by social scientists as components of black or lower-class

culture—for example, an exaggerated sense of masculinity—are actually “public fictions” offered by people to protect their self-concepts against failures at work, marriage, and life in general. Similarly, Anderson (1999) found that even those who are not part of a violent street culture in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty have to dress and act “street” in order to avoid harassment and attack—with the result that “outsiders” like police and schoolteachers often cannot tell who is “street” and who is “decent.” Significantly, both Liebow and Anderson point out the ultimate reason people must put on such displays relates to the limited opportunity for legitimate success in inner-city neighborhoods where all but unskilled and often temporary jobs have departed. They do so either to cover their lack of success in life or to protect themselves from those who have turned to the violent “street” culture. Thus, the ultimate cause lies not in the cultural heritage of

for leveraging the senator’s influence (Scannell & Polantz, 2023). The charges against them encompass conspiracy to commit bribery, conspiracy to commit fraud involving honest services, and conspiracy to commit extortion under color of official right (Department of Justice, 2023). Menendez, a Democrat hailing from New Jersey, serves as the senior U.S. Senator for his state and currently presides over the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Department of Justice, 2023). This marks the second instance within a decade where the Justice Department has brought corruption charges against Menendez (Scannell & Polantz, 2023).

Since his electoral defeat in November, President Trump has vehemently contested the outcome of the 2020 presidential election at every turn (Witynski, 2021). Trump’s efforts climaxed with a violent incursion on the U.S. Capitol during the Congressional certification of Joe Biden’s Electoral College victory. These events, as noted by Associate Professor Michael Albertus, represent a “flagrant attempt to overturn the election” and underscore a “shortcoming” of American democracy in upholding one of its core principles—the peaceful transfer of power (Witynski, 2021). Trump’s allegations of voter fraud were widely refuted, with no substantiated evidence found to support claims of systematic voter fraud (Ansolahehere et al., 2021).

Despite this, prosecutors allege that Trump persisted in promoting false fraud allegations, knowingly pressured state and federal officials, including Vice President Mike Pence, to manipulate election outcomes, and ultimately encouraged a violent attack on the U.S. Capitol in a last-ditch effort to subvert American democracy and retain control. (Lynch, Thomsen, and Goudswaard, 2023). Following these activities, Trump has faced federal charges for his extensive endeavors to reverse the outcome of the 2020 election (Lynch, Thomsen, and Goudswaard, 2023). The indictment, spanning four counts over 45 pages, accuses Republican Trump of conspiring to defraud the U.S. by obstructing Congress from certifying Democrat Joe Biden’s win and depriving voters of their fair election rights (Lynch, Thomsen, and Goudswaard, 2023). To his critics, Trump’s efforts to overturn the election have undermined confidence in democratic institutions across the political spectrum (Witynski, 2021). “Many aspects of Trump’s behavior echo authoritarians around the globe. The most basic instinct of authoritarians is to hold on to power no matter what citizens have to say about it” (Witynski, 2021). These critics see Trump’s actions as posing a substantial challenge to American democracy and its institutions.

Has our competitive culture given way to a cheating culture? Does competition always lead to cheating? What do you think?

African Americans but in the restricted opportunity structure of the neighborhoods where many African Americans live. Richard Wilkinson (1996) argues that inequality fosters a subculture of violence within economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, where residents are more likely to be exposed to violent incidents. These neighborhoods result from policies and practices that concentrate social and economic disadvantages, leading people of specific racial, ethnic, and income groups with limited opportunities to coexist in areas prone to violence. The availability of quality schools, health-care facilities, libraries, recreational centers, and parks can serve as protective factors against violence. Collective hopelessness pervades marginalized communities heavily affected by violence, and this despair is linked to increased violence and weapon carrying. In communities where violence is normalized and social isolation is prevalent, young individuals may feel marginalized and without opportunities to contribute meaningfully to their community. As a result, inequality and the drive for status contribute to criminal activity and violence, generating a subculture of violence in impoverished neighborhoods (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, 2019).

Labeling Tradition

The labeling tradition represents a major shift in scientific explanations of human behavior. It arises largely from the symbolic-interactionist perspective (Heimer and Matsueda, 1994; Matsueda, 1992), but it also uses important ideas from conflict perspective. Earlier explanations of deviant behavior had accepted law as a reflection of a natural moral order or of social consensus. Deviants were seen as people who violate norms and nondeviants as those who conform. **Labeling theory** has challenged these assumptions by arguing that deviance is defined by societal reaction to certain groups, individuals, and behaviors, and not by the behaviors themselves. Furthermore, messages given to deviant people—including punishment—enhance rather than decrease deviant behavior. Labeling theory is based strongly on *relativism*, the contention, introduced in our

discussion of the sociology of rule making, that what is deviant in any society is the consequence of social or political processes. Social agreement, rather than objective moral reality, defines what is identified and punished as deviant in a society.

It is at this point that the conflict perspective influences labeling theory. Although there is some agreement on what is deviant, this agreement usually is not complete, partly because different interest groups define reality differently and in ways consistent with their own interests (Goode, 1990, p. 24). The Eighteenth Amendment, for example, which prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages, reflected the values and interests of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and other reformist groups but contradicted the interests of many European immigrants. Currently, a number of illegal acts, such as drug use, gambling, antitrust violations, and the sale of sexually explicit materials, are not considered immoral by a significant proportion of the U.S. population. The same principle applies to homosexual behavior, which was illegal in a number of states until 2003, when in the *Lawrence v. Texas* ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned state sodomy laws. Thus, the labeling tradition argues that definitions of deviance reflect the ability of certain groups to legitimize and enforce their interests over those of other groups (Schrage, 1984, pp. 1–2). Not surprisingly, those groups with the largest membership, greatest financial resources, and best internal organization will be able to enforce their definitions (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977).

Similarities Between Deviants and Nondeviants

Labeling theory also contends that deviants are not fundamentally different from nondeviants—they are just *treated* differently. For example, although few people are arrested and processed as criminals, self-report surveys (studies that measure crime by asking people how many and what types of offenses they have committed) reveal that most people violate rules. In most such studies, more than 75 percent admit committing at least one illegal act

(Barlow, 1993). In a sample of several hundred Texas college students, Porterfield (1946) found that although all of them had engaged in delinquency, few had ever been involved with the police or courts. Short and Nye's (1958) self-report study of noninstitutionalized youth (midwestern and western high school students) and institutionalized youth (delinquents in western training schools) found high rates of deviance among the high school sample and similarities in delinquency rates between the delinquent and the high school population. Although self-report methods have been legitimately critiqued for several methodological weaknesses (see Wilson and Herrnstein, 1985; Currie, 1985), the weight of the evidence continues to indicate that people cannot be divided into criminal and noncriminal categories. The vast majority of people engage in deviant behavior, but only a minority are labeled by society as deviant (Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963; Becker, 1963).

The Consequences of Labeling

To understand the argument that social reaction creates deviants and increases the likelihood of future deviance, we must review the concepts of primary and secondary deviance (Lemert, 1978). **Primary deviance** is related to unique social, cultural, or psychological situations. It is not the result of labeling, nor is it associated with the basic psychological makeup of the offender. Taking money left unattended, shoplifting for a thrill, drinking alcohol before the age of 21 years, and smoking marijuana with college peers are examples of this type of behavior. Such behaviors are seldom repeated or cease with adult status, and they are only marginally related to the offender's self-concept. **Secondary deviance**, on the other hand, evolves out of an offender's self-concept. People engage in secondary deviance because they have come to see themselves as deviant as a result of labeling by others. An occasional marijuana smoker may come to be identified by his acquaintances as a "doper," or a woman who is known to have had multiple sexual partners may be labeled "promiscuous." (The fact that this label is applied more often to women than to men is a clear reminder that

power plays a key role in determining which people and behaviors are labeled as deviant.) When people are told that they are "dopers" or "promiscuous," they often come to believe that they are, and they are rejected or ridiculed by others. Once this has happened, they are more likely to move into further deviant behavior, such as using crack or cocaine or engaging in prostitution. This process was illustrated in a study by Matsueda (1992). He found that when people perceive that other people think of them as "rule-violators" or as people who "get in trouble," they are in fact more likely to violate rules. When people reach this point, they are engaging in *secondary deviance*: They are stealing because they think of themselves as thieves, or bartering their sexuality because they think of themselves as prostitutes. Because such self-images have become internalized, secondary deviance often continues throughout adulthood.

Deviance and the Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Increasing involvement in deviant behavior follows the principles of the Thomas theorem (discussed in Chapter 3): If society defines a situation as real, it is real in its consequences. Thus, labeling theory holds that deviant behavior often is the result of a self-fulfilling prophecy. If society treats a person like a criminal, that person will become a criminal. Being caught in an act of primary deviance sets in motion a process that develops its own momentum. Although the majority of identified offenders, through personal and class resources, can avoid being labeled as deviant, some cannot. For the latter group, a deviant label overrides all other personal characteristics and functions as a *master status*. The label "ex-con," for example, tends to overshadow all other personal traits in the eyes of potential employers. Thus, systematic exclusion can force the labeled person to resort to crime in order to survive. Moreover, if the labeling becomes pervasive, it will be nearly impossible for the person to retain a positive self-image. At the extreme, some people come to view themselves wholly in terms of their deviant status—as nothing but thieves, prostitutes, or drug addicts. Then the self-fulfilling prophecy is complete. People have become what they were defined as being, thereby increasing

the likelihood of deviance or crime (Schur, 1980, pp. 12–17).

Assigning Deviant Labels

Labeling theorists further argue that this process is neither random nor haphazard. Access to power is critical in distinguishing between those who are labeled deviant and eventually take on deviant careers, and those who avoid deviant identities. In addition to having a better chance of avoiding arrest in the first place, people with greater resources who are arrested can obtain bail and secure private legal counsel, two factors that greatly reduce chances of conviction (Lizotte, 1978). Race plays a role, as it has been well documented that police often engage in racial profiling: stopping people for no reason other than their race (Barovick, 1998; Feagin, 1991, 2000). Additionally, middle- and upper-class offenders are less likely to receive harsh punishments. They are less likely to go to prison, and if they are imprisoned, they serve less time (Sheldon, 1982, p. 295).

William J. Chambliss (1984, p. 135) succinctly described the dynamics and outcome of labeling in his study “The Saints and the Roughnecks,” which compared two delinquent youth gangs: the Saints and the Roughnecks. The Saints were a middle-class gang; the Roughnecks came from low-income backgrounds. Both groups engaged in a variety of illegal activities, but only the Roughnecks were labeled as deviant. In the two years during which Chambliss carried out his observations, not one Saint was arrested, despite the fact that this group engaged in a number of dangerous and destructive activities, including vandalism, drunk driving, and removing barricades from street-repair sites. The Roughnecks, in contrast, were constantly in trouble with the police, in part because their deviant activities were more public and more visible to the police.

The effects of these differences in labeling did not end in adolescence. Because the Saints were not labeled deviant, their deviant behavior ended when they outgrew the need to “sow their wild oats.” The Roughnecks, in contrast,

were steered toward careers of deviant behavior as a result of being labeled deviant.

This can extend even to the families of those who are labeled deviant. According to a study by Elliott and Reid (2019), economically disadvantaged black mothers adjust their parenting approaches based not only on the apprehension that their children might face unjust accusations by mainstream institutions and law enforcement but also on the worry that they, as mothers, could be stigmatized as unfit parents who risk losing their custody rights.

Critique of the Labeling Tradition

A number of criticisms have been directed at the labeling tradition. First, labeling theory cannot account for primary deviance—that is, deviant behaviors that occur before any labeling. Labeling does not account for first-time serious offenders—murderers, rapists, robbers. In addition, critics point to research that shows labeling that occurs as a result of some behavior of the person labeled, not because of that person’s social characteristics (Tittle, 1980; Hirschi, 1980). In other words, most labeling follows primary deviance and therefore cannot cause people to begin deviant behavior. Second, researchers in the labeling tradition have concentrated on less serious offenses, even non-criminal behaviors, including mental illness. Findings in these studies may not be applicable to violent or serious property crimes or to white-collar crime. Third, although the labeling tradition has historically been concerned with humanizing the deviant, labeling researchers, like other deviance researchers, may have actually helped label the powerless as deviant. This criticism is developed in the box “An Argument Against Studying ‘Deviance.’” Finally, critics argue that rather than acting as a self-fulfilling prophecy, deviant labels can discourage deviant behavior, as people conform in order to avoid the many bad consequences of being labeled deviant. Thus, while the labeling tradition offers many useful insights about the nature of deviance, how it occurs, and the consequences of society’s response to it, labeling, like other approaches, has its limitations and can offer only part of the answers to the questions it asks about deviant behavior.



UNDERSTANDING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

An Argument Against Studying “Deviance”

In 1972, sociologist Alexander Liazos published what was destined to become one of the more widely cited journal articles in the sociology of deviance—a paper in which he questioned whether sociology should even study “deviance.” The unusual title of his paper was “The Poverty of the Sociology of Deviance: Nuts, Sluts, and Preverts.” That’s right—“preverts.” The title came from the nicknames his students had given to the deviance course—nicknames that underscored the idea that the study of deviance actually tends to further stigmatize those it seeks to understand.

Liazos’s point was that even when they emphasize ways in which society defines, creates, and stigmatizes deviance, most courses and books about deviance end up emphasizing not society but “deviant” people and the problems they present for themselves and others. He studied 16 textbooks on deviance, half of which emphasized the labeling perspective. He found that they contained three major biases. First, even when they tried to humanize the “deviant,” the courses led to stigmatization of people who do not conform by focusing on the “deviant” rather than on society’s role in establishing what is thought to be deviant. Liazos argued that the term “deviant” itself is stigmatizing—it underscores the idea that we think there is something “different” about those who do not conform.

Second, although the books talked about the role of power in defining deviance, their discussions of deviant behaviors tended to focus on deviance by the powerless and ignore deviance by the powerful. Thus, topics such as robbery, rape, prostitution, mental illness, drug use/abuse, and homosexuality were covered in all of the books, and some books also covered political radicals and religious dissenters. On

the other hand, the books paid little if any attention to unethical, illegal, and destructive behaviors of the wealthy and powerful. The subtle message was that violence was committed by the ghetto poor, youth gangs and motorcycle gangs, and other powerless groups, not by the wealthy and powerful.

The third bias, related to the second, was that the books tended to focus on the dramatic—murders, muggings, prostitution, juvenile delinquency, and so forth. They did not focus on what Liazos saw as more subtle but deadly forms of violence committed by everyday operations of social institutions—for instance, that a black baby is twice as likely to die in the first year of life as a white baby. The black infant mortality rate is a reflection of racism and inequality in American society, resulting from a black poverty rate that is three times the white poverty rate and a health-care system in which black people are twice as likely as white people to be uninsured. As Liazos points out, “This is surely much worse violence than anything committed by the Hell’s Angels or street gangs.” Yet, because of the way most sociology textbooks and college courses teach about deviance—even those that emphasize the labeling perspective—we associate deviance with Hell’s Angels and street gangs, not the health-care or economic system. According to Liazos, the people who control and benefit from these systems are presented not as deviants, but as “pillars of the community.”

Source: From “The Poverty of the Sociology of Deviance: Nuts, Sluts, and Preverts” by Alex Liazos, *Social Problems* 20, 1 (Summer, 1972). Copyright © 1972 by the Society for the Study of Social Problems. Reprinted by permission of University of California Press Journals.

Functionalist and Conflict Perspectives on Deviance

Within the discipline of sociology, the functionalist and conflict schools provide different ways of understanding deviance and social control. Functionalist views are best represented by the works of Émile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. Conflict views are heavily influenced by the works of Karl Marx and Ralf Dahrendorf.

The Functionalist View: Durkheim

Although Durkheim regretted the negative consequences of deviant behavior, he considered a limited amount of crime to be a normal and necessary characteristic of all societies. He argued that deviance was so crucial to social order that societies lacking a given amount of it would redefine acceptable behavior to create deviance, as was noted earlier in our discussion of victimless crimes.

Without deviance, Durkheim contended, societies are unable to adjust to the demands of changing environments. Rigid societies with an unyielding commitment to outdated rules deteriorate and perish. By providing alternative ways of thinking, organizing, and behaving, deviance enables societies to adapt to new situations. To Durkheim, what is condemned as deviance today can become the norm of tomorrow. The civil rights activism of the 1960s offers a good example of this reasoning. The initial violators of Jim Crow laws were treated as criminals. Activists were physically abused, even murdered, and subjected to legal sanctions. Today, few people consider civil rights organizers and participants as criminal. In fact, their demands for social, economic, and political equality are, at least nominally, supported by most major politicians and some of them have been incorporated into law.

Durkheim also identified boundary maintenance and increased solidarity as positive consequences of deviance and social control. Identifying and punishing deviants clarifies the rules that society expects its members to obey. By making clear what a society rejects, the definition of deviance helps a society define what it is and what it approves (Durkheim, 1947 [orig. 1893], 1964b [orig. 1893]). Defining and punishing deviance also demonstrate the consequences of breaking society's rules. Further, the use of social control reinforces a sense of righteousness and superiority among conformists and thereby strengthens social cohesion. Conformists are pushed together as they battle a shared threat, the deviants—be they criminals, witches, homosexuals, dope addicts, or communists (see Vold and Bernard, 1986, pp. 144–52). The “War on Drugs” of the late 1980s and early 1990s can be cited as another example of this process.

The Dysfunctions of Deviance: Parsons

Although Durkheim recognized the positive consequences of deviance, he also warned that deviance beyond a certain level threatens social order and is dysfunctional. This point of view was echoed by Talcott Parsons. According to

Parsons, the primary function of social control is to reduce tensions between different elements of the social system in order to ensure the cooperation necessary for a society to function reasonably well (Parsons, 1962, p. 58). Accordingly, all social participants benefit when society operates in a stable and harmonious fashion. Thus, deviance is counterproductive and reflects failure to understand the common social interests that bind all members of a society. Social control enables a society to move people into the different social roles required for its functioning. When socialization, rewards, and persuasion fail to accomplish this task, some form of coercion is required. Functional reasoning argues that this use of coercive social control is legitimate because laws are enacted by representatives of the people in the interest of the people. Moreover, these laws are in theory applied equally to all members of society (Chambliss and Mankoff, 1976, pp. 7–9), though, as we have seen, this often is not the case in reality.

The Conflict View

Conflict theorists deny the existence of a harmony of interests or value consensus in modern society. Rather, diverse groups, with varying degrees of social, economic, and political power, compete to have their interests and values protected and preserved in law. Rather than reflecting harmony and cooperation, social order reflects the suppression of competing interests (Vago, 1988, pp. 16–17). Definitions of deviance and the enforcement of those definitions perpetuate the dominance of elites over the less powerful or powerless. To support this contention, conflict analysts point to the relative absence of legal restrictions against socially destructive elite behaviors. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, for example, alcohol and tobacco together kill hundreds of thousands of Americans a year. The annual cost of the abuse of these substances to the U.S. economy is over \$500 billion (National Institutes of Health, 2015). These human and dollar costs are far beyond those of all illegal drugs (marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and others)

combined, estimated to be \$193 billion, yet enterprises that produce alcohol and tobacco are allowed to advertise and market their goods. In the case of tobacco, the enterprise is supported with federal subsidies. Further, although the economic and human costs of corporate crime are greater than those of all other types of crime combined, few enforcement resources are directed against this problem (Simon and Eitzen, 1986, pp. 228–30). People almost never go to jail for violating antitrust laws, endangering their employees, damaging the environment, or selling products known to be dangerous. Thus, for the conflict perspective, the laws that exist, the laws that are enforced, the methods, targets, and harshness of enforcement all function to protect the interests of the ruling classes.

According to conflict theorists in criminology, the laws and the ways they are enforced do this in several ways. Not only does overattention to crimes committed by the poor deflect the wealthy from criticism; it also leads the public to view the poor—and especially the minority poor—as a dangerous class. Hence, the worries of the middle class are deflected from economic concerns that might threaten the owners of real wealth, and against the ghetto poor that the middle class has come to define as a threat (Gordon, 1971, 1973). In fact, when the economy worsens—and when such worries among the middle class might be heightened—researchers have shown that punitiveness toward the poor increases (Michalowski and Carlson, 1999). This underlines the elite's message that the poor are the real threat to the middle class, making the poor the scapegoat for middle-class economic frustrations. At the same time, of course, blame is deflected from the truly wealthy.

Another theme in conflict theories of crime and deviance is that capitalism and inequality do actually lead to higher rates of crime in society. Societies characterized by extreme capitalism and a high degree of inequality tend to overemphasize economic gain, so that such material gain is valued over human relationships and social and cultural solidarity. Consequently, families and neighborhoods are weakened because more hours of work are

demanding at the expense of parental leave, family vacations, and leisure time (Currie, 1997). Contrast the United States—where even longtime employees get only two weeks of vacation, minimal family leave, and a few holidays a year—with European countries where five or six weeks of vacation a year, generous family leaves, and a holiday every month are the standard. In the United States, the rates of divorce, juvenile delinquency, and family violence are far higher than in any European country. In addition, the American emphasis on material gain often leads people in all social classes to seek gain through illegal means—so rates of theft, embezzlement, burglary, and other crimes for material gain exceed those of other industrialized countries. Similarly, corporations and government agencies often press their employees to meet the goal and make the bottom line come out good, regardless of the means, leading to corporate and state crime. Hence, conflict theorists stress that societal and organizational situations, as well as individual ones, are important causes of crime and deviance (Kauzlarich and Kramer, 1998).

Feminist Criminology

An increasingly influential variant of conflict theory is *feminist criminology*, an approach illustrated by the work of Meda Chesney-Lind, featured in this chapter's Personal Journeys Into Sociology box. Feminist criminology stresses that the unequal roles and resources of men and women lead them to commit different kinds of deviant acts, to do so under different social conditions, and to be labeled as deviant as a result of different behaviors (Morris, 1987). For example, women who commit violent crime are more likely than male criminals to be married and much less likely to have prior criminal records (Barlow, 1993). This may reflect recruitment into criminal activity by their spouses, or perhaps a reaction to violence against them by their partners, which happens to women much more often than to men. The relationship between unemployment and crime among men also appears not to be true for women (Alder, 1986), perhaps

reflecting the different meanings of employment for men and women. We also know that women commit much less crime than men; Messerschmidt (1986) suggests that one reason for this is that the more restricted roles of women give them less opportunity to commit crimes. Another difference is that female juvenile delinquents are more likely than male delinquents to be in trouble because of running away (Chesney-Lind, 1996). This happens partly because girls often run away to escape sexual abuse, but also because girls are

more likely than boys to be arrested for running away (Chesney-Lind, 1996).

Feminist approaches to criminology have emphasized also the differences in why and how men and women commit crimes (Barlow and Kauzlarich, 2002). Crime by males, for example, is often done to reaffirm their masculinity—either to show themselves to be “tough” or in response to challenges to their masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2000; see also Anderson, 1999). Females, on the other hand, may turn to crime due to their greater economic



PERSONAL JOURNEYS INTO SOCIOLOGY

Doing Feminist Criminology

I can still vividly recall hearing a male researcher who, reporting on birth rates at a population meeting in Seattle, referred to his subjects using male pronouns throughout his presentation. Since his subjects were female (we are, after all, the only ones who can give birth), I was puzzled. As a graduate student attending my first national meeting and rather daunted by the setting, I waited until the break to ask him about his word choice. Without any embarrassment, he informed me that “I say ‘he’ or ‘him’ because to say ‘she’ or ‘her’ would trivialize my research.” For many years, criminology was not haunted by this problem. Unlike demography, it was seen as an incontrovertibly male, even “macho” field. Crime has, in fact, sometimes been described as an ultimate form of masculinity. In Albert Cohen’s words, “the delinquent is a rogue male” whose behavior, no matter how much it is condemned on moral grounds, “has at least one virtue: It incontestably confirms, in the eyes of all concerned, his essential masculinity.”

The criminological fascination with male deviance and crime is not simply a reflection of the American crime problem. I suspect that it also is explained by Margaret Mead’s observation that whatever men do, even if it is dressing dolls for religious ceremonies, has higher status and is more highly rewarded than whatever women do. For this reason, fields focus on male activities and attributes wherever possible: Studying them confers higher status on the researcher. Hence, the academic rush to understand boys and men and the disinterest, until relatively recently, in all things female.

The question now is whether theories of delinquency and crime, which were admittedly developed to explain male behavior, can be used to understand female crime, delinquency, and victimization. My research experience convinces me that they cannot. About 25 years ago, when I was reading files compiled on youth who had been referred to Honolulu’s family court during the first half of the twentieth century, I ran across what I considered to be a bizarre pattern. Over half of the girls had been referred to court for “immorality,” and another one-third were charged with being “wayward.” In reading the files, I discovered that this meant that the young women were suspected of being sexually active. Evidence of this “exposure” was vigorously pursued in all cases—and this was not subtle. Virtually all girls’ files contained gynecological examinations (sometimes there were stacks of these forms). Doctors, who understood the purpose of such examinations, would routinely note the condition of the hymen on the form: “Admits intercourse, hymen ruptured,” “Hymen ruptured,” and “No laceration,” as well as comments about whether the “laceration” looked new or old, were typical notations.

Later analysis of the data revealed the harsh sanctions imposed on those girls found guilty of these offenses. Thus, despite widespread repetitions about the chivalrous treatment of female offenders, I was finding in the then-skimpy literature on women’s crime that girls referred to court in Honolulu in the 1930s were twice as likely as boys to be detained. They spent, on the average, five times as long as males

in detention facilities, and they were three times as likely to be sent to training schools. Later research would confirm that this pattern also was found in other parts of the country and that similar, though less extreme, bias against girls existed well into the 1960s.

Reflecting on this pattern recently, it occurred to me that girls were being treated in this fashion as the field of criminology was developing. So while criminologists—mostly male—were paying a lot of attention to the male delinquent, large numbers of girls were being processed, punished, and incarcerated. Indeed, one of the classic excuses for neglecting female offenders—their relatively small numbers—did not hold during these years. I found, for example, that girls made up half of those committed to Hawaii training schools well into the 1950s.

One reason for this neglect of girls may have been the inability of researchers to identify with their problems or situations. By contrast, I was not able to distance myself from their lives. At that time, the women's movement was a major part of my life. For the first time, I was seeing the connections between my life and the lives of other women. I knew, first-hand, about physical examinations, and I knew that even under the best circumstances they were stressful. I imagined what it would have been like to be a 13- or 14-year-old arrested on my family's orders, taken to a detention center, and forcibly examined by a doctor I didn't know. Later, I also would read of legal cases where girls in other states were held in solitary confinement for refusing such examinations, and I would talk to women who had undergone this experience as girls. Their comments and experiences confirmed the degradation and personal horror of this experience.

I bring up this particular point simply to demonstrate that the administration of a medical examination, the larger meaning of that medical examination in the girl's delinquent "career," and the harsh response to the girl so identified had no place in the delinquency theories I had studied.

Certainly, one can patch together, as I did, notions of stigma, degradation rituals, and labeling, but the job was incomplete and the picture imperfect. I have come increasingly to the conclusion that my own research results, in conjunction with the work of other feminist researchers, argue for a feminist revision of delinquency, crime, and criminal victimization—a feminist criminology.

Though I see the need for this, I am keenly aware that professional rewards for such an undertaking may be slow in coming. The work I just described on female delinquency was completed for my master's thesis. The sociology department where I did this research failed to perceive its import. In order

to complete my work for the PhD, I was forced to abandon the topic of women and crime and venture into population research—that's how I got to Seattle to hear that even a woman's ability to give birth can be obfuscated.

Despite the professional liabilities, I would argue that an overhaul of criminological theory is essential. The extensive focus on disadvantaged males in public settings has meant that girls' victimization, the relationship between that experience and girls' crime, and the relationship between girls' problems and women's crime have been systematically ignored. Feminist research has established that many young women who run away from home, for example, are running from sexual and physical abuse in those homes. These backgrounds often lead to a street life, also rigidly stratified by gender, that frequently pushes girls further into the criminal world and, for some, into adult crime.

Also missed has been the central role played by the juvenile justice system then and now in the criminalization of girls' survival strategies. In a very direct way, the family court's traditional insistence that girls "obey" their parents has forced young women, on the run from brutal or negligent families, into the lives of escaped convicts.

More recently, girls account for an increasing number of those arrested for delinquency, and they are being brought into the system for a wider variety of offenses (though they are still far more likely than boys to bring the trauma of abuse with them). Now, one in four of all juvenile arrests are of girls, and because we still have woefully few programs for girls, the nation's detention centers are filling up with young women who do not belong there.

We need to rethink our responses to "delinquency" in ways that put the lives of girls at the center, rather than the periphery, of delinquency prevention and intervention strategies. Gender matters, in short, in both the problems that bring girls into the juvenile justice system and in the ways in which the system should respond. So, finally, a plea, no more studies of "delinquency" that only include boys, and no more "girls watching boys play sports" approaches to youth programming.

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marginalization, or commit violence to defend themselves from males (Maher, 1997). They may also commit crimes in different ways, such as targeting other women rather than men, or using feigned vulnerability or sexual availability to trick males into becoming crime victims (Miller, 1998). Because traditional theories of crime and deviant behavior often “don’t work” for women, the influence of feminist criminology has grown in recent years. This change in the study of crime and deviance is discussed by criminologist Meda Chesney-Lind in her *Personal Journeys Into Sociology* box. Among other issues, feminist criminologists have explored how boys and girls are subjected to different kinds of social control as children as well as the consequences of this different treatment.

Summary

Deviance refers to behavior that violates social norms. Social norms can be categorized as folkways, mores, and laws. Although common sense frequently condemns deviant behavior as inappropriate or immoral, sociologists treat deviance as a label attached to certain behaviors by certain groups within society. They are aware that the behaviors that are labeled deviant vary both within a culture and among different cultures.

A behavior that violates a law is referred to as a crime. Punishments of crime are formally specified and are carried out by state apparatuses. Crime is a broad term that can include the following categories: street crime, which refers to attacks against people and property; victimless crime, in which all participants are consenting adults; and white-collar and corporate crime, which involves illegal activities by “respectable” members of society. In general, people from lower-income backgrounds are more likely to commit street crimes, whereas higher-status people tend to commit white-collar crimes. Although our society generally focuses on the problems associated with street crime, the costs of white-collar and corporate crime in this country are enormous.

Theories of criminal behavior have changed over the centuries. Biological theories that

prevailed in the nineteenth century portrayed criminals as suffering from pathological defects and therefore unable to control their behavior. Various psychological theories have focused on the mental processes of criminals, attributing crime to such phenomena as an imbalance between id and ego or an inability to experience guilt. All of these explanations assumed that criminals are different from the rest of society. More recent theories have defined crime in terms of social conditions, such as anomie or violent subcultures. Prominent among these is the labeling theory, which denies that deviants are inherently different from other people. Rather, deviance is defined as a label that powerful groups can impose on less powerful groups and individuals. Labeling people as deviant often creates a self-fulfilling prophecy in which those people accept the deviant label and come to define themselves—and behave—accordingly. At the organizational level, theories of corporate crime examine ways in which organizational goals create pressures to commit illegal and/or dangerous actions. Although some of these various theories are more legitimate than others, none offers a complete explanation for all types of crime.

The functionalist and conflict theories differ over the nature and role of deviance. Functionalists like Durkheim argue that a limited amount of deviance performs the positive role of providing a society with alternative ways of thinking, organizing, and behaving, thus facilitating adaptation to changing conditions. When deviance becomes excessive, however, it threatens social cohesion and must be repressed. The conflict view, in contrast, argues that powerful groups use definitions of deviance to repress groups they perceive as threatening, thus enabling them to maintain their privileged position. Conflict theorists point to the relative lack of enforcement of laws against white-collar and corporate crimes as opposed to the national preoccupation with street crime as evidence that enforcement of social norms tends to protect the interests of the ruling classes. Similarly, feminist criminologists have shown that the labeling and punishment of crime are different for males than for females.

Key Terms

deviance
crime
social control
sanctions
deterrence
street crime
victimless crime
white-collar crime
anomie
differential association
labeling theory
primary deviance
secondary deviance

Exercises

- 1 Students sometimes have difficulty understanding the sociological approach to deviant behavior. Review the section “How Sociologists View Deviance” if you need a refresher and then answer the following questions: What might be some strong arguments *against* the sociological approach? How would a sociologist counter them?
- 2 This chapter includes a discussion of whether capital punishment deters murder.

Predictably, the position of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) on the death penalty brings polarized reactions: in favor or opposed. Check out their site for the issue at www.aclu.org/capital-punishment, and then answer the following questions:

- Do you think that the death penalty deters capital crime? Why or why not?
- Would American society benefit from eliminating the death penalty? If put to a vote, would you favor *life imprisonment without possibility of parole* in lieu of capital punishment? Why or why not?

- 3 In a box in this chapter, the 1996 ValuJet crash is analyzed as an example of state-corporate crime, in which multiple companies and the federal government all disregarded safety laws to meet deadlines and keep costs down. The box also discusses the *normalization of deviance*. To what extent do you think the forces at work in the ValuJet case were similar to or different from ones at work in the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico? Explain your reasoning.

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Part IV

Social Institutions



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Chapter 11

Economy and Society

Is it always better to get what you want? How about the thing you want the most? Seem like silly questions, don't they? How could it ever be better to *not* get the thing you want the most? After all, getting what we want makes us happy. Conventional economics have built an entire school of thought around just such a proposition. People are assumed to be always striving to fulfill their preferences as best they can. We talked about this earlier as the norm of maximization. We maximize the things we want the most and minimize all things we don't want. What could possibly be wrong with that?

Well, sociologist Wolfgang Streeck would beg to differ. In his article “Beneficial Constraints: On the Economic Limits of Rational Volunteerism,” he argues that sometimes getting exactly what we want is the worst thing for us, or at least not the best thing (Streeck, 1997). Think about that. The odds are reading this textbook is not the thing you would most like to be doing right now. Surely, watching television, going to a movie, reading a good novel, hanging out with friends or a significant other, even playing Pokémon Go might be preferable. In fact, reading this textbook might actually be far down on the list of things you'd rather be doing. So why are you doing it?

Because some part of you knows it is the best thing for you, even if it's not the thing you want most. In the long run, it may lead you to the thing you want the most: a better career or a wider understanding of the world around you—hopefully both! The concept of beneficial constraints demonstrates the problem sociologists generally have with many of the more mathematics-based assumptions about human behavior. Humans are difficult to predict on the individual level. On the other hand, the patterns we see of groups are predictable. Thus,

starting with Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, economic behavior as a form of social behavior has been of special interest to sociologists. Examination of the economy using the tools of sociology can be seen in three central aspects of study: culture, networks, and organizations. Like sociology as a whole, these aspects span social life from the macro to the micro. We start with the macro.

Economic Systems

Economic systems are the means by which scarce resources are produced and allocated within and between societies. Economic systems can be classified in three ways. The first is based on the level of economic development—how are goods and services produced, and how much of them can the system produce? The second classification is based on who owns the means of production. Third, economic systems may be classified on the basis of their scale, ranging from local to national to global. We examine all three of these issues in this chapter.

Sectors of the Economy

At different levels of development, different sectors of the economy predominate. Economies contain up to three basic sectors: primary, secondary, and tertiary. The **primary sector** consists of the direct extraction of natural resources from the environment. The primary sector includes farming, fishing, mining, woodcutting, oil drilling, and generating solar or hydroelectric power. The economic viability of the primary sector depends on the availability of natural resources and the market for products

derived from natural resources, so it can be subject to severe fluctuations, in both the short term and long term. Though still important, the primary sector has generally become a smaller proportion of the overall economy over time and with technological advancement.

The **secondary sector** consists of making or manufacturing products, such as cars, airplanes, televisions, dishes, and computers. It includes not only mass production but also the handcrafting of such items as furniture, carriages, and building fixtures. Generally, if a product is made by machines or human hands rather than taken directly from the environment, it is part of the secondary sector. This sector, too, has experienced considerable fluctuation and seems to be declining in importance today. In the 1950s and early 1960s, when the secondary sector of the American economy was a major and growing source of employment, industrial workers prospered. However, by the 1970s, the secondary sector was declining in importance as a source of employment for a variety of reasons that are discussed in this chapter. As a result, employment in heavy industry declined in the United States and in other technologically developed countries.

The **tertiary sector** consists of producing and processing information and providing services. The products of the tertiary sector are less tangible than physical products such as cars or houses. Examples of activities in the tertiary sector include teaching, research, data analysis, Web page design, management and investment consulting, broadcasting, entertaining, and writing. This sector also includes personal services, such as washing and repairing cars, cleaning houses, and providing medical care and legal assistance. The tertiary sector is growing most rapidly in today's economy. This is why places like Silicon Valley have the advantage over places like Detroit. People who have the technical and specialized training required for the better jobs in the tertiary sector will also have the advantage over those who do not. This is an important reason why the income of college graduates has been rising while the income of people with low levels of education has been falling (after

adjustment for inflation) over much of the past three decades.

Economic Change and Social Change

Over time, as the economy has evolved from one level of development to another, different types of economic activity have taken place, different sectors of the economy have predominated, and different regions of the country have benefited. This process is but a small part of a much larger process of economic development going back to the origins of humankind. This process has led to great increases in the standard of living for much of the world's population, but it has also led to great upheavals and displacements. Today, there are strong indications that economic change is affecting economies like the United States in two ways. First, it has led to stiff international competition, as other economies, such as Korea and Taiwan, are able to develop their own highly efficient manufacturing and information industries. Second, it is leading to growing socioeconomic inequalities between those with the training to take advantage of the new opportunities and those who lack such training and have been displaced by the decline of the secondary sector in the United States.

Economic Development and Society

Changes in levels of economic development have also had tremendous impact on the world, leaving different parts of the world at dramatically different levels of economic development. As we see in Chapter 16, such changes have also increased both world population and world consumption of natural resources—so much so that human survival may be threatened. Let us take a closer look at these different levels of economic development, including hunting-and-gathering economies and agricultural economies, in which the primary sector predominates; industrial economies, in which the secondary sector predominates; and postindustrial economies, in which the tertiary sector becomes increasingly important.

Hunting-and-Gathering Economies

The most basic level of economic development, with the simplest division of labor, is the **hunting-and-gathering economy**. This type of economy has no cultivation and no manufacturing. People live on what they can obtain directly from the natural environment by gathering wild fruit and vegetables, fishing, and hunting—the primary sector predominates in such economies. Societies with hunting-and-gathering economies are usually small (often 50 or fewer people) and are usually organized as a tribe or as a clan, a group in which everyone is related. Thus, the entire society could be characterized as a primary group. The small size of such societies is a product of their economy and environment: In most places, hunting and gathering can support only a limited number of people. Most of these societies operate at or near a **subsistence level**, producing just enough food, clothing, and shelter to survive. They produce little or no **surplus**. In other words, they produce little or no wealth beyond what is necessary to meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter.

Hunting-and-gathering societies are often **nomadic**—they move to another place, within a limited geographic range, when they use up the food available. They have relatively little division of labor; work distribution is based on gender and on physical capabilities. Occasionally, the society assigns a group of people to a military role, but usually this is not needed, as the sparse population that hunting and gathering can support tends to keep groups separated from one another.

Because of this limited specialization and relative isolation from other societies, hunting-and-gathering societies tend to have high levels of consensus. Also, ownership is usually communal since the meager level of production dictates that everything be shared (Lee, 1984). People in such societies usually have a fair amount of time to spend interacting with one another and participating in group rituals because once they have collected enough food to meet group needs, they have little reason to collect more (Lee, 1984). Therefore, people in

such societies frequently spend less time working than people in societies with more complex economic systems (Gowlett, 1984; Lee, 1984; Lee and DeVore, 1968).

From the origin of human societies several million years ago until around 10,000 BCE, all societies had hunting-and-gathering economies. Today, a limited number of such societies still exist, mostly in thinly populated tropical, arctic, and desert areas remote from modern societies.

Agricultural Economies

The evolution of economic systems began with the transition from hunting-and-gathering economies to **agricultural economies**. This transition occurred gradually, along with the development of intermediate forms known as horticultural economies and pastoral, or herding, economies. Horticulture consisted of slashing and burning a small plot of forest, working the soil with a hoe or digging stick, and raising a crop. After a few years, when the soil was no longer fertile, horticulturalists moved on to another nearby location. Pastoral societies raised small herds of domesticated animals, also moving from place to place as forage was used up. Eventually, true **agriculture** developed. True agriculture is different from horticulture: Those who practice it are permanently attached to the same location. This change occurred because of changes in the environment and advances in technology. Evidence suggests that while climate changes made hunting and herding more difficult, repeated raising of grain crops on the same site became easier (McCorriston and Hole, 1991). This may have led to the first true agriculture, as early as 10,000 years ago. By 3,000 to 6,000 years ago, the plow had come into use. Through the invention of the plow harnessed to animals such as oxen or horses, societies were able to raise crops on the same land year after year, because the plow could bring up nutrients from the subsoil and work weeds and leaves into the ground to act as fertilizers. Thus, people were no longer compelled to move from place to place to survive. Also, a much larger plot of land could be worked by one person,

making the creation of a surplus possible for the first time (Lenski and Nolan, 1984).

The production of surplus food enabled societies to exist on a larger scale and in one location. It also freed some people to perform tasks other than food production. Towns and small cities became possible, and greater effort could be devoted to such secondary-sector activities as the construction of temples and public buildings. The production of a surplus also added a critical new element to the economic system: inequality, or economic stratification. In a subsistence economy, everybody lived at a bare survival level, but in an agricultural economy, those with power and prestige accumulated more than the rest of the population—usually much more.

In agricultural societies, the means of production is land, and those who own the land obtain most of the wealth and power. Some agricultural societies are based on family farms, but more often a small elite—usually deriving its position from religious tradition or military power—owns the land, while the rest of the population works for them. The system is usually headed by a monarch, and those who own land often have some formal political or religious title that is passed on between generations (along with land ownership). This type of system is referred to as a feudal system or an estate system (see Chapter 6), or sometimes simply as feudalism.

In various forms, feudal systems existed until a few hundred years ago in Europe, and even more recently in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The southern U.S. plantation system bore an important resemblance to this system as well. As agriculture became more efficient, very large-scale governments occasionally emerged, as in the Roman and Chinese empires. More often, though, infighting among regional elites made warfare a constant reality. Such systems, though warlike and dramatically unequal, created enough surplus to allow the development of increasingly complex philosophy, art, religious institutions, architecture, and governments. Although the secondary and tertiary sectors were both larger than in less-developed economies, the primary sector still predominated in agricultural economies.

Industrial Economies

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a new system of economic production based on manufacturing took hold in England and spread through the rest of western and northern Europe, as well as to North America. Since that time, it has spread in varying degrees to virtually every part of the world. This new system, the **industrial economy**, was based on the use of machines to produce a variety of products ranging from military hardware to consumer goods to new machines that could produce more new products. Thus, the secondary sector became the sector of greatest economic importance. Beginning with the steam engine, a series of inventions made possible more and more efficient manufacturing. These inventions grew out of *technology*—the application of scientific knowledge to practical tasks. This new economic system so dramatically transformed society that we refer to its development as the Industrial Revolution.

The industrial mode of production was made possible not only by new technology but also by the changes in social organization discussed in Chapter 9, including the rise of bureaucracy and the accompanying trend of rationalization. Tradition became less influential, and science, technology, and education more so. As we see later in this chapter, large-scale governments, based on legal-rational authority (see Chapter 12), replaced the traditional authority of monarchies.

Increased Standard of Living. With industrialization, the economy's ability to produce a surplus increased dramatically. This had a number of important consequences. One was a dramatic long-term rise in the standard of living, because the application of technology meant that far more could be manufactured per person (Rostow, 1965). In its early stages, however, industrialization did make life harder for many because of the long hours, low wages, and brutal working conditions it created. Over the long run, though, the increased productivity of industrial economies meant that people could have better diets, more adequate shelter, better health care, and more luxury goods. Life expectancy increased dramatically.

One factor that aids greatly in increasing living standards is the tendency for industrializing nations to develop strong labor movements. This does not happen immediately, but over time the workers involved in producing the increased surplus demand a larger share of it. In the United States, where labor's power has been relatively weak compared to other wealthy industrialized countries, organized labor rose slowly and more disjointedly than in other rich countries. Kimeldorf (2013, p. 1033) found that early unions in the United States formed when one of three conditions was present: "scarcity of skilled labor, geographically isolated worksites that raised the cost of importing strikebreakers, and time-sensitive tasks that rendered replacement workers economically impractical." Examples of these are craft workers (specialized skill), coal miners (isolated work sites), and railroad workers (time-sensitive tasks). Any of these elements gave workers more leverage for higher wages and greater benefits, which led to higher standards of living for union members.

Greater Social Equality. Second, industrialization has been associated over the long run with greater social equality, at least with respect to income and standard of living (Lenski, 1966; Simpson, 1990). At first, industrialization often does increase inequality, because the new industrial sector creates so much more wealth for its owners than the old agricultural sector (Nielson and Alderson, 1995). But once industrialization begins to have an effect on most of the population, the trend turns toward greater equality. Although the huge surplus created by industrialization has allowed the wealthiest people, usually the owners of factories, to amass previously unheard-of fortunes (Bobbio, 1987), it has improved the standard of living of the masses more than that of the wealthy. The surplus produced by industrial economies is so great that the wealthy can have their wealth and still allow much more income to go to the bulk of the population, thereby avoiding a revolution that might deprive them of their wealth. This tendency toward greater equality is also reinforced by declining birth rates (which reduce scarcity) and by democratization, both of which usually occur sooner or later along with industrialization (Nielson and Alderson, 1995). One

note of caution is in order, however: The trend toward greater equality may well be reversed when societies move from the industrial stage to the postindustrial stage, discussed in the next section.

War and Revolution. Because of their high standard of living, industrialized societies seldom experience revolutions. The transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy has often been accompanied by a revolution, but once a society becomes industrialized, it is not likely to experience revolution. Industrialized societies also seem to go to war less often than preindustrial ones. One reason, hotly debated among political scientists, may be related to the previously mentioned correlation between industrialization and democracy. Some evidence suggests that democracies are reluctant to go to war with other democracies, though they still do attack nondemocracies, as in U.S. actions against Iraq and Vietnam, and the British war with Argentina over the Falkland Islands in 1982 (Lynn-Jones and Miller, 1995; Shea, 1996). However, the infrequent wars that do occur among industrial countries can be catastrophic, because the populations of industrialized societies are larger and because such societies have the technology to develop deadlier weapons (Beer, 1981; Singer and Small, 1972; Sorokin, 1937). In World War II, for example, over 40 million people died (Beer, 1981). Nuclear weapons can destroy all the world's industrialized societies in one war, and for several decades the United States and the Soviet Union spent vast sums on such armaments, though such expenditures decreased dramatically with the demise of the Soviet Union. However, as tensions are rising again between Russia and other industrialized nations, including the United States and several countries in Europe, expenditures on armaments could increase again.

In today's world, many societies have fully developed industrial economies, while others remain predominantly agricultural or even horticultural (Lenski and Nolan, 1984, 1986). Many Third World societies are at intermediate stages between agricultural and industrial economies. The most industrialized areas of the world are Europe, North America, Russia,

Israel, Australia, New Zealand, and parts of Asia. Some of these areas are now shifting to the *postindustrial* stage, discussed next.

The Shift to Postindustrial Economies

In the United States, in many European countries, and in other societies that have experienced industrialization, the role of manufacturing as a source of employment has declined recently. Instead, more and more people in these societies are employed in the provision of services and the generation and dissemination of information. In such an economy, there are more lawyers, accountants, researchers, computer designers and operators, and advertising and public relations specialists. Note that, in some way, each of these occupations involves obtaining, processing, presenting, or disseminating knowledge or information. There are also more waiters, auto repairpersons, entertainers, travel agents, and household and business maintenance workers and cleaners. All of these occupations in some way involve providing a service. Such an economy, in which fewer people are employed in manufacturing and more are employed in information, knowledge, and service activities, is referred to as a **postindustrial economy**.

The idea that a postindustrial economy represents a new stage of economic development was first raised around 1970 by a group of sociologists including Alain Touraine (1971 [orig. 1969]) and Daniel Bell (1973). According to Bell, the main characteristics of a postindustrial economy include the transition from an industrial to a service economy, the growth of professional and technical occupations, a key role for theoretical knowledge as the main source of innovation and policy formation, and a shift to decision-making on the basis of problem-solving rules rather than intuitive judgment.

In such economies, the tertiary sector has taken on greater importance than either of the other two sectors. Ownership of capital may become less important than control of information, the capability to develop new

technologies, and the ability to provide services. More important, the ability to do these things may enable people to quickly amass great amounts of capital, as illustrated by the “instant billionaire” status of Microsoft founder Bill Gates, the world’s wealthiest person at the start of the new millennium.

Many of the changes predicted by Bell, Touraine, and others in the early 1970s have indeed taken place in the most technologically developed societies. In the United States and Western Europe, heavy industry has declined as a source of employment. This is the process of deindustrialization introduced in Chapter 6. This happened partly because new technologies automated these industries, and partly because the core of economic growth shifted from manufacturing to services. It also happened in part because of globalization, a trend whereby competition and economic exchange occurs on a worldwide scale. In recent decades, the United States, Europe, and even to some extent Japan have lost manufacturing jobs because of international competition. Such competition has reduced the number of manufacturing jobs in these countries in two ways. First, international competition has taken away some of the market for goods produced in these countries. Korean cars compete with Japanese cars, and Taiwanese auto parts compete with parts made in the United States. Second, it has led to increased *automation* (the replacement of people with machines, computers, and robots) as manufacturers have sought to cut costs to meet the competition, which sometimes comes from countries where wages are very low (Rohan, 1989). Globalization has also increased the tendency of manufacturers in the United States and other high-wage countries to move jobs to other countries where they can pay lower wages. Globalization and its effects are described in greater detail later in this chapter.

Between 1950 and 1980, the proportion of American workers employed in industries that produce goods fell from 49 percent to 33 percent, while the share in service-producing industries rose from 51 percent to 66 percent (Clark, 1985, p. 22). Banking and investment, entertainment, accounting, health care, engineering, hotels and restaurants, and the electronics

industry have been the growth areas—and all of these either are in the service sector or involve generating and processing information. This shift has generally hurt the industrial Midwest and Northeast and helped the South and West (Sternleib and Hughes, 1975; Weinstein, Gross, and Rees, 1985). Unlike heavy industry, these businesses can locate to areas with a desirable climate and recreational amenities (see Morgan, 1976), rather than being tied to areas that have natural resources or transportation waterways.

Effects on the Labor Force and Stratification

The transition to a postindustrial economy has resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs in manufacturing, with job growth occurring in the professional and managerial sectors (as Bell predicted), but also in the service and clerical sectors. One consequence of this shift has been an increasing division of the labor force into two distinct and highly unequal segments. One segment, including doctors, lawyers, research workers, financial specialists, technicians, and engineers, is technologically educated, is relatively well paid, and enjoys high prestige. Since 1979, this group has seen a steep boost to their income from critical thinking and other related analytical skills (Liu and Grusky, 2013). The other segment, bigger and faster growing, is made up of service, clerical,

and retail sales workers (Reich, 1986a). These workers are usually poorly educated and often work for very low wages.

Thus, in the United States at least, the development of the postindustrial economy appears to have contributed to greater socioeconomic inequality (Eitzen and Zinn, 1989; Harrison and Bluestone, 1988; Olsen, 1990; Duncan, 1996). The more advantaged segment of the population creates demand for increasingly diverse services. In part, the advantaged segment of the population creates this demand by spending its time and money in search of self-fulfillment, good health, and fun. It also creates demand for services in the process of making its money, through expenditures for child care and help in the home, and through such activities as business travel. One example of this is the rapid growth in eating out, a time-saver for those who work long hours. The percentage of meals eaten out roughly doubled between 1977 and 1995, by which time 27 percent of U.S. meals were purchased from restaurants (Stenson, 2001). By 2009, this percentage was 48 percent, despite a slight decline from 2008 due to the severe recession (Zagat, 2009). This, of course, has led to rapid growth of employment in the restaurant and fast-food businesses, often with low wages and limited benefits.

The high educational level of professional, technical, and managerial workers, along with the mobility and diversity that are typical of the postindustrial society, strengthen some of the forces for democratization already present in industrial society. More people demand to be informed, refuse to follow rules blindly, and object to discrimination based on race, sex, and religion. In such a society, women tend to be as educated as men and to work outside the home.

Although the less advantaged segment of society is also affected by these trends, its members have been hurt economically as lower-paying service jobs have replaced higher-paying manufacturing



Photo 11.1 Nowhere has the demand for services in the postindustrial economy been more evident than in the growth of fast-food and carryout food establishments. These businesses have created many jobs, but most offer low pay and limited benefits.

Courtesy of John E. Farley

jobs. This group provides the services the higher-status group demands, but its members often cannot afford to purchase many of them for themselves. In particular, they cannot afford the education necessary to gain access to professional and managerial employment. They also cannot afford the travel and the wide variety of entertainment enjoyed by more affluent classes, nor do they have the money to take advantage of investment and financial services. On the other hand, electronic entertainment media such as televisions, radios, and stereos have become affordable to nearly everyone, so even the less affluent have been touched to some extent by the burgeoning entertainment and information businesses that are typical of postindustrial economies. In addition, the disadvantaged, like everyone else, have access to the “instant information” the media make available.

The collective result of these changes since the early 1970s is quite clear. The share of income going to people who are relatively low in the income distribution has fallen quite sharply, whereas the share going to those near the top has risen quite sharply (Duncan, 1996). With the arrival of postindustrial society, the rich have gotten richer and the poor, poorer. It appears that this pattern is not limited to the United States. Nielson and Alderson's (1995) international study of the relationship between development and income inequality supports such a notion. Their graph clearly shows that the tendency for inequality to decline as development increases, levels off, and ends at the highest levels of development—in other words, in the postindustrial economies.

The people who have been most directly hurt by the transition from an industrial to a postindustrial economy have been the workers (and their families) who once had high-paying manufacturing jobs but have since become unemployed or moved to low-paying service jobs. The Detroiters displaced to Houston are a prime example. In recent decades, black people and Hispanics in large cities in the Midwest and Northeast have especially had great difficulty finding employment, as the manufacturing jobs they were once dependent on disappeared (Wilson, 1987, 1991a, 1991b; Anderson, 1990; Kasarda, 1989; Farley, 1987b).

The Rise of Professions

In postindustrial economies, the role of professions in both economy and society is enhanced. The basic characteristics of professionals—people who work in professions—were outlined in Chapter 9. Compared with other occupations, professions enjoy greater autonomy, status, and often pay, and require extensive and specialized training to enter. Doctors, lawyers, nurses, accountants, social workers, and teachers are examples of professionals. Note that to a large extent, professionals are involved in providing services. With the service-oriented economy of postindustrial society, growth in the tertiary sector has led to increased demand for professionals. Thus, the proportion of workers in the professions has risen steadily. The percentage of workers in what the United States Census Bureau considers professional occupations rose from 11 percent in 1960 to 14 percent in 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992d) to 20.2 percent in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 3) to 22.7 percent in 2015 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016, Table 11).

While some occupations like those previously outlined are quite clearly professions, others are more ambiguous. It takes some specialized training to become a police officer or firefighter, but not as much as it takes to be a doctor or lawyer. So, is a police officer or firefighter a professional? While there is no clear answer to such a question, it is clear that increasing numbers of occupations are seeking to define themselves as professions. This trend, called professionalization, involves establishing credentials and qualifications to enter the occupation, such as increased educational requirements for police officers. As is noted in Chapter 9, an occupation that succeeds in defining itself as a profession may enjoy greater autonomy and authority. It may also receive greater pay.

The Role of Science and Education

Because of the role of information in the postindustrial society, science and technology play a central role. Education is a key institution, for it

is through the educational system that information is generated (in research universities) and taught. In some postindustrial societies such as the United States, however, privately funded and controlled research and development rival university research, as companies compete to discover for themselves the new technology that brings wealth.

Science is influential in postindustrial societies because it is widely understood that technology arising from scientific knowledge has made possible the high standard of living and relatively good health that the majority of people in such societies enjoy. Because science has made these gains possible, it is valued because it is seen as the most likely source of further gains. It is also valued because it can lead to the invention of products—such as the computer, video game machine, and various electronic medical scanners—that have been highly profitable to their developers.

The danger is that our ability to create risks—nuclear war, air pollution, hazardous chemicals, the “greenhouse effect”—may outstrip our ability to create knowledge to deal with those risks. Yet, our society persists in creating risks, in large part because it is profitable in the short run for those who own wealth to do so. This new role of science and education has its dangers. There is a tendency to believe that technology can solve all problems, including those that are created by the new technologies themselves. To the extent that we miscalculate on this point, the very survival of humanity could be jeopardized.

Postmodernism: A Challenge to Science and Technology

For a variety of reasons, increasing numbers of people in postindustrial societies have begun to ask whether science and technology have been given too great a role. This has led to a broad but rather ill-defined intellectual movement called *postmodernism* (Doherty, Malek, and Graham, 1992). People who identify with this movement generally believe that the science, technology, and rational thinking that characterize industrial and postindustrial societies are harmful

to society in various ways. More broadly, they question not only the influence of science and rationality but also the view that any one kind of knowledge can tell us what we need to know. Postmodernism rejects the idea that there is any one way of knowing things, whether it be science, religion, or an ideology such as Marxism (Jencks, 1992; Lyotard, 1984). With respect to science, it argues that knowledge consists of more than what can be tested scientifically—it also includes cultural, artistic, and ethical elements that science cannot address. Lyotard (1984) points out that knowledge includes such elements as justice, happiness, and beauty. Similarly, Postman (1992) argues that modern societies have become technopolies—that is, societies in which technology has come to define the meaning of religion, art, family, politics, history, truth, privacy, and intelligence. He argues that this tendency has robbed us of our souls and deprived us of opportunities to see alternative ways of living and believing.

In general, postmodernists reject the notion of anything having only one possible meaning (Olsen, 1992; Jencks, 1992). Thus, neither science nor anything else can tell us the meaning of things like religion, art, or family: These meanings are different to different people. In fact, the postmodernist notion that meaning is subjective can be tied closely to the theoretical viewpoint in sociology known as *ethnomethodology*, discussed in Chapter 3. Postmodernism has developed as a school of thought in most academic fields in the humanities and social sciences. In all of these fields, it has rejected the notion of any dominant paradigm that can tell us “how things are.”

Postmodernism also rejects the notion of “high” and “low” culture. For example, for many years jazz, a highly complex and sophisticated type of music, was not taken seriously by academics because it was not classical music (and, some say, because its origins were African American, not European). But with the influence of postmodernism on the field of music, jazz has been given the recognition it deserves. Today, you may well be able to take classes on jazz at your college or university; in the past, you would not have been able to. Thus, postmodernism has challenged not only science but the notion of

singular ways of thinking in many other disciplines as well. In addition, postmodernism has had significant influence in popular culture, especially in the more avant-garde circles. It has been tied, for example, to the rise in popularity of various forms of punk and alternative rock music as well as to new movements in art and filmmaking.

From a sociological standpoint, postmodernism represents two important developments. First, it is a challenge to established ways of thinking such as functionalism, Marxism, and Weberian sociology, all of which developed in the early days of industrialization and may be less relevant in a postindustrial society (Pescosolido and Rubin, 2000). For example, postmodernist sociologists identify with the nineteenth-century writings of Friedrich Nietzsche (Antonio, 1995). Nietzsche was not taken very seriously by earlier sociologists because he challenged their dominant paradigm, Max Weber's view on bureaucracy and rationalization (discussed in Chapter 9). What Weberian sociology saw as rationalization, Nietzsche saw as regimentation and cultural domination. Second, postmodernism is an outgrowth of the movement toward a postindustrial society. Its viewpoint is not particularly new (Olsen, 1992), but it is highly appealing in postindustrial society. According to Lash (1990), the people who find postmodernism most appealing are precisely the groups who are ascendant in the postindustrial era: the "new class" of information specialists, and people who have "expressive occupations" (writers, researchers, entertainers) in the tertiary or service sector. Thus, theoreticians like Nietzsche are viewed differently today than in the past. They were rejected when sociology, like much the rest of society, saw industrialization as the hope of the future, but their words are appealing today when deindustrialization has made that seem like a false promise. And they are especially appealing to the growing number who do not rely on industrial work for a living.

More specifically, postmodernists point out that science and technology, while useful, cannot by themselves solve problems. A society such as the United States, for example, can have the most advanced medical technology in the world, but that technology cannot and does not guarantee

a healthy population. Rather, ethical, political, and philosophical choices determine whether our population has access to the benefits of that technology. Global warming and catastrophic oil spills, like the Deepwater Horizon spill off the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, are all examples postmodernists might cite to question the very notion of "progress" that was taken for granted during most of the industrial age. Thus far, postmodernism has not been a sufficiently strong influence to move postindustrial societies away from their great emphasis on science and technology. But its influence is visible nonetheless in the questioning attitudes of people in postindustrial economies. People in these societies have increasingly come to question not only tradition, as science calls upon them to do, but also the influence of science itself, as postmodernism calls upon them to do.

Perhaps the most significant change associated with postmodernism is that what once was a great confidence in science has been replaced with the same skepticism that science has always displayed toward tradition and unproven assumptions. Ironically, then, postmodernism is in some ways a victory of modern thinking (that is, critical, skeptical, unsatisfied thinking) that is now turned against the science and technology that characterizes modern society (Bauman, 1992, pp. viii–ix). However, one criticism of postmodernism is that while it shows the limitations of science and rationalism in understanding postindustrial society, it does not really offer an alternative that does offer such understanding (Pescosolido and Rubin, 2000). In other words, it is better at deconstructing theories that are flawed in explaining postindustrial society than it is at constructing new theories that do a better job.

Modern Economic Systems

Modern economic systems—industrial and postindustrial—vary in several important regards. One of the most important is the question of who owns capital, or productive capacity. In some modern economies, capital is for the most part privately owned; in a few others it is mainly publicly owned; and in yet others there is a mixture of public and private ownership.



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

The Pandemic and Postmodernism

Skepticism over science was on full display during the COVID-19 pandemic and its response by members of the general public who rejected scientific authority in favor of “alternative facts.” Does this prove that the postmodernists were right? Could President Trump be considered the first postmodern president of the United States? The answers to these questions are complex and, fittingly, subjective.

As we have seen, postmodernism, in a broad sense, is a philosophical movement that questions the idea of objective truth, suggesting that our understanding of reality is constructed through language and cultural contexts. Some argue that the Trump administration’s approach to truth and facts aligned with this postmodern perspective (Edsall, 2018; Heer, 2017). For instance, the administration’s frequent dismissal of expert advice, scientific consensus, and objective facts, particularly in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, could be seen as a postmodern rejection of objective truth (Heer, 2017). The Trump administration’s critics charge that its handling of the pandemic was characterized by denial, misinformation, and a disregard for expert advice (Cathey, 2020). For example, despite warnings from health security professionals and his own administration, President Trump claimed that nobody could have anticipated the pandemic, despite his having told reporter Bob Woodward COVID-19 was “deadly stuff” prior to its U.S. outbreak but wanted to “play it down” (Gregorian, 2020). The administration has also been accused of sidelining and undermining the federal government’s public health apparatus, censoring government scientists, politicizing testing, and undercutting public health guidelines (Tollefson, 2020). His critics point out that President Trump compared the virus to the flu and promoted unproven treatments such as hydroxychloroquine. He also suggested that the virus could be combated by injecting or drinking disinfectant, a claim that was widely criticized by health experts. Despite the rising number of COVID-19 cases and deaths, Trump maintained that the virus was “receding” and that it was “going away” (Washington Post, 2020).

Some members of the general public readily accepted Trump’s approach to the pandemic. This can be attributed to several factors. First, public

beliefs about COVID-19 were significantly influenced by political ideology and media (Ugarte, et al., 2021). For instance, after Trump tweeted about his infection, the number of tweets expressing the belief that COVID-19 was a hoax or not serious decreased significantly (Ugarte, et al., 2021).

Second, trust in science and the government was a critical factor. A study found that failing to adhere to COVID-19 experts’ advice could have devastating consequences for individuals and communities (Oshea and Ueda, 2021). The study also found that trust in experts varied by demographic factors, suggesting that certain groups were more likely to support those who ignored or dismissed experts’ health advice and government recommendations (Oshea and Ueda, 2021).

Last, the politicization of the pandemic and the spread of misinformation also contributed to the public’s embrace of the administration’s dismissal of expert advice. The Trump administration’s handling of the pandemic set the stage for segments of the public to be more receptive to misinformation about COVID-19 (Bolsen and Palm, 2022). Individuals who voted for Trump tend to reside in regions where manufacturing and farming industries are declining, and they perceive that they have something to lose (Talaifar, et al., 2022). A postmodernist rejection of established power structures might seem appealing to such voters who feel left behind by them.

However, it’s important to note that postmodernism does not endorse or justify these actions. While postmodernism questions the idea of objective truth, it does not advocate for the dismissal of factual information or the undermining of scientific consensus. Instead, it encourages critical thinking and the questioning of established norms and narratives. So, while the Trump administration’s handling of the pandemic and its approach to truth and facts may align with some interpretations of postmodernism, it does not necessarily prove that postmodernists were correct all along, or that Trump was a “postmodern president.” It does show that disenchantment with authority and “progress” can make science and experts feel like false promises. However, it also highlights the potential dangers of dismissing objective facts and expert advice, particularly in the context of a public health crisis.

Capitalism

An economy in which most of the productive capacity is privately owned is called a **capitalist economy**. This system of ownership is called capitalism or private enterprise. **Capital**, or productive capacity, includes manufacturing plants, distribution systems, land, raw materials, and money that can be converted into such things. Capital can be thought of as income-producing wealth: If you own something that produces income, you own capital. The larger the share of capital that is owned privately, the more capitalist an economy is said to be. In a purely capitalist economy—an *ideal type* that does not exist in real life—all productive capacity would be privately owned. The United States is one of the most highly capitalistic nations in the industrialized world. More of its productive capacity is privately owned than is the case in most European countries—but it is not completely capitalist. Certain important economic functions (highway construction, mail delivery, education) are performed predominantly by government-owned organizations. Moreover, even economic activities that are *usually* privately owned are not always so: The United States has publicly owned electric power companies, bookstores (on college campuses), campgrounds, marinas, and ski areas. In addition, even highly capitalist countries, such as the United States, have some government involvement in the economy in the form of social security and welfare programs, though such involvement is more limited than in mixed economies. In addition, the extent of such programs varies over time, growing during periods when the working class is politically organized and mobilized (Hicks, Misra, and Tang, 1995; Hicks and Misra, 1994) but also shrinking during times like the 1980s when it is less influential (Hung and Thompson, 2016; Western, 1995).

Although capitalism is primarily found in industrialized economies, its basic characteristics have been adopted by countries in various stages of industrializing, such as South Korea, Taiwan, and Brazil.

Individual and Corporate Capitalism

Capitalist economies can be further subdivided into two types: individual capitalism and corporate capitalism. In individual capitalism, income-producing wealth is owned by individuals or families. In the past, the U.S. economic system was primarily one of individual capitalism. Productive capacity was largely owned by a limited number of very wealthy families, such as the Carnegies, Fords, and Rockefellers. In contrast to individual capitalism is corporate capitalism, in which most income-producing wealth is owned by **corporations**. These are large organizations whose ownership is shared by a number of people, called stockholders. A share of ownership in a corporation is called corporate stock. Corporations exist as separate legal entities. The corporation itself, and not any individual, assumes responsibility for the consequences of corporate decisions. Corporations enjoy various legal rights and must meet certain legal responsibilities; they can be sued and penalized if they fail to do so.



Photo 11.2 The headquarters of Google. For the past century or more, most productive capability in the United States has been controlled by corporations. In recent years, corporations in information-related businesses have become particularly dominant on a global scale.

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As industrial societies grow and modernize, the tendency is for individual capitalism to be replaced by corporate capitalism. In the United States, this happened quite rapidly, between about 1890 and 1905 (Roy, 1983). By 1905, corporations accounted for 74 percent of domestic production (Roy, 1983). The amount of capital required to produce, market, distribute, and sell products in today's large national and international markets is so great that even the wealthiest individuals lack sufficient means to own or finance the entire operation. Therefore, large numbers of individuals pool their wealth and jointly own the corporation. Corporate stock is usually bought and sold on public markets. Although a good many people own some stock, *most* stock is owned by a very small, wealthy segment of the population (see Chapter 6). In fact, because a corporation's rights include ownership of stock in other corporations, a large share of corporate stock in the United States is owned by corporations rather than by individuals.

Corporate Management

Rather than being run directly by their owners, corporations are run by boards of directors elected by the owners, and by managers hired by these boards of directors. Whereas in individual capitalism the owner actually operates the business, in corporate capitalism the owners hire someone else to do so. As a practical matter, the control of the corporation lies with its board of directors and managers, not its owners (Mintz and Schwartz, 1985). Boards of directors are effectively self-perpetuating: Although their members are elected by stockholders, most stockholders vote by proxy; that is, they allow someone else to vote for them. The board of directors makes recommendations to the stockholders concerning its membership, and the proxies ratify these recommendations. The only major exception to this rule is a "hostile takeover," in which a group of investors (which may include other corporations) buys the majority of the stock over the objection of the board of directors.

The American economy in the twenty-first century is best classified as a corporate capitalist system. Although many individual enterprises remain, the bulk of wealth is owned, produced,

and sold by corporations. The 500 largest manufacturing corporations—a tiny percentage of all businesses—account for 42 percent of the U.S. gross national product and two-thirds of after-tax profits (Guzzardi, 1988). Even retailing, once dominated by small, family-owned stores, is today dominated by big corporations such as Home Depot, Kroger, Amazon, Walmart, and Target.

Socialism

A system in which capital is publicly owned is called a **socialist economy**. Sometimes, to emphasize the major role of government, the system is referred to as state socialism (Edwards, Reich, and Weisskopf, 1986). The clearest examples of socialism today are Cuba, Vietnam, and North Korea. China remains officially socialist but, in fact, has moved sharply in the direction of becoming a mixed economy. For many years, the Soviet Union and its satellite countries in Eastern Europe also had socialist economies. However, this changed dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s. During the latter half of the 1980s, under the leadership of President Mikhail Gorbachev, elements of capitalism were gradually introduced into the Soviet economy, and the Eastern European countries were given greater freedom to choose their own direction. By the late 1980s, several of them, led by Poland, had shifted sharply toward capitalism. And in 1991, after an attempted coup against Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin took over as president, and a democratic government was established. The Soviet Union was subsequently abolished, and the former Soviet republics became independent countries, loosely federated in a Commonwealth of Independent States. The largest of the new nations, Russia, began to move sharply toward capitalism under Yeltsin's leadership. However, both political conflict and economic difficulties have slowed this transition. Under the presidency of Vladimir Putin, Russia has again veered off into authoritarianism, though it retains a largely capitalist economic structure. The largest and most important officially socialist country today is the People's Republic

of China. But even China, though it remains staunchly socialist in its ideology, has large and growing elements of private ownership in its economy. Even as it has sought to centralize and tighten political control since the 1989 student uprising in Beijing, the Chinese government has continued in recent years to try to decentralize economic decision-making. It has done this in several ways—allowing small business and private production of goods and services, recruiting multinational corporations to establish manufacturing enterprises in China, and making increased use of market influences in economic decision-making, even in publicly owned industries. In many cases, it is easy for China's publicly owned industries to act on the basis of market forces because they are owned locally (Walder, 1995). Until recently, enterprises owned by local governments have been the leaders in China's economic growth, but in the past decade or two, private entities have also accounted for a great deal of China's dramatic growth. Thus, it is fair to say that the Chinese economy, though still officially socialist, has become increasingly influenced by private ownership and market forces. Even when the Communist Party was in full control in the Soviet Union, that country's economy was never completely socialist. For example, black markets—illegal private sales of goods and services—always

existed in the Soviet Union. Thus, all economies in the real world, whether mainly capitalist or mainly socialist, include some elements of each system.

Karl Marx and Communism

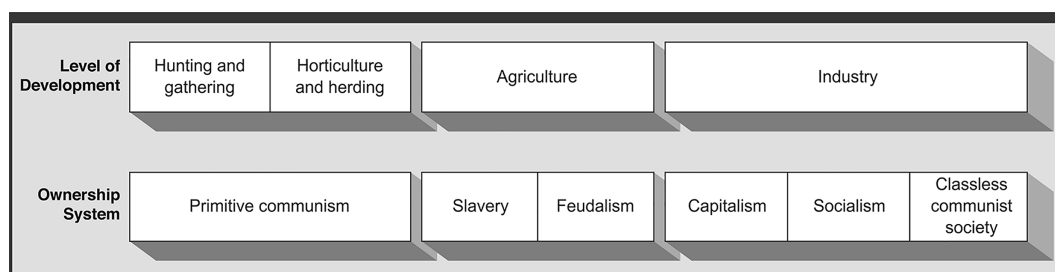
In part because it was ruled by the Communist Party, the Soviet Union was considered by most Americans to be communist. It is true that its ideology was communist, but its economy was not—at least as defined by Karl Marx, on whose theories virtually all twentieth-century socialist economies were based. As Marx saw it, **communism**—or what he called the “classless communist society”—could come only after the long historical process illustrated in Figure 11.1, which Marx believed would end with the “withering away” of the state. The top bar of the figure represents changes over time in levels of economic development, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The bottom bar represents what Marx believed would be the dominant system of ownership at different points in time under each level of development.

The historical process envisioned by Marx began with hunting-and-gathering economies, which produced no surplus and tended to produce and share essentials on a communal basis. For this reason, Marx called such societies “primitive communism.” When these societies gave way to agriculture, the dominant economic system became either feudalism or a plantation system, often with slavery. In both of these systems, a small, wealthy elite owned land, and a large, impoverished segment of the population worked for that elite, which enjoyed the benefits of whatever surplus was produced. Marx believed that industrialization would be dominated by capitalism in its early stages, but that the inequalities of capitalism and the alienation it would cause



Photo 11.3 This KFC near Beijing's Tiananmen Square illustrates the wide reach of multinational corporations.

Courtesy of John E. Farley

Figure 11.1 Stages of economic evolution, according to Karl Marx.

would lead to revolutions establishing socialism. (The extent to which this actually happened is explored in Chapter 18.) Marx saw socialism, however, as only an intermediate step toward the development of communism—a step that would be needed only temporarily to ensure that capitalists overthrown by revolution would not regain their wealth and power. He believed that eventually socialist countries would evolve into communism. Under communism as envisioned by Marx, government would be unnecessary because decisions would be made by collectives of workers who would run the places where they work. Individuals would contribute according to their abilities and receive according to their needs. In reality, however, Marx's ideal has never been achieved—all of the countries that have been ruled by communist parties have in reality been socialist. In fact, it is doubtful that Marx's ideal could ever be achieved, given the tendencies toward bureaucracy in complex societies and toward oligarchy in organizations (both discussed in Chapter 9).

More generally, history has not unfolded in the ways Marx predicted. Major socialist economies did appear, but they did not develop out of capitalism. Rather, they typically emerged as societies, such as Russia and China, underwent the transition from an agricultural economy to an industrial one. Thus, these societies went directly from feudalism to socialism, without a period of capitalism in between, as Marx had predicted. And the majority of socialist economies have in turn been replaced with capitalism or mixed economies—not the classless communist society into which Marx predicted socialism would evolve.

One reason for this is that Marx did not foresee the transition to a postindustrial economy. In such economies, based largely on information and technology, economic success depends on the ability to respond quickly to changes in technology, markets, and society—and bureaucracies associated with the kind of top-down governmental control found in socialist societies cannot respond this way. Neither can some large private-sector bureaucracies, which explains why new startups, international competition, and less hierarchical organizations have taken business away from old, established, hierarchical business organizations like General Motors and IBM.

Where Marx's ideas may find some redemption is in the area of automation. According to Marx, socialism—the fifth stage of ownership as shown in Figure 11.1—would be ushered in, at least in part by machines replacing human labor. While Marx could never have anticipated the rise of the postindustrial economy, not to mention artificial intelligence, he did see the logical conclusion of the industrial age was to replace as many workers with machines as possible. Today, many commentators and even the White House are worried about the future of work itself as machines are poised to take over more and more jobs in the postindustrial economy (Economic Report of the President, 2016; Wadwha, 2014). Could this lead to a socialization of the means of production? Maybe not, but commentators on both the political left and right have called for some kind of guaranteed annual income to deal with the massive unemployment that is being predicted. James Albus (1976) argued some time ago that a national mutual fund, run semiautonomously

from government (much like today's Federal Reserve) should be set up to accelerate the automation process by using public funds to invest in new technologies for businesses. The share of this investment would then be paid directly to the public as a form of annual income for all. Recently, the general idea of a *universal basic income* as a way of protecting people from the effects of automation has gained support among intellectuals of a variety of political persuasions (Manjoo, 2016). As more proposals like this are likely to develop in the near future, we may look back on Marx and think he was not as far off as we once thought.

Mixed Economies

The final modern economic system that we discuss is the **mixed economy**. In this system, characteristic of most of Western Europe, some means of production are privately owned and some are publicly owned. Great Britain, France, and Sweden are prime examples of this system. In the developing world, Zimbabwe can be cited as an example. China and Russia have also taken on some, but not all, of the characteristics of a mixed economy.

Railroads, airlines, and utilities such as gas and electricity are nearly always publicly

owned in a mixed economy, although there may be private competition. Day care for children, which is mainly a private industry in the United States, is run by government on a non-profit basis in virtually all mixed economies. Health care is publicly financed, although doctors may or may not be government employees. Certain manufacturing industries are state owned. Shipbuilding, mining, and petroleum are also frequently public enterprises. At the same time, there is a great deal of for-profit private economic activity, and even government-operated firms often try to maximize profits. Private firms compete with government-owned ones, and some industries are entirely private, although they are typically more regulated than in more capitalist countries such as the United States.

The prevailing political trends can and do influence the precise mix of public and private control. Especially in Great Britain and France, there was a trend toward privatization in mixed economies in the 1980s, reflecting in part the election of more conservative governments. This trend primarily took the form of selling off part or all of the stock in some government-owned industries. Even so, the role of the public sector in these economies remains far greater than in the United States. The key difference is that most European public-service functions, such as health care, utilities, child care, and domestic transportation, remain in the public sector, whereas they are usually in the private sector in the United States.



Photo 11.4 One prediction by Marx that largely has come true is automation: the replacement of workers by machines, a worldwide trend in today's high-technology age.

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Social Consequences of Modern Economic Systems

Sociologists are interested in the social consequences of living under various economic systems. What does it matter for the nature of society and the experiences of ordinary people whether an economic system

is capitalistic, socialistic, or mixed? Since its inception, a common criticism of capitalism has been that it promotes greed and inevitably produces extreme inequalities between the wealthy and the poor. On the other hand, the collapse of the Soviet Union and many other socialist economies raises serious questions about the social and economic viability of socialism. Does socialism inevitably lead to poor productivity and authoritarian, hierarchical forms of government—the conditions that brought down the Soviet Union and its satellites?

Does Capitalism Promote Greed?

As noted, a long-standing criticism of capitalism is that it promotes greed. In fact, some critics have argued that capitalism could not work without greed. In 1972, Richard Edwards and colleagues wrote, “Capitalism would collapse if capitalists followed Christ’s command, ‘If you would be perfect, go sell what you possess and give it to the poor.’” Why do these critics think it would collapse? Because, they argue, capitalism depends on a **norm of maximization** that assumes people will want to get as much as they can. A review of capitalist economists will reveal that economically rational behavior is defined as that which brings the maximum possible return in income, wealth, or profits (see, for example, Riddell, Ramos, and Shackelford, 1979, chap. 11). Early capitalist economists such as Adam Smith (1910 [orig. 1776]) believed that such a norm of maximization would benefit everyone in society, because it would reward efficiency with higher profits. Because people want to get as much money as possible and efficiency is the route to profits, they will become as efficient as possible. However, critics point out, wealth is still limited, and when one person maximizes their wealth, it often occurs at the expense of someone else. For this reason, they point out, capitalism promotes inequality. The highly capitalistic United States is often cited as an example of this: As shown in Chapter 6, the United States has greater economic inequality and more severe poverty than most other industrialized countries, nearly all of which are less capitalistic than the United States.

By now, some of you may be thinking that wanting to maximize one’s wealth and income is simply human nature, not the product of any particular economic system. However, socio-historical analysis strongly suggests that maximization is *not* simply human nature, because it has not existed in many past societies. Max Weber (1958 [orig. 1920]) studied cultural values, particularly as they related to religion, in a wide variety of past societies. He found that through most of human history, people did *not* value maximizing personal wealth and comfort. Rather, values in most preindustrial societies centered on spiritual life, interpersonal relations, community, and tradition. As we see in greater detail in Chapter 15, Weber links the spread of a norm of maximization with the more individualistic values of Protestantism and argues that by promoting individualism, Protestantism created a cultural atmosphere in which capitalism could flourish. In this classic study, Weber made two points that are relevant to our present discussion. First, the norm of maximization is not universal—it has existed only in *some* societies through history. Second, the culture and values of a society may make it more or less conducive to capitalism, a view that is consistent with the notion that capitalism needs the norm of maximization in order to fully develop.

One important counterargument could be made. It could be argued that the norm of maximization is a product of modernization and industrialization, not capitalism, *per se*. In fact, Weber saw Protestantism, capitalism, and industrialism as all contributing to the set of values that includes maximization. Also, it appears that the norm of maximization has arisen in socialist societies as well as capitalist ones and may have even contributed to the downfall of many of the socialist economies that collapsed in 1989 and the early 1990s. In many cases, people in these economies were angry because they learned through news media and, in some cases, through travel that people in capitalist economies were enjoying a higher standard of living than they were. And there is no question that even former Communist Party officials have quickly adopted—or perhaps already believed in—the norm of

maximization: Many of them have made considerable fortunes by gaining ownership of formerly public enterprises (Frydman, Murphy, and Rapaczynski, 1996).

Socialism, Capitalism, the Market, and Productivity

The anger in communist countries over reports of higher standards of living elsewhere brings us to the key criticism of socialism: It cannot produce a good standard of living, because it does *not* provide the incentives necessary to get people to be as efficient as they can. The strength of capitalism is often seen in the *market*: If it is left free from interference, the laws of supply and demand will bring rewards to those who supply what people want and can buy, particularly to those who do it the most efficiently. In fact, the extent to which capitalism actually works this way varies, because the market can only function when there is free competition—that is, a number of suppliers competing with one another to offer the best product at the lowest price. Today, capitalism in many cases has become *oligopolistic*—markets for any given product are controlled by only small groups of producers, who collude rather than compete—or even *monopolistic*—there is only one producer of a given product. To the extent that this is true in any given economy, there cannot be competition, so the market cannot encourage efficiency unless there is international competition. Thus, the market does not always exert great influence under capitalism.

Critics of socialism, however, point out that it is almost impossible for the market to function under state socialism because it is almost by definition monopolistic: The only producer is the state. Moreover, in part because of the state's monopoly power and in part because of a philosophy that emphasizes taking care of people rather than doing what is most efficient, economic decisions are made on the basis of government decision or social policy rather than market factors such as supply and demand. As a result, these critics argue, socialist economies cannot possibly be as efficient as capitalist ones (Clark and Wildavsky, 1992).

The consequence is a low standard of living for everyone, even though nobody may go without very basic essentials.

Is Socialism Dead?

In the modern era of mass communications, such a low standard of living can make socialist societies highly unstable. In fact, it has led many to question whether state socialism is pretty much a thing of the past, even though as of this writing state socialist societies still existed in North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, and, to some degree, China. During the 1980s, in the Soviet Union and its satellites, media images of the higher standard of living of Western countries with their capitalist or mixed economies led to great dissatisfaction with socialism. And once they were given the choice of free, multiparty elections, people in formerly socialist countries have for the most part voted for politicians favoring capitalist or mixed economies based primarily on market forces, although in some of these countries, more socialist-leaning parties have won some elections more recently.

It may be, for reasons suggested earlier in this chapter, that as economies move from early industrialization toward the information-based postindustrial economy, socialism becomes less and less viable (Berman, 1993). We previously noted that, contrary to Marx's predictions, the socialist economies that have existed have not been the result of an overthrow of capitalism. Rather, the socialist economies of both the Soviet Union and China resulted from the overthrow of feudalism. To a large extent, the same is true of Cuba and Vietnam. Thus, socialism has been an alternative to capitalism as a route from an agricultural to an industrial economy. It is an open question whether Russia and China could have industrialized to a greater or lesser extent with a capitalist system, but it is clear that they succeeded in substantially industrializing under socialism (Brus and Laski, 1989, chap. 3). China has adapted to these changes more successfully, but in part, it has done so by becoming more capitalist.

As the economy became more based on information, computers, and free world trade,

however, socialism became more and more of an impediment because it was not as effective as the market in adapting to these rapid changes (Berman, 1993). As one might expect from this, the economic growth of the Soviet Union and its satellites from the 1960s through the 1980s was vastly poorer than in the earlier era of industrialization (Brus and Laski, 1989, p. 31). All of this suggests that while a state socialist economy may be a viable means of industrialization, it does not function well in an advanced industrial or postindustrial economy or under conditions of globalization.

In addition to this, globalization and the information economy have another effect. They make people more and more dissatisfied with the poor productivity of state socialism. When state socialism collapsed, it was in no small part because Russians, Poles, and East Germans were well aware of the vastly higher standard of living in West Germany, the United States, the Scandinavian countries, and other capitalist or mixed economies.

On the other hand, it appears that some formerly state socialist countries, while moving to a market economy, could develop forms of worker ownership that are in fact closer to Marx's ideal communist society than state socialism ever was. Before it was abolished in 1991, the Soviet Union was developing worker-owned industries that functioned in an increasingly market-oriented economy. The future of this remains uncertain, however. Research has shown that most of the ownership of some companies eventually ended up in the hands of former Communist Party officials (Frydman, Murphy, and Rapaczynski, 1996).

In China, on the other hand, employee ownership has been fairly common as the country has moved to a less socialist and more capitalist economy (Australian Employee Ownership Association, 2008). Such worker ownership is an alternative type of economic system that incorporates some important elements of socialism but retains a market economy rather than attempting to plan and manage the economy centrally, as was done under state socialism. The main challenge that these employee-owned companies face is the same one that companies everywhere are facing: To what extent do the

workers think in terms of the long-term welfare of the organization (and thus their own long-term welfare) versus short-term maximization of wages?

As noted earlier in this chapter, another socialist alternative that seems to be producing improved economic growth in China is locally owned enterprises. Like the enterprises of the old Soviet Union, these organizations are governmentally owned. Unlike in the Soviet Union, however, many of China's public enterprises are locally owned and compete with other businesses (public and private) in a market economy. This competition, which the Chinese government calls market socialism, creates many of the same market incentives as would be found in a competitive capitalist economy. With this and other changes from its previous centrally controlled socialist system, the Chinese GDP today is about 185 times what it was in 1978, reaching \$10.87 trillion in 2015, making China today the world's second-largest economy. However, its per capita GDP remains far below that of industrial capitalist and mixed economies. One limitation of market socialism can be seen in the former East Germany. On the one hand, East Germany used a system of market socialism to become the most productive of the old Soviet satellites. A study that compared two similar companies in socialist East Germany and capitalist West Germany found the East German company every bit as technologically competent as the West German company. However, there was a problem: The East German company was less able to innovate, despite its competence, because it was constrained by pressures from the government to meet central planning goals. So even though it was independent and competent (much like today's locally owned Chinese companies), pressures from central planners kept it from adapting as well as it could have (Kogut and Zander, 2000).

While state socialism has largely failed because of its inability to be productive, particularly with the development of globalization and postindustrial economies, mixed economies do not seem to be subject to such problems. Mixed economies such as Sweden, Germany, and Norway are among the most productive in the world (Pontusson, 2005; World

Bank, 1992, p. 219). In mixed economies, the market continues to exercise great influence, but government ownership of some industries and regulation of others act as a counterforce to the tendencies of capitalism to produce socioeconomic inequality. The mixed economy model has also drawn substantial support from the growing environmentalist “green” movement (Hill, 2010; Rae, 1991), and it appears that mixed economies such as Sweden may provide stronger environmental protection than either capitalist ones like the United States or socialist ones like the old Soviet Union. Through strong but flexible environmental regulation, Japan between 1970 and 1990 was able to attain rapid economic growth and substantially improve its air quality at the same time (World Bank, 1992, p. 92). Although social democratic parties suffered setbacks in some countries such as Sweden and Great Britain during the 1990s, some of these setbacks have been only temporary, as these parties regained power in the mid-1990s. Moreover, such parties have gained ground in other countries such as Canada, where the democratic socialist New Democratic Party won a majority in the Ontario parliament in 1990. Since that time, it has at various points also formed governments in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. And even in Sweden and Great Britain, moves to reduce the role of government and increase the role of the private sector were limited in scope: The role of the public sector in these countries remains far greater than it is, for example, in the United States.

The Changing Scale of Modern Economies

Today, goods and services are produced on a larger scale than ever before. When you purchase a good or service, there is a good chance that its producer or provider is a massive international corporation. This is true whether you buy a car, rent a hotel room, eat a meal out, or go shopping: You will likely be dealing with international giants such as General Motors, Holiday Inn, McDonalds, or Walmart. We already noted that the *corporation* rather than the individual

or family business has come to dominate modern capitalist economies. We now examine an additional reality: In many cases, the number of corporations producing any given product has become very small.

Concentration in Corporate Capitalism

An economy in which the number of producers of any given product is small is referred to as a **concentrated economy**. Because only a very few producers control almost all the market for any given product, there is little or no competition. An economy in which there are many producers is referred to as a deconcentrated economy. As shown in Table 11.1, the American economy is highly concentrated. The table shows the share of the market for various products that is controlled by the four largest producers of the product. Note that for most of the products shown in the table, the top four producers control a clear majority of the market, and for some products, they control nearly all the market—90 percent or more. In cases such as this, **oligopoly**—control of virtually all of the market by just a few producers—clearly exists.

The origins of the current high levels of concentration in the American economy can be traced to around the beginning of the twentieth century. In the late nineteenth century, large American producers began to combine into a few giant corporations known as *trusts*, thereby eliminating competition and creating oligopoly in various industries including railroads, steel, oil, banking, and others (Herman, 1981). In some cases, this concentration went so far as to create **monopoly**—control of all or nearly all of a product market by just one producer. In the early twentieth century, growing concern about the effects of concentration in the U.S. economy led to the passage of antitrust laws. However, these laws have rarely been strictly enforced, and current statistics reveal that the American economy has remained concentrated throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. Indeed, some industries have become *more* concentrated over time. Overall, the majority of industries are more concentrated than they were in 1992 and also

Table 11.1 Concentration in the American Economy, Selected Industries: 1982, 1992, 1997, 2002, and 2007

Industry	Number of Firms in Industry					Domestic Market Share of Four Largest Producers (%)				
	1982	1992	1997	2002	2007	1982	1992	1997	2002	2007
Breakfast cereal	32	42	48	45	35	86	85	83	78	80
Pet food	222	102	129	176	199	52	58	58	64	71
Cookies and crackers	296	374	322	296	303	59	56	60	67	69
Chocolate products	77	146	152	138	154	75	75	80	69	59
Beer	67	160	494	349	373	77	90	90	91	90
Soap and detergents	642	635	738	699	659	60	63	66	61	67
Tires	108	104	110	112	90	66	70	72	77	78
Guns (small arms)	138	177	189	179	212	51	43	42	43	35
Household cooking equipment	71	80	77	69	108	52	60	58	56	74
Home refrigerators and freezers	39	52	21	18	19	94	82	82	85	92
Home laundry equipment	15	10	10	13	14	91	94	90	93	98
Household vacuum cleaners	29	35	25	29	30	79	59	68	78	71
Electric lamps	113	76	54	57	69	91	86	90	89	75
Telephones	259	479	548	456	347	76	51	54	56	60
Motor vehicles	284	398	325	308	313	92	84	82	81	68
Aircraft	139	151	172	184	221	64	79	85	81	81
Motorcycles and bicycles	269	244	373	348	462	59	65	68	72	72
Watches and clocks	227	179	145	123	123	51	40	52	47	57
Burial caskets	270	195	161	148	120	52	64	80	73	74

Source: Concentration data for 1982 are from U.S. Bureau of the Census (1986b). Table 5. Data for 1992 are from U.S. Bureau of the Census (1996c). Data for 1997 are from U.S. Census Bureau (2001d). Data for 2002 are from U.S. Census Bureau (2008a).

For 2002 data: U.S. Census Bureau (2008a). Economic Census: Concentration Ratios. 2002 Economic Census, Manufacturing, Value of Shipments, www.census.gov/epcd/www/concentration.html (downloaded October 28, 2009).

For 2007 data: U.S. Census Bureau, (2016a). Economic Census: Concentration Ratios. EC0731SR2: Manufacturing: Subject Series: Concentration Ratios: Share of Value of Shipments Accounted for by the 4, 8, 20, and 50 Largest Companies for Industries: 2007.

2007 Economic Census of the United States. Data downloaded via American Factfinder, http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ECN_2007_US_31SR12&prodType=table (downloaded June 2, 2016).

more concentrated than they were in 1982. This trend appears to be accelerating. In 2014 alone, there was over \$2 trillion in corporate mergers and acquisitions, most of which increased the level of corporate concentration (Vardi, 2014).

For a period of time, economic concentration extended beyond any one product or industry: In the 1960s and 1970s, the dominant corporate form was the *conglomerate*: a huge company that owned large producers in a

number of industries. However, during the corporate takeovers of the 1980s, many conglomerates were dismantled, as companies financed their purchase of other companies by later selling off parts of their acquisitions that were unrelated to the main product (Davis, Diekmann, and Tinsley, 1994). This, ironically, produced even bigger companies but ones that were more specialized in one industry, such as publishing. Retrospective analyses of the conglomerate era suggest that the conglomerate was not an effective form of corporate organization, because the disparate industries were too hard to manage. In fact, it appears to have contributed significantly to U.S. difficulties competing in a global market (Economist, 1991b).

Interlocking Directorates

A feature closely related to concentration, which has also reduced the degree of competition in modern capitalism, is the **interlocking directorate**. This occurs when the same individual serves on the board of directors of more than one corporation. In effect, it means that the same people may have a hand in the operation of numerous legally autonomous corporations. The overwhelming majority of major U.S. corporations have interlocking directorates with other corporations. In fact, interlocking directorships have been widespread ever since the U.S. economy shifted from individual to corporate capitalism around the beginning of the twentieth century (Roy, 1983). Of 1,131 corporations studied by Mintz and Schwartz (1985, p. 145), 998 were part of a continuous network of interlocking directorates. At the center of the network, and connected directly to nearly all of the largest corporations, are banks and insurance companies. Thus, a relatively small group of people has vast power over the economy, and great opportunities and pressures exist for producers who are supposed to compete to collude instead (Burt, 1983; Mintz and Schwartz, 1981a, b). Another very important effect of interlocking directorates is that they help large corporations act on behalf of their political self-interests by enabling them to operate as a relatively unified political force (Baccini and Marroni, 2016; Useem, 1984; Zeitlin, 1974).

Consequences of Concentration

When industries are so concentrated that oligopolies form, several problems can result. First, there may be some of the same efficiency problems that exist under state socialism: If there is no competition, the market cannot reward the most efficient producer or punish bad actors. Poor productivity, low-quality products, overpricing, and failure to respond to changes in demand can all result from the lack of competition when there is too much concentration.

The U.S. automobile industry is often cited as an example of this. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the three major U.S. automakers—General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler—controlled the overwhelming share of the domestic market. During this time, car prices soared, and those companies continued to produce large, gas-guzzling cars even when looming energy shortages and environmental concerns necessitated the production of smaller, more efficient automobiles. Only through the return of competition, in the form of Japanese and European automakers capturing a growing share of the market, were American automakers forced to produce more efficient and reliable products. In the process, however, American automakers lost a substantial part of their market; this might have been avoidable had they produced more efficient and reliable cars without being forced to do so by international competition. This example also shows that excessively concentrated capitalism is subject to some of the same vulnerabilities as socialism in today's globalized economy. In this situation, any domestic economic system that does not include effective competition is highly vulnerable to international competition, as explored in greater detail in a later section of this chapter.

Another problem is that concentration can be a source of great power. At the national level, this power is exercised through the lobbying, political action committee (PAC) contributions, and policy institutes discussed in Chapter 6. Jacobs and Durlam (2016) found that the growth of economic stratification in the United States is primarily due to the decline of labor unions and the rise of business PACs that work to protect the interests of business. Murray

(2017) finds that this increasingly extends to a global level, as well, through things like shared corporate board members. However, power is also exercised on the local level. Large firms can use the local need for jobs to create policy favorable to the firm. For example, a large firm might encourage several localities to compete for their new plants. The firm is able to extract subsidies from local governments in the form of property tax abatements, public services, road construction, and sometimes even land. Many state laws allow the use of property tax abatements as an enticement to plant construction, and most of the time, the maximum legal abatement is routinely given (Wolkoff, 1983). This amounts to a massive subsidy of big business, paid for by taxpayers.

Bigness is also a source of power in the marketplace that can be used to eliminate potential sources of future competition. This is often done through a process known as predatory price cutting: Producers in a monopoly or oligopoly keep new competitors out by temporarily cutting their prices below that of the new producer, often by using money earned in one activity to temporarily subsidize another (Burgess, 1989, pp. 172–79).

Finally, concentration often contributes to inequality in society. To some extent it does so by its very nature, by placing great wealth and power in the hands of a few people. The effects of concentration on wages and prices, however, are more complicated than the foregoing suggests. Concentration may actually lead to *higher* wages, because it eliminates the competition that creates pressures to keep wages low. Employers may have to raise wages to keep high-quality employees, especially when those workers have specialized skills or cannot be easily replaced. In the nineteenth century, when the U.S. economy was characterized by individual capitalism and intense competition, wages were very low. The reason was that producers tried to outsell the competition by keeping prices—and hence wages—low. To a large extent, concentration eliminated this incentive to pay low wages by reducing the incentive to cut prices—monopolies and oligopolies involve little or no price competition. Yet, as we saw in Chapter 6, high-income consumers tend to

choose products and services that are considered superior or more exclusive, which are often associated with higher prices (Wilmer, 2017). This demand for high-end offerings creates a dynamic where certain workers, particularly those in the service industry, are pressured to deliver an elevated level of service. As a result, workers in positions that cater to the preferences of high-income consumers, such as chefs, personal trainers, or hospitality staff, often receive higher wages. However, this intensified pressure and competition can lead to stagnated or even reduced wages for those who cannot meet these elevated demands, thus increasing inequality. In other words, the economy geared toward high-income consumers produces more than luxury goods and high-end services; it produces a diverging wage structure (Wilmer, 2017).

More recently, competition was introduced into the airline industry through deregulation in the 1980s, and again the result was declining wages. Unions were broken or suffered serious damage, and wages fell throughout the industry (Salpukas, 1988). Competition from lower airfares also put pressures on the bus industry to lower their rates. Following the examples of the airlines, Greyhound hired strikebreakers when its drivers struck to oppose wage and benefit cuts. It was three years before the resultant conflict was finally resolved in 1993. As these examples show, intense competition can lead to increased inequality by reducing workers' wages and benefits.

While concentration may reduce pressures to cut wages, it can still lead to inequality through prices, profits, and other mechanisms. For example, producers without competition can raise their prices more than enough to cover the costs of the higher wages they may pay, so profit margins may actually increase to a greater extent than wages. In addition, monopolistic producers may become highly vulnerable to international competition as the economy globalizes—an issue that is discussed in greater detail shortly. When this happens, job loss and displacement, such as that of Detroit's autoworkers, is often the result. Typically, the workers suffer more than their bosses when this happens. In the auto industry, as in the other industries, executive salaries soared

in the 1980s and 1990s. This occurred even as some workers were laid off and others who remained were told they would have to sacrifice wages and benefits in order to save their jobs and their companies. There were also increases of executive salaries at many companies during the Great Recession of 2008–2009, even as the profits of the companies shrank or vanished and thousands of workers were laid off (Bloomberg News, 2009). And overall, executive pay in 2009 was about double what it had been in the 1990s, despite the vast increases in executive pay that also occurred in the 1980s and 1990s (Anderson et al., 2010).

Multinational Corporations

A particular feature of concentrated corporate capitalism is the **multinational corporation**, a giant business that is headquartered in one country but operates in many. Multinational corporations engage in production, resource extraction, and marketing in different parts of the world, locating each operation wherever it will best contribute to the corporation's profitability. Such corporations may dominate markets not just in their home country but in many other countries as well. To some extent, multinational operations may be necessary in today's world economy. In dollar value, about one-fifth of what is manufactured in the United States today is sold elsewhere, and more than one-fifth of what is sold here is manufactured elsewhere. Both markets and sources of essential natural resources are often located far from a company's home country. For example, American Levi's are partially manufactured in Mexico; Toyota, Honda, and Volkswagen have manufacturing operations in the United States. Another common pattern is for a corporation based in one country to be absorbed into one based in another; RCA televisions are today the product of a French government-owned corporation, Thomson SA.

Although multinational corporations often do pay higher wages than Third World workers might otherwise receive, their activities in the developing world are in many ways detrimental. For one thing, they take the profits from what

they produce out of the Third World country, depriving it of the opportunity to invest and grow. This issue, which is addressed by world-system theory, is discussed further in Chapter 12.

Multinational corporations are also often involved in bribery and coercion. Their great wealth and power make it easy to do this in poor countries that often depend on them for jobs. Additionally, preindustrial societies tend to have great inequality of wealth and power and may be ruled by monarchs or dictators who have their own interests at heart to a greater extent than those of the people. Such leaders are often easily swayed by the great wealth of the multinationals, and in some cases may even demand bribes as a cost of doing business. Since congressional investigations of business and political corruption began in 1976, hundreds of American corporations have admitted to making payments to foreign government officials to gain favors. Payments totaling hundreds of millions of dollars were made by various American corporations (particularly in the aerospace industry) to government officials in South Korea, Bolivia, Japan, the Netherlands, Turkey, Italy, Pakistan, and Colombia, among others (Barlow, 1987, p. 261). Since World War II, corporations have been involved—with the assistance of the American government—in overthrowing the governments of Chile, Guatemala, and Iran.

Multinational operations are by their very nature exceedingly difficult to regulate. Every country has different rules, and the corporation can simply move around until it finds either rules it likes or officials willing to bend or ignore the rules. The very threat to move usually discourages enforcement of the rules, for fear that the country will lose jobs. Thus, to a large extent, multinational corporations can operate outside the law.

Globalization and Its Consequences

In Chapter 9, we introduced the concept of **globalization**—a trend whereby production, competition, and economic exchange increasingly occur on a worldwide scale. The growth and development of multinational corporations

is both a cause and an effect of globalization. Production and trade occur in worldwide markets today more than ever before. This can be seen in several ways. First, it can be seen in the growth of international trade: 70 percent of all goods produced in the United States compete with imports, and imports to the United States increased by 80 percent just between 1982 and 1986 (Pattison, 1990), and more than doubled between 1990 and 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996b, 2001h). At the same time, American-made products and services are distributed worldwide and compete in many countries with products and services produced there. There are, for example, over 3,000 7-11 stores in Japan. In virtually all industrialized countries, the share of product markets taken by imports has risen; in fact, the increase has been faster in a number of other countries than in the United States (Vernon, Spar, and Tobin, 1991).

With globalization, the line between domestic products and imports becomes increasingly unclear: The vast majority of all U.S. manufacturers use foreign materials in their domestic manufacturing process, and U.S. materials are similarly used by foreign producers. U.S. firms have many production plants in other countries, and foreign firms have many production plants in the United States. During the 1980s, Japanese companies created over 10,000 jobs in Tennessee (Pattison, 1990), and U.S. firms employed thousands of people in Mexico. Today, even Korean auto manufacturers have plants in the United States.

Globalization also affects capital markets—that is, the buying and selling of stocks and bonds and the lending and borrowing of money. In part because of computer technologies, these activities have become so worldwide that international borders have almost ceased to have any meaning (Aho and Levinson, 1988). Currency trading has also grown dramatically. Between 1973 and 1993, the amount of money changed from one currency to another every day soared from \$10 billion to \$1.3 *trillion*—130 times as much (Menshikov, 1997)—and by 2007, the figure had reached a mind-boggling \$3.2 trillion (Bank for International Settlements, 2007). April 2016 had a daily rate of \$5.1 trillion (Bank

for International Settlements, 2016, Triennial Central Bank Survey). That figure represents the entire U.S. economy for 2007 (\$13.8 trillion) being traded every three days.

Globalization has been going on for a long time, but we are now in a period of unprecedented acceleration of this process. Chase-Dunn, Kawano, and Brewer (2000) studied world trade in relation to domestic production over a 160-year period in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They found a long-term trend of globalization, along with three distinct surges of globalization: in the mid-to-late nineteenth century (about 1845–1880), in the first quarter of the twentieth century, and in the last half of the twentieth century. However, the third surge took globalization to a level beyond what was attained in any previous time period so that the level of globalization today is unprecedented in human history. What caused this? In developed countries like the United States, businesses have led the way in pursuing policies to accelerate and encourage globalization in concert with new technologies in communications and transportation. In developing countries, technocrats—the policy experts that guide political leaders—pushed for globalization. In both developed and developing economies, the expert advice of economists was critical to legitimizing these efforts (Fairbrother, 2014).

Consequences of Globalization for the United States

The trend toward globalization has had a number of social and economic consequences for the United States. First and foremost, it has meant a loss of economic dominance (Vernon, Spar, and Tobin, 1991; Aho and Levinson, 1988). In the past, the United States was the world's largest manufacturer. American products were sold not only in the United States but throughout the world. With globalization, however, more and more countries around the world have developed the capacity to produce the same products that are made in the United States, and they compete with American producers in world markets. Today, for example, Japan and Korea account for a substantial share of worldwide automobile production; 50 years

ago, their share was much smaller and the American share much larger. In the early 1950s, the United States produced about 60 percent of the world's manufactures; by the early 1980s, it produced less than 30 percent (Gill and Law, 1988, p. 340). Today, the combined gross national product of the European Community is similar to that of the United States. Japan, with less than half the population of the United States, had two-thirds the gross national product of the United States in 1993 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996b, p. 853; Krugman, 1990).

In some cases, international competitors have prospered in the world market in part because they pay lower wages. Korean Hyundai cars, for example, can be produced and sold at a lower price than American, European, or Japanese cars largely because Korean autoworkers are paid less than those in other countries. However, globalization's contribution to low-wage employment cannot be blamed purely on international competition. As companies in industrialized countries such as the United States have sought to cut costs, they have exported jobs to Third World countries where wages are lower. The most visible example of this is the large-scale shifting of jobs to Mexico by American companies. The number of foreign-owned (mostly U.S.) manufacturing plants in Mexico near the border reached 1,250 by 1988 and 3,600 by 2001 (Rohan, 1989; Lindquist, 2001). And by 1996, three-quarters of a million Mexican workers were employed in *maquiladoras*—mostly foreign-owned plants located in Mexico to take advantage of Mexico's low wages (Brouthers, McCray, and Wilkinson, 1999). Most of these plants are owned by American or (to a lesser extent) Japanese interests. Mexico is highly attractive to American businesses because workers there can be paid as little as 15 to 20 percent of what they would have to be paid in the United States. Another reason companies can operate more cheaply in Mexico is that, for the most part, there has been little enforcement there of environmental protection requirements. In some cases, hazardous wastes are simply allowed to run into the streets in border towns dominated by American-owned plants. This movement of jobs across international borders has sparked

an intense debate in the United States, which is examined further in this chapter's Putting Sociology to Work section.

Consequences of Globalization for the World

It has been suggested that as economic activities continue to globalize, nations as entities become less influential and less important. In an economic sense, at least, boundaries are rendered increasingly meaningless. An "American" car today may be made of parts assembled in Canada, Mexico, France, and Japan as well as the United States. The same may be true of a "Japanese" car. The corporations that produce these cars are not only multinational in the sense that they sell their products worldwide: They also *produce* them worldwide. The growth of such international modes of production makes these producers more powerful relative to governments than corporations were in the past (Gill and Law, 1988, p. 365). Not only can multinationals move jobs around in search of cheap labor, as when they shift jobs from the United States or Japan to Mexico or Korea, they can also use the *threat* of such moves to extort or pressure governments to pursue policies that serve their interests.

Several writers on globalization have suggested another way in which individual nations may become less important. They point to regional economic coalitions of countries that may cooperate within each coalition and compete with other coalitions (Gilpin, 1979; Krugman, 1990). There is already evidence that this is happening in Europe, as a free trade zone has been created and economic and political cooperation has increased among the nations of the European Union, including the creation of a common currency, the euro. To a lesser degree, similar trends are happening in North America with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Gilpin and others foresee a similar trend among Pacific Rim countries such as Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, and possibly China. However, backlash against the negative effects of globalization may act to limit this tendency, as seen in the Brexit vote (a 2016 referendum in which the UK voted to leave the European Union) and the emergence of opposition to

trade agreements in both the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States that same year, not so long after both parties had mostly supported such agreements.

As nation-states weaken, some analysts argue that democracy is threatened (Barber, 1996). For one thing, democracy has always operated in the form of the nation-state (e.g., through election of the president and the Congress), so as the nation-state is weakened, what can be influenced through its democratic decision-making process becomes more limited. Closely related, the power of global market forces takes more and more decisions out of the hands of democratically elected representatives. This may be efficient, but it can also be undemocratic. Additionally, globalization is likely a key factor contributing to the type of fundamentalist tribalism that lies beneath both domestic and international terrorism.

Finally, the greater power of the multinational corporations in a globalized economy creates increased risk of ecological crisis. Deforestation is occurring rapidly worldwide and along with increased fossil fuel use is contributing to an increasingly rapid rate of global warming. Ozone depletion owing to use of aerosol sprays and air conditioning and the spread of several of the world's deserts because of depleted water supplies and other environmental alterations are also significant threats. Environmental disasters such as the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico can create destruction far from the country where the company that caused the disaster is based. The potential for social conflict over such issues is great. On the one hand, everyone in both advanced industrial countries and developing countries is threatened by these environmental problems. At the same time, however, developing countries have clearly stated that they do not want to be deprived of the economic development that has led to the growth of the industrialized countries, even though such growth incurred substantial costs. Often, they see the concerns raised by labor and environmental groups in developed countries as thinly disguised efforts to block competition by preventing them from developing.

These debates often surround the issue of sustainable development: How can we

encourage economic growth in developing countries in a way that will benefit those countries (not just the multinational corporations that operate there), and in a way that can be sustained over the long run without further damaging the environment? A closely related issue is the question of who really benefits when international corporations build plants or extract natural resources in developing countries. One view, modernization theory, argues that both the corporations and those who live in developing countries benefit because of the jobs and new markets that are created by the investment that the corporations bring (de Soysa and Oneal, 1999). But others, following dependency theory and world-system theory, argue that the corporations take wealth out of the developing countries and gain control of resources that could otherwise have been developed and benefited from by the people living in the countries (Bornschiefer and Chase-Dunn, 1985). This question, which has become a major debate among sociologists who study globalization and social change, is examined in detail in Chapter 18. Among the general publics of many countries, as well as among sociologists, debates about globalization and its effects on workers, the environment, and sustainable development intensified around the turn of the new millennium. These issues dominated the 1992 environmental summit in Rio de Janeiro, and since then they have been at the center of debates—and at times loud protests—over NAFTA, the WTO, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, international trade policies, and the extent and causes of global warming as well as efforts to control it.

Unemployment and the Economic Cycle

Two closely related problems in modern economies are unemployment and the economic cycle. Unemployment occurs when people who want to work are unable to find jobs. Unemployment rises and falls along with an economic cycle, a periodic movement of the economy between “boom” and “bust.” During boom periods, jobs are plentiful, wages rise, businesses grow, and

unemployment is low. During bust periods—called recessions or depressions, depending on their severity—unemployment rises, wages fall, and businesses shrink in size. As the economy has globalized, periods of boom and bust have become worldwide in scale. For example, in the early 1990s and again in 2007–2009, economic slowdowns occurred not only in the United States but throughout the industrialized world, including Japan and virtually all of Europe. This occurs because producers of goods increasingly rely on a worldwide market, rather than only on buyers in the country where the goods are produced.

The functionalist and conflict perspectives offer different interpretations concerning the meaning of the economic cycle. The functionalist perspective sees the economic cycle as a means by which the economy corrects itself. When demand outstrips supply, a boom period occurs, until prices rise high enough that people cannot pay them, or people borrow so much that they have trouble handling the debt. At that point, people stop buying, loans are not paid back, and the economy goes into a “bust” period. Eventually, prices fall or stop rising, people learn to live within their means, and a new upturn occurs.

Conflict theorists view the economic cycle and unemployment as means by which some people gain at the expense of others. In most capitalist countries, if it is profitable to lay workers off, it will be done. In mixed and socialist economies, workers’ welfare is more likely to be considered in decisions regarding layoffs. This clearly makes the employer less profitable in hard times, and it is one reason that government-owned companies in Western Europe have sometimes been less profitable than private ones. In these countries, an additional consideration is that laid-off workers may vote against the government.

Some conflict theorists believe that the economic cycle itself is useful to the owners of capital. The idea dates to Marx (1967 [orig. 1867–1894]) and a concept he called the *reserve army of the unemployed*. According to Marx, this reserve army serves an important function for the owners of capital: It reminds workers that they can easily be replaced and keeps them from demanding too much in the way

of higher wages and benefits. Modern conflict economists and sociologists have applied this argument to the economic cycle. They argue that when a boom economy creates pressures for increased wages, a recession is actually useful to employers because it raises the unemployment rate, and this allows employers to threaten their workers with replacement if they demand too much (Lekachman, 1982). Sometimes they deliver on this threat, as happened with increasing frequency in meatpacking, the airline industry, and other industries in which striking workers were replaced during the 1980s. One reason that the strategy succeeded was the presence of large numbers of unemployed workers—there were over 11.5 million at one point. In fact, recessions can be very profitable. During the twentieth century, the share of American corporate income going to profits, as opposed to wages, was generally higher after recessions than before. (For further discussion of these and related issues, see Gordon, 1975; Heilbroner, 1978.) During the 1991–1992 recession, for example, many workers suffered wage freezes, and in some cases even cuts. Reductions in employee health insurance coverage (or sharp premium increases) were widespread, with increased numbers of workers left without coverage at all. Conversely, during the boom of the mid and late 1990s, wages and benefits recovered somewhat, though more so for well-educated workers than for those lacking skills demanded by the information economy. Still, employers such as fast-food outlets did have to raise wages and improve benefits somewhat in the late 1990s to be able to attract workers in an economy where jobs were less difficult to find than in the early 1990s. Again, with the Great Recession of 2008–2009, wages and employment shrank sharply, so that after the recession, in 2013, corporate profits were at an 85-year high and employee compensation at a 65-year low (Norris, 2014). The share of GDP going to after-tax profits set records in both 2012 and 2013. Thus, there is considerable evidence to support the conflict perspective’s argument that recessions and economic downturns are a means by which corporations and employers weaken the position of their workers to, over the longer term, maximize their profits.

Financial Systems

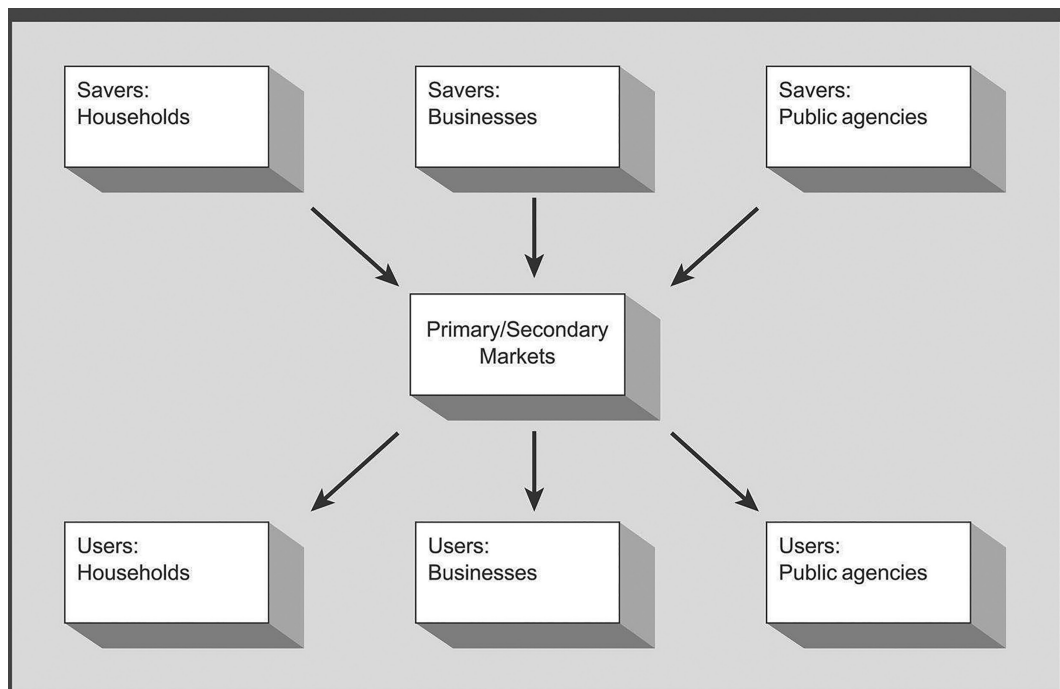
The 2008 financial crisis and recession highlighted the importance of finance to the health and functioning of the overall economy. Investors (banks included) had put their money into risky investments tied to the booming U.S. housing market. As this market collapsed in the wake of the late 2007 economic downturn, heavy losses began to be suffered by these investors. In September 2008, with banks seeing their investments spiraling downward, they simply stopped lending to one another—or anyone else. Without a massive government infusion of cash, policymakers were afraid the crisis would have plunged the world economy back into another Great Depression. Financial systems are mysterious to most people, yet they are crucial to how an economy operates. In this section, we examine how finance can affect the character of an economy and why it sometimes plunges them into crisis as it did in the fall of 2008.

A **financial system** can be defined as the set of institutions that funnel money from savers to competing investors (Zysman, 1983, p. 57).

Primarily, this system consists of banks and stock markets (sometimes referred to as equity markets or capital markets). The character of the financial system will largely determine the character of the entire national economy. An economy can be more dynamic, but volatile, or it can be more stable, but rigid. We examine this trade-off as well as the basics of financial systems and their impact on overall economic performance. Essentially, financial systems try to accomplish two main goals. First, they facilitate the flow of resources, especially money from savers to productive uses (through investors such as banks or stock markets). Second, they facilitate the flow of information by monitoring where funds should go, to whom they should go, as well as where and to whom they should not go.

The financial system is an intermediary between the households, businesses, and public agencies that wish to save money (savers) and the households, businesses, and public agencies (users) that wish to invest those savings for productive uses. Figure 11.2 shows this relationship between savers and users of financial

Figure 11.2 How capital markets work.



capital. Money is funneled from savers through the major institutions of the financial system (stock markets, bond markets, banks, etc.) to those who use that money to invest in the economy. This activity also has a social-class element to it that is not widely known. Financial markets are split between primary markets and secondary markets. Primary markets are the face-to-face transactions between elite market players of the upper class who actually set the stock, bond, or other prices. Secondary markets are those that all others participate in after the prices have already been set and the best deals already taken in the primary market.

The two goals of facilitating the flow of resources and information are tightly linked to one another. Without proper information about firm performance, investors will not know where to invest in the first place. Without an efficient flow of resources, the best information in the world will not be useful. To achieve these two interrelated goals, national economies tend to build their financial systems either around **debt** (banks) or **equity** (stock) markets. The choice of *debt* from banks or *equity* from stock markets is very important for the monitoring and ultimate character of a national economy.

In some countries like Germany or Japan, the national economy is organized around a *debt-centered system*. Banks fund most economic activity, as firms borrow the money they use to invest in new projects. This often takes two main forms. First are loans from a bank. The downside to this is that the borrower must pay interest on the loan, which can be difficult in bad times when the business is not making much money. Second are bonds. Bonds pay out interest to investors on a regular schedule. These payments must be made regardless of the financial health of the business. Thus, both of these options can be very tough on new businesses that are struggling to make a profit.

In stock market systems like that in the United States, the national economy is organized around equity rather than debt. These are known as *equity-based systems*. Investors purchase shares of ownership in a company (equity) and are then paid only for a percentage of the profit, once a profit is made. This puts off payment until the business is ready and able to

pay out cash. The downside is that it also represents a loss of control in ownership.

It is important to note that debt/bank-based systems like one in Japan also have stock markets and that equity/stock market-based systems like the system in the United States also have big influential banks. But the role of banks in the United States or of the stock markets in Japan is of less importance. The different forms of financing have important and powerful effects on the subsequent behavior of the businesses they fund. Social scientists have used the concepts of *voice* and *exit* to illuminate this effect (Hirschman, 1970; Zysman, 1983).

Voice or Exit

Equity markets monitor economic performance through the threat of **exit**. If investors are unhappy with the economic performance of a firm, they can exit from their relationship with it by pulling out their funds. Equity financing is attractive because investors only have to be paid *after* the business is already making a profit. Until then, no payments have to be made. A downside is that the relationship between investor and firm may not be very close and may not generate very detailed or robust information about the firm. Without reliable information, the monitoring function of the financial system may not be very effective.

Bank- or debt-centered systems rely more on **voice**—taking an active role, or “voice,” in the decisions that are made at the firm because relationships are based on loans between the bank and its client firms, and if things start to go wrong, the bank will know about it (as the firm fails to make their payments). The bank is more likely to profit if the firm succeeds, so it is in the bank’s interest to monitor the behavior of its firms by ensuring that the bank has a voice in what goes on. This may include specifying the terms of the loan proactively from the outset to avoid trouble or sending out teams of experts from the bank to look over a firm’s operations when times are tough. So, voice-based monitoring is a “hands-on approach,” while exit is an “arm’s-length” approach.

Thus, banks/voice tend to produce better information and longer-term relationships but

are somewhat slow and rigid. They tend to be slow to respond to sudden changes in economic fundamentals, because the terms of their loans are locked-in for longer periods of time than the “easy, breezy” relationships equity market investors have with the firms they own. Equity markets/exits tend to produce less reliable information and shorter-term relationships, but they are fluid, flexible, and respond better to sudden changes in economic conditions. In general, then, we can say that equity markets probably do a better job of facilitating the flow of resources, while debt systems do a better job of facilitating the flow of information. The financial systems of the United States, Canada, and the UK are largely equity markets; Japan, Germany, South Korea, and Sweden are largely bank-centered markets. Equity markets also appear to be better at bouncing back from crises; however, critics of equity markets will claim that they are also more likely to cause a crisis because they feed *financial speculation*, a term we investigate later in the chapter. Finally, it should be noted that in 1999 the United States significantly complicated the distinction between debt and equity by allowing commercial banks to essentially merge with investment banks. In essence, it became possible for banks to invest in equity. Banks subsequently invested in the highly profitable subprime mortgage market of the 2000s but found their entire operations threatened when those markets crashed in the latter years of the decade. This seems to point out the need for financial systems to be generally characterized by primarily by either debt/voice or equity/exit, but not both (Flota, 2010).

Financial Crises

In September 2008, a global recession became a global financial crisis. It was the latest of many that have occurred across the globe since the early 1970s, when such crises became more common after the collapse of the Bretton Woods system. Bretton Woods was a system aimed at regulating the flow of money around the world and the value of currencies in relation to one another. As a result, very little of it actually flowed across national borders. That which

did, did so mainly to facilitate trade between two parties in two different nations. When the system collapsed in the 1970s, money began to fly around the world in increasingly large numbers as investors began to speculate in markets across the globe. **Speculation** is when investors invest in something purely to make money from the sale of the investment, not to produce a good or service with that investment. As this occurred, many global investors became very rich, but a spate of financial crises also began to occur. Financial crashes like the one that started the Great Depression in 1929 or the crisis of 2008 are part of a phenomenon that has been ongoing since markets were formed. When a process of boom and bust or a financial crisis spreads from one market to another, or from one country to another, this is called a **financial contagion**. In this section, we examine briefly how and why the crises occur.

Economic historian Charles Kindleberger (1989) studied financial crises. He elaborated a model of how such crises proceed, presented in the Sociological Insights box titled “Kindleberger’s Simplified Model of Financial Crises.” As the model makes clear, a great deal of what makes markets work and what makes them fail is social and psychological. The stages of distress and panic are periods in which market participants begin to fear the actions of others. They literally begin to fear others’ fears. This was likely not far from his mind when President Franklin Roosevelt reminded Americans in the depths of the Great Depression that “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

In the financial crisis of 2008, the mania stage can be seen in the astronomical rise of real estate prices across the United States after 2001. As prices continued to rise, many commentators began to worry that a financial “bubble” was forming. The implication being that this bubble was getting too big and could “burst,” meaning a rapid decline in prices. The term “bubble” is common slang for a market that is rising too high, too fast, beyond any rational reason. The implication is that the prices were being driven up by speculators who simply wanted to make a quick buck. The term “flipping” became a common term for someone who buys a home and then very quickly resells it (flips it) as the value

of the home rises. Commonly, the buyer would only hold the property for a few weeks or months before flipping it, thereby making a quick profit. Often, several thousand dollars could be made in a short period of time at the height of the mania. A common warning sign that a bubble has developed is the rise of fraud in a market, and such signs were revealing themselves prior to the crash (Fligstein and Roehrkasse, 2016). Yet, as long as everyone was making money, almost everyone was willing to turn a blind eye or worse, even the Federal Reserve of the United States, the nation's central bank (Fligstein, Brundage and Schultz, 2017). Risk assessment officers, hired by banks to make sure they were not taking on overly risky investments, were paid to assess what were very risky investments as not so risky—because everyone was making so much money doing so (Pernell, Jung and Dobbin, 2017). But the fact that some people finally began to question the rationality of the market's meteoric rise was another telltale sign that a period of distress was about to set in. Many began to worry that the prices were going to reach their peak, especially as mortgages began to fail and losses began to mount. Speculators began to wonder if the time was soon approaching that they should pull their money out, so they would not be left holding properties with falling values. Slowly, buyers began to shift into selling and the prices began to fall, slowly at first. As prices fell, however, the final stage, panic, eventually set in. Investors began to sell off the properties as fast as they could, causing the real estate prices to fall just as fast as they had risen. Businesses and individuals that had

invested in real estate and had not sold in time were left with massive losses. The economy began to crash as these losses rippled across the economy, and thus occurred the latest financial crisis to beset the American economy. But this crisis was the worst since the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s. Commentators would later label it the “Great Recession.”

Derivatives: Financial Insurance or Weapons of Mass Destruction?

One of the factors that made the Great Recession so severe was the use of derivatives that served to compound economic losses. **Derivatives** are financial instruments whose value is derived from the value of other underlying assets—stocks, bonds, currencies, and the like. So, just as an insurance policy on a \$500,000 home is going to be worth more than a policy on a \$50,000 home, the value of a derivative rises or falls based on the underlying value (or riskiness) of the asset it is based on. Derivatives are supposed to act as financial insurance. Let's say an investor buys many shares of a stock. The investor believes the stock will go up in value in the next month but knows there is at least some chance the stock might go down. To hedge the bet, the investor can buy a derivative contract from a seller—let's say a bank—that stipulates if in those 30 days the stock goes down instead of up, the bank covers the losses on the stock. The investor is only out the money originally paid for the stock—no more—plus the fee for the contract. If, on the other hand, the stock



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

Kindleberger's Simplified Model of Financial Crises

- 1 **Mania:** New opportunities for profit result in an irrationally rapid rise in prices.
- 2 **Distress:** Investors begin to fear that values may be getting too high.
- 3 **Panic:** A general sell-off begins as values crash.
- 4 **Contagion:** The preceding process begins to affect other markets.

goes up as expected, the investor is only out the money paid to the bank for the derivative contract. If the bank thinks this is a pretty safe investment—meaning the stock probably will go up—then it will likely charge the investor a modest fee. But if the bank feels the investment is risky, it is likely to charge the investor a much heftier fee.

Much of the time, this is how derivatives work, as a hedge against risk. So why, then, did famed investor Warren Buffett (2002) call derivatives “weapons of financial mass destruction”? The problem is that sometimes derivatives can make the losses they are trying to prevent more likely to occur. And this is where the insurance model breaks down. When you buy flood insurance for your home, it does not make the flood more likely to occur. But with financial insurance, sometimes it does. When the psychology of the market shifts from “desire for gain” to “fear of losses” (usually during a financial bubble), the same act of buying a derivative to hedge against losses can be seen as a sign that a market is ripe for a crash. In normal times, buying the contract would be seen as prudent, but in a bubble, when there is a fear of a crash, buying the contract can actually *cause* the crash! Other investors worry that there is something they don’t know, and just to be safe, they sell the stock. Then others follow suit and sell their stock. Then even more sell. Soon, there is a cascading crash, and the price of the asset plummets. Fear of the market crashing actually makes the market crash.

A second way in which the insurance model breaks down is in the form of financial gambling, that is, speculation. If you think about it, hedging against a loss is a form of betting that there will be a loss. Otherwise, why hedge against it? Investors have taken this simple principle and turned gambling with derivatives into the largest single market in the world. On any given year, the global market for derivatives is around ten times the size of the entire world economy of goods and services, reaching over \$691 trillion in 2014 (Bank for International Settlements, 2016). In that same year, global GDP was about \$77 trillion. With derivatives, investors can gamble not just on financial assets like stocks, bonds, and currencies but also on

the weather, sporting events, celebrity deaths, almost anything under the sun. And the mathematical algorithms used to create sophisticated derivatives are literally often more complicated than rocket science.

To give you a metaphorical idea of this, let’s imagine a giant casino where on the bottom floor people are playing the games and the slot machines. Think of the Luxor in Las Vegas, the massive black pyramid that impressively towers over the skyline of the Vegas strip. In reality, the bottom floor of the Luxor is a casino, but the other floors are all pretty much hotel rooms. Let’s imagine instead that the floors above are hollowed out in the center, so that you could go up to any of the floors, all the way to the top of the pyramid, and be able to look down onto the casino floor, as well as all the other floors below you. Let’s further imagine that on all these floors, there are other smaller casinos where people are all simply betting on what the people on the bottom floor are gambling on. So, a \$10 dollar roll of the dice on the bottom floor might have a \$5 dollar bet placed against it on the second floor. On the third floor a \$15 dollar bet is placed against the original \$10 roll of the dice, so that now we have \$25 actually riding on the \$10 roll of the dice. But, of course, we aren’t done. *Each* floor is betting on the roll of the dice. We might end up with \$100 riding on that \$10 roll of dice—ten times the original amount. But we still aren’t quite done. In the world of derivatives, all the floors could also place bets on those being placed on all the other floors above and below them. In the Luxor, there are 30 floors. If you can imagine a formula that could handle all those bets at the same time, you would start to visualize the level of complexity of some of the world’s most sophisticated derivatives. Some observers believe there are only a handful of the world’s best mathematicians who truly understand the most complex derivatives! You don’t have to understand them to make money with them.

In good times, derivatives allow the best investors in the world to make enormous fortunes. But what happens when the market turns sour as it did in the Great Recession of 2007–2009? In recessions, multiple layers of bets can turn into multiplied losses. What would have

been a \$10 loss in our example could be a \$100 loss. While some derivatives will cancel one another out, the more severe the downturn in the market, the less likely this is and the deeper the losses are likely to be. However, to understand why this was so severe during the crash, we are not quite done with our casino metaphor. Imagine if nearly 90 percent of the money that was used to place those bets on the floors above was actually borrowed money—something known in the financial world as buying on margin. If an investment goes sour and takes lots of derivative investors with it who have all invested on margin, the losses may exceed all their personal assets, wiping them out, as well as many of the people they owe. This is what happened in the Great Recession.

Karl Polanyi and the New Economic Sociology

In this final section, we look at the field of economic sociology and its classical founder Karl Polanyi. Sociologists refer to the sociological study of the economy as “new” to differentiate the “old” study of the economy that Marx, Weber, and Durkheim devoted a great deal of their time to. With Polanyi, whom we learn about later in the chapter, sociologists broke not only with many of the assumptions of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim but also with those of professional economists, creating a tension between the fields of economics and economic sociology that survives to this day.

The Sociological Study of the Economy

Sociologists study the economy in almost exactly the opposite manner in which economists study it. That is, economists look at numbers, self-interest of the individual, and numerical relationships and hold all other “social” factors to the side (saying that, although “social” factors make a difference, they do not change fundamental economic realities). For them, everything can be reduced to numbers.

The reason for this is simple: Economics wants to be a predictive science. The easiest way

to do this is to create a model of human behavior that is easy to predict. So, economists traditionally accomplished this by assuming that humans are always maximizing good things and minimizing bad things, the norm of maximization mentioned earlier in the chapter (economists define this as an actor’s individual self-interest). While contemporary economists have significantly complicated this simple model, this did allow them to reduce everything to numbers. One does not need to know exactly what a person’s wants and desires are to be able to predict behavior. (Remember algebra? We don’t have to know the values of X and Y to be able to create a formula.) And someone’s desires can be converted to economic value using this model, as well. Imagine that right now what you really want to do is play Pokémon Go rather than keep reading this textbook. How much would we have to pay you to not go play the game? Whatever that figure is represents the economic value of your preference to play Pokémon Go. Thus, human behavior is actually quite simple to understand in economics and because of that, easy to predict.

Economic sociologists tend to take the opposite approach: Human behavior is messy. Although self-interest is important, it is social influences that really matter. Of course, as with all other topics, a variety of sociologists take a variety of approaches to studying the economy. But in general, sociologists see economic activity generated by the same forces that generate all other forms of social activity: group identity, socialization, love, passion, hate, status, revenge, sex, and so on. Competition and self-interest certainly play a role in these, but it is not simply about what is best for “me,” it is also what is best for “we.” Sometimes, “me” and “we” even conflict with one another, for instance, in the form of self-sacrificial behavior in support of a group.

Let’s imagine that it is a sunny day, and you are strolling to class on your college’s campus. There is likely place on campus, possibly near the student union, where people and organizations attempt to sell things like T-shirts, credit cards, posters, or snacks to students as they pass by. Let’s imagine that one day you are surprised to find a vendor offering raw meat. But not just any raw meat. This vendor is selling dog and cat meat. What do you think you and your fellow

students' reaction would be to such a situation? Would you be angry, disgusted, or both? Or would you become a willing customer? Based on my experience (Flota) of offering up a similar hypothetical situation to my students over the years, I would say that you would not be happy. In fact, a similar story usually results in audible groans and shocked looks from my students. Not only would this person be engaging in behavior that is not appropriate for a college campus (selling raw meat), but they are violating the cultural values of their "customers" by killing and trying to sell animals that Americans define as "pets," not "food." The person would never be granted a permit to sell such items at a college and would likely be charged with animal cruelty. Yet, in many parts of the world, dogs and cats are indeed defined as food, and the act of selling such meat in a street market in parts of Asia, for example, would not be considered deviant.

So, the point of this ridiculous example is that what is considered efficient economic activity is completely wrapped up in the cultural and social context in which that activity takes place. So is, sociologists contend, all economic behavior. The goal of most economic sociologists is to rescue the study of the economy from the mathematicians.

Karl Polanyi and Adam Smith

These assumptions were famously challenged by a social scientist by the name of Karl Polanyi. Today, Polanyi is a leading classical influence in economic sociology. Polanyi represents the transition to a "new economic sociology" from the classical economic sociology of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim (Block, 1990; Granovetter, 1985). Polanyi's work directly challenged the notion that the economy and society were two separate spheres. In fact, Polanyi challenged the economists' notion that the market was a universal or natural part of human society ([1944] 2001). To fully understand what Polanyi was criticizing, we have to learn a little economics. Just a little—we promise!

Economics is built on the notion of the **invisible hand** of supply and demand. Adam Smith, the "father of capitalism," is credited

with this idea ([1776] 1910). The notion is that if we produce something and decide we are going to gouge you, the consumer, with really high prices, a competitor can come along and charge a lower price for the same goods and steal you, our customers, away from us. That's what we get for trying to price gouge our customers. Our competitor comes in and offers a lower price to you, which helps you out, and of course, it helps our competitor out because they get your money and your business. The only person who loses is us, and we are the one who was trying to cheat you anyway. So, in Smith's famous phrase:

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest.

Every individual . . . generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it . . . he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.

(Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*)

So, the market itself is said to **self-regulate**. No need to interfere with the market; the invisible hand will do the job for us, protecting us from predatory producers and increasing the quality of goods over time. In fact, the more we interfere, the less effective and efficient the market becomes, and the less protected we will all be by the invisible hand.

But Smith and his followers also went further. The market became thought to be part of human nature. We *naturally* know how to interact in a market, they thought. Markets have since been seen by these theorists to be everywhere: marriage markets, friendship markets, and so on. The idea is that human beings are always engaged in market-like behavior, maximizing good things and minimizing bad things. This is called Rational Choice theory. So, economists will say that human beings are **rational maximizers**. That is, we are *rational*: We make conscious, deliberate decisions based on weighing alternatives and the choices we have. And, we *maximize* the things that bring

us good things and go for those things that will best satisfy our desires (Hodgson, 1988). In this sense, economists in the tradition of Smith see the norm of maximization (discussed earlier in this chapter) as an innate and universal human tendency, in contrast to sociologists, who see it as something that is culturally learned and specific to certain social and cultural contexts.

Empirical research has not been too kind to Smith's theoretical assumption that humans are always rational maximizers. Today, we know that most of human behavior is "reflexive" (Hodgson, 1988; Massey, 2005). That is, it happens more or less without us really thinking about it, like a reflex or habit. Humans certainly do engage in rational behavior, and most social scientists agree that in Western societies like the United States, most of us want to be rational (intentionally rational). But most human behaviors still occur out of reflex, emotion, habit, or the tendency to behave as others expect us to. Add the many addictive behaviors we have, self-sacrificial behavior, and mental disturbance, and you have a very small amount of the time that we are actually being stone-cold rational. Finally, we humans never have complete information about the world around us (Hodgson, 1988). For us to really maximize anything, we would need to have complete information, and we almost never do. Add in the fact that we are constrained by the tastes of our culture, and we have a process that is very far from rational maximization. On the minority of occasions when we do consciously choose, we do so within the constraints of culture. Polanyi would have been very comfortable with these subsequent findings had he lived to see them verified.

Another assumption of the classical economists like Adam Smith is that humans are more or less naturally greedy or self-interested. Markets are such a magnificent invention because they take that natural greediness and turn it into something that benefits all humankind. Polanyi questioned this. Who is to say humans are naturally greedy? What evidence is there for that? Instead, Polanyi found evidence for a variety of human behaviors. We are greedy and selfless, kind and cruel. It is more complicated than Smith imagined. Indeed, as is discussed in the box "Embeddedness at Work: Ashley

Mears's 'Working for Free in the VIP': Sex, Fashion, and the Power of Self-Exploitation," people will, under certain conditions, even work without being paid in a situation that many would regard as highly exploitative.

Polanyi questioned whether these assumptions about human nature would really stand up to empirical investigation ([1944] 2001). What he found was that this kind of market behavior was an ancient human practice just as Smith and his followers had said. But he also found something else. Economic activity had been organized around several different principles, including **exchange**, **reciprocity**, and **redistribution**, with exchange being the most recent of the three. In fact, if we go back to the hunters and gatherers, we will find no real market in the activities they engaged in. In fact, even in the agrarian ages, the market was a very small part of economic behavior for thousands of years ([1944] 2001). Instead, Polanyi found that there were other more important modes of economic production and distribution ([1944] 2001, 1963).

Rather than a universal reliance on market *exchange*, Polanyi demonstrated that throughout most of human history, human livelihood was structured by kinship, religion, or other cultural practices, all of which had little or nothing to do with exchange on a market (1963). He argued that economic activity had been based on a set of principles of which market-like exchange was only one. Others included *reciprocity* and *redistribution*. These represented the most important forms of economic activity for most of human history (97 to 98 percent). *Reciprocity* was found in the hunting-and-gathering (and is still found in some) societies that used gift giving, dowries, or kinship obligations as main engines of economic activity (Polanyi, [1944] 2001, 1963). Mutual obligation or a shared sense of identity drives economic activity. *Redistribution* takes place when resources are collected by a central authority and then given back to everyone more or less equally (Polanyi, [1944] 2001, 1963). The authority to do this is usually organized around religious and political authority. This was common in early agricultural societies and like reciprocity is still practiced in different ways today across the globe.

This led Polanyi to argue that prior to Adam Smith, the economy had always been seen as

secondary to the rules of society. But starting with Smith, and his argument for the *self-regulating* nature of the invisible hand, all of this changed. Now, society was being told to change itself according to the rules of the market.

The Embedded Economy and the Impossibility of the Self-Regulating Market

To Polanyi, the economists' notion of a self-regulating market was a fiction. Instead, it was only social regulation that allowed markets to function properly. Without these social regulations, markets would spiral into destruction and social chaos. Any attempt to create a true self-regulating market was doomed to failure and thus impossible. Even just the effort to create one would inevitably lead to human suffering.

Polanyi described this as the economy being **embedded** in society (Polanyi, [1944] 2001, 1963). Society and the economy are not on separate paths; they are one and the same. Indeed, the economy is a subsector of society. Any attempt to disembed the market from society would result in devastation and destruction (Polanyi, [1944] 2001). Not only would people begin to treat each other as commodities to be bought and sold, so would they treat things like the truth, life and death, children, and morality. All of these are things that are supposed to be "outside" of economic activity according to most economists, but Polanyi argues they are simply things that economists have defined as "not economic." But in reality, they are critical to an economy actually being able to function. Imagine the chaos that would follow if I knew that the only way you would ever tell me the truth was if there was money in it for you. How confident would you be in giving out your credit card number over the phone, the Internet, or even at the counter at a pizzeria? What if you determined you could get more money out of me by cheating, lying, stealing? Who would trust anyone, who *could* trust anyone? Economies simply could not function without the social and cultural rules they are embedded in.

Polanyi proved this point by drawing on the three **fictitious commodities**: land, labor,

and money. Smith and his followers treat these three as if they are commodities, but Polanyi argues that they are not. And, if they are treated like commodities, the end result will be a disaster—economic and social destruction (probably a war or revolution). Here is why.

A true commodity must have at least one main principle in order for it to be a commodity and work in the normal rules of supply and demand. One must be able to reduce one's inventory of that commodity to zero (Polanyi, [1944] 2001). On a normal market, the hope is that the market will "clear"—that is, the number of products supplied for sale on the market is equal to the number of products demanded by consumers—through the shifting of prices—and all products are purchased. But Polanyi argues society cannot tolerate allowing these three markets to "clear" in the same way as other commodities ([1944] 2001, 1963).

Think about it. An abundant supply of any other good results in a falling price for that good which restores "equilibrium" or balance to the market by encouraging increased consumption and discouraging further production (lower profits from lower prices drives producers to produce other products that can make them more money). But markets do not control the supply of land, labor, or capital. The money supply is the only one of the three that could be controlled by the market even in theory, but in reality, money has to be controlled by the government to ensure a stable economy. Allowing a national economy to run out of money or "clear" would be disastrous. Modern economists have long recognized this but have not realized the deeper implications, according to Polanyi. Those implications are a steep decline into economic and social chaos not unlike the Great Depression ([1944] 2001). In fact, Polanyi's work was heavily influenced by the depression and the wars that followed it (Block, 2003). From his perspective, the world nearly destroyed itself because it had tried to create the self-regulating market in the 1920s. Sociologist Fred Block has made the argument that society nearly repeated this process by deregulating markets for 20 years, leading to the economic crisis of 2008 (Block, 2009). Would Polanyi agree with this assessment?



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

Embeddedness at Work: Ashley Mears's "Working for Free in the VIP": Sex, Fashion, and the Power of Self-Exploitation

Why do workers engage in their own exploitation? This is the question that animates sociologist Ashley Mears's fascinating research (Mears, 2015). Mears used her experience and connections as a former model to gain access to the unusual world of women (many of whom are aspiring models) "working for free in the VIP"—the "bottle service" of exclusive nightclubs, where male promoters use the presence of beautiful women to entice and attract high spenders to purchase drinks in their clubs. VIPs (very important people) are members of the "global elite," and frequent exclusive nightclubs that typically offer bottle service: "Rather than order drinks at the bar, VIP clients rent tables and purchase whole bottles of alcohol, carried by 'bottle girls'—attractive cocktail waitresses in revealing clothing" (p. 1103). Mears was able to gain access to the clubs and their promoters through her "bodily capital," a form of social capital that relied on her physical appearance and previous modeling work, to be able to fit into the high-stakes world and networks of VIP nightclubs. Mears conducted her research by "ethnographically following promoters and women throughout the VIP party circuit in New York, the Hamptons, Miami, and the French Riviera over 18 months of fieldwork" (p. 1100). This allowed her access to all the main players she needed to investigate: "interviews with 44 promoters, 20 women (called 'girls'), and 20 clients (i.e., men who spend money in VIP parties) to show how such value is produced" (p. 1100). This research was not without its challenges. "Copious amounts of alcohol and sometimes drugs are supplied to women free of charge," but Mears explains that she would typically sip a glass of champagne all while taking notes on her cell phone—which fit right into what everyone else was doing with their cell phones (p. 1105).

The girls are there as "decoration" and to "enhance the atmosphere," and they do this labor almost exclusively for free: "These women are not paid wages; they work for free and with a felt sense of obligation to their brokers, who shower them with gifts and perks," Mears explains (p. 1100). The clubs look to attract "women whose bodies correspond to those valued in the high-fashion arena as models" (p. 1106). The "girls" are often literally so: "In the VIP scene, girls are young (roughly 16 to 25 years), thin

(size 0 to 6), tall (at least 5'9" without heels), and typically although not exclusively white, all of which is gauged visually" (p. 1106).

Yet both the aspiring models and the promoters understand that this is a business relationship. Their work is crucial for the clubs. Without the presence of beautiful women, the VIP will spend less money, and the reputation of the club will suffer, Mears explains. So why do the girls do the work—hours of free labor—much of which is high stakes, exhaustingly social, and potentially demeaning, for no pay? Certainly there is self-interest involved: The models hope to gain the attention of powerful businessmen who might be able to help them further their modeling careers. However, Mears's research shows that what really allows this working partnership between promoter and model to function are the personal relationships that are built up between the two and the "emotional attachments" that go along with them. Though both sides recognize that they are engaged in business, it is their "friendships" that justify the models' free labor. The women come to see the promoters as their friends, and vice versa. This is made clear by the fact that if either party violates the rules of friendship, it is also seen as a violation of the business relationship and may end in the termination of both. The two are inseparable. However, as long as those rules are adhered to, many exploitative elements are allowed to enter into the relationship, sex with the promoters or some of their wealthy clients—all in the name of networking and friendship.

Mears discovered that promoters relied heavily on the friendship angle and introducing the women into their social networks, while downplaying the business side of the relationship when recruiting them for the VIP parties at the clubs. It was the friendship that allowed them to gain the free labor of the women, and promoters used gifts of various kinds not only to boost their credibility as friends to the women but also to engender obligations of reciprocity. They need to help their promoter friends because the promoters are so nice to them. As Mears explains:

Promoters offer a number of comps (complimentary goods) free of charge to girls, who can expect at least free transportation, dinner, and drinks, and sometimes also drugs for the night . . . free meals and drinks . . .

[G]irls are motivated to join a promoter's social network. Nearly all the girls I met at promoters' tables were relative newcomers to the city, and many did not know where or with whom to socialize (p. 1109).

Mears's work makes clear that emotion, intimacy, fun, and leisure are the focus of the relationships that are built by the promoters, and while both sides of the equation understand that business is being conducted, business is not the main emphasis. Friendship and even romance dominate these relationships. It is not unusual for promoters and their "girls" to have sex, and nearly all of the promoters Mears met had model girlfriends who often helped recruit other models for their promoter boyfriends.

One promoter explicitly explained the relationship strategy involved with sex in mobilizing the free labor for his parties:

How can you convince a whole models' apartment to come out with you at night? I'll tell you, you find the popular girl—the most exciting popular girl in the apartment—and you fuck her. Pardon my French . . . Not the quiet girl, not the dull girl, you go for the popular energetic girl, because she will motivate everyone in the apartment to come out (p. 1110).

Mears describes the relational labor that is obtained through these strategies as "surplus value." In fact, when the sexual or friendship nature of the relationships is too low, or when the relationship becomes about money, the surplus labor the women provide declines or stops altogether, revealing clearly that money is not the main motivating factor. Mears points out the highly embedded nature of these relationships. The economic activity that takes place is wrapped up in the social relationships between the women and the promoters. If that relationship becomes too impersonal, the business stops or declines, and the surplus value of the women for the promoter declines. Finally, not unlike other professions such as teaching, nursing, social work, or many other fields, the low pay or sometimes uncompensated work is justified to the self and others by the altruistic mission of the job and the relationships to those the worker is trying to help. In the VIP, the social relationships with the promoters served the same purpose for the women workers. As Mears puts it, "[R]elational work can explain what compels people to enter into, accept, and even feel good about exploitative relationships" (p. 1120).

Summary

The economic system of any society is partly a product of that society's level of economic development and partly a result of who owns the means of production. The simplest level of economic development is the hunting-and-gathering society—a small nomadic tribe or clan. Its economy produces no surplus, and property is usually communally owned. People in such societies live at a bare subsistence level, yet they enjoy considerable leisure time and engage in common activities that hold the group together. Eventually, the group may learn to cultivate crops or raise animals. Such horticultural and pastoral societies are an intermediate between hunting-and-gathering and agricultural economies. Agricultural economies farm larger plots of land using plows and draft animals, which enables them to produce a surplus. This surplus allows a certain portion of the population to live in permanent towns and engage in activities other than food production; it also creates socioeconomic inequality.

In agricultural societies, the means of production is land, and the wealthy are those who own land. Typically, they develop a feudal system, which is characterized by a land-owning gentry and a large peasant class who work for the landowners. When society reaches the industrial stage, the means of production becomes capital, or productive capacity. In industrial societies, manufacturing—made possible by new technologies and by bureaucratic organization—is the most important economic activity and a key source of employment. Industrial societies tend over the long run to produce a large increase in the standard of living and some leveling of inequalities.

A new form emerging in some of the most highly developed countries is the postindustrial economy. In this system, the provision of services becomes the predominant activity, as industry becomes more automated and a relatively affluent population demands more services. Application and control of new technology become the route to economic growth, and possession of information may become

almost as important as ownership of capital for the accumulation of wealth.

Whereas agricultural economies were generally organized on feudalist lines, new systems of ownership emerged in industrial societies. Most such systems are capitalist, with private ownership of the means of production; socialist, with public ownership of the means of production; or some mix of the two. Capitalist economies are highly efficient but produce greater inequality than socialist ones. Socialist economies place a high priority on meeting everyone's basic needs, but they are less efficient and productive than capitalist ones, especially in today's postindustrial economies. An intermediate type is the mixed economy, where part of the means of production is publicly owned and part is privately owned. Some analysts feel that mixed economies combine the best features of capitalist and socialist economies: They are more efficient than socialism and do a better job of meeting everyone's basic needs than capitalism.

Another dimension along which modern economies vary is the degree of concentration. In a concentrated economy, ownership and power are in the hands of a few, with little competition. A deconcentrated economy, in contrast, has many competing producers. As economies have modernized, they have become more concentrated, which has reduced incentives for efficiency. Their scale has also increased. More and more of today's economic activity is worldwide in scope. This trend, known as globalization, has had a variety of effects and has posed a challenge to formerly dominant economic powers such as the United States. It has also weakened the nation-state as an institution, and some see it both as a force increasing economic inequality at home and abroad and as a threat to democratic decision-making. As globalization has made the world smaller and more standardized, it has also given rise to opposition movements, which are both political and religious/tribal in nature. Financial systems are designed to facilitate the flow of both resources and information. They can be organized around equity markets that use a threat of exit to monitor economic actors, or they can use debt and employ voice to make sure firms are staying profitable. Financial systems are susceptible to periodic crises

in which a manic bubble can develop by a panicked sell-off that results in a crash. Derivatives, designed to act like financial insurance, can, at times, serve to make crises more likely to occur and deepen their severity.

Finally, Karl Polanyi is the leading classical influence for contemporary economic sociology. Polanyi argued that the economy was not able to self-regulate but instead depended on social, cultural, and political regulations to function effectively. Sociologists take issue with economists' use of rational maximization to explain human behavior and use Polanyi's theories as a basis by which to show that culture, emotion, and habit form important bases of economic action as well.

Key Terms

economic systems
primary sector
secondary sector
tertiary sector
hunting-and-gathering economy
subsistence level
surplus
nomadic
agricultural economy
agriculture
industrial economy
postindustrial economy
capitalist economy
capital
corporation
socialist economy
communism
mixed economy
norm of maximization
concentrated economy
oligopoly
monopoly
interlocking directorate
multinational corporation
globalization
financial system
debt or equity
exit or voice
speculation
financial contagion

derivatives
invisible hand
self-regulating market
rational maximization
exchange, reciprocity, and redistribution
embeddedness
fictitious commodities

Exercises

1 This chapter asks, “Is Socialism Dead?” Many people feel that with the demise of the Soviet Union, any favorable view of socialism was lost in the process. Others disagree. With the 2008 collapse of the global financial system, global warming, and the breakdown of the global supply chain during the pandemic, more people are also questioning the sustainability of global capitalism.

- Do you think that socialism is an inferior economic system in comparison with capitalism? Try to be as objective as you can in answering. Why or why not?
- How do you feel about the text’s query, “Is Socialism Dead?” What is your rationale as you answer this question?

2 The 2008 financial crash has been blamed in part on the rise and fall of the American housing market. Some popular

explanations for the “great recession,” as it is often called, blame homebuyers for taking out mortgages they should have known they could not afford. Others blame lenders that talked people into taking out loans they could not pay back, who then sold the mortgages to other financial institutions, thereby avoiding the risk. Yet others say that the removal by Congress of financial protections and regulations that were established after the Great Depression is the primary culprit. And there are some who say the “American Dream” of everyone owning their own homes is simply unrealistic and led all sides to bad decisions. Do an Internet search for the “causes of the Great Recession.” Which of these explanations, if any, are supported by the “experts”? What do you think was the cause?

3 How might Karl Polanyi’s ideas on embeddedness and the social consequences of a self-regulating market system be applied to the supply chain disruptions experienced during the recent global pandemic? Consider the impact on labor, the role of government intervention, and the reevaluation of market priorities in the context of ensuring societal well-being.

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Chapter 12

Politics, Power, and Society

Power in Modern Societies

In our discussion of class consciousness in the United States, we saw that the relatively harsh treatment of labor unions is one factor in the relative lack of class consciousness. When the military or police are used to control strikes, or when the law says that strikebreaking is acceptable, owners and employers are exercising power. That is, they are getting the government to act on their behalf and against groups that threaten their wealth. **Power**, then, *can be defined as the ability to affect the actions of others*. If you can get others to behave as you want, or if you can affect the outcome of a struggle or conflict, you are exercising power.

Power is largely exercised through the political system. For that reason, when Max Weber identified power as one of three key dimensions of stratification, he referred to it as “party.” But power can be exercised any time people interact with one another. Exchange theorists point out, for example, that power is exercised even in intimate relationships (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1972; Molm, 1991, 1987). Partners offer one another something that allows each partner to gain from the relationship, but the partner who has more resources (beauty, wealth, popularity) to offer gets their way more often.

Legitimate Power and Authority

In many cases, power is **legitimate power**, that is, people agree that the person exercising power has the right to do so. Often, legitimate power is attached to a position that a person holds. At about this point in my introductory classes, I (Farley) generally ask my students

to stand up. They always do. This is because, as the professor, I have **authority**—legitimate power attached to the position that I hold. Because I am the professor, my students will do as I ask, so long as I remain within the bounds of reason.

There are several sources of legitimate authority. Three of them—*traditional authority*, *legal-rational authority*, and *charismatic authority*—were identified by Max Weber in his writings on power and authority. The fourth, *expertise*, is a more modern phenomenon.

Traditional authority is based on long-standing, institutional, and largely unquestioned practices. The authority of a king or queen, or, within the Catholic Church, of the pope, are good examples of traditional authority. In a monarchy, it is obtained by birth, and in the case of religious leaders like the pope, is believed to lie in part in divine inspiration. The role carrying traditional authority is generally attached to a person for life, so that a king or pope reigns until he dies.

Legal-rational authority is also attached to a position, but it is done so for the purpose of carrying out some assigned task, and it is usually limited in both time and scope. Unlike the queen, the British prime minister belongs to a political party that must be reelected to a majority in Parliament if he is to continue in office. Similarly, because I am a professor, not a king, I have no authority outside the specific context of the classroom, my classes, and my students.

Somewhat different is **charismatic authority**. It is more attached to the person—and to a particular person’s qualities—than any other form of authority. Charismatic leaders have authority because they excite and inspire people. Examples of charismatic authority can be

seen in Martin Luther King, Jr., former presidents Donald Trump and Barack Obama, Mother Teresa, or Apple founder Steve Jobs. While all of these leaders occupied various positions of authority, it is their personal ability to inspire and mobilize people that has made them successful. Although others could hold their official titles, it is their personal charisma that has enabled them to mobilize large numbers of people in ways others have not.

A final form of authority, not included in Weber's original typology, is **expertise**. This refers to specialized knowledge that others value. In postindustrial societies, which place a premium on information and scientific knowledge, such specialized knowledge is highly valued. One widely used way of determining whether or not people have expertise is **credentials**—academic degrees, professional memberships, scientific publications that they have written, and similar indicators. One characteristic of credentials is that they are subject specific. Hence, as PhD sociologists and authors of sociology books and articles, at conference presentations we are often asked for expert opinions on social issues. Our credentials would not allow us, however, to claim expertise in some other area, such as medicine or weather forecasting.

Other Sources of Power

Besides authority, there are many other sources of power. Some are generally regarded as legitimate, others as not legitimate, and some may be either legitimate or illegitimate. In a democratic system, for example, people exercise power by voting. On the one hand, voting is often based more on candidate personalities than the issues, particularly in the United States where political parties exercise relatively little control over their candidates. However, even in the United States, large interest groups do sometimes vote together and influence the outcome of elections. In 2008, for example, women and minorities who had become dissatisfied with the policies of the George W. Bush administration played a crucial role in the election of Democrat Barack Obama to the presidency. Eight years later, these groups

failed to vote in the same numbers for Democrat Hillary Clinton. Instead, older, white, and less educated Americans were a major factor in Republican Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election.

Power is also frequently exercised through force and coercion. Such use of power may be either legitimate or illegitimate. When police arrest people, that is generally accepted as a legitimate use of force. When protestors block highways, that is often seen as illegitimate, because such protests are illegal and the ability of others to go where they want is impeded. However, in democracies, such protests can succeed—and therefore exercise power—if they draw attention to a grievance that others see as real. Hence, such protests against the Vietnam War probably did force changes in the war policies of the Johnson and Nixon administrations. Protests across the country in 2014–2016 and again after the killing of George Floyd in the summer of 2020 led to an increase of attention to racially tinged police brutality and the police killings of unarmed African Americans across the nation, as discussed in Chapter 7.

A very important source of power is control of information. If you can control information, you can strongly influence how people perceive events. An example can be seen in medical experimentation in which the U.S. government allowed populations of U.S. cities to be exposed to hazardous substances in order to determine what might happen in cases of germ, chemical, or nuclear warfare (Kauzlarich and Kramer, 1998). These experiments were kept secret, and false information was provided to the public. Hence, the ability of the government to carry on these experiments was unimpeded. Only later did the true nature of these experiments become public. Imagine what would have happened if an army general had announced, “We are going to spray toxic chemicals over Minneapolis to see what will happen,” or “We will inject hospital patients with radioactive plutonium without telling them so we can learn the effects of exposure to radiation.” (Both of these examples are based on real cases described by *The New York Times* [1994] and by Kauzlarich and Kramer [1998].)

Wealth, Income, and Power

Finally, there is a definite link between wealth and high income and political power. Money can be translated into power in many ways: access to the mass media (advertising, publishing books, making movies and television programs); running for political office (around two-thirds of U.S. senators are millionaires [New York Times, 2009]); making campaign contributions (directly or through PACs); and through funding foundations, public-policy institutes, and think tanks.

In fact, one of the great debates of sociology is about how closely power is related to wealth and income. The classic theorists Karl Marx and Max Weber offer different viewpoints on this issue. According to Marx, wealth—in the form of owning the means of production—is the key to all political power. Marx believed that all aspects of a society, including its political system and power structure, are determined by and serve the interests of whoever owns the means of production. Marx's colleague, Friedrich Engels, believed this so strongly that he predicted that once economic inequality was eliminated through common ownership of the means of production, the state would “wither away.”

Weber, on the other hand, saw class (economic income and wealth), status, and power as three separate dimensions of inequality. He recognized that wealth influences power, but he believed that wealth *does not determine* power. In other words, it is possible to be wealthy but not powerful or powerful but not wealthy.

In its modern form, this debate often places *pluralists* against *power elite* theorists. The **pluralist model** of power distribution holds that the wealthy cannot monopolize power because power is in fact divided among many competing groups (Dahl, 1961, 1981, 1982; Riesman, 1961; Pampel and Williamson, 1988). These groups include business, labor, ethnic, racial, regional, and religious interests. Often, they operate as **veto groups**—that is, they are not strong enough to get their way on everything, but they can block political actions that would seriously threaten their interests. The pluralist model is primarily derived from the functionalist perspective. It does reflect some influence of conflict theory

because it clearly recognizes that different groups have competing interests. But it sees the system as functional in that it accommodates those interests so that no group is downtrodden and no group consistently dominates. One final important point: This does *not* necessarily mean that the average citizen has much control over politics. Rather, people belong to groups like labor unions, churches, professions, and ethnic groups whose leaders watch out for their collective interests.

The *power elite model*, best exemplified by the work of C. Wright Mills (1956) and G. William Domhoff (1967, 1978, 1983), sees things differently. The **power elite model** holds that real political power is held by a small group made up almost entirely of those who own corporate wealth. It points out that much of the decision-making is done behind the scenes, involving nonelected political appointees and administrators who are often influenced by foundations and public-policy institutes funded by the wealthy. It also points out that a small number of people have overlapping positions of power on corporate boards, in the executive branch of the federal government, and in the top echelons of the military (Mills, 1956).

Ideas about the power elite are in some ways similar to theories about group dynamics, which hold that groups always tend to be dominated by a small leadership group. These theories include Michels's “iron law of oligarchy” (1967 [orig. 1911]) and related theories developed by Pareto (1935 [orig. 1915–1919]) and Mosca (1939 [orig. 1896]). These theories—discussed in greater length in Chapter 9—argue that it is the nature of organizations to be controlled by a small elite. The power elite model, however, sees such concentration of power not so much as an inevitable characteristic of organization, but rather the result of a great concentration of wealth, which leads to a concentration of power.

Who Has Power in America Today?

Measuring Power

To determine who has power, we must have some way of measuring power. This is not easy to do, because power is an abstract concept, or

construct, that cannot be measured directly. Domhoff (1983) has proposed three questions to help sociologists determine who has power. One way is to ask, “*Who governs?*” In other words, what social groups seem to be well represented among people who hold elective and appointive office? A second question is “*Who benefits?*” from governmental decisions. The assumption is that if a group of people consistently gets governmental actions that favor their interests, they are exercising power. Finally, we can learn about power by asking “*Who wins?*” when controversial issues arise. If an interest group wins consistently, we can conclude that it has power. If one group wins nearly all the time, that group likely constitutes a *power elite*. If, however, different groups win on different issues, and/or if real compromises are common, then power is probably dispersed among a number of groups, as suggested by the *pluralist model* (Banfield, 1962; Banfield and Wilson, 1963).

Besides Domhoff’s three ways of measuring power, there is the *reputational approach*. This approach assumes that when someone repeatedly exercises power, others know about it. Thus, this approach seeks to measure power by asking people in politics who is powerful (Hunter, 1955, 1980). This method has two shortcomings: (1) People do not always know who has power, and (2) asking people “Who is powerful?” may lead them to assume that *someone* must have great power, thus biasing their answer (Cousins and Nagpaul, 1979; Polsby, 1980; Walton, 1966, 1977).

The Distribution of Power in the United States

Domhoff and others have used the methods previously described to assess the power of different groups in the United States. In 2015, there were 11,514 official lobbying groups in the United States dedicated to lobbying congress and federal agencies, spending \$3.22 billion in the process (Center for Responsive Politics, 2016), and many others that sought less direct ways to influence policy. However, most of them tend to represent certain groupings of interests.

Three Key Interest Group Coalitions

According to Domhoff (1983, 2009), there are three main interest groups that try to influence policy at the national level: multinational corporations, a small business coalition, and a labor/liberal coalition. The **multinational corporations** include companies, many but not all of which are based in the United States, that conduct business on a global scale. This group includes a number of policy foundations and research institutes that do not call themselves lobbyists but rather claim to operate on the behalf of “good government” or “national interest.” Examples include the Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie Foundations, the Committee for Economic Development, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the Trilateral Commission, and the Business Roundtable. Although they present themselves as “public interest” or “good government” groups, these groups in fact lobby for policies that promote free trade and other policies that allow the multinationals to operate in the world economy with a minimum of restrictions. The NAFTA, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and U.S. government’s support for Mexico’s Maquiladora program are all outgrowths of the efforts of this group. (The Maquiladora program provides U.S. corporations with cheap labor in Mexican plants near the border; it has employed over a half million workers at wages sharply lower than those paid in the United States [Bartlett and Steele, 1992, p. 35].)

The second interest group identified by Domhoff is a small business coalition. It is represented by the Chamber of Commerce and by national organizations of professions that operate as small businesses—the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Dental Association, and the Farm Bureau. This group is more conservative and concentrates on opposition to governmental regulation of business. It is less involved in foundations and research institutes than the corporate group but does support some, most notably the American Enterprise Institute and the Hoover Institute. This group may also be less cohesive than it once was; for example, the AMA endorsed the health reforms passed in 2010, which groups like the Chamber of Commerce staunchly opposed.

The third group—and the most diverse—is a loose coalition of liberal, labor, ethnic, feminist, and environmental groups. It includes organized labor (the AFL-CIO) and such organizations as the NAACP, Urban League, National Organization for Women, National Education Association (NEA), and the Ralph Nader–based organizations. It is less unified than the other groups, though on certain issues such as free trade and affirmative action, it has been able to exert a forceful and unified presence.

By examining who governs, who benefits, and who wins, we can assess the relative power of these three interest groups. If the power elite model were correct, we would expect power to lie almost totally in the hands of the wealthiest of these groups, the multinational corporations. If the pluralist model were correct, we would expect power to be scattered among the three groups, with different ones winning on different issues, lots of compromises, and all three groups well represented among decision-makers. Research shows that the truth lies between the two models, but reality may be closer to the power elite model, since the corporate group does in fact exert disproportionately great power.

Who Governs?

An examination of the characteristics of national elected officials shows that corporate wealth is very well represented. About two-thirds of the 100 U.S. senators are millionaires, compared to about 2 percent of the U.S. population. Wealthy families with names like Rockefeller, Danforth, and Kennedy have been well represented over the years. On the other hand, groups such as women, African Americans, and Latinos are very underrepresented in both the House and the Senate. There were just three African Americans in the U.S. Senate following the 2016 election. Even this small number represents some progress, since only two black people were elected to the Senate in the entire twentieth century.

The executive branch and the advisory groups who govern “behind the scenes” have also shown a tradition of overrepresentation of the wealthy. Stryker’s (1990) study of social

scientists’ roles in two government agencies found that when such experts support the interests of the wealthy, their involvement becomes institutionalized—but when they oppose such interests, their role is usually eliminated. All this is consistent with the findings of C. Wright Mills’s classic study *The Power Elite*, in which Mills found a small group of wealthy individuals who moved freely among positions in the executive branch of government, the military, and corporate boards of directors. According to Jacobs and Durlam’s research in 2016, the increasing economic disparity in the United States primarily results from the decline of labor unions and the ascent of business-oriented PACs that advocate for corporate interests. Furthermore, Murray’s findings in 2017 suggest that this influence has started to extend globally, facilitated by factors like the shared presence of corporate board members across international boundaries.

One critique of the “who governs” approach is that millionaires and even billionaires do not always agree on social policy, as illustrated by George Soros and Donald Trump. Hence, the critics argue, they cannot be a true power elite if they lack a common agenda (Dahl, 1982). In addition, the politicians must pay some attention to their constituents if they are to be elected, which may limit their power to promote their own self-interests (Riesman, Glazer and Denney, 1969). Still, there is little doubt that the wealthy are greatly overrepresented, and that poor people, women, and minorities are very underrepresented among our government’s decision-makers.

Who Benefits?

Measuring who benefits from governmental policies is probably the most difficult and subjective of Domhoff’s three questions. One way is to look at distributions of wealth and income, which might to some degree indicate how favorable a government’s policies are toward the wealthy. As already seen in Chapter 6, wealth and income are distributed more unequally in the United States than in most other industrialized countries. A more direct indicator is

how the government spends its money. In the United States, for example, a larger share of the budget goes to defense than in most industrialized countries. Clearly there are beneficiaries of this. Consider that in the 1980s one study found that ten of the 50 biggest U.S. corporations relied *primarily* on sales to the military, and at the peak of U.S. military spending in the 1980s, eight Pentagon contractors had sales greater than the entire gross national product of Norway (Currie and Skolnick, 1984). Critics argue that much of this spending is driven by the interests of the companies involved rather than by national need.

The question “Who benefits?” can also be asked about tax legislation in the United States. As noted earlier in this chapter, wealth and income became more unequally distributed in the second half of the twentieth century. Did tax changes play a role in this? There is little question that effective rates of taxation for those in the higher income brackets have fallen, and research shows that this did contribute to the rising inequality (Auten and Carroll, 1999). For example, tax reform legislation in the 1980s effectively cut taxes 7 percent for middle-income taxpayers, but 31 percent for upper-income taxpayers. Consequently, the average

household in the \$100,000 to \$2 million range got a cut of \$7,203, while for households with incomes below \$10,000, the cut was \$37 (Bartlett and Steele, 1992). The tax reform also shifted the effective tax burden from corporations to individuals: The share of taxes paid by corporations fell from 21 percent to 17 percent of taxes between 1982 and 1992. Since then, Congress has reduced the capital gains tax (paid on investment income) to a lower rate than that paid on wages, and it has eliminated the so-called marriage penalty. While both of these moves sound appealing, they mainly benefit upper-income taxpayers. Low-income taxpayers gained little from the capital gains cut because they had no money to invest. And an analysis of the marriage penalty elimination showed that 78 percent of the tax savings would go to those taxpayers in the top 20 percent income bracket (Institute for Taxation and Public Policy, 2000).

Who Wins?

Finally, we can learn about who has power by examining who wins when conflicts, debates, and controversies arise over public policy. Domhoff (1983) reviewed much of the literature

on this question, focusing on the relative influence of the three coalitions he identified: multinational corporate, small business, and labor/liberal. His review showed that when there is substantial disagreement among these three groups, the corporate group nearly always gets what it wants (see also Neustadt and Clawson, 1988). One example can be seen in the inability of doctors and hospitals to block health-care cost controls desired by corporations in the 1980s (Imershein, Rond, and Mathis, 1992). Over about five decades, the corporate group’s only clear defeat was the passage of the National Labor Relations Act



Photo 12.1 Power theorists contend the system is biased toward the wealthy. When President Obama signed the financial bailout into law, some saw this act as saving the national, and possibly global, economy from a Great Depression type of downward spiral. But power theorists might point out that the same group of wealthy investors who created the financial crisis were also the ones to receive the bailout funds. Who do you think is right? Can both views be right?

Courtesy of John E. Farley

in 1935. And even this law was later modified to make it more acceptable to the corporations. More recent research by Domhoff (2009) has shown that the corporate group continues to get its way the great majority of the time. A study by Gilens and Page (2014, p. 564) concurred, finding that “economic elites and organized groups representing business interests” have a large influence on government policy in the United States and usually get their way, while “average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence.”

Among the other two groups, the small business group appears to have a fair amount of veto power: It could usually stop something that threatened it. It regularly defeated initiatives of the labor/liberal group, and in some cases, it could modify, though not block, initiatives of the corporate group. However, it fared less well with its own initiatives, winning only when it had the backing of the corporate group (Domhoff, 1983).

Least powerful was the labor/liberal group. It could veto initiatives of the small business group only if it could get the support of the corporate group. It rarely passed its own initiatives, and when it did, it was usually with the support of the corporate group. Significantly, its power did increase during times of social conflict and upheaval, as the corporate group sought to maintain order by making concessions (see, e.g., Edlin, 2016; Gilbert and Howe, 1991, pp. 215–16; Jenkins and Brents, 1989, 1991). Why, according to Domhoff, did this group have the least ability to win? First, as previously noted, it was a looser and more diverse coalition, which made it less unified. Second, it had fewer economic resources than either of the other groups. Third, it had less access to governmental officials. As Domhoff mentions in his “Personal Journey Into Sociology” box, it is possible that recent political realignments may increase the influence of this group, but it is too early to tell whether any long-term power shift is occurring.

Overview

We have seen that whether the question is “Who governs?” or “Who benefits?” or “Who

wins?” the answer supplied by research evidence is much the same. Though neither model has the whole answer, the political system operates more in the way predicted by the power elite model than by the pluralist model. In the latter part of the twentieth century, the rich got richer, and the small share of income and wealth that went to the poor got even smaller—and research shows that while government action is not the only reason for this, it did definitely contribute to it.

The State

Max Weber argued that **the state** is the institution that holds a legitimate monopoly over physical violence in a given territory. Although often debated, this definition has become the cornerstone of how we think about the concept of the state. Yet, this kind of power is most effective if never used. Once a state resorts to violence, it shows weakness. Resorting to violence means a state has no other way to enforce its will, and this often leads to a loss of legitimacy. This paradox is at the heart of the power states wield. In practice it means that states rarely use such power. Instead, they resort to numerous other means to enforce their will, including prohibiting others in a society from using force. Modern states like the United States have taken on a much larger role than the early states that emerged some 5,000 years ago. Today they engage in activities along a very diverse range of areas such as education, medical, family services, workplace safety, food and drug safety, technology, and many others. As we see later, Western states have become the primary institution in guaranteeing a minimum level of welfare of citizens. States that do this are referred to as **welfare states**.

This was not always the case. Starting in the 1840s, with the expansion of transportation across the country, especially the railroads, the American state increased its role in economic life by acquiring the land (sometimes through eminent domain—the involuntary sale of land to the government by private individuals) and creating uniform standards for rail lines across the continental United States. The growth of the

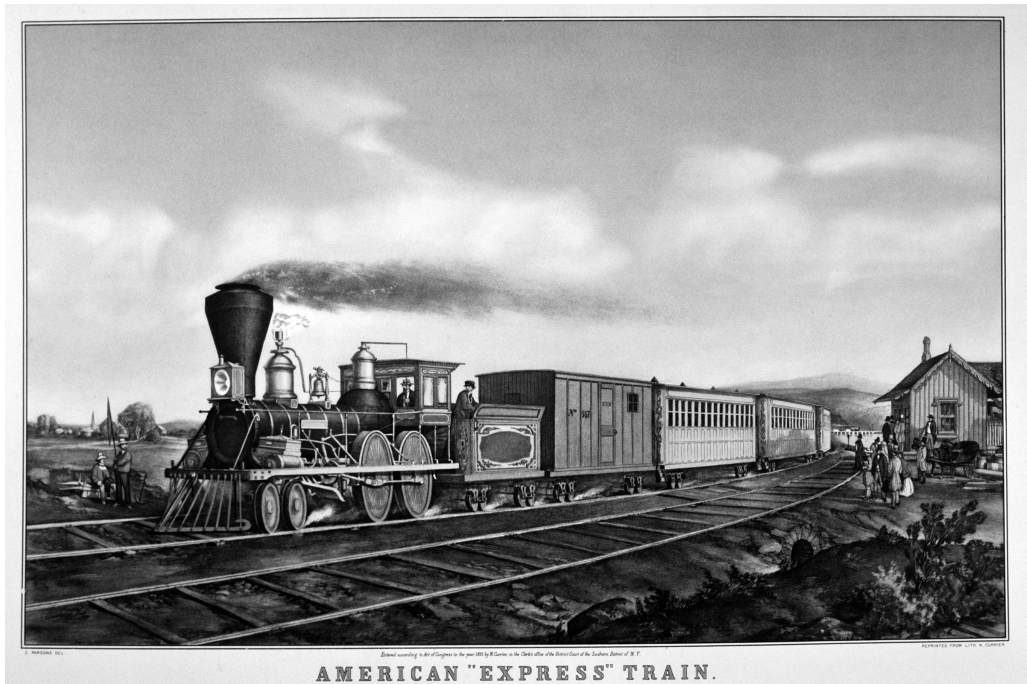


Photo 12.2 Starting in the 1840s, the state increased its role in American life by obtaining land for railroads and creating uniform standards for railroads in the United States.

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railroads in particular allowed the rapid expansion of the Industrial Revolution that would follow the Civil War in the United States but would not have been possible without the active intervention of the U.S. government (Novak, 2008; Scheiber, 1975).

With the onset of the Industrial Revolution, the American state took on another great expansion sparked by the need for new power sources. The internal combustion engine and the electric motor required raw materials like oil, steel, and rubber. With no rules to prevent it, corporations merged and bought each other out, crushing their smaller competition until huge monopolies and trusts cornered their markets, many of which were the lifeblood of industry. These massive firms exploited their workers, consumers, and even their suppliers. The Progressive Era, which started in 1900, marked a rolling back of these giant industries and the power they had accumulated. Breaking up the monopolies became a clarion call of President Theodore Roosevelt and other

like-minded politicians. Businesses were regulated in ways unthinkable just decades earlier.

Despite this, other than making sure businesses did not engage in unfair practices or grew so large as to impede a reasonable level of competition, the American state still left a remarkable amount of freedom for corporations to operate. The state was no longer afraid to regulate and monitor business activity, but it was still done only when absolutely necessary. This freedom contributed to the economic boom that occurred after World War I, often referred to as the Roaring 20s. In this period, American corporations enjoyed rapid growth, and the American economy continued to grow as a result. But this prosperity was not shared by all. Massive inequalities of income and wealth developed between the rich and the poor. The Roaring 20s came to a dramatic end with the stock market crash on October 21, 1929. The crash heralded in the long period of economic stagnation known as the Great Depression. Saddled with the philosophy that the government

that governs least is the government that governs best, President Herbert Hoover hesitated to intervene in substantial ways to combat the economic downturn. By contrast, newly elected President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Theodore's distant cousin) promised bold action as part of a New Deal for the American people. FDR, as he is often known, tried to stimulate the economy through government spending and provided relief for unemployed workers. Yet it wasn't until the United States entered into World War II and engaged in massive deficit spending did the economy truly begin to recover. After the long, bloody war, governments all around the world began to realize that they owed their depression- and war-weary populace the chance at a better life. Thus, the state made its final expansion into the economy with the development of the welfare state—a commitment that the state in wealthy nations would be the guarantor of citizens' welfare. As we soon see, some states are more active in this role than others. In the United States, the welfare state is largely seen as a measure of last resort for those who have fallen upon hard times in the labor market. In other countries, the welfare state is viewed as part of a citizen's birthright. Since at least the 1980s, the very concept of a welfare state has been under attack by some sectors of American politics, especially the more conservative or libertarian wings.

Sociologists see the state differently depending on their theoretical orientation. Functionalists tend to see the state as a necessary evil in modern societies. The state is the only institution with enough power to control and unite large diverse groups of people around common goals, values, and norms. For the functionalists, we enter into the state to control the potential chaos that would ensue were there no overriding authority. The state also serves the function of defending us from other groups of people or states that may threaten us for various reasons. For conflict theorists, the state represents an institution that imposes the rule of the powerful over the weak. So, in capitalist societies, conflict theorists tend to see the state as promoting the interests of capitalism and capitalists over the working and middle classes.

Many sociologists take a middle view. The state is autonomous from capitalism and does create unity among citizens; however, it is also true that the state is, in normal times, controlled by those with the most power. But this rule is far from complete. As we have seen, in a crisis, their control can be broken in important ways (Block, 1977), though as Domhoff pointed out, this often requires the support of corporate actors. This was evident during the Great Depression when New Deal legislation curtailed the powers of capitalists and extended social protections to the working and middle classes that were not there before. Further, many capitalists actually supported the creation of welfare states (Swenson, 2002). Nor is it the case that capitalists and business interest in general always oppose the welfare state. Many businesses find they derive benefits from welfare state programs (Flota, 2003). A good example is not having to pay for their employees' health insurance costs. This has traditionally been one of the greatest expenditures for American businesses, for instance, that do have to provide this coverage. During the 1980s and 1990s when Sweden debated cutbacks in welfare state activity, some of the same kinds of firms and business sectors that favored the creation of the welfare state (primarily small businesses and industries tied to domestic production, such as forestry) also opposed the dismantling of the welfare state (Flota, 2008, 2003). Further, the state itself has interests as an organization and bureaucracy. Once a program is put into place, vested interests form to keep the program, not the least of which are the incomes and livelihoods that are derived from such programs. Capitalist opposition is not enough to guarantee such programs will not survive, though as a group they are the most likely to get their way, as we discussed earlier in the section on "Who Wins." Finally, it should be recalled that capitalists themselves are in competition with each other and are from all the various sectors of the economy. They do not always speak with one voice.

Types of Systems

There are three main kinds of states: democracies, dictatorships, and monarchies. **Democracy** is defined as a political system in which there is

civic control over the state. The idea is that the ultimate authority for the society rests with its citizenry: rule by the people. How the authority of citizens works, however, varies greatly. In a *direct democracy*, every citizen of a given population votes on every issue. This is sometimes seen in small-town hall gatherings, traditionally popular in the Northeast of the United States. *Representative democracy* is far more common, however, in which citizenry elect representatives to do their bidding. The Congress of the United States is a prime example. Representative democracies vary greatly themselves, but two main types of representative systems exist: plurality systems and proportional systems. Plurality voting is a winner-take-all system in which the candidate with the most votes wins. Elections in congressional districts for the House and Senatorial seats are elected this way. Even if a candidate wins by only a single vote, that seat is awarded to that candidate, while their opponent gets nothing. One outcome of a plurality system is that they tend to create two main political parties. Minor parties have little chance to flourish and are often subsumed by the major parties over time. The exception to this is if there is a regionally powerful third party that can win seats in the region. Another common aspect of plurality systems is that the two parties can become so ingrained in their opposition to each other that they rarely work together to strike compromises. This has been the case recently in the United States and has produced record-setting gridlock within our national political system. In a proportional system, on the other hand, political parties are awarded seats based on the percentage of votes they received in the election. So, a party receiving 25 percent of the votes can expect to receive roughly about that same percentage of seats in a legislature, depending on the exact rules. Often, proportional systems have vote thresholds that must be reached before a party can receive seats, say 5 percent. The lower this threshold, the more parties there tend to be. It is not uncommon for a multiparty democracy to have as many as five or six major parties. With this many parties competing, it is very rare for one party to win a majority, so parties are forced to form coalition governments and come to compromises in order to govern. The more parties

there are, the more difficult it is to achieve compromise, causing this system to break down into gridlock. The optimal arrangement appears to be a proportional system that creates a relatively small number of major parties, say four to six.

In a **dictatorship**, the people as a whole are not allowed to participate in the governance of their society. The classic form of this is derived from the title where a dictator, one person, rules with impunity. In actual practice, even dictators have limits. They must, after all, get other people to do their bidding. They cannot do it all. But the fact that they do get others to do their bidding speaks to the power they have in society. Oligarchy, rule by the few (which we talked about in Chapter 9), would also fit into this category, although it is sometimes considered a system of its own. China would be a contemporary example. We make a distinction between an authoritarian state in which democracy is denied and a totalitarian state in which all aspects of life are controlled more or less by the state. Totalitarian states are rare in actual practice. Nazi Germany was one example. Today, many point to North Korea as a contemporary example. **Monarchies** are the final type of state, and they are ruled by a family through hereditary succession. These states were common during agrarian stages of development, and the legacy of these states is very much with us today. Sweden, Norway, and the other Scandinavian states are often held up as the most democratic societies in the world. However, in a technical sense they are also monarchies in that they have retained their monarchical leader as formal head of state. The UK also has this structure. We call these states constitutional monarchies, as all important functions of government have been transferred to the democratic representatives of those states. Saudi Arabia is an example of a modern state that retains a powerful ruling monarchy.

Putting Sociology to Work

Welfare Reform: An Effective Tool Against Poverty?

In 1996, legislation providing for major “reforms” in welfare was passed. A lifetime limit of five years was placed on how long people

could receive welfare, based in part on the belief that welfare actually causes people to stay poor. Mandates that people with certain needs be covered by welfare were eliminated, leaving the five-year time limit as the key federal welfare mandate (states could impose shorter, but not longer, limits). The name of the main welfare program was changed from Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) to emphasize the notion that welfare should be only temporary.

These changes reflect a widespread belief that welfare encourages people to be dependent on aid rather than to find jobs and support themselves. Many also believe that welfare acts as an enabler that encourages teenage pregnancy and single parenthood, which further perpetuate poverty. The strongest sociological statements of this viewpoint have been made by Charles Murray (1984, 1993). In part because of such concerns, the two political parties competed in the 1990s to present themselves as wanting to “end welfare as we know it,” and the 1996 legislation was the result. In addition to the five-year lifetime time limit on welfare, the 1996 law also included a requirement that people receiving welfare must accept employment, reduced to one year the amount of time that education could be substituted for employment, and excluded all types of education (including college) other than vocational education. The law also limited the time that unemployed adults could receive food stamps. At the same time, it increased federal funding for day care and provided some expanded access to Medicaid for the working poor.

Sociological research, however, raises serious doubts about some of the assumptions that underlie welfare reform. William Julius Wilson, for example, researched the actual correlation over time between the level of welfare benefits and the poverty and unemployment rates. If welfare really causes poverty by discouraging people from working, we ought to find that when welfare benefits are high, more people are poor and unemployed. But Wilson’s research shows just the opposite! The time period when poverty grew most rapidly was between 1978 and 1983. (You can see this

by reviewing Figure 6.3.) But real (adjusted for inflation) welfare benefits fell steadily and substantially from 1972 into the mid-1980s. In fact, the inflation-adjusted value of welfare and food stamps was 22 percent lower in 1984 than it was in 1972 (Wilson, 1987, p. 94). In other words, the correlation is just the opposite of what Murray predicted: Poverty increased when welfare was reduced. Wilson is not the only one to obtain such findings: Jencks (1991, pp. 56–62) found that availability and levels of welfare benefits had little effect on the proportion of single mothers who were employed.

Similarly, Robert Moffit (1992) examined the correlation over time between levels of welfare and rates of single parenthood. His conclusion was that “The evidence does not support the conclusion that the welfare system has been responsible for time-series growth in female headship and illegitimacy” (p. 51). He found little or no correlation over time between welfare benefits and either illegitimate births or the percentage of female-householder families. Similar findings have been obtained in other research by Ellwood and Bane (1984), Rank (1989), and Wilson (1987, pp. 77–81).

Nothing in any of this research argues against the view that it would be better for most welfare recipients if they were stably employed rather than receiving welfare. But there is little reason to believe that welfare reform by itself will significantly reduce poverty, and now that it has been nearly 20 years since welfare reform went into effect, there is a growing amount of research that can help us assess the actual effects of welfare reform on poverty. The research as well as numbers showing large declines in the number of people receiving welfare confirm that welfare reform moved many people from welfare to work, as it was intended to do. However, most are working in low-pay service or clerical jobs. Many of these jobs do not pay enough to get even a two-person household above the poverty level, even if the person worked year-round full time, which many do not. Another negative outcome of the law has been that it may be killing its recipients or at least causing them to not live as long. Researchers found that, on average, TANF participants lived nine months less

than those on traditional welfare programs that did not contain a work requirement (Muennig, Rosen, and Wilde, 2013).

Overall, the total annual household earnings of former welfare recipients (which includes spouses' incomes when present) were, on average, only high enough to provide a poverty-level income for a family of three. Loprest (1999) also examined reasons why some who left welfare were not working (about 40 percent of those who left welfare). The most common reason, accounting for more than one-fourth of those not working, was medical disability. About another one-fourth did not work because they were taking care of someone at home. About 15 percent had looked but could not find a job, and 12 percent mentioned transportation problems or inability to get child care.

Several additional findings from Loprest's (1999) study show how great the economic difficulties are for those who have made the transition from welfare to work. One-third of former welfare recipients reported that they had to skip meals or eat smaller meals because they did not have enough money for food. Nearly 40 percent had missed paying rent, mortgage, or utility bills in the past year, and one out of every 14 had to move in with someone else because they could not pay their bills. Schaefer and Edin (2014, p. 6) found that "in 2011, 1.65 million U.S. households fell below the \$2 a day per person threshold in a given month. Those households included 3.55 million children, and accounted for 4.3 percent of all nonelderly households with children" (Matthews, 2013b).

Research also shows that even when eligible and in need, many who moved from welfare to work did not receive food stamps (Zedlewski and Brauner, 1999; Urban Institute, 2001). Perhaps for this reason, the U.S. Conference of Mayors reported a 17 percent increase in requests for emergency food assistance in 2000, and one-third of the adults requesting assistance were working (American Friends Service Committee, 2001). As was true for food stamp programs, Medicaid enrollment fell in 1998, and studies indicate that the declines in enrollment were biggest where the most people were moved off welfare (Bruen and Holahan, 2001). This further supports the view,

previously noted, that many who moved from welfare to work lost medical coverage in the process. Finally, research suggests that, like much else in America, race makes a difference in the effects of welfare reform. The American Friends Service Committee (2001) reports that black people leaving welfare received less assistance from caseworkers in finding jobs, were more often required to take a test in order to get a job, and—even at the same levels of education—were less likely to find jobs than white people leaving welfare.

All of this suggests that if we are serious about welfare reform and combating poverty, issues such as job training, child care, medical coverage, low wages, and racial discrimination cannot be ignored, as they largely were in the federal welfare reform legislation in 1996. In addition, starting in 2001, a serious crisis emerged for two reasons. First, this was the year in which the first welfare recipients ran up against the five-year limit. Second, the economy entered a recession after eight years of prosperity and growth. This meant that large numbers of former welfare recipients were forced into the labor pool precisely at the time when the economy was least able to accommodate them. One reason that so many did move off welfare in the first few years after welfare reform is that the economy was enjoying healthy growth. Social scientists had long warned that the true test of welfare reform would come when the economy entered a slowdown (Dervarics, 1998), and unfortunately, that occurred precisely at the time when the five-year time limits were being reached. As a result, poverty, homelessness, and income insecurity all increased for the poor (Burnham, 2001; Griffin, 1999; Hennessy, 2005). In addition, Hao and Cherlin (2004) found that teenage pregnancy and school dropout rates increased for welfare families during the postreform period. Thus, while welfare reform was successful in moving people from welfare to work in strong economic times, it was not successful in getting them out of poverty, nor could it provide stable employment during weaker economic periods. Clearly, many former welfare recipients are unable to find work when the overall unemployment rate rises to 10 percent, as it did early in 2010.

One program that probably has lessened the negative impacts of welfare reform is the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The EITC is a government program that allows low-income workers to keep more of what they earn by refunding all or part of their Social Security taxes back as income. Sykes et al. (2015) found that the EITC did more than simply provide needed income to low-income families. It also encouraged these families to consume more, since it was seen as debt relief rather than a “handout.” Similarly, the EITC was “seen as a springboard for upward mobility.” The researchers found that unlike any other transfer program, the EITC increased recipients’ feelings of citizenship and inclusion (Sykes et al., 2015). Also, the expansion of Medicaid in many states under the ACA and the subsidies offered to low- and moderate-income households under the ACA have clearly increased access to medical care among the poor—but these changes did not come until around 15 years after the welfare reform legislation (Gutierrez, 2018). The ACA and its impacts on access to health care are discussed further in Chapter 16.

Welfare Around the World

As we have seen, a major responsibility modern states have is to provide for the welfare of their citizens. The United States is no exception to this. In this sense, though the levels of assistance it provides are smaller than the vast majority of industrialized countries, the United States can be said to be a welfare state. Yet a variety of welfare states exist across the globe. In this section, we look at the broad outline of the variety of welfare states that can be found among the wealthy nations of the world.

Liberal Welfare States: The United States, Canada, the United Kingdom

The first set of nations we will call the liberal welfare states. These include all the predominantly English-speaking countries of the wealthy nations: the United States, of course, along with Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and

the UK. In general, these countries are characterized by having smaller welfare states in terms of the money they spend as a percentage of their entire economies. The focus here is on efficiency: spending as little as possible to help those in need. They are also more “liberal” in the sense that they rely more on market forces than the other sets of nations (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Adam Smith, the father of economics, used to be called a “liberal” economist to distinguish him from the “conservative” economists he was arguing against who wanted to conserve the authoritarian powers of the monarchs to control the economy. Smith and his contemporaries wanted to liberate the market, workers, and businesspeople from these controls. The system Smith sought to replace was called *mercantilism*. Mercantilism dominated the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The philosophy behind the system was to maximize the wealth of the aristocracy by increasing a country’s exports abroad by selling cheap goods to trading partners. These exports would then bring in gold to the nation’s treasury and enrich the ruling aristocracy or royalty. Workers were organized into guilds, which in turn controlled the workers and pledged loyalty and cooperation to the aristocracy in exchange for protection from competition, high-cost suppliers, and other threats to making cheap products that would sell abroad. Smith criticized this system for being corrupt and inefficient. He felt that the market could provide liberation to society from the power of the royalty at the same time that society became wealthier. So, while the label might seem to make little sense in our political debate today, calling these welfare states liberal, as did an influential study by researcher Gosta Esping-Anderson (1990), makes sense historically. He pointed out that liberal welfare states are not just small in terms of the amounts of money they spend compared to other types of welfare states. They are also more likely to use **means-tested benefits** welfare programs. That is, programs that test whether or not you have the means to get by on your own or whether you need some kind of assistance from the government. Traditional American welfare programs, now workfare (as discussed earlier), are organized around this principle. So are subsidized

student loans! The belief at work here is that the market tends to be a fair and just arbiter of economic outcomes, and while society has a responsibility to limit any pain or suffering of the poor, the market should be left to do most of this. Possibly as a result, there is less reduction of inequality and poverty in these types of systems than in the others. However, it should be noted that even in this category the United States stands out. The United States has a smaller public sector, more poverty and inequality, and more means-tested programs than any other nation in this category by a wide margin. No wealthy industrialized nation produces as wide a gulf between its rich and its poor, and no nation other than Japan among the wealthy nations spends less on its welfare state. Some of this is due to the American aversion to paying taxes or going into debt to pay for expensive government programs. Interestingly, a new school of economic thought argues that high taxes might not be needed to pay for America's (or most other countries') welfare systems; see the box "Taking a STAB at the Deficit Myth." Another important element is the belief in the "undeserving poor" as discussed earlier in the Causes of Poverty section of Chapter 6.

Corporatist-Statist Welfare States

These countries have larger welfare states and have fewer qualms about intervening in the market if need be. Prominent countries in this category include Germany and France. The imagery Esping-Andersen (1990) uses to describe these welfare states is that of the strong-father family. The rich have a responsibility to look after the poor, but it is recognized that the status differences between the two are there for a reason. A father does not give his child equal rights in the family, because children are not equal. A parent knows better than a child what is safe and proper, and thus, they have greater rights. At the same time, the father does not simply force the children to fend for themselves; he makes sure the children are safe and comfortable and grow to adulthood in the proper manner—the father has greater responsibilities because of his greater rights. The same is true for welfare in these

nations. Welfare is used to soften the blow of market outcomes to a much greater degree than in the liberal welfare states, but by no means is the point to try and make everyone equal or even have equal benefits from the welfare state. The family, the church, and the state have levels of power and hierarchy that are there for a reason, and they should be respected. As a result, these states tend to have a medium level of inequality when compared to the other two types of states.

Social Democratic Welfare States

The Scandinavian welfare states populate this category. Here the strategy of the state is to provide **universal benefits** that ensure a decent standard of living to all citizens, regardless of what happens to them in the marketplace. The philosophy behind this is that human welfare should not be for sale. No one should be allowed to suffer in a rich nation simply because they have had misfortune in the labor market. In Sweden, the political imagery that has been used for decades is that of the so-called People's Home. Everyone has a responsibility to take care of each other. The state is seen as best equipped to take primary responsibility for this. Although citizens in these countries typically complain about the high taxes (they pay the some of the highest in the world), they lavish praise on the comprehensive set of welfare benefits they get from cradle to grave. Unlike the means-tested benefits one must qualify for in the Liberal welfare states, benefits in social democratic countries tend to be **universal**; that is, they are received by all people no matter of income. The philosophy behind this system is to "de-commodify" the citizen. That is, remove the market from being the primary vehicle in which people's prosperity is achieved. Citizens in these states enjoy the most comprehensive set of social benefits in the world. Poverty has been all but eliminated in many of these countries, health care is very cheap, and yet they have some of the healthiest, longest-living people on earth, and many of these states give their citizens two-week government-paid holidays. A fact that has been a nuisance to more than one sociologist wishing to use their summer to study a country like Sweden: Sweden virtually shuts

down during the summertime as nearly everyone seems to be on holiday! As a result, these nations have the lowest levels of poverty and inequality of the bunch.

Evaluating the Welfare States

So which is best? The answer to this likely lies in one's ideological appeal. For many in liberal welfare states, the goal may not be to eliminate poverty as it is in the social democratic states. The liberal states tend to take the Davis-Moore perspective talked about in Chapter 6 to heart and argue that a certain level of inequality and poverty is useful for motivation, although in fact their overall productivity is not much different from the social democratic states. If we assume that the welfare state's goal really is to create as much welfare for the citizens as possible, then liberal welfare states should have two distinct advantages when trying to reduce problems such as poverty. One, they target the money they spend directly at the most vulnerable populations. Two, they spend less because they are only helping those who actually need the help. So, why are they less effective in reducing poverty and inequality? One major reason is that with means-tested programs aimed at the poor, it is easier for a stigma to gain hold in people's minds about those programs. This does not happen when a program is universal and aimed

at everyone (Korpi and Palme, 1998). The American programs Social Security and Medicare (both of which cover virtually all older people in the United States) are universal programs for older adults and are both wildly popular and successful. In fact, Social Security and Medicare have been shown to have a greater effect on reducing poverty than either the very means-tested programs designed to do so, or the lower tax rates and various tax cuts aimed at the poor (Marmor, Mashaw, and Harvey, 1990). When a program gains a stigma, people are less likely to favor funding it. As the preceding descriptions indicate, all else equal, you get what you pay for when it comes to reducing inequality through social welfare programs. So, universal programs do a better job of reducing poverty than means-tested programs because universalism tends to build support for a larger welfare state (needed to combat poverty), while the targeting of means-tested programs undermines that support (Korpi and Palme, 1998). However, Brady and Bostic (2015) found that increasing the proportion of earnings coming from welfare programs in a nation's income does not automatically increase support for the welfare state. Some countries can have very little inequality but still show strong support for the redistributive effects of the welfare state (Scandinavia, for instance), while others that have a high preference for the welfare state still show high levels of inequality (South Africa, Israel, and Spain, for instance).



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

Taking a STAB at The Deficit Myth

Surveys show most Americans place the national debt as one of the greatest threats to the future of the country. Politicians, afraid to raise taxes on their constituents, take the easy way out, we are told, and instead borrow the money to pay for important national priorities, like the welfare state programs, as discussed in the preceding section. As a result, "We are amassing a massive debt that our children will never be able to repay," politicians, pundits and even most economists, often tell us.

Not economist Stephanie Kelton.

Kelton is the leading voice of a group of heterodox economists known collectively as proponents of Modern Monetary Theory (MMT). A central tenet of MMT is that a government, like that of the United States, China, Great Britain, Canada, or any other country that controls its own sovereign currency, never needs to borrow its money from anyone because it is the issuer of that currency.

Kelton, in her book *The Deficit Myth* (2020), cites former President Obama when he warned that “We are taking out a credit card from the Bank of China.” What Obama and other politicians were warning about is spending beyond our means as a nation. If you or I spend more than we bring in, we go into debt and must borrow money from someone to keep food on the table. At some point, we must pay our debts. How do we do that? Possibly by selling off the things we own and hope that is enough to cover our debts. This is often what is meant by “amassing a debt our children will never be able to repay.” Future generations will be worse off when the bill comes due for our overindulgence today. President Obama was making an even more serious argument: not only are we borrowing too much, but we are also borrowing from the wrong people—China—a rival and potential enemy of the United States.

Obama and others who make this type of argument couldn’t be more wrong, Kelton argues. For Kelton and MMT, we are still locked into thinking about money, taxing, spending, and borrowing in a way that is outdated. We use a mindset that was relevant and accurate when money was tied to precious metals (the Gold Standard) because the money supply was fixed: it had to be the roughly same as the amount of gold a country owned.

But after President Nixon took the United States off the Gold Standard in 1971, that no longer became the case. Currencies became “fiat currencies” or currencies issued by government fiat. They have value because we say they have value . . . and because you must pay your taxes in them. In short, the world changed, but our way of thinking about it did not, MMT argues. We are still using what they call the TABS model (Tax and Borrow, then Spend) when the actual process is the STAB model (Spend, then Tax and Borrow). More on this in a bit.

Most Americans assume that when the Congress passes a new piece of legislation, containing both a cost (taxes) and benefits (spending), the first thing that happens after the president signs it is the government begins to tax the money away from the American people to pay for the new program. Let’s say the new program is going to cost \$100 billion. Congress is only able to pass \$90 billion in new taxes to pay for the program. So, the government issues \$10 billion in bonds to the public, who buy them (thereby lending the government the money), and therefore cover the difference between the taxing and the spending. Thus, we are left with a \$10 billion deficit that will get added to the national debt, further endangering our children’s future as they will have to pay for our “out-of-control” spending some day by paying those investors back the \$10 billion they loaned us.

The rub is, so goes the conventional wisdom, that those bonds carry interest rates—interest rates the government must pay to the folks it borrows the \$10 billion from. Where does that money come from? Probably more borrowing! This is a problem, so says the conventional wisdom.

But the TABS model points out an even more serious problem. Some of that borrowing, as noted in the quote from President Obama earlier, also comes from foreign sources, even rivals, like China. So, not only are we accumulating a debt our children may never be able to pay, but we are also owing a significant part of that debt to nations that may have hostile intentions. Not good.

Also, not a problem, says Kelton and MMT.

Through a thorough process of forensic accounting over millions of transactions each day, they say they have discovered something surprising: the STABS model. If the Congress passes a bill that calls for \$100 billion in new spending, the first thing that happens is the government *creates* \$100 billion in new money and *spends* it out into the economy on the new program. That is the first step. And in our example, Congress only raised \$90 billion in new taxes to “pay for” the new spending, which is then taxed back out of the economy: \$100 billion put in, \$90 billion taken back out. Leaving a deficit of \$10 billion. But it’s not really a deficit, says MMT, its actually just \$10 billion in new money that was spent into circulation.

Here is where things get funky. The Treasury Department then issues \$10 billion in Treasury bonds to the public. To the conventional wisdom, this means the Treasury Department is borrowing \$10 billion from the public, who they will eventually have to pay back. Though when we say the “public” what we really mean is very wealthy investors. You and I literally cannot make these investments. One must be invited to do so, and the only folks who are invited are very wealthy investors or intuitions like big pension funds. These Treasury bonds are considered “As good as gold”—actually better than gold because the price typically does not fluctuate as much, and you can’t run out of them. We could theoretically run out of gold someday.

So, notice what just happened there. Rich investors take the dollars that have just been created and spent into circulation (Kelton calls them Green Dollars) and deposit them in a government savings account at the Treasury (Kelton calls these Yellow Dollars) which then pays an interest rate to those rich investors for parking their dollars in the government’s savings account. Green Dollars get turned into Yellow Dollars . . . but they are still the *same dollars*. This is an awesome deal

for rich investors, Kelton argues. The first rule of investing is to have a balanced portfolio of investments. Some money you gamble with and other money you want to be super-safe. Nothing is safer than Treasury bonds. It's a guaranteed flow of money (interest) over the life of the bond. But note, in no way is the government borrowing the money from these investors: the money was already in existence, argues Kelton.

This is where China comes in. China earns dollars (Green Dollars) through its exports that it sends the United States when we buy Chinese goods. And we buy a lot of stuff from China, as you probably already know. China now has dollars. What is it going to do with these dollars? One thing it can do with them is to buy Treasury bonds, just like rich investors do. They can take those newly earned Green Dollars and invest them in the government's savings account (now making them interest-bearing Yellow Dollars). But again, in no way is the United States borrowing dollars from China. We are just letting them park their hard-earned dollars in the Treasury and earn interest on those dollars.

The idea that the national debt is actually a *debt* is just an accounting fiction, Kelton and MMT argue. In sociological parlance, it is a social constructed "truth." The U.S. government does not borrow dollars from bond holders, be they on Wall Street or be they in China. Because you and I (or even rich

folks) do not sit around producing dollars in our basements. (If you do sit around producing dollars in your basement, Kelton points out, the FBI and Secret Service will want to have a word with you and may provide you a new place to live following a lengthy legal proceeding!) So, in the end, MMT argues that the national debt is nothing more than a historical record of how much money has been spent into circulation. It's nothing to become concerned about. This is not to say that Kelton and MMT do not see risks to running large government deficits. Like all economists, they see a risk of inflation if too much money is flushed into the economy too quickly and without the demand to absorb it. That is the real risk of deficit spending according to MMT. But that is a very different concern than a debt our children will never be able to repay.

Critics charge that MMT is too theoretical and has not been thoroughly tested in the real world; that it could lead to excessive inflation, loss of value for the currency, and general economic instability. Yet, MMT has grown in popularity. Some economists argue that it was an MMT-like response to the pandemic that led to the high inflation of the immediate postpandemic years; others argue it was supply chain issues caused by the pandemic itself. Whatever the case, MMT gives us another way to think about the debt and deficits.

Political Ideology

At a very basic level, political ideology breaks down between *liberals*, *conservatives*, and *moderates*. We have all heard these terms but what do they mean? **Liberals** are said to lean to the left of the political spectrum and support more government intervention in the marketplace on behalf of the working and middle classes. They also favor a more lenient stance when it comes to regulating moral behavior—what social scientists often refer to as “social issues.” In contrast, on economic and social issues, **conservatives** and the right wing of the political spectrum tend to favor less government intervention in the economy on behalf of the working and middle classes and a more restrictive/traditional stance toward moral or social issues. **Moderates** fall somewhere between liberals and conservatives on these issues or mix

the social and economic views of conservatives and liberals.

Notice we said conservatives favor less intervention on behalf of the working and middle classes. Most sociologists who study the economy make the argument that government always intervenes in the economy, it's just a matter of how and on whose behalf. In this case, conservatives often intervene on the side of the upper class or business interests. While liberals tend to argue that government should help those who are less fortunate, conservatives tend to argue that government should make it as easy as possible for the folks who they believe create jobs and wealth to do so. Conservatives and liberals found themselves in awkward ideological territory after both a Republican and a Democratic administration spent hundreds of billions of dollars in 2008 and 2009 to bail out some of the largest banks in the U.S. financial

system. Both the George W. Bush and Obama administrations have sharply increased government spending and thus the size of the state. Voices from the right and the left have criticized both parties for supporting the very wealthy, and the Tea Party movement of conservative activists rose up in the summer of 2009 to challenge both the Obama administration and the elements of the Republican establishment that oversaw the run-up of government spending during the Bush years.

Ideological divisions between conservatives and liberals in the United States appear to have widened in recent decades. Dellaposta, Shi, and Macy (2015) found that this polarization extends deep into social behavior and preferences, for instance, musical or artistic tastes, appropriate versus inappropriate child-rearing practices, or tolerance for divorce, not just politics. These views are driven by “echo chambers” of influence and interaction between people who have the same views, only listening to information that agrees with what they already think, with little interaction between people with opposing views (DellaPosta, 2020). Increasingly, friendship networks and even where people want to live reflect their political viewpoints (Pew Research Center, 2014). Along with this, other changes in ideology have taken place. For instance, over the past 40 years, conservatives have gone from having the most trust in science compared to both liberals and moderates, to today having the lowest trust in science (Gauchat, 2012). This is dramatically demonstrated by differences over the scientific consensus among scientists that global warming is caused by human activities, with liberals and moderates generally accepting the consensus while conservatives largely dismiss it (Kiley, 2015). A similar dynamic played out during the COVID-19 pandemic, with conservatives being less likely to believe public health officials and liberals more likely. Nationalism also plays a role, with conservatives increasingly favoring an exclusionary nationalism on issues such as immigration, for instance, while liberals are more likely to support policies that promote diversity and to view immigrants as a source of strength (Bonikowski, Feinstein, and Bock, 2021). In the middle of all of this,

moderates tend to try to take the best of both the right and the left, but this is not always an easy task. Many people who report to be moderates are found to be less interested in, knowledgeable about, and involved in politics than liberals or conservatives. In the United States, this means that many politicians make great efforts in general elections to court the elusive moderate swing vote, which is populated largely by people who have very limited political or policy knowledge or interest and who tend to make their minds up about candidates and issues at the last minute. A rough picture of how people self-report their ideological leanings finds that about a quarter of people consider themselves liberal, four in ten say they are moderates, and a third conservative. This breakdown of ideology does not stay static over time. From 2008 to 2010, public support for social programs in general, one of the bedrocks of liberal ideology, saw a sharp decline in public support, especially among conservatives (Brooks and Manza, 2013) following the Great Recession and the Obama administration’s successful push for national health insurance. In 2016, voters shattered the traditional ideological categories by nominating Donald Trump on the Republican side, who adopted a hard right stance on many social issues, such as immigration and racial profiling, but several liberal positions on economic issues, such as trade and support for entitlement programs and infrastructure spending. Democrats flirted with nominating an avowed democratic socialist in Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. Though the establishment candidate Hillary Clinton eventually won the Democrat’s nomination, it was clear voters were in a mood to shake up the traditional ideological divide. Part of that may be explained by a study conducted just prior to the process. Baldassarri and Goldberg (2014) found that while many voters have moved to the ideological corners of liberal and conservative, others remain “alternatives,” many of whom are morally conservative but economically liberal, and vice versa. The researchers found that these alternative voters have been reluctantly supporting Republicans in recent elections. This might explain the enthusiastic support for Trump in the 2016, 2020, and 2024

Figure 12.1 Hillary Clinton won the 2016 popular vote by 2.8 million votes, but close wins in several usually Democratic rust-belt states enabled Donald Trump to win the electoral vote and thus be elected president.

	Total Votes	Percentage of Vote
Clinton	65,516,951	48.2
Trump	62,844,908	46.2
Other	7,639,968	5.6
Total	136,001,827	100.0
Clinton margin	+2,672,043	+2.0

campaigns as these voters have felt alienated from both parties’ political agendas, thus a “renegade Republican” like Trump would specifically appeal to this group. In fact, evidence suggests that when a candidate asserts an obvious untruth—as Trump has done repeatedly—especially as part of a general attack on establishment norms, anti-establishment voters will pick up on the underlying message that the establishment is illegitimate, and therefore, the candidate will have an “authentic” appeal despite the falsehoods and norm breaking (Hahl, Kim and Sivan, 2018). On the other hand, Trump’s extreme positions and denigration of women, minorities, and Muslims appears to have driven some moderate Republicans away from their party toward support of Hillary Clinton or of third-party candidates. In the general election, Trump was elected president due to narrow wins in several “rust-belt” states, which gave him a majority in the Electoral College, despite Clinton winning the popular vote by around three million votes (Figure 12.1).

Political Parties and Special Interest Groups

The two-party system in the United States reflects the ideological split between liberals and conservatives. Democrats tend to represent liberals, and Republicans tend to represent the conservatives with moderates vacillating between the two. The outcomes of elections

tend to rely on the mobilization of the liberal or conservative base of the two parties during the low-turnout elections (like off-year congressional elections, where only a third of those eligible typically vote) and wining the moderate middle during high-turnout elections (like presidential elections where roughly half of those eligible typically vote). Sometimes moderate voters become so connected to their identity as neither a Democrat nor a Republican that they declare themselves Independents. But not all Independents are moderates. They also come from the liberal or conservative fringes and are not satisfied with center-right or center-left positions of the major parties. As mentioned earlier, there is strong evidence that the political parties in the United States are becoming more partisan and less willing to compromise with one another at the same time that they are becoming more ideological: something often referred to as political polarization (DiMaggio, Evan, and Bryson, 1996). One reason for this may be the gerrymandering of districts in the House of Representatives. Gerrymandering is the process of drawing congressional districts so as to control the outcome of an election: concentrating a large number of voters from one party in a single district so that the other party can win the four districts around it. This is common, and both major political parties do it. State legislatures typically control this process, so when a state legislature switches hands from, say, a Democratic to Republican majority, it can have important ramifications for the makeup of congressional districts in that state. This can lead to results unrepresentative of public opinion. For example, in 2012, Republicans received only 48 percent of the national vote for seats in the House of Representatives but won a majority of the seats. This is because of a swing to the Republicans in state legislatures in 2010, who in turn gerrymandered U.S. House districts to favor Republicans. In the 2014 election, Republicans won 52 percent of the national vote but 57 percent of the House seats, for the same reason (Richie, 2014). Another possible explanation for the rise of partisanship can be found in the partisan interactions political leaders have with one another over time. Liu and Srivastva (2015) found that by studying senators’

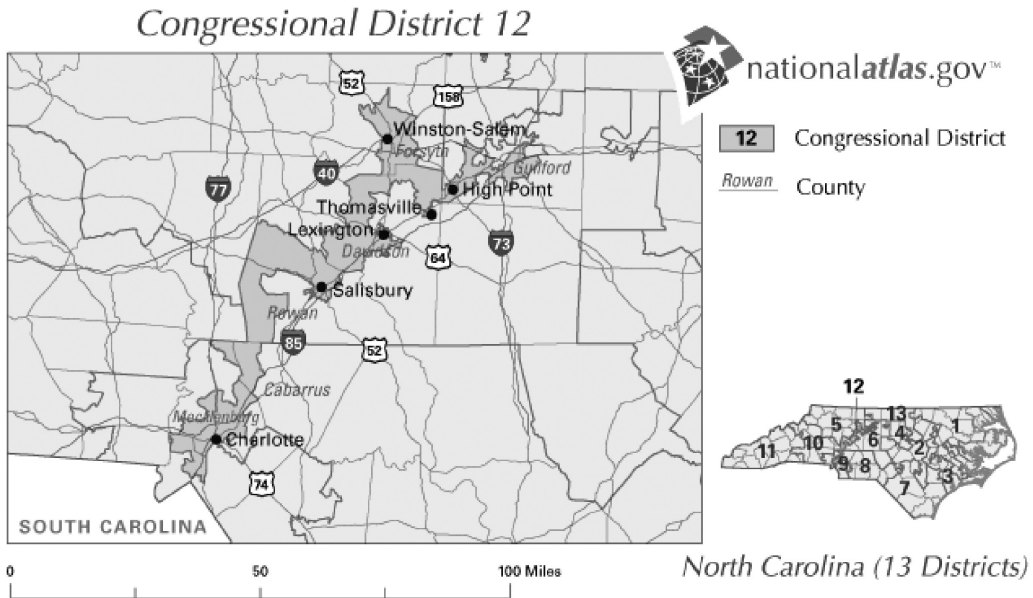


Photo 12.3 Gerrymandered congressional districts like this one have created more districts that are “safe” for one party and fewer “swing” districts that might vote for either party. This has increased political polarization and decreased the voting influence of moderates and independents.

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interactions with one another in Senate committees over a period of 30 years, senators who shared the same political identity tended to converge in their views over time, while those who had opposing political identities tended to become further apart on their views. In both cases, senators’ views were becoming polarized from those of members of the other political party.

Lobbyists and Special Interest Groups

For a host of reasons, not the least of which is that representatives in Congress are elected as individuals from specific districts, U.S. political parties tend to be fairly weak. That is, party unity is weak. The interests of a northeastern Democrat from an urban district are going to be very different from those of a southern Democrat from a mostly rural district. In fact, southern Democrats have historically had as much in common with the Republicans as they have with the members of their own party or its platform. The same can be said for northeastern Republicans, who tend

to be rather liberal and have often voted with Democrats, especially those from New England. As Domhoff points out, these differences have decreased somewhat in recent years, but they have not entirely disappeared.

With all of this incoherency at the party level, lobbyists and special interest groups have gained a great deal of power and influence in Washington, DC. **Special interest groups** are just what they sound like, groups of people who come together to support particular issues or interests. Interest groups use their financial resources to hire lobbyists. **Lobbyists** go to the capitol to attempt to influence legislation. **Political action committees**, called PACs, are creations of these groups to raise money for their causes. PACs typically funnel money to political candidates who support their positions. PACs have many critics who charge that they amount to little more than legalized bribery (Cook, 1993). On the other hand, PACs make no secret about what they are doing: trying to influence politics in the direction that they favor. PACs were created in the 1970s, though some trace the first PAC back to 1944. They exploded in

number during the 1980s and have continued that explosive growth to this day. Critics blame PACs for being a major contributor to the rising costs of political campaigns in the United States. Ironically, it is probably the high costs of running a national campaign that contributes to political candidates' accepting money from PACs in the first place. And this vicious cycle looks to have no end unless specific legislation is passed to curtail it. Either way, the influence of special interest groups, the lobbyists, and their PACs is now well entrenched in the workings of government. Well-funded groups like the National Rifle Association can block gun control legislation year after year despite the fact that a majority of Americans support moderate gun control legislation and have for decades. The same can be said for a multitude of major issues. And while critics charge this amounts to a small minority of voices drowning out the majority, supporters of the system counter that interest groups allow the passion of an organized minority to counterbalance the passivity of a larger opposition. In other words, isn't it appropriate, supporters ask, if a smaller group of people who really care about an issue (likely because they are going to be heavily affected by the outcome) get their way over a larger group who do not feel as passionately about their side (and likely won't be as affected by the outcome)? Is majority rule always appropriate, they ask, especially when the minority may be disproportionately affected?

Voting Patterns of the Major Social Groups

The dominant social locations that we have looked at in this book are very evident when one examines voting patterns in American elections. Class, race, and gender along with other social forces play important roles in shaping how people vote. White, rural voters tend to vote Republican. More men vote Republican than women. But that gender gap is dwarfed by the race gap. African Americans and Latinos vote Democratic in very large numbers: around 90 percent and 65 to 70 percent in most elections. White women tend to support

the winner in presidential contests, but white men vote overwhelmingly Republican. Class also plays a role, with working-class voters overall supporting Democrats and upper-class voters supporting Republicans, although white working-class voters fearful of competition from minority groups have increasingly voted Republican in recent decades. The middle class is split and often votes with the winner. Age is also an important factor with older voters being generally more conservative, thus tending to vote more Republican, while younger voters are more liberal and tend to vote more Democratic (Milkman, 2017). We can see these patterns clearly in the 2012 presidential election in which Democratic President Barack Obama was reelected over challenger and former Republican Governor of Massachusetts, Mitt Romney. Obama won a whopping 93 percent of the African American vote, while Romney won 59 percent of white voters. Obama won 66 percent of Latinos and 73 percent of Asians. Romney won just over 50 percent of voters earning above \$50,000, while Obama won a convincing victory of those making less than \$50,000. Age played out as previously described, with Obama winning the youngest voters at 60 percent and Romney winning the oldest (age 65 years and over) at 56 percent. For education, Democrats decisively won those without a high school education at 60 percent and those with the most education (graduate degrees) at 56 percent. Religion was another divergence point. Those who attend religious services more than once a week voted for Romney at 63 percent, while those who reported never attending a religious service voted for Obama at 62 percent. Protestants, who made up 53 percent of the electorate in 2012, voted 53 percent in favor of Governor Romney, while Catholics split barely in favor of President Obama. Jewish voters voted 69 percent in favor of Obama. These patterns were largely re-created in the 2016 presidential race between Republican businessman Donald Trump and former Secretary of State Democrat Hillary Clinton. White, rural voters strongly backed the Republican. Men voted for Trump by a 53 to 41 percent margin, while women backed Clinton by a similar 54 to 42 percent. Race once again was critical to the election outcome, and

much of what looked like a gender gap was revealed to actually be a race gap. While women overall backed Clinton, white women voted for Trump by a margin of ten points, 53 to 43 percent. And while every other racial or ethnic group backed Clinton, they failed to do so in as large margins as they did President Obama in 2008 and 2012. Another surprising result from the 2016 campaign was an increase in support from Latino voters for Trump at 29 percent, up from 27 percent for Governor Romney in 2012. This, despite the heated rhetoric from Trump about building a wall between the United States and Mexico, calling Mexicans “rapists” and “murderers,” and pledging to deport all 11 million undocumented immigrants in his first year in office. While African Americans again overwhelmingly backed Secretary Clinton at 88 percent, their support was down from the 2008 and 2012 numbers (95 percent and 93 percent) for President Obama. Also, turnout among younger and minority voters was lower in the 2016 election than in the previous two elections, perhaps reflecting lesser enthusiasm for Clinton than for Obama.

Class played a similar role as in past elections, with Clinton winning those making under \$50,000 a year, while middle-class and upper-class voters backed Trump, though his support was considerably lower among voters making \$100,000 or more compared to the support for Republican Governor Romney in 2012. This may be related to a shift in educational levels from recent elections, as Democrats have traditionally won the least and most educated voters, while the GOP have normally won everyone in the middle. This time, however, Democrats won both voters with a college degree (normally a Republican leaning group) and those voters with graduate degrees, while the Republicans won among those with only a high school degree, a group that normally leans Democratic, as well as those voters with “some college.” This could indicate a realignment of the parties in terms of education with the more highly educated leaning Democratic and the less educated leaning Republican, but only future elections will tell for certain. Religion played out as it did in 2012, with those attending religious services more often supporting Republican

Trump and those rarely or never attending such services backing Democrat Clinton. Protestants again backed the Republican candidate, while Jewish voters and those with no religion backed the Democrat. One shift from 2012 was that Catholics narrowly sided with the Republican this time out. Secretary Clinton did win the popular vote by nearly three million votes and drew about the same number of total votes as President Obama did in 2012 (about 65.8 million for Clinton compared to 65.5 million for Obama). Clinton’s popular vote margin over Trump was by about two percentage points, yet the geographic distribution of Clinton’s votes was such that her opponent, Donald Trump, won more electoral votes and thus defeated her in the election. What the last several election cycles demonstrate, however, is that the nation is becoming more polarized by race, class, age, and education.

As previously mentioned, immigration became an important issue after it was raised as a centerpiece of Republican nominee Donald Trump’s campaigns. Trump’s insistence that undocumented immigrants, mostly from Mexico, were rapists and murderers and that he would construct a wall between the United States and Mexico (and make Mexico pay for it) drove a great deal of interest, anger, and media toward his campaign. Yet Brady and Finnigan (2014) found that anti-immigrant sentiments have little actual impact on voters’ attitudes toward social policies in the 17 wealthy democracies they studied.

Interest in this issue in the United States may be more a reflection of the shifting demographics of the electorate. The traditional Republican coalition of older white voters is declining in the population, while younger minority voters are increasing. It is possible that the focus on immigration in the 2016 campaign was a proxy for far deeper fears among white people and older voters concerning the changing face of the American population. Education levels have traditionally played an interesting role in voting patterns, with Democrats capturing both the most (those with graduate degrees) and the least educated individuals (folks with a high school degree or less), and the GOP capturing a majority of those in between. Republicans have

traditionally won voters with four-year degrees but not graduate degrees, but McVeigh et al. (2014) found that members of the Tea Party faction within the Republican Party are much more likely to have a bachelor's degree than the general population. The researchers also found that areas in which college-educated voters were more segregated from noncollege-educated voters were the most likely to have a greater number of Tea Party organizations, and that those with four-year degrees in those educationally segregated counties were more likely to be members of Tea Party organizations. The researchers speculate that areas highly segregated by education are less likely to need direct government assistance due to their higher incomes and status; thus, they are less supportive of those programs while being more concerned about bearing the costs.

The Apathetic Voter

What is distinctive about American elections is how many people *don't vote at all*. With the lowest voting rates of any advanced industrial society, the reasons for this low turnout are complex. But chief among the culprits would appear to be a belief that politics do not matter in the lives of those who do not vote. Many nonvoters report a cynicism about being able

to impact meaningful change. They feel they have little stake in the system. Others have argued however that those who do not vote do so because they are basically satisfied with their situation or have little appetite for substantial change which might risk what few resources they already have and therefore see little reason for voting (Jackman, 1994).

By looking at which groups participate and which groups do not, most sociologists believe the first view. In general, as we see later, those with more power in American society tend to vote in greater numbers, while those with less power vote less. One area where this does not hold true, however, is sex. Men and women vote in roughly the same numbers. But race shows the trend quite clearly. Overall, white people vote the most followed by African Americans and then Hispanics. However, the race and ethnicity of the candidates and the nature of the issues in the election sometimes lead to exceptions to this pattern. Homeowners, parents, the highly educated, and the wealthy are all more likely to vote than renters, singles, those with less education, or the poor. Interestingly, Minkoff (2016) finds that being in groups, whether they are political or community based, makes people more politically active, and this may accord with research by Putnam (2000) that notes the declining connectedness of Americans who are less likely to do things like join groups.



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

Strangers in Their Own Land

Why do so many voters seem to vote against their own apparent self-interest? Why do voters in the South, the poorest region of the country, consistently vote for conservative politicians whose most reliable policy mantra is tax cuts for the wealthy?

In Arlie Russell Hochschild's book, *Strangers in Their Own Land*, we discover the anger and mourning that pervade the American right and an important examination of the emotions that drive many on the conservative side of the political spectrum. The book dives into the emotional complexities that underlie

conservative beliefs, challenging preconceived notions and stereotypes. In a time of increasing polarization, this book calls for empathy, communication, and unity, seeking to bridge the nation's political divide.

Empathy Wall: Understanding the Divide

Hochschild introduces the concept of the "empathy wall" to explain the emotional and ideological barriers that separate liberals and conservatives. This

metaphorical wall is the lens through which she explores the emotions of her conservative subjects. For Hochschild, bridging this divide requires scaling the empathy wall, seeking to understand the emotional landscape of those on the other side of the political spectrum.

The Louisiana Context: A Microcosm of Conservative America

Hochschild's journey begins in Louisiana, a state that represents many aspects of conservative America. Louisiana is known for its strong conservative and Tea Party influences, but it also grapples with environmental issues due to the presence of the oil and petrochemical industry. Hochschild's choice of location provides an ideal microcosm of the broader American conservative landscape.

The "Deep Story": A Narrative of Suffering

One of the central sociological insights of *Strangers in Their Own Land* is the development of what Hochschild calls the "deep story." This is the narrative that underlies the emotions and beliefs of her conservative subjects. The deep story is not a collection of facts and figures but a story of suffering, a narrative that explains why individuals feel as they do. Hochschild's deep story revolves around the metaphor of waiting in line. In this story, people on the right feel like they have been patiently waiting in line for the American Dream. They've played by the rules, worked hard, and done what they believed was right. Meanwhile, they perceive others, often minorities and the urban elite, as cutting in line ahead of them, getting ahead through government programs and social-justice initiatives. This perceived line-cutting leads to feelings of betrayal, frustration, and anger. Understanding the deep story is crucial to comprehending the emotional underpinnings of conservative beliefs. It's not just about policy preferences; it's about feeling left behind and betrayed.

Environmental Concerns: A Complex Balancing Act

Hochschild delves into the complex relationship between conservatives and environmental issues, particularly in a state heavily reliant on the oil and petrochemical industry. She highlights the conflicts individuals experience when their economic interests collide with environmental concerns. Conservatives in Louisiana often work in industries that have a significant environmental impact. They are well

aware of the pollution and its consequences, but they also depend on these industries for their livelihoods. Hochschild's interviews reveal the inner turmoil as individuals try to balance their economic well-being with their environmental concerns. This challenges the notion that conservatives are uniformly dismissive of environmental issues. It underscores the importance of understanding the context in which individuals form their beliefs.

"The Great Paradox": Voting Against Economic Interests

Hochschild grapples with a puzzling question: Why do many conservatives seem to vote against their own economic interests? This sociological puzzle is particularly relevant in the context of Louisiana, where poverty rates are high, and public services are often underfunded. Hochschild's deep story of "waiting in line" offers a key to understanding this paradox. Many conservatives prioritize preserving their place in line, even if it means supporting policies that seem contrary to their economic well-being. In their view, social programs and regulations too often help others cut ahead of them in line, jeopardizing their own prospects. This highlights the powerful influence of identity and values in shaping political choices. Mirroring Weber's arguments against Marx, it's a reminder that political decisions are often driven by more than just economic calculations.

The Bridge to Unity: The Empathy-Enabling Process

Throughout the book, Hochschild documents her own journey of understanding and building empathy with her conservative subjects. Hochschild's method involves active listening and seeking common ground. She listens to the stories, concerns, and hopes of the people she meets. She avoids confrontation and judgment, instead showing a genuine desire to understand. As the United States faces increasing polarization, understanding the emotions and narratives that drive political beliefs is crucial for fostering unity and productive dialogue, she argues. By offering a profound understanding of the American right's anger and mourning, the book becomes a call to action for empathy, dialogue, and a more united nation. As the nation confronts the challenges of polarization and division, Hochschild hopes *Strangers in Their Own Land* can serve as a timely reminder that empathy and open conversation can build bridges and foster unity in a fractured society.

The Politics of Development in the Third World

The term “development” is used both narrowly and broadly in the sociological literature. The narrow sense refers to economic development, the economic changes associated with the Industrial Revolution. In the broad sense, development refers to *all* the changes that have occurred in the last 200 to 300 years. In this sense the term is used interchangeably with the term “modernization.” In this chapter, we use the term *development* for this broad meaning and the term “economic development” for the narrow meaning.

Sociologists frequently place different countries in categories that reflect different degrees of economic development. Developed countries are those that have modern political institutions, industrial economies, high standards of living, high literacy rates, and good medical care. Examples are the United States, Japan, and the Scandinavian countries. The less-developed or developing countries lack some or all of these things and have low standards of living. Many countries in Africa, Asia, and South America fall into this category. Another common term, referring to a group of countries that roughly corresponds to the developing countries, is *Third World* countries. This term was originally coined to refer to countries not clearly aligned with either of the two major groups of developed countries in the mid-twentieth century, the capitalist/democratic bloc and the communist bloc (Worsley, 1984). Although this distinction is less meaningful today, the “Third World” terminology continues to be widely used and is preferred by some who see negative connotations in the term “less-developed.”

Perspectives on Uneven Development in the Third World

One issue of great interest to sociologists who study social change in the Third World is that of uneven development between First World and Third World countries, as well as within Third World countries. The term “uneven development” refers to differences in growth and

economic development among different geographic areas. Theories concerning social change and uneven development in the Third World fall into two broad categories that generally correspond to the functionalist and conflict theories.

Modernization Theories

The major functionalist approach to uneven development is **modernization theory**, which holds that as Third World countries modernize and industrialize, uneven development will gradually decrease. Functionalists believe that, as the process of modernization spreads to the developing countries, they will benefit from it much as the industrialized countries have. Modernization theorists see the development of Third World societies as linked to a process of diffusion, both cultural and technological (Rostow, 1960). On the technological side, economic development is seen as an outgrowth of technologies that were first developed in Europe or North America. These technologies allowed dramatic increases in productivity in Europe and North America, particularly from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. Modernization theory holds that similar gains in productivity can be realized in Third World countries through the importation of modern technology and modern forms of organization, along with infusions of the capital necessary to build factories that use these technologies. Modernization theorists would point to economic booms in Third World countries such as South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan as examples of this, noting that all of these countries have received substantial investment from corporations and other organizations based in more-developed countries. More recently, such investment and growth has also been occurring in mainland China.

Modernization theorists give equal importance to cultural diffusion. Theorists such as David McClelland (1961) point to the need for such values as individualism and self-reliance, the ability to defer gratification, and the desire to achieve. He argues that countries with such values will experience economic growth, while countries without them will not. In a sense,

McClelland's view is a modern version of Max Weber's theories about the Protestant work ethic, discussed in Chapter 15. According to this view, countries that have these values to begin with will be better able to take advantage of imported technologies. In countries that do not have them, it may be necessary for the values to be introduced and accepted through the process of cultural diffusion discussed earlier in Chapter 4. We return to this topic in Chapter 18.

A comparison of the opposite trends in economic growth in Russia and China in the early 1990s has been used to illustrate this point (Klein, 1993). Although Russia is not a Third World country, its standard of living remains low compared with other Western countries, and it has not thus far received major economic benefits from its transition from socialism to capitalism. Klein points out that when China made moves to privatize its economy in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the entrepreneurial aspects of China's culture created an atmosphere favorable to economic development. For example, Chinese farmers jumped at the chance to make a profit, and when the Shenzhen stock exchange opened in 1992, so many Chinese wanted to buy stock that a riot ensued. In addition, the 55 million Chinese living abroad include many successful businesspeople, eager to bring what they have learned to their homeland in the form of investment. According to Klein, 80 percent of foreign investment in China in the early 1990s came from ethnic Chinese living abroad. Russia has neither of these advantages. In contrast to China, Russians appear to lack values of entrepreneurship and distrust potential investors as speculators. One Russian manager in 1993 lamented that, "there's a philosophy here that if it's good for business, it must be bad for the country" (Watson, 1993). In Russia, foreign investment that could provide needed capital is distrusted. Undoubtedly, one reason is that it is truly "foreign": Unlike China's situation, there are not masses of ethnic Russians around the world waiting with money to invest in Russia.

Modernization theorists would hold that despite Russia's possession of advanced technology, it will not experience a real economic

takeoff until it adopts values more supportive of investment and growth. Many of them make the same point about other less-developed countries, most of which, unlike Russia, can be classified as Third World countries. This may occur through cultural diffusion, though countries such as China that have favorable values already may be better able to take advantage of the importation of technology and infusions of capital.

Despite examples such as Russia and China, modernization theory does have its critics. Certain of its arguments have not held up when researched. For example, in many countries with low levels of economic development, research has not demonstrated that people's need to achieve is any less than in more-developed countries. Moreover, there is also some evidence indicating that international investment can harm the development of Third World countries. Whatever the benefits of the diffusion of technology and cultural attributes favorable to development, there may be other effects that offset these benefits. For these reasons and others, sociological criticisms of modernization theory have increased (Chirot, 1981; Wallerstein, 1976). A major alternative to modernization theory is dependency theory, to which we now turn.

Dependency Theories

Some conflict theories argue that First World countries have developed at the expense of less-developed countries and have even pushed these countries backward. This process is called the development of underdevelopment, a name popularized in North America by Andre Gunder Frank (1969). These theories are called **dependency theories** because they claim that the activities of the industrialized countries keep the Third World countries in a dependent position, rather than enabling them to develop on their own. Some dependency theories argue that the "help" provided by the First World to the Third World is either disguised benefits for its own international corporations or political blackmail used to force Third World countries to support First World political goals.

World-System Theory

In North America, the most widely accepted version of dependency theory is **world-system theory**, associated with the work of Immanuel Wallerstein (1974a, 1974b, 1979, 1980, 1989; Chirot, 1981; Chirot and Hall, 1982). Wallerstein defined *world-system* as a worldwide economic and political system that includes a division of labor among different countries as well as a stratification system among these countries. The world-system is an outgrowth of the process of *globalization* discussed in Chapter 11. As more and more economic activity occurs on an international scale, international boundaries become less important. Social inequality, economic exchange, and political and economic domination once occurred within the boundaries of particular countries. But in the world-system, they occur on a worldwide scale. Thus, for example, it makes as much sense today to talk about inequality between two different countries as it does to talk about inequality between two different groups within the same country. Wallerstein argued that the “modern world-system” began in what he called the “long sixteenth century,” which ran from about 1450 to 1650 in Western Europe. During the last few centuries, this world-system expanded to encompass the entire planet. The appearance and growth of this world-system is the fundamental context for the spread of capitalism, the Industrial Revolution, and modernization.

As the modern world-system grew, it produced a division of labor among the different countries of the world. This division of labor divided the countries of the world into three major, interrelated groups. At the center are core countries, characterized by industrialization, economic diversification in secondary and tertiary production, heavy investment in foreign areas, and considerable political and economic autonomy in pursuing their own interests. Currently, the leading core countries are the United States, Germany, and Japan. Peripheral countries, in contrast, have little or no industrialization, specialize in primary production, are heavily invested in by foreign countries, and experience frequent outside interference in

their political and economic affairs. Core countries use the resources of peripheral countries to enhance their own development and consequently retard the development of peripheral countries. Examples of peripheral countries are Sri Lanka, El Salvador, and Zimbabwe. In between core and periphery are semiperipheral countries that are more developed than peripheral countries but less developed than core countries. Because semiperipheral countries exploit peripheral countries even as they are exploited by core countries, they (or at least their economic elites) have a vested interest in keeping the entire system stable. Brazil, Spain, and Greece are semiperipheral countries.

It is only within this world-system that the rise and fall of states, relative rates of development, and social relations in general can be fully understood. Although the system has always had core countries, the countries in the core have varied through time. In the same way, world-system theory sees the origin of the modern nation-state as a result of the expansion of the international system. Semiperipheral countries are especially volatile, because they are typically declining former core countries or rising former peripheral countries.

Relationships Within the World-System

The basic arguments of world-system theory are that relations between core countries and peripheral countries are imperialistic and that core development and continued economic growth occur at the expense of the underdevelopment of peripheral and semiperipheral countries. Core countries use peripheral countries as sources of cheap raw materials and, increasingly, cheap labor. Thus, the objective of investment by core countries in peripheral countries is to increase profits in core countries and not to assist peripheral countries. Specifically, a large proportion of the profits generated in peripheral countries are taken out of those countries by the multinational corporations of the core countries, as discussed in Chapter 11.

World-system theory is in some regards an outgrowth of imperialism theory, first advanced by the Russian revolutionary V. I. Lenin (1916). **Imperialism** can be defined as a system in which one country uses the resources of

another to its own advantage, while not giving the other country a fair return for its contribution. Lenin saw imperialism as a product of saturated markets and depleted natural resources in industrialized countries. When this occurs, banks and corporations use their influence to encourage their governments to engage in colonial expansion to secure new sources of natural resources and new markets for their products, which include not only goods but also capital investments.

In today's world, we might add two modifications to Lenin's theory. First, as multinational corporations have grown stronger, they have become less reliant on governments to engage in colonial expansion—in a sense, they do it themselves, though often still with the backing of their governments. American and European corporations, for example, have invested heavily in the oil resources of the Middle East; American companies are shifting jobs from the United States to Mexico, where wages are much lower, and Japanese companies are similarly shifting jobs to Korea, Taiwan, and other low-wage Asian countries. All of this is occurring without any actions by government to establish colonies in the Third World—indeed, most of the old colonies have gained independence. However, Western governments will still act to protect their business interests or those of their corporations. This is illustrated by the Persian Gulf War, which was fought largely to protect Western oil interests in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Second, cheap labor is increasingly what multinational corporations seek in their international activities, as is illustrated by the American and Japanese job shifts previously described. According to world-system theory, these kinds of investments and economic relations distort class stratification in peripheral countries. They lead to the development of a small, wealthy class that owes its position to the economic relations with core countries. In order to maintain their position, members of the wealthy class must continue to support core investment and related policies. It might be added that these patterns of economic relations also distort class stratification in core countries: A key consequence of globalization

in the United States, discussed in Chapters 9 and 11, has been increased economic inequality and a shrinking middle class. Similarly, working-class institutions, such as labor unions, appear to have weakened during the era of globalization (Western, 1995).

In addition, investment in primary production (that is, the extraction of natural resources) does not lead to economic development in peripheral countries. Primary production creates relatively few jobs, and those it does create are unskilled and low-paying jobs. Thus, a large, poor working class or, in the case of agricultural production, a large class of peasants, develops. In either case the gap between rich and poor in peripheral countries increases with development—just the opposite of what happened in core countries, until recently.

Peripheral Countries and Socialist Revolution

The world-system previously described helps to explain why socialist revolutions have happened mainly in peripheral or semiperipheral countries, rather than in core industrialized countries, as had been predicted by Marx. Peripheral and semiperipheral countries have vast gaps between the wealthy and the poor. Their people are aware of the internal gaps as well as the gap between their countries and the core countries. Moreover, they often trace their problems to the actions of the core countries. For these reasons, these countries are often attracted to socialist and communist philosophies. Since the Russian Revolution of 1917, nearly all socialist revolutions have occurred in Third World, peripheral countries, such as China, Cuba, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, and Nicaragua. Many other peripheral countries are leftist and sympathetic to the ideals of socialism, even though they may not have experienced socialist revolutions. Still, it should not be forgotten that part of the objective of these countries is to modernize, and that they view socialism as an alternate route to modernization.

The core countries have tended to oppose virtually all Third World socialist revolutions. In Chile in 1973, socialists who had been freely elected to lead the government were ousted by a CIA-backed coup. Ostensibly, the core countries have opposed socialist revolutions out of

a desire to support democracy, but two realities suggest strongly that other motivations play an equal or greater role. In the case of Chile, Socialist president Salvador Allende was ousted and killed with American backing, and his successor, Augusto Pinochet, was a brutal dictator who ruled with an iron fist for more than a decade. Around 3,500 people were killed or disappeared, and another 28,000 were subjected to torture under the Pinochet regime. Second, the response of core countries to governments of peripheral countries has in many cases depended more upon whether they were capitalist or socialist than on how democratic they were. For years, the United States opposed Nicaragua's socialist Sandinista government, while supporting a capitalist government in nearby El Salvador, despite a worse record on human rights and a more repressive regime in El Salvador than could be found in Nicaragua. This suggests that, in large part, core countries oppose socialist revolutions because they threaten the assets of multinational companies based in the core countries.

Ironically, in light of Marx's theories, socialist revolutions that occur in peripheral or semiperipheral countries may be reversed by capitalist revolutions once those countries reach a certain level of modernization and industrialization. This has happened in the Soviet Union and nearly happened in the Tiananmen Square uprising in China in 1989. Moreover, China's economy has become increasingly capitalist, despite its continued authoritarian government and Marxist ideology. Investment by multinational corporations has been encouraged in recent years; much of its farming has been privatized; and, as noted earlier, a stock exchange was opened in 1992. Also, the country's system of stratification has become increasingly tied to market forces, according to sociological research (Nee, 1996). Vietnam, too, has become increasingly capitalistic, particularly in the southern part of the country, which had been capitalist prior to the departure of U.S. troops in 1975. These examples make an important point: In some cases, economic systems established by socialist revolutions may become quite capitalist without capitalist revolutions such as Russia's in 1991. Eastern Europe experienced a

particularly swift series of capitalist revolutions in 1989 and 1990. But there, socialism had been imposed by the Soviet Union, not established by revolution, and hence, never had the constituency it had elsewhere.

Foreign Aid and International Loans

From the standpoint of world-system theory, foreign aid, loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and development loans from private banks are all forms of imperialism because they require the recipient to buy goods and supplies from the lending country and to follow certain economic and political policies. Thus, foreign aid ensures large markets for firms in core countries. To some extent, it is also designed to ensure large profits for banks in the form of interest on development loans. This is one cause of the current debt crisis. So much money has been loaned to developing countries that their failure to repay the loans could lead to the collapse of major core banks. The lack of development in these countries, on the other hand, has made many of them unable to pay their loans. Ironically, this crisis gives some control to debtor countries and forces core countries to take some interest in peripheral development in order to protect their money.

World-System Theory: An Analysis

A good deal of empirical research supports some aspects of world-system theory. Snyder and Kick (1979) analyzed international networks of trade, military intervention, diplomatic ties, and treaty memberships to see if they could verify the existence of the global division of labor postulated by world-system theory. They found that countries did fall into three groups, and that each of the three groups of countries had development patterns described by world-system theory.

Heavy foreign investment, presence of international corporations, and concentration on raw material production (especially in agriculture) do seem to slow development in Third World countries (Bornschiefer and Chase-Dunn, 1985). Core countries are developing faster than peripheral countries. Thus, the gap between rich and poor countries continues to widen (Breedlove and Nolan, 1988). This is consistent

with the view that international relations work to the advantage of the First and Second Worlds and to the disadvantage of the Third World. Also as predicted by world-system theory, modernization and industrialization have had opposite effects on internal inequality in core and peripheral countries. In core countries, as we saw in Chapter 11, industrialization has led to a *decrease* in inequality. In peripheral countries, however, inequality has *increased* (Chirrot, 1986; Nolan, 1987). But even though this is true, there is also evidence that (1) growth benefits everyone to some extent, by leading to improvements in the overall national welfare (Firebaugh and Beck, 1994); and (2) even core countries may experience increased inequality as they move beyond industrialization into the postindustrial stage.

Finally, Wimberley (1990) has shown—using mortality level as his indicator of well-being—that in peripheral countries with higher levels of involvement by multinational corporations from the core countries, the people of the peripheral countries are worse off. This supports the view of world-system theory that involvement by multinational corporations inhibits the development of a higher standard of living in Third World countries. It also challenges the view of modernization theory that the importation of technology and capital will improve the standard of living in these countries.

Critiques of World-System Theory

Dependency theories are not without criticism. Bairoch (1986) and O'Brien (1982) challenge the argument that imperialism was necessary for the origin of the capitalist world-system. They find that, at most, the raw materials taken from early colonies sped up the development of the core countries but were not crucial to it. They do not, however, dispute the contention that colonization may have had some harmful effects on the development of colonial areas. This suggests that Lenin's theory, and hence a major portion of world-system theory, may describe *what* happened but not *why* it happened.

World-system theory has also been criticized for an overemphasis on economic factors and a relative neglect of class, politics, culture, and gender (Brenner, 1977; Evans,

Rueschmeyer, and Skocpol, 1985; Denmark, 1992; Ward, 1984, 1988; M. Zeitlin, 1984). Some recent research also suggests that the size of a country's economy has a more significant effect than its level of development on how it fits into the world-system (Van Rossem, 1996). Despite these criticisms, a major contribution of this theory has been to prompt sociologists to look carefully at historical and international aspects of social change. It has also raised important questions about the assumption that the importation of capital and technology leads to economic development, even if many of these questions remain less than fully answered.

Summary

Political power and authority in the United States are not divided equally among the population. There are various forms of power. Legitimate power is power the others accept, and in the United States, a good deal of power channels through the political system by way of voting, lobbying, campaigning, and so on. But power is an abstract concept and difficult to measure. It is often executed through positions of authority, expertise, charisma, or long-standing practices. Power may also be exercised through (sometimes) less legitimate forms of power such as force, coercion, or the control of information. Wealth and income are also closely related to power; sociologists debate to what extent America is a pluralistic society, made up of a competing group of varied interests, as opposed to an elite-dominated society in which the interests of a wealthy few predominate over the rest of society through their use of power.

Political systems start with the state, the one institution that holds a monopoly on the use of legitimate violence in society. There are three main kinds of states: democracies, dictatorships, and monarchies. States have also greatly expanded their scopes of activity in the last two centuries, including increased focus on improving the welfare of citizens. Thus, contemporary nation-states, especially wealthy nations, are often referred to as welfare states. Three types of welfare states are often identified: liberal, like the United States or Canada;

corporatist-statist, like Japan or Germany; or social democratic, like Sweden and Norway.

Political systems are shaped by ideologies. In the United States, the most common breakdown of political ideologies consists of conservatives, moderates, and liberals. Political parties often spring up around ideologies as their basis of support, or possibly around special interests that are linked to one ideology or another. In the United States, liberals tend to be Democrats and conservatives tend to be Republicans, but both parties have some representation of the other ideological extreme and moderate wings as well. The most powerful special interest groups are those tied to the wealthy or to large segments of the population like older adults, gun owners, and the Chamber of Commerce. Through lobbyists, these groups wield an enormous, some would say inordinate, amount of power in our political system. Possibly due to that unequal distribution of power in our society, major social groups along class, race, and gender lines vote in varying degrees of regularity. In general, the more powerful and privileged the group, the more often its members participate in political life, and the more influence they exercise. Some say this reflects the power of the groups involved, while others argue it simply reflects the fact that powerful groups have more at stake. Whatever the reason, voters in the United States vote in much lower percentages than in most other democracies.

Despite the rapid rate of change in societies in the past century, different states remain at different levels of development. Sociologists have developed systems for classifying countries according to a variety of factors related to economic development, as well as diverse theories to account for differences among countries. Modernization theories, which draw heavily from the functionalist perspective, argue that the less-developed nations will pursue a path similar to that of the developed nations and will enjoy similar benefits. Dependency theories, which reflect the conflict perspective, maintain that the imperialistic policies of the developed nations keep the less-developed nations in a dependent state in which they serve as markets and sources of raw materials for the developed nations. One form of dependency theory, the

world-system theory, sees all the world's economies as part of a worldwide system dominated by the developed, or core, nations. Dependency theories help to explain the preponderance of socialist revolutions in the Third World, and they argue that traditional foreign policies such as investment and foreign aid to less-developed countries will increase rather than solve their problems.

Key Terms

power
legitimate power
authority
traditional authority
legal-rational authority
charismatic authority
expertise
credentials
pluralist model
veto group
power elite model
multinational corporations
the state
welfare state
democracy
dictatorship
monarchy
means-tested benefits
universal benefits
liberal
conservative
moderate
special interest groups
lobbyists
political action committee (PAC)
modernization theory
dependency theories
world-system theory
imperialism

Exercises

- 1 Considering the discussion of power in the early part of this chapter and the unusual way in which American elections work,

would you say that the United States is a democracy? How would you define democracy? What would have to change in the United States for the country to not be a democracy (if you think it is) or for it to become one (if you think it is not)? In recent years, what has caused both Democrats and Republicans to increasingly believe that the other party is trying to undermine American democracy?

- 2 Typically, Democrats are labeled as being in favor of “big government,” and Republicans are labeled as being in favor of

“small government.” Can you think of any instances in which Democrats are typically in favor of smaller government than Republicans? Can you think of examples in which Republicans are typically in favor of bigger government than Democrats? What are the underlying social values that lead the parties to take the views that they take in the examples you chose?

For a full list of references, please visit the book’s Support Material at www.routledge.com/9781032423593.

Chapter 13

Marriages and Families

“Surrogate Mother Refuses to Give Up Baby”

“One-Quarter of Conceptions End in Abortion”

“Working Moms Lobby Legislature for Day-Care Assistance”

“More Than Half of All Marriages End in Divorce”

“Researchers Find Higher Cancer Risk With More Sexual Partners”

“Fewer Than One-Fourth of Households Are Married Couples With Children”

“Iowa Supreme Court Rules Gay Marriage Ban Unconstitutional”

“Four in Ten Babies Born Outside Marriage”

Headlines such as these reflect our growing concern, disagreement, and, sometimes, anger over changes in the family. Only 40 years ago, things were quite different. Surrogate mothers and AIDS were unknown, abortion was legal across the nation thanks to *Roe v. Wade*, and openness about sexuality still made many people uncomfortable. Fewer women worked outside the home, and more couples stayed married for a lifetime. The changes that have affected marriage and families over the past 40 years are almost overwhelming.

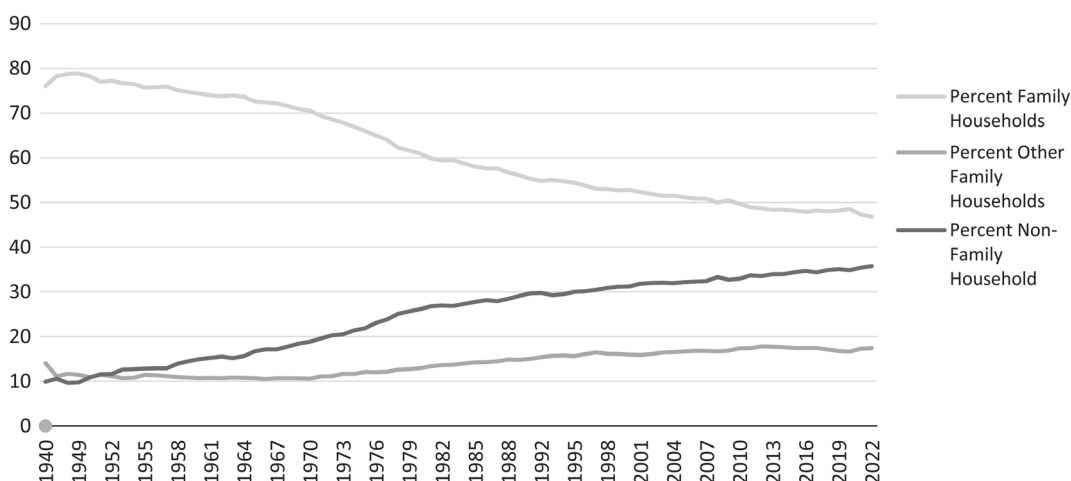
Despite this rapid social change, the family is one subject students often believe they already know all about. After all, the vast majority of people have had firsthand experience of at least one family. But in fact, most people have only limited knowledge of families precisely because their beliefs about the family are formed largely from their own experiences. Their personal background does little to prepare them for the wide diversity of families, even within their own society.

Try, for example, to answer the following questions. Do marriages in which the bride is pregnant have a higher risk of divorce? Has love

always been the main reason for marriage? Do the majority of American children today live with stepparents? In the past, did the majority of adult Americans live with other relatives besides their spouse and children? When it comes to marriage, do “opposites attract”? Although common beliefs could lead a person to answer yes to each of these questions, the correct answer to all of them is no. Thus, much of what many people think they know about families is not true.

Many people still cling to the nostalgic image of the American family composed of a breadwinner father, a stay-at-home mother, and one or more children. In reality, however, only 8 percent of all American families fit this picture (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016f, Tables FG7 and FG8). The other 92 percent are made up of many other types: dual-earner families in which both spouses provide financial support, single-parent families, married couples who have chosen not to have children, and countless other variations. Moreover, these figures do not even include the increasing number of unmarried couples, both heterosexual and homosexual, living as a family. Some of the changes in American family structure over the past quarter century can be seen in Figure 13.1. Note that the number of married couples with children has declined from about 40 percent to about 20 percent of households. One thing the figure does not show is that whether they have children or not, the majority of wives in married-couple families are now in the paid labor force. Furthermore, as shown in the figure, more than one-third of American households—nearly twice as many as four decades ago—are not family households, consisting instead of one or more unrelated

Figure 13.1 Households by Type: Selected Years, 1970–2022.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1940, and Current Population Survey, March and Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1947 to 2022.HH-1 Households by Type: 1940 to Present. www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/families/households.html (Downloaded September 27, 2023).

persons. More than one out of four households consists of one person living alone (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012a).

The family has never been a “golden” institution that fulfilled the needs of all its members while providing them with security and love. In fact, many marriages in past eras were little more than economic arrangements in which men were the primary beneficiaries. Although some families were characterized by considerable warmth and emotional support, the socio-emotional functions of marriage were generally seen as secondary to its economic functions until fairly recently.

Family and Marriage Defined

Although the exact meaning of *family* and *marriage* can vary from one society to another, these institutions do share certain key features that can be found in all societies. The **family** is a social group of people related by ancestry, marriage or other committed sexual relationship, or adoption, who live together, form an economic unit, and rear their children, if they have any. Of course, this definition says nothing about the psychological bonds between family members, which, to some people, is what the meaning of

family is all about. **Kinship** also refers to people related by ancestry, marriage, or adoption, but kin can, and often do, live independently from one another. Societies around the world exhibit tremendous diversity in determining who are considered to be kin.

Marriage is a socially approved arrangement, usually between a male and a female, that involves an economic and a sexual relationship. Although historically marriage has usually been between a male and a female, today, a number of countries and several states in the United States allow same-sex marriage for gay or lesbian couples. Society has generally disapproved of births outside of marriage, in part because such children are more likely to need support from the larger society. Nonetheless, the proportion of births occurring outside marriage in the United States has been rising, reaching 38.5 percent by 2006 (Martin et al., 2009).

Extended and Nuclear Families

All family systems can be divided into one of two basic types: extended and nuclear families. The **extended family** is made up of more than two generations who generally live

together, contribute to the economic well-being of the household, and share housekeeping and child-rearing responsibilities. Extended families can include a large number of people, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. The **nuclear family** is made up of two or fewer generations who live together, and it most often includes a husband, a wife, and their dependent children.

Although in many other cultures extended families have been and continue to be common, the most common form of the family is and probably always has been the nuclear family. Relatively few families in modern societies consist of more than two generations living together in the same residence. When this does occur, it most often involves either an aging parent living with a grown child and that child's family or a single mother and her child living with one or both of her parents.

Even though relatively few Americans live in extended families, extended family members (called *extended kin* when they do not live under the same roof) may interact frequently, and they are often important in terms of providing assistance of various types, such as child care and financial help. Holidays and other social occasions are often spent with extended kin.

Growth of Nuclear Families in the United States

Although nuclear families have always been the primary family form, the extended family was more common in the past than it is today. With the spread of industrialization, extended families have become less common. Although "many hands" are economic assets in preindustrial societies in which agriculture and cottage industries shape the economy, they become "more mouths to feed" in industrial societies. In addition, highly industrialized economies require a trained, mobile workforce. Because it has fewer people to move, the nuclear family makes it easier for workers to go where the jobs are. Also, social mobility was less frequent in the past; today, social mobility has made required contact with extended family members, with whom there may be little in common, less

useful. Finally, nuclear families today are able to get services from other institutions, such as social security and schools, which makes them less dependent on extended family members.

In spite of all these conditions, there are many in the United States for whom extended family remains important. We already noted that many extended family living situations involve either older parents or unmarried mothers—both groups who frequently need assistance and seek it from family members. To some extent, the use of extended families for help and support occurs among all ethnic groups in the United States (Uttal, 1999). However, the extended family and extended kin contacts are more common, and probably more valued, among African Americans (Uttal, 1999; Higginbotham and Weber, 1992; Farley and Allen, 1987; Stack, 1974; Martin and Martin, 1978) and among Mexican Americans (Uttal, 1999) than among white Anglo-Americans. These relationships have developed in part as a survival strategy and may reflect a greater value placed upon blood ties relative to marital ties in the African American and Mexican American communities (Benokraitis, 1993, p. 337).

Family Memberships

Most Americans will belong to at least three different families in the course of their lifetime. When you are born, you become a member of your **family of orientation**, which consists of your father and/or mother, and any brothers or sisters. It also includes stepparents and stepsiblings when they are present. This is the only family membership about which you have no choice.

The second family that most people have is the **family of procreation**. Formed when you marry, it includes your spouse and children. Because nearly 90 percent of people in our society marry at some point, most people have a family of procreation. When a divorced person remarries, that person forms a second family of procreation. Given the current high divorce rate, many people will have more than one family of procreation.

When you marry, you become a member of yet a third family, the in-law family. As discussed

earlier, even though most people in our culture reside in a nuclear family, they often have frequent contact with members of their extended families. In American culture, we have terms to refer to these relationships with a spouse's family, including mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law, and brother-in-law. Beyond this, however, we have only fairly awkward means of referring to in-law family members, such as "my wife's grandmother" or "my husband's uncle." Although technically we choose our in-law families, many people feel they have little choice in the matter. They choose a spouse, and the in-law family comes with that choice. Perhaps this forced relationship explains the existence of "mother-in-law jokes." There are no clear-cut rules as to what happens to the in-law family when a couple divorces. Although marriage creates the tie, divorce does not necessarily terminate it, especially when strong feelings of attachment exist between a divorced person and an ex-spouse's family, or when there are children who create a grandparent-grandchild relationship.

Muraco (2006) argues that many LGBTQ+ people have formed a fourth kind of family, a "chosen family" of **fictive kin**. Her study focuses on straight friends who are fictive kin that serve many, if not all, of the same functions as biological, extended, or in-law family members. An interesting aspect of this research is that the fictive kin worked both ways, not just for the LGBTQ+ friends, but for the straight friends as well (Muraco, 2006). While Muraco's study focuses on LGBTQ+ people, fictive kinship (that is, family-like relationships among people who are not blood relatives) has also been found in a variety of other settings ranging from recent immigrants to people serving together in the military (Kim, 2009, 2012; Frese and Harrell, 2003).

Marriage Patterns

Forms of marriage have varied among different societies and historical periods. The main form of marriage today in the United States and other industrialized societies is **monogamy**, the marriage of one husband to one wife. In many cases, monogamy in the United States has become **serial monogamy** because many

people will have more than one spouse in their lifetime, although only one at a time.

In some societies, marriage practices have allowed, or even required, people to have more than one spouse at a time. This system is referred to as **polygamy**. When males have more than one wife, the arrangement is called **polygyny**. Although this practice is most common in pre-industrial societies, it has been practiced in the United States. For example, Mormons practiced polygyny until 1890, when the Utah territory sought acceptance into the Union. The federal government made the outlawing of polygyny a condition of statehood. However, as was illustrated by a highly publicized legal case in 2001, there are still a few traditionalists who continue to practice polygyny. In some instances of polygyny, males may be required to have the first wife's approval before marrying another wife; in others, a man may marry sisters. Both patterns are thought to reduce jealousy between wives. **Polyandry** is the pattern of women having more than one husband. Although numerous societies have condoned polygyny, few have allowed polyandry.

Although many—perhaps most—societies permit polygamy for at least some people (often high-status males), the reality is that most marriages have been monogamous. There are several reasons for this. To begin with, the number of males and females in most populations is roughly equal. Whenever a male takes more than one wife, he effectively deprives another male from having any wife. Beyond this is the issue of cost. The financial costs of supporting multiple wives and the large number of children that might be born would be great. Traditionally, only the wealthiest, most powerful males have had more than one wife.

Mate Selection

Although there are few legal restrictions on who can marry whom, most people in fact choose marriage partners who are relatively similar to themselves. In the United States, there are only three restrictions on selection of marriage partners. The first involves age: Most states have laws specifying a minimum age at which people can marry. Often, there are two ages specified:

one for marriage with parental consent, another for marriage without such consent. The second restriction is the **incest taboo**, which exists in some form in nearly all societies. The incest taboo forbids marriage between people who are related to one another. Societies vary in defining which relationships violate the incest taboo. In the United States, no state permits marriage between parent and child, brother and sister, uncle or aunt and niece or nephew, or grandparent and grandchild. Marriages between first cousins are illegal in many states. The incest taboo reduces potential jealousy between family members, fosters alliances with other families, and may keep the gene pool healthier. Historically, only a few societies have made exceptions to their incest taboos. Marriages between brothers and sisters from royal families, such as in ancient Egypt and early Hawaii, have been the most common exception to this rule. Third, until recently, all but a few states limit marriage to members of the opposite sex.

Exogamy Versus Endogamy

Until 1967, when the United States Supreme Court ruled them unconstitutional, miscegenation laws existed in some states, especially in the South, to prohibit marriage between people of different races. These laws represented an attempt to prohibit **exogamy**: marriage between people from different groups, such as racial, religious, or ethnic groups. On the other hand, exogamy may be required in some societies that desire to cement relations between certain groups, such as between two potentially hostile tribes.

Endogamy is the pattern followed when marriage partners are required or expected to be from the same groups. For example, a particular religious faith might prohibit its members from marrying members of other religions. Many societies attempt to prohibit marriages between partners from different social groups. Sometimes this is done by law, as in the case of South Africa, where interracial marriages were forbidden until fairly recently. Sometimes the prohibition is informal; in Northern Ireland, for example, there is a strong norm against Catholics marrying Protestants.

The United States has no legal prohibitions to mixed marriages. In practice, however, most

American marriages tend to be between people of the same race, ethnic background, religion, and social class, and are therefore *endogamous* (Pagnini and Morgan, 1990). Interracial marriages—particularly between black people and white people—remain rare in the United States, though they are becoming less so. Of all American married couples in 2007, about eight out of 1,000 were composed of a black person and a white person. There were nearly three times as many such couples in 2007 as there were in 1980 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009).

Spouses: How Similar? How Different?

Researchers have found that similarities between marital partners go beyond race, religion, and ethnic background. Most husbands and wives tend to be similar in terms of social-class background, educational attainment, intelligence, physical characteristics such as attractiveness and age (although husbands tend to be slightly older than wives), personality traits, and values (Mare, 1991; Hout, 1982; Epstein and Guttman, 1984; Kalmijn, 1994b). This pattern is referred to as **homogamy**, or the idea of “like marrying like.” Homogamy occurs partially because people often marry on the basis of propinquity, or geographical nearness. The people we live near and associate with are often similar to us in social background. These people serve as a pool of potential marriage partners: People usually marry someone they live near, work with, go to school with, or otherwise have associated with (Kalmijn and Flap, 2001). At the same time, homogamy also reflects the greater ease with which people with similar values and interests interact. Though homogamy remains the norm, there is some evidence of a move away from it since the 1980s (Mare, 1991; Rytina et al., 1988; Smits and Ultee, 1999). With the greater variety of opportunities to meet others—singles clubs and sports clubs, computer and video dating services, personals columns, social networking sites on the Internet, and singles bars—people are not limited in their choices of mates. Research also shows that while both married couples and cohabiting couples tend to be homogamous, married couples are more so (Blackwell and Lichter, 2000; Forste and Tanfer, 1996).

People who marry and stay married are nonetheless likely to be similar to one another, creating a compatible relationship based on shared values, habits, and lifestyles. At the same time, each partner must feel that they are both giving something to the relationship and receiving something from it. This is consistent with the principles of *exchange theory*, introduced in Chapter 3: People enter into and maintain relationships because each offers something of value to or needed by the other. They maintain the relationship as long as this continues, but when one partner's needs change or are no longer met by the other partner, the relationship is in trouble (Walster, Berscheid, and Walster, 1973). Similarly, if one partner is doing all the giving and the other all the getting, the giving partner is likely to feel angry, and the receiving partner may feel guilty or question their value as a person.

Romantic Love and Mate Selection

Love, in the sense of our selection of a mate, is clearly multifaceted and has been defined in a variety of ways. One definition holds that love involves a series of stages—rapport (a feeling of sharing something in common), self-revelation, mutual dependency, and, finally, personality-need fulfillment—joint decision-making and helping one another to be successful in life (Reiss, 1960; Reiss and Lee, 1988). Other definitions focus on different components of love—intimacy (feelings of closeness), passion (romance and sexual excitement), and decision/commitment: deciding to be and remaining committed to loving one another (Sternberg, 1988). Bergner (2000) adds four other components: investment in the other person's well-being, appreciation or admiration, exclusivity, and understanding. For love to be real, most or all of these elements must be not only present but also relatively balanced between partners.

A distinctive type of love—much idealized in American society but fraught with risks—is *romantic love*. It involves physical and emotional attraction, as well as idealization, which means seeing the person in an entirely positive light and failing to recognize any negative qualities or traits (Benokraitis, 1993). If you were to ask

most Americans on their wedding day why they were marrying their soon-to-be wife or husband, they would likely answer that they are “in love.” In fact, if they said they were marrying for money, power, or some equally unromantic reason, many people would view the marriage as a sham. In fact, a key characteristic of love is that it goes beyond self-interest, often involving self-sacrifice on behalf of the partner (Bahr and Bahr, 2001; Bergner, 2000).

Limits of Romantic Love

In our culture, movies, television plots, and novels support romantic love as the basis for marriage. Infrequent attention is given to the fact that this type of love, at least in its initial, intense phase, does not last more than a few years, at most. In long-term marriages, romantic love develops into a different type of love based on other factors such as companionship and shared goals. Unfortunately, many people believe that marriage without the intense type of romantic love depicted in the movies lacks a critical element. As a result, they may become disenchanted with their relationship. The belief in romantic love is particularly strong in the United States and is often cited as one reason the U.S. divorce rate is among the world's highest. However, the notion of romantic love seems to be spreading to other societies. This interest in romantic love has developed in part through the influence of American and European movies, music, and books, and in part through an improved standard of living allowing people the luxury of choosing a mate for love. Will the divorce rates rise in these societies?

Romantic Love: A Cross-Cultural View

Love, at least as we understand it, has not always played such an important role in the selection of a spouse or in marriage. In the past, marriages were often arranged by parents or others, and love either developed later or was not seen as an essential part of marriage. Even today in many other, especially non-Western, cultures, the selection of a marriage partner is considered too important to be based on love. People in love are considered too emotional to make such a critical decision. Love is often viewed with suspicion, and attempts may be made to prevent

its occurrence. For example, young males and females may be isolated from one another, and chaperones may monitor the activities of their charges to ensure that no inappropriate relationships develop. In such societies, an unmarried woman's virginity is a valuable commodity, and a sexually experienced young woman is not considered a desirable marriage partner. In some cultures, girl and boy babies may be betrothed to one another at birth, or even before. In such societies, love is not a prerequisite for marriage. Community older adults or parents decide who should marry whom, basing their decisions on such issues as cementing ties between two families, maintaining power, or increasing wealth. The young couple may eventually grow to love each other, but the failure to do so is not considered important. In our culture, because many necessary services are performed by institutions other than the family, love may be required to hold the family unit together.

Courtship

How do people meet and select mates? The process by which people meet and become familiar with potential mates is sometimes called courtship.

Historically, people have met most often at work, in school, in their neighborhood, and in churches and other organizations. Today, however, the ways in which people meet potential partners have become more diverse and varied, as illustrated by the box "New Ways to Meet Partners: There's an App for That!"

The early stages of courtship involve dating or informally "getting together" in groups, practices that take different forms in different cultures. Sometimes, relationships of this type develop into exclusive relationships, which, in turn, sometimes lead to living together or getting married.

Dating. The processes of dating or informally "getting together" in groups allow people to become acquainted and to determine whether they want to spend more time together. Today, as previously noted, personals columns, computer and video dating services, and mobile apps enable dating partners to meet one another in ways more diverse than ever before. These modern techniques have somewhat reduced the

tendency of people to date others with similar social characteristics to themselves, though this tendency is far from having been eliminated.

Dating serves a number of other functions besides mate selection. For younger adolescents and those with no immediate interest in marriage, dating can be an enjoyable recreational activity involving the companionship of another person. Dating also allows young people an opportunity to learn more about the opposite sex and about themselves. It can also provide an opportunity for sexual experience and satisfaction. Finally, dating can help some people improve their status or prestige by being seen with someone who is popular, attractive, or wealthy. Yet evidence suggests limits to this. McClintock (2014) finds that partners tend to choose partners of similar socioeconomic background. The same can be said for physical attractiveness. Despite the belief that women tend to trade physical attractiveness for socioeconomic status, McClintock found little evidence of this. Instead, her findings suggest attractive women tend to partner with similarly attractive males. Though many sociologists have theorized that men with higher social statuses would be seen as more sexy to women, Martin (2005) found that women with higher statuses are more attractive to men. And instead of men's social status being sexier to women (power in their social position), he found that men who are more dominant in their interpersonal interactions with women are seen as more attractive (power in relationship). McFarland, Jurafsky, and Rawlings (2013) found that when making an initial successful connection, heterosexual men and women followed strict gender ideals. Men became louder, laughed more often, and spoke in more of a monotone voice. Women varied the pitch and the loudness of their voices. The couples experienced a sense of connection when the female became the main focus of attention, with men playing a supporting role by showing understanding for the female's point of view and avoided questioning or hedging in their interactions.

Exclusive Relationships. Sometimes, people who date or meet through informal groups develop a closer relationship that becomes exclusive. Such relationships involve at least one

element of love—exclusivity—and may lead to cohabitation or marriage. At least as often, though, they end when the partners find themselves to be incompatible or when one partner is more committed to the relationship than the other. At one time, exclusive relationships were quite formal, often referred to as “going steady” and accompanied by rituals such as “getting pinned” or wearing a ring. Today, they are less formal, and commonly referred to as “going out” or “seeing someone.” Relationships of this type offer a level of intimacy and commitment that goes beyond that of dating or “getting together,” but they require neither long-term commitment nor the accommodation to one another’s habits and idiosyncrasies necessary in marriage or cohabitation.

Patterns Within Marriages

When courtship does lead to marriage, the nature of that marriage will reflect the culture and social structure of the larger society within which it occurs. Thus, while all societies have some kind of marriage system, the nature of marriage varies widely from one society to another. It also can vary widely across different time periods within the same society, and among different social and cultural groups within one society. While each individual couple to some extent creates its own marriage, their choices are often determined by these larger societal patterns.

Power and Authority in Marriages

In the majority of societies throughout history, men have dominated the decision-making in marriage, a pattern called **patriarchy**. In patriarchal societies, husbands have the right to control their wives and children and are expected to do



Photo 13.1 An engaged couple on a prewedding photo shoot in Beijing’s Beihai Park. As marriage in China has become associated with modern concepts such as romantic love, the country’s divorce rate has soared.

Courtesy of John E. Farley

so. In a **matriarchy**, women have the power and right of decision-making. There are no known cultures that could be described as being matriarchal by preference. In the United States, some family systems have been classified as matriarchal, but such patterns typically occur when the husband is not present because of death, divorce, separation, or desertion. In an increasing number of cases today, however, matriarchal families are set up when a child is born outside marriage, since it is the mother who raises such children in the large majority of cases. The sociological debate over the effects of living in female-headed families are discussed later in this chapter.

The United States is in the process of moving from a primarily patriarchal pattern to an egalitarian one, in which neither males nor females necessarily control or dominate one another. This transformation is largely the result of changing gender roles. Later in this chapter we discuss the changes that have occurred in male-female relationships.

Residency Patterns

Most newly married couples in industrialized societies prefer to establish their own residence away from the control and scrutiny of their parents. Sociologists use the term **neolocality** to

refer to a residency pattern in which married couples form a separate household and live in their own residence. For most young people, getting married and moving out on their own represents independence from parental control. A couple who marries but continues to live with one spouse's parents continues to be dependent to some extent, and their decisions must take the parents into account. In other societies, usually preindustrial, a newly married couple might be expected to take up residence with the husband's family, called **patrilocality**, or with the wife's family, called **matrilocality**.

The relative wealth of a society and the availability of affordable housing can affect residency patterns. Historically, couples in the United States often delayed marriage until they could afford a home of their own. In the early twentieth century and before, unmarried adults had to choose between delaying marriage until they were in their mid-20s or older, or living with one partner's parents after marriage. It is a major reason why the typical age at first marriage was fairly high. By the 1950s, most couples could afford to live on their own at an earlier age. The age of marriage fell, and few couples lived with parents. More recently, however, costs of housing have risen faster than young couples' purchasing power. This has forced some couples to share their parents' residence or rent apartments, though they would

prefer their own home. This rise in the cost of housing has also contributed to the recent rise in the age at first marriage.

Inheritance and Descent Patterns

Societies differ in their practices that determine how property is inherited and how descent is traced. In a **patrilineal system**, wealth is handed down to males but not to females. This system has contributed to the high birth rates of many developing countries, including India, Korea, Pakistan, and Egypt: No matter how many daughters they have, couples continue trying to have children until they have a son (Weeks, 1986, pp. 113–14). Furthermore, kinship is traced through male kin, not female. In other words, a child would be considered related to his father's extended family, but not to his mother's. In a **matrilineal system**, the reverse is true; wealth and descent are passed through female family members. This system is much less common than the patrilineal system.

Like other industrialized societies, the United States has, with one exception, a **bilineal system**. Americans consider themselves to be related to both their father's and their mother's families, and wealth is generally passed down to the children regardless of their sex.

STUDENT LIFE



New Ways to Meet Partners: There's an App for That!

Over the past couple of decades, formal systems for meeting potential mates—ads, in what would have been the personal columns of newspapers in the past, are now increasingly online. Internet “personals” sites, computerized and video dating services, social media, and most recently an explosion in cell phone dating apps (the largest of which is Tinder) characterize dating in the United States. Increasing numbers

of people, from college age on up, are using these services as a way to meet people. Sociologists are interested both in the causes of this trend and in its consequences for how people meet dating partners and potential marriage partners. College students are particularly likely to use technology, with thousands of students now using the Internet or their phones every day to meet people.

As with many other things in life, research shows us that gender and life-cycle stage are key factors in the extent to which college students use Internet personals. A study by Hatala, Milewski, and Baack (1999) shows, for example, that twice as many ads are placed by male students as by female students, and freshmen, seniors, and graduate students—people who are undergoing or about to undergo changes in life circumstances—are twice as likely as sophomores or juniors to place ads. Males are also more likely to initiate contact than are females (Kreager et al., 2014). However, the researcher also found that women who did initiate contact were more successful than females who waited to be contacted.

Several reasons for the popularity of systems such as newspaper, Internet personals, and mobile apps have been pointed out by Ahuvia and Adelman (1992) and Cox (2014). For one thing, there are more single people today because people are waiting longer to marry, and more people are getting divorced. The number of unmarried adults soared from 47 million in 1975 to 68 million in 1985 (Bennet, 1989); by 2015, it had reached 127 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001e, 2009g, 2016c). A critical mass of people engaging in online and mobile app dating has now been achieved, and, combined with the myriad of activities many people now engage in online, these changes have served to take the stigma away (Cox, 2014). In addition, these single people are more individualistic. They feel more free to have sex outside marriage, and women are more economically independent (Bellah et al., 1985). All these things make people choosier about potential marriage partners and more willing to go to a fair amount of trouble to find the right partner. This is partly because they see marriage less as a necessity and more as a source of emotional gratification—without which marriage or even a serious relationship seems pointless. In addition, the trend toward using ads in “the personals” and dating services may be seen as one more extension of the service economy, as discussed in Chapter 11. Such services are often targeted toward professionals and young people already accustomed to using a variety of services. Getting help meeting the “right” person is now presented as just one more service (Ahuvia and Adelman, 1992).

Who uses online dating services and personals? At one time, such people were stigmatized as “losers” in the dating market. They were seen as less attractive and socially skilled than people who meet partners through informal means such as parties and mutual friends. However, studies show that this began to change in the 1980s and 1990s. Back then, the main difference was that people using the formal services were choosier than others. They were less shy and

had higher self-esteem, but they also had higher standards for the personality and appearance of potential partners (Bernard, Adelman, and Schroeder, 1991). Today, this may no longer be true, with nearly half of the U.S. population having used or knowing someone who uses, or having met their own spouses using online dating (Smith and Anderson, 2016; Stern, 2012). These sites and apps are especially popular with individuals who have never been married. According to Anderson (2016), 30 percent reported using online dating. On the other hand, one-third of people who use such sites report never having gone on a date with someone they met on the sites (Smith and Anderson, 2016). Anderson (2016) reported that 15 percent of Americans 18 years and over have used an online dating site or mobile app at least once. Of those using these online services, 66 percent have gone on a date with someone they met through these sites and apps, and 23 percent have successfully met their spouse or long-term partner through online dating (Smith and Duggan, 2013). In addition, two out of five currently single people reported using such sites. A full 42 percent of Americans reported knowing someone who used an online dating site or app, and 29 percent know someone who met their spouse or long-term partner through online dating. Looking at teenagers (13 to 17 years of age), Anderson (2015) found that only 8 percent have met a romantic partner online, with Facebook being the most used site, outperforming dating sites and mobile apps. Of this age group, 64 percent reported having never been in a romantic relationship, while 26 percent reported having never met a romantic partner online.

As for the process itself, studies find contradictory outcomes for those who use online dating services (Dewey, 2015). Finkel et al. (2012) found that while dating algorithms (that are supposed to match daters based on partner compatibility) for the most part fail, such sites do succeed in opening up the potential pool of dating partners to a much larger group. And this larger pool was found to be especially good for people in “thin dating markets” like rural areas, older women, or LGBTQ+ daters (Dewey, 2015; Finkel, 2012; Rosenfeld and Kleykamp, 2012). Looking at data from 2007 to 2009, Rosenfeld (2012) found that 21 percent of heterosexual and 61 percent of homosexual couples met online. This leads Rosenfeld to argue the likely outcomes of this increased pool of potential partners will be a corresponding increase in the marriage rate: A larger pool means a larger chance of finding the “right” person. Similarly, another study found that “online marriages” were slightly higher in terms of happiness and lower in terms of their divorce rates than “offline marriages” (Cacioppo et al., 2013). However, an even more recent study found that online

partners are more likely to date rather than to marry when compared to offline daters, and the online daters were more likely to break up and do so faster than their offline counterparts (Paul, 2014). Sales (2015) found young people use online dating as a way to “hook up” for casual sex much more often than they do to find more stable, long-term relationships. The Pew Research Center found only 5 percent of married Americans say they met their spouses or partners online, and for those married five years or less, that figure is only slightly higher, with a mere 12 percent who met their partner online (Smith and Anderson, 2016). A recent study (Ramirez et al., 2014) found that online daters sometimes reach a “tipping point” in their online interactions of 17 to 23 days, after which it is best to meet in person. After that, the researchers find, too much online interaction can actually create an idealized impression of the other person that is nearly impossible for them to live up to (Adams, 2014).

Another interesting aspect that has been apparent for some time is that it seems men and women offer somewhat different attributes and also seek different attributes when placing ads for potential partners. There is mixed evidence on whether or not men are more likely than women to mention attractiveness in their ads, but women do seem more likely to mention interest in marriage and a financially secure partner (Ahuvia and Adelman, 1992). A study conducted by the consumer research company AnswerLab found that men spend considerably more time looking at the pictures on dating sites while women spend more time reading the profiles (Danko, 2014). Research comparing heterosexual and homosexual ads shows that lesbians are the most likely group to mention wanting a permanent relationship, whereas heterosexual women were the group most interested in financial and occupational information about possible partners (Deaux and Hanna, 1984). To some extent, however, what people offer and seek in “the personals” has always varied by the medium they are placed in. In traditional print sources like magazines appealing to professionals, for example, more women mention their education or job, and fewer emphasize their appearance. On the net and mobile apps, both men and women tend not to emphasize

their political leanings, despite the fact that seven out of ten couples in the United States share their politics (Stampler, 2011). Instead, successful ads show that men tend to focus on the physical attributes of women, while women tend to focus on the intelligence of men (Zadronzny, 2015).

The notion of gender differences is supported by research on what kinds of ads get the most responses. Men get the most responses if they mention being older and taller, if they mention educational or professional success, if they convey masculinity, and if they avoid sexual references. Women get the most responses if they mention youth and activity (which may signal attractiveness), if they make positive or neutral self-descriptions that mention intelligence, and if they mention sex (Ahuvia and Adelman, 1992; Goode, 1996). More generally, most studies show that more men than women reply to personal ads (Ahuvia and Adelman, 1992; Goode, 1996; Kreager et al., 2014).

Studies from dating sites themselves have consistently found that the most important aspect of online dating is race (Davis, 2013; Grinberg, 2016; Lee, 2016; Lin and Lundquist, 2013). Women of all races seem to respond only to men of similar or more dominant racial statuses (Lin and Lundquist, 2013). This means women respond overwhelmingly to white men, except black women who respond mostly to black men, while the lowest response rates from women were Asian, Latina, and white women to black men, and from black women to white men. On the other hand, black, Latino, and white men all responded most to Asian women, with Asian men responding most to Latina women, while all men responded least to black women.

While formal services may be changing how people meet, they may not be changing how people ultimately pick marriage partners. One study compared a computer dating service's clients who dated but did not marry each other with other clients who ultimately married and found in the marrying partners the same characteristic that has always been linked to marriage: similarity. The most likely to marry were couples who were similar to each other, particularly with respect to pessimism versus optimism and concrete versus abstract thinking.

This pattern increases the independence of the nuclear family by reducing deference to either the husband or the wife's family. The exception to this bilineal system is the usual practice of giving children their father's last name. Some

pioneering couples have decided not to follow this pattern and have given their children a combination of both parents' last names. However, the majority continue to give their children the father's last name.

Functions of Families

Since all societies have some type of family system, it is reasonable to ask what the family does for society. After all, if the family did not serve some function that could not be performed equally well elsewhere, it might well cease to exist. In the 1930s and 1940s, some sociologists predicted the disappearance of the family, precisely because many of its functions, such as economic production and the education of children, had been taken over by institutions such as the factory and the school (Ogburn, 1933). The family *has* changed, but it has not disappeared. The same might be said of the family's functions: They have changed, but they have not necessarily decreased. We now examine some of those changes.

Changing Functions

Economic

As noted earlier, families in the past were economically more independent than they are today. A higher proportion of the population lived on family farms where they grew their own food and produced much else of what they needed. Home-based businesses and cottage industries also allowed families to be economically productive. Industrialization transformed the economic function of the family from production to consumption. Most families became dependent on outside employers for their income, which allowed them to purchase, rather than produce, the things that they needed. Grocery stores replaced the garden plot and barn, and department stores replaced the sewing rooms. The family's economic function did not cease to exist, it just changed.

Status Transferral

Status transferral refers to the way in which a person acquires their social status or social class. The family used to be the primary source of a person's social position. People inherited social status just as they inherited material goods. Today, however, social status is partly inherited and partly a product of market forces.

Although many personal characteristics are still determined by family background, and predictions about a person's future based upon family factors are still fairly accurate, modern societies frequently place as much or more emphasis on people's achieved statuses as on their ascribed statuses. In traditional societies such as India, however, a person's entire lifestyle is often still dictated by the social status of their family.

Religious, Educational, Protective, and Recreational

Although the family used to be the primary source of religious training, much of this responsibility has been turned over to churches, synagogues, Sunday schools, and other organizations supported by religious institutions. Nevertheless, people generally adopt the same religion as their family, and many families still give their children religious training.

Before schools were available on a widespread basis, the family often taught its children to read and write at home. Fathers also taught their sons the work skills they would need to provide for their families. Education now is the responsibility of school systems, colleges, and universities, and relatively few people follow in the occupational footsteps of their parents. Still, the family is critical in supporting and encouraging the education of children. Parents send their young children to preschools and summer camps to provide them with lessons in certain subjects. Whether a teenager graduates from high school is largely determined by parental attitudes toward the importance of education. Furthermore, many parents sacrifice financially so that they can send their children to college. Recently, a small but growing number of families have chosen to *homeschool* their children. For these families, concerns about the social institutions that have taken over the education of children have led to the family seeking to reclaim this function. Today, many children are homeschooled, and the numbers continue to rise.

Protection refers to the provision of food, shelter, and care. It used to be entirely the responsibility of nuclear or extended family members or neighbors. Although the family

still cares for children, those who are sick, older adults, and others in need of help or care, it is greatly supported by hospitals, pension plans, police and fire departments, nursing and retirement homes, and day-care centers. Nonetheless, the family still appears to serve some protective function: The mortality rates for both men and women are lower for those who are married (Lillard and Waite, 1995).

With respect to the recreational function, the common belief is that families in the past often spent their limited leisure time together. Recreation today often takes family members in different directions—to movie houses, golf courses, and video arcades. On the other hand, this has been partially offset by other trends, such as growth in family vacations (Nye, 1974). It is also important to consider what time period we are comparing today's family to. Families may have spent more time together in the 1950s than now, but that time period was something of an anomaly: Through much of history, parents spent very limited time, recreational or otherwise, with children. They were too busy working (both for financial support and on household tasks), and children often worked too. In many cases, too, children in early America did not even live at home most of the time: They were sent out as household workers, apprentices, or to be cared for by kin (Coontz, 2000).

Socialization and Emotional Support

Talcott Parsons and R. F. Bales (1955) identified two "basic and irreducible functions" of the family. The family provides children with the necessary socialization to allow them to become functioning, contributing members of society, and it gives adults the emotional support they need to function in a depersonalizing world.

As discussed in Chapter 5, socialization means that family members provide children with the training that equips them to exist as members of a particular society. Families teach children the behaviors, beliefs, and customs necessary to function within their culture.

Perhaps the emotional value of the family can best be appreciated by considering to whom most people turn in times of sickness,

sorrow, joy, or financial setback. Although most people have close friendships that give them emotional support, family members generally play a larger role in this area. Most people feel a particular bond with family members that is unlike that felt in any other social relationship.

Affectional

For all the functions discussed so far, the family's role still exists, though sometimes in an altered fashion. One function that has become *more* the domain of the family than in the past is the affectional function. The family has been referred to as the "shock absorber of society" in that it offers support for the individual who must cope in a difficult world (Toffler, 1970). As the family has become less important as a unit of economic production and the notion of romantic love has become more influential, the affectional function of the family has received greater emphasis. The importance of both the affectional and emotional functions of the family is demonstrated in a recent study by Yabiku, Axinn, and Thornton (1999). They examined a study of mothers who had children in 1962, and a survey of the children 23 years later. They found that the more closely integrated the mothers' families were in 1962, the higher the children's self-esteem was 23 years later.

The Family as a Regulator of Sexual Behavior

In the words of Malinowski (1962, pp. 98–9), "the sexual impulse is never entirely free, nor can it ever be completely enslaved by social imperatives." Human sexual norms and practices are primarily learned through the process of socialization. All societies control sexual behavior in some manner. In fact, three cultural universals or patterns relating to the family are found in all societies. The first is the incest taboo, discussed earlier in this chapter. The next universal is marriage. Societies have typically encouraged sex within marriage and discouraged or regulated it outside of marriage to provide a stable environment for the nurturance of children. Thus, the family in most

societies performs a function of, in some way, regulating sexual behavior. The final cultural universal is an expectation of heterosexuality for at least part of the population, which is necessary for the perpetuation of the species. The functionalist perspective is helpful in understanding these patterns (Malinowski, 1939, 1962). Note that each of the three general patterns outlined previously is in some way related to a societal need.

Outside of these expectations, however, a great deal of variety exists in what practices different societies require, encourage, permit, ignore, discourage, or condemn. Some cultures encourage premarital sex; others discourage it. Some societies condemn homosexuality, others ignore it or are neutral toward it, and some are accepting of it. These values can change over time. Although a sexual relationship is expected of couples when they marry, the details of that relationship can vary significantly between cultures, social classes, or religions, and from one couple to another. Unlike in other species, human sexuality is quite diverse.

Nonmarital Sex

Nonmarital sex refers to any sexual activity outside of a marital relationship. Within this category, premarital sex is sexual activity prior to marriage, and *extramarital sex* refers to a married person's sexual relations with anyone other than their spouse. Although sex outside of marriage has never been socially supported in the United States, premarital sex has become increasingly common and acceptable over the past century.

Sex outside of marriage has been discouraged for various reasons, including disease, pregnancy, and social and religious disapproval. When effective means of treating most sexually transmitted diseases were found and contraception became widely available, much of the resistance to premarital sex broke down. Extramarital sex, however, is still frowned upon by most people (Scott and Sprecher, 2000).

The Sexual Revolutions. Before World War I, approximately three-quarters of all new brides and half of grooms were virgins. During World War I and the 1920s, however, a little-recognized sexual revolution occurred that involved significant changes in sexual behavior. By the

mid-1920s, only half of brides and one-third of grooms were sexually inexperienced on their wedding day. Because of the lack of social support for sex outside of marriage, however, these new behavior patterns were not discussed. When Alfred Kinsey et al. (1948, 1953) conducted their monumental studies of sexual behavior in the late 1940s and early 1950s, they noted that 85 percent of males had engaged in premarital sex, as had about half of all women. Furthermore, half of males and one-quarter of females had engaged in extramarital sex. (Recent studies, with more representative samples, however, suggest that this number may be too high. As noted in the box, the large majority of both married men and married women in the more recent "Sex in America" survey [and in other recent surveys with representative samples] report having sex only with their partner during the time they have been married [Laumann et al., 1994; Greeley, 1991].)

It was not until the second sexual revolution, from the mid-1960s to mid-1970s, though, that people openly espoused the sexual values that had, to a great extent, already taken hold. Although the figures are somewhat lower for college students, studies now consistently find that, on their wedding days, more than 80 percent of brides and 90 percent of grooms are nonvirginal. Among all unmarried adults in their 20s, similar percentages, around 90 percent of men and 80 percent of women, are sexually experienced (Scott and Sprecher, 2000). Among unmarried, noncohabitators in the wider age group of 18 to 44 years, around 80 percent of both men and women have experienced vaginal intercourse, with another 5 percent or so who have experienced only oral or anal sex (Copen, Chandra, and Febo-Vazquez, 2016). Attitude surveys suggest that, despite some disagreement, overall attitudes toward premarital sex have moved in the direction of moral neutrality. Close to 40 percent in recent years see premarital sex as not wrong at all, and nearly another quarter view it as only sometimes wrong (Scott and Sprecher, 2000). Using two differently worded questions, a Gallup poll in 2001 reported that 53 percent agreed that premarital sex is "acceptable," and 60 percent disagreed with a statement that it is "wrong." Only

38 to 42 percent, depending on wording, saw premarital sex as wrong (Saad, 2001). Nearly identical results were obtained in 2003 (Gallup Jr., 2003). In general, approval of premarital sex is higher when it is tied to some form of emotional commitment, and those who are less religious, younger, more liberal, urban, and single are more accepting, as are people who do *not* have teenage children.

The increase in premarital sexual activity has been greater for women than for men. Male rates have been less affected because men in the past often had sex with prostitutes. There has been a move away from the double standard in which premarital sex was condoned for men but condemned for women. Although promiscuous sexual behavior—that is, having sex with a number of different partners—is still particularly frowned upon among females, society today is much more tolerant of a woman having sex with a partner with whom she is emotionally involved. The changing role of women is partially responsible for this shift, as is the availability of effective contraception. The availability of birth-control pills beginning in the mid-1960s enabled women to control their reproductive behavior.

We have moved away from another double standard that required people to say that they believed in abstinence before marriage when, in fact, most of them were behaving differently. Christensen (1960) found that when people valued chastity and yet engaged in premarital sex, they were more likely to feel guilty about their behavior. If they saw nothing inappropriate in engaging in sexual relations before marriage, however, their behavior provoked no guilt.

AIDS

Fear of contracting AIDS has caused many people to alter their sexual behavior. Both homosexuals and heterosexuals are limiting the number of their sexual partners, a trend that was already under way before AIDS became widespread but has been accelerated since then. In addition, more people today are engaging in safer sex practices, such as the use of condoms. However, these trends are modest among heterosexuals,

more evident in men than in women (DeBuono et al., 1990; Ishii-Kuntz, 1988), and inconsistent among all groups. In recent surveys, for example, about 45 percent of never-married men in their 20s and 30 percent of never-married women between age 15 and 44 years have reported having sex with more than one partner over the time period of a year to a year and a half (Scott and Sprecher, 2000). Data from the 2011–2013 period show that between 70 and 80 percent of 15- to 19-year-olds used a condom at first sex. But among the broader group of sexually active unmarried adults age 18 to 44 years, about two-thirds of men and three-fourths of women reported rarely or never using a condom (Martínez and Abma, 2015). Generally, however, some people believe that AIDS has contributed to a swing of the pendulum back toward traditional sexual values.

Marital Sex

Sexuality within marriage has also been undergoing change. Years ago, women were not expected to enjoy sex. In fact, a woman who did was considered to be highly unusual and undesirable. Sex was viewed as a “wifely duty.” This is no longer the case. Today sexual pleasure is considered to be equally important and desirable for males and females. A woman’s sexual role is no longer defined as simply to satisfy her husband’s sexual needs. As sexual relations within marriage have moved toward equality with greater emphasis on mutual fulfillment, studies have reported increased enjoyment of marital sex. In addition, married partners report somewhat greater enjoyment of sex than do unmarried partners (Laumann et al., 1994). At the same time, many dual-career couples find that between their jobs, children, and household responsibilities, they don’t have much time or energy for sex. Women, especially, state that fatigue reduces their interest in sex. On the average, several studies during the 1990s and since 2000 suggested that the typical married couple has sex about six to eight times a month. The rates are higher for younger couples, new marriages, and recent remarriages (Scott and Sprecher, 2000). In general, studies show little change in the frequency of sex in recent decades from earlier ones.

A Conflict Analysis of the Family

Role Inequality Within the Family

Whereas functionalists view the family as a cooperative arrangement meeting the needs of its members and the larger society, conflict theorists see the family as a microcosm of the larger society in which groups who possess wealth and power exploit those who do not. In the family, conflict theorists believe that men dominate women and exploit them both economically and sexually (Marx and Engels, 1969 [orig. 1848]).

In even the fairly recent past, women were considered the property of their fathers and husbands. Many traditions and rituals remind us of this: the bride's father "giving her away" at the wedding; the promise to "love, honor, and obey"; and the practice of a woman taking her husband's last name. Today, fewer women promise to "obey," and more keep their maiden name or use hyphenated names. However, the majority still take their husband's name.

When a couple marries, the agreement is more than a two-party arrangement. The couple is bound by the rights and responsibilities dictated by the state in which they reside. In the United States, this has meant, until recently, that when a woman married, she lost control of her property, both inherited and earned. She also could not sign a contract without her husband's permission and, until 1970, could not get a credit rating in her own name. Until 1985, there had never been a provision in the law that would allow the prosecution of a husband for raping his wife, though nearly all states do have such a provision now. The presumption was that a husband has the legal right of sexual access to his wife. There are still some states in which a husband can only be prosecuted for rape under specified conditions. In addition, in many jurisdictions, it is much more difficult to prosecute a husband for assaulting his wife than if a stranger were the offender. This is of particular concern because research has found that the family is one of the most violent institutions, surpassed only by the police and the military (and then only in times of war) (Gelles and Straus, 1979).

Violence in the Family and in Courtship

Although violence in the family was not recognized as a social problem in the academic literature until 1970 (O'Brien, 1971), violence between family members has always been a feature of family life. The closeness and dependency created in the family unit can breed anger, hostility, and physical abuse. Family violence ranges from the physical punishment of a child to physical assault, and it frequently results in serious injury. The fact that the abuse takes place in the privacy of the family makes it especially difficult to prevent, detect, and control.

Conflict theorists point out that the overwhelming majority of serious family violence reflects inequalities of power. Husbands engage in serious violence against their wives far more often than vice versa (Straus, 1980), and serious violence in courtship is also usually committed by men (Makepeace, 1981). Similarly, children are abused by adults or, sometimes, older children.

Child Abuse

Physical violence against children has traditionally been viewed as a necessary part of child-rearing, as indicated by the expression "Spare the rod and spoil the child." Extreme physical violence against children is one form of **child abuse**. Although child abuse has always existed, it has only received serious recognition during the last few decades. Today, it is unfortunately all too common for news stories to report the death of a child as a result of abuse, often at the hands of a parent, or the arrest of an adult, again often the parent, for sexual abuse of a child. In 2005, about 885,000 cases of child abuse or neglect were substantiated by state family service agencies—a decline from the mid-1990s, when annual reports topped one million (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001a; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009). A national study in 1995 estimated the total number of abused or neglected children at around 2.8 million (*Nation's Health*, 1997). Of these, nearly one million involved physical or sexual abuse (Sharp, 1996). National surveys conducted in the mid-1970s and again in

the mid-1980s indicated that a little more than 2 percent of U.S. parents had engaged in serious violence—such as kicking, punching, beating, or burning a child, or threatening a child with a weapon (Gelles and Straus, 1987, 1988; Straus and Gelles, 1986; Gelles and Cornell, 1985). These surveys may understate the actual amount of violence, since some people will not admit to it in a survey (Gelles, 1995).

Parents who are under a great deal of stress are more likely to abuse their children (Emery, 1989; Berkowitz, 1983), as are those with limited knowledge of child development. Children who cause family stress, such as the physically or mentally disabled, are likely targets of abuse, as are babies and very young children, who are too young to tell anyone. Although the cases that most frequently come to public attention are from lower-class families, child abuse occurs among all social classes. Middle-class families may be more successful at keeping violence hidden. There is some evidence, however, that lower-class people may not be as aware of child development or of more appropriate ways of dealing with stress and may therefore resort to violence more readily than middle-class people. Also, because stress increases the risk of abuse, and poverty itself is a major stressor that can lead to a lifetime of bad health (Ferraro, Schafer, and Wilkinson, 2015), there may also be a relationship between social class and increased risk of abuse. The “cycle of violence” refers to the fact that abused children often grow up to be abusing parents, modeling their child-rearing practices after those of their own parents (Egeland, Jacovitz, and Sroufe, 1989). This fact underscores the need to break the cycle through education, counseling, and training. Women are a little more likely than men to engage in violence against children, but this is because they bear more of the responsibility for child-rearing than men (Wolfner and Gelles, 1993; Gelles, 1995). When researchers compare men and women who have similar levels of child-care responsibility, males are more likely to be abusive (Margolin, 1992).

In recent years, we have become increasingly aware of another form of child abuse—sexual abuse of children. Such abuse is most often committed by family members (including

parents and stepparents) or their friends. There has also been increased awareness in recent years of abuse by priests, teachers, and other adults who interact with children in institutional settings. Overall, girls are victimized more often than boys. While the precise amount of abuse is impossible to estimate because people are so reluctant to talk about it, the best studies indicate that 30 percent or more of American girls are sexually abused in some manner by age 18 years (Finkelhor et al., 1986, chap. 1; Bolen and Scannapieco, 2001). The factors associated with sexual abuse of children are much the same as those associated with other forms of violence against children: Authoritarian males, substance abusers, the unemployed, and people who were themselves abused as children are disproportionately likely to be sexual abusers (Finkelhor et al., 1986; Gebhard et al., 1965; Rubin, 1966).

Spousal Abuse

Some studies suggest that men and women are about equally likely to engage in violence against their spouses (Straus and Gelles, 1986), whereas other studies show that men engage in violence more often (Dobash et al., 1992). But studies agree that *serious* violence resulting in injuries is more commonly committed by males, and that males are more likely to initiate the violence against their spouses.

The 2011 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey found that about ten million Americans per year experienced some form of violence from their intimate partners. While 4 to 5 percent of men and women experienced some form of violence in the most recent year, women are more likely to experience serious violence of the type likely to cause injury—about 22 percent of women versus about 14 percent of men (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Similarly, a statewide survey in Washington State in 1998 showed that 21.6 percent of women and 7.5 percent of men had experienced injury from violence by their spouse or partner sometime in their lives (Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 2000). Again, there is a cycle of violence—males who were abused as children or whose fathers beat their mothers are more likely to become abusers than other men. Although some social scientists

have predicted that as women's status improves, the incidence of wife-beating will decline, one study found that high-status wives may actually be perceived as a threat by insecure males, thus resulting in *greater* levels of abuse.

Abused children are usually too immature to escape the situation, but battered adult women also often stay in abusive situations. The reasons range from economic dependency and an inability to see alternatives, to low self-esteem that results in perceived helplessness. Some wives are committed to their husbands and their marriage regardless of the situation; others blame themselves for bringing on the abuse.

Courtship Violence

Violence also occurs between many dating couples. Most cases involve slapping, punching, and hitting, but some involve sexual attacks. In one study, three out of four college women reported that they had been the victims of sexual aggression at some time in their lives, with 15 percent actually being raped (Muehlenhard and Linton, 1987). Many of these cases involved what is called acquaintance rape, or sometimes date rape.

Most acquaintance rapes do not occur on the first date but after the people involved have known each other for a while (Muehlenhard and Linton, 1987). Some acquaintance rapes apparently occur because of incorrect assumptions by male partners about consent. The male may assume that because he has not been explicitly told no or encountered physical resistance, his partner has consented to sex—yet that partner may be submitting out of fear, not because she is truly willing (Celis, 1991). Studies consistently show that the percentage of women who report being raped by their dates is higher than the proportion of men who believe that they have committed rape. Clearly, better education about what constitutes rape would prevent some acquaintance rapes. Many college campuses, where a sizable proportion of date rapes occur, have started education programs on this topic. In some cases, of course, men who rape their dates understand exactly what they are doing. Violence that begins in courtship generally continues into marriage (Roscoe and Bernaske, 1985). In fact, one study of battered

wives seeking shelter found that more than half had also been physically abused in a dating relationship (Roscoe and Bernaske, 1985).

Physical as well as sexual violence is common in courtship. Studies of college students suggest that 20 to 40 percent have experienced courtship violence (Benokraitis, 1993, p. 208). Around one in 11 high school students annually, both male and female, experience some form of violence from dating partners (Rothman and Xuan, 2014). However, as with family violence, most victims of *serious* courtship violence are female (Makepeace, 1981). At least half the time, such violence occurs more than once between the same man and woman. Like battered wives, many of the women who are victimized feel too powerless to leave the people who are abusing them: Half the women in the Makepeace study remained with the men who had attacked them. Males who engage in courtship violence tend to be traditionally “masculine” males, and the women most likely to be victimized are less traditionally “feminine” women (Bernard, Bernard, and Bernard, 1985). Their assertiveness is likely to be seen as threatening by authoritarian males, and such men often use violence to control their partners.

The Family in the Larger Social Structure

The conflict perspective is also relevant to the role and position of the family within the larger society. Specifically, when the needs of other institutions conflict with those of the family or its members, the family must generally conform or adapt. For example, to compete for jobs, families often must be prepared to go where the work is. To pull up roots and move to a distant location for a breadwinner's job can be an unpleasant experience. Social ties may be difficult to break, and if the other spouse is employed, they might not want to quit a good job with no firm prospects in the new location. Significantly, women give up their jobs when their husbands get better offers out of town much more often than the reverse (Bielby and Bielby, 1992). This probably in part reflects a tendency to value the husband's career over

the wife's. However, recent research suggests that another reason for this may be occupational segregation: Women are more likely to have occupations such as nurse, secretary, or social worker that are geographically dispersed, whereas men are more likely to have occupations that are geographically clustered, such as nuclear engineers or naval architects—making it easier for the wife to find a job in a new location than for the husband (Benson, 2014).

There are many other situations of potential conflict between the family and other institutions. Parents often experience conflict between the need to provide child care and the demands of work; school schedules fail to conform to work vacations; ill family members must get treatment when medical personnel are available, regardless of the inconvenience; and even religious services may conflict with family schedules.

Changing Patterns of Marriages and Families

During the 1960s, social movements such as women's liberation, the sexual revolution, and the gay rights movement transformed many of our traditional concepts concerning marriages and families. Since the 1990s, additional trends have emerged.

Changing Roles Within Marriages

Undoubtedly, the most fundamental change in American marriage and family life revolves around the changing roles of men and women. Women have entered the labor force in record numbers, a trend that is expected to continue. As discussed in Chapter 8, there has been some concern in years since then with the effects of both mothers and fathers working long hours away from home. While many think it is better if one parent stays home, few think it matters whether it is the mother or father (McComb, 2001). And despite these concerns, the actual labor force participation of women with children is very high.

Both women and families have benefited economically from the movement of wives and mothers into the workforce. The additional

income helps meet family expenses, provides for the children's education, and avoids poverty in old age. No longer entirely dependent on their husbands for financial support, working wives exercise increased power within the marriage, which helps to create a more equal relationship (Sorensen and McLanahan, 1987; see also Plutzer, 1988). Even young children can benefit when their mothers enter the labor force because of the greater resources this brings to their families (Parcel and Menaghan, 1994).

Men's Contributions to Housekeeping and Child Care

Although in many ways the movement of women into the labor force has been positive, some studies have shown that women have had new responsibilities thrust upon them but have not been relieved of many of their traditional duties. Despite significant changes in the roles women play outside the home, there have been only modest shifts in the allocation of tasks within the home between males and females over the past 30 years, and women still do about twice as much household work as men (Coltrane, 2000; Daminger, 2020). This issue is discussed in detail in Chapter 8. Offer (2011) found that even when men and women share similar total workloads, women feel more stressed than men in the multitasking they have to do because they do more housework and child care than do men. Husbands tend to find their multitasking between work and home a positive experience, where women are far more likely to view it as a negative experience (Offer, 2011).

Because women continue to assume the bulk of child-care and housekeeping responsibilities, even when both spouses work full time, men have more time to devote to their careers than do working mothers. For instance, a survey of executives in the 1980s found that women who become financially successful frequently are unmarried or married without children, which is not true of men. Fifty-one percent of top female executives were unmarried, and 61 percent are childless, compared with 4 percent and 3 percent, respectively, for men (Fraker, 1984). In general, women with children earn about 20 percent less than those who remain

childless (Bloom, 1986). And more recent research finds that, among white women, those who are most privileged with high skills and high wages experience the highest total wage penalties due to motherhood (England, et al., 2016). Unlike men, women often must choose between home and career.

The division of work in the home has become an increasing source of marital conflict in recent years (Townsend and Walker, 1990). This aspect of the issue, along with some of the reasons for the uneven distribution of housework, is explored in the box “Nancy and Evan,” excerpted from Arlie Hochschild’s *The Second Shift* (1989). Research by Daminger (2019) introduces the concept of “cognitive labor” within the context of household chores, which goes beyond physical tasks and involves activities related to anticipating needs, decision-making, and monitoring progress in managing a household. The research reveals that cognitive labor is often invisible and can lead to conflicts in relationships. It also finds that women tend to perform more cognitive labor than men, particularly in tasks related to anticipation and monitoring, although both genders participate relatively equally in decision-making, a crucial aspect of cognitive labor. These findings shed light on a previously overlooked source of gender inequality within households.

Delayed Marriage and Permanent Singlehood

About one in four households in the United States today is made up of one person living alone (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009). In comparison, just 30 years ago only about one in ten households was made up of a single person. These households come about in a number of ways.



Photo 13.2 Men have taken on more child-care responsibilities than in the past, but these duties tend to be those that are less routine and more “fun”.

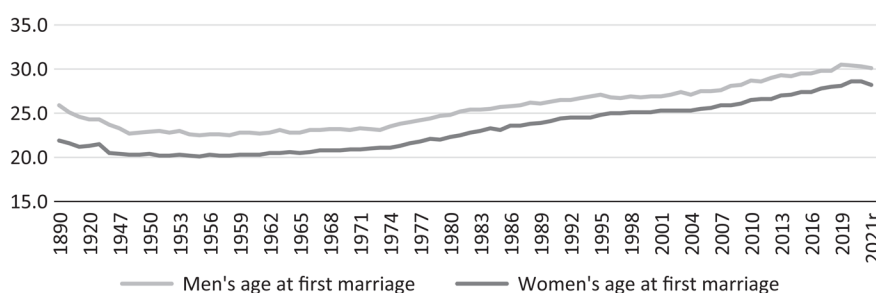
Courtesy of Michael W. Flota

First, some people are unmarried; of these, some may never marry—an increasingly common and socially acceptable pattern. Currently, at least 10 percent of the population never marries, and this percentage has increased a little but may be leveling off as more people over 40 years of age are now marrying for the first time.

There has also been a trend to delay marriage. The average age at first marriage for women has risen from 20.4 in 1960 to nearly 27 by 2010 to 28.2 in 2022 (see Figure 13.2). For men, the average age at first marriage is about two years older, around 30.1 in 2022, up from 24 in 1977. Women today are delaying marriage to complete academic degrees and establish careers. In addition, because premarital sex has become more acceptable, people no longer need to marry in order to enter into a sexual relationship.

Single-person households are also created when a married person becomes widowed or divorced. Although younger people in this category often remarry, older people frequently do not. Because women significantly outnumber men by age 60 years, widowed women are especially unlikely to find another partner.

Finally, there are more single-person households because it is somewhat more common today than in the past for young unmarried adults to live independently rather than with their parents (Goldscheider and Goldscheider, 1987). Economic difficulties caused

Figure 13.2 Median age at first marriage by sex: 1890 to 2010.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses, 1890 to 1940, and Current Population Survey, March and Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 1947 to 2022. Table MS-2. Estimated Median Age at First Marriage, by Sex: 1890 to Present. www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/families/marital.html (Downloaded September 27, 2023).

a modest reversal of this trend beginning in the late 1980s (Bouvier and DeVita, 1991), and subsequent recessions, including the Great Recession that began in 2008, have forced more young adults to live with their parents. In some cases, this is contrary to the preferences of the young adults, the parents, or both.

Cohabitation

According to U.S. Census data, the incidence of **cohabitation**, an unmarried couple living together, has increased rapidly since 1970. Previous studies have found that 60 percent of cohabiters are under 35 years of age (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991a), but the incidence of cohabitation is rising among people in their 30s, 40s, and older, particularly people who have been divorced. Nearly half of people who cohabit have been previously married.

Cohabitation and Marriage

For many, but not all, cohabitation is a step toward marriage. One study found that the proportion of applicants for marriage licenses who listed the same address rose from 13 percent in 1970 to 53 percent in 1980 (Gwartney-Gibbs, 1986). Other research during the first half of the 1980s found that 44 percent of all couples who ultimately married had lived together (Bumpass and Sweet, 1988). Some see living together as a way to test the relationship under more realistic conditions than dating allows. In fact, cohabitation

is similar in some respects to marriage, and the lives of couples who live together are not much different from those of married couples. Cohabitors generally are committed to an exclusive sexual relationship, although they may be less committed to a long-term relationship with the person they live with. For example, some studies do indicate higher rates of unfaithfulness among cohabiting couples than among married couples (Forste and Tanfer, 1996). As in marriage, women perform a disproportionate share of the housework, and men make more of the decisions.

Living together, however, does not always lead to marriage. The couple can enter the relationship with this understanding, or they can arrive at this decision after living together for a while. Misunderstandings can occur, however, when partners have different expectations about whether the arrangement will lead to marriage.

Sociologists have conducted research to find out whether couples who live together before marriage have better or worse marriages, or a greater or lesser risk of divorce, as compared to couples who do not live together before marriage. At first, such studies found little or no difference (Newcomb and Bentler, 1980; Olday, 1981). However, more recent studies in the United States, Canada, and Sweden have found that couples who live together before marriage appear to experience a higher rate of divorce and report lower levels of marital happiness (De Maris and Leslie, 1984; Balakrishnan et al., 1987; Bennett, Blanc, and Bloom, 1988; Dush, Cohan, and Amato, 2003). A possible reason

for such differences is that those who cohabit before marriage are less committed to the institution of marriage and are more hesitant to make the long-term commitment of marriage. This suggests that it may not be cohabitation itself that leads to later divorce, but rather that people who are willing to cohabit are also more willing to divorce. For example, people who are less religious are both more likely to divorce (Colasanto and Shriver, 1989) and more likely to cohabit (Thornton, Axinn, and Hill, 1992).

Gay and Lesbian Couples

The 2000 Census, for the first time, offered a national count of the number of same-sex unmarried partners. About one out of ten unmarried-partner households was composed of two men or two women, according to preliminary census data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001j). This is about 0.5 percent of all households, amounting to over half a million households and over a million people. In 2014, same-sex couples accounted for about 1.2 percent of all couples (married and unmarried), about 1.5 million people. In most respects, homosexual couples are quite similar to heterosexual couples. Until 2015, same-sex marriage was illegal in most of the United States, and this caused extra hardships that heterosexual couples did not face. Because homosexual couples also face most of the same problems as heterosexual couples, homosexual relationships may have had a higher rate of instability than heterosexual relationships. This may now be dissipating. In any case, many homosexuals remain with the same partner for a number of years. Compared with heterosexuals, homosexual relationships tend to be more egalitarian (Harry, 1982). There is also less gender-based role playing in homosexual relationships (Maracek, Finn, and Caedell, 1982). Interestingly, recent research out of the Netherlands suggests that children raised by same-sex parents from birth perform better in primary and secondary education compared to children raised by different-sex parents (Mazrekaj, De Witte, and Cabus, 2020).

Whether in heterosexual or homosexual couples, however, women and men do tend to exhibit some of the same gender differences. For

example, both heterosexual and lesbian women show more interest in emotional, lasting relationships, and tie sex more strongly with emotional intimacy, than do men of either sexual orientation (Kurdek and Schmitt, 1986). Lesbian couples are also less likely to fight over money and are more home-centered as opposed to work-centered than either gay male or heterosexual couples (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983). Male homosexuals are also more likely than lesbians to have sex with someone other than their partner (Peplau, 1981; Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983), though concern about the risk of AIDS has probably reduced the incidence of such behavior.

The AIDS epidemic led to an upturn in prejudice against homosexuals during the mid-1980s, but by the end of the decade, support for the rights of homosexuals to enjoy equal opportunity and freedom from discrimination was at an all-time high in the United States—and it continued to rise through the 1990s (Gallup, 1990; Gallup Organization, 2001b). By 2001, Americans favored equal rights for homosexuals by a margin of 85 percent to 11 percent, with majorities also agreeing that homosexuality should be considered “an acceptable alternative lifestyle” and supporting the hiring of gay and lesbian people for every occupation they were asked about, including teachers and clergy (Gallup Organization, 2001b). Today, at least 22 states, the District of Columbia, and numerous municipalities have outlawed discrimination by private employers on the basis of sexual orientation, and some additional states and cities forbid it in public employment (Human Rights Campaign, 2001). In Denmark, homosexual marriages gained legal recognition in 1990 (Benokraitis, 1993), but formal recognition of gay marriages in the United States was slower to arrive and came about nationally only as a result of a U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case in July 2015. As a result of this Supreme Court decision, same-sex marriage is now the law of the land everywhere in the United States.

The growing support for protecting the legal rights of homosexuals in the United States has been met with a backlash from those who want to discriminate against homosexuals. Much of this backlash has been targeted at transgender individuals and drag shows. Violence against



UNDERSTANDING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

Nancy and Evan

Why has the division of work in the home become an increasing source of conflict in recent years? And what are some of the reasons for the unequal distribution of housework? These questions are dealt with in the following excerpt from Arlie Hochschild's *The Second Shift*.

Between 8:05 a.m. and 6:05 p.m., both Nancy and Evan are away from home, working a "first shift" at full-time jobs. The rest of the time they deal with the varied tasks of the second shift: shopping, cooking, paying bills; taking care of the car, the garden, and yard; keeping harmony with Evan's mother who drops over quite a bit, "concerned" about Joey, with neighbors, their voluble babysitter, and each other. And Nancy's talk reflects a series of second-shift thoughts: "We're out of barbecue sauce . . . Joey needs a Halloween costume. . . . The car needs a wash . . ." and so on. She reflects a certain "second-shift sensibility," a continual attunement to the task of striking and restriking the right emotional balance between child, spouse, home, and outside job.

When I first met the Holts, Nancy was absorbing far more of the second shift than Evan. She said she was doing 80 percent of the housework and 90 percent of the child care. Evan said she did 60 percent of the housework, 70 percent of the child care. Joey said, "I vacuum the rug, and fold the dinner napkins," finally concluding, "Mom and I do it all." A neighbor agreed with Joey. Clearly, between Nancy and Evan, there was a "leisure gap": Evan had more than Nancy. I asked both of them, in separate interviews, to explain to me how they had dealt with housework and child care since their marriage began.

One evening in the fifth year of their marriage, Nancy told me, when Joey was two months old and almost four years before I met the Holts, she first seriously raised the issue with Evan. "I told him: 'Look, Evan, it's not working. I do the housework, I take the major care of Joey, and I work a full-time job. I get pissed. This is your house too. Joey is your child too. It's not all my job to care for them.' When I cooled down I put to him, 'Look, how about this: I'll cook Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. You cook Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. And we'll share or go out Sundays.'"

According to Nancy, Evan said he didn't like "rigid schedules." He said he didn't necessarily agree with her standards of housekeeping, and didn't like that standard "imposed" on him, especially if she was "sluffing off" tasks on him, which from time to time he felt she was. But he went along with the idea in

principle. Nancy said the first week of the new plan went as follows. On Monday, she cooked. For Tuesday, Evan planned a meal that required shopping for a few ingredients, but on his way home he forgot to shop for them. He came home, saw nothing he could use in the refrigerator or in the cupboard, and suggested to Nancy that they go out for Chinese food. On Wednesday, Nancy cooked. On Thursday morning, Nancy reminded Evan, "Tonight it's your turn." That night Evan fixed hamburgers and French fries and Nancy was quick to praise him. On Friday, Nancy cooked. On Saturday, Evan forgot again.

About two years after I first began visiting the Holts, I began to see their problem in a certain light: as a conflict between their two gender ideologies. Nancy wanted to be the sort of woman who was needed and appreciated both at home and at work—like Lacey, she told me, on the television show "Cagney and Lacey." She wanted Evan to appreciate her for being a caring social worker, a committed wife, and a wonderful mother. But she cared just as much that she be able to appreciate Evan for what he contributed at home, not just for how he supported the family. She would feel proud to explain to women friends that she was married to one of these rare "new men."

For his own reasons, Evan imagined things very differently. He loved Nancy and if Nancy loved being a social worker, he was happy and proud to support her in it. He knew that because she took her caseload so seriously, it was draining work. But at the same time, he did not see why, just because she chose this demanding career, he had to change his own life. Why should her personal decision to work outside the home require him to do more inside it? Nancy earned about two-thirds as much as Evan, and her salary was a big help, but as Nancy confided, "If push came to shove, we could do without it." Nancy was a social worker because she loved it. Doing daily chores at home was thankless work, and certainly not something Evan needed her to appreciate about him. Equality in the second shift meant a loss in his standard of living, and despite all the high-flown talk, he felt he hadn't really bargained for it. He was happy to help Nancy at home if she needed help; that was fine. That was only decent. But it was too sticky a matter "committing" himself to sharing.

After seven years of loving marriage, Nancy and Evan had finally come to a terrible impasse. Their emotional standard of living had drastically declined: They began to snap at each other, to criticize, to carp.

Each felt taken advantage of: Evan, because his offering of a good arrangement was deemed unacceptable, and Nancy, because Evan wouldn't do what she deeply felt was "fair." Not long after this crisis in the Holts' marriage, there was a dramatic lessening of tension over the issue of the second shift. It was as if the issue was closed. Evan had won. Nancy would do the second shift. Evan expressed vague guilt but beyond that he had nothing to say. Nancy had wearied of continually raising the topic, wearied of the

lack of resolution. Now in the exhaustion of defeat, she wanted the struggle to be over too. Evan was "so good" in other ways, why debilitate their marriage by continual quarreling? Besides, she told me, "Women always adjust more, don't they?"

Source: From *The Second Shift* by Arlie Hochschild and Ann Machung. Copyright © 1989 by Arlie Hochschild. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA Inc.

homosexuals had grown, to the point that more hate crimes were directed against homosexuals than any other group, as a percentage of population. However, in 2009, Congress passed, and President Obama signed, national legislation against hate crimes that for the first time included hate crimes based on sexual orientation. Since then, public opinion polls have shown a dramatic shift in opinion in support of laws banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and in support of same-sex marriage. For example 71 percent of Gallup poll respondents in 2023 said that same-sex marriages should be legally recognized as valid, compared to just 27 percent nearly 30 years earlier in 1996 (Gallup Organization, 2023). Also, 83 percent of Gallup poll respondents in 2019 said that homosexuals

should have equal job rights, up from 47 percent in 1989; and in 2010, 66 percent of respondents said that openly gay or lesbian Americans should be able to serve in the military (Gallup Organization, 2023). The latter became reality in 2011 as a result of court orders and federal legislation signed by President Obama in 2010. However, state laws still vary on the subject of workplace discrimination against gays and lesbians. It is important to note that people do not "choose" to be homosexual any more than people "choose" to be heterosexual. Rather, people discover their sexuality (Cook, 2020; Simonelli, Galizia, and Eleuteri, 2022); growing evidence suggests, though it does not yet prove, a genetic factor in sexual orientation (Wheeler, 1992; Sanders et al., 2015; Suplee, 1991).



Photo 13.3 Homosexual couples are among the many new types of marriage and family relationships that have emerged in American society.

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Fewer Children, No Children

Large families are no longer considered ideal. In a poll taken in 1941, about 70 percent of the respondents thought that three or more children would make an ideal-size family. Today, just 41 percent hold this view (Gallup Organization, 1997b).

In addition to the economic changes discussed previously, one reason for the trend toward smaller families

is the rejection of the belief that an only child will grow up lonely and spoiled. In fact, recent research has found that only children are happy, mentally healthy, and tend to be high achievers (McCoy, 1986), although children raised in larger families do tend to be more outgoing and sociable.

Until recently, childless couples were pitied because it was assumed that they could not have children. A *decision* not to have children, on the other hand, was considered selfish because communities and countries wanted to see their populations grow. Today there is more concern about the problems of overpopulation, and many couples admit that they are voluntarily childless. Recent evidence estimates that up to one in five married women might ultimately remain childless. Couples who voluntarily remain childless are often highly educated and career oriented. They may have been previously married or have married later in life, and their relationships are more egalitarian. Women who are heavily involved in demanding careers often believe that advancement on the job will be slowed if they have children. Couples sometimes argue that their lives are fulfilling without children. With the skyrocketing costs of child-rearing, financial considerations may also play a part in the decision to remain childless. Research has shown that couples without children are happier than couples with children; paradoxically, they also have a modestly greater risk of divorce (Morgan, Lye, and Condran, 1988; Waite and Lillard, 1991), perhaps because couples with children often try to stay together for the sake of the children.

Some couples “drift” into childlessness. They keep delaying having children until they are entrenched in an enjoyable lifestyle or until the wife is too old to become a mother.

There are some couples who are not childless by choice. However, couples with fertility problems who want to have children now have options that were not available even a few years ago. Medical technology has developed various innovative means of allowing couples to produce a child, including in vitro fertilization and artificial insemination. Surrogate mothers are bearing children for couples with fertility problems, provoking intense debate. Some people perceive

surrogate motherhood as “selling babies.” In addition, because surrogate mothers sometimes act out of economic need, the practice raises questions of lower-income women serving as “breeders” for the wealthier classes. Adoption has always been a possibility, but with the legalization of abortion and with more single mothers choosing to keep their babies, there are fewer children available for adoption. How this will change now that the Supreme Court has thrown out *Roe v. Wade* and returned the power to regulate abortion to individual states remains to be seen.

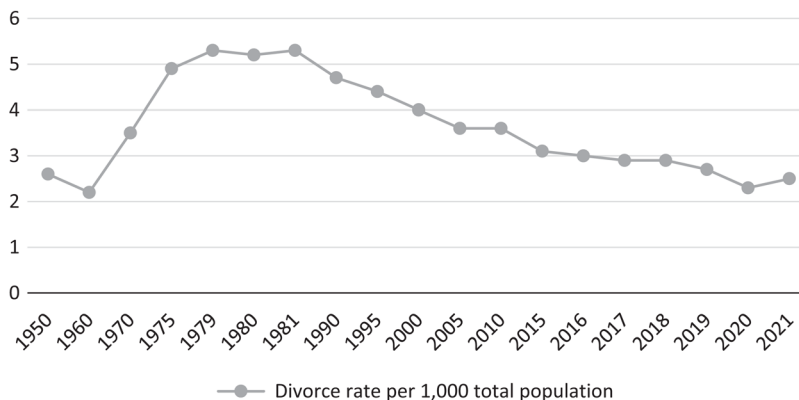
Marital Disruption and Divorce

Americans depend heavily on marriage for their psychological well-being (Glenn and Weaver, 1981). If the choice of a spouse is a good one, the result can be a happy, satisfying future. If the choice is poor, however, the unhappiness of the marriage can penetrate other areas and reduce the overall quality of a person's life.

Divorce in the United States

The United States has one of the highest marriage rates in the world, but it also has the highest level of divorce (Stack, 1994). According to Bumpass (1990), more than half of all recent first marriages will end in divorce, and the divorce rate for remarriages is even higher (Becker, 1981). The divorce rate has been fairly steady since the mid-1970s, as shown in Figure 13.3. It has even declined somewhat in recent years, though the probability of a marriage ending in divorce has not changed much because the marriage rate has also declined. Divorce is quite a bit more common today than it was a century ago (Huber and Spitze, 1988). Just over 100 years ago, about one divorce would occur for every 21 marriages. During World War I, there was one divorce for every nine marriages. In the 1960s, the divorce rate increased again to one divorce for every 3.5 marriages.

Today, there is about one divorce for every two new marriages performed, and over the long term, more than half of current marriages will end in divorce if current rates prevail

Figure 13.3 U.S. Divorce Rates per 1,000 Total Population, 1960–2021.

Source: 1950–72 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. Monthly Vital Statistics Report Vol. 26, No. 2 May 9, 1977. www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/mvsvr/supp/mv26_02s2acc.pdf (Downloaded September 27, 2023).

1973–82 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. Monthly Vital Statistics Report Vol. 30, No. 13 Dec 20, 1982. www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/mvsvr/supp/mv30_13.pdf (Downloaded September 27, 2023).

1986–1990 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. Monthly Vital Statistics Report Vol. 42, No. 13 Oct 11, 1994. www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/mvsvr/supp/mv42_13acc.pdf (Downloaded September 27, 2023).

1993–1994 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. Monthly Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 44, No. 12, July 24, 1996. www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/mvsvr/mv44_12.pdf (Downloaded September 27, 2023).

1995–1997 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics. Monthly Vital Statistics Report, Vol. 46, No. 12, July 28, 1998. www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/mvsvr/mv46_12.pdf (Downloaded September 27, 2023).

2000–2021 CDC/NCHS National Vital Statistics System. www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/dvs/marriage-divorce/national-marriage-divorce-rates-00-21.pdf (Downloaded September 27, 2023).

(Stack, 1994; National Center for Health Statistics, 1996). Although the divorce rate of the United States is well above those of other countries (and has been for a long time), divorce rates have been rising in all modern industrialized countries (Gelles, 1995, p. 396).

Who Gets Divorced?

The risks of divorce are highest in the early years of marriage, with the average divorce occurring in the seventh year. The longer a marriage has been intact, the lower is the chance of divorce. There is also an increased risk for divorce when a person has previously been divorced or comes from a family with a history of divorce. A couple is also more likely to divorce if they married very young. Because those who marry younger have a higher probability of divorce (Bramlett and Mosher, 2001), the recent increase in the age at first marriage should help reduce this risk. Couples who knew each other less than six

months before they married have higher rates of divorce, as do those in which the wife had a child prior to marriage (Bumpass and Sweet, 1972; Teachman, 1983). On the other hand, research shows that the incidence of divorce is no longer elevated by premarital pregnancy, except when the child is born before the parents get married (Teachman, 1983; Waite and Lillard, 1991). According to Killewald's research in 2016, the critical factor is the distribution of responsibilities within the household, particularly when husbands are not engaged in full-time employment. This circumstance is associated with an elevated divorce risk, especially for couples who tied the knot after 1975. Whether wives are employed full time or their contribution to household chores does not seem to affect the risk of divorce. This implies that while societal expectations regarding wives' domestic roles may have evolved, the traditional notion of husbands as primary breadwinners

continues to exert an influence on marital stability. Couples with low income, limited educational attainment, and unemployment also tend to have a higher risk of divorce. This probably explains most of the racial difference in divorce (African American rates are slightly higher than those of white people), except for the low rates of divorce for Asian Americans, who are less likely to divorce than any other racial group. Money problems are a major cause of stress in marriage, and when problems such as unemployment make it impossible for breadwinners to support their families, divorce or separation is often the result. For similar reasons, divorce rates in general tend to be slightly lower during periods of economic prosperity (Stack, 1994).

Sociologists have also noted that states in which there is a larger proportion of religious conservatives also tend to have higher divorce rates. This is a somewhat counterintuitive finding, since conservatives tend to have more traditional values (as we saw in Chapter 12) and are therefore less likely to approve of divorce in general. What explains this? Glass and Levchak (2014) examined this curious pattern. Their results showed that an individual's religious conservatism is correlated positively to an individual divorce risk for two reasons. First, conservative Protestants were found to have married earlier. Second, and not unrelated to earlier marriage, was the lower incomes of conservative Protestants. These families also tended to have lower levels of education. Lower levels of educational attainment are associated with early family formation—since it is more difficult to raise a young family and go to college at the same time. Lower levels of education are associated with lower incomes—financial strain being a leading cause of marital strain. These stressors combine to cause a higher rate of divorce in these counties and states.

Divorce rates are also higher among couples with dissimilar social characteristics. This is particularly true for religious preference, but to a lesser extent holds true for age, education, and race. Divorce rates are also higher among people who have friends or relatives who are divorced, people who live in cities, and people who are less religious (Stack, 1994). These three factors probably reduce inhibitions against getting divorced, making it more likely that when a marriage encounters

problems, people will choose to divorce. Finally, some recent research suggests that people may be more willing to get divorced when they have “spousal alternatives,” that is, when they have access to other potential partners for relationships after a divorce (South and Lloyd, 1995).

Not all bad marriages end in divorce. Many of the same factors that contribute to high divorce rates also create stress in marriage, producing unhappy, unsatisfying marriages that remain outwardly intact but are internally broken. Sometimes these relationships have been termed “empty-shell” marriages.

People may remain in unhappy marriages for reasons unrelated to the quality of the relationship, such as fear of being alone, unwillingness to break the “until death do us part” vow, or a (usually misguided) desire to stay together “for the sake of the kids.” People in such marriages may quietly coexist without emotional attachment, or they may engage in constant conflict with one another. They may convince themselves to accept the devitalized quality of their marriage or be so dependent upon the conflictual relationship that they do not view divorce as a realistic option.

Causes of Divorce

Longevity

Some people interpret today's high divorce rate as evidence that many people are making poor decisions regarding their choice of a mate. Others believe that greater life expectancy almost inevitably leads to more divorces. In the past, when people had much shorter life expectancies, couples who married until “death do us part” frequently didn't have to wait very long to be parted. The *combined* risk of marital disruption from either death or divorce was only modestly lower then than now (Cherlin, 1981; Sweetser, 1985). However, marriages were more likely to be ended by death and less likely to be ended by divorce. Today, with average life expectancy exceeding 75 years, a couple who marries in their early 20s could, in the absence of divorce, expect their marriage to last 50 or more years. It may be unrealistic to expect that the right mate for a person of 20 years old will still be the best choice 20, 40, or 60 years later.

People continue to change throughout life, and spouses often find that they are not changing in parallel ways.

Economic Independence of Women

Past research found that when women are more independent economically, such life changes are more likely to lead to divorce. As women have become better educated and have entered the labor force, they have become less economically dependent upon their husbands. As a result, a woman in an unhappy marriage has the option of leaving the marriage because she is, or can become, economically self-sufficient (Stack, 1994). This trend may have run its course by the end of the twentieth century, however: Some recent research shows no correlation between a wife's income and the risk of divorce (Rogers and DeBoer, 2001; Schwartz and Han, 2014). Though past research did find couples where the wife was more highly educated than the husband were more likely to divorce, that trend also seems to have disappeared (Schwartz and Han, 2014). Instead, marriages between educational equals now appear to be highly stable compared to couples of less equal education (Schwartz and Han, 2014). Further, as discussed in Chapter 8, evidence suggests that husbands have a tendency to be more unfaithful in their marriages if they are dependent on a breadwinner wife (Munsch, 2015), while wives tend to be more faithful to their husbands if they are breadwinners, than nonbreadwinner wives. Researchers theorize this may be evidence that both men and women aim to "balance" their gender roles: men by staking some independence and distance from their breadwinner wives to compensate for their perceived lack of power and women by showing loyalty and deference to their dependent husbands by remaining faithful and minimizing any tension that might result from their husbands' lack of power (Munsch, 2015). There also does appear to be some trade-off between the breadwinner role for women and the role of mother. Research findings indicate that the likelihood of male college graduates having a child who subsequently graduates from college is higher than for non-college attending males; but this outcome is not evident among female graduates. This gender disparity can be predominantly attributed to

the adverse impact of college on women's prospects of marriage and parenthood (Lawrence and Breen, 2016).

Unrealistic Expectations

Another factor in divorce is the high level of expectations people have for marriage. With the decline of the extended family, husbands and wives increasingly look to each other for needs that had previously been met by other family members. It may be unrealistic to expect any marital relationship to be able to meet all the diverse needs of both partners at all times.

Changing Divorce Laws

Until recent decades, divorce was a cause of public censure and personal humiliation. Today, however, the emphasis is on reducing the negative impacts on the divorcing spouses and especially on the children. Social and legal accommodations have been made to ease the trauma.

No longer do spouses have to accuse each other of adultery, alcoholism, or physical cruelty to get a divorce. In New York State, adultery was the only legal grounds for divorce until 1973. In 1970, California became the first state to eliminate any requirement of fault in cases of divorce in its much-copied no-fault divorce law. The majority of states now have statutes allowing no-fault divorce. Just as no-fault automobile insurance seeks to save court expenses by eliminating the need to determine responsibility, so no-fault divorce seeks to allow divorce without requiring that one spouse prove the other was at fault. In no-fault divorce, marital partners agree that the marriage has broken down and that they have irreconcilable differences. This reduces potential hostility between spouses and saves children much trauma.

Although many people hail this trend as humane and farsighted, others fear that it has made divorce too easy. They argue that such laws have contributed to the increase in the divorce rate in the United States, and social research backs this argument to some extent. Divorce rates did increase after states introduced no-fault divorce laws, although it was also found that sociodemographic variables explained divorce rates better than divorce laws did (Stack,

1994, p. 155). Critics of such divorce laws argue that more people would stay married if divorces were harder to get. Of course, there is no guarantee that the marriages would be any happier.

There have been other legal changes regarding divorce. Although fathers most often got custody of children in the nineteenth century, this pattern reversed in the twentieth century, and by the 1940s, mothers nearly always got custody (Stack, 1994). Recently, it has become less automatic to give custody to the mother in disputed cases. Data from the 2000 Census indicate that among all one-parent families (not just ones resulting from divorce), about 20 percent were composed of an adult male living with one or more children (computed from U.S. Census Bureau, 2001e). In 2011, there were almost 2.7 million single father households, about 24 percent of all single-parent homes (Livingston, 2013). Typically, in divorces involving children, the noncustodial parent has visitation rights. Joint custody, in which children are with each parent a roughly equal portion of the time, has become increasingly common.

Effects of Divorce on Women and Children

Some evidence indicates that liberalized divorce laws may actually harm many women economically. Although this effect is not as large as was once believed (e.g., Weitzman, 1985), it is still substantial (Smock, Manning, and Gupta, 1999). Following a divorce, a woman's standard of living declines by about 27 percent on average, whereas her ex-husband's rises by about 10 percent (Peterson, 1996). The effects of taxes and social benefits reduce this gap somewhat, but men still fare better than women after a divorce, even adjusting for taxes and social benefits (DiPrete and McManus, 2000). When a woman who has been a full-time homemaker and has not been on the job market in years is divorced, she may have a difficult time supporting herself. At the same time, she is less likely to receive alimony. Now that women are more often able to take care of themselves financially, courts are awarding alimony much less frequently, in less than 17 percent of divorces. Even when awarded, alimony is paid only three-quarters of the time, and the average alimony payment is only about \$4,000 per year. Child support is awarded more often—about 57 percent of custodial parents

had some type of child support agreement or order as of 2006. But just over one in four parents (usually fathers) who are supposed to pay child support paid nothing in 2013, and only 44 percent of parents who were due to receive child support got the total amount due in 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The average amount of child support actually paid is only \$3,447 per year as of 2015 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Overall in 2015, more than half of all custodial mothers received *no* child support.

Putting Sociology to Work

Should Couples Stay Together “for the Sake of the Kids”?

Many parents in unhappy marriages wonder whether they should try to stay together even though they are unhappy in order to prevent their children from suffering the damaging effects of divorce. Social research has provided some information that may be helpful in answering this question. In part, whether or not divorce is bad for children may depend on the level of conflict in the marriage. If the level of conflict in a marriage is high, the children are probably better off on average if the parents divorce (Amato, 2000; Amato and Booth, 1997). However, this is only the case in a minority of marriages. In the rest, studies show consistent though relatively small (on average) disadvantages for children of divorced parents in a number of areas (Amato, 2000).

To begin with, divorce is usually very stressful to children when it occurs, and many children of divorced parents still have strong feelings about the divorce years or even decades later (Wallerstein and Blakeslee, 1989). They also experience increased risks of psychological maladjustment and low self-esteem (Amato, 1993). They are at a higher risk of criminal behavior, in part because their one custodial parent has less time to supervise them (Stack, 1994). They also experience somewhat less academic success and greater behavioral problems in school, and less economic success over the course of their lives. Children of divorced parents are not necessarily more likely to have unhappy marriages or to get divorced, though they may be more

likely to divorce if they do have a bad marriage (Webster, Orbach, and House, 1995; Thornton, 1991). They are also more likely to cohabit as adults, perhaps reflecting a fear that their own marriages will fail (Thornton, 1991).

None of this, however, means that if a marriage goes bad, the children will benefit if the parents stay together. First, it is open to question whether these problems result from divorce or were there anyway, perhaps as a result of family problems that contributed to the divorce. Several studies show that *even before a divorce*, children in families that end up divorcing fare less well—and this pattern continues after the divorce (Amato, 2000; Amato and Booth, 1996; Aseltine, 1996; Hetherington, 1999; Doherty and Needle, 1991). It is also clear that how well children do after a divorce varies widely from case to case. Not surprisingly, research has shown that children of divorced parents are less prone to problem behavior when they receive adequate economic support from their noncustodial fathers (Furstenberg, Morgan, and Allison, 1987). In addition, there can be some *positive* effects of divorce, as well as any negative ones. For example, many children actually experience *closer* relationships with their custodial mothers after a divorce (Arditti, 1999; Amato and Booth, 1997).

Three things previously discussed call into question the wisdom of “staying together for the sake of the children.” First, average differences between children from divorced and married families, though consistent, are small. Second, it is not clear whether they reflect effects of divorce or differences already there before the divorce. And third, children may benefit in some ways from divorces, especially in marriages where there was severe tension or conflict.

Because of the wide variation in outcomes of divorce for children, more recent social research has focused on the sources of this variation. The most important factor is conflict: If divorced parents engage in conflict, especially in front of their children, the children tend to do poorly. In fact, this is bad for children whether the parents are divorced or married (Amato, 1993, p. 31). If divorced parents can avoid such conflict, the children do much better, sometimes even better than children in intact families. Research also supports the idea that if the custodial parent

is better adjusted psychologically, the children generally do better (Amato, 1993). The effects of conflict and adjustment are hard to sort out, however, because conflict and poor adjustment often occur in the same parents. The overall research picture suggests that the welfare of children whose parents have marital problems is not so much a product of whether or not their parents get divorced but rather of how they do it and how they behave toward each other and their children after the divorce. It is also clear that if parents have marital problems, there are potential consequences for children whether the parents divorce or remain married. One final point is worthy of mention: Divorce is a major cause of one-parent families, and there is considerable debate about the possible effects of living in such families regardless of their cause. This debate is addressed later in this chapter.

Remarriage

Although divorce rates are high, remarriage rates are also high. Three-fourths of all divorced women remarry within ten years of the divorce (Bramlett and Mosher, 2001). Americans may be disenchanted with their current marital partners, but they do not seem to be disenchanted with the institution of marriage. Males tend to have even higher rates of remarriage than females. As women grow older, the number of males in their age range diminishes rapidly, reducing their chances of finding a second husband. Also, divorced men often marry women considerably younger than they are, further reducing the pool of potential partners for divorced women, who less frequently marry younger males. Women with higher educational attainment levels also remarry less frequently (Glick and Sung-Ling, 1986), demonstrating the marriage gradient; that is, the pattern of women marrying “up” (men with more education and higher incomes) and men marrying “down.” Although most divorced people do remarry, the percentage who do so has been falling, and people have been waiting longer after a divorce before they remarry. Between 1970 and 1987, for example, the median amount of time between divorce and remarriage more than doubled for both men and women in the

United States (National Center for Health Statistics, 1988), reaching four and a half years for women by 1995 (Bramlett and Mosher, 2001). To a large extent, however, these changes have been offset by an increase in cohabitation. About half of these cohabitants eventually marry their partner (Bumpass, Sweet, and Cherlin, 1991; Wilson and Clarke, 1992).

Second marriages have only a slightly higher risk of divorce than first marriages, except that those with children tend to have somewhat higher rates (White and Booth, 1985). Overall, about 39 percent of second marriages end in divorce within ten years, compared to 33 percent of first marriages (Bramlett and Mosher, 2001). The highest rates of divorce occur when both partners have children (Booth, 1991). When children are involved and a “blended” family is created, the remarriage experience is considerably different from a first marriage. Today, about one child in nine lives with a stepparent (Popenoe, 1996). Two-thirds of these have stepsiblings, half-siblings, or both (Huber and Spitze, 1988, p. 434). There are few established norms or rules to guide relationships between stepparents and stepchildren, stepbrothers and

stepsisters. This often results in uncertainty, confusion, and a higher divorce rate.

Women who are widowed later in life have low rates of remarriage because of the lack of eligible males. Only 7.7 percent of males between the ages of 65 and 74 years are widowed, whereas 26.2 percent of females are. For those age 75 years and older, the difference is even greater, with 20 percent of males and 58.2 percent of females widowed (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009).

Single-Parent Families

According to the most recent figures, at any given time, more than one of three children in this country are living in one-parent households (Livingston, 2014). This compares to fewer than one of ten in 1960. Forty-two percent of white children and 86 percent of black children will live in a single-parent household at some point before reaching the age of 18 years (Bumpass, 1984). About 74 percent of single-parent households are headed by a female (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009), a slightly lower proportion than a decade ago. About two-thirds of children in single-parent households have parents who are divorced or separated. The remainder have parents who never married (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992a). An increasing share of single-parent households are the result of out-of-wedlock births, which now account for more than 38 percent of births in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010a, Tables 78 and 85).

The number of single-parent, female-headed households has increased for several reasons. One is the rising rates of divorce and separation, previously discussed. Another is the rapid increase in the birth rate among unmarried people, and an increasing tendency for unmarried mothers to keep and raise their children rather than putting them up for adoption. Today only 10 percent of single mothers choose not to keep their babies.

About 33 percent of all children in families with no father present live in poverty (De-Navas-Walt and Proctor, 2015). Children from single-parent households exhibit rates of delinquency double those for children from



Photo 13.4 With today's high divorce and remarriage rates, a growing number of marriages result in families in which one or both of the partners bring children from previous marriages.

Courtesy of John E. Farley

two-parent homes, but this may be related to poverty as much as to living arrangements. Often having lower educational and economic levels to begin with, single parents must then cope with living on only one income while playing both mother and father to their children.

Race, Poverty, and the One-Parent Family

For more than two decades, sociologists and policymakers have debated the importance of the growing number of one-parent families as a cause of poverty. Since there are racial differences in the proportion of one-parent families, this debate has often taken on racial overtones. The statistics concerning race, poverty, and family type are clear, but their meanings are not. The incidence of one-parent, female-headed families is much higher among the poor than among the nonpoor population for all races (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000b). This is illustrated in Table 13.1. However, the incidence of such families is lowest among white people, higher among Hispanics, and highest of all among African Americans, as shown in Figure 13.4. Nonetheless, there have been substantial increases in the proportion of one-parent families among all racial and income groups since the late 1960s.

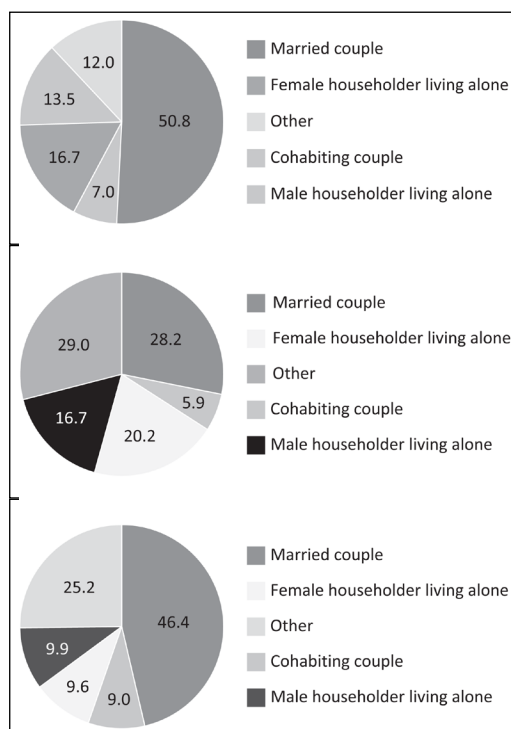
Single Parenthood and Black Families

The high incidence of single-parent families among African Americans and poor people has led some sociologists to argue that the structure of the black family is an important cause of disproportionate black poverty. These sociologists, operating largely from a functionalist perspective, see danger in any group having a family structure too different from the standard nuclear family. The view that single parenthood

is a major cause of poverty has been criticized on several points.

First and foremost, the single-parent family is at least as much a product of poverty as a cause of it. Poverty both breaks up existing families and prevents the formation of new married-couple families (Cavanagh, 2015). Our society continues to expect men to support their families (or at least be the main source of support), but poverty makes that impossible. Thus, these men avoid marriage (Mare and Winship,

Figure 13.4 Proportion Married Couple, Female-Householder, and Male-Householder Families, 2023.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2007 to 2023. www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/families/households.html (Downloaded September 29, 2023).

Table 13.1 Percentage of Poverty in Female-Householder Families With Children Under 18 Years Old, by Race, Hispanic Origin, Below Poverty Level: 2021

	White Families	Black Families	Hispanic Families
Families below poverty level	25.7%	40.8%	37.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1960 to 2023 Annual Social and Economic Supplements (CPS ASEC). www.census.gov/data/tables/2023/demo/income-poverty/p60-280.html

1991). If they are married, they may leave the family when they become poor or unemployed. The stresses of poverty also increase the risk of conflict, violence, and substance abuse within the family. For these reasons, low socioeconomic status is associated with higher divorce rates (Waite and Lillard, 1991) and much higher separation rates than occur among middle- and upper-class families.

Low socioeconomic status is even more strongly associated with births outside marriage (Jencks, 1991). For reasons discussed in Chapter 6, poor teenage girls are much more likely than nonpoor ones to become pregnant. Poor inner-city women—particularly among African Americans—experience a severe shortage of marriageable men, because many of the men in their community are unemployed, imprisoned, or prematurely dead (Wilson, 1987; Lichter, LeClere, and McLaughlin, 1991). Yet, like their middle-class counterparts, most of these single women are sexually active. This fact results in a higher percentage of children born to single mothers (Stokes and Chevan, 1996; Seeborg and Jaeger, 1993). If this is the case, the logical policy direction is to address the direct causes of poverty, discussed in Chapter 6, rather than to try to reduce poverty by changing families (Cavanagh, 2015).

With respect to black families, several other issues have been raised in this debate. It is commonly argued that matriarchy is part of African American culture, and that the disproportionate number of female-headed families has roots that can be traced at least to slavery. At and before the beginning of the twentieth century, female-headed families were indeed more common among black people than white people (Morgan et al., 1993; Ruggles, 1994). However, most evidence suggests that the vast majority of black families were two-parent families until the mid-twentieth century, and that female-headed families became much more common among African Americans only when the black population began to urbanize on a large scale (Furstenberg, Hershberg, and Modell, 1975; Gutman, 1976; Lammermeier, 1973; Wilson, 1987). This further suggests that the urban poverty experienced by African Americans is an important factor in shaping black family structure. Still further support for this interpretation

can be seen in recent research showing that the sexual behavior of black and white teenage girls is much the same under similar economic and neighborhood conditions (Brewster, 1994).

It is also important to remember that there is no one black family pattern, just as there is no one white family pattern or Hispanic family pattern. There are more husband-wife families (about 45 percent in 2015) among African Americans than female-headed families with children (about 34 percent), though it is true that a narrow majority of black families with children have female householders (calculated from U.S. Census Bureau, 2016h, Table H-3). Finally, it is important to point out that a father who does not live with his children is not necessarily uninvolved. Hamer (2001) found that most noncustodial African American fathers saw their children regularly and were quite involved with their child-rearing. However, their financial support was usually limited because their incomes were meager, and in some cases, conflict between the fathers and their children's mother was a significant impediment to their interaction with their children.

Family Structure: A Cause of Poverty?

Over the past three decades, research has indicated that the rising incidence of female-headed households has been accompanied by increases in poverty and a worsening of the position of the urban “underclass” (Bianchi, 1981; Wilson, 1987; Reimers, 1984; Mare and Winship, 1991). In one sense, single-parent families would seem to be at greater risk of poverty. They have only one potential earner and thus cannot take advantage of the trend in the American family toward having two sources of income. For never-married poor women who have children, this disadvantage is heightened because they have a lower probability than other women—even divorced women with children—of eventually getting married. As mentioned previously, they often face a shortage of employed men in their neighborhoods. Furthermore, they may be seen as undesirable partners: Their incomes are low, their education and job skills are often limited, and their children present additional economic costs and parental responsibilities to any potential partner.

This disadvantage may be further heightened by the “welfare reform” legislation passed in 1996. This legislation placed strict time limits on how long a mother may receive welfare in order to encourage women to enter the workforce rather than rely on welfare. Since welfare has often worked in ways that keep poor mothers dependent rather than allowing them to become self-supporting and independent, the goal of the legislation was to address a genuine problem. And in the short term, many did move from welfare to work, since the legislation occurred at the height of the 1990s economic boom. There are at least two reasons, however, that this legislation may, over the longer term, have created more problems than it solved. First, it does not address situations where jobs are unavailable—and this situation clearly exists in many areas of concentrated poverty, in both inner-city neighborhoods and in underdeveloped rural areas. This condition was alleviated somewhat by the economic growth of the 1990s, but with the recessions of the following decades, jobs have become much more scarce, especially in places where poverty and unemployment were already common. Second, even if jobs are available, the legislation does little to address the need for affordable day care. If single mothers are to enter the labor force, they must have some way to ensure that their children are cared for while they work. At least initially, many who leave welfare work at or near the minimum wage, and a mother with two children working at the minimum wage could easily spend half or more of her income on day care alone—thus

leaving her without nearly enough to feed, shelter, and clothe her children. So, while the “welfare reform” legislation did succeed in moving many from welfare to work, in a good number of cases it meant nothing more than a shift from being unemployed and poor to being a member of the working poor (Greenberg, 2001, p. 20). As Greenberg put it, “But welfare caseloads have fallen far more rapidly than child poverty, many families have lost benefits without finding work, and many who have found work have had little or no increase in economic well-being.” Because their jobs lack benefits, many also have limited access to health care.

However much single parenthood may elevate the risk of poverty, it is also clear that a major cause of poverty among single mothers and their children is gender-related inequality in pay. As shown in Table 13.2, the median income of one-parent, male-headed families is quite close to that of the “traditional” family where the husband is employed and the wife is a homemaker. Thus, the low wages of women, rather than single parenthood per se, are a major cause of whatever economic disadvantages female-headed families suffer. Among black and Hispanic women, this condition is worsened by relatively low levels of education, which further depress wages. Racial disparities in income also clearly exist above and beyond differences tied to family type: Table 13.2 also shows that within every family type, black and Hispanic families have lower median incomes than white families.

Of course, what many social scientists and others have argued is that other disadvantages of

Table 13.2 Median Family Income, by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Type of Family: 2014

	Married-Couple Families				Nonmarried-Couple Families	
	All Families Householder	All Married-Couple Families	Wife in Paid Labor Force	Wife not in Paid Labor Force	Male Householder, No Wife	Female, No Husband
White	\$76,658	\$86,740	\$104,879	\$55,501	\$60,322	\$52,041
Black	\$43,364	\$70,040	\$85,541	\$43,203	\$38,472	\$27,047
Hispanic	\$45,114	\$53,812	\$71,974	\$38,714	\$44,589	\$26,470
U.S. total	\$66,632	\$80,814	\$99,983	\$54,779	\$47,597	\$31,770

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016. Current Population Survey Tables for Family Income. FINC-01. Selected Characteristics of Families by Total Money Income. <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-finc/finc-01.html> (Downloaded June 4, 2016).

growing up in a female-headed family can lead to the perpetuation of poverty into successive generations, even though single parenthood is itself often the result of poverty (Wilson, 1996). Research indicates that growing up in single-parent families can have long-term effects for both black people and white people (McLanahan and Bumpass, 1988; McLanahan, 1988; Upchurch et al., 1999), including a greater risk of early and premarital childbearing, a greater risk of divorce, and lower education and income. Research by Sampson (1987) also found that black family disruption led to increased rates of juvenile crime. Undoubtedly, some of these effects are the result of teenage pregnancy rather than single-parent families *per se*. In addition, a number of studies suggest that it is mainly the lower income of single-mother families, not the family type itself, that leads to many of the longer-term effects (Biblarz and Raftery, 1999). Also, research suggests that the negative effects of one-parent families are partially mitigated by their smaller size. Children with more brothers and sisters do less well on average, perhaps because their parents, like single parents, are busier (Featherman and Hauser, 1978; Jencks, 1991, p. 87). Since one-parent families are smaller than other families (particularly among the poor), the disadvantages of a one-parent family are in large part offset by the advantages of a smaller family (Jencks, 1991; Biblarz and Raftery, 1999). Finally, research conducted by Wei-hsin Yu and Janet Chen-Lan Kuo in 2017 reveals that in occupations characterized by increased autonomy, reduced dependence on teamwork, and lower competitive pressure, the wage penalty for mothers is diminished. This finding suggests that enhancing job conditions can potentially mitigate work-family conflicts for mothers.

Although growing up in single-parent families does appear to be detrimental in some ways, it also appears that one-parent families are here to stay in the United States. Moreover, virtually all studies agree on certain points. First, people with low incomes—black, Hispanic, and white—are more likely than others to form one-parent families either by premarital childbearing or by divorce and separation. Second, an important source of problems among people in female-headed families is the low

income of their wage earners (Reimers, 1984; Cavanagh, 2015), not the mere fact that there is a single female parent. Therefore, dealing with such causes of poverty as low wages and high unemployment will likely reduce the number of urban single-parent families, and taking steps to eliminate wage inequalities based on sex and to enforce payment of child support by absent fathers would alleviate many of the disadvantages of female-headed families.

Finally, it is important to stress that the disadvantages associated with growing up in a single-parent family in and of itself appear to be relatively small and frequently are offset by the smaller number of children in such families. Many who grow up in single-parent families are highly successful. For example, Michelangelo, John Lennon, Tom Cruise, Madonna, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Jodie Foster, Johnny Depp, and Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama have something else in common besides success and fame—all of them grew up in single-parent families.

The Future of Marriages and Families

The changes that have affected marriages and families over the past few decades are dramatic. What will families be like 25 years from now, and what problems will they face?

Just as sociologists 50 years ago feared the disintegration of the family because it was losing its traditional functions, today some social observers point to sexual permissiveness, smaller families, higher divorce rates, single-parent households, teenage pregnancy, family violence, increasing number of people not marrying at all, and the prevalence of alternative family structures as evidence that the family is a decaying institution (Popenoe, 1988, 1996). Others look at these same developments and proclaim that the family is a resilient institution that is “here to stay” (Bane, 1976). Most people still ultimately marry and, if they divorce, later remarry.

Ideally, the changes we are undergoing in the family and in gender roles will allow people to choose what is right for them individually

rather than conform to predetermined roles. However, the new options available today, especially to women, make it difficult to know what to do or whether to be content with our choices. This can produce a lack of effective norms that can lead to confusion and alienation. At the same time, people are less likely to be stigmatized for the personal choices they make. American society has become increasingly tolerant of alternative forms of marital and family life. People are choosing family systems to complement their social and economic situations. As these institutions have changed, so has the family.

Summary

The family is the most basic and universal of all human social institutions. A family can be defined as a group of related people who live together as a unit. The precise form and functions of families vary from culture to culture. The most basic family types are the nuclear family and the extended family; the former is the predominant type in the United States. The family you are born into is called your family of orientation; the family you create when you marry and have children is called your family of procreation. Although monogamy is the only legally recognized form of marriage in Western societies, many cultures have practiced different forms of polygamy.

Because the family is a cultural universal, functionalists assume that it must perform certain roles that other institutions cannot. The key functions of families can be divided into general categories, including economic, status transferral, religious and educational, affectional, socialization, and emotional support. In modern societies, families must share these functions with outside institutions, but they continue to play a critical role in all of them.

Conflict theorists argue that the family reflects the inequalities of the larger society. They point to such social realities as role inequality and violence within the family to argue that family structure and behavior are designed to promote the well-being of the dominant group in the society—males.

As with most institutions, families have changed in response to larger societal and cultural changes. As women have increasingly entered the workforce, many have chosen to delay marriage and childbirth. More women and men than in the past do not marry, and among those who do, the percentage of couples who choose to remain childless has increased. Cohabitation has become acceptable. Married and cohabiting couples divide household responsibilities more equally than in the past, although the woman still assumes a disproportionate share of such responsibilities in most relationships.

As a result of women's increased economic independence and related legal and ideological changes, divorce has become more common and acceptable in U.S. society. On the one hand, this change has benefited people, especially women, by allowing them to escape from unhappy marriages. On the other hand, increased divorce rates have created many one-parent families and placed severe economic hardships on many women. One consequence of this trend has been the feminization of poverty.

Despite all these changes, the family remains a viable unit, and warnings of the "demise of the family" are probably exaggerated. Most people still marry and have families. If divorce rates are high, so are remarriage rates, although the latter are falling. Although families must change to adapt to changes in other social institutions, they will continue to play a crucial role in modern societies.

Key Terms

- family
- kinship
- marriage
- extended family
- nuclear family
- family of orientation
- family of procreation
- fictive kin
- monogamy
- serial monogamy
- polygamy

polygyny
 polyandry
 incest taboo
 exogamy
 endogamy
 homogamy
 patriarchy
 matriarchy
 neolocality
 patrilocality
 matrilocality
 patrilineal system
 matrilineal system
 bilineal system
 child abuse
 cohabitation

Exercises

1 Not that long ago, “family violence” was more or less synonymous with “spousal violence” or “child abuse.” More recently, family violence also focuses on youth violence. Tragedies like those that have taken place in Newtown, Connecticut, Uvalde, Texas, and Virginia Tech have piqued the nation’s interest in violence among America’s young people. Predictably, one of the most commonly heard questions regarding

these incidents is, “What was wrong with the families these youngsters came from?”

- Do you think there is a crisis of youth violence in our society, or is this perception fueled by what might be called an adult panic?
 - If you were a policymaker, what approach would you recommend in reaction to episodes of youth violence?
- 2 This chapter poses the question: “Should couples stay together ‘for the sake of the kids?’” Sociological research has demonstrated that more harm can come from maintaining an unhappy marriage than from dissolving that marriage. In addition, research demonstrates that how much a divorce hurts children can depend upon how the adults handle the dissolution.
- How does adversarial divorce affect the children involved?
 - How can divorce mediation and collaborative law assist in relieving the harmful impact of divorce on dependent children?
 - If you were married and decided to divorce, would you consider divorce mediation? Why or why not?

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Chapter 14

Education

How often, when discussing some social problem, have you heard the phrase “Education is the answer”? This phrase reveals the extent to which education has become institutionalized in postindustrial societies such as the United States, where the importance of education is virtually unquestioned. Through education we gain knowledge, and through knowledge we gain the capacity to create new products, achieve new accomplishments, and find new ways to solve our problems. Yet, although this is very much taken for granted today, the institutionalization of education is something that has happened fairly recently. Through most of human history, truth consisted of that which was handed down from God or a set of gods, as interpreted by some human religious leader. Thus, “truth” could be taught in the home, by religious organizations, or by tribal elders, and no formal schools were required. Some societies deviated from these patterns—for example, the ancient Greek, Roman, and Arabic civilizations. However, the belief that all children should attend school existed in only a few societies.

The Origins of Mass Education

Until little more than a century ago, education in Europe and America was limited primarily to members of the wealthier classes. Although some U.S. colonies established schools early on, their purpose was mainly religious training, including reading the Bible. Moreover, not all children got even this type of education. In both the United States and Europe as well as in most other societies, most learning and socialization occurred in the family, not in the school.

Mass Education in the United States

The real spread of mass education in the United States began prior to the Civil War with the movement to establish common schools. Common schools are available free to everyone, based on the concept that all children should be educated, regardless of their social class or background. The notion that public education should be both free and mandatory for all children was only accepted about a century ago in the United States and even more recently in Europe (Garnier, Hage, and Fuller, 1989).

Research on the development of mass education has identified two critical factors. First, the development of mass education occurred when the United States and other countries industrialized. Second, once this happened, mass education with similar content spread rapidly throughout the world, including countries with preindustrial economies (Benovat et al., 1991). This suggests that education performs certain functions that are particularly critical in industrial societies. It also suggests that there has been a rapid cultural diffusion of mass education concepts from industrialized societies to the rest of the world (Benovat et al., 1991).

The Functionalist Perspective on Education

Manifest Functions of Education

Functionalists see education as meeting basic societal needs. Some of these needs are obvious; they constitute the manifest functions

of education. In today's society, they include a technically trained population, a means of assigning people to jobs in accordance with their abilities, and a citizenry sufficiently educated to make democracy work. Let us explore each in a bit more detail.

Technical Training

Clearly, a modern, technologically advanced society needs a better-educated population than a preindustrial society. Imagine trying to shop, drive a car, or perform even the simplest jobs if you could not read, write, add, or subtract. Although most Americans take these skills for granted, the fact is that for most of human history the great majority of people lacked these skills. Today's society also demands skills that go far beyond mere reading and writing. Many occupations require elaborate scientific, quantitative, and technological capabilities. The relatively high standard of living in the United States and other industrialized societies is the result of the development of such knowledge. To sustain this standard of living, our educational system must continue to produce people with the skills necessary to take advantage of the advances that have been made and to make new advances (Callahan, 1962; Hurn, 1978, pp. 30–31; Porter, 1965). This pool of trained individuals is sometimes referred to as **human capital**, or *human resources* (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961).

Selecting and Matching People to Jobs

Of course, not everyone has equal capacity to learn any given skill or area of knowledge. Thus, another important function of education is to *select* those who have the ability to learn, *teach* them in accordance with that ability, and *allocate* or match them to positions that fit their capabilities (Hunter, 1988). Traditional wisdom maintains that people have different overall capacities to learn—some are better learners than others. Thus, “good learners” have been encouraged to get more education, and “poor learners” to get less. Today, however, educational research has shown that different people have capacities to excel in different kinds of skill and knowledge. Some people excel in the long-recognized verbal or mathematical dimensions of intelligence, but we know today that there are several other dimensions of intelligence that

were not recognized in the past (Guilford, 1982, 1967; Sternberg, 1994; Gardner, 1983; Gardner, Kornhaber, and Wake, 1996). Some people, for example, have a great capacity for understanding physical relationships; other people have a greater ability to perceive and respond correctly to the feelings of others; still others have the capacity to excel in the fine arts, such as drama, music, and dance. Creativity often varies quite independently from other kinds of intelligence (Andreasen, 1987).

Motivating Students. As a result of this awareness, a new view of education is emerging. Though education must still allocate people according to their abilities, it is no longer appropriate to select some and exclude others. Rather, successful education identifies each student's strengths, and helps allocate that individual to a role in which they can make the most of those abilities. To do this successfully, schools may have to motivate students by making them aware of what they can accomplish. At one time, schools were seen as venues for sorting students according to motivation as well as ability. Today motivation is seen as a socially inculcated trait. The most successful schools are ones that find ways to motivate their students, rather than seeing low levels of motivation as unchangeable personal characteristics. Thus, a new function of education—closely related to but different from allocation—is emphasized today: helping each student to achieve up to their full potential (Walters and Gardner, 1984).

Credentialing and Meritocracy. Part of the process of allocating people to tasks and roles that fit their abilities involves identifying who is and who is not capable of doing any given task (Hurn, 1978, pp. 30–31). This is accomplished through **credentials**—items of information such as school grades and educational degrees, that document or support a claim of expertise, such as an MD or a PhD. (Chesler and Cave, 1981, pp. 60–61). Ideally, these selection, allocation, and credentialing processes work as a **meritocracy**, which literally means “merit rules.” In other words, people are allocated to jobs in accordance with their abilities and what they have learned. When education operates as a true meritocracy, it acts as a source of mobility. It is not your background that matters, but how much you learn (Goslin, 1965; Parsons, 1959; Ravitch, 1983;

Rehberg and Rosenthal, 1978). A skilled surgeon who grew up in a poor family is just as valuable as one from a wealthy family. However, ideals and reality are not the same: Few people who grow up in poverty ever become surgeons. (For critical discussions of the notion of meritocracy, see Bastian et al., 1985, pp. 20–22; and Chesler and Cave, 1981, pp. 282–92.)

Education for Citizenship

The final manifest function of education is to prepare people to participate in the political and civic life of their society. This means, for one thing, that people must understand how the political system works. They must, for example, know which political officials have the power to make particular decisions. A state legislator's position on the nation's nuclear arsenal might be interesting, but it is not relevant to the office they hold because decisions relating to national defense are made at the federal rather than at the state level. An educated citizenry can make much more useful contributions to good public policy than an uneducated one. A candidate may, for instance, claim that they will deal effectively with the problem of drug abuse. How do you know whether such a claim is valid? You don't—unless you know something about the conditions associated with drug abuse, or at least how to find out about them. Without knowledge, you can act only on the basis of prejudice or guesswork, which hardly contributes to effective citizenship (Gabriel, 1963; Gutman, 1987, pp. 48–52).

Latent Functions of Education

In addition to the manifest functions of education discussed earlier, there are also some less-evident latent functions of education, to which we now turn.

Socialization and Cultural Transmission

Schools engage in rituals, such as the “Pledge of Allegiance,” that are intended to build feelings of patriotism, consensus, and respect for the social system. According to functionalists, consensus and solidarity form a basis for cooperation, which is essential if the social system is to prosper. Also, if a culture is to be sustained, each generation must pass it on to the

next. In elementary and secondary schools, at least, there is a tendency to accentuate the positive aspects of the national identity and history and downplay the negative aspects. In short, the schools teach children to be proud of their society and to view it positively rather than critically (Apple, 1982; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977 [orig. 1970]; Chesler and Cave, 1981). This is especially true in the lower grades; as students advance to the higher grades and college, they may be exposed to somewhat more balanced accounts. However, even the notion that colleges should present students with negative material on their own society has been criticized. Some conservative writers, in the functionalist tradition, argue that critical material undermines societal cohesiveness (Bloom, 1987; National Association of Scholars, 2012).

Acculturation. A closely related social integration function of schools is the **acculturation** of immigrants and minority groups. As we saw in Chapter 7, functionalists see ethnic divisions and cultural distinctions as a threat to societal consensus (Porter, 1972). Thus, they view education as performing a special integrative function in societies with large numbers of immigrants, such as in the United States and Canada, or in societies where outside powers drew boundaries that combined disparate tribal and ethnic groups into one nation, such as in many African countries. Functionalists believe that the schools in such societies must teach the national language and culture to the children of immigrants and minorities. In short, the goal is to get people to think of themselves as Americans or Canadians rather than immigrants from Germany or Japan, or as Zambians rather than Bantus.

Independence. An important part of growing up is becoming independent of parents. School plays an important role in this process, by providing children with an important social setting away from home. Thus, for a significant part of the day, children are in a setting where peers and teachers, not parents, are the main agents of socialization. Today, this process begins earlier than in the past for many children. In 2011, more than one-third of all children three to four years old were enrolled in nursery school, day care, or some other organized setting (U.S. Bureau of the Census,



2013b), and many other preschoolers are cared for by relatives, neighbors, or friends. Either way, young children are encountering agents of socialization other than their parents to a greater extent than in the past.

Experience in Secondary Groups and Peer Relations. At the same time, children both develop interpersonal skills and become more independent of their parents through interactions with their peers. These interactions become increasingly important as children get older, preparing children for situations they will encounter as adults. In school or day care, children for the first time encounter secondary-group situations in which they are “one in a crowd” rather than “someone special.” As will be true in later workplace situations, children in school—in contrast to the home—are rewarded for what they do rather than for who they are.

Although teachers and parents often decry the great influence that peers exercise over adolescents, the fact is that children in this age group develop important social skills through peer interactions, skills that they will use later in their relationships with co-workers. It is also through peer interactions that young people learn the skills of dating and developing romantic relationships (Lefrançois, 1996).

The Hidden Curriculum

To the extent that schools perform such integrative functions, they are teaching values and habits as well as academic content. The values and work habits taught in the schools make up

the **hidden curriculum** of the educational system (Jackson, 1968). Sociologists of all theoretical orientations agree that in addition to skills and factual information, the schools teach values. Critics of American education, ranging from conservative religious fundamentalists to Marxists, have criticized the schools for just that reason. However, what they usually mean is that they disagree with the values being taught rather than with the idea that the schools

should teach values. In fact, value-free education is probably impossible. As long as teachers, students, administrators, parents, and school boards have values, these values will likely be reflected in what is taught and how it is taught (Gutman, 1987, pp. 53–54; Purpel and Ryan, 1976). So, although sociologists agree that the hidden curriculum exists, they disagree on the usefulness of its content, and they also disagree on the reasons why the schools teach the values they do. We return to the hidden curriculum later in this chapter when we consider the conflict perspective on education.

The School as Babysitter

One latent function of education is to care for children, especially if the parents work. The school not only serves as a babysitter; it also gives children something to do during the day, which relieves their boredom and keeps them out of trouble. It is notable in this context that compulsory education emerged around the time when child labor in factories was forbidden by law. Although child-care functions have been served by the school for many years, their importance has grown as fewer and fewer children have a parent at home during the day.

Race, Class, and Education: Equal Opportunity or Inequality?

As we saw earlier, functionalists believe that one purpose of education is to operate as a

meritocracy. To do so, schools must offer *equal opportunity*. Serious questions have been raised, even by functionalists, about whether the schools really work this way. Certainly, the schools do *not* produce equal *results*: Middle-class children on average get more years of school and higher-quality education than poor children; white children similarly get more and better education than African American or Hispanic children. The reasons for these unequal results—and whether they reflect unequal opportunity—are at the core of the debate between functionalists and conflict theorists about education. According to functionalists, children must have certain basic abilities, as well as certain cultural attributes, if they are to learn. Many functionalists believe that children from low-income families generally do not get the opportunity during their childhood to develop these basic abilities and cultural attributes, and as a result, they cannot compete when they enter school.

This viewpoint was bolstered by a massive study of American education commissioned by the federal government during the 1960s, called the Coleman Report for its chief author, James S. Coleman (see Coleman et al., 1966). The Coleman Report, which included over 570,000 students and 10,000 teachers nationwide, was the most comprehensive study of the factors influencing student achievement that had been done up to that time. Its findings were striking. Perhaps the key finding was that regardless of the amount spent on education, the personal attitudes and social background of the student—not the apparent quality of the school—were most closely linked to student achievement. The characteristics of the school measured by the study accounted for only about 5 percent of overall variation in student achievement, whereas personal and background variables accounted for one-third of the overall variation. (However, school characteristics did make a greater difference for African American, Latino, and Native American students.)

In general, students who believed they could learn and had positive attitudes toward learning and success learned a lot; students with the opposite characteristics learned far less. Similarly, students from homes with

well-educated parents who took an active interest in their education and who had considerable educational resources in the home did well; students with the opposite background did poorly. Generally, middle-class students were far more likely than poor students to possess the background and personal characteristics associated with success in school.

Although the Coleman Report shocked many educators when it was published, it has been a very consistent finding of research since that time that student traits correlate more closely with educational success than do school resources (Bidwell and Friedkin, 1988; Jencks et al., 1972). This does not mean that resources don't matter at all—as Kozol (1991) has demonstrated, there are many schools where financial support is so inadequate that basic necessities such as books, computers, and running water in labs are absent. When this occurs, learning is impaired. This is probably why Coleman found that school resources generally made a bigger difference in the learning of students of color than they did for white students: Minority students are more likely to attend schools that receive seriously inadequate levels of financial support. At the same time, it has become more and more clear that increasing school resources will not by itself resolve the problems of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic inequality in education. For example, research on class-size reduction initiatives suggests that reducing class sizes *can* lead to improved student achievement, but to a large extent this depends on what is done by the teacher in the smaller classes (Jacobson, 2001; Molnar, Smith, and Zahorik, 2000). As is true with school resources generally, the biggest effects of class size on achievement are among minority and poor students (Molnar, Smith, and Zahorik, 2000).

When findings concerning the limited effect of school resources first appeared, they seemed to show that the school as an institution has little to do with educational inequality, and this led many sociologists and educators to support policies aimed at teaching the values and work habits needed for success in education to students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This lent support to an approach known as *compensatory education*, and it also was part of the motivation for school desegregation through busing.

Compensatory Education

Although compensatory education was already under way before the Coleman Report was published, the report gave it a big boost, as did subsequent studies that produced similar findings. Compensatory education programs are designed to encourage the development of healthy study habits and appreciation for learning—usually at an early age in a preschool setting such as the Head Start program. While preliminary findings about the effects of compensatory education were not entirely encouraging (Cicirelli et al., 1969; Little and Smith, 1971; Stanley, 1973; White, 1970; Baratz and Baratz, 1970), the findings became more positive later, with several studies that were published during the 1980s showing clear evidence of long-lasting benefits of compensatory education. In general, children who receive compensatory education score higher on IQ and achievement tests, are less likely to be placed in special education classes or to fail a grade, have better self-images of their achievement, and get more encouragement from their parents to get a good education than similar children who have not received compensatory education (Consortium for Longitudinal Studies, 1979, 1983; Lazar et al., 1977, 1982; Brown, 1985, 1978). And in the short term, Head Start improves student learning and parental involvement, and reduces problematic student behavior (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001b).

However, there continues to be conflicting research findings on the extent to which the benefits of compensatory education continue into the higher grades and beyond. For example, one recent study found long-term benefits for girls but not for boys (Oden, Schweinhart, and Weikart, 2000), while another found overall positive long-term effects of early childhood compensatory education (Reynolds et al., 2001).

Although compensatory education along with efforts to desegregate schools by race and ethnicity do seem to reduce racial and economic achievement differences in many cases, they are not the only ways to accomplish this. Moreover, conflict theorists and symbolic-interactionists point out that many processes in the schools that produce inequality remain untouched by either desegregation or compensatory education. Both desegregation and compensatory

education operate from the basic assumption that the schools are generally working well but that certain groups need help “fitting in” if they are to enjoy equal opportunity. Conflict theorists and many symbolic-interactionists in the sociology of education do not share this positive view of the schools (Davies, 1995).

The Conflict Perspective on Education

Numerous studies have shown that the social and economic background of students is strongly correlated to how much students learn and the amount of education that they ultimately get (Bidwell and Friedkin, 1988). To conflict theorists, these results indicate the absence of equality of opportunity in the schools. Conflict theorists argue that the main function of education is to pass economic, racial, and sexual inequality from one generation to the next (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977; Aronowitz and Giroux, 1993; 1985). They also believe that the educational system serves the interests of economically advantaged groups in other ways. They argue that education often seeks to justify educational inequalities along the lines of social class and race. In other words, educators convince poor, working-class, and minority students that their limited advancement in the educational system is a result of their own shortcomings and not of biases built into the educational system (Bourdieu, 1966; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Education also teaches children attitudes and beliefs that support the economic and political system (Morrow and Torres, 1995). Functionalists see this process as necessary for cooperation, which benefits everyone. Conflict theorists, however, believe that it is the wealthy who have the greatest stake in keeping the system as it is. Thus, they are the ones who ultimately benefit when children are taught to see the social system as basically fair.

Schools and Unequal Mobility

Before addressing the mechanisms by which conflict theorists claim that education perpetuates inequality, it may be useful to examine

briefly some statistics concerning educational mobility. What are the chances, for example, that the child of parents with an eighth-grade education will receive a college degree? And how does that child's chance of getting a college education compare to that of another child whose parents were college educated? The answer is that these children clearly have very different chances. While many "first-generation" college students are attending college today, social class remains strongly linked to the chance of attending and graduating from college (Bidwell and Friedkin, 1988). In general, research has shown that the parents' educational level is one of the best predictors of a person's educational attainment (see Kerbo, 1983, pp. 358–63). Some studies have even suggested that it correlates more closely with educational attainment than does intelligence (Sewell and Shah, 1968). If you combine parental education with other aspects of socioeconomic status, the effect on educational attainment is even greater (Alwin and Thornton, 1984; Teachman, 1987). One study found that parents from different social classes teach their students differing models of both appropriate behavior and problem-solving strategies for the classroom, with those from the middle class being more effective than those from the working class (McCrary-Calarco, 2014). Thus, the amount of education you get is closely associated with the socioeconomic status and particularly the education of your parents—a finding consistent with the view that education transmits inequality from generation to generation (Bidwell and Friedkin, 1988). Let us now examine some of the explanations conflict theorists offer for these findings.

Unequal Funding of Schools

About half (47 percent) of the funding for public schools in the United States comes from state revenues, and most of the rest (44 percent) comes from the local property tax (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009). To the extent that schools rely on the local property tax, the tendency is for schools in more affluent areas to be better funded. Property taxes raise more money per child in affluent areas than they do in poor ones

because the value of the property is higher. Poor communities often have very high tax rates but raise only small amounts of money because there is so little to tax (Illinois Capital Development Board, 1977).

In recent years, inequalities in funding between wealthy and poor school districts have been reduced somewhat because the states have been picking up an increasing share of school costs. In the past, many states offered aid in proportion to taxes raised locally, a formula that again favors wealthier districts. Since the 1970s, some states have offered more state aid to poorer districts, but the extent of this adjustment has varied widely among the states (Brown et al., 1978). By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the courts were paying increased attention to the fairness of state aid formulas. By 1991, several states, including Texas, New Jersey, and Montana, had been ordered by state courts to allocate more state aid to poorer districts (*Education Week*, 1989; *The New York Times*, 1991b; Sullivan, 1990). More suits and protests over school funding followed in subsequent years and, in some cases, resulted in new court orders to change state aid formulas, as in Ohio (1997), or in legislative efforts at reform, as in Illinois, where modest reforms were passed in 1997. However, in most cases, legislative responses have been less than sweeping.

Kozol (1991) has dramatically illustrated such inequalities and their impact. In the city of Detroit, for example, where the student population is largely black and poor, per-pupil spending in 1988 was \$3,600. In several affluent nearby suburbs, in contrast, spending ranged from \$5,700 to \$6,400 per pupil. In several inner-city districts, Kozol found classrooms where students went weeks or months into the year without receiving textbooks. One physics lab teacher in East St. Louis, Illinois, commented, "It would be great if we had water." National data partly support Kozol's view: The highest per-pupil spending is found in districts with the lowest poverty rates but also in ones with the highest poverty rates, with other districts in between (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009, Table 36–1). However, the gap between wealthier districts and poorer districts widens when statistics are adjusted for the fact that costs are higher in high-poverty areas.

Symbolic Interaction and Educational Inequality

There are a number of ways in which student-teacher interactions differ along the lines of social class, race, and sex. In some cases, individual teachers treat students differently; in others, the different treatment is institutionalized and occurs throughout the school. In yet other cases, students from different backgrounds may encounter similar situations but interpret their meaning differently because they bring different experiences and worldviews to the classroom. Three of the most important issues relating to interaction in the schools are teacher expectations, tracking, and testing.

The Effect of Teacher Expectations

A broad range of research has supported the basic idea of a self-fulfilling prophecy in education. In general, students who are *expected* by their teachers to do better than other students generally do learn more (Beez, 1968; Brophy and Good, 1974; Nash, 1976, chap. 3; Nolen and Haladyna, 1990; Rist, 1970; Rosenthal, 1989). In a review of the literature on the self-fulfilling prophecy in education, Brophy (1983) estimated that teacher expectations account for 5 to 10 percent of student achievement. Although these effects are greatest in the early grades, they can linger throughout a person's schooling (Leiter, 1974; Rist, 1970). Many studies of teacher expectancy effects have been conducted. An extensive review was conducted by Jussim and Harber (2005). This review found that teacher expectancy effects are generally small but real. However, they tend to be larger among at-risk or stigmatized groups such as racial and ethnic minorities and low-income students. And though the effects of any given teacher's expectations tend to decline over time, they can continue to affect student achievement over a number of years.

Factors Affecting Teacher Expectations

Evidence also indicates that social characteristics of students such as race and socioeconomic

status influence teachers' expectations of their achievement, although the extent to which this is true varies widely (Brophy, 1983; Brophy and Good, 1974; Didham, 1990; Ford and Obiakor, 1995; Gaines and Davis, 1990; Harvey and Slatin, 1975; Hurn, 1978; Leacock, 1969; Rist, 1970; Wasserman, 1970; Weinberg, 1977). Teachers of high social status often have particularly low expectations of minority and poor students (Alexander, Entwisle, and Thompson, 1987). Counselors also play a role in this process by encouraging white and middle-class students to prepare for college, while discouraging minority and low-income students from doing so. This process occurs even when students' academic performances are similar (Cicourel and Kitsuse, 1963; see also Erickson and Schultz, 1982), although it is true that teacher expectations are also fairly strongly correlated to past student achievement (Jussim and Harber, 2005). Sex also influences teacher expectations. Boys are often expected to excel in certain subjects and activities, while girls are expected to excel in others (see Frazier and Sadker, 1974; Safran, 1988; Stacy, Bereaud, and Daniels, 1974).

Teacher Expectations: The Schoolwide Level

The problem of teacher expectations and student achievement sometimes extends to entire classrooms or schools. Low expectations are especially likely to develop in inner-city schools with a large proportion of low-income, black, and Hispanic students. Teachers develop the attitude that "Students like ours can't be expected to learn too much." Such teachers demand less of their students; in turn, the students learn less (Hallinan and Sorensen, 1985; Obiakor, 1998, p. 9).

Such attitudes are found to be common in predominately minority or lower-income districts (Farkas, 2003: 1123). In his study of inner-city school districts, Kozol (1991) found such attitudes to be widespread. Further, teacher expectations about race and class may not always be needed to produce a negative effect on achievement if an overrepresentation of lower-income and minority students are in

lower tracks or ability groupings (Farkas, et al., 2005). In any case, all these processes are likely to be intensified by the fact that school districts in the United States tend to be segregated by race and class (Farkas, 2003) and are becoming more so (Orfield and Lee, 2007).

This situation need not exist. In schools with overwhelmingly black or Hispanic populations—even ones where most of the students are from low-income families—high levels of student achievement are possible if certain conditions are present. The most important requirement is that teachers expect and demand high levels of achievement (Edmonds, 1979). Dramatic evidence of how much students from “disadvantaged” backgrounds can learn was provided by a Department of Education report (1987a) of certain schools in poor neighborhoods. In these schools, high expectations and demands for achievement were producing achievement at or—in some cases—well above national norms.

Another important source of data is the nationwide High School and Beyond Study. That study found that students in Catholic high schools on average show higher achievement and more rapid growth than students in public high schools, and that black, Hispanic, and low-income students in Catholic schools on average achieve at levels closer to that of white middle-class students (Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore, 1982; Greeley, 1982; Hoffer, Greeley and Coleman, 1987). While there is debate about how big these differences are (Alexander and Pallas, 1987; Willms, 1987), such differences do show up consistently in a variety of analyses of the data (Haertel, 1987). Why do Catholic schools produce better achievement than public schools? An important reason seems to be that they assign more homework, expect higher student achievement, and are more likely to expose minority and low-income students to advanced, college-preparatory materials. More important, some public high schools have similar characteristics, and these schools have similar levels of achievement to the Catholic schools (Hoffer, Greeley, and Coleman, 1987).

Clearly, the level of achievement expected and demanded by the schools has a real influence on how much students achieve. This is particularly true for students from social

backgrounds that teachers often associate with low levels of achievement. Unfortunately, expectations remain too low in the vast majority of public schools in areas with low-income or minority populations.

Children attending such ineffective schools may be headed for lifelong difficulties. The failure of the schools to teach inner-city children math and science is a particularly serious problem in today's high-tech economy. The box “Radical Equations: The Algebra Project” discusses an innovative and successful effort to change this situation.

Tracking and Ability Grouping

In many schools, students are placed into groups or classes according to their teachers' assessment of their abilities.

When students are placed in classes with different content or different levels of content, this practice is called **tracking**. When they are grouped within classes on the basis of ability, it is called ability grouping.

Tracking is more commonly used at the junior high or high school level. These practices were formulated to allow students to proceed at their own pace, so that more capable students would not be held back and bored, and less capable students would not be overwhelmed or left behind.

In practice, however, there are several serious problems with tracking and ability grouping. Most important, these practices affect student achievement above and beyond differences in student ability, largely because of different teacher expectations in different ability groups. The process by which people are placed in tracks and ability groups is also biased: Group or track placements are frequently influenced by social class, race, ethnicity, and other irrelevant characteristics. Another problem with tracking and ability grouping is that once a student is placed in a given track or ability group, it is very hard to move to another one (Bidwell and Friedkin, 1988; Rosenbaum, 1976). Among students of comparable ability, those placed in higher tracks learn more and ultimately complete more years of education than those placed in lower tracks



UNDERSTANDING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

Radical Equations: The Algebra Project

It is widely believed by educators and policymakers that the effects of poverty are so great that, in schools with massive numbers of children from poor families and blighted neighborhoods, educational excellence is a near impossibility. There are also some, like the authors of *The Bell Curve*, who think that poverty reflects bad genes, and they are even more pessimistic about the chances of success in such schools. Perceptions like these are being proven wrong by people like Bob Moses, founder of The Algebra Project. But these wrong perceptions are still widespread and are doing a great deal of damage. Because of them, many students do not even have the chance to take the kinds of courses—math, science, literature—that colleges often require their applicants to have. How important is this? Here's what the College Board (1998) had to say:

The most important step is taking the right courses. Financial aid is not enough. Research has repeatedly shown that students who take rigorous, progressively more challenging coursework are more likely to plan for and enroll in college.

The reality is, though, that many students do not get the right courses, and your likelihood of getting them is affected by your race, class, and geographic location. In Illinois, for example, only about half of all high school students who take the ACT have had the core of courses that the state expects all who enter college to have—four years of English and three years each of math, science, and social science (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2001). The students least likely to get these core courses are students in schools with large African American or Hispanic enrollments, and students in rural schools.

Beginning in 1982, Bob Moses decided to do something about this problem. He realized that the widespread practice of offering middle school algebra only to students identified as “academically gifted” was holding back those to whom it was not offered—who, again, were disproportionately African American, Hispanic, and working class. Beginning in his hometown of Cambridge, Massachusetts, he started The Algebra Project, a program designed to bring algebra to *all* middle school students. Moses was a veteran of the civil rights movement's Mississippi Freedom Summer (1964), which helped to bring about the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He realized that education was just as much a civil rights

issue as voting. If all middle school students, regardless of race, class, or geographic location, could be taught algebra, he reasoned, more of them would go to college. He began by helping his own daughter and some of her middle school friends get ready for a test to enter an honors math program in Cambridge's high school. No student in Cambridge's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School had ever tested into the program, but this year, all three that took the test did. Moses was invited back the following year, and that year, six of his nine students tested into the honors program.

Moses still wasn't satisfied, though, because only students identified as “having math promise” were being sent his way. Thus, many others were being left behind. That's when he got his idea—offer what he was doing to *all* students in the middle school. To do this, he and the teachers he was working with had to develop a culture, among the students and the teachers, that carried the expectation that every child in the school could achieve algebra literacy. To do this, he knew that he had to involve parents, and he had to present the students and teachers with role models. To do the latter, he recruited black college graduates from throughout the Boston area to get involved in his program. This way, his students and their parents and teachers would see college-educated African Americans who knew how to do math—thus giving them a different expectation than they had previously been exposed to (Moses et al., 1989).

He also understood that the methods used to teach algebra to the students in Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School might need to be different from those used to teach white middle-class students, because the experiences and knowledge they bring to the classroom are different. Knowing, as a math teacher, that algebra involves not only reasoning with numbers but also associating those numbers with direction (positive/negative, increase/decrease), he got the idea of taking students on the Boston subway and talking about changes in distances to stations as a way to help the students visualize these concepts. Similarly, Moses also developed activities based on African drum-making and drumming to teach such concepts as ratios, proportions, and multiples.

Finally, Moses knew from his experiences as a civil rights activist that, just as with getting people to risk arrest to enable black people to vote in Mississippi, he had to make a convincing case of why

algebra mattered. He had learned in Mississippi that if you can't tell people why being able to vote matters, they have no reason to care. But when Moses and his colleagues showed them how it could change their lives for the better, they became activists. The same was true for algebra. He had to answer the unspoken questions in the minds of his students and their parents: What is algebra for? Why do we want children to study it? When he showed them that algebra is essential for college and college is essential for a good job and a good income, they had motivation.

From its beginnings in Cambridge, The Algebra Project has spread to over 100 schools in 13 states in all parts of the country, from its origins in New England to the Mississippi Delta, large Midwestern cities, and the San Francisco Bay area. It includes both urban and rural school districts—all areas with traditionally underresourced communities of color. And, though it is not aimed specifically at improving student test

scores, it has done just that. For example, in Jackson, Mississippi's public schools, 80 percent of the schools that have implemented The Algebra Project have seen their average math test scores increase, and the district also experienced a sharp decrease in discipline problems (*NEA Today*, 1996). In Cambridge, the original program was so successful that the district mandated that all sixth and seventh graders citywide be taught pre-algebra and all eighth graders, algebra. According to the National Science Foundation, the Algebra Project in Mississippi has significantly benefited students. The program has positively impacted participants' attitudes and perceptions towards mathematics, boosted their motivation and engagement, strengthened their problem-solving skills, and improved their ability to express and discuss mathematical concepts. Overall, the Algebra Project has yielded substantial benefits for student learning and development in mathematics (Watson, 1996).

(Esposito, 1973; French and Rothman, 1990; Gamoran, 1987, 1989; Gamoran and Mare, 1989; Hauser, Sewell, and Alwin, 1976; Peterson, 1989; Rosenbaum, 1976; Schafer, Olexa, and Polk, 1972; Vanfossen, Jones, and Spade, 1987). Students placed in low tracks generally do more poorly than students of similar ability who are not tracked but instead are placed in classes or groups with higher-ability students (Froman, 1981; Marascuilo and McSweeney, 1972). When they reach high school, students are placed in either vocational or college-preparatory tracks. Again, this has a substantial effect on the amount of education that students ultimately get. A study by Alexander, Cook, and McDill (1978) found that enrollment in college-preparatory classes makes it 30 percent more likely that students will pursue higher education—even when compared with equally talented and motivated students in nonacademic programs.

In general, lower-income and minority children are overrepresented in lower-ability tracks (Boocock, 1978; Brischetto and Arciniega, 1973; Carter and Segura, 1979; French and Rothman, 1990; Harnischfeger and Wiley, 1980; Jencks et al., 1972; Larkins and Oldham, 1976; National Science Foundation, 1996; Schafer, Olexa, and Polk, 1972; Schneider, 1989; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1974; Useem, 1990; Vanfossen, Jones, and Spade, 1987). In

addition, the more racially diverse a school is, the more likely it will use tracking, suggesting there could be a racial motivation to such practices (VanderHart, 2006). Numerous studies indicate that social class affects track placement, even among students of similar ability (Alexander, Cook, and McDill, 1978; Findley and Bryan, 1971; Lunn, 1970; Gamoran and Mare, 1989; Haller and Davis, 1980; Rist, 1970; Tach and Farkas, 2006). In math, gender also influences track placement (Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson, 1994). Placement into tracks is often haphazard. One national study, after considering every factor that might influence placement, could explain only 30 to 40 percent of the variation in track placement (Alexander, Cook, and McDill, 1978).

Options Within Tracking or Detracking?

Would class and racial inequality in education be decreased if tracking were eliminated? A strong case can be made that it would. It has been argued, for example, that one reason for the greater achievement and more equal achievement in Catholic high schools is that they are less likely to use tracking, and when they do use it, they include a larger share of their students in college-preparatory tracks (Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore, 1982; Hoffer, Greeley, and Coleman, 1987).

Rather than eliminating tracking, however, educators might make the system more flexible by routinely reevaluating track assignments. This was done by many of the successful all-black schools in Chicago studied by Fuerst (1981). Of course, this is possible only if there is some similarity among the subject matter taught to students in different tracks, which is often not the case (Bidwell and Friedkin, 1988). Another possibility is to track students separately for each subject, rather than placing them in the same track for all subjects.

Even with these alternatives, though, a growing number of educational sociologists argue that the practice of tracking is inherently unsound (Eyler, Cook, and Ward, 1983, p. 132; Haury and Milbourne, 1999; Burris and Garrity, 2008). As a result, a movement known as *detracking* has developed in U.S. education (Wheelock, 1992). Some school districts in recent years have abandoned tracking and ability grouping, moving instead toward heterogeneous learning groups, often combined with experiential learning, in which students learn by trying things out rather than through lecture, memorization, and testing (French and Rothman, 1990; Good et al., 1990; Sanacore, 1990; Veves, 1989; Weaver, 1990; Rubin, 2006). However, many upper-class and upper middle-class parents have opposed this movement, in part because they fear that their children will lose the advantages they currently enjoy. There is some evidence to back up this fear in at least a few schools, and this has led to opposition to detracking that has slowed or blocked its implementation in some areas (Rubin and Norega, 2004). Nonetheless, research shows that detracked schools generally raise the achievement of students who had been in lower track courses (Cohen, 1993; 1995) and reduce disruption among such students (Mekosh-Rosenbaum, Spade, and White, 1996). They also have overall achievement at least as high as tracked schools (McDermott et al., 1995; Slavin, 1995) and send a higher percentage of their students on to college (Mehan, 1992; see also Cooper, 1997). Recent research has also revealed a further benefit: In more diverse schools, there is a higher likelihood that more sophisticated discussions of societal issues will result (Rubin

and Norega, 2004: 97). What seems clear is that with a challenging environment that also pays attention to fully integrating formerly under-tracked students (for instance with assigned seating that breaks up self-segregation among students), detracked schools can be highly effective (Rubin and Norega, 2004). As usual, though, the effectiveness of detracked schools depends on how detracking is implemented (Rothenberg et al., 1997) and the quality of student-teacher interaction (Gamoran and Weinstein, 1995; Jaeger and Hattie, 1995; Lockwood, 1996). Use of cooperative and active learning techniques appears especially effective in such schools (Ovando and Alford, 1997; Rothenberg et al., 1997).

Testing

Even standardized tests do not eliminate biases in tracking. In fact, achievement testing has been identified by educational sociologists and psychologists as another important mechanism by which class and racial inequalities are often perpetuated by education. Any test directly measures only what a student knows or can do at any given time. Test results are used to make inferences about student ability, but these are only educated guesses. Moreover, what students know or can do will always be influenced by what their culture teaches them (Hardy et al., 1976; Rogoff, 1981). This means that one test will not usually work for all cultures (Miller-Jones, 1989; Rogoff, 1982). Most often, test items reflect the culture of the mainly white, middle-class group against which the questions are normed (Cummins, 1988). Test scores are also influenced by how the test-taker understands the questions, which is not always the same way the question-writer intended, particularly when the social class and/or ethnicity of the test-taker is different from that of the test-writer (Brescia and Fortune, 1989; Hannon and McNally, 1986; Miller-Jones, 1989, p. 362). Such factors as language models in the home, strictness of upbringing, and family emphasis on achievement and independence also influence test scores (Hanson, 1975; Marjoribanks, 1972; Radin, 1972; Wolf, 1966), as



SOCIOLOGICAL SURPRISES

When White Guys Can't Do Math: The Effects of Stereotype Threat

We have seen that the performance of African Americans is influenced by how a test is described. For example, when a math test is described, as is usually the case, as an “academic test,” black students tend to do less well, because negative stereotypes of their academic abilities are called to mind. But when the same test is described as a task *not* being used for academic evaluation, the black students do just as well as comparable white students. But is this “stereotype effect” something that is unique to African Americans, or is it equally applicable to anyone? To find out, researchers Claude Steele and Joshua Aronson and their colleagues (Aronson et al., 1999) devised another experiment. In this one, white male students with good records in math were told that

they were about to take a math test on which Asian American students usually did better. Since math proficiency is a common stereotype of Asian Americans, the researchers thought this would be a credible way to create stereotypes that might affect the performance of white students if their performance, like that of black students, was subject to influence by “stereotype threat.” As Steele (1999, p. 2) put it,

White males should not have a sense of group inferiority about math, since no societal stereotype alleges such an inferiority. Yet this comment would put them under a form of stereotype threat: any faltering on the test could cause them to be seen negatively from the standpoint of the positive stereotype about Asians and math ability.

do test anxiety and the formality of the test situation (Anastasi, 1988; Golden and Birns, 1968; Kirkland, 1971; Palmer, 1970; Sharma, 1986; Zigler, Abelson, and Seitz, 1973). Finally, the same stereotyping that leads teachers to have low expectations of minority and low-income students may lead students to doubt their own ability. Such doubts may in fact lead them to do more poorly on ability tests, just as the teacher expectations did in the Rosenthal and Jacobson study. Claude Steele (1995) has argued that negative self-images arising from such stereotyping account for the low ability test scores that are commonly obtained by African American students and, in some subjects, by female students. Research supports the notion that low “specific self-esteem” regarding ability to do academic tasks does in fact affect school performance (Rosenberg et al., 1995). Similarly, Steele and Aronson (1995) found that African American college students performed worse than white people on a standardized test that was described as a diagnosis of intellectual ability, but just as well as white people when the same test was described as a problem-solving task not being used for evaluation. As discussed

in the box “When White Guys Can't Do Math: The Effects of Stereotype Threat,” the academic performance of even white males can be influenced by stereotyping.

When the researchers gave these white male students the test, they found that their performance was influenced in a similar way to that of black students under stereotype threat: They did less well on the test than white students to whom the performance of Asian American students was not mentioned. Thus, this research strongly suggests that there is nothing unusual about the response of African American students to stereotype threat on tests, except that they deal with it on a day-in, day-out basis. If an ethnic group is stereotyped in a way that calls into question its performance on a particular task, and anything about the situation in which the task is done calls that stereotype to mind, the students in that group do less well. If the stereotype is not called to mind, their performance is not reduced. If black students are given a math test without calling it a test, calling to mind the negative stereotype about black academic performance, they do just as well on the test as similarly prepared white people. If white males are given a test in a

situation that calls to mind a negative comparison of their abilities, their scores fall.

For all these reasons, it is not surprising that assistance with test-taking skills can raise scores among ethnic minority test-takers (Frierson, 1989). In addition, children from poor neighborhoods often see little use in doing well on the tests, so they do not try hard to do well (Ogbu, 1978, 1986). Even on tests designed to measure ability, such as intelligence tests, social influences such as these have a big influence on student scores (Bidwell and Friedkin, 1988), accounting for perhaps half of the overall variation in test scores (Plomin, 1986).

In spite of these problems, achievement tests do predict school success fairly well, for two reasons. First, they measure real differences in achievement and readiness for school to some extent, even if they are poor measures of native ability (Elliott, 1988). Children who grow up in severe poverty have less opportunity to learn, and so they are not as prepared for school. Wodtke, Harding and Elwert (2011) found that simply being raised in the poorest quintile of neighborhoods decreases the probability of graduation from 96 to 76 percent for African American children, and from 95 to 87 percent for nonblack children, compared to growing up in the wealthiest neighborhoods. Second, even when the tests are culturally biased, the cultural characteristics they reward are the same ones rewarded by the schools—and thus they do predict school success (Scarr and Weinberg, 1976; Weinberg, 1989). The ability of these tests to do a fair job of predicting school success probably accounts for their continued use. However, they are not valid measures of natural or inherent ability and therefore should not be used for the purpose of grouping or sorting students; rather a more valid function would be to assist individual students in addressing their educational problems (Karr and Wright, 1995). Even testing experts who favor the continued use of IQ tests and other standardized tests are increasingly in agreement with this point (Sattler, 1988; Sharma, 1986; Weinberg, 1989, p. 102).

Such misuse of tests, which remains fairly common, is a significant cause of socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic inequality in educational opportunity. A related problem is the

tendency for such tests to reinforce or create teacher perceptions about which students are likely to do well, leading to the teacher expectation effects discussed earlier. To change the patterns described earlier, teachers must become convinced that more of their students—even those from “disadvantaged” backgrounds—can learn. Institutional change, such as the modification or elimination of tracking and more appropriate use of testing, is also probably a prerequisite to truly equal opportunity. The unfortunate reality at present is that differences in achievement between students of different social backgrounds start out relatively small when children enter the educational system in kindergarten or first grade but become large by the time they complete their high school education (Phillips, Crouse, and Ralph, 1998). Similarly, and sadly, lower-income students who begin their K-12 education as high achievers often lose that status by the time they complete it (Wyner, Bridgeland, and Dilulio, 2007). However, there is yet another issue that relates to educational inequality: the effects of the hidden curriculum.

The Hidden Curriculum: A Conflict Analysis

Earlier, we saw that functionalists view the hidden curriculum as teaching all children valuable habits and beliefs. In contrast, the conflict perspective sees it as a mechanism to perpetuate inequality by teaching different values, beliefs, and habits to children of different social classes.

Social Class and School Orientation

Studies of schools in working-class and poor neighborhoods reveal an emphasis on order and conformity rather than achievement (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Gouldner, 1978; Leacock, 1969; Sharp and Green, 1975; Willis, 1977). These schools also teach students to feed back a predetermined “right” answer rather than to analyze new situations independently. Schools in middle-class areas, in contrast, allow their students more autonomy, place a greater emphasis

on independent work and reasoning skills, and have fewer rules (Mickelson, 1980; Gamoran, 1995). This has continued into the digital age. In a school serving working-class Latino youth, researchers find that digital expressions are considered irrelevant to learning, while in a school with middle-class Asian American students, they are viewed as potential threats to academic success. Conversely, at a private school with wealthy white students, digital skills are seen as essential for success (Rafalow, 2018).

Significantly, the teaching of different values in the schools reflects a similar process in the home. As sociologist Melvin Kohn (1969) has shown, middle-class families are more likely to instill such values as achievement and independent thinking in their children, whereas working-class and poor families stress obedience and conformity. For example, middle-class students, compared to their working-class peers, seek more help in classrooms and as a result are better prepared for assignments and therefore achieve higher grades (McCrory-Calarco, 2011). These differences are based on the different job situations of the working-class and middle-class parents. In general, parents socialize their children in ways that reflect their own experiences of autonomy or conformity on the job (Kohn, 1969). Thus, the schools do not *originate* this process, but they do *reinforce* it (Miller, Kohn, and Schooler, 1986). As a result, middle- and upper-class students are inculcated with the values necessary for managerial and professional occupations, while working-class and poor students are prepared for lower-level or less-skilled positions (Brown and Lauder, 1991; Bailey, 1995). These processes that pass inequalities from generation to generation occur in all industrialized countries, not just the United States.

The same differences in the hidden curriculum occur at different levels of the educational system. The further you advance, the more the schools resemble the upper middle-class, independent-thinking model rather than the working-class, obedience model. Significantly, the further you go, the more upper middle class the student bodies become. In addition, as more students from working-class and poor backgrounds have attended college,

the colleges themselves have become more differentiated. Community colleges, teachers' colleges, and many commuter universities—all of which are more working class in character than other types of colleges—have more rules and a greater emphasis on “right” and “wrong” answers and following directions (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Major state universities and elite private universities—with more upper-class student bodies—place a greater emphasis on autonomy, flexible task orientation, and leadership qualities (Binstock, 1970). Is it any surprise, then, that graduates of different colleges get very different types of employment?

Schooling and Job Status

Another trend that, according to conflict theorists, inhibits mobility is the rising educational requirements for most jobs. At a time when more students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are completing high school, jobs that in the past required a high school diploma require a college degree; jobs for which a college degree would once have sufficed now require a graduate or professional degree. In fact, a good deal of evidence suggests that the key variable in securing a good job is not what you know or can do, but rather how many years you stay in school. Indicators such as IQ, grade point average, and standardized test scores have little to do with income or job success among people with any given level of education (Bishop, 1987; Rosenbaum and Kariya, 1991). What matters is mainly how many years of school you have. (For evidence and a review of studies, see Bowles and Gintis, 1976, pp. 111–13, 294–97.) Collins (1979) argues that raising educational requirements enables the upper classes to keep their hold on better jobs, because their children have always been able to go further in the educational system than the children of the working class and the poor.

Significantly, the relatively few schools that do not fit the usual pattern often produce strikingly successful results. Some schools, even in working-class areas, do give students greater responsibility—and these schools tend to be more effective (Rutter et al., 1979). In these

schools, expectations are high, and more time is spent on instructional tasks than on following rules. Thus, the educational system does not have to reinforce social-class inequalities, but as it now operates, that is what it usually does.

Higher Education

About two-thirds of all Americans today take at least some college courses by the time they reach their mid-30s, and more than one out of three graduates from college by then (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016k, Table 1). Some students, of course, enroll and graduate much later. In fact, the proportion of college students outside the traditional age group of 18 to 24 years has risen greatly in recent years. Today, 37 percent of college students are older than age 24 years (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009). The high percentage of people going to college today is a dramatic change from the past. In 1900, just 4 percent of people in their early 20s attended college (Veysey, 1965, p. 269), and very few attended college later in their lives.

At the turn of the century, almost all college students came from upper socioeconomic backgrounds, and almost none (except at a few colleges) were Catholic, Jewish, or black. In a 1902 poll conducted at the University of Michigan, two-thirds of the respondents reported that their fathers held the kind of upper-level positions (business and professional) that accounted for only 10 percent of the nation's jobs (Ellsworth, 1903; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975, p. 139).

Community Colleges

More than one-third of all college students and more than half of all freshmen attend two-year community colleges. These schools grew rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s and were seen as a means of providing an opportunity for higher education to students who otherwise would not have had the chance. Community colleges serve a more diverse student population than do four-year schools. The proportions of low-income students, women, and African American and Hispanic students are higher in community colleges than in four-year colleges and universities

(Monk-Turner, 1990; National Center for Education Statistics, 1990b; Hodgkinson, 1986; DePalma, 1992).

On the one hand, community colleges have enabled many people who would not have otherwise done so to continue their education beyond high school. However, they face several serious problems. For one thing, only half of all who enroll in community colleges complete as many as 12 credits, only one-fourth of the rest go on to a four-year school (DePalma, 1992), and no more than 12 percent graduate (OpenEducation.net, 2008). In many states, budgetary problems have forced cutbacks in community colleges as well as four-year schools, and as a result, they have been forced to restrict what had been free access. While community college graduates do receive significantly higher pay than high school graduates, a year of community college does not have as great a payoff in income or job status as a year in a four-year college or university (Monk-Turner, 1988). This is because community colleges tend to prepare students for different kinds of employment than four-year schools—typically technical or clerical jobs, often relatively low-paying jobs. This fact, combined with the overrepresentation of lower-income students relative to four-year schools, has led some critics to argue that community colleges function to limit the occupational choices of less-affluent students (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Clark, 1978; Pincus, 1980; Monk-Turner, 1990).

Recent Trends in Access to College

All colleges, even four-year schools, are more diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, income, gender, and age than was the case several decades ago. Nonetheless, working-class and minority high school students remain substantially less likely to attend college than affluent white people and even less likely to graduate. College enrollment of minority and working-class students rose during the 1960s and early 1970s, dipped for a time in the late 1970s and 1980s, and then has been rising again since the late 1980s.

Access to college among working-class students, though greater today than in the early twentieth century, has been limited by certain recent trends. Ever since the 1970s, the cost of

college has risen faster than inflation, largely because state appropriations for higher education have not kept up with inflation and growing enrollment. As discussed in Chapter 11, grants have been largely replaced with loans over the past two decades, and in the 1990s, a number of colleges abandoned need-blind admissions policies, choosing instead to favor students who need less financial aid. Increases in grant aid have been shown to significantly increase the likelihood of graduation among low-income four-year college students (Goldrick-Rab, et al., 2016). In addition, states changed their financial aid programs to emphasize merit over need, providing financial aid to students with the highest grade point averages regardless of need. The result has been that college financial aid has been shifted away from students with the greatest financial need toward more affluent students, whose economic advantages often translate into better elementary and secondary schooling and higher scores on the tests used to award aid based on “merit” (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2001). Parents who have the resources to do so have had to step into the breach between financial aid and college cost—with mixed results. On the one hand, studies have found that students who receive substantial help from their parents are more likely to graduate from college than those who do not; however, they also achieve lower GPAs (Hamilton, 2013).

Higher Education for Students of Color

About one out of three African American college students attends a predominantly black college—an option that offers support often not available in predominantly white colleges. Although black students who attend predominantly white colleges have somewhat better academic records at the time of admission, the achievement of black college students is similar in predominantly black and predominantly white colleges. However, black students in mostly black colleges are more likely than their counterparts in mostly white schools to remain in college and graduate (Harvey and Williams, 1989). Why? Despite their initially better academic records, black students who enroll in mostly white schools experience

greater alienation and problems of adjustment than those who enroll in mostly black schools (Allen, Epps, and Haniff, 1991). One reason for this is that good relationships with faculty are one of the best predictors of black student success (MacKay and Kuh, 1994; Watson and Kuh, 1996), and black students are more likely to find such relationships on predominantly black campuses (Haniff, 1991). Interaction with other students matters, too: In general, black students on majority-white campuses adjust better to their college experiences when there are sizable numbers of other black students on campus (Oliver, Smith, and Wilson, 1989). A national study of black college students suggests that two key steps could be taken to improve opportunity for African American students. The first would be to provide better funding and program support for predominantly black colleges, which tend to be comparatively underfunded. The second would be to make mostly white campuses more supportive environments for African American students, including greater student-faculty interaction (Haniff, 1991; see also Feagin, Vera, and Imani, 1996; Farley, 2001a). Research also suggests that nontraditional teaching methods are more effective than traditional methods for black students (Nettles, 1991).

During the past two decades, there have been numerous incidents in which students of color have been harassed on predominantly white campuses. While surveys suggest that students are no more prejudiced than before, it appears that those who are prejudiced have felt freer to act upon those prejudices recently, and this has led to more incidents. This may be related to economic fears during hard economic times, and it may also be related to racially based appeals by politicians, such as the attacks on affirmative action and immigration by an increasing number of candidates. Regardless of the cause, a wide variety of surveys and interview studies of students of color on predominantly white campuses consistently reveal that a large number report personal experience with harassment and discrimination (Feagin, Vera, and Imani, 1996; Farley, 2001a).

The number of Hispanic students has increased over the past two decades but not much faster than the growth in the overall Hispanic population. Today, Hispanics remain less

likely than any other group to graduate from college. Among people of color, only Asian Americans are represented among college students in proportion to their share of the college-age population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000b). Because their average levels of achievement exceed those of any other racial group, Asian Americans are particularly well represented at some of the most prestigious public and private institutions.

As shown in Table 14.1, black and Hispanic young people are less likely to attend and graduate from college today than are white young people. This is largely a problem of retention, since African American and Hispanic high school graduates are now almost as likely as white high school graduates to enroll in college the following fall after high school graduation (National Center for Education Statistics, 1990b, p. 103). The gap in graduation rates from college, however, is larger, as you can see by comparing the enrollment and graduation data in Table 14.1. Although only about half of U.S. college students overall graduate within six years, the graduation rates of African American,

Hispanic, and working-class students are particularly low. Among those who begin college, white students are about one and a half times as likely to graduate as African American or Hispanic students, and students from the quarter of the population with the highest income are six times as likely to graduate as those from the lowest quarter (Burd, 2001). The main reasons for these differences do not lie in achievement differences, but rather in (1) different rates of financial problems and (2) different campus experiences (feeling welcomed, establishing links to faculty, working and studying while free from harassment) along lines of race and class (Farley, 2001a). In addition to these racial and socioeconomic gaps in college graduation rates, it is also true that the overall percentage of college students who eventually graduate is lower today than in the past. In this chapter's "Student Life" box, the reasons for this are further examined, and some ideas are presented on what could be done to improve graduation rates.

Overall, white people in their late 20s are about twice as likely as black people and about

Table 14.1 College Enrollment and Graduation Rates Among Young American Adults, by Race and Hispanic Origin

	Percentage of 18- to 24-Year-Olds Enrolled in College							Percentage of 25- to 29-Year-Olds with Bachelor's Degree						
	1978	1985	1993	2000	2010	2014	2021	1980	1988	1995	2000	2008	2015	2021
White	25.7%	28.7%	34.5%	35.6%	43%	42.2%	38%	23.9%	23.5%	26.0%	34.0% ¹	31.1%	36.7%	41.9%
Black	20.1	19.8	24.5	30.3	38	32.1	37	11.4	12.3	15.3	17.8	20.6	20.7	28.1
Hispanic	15.2	16.9	21.7	21.7	32	34.7	33	9.0	11.3	8.9	9.7	12.4	16.4	20.6

¹ non-Hispanic white.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983b; U.S. Department of Education, 1987a; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990b, p. 134; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990c; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992d. The data for 1993, 1995, and 2000 are from U.S. Bureau of the Census, <http://www.census.gov/>. 2008 data is calculated from U.S. Census Bureau. 2009i. School Enrollment—Social and Economic Characteristics of Students, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/school/cps2008.html> (Downloaded November 22, 2009); U.S. Census Bureau. 2009j. Educational Attainment in the United States, 2008, Table 1, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/education/cps2008.html> (Downloaded November 22, 2009), U.S. Census Bureau, . 2016. Educational Attainment in the United States, 2015, Detailed Tables, Table 1. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2015/tables.html> (downloaded June 21, 2016), U.S. Census Bureau, 2016, School Enrollment, CPS October 2014 Detailed Tables, Table 1. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/school/data/cps/2014/tables.html> (downloaded June 21, 2016).

For 2021 enrollment in college: Annual Reports and Information Staff (Annual Reports).nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cpb/college-enrollment-rate. (Downloaded September 27, 2023).

For 2021 percent with bachelor degrees. Report: Census Bureau Releases New Educational Attainment Data. www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/educational-attainment.html. (Downloaded September 27, 2023).

three times as likely as Hispanics to have college degrees. In addition to the reasons discussed earlier and in the box, another reason for this is that black people and Hispanics are more likely than white to attend two-year colleges. Black students have a higher rate of entry into four-year colleges compared to their white counterparts; however, they also have a higher dropout rate (Eller and DiPrete, 2018).

Does College Pay?

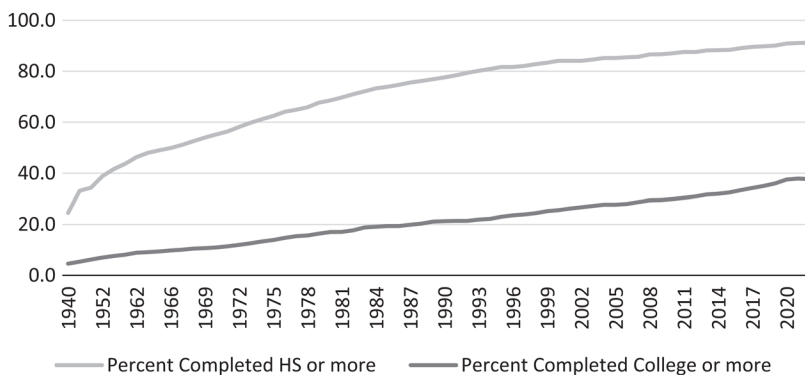
In general, college does pay: The incomes of people with a college degree run about one-quarter to one-third higher than those of people without one (see Figure 14.1). Additionally, according to the Center on Education and the Workforce (2010), only 36 percent of the 46 million jobs expected to be created between 2011 and 2018 will not require at least an associate's degree, and the vast majority of these jobs will be in the low-paid, tenuous service sector. However, the extent to which it pays has declined over time. Between 1970 and 1980, for example, the difference between the incomes of people with college degrees and those with only high school diplomas fell for both men and women

(Guinzberg, 1983). Thus, the income advantage of attending college, though still considerable, is less than in the past (Horowitz, 2018).

It is also important to point out that the income value of a college degree differs by race and sex (Figure 14.1), reflecting race and gender inequality in the economy. On the one hand, college-educated women and minorities enjoy a relatively large advantage relative to high school-educated women and minorities. However, the incomes of women and minorities with college degrees are significantly lower than those of white males with college degrees (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016d). Additionally, research indicates that the likelihood of male graduates having a child who later graduates from college is higher when they themselves complete college. However, this effect is not evident for female graduates. The gender disparity is largely explained by the adverse impact of college on women's prospects of marriage and parenthood, as noted by Lawrence and Breen (2016).

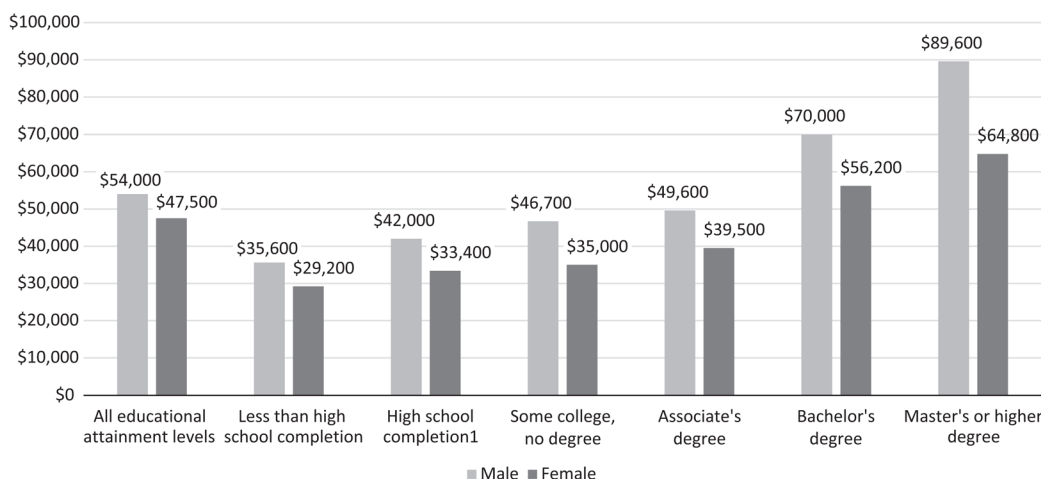
While college clearly does pay, it is also true that a sizable number of college graduates today end up working in jobs that do not require a college degree. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as many as one out

Figure 14.1 Percentage of U.S. Population Ages 25 and Over Who Have Completed High School and College, 1940–2015.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1947, and 1952 to 2002 March Current Population Survey, 2003 to 2022 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey (noninstitutionalized population, excluding members of the Armed Forces living in barracks); 1950 Census of Population and 1940 Census of Population (resident population). www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/educational-attainment/cps-historical-time-series.html.

Figure 14.2 Median Earnings of Year-Round, Full-Time Workers, by Sex and Educational Level, 2021.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics: Annual Earnings by Educational Attainment. U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2022. See Digest of Education Statistics 2022, table 502.30. nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cba/annual-earnings.

of five college graduates may be in this situation, and the percentage is increasing. There are a variety of reasons why this is the case. Different majors are in varying degrees of demand in the job market, and the demand for a particular major may vary by time and place. Some graduates' job searches are inhibited by the need to remain in a particular locality. Some people undoubtedly graduate with limited job-related skills or limited knowledge about how to look for a job or how to present one's abilities and skills to potential employers. And finally, the number of college graduates is growing, and in some fields, there are more qualified graduates than positions opening up. In spite of all this, however, persons with college degrees will continue to enjoy advantages over those without. Among jobs that typically have "very high" annual earnings, eight of ten require a bachelor's degree or higher, and seven out of ten require only the bachelor's degree (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009). However, the number of people with bachelor's degrees may be growing even faster than the supply of jobs that require them. Thus, college may not provide the presumed solution, according to Zhou's (2019) research. When considering

family background, the mobility of college graduates doesn't significantly differ from that of nongraduates. Instead, parental socioeconomic status continues to wield a notable influence on students' college access and success. Opting for a prestigious college or pursuing STEM fields, however, can significantly boost students' future income prospects. This raises doubts about the extent to which education can genuinely equalize opportunities. Moreover, global evidence, as indicated by Chmielewski (2019), suggests that the academic achievement gap between students of higher and lower socioeconomic status is widening.

Of course, the rewards of college are not all economic. Studies of college students have indicated that their verbal, mathematical, and reasoning skills do improve as a result of college attendance (Anderson, Farley, and McReynolds, 1986; Bowen, 1977). A college education also enhances interest in learning, stimulates a positive self-image, leads to healthier lifestyles and better health, improves interpersonal skills, and leads to greater tolerance and respect for civil liberties (Astin, 1977; Hyman and Wright, 1979; Hyman, Wright, and Reed, 1975; Ross and Wu, 1995; Phelan et al., 1995).

Is the Quality of American Education Declining?

More than a generation ago in the early 1980s, several reports raised a national alarm that the quality of education was declining (College Board, 1983; Twentieth Century Fund, 1983; Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 1983). The most influential of these reports was *A Nation at Risk*, published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). All these reports agreed that American students in the 1980s were less knowledgeable than students with the same amount of education a generation earlier or students in most other countries (as continues to be the case), and they suggested that the quality of education was getting worse. Average scores on most achievement tests have improved somewhat since then, but tests, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) still show that the majority of students fall below the ideal “proficient” level in history, reading, mathematics, and other subjects (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016c, 2001b, 1996a, 1996b, 1995; Muller et al., 1993). However, while overall scores were improving, some assessments, such as the 2000 NAEP fourth-grade reading test, indicate a widening gap between the highest- and lowest-scoring students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001b).

We must be careful when interpreting studies such as these. As noted earlier in this chapter, a higher percentage of Americans today attend high school (and take college entry tests) than was the case in the past or is the case in many other countries. Thus, if we compare all Americans at any given age (that is, not just students or graduates) to the comparable age group in the past, they come out better educated, not worse (Best, 2009). Still, the fact that those who graduate from our schools know less than those who graduated in the past and/or less than those from other countries is a cause for concern. Moreover, some of the international comparisons are not limited to students; entire age groups in some other countries outperform the same age group in the United States (Newsweek, 1988). Some people who graduate from American high schools are functionally illiterate: They cannot

read, write, add, or subtract well enough to read a newspaper, fill out a form, balance a checkbook, or determine the best buy in a store (Kozol, 1986).

Have Educational Changes Reduced Achievement?

Concerns about low test scores have led educators and sociologists to ask what, besides the changing composition of the population taking the tests, accounts for declines in scores. Some of their answers are discussed next.

Less Time Spent Teaching Core Subjects

As the educational institution has been asked to deal with an increasing number of social problems and issues, courses *outside* the traditional areas of academic achievement (that is, language, writing, reading, math, the natural and social sciences, speech, and the fine arts) have proliferated. Examples of nontraditional areas are driver training, cooking, marriage training, drug and sex education, and health and physical education. However important such courses may be, they are taught at the expense of time spent on traditional subjects. In some states, more than half a student's time in school is spent on nonacademic courses. In some cases, the effect of this trend has been compounded by shifts to a shorter school year or school day. At higher levels of education, declining attention to core subjects has also resulted from increased emphasis on vocational education.

Fortunately, there has been some recognition of this problem and an effort to address it in recent years. Still, even as recently as 2015, only about half of graduating students in Illinois had completed all of the core courses (Illinois State Board of Education, 2016), and it is unlike that other states are much different in this regard.

The Influence of Television and Other Screen Time

By the time the typical child graduates from high school, he or she will have spent a good deal more time in front of the television or computer screen than in the classroom. Although television and video technology offer a great deal of educational material, most television viewing

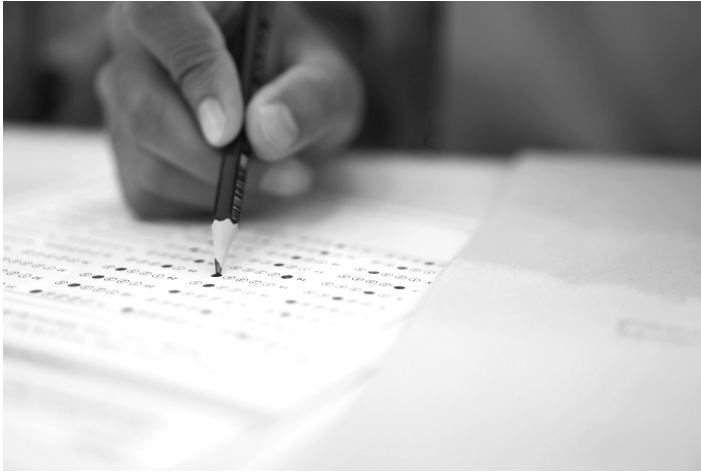


Photo 14.2 Effects of teacher expectations on student achievement, though small for most students, are nonetheless real, and tend to be greater for minority and lower-income students.

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involves entertainment-oriented material. This comes at the expense of reading, and sometimes of homework. Moreover, watching screens is a passive activity that emphasizes watching rather than doing. In general, the more time a child spends watching television the poorer he or she performs in school (Hodge and Tripp, 1986, pp. 162–66; National Center for Education Statistics, 1996a). Today, of course, television is just one part of children’s screen time, which also includes smartphones, tablets, computers, and other devices. While not all of this is passive activity and some of it may involve research for homework, there is no doubt that much of it is texting friends, social media, playing video games, and other activities that may have limited educational value and that detract from activities such as reading and homework. It may also have health consequences, since it is associated with reduced physical activity and obesity.

Reduced Expectations of Student Achievement

We addressed this issue in our discussion of inequality in education, but expectations have been reduced not only for individual students or in individual schools, but, some argue, also for the educational system as a whole. One piece of evidence is *grade inflation*: Even as the measured achievement of American students has

fallen, the average grades they are given have risen. Thus, it takes less knowledge to get an “A” in the average school or college today than it did thirty or thirty-five years ago.

Also, schools assign relatively limited amounts of homework to American students. American high school and junior high students spend about 20 percent as many hours doing homework as their average Japanese counterparts (Institute for Social Research, cited in Chira, 1991a). Research has linked achievement to the amount of homework assigned at the high school level (Cole-

man, Hoffer, and Kilgore, 1982; Hoffer, Greeley, and Coleman, 1987), and this difference is one reason for the higher achievement of Japanese students. Although there seems to be a link between homework and student learning at the high school level, the link is more questionable at the elementary school level, and a movement has developed recently in the U.S. to eliminate homework at that level. Some school districts have done so. According to the NEA (2015), there has not been much change in the amount of homework high school students do over the past 50 years, but there has been some increase in homework at the elementary school level—apparently with no significant improvement in achievement.

Changes in the Home Background of Students

More students today come from single-parent homes or homes where both parents work (Rand Corporation, 1994). This does not in itself affect their school achievement, but it does often increase the amount of time that students are unsupervised, and reduces the amount of time that parents are available to help with homework. If parents cannot afford quality day care, children may spend time in environments in which their learning capacity is not stimulated. To a large extent this is a societal

STUDENT LIFE



College Today: More Students Than Ever Before, But Why Don't More Graduate?

More students are going to college today than ever before. Around 80 percent of high school graduates now attend college at some time in their lives (though many take only a few courses). And when you ask them, over 90 percent of high school students say that they expect to continue education beyond high school, and over 70 percent expect to get a bachelor's degree. (Only about 30 percent actually do, however.) Why such a big increase in such a short time? For one thing, word may be getting out on the value of a college education. A University of Illinois study showed, for example, that a bachelors degree, on the average, adds \$590,000 to a person's lifetime earnings. A professional degree may add as much as \$1.8 million (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2001).

As more students attend college, however, not all are finding what they expect. While nearly all students expect to get a degree when they begin their studies, many do not. In Illinois, for example, of all who enroll as freshmen in public universities, about 40 percent never graduate. In fact, other countries are now graduating more people from college than the United States. For example, despite the past notion in Europe that college was something for the elite, Norway, Ireland, Belgium, France, and Denmark now have a higher percentage of their population graduating from college than the United States. Why do so many Americans enter college but not graduate? There appear to be several reasons.

First, cost is a major reason that many students don't graduate. Students are going into debt more than ever before to get college degrees, as was discussed in Chapter 11. Particularly for students from families with limited income, the cost and debt can become too much, and students often must leave school. Also, the need to work twenty to thirty hours or more per week, once unusual but now common among college students, can be a major disruption to studies. Students of limited income must work in order to support themselves and pay their expenses, yet the desire to graduate by some target date often leads them to take too many credit hours. The combined load of work and school becomes too much, and their schoolwork suffers.

Second, the dominant culture and atmosphere of college campuses often present difficulties for working-class students and students of color, many of

whom are the first in their families to attend college. This can be seen in the experiences of African American students at predominantly white colleges, who are less likely to remain in school and graduate than their counterparts at predominantly black colleges. At predominantly white colleges, the frequency of racial incidents remains distressingly high, and students of color often feel harassed or excluded. Such feelings have a very real basis: For example, D'Augelli and Hershberger (1993) found that 89 percent of black students on the predominantly white state university campus they studied had heard disparaging remarks about black people. A study with sixty items to measure student feelings of marginalization on four predominantly white Midwest universities found that on forty-five items, black students felt more marginalized than white students (Gossett, Cuyjet, and Cockriel, 1998). And at yet another predominantly white campus, 44 percent of black students told researchers that they had personally been the target of prejudice, compared to just 7.5 percent of white students (Fisher and Hartman, 1995). In 1998, the FBI reported over 250 hate crimes on college campuses—and the great majority of such crimes go unreported. Perhaps the effects of campus climate on students of color are best captured by this comment, made by a student to a researcher studying the racial climate on a predominantly white campus: "The first time I felt like a minority was at this school" (Schwitzer et al., 1999).

What can be done to improve student graduation rates? We know several things that would make a difference. First, as was noted in the box on The Algebra Project, making college-preparatory courses part of the standard curriculum for all high school students would help a good deal. Second, efforts to keep the cost of college education down are needed. The cost of college has risen faster than the rate of inflation, mostly because state legislative appropriations for colleges and universities have not kept up with the increased demand. The value of a college degree today is much like that of a high school diploma a century ago, but that diploma was free. Today's college degree isn't. In every state, tuition is still charged for public higher education. Third, more effort could be devoted to teaching students about diversity and intergroup relations, to help them get along in the increasingly diverse

contexts of their college campuses and, later, their workplaces. More colleges than ever before do require such courses, but often the courses can be selected from “laundry lists” consisting of dozens of courses, some of which have dealt only in small part with issues of intergroup relations. Finally, initiatives around the country have shown that programs targeted to students at risk of leaving school can

make a big difference in student achievement and graduation rates, if they are designed and carried out in certain ways. The most successful programs emphasize group problem-solving, foster relationships between students and faculty in the students’ major departments, and emphasize what students are capable of doing, not student deficiencies or remediation (Farley, 2001a).

problem: The United States, unlike virtually all other industrialized countries, does not provide government-funded day care. In general, children in quality day care have academic performance comparable to or even better than that of children raised by their parents; however, the achievement levels of children who stay with babysitters or by themselves are often lower (Meece, 2000; Clarke-Stewart, 1987; Goelman and Pence, 1987; King and MacKinnon, 1988).

Another trend that some people believe may be influencing achievement is a tendency toward more lenient child-rearing. Critics of this trend believe that children may be learning less self-discipline as a result. However, there is some evidence that contradicts such a view: Children raised in a strict, authoritarian manner may actually achieve less. They learn to obey rules rather than to work and achieve independently, which inhibits their ability to learn, studies say (see Miller, Kohn, and Schooler, 1986; Kohn, 1969).

Lower-Quality Teaching

For a number of reasons, many teachers may lack either a sound knowledge of the subjects they teach or the interpersonal skills needed to teach effectively. Education majors on average have lower achievement test scores than college students majoring in other subjects, particularly compared with arts and science majors (National Institute of Education, 1985). In fact, this has been consistently the case from the early 1950s to the present (Wai, 2015). In this regard, the U.S. is unlike a number of other countries—in countries such as Singapore, Finland, and South Korea, teachers come from the top 1/3 of students (Auguste, Kihn, and Miller, 2010). In recent decades, most states have enacted some

form of competency testing program for new teachers (Griffith, Frase, and Ralph, 1989), and some have established them for experienced teachers as well. Much of the problem is that the pay of teachers is relatively low compared with other occupations that require comparable (or even less) training. In fact, people who graduate with education majors consistently report lower annual incomes than people majoring in any other major subject area one year after graduation (National Center for Education Statistics, 2000b, figure 27). Moreover, talented women and minorities for whom teaching was one of the few open professions a generation ago today go into more lucrative fields. Thus, teaching has experienced a “brain drain” (Goodwin, 1991; Opp, 1989; Sedlack and Schlossman, 1986). Finally, some have argued that the cultural values of the United States do not encourage people to go into teaching (Wai, 2015). For example, we often value highly lucrative careers, or careers in doing (rather than teaching) work in STEM careers.

There has been considerable effort to improve the quality of education in the United States. In addition to the teacher-testing programs mentioned previously, there have been efforts within individual schools to raise teachers’ expectations of students and their achievement. Where schools have been successful in raising such expectations—including getting teachers to believe that their students can be high achievers—student achievement has improved dramatically, even in schools where nearly all the students come from families near or below the poverty level (U.S. Department of Education, 1987a). Efforts to improve education also include a variety of approaches discussed elsewhere in this chapter, such as school choice and desegregation programs, mentoring



programs for black males, and compensatory education. Many schools are also experimenting with nontraditional teaching methods such as group learning experiences and computer-assisted instruction. A major limitation of all such programs, however, is that even when they work, they have thus far reached only a fraction of students who could benefit from them. The only widespread effort has been one is teacher testing. And teacher testing faces one major limitation: It cannot by itself offset the social forces that have made other professions more attractive than teaching, nor can it offset societal influences such as television or social media.

Just as teacher testing has been established in many areas as a way of improving education, so too has increased (and more standardized) student testing been proposed.

In the early 1990s, the idea of a national standardized achievement test, mandatory for all students, as a means of assessing how well schools were doing, became fashionable in the United States (DeWitt, 1991). Such a test is used in Japan and much of Europe. Advocates of a national standardized test believe it will increase demands upon and expectations of students to achieve, ultimately improving achievement levels.

Although testing is popular, there are several problems with it. First, it is very difficult to develop one national or even statewide standardized test that is valid for all segments of our diverse population (Darling-Hammond, 1994, 1990). Also, a

test by itself will not lead to better achievement if there is no change in how and what students are taught. A related problem is that teachers often “teach to the test,” leading to higher student scores without better all-around knowledge. Finally, critics argue that when poor test results are used to penalize districts whose students do poorly, students will not necessarily be helped. There are many impediments to students simply being shifted to other schools, including

distance and the logistics of parents getting them there. This is especially true for poor students, and some teacher organizations have opposed national testing because they fear that students in districts with high poverty rates could be hurt rather than helped. Additionally, numerous studies have shown that charter schools, promoted by these programs as an alternative to traditional public schools in fact produce achievement that is on average no higher than that found in traditional public schools (Ravitch, 2010).

Summary

Sociologists of education are concerned with a variety of issues relating to education, including who goes to school, for how long, and why; the role of schooling in society; and international differences in the kinds and amounts of schooling. In the United States, education has become firmly institutionalized—probably more so than in any other country. Elementary and secondary schooling are free and compulsory up to about the age of 16 years. Americans believe that, ideally, everyone should be educated regardless of social background. In part for this reason, American schools typically include students from a variety of social backgrounds and ability levels. This is in sharp contrast to schools in other industrialized countries, where some schools are vocationally oriented, and others are academic in orientation. In American

schools, students are grouped or tracked within schools rather than sent to different schools. Under both systems, schools in part offer a chance for mobility and in part pass on inequalities from generation to generation.

Functionalists see education as serving many key purposes, including technical training, the development of human capital, and matching people to appropriate jobs. They also see it as providing people with the necessary knowledge to be informed citizens of a democracy, and as an important part of the socialization process. Education promotes consensus and solidarity by emphasizing the positive aspects of the national identity and by teaching children the rituals of patriotism. An important aspect of education is the hidden curriculum, which functionalists see as teaching children the beliefs and work habits they will need to be successful in the world of work.

Functionalists and conflict theorists disagree about the extent to which schools promote social mobility as opposed to passing inequality from generation to generation. Clearly, many students from lower-income backgrounds experience difficulty in school, and on average such students attain lower levels of education. Functionalists believe that such children will have greater opportunities if they are socialized to middle-class values and work habits. This view forms the basis for compensatory education and is also part of the reasoning behind school desegregation. Properly executed, both methods appear to improve the achievement of economically disadvantaged students without hurting the achievement of others.

Conflict theorists, in contrast, see the schools primarily as a mechanism by which inequalities are perpetuated. They point to mobility studies that show that social-class background is strongly correlated with the amount of education a person gets, which in turn is the strongest determinant of future income and job status. Although schools in more affluent areas are better funded, this is not the biggest cause of inequality. Drawing from symbolic-interactionist theory, conflict theorists argue that schools give their students messages about who will do well and

who will not based largely on socioeconomic background. These messages are transmitted to students through such processes as teacher expectations, tracking, and testing. Schools where expectations are uniformly high seem to produce higher achievement. Student achievement is less influenced by socioeconomic background in such schools.

Conflict theorists also see the hidden curriculum as part of the problem, in part because it varies according to a student's social background. For students of lower socioeconomic status, the message is primarily to conform to authority, whereas for those of higher status, it is to work independently, though within a framework of hierarchical authority. This process reinforces differences in socialization that have already occurred in the home, and it prepares students for distinctly different kinds of jobs.

More young Americans enter higher education today than at any time in the past. More college students today are older adults, and more are attending community colleges. There was some increase in college attendance by working-class and minority students during the 1960s and early 1970s, but rising tuition and decreasing pressure on colleges to admit such students reversed that trend during the 1980s. In the 1990s, minority enrollment again rose modestly, but minority students remain underrepresented, and financial pressures have continued to limit access among working-class students of all races.

Concerns have been raised in recent years about the quality of education in America. Although Americans are getting more education than ever, test scores of American students fell in the 1970s and early 1980s and, despite some recent improvement, remain below those of students in many other countries. Possible causes of this situation include the changing composition of secondary school students, reduced time spent teaching core subjects, the influence of television, reduced expectations of achievement, and changes in the home background of students. It has also been suggested that the quality of teaching has declined, perhaps because teaching has become less attractive compared with other professions.

Key Terms

human capital
credentials
meritocracy
acculturation
hidden curriculum
tracking

Exercises

- 1 Since 1968, when Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) published their classic “Pygmalion in the Classroom,” much has been said and written about the effect of teacher

expectations. The text devotes considerable discussion to the issues surrounding this topic. Are first impressions usually lasting impressions? How might a teacher’s first impression of a student become a self-fulfilling prophecy?

- 2 How does the concept of the hidden curriculum manifest in educational institutions, and what implications does it have for reproducing social inequalities? Consider the unwritten lessons students learn through the hidden curriculum, such as values, norms, and social expectations. How might these implicit teachings reinforce or challenge existing power structures within society?



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Chapter 15

Religion

Christians in the Middle Ages declared “holy war” against Muslims in the series of battles known today as the Crusades. In Europe during World War II, six million people were killed simply because they were Jews.

Why is it that a concept identified with spirituality, love, and community evokes such strong feelings that it often leads to wholesale violence between groups with different beliefs? What is it about religion that makes it such a powerful social force? And what are the circumstances under which it can unite societies, as it does so often, or divide them in the destructive ways illustrated by the previous examples?

What Is Religion?

In order to understand why people are so strongly moved by religion, we must first understand what religion is. To answer the elusive question “What is religion?” Émile Durkheim undertook a study of Australian aborigines, arguing that elementary forms of religion could best be studied in tribal cultures. He later presented his conclusions in his seminal work on religion, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1965 [orig. 1915]). In this work, Durkheim distinguished the aspects of everyday life, which he called the **profane**, from those things, often associated with the supernatural, that inspire awe, reverence, fear, or deep respect, which he called the **sacred**. Durkheim thus defined religion as formalized behavior that is directed toward the sacred. Such behavior usually involved **ritual**, a system of established rites and ceremonies. Durkheim thus developed the following definition of **religion**:

A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to

say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.

(Durkheim, 1965 [orig. 1915])

Often, religion provides a set of rules, or ethical principles, that tell believers how they are expected to behave in everyday life. These principles differ from other rules mainly in the sense that they are seen as being sacred in origin (Johnstone, 1992, p. 13).

Forms of Religion

One way religions vary around the world is in terms of their complexity. The sociologist Robert Bellah (1964) has argued that as societies become more complex, religions take on increasingly complex forms.

According to Bellah, the primitive stage was characterized by ritualized worship of ancestral figures, who were not considered gods. An example of this type of religion would be Chinese ancestor worship. In contrast, the mythical beings of archaic religions were gods who actively involved themselves in human affairs. People communicated to these gods through worship and sacrifice. Because these societies had developed a system of social stratification, the upper class assumed the priestly function. Greek, Roman, and Norse mythology typify this pattern. Historic religions retained the idea of a deity but added the crucial concept of salvation. This emphasis on achieving life after death encouraged people to stress their spiritual life rather than the material world. Islam and Roman Catholicism, particularly in their more traditional forms, are examples of this pattern.

As religions moved into the early modern stage, people continued to focus on salvation, but they no longer attempted to withdraw from the material world. Rather, they believed they could achieve salvation through involvement in worldly affairs. In addition, early modern religions stressed a direct relationship with God as opposed to mediation through a priestly class. Protestantism, particularly the Calvinist variety, is an example of this type of religion. The final stage, modern religions, reflects the complexities and accumulation of knowledge associated with the twenty-first-century world. These religions place a greater emphasis on the physical world, stressing individual and social reform, and are less likely to adopt a formal, hierarchical organization. Unitarians and Quakers practice this type of religion.

Religion and Society

Bellah's theory can be accused to some extent of ethnocentrism. His theory could be interpreted as saying the religions of modern industrial societies are more highly developed, while the religions of preindustrial societies are identified as less developed. Yet, while some of Bellah's specific arguments may be ethnocentric, the broader notion that religion reflects society has been well supported (Johnstone, 1992). A sociohistorical study by Guy Swanson (1960), for example, revealed a close correspondence between religious beliefs and societal characteristics. Swanson learned that belief in reincarnation was found mostly in societies with small, intimate bands, of a size smaller than a village. In such societies, the memories of those who die are especially likely to persist in the community after their death. This apparently supports the belief that the dead live on and will eventually return to the community.

Religion: The Sociological Perspective

Because religion exists in some form in all societies, it is of great interest to sociologists. Sociologists study religion within the framework of

the social construction of reality, discussed in Chapter 3; that is, they treat religion as a social institution created by human beings. In so doing, they do not pass judgment on the validity of any religion. Rather, sociological perspective holds that whatever the source of religious beliefs, the forms and roles that a religion assumes within a society are determined by human actions.

In the area of religion, as in most areas, the functionalist and conflict schools espouse different views. We examine the functionalist perspective first and then proceed to the conflict school.

A Functionalist Analysis of Religion

Functionalists assume that society tends to be a stable and integrated system, and they argue that the interrelated parts of this system (the family, the military, religion) maintain the stability of society by teaching and reinforcing the same set of basic values. Sociologists tend to agree on six basic functions of religion that are inextricably linked: social solidarity, meaning, social control, identity, psychological support, and social change (see Chalfant, Beckley, Palmer and Palmer, 1987; O'Dea and Aviada, 1983). We now briefly explain each of these functions.

Social Solidarity

Religious beliefs and practices create a bond among members of a society and help to foster a sense of community. This idea was central to Durkheim's functionalist analysis of religion; in short, Durkheim claimed that religion was society.

The Christian practice of receiving Holy Communion (the Eucharist) illustrates Durkheim's argument. This sacrament, which is often referred to as the Lord's Supper, represents the central beliefs regarding Jesus's mission, death, and resurrection. In Jesus's time a shared meal signified peace, trust, and community (social solidarity); today the term

communion connotes a very similar meaning—a sharing of thoughts and emotions, which is often conceived as fellowship or community.

Religion can perform this function only when there are at least some religious beliefs that are held in common throughout most or all of a society. When a society is divided on the basis of religion, the result can be severe conflict, as we see when we examine the dysfunctions of religion.

Meaning

Parsons (1951, 1978) claimed that religion provides answers to our questions concerning the meaning of our relations to others, of existence, of happiness and suffering, and of good and evil. Religions that fail to provide answers to questions about the ultimate meaning of life will frequently lose members. Kelly (1977) used this argument to explain why conservative or fundamentalist churches are growing in the United States. According to Kelly, liberal churches placed themselves in serious competition with nonreligious organizations by offering incentives that are not unique to religion (e.g., fellowship, entertainment, and knowledge). Conservative churches, in contrast, kept their focus on salvation, with its attendant answers to questions about the meaning of life, and thereby stimulated growth in their memberships. One could add to this analysis that the liberal churches often define truth as a matter to be individually reasoned or interpreted, whereas the more fundamentalist churches offer clear answers through their more dogmatic beliefs (Rose, 1988, chap. 2). Those who are looking for straightforward answers about the meaning of life will find them more readily in more conservative, fundamentalist churches.

According to a historical analysis by Finke and Stark (1992), the trends observed by Kelly and by Rose are not new. Throughout American history, new, more fundamentalist churches have sprung up and gained members as the older, more established churches have “modernized” their doctrines and “fit in” to contemporary values. As the latter have modernized, argue Finke and Stark, they have lost some of

their attractiveness, and, hence, their membership. The more churches “fit in,” the less they have to offer people who are looking to religion for meaning that they cannot find elsewhere.

Social Control

In addition to explaining the supernatural, religions offer prescriptions for life in this world—those things a person must do (virtue) or avoid (sins) in order to attain salvation (Glock and Stark, 1965). Although civil authorities frequently share responsibility for enforcing moral behavior (by punishing such offenses as murder, theft, and improper sexual conduct), religion’s use of a normative power—whose source of legitimacy is usually rooted in a supreme authority—is often the most effective means of exercising control over society’s members. For example, the Bible contains the Ten Commandments, which enumerate what Jews and Christians must do in order to attain salvation. Because socialization is the means by which people learn right and wrong, religion plays an important part in the socialization process in most societies.

Identity and Psychological Support

By providing an answer to the question “Who am I?” religion gives people a sense of security, a feeling of acceptance and belonging. The role that the identity function plays can be seen in Hinduism, because recognition and acceptance of the identity assigned at birth determines a person’s position in the next life.

Religion serves as a source of psychological support during the trying times of a person’s life. Not only do religious rites mark the most stressful and major transitions throughout a person’s lifetime, but they offer tremendous support during unexpected crises. For instance, suicide rates are lower for highly religious communities, and this seems to hold across a variety of faiths (Lotfi, Ayar, and Shams, 2012).

Social researchers have devoted considerable effort to studying the actual effects of religious participation on psychological

well-being. Most studies show positive effects (Lea, 1982; Witter et al., 1985; Bergin et al., 1988; Schumaker, 1998; 1992; Newport, 2012), although many show only small effects, and the studies are not entirely consistent (Willits and Crider, 1988; Peterson and Roy, 1985; Chamberlain and Zika, 1992; Buggle et al., 2000). Probably the overall effect of religion on mental well-being is positive, but there appear to be some negative effects as well. The positive effects of religion on well-being may be especially strong among groups that encounter discrimination and disproportionate poverty. For example, studies have been very consistent in showing beneficial effects of religious participation among African Americans (Lewin and Taylor, 1998).

Sometimes mixed effects arise from differences between intrinsic religion and extrinsic religion. Intrinsic religion is a religious orientation that is aimed at enhancement of meaning in life and is an end in itself. Obviously, this type of religion relates directly to the meaning function discussed previously. But it also relates to psychological well-being: This type of religious orientation is associated with greater peace of mind and less anxiety (Donahue, 1985). More generally, people who search for meaning and feel that they have attained it exhibit better mental health (Chamberlain and Zika, 1992). Religion is not the only way this can occur, but it is an important means for many people.

Extrinsic religion, on the other hand, is a means to an end: for example, adapting to social convention. This type of religion has been associated with prejudice and dogmatism and does not appear to reduce anxiety (Donahue, 1985). In contrast, the experiences of nonreligious Americans reveal that uncertainty about religion can be both positive and motivating (Frost 2019). People are religious for both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons, and the presence of one type does not necessarily mean the absence of the other. For example, Pentecostals look to religion for answers, showing strong personal faith. Thus, they have a strong intrinsic orientation. But they also tend to be highly involved in the church socially, reflecting an extrinsic orientation as well (Chamberlain and Zika, 1992).

Although extrinsic religion in and of itself does not seem to promote social well-being, the social support that comes with religion may be a significant factor in the positive effects of religion on well-being. In other words, religious institutions provide a network of people who can provide both emotional support and personal assistance. They may do this both on the basis of their religious beliefs and on the basis of friendships made within churches and similar organizations. Either way, it appears that the availability of this support to people who participate in religion is helpful to their health and well-being (Ellison and Lewin, 1998). In fact, evidence suggests that most followers of a religion do not initially join up because they believe in the teachings of the faith but rather in order to belong to the social group that is socializing them into that faith; and those who switch faiths tend to do so for social reasons. Only later does a switch in actual belief systems occur (Roberts and Yamane, 2012). Of course, there are limits to this. Structural



Photo 15.1 Religious institutions often provide social networks that can be sources of friendship and support.

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sexism within religious institutions can affect individuals' physical health. Findings show that women who attend sexist religious institutions report worse self-rated health compared to those attending more inclusive congregations, suggesting that religious participation may not necessarily lead to health benefits for marginalized groups within these institutions (Homan and Burdette, 2021).

Social Change

Religion can sometimes serve as a catalyst for social change. One example is the civil rights movement in the United States. Among the most prominent leaders were the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and other ministers, many of whom were associated with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). In addition, representatives of religious groups throughout the country participated in various ways, including marching and demonstrating, lobbying for civil rights laws, and teaching about racial justice. At the local level, black churches played a critical role in the organization of these civil rights activities (Farley, 2011; Morris, 1984). Later, when the movement became more militant and shifted its emphasis to Black Power, religion continued to play a major role, as Malcolm X based his arguments on the precepts of Islam.

The Iranian revolution provides a more dramatic example of religion as a source of social change. The revolution was, in part, a reaction to the modernization and secularization that had been introduced into Iran by the Shah. Under the leadership of a major religious figure, the Ayatollah Khomeini, the revolution led to the creation of an Islamic state based on strict enforcement of Shi'ite Islamic law.

Dysfunctions of Religion

Although religion often promotes solidarity, it can only serve this function on the societal level if there is some degree of consensus on religion. The vast majority of Americans, for example, have historically identified with the

Judeo-Christian tradition, despite the presence of numerous denominations, and thus until recently, religion has generally promoted solidarity in the United States. However, the past few decades have been marked by heightened conflicts between followers of traditional, fundamentalist religions and those who follow more liberal religions or no religion at all. Issues such as abortion, censorship versus freedom of expression, and governmental family policy have been lightning rods for increased conflict among these groups. Additionally, as terrorism has become more frequent in the world, hostility toward Muslims has increased in the United States and appears to have played some role in the surge of popular support that allowed Donald Trump to gain the Republican nomination for president in 2016.

Although religious conflict does occur in the United States, the deepest religious conflicts can be found in other countries where different religions have little in common or see one another's beliefs as being in opposition. In the former Soviet Union, conflicts between Christians and Muslims have brought parts of the country close to civil war. Similarly, conflicts between Muslims and Jews in the Middle East have been ongoing sources of violence and warfare. Even when religion is not the main cause of international conflicts, such conflicts are nearly always harder to resolve if religious differences are present.

A Conflict Analysis of Religion

Conflict theorists view religion as they do other social institutions: as a mechanism that allows an elite minority to dominate a relatively powerless majority. Conflict theories concerning religion center around the writings of Karl Marx, whose beliefs about religion were heavily influenced by the Young Hegelians, a group of German philosophers who viewed religion as an oppressive force in German society (Coser, 1977). As we saw in Chapter 4, Marx argued that the economic base of society influenced the rest of society—its laws, government, education, and religion. Because the dominant class controlled the economic resources, it was able

to control all of the social institutions. Marx referred to religion as “the opium of the people.” By this, he meant that the dominant religion in society was the religion of the ruling class, who formulated and maintained beliefs that justified the inequalities of the social order, and that subordinate groups by and large accepted these beliefs. Rooted in beliefs about eternal rewards and punishments, this form of social control was extremely effective. By teaching people to look forward to happiness in the next life, religion led them to accept their lot in this life, no matter how bad or unfair it might be. Thus, argued Marx, religion encouraged people to accept unfairness and inequality rather than fight for change.

Religion and Inequality

The degree to which religion can maintain inequalities and injustices to serve the interests of the ruling class is illustrated by Hinduism, which for centuries effectively maintained a caste system in India. Although by law the caste system has been abolished, it continues to have influence, particularly in rural areas. The rules of *dharma* specify different behaviors to be followed by members of each caste. An attempt to move out of one’s caste constitutes a violation of *dharma* that will be punished by rebirth into a lower position. Thus, Hinduism has prohibited the social mobility that has become a central tenet—although often not a reality—of Western thought.

Religion has also been used to maintain racial and economic inequality in the United States. Although there was some controversy among slaveholders in the United States over religion’s effect upon slaves, most of them eventually saw religion as an effective means of social control (Marx, 1974). Historian Kenneth Stampp (1956) notes that slaveholders in the American South exploited the Bible by telling slaves that God expected them to be obedient and would punish disobedience, while subservience would be eternally rewarded. In response to abolitionists, slaveholders also interpreted the Bible as saying that black people were the descendants of people who had

disobeyed God and were thus condemned to an inferior status.

Since the 1980s in the United States, religion has exerted a strong influence over politics, and most of that influence has tended toward conservatism. The rise of the religious right, discussed later in this chapter, played some role—how much is debated—in the “Reagan Revolution” of the 1980s and in the Republican sweep of Congress in 1994. These events led to cutbacks in programs for the poor, attacks on affirmative action, and, for a time, a weakening of labor unions in the United States. But religion cuts both ways. Churches also played a key role in both the civil rights movement and the antiwar movement in the United States during the 1960s, and an Episcopalian bishop, Desmond Tutu, won the Nobel Peace Prize for his opposition to apartheid in South Africa. Earlier in American history, religion played a key role in the movement to abolish slavery: Many of the leaders of that movement, such as Harriet Ward Beecher, Theodore Weld, and Elijah Lovejoy, were closely associated with churches. The same religion can work in different ways, some of which would be predicted by conflict theory and some of which would contradict it.

Religious Conflicts

Conflict theory explains not only how religion legitimizes and maintains inequalities in a given social order, but also how different religious faiths come into conflict. For instance, conflict theorists view the situation in Northern Ireland more as a class struggle and an ethnic struggle than as a religious conflict. They see its roots in the conquest of Ireland by Great Britain. However, because those of British ancestry are Protestant and those of Irish ancestry are Catholic, religion came to play an important role in the conflict.

Major World Religions

The world’s major religions, which originated in Europe and Asia, have since spread to every

continent in the world. Christianity, claiming the largest following, has about 2.2 billion followers in 254 countries. The Islamic faith is practiced by about 1.6 billion people in at least 172 countries, with concentrations in Africa and South Asia. Spreading from its birthplace in India, the Hindu religion now has about one billion followers in 88 countries, primarily in South Asia. Buddhists can be found in 86 countries, mainly in East Asia and South Asia, and number about 375 million. Located largely in East Asia, Chinese religions (Chinese folk religions and Confucianism) are practiced by almost 400 million people in 59 countries. In contrast to the large number of adherents for the preceding religions, Judaism has only about 15 million followers, but it exerts its influence in 125 countries, mostly in Europe, North America, South Asia, and Russia. (Estimates on the number of adherents to these and other religions worldwide can be found in Robinson [2009] and on Wikipedia [2016a].)

Monotheism, Polytheism, and Sacred Philosophies

The belief that there is only one God is called **monotheism**, whereas the belief in two or more gods is referred to as **polytheism**. Islam, Judaism, and Christianity are monotheistic; Hinduism, Taoism, and some forms of Buddhism are polytheistic. However, even monotheistic religions often have some themes or beliefs that approach polytheism, such as the veneration of many saints among Muslims and Christians, and the belief of most Christians in the Trinity—that is, one God in three persons.

In addition to monotheism and polytheism, there are also religions that do not acknowledge the existence of a God or gods. These religions are referred to as **sacred philosophies**: Although they do not recognize a God per se, they do have a concept of the sacred, and from the sacred is derived a set of moral principles, philosophical guidelines, and norms of conduct. This form of religion, exemplified by Confucianism and some types of Buddhism, is particularly common in Asia. Recently, there has been some increased interest in this form

of religion in Europe and North America, as evidenced by the growth of Transcendental Meditation.

History, Beliefs, and Practices of the Major Religions

In addition to differing in their views regarding the worship of one God or several gods, the world's major religions also differ in terms of other beliefs and rituals and practices, as well as in their history. What follows is a survey of the major religious groups, many of which were first studied by Max Weber in a series of monographs comparing the world's religions (1951, 1952, 1958b). For all their differences, there are also quite a few similarities.

Hinduism

Hinduism, a polytheistic religion, is the predominant religion in India, where it originated thousands of years ago. Although most of the basic beliefs of Hinduism solidified about 2,000 years ago, some of the *Vedas* (sacred writings), as well as the gods whom Hindus worship today, date back 4,000 years. Unlike other religions, Hinduism claims no founder and lacks any form of structured organization (that is, a hierarchy of religious leaders). Hindus acknowledge the existence of hundreds of gods, but they recognize Brahman as the greatest deity, the creator of all who, as an everlasting spirit, contains all the lesser gods. Some of the best known of these gods are Vishnu, Rama, and Krishna. Today gurus (teachers) transmit these sacred beliefs. The *Bhagavad-Gita*, part of a lengthy epic (100,000 verses), is perhaps the most famous of Hindu scriptures, and it may come closest to capturing the central truths of Hinduism.

Reincarnation, a fundamental concept of Hinduism, links together explanations of the meaning of life, inequalities in this world, and our fate after death. Reincarnation is the belief in a cycle of births and rebirths. According to this belief, the human soul does not die. Rather, after death the soul goes to heaven, purgatory,

or hell until it is reborn. Central to this belief is *karma*, the idea that a person's behavior in this life will determine his or her position in the next life. Those who follow the rules of *dharma*, for their caste position, will be reborn into a higher position; those who do not will be reborn into a lower position. Thus, Hinduism is clearly linked to the caste system that was formally recognized for many years in India. This illustrates the linkages that typically exist between religious beliefs and the structure of the larger society.

Like other religions, Hinduism has special **rites of passage** for each of the major transitions in life—birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Rites of passage are rituals that mark the transition from one age-related role to another. Among Hindus, a special ceremony for birth occurs before the umbilical cord is cut, and a naming rite is performed about ten days after birth. When a boy reaches puberty, he is invested with a sacred thread, which he wears across one shoulder for the remainder of his life. During the marriage ceremony, the bridal couple walks around a sacred fire with their clothing knotted together, reciting vows. Funeral rites involve cremation and the scattering of the ashes in either the Ganges or another sacred river. In the days following cremation, the family of the deceased may give offerings of rice balls and milk to ward off harm from the deceased's ghost.

Buddhism

In the sixth century BCE, Siddhartha Gautama (c. 563–483 BCE) founded Buddhism in India. Although it arose from a rejection of orthodox Hinduism, Buddhism retained reincarnation as a fundamental concept. By 200 BCE, Buddhism had split into two major forms—Hinayana and Mahayana. Hinayana Buddhism, which is based on Buddha's teachings, is a sacred philosophy and code of ethics. Distinguishing itself from Mahayana by the belief that Buddha (Gautama) was human and not divine, the focus of Hinayana is not on deities but rather on the attainment of *nirvana*—a state of perfect bliss in which the

self, freed from suffering and desire, loses individual awareness and is merged into the universal. A person achieves this state by practicing a number of virtues, including humility, mercy, charity, and, most important, self-control. In Mahayana Buddhism, which regards Buddha as divine, followers may worship many gods and stress faith, and not good works, as the key to salvation. Mahayana Buddhists perceive nirvana not as a total loss of individual awareness but as a state of passionless peace.

Buddha ("the Enlightened One") rejected the authority of both the Vedas and the Brahman priests, teaching that salvation could be attained through knowing and living by "Four Noble Truths." These truths maintain that suffering arises from a desire for objects and ideas that are not permanent; this desire—and thus suffering—can be overcome by following the "Noble Eightfold Path."

Buddha's concept of the self was central to his rejection of the Vedas. In place of sacrificial rites to gods, Buddha emphasized the purification of the self, which he claimed occurred through proper thoughts and actions. He advocated a love for all creation, which would reduce human frustrations.

Although Buddhism spread into Central and East Asia, its influence in India lasted only until about 500 CE. Today Hinayana is practiced in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia; Mahayana is practiced in China, Tibet, Vietnam, Japan, and Korea.

Confucianism

Regarded as the major traditional religion of China, Confucianism is a sacred philosophy that strongly emphasizes ethical principles, rules for the proper conduct of family, community, and political affairs. The principles of this religion are based upon the teachings of Confucius, who lived around 551 to 479 BCE. Although Confucianism became the ethic of the mandarin class—the elite group—Confucius himself came from a poor but well-respected family. The principle upon which he built his philosophy has been compared to the Golden

Rule. Considered central to producing ideal relationships, it is recorded in the *Analects*, a collection of Confucius's most famous sayings, and in other works.

Tzu-kung asked, saying, "Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?" The Master said, "Is not Reciprocity (*shu*) such a word? What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."

(Noss, 1980)

In addition to this fundamental principle, Confucius taught the importance of many other virtues, including loyalty, wisdom, self-control, filial piety, and self-development. Confucius used the family as the model for society. Those in power should rule for the well-being of the people, while the rest of society should obey and respect their rulers, as children do their parents.

Unlike other major world religions, Confucianism is not oriented to the metaphysical. Confucius did not speculate about the afterlife or salvation. Characterizing Confucianism as an ethical doctrine that values proper conduct for its own sake, Parsons (1937) noted that in this religion there is no such thing as sin, only error. He described Confucius's view of the perfect gentleman in the following way:

The rational man will avoid display of emotion, will be always self-controlled, dignified, polite. He will always observe the proprieties of any situation most punctiliously. His basic aim is to live in harmony with a social order which is generally accepted and to be an ornament to it.

Judaism

Historians trace the beginnings of the Jewish faith to a period somewhere between 2000 and 1600 BCE. Taking its name from Jacob's fourth son, Judah, Judaism was the religion adopted by the descendants of Jacob and Benjamin who claimed Jerusalem as the capital of their kingdom. Central to Judaism is the belief that salvation cannot be attained simply by adhering to a set of beliefs. Rather, true believers must act in

accordance with their faith in Yahweh, the sole creator and ruler of the universe.

Influenced by the cultures of Canaan and Babylonia, Judaism evolved from a polytheistic to a monotheistic religion based on ethical principles. No divine leader is recognized as the founder of Judaism, but several historical leaders are credited with establishing and maintaining the principles and practices of the Jewish faith. Among the most important of these leaders were the prophets Abraham (whose lineage is also traced by Muslims) and Moses, who is credited with the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, which contain Jewish law, including the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule, as well as an explanation of creation (Genesis).

The worship of and attribution of godlike qualities to man-made objects was common among many religions in that era. The Jews taught, instead, a religion that emphasized social justice and belief in Yahweh.

Although they believe in only one God, Jews view God as having many roles—creator, ruler, helper, friend, father, liberator, and savior. Believing that God is the creator of good as well as evil, Jews maintain that the human soul is immortal. Thus, if good acts are not rewarded in this world, they will be rewarded in the hereafter.

The ethical nature of Judaism is reflected in its core beliefs, which include, above all, love of God. This love will lead people to do good everywhere. Teachings about good and evil also include the belief in free will. Jews believe that we are free from sin at birth and consciously choose to do evil. Atonement for sin must be sought directly from God through prayers, reflection, and good works. Judaism's emphasis on social justice is clearly recognized in Jewish scripture's version of the Golden Rule: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow men." Because we are all created in God's image, all people are equal. Judaism also teaches that the world is good, and that the blessings of this world are to be enjoyed. This does not, however, signify a life oriented to pleasure: Jews emphasize a person's duty to family and community.

The special rites of Judaism are rites of passage associated with major life transitions. As noted earlier, males are circumcised at birth

to symbolize Abraham's covenant with God. At puberty, boys have a bar mitzvah and girls have a bat mitzvah to signify their entrance into the world of adult responsibilities. Marriage rites include the use of a special canopy for the wedding ceremony, drinking together from a wine cup, placing of the ring on the bride's finger during the recitation of promises, and the breaking of a glass following the ceremony. For Jews death is a time for a person's confession to God. Funeral rites include dressing the dead in a white shroud and reciting the mourner's *kadish*, a prayer honoring the dead. Each year on the day a person died, a candle is lit as a memorial. The candle is allowed to burn itself out.

In the United States, there are three major branches of Judaism—Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative. Orthodox Jews are the most strict and traditional, Reform Jews the least so, and Conservative Jews—the largest group—somewhere between. Many people identify as Jews culturally but rarely if ever participate in organized religious activities. Some of the latter do, however, hold rituals such as the *seder*, or Pass-over meal, in their homes.

Christianity

Christianity began as a sect of Judaism nearly 2,000 years ago. The distinctive feature of Christianity is its focus on Jesus Christ, who is regarded as a divine being who came into this world to make salvation possible for all people. He achieved this by dying on the cross and rising from the dead three days later. Following his resurrection, he spent a brief period with his followers during which he established his church, and then he ascended into heaven.

Unlike the mythical figures of many other religions, Jesus is a historical figure who lived in Israel during the period of the Roman occupation. He led a brief ministry lasting somewhere from one to three years, during which he preached and performed miracles, such as healing the sick and raising people from the dead. Though his teachings were not organized or written down during his life, he did assemble a group of apostles to whom he entrusted the

responsibility of spreading his teachings. Thus, Christianity spread rapidly, and in the fourth century it was proclaimed the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Somewhere between 50 and 100 CE, the 27 documents that were incorporated into the Christian Bible as the New Testament were compiled. Included among these writings are four accounts of the life of Jesus, called the *Gospels*; a history of the early Church, called the *Acts of the Apostles*; and a series of letters, called *Epistles*, many of which are credited to St. Paul.

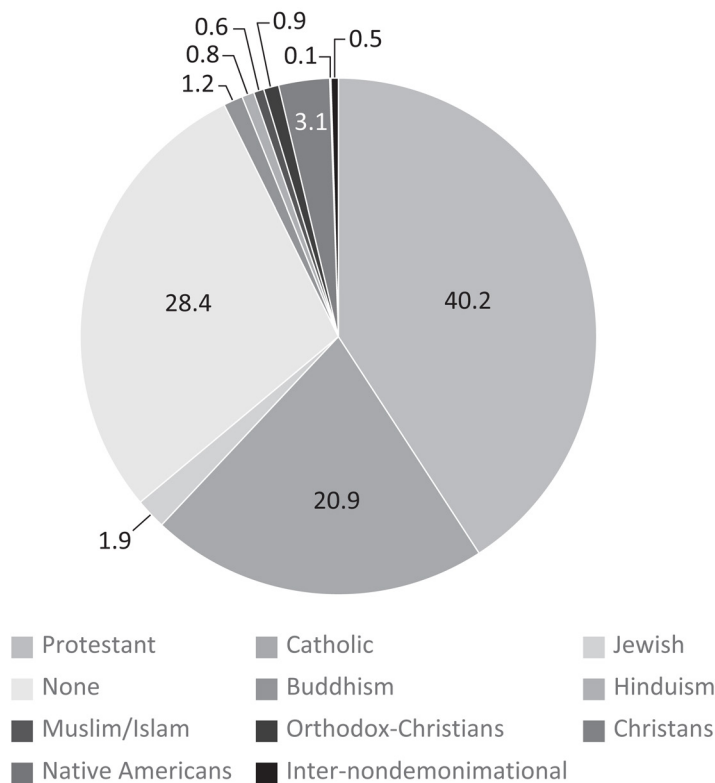
Divisions Within Christianity. By the Middle Ages, most people in Europe had been converted to Christianity. As the Christian Church grew larger, however, it experienced numerous internal conflicts, which eventually led to formal divisions and the establishment of different denominations. In the first major schism, two distinct branches of Christianity emerged: the Roman Catholic Church, headed by the pope, in the West; and the Orthodox Church in the East. The Catholic Church remained supreme in most of Europe until the sixteenth century, when Martin Luther inspired the Protestant Reformation, which rejected the authority of the pope and insisted on the authority of the Bible. Among the many Protestant denominations that emerged from the Reformation were Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism (Episcopalianism in the United States after the American Revolution), Methodism, and the Society of Friends (Quakers). As shown in Figure 15.1, the great majority of the American population identifies itself as Christian, with nearly half considering themselves Protestant and a little more than another one out of five considering themselves Roman Catholic.

Christian rituals that mark the major transitions in a person's life are called *sacraments*. Different Christian denominations observe some or all of the following: baptism, confirmation, communion, marriage, extreme unction ("last rites"), penance, and ordination.

Islam

Of the world's major religions, Islam has existed for the shortest period of time. It was founded

Figure 15.1 Religious Preferences in the United States (percents), 2021.



Source: 1972–2022 General Social Survey Cross Section.
Smith, Tom W., Davern, Michael, Freese, Jeremy, and Stephen L. Morgan. *General Social Surveys, 1972–2018*. [machine-readable data file]. Principal Investigator, Tom W. Smith; Co-Principal Investigators, Michael Davern, Jeremy Freese and Stephen L. Morgan, NORC ed. Chicago: NORC, 2019. 1 data file (64,814 logical records) and 1 codebook (3,758 pp).

in Arabia by Muhammad (570–632 CE), whom Muslims regard as a prophet. Islam is linked historically to both Judaism and Christianity, which were established religions by the time Muhammad began to preach. Although Islam recognizes the initial validity of both of these religions, it maintains that the followers of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus Christ altered these figures’ original teachings, thereby producing the religions we see today. Thus, Islam claims that only Muhammad’s teachings represent the true words of God, whom they call Allah.

The *Qur’an* (*Koran*), which contains the sacred writings of Islam, consists of 114 chapters, or *suras*. Muslims believe that God

revealed these words to Muhammad and therefore regard them as holy truths. Muhammad, like Jesus, did not organize or write these truths down; this task was left to his followers, who assembled his teachings in the *Koran* after his death.

The central belief of Islam is that God is great, meaning greater than anyone or anything possible. God rules the world and universe and is seen as both compassionate and merciful. Nonetheless, Muslims, like Christians, believe that there will be a day of judgment when good will be rewarded and evil punished. Muhammad is seen not as divine but as being the most important of prophets—the one to whom God

revealed His truths for all humanity. Because these truths are for all, Islam rejects no one on the basis of race, color, nationality, or social status. Like several other religions, Islam has its version of the Golden Rule: “No one of you is a believer until he desires for this brother that which he desires for himself.” In addition to these beliefs, Muslims are expected to perform certain works, including recitation of the creed that “There is no god but God”; prayer and facing in the direction of Mecca five times a day; and abstinence from eating, drinking, and sex from dawn to dusk during the holy month of Ramadan, when Muhammad received his revelations from God. They are also expected to give alms to the poor and to make a pilgrimage to Mecca at some time in their lives.

Like Christianity, Islam has multiple denominations. The two largest and most important are the Sunni and Shi’ite branches. The schism between these two groups began in the earliest days as a political struggle over who was to succeed to the rule of the Prophet

Muhammad. Their religious disagreement concerns the role of the *imam*, or spiritual leader of the community. Shi’ites see imams as inspired interpreters of Islamic principles; Sunnis do not. In general, Shi’ite Muslims tend to be stricter and more fundamentalist in their beliefs than Sunni Muslims. However, there is considerable variation in this regard among the Sunnis, who are by far the larger of the two denominations. In Saudi Arabia, for example, Sunni Muslims are far more traditional and puritanical than most Sunni Muslims elsewhere (Philipp, 1980). Shi’ites are also more opposed to modern and Western influences than most Sunnis, a reality that has been reflected in the political stance of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Shi’ite is the dominant religion in Iran, where it became the official state religion following the 1979 revolution led by the Ayatollah Khomeini. There are also large numbers of Shi’ites in several other countries, including Iraq, where they make up nearly half of the population. In most other Islamic countries,

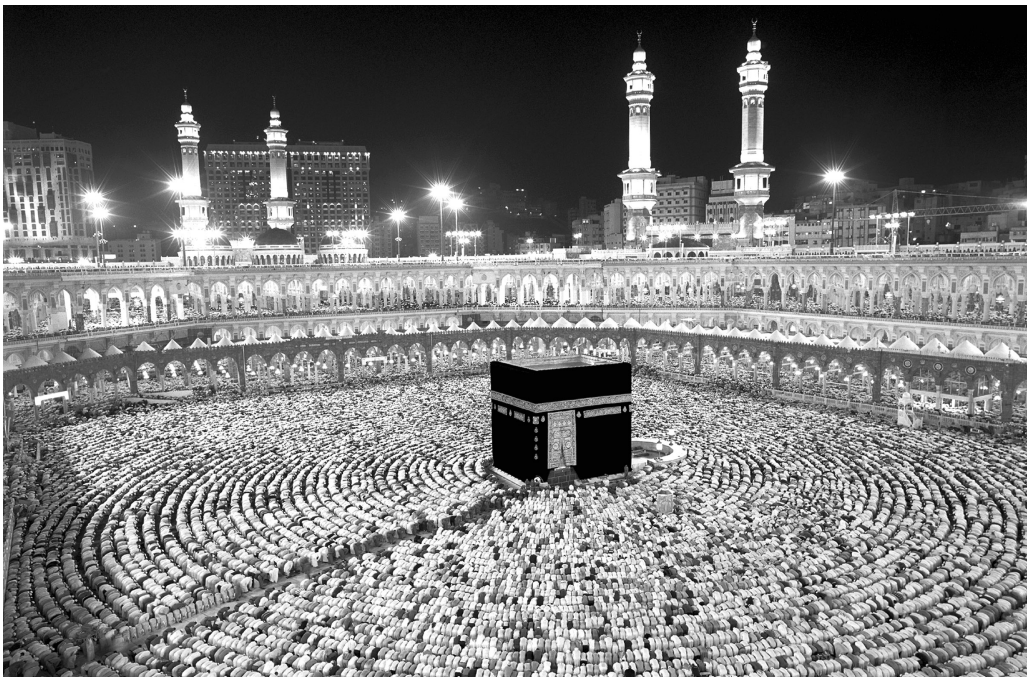


Photo 15.2 Muslim worship at the Grand Mosque in Mecca is an example of a religious ritual.

however, Sunni Muslims are the vast majority. This is true in both the Arabic countries, where Islam originated, and in non-Arabic countries where most Muslims live today. These include Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, much of Africa, and several former republics of the Soviet Union. Today, only about 15 percent of the world's Muslims are Arabic.

Religion in the United States and the World

Americans are more religious than people in many other societies, particularly in Europe and Latin America. If asked, around 75 to 80 percent of Americans will state a religious preference—fewer than in the past, but still more than in most countries. Americans are also more likely than people in most other countries to view religion as an important source of strength and comfort in their lives (World Values Study Group, 1994).

Why are Americans more religious than people in other countries? One reason can be found in their ethnic diversity (Abramson, 1980; Parillo, 1994, p. 453). Often religion is tied to ethnicity: Swedish and Norwegian Americans are mostly Lutheran; Italian, Latino, and, in many cases, Irish Americans are Catholic; Scottish Americans are mostly Presbyterian; and many Americans of English ancestry belong to the Episcopal Church, the American organization of the Anglican Church. Several large denominations, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church and National Baptist Convention, have predominantly African American memberships, and some churches, such as the Greek Orthodox, even have names that identify ethnicity. Thus, church involvement to some extent represents an expression of ethnic identity, making it appealing in an ethnically diverse society like the United States.

Second, in the United States, there is competition among many denominations and religious movements (Finke and Stark, 1992; Butler, 1990). Some even argue churches can be seen as organizations that are in competition with each other for followers, much like businesses

that compete with each other for customers and their dollars, and that this might explain high levels of religiosity in the United States—more competition leads to greater interest in religion overall (Finke and Stark, 1988, 2005). This is a stark contrast to many European and Latin American countries, in which one religion overwhelmingly dominates. England, Norway, and Sweden, for example, have national churches to which most of the population belongs, yet few people attend services regularly. France and most Latin American countries are overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, but again, fewer people attend church on a weekly basis than in the United States. Even in colonial New England, when nearly everyone was Puritan, church membership was far lower than it is in the context of today's religious diversity (Finke and Stark, 1992). About the only exceptions to this pattern among Western societies are found in Ireland and Quebec, and in both cases, being Catholic is seen as a symbol of rebellion against domination—by England in the case of Ireland, and by English-speaking Canadians in the case of Quebec (Finke and Stark, 1992).

Finally, Americans as we enter the twenty-first century are more religious than were Americans in the nation's early history. Early Americans brought the low levels of church membership of Europe with them. According to calculations by Finke and Stark (1992, p. 16), only about 17 percent of Americans were church members in 1776. But as new religions sprang up and competition among churches increased, so did membership. In other words, once people had choices of different churches and belief systems, rather than one institutionalized church, more of them joined. Church membership roughly doubled, to around 35 percent, during the first century of U.S. history, and had reached 60 percent by the mid-twentieth century. Since then, it has remained at that level or a little higher. While about two-thirds of Americans in 2001 were church members, over 90 percent identified with some religion. Since then, it has fallen but still remains higher than in other countries. As suggested by Figure 15.1, around 70 percent of Americans identify with some Christian church, that is, Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, Mormon,



Photo 15.3 The involvement of Americans in organized religion is greater than it was in early American history, but less than it was a few decades ago. Still, Americans are more involved than citizens of most other industrialized countries.

© Alamy

or some nondenominational Christian congregation. The two largest non-Christian religions in the United States are Judaism and Islam. About 2 percent of the population is Jewish, and about 1 percent is Muslim. Although Americans are more religious than people in other countries and more religious than at some times in the past, there signs that this may be changing. For example, between 1990 and 2008 the percentage of Americans identifying with no religion nearly doubled, from 8 to 15 percent (Kosmin and Keysar, 2009). It has continued to increase since then, reaching around 23 percent in a 2015 survey (Pew Research Center, 2015). And it is even higher than that among younger Americans.

Types of Organized Religion

As you can see, most of the major world religions include subdivisions: Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims; Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and

Protestant Christians; Conservative, Reform, and Orthodox Jews; Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhists. Such subdivisions can be placed along a continuum of different types, ranging from a church at one end to a sect at the other. Intermediate types include the denomination and the institutionalized sect.

Churches and Sects

Although the concepts of church and sect were introduced by Max Weber, it was his student, Ernst Troeltsch (1932), who first developed a system to classify religious groups according to these concepts. A **church** can be defined as a religion with a formal hierarchy (including professional clergy), an established set of rules and procedures, and a relatively diverse membership. In its purest form, as exemplified by the medieval Roman Catholic Church, it exercises religious monopoly and is closely tied to

the state (Johnstone, 1992, p. 86). Although churches usually accept converts, they get most of their new members by baptizing or otherwise admitting the children of current members. Churches usually have full-time, professional **clergy** who have religious authority and occupy a status distinct from that of the **laity** or general membership.

At the other end of the continuum is the **sect**, a relatively dogmatic and homogeneous group that is not well integrated into society and lacks bureaucracy and hierarchy (Iannaccone, 1988). Clergy and laity are less separate from one another, and sects often have part-time rather than professional clergy. Sects are usually small—often deliberately so—and the members of such groups know one another well.

As a general rule, churches support the beliefs of the larger society within which they exist, while sects see society as having chosen evil ways (Johnson, 1963; Stark and Bainbridge, 1981). For this reason, sects typically encourage their members to withdraw and avoid society's bad influences. A smaller number of sects actively try to change society. Usually, sects grow out of more established churches when members become disenchanted, perceiving that the church has forgotten its principles (Wilson, 1959, 1961, 1985). They view themselves as the true believers. They recruit most of their members as adult converts who are alienated from an established church.

The theologian H. Reinhold Niebuhr (1929) and the sociologist Liston Pope (1942) added important insights about the social

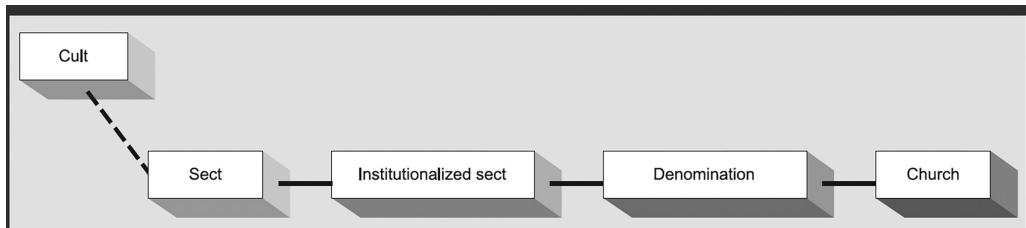
forces that lead people to identify with either churches or sects. It was already noted that sects tend to be more homogeneous than churches; also, they draw their membership mainly from the lower social classes. According to Liston Pope, this happens because people who join sects use the sect as a way of compensating for what society does not offer them: They substitute religious status for social status. Such a person might say, "I don't have a fancy car or house, but I do have true religion and I'm a lot closer to God than the people who have all those fancy things." Thus, identifying with a sect becomes a means by which people can deal with feelings of economic or social deprivation (Glock, 1964).

Denominations

It is clear that many religious organizations fall somewhere between churches and sects—a reality that led Niebuhr (1929) to introduce the idea of a continuum between church and sect (Figure 15.2). Close to the church is the **denomination**. The main difference is that denominations do not have a monopoly, nor do they usually have official state recognition.

They are, however, on reasonably good terms with the government and, usually, with other denominations. Like churches, they get most of their members through births to existing members, and when they recruit, it is from the unchurched or in faraway missionary efforts, as opposed to "raiding" other denominations

Figure 15.2 The involvement of Americans in organized religion is greater than it was in early American history, but less than it was a few decades ago. Still, Americans are more involved than citizens of most other industrialized countries.



Source: Shutterstock.

for members. Like churches, they draw most of their members from the middle and upper classes. In the United States, denominations are often correlated to social class. Denominations with more highly educated and income earning members tend to be more versed in the social, historical, and political background of their beliefs; while denominations with lower income and education levels tend to have members who read religious texts and pray on a daily basis. This is also linked to the fact that more affluent denominations have members who are socialized into leadership and professional positions that require them to problem-solve and “think outside the box.” Therefore, these denominations also tend to be more tolerant and less rigid (Roberts and Yamane, 2012). American religion is highly denominational (Greeley, 1972); major denominations include Roman Catholics, Methodists, the United Church of Christ,

several Baptist denominations, Episcopalians, two Lutheran denominations, Presbyterians, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and three Jewish denominations. This reflects that as societies have industrialized and democratized, the notion of a state-sponsored religion has generally been dropped in favor of religious freedom; most industrial democracies are also denominational (Johnstone, 1992, p. 170), though not necessarily to the same extent as the United States. The differences between sects and denominations—the two most common forms of religious organization in industrialized countries—are summarized in Table 15.1.

Institutionalized Sects

A step closer to the sect end of the continuum is the institutionalized sect. This includes groups

Table 15.1 Comparison of the Sect and the Denomination

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Sect</i>	<i>Denomination</i>
<i>Size</i>	<i>Small</i>	<i>Large</i>
Relationship with other religious groups	Rejects other groups—feels that the sect alone has the truth	Accepts other denominations and is able to work with them in harmony
Wealth (church property), buildings, salary of clergy, income of members	Limited	Extensive
Religious services	Emotional emphasis—try to recapture conversion thrill; informal, extensive congregational participation	Intellectual emphasis—concern with teachings, formal, limited congregational participation
Clergy	Unspecialized; little if any professional training; frequently part-time	Specialized, professionally trained, full-time
Doctrines	Literal interpretations of scripture; emphasis upon otherworldly rewards	Liberal interpretations of scripture; emphasis upon rewards in this world
Membership recruitment	Conversion experience; emotional commitment	Born into group or ritualistic requirements; intellectual commitment
Relationship with secular world	“At war” with the secular world, which is defined as evil	Endorses prevailing culture and social organization
Social class of members	Mainly lower class	Mainly middle class

Source: Glenn Vernon, *Sociology and Religion*. Copyright © 1962 by McGraw-Hill, Inc. Reprinted by permission of McGraw-Hill, Inc.

that in one way or another oppose society's values yet have become institutionalized and more hierarchical and bureaucratic than true sects. Institutionalized sects may either withdraw from society and form their own communities (e.g., the Amish and Hutterites) or may seek to reform society through political action and social-service activities, as in the case of the Quakers. As a general rule, a sect will either move toward institutionalization over time or fade away (Johnstone, 1992). Why does this happen? In order to become self-perpetuating, a sect must become bureaucratic—just as is true of other formal organizations, as discussed in Chapter 9. Also, if a sect grows over time, it almost inevitably becomes more diverse, lessening its ability to hold to a strict, narrow set of beliefs. Some of today's major denominations, including the Methodist Church (the second-largest Protestant church in the United States), began as sects but gradually evolved into denominations (Harrell, 1967; Johnstone, 1992; Niebuhr, 1929). Many other sects, unable or unwilling to make this transition, gradually died out.

Cults

A **cult** is a religion that is totally withdrawn from, and often at odds with, the religious traditions of a society. Although there is a great deal of similarity between cults and sects, there are also important differences. Sects often arise from established denominations and attempt to renew a society's traditional religious values. Cults, in contrast, promote values and behaviors that deviate greatly from established norms (Stark, 1985). Often, they revolve around claims of new and different revelations. Because cults reject many basic societal values, they may consciously isolate their converts from the larger society to maintain their influence. Such isolation and secrecy are sometimes considered a defining characteristic of a cult (Weber, 1999). Consequently, some cults have been accused of kidnapping and "brainwashing" their members. In some cases, relatives have

had members forcibly removed from the cult and "deprogrammed." Examples of current and recent cults in the United States are Scientology, the People's Temple, the Children of God, the Unification Church, the Divine Light Missions, Hare Krishna, and the cult of Rajneesh.

Cults often form around a charismatic leader. Occasionally, the combined influence of an unquestioned leader and the intense beliefs of the members leads to tragedy, such as mass suicides, mass murders, or some combination of both. The Reverend Jim Jones, founder of the People's Temple and David Koresh and the Branch Davidians are but two of many examples.

Although cults are qualitatively different from sects (they appear separately with a dotted line between them in Figure 15.2), they do share one thing not yet mentioned. In general, they must choose either to disappear or to become more like a denomination. Because cults often revolve around one individual, they may end with the death or social demise of their leader.

In some cases, cults can form when charismatic leaders gain control of sects. The Branch Davidians, mentioned earlier, existed for many years as a sect that had arisen from the Seventh-Day Adventist religion. However, it became a cult when David Koresh took control from its previous leaders and began stockpiling weapons and preaching impending doom. Like many cults, the Branch Davidians became totally centered on the personality of their leader, Koresh, who eventually led them in a self-destructive direction.

Religion and the Economy: Weber and the Protestant Ethic

We noted earlier the association between industrial democracy and denominational society as well as the tendency for religious beliefs and social structures to match one another. Max Weber, the sociologist, is probably most responsible for bringing this to general attention. While Marx saw religion as reflecting and reinforcing economic arrangements, Weber

believed that religious beliefs could actually influence the nature of the economy. He explained his theory in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Weber's work focused on those factors that gave rise to capitalism. Although he acknowledged the important roles played by increased agricultural production, industrial technology, and improvements in transportation and sanitation, he considered the decisive factor to be neither science nor technology but rather the emergence of new values associated with the rise of Protestantism. Weber viewed the notion of predetermination in Calvinism as crucial to the development of materialism. Calvinism held that God knew all along who would be saved and who would not: It was predetermined whether a person would go to heaven or hell. Therefore, Calvinists saw it as unlikely that a perfect God would contradict himself by rewarding a person who was damned with material goods in this life. Thus, worldly wealth was taken as a sign that a person would be saved, while poverty was taken as a sign that a person would be condemned to hell. Since nobody knew for certain how much wealth was a sign that one was saved, there was always an incentive to work harder and amass more wealth. In this way Calvinism encouraged people to place greater emphasis on material success. This lifestyle of hard work, frugality, and individualism came to be known as the **Protestant ethic**. Clearly, such a religious belief system provided strong ideological support for capitalism. In promoting this more secular view of the world, Calvinism unintentionally paved the way for a major restructuring of economic life.

Weber's analysis of the conditions that gave rise to the development of capitalism was not limited to Europe. He also examined Eastern societies and religions, noting where conditions matched or differed from those in the West. He argued, for example, that although trade and manufacture had reached fairly high levels in both India and China, the religious beliefs and practices in those societies inhibited the development of capitalism. Regarding India, Hinduism stressed the importance of a frugal and ascetic lifestyle, much as did Calvinism. However, the purpose of this lifestyle was not

to enable a person to maximize wealth, as in Calvinism, but rather to separate the Hindu from the material world. Likewise, in China, the ethical principles embodied in Confucianism did not promote the pursuit of wealth and material success.

Weber's explanation of why capitalism emerged in the West focused on, but was not limited to, religious factors. He identified a number of socioeconomic factors that he also considered necessary for the development of capitalism. Most of these factors centered on the concept of rationalization, discussed in Chapter 9. However, Weber's most central argument was that Protestant religious beliefs produced a cultural environment supportive of the development of capitalism.

Impact of Weber's Theory

Weber's theory created a great deal of controversy. Some critics questioned his accuracy in describing different religions and claimed that he lacked empirical evidence for his arguments and that he distorted his concept of "Modern capitalism" so that it would fit specific features of Calvinism. Nevertheless, Weber's thesis on the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism is a seminal work in the sociology of religion. According to Andrew Greeley (1972), Weber's theory has had a greater impact on modern-day theories about the relationship between religion and society than any other work. It has also inspired research on other ways in which Calvinism may have helped to transform society, for example, by contributing to the emergence of national governments (Gorski, 1993).

Weber's theory that religion and society mutually influence each other represents a complex theoretical model in that it recognizes that each variable—religion and society—operates as both cause and effect. This complexity has hindered efforts to devise a conclusive test of his hypothesis. There are, for example, a variety of alternative explanations that may account for the rise of Calvinism and capitalism during the same general period in history (Johnstone, 1992, pp. 167–69). Even so, there

are clearly a number of ways in which Calvinism could have facilitated the rise of capitalism (Rachfall, quoted in Samuelson, 1961). For this reason, Weber's work has remained influential in the sociological study of both religion and economics.

If the specific relationship between Calvinism and capitalism continues to be debated, the notion of a two-way relationship between religion and the nature of society is not a matter of debate among sociologists. In the United States, one of the first comprehensive studies of this relationship, *The Religious Factor*, was published by Gerhard Lenski in 1958 (rev. ed., Lenski and Lenski, 1963). Lenski demonstrated that religion was linked to economics, politics, family life, education, and science in the United States.

On the other hand, the distinctive features of Protestant theology that may have given rise to capitalism are no longer so distinctive, at least within industrial societies. The theological differences between American Protestants and Catholics, for example, have narrowed, and the two groups no longer vary significantly in their work-related values. As a result, Protestants and Catholics today have similar income and education levels, although various Protestant denominations vary widely in this regard (Greeley, 1977; Roof, 1979).

On the worldwide level, though, there continue to be significant social and cultural differences between countries with a Protestant history and countries with Catholic, Orthodox, Confucian, or communist histories (Inglehart and Baker, 2000). For example, historically Protestant, communist, and Confucian countries all are toward the secular rather than traditional end of the scale but vary widely in their emphasis of self-expression versus survival. Historically Protestant countries emphasize self-expression, historically communist countries emphasize survival, and formerly Confucian countries are in the middle. Historically Catholic countries, like Confucian ones, are in the middle between survival and self-expression, but they are less secular and more traditional than countries with any of the other three histories (Protestant, Communist, or Confucian) (Inglehart and Baker, 2000).

Church and State in America

Although Lenski was the first American to measure comprehensively the mutual influences between religion and other major social institutions, the idea that a fine line existed between religion and politics has long been a part of American thought. In formal recognition of the potential influence that the church and the state could exert upon one another, the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights (1791) forbade Congress from passing any law "respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

According to John Wilson (1978), there are a number of reasons why the framers of the Bill of Rights chose both to protect freedom of religion and to forbid any official, state establishment of religion. For one thing, many groups, such as Mennonites, Catholics, and Puritans, came to North America to escape persecution in Europe, where other religions were officially established. Moreover, with the large variety of religious groups that existed, freedom of religion—with no one established church—was necessary in order for cooperation and harmony in society. It would also encourage continued immigration, which would lead to the growth of the new nation. There were also many who did not go to church—only one in eight Americans was a church member when the Constitution was framed—so there was also a perceived need to protect the right *not* to be religious. In general, the dominant values of the new nation—liberalism and pluralism—emphasized freedom of choice and individualism in most areas of life, including religion.

The framers also had role models for freedom of religion: in England, where freedom of religion increased after the Glorious Revolution of 1688; in colonies such as Pennsylvania that practiced freedom of religion; and in French prerevolutionary ideas of egalitarianism and deism, which held that God had created the world and then left it to function according to natural laws. The Great Awakening, a religious revival in the mid-eighteenth century, further emphasized nonconformist ideas, and freemasonry, popular among the leaders of the era, advocated religious tolerance. Thus, a variety

of social forces led to the protection of freedom of religion and to the separation of church and state.

Civil Religion

Although the First Amendment prevented the government from establishing or prohibiting any one religion, it did not ensure the complete separation of religion and politics. In fact, general, nondenominational religious themes have long been present in American government and political life. Sociologist Robert Bellah (1970) has referred to this pattern as **civil religion**, arguing that it represents a form of institutionalized religion, though not an established church, in the United States. Bellah notes that although speeches by American presidents on solemn occasions almost invariably contain references to God, these references are neither to Christ nor to any specific deity.

Thus, civil religion plays an important political role within a society. By referring to the sovereignty of God, civil religion teaches that the laws and traditions of U.S. society are sanctioned by God and are therefore good. President Dwight Eisenhower expressed this view when he asserted that “our government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith—and I don’t care what it is” (quoted in Nash et al., 1986, p. 895). Even today, a president who is being inaugurated takes the oath of office with one hand on the Bible, implying that the chief executive must answer to a higher authority than even the will of the people. Thus, civil religion serves as a means of social control (see Chapter 10) by promoting nationalism and conformity to prevailing social norms.

A good illustration of this function occurred in the 1950s when Congress voted to add the phrase “under God” to the “Pledge of Allegiance” and “In God We Trust” to all U.S. currency. Congress took these actions during the height of the Cold War to emphasize the distinction between the “God-fearing” United States and “atheistic communism.”

You might ask how the concept of God can play any role in the political realm given the separation of church and state. According

to Bellah, the separation of church and state did not deprive politics of a religious dimension. Although personal religious beliefs are regarded as strictly private, Americans have since the beginning of the republic shared certain religious beliefs, symbols, and rituals. Thanksgiving, a day that “serves to integrate the family into the civil religion,” and Memorial Day, which serves “to integrate the local community into the national cult,” are both occasions for the public expression of Americans’ civil religion (Bellah, 1970).

Thus, civil religion serves the functions of integration and social control. Although the importance of these functions can be debated, it is clear that many Americans place great value upon them (Roberts and Yamane, 2012). In fact, belief in God appears to be a prerequisite for those seeking the presidency of the United States. According to a 2014 Gallup poll, less than half (46 percent) of Americans would vote for an atheist for president (Lipka, 2014).

Religion and Politics in America

The role played by religion has varied at different times in American history; both reform movements and conservative movements have drawn strong support from religion. According to the French scholar Alexis de Tocqueville, who visited America in 1831, religion played a strong role in the emergence of democracy. He wrote in his famous book *Democracy in America* that religion “contributed powerfully to the establishment of a republic and a democracy in public affairs.”

The Nineteenth Century

In the decades leading up to the Civil War, the United States experienced a period of humanitarian and social reform that evolved from the major religious movements of that time. Proponents of such reforms as temperance, women’s rights, peace, and the humane treatment of prisoners and the mentally ill drew much of their inspiration from religious revivalism (Unger, 1989, pp. 318–29). Perhaps the most

significant of these movements was the drive to abolish slavery. Religion played an important role within both the African American and white segments of the abolitionist movement. Some of the leading black abolitionists such as the Rev. Moses Dickson were ministers, while others such as Sojourner Truth used religious arguments to move their audiences against slavery. Many leading white abolitionists, including Theodore Weld, Henry Ward Beecher, and Elijah Lovejoy, were closely associated with liberal Protestant denominations.

The Twentieth Century

The interaction of religion and politics continued through the twentieth century. This activity included the full range of political orientations: radical, liberal, conservative, and reactionary. One example of the last can be seen in the activities during the 1930s and 1940s of Father Charles Coughlin, a Detroit priest. He broadcast a national radio program and published a newspaper entitled *Social Justice* in which he espoused extreme anticommunism and anti-Semitism. Among other things, he stated his support in 1938 for the Nazi persecution of Jews, arguing that it was necessary to stop the spread of communism (Goren, 1980, p. 591). His position was endorsed by several diocesan Catholic newspapers, although other Catholics vigorously opposed it.

Another example of the interaction between religion and politics occurred in the 1960s, when religious values contributed to a period of social reform, as they had before the Civil War. As discussed in the box “The Black Church in America,” religion played a major role in the movement for racial equality. Many religious leaders, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., were also active in opposing U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. For example, Daniel and Philip Berrigan were Catholic priests who engaged in many antiwar protests. In the 1980s, religious figures were among those who called for an end to the nuclear arms race and for increased aid to the poor and homeless. Also in the 1980s, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops took the position

that the American economic system inherently produces social injustice—a position that angered Catholic conservatives and was openly criticized from the pulpit by a few Catholic priests. Religion has also played a major role in recent public debates over such issues as abortion, government policy toward the family, and whether restrictions should be applied to the availability of sexually explicit materials and performances. In 1991, for example, when over 2,000 people were arrested for blocking access to an abortion clinic in Wichita, Kansas, nearly 100 of them were clergy members. In the first decade of the new century, several Catholic bishops denied communion to Catholic politicians who have voted to keep abortion legal, although some bishops who led this movement have since been demoted by Pope Francis, who has preferred to emphasize environmental and social-justice issues over issues such as gay marriage and abortion. Nonetheless, Catholic priests and fundamentalist Protestant ministers have been heavily involved in the antiabortion movement; on the other hand, clergy from liberal Protestant and Jewish denominations have often been vocal supporters of abortion rights.

Fundamentalism and the New Religious Right

The battle over abortion illustrates an important trend in the relationship between religion and politics: increased political activism by and support for religious fundamentalists. **Fundamentalism** can be defined as a form of religion characterized by strict and unambiguous rules, and by literal and dogmatic acceptance of scripture exactly as written. In the United States, fundamentalist Christians have become increasingly involved in politics since the mid-1970s, through such organizations as the Christian Coalition and its predecessor, the Moral Majority. To a large extent, fundamentalism has been a Protestant movement, supported largely by Southern Baptists and by members of a variety of evangelical churches and sects. However, there is a comparable movement among conservative Catholics, who have provided much of the support for groups such as



UNDERSTANDING RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

The Black Church in America

The black church serves as a home to many of its members. It cooks suppers, plans outings, arranges picnics, conducts bingo games, provides day care for children, and lends money. All of this has a familiar, small-town quality, even when it occurs within the setting of a large city. In Lenski's terms, the black church forms a strong communal bond. Homey or not, the black church contains tensions and contradictions.

In fact, many scholars question whether we should use the term "black church" at all. There is no single African American church in the United States. Rather, the term refers to a collection of mainly Protestant denominations that emerged in response to racial discrimination and the need of African Americans to achieve some measure of self-identity and independence. Most of these denominations can be described as evangelical; that is, they accept the Bible as the word of God, emphasize salvation in the next life, and stress emotional expression in their services. Critical to many black denominations is the idea of a personal conversion and a direct relationship with God. As a regular participant in the Wednesday evening prayer services in a southern church explained, when troubled worshippers "testify" and wail and speak in tongues, "They go and leave their burdens at the altar. It's like a service station. You go there 'to get filled up.' "

How and why did the black church emerge as a separate entity? The answer lies in the history of the racial caste system in the United States. By the early 1800s, U.S. slave owners had decided that slaves should be converted to Christianity but should also remain in bondage. To justify this apparent contradiction, they argued that the Christian's duty was to obey God, and the slave's duty was to obey his or her master. All of the faithful would then be rewarded in the next life.

At first, owners and slaves worshipped together, although black people were usually forced to sit in the church balcony. Gradually, however, black people splintered off from the white congregations. In the North, the first all-black denominations were the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (organized in 1796) and the African Methodist Episcopal Church (1816). Not surprisingly, black Christianity adopted certain distinctive features. Perhaps the most significant was identification with the Israelites of the Old Testament. Many black prayers and hymns expressed the same hope of liberation from bondage and suffering that was so common in the nation of Israel in that time period.

The transition from interracial to all-black congregations increased dramatically following the abolition of slavery in 1865. As society became segregated

the Eagle Forum. The political agenda of religious conservatives has centered on opposition to legal abortion; support for prayer in the public schools; opposition to laws forbidding discrimination against homosexuals and to same-sex marriage; opposition to school-based family-planning clinics and to sex education in the schools; and support for greater restriction of sexually explicit books, art, videos, and performances. In many ways, the movement had one of its main aims achieved with the recent Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade's* abortion rights ruling of 1974. Many of these groups also generally oppose the teaching of evolution in the schools, because they believe

that this is contrary to a literal interpretation of the first book of the Bible, Genesis, which states that God created the world in six days and then rested on the seventh day.

This movement, sometimes referred to as the religious right, has used four major approaches, two of which reflect modern technology and partially account for its increased influence in the "electronic era."

Televangelism

One technique is televangelism—religious programming broadcast over television. Although

(see Chapter 7), so did religion. In addition to their religious function, African American churches offered the ex-slaves an opportunity to learn to read, to vote (at least for church officials), and to find some personal dignity in a racist society. As time passed, the role of the church in promoting education became especially important. The church was deeply involved in building and supporting schools, and ministers were among the best-educated members of the African American community.

Not surprisingly, given its prominent position within the black community, the black church played a vital role in the struggle for racial equality in the twentieth century. Many African American religious leaders—including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and the Reverend Jesse Jackson—became leaders in the movement for black equality. The SCLC, an association of black ministers that was created during the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955–1956, became one of the major organizations of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. Churches often served as meeting places, and civil rights marches frequently were accompanied by the sounds of hymns and gospel music.

Today, the black church faces many challenges. Some young African Americans are now turning to secular organizations for help in overcoming barriers to mobility and equality. At the same time, the success of the civil rights movement in eliminating legal segregation has raised questions among some concerning the appropriateness of racially separate churches. If and when the United States achieves racial justice and equality, will black people and

white people worship together as one community? Until that time, the black church will continue to be a core institution in the African American community, playing many important roles. Certainly, this remains the case today: recent survey research continues to show that African Americans are more involved in religion than white people, both in the public context, as measured by church attendance, and privately, as measured by the reading of religious materials. These differences persist even after controls for other social factors that influence religious involvement (Chatters and Taylor, 1998). Nonetheless, the percentage identifying with no religion has risen recently among African Americans, but it remains lower than in other racial groups.

Source: Ezra E. H. Griffith, Thelouiz English, and Violet Mayfield. 1980. "Possession, Prayer, and Testimony: Therapeutic Aspects of the Wednesday Night Meetings in a Black Church." *Psychiatry* 45: 120–28; Gerhard Lenski. 1961. *The Religious Factor* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday); Ronald L. Johnstone. 1988. *Religion in Society*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall); Suzanne T. Ortega et al. 1983. "Race Differences in Elderly Personal Well-Being: Friendship, Family and Church." *Research-on-Aging* 5: 101–18; Aldon Morris. 1980. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press); and Linda Chatters and Robert Taylor. 1998. "Religious Involvement Among African Americans." *African American Research Perspectives* 4, 1. Also available on World Wide Web, <http://www.isr.umich.edu/rcgd/prba/persp/spring1998/chatters.pdf>.

televangelism has existed for as long as television (in fact, religious broadcasting goes back to the early days of radio), its influence increased after about 1970, for two reasons. First, cable television has made it economically feasible to broadcast to an audience that may be limited in any locality, yet sizable on a national scale. Second, religious organizations have increased their ownership of television and radio stations; by 1980, they owned 1,400 radio stations and 60 television stations (Johnstone, 1992, p. 149). In addition, several nationwide cable television networks are also owned by religious organizations. An analysis of several studies estimating the size of the audience during the 1980s suggests that the audience for religious programming during

that decade averaged somewhere between 10 and 20 million (Auter and Lane, 1998). Given the increased availability of cable TV since then, it is likely a little larger than that today.

According to sociologists Jeffrey Hadden and Charles Swann (1981), the television preachers appeal to many people because they present simple, certain, and clear-cut answers. In so doing, they offer a refuge from the confusion, uncertainty, and ambiguity associated with modern society. Television, of course, is a two-edged sword. In the mid-1980s, the influence of television evangelists was sharply curtailed by widely publicized scandals involving televangelists Jim and Tammy Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart.

Direct Mail

The second modern technique used by the religious right is direct mail, especially computerized files of supporters and computerized label generation. This technology permits various organizations to share lists of supporters, and it allows for quick appeals for funds, votes, and signatures on preprinted letters to politicians. Direct mail has been used both by religious organizations themselves and by political organizations that work closely with them, such as NCPAC (National Conservative Political Action Committee) and the National Right to Life Committee. Of course, with the advent of the Internet, email, websites, and social media have also become important means of spreading the message.

Mobilizing Congregations

The third technique used by the religious right is mobilization of congregations. Issues such as abortion, school prayer, evolution, and homosexuality are regularly addressed from the pulpit, and congregations are sometimes mobilized for political actions, such as right-to-life marches or attendance at presidential caucuses.

The weekend before the 1988 election, parking lots of Catholic and fundamentalist Protestant churches were leafleted in support of Republican George Bush by right-to-life organizations. Sometimes the effort was enhanced by sermons inside the church on the abortion issue.

In 1992 and 1993, local congregations became increasingly involved in efforts to elect fundamentalists to local governmental units such as school boards. This occurred everywhere from small towns in the Midwest and South to San Diego and New York City. In one Iowa town, a church-based campaign led to the election of a write-in slate of candidates that the local press did not even know about. More recently, in states that have legalized gay marriage, churchgoers have been mobilized in opposition, resulting in the reversal of laws legalizing gay marriage in California and Maine. However, the reversal of these laws was temporary, as the Supreme Court affirmed the legality of same-sex marriage nationally in 2015. Since then, some religious groups have de-emphasized trying to make same-sex marriage illegal, but some have argued that businesses such as bakers, florists, and caterers should be able to refuse service to same-sex weddings. It is important to emphasize, though, that no church is compelled by the Supreme Court ruling to perform same-sex marriages. While civil marriage must be open to same-sex couples and churches cannot be prohibited from conducting same-sex marriages, under the First Amendment they cannot be compelled to do so.



Photo 15.4 In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriage is legal nationwide. Since then some religious groups have shifted away from opposition to it, while others have argued that businesses should have a right, based on religious beliefs, to refuse service to same-sex weddings.

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Christian Schools

While not directly a tool of political action, Christian schools have played an increasingly important role in shaping and building support for the religious right's political agenda (Rose, 1988, p. 26). By the late 1980s, one out of five private

school students was enrolled in an evangelical Christian school (Rose, 1988). Christian schools grew rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, as fundamentalists increasingly perceived the public schools as falling under control of the evil forces of modernism and secular humanism—a philosophy basing right and wrong on principles derived from reasoning rather than absolute, God-given rules. Fundamentalists saw certain educational practices such as value clarification; the teaching of gender equality, evolution, and sex education; and the absence of organized prayer in public schools as teaching their children to be godless. This set of fundamentalist values was based on the notion that biblical revelation, not science, was the source of truth (Rose, 1988; Ammerman, 1987). The fundamentalists also viewed these educational practices as part of a political agenda that violated their freedom to raise their children the way they wanted (Ammerman, 1987, p. 201). Their response was to take their children out of the public schools and enroll them in their own Christian schools, teaching their own values. As a result of the growth of Christian schools, the fundamentalists became progressively less willing to support public education, which they increasingly saw as having hopelessly fallen to the evils of secular humanism and modernism.

Research Center, 2012, 2008; Beckman, 2016), especially for white voters. Given the harshness of speeches by candidates such as Buchanan in 1992 and Trump in 2016, who campaigned largely on an anti-immigration and anti-Muslim platform, and the fact that both drew more support from fundamentalists and frequent churchgoers, it is perhaps not surprising to find that strong religiosity is sometimes correlated to prejudice. For example, among white people in the United States, being a more active church member has been shown to be correlated with being more prejudiced than less active members (Roberts and Yamane, 2012).

On the one hand, religion plays an important role in U.S. politics; but on the other hand, many Americans find religious appeals either frightening or irrelevant to their economic concerns. This limits the power of both the religious right and liberal religious activists. Dionne (1991) argues that the growing influence of cultural issues in politics during the 1970s and 1980s, including issues linked to religion, is one reason that U.S. voter turnout fell during those decades. Voters were more concerned about economic issues that were then falling by the wayside. When the debate focused on issues of less immediate concern to many voters, such as school prayer, censorship, and so forth, many voters lost interest and stayed home instead of

Religion and Politics: The Current Scene

As fundamentalists and their opponents have mobilized, religious conflict has increasingly been acted out in the political arena. Those who attend church more frequently are, on average, more conservative and more likely to vote Republican, while those who attend less often or not at all are more liberal and more likely to vote Democratic. This was true for the 2008, 2012, and 2016 presidential elections (Pew



voting. In the short run, according to Dionne, these issues, which were emphasized by both political parties from 1972 through 1988, helped the Republicans, because religious conservatism and fear of change influenced more voters than cultural liberalism. However, in the 1992 elections, the Republicans emphasized these issues at their convention, while the Democrats focused on the economy, and the Democrats won. While the role of religion in political debate has diminished somewhat since 1992, there is still polarization between those who believe that their religious beliefs should form the basis for the resolution of a variety of social issues, and those who believe that those issues must be resolved in a manner free of religious influence. Additionally, as noted earlier, the percentage of Americans identifying with no religion has increased sharply in recent years, with the biggest increase among people under 30 years old—a trend that suggests secularization among the larger society. In our next section, we examine this issue in depth.

Two Opposing Trends: Secularization and Fundamentalist Revival

It is becoming increasingly evident to sociologists that, as societies modernize, two opposing trends are often unleashed: secularization and fundamentalist revival (Ammerman, 1987, p. 18; Bruce, 1988). We first discuss secularization, then examine how it often breeds fundamentalist revival as a response.

A Trend Toward Secularization?

Most definitions of **secularization** include two central ideas: (1) increasing reliance on science rather than religion to explain reality; and (2) greater distinction between the religious and the profane (secular), with important ideas such as those about the basis of life or behavior increasingly coming from the secular rather than the religious realm (Hargrove, 1979; Johnstone, 1992, pp. 316–20). Some sociologists see secularization as a long-term social trend

that necessarily accompanies modernization, urbanization, and industrialization. The term itself dates to the Renaissance period, when it was used to describe the transfer of church property to the state or private owners.

Secularization theories developed a wide audience during the 1960s and 1970s. Increased scientific knowledge—including our greater understanding of the genetic code, space travel, new theories in physics, and the growth of social science—all challenged religion as the source of knowledge and interpretation of life and the universe. According to Hargrove (1979, p. 27), science provided us with an “increased ability to explain what was previously mysterious.” As people learned to rely more on science to understand their lives, secularization theorists predicted, their interest in religion would decline.

Some statistics on church membership and attendance seemed to support this conclusion. Roozen and Carroll (1979), for example, demonstrated that church attendance declined for most of the liberal Protestant denominations from the mid-1960s through the mid-1970s. Hout and Greeley (1987) similarly showed that there was a large fall off in church attendance among Catholics during that same time period. The latter study found that the major reasons for this decline were opposition to the church’s traditional sexual teachings and disenchantment with its authoritarian system of rules and beliefs. One could argue that science had something to do with both of these factors. Technology made it possible to have sex without producing unwanted children, which eliminated one of the traditional reasons for opposing premarital sex. Similarly, as knowledge is increasingly obtained from science, people become less likely to accept ideas solely on the authority of church officials. For many Americans, right and wrong came to be defined not by scripture or church law, but by humanist principles such as freedom of choice, self-fulfillment, and individual reasoning. Even churches themselves have become more secularized—particularly large, mainstream ones. One study of 83 Protestant denominations showed declining church control over agencies affiliated with the denominations: Bureaucratic rationalization, not church

authority, seemed to be the dominant force driving many of the agencies (Chaves, 1993). Finke and Stark (1992) point to a similar trend of secularization within the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. Voas and Chaves (2016) argue that each new generation of Americans is less religious and more secular than the last; while Bruce (2013) finds secularization has turned religion into a consumer choice rather than moral or social obligation as it was in the past.

Fundamentalist Revival?

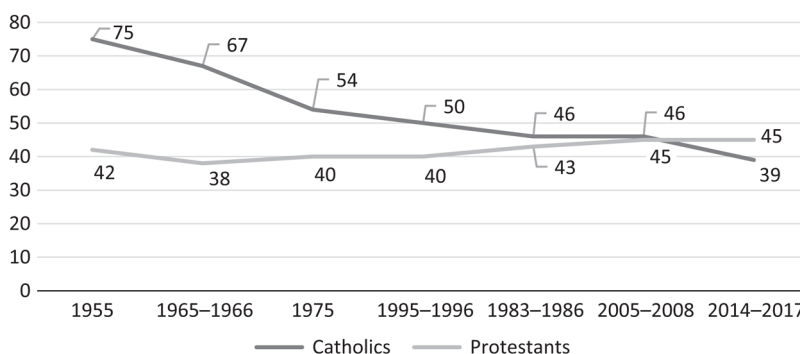
Despite these findings, secularization theories have been widely challenged since the 1980s (Sasaki and Suzuki, 1987; Greeley, 1999). Some of the challenges are methodological: It has been noted, for example, that statistics on church membership are not very reliable. Different denominations use different methods to record membership, and any conclusions drawn from these figures must be approached with caution.

More critically, some sociologists argue that the influence of religion expanded after about 1980, at least for a time. This argument was based on the rapid growth of a number of fundamentalist denominations, and the ascending political influence of fundamentalism. This growth led to an increased emphasis on such

issues as abortion, school prayer, and pornography. Moreover, as shown in Figure 15.3, trend data suggest that church membership and attendance stabilized in the 1980s, and may even have increased among Protestants (Gallup, 1987; Hout and Greeley, 1987; World Almanac, 1988, p. 591). However, according to Figure 15.3, a notable decline can be seen in church attendance for Catholics from 75 percent reporting attending church in the past week in 1955 to 39 percent reporting the same in 2017. More recent Gallup data suggest a further decline of about seven percentage points in weekly church attendance between 2005 and 2015 (Gallup Organization, 2016a).

It should be noted, however, that attendance figures from polls such as these suffer from overreporting. Actual observations and counts of church attendance show that the true figure for Protestant attendance in the early 1990s was probably less than 20 percent, not 40 percent as reported by Gallup, and the true figure for Catholic attendance was probably around 28 percent, not 51 percent as reported by Gallup (Brenner, 2011; Hadaway, Marler, and Chaves, 1993; Marler, Hadaway, and Chaves, 1998). These findings are supported by time diary studies, which did not directly ask about church attendance (and thereby encourage the socially desirable answer) but did have people keep track of what they were doing on Sundays or other days when they might have attended

Figure 15.3 Self-Reported Church Attendance of Catholics and Protestants in the Past Week, 1955–2017.



Source: Gallup: Catholic Church Attendance Resumes Downward Slide by Lydia Saa. news.gallup.com/poll/232226/church-attendance-among-catholics-resumes-downward-slide.aspx (Downloaded September 29, 2023).

church. These studies suggest that only 26 percent of Americans attended church weekly in the mid-1990s (Presser and Stinson, 1998). Both the observation studies and the time diary studies suggest that people tell survey-takers that they attend church more frequently than they really do (Walsh, 1998). The survey data may accurately portray the *trend over time* in churchgoing, even while overstating it. However, there are some who argue that as church attendance has fallen compared to the 1950s and earlier, people have become more likely to tell survey-takers they went to church when they really did not. If this is the case, the fall in church attendance may be greater than the polls show, and in any case is likely continuing today, especially among Catholics and mainline Protestant denominations.

The data on overall church attendance mask an important fact, however: When attendance among Catholics and liberal Protestant denominations was declining, membership was rising among fundamentalist denominations (Doyle and Kelly, 1979; Kelly, 1977). During the 1960s and 1970s, for example, the Seventh-Day Adventists, Church of the Nazarene, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Reformed Church, Southern Baptist Church, and Assemblies of God all enjoyed rapid growth. Because these religious organizations offered clear answers and continued to focus on salvation, they appealed to people in a way that many of the larger churches didn't (Kelly, 1977). The stricter churches may have also grown because they don't allow room for "free-riding"—being a member of the church without contributing money, work, commitment, or even regular attendance (Iannaccone, 1994). As a result, these churches prosper because of the greater commitment of their members. Although recent data suggest that the growth of these more fundamentalist denominations has slowed somewhat over the last decade or so, they now account for the largest single grouping of Christian churches in the United States. The growth of the stricter, fundamentalist churches put the Catholic and liberal Protestant denominations in a bind. If they continued to emphasize traditional rules and beliefs, they would alienate their more liberal, educated, and science-oriented members, who would then stop going to church. If, on

the other hand, they tried to "keep up with the times," they would place themselves in danger of alienating those seeking salvation and clear-cut answers, who would then switch to more conservative denominations. The effects of this bind can be seen in statistics showing, for example, that weekly attendance at Catholic mass fell by about 40 percent in the last quarter of the twentieth century (Stammer, 1999).

Why Secularization and Revival?

We are left, then, with the puzzling task of explaining how such opposite trends as secularization and fundamentalist revival might be occurring at the same time, leaving the old mainstream religions caught in the middle. Part of the answer lies in distinctly American patterns. However, another part of the answer is that to some extent, secularization and fundamentalism each breed the other as a reaction, because each side sees the other as threatening. To the fundamentalist, modern humanist values threaten their ability to raise their children and live according to what they see as divinely imposed rules (Ammerman, 1987, p. 201). The more such values spread, the more threatened the fundamentalists feel. In Bruce's (1988) words,

Conservative Protestants of the 1950s were offended by girls smoking in public. In the late 1960s girls were to be seen on news film dancing naked at open-air rock concerts. While both can be abstractly construed as culture threats, the second was taken to be a much greater threat than the first. . . . By the late 1970s, [fundamentalists] were faced with the added and more immediate threat of an increasingly secular state which acted . . . to reduce the autonomy of fundamentalist institutions.

(p. 22)

At the same time, the advocates of freedom of choice also have felt threatened by the fundamentalists. They see threats to their personal freedom to live their lives as they choose because of fundamentalist efforts to ban abortion, censor materials they considered objectionable, forbid sex education, require school

prayer, and mandate the teaching of creationism as opposed to evolution. Thus, the two sides have polarized, and the middle has not held (Gorski, et al. 2012). Such phenomena are particularly strong in the United States because it has a stronger tradition of religiosity than most countries (Jones et al., 1986). The same tensions, however, have arisen in other countries with strong religious traditions as they modernized. The best examples are Iran, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, where reactions against modernization have brought about strong Islamic fundamentalist movements.

To some extent, fundamentalism grows in response to rapid social change and anomie, because it offers clear and easy answers in a time when things are generally uncertain and confusing (Ammerman, 1987; Balmer, 1989, p. 229; Fernandez, 2011; Roberts and Yamane, 2012). This may explain why fundamentalism grew following the upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s; in fact, social upheaval usually does lead to a growth of religious fundamentalism (McLoughlin, 1978). One study found that among people who do not feel that “survival is secure enough that it can be taken for granted” fundamentalist revival is the likely response (Norris and Inglehart, 2004)

Response to accelerating social change may also help to explain why fundamentalism has become a worldwide phenomenon since World War II. More than anything else, fundamentalism reflects a rebellion against the influences of modernism. Modernism encourages independent thought, reasoning, and acceptance of difference. As societies modernize and industrialize, and as education levels rise, these values tend to spread. Indeed, such values in large part contribute to secularization. But to many people, these values are seen as threatening to their traditions, and the spread of such values is often accompanied by changes that displace people from their traditional lives. As modernization has spread throughout the world, fundamentalism has arisen in some form in many of the world’s major religions—not only in Christianity but also in Islam (as illustrated by Iran’s revolution that established a Shi’ite Islamic state, by the strict Islamic state created in Afghanistan by the Taliban when it was in power, and by the rise of terrorist groups motivated by radical

interpretations of Islam, such as Al Qaeda and ISIS/ISIL/Daesh), in Judaism (as evident in the settlement movement in Israel), and in Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Sikh religion (Nielsen, 1993; Kaplan, 1992).

Because secularization and fundamentalist revival have been occurring simultaneously, we cannot clearly state that America is becoming *either* more or less religious. No great change has occurred since the mid-twentieth century in the proportion of Americans who belong to churches, although since about 1990, the percentage who identify with no religion has been rising. Therefore, sociologists argue that religion has not declined or increased so much as it has adapted to a changing environment (B. R. Wilson, 1985; Swatos, 1983; Hammond, 1985). Their arguments resemble those of Bellah (1964), discussed early in this chapter, that religion takes different forms during different periods of history. According to these sociologists, most people today clearly rely less on mystical explanations of events in the physical world, a basic tenet of secularization theory. At the same time, they continue to turn to religion for values and spiritual support and for consolation in times of crisis. In some cases, religion has assumed a secular form. For example, the great emphasis in the 1980s on “self-fulfillment” (see Chapter 4), which often involved self-help and therapy groups that stress the metaphysical, is frequently cited as a form of religious behavior.

This is exemplified in the New Age movement of recent decades. An outgrowth of spiritual and mystical movements of the 1960s, such as Transcendental Meditation, the New Age movement uses such techniques as extra-sensory perception (ESP), spiritual communication, and astrology to achieve personal quests for meaning. The objective is to achieve harmony with oneself, the earth, fellow humans, and the cosmos (see Johnstone, 1992, pp. 325–26, 330–31). Stark and Bainbridge (1985) found over 500 groups that might be broadly identified with New Age ideas; such groups attracted the most members in the West and the fewest in the South—just the opposite of traditional religions. A Gallup poll in the late 1970s, cited in Johnstone (1992, p. 331), found six million people involved in Transcendental Meditation and three million in mysticism. A Gallup poll in 2001



SOCIOLOGICAL SURPRISES

Liberal Islam

Although the rise of radical, fundamentalist Islam has gotten a lot of attention since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the reality is that Islam, like Christianity, has both liberal and fundamentalist movements under its broad umbrella. And, as is the case with Christianity, these movements often espouse a very different type of religion. The strict, traditionalist version of Islam sees Islam as the one true religion and views other religions as heretical—just as is the case with some strict, traditionalist versions of Christianity. But there is also a large, and quite likely growing, segment of Islam that espouses a much more liberal viewpoint. Among the views held by the liberal branch of Islam are the ideas that Muslims are obligated to accept the reality that

other religions hold different views, and to coexist and cooperate with others. They cite verses from the Qu'ran such as the following:

“To you your religion, to me my religion.”
(Sura 109, Verse 6)

“O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other, not that ye may despise each other.”

(Sura 49, Verse 13)

Much like liberal Christians, liberal Muslims hold that scripture, though divinely inspired, is always

found significant increases in the percentage of Americans believing in clairvoyance, psychic healing, ghosts, and the ability to communicate with the dead (Newport and Strausberg, 2001). However, for many of these people, meditation, mysticism, and clairvoyance represent interests, not a primary religious viewpoint or affiliation. In fact, some people with such beliefs attend and identify with regular churches, such as the Baptist or Lutheran denominations. While the beliefs of movements like Transcendental Meditation are different from those of traditional religions, the notion of a search for meaning and the concepts of the sacred and of spirituality have much in common with religion as it has always existed. Many sociologists would therefore agree with the analysis of Émile Durkheim (1965 [orig. 1915]): “There is something eternal in religion which is destined to survive all the particular symbols in which religious thought has successively enveloped itself.”

Finally, it is important to remember that today's simultaneous trends of secularization and revival are not as new as they may seem. Finke and Stark (1992) have shown how fundamentalism has sprung up repeatedly in American history as a response to secularization. As

early as 1740, the revivalist preacher George Whitefield drew huge crowds by offering a kind of religion that the more intellectualized Congregationalists of his day could not. He warned that too many of the clergy had become too worldly, and he would thunder “Are you saved?” to crowds of up to 20,000 or 30,000, who would respond by falling to the ground and crying out to God (Finke and Stark, 1992, pp. 46–53). Though he was not a Methodist himself, his ministry laid the groundwork for Methodism in the United States. As noted earlier, Methodism arose as a rebellion against the intellectualized, modernist religion that the Congregationalists had come to represent. Ironically enough, Methodism became so successful that it, in turn, became institutionalized and, some fundamentalists today argue, moved away from its roots. So today, Methodists are among those losing ground to the newer, more fundamentalist religions. Thus, the interaction between secularization and fundamentalist revival has occurred repeatedly throughout American history (Finke and Stark, 1992). And this has not just been the case in the United States. As illustrated in the box “Liberal Islam,” much the same is going on today in the Islamic world.

subject to human interpretation, and that there can often be more than one way to interpret it. For example, one liberal Muslim leader states, "Religion is divine, but its interpretation is thoroughly human and this-worldly" (Abdul-Karim Soroush, Iran, born 1945, quoted in Kurzman, 1999).

Charles Kurzman (1999), a sociologist who has studied both the traditionalist/fundamentalist and the liberal branches of Islam, argues that more liberal interpretations have emerged, and may be growing, for several reasons. First, educational levels are rising, and more people are being educated in subjects outside the influence of traditional clerics, such as engineering, philosophy, and sociology. This has created an intellectual leadership that does not follow strict religious rules, as had been the case with intellectuals in the past, who were more likely to be educated in religion and theology. Second, international contacts are increasing. Travel, trade, television, telephone, and the Internet are all bringing more people in Islamic countries into contact with secular and democratic viewpoints. Third, Kurzman argues that, for the most part, Islamic states such as Iran and the Taliban in Afghanistan have failed to deliver on their promises, and as a result, many people have become disillusioned with strict, traditionalist forms of Islam. In Iran, for example, many people—even some in the religious leadership that ran the country after an Islamic state was created in the 1970s—came to the view that the strict Islamic regime had failed to deliver on its promise to bring an era of justice and righteousness, while at the same time it did restrict personal freedom and it did weaken universities by getting rid of professors who did not fit the regime's image of ideological and religious purity. This viewpoint can be seen in the large protests in Iran's urban areas following the disputed Iranian election of 2009. And of course, the treatment of women and others under the Taliban in

Afghanistan was seen by many in the Islamic world as frightening, as has been the reign of terror by ISIS/ISIL/Daesh in parts of Iraq and Syria.

None of this, of course, is to deny that there is a strong and influential fundamentalist trend within Islam as well. And, as with Christianity, much of the strength of traditionalism and fundamentalism in Islam arises from fears that are generated by secularization, modernization, and, in the case of Islam, Westernization. Many strict Islamists see liberal Islam as inauthentic and a denial of "true Islam." Again, this is similar to the ways that fundamentalist Christians view liberal churches such as the Episcopal church. Finally, one force that works against liberal Islam is that in many Western countries, it is commonplace for Islam to be labeled as a religion of fanatics and extremists—a trend that has only increased since the wave of terrorism by ISIS and people identifying with it during the 2014–2016 period. The presence of the liberal trends within Islam tells us that this is not so, but, ironically the fact that many in the West stereotype Islam in the ways that they do actually undermines the influence of the more liberal strains of Islam. Kurzman cites Algeria as an example of this. An Islamic religious party, with liberal and conservative wings, won the majority of the vote in the first round of elections in 1991. The liberal influence was dominant, as it was the group that was setting policy in the party, and a number of candidates were drawn from it. However, with the support of the United States and France, who feared any kind of Islamic government, the Algerian military canceled the election. The result was that the liberals in the party were discredited, the extremist faction took control, and it even murdered some of the liberal Islamic leaders. In Kurzman's (1999) words, "The Western inability to believe that there might be such a thing as liberal Islam proved a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Summary

Religion reflects a universal human concern with the meaning of life and the supernatural. According to Durkheim, societies distinguish between the aspects of everyday life, called the profane, and those things that inspire awe or deep respect, called the sacred. He defined religion as a system of beliefs and behaviors involving the sacred. This is a broad definition, and the nature of religious beliefs and practices varies considerably from culture to culture.

Sociologists classify religions according to several broad categories. Churches and denominations are established religions with formal rules and hierarchies. Such religions usually distinguish between those with religious authority, called clergy, and the general membership, called laity. A sect is a smaller, more dogmatic group that is not well integrated into the larger society. Some sects gain acceptance and develop into denominations. A religion that is totally withdrawn from the larger society is called a cult.

Religions that worship only one God are called monotheistic, and those that worship two or more gods are called polytheistic. Some religions, however, do not worship any deities; instead, they emphasize spiritual or moral principles on which their members base their behavior. These faiths are referred to as sacred philosophies. Judaism is an example of monotheism, Hinduism of polytheism, and Confucianism of a sacred philosophy. Among the other major world religions are Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism.

Functionalists and conflict theorists disagree as to the social roles of religion. Functionalists argue that religion contributes to the well-being of a society by encouraging social solidarity, providing meaning and identity to society's members, and allowing for a degree of social change while maintaining basic social control. Conflict theorists respond that religion, like all social institutions, serves the interests of the ruling classes. By focusing people's attention on salvation in the next world, religion distracts them from the injustices of this world. For this reason, Marx called religion the "opium of the people." Weber maintained that the interaction between religion and social structure was too complicated to be classified simply as class conflict. He argued that changes in people's views of the world brought about by the Protestant Reformation made possible the rise of capitalism in the West.

The United States officially practices separation of church and state in the sense that the Constitution forbids the government to establish or prohibit any religion. In fact, religion and politics interact regularly, and people's political behavior is frequently influenced by their religious and moral beliefs. This applies to the antislavery and social reform movements of the nineteenth century as well as to the civil rights and antiwar movements of the twentieth century. One current example of religious activism is the "religious right," which pursues a conservative agenda that opposes abortion, gay rights, and pornography, while supporting prayer in the public schools.

Scholars debate the current and future state of religion in the United States. Some adhere to secularization theory, arguing that as

people accept scientific explanations of reality, religion will become less important to them. Others contend that the United States is in the midst of a fundamentalist revival as people turn to religion to cope with an increasingly complex world. Most likely, secularization and a fundamentalist revival are both occurring at the same time among different parts of the population. In fact, there are some ways in which each contributes to and sustains the other. One possibility is that, as with the family, the role of religion is changing, but the institution itself will remain strong.

Key Terms

profane
sacred
ritual
religion
monotheism
polytheism
sacred philosophy
rites of passage
church
clergy
laity
sect
denomination
cult
Protestant ethic
civil religion
fundamentalism
secularization

Exercises

- 1 The Christian Coalition is one of the most important religious organizations in the United States due to its impact on the political scene. The organization's website (www.cc.org/) provides an informative glimpse at its activities.
 - What are your personal views about the Christian right? Do you agree? Disagree? Why?
 - How would you evaluate the future of the fundamentalist movement in the United

States? This chapter poses the questions of whether there is a “fundamentalist revival.” What do you think?

- 2 Quoting from the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, “*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof . . .*” The issue of secularization continues to be an extremely controversial issue in our society and draws considerable attention from organizations like the American Civil

Liberties Union (ACLU); see www.aclu.org/religion-belief. This chapter poses the question of whether there is a trend toward secularization. What do you think? Also, consider these questions:

- Do you agree with the ACLU stand on the issue of secularization?
- What is your stand on organized prayer in public schools?



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Chapter 16

Health, Population, and Aging

Think about the images you had of sociologists and what they do before you took this course. Did sickness, health, and health care come to mind? Would it surprise you to know that medical sociology is one of the largest specialties in sociology in both Europe and the United States? In the United States, more than 1,000 of the ASA's 14,000 members belong to the association's Section on Medical Sociology, making it one of the four largest of the association's 46 specialty groups (ASA, 2009). In Europe, medical sociology is even larger. In West Germany, for example, the German Society for Medical Sociology had more members in 1985 than the German Sociological Association (Cockerham, 1988, p. 575).

Why are sociologists so interested in health and medicine? Although health and illness are commonly considered biological conditions—you get sick because some abnormal condition develops in your body—it turns out that society influences both who gets sick and how sick people are treated. We know that social factors have a lot to do with sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, but we often do not realize that they can have an equally great influence on more common diseases such as heart disorders and cancer. In preindustrial societies, for example, people almost never die of heart disease or cancer, and in modern societies like our own, lifestyle, diet, and environment—all products of human behavior—play a major role in determining who contracts these diseases. When you get sick, your social situation makes a big difference in your treatment and your chances of recovery—perhaps more so in the United States than in most industrialized societies.

Health and illness also affect society. During the Black Death, a plague in fourteenth-century Europe, parents abandoned their

children, husbands abandoned their wives, and entire cities were deserted as people fled in panic. In some places, the entire social order came to an end. This is not surprising when you consider that a force that nobody really understood at that time suddenly killed one-quarter to one-half of the population (Gottfried, 1983; Thomlinson, 1976, pp. 88–93).

This chapter examines both society's influence on health and illness and the influence of health and illness on society. It is important to realize that concepts such as health, at one end of the scale, and disease, sickness, and illness, at the other end, are socially defined. Some diseases are specific to certain cultures, and other people such as doctors and supervisors set rules that define when we can consider ourselves sick. **Health**, on the other hand, can be defined as the ability to function effectively—physically, mentally, and socially (World Health Organization, 1946; Cockerham, 1992, p. 2). This, of course, is to say in large part that health, too, is socially defined. What constitutes effective functioning is socially defined, and therefore can change over time and among societies. People viewed as healthy in the United States, for example, might be seen as less healthy in other societies that place a greater value on physical fitness. In addition, we define ourselves as healthy or not healthy largely on the basis of messages we get from others.

Note from the previous definition that health has three dimensions—physical, social, and psychological. The truly healthy person is one who functions well in all three of these areas. In addition, such effective functioning does not merely depend on the absence of disease or illness. You can be free from any recognized disease or illness and yet not function well in one or more of the three areas. Or you

can have a disease and yet function quite well, either because the disease is being medically managed or because you have successfully adapted to it. Of course, social factors, such as your socioeconomic status, affect the ability to manage, prevent, and adapt to diseases.

The medical management of disease is closely related to another topic that is central to the sociology of health and illness: the institution of medicine. **Medicine** refers to the system developed for the purpose of treating illness. As we see in this chapter, the institution of medicine has a major impact on health both in society as a whole and in particular groups within society. Medicine both reflects and helps to maintain the social patterns of the larger society.

Health and Society: A Functionalist View

The Sick Role

From a functionalist standpoint, the normal and natural state of affairs is for people to be healthy and to contribute to their society. The opposite situation, ill health, is a form of deviance. When people are not healthy, they cannot contribute. Therefore, sickness is dysfunctional both for the individual who suffers an illness and for the larger society (Parsons, 1951, 1977). Because illness is dysfunctional for the social system, societies must establish a system of social control to regulate who can legitimately claim to be sick and who cannot. It is equally essential that those who are sick make efforts to get better so that they can again contribute to the operation of the social system.

For these reasons, according to Talcott Parsons, all societies define a **sick role**. The sick role performs the essential functions of (1) specifying who can claim to be sick and (2) imposing a set of obligations that help people return to their normal, productive roles as soon as possible. In general, a person can only enter the sick role by showing some evidence, visible to others, that they are suffering from ill health. Externally visible symptoms, such as an obvious serious injury, a high fever, vomiting, or a

severe rash, allow a person to play the sick role in most societies. Other indicators vary with the nature of the society. In modern industrial societies, you must be recognized as sick by a medical professional in order to play the sick role for any length of time. Even there, however, what doctors regard as sufficient cause to play the sick role varies widely from one society to another, and even from one doctor to another in the same society. In preindustrial societies, in contrast, evidence of exposure to generally recognized evil spirits might place a person in the sick role.

The sick role is best understood by combining the insights of the functionalist and symbolic-interactionist perspectives. The functionalist perspective—specifically Parsons's theory—tells us why society has a sick role. The symbolic-interactionist perspective gives us important insights into how that role is defined and applied. How the sick role is defined in any society depends on societal agreements about the causes, meanings, and consequences of illness. For example, the sick role will be quite different in a society where illness is seen as the product of infections or organic dysfunctions as compared with one in which it is believed to be a punishment from God or an infestation of evil spirits. In the latter, it will be surrounded with religious rituals; in the former, it will involve medical interventions based on science. Furthermore, whether any individual may play the sick role is the result of a process of social negotiation based on agreements about the nature of that role.

The sick role, like all roles, carries a specific set of expectations. It excuses a person from the normal obligations of their other roles. However, it also brings some new obligations. In general, people are expected to do their best to get out of the sick role. Specifically, they are expected to want to get well and to seek technically competent treatment. Moreover, they are expected to do what their doctor tells them. If they fail at any of these things, they will no longer be seen as entitled to play the sick role (Parsons, 1951). This is illustrated by such statements as, "If you had gone to bed, followed your diet, and taken your medicine, you wouldn't still be sick. It's your own fault."

To functionalists, the sick role is a deviant role, because it is beneficial to society for people to be in that role as little as possible. However, it is different from many other deviant roles (prostitute, robber, crooked politician) in that it is not usually seen as voluntary. That perception, however, is highly conditional. It does not fully apply to certain illnesses that are socially defined as the product of a person's own behavior. For example, because AIDS is most often transmitted sexually or as a result of taking illegal drugs intravenously, people with AIDS are often severely stigmatized and blamed for their own illness. To a lesser extent, the notion that people are responsible for their own illness is also applied to diseases resulting from excess drinking, overeating or unhealthy eating, and smoking. Also, an individual who is seen as making inadequate efforts to get out of the sick role may be stigmatized as a "malingerer" or "hypochondriac." This labeling process can occur with a wide range of ailments.

Criticisms of the Sick Role

Parsons's formulation of the sick role has been controversial because it places so much responsibility for illness on sick people themselves (Crawford, 1981). Conflict theorists criticize it for neglecting ways in which the actions of other people may cause someone to be ill. Some people, for example, become sick after being exposed to hazardous substances, through no fault of their own. Others suffer injury or illness as a result of unsafe conditions at work, over which they have no control. Yet others are sick because they lack the income to purchase adequate food or shelter. None of these conditions is the responsibility of the sick person; all of them result from situations created by others or from which others benefit. Even in the case of behaviors such as smoking and excessive drinking, a conflict analysis rejects a totally individualistic explanation. Powerful interests benefit from these behaviors: a tobacco industry that is still heavily subsidized by the government, and an alcohol industry that bombards young people with advertising that associates drinking with popularity and sexual attractiveness. To define

illness, as Parsons did, simply as the result of either "bad luck" or individual irresponsibility is to cover up an important source of illness.

In addition to the critique of the individual-responsibility model, many other criticisms have been leveled at Parsons's concept of the sick role. One is that the sick role is more applicable to some types of illness than to others. It best fits **acute disorders**: illnesses of limited duration from which the victim either recovers or dies. Examples are influenza, pneumonia, and appendicitis. It does not apply as well to **chronic disorders**: long-term or permanent conditions, such as arthritis, allergies, and muscular dystrophy, that may or may not be fatal. Because these diseases cannot be "cured," obliging the victim to try to get well makes less sense. The sick role concept has also been criticized for reflecting a middle-class bias and for emphasizing treatment over prevention. However, these facts do not negate its importance or usefulness in medical sociology. The sick role may be defined differently by different groups (Zola, 1966), but virtually all definitions contain the notion of wanting to get well (Twaddle, 1979).

The Health Benefits of Modernization

Good health is important to the operations of society. For this reason, functionalists hold that a well-functioning social system will maximize health and minimize illness among its members. As we see in Chapter 18, many functionalists see society as undergoing a process of social evolution—a gradual process whereby society becomes more complex and better functioning, and the quality of life improves. Modernization and industrialization contribute to this process by providing benefits to both the individual and society. This is evident in the relationship between modernization and health: In general, modernization and industrialization are associated with longer lives and fewer illnesses.

Massive outbreaks of deadly epidemics have generally been eliminated from industrial societies (the present epidemic of AIDS is a recent exception). Modernization and economic development have brought three great changes

that have taken place over the past two to three centuries. First, people are living much longer. The life expectancy in most industrialized countries today is over 70 years of age, and in some, it has reached 80 years of age. Life expectancy was between about 25 and 35 years of age as recently as the eighteenth century in some of these countries (Population Reference Bureau, 2001; Thomlinson, 1976, p. 84). Second, people are healthier than they were in the past, and they do not get as seriously ill when they do get sick. Conditions that were once life-threatening, such as influenza and diarrhea, are usually little more than a temporary nuisance today. Third, as the preceding sentence suggests, the causes of death have changed. In industrialized societies, heart disease, cancer, and stroke account for most deaths. In 2014, for example, these three causes of death accounted for more than 55 percent of all deaths in the United States (Table 16.1). Partly, this is because our lifestyles and social conditions have made us more susceptible to such illnesses, but more important, it is because in the past people simply didn't live long enough to acquire these illnesses. Rather, most deaths were from contagious diseases that frequently took the form of epidemics like those described at the beginning of the chapter. Directly or indirectly, malnutrition was another important cause of mortality until a century or two ago. In industrialized countries, that too

has declined greatly as a cause of death. Diet remains a factor in illness and mortality, but in the United States, too much food and the wrong kinds of food are the most serious dietary problems for much of the population.

Changes in health and longevity have not been limited to industrialized countries. Malnutrition and contagious diseases are more serious problems in the less-developed countries, but there, too, dramatic changes have taken place. The average life expectancy in nonindustrial countries had reached 68 years of age for men and 72 years of age for women by 2015, which is much higher than people enjoyed *anywhere* 200 years ago (Population Reference Bureau, 2016).

Thus, the nature and development of society have had worldwide effects on health, illness, and longevity. Although so far these effects have been primarily good, there have been some negatives, a point that is strongly emphasized by the conflict perspective.

Health and Society: A Conflict View

Whereas functionalists focus on the sick role and its contribution to the effectiveness of society and on the health benefits of modernization, conflict theorists examine how the

Table 16.1 Leading Causes of Death, United States, 2020

	Number	Percent	Crude Death Rate (per 100,000)
Deaths from all causes	3,383,729	100.0	1,027.0
Leading deaths:			
1. Heart disease	696,962	20.6	211.5
2. Cancer	602,350	17.8	182.8
3. COVID-19	350,831	10.4	106.5
4. Stroke and related cardiovascular diseases	160,264	4.7	78.6
5. Chronic respiratory disease	152,657	4.5	46.3
6. Alzheimer disease	134,242	4.0	40.7
All others	2,097,306	61.9	

Source: National Vital Statistics Report: September 22, 2023. National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, mortality data file. Table 16.1 Number of deaths, percentage of total deaths, death rate, and age-adjusted death rate for 2020, percent change in age-adjusted death rates in 2020 from 2019, and ratio of age-adjusted death rates by sex and Hispanic origin and race for the 15 leading causes of death for total population in 2020: United States www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr72/nvsr72-10.pdf (downloaded September 27, 2023).

distribution of wealth and power in society influences health. One way that this occurs is through environmental degradation. It is often to the advantage of the wealthy or powerful to engage in behaviors that damage the environment. Moreover, those who suffer the greatest damage to their health as a result are often the least wealthy and powerful.

Power, Environmental Quality, and Health

Conflict theorists do not see health-threatening pollutants as merely an unfortunate by-product of industrial growth. Conflict theorists point out that manufacturers and producers have an important stake in pollution (Commoner, 1982; Epstein, 1981). It is usually cheaper or more profitable (at least in the short run) to dump pollutants into the environment than to dispose of them safely. Similarly, products that are known pollutants—detergents as opposed to soaps, Freon-charged air conditioners as opposed to other kinds—may be cheaper to produce than environmentally safer products. Because producers are out to maximize profits, they can be expected to take the cheapest and most profitable route, unless they are prevented by regulation from doing so (Commoner, 1982).

The tendency for producers to cut costs by damaging the environment can be seen in both capitalist and socialist societies. In the former Soviet Union, with its unelected government accountable to no one, the environment often suffered as a result of desires to boost industrial and military production at the lowest possible cost. The result was widespread air and water pollution worse than that in most other industrialized countries, and poor safety procedures resulting in disasters such as the Chernobyl nuclear accident, which affected the health of thousands in the Ukraine.

A similar dynamic occurs under unregulated capitalism where regulations or enforcement of regulations to protect the environment may be lax. This, together with continued national and world population growth and economic development, has exacerbated the most serious environmental problems such as

acid rain and the potential for global warming, known as the “greenhouse effect,” caused by the burning of fossil fuels.

In recent years, the lowest per capita generation of pollutants has been in Western European countries, which have mixed economies (see Chapter 11) and democratic governments (OECD, 1979). In such countries, strong but democratically elected governments can act on public concerns about pollution, often leading to greater regulation of industry than occurs in the United States. However, even in these countries, pollution is a serious health problem, because of their high population densities. Western Europe has less pollution *per capita* than the United States but as much or more per square mile, meaning that people can be exposed to high levels of pollutants in their air and water.

Modernization and Health: The Epidemiology of Cancer

As societies modernize, the number of profitable industries that pollute the environment and thereby damage health tends to grow. This can be seen by looking at the epidemiology of cancer. **Epidemiology** is the measurement of the extent of medical disorders and the social, demographic, and geographic characteristics of those who become ill. It is concerned with the incidence of disorders—the number of new cases of a disorder that appear within a specified time—and with the prevalence of disorders—the total number or proportion of the population having a disorder at any given time. Epidemiologists compare incidence and prevalence among different groups—such as men and women; black people, Hispanics, Asians, and white Anglos; and wealthy and poor—as well as in different geographic areas.

Epidemiological studies of cancer show a strong correlation between the incidence and prevalence of cancer and environmental pollutants (Vogelstein and Kinzler, 1992; Shields and Harris, 1991). Although cancer may be the most deadly disorder resulting from environmental contamination, it is not the only one. A variety of nerve, liver, skin, and respiratory conditions,

as well as birth defects, have been linked to various environmental contaminants.

Conflict theorists also point out that the health consequences of environmental pollution are not shared equally among all groups. Often, it is the neighborhoods of the poorest and least powerful that become dumping grounds for hazardous substances. In recent years, there has been increasing awareness of the problem of environmental racism: the concentration of pollution and waste disposal in areas occupied by relatively powerless minority groups. Examples of this can be seen in the number of hazardous chemical plants around 98 percent-black East St. Louis, Illinois (Kozol, 1991), and in the increasing use of Native American reservations as hazardous waste dumps. Because of the desperate economic condition of the reservations, some tribal councils have entered into contracts with companies that will pay to locate such dumps, unwanted everywhere else, on the reservations. Environmental racism undoubtedly accounts for some of the health disadvantages of minority groups. Epidemiological studies show, for example, that most types of cancer are more common among black people than among white people (*The New York Times*, 1991c). In recent years, a number of studies have documented higher exposure to toxic substances in minority and low-income areas, though there is some debate as to whether this is more closely tied to race or class (Downey, 1998; Maher, 1998; Boer et al., 1997; Yandle and Burton, 1996).

Social Inequality and Health

Conflict theorists are also interested in the broader issue of how social inequality affects health. In virtually all societies, people of higher socioeconomic status live longer and healthier lives than people of lower socioeconomic status (see Cockerham, 1988; Lundberg, 1986; Thomson, 1976). There are many reasons for this difference, some related to the individual and others to the social system. Conflict theorists stress those causes related to the social system, arguing that unequal access to the resources needed for a healthy life inevitably leads to

inequalities in health and mortality. They also argue that the health-care system often provides better care to those with more money.

Income and Health

Many of the reasons for social-class differences in health are related to income. People with higher incomes enjoy better food and shelter. In the developing countries, of course, malnutrition and inadequate shelter are more serious problems than in the United States, and class differences in health are even greater.

Poor and working-class people also face a greater risk of injury or exposure to contaminants on the job. Poor people are more likely than others to be victims of violent crime, and they are more likely to live in locations where pollution, flooding, and other hazards threaten their health and safety. Makeshift heating and cooking arrangements, inadequate electrical wiring, and older housing all increase the danger of fire for poor people. Poor people also experience more divorce, separation, and unemployment, which raise their levels of stress significantly above those of the more affluent. Although we often think of ulcers, high blood pressure, and heart attacks as perils for the overworked business executive, the rates of these diseases are actually higher among the poor (Susser, Hopper, and Richman, 1983; Cockerham, 1988). A recent study found that genetic propensity for higher body mass index is effectively combated by higher socioeconomic status or upward mobility; while lower socioeconomic status or downward mobility does not, and in fact amplifies the effects of body mass index. Interestingly, this effect is not as strong in more recent generations as it was in older generations (Liu and Guo, 2015).

Race, Ethnicity, and Health

In the United States, race and ethnicity are related to both illness and mortality (Farley, 2000, pp. 273–74; 311–12). African Americans live an average of about three and a half years less than white people (National Center for Health Statistics, 2015, 2001b; Farley, 2000, p. 273). More than twice as many black babies as white babies die in the first year of life, and both black people and Hispanics are sick more

days per year than white people (National Center for Health Statistics, 2016, 2001b, c, 1999, 1986). Black people are almost one-third more likely than white people to be disabled. These variances are not the product of innate differences in susceptibility to disease, though such differences do exist for some diseases such as sickle-cell anemia (much more common among black people) and multiple sclerosis (more common among white people). Rather, they are related to social conditions that are largely associated with social class. A study by Baquet et al. (1991), for example, showed that the higher cancer rates of African Americans as compared to white people are entirely the result of differences in socioeconomic status.

As we saw in earlier chapters, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans are all far more likely to live below the poverty level than white people. Therefore, they experience more stress. For example, the incidence of high blood pressure is much higher among black people than among white people (Cockerham, 1988). Evidence that this is largely the result of poverty comes from research by Livingston (1985), which found that high blood pressure is more common among low-income black people than among either middle-class or upper-class black people. However, recent research also suggests that social factors linked to race may cause health problems regardless of income. For example, anger arising from the experience of racism may play a role in high blood pressure among African Americans. Similarly, Monk (2015) found that for African Americans, skin tone could be used to predict the level of perceived discrimination, and in turn, skin tone could be used to predict the health outcomes of subjects, including depression and self-reported physical and mental health. In addition, self-reported skin tone was a better predictor of perceived discrimination than objectively observed skin tone (Monk, 2015). Other diseases may also result from stresses and risks tied to race that are independent from the effects of income: Asthma and some kinds of cancer are more common among African Americans than white people, even at similar income levels (Miller, 2000; Baris et al., 2000; Grant, Lytle, and Weiss, 2000). Since

both of these diseases can be triggered by pollutants, environmental racism may play a significant role. Because of their high poverty rate and frequent lack of medical insurance, African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans are also less likely to get adequate prenatal care than white people, which largely explains their high infant mortality rates. The risks of injury or death from criminal victimization, accident, and fire are far greater for these groups than for white people, and all these risks are of social origin.

Education and Health

The poorer health of lower-income people may also result from their relative lack of access to education. People with less education are less likely to know the value of a healthy diet and lifestyle in preventing illness (Harris and Guten, 1979), which symptoms require medical attention (see Cockerham et al., 1986; Koos, 1954), and how to take care of themselves when they are sick. Therefore, it is not surprising that even among people with similar incomes, those with less education are less healthy (Grossman, 1982; Williams, 1986; Ross and Wu, 1995; Baris et al., 2000).

Research, however, indicates that people of different income and education levels may be getting more similar in the extent to which they seek to prevent illness by adopting healthier lifestyles. In analyzing data from a statewide survey in Illinois, Cockerham and associates (1986) found little difference among the social classes in food habits, exercise, smoking, or alcohol use. Virtually everyone, for example, attempted to engage in some form of exercise, and most people tried to eat food with good nutritional value, avoiding chemical additives, and so on.

On the other hand, important social-class differences, probably linked to both education and income, have emerged in the ways people use doctors. These differences are explored in the following section, when we examine health from the interactionist perspective. In addition, people with more education typically have more rewarding and less stressful jobs, greater social support, and are more knowledgeable about the effects of lifestyle choices (e.g., exercise and

smoking) on health. All of these factors contribute to better health among people with higher levels of education (Ross and Wu, 1995).

In evaluating the conflict perspective on health and illness, it is clear that this perspective is helpful for understanding why race, income, and education have sizable effects on health, even before we consider the issue of access to health care, which is addressed later in this chapter. The conflict perspective also reminds us that modernization has brought substantial costs as well as benefits with respect to health, in the form of environmental pollutants that cause health problems.

Health and Society: An Interactionist View

The Meaning of Health, Sickness, and Illness

How do you know when you are sick? The answer is that you have learned from others what it means to be sick, and when the way you feel fits your understanding of what it means to be sick, you decide that you are sick. In sociological terms, you adopt the *sick role*, based largely on messages about that role that you have received from others. From an interactionist standpoint, the important fact is that illness is socially defined: You learn from others how to decide that you are sick. Suppose you have a headache—an objective physical condition. Does this condition mean that you are ill? You have to decide, and you decide on the basis of messages you have gotten from others in the past: “A headache means you have a fever”; “After the day I’ve had, no wonder I’ve got a headache”; or “If you drink any more beer you’ll have a hangover tomorrow.” Your decision on the meaning of your headache will partly depend on the context or situation in which you got it (Locker, 1981). In addition, you may check out the impressions of others (Berger and Luckmann, 1966)—“Mom, do you think I’m getting a cold?” Ultimately, you make a subjective decision as to whether or not you are ill, based on current and past messages from others, in the context of the current situation.

Sociologists distinguish between **illness**—a condition that occurs when *you* perceive that you are suffering from a bodily disorder—and **sickness**—a condition that occurs when *others* perceive that you are suffering from a bodily disorder (Clark, 1988; Twaddle and Hessler, 1977). Even if you believe you are ill when others don’t, or vice versa, the basis of that belief is a set of cues about sickness that you have learned from others (Lewis, 1953).

Ultimately, if you think you are or may be sick, you may go to a doctor. The doctor may or may not diagnose a **disease**—a specific condition defined by a medical practitioner as a cause of illness. Here again, a subjective judgment is being made of your condition, this time by a doctor in accordance with their medical training and experience. This judgment may or may not accord with your own judgment or that of others about your health status. Although the doctor’s judgment is based on medical training, it is still subjective—as anyone who has gone to two different doctors and gotten two different diagnoses of the same symptoms will tell you. Doctors’ diagnoses of disease are based on messages they have received about what conditions indicate what disease—or even whether a given condition indicates any disease.

Doctors socialized in different schools and different countries can and do define disease differently. For example, you have probably never heard of a mild cardiac disorder known as *Herzinsuffizienz*. Yet if you visit Germany, you might: This disorder is frequently diagnosed by German doctors but is virtually unrecognized anywhere else (Payer, 1988). The reason is not that the disease is unique to the German environment, but rather that doctors trained in German medical schools learn to recognize a certain condition and classify it as *Herzinsuffizienz*.

Because culture, training, and experience influence their judgments, doctors sometimes make the “wrong” diagnosis, even when there is a clear medical explanation for a condition. In other cases, there may be no clear-cut “right” diagnosis; the meaning of a given set of signs and symptoms is simply viewed differently by doctors from varying backgrounds.

Illness, sickness, and disease, then, are *all* socially defined, and for this reason vary from

one culture to another. Thus, not only do German doctors diagnose different diseases than American doctors, but people of different countries, social classes, and ethnic groups use different rules to define themselves as ill or others as sick. In the United States, Italian and Jewish Americans are more expressive and emotional about pain than Anglo-Saxon Americans and Irish Americans, who tend to maintain a “stiff upper lip” (see Croog, 1961; Mechanic, 1963; Sternbach and Tursky, 1965; Zborowski, 1969). Hence, what you have learned about how to decide when you are ill is a product of your particular social situation.

Gender and Health

The influence of social expectation on health can be seen by examining differences between men and women in health and mortality. In general, women are sick more than men, but they also live longer than men (Cockerham, 1992, p. 41). The reasons for this appear to be (1) socially learned differences between men and women in their responses to signs of a medical disorder, (2) role differences between men and women, and (3) biological influences. The latter are evident in the higher prenatal and neonatal mortality rates of males. However, it is the social influences on sickness and mortality that are of greatest interest to sociologists.

Gender roles clearly account for some of the differences in health and mortality between men and women. Men are more likely to die of accidents, both at work and at play. The highest occupational death rates because of accidents occur in predominantly male occupations (Cockerham, 1992, p. 40). Occupational stress, higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse, and a more aggressive, competitive lifestyle may all contribute to higher male death rates.

Although male mortality rates are higher, women are sick more often than men. Women are more likely to have chronic conditions that do not cause death, while men more often have chronic conditions that lead to death. Part of this difference may be biological, but part of it also appears to reflect differences between men and women in how readily they adopt the sick

role. Women may more readily acknowledge that they are sick, and they use medical services much more than men, even after usage rates are adjusted for services related to pregnancy and childbirth (National Center for Health Statistics, 1992b, p. 219; Ritchey, LaGory, and Mullis, 1991; Cleary, Mechanic, and Greenley, 1982). The greater willingness of women to adopt the sick role may also be one reason why their mortality rates are lower.

As the roles of men and women become more similar, some of these differences may decrease (Verbrugge, 1985). For example, men were once much more likely than women to smoke cigarettes. As the cigarette-smoking behavior of men and women has become more similar, so have the rates of lung cancer among men and women. And today, among teenagers, rates of alcohol use are similar for boys and girls, and overall, comparable levels of alcohol consumption have greater effects on the health of women than of men (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2016). For these reasons, gender differences in alcohol-related medical problems could decrease in the future, as has been the case with lung cancer.

Personal Outlook and Health

Thus far, in considering health from an interactionist standpoint, we have seen that a person's response to a given physical condition is a product of social interaction. There are also similar influences on the physical conditions themselves. To a certain extent, a self-fulfilling prophecy operates when it comes to illness. People who believe that they have little control over their health are more likely to get sick than people with a more positive attitude (Seeman and Seeman, 1983). If you believe that you have some control over your health, you are more likely to exercise; to avoid overeating, smoking, and excessive drinking; and to try harder to eat a balanced diet and to protect yourself from environmental contaminants. This process suggests another reason why socioeconomic status influences health status. Recall from Chapter 6 that people of lower status experience less control over their lives in general (Kohn, 1969). As

a result, they are less likely to *believe* that they can control their health and may therefore be less likely to adopt health-enhancing behaviors such as exercise or quitting smoking (Jain et al., 2001; Ross, Mirowsky, and Cockerham, 1983; Seeman and Evans, 1962).

The same forces that influence people's health behavior also influence the ways in which they use the health-care system. According to Cockerham (1988), one example of this is that people of different social classes use doctors differently. Because, based on their experiences, poor people have less confidence in their ability to control their life situations, they are more likely to turn responsibility for managing their health over to their doctors. They are equally likely to go to the doctor whether their symptoms indicate a possible serious illness or not, and they are more likely to follow the doctor's instructions blindly.

This behavior has several negative consequences. First, low-income patients take "the doctor's word" even if they don't understand what it means, and therefore, they have a poorer understanding of their disorder. Moreover, if the doctor does make mistakes, or if the condition changes after a visit to the doctor, they are more likely to continue following "doctor's orders" anyway.

Middle-class patients, in contrast, have adopted a consumer orientation toward medical care—a certain healthy skepticism that allows them to be less dependent on physicians and thus quicker to respond on their own to symptoms (Haug and Lavin, 1981, 1983). Cockerham (1988) argues that the medical profession encourages "a healthy lifestyle"—exercise, a balanced diet, no smoking or heavy drinking—but discourages the consumerism that leads to patients' asking for explanations or questioning the doctor's judgment. Poor people have developed a healthier lifestyle in recent years, but they still have not become skeptical consumers of medicine.

There is increasing evidence that this may account for some of the socioeconomic differences in health and life expectancy. Research indicates that patients' own sense of their health status is a very strong predictor of subsequent longevity. For example, whether people

see themselves as being in "excellent," "good," "fair," or "poor" health is a much better predictor of whether they will still be alive five, ten, or 15 years later than results of physical examinations (Idler and Angel, 1990; Idler and Kasl, 1991). Among older people, their own sense of health predicted their longevity even better than diagnoses of cancer, liver disease, heart attack, and other diseases (Idler and Kasl, 1991). These results suggest very strongly that people often have a good sense of their own health, which may be based both on how they feel and on their knowledge of risk factors, such as disease in their families (Goleman, 1991). At the same time, these feelings may to some extent act as a self-fulfilling prophecy. Nonetheless, they suggest that patients and doctors should often trust patients' feelings about their own health, and that patients should be wary of any physician who does not. If middle-class patients are more trusting of their own feelings and quicker to challenge doctors who are not, this may well be one reason for their better average health.

Mental Health

If social processes play a role in physical health, sickness, and illness, the same is even more true in the case of mental health. For example, stress related to social roles has been shown to account for much of the variation in mental health among people of different age, marital status, gender, and occupation (Turner, Wheaton, and Lloyd, 1995). The study of mental health has grown within the field of medical sociology to the point that there are about as many sociological studies of mental health as there are of physical health (Cockerham, 1981). The study, assessment, and treatment of mental health is even more difficult than that of physical health, because there is less agreement on the nature and underlying causes of what are labeled as mental disorders. Contrast a diagnosis of appendicitis with a diagnosis of clinical depression. An appendix can, through surgical exploration, be examined and definitively identified as inflamed or normal. However, because mental disorders involve sets of behaviors that have more than one possible meaning,

a definitive diagnosis of clinical depression is more difficult.

Mental disorders are commonly defined as conditions that are psychological and affect behavior; that involve stress, impairment, or undesirable behavior; and that may respond to treatment (Spitzer and Wilson, 1975). There are a number of fairly well-defined disorders, such as schizophrenia and depression, that appear to exist in some form in virtually all societies (Townsend, 1978; Murphy, 1976). Thus, the notion seems valid that there are certain identifiable kinds of mental disorders that impair a person's ability to function in life.

Social Factors in Diagnosis and Treatment

While identifiable disorders do seem to exist, the challenge is how to put definitions of such disorders into operation in actual diagnosis and treatment. For example, what behavior patterns "count" as indicators of clinical depression and how much of those behaviors does one have to exhibit in order to be diagnosed as clinically depressed? Even when the pattern of behaviors linked to a disorder is clearly defined, as with schizophrenia and depression, various factors influence whether a person will or will not be diagnosed and treated. For example, factors such as the presence of friends or family members, a referral by a physician, social class, and marital status influence mental hospital admissions, even among patients with similar symptoms (Cockerham, 1981, p. 267).

Additionally, a given behavior may denote a mental disorder, or it may denote a cultural difference between the patient or client and the psychiatrist or psychologist. Consider the following examples from C. C. Hughes (1993). A diagnostic guide (Freedman, Kaplan, and Sadock, 1975) notes the importance of dress and eye contact in making judgments about a patient. But different reference groups have different expectations about dress—teenagers, businesspeople, and cowboys, for example, do not dress the same. Do differences in dress indicate different mental states, or do they indicate that people belong to different groups? Does a lack of eye contact indicate that a person has a mental disorder, or that the person's culture forbids looking directly into the eyes of someone

(like a psychiatrist) who has greater power or social status? This norm is common among both Asian Americans and African Americans (Argyle and Cook, 1976). The possibility of such alternative interpretations makes the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders even more a social process than is the case with physical disorders.

Changing Views of Mental Disorders

It is also clear that society's approach to mental disorders has changed over time. Prior (1993) has shown that at different points in the past century in industrialized countries, at least three different explanations of mental disorders have predominated. During the first two or three decades of the twentieth century, mental disorders were referred to as *insanity*, a legal concept (e.g., Southard, 1917, quoted in Prior, 1993). The insane were housed in an *asylum*, the primary purpose of which was to isolate "lunatics" from the "normal" population. In the asylum, the insane were cared for by "attendants," not "treated" by doctors. Insanity was seen as a rather unalterable reality, not easily changed by medical intervention. Hence, bodily care, not curing, was the objective.

By around 1930, the term "asylum" was falling out of favor, and people with mental disorders were placed in "mental hospitals." Thus, mental disorders were being viewed more as a *medical* problem and less as a legal one. "Lunatics" became "patients," who were now cared for by doctors and nurses. A variety of medical interventions became common, including hydrotherapy, electroconvulsive ("shock") therapy, insulin coma therapy, and psychosurgery (Prior, 1993, p. 30). These interventions show that mental disorders had come to be seen as medical disorders similar to physical illnesses, which might improve if medical wisdom could find the "right treatment." Mental illness remained far more stigmatized, however, than physical illness, and mental hospitals, like the earlier asylums, were typically located in rural areas or on the urban fringe, on large tracts of land with gates and walls, separated from the "normal" population. And despite the belief in

the efficacy of medical treatment, people often ended up in such hospitals for life.

The third period began to emerge after World War II and clearly includes the decades since about 1960. In this period, which has continued to the present, mental disorders have been seen as largely *social*, though the medical view has retained substantial influence as well. Under this approach, mental disorders are viewed to a large extent as consequences of community problems or dysfunctions. Thus, the origins of mental disorders lie at least partly in the community, not merely in the individual. Mental hospitals have fallen out of favor, more and more patients have been deinstitutionalized, and when hospitalization has been required (usually for only a short time), it has increasingly taken place in the mental health departments of ordinary community hospitals. A community mental health movement has emerged, and mental health is no longer just the province of the psychiatrist. Psychologists, social workers, community nurses, and others have been added to the mix of caregivers, and whenever possible, care occurs on an outpatient basis in community mental health centers and similar facilities. Issues such as unemployment, family conflict, and gangs become relevant as forces influencing mental health, and social workers and others seek to address them all as parts of a system that can affect mental health. In many cases, the person with a mental disorder is no longer a “patient” to be “treated” but a “client” to be “served” (Prior, 1993). The medical model has not disappeared—in fact, drugs are even more widely used than in the past. But typically, they are used in combination with system- and community-oriented “interventions,” not as stand-alone “treatments” like they were in the past.

The important thing to understand, according to Prior, is that these changes reflect a shift in professional and societal thinking about the causes of mental disorders. What was once seen as an unchangeable condition became an illness to be treated, and then, at least in part, came to be viewed as an outgrowth of societal problems. Today, we view mental disorders largely in this way, though the medical model also retains a good deal of influence. And the changes in

treatment reflect this. Today we hospitalize fewer people for shorter times and do so in community settings. In fact, much of the treatment now occurs entirely outside hospitals. In part, this shift has been the result of cost-saving efforts, and of the introduction of medicines that control the more disruptive symptoms of mental disorders. But Prior (1993) shows strong evidence that the move for deinstitutionalization was under way before the budget cuts and before the availability of many of the medicines most widely used today. Thus, he argues convincingly, today’s community treatment largely reflects the current view that mental disorders are largely a social or community problem.

The Institution of Medicine

Some kind of health-care system—a social institution known as *medicine*—exists in every society. The form of that institution varies widely among societies, depending on culture, level of technology, and the economic system. What is less variable is the relatively high status accorded to medical practitioners—an indication of the value that most societies place on good health (Twaddle and Hessler, 1977, p. 140). As has been suggested, societal beliefs about the causes of sickness play a big role in determining the nature of medicine. In societies where sickness is thought to be caused by evil spirits or witchcraft, for example, medicine is the domain of spiritual healers who perform ceremonies aimed at driving the offending spirits or curses away.

Traditional and Scientific Medicine

Traditional Medicine

Spiritual healing is one of several types of traditional medicine. Such practices are common in preindustrial societies, where they take a variety of forms. Besides blaming witchcraft and evil spirits for their ills, preindustrial societies frequently view sickness as a punishment from God or the gods for evil behavior or as the result of the soul leaving the body (Twaddle and Hessler, 1977, p. 141). When people believe in these

causes of illness, they often turn to prayer, repentance, and faith healing, so medicine becomes largely the domain of religious figures. Another common belief is that illness results from the presence of foreign substances within the body or from an imbalance of forces affecting the body. In societies with this belief, medicine centers around a combination of magical ceremonies and preparations of herbs and other substances aimed at restoring the proper balance of forces or helping the body to fight off the offending agents.

Scientific Medicine

Industrialized societies subscribe to a scientific notion of the nature of sickness and disease. They believe that some identifiable malfunction of the body underlies all illness. Sickness is often caused by the invasion of the body by some microscopic living organism—bacteria or a virus. It may also stem from the failure of some bodily organ to work as it should, the growth of abnormal body tissue, or an injury. The underlying assumption of scientific medicine is that the cause of a sickness can be identified through observation and treated scientifically. Medicine in industrialized societies is the domain of scientifically trained physicians who use technology to treat and cure illness. A key element of scientific medicine is the *hospital*, the setting where the diagnosis and treatment of relatively serious illnesses take place.

Blends of Traditional and Scientific Medicine

Although scientific medicine is generally associated with industrialized societies and traditional forms of medicine with preindustrial societies, the distinction is not really that clear-cut. Many preindustrial societies have, in fact, combined scientific methods of medicine with more traditional methods. One of the clearest examples of this is Native American medicine. In preindustrial America, medicine among both Native Americans and Americans of European ancestry was a blend of science and superstition. It could be argued that Native American medicine was at least as scientific as European medicine. Among the medical advances made by Native American tribes were effective oral contraceptives (first used by Native Americans over 100 years ago but not “discovered” by modern American

medicine until the 1950s), stimulant and anesthetic drugs, isolation of sick people, surgery, antibiotic drugs, and a cure for scurvy (Twaddle and Hessler, 1977, pp. 152–56). These techniques, developed through a process of trial and error much like modern scientific experimentation, were combined with religious rituals.

Similarly, traditional forms of medicine continue to coexist with scientific medicine. Millions of Americans and people in many other societies believe in faith healing, which is practiced by both Pentecostals and Christian Scientists, among others, in the United States and other countries. Another form of traditional medicine is herbal medicine. Herbs or oils are believed by some to help in the treatment of a variety of maladies, both physical and emotional. Various forms of herbal medicine are practiced by a variety of groups in the United States, including Asian Americans, Hispanics, middle-class white people who identify with the “New Age” movement, and rural groups from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. *Curanderismo*, a time-honored form of Latin American folk medicine, is practiced by significant numbers of Hispanics in the United States. It is based on the assumption that sickness results largely from an imbalance of forces, such as heat and cold, in the human body, and it relies on herbs and foods aimed at restoring the balance, in combination with the use of religious or magical symbols (Clark, 1970; Twaddle and Hessler, 1977; Willard, 1972).

Although traditional forms of medicine such as faith healing, herbal medicine, and *curanderismo* are based on different assumptions than modern scientific medicine, the reality is that significant numbers of people rely on both kinds of medicine. For example, thousands of American patients with cancer spent great amounts of money during the 1970s to travel to other countries to get Laetrile. This substance was extracted from apricot pits and was rumored to cure cancer, despite the absence of any scientific evidence that it worked and some evidence that it could be harmful. (It was banned in the United States for these reasons.) Significantly, most people who used Laetrile also used such conventional therapies as radiation. Similarly, most people who go to faith healers or *curanderos* also go to regular doctors.

Does Traditional Medicine Work?

In some cases, traditional medicine may “work” in the same way as a **placebo**, a non-medicated substance that a patient believes is an effective medicine for their condition. When people *believe* that they are being treated by something that works, their personal outlook improves, which may actually make them feel better (Mechanic, 1978, p. 429). Are they really better? In some cases, yes. Actual physiological changes have been documented in people given placebos and in people treated by traditional medicine. Warts and stomach ulcers, for example, have healed at above-average rates among people given placebos (Frank, 1969). However, placebos also can have side effects, and the effectiveness of both placebos and traditional medicine varies widely, depending on the patient’s personality, illness, and social situation (Mechanic, 1978, pp. 427–30).

Some research suggests that some forms of traditional medicine offer both emotional and psychological benefits. Faith healing, for example, appears to relieve stress associated with illness and to help in adapting to a situation of bad health (Glik, 1990). On the other hand, traditional medicine does keep some people away from scientific medicine that could help them. In recent years, the courts have repeatedly been asked to rule in cases in

which parents withheld scientific medicine or vaccines from their children in favor of various forms of faith healing or herbal medicine. In many of these cases, the courts have ordered medical treatment, finding that whatever adults may choose to do for their own illnesses, freedom of religion does not include the right to place a child at risk of death or ill health by withholding scientific medicine. However, how willing the courts are to intervene varies with the circumstances and the degree of risk to the child (Vara, 2014).

Modern Medicine: The Medicalization of Everything?

Although forms of traditional medicine persist in industrialized societies, scientific medicine is by far the dominant medical institution in such societies. Over time, scientific medicine has grown dramatically in industrialized countries (see Table 16.2) and has defined as diseases an increasing number of problems and conditions. The presumption is that these problems are the result of bodily malfunctions rather than stress or environmental factors, for example, and that the answer to them is medical treatment. Sociologists call this **medicalization**. The trend to medicalization has been most pronounced since World War II, and it has been

Table 16.2 The Growth of Medicine in the United States During the Last Half of the Twentieth Century: Selected Indicators

	<i>Total National Health Expenditures (in Millions)</i>	<i>Active Physicians (per 10,000 residents)</i>
1960	27,122	
1965	41,627	
1975	132,666	15.3
1985	439,877	20.7
2000	1,365,999	25.8
2009	2,492,739	27.3
2019	3,757,382	29.9
2021	4,255,127	

Source: Health Expenditures, 1960–2021. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Office of the Actuary, National Health Statistics Group. www.cms.gov/data-research/statistics-trends-and-reports/national-health-expenditure-data/historical (Downloaded September 29, 2023).

applied especially to human behaviors defined as causing problems (Clark, 1988). Those who eat too much have a compulsive eating disorder; those who eat too little, anorexia nervosa. Drug addiction, alcoholism, childhood hyperactivity ("attention deficit disorder" or "hyperkinetic impulse disorder"), and insomnia have all been defined as diseases or medical problems. Problems of personal adjustment are grouped together under the label *mental illness*—although diagnosis of any given disorder (e.g., schizophrenia) is often highly subjective and not very reliable (Clausen, 1979; Scheff, 1975; World Health Organization, 1973). Moreover, the medical categories tend to expand. While major depression may legitimately be considered a disease, mere unhappiness has increasingly come to be defined as "minor depression" or "depressive disorder NOS" (not otherwise specified), and thus also is treated as a medical condition (Dworkin, 2001). In part for this reason, the proportion of patients diagnosed with depression doubled between around 1970 and 2000, and the use of medicines to treat depression has soared (Dworkin, 2001; see also Heath, 1999).

Reasons for Medicalization

Although behaviors like those described in the last paragraph can be serious problems, it is questionable whether they are all diseases. The reasons for the growing medicalization of industrialized societies are probably more social than scientific (Schneider and Conrad, 1980). In many cases, no specific bodily condition that would lead to certain behavior problems can be identified. Health providers have encouraged the medicalization of these problems because it has greatly increased their authority and domain of activity. Major industries have developed to treat eating disorders, alcohol and drug dependence, smoking, childhood hyperactivity, and so forth (Schneider and Conrad, 1980). That these industries are clearly part of the medical establishment is shown by the dominant roles that doctors and hospitals play in these industries.

Medicalization is seen as more humane and effective than the alternatives. Formerly, many behavior problems currently defined as

diseases were viewed as immoral behavior, bad habits, or delinquency. Thus, the person with the problem was placed at fault. With medicalization, it is possible to say, "It's not your fault, you have a disease" (Clark, 1988; Illich, 1976). Removing the stigma encourages the person to acknowledge the problem and do something about it. Moreover, medical treatment is usually more effective than threats and punishment (Clark, 1988). Sociologists point out, though, that medical treatment is still a form of social control (Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich, 1975; Schneider and Conrad, 1980). For example, the mandatory alcoholism treatment program becomes a functional substitute for the previously used "drunk tank."

Limits of Medicalization

Unfortunately, medicalizing a problem does not always remove the stigma attached to it. Labels such as "alcoholic," "drug addict," "schizophrenic," or "hyperactive child" can still be considerably damaging. For this reason, some social scientists argue that although the disease model has been helpful in getting some people to seek treatment, it has inhibited others from doing so. The individual's response depends on their personality and culture. Another criticism of the medical model is that, like earlier models, it stresses individual characteristics rather than the social situation as the source of the problem (Conrad, 1975). In fact, problems such as over- or undereating, substance abuse, and excessive activity in children arise from a mixture of psychological, sociological, and biomedical influences that vary from person to person. Thus, although the medical model has become the most common approach to such problems, its appropriateness continues to be debated, and its value probably varies widely.

Medicalization of Nondisease Conditions

In addition to behavior problems, a variety of routine life events have become medicalized. Births occur in hospitals; they have become an expensive event that involves a large number of medical workers. This was not always so; it came about as a result of vigorous efforts by physicians

during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to gain control of the birthing process (Savage, 1986; Mehl, 1977; Zola, 1972). Pregnancy today is defined as a medical condition; pregnant women are often expected to adopt something akin to the sick role. They are placed under the care of a physician and may be expected to withdraw from some of their usual activities. Medicine has become the answer to a range of problems in other areas of life, ranging from discrepancies between one's gender identity and one's sex (the sex-change operation) to dissatisfaction with one's appearance (plastic surgery).

The medicalization of these conditions brings both costs and benefits. The medicalization of birth, for example, has meant there will be rapid detection of, and treatment for, any problems that arise. For this reason, infant mortality is significantly lower among women who receive early and regular prenatal care. In addition, fetal monitoring during labor may have contributed to the substantial decline in infant mortality that occurred in industrialized countries during the 1980s. Yet a strong case can be made that for standard births, medicalization has been excessive. Routine fetal monitoring, for example, may *increase* the risk of infant mortality from unnecessary cesarean deliveries (Banta and Thacker, 1979). In the Netherlands, nearly half of all births occur in the home, under the supervision of a midwife rather than a doctor, and the infant mortality rate there is 3.6 (per 1,000 live births) compared to 5.8 in the United States (Sagor and Brodsky, 1984; Population Reference Bureau, 2016). As Americans in general, and women in particular, have sought to exert greater control over their own health, midwifery and home birth have become more popular (Ruzek, 1980; Weitz and Sullivan, 1986). Though the costs and benefits of medicalization are mixed for the general public, there is no such mix for the medical establishment, as illustrated by the growth of medicine shown in Table 16.2.

Roles and Stratification in the Medical Institution

Because of such trends as the advancement of medical technology, the growth of scientific

medicine, and the medicalization of a widening variety of problems and conditions, medicine has become an increasingly large and complex institution (Loft and Kletke, 1989). It is made up of a structure of roles that are both specialized and stratified.

Physicians

At the top of the stratification hierarchy is the physician. Traditionally, physicians, once they have completed periods of supervised hospital practice known as internship and residency, have been all-powerful in medicine because of their professional status (Rasmussen, 1975). Thus, nurses, paramedics, orderlies, and patients are all expected to follow "doctor's orders." The hospital, which has become the primary place where medical care is given, has traditionally been ruled by physicians. Because of the presumption that only doctors have the professional training and scientific knowledge necessary to identify and cure disease, they have until recently made their decisions independently of any supervision by, for example, hospital administrators. Recently, however, this has changed, as concerns about the rising cost of medicine have led to independent reviews of physician decisions, such as a decision to keep a patient in the hospital for another day. Those who pay for health care—government, insurance companies, and employers—have demanded and gotten greater power to decide how much and what kind of care will be given (Light, 1989).

Nonetheless, the rewards of being a doctor go beyond power. In 1997, for instance, the average income of an American medical doctor was \$166,000 (Jacob, 1998), compared with about \$33,000 for men and \$25,000 for women among year-round workers in the general population.

Nurses and Other Health Providers

As the institution of medicine became larger and more complex, a variety of roles other than that of physician developed. In the early twentieth century, medicine was often practiced in the patient's home and usually involved only the doctor and the patient (Loft and Kletke, 1989, p. 419; Rosenberg, 1987). Today, care occurs

much more often in the hospital and involves a much wider variety of providers, including nurses, paramedics, emergency medical technicians, physician's assistants, and physical therapists.

Still, the physician continues to reign supreme. Many medical sociologists argue that the sharp distinction between the doctor and other medical providers creates a number of difficulties. One problem is that the doctor does not always know the most about a patient's condition. A nurse, for example, interacts regularly with a hospitalized patient over the course of their shift. The doctor, in contrast, may see the patient only once a day while "making rounds," and even then may evaluate the patient's condition partly on the basis of data (body temperature, blood pressure, heart rate) collected by the nurse. Nevertheless, the norm is for the physician to manage the patient's care. This can lead to mistakes, as well as to an elaborate and potentially demeaning ritual, sometimes called "the doctor-nurse game" (Stein, 1967), in which the doctor indirectly elicits suggestions from the nurse, and the nurse in turn gives indirect answers.

To a large extent, the pay and the status of nurses relative to doctors reflects gender inequality. Most nurses are female; the large majority of doctors are male, though the percentage of women physicians is rising. As is true of other predominantly female occupations, nurses have historically received relatively low pay. However, as demand has grown for medical services and as nurses have taken on more tasks that at one time were performed exclusively by doctors, their salaries have risen. Nurse practitioners, who like physicians' assistants perform many tasks that were formerly performed by doctors, have higher salaries. These salaries are still far below those of physicians. As nursing has professionalized, other changes have occurred. The author of the

original study of the doctor-nurse game argues that by 1990, it had become much less common, mostly because increasing numbers of nurses refused to play it (Stein, 1990). However, others have argued that it still persists in many cases (Holyoake, 2011). According to a study by Fløge and Merrill (1986), this may not be true for male nurses, though: They are asked for and make direct recommendations concerning treatment.

Shortages of nurses have been a problem from time to time in many areas, in part because women have gained other employment opportunities that offered better pay, higher status, and greater autonomy. The nursing profession has responded by attempting to gain more authority and autonomy, largely through expanding into hospital administration and a variety of specialties such as anesthesia and cardiac care (Cockerham, 1992, pp. 201–3). Particularly significant has been the emergence of the category of nursing, noted earlier, known as *nurse practitioner*. The nurse practitioner has taken over a number of routine medical-care tasks that were once handled by physicians: giving certain types of medical examinations, taking medical histories, ordering laboratory work, and providing medical education. Nurse practitioners have both elevated the status and responsibilities of the nursing profession and freed physicians to perform more specialized and complicated tasks for which

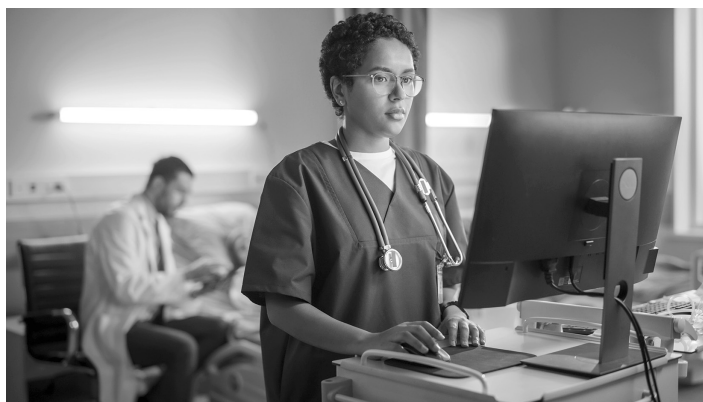


Photo 16.1 As demand for health care has risen and gender roles have changed, the status and incomes of nurses have improved, and the "doctor-nurse game" has become less common.

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only they have the training. As the status and pay of nurses rose, nursing school enrollments rose as did the number of nurses employed in nonhospital settings. With an aging population, overall demand for medical services has increased. Hence, nurse shortages are again becoming a problem in some areas today, and as noted earlier, the salaries of nurses have risen considerably.

Patients

A strong case can be made that the lowest position in medicine's structure of roles and stratification is that of patient. Patients are often devalued by hospital personnel because they are old, sick, or otherwise "defective" (Coe, 1978). Particularly in hospitals, patients are dependent on others for everything from food and medication to basic information. As a result, they become powerless and depersonalized. Moreover, a patient who refuses to cooperate in this process becomes even further devalued. In general, a "good patient" is one who takes the least possible amount of doctors' and nurses' time (Lorber, 1975). The lowest-status patient is the one who refuses to do what they are told, or is seen as a *hypochondriac*—one whose illness is "all in their head." This type of labeling is often resorted to when traditional methods of diagnosis fail: The responsibility is thereby placed on the patient (for imagining symptoms) rather than on medicine (for failing to find out what is wrong). Significantly, the label "hypochondriac" is most commonly applied to social groups that already occupy a subordinate status in society, such as women, the poor, and racial and ethnic minorities. Since recent research indicates that most people are very good judges of their own health status (Idler and Angel, 1990; Idler and Kasl, 1991), such labeling is very often incorrect. It can also be harmful because it can lead physicians to blame the patient's psychological state rather than continuing to search for a biomedical cause of the patient's illness, which, if identified, could lead to effective treatment.

Perhaps the status of patient can best be understood by someone who has suddenly been thrust into that role after occupying a

higher-status role in medicine. Physician H. Jack Geiger (1975, p. 13) wrote the following after a sudden, unexpected hospitalization:

In the space of only an hour or two, I went from apparent health and well-being to pain, disability, and fear, and from staff to inmate in a total institution. At one moment I was a physician: elite, technically skilled, vested with authority, wielding power over others, affectively neutral. The next moment I was a patient: dependent, anxious, sanctioned in illness only if I was cooperative. A protected dependency and the promise of effective technical help was mine—if I accepted a considerable degree of psychological and social servitude.

Care Based on Ability to Pay

U.S. medicine is grounded in our capitalist economy. Transactions are between individuals who need care and doctors or other health professionals who provide that care for a fee. Payment for care is defined as the legal responsibility of the individual—even if the individual has insurance that will cover part or all of the cost. An important component of this system is that if you don't have insurance and can't afford to pay the bill, you have very limited access to medical care. At one time, a substantial number of people received "charity care" for no fee, but that kind of care has largely disappeared except in emergency rooms, where hospitals are required under a law passed in 1986 to provide care regardless of ability to pay. As costs to doctors and hospitals soared and insurance companies placed more limits on reimbursements, it became more difficult for providers to recoup the costs of "charity care" from "paying" patients. The result is that it became much harder for poor people without insurance to get care (Farley, 1986). Because they are sicker by the time they are finally admitted to the hospital, uninsured hospital patients are up to three times as likely to die as those who have insurance (Hadley et al., 1991). Overall, Wilper et al. (2009) found that prior to the passage of the

ACA, 35,000 to 45,000 people died annually due to not having insurance. And because emergency room care is more expensive than care in a doctor's office, the unavailability of "charity care" except in the emergency room also added substantially to the high cost of health care in the United States.

There is some public funding of health care for a segment of the very poor in the United States. The most important such program is Medicaid, a federal program funded by a combination of state and federal money and operated by the states. However, the eligibility requirements for this program are very strict in some states, even after passage of the ACA, so Medicaid does not reach all of the low-income population that lacks private insurance. Before the passage of the ACA, fewer than 39 percent of Americans with incomes below the poverty level were covered under Medicaid (National Center for Health Statistics, 2000, p. 340). Even fewer people who had incomes just above the poverty level but who lacked medical insurance were eligible for Medicaid. As a result, more than 46 million Americans had no medical insurance at all, public or private, in 2008, before the ACA was passed by Congress (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, Table C-1). In 2008, 15.4 percent of the U.S. population had no health insurance (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009, Table C-1), and among those who do not have the option of Medicare, the percentage was even higher. Poor people and people with incomes just above the poverty level were particularly likely to lack health insurance.

For children, improved access to health care came two decades ago, thanks to the CHIP, created in 1997. The percentage of poor children covered by Medicaid rose to 75 percent by 2007, but poor adults would have to wait for the ACA, which would not come until more than a decade after the CHIP. The majority of poor adults still were not covered by Medicaid in 2008 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2009, Table 139). A large proportion of adults who lacked insurance prior to the ACA worked part time or for low wages and received no health benefits. Prior to the passage of the ACA in March 2010, there was no requirement that

employers provide health insurance to workers, and those in part-time, short-term, or low-paying jobs generally did not get it. That changed in 2015 when many large and medium-sized employers were required by the ACA to offer insurance to their workers. People without insurance who cannot afford to pay their own medical bills (and this is the overwhelming majority of the uninsured) are referred to as the **medically indigent**.

The United States is the only industrialized country that has health care based in any substantial part on the ability to pay. All of the rest have some form of universal health coverage that pays for most or all doctor and hospital bills. Thus, the condition of having 17 percent of the population medically indigent prior to the passage of the ACA was unique to the United States. On March 23, 2010, President Obama signed the ACA that substantially reduced but did not eliminate medical indigency in the United States. The provisions of this law and its impacts in its first few years in effect are discussed later in this chapter.

Alternative Approaches to Health Care

The U.S. medical system remains, by far, the most expensive in the world. The share of the gross national product spent on health care in this country is higher than in other industrial societies, and per capita expenditures on health care are, by a wide margin, the highest in the world. Even so, it cannot be said that Americans are the healthiest people in the world. As of 2015, 48 countries had lower infant mortality rates, and 42 countries had longer life expectancies for males; 46 had longer life expectancies for females (Population Reference Bureau, 2016). Besides the relative inefficiency and high cost of the U.S. system, a key problem is unequal access to care, which is particularly evident in the infant mortality statistics. For these reasons, The Obama administration and Democrats who then controlled Congress passed the 2010 health insurance reform bill known as the Patient Protection and Affordable

Care Act (ACA). The new system most closely resembles the health system of Switzerland. The system essentially requires all Americans to have health insurance, either through their employers or by purchasing it on their own. Insurance companies are not allowed to turn anyone away for preexisting conditions, and those who cannot afford their monthly premiums receive subsidies from the government. A major difference with Switzerland, however, is that the Swiss insurers are not allowed to make a profit. That is not a part of the American plan. U.S. insurance companies can and do make substantial profits. A contentious part of the original ACA debate was over whether or not to include a public option for consumers—a government-run insurance plan that would compete with private plans with the goal of holding down costs and ensuring quality. An alternative to the public option revolved around health insurance cooperatives, member-based insurance plans like those that are used in a few, mostly rural, areas of the country. Though a political compromise, little was known of how or to what extent these plans would hold down costs, although early data suggest they are more effective in doing so than traditional insurance companies. Thus, many critics feel the plan is not as strong in cost controls as most other wealthy nations' systems of national insurance.

National Health Insurance

The most common system of health care in industrialized countries is **national health insurance**, a system in which health-care providers remain in the private sector but are paid through a nationwide insurance system supervised and, to varying degrees, financed by the government. Among the countries that have this form of health-care system are Canada, France, Germany, Norway, Japan, Denmark, and Australia.

Although some Americans refer to national health insurance as “socialized medicine,” national health insurance actually retains the basic capitalistic nature of medicine. Doctors and hospitals remain in the private sector,

and in most cases the fee-for-service system is retained. The difference is a legal requirement that everyone be covered by health insurance. There are two basic variants of this system: public health insurance and private but legally mandated health insurance. Under a system of public health insurance, such as that of Canada, the insurance is financed through taxes and administered by the government or by private organizations hired by government to do the job. In this sense, it could be said that insurance is socialized, but medicine itself is not.

Under private but legally mandated health insurance, employers are required to provide insurance to all employees and their families. Usually, this is accompanied by public insurance for people who are self-employed or not in the labor force, such as retirees and some students. A variant on this plan is the “play or pay” system, under which employers are given the choice of providing health insurance to their employees or paying a certain amount per employee into a public fund that insures those not covered by employers. Massachusetts and Hawaii have taken steps to adopt private but legally mandated health insurance, and the Massachusetts plan, passed when Mitt Romney was governor, had many elements present in the ACA. The national health reform signed into law in 2010 (i.e., the ACA) is largely a “play or pay” system, since large and medium-sized employers are required, in most cases, to pay a per-employee fee if they do not provide insurance coverage. The law also includes substantial assistance to small businesses to provide coverage for their employees.

There are two key issues that any system of national health insurance must address. The first is care for people who are unemployed or out of the labor force. If national health insurance is financed by a payroll tax or mandated employer-paid private insurance, special provisions must be made for those not working.

National Health Insurance and the Cost of Care

The second issue is cost. As the Blue Cross/Blue Shield and Medicare experiences indicate, national health insurance must be accompanied by cost controls. Without them, third-party,

fee-for-service payment will almost surely lead to soaring costs and excessive use of the health-care system. However, France, Germany, Japan, and Canada have shown that cost controls can be effective. In all of these countries, controls such as fee regulation, utilization reviews, and limits on duplication of expensive medical equipment have held per capita medical expenses well below those in the United States (Marmor and Tenner, 1977; Sandier, 1983; Uchitelle, 1991). In the United States in 2014 (just prior to the ACA taking full effect), per capita spending for health care was two to three times what it was in France, Germany, Japan, and Canada, where it ranged from \$3,703 (Japan) to \$5,411 (Germany) (World Bank, 2016a). As mentioned earlier, concerns remain among critics that the new U.S. health care system does not adequately rein in costs, though as we examine later, efforts were made to do so in the new law.

In addition to negotiated fees, another approach to regulating medical costs has been used in Germany. Each year, a ceiling is established for Germany's medical expenditures. If doctors perform more than the projected number of procedures, their fees are lowered proportionately (Uchitelle, 1991). The fear of such regulation of fees has led the AMA to block national health insurance ever since it was first proposed by President Truman in the 1940s (Starr, 1982). Possibly because some form of health insurance passage seemed inevitable in the wake of the Obama presidential victory and Democratic control of congress in 2008, or possibly generational attitude change among physicians themselves, the AMA reversed its historic position on the issue and essentially supported the efforts of 2009–2010.

Various arguments have been made about the relative advantages of public health insurance versus private but mandated insurance, the system adopted in 2010. Some argue that the private sector could administer a system more efficiently than the public sector. Others argue that a system that retains the inefficiencies of the present health insurance industry could not bring effective savings. Still others warn that either system could lead to rationing of medical care as a way of lowering costs. Some

critics point to long delays for some noncritical procedures in Canada and note that some forms of care given to the terminally ill in the United States are not available there.

Advocates of national health insurance point out that health care has always been rationed in the United States, but on the basis of ability to pay, not on any assessment of the usefulness of the medical care. It has also been pointed out that a large share of health expenditures in the United States are spent on people within a week or two of their death, suggesting that expensive efforts are being made that may only prolong life for a few days or weeks. The bottom line, as noted earlier, is that all industrialized countries with national health insurance spend much less than the United States. Yet their citizens live as long as or longer than Americans, and their infant mortality and other health indicators suggest healthier populations. As we see later, specific reforms were passed in 2010 with an eye to addressing these cost and quality issues.

It is not clear which approach—public health insurance or private but legally mandated insurance—is preferable with respect to cost and efficiency. Based on the experience of other countries, effective cost controls such as negotiated fees, limitations on duplication of expensive equipment, and a national health-care spending ceiling could lead to substantial savings. As discussed later, the ACA has led to modest cost savings in terms of overall health-care expenditures in the United States, but some individuals have not seen these benefits in their own medical expenses due to high deductibles, premium increases, and soaring prescription drug costs.

National Health Service

While proposals to change the U.S. health-care system have generally focused on the concept of national health insurance, there is another alternative that has been used successfully in several countries. The **national health service** exists in Great Britain, New Zealand, and a number of formerly socialist countries. The label “socialized medicine” applies more appropriately

here than to national health insurance, because under a national health service system, doctors are public employees. Rather than being paid on a fee-for-service basis, they receive either salaries or capitation payments. Supporters of this system claim that it has two major advantages over national health insurance. First, it treats everyone the same, because coverage is not linked to payroll taxes or employer-paid insurance. Thus, the unemployed, retired, and college students all get the same coverage as working people. Second, it is significantly less expensive. Without fee-for-service, there is no incentive for unnecessary procedures and hospitalizations. In this regard, a national health service works in much the same way as an HMO. (Indeed, it has been referred to as “one big HMO.”)

The pros and cons of the national health service are much the same as the pros and cons of HMOs in general. On the positive side, it is clearly less expensive than other systems of health care, and it carries less risk of harm from unnecessary medical procedures. On the negative side, patients are sometimes assigned a

doctor rather than allowed to choose one, and they may feel that they are being deprived of care they need. In Great Britain, for example, coronary bypass surgery and computerized axial tomography scans are much less widely performed than in the United States (Payer, 1988). Again, whether this trend is good or bad depends on one's individual perspective and the specifics of a patient's condition.

As Table 16.3 shows, the advantage with respect to overall health would appear to go to the national health insurance systems of Canada and France. Great Britain, with its national health service, also appears to have better overall health than the United States, though the difference is a little smaller. The adoption of a national health service in Great Britain did improve the health of the poor as well as others, but socioeconomic inequality in health persisted for reasons not entirely related to the health-care system (Cockerham, 1988; Hollingsworth, 1981).

What is clear from Table 16.3 is the difference in cost: The American system is the most expensive, the British system the least. There

Table 16.3 Health Expense and Health Status in Industrialized Countries With Various Health-Care Systems: Selected Indicators

Country ²	Percent of GDP ¹ Spent on Health Care					Per Capita Health Expenditure				Health Status Indicators, 2014 ⁴	
	1990	1993	1998	2007	2014	1990–1993	2007	2014		Life Expectancy	Infant Mortality Rate ³
United States (AP)	12.4	13.6	13.5	15.7	17.1	\$2,566	3,331	7,285	9,403	78.8	6
France (NHI)	8.9	9.8	9.6	11.0	11.5	1,379	1,835	3,593	4,959	82.3	3.5
Canada (NHI)	9.0	10.2	9.2	10.1	10.4	1,795	1,971	3,867	5,292	81.5	4.8
Great Britain (NHS)	6.2	7.1	6.8	8.4	9.1	932	1,213	2,990	3,935	81.1	3.9

¹GDP means gross domestic product.

²AP means health care based on ability to pay; NHI means national health insurance; NHS means national health service. In the case of the United States, by 2014, the system was something of a hybrid of AP and NHI due to the ACA. This is discussed further in the chapter text.

³Infant mortality rate means deaths to children under age 1 year per 1,000 live births.

⁴Canada life expectancy is for 2011; Canada infant mortality is for 2012. U.S. infant mortality is for 2013.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 1992b; 1996c, p. 240; 2000, p. 321; Population Reference Bureau, 2001; OECD Health Data, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau International Database, 2007; World Bank, 2016a, 2016b; OECD, 2016.

are also substantially greater socioeconomic inequalities under the American system than in any of the others. Because of these shortcomings, polls reveal that Americans still favor changes in the health-care system, although they are divided about the specific legislation passed in 2010.

The Affordable Care Act

On March 23, 2010, Barack Obama signed into law what at least five American presidents in the twentieth century had tried and failed to accomplish: comprehensive health insurance reform aimed at covering every American, controlling costs, and increasing the quality of American care and health outcomes. The political battle was fierce and often ugly. In the end, the legislation passed without a single Republican vote from either house of Congress. And through the rest of Obama's presidency, Republicans in Congress made more than 60 unsuccessful attempts to repeal it, as well as repeatedly challenging it in the courts, with limited success.

The law has six major provisions: an individual mandate to purchase insurance; a "play or pay" system for large employers and tax credits to small employers, to encourage employers to cover employees; an elimination of insurance noncoverage of preexisting illnesses; subsidies to those who cannot afford insurance; Health Exchanges to increase consumer purchasing power; and a new research institute for best practices.

Thus far, the ACA, sometimes called "Obamacare," has led to dramatic reductions in the number of uninsured Americans but has still left a considerable number uninsured. As of March 2016, 20 million Americans had gained health-care insurance as a result of the ACA. Around nine million white Americans, three million African Americans, and four million Hispanics gained coverage because of the act. Overall, the percentage of nonelderly adults without insurance fell from 20.3 percent to 11.5 percent. Despite these dramatic improvements, coverage remains less than universal, and the ACA has not entirely eliminated the limited access of lower-income people to health care. Why are there still so many uninsured

people? There are several reasons. First, it was intended when the law was passed that people with incomes below the poverty level would be covered by the ACA's expanded Medicaid provision. However, a June 2012 Supreme Court ruling made state participation optional. (The original law made it mandatory and included subsidies for the vast majority of the cost.) Several states decided not to participate in the expanded Medicaid, and in these states the percentage uninsured was substantially higher, because people with incomes below the poverty level or just above it, who were not previously eligible for Medicaid, remained ineligible. Additionally, some are ineligible because the ACA specifies that no benefits can go to unauthorized immigrants.

Furthermore, there are still a good number of uninsured people whose incomes are too high to qualify for subsidies for insurance. Overall, it is estimated that about half of the 30 million Americans who still do not have insurance are ineligible for subsidies either because of the Medicaid gap (9 percent of the uninsured), because they are unauthorized immigrants (15 percent), because their incomes are too high (12 percent), or because they have turned down an offer of insurance from their employer (15 percent) (Garfield et al., 2016). That leaves the other half, or about 15 million Americans, who are eligible for subsidies but have not signed up to get them.

One reason people who are eligible do not sign up is deductibles. Deductibles must be paid before benefits of insurance plans (other than annual wellness visits) begin, and these were already on the rise before the ACA was passed. With regard to the cost of care, there do appear to have been some positive results of the ACA. Before the ACA, health-care costs were rising faster than inflation; after the ACA, those same costs have risen at roughly the same rate as overall inflation.

Demography: The Study of Population

Demography studies birth rates, death rates, migration, and the basic characteristics of the

population that are influenced by these factors, such as age structure and the racial and gender composition of populations. Demography is also concerned with population characteristics, such as marital status, that influence birth rates, death rates, and migration. Because of its many practical applications, demography is one of the areas of sociology most in demand today. Businesses, government, educational institutions, labor organizations, and a curious public have all turned to demographers to provide information and advice (Merrick and Tordella, 1988). In the remainder of this chapter, we see what kind of information demographers use and some of the key ways they use it. We give special attention to one aspect of demographic change: the aging of the population of the United States and other industrialized countries. In so doing, we examine how roles are attached to age, and, in particular, the roles of the growing number of older people in industrial societies.

Three Basic Demographic Variables

The size, growth, and characteristics of all human populations are determined by three basic forces, referred to by sociologists as the three basic demographic variables. These variables are fertility, or birth rates; mortality, or death rates; and migration. When demographers measure these and other variables, they usually use *rates* rather than raw numbers. In other words, rather than simply counting the number of births or deaths, they compute the number of births or deaths per 1,000 people. They do this to get a measure of the number of births or deaths *relative to the size of the population*. This is what influences the rate at which a population grows or declines. Thus, rates are used because they can tell us about how populations are changing.

Fertility

Fertility refers to the number of births occurring in a population. It means the number or rate of actual births, in contrast to fecundity, which refers to the extent to which a woman is *capable* of having children. Fertility is complicated to measure because (1) only some

people—women of childbearing age—are capable of having babies, and (2) the same person can have more than one baby. This presents a sharp contrast to *mortality*: Everyone dies, and each person dies only once. The **crude birth rate** is the number of births in a year per 1,000 population. This measure is influenced by the age structure of the population: It will be higher in a population where more of the women are in the childbearing ages, roughly 15 to 49 years old. It may also be influenced by the sex composition: If there is a higher percentage of women in the population, the crude birth rate might be higher.

For this reason, demographers often use another measure of fertility. This measure, the *total fertility rate*, is the number of babies that the average woman can be expected to have over her entire lifetime, based on current patterns of fertility. The total fertility rate is a better figure to use if you are comparing different populations or groups that have different age structures.

The total fertility rate is widely used because it is a good indicator of the long-term implications of a country's fertility for its population growth. For a population to replace itself, a total fertility rate of approximately 2.1 is required. In other words, if each woman had two children, this would replace her and her partner for another generation. The actual total fertility rate required for replacement is slightly more than two because some women die before reaching childbearing age. Thus, the total fertility rates of Canada and the United States are below replacement. In the long run, if there were no immigration, the population would level off and eventually begin to fall. The worldwide total fertility rate of 2.5, on the other hand, is still above replacement. For this reason, the world's population will continue to grow for at least the next several decades. The worldwide total fertility rate is falling, though, and some demographers believe that this could bring about a leveling off of world population within the next century or so. For example, while the United Nations projects a world population of about 9.7 billion by 2050 and 11.2 billion by 2100, it also expects the total fertility rate to fall to near the replacement level

by sometime between 2050 and 2100 (United Nations, 2015, pp. 1, 8).

Mortality

In one sense, mortality might not be thought of as a variable; as noted, everyone dies once and only once. Yet, in a population, great variations occur in the number of deaths, and these variations are what demographers mean by **mortality**. One way that mortality varies is in the number of deaths that occur each year relative to the size of the population. The **crude death rate** is the number of deaths in a year per 1,000 people.

Like the crude birth rate, this measure is influenced by the age structure of the population: A population with a higher proportion of older people will have a higher crude death rate. Another aspect of mortality is measured by **life expectancy**, the length of time the average person can be expected to live. Life expectancy is computed on the basis of the current risk of death in each year of life from infancy through old age. Thus, it is based on present mortality, but it is not influenced by the mix of old and young people in a population. Hence, if you want to compare mortality in populations with different age structures, life expectancy is the statistic to use. The average worldwide life expectancy in 2015 was 70 years for males, 74 years for females. Life expectancy varies widely among different countries, ranging from a low of 49 years for males in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo and 48 years for females in Swaziland; to a high of 84 years for males in San Marino and 89 years for females in San Marino. Life expectancy in the United States in 2015 was 76 years for men and 81 years for women; in Canada it was 79 years for men and 84 years for women (Population Reference Bureau, 2016).

A concept different from life expectancy is lifespan. This term refers to the maximum number of years a form of life is capable of



Photo 16.2 With the election of a Republican president and Congress in 2016, the possibility of a repeal of the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) became real. With the realization that up to 20 million Americans could lose health insurance, protests against repeal spread quickly.

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existing. Life expectancy is never as great as lifespan because accidents, malnutrition, and inadequate medical care all lead to deaths that are, theoretically, avoidable. The human lifespan cannot be measured precisely because we have no way of determining the upper limit of life. The longest any human has been known to live is 120 years; that record was achieved by Jeanne Calment of France (Whitney, 1997). Although we cannot precisely know the human lifespan, we do know that beyond a certain age, the human body suffers physical degeneration, which places some upper limit on how long human beings are capable of living. As societies modernize, life expectancy rises closer to lifespan.

Another important measure of mortality is the **infant mortality rate**—the number of deaths annually of children less than one year old per 1,000 live births. The infant mortality rate is a sensitive measure of nutrition and access to health care, because newborn infants are among the most vulnerable members of the population. It also has a disproportionate effect on life expectancy, because the death of an infant means the loss of many years of potential life. In 2015, the average worldwide infant mortality rate was 36. The variation in infant mortality rates from country to country



Photo 16.3 Fertility is harder to predict than mortality, because we do not know if women will choose to have more or fewer babies in the future.

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is tremendous, ranging from a high of 97 in Democratic Republic of Congo (in other words, more than one baby out of 11) to a low of 1.4 in Hong Kong. Several countries in Asia and Western Europe have infant mortality rates at or below 2.5. The infant mortality rate of the United States in 2015 was 5.8; in Canada, it was 54.4.

Migration

The third basic demographic variable is **migration**, which occurs whenever people change their places of residence. Migration may be broken down into two components: in-migration, which refers to the number of people moving into some geographic area during a fixed period of time; and out-migration, which refers to the number moving out. These components can be combined to produce net migration, which is the total gain or loss of population in an area because of migration. Net migration simply equals in-migration minus out-migration. In-migration, out-migration, and net migration statistics may be expressed as numbers (how many people move) or rates (the number of movers per 1,000 population).

Migration can be an important force in the growth or decline of populations. In the late 1990s, net migration into the United States accounted for between 35 and 40 percent of the growth of the American population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000f). The rest of the growth

occurred because births exceeded deaths. For smaller areas, the impact of migration is greater. It is the main reason why cities gain or lose population over time. For example, as people left Detroit during the 1980s because of job losses in the auto industry, Detroit and many surrounding areas rapidly lost population, due to net out-migration. Recent research has found that for black people and white people who move from north to south in the United States, their incomes are lower than those same groups who do not migrate; however, both groups end up in higher occupational positions by moving south, and these social gains are higher for black people than they are for white people. Conversely, the trend reverses for those moving from south to north (Flippen, 2013).

The Basic Demographic Equation and Population Projections

The growth or decline of a population is determined by mortality, fertility, and migration. This is summarized by the following equation, called the basic demographic equation:

$$\text{Population change} = (\text{Births} - \text{Deaths}) + (\text{In-migration} - \text{Out-migration})$$

Another way to say the same thing is as follows:

$$\text{Population change} = (\text{Births} - \text{Deaths}) + \text{Net migration}$$

Although this equation seems simple, it is in fact very powerful and serves as the basis of all population projections. **Population projections** are estimates of the future size of a population based on assumptions about mortality, fertility, and migration.

Population projections are useful because they help us estimate needs for facilities and markets for products in the future. For example, if the number of children in an area is likely to grow rapidly, more schools will be needed. If, on the other hand, the college-age population is likely to decline, it would be unwise to build more colleges, unless there was reason to

believe that a higher percentage of persons at any given age would attend college.

Population projections themselves are not predictions but rather are statements of what will occur in a population under given levels of mortality, fertility, and net migration. The key to the accuracy of population projections, therefore, lies in the accuracy of our assumptions about what will happen to these variables. The difficulties involved in making accurate assumptions vary among the three variables. Mortality is the easiest to determine. Modern demographic techniques enable us to predict the number of deaths in a population if we know its age structure and current patterns of mortality. Except in the case of catastrophes, mortality changes only gradually. Fertility is harder to predict, because we do not know if women will choose to have more or fewer babies in the future. Migration is the hardest of the three demographic variables to predict because it depends on economic and political forces that are hard to foresee.

The usefulness of population projections is not so much in making predictions about future population size as in answering “what if” questions. For example, how much would the population grow if life expectancy increased by ten years? What would be the consequences if women suddenly decided to have twice as many babies as they are having now? What if immigration—that is, in-migration to a country from other countries—doubled or suddenly stopped?

Moreover, population projections can answer specific questions about subgroups in a population as well as the population as a whole. We know, for example, that if anticipated fertility, mortality, and immigration patterns hold, about half—52 percent—of the U.S. college-age population in the year 2030 will be African American, Hispanic, Asian American, Native American, or some combination of ethnicities involving one or more of these groups, compared to just over third of the college-age population today (computed from U.S. Census Bureau, 2008c).

This projection is likely to be fairly accurate because it is based on the mortality rates of people already born: Those who will be of college age through the period of this projection

are already alive. Even this projection could be misleading, however, if migration rates for the various groups deviate drastically from expectations.

Although such projections are only as good as the assumptions about fertility, mortality, and migration they rest on, projections are a tremendously important tool for any type of planning for the future, including social-services planning, business and investment decisions, political strategies, and estimating tax revenues and expenses. To continue the education example, projections like those presented earlier not only give college administrators and teachers some idea of the number and social characteristics of students in the future but also suggest new strategies. For example, they might try to recruit students outside the traditional college ages when these age groups seem likely to shrink.

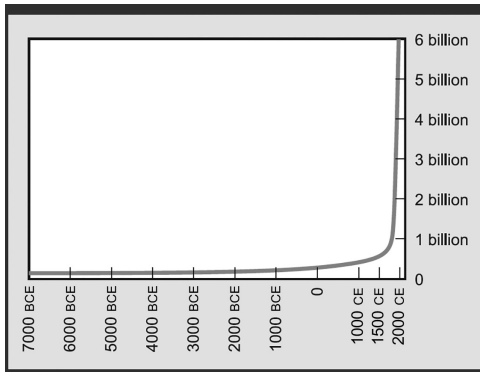
World Population Growth

Throughout most of human history, the population of the world grew only very slowly. Then, rather suddenly around 250 years ago, it began to increase, until in recent years it has reached levels that would have seemed unimaginable just a few centuries ago. In this part of the chapter, we examine how and why such a dramatic change has taken place and discuss some of the consequences of this growth.

A History of Population Growth

The growth of the world's population is illustrated in Figure 16.1. From the beginnings of humanity until about 10,000 years ago—a period of more than one million years—the world's population grew only to about eight million (Cipolla, 1965; Coale, 1974). That is less than the present population of Michigan or Florida. From about 10,000 years ago until around 1750 CE, the world's population increased from eight million to about 800 million. This was a much more rapid rate of growth, but it has been dwarfed by growth rates of the last 250 years. The world's population reached one billion around 1820. By 1930, it had reached two billion. Three billion was achieved in 1960, four billion in 1976, five billion in 1987, and six

Figure 16.1 World population growth, 7000 BCE to 2000 CE.



Source: John E. Farley. 1992. *American Social Problems: An Institutional Analysis*, 2nd ed., p. 344.

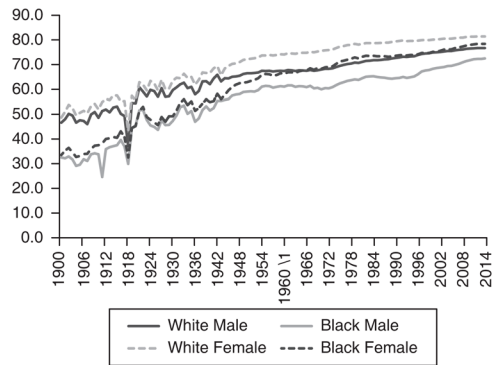
billion in 1999. Today, with the world population at 7.4 billion in 2016, it takes just 12 years or so to add one billion people, compared to the one to three million years it took to amass the first billion. Recall that 10,000 years ago, the world's population had just reached eight million; today, it takes about five and a half weeks for the world's population to grow by that amount. This rapid world population growth has been referred to as the *population explosion*.

Why has the world's population grown so dramatically in the past few hundred years? The answer to this question revolves around two factors—exponential growth and the demographic transition. We examine both in more detail.

Exponential Growth

Consider world population growth in 1950 and 1985. In both years, the world's growth rate was 1.7 percent per year. In 1950, the world's population was about 2.5 billion. Thus, a 1.7 percent growth rate meant that 43 million people were being added each year. Now consider 1985. The growth rate was once again 1.7 percent, but by then, the world population had risen to 4.9 billion. On a population of this size, a 1.7 percent increase meant that 83 million people were being added each year—nearly twice as many as in 1950, even though the percentage growth rate was the same. This illustrates the concept of **exponential growth**—growth at a fixed

Figure 16.2 The Demographic Transition.



Note that in the first stage, the birth and death rates are both high. In the middle stage, the death rate falls, followed by a decline in the birth rate. Population grows rapidly. In the final stage, birth and death rates are again in balance, though much lower, and growth is again limited.

Source: John E. Farley, *American Social Problems: An Institutional Analysis*, 2nd ed., © 1992, p. 348. Adapted by permission of Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River, NJ.

percentage rate that results in progressively greater growth in numbers each year.

When populations grow exponentially, they double at certain intervals. This doubling time is estimated by dividing 70 by the percentage growth rate (Weeks, 1992, p. 31). Thus, at the current growth rate of 1.17 percent, it takes the world's population about 59 years to double. A growth rate of 2 percent would yield a doubling time of 35 years; a growth rate of 3 percent, 23 years; a growth rate of 4 percent, 17 years, and so forth. If the world's population were to grow indefinitely at its current rate of 1.17 percent, it would reach 13.6 billion by 2068, 27 billion by about 2127, 50 billion by around 2186, and so forth. Obviously, such growth cannot continue for very long, because an upper limit would soon be reached. And, fortunately, there has been some decline in the growth rate: When the third edition of this book was published, for example, the doubling time was 40 years, compared to doubling time of 46 years when the fourth edition was published, 56 years when the fifth edition was published, and 59 years today. This trend is expected to continue; the United States Census

Bureau predicts that by 50 years from now, the growth rate will fall below 0.5 percent, which would increase the doubling time to 140 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000h). This is obviously much slower than the present rate but still fast by the standards of most of human history. As noted earlier, United Nations population projections call for a continued slowing of the world's growth rate due to the continuing decline in fertility, so the world's population in all likelihood will *not* double over the next 59 years.

The Demographic Transition

The exponential nature of the growth of human populations shows why they can grow so rapidly, but it does not tell us much about the underlying forces that drive that growth. To do this, we must return to the basic demographic equation outlined earlier: *Population growth equals births minus deaths plus net migration*. Because we are talking here about world population, we can disregard net migration. Basically, as long as births and deaths each year are roughly in balance, the world's population will remain constant. When births exceed deaths, it will grow.

The recent experience of rapid world population growth is explained by a process called the **demographic transition**, which is depicted in Figure 16.3. The demographic transition has three distinct stages. In the first stage, birth and death rates are both high. Because they are in balance, there is little or no population growth. In the second stage, the death rate falls, but the birth rate at first remains high. This produces rapid population growth. Later in the second stage, the birth rate falls. By the third stage, it has returned to a new balance with the death rate. In this stage, birth and death rates are both low, and because they are again in balance, population growth slows or ends.

How does the demographic transition explain the world's population explosion? To answer this question, we must consider industrialized and preindustrial societies separately. Most industrialized societies today, and some that are less industrialized, have gone through the entire process of the demographic transition. The industrialized countries began the process around 250 to 300 years ago, which

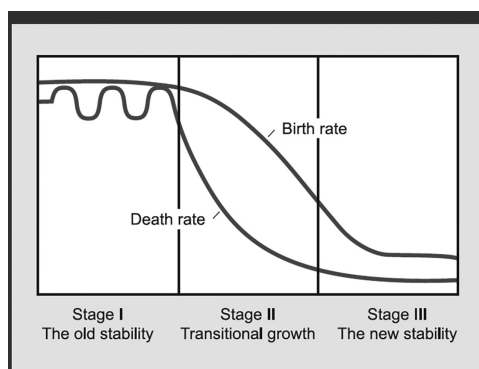
explains why the world's population began to grow rapidly around that time. Although they have completed the demographic transition and now generally have low growth, the situation is very different elsewhere. Many of the less-industrialized countries of the world, which account for nearly five-sixths of the world's population, are today in the middle stage of the demographic transition. Their death rates have fallen, but in many of these countries, the birth rates remain high. Thus, their populations are growing rapidly, and because they represent the majority of the world's population, the world's population is also growing rapidly. Will these countries follow the experience of Europe and North America, or will they be different? To address this question, we must consider the forces that brought about the demographic transition in the industrialized countries and compare them to the social forces currently at work in the Third World.

The Demographic Transition in Europe and North America

Declining Mortality

Until about 300 years ago, worldwide mortality was very high. The typical life expectancy

Figure 16.3 Note that in the first stage, the birth and death rates are both high. In the middle stage, the death rate falls, followed by a decline in the birth rate. Population grows rapidly. In the final stage, birth and death rates are again in balance, though much lower, and growth is again limited.



Source: John E. Farley. 1992. *American Social Problems: An Institutional Analysis*, 2nd ed., p. 348.

ranged from 20 to 30 years, and to have two or three children who would live to adulthood, a woman typically had to have from four to six babies (Weeks, 1992, p. 32). Mortality varied sharply from year to year owing to famines and epidemics, but over the long run, the numbers of births and deaths per year were fairly close.

In Europe and North America, this pattern began to change about the same time industrialization began to occur. The death rate started to fall. It fell enough so that a substantial gap was opened between births and deaths: Every year more people were born than died. This trend developed not because women had more babies, but because more babies lived to adulthood and had babies of their own. Thus, a family who might have once had two of their children survive to adulthood now had three or four survive to adulthood, and each of these in turn gave birth to three or four children who survived to adulthood.

In Europe and North America, this decline in mortality occurred gradually, beginning around 1700. At that time, the main causes of death were malnutrition and contagious diseases. Over the next two centuries, these conditions claimed fewer and fewer lives for a variety of reasons, including increased food supply, better shelter, improved transportation to get food to people, and the development of vaccinations against contagious diseases. Many of these changes were the result of rising standards of living, brought about by new technologies. Especially important, though, were improvements in sanitation. As recently as the eighteenth century, it was commonplace to throw garbage (including human waste) into the street or the nearest stream, which also served as the source of drinking water. The importance of washing one's hands was not understood, even by surgeons. Thus, advances such as sanitary sewers, trash collection systems, water pumping and filtration systems, and simple knowledge of the importance of cleanliness and sanitation were major causes of the decline in mortality (Thomlinson, 1976, pp. 97–99).

You will notice that we have not mentioned the treatment of illness as a cause of declining mortality. This is because medicine was not

very scientific until after about 1900, and many historians believe that doctors unwittingly killed more people than they saved until about that time (Conant, 1952). Since then, however, the effects of medicine on mortality have been substantial, and a mortality decline that began through better sanitation and rising standards of living has been reinforced by increasingly sophisticated medical technology.

Declining Fertility

As noted previously, the decline in mortality in the industrialized countries led to a period of rapid population growth. Gradually, though, fertility also declined, and today, birth rates are only slightly above death rates in most industrialized countries. The trend in the total fertility rate of the United States illustrates this point. In 1800, the average American woman had more than seven children over her lifetime, compared with about two today (Coale and Zelnick, 1963; Population Reference Bureau, 2010). The one exception to this downward trend was the baby boom of the 1950s and early 1960s, a temporary but large surge in fertility that occurred in most industrialized countries. By the 1960s, however, the downward trend had resumed, and birth rates today are well below those of the period just before the baby boom.

Birth rates in the United States, Europe, and other industrialized countries have fallen for a number of reasons. One factor is the decline in mortality itself. As more children survived into adulthood, the pressure to give birth to a large number of offspring diminished. Also important, though, were social and economic changes that came with a rising standard of living. People began to feel greater control over all aspects of their lives, including the number of children they had (Tabah, 1980). Gradually, “as many as God provides” was replaced with “as many as I want.” Also, people increasingly put off having children in order to attain such goals as more education and a higher standard of living (Coale, 1973). Postponement of childbearing usually means having fewer children, because the number of years during which a woman can give birth is limited.

The movement of women into higher education and the labor force has also helped to

lower the birth rate. Employed women have fewer babies than nonemployed women, and women's birth rates decline as their education and job status increase (Hallouda, Amin, and Farid, 1983; Weeks, 1992, chap. 5). As society modernizes and industrializes, the costs and benefits of having children change. In agricultural societies, children are often an important source of labor; in industrialized societies, they are mouths to be fed, and the cost of educating them is substantial (Caldwell, 1982). Finally, of course, birth-control techniques improved dramatically and became available to more women.

Third World Demographic Transition

As previously noted, the death rates of most preindustrial countries of the Third World have fallen, while their birth rates remain high. In 2015, for example, the overall crude death rate for the world's less-developed countries, which contain four-fifths of the world's population, was seven per thousand population—actually slightly lower than in the more-developed countries, due to the younger age structure of the less-developed countries. Fertility, however, is a different story: The crude birth rate of the less-developed countries was 22 in 2015, compared to just 11 in the more-developed countries (Population Reference Bureau, 2016). There are various ways to interpret the current gap between birth rates and death rates in the Third World. These include demographic transition theory, which foresees a decline in birth rates similar to that in industrialized countries; Malthusian theory, which sees population growth exceeding resources with potentially catastrophic results; and Marxist population theory, which sees maldistribution, not overpopulation, as the main problem.

Demographic Transition Theory

Demographic transition theory holds that most Third World countries are currently in the middle stage of the demographic transition and predicts that the birth rates in these countries will fall over time and thereby create a new balance between births and deaths, as happened in

the industrialized world. Evidence in support of this viewpoint is that the worldwide growth rate has fallen from a little over 2 percent in the late 1960s to 1.17 percent today. Also, the birth rates in a number of preindustrial countries had already fallen by one-third or more between the early 1960s and the mid-1980s (Merrick, 1986), and they continue to fall in the new century. Demographic transition theorists predict a continuing decline in the world's population growth rate (Merrick, 1986; Tsui and Bogue, 1979), and so far, this prediction is coming true. A closely related argument is that new technology will lead to heightened productivity that will at least partially offset the effects of population growth, and therefore, the degree of growth anticipated need not be a cause for alarm (Simon, 1981; Simon and Kahn, 1984). Demographic transition theory is sometimes associated with the functionalist perspective, because it views societies as tending naturally to adjust to ensure their long-term survival.

Malthusian Theory

A very different and more pessimistic interpretation is offered by Malthusian theory, reflected in the writings of Coale and Hoover (1958) and Meadows and colleagues (1972), and in a 1980 report of the Council on Environmental Quality. Malthusian theory is named for Thomas Robert Malthus, a prominent English population theorist who wrote around 1800 (see Malthus, 1965 [orig. 1798]). Malthus believed that while population increases exponentially, food production could grow only by a fixed annual amount. For this reason, he thought that a worldwide crisis resulting from overpopulation was inevitable. Present-day Malthusians recognize that many other factors besides food supply limit growth. In general, they see the current rapid growth of the world's population as potentially catastrophic, even though it is slowing somewhat. They argue that the current and probable future growth rates will carry the world's population beyond what the earth can support, and they note that the numbers of people being added is dramatically greater now than when Europe and North America were in the middle stages of the demographic transition. They also argue



Photo 16.4 In parts of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the standard of living has been slow to rise, and fertility has been slow to decline.

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that, as discussed later, important differences exist between the experiences of European and Third World countries that will make it harder for the latter to fully restore their population balance as easily as the Europeans did. As a result, Malthusians predict that the birth rates of Third World countries are unlikely to fall enough to avert disaster unless extreme measures are taken.

Marxist Population Theory

Marxist population theory emphasizes maldistribution, rather than the danger of running out of natural resources, as the main cause of suffering in the world. Traditionally, Marxists denied any risk of overpopulation. They claimed instead that there would be sufficient resources for everyone if some people did not consume far in excess of what they need. However, rapid population growth has led to some alteration of that view, so that most Marxist countries in the Third World have sought to reduce their birth rates. Indeed, the most successful in doing so is the People's Republic of China, where the total fertility rate has declined from somewhere in the range of six or seven in the early 1960s to just 1.6 in 2015 (Lavelly, 1984; Merrick, 1986; Population Reference Bureau, 2016). Today, Marxists point out that maldistribution greatly worsens the effects of overpopulation and can create great suffering even when

there is no overpopulation. They also note that if scarce resources are redistributed so as to improve the standard of living of the poor, birth rates will fall (Ahmad, 1977). More important, Marxists agree with demographic transition theorists on one point: An improved standard of living will lead to a decline in the birth rate. However, the two approaches disagree on how to bring about an improvement in the standard of living. Specifically, Marxist population theorists argue that reducing the birth rate will not *by itself* lead to improve-

ments in the standard of living in developing countries if the wealthy countries continue to overconsume and control world resources. And it is the case that, despite a worldwide reduction in population growth rates, much of the world's population remains desperately poor while others consume massive amounts of resources.

Evaluating the Theories

Each of the three theories about the population future of the less-industrialized countries might offer part of the answer. Demographic transition theorists are almost certainly right to predict a continuing decline in the world's rate of growth, since trends that reduce birth rates, such as expanded educational opportunities for women, are reaching a rising share of the world's population. Nonetheless, several differences exist between the situation in the Third World today and that in Europe when it experienced its demographic transition. Among the most important of these differences are the following:

- The decline in mortality has occurred much more quickly in the Third World than it did in Europe, which has given people less time to adjust their fertility patterns to the new situation. Mortality declines that took over 200 years to occur in Europe and America have happened

in a far shorter time in the Third World. In Mexico, for example, mortality fell as much in 50 years as it did over 500 years in Europe (Weeks, 1992, p. 188).

- The decline in mortality in the Third World has resulted from imported technology rather than domestic economic development. Thus, it has not been accompanied as much by the rising standard of living that took place in the industrialized countries. But a rising standard of living (and people's response to it) drives down fertility. Without it, there has been less downward pressure on birth rates in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. (This is a difference that Marxist theorists, in particular, would stress.)
- In part because they have not yet industrialized, many Asian, African, and Latin American countries have extremely unequal distributions of wealth and income. As Marxists argue, this means that even when the resources exist for a rise in the standard of living, only a few people share in the benefits of those resources that lead to lower fertility in the industrialized countries. Although these conditions also prevailed in Europe at the start of the Industrial Revolution, they began to break down with fuller industrialization and the growth of an urban trading class. Today, in the Third World, however, much of the wealth produced by industrialization goes to foreign investors.
- Education remains highly limited in many Third World countries, and education is one of the main forces that lowers fertility. In the small number of Third World countries that do have well-developed educational systems, such as China, Taiwan, Korea, and Sri Lanka, birth rates have fallen dramatically (see World Bank, 1991, pp. 276–81; Population Reference Bureau, 2010).
- In many Third World countries, the role of women remains traditional, though great variation exists from one country to another. In general, where women are more educated and more involved in the labor force, fertility falls.

For all these reasons, fertility in much of Asia, Africa, and Latin America is likely, at best, to fall into balance with today's lower mortality only very gradually. Thus, the truth falls somewhere between the optimism of the demographic transition theorists and the pessimism of the Malthusians, but precisely *where* is hard to say. Moreover, as Marxist theorists argue, the distribution of wealth and access to education and quality employment certainly have effects both on how rapidly the birth rate will fall and on the degree to which the population benefits from technological modernization.

It is important to realize that women must *want* to have fewer children if they are to lower their birth rates, and they must be *free to make that choice*. In many Third World countries, strong cultural values continue to support large families. In some countries, for example, only males can inherit property, which leads people to keep having babies until they have a boy. In other countries, a family's social status is determined largely by the number of children. The World Fertility Survey found that in the early 1980s the elimination of all unwanted pregnancies in 20 preindustrial countries would still have produced a birth rate more than twice as high as the death rate (Lightbourne, Singh, and Green, 1982). Since that time, however, values in a number of countries have shifted toward limiting the size of families. A more recent study by Freedman (1995) found that in six countries containing three-fourths of Asia's population (and nearly half of the world's population), about two-thirds of all married couples were practicing contraception in 1990. In those countries, fertility fell significantly.

Population Growth and the Future

One critical source of predictions concerning population growth consists of population projections from sources such as the United Nations and the Population Reference Bureau. Current UN projections call for about a 32 percent increase in world population, to a total around 9.7 billion, by 2050 (United Nations Population Division, 2015). Keep in mind that small changes in fertility can make big differences in the projections. Because worldwide fertility fell less than expected in much of the

Table 16.4 Current and Projected Population of the World

Region	Actual Population 2015		Projected Population 2050	
	Number (in millions)	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Less-developed regions	6,085	76.44	8,799	90.23
Africa	1,141	14.30	2,748	28.09
Asia	4,730	59.42	5,313	54.48
Latin America	656	8.24	746	7.65
More-developed regions	1,440	18.01	1,148	11.77
Europe, Australia, New Zealand	772.9	9.71	.724	7.42
North America	.357	4.48	.424	4.35
World total	7,960	100.0	9,752	100.0

Source: International, PRB. www.prb.org/international/indicator/population/table (downloaded September 27, 2023).

1980s but more than expected in the early 1990s, the year in which the world's population is expected to reach ten billion has shifted back and forth by about 25 years since the early 1980s. Table 16.4 shows population projections for various parts of the world. Note that these projections show much larger growth in the less-developed regions than in the industrialized countries. By the year 2050, more than 85 percent of the world's population will be in what today are the less-developed regions of the world. The Population Reference Bureau projects that by that time, the world population will have reached 9.8 billion, a figure that differs slightly from the UN projection of 9.7 billion, but not much. By then, the rate of growth will likely be slowing, but the world's population will still be growing.

Summary

In this chapter, we explored ways in which society influences health and medicine and ways in which health and medicine influence society. The functionalist, conflict, and symbolic-interactionist perspectives have all made important contributions to our understanding of the relationship between health and society.

Perhaps the functionalists' major contribution has been the concept of the sick role, reflecting the notion that good health is normal and functional for society but not always

attainable. The sick role is a deviant one, but unlike many other deviant roles, it is not usually adopted by choice. Thus, it is less stigmatized. Although sociologists debate the individual-responsibility model and other aspects of the sick role proposed by the functionalists, most accept the basic concept of a sick role. Another major contribution of the functionalist perspective to medical sociology has been analysis of the relationship between modernization and health. Industrialization and modernization have brought great improvements in health and longevity, but there have also been some costs in the form of environmentally induced illness.

Conflict theorists focus on the inequalities in health and medicine and on the question of who, if anyone, benefits from them. They emphasize the strong link between environmental pollution and certain disorders such as cancer and note that certain interest groups have an economic stake in polluting the environment. Conflict theorists also point out that there is a near-universal relationship between income and health status, noting the health consequences of inadequate food, shelter, and job safety among the poor, as well as their unequal access to health care. Poor education and the risk of criminal victimization also endanger the health of the poor.

The symbolic-interactionist approach to medical sociology stresses two main issues. The first is the meaning of health or the lack

of it. Interactionists distinguish between illness (your own belief that you are not well), sickness (the judgment of others that you are not well), and disease (a doctor's judgment about what is wrong with you). Each is the result of a subjective judgment about the meaning of what is observed—feelings in the case of the patient; signs and symptoms in the case of the doctor and others. All these judgments are made on the basis of meanings learned through interaction with others. Medical cultures vary among societies, as do doctors' judgments about the meaning of signs and symptoms. A second area stressed by interactionists is personal outlook and its effect on health and the use of medicine. Different groups of people approach and use doctors and hospitals differently. Differences in their life experiences influence the degree to which people become involved in their own treatment, which in turn influences the outcome.

Another major concern in medical sociology is the institution of medicine—the system by which sickness is treated in a society. All societies have medicine, but its nature varies widely. In some societies, traditional medicine dominates: Illness is believed to be the result of spiritual forces, punishment for evil, or imbalances of natural forces. Scientific medicine, in contrast, assumes that every illness has a cause that can be identified through scientific observation, and that, with sufficient knowledge and experimentation, an effective treatment can be devised.

The tendency of scientific medicine has been to grow by defining an increasing number of problems and conditions as medical in nature. Sociologists refer to this as medicalization. As medical care has expanded, it has become more costly. From a conflict standpoint, both of these trends reflect the power and self-interest of medical providers. This has



Photo 16.5 This woman has moved beyond the normal retirement age of sixty-five and thus is considered to have reached old age, a social category originally created to open jobs for younger workers. But this does not mean she is incapable of work. Today official retirement ages are rising as government policies change.

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been especially true in the United States, which has had a private medical-care system based on ability to pay.

Problems such as these have led many analysts of American medicine to suggest the United States adopt one of two alternative systems common among industrialized countries: national health insurance or national health service. Countries that have these systems have health and longevity equal to, or better than, that found in the United States, and their costs are lower. Problems in the health-care system became a major issue in the 1992 elections and contributed to President Clinton's victory that year. However, strong opposition to health-care reform developed, and no major changes were made. It continued to be the case in the new millennium that about one out of every six nonelderly Americans had no health insurance. In 2010, the Obama administration succeeded in passing health-care reform that brings a limited form of national health insurance, based on near-universal coverage with mostly private insurance but with public subsidies, similar to the system found in Switzerland. This reform cut the percentage of Americans without health insurance in half and slowed inflation in overall costs of health care slightly. However, the future of this reform is uncertain, given the ascendancy in the

2016 election of Republicans who had expressed opposition to the new law.

Demography is the study of human populations. It is based on three variables—fertility, mortality, and migration—that determine population growth, composition, and age structure. The different mortality patterns of men and women lead to different mixes of males and females in different age groups, and the size and growth of various racial and ethnic groups are determined by their distinct patterns of fertility, mortality, and migration. An increasingly important activity of demographers has been to make population projections based on assumptions about the three basic variables.

Populations grow exponentially, or on the basis of a percentage rate of increase. They grow especially fast when there are substantially more births than deaths. On a worldwide basis, births and deaths were relatively in balance throughout most of human history, so the world's population grew only slowly. However, around 250 years ago, that trend changed, owing to a process known as the demographic transition. This process, which accompanied industrialization, involved a gradual decline in the death rate, followed only later by a decline in the birth rate. During the lag between the two declines, the world population grew rapidly.

In most industrialized countries today, the birth rate has fallen back into balance with the death rate, so the rate of population growth is slow. But in the majority of the world that has not completed industrialization, population growth remains rapid. Because of imported technologies, the death rate has fallen rapidly, while the birth rate remains high; this has led to a population explosion. In just the past 70 years, the world's population has gone from about two billion to over seven billion. The birth rate is now falling in the less-developed countries, but only slowly. As was historically true for Europe and North America, the best chance for a declining birth rate is through a rising standard of living and improved education. However, current population growth rates make these ideals difficult to attain in some areas. Therefore, the world's population may increase by around 50 percent over the course of the new century. It will likely grow by at

least two billion people, and possibly more than three billion, though by the end of the century it will likely be leveling off.

In industrialized countries such as the United States, low birth rates are leading to an aging population. This effect will be enhanced by the aging of the massive baby boom birth cohort, followed by the much smaller “baby bust” cohort born in the 1970s. Thus, the share of the population that is over 65 years old is at a record high in most industrialized countries and will be sharply higher still in about 25 years. This trend will affect many areas, including the funding of private and public pensions, the demand for health care and education, political trends, and even the crime rate. At the same time, the U.S. population is becoming more diverse due to the effect of immigration, another change that is affecting various areas of American life.

Key Terms

health
medicine
sick role
acute disorder
chronic disorder
epidemiology
illness
sickness
disease
placebo
medicalization
medically indigent
national health insurance
national health service
demography
fertility
crude birth rate
mortality
crude death rate
life expectancy
infant mortality rate
migration
population projections
exponential growth
demographic transition

Exercises

- 1 Even after the passage of health-care reform in 2010, debate continues about whether the United States should have a national health-care plan and what the characteristics of any such plan should be.
 - Are you personally in favor of some form of national health care? Why or why not?
 - Americans in general seem to overwhelmingly support the idea of national health insurance, but that support goes down significantly for most specific reform proposals. Why do you think that is the case?
- 2 Do you think that the United States should have strict immigration quotas? Why or why not? Do you support or oppose Congressional legislation that makes it more difficult for poor immigrants who already live in America to sponsor other members of their families who also wish to come to the United States? Also, the U.S. Constitution specifies that anyone born in the United States is by definition a U.S. citizen, with the sole exception of children of foreign diplomats. There have been some legislative efforts recently to change this provision, if the person's parents are in the United States illegally. Do you support or oppose such legislation?



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Part V

Social Change



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Chapter 17

Urban Society

City Life and Collective Behavior

You know it well. It's where you go to learn, to have fun, to be uplifted. The zoo, the symphony, theater, opera, the best museums and libraries—they're all there. So are the liveliest nightclub districts—where you can hear the best of the blues, jazz, rap, rock, funk, alternative, soul, or even country—sometimes all within a block or two of each other! It's where you go to see the ball game, hear U2 in concert, or try some kind of food you've never eaten before. And it is the place that has those offbeat little shops where you can buy things you can't find anywhere else. It's also where you see those spectacular works of public art and architecture—the Gateway Arch, the Statue of Liberty, the Eiffel Tower, the Parthenon. Or is it?

Some of you know it quite differently. To you, it may be that scary place you see on the news every night—the place where there has just been a murder even bloodier and more shocking than the one you heard about last week. The place where you hear about people complaining that they can't get to sleep because of the gunfire every night, or where a two-year-old is abducted and murdered by two ten-year-olds. Maybe you think of it as the place where people loot stores and burn buildings when their home team wins the World Series, Super Bowl, or NBA Championship, or where terrorists create mayhem by blowing up crowded buildings or setting off bombs in shopping districts. Also, perhaps, you know it as the place where corrupt politicians keep finding new ways to divert public money to their own personal use, or where corporate moguls hatch new plots to dodge antitrust laws and get more of your money.

Of course, in both cases I'm talking about the city. In fact, both images of it are prominent

in contemporary culture, and each contains a piece—but only a piece—of the truth. Those who see the city as described in the first paragraph may see it as “the only place to live”; if they don't live there, they visit it as often as they can. Those who see the city as described in the second paragraph look upon it as a frightening place to be avoided whenever possible. Why do people have such different images of the city? And why are so many activities, both good and bad, concentrated there?

In this chapter, we explore why the city has become such a dominant force in modern societies—why so much of what goes on in the world happens there, and why societies like the United States have undergone an abrupt (in historical terms) transition from rural societies to urban societies. As the opening vignette illustrates, our new urban life has been both glorified and vilified. Though both the glorification and vilification contain elements of truth, both are also great oversimplifications.

To truly understand the city, we must first define it. The most widely used definition of the city probably is that of Louis Wirth (1938), who defined it as “a relatively large, dense, permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals.” This definition encompasses four characteristics of cities: the large size of population, the high density of population (in other words, a large number of people per square mile), the permanence of the settlement, and the heterogeneity or diversity of the population. This definition is relative: A city has these characteristics as compared with other settlements. Thus, what was considered a city in the past might not be today. In past eras, a settlement of 10,000 people would have qualified as a city; today it would not because such a population

is relatively small. Moreover, a settlement of 10,000 people during certain past eras would certainly have been a highly specialized and complex place; more so than a town of that size today, and certainly more so than most human settlements at the time. Finally, it would have had a much higher population density (people per square mile) than a town of 10,000 today.

Wirth's definition leaves room for debate as to whether a given settlement is or is not a city, but it continues to be widely used because it makes two important points. First, what is or is not a city is relative and must be considered in the context of any given society. Second, a city is defined not merely on the basis of size, but also on the basis of the diversity of its inhabitants and the complexity of their activities. This point was later elaborated upon by Childe (1950), who pointed out that cities are associated with such things as specialization, monumental public buildings, trade, and the development of writing and the arts and sciences.

The Rise of Cities Throughout the World

Large-scale urbanization is a recent phenomenon. **Urbanization** can be defined as the process by which an increasing share of a population lives in cities (Choldin, 1985, pp. 150–2). Urbanization does not mean merely that cities are growing; that is urban growth. We say that urbanization occurs when cities not only grow but grow to a greater extent than rural areas or grow when rural areas do not. Although sociologists usually speak of urbanization as a process, they also sometimes refer to the level of urbanization. Generally, this refers to the percentage or proportion of the population that lives in cities and their suburbs.

It is only within the past two centuries that any

sizable proportion of the human population has lived in cities. Only the Roman Empire and the Inca, Aztec, and Mayan Indians of Central and South America were able to attain urbanization levels of as much as 10 or 20 percent (Childe, 1946; Davis, 1955; Hawley, 1981; Kornberg, 1975; Rivet, 1960). Most early cities had small populations, usually under 40,000 and often well under 10,000. The largest early cities were ancient Rome, which probably had a population of 350,000 to 600,000, and the Central and South American Indian cities, the largest of which had populations of around 200,000—hardly large cities by today's standards (Chandler and Fox, 1974; Rivet, 1960; Russell, 1958; Kornberg, 1975). As shown in the box "A Portrait of the Preindustrial City," these early cities differed from cities in today's industrialized societies in a number of ways besides size.

After around 500 CE, cities grew somewhat larger, but truly large cities remained rare for another thousand years or more. As shown in Table 17.1, only a handful of cities in the world had populations exceeding 150,000 at any time between 800 and 1600 CE, and none had populations that came even close to one million. Today, in contrast, the industrialized societies have become overwhelmingly urban, and the rest of the world is urbanizing rapidly. By the



Photo 17.1 The pyramids and temples of Teotihuacan are typical of the religious monuments that characterized preindustrial cities.

Courtesy of John E. Farley



GLOBAL SOCIOLOGY

A Portrait of the Preindustrial City

Most of the earliest cities around the world would be almost unrecognizable to anyone living in a modern city. Certain features appeared independently in the earliest cities in Mesopotamia, China, and Central America, and, with minor variations, these features characterized most preindustrial cities throughout history.

One major way preindustrial cities differed from modern ones was in the nature of the city center. Rather than centering on a downtown commercial district, early cities were built around a religious center: a temple, tower, or pyramid in the earliest cities; a cathedral in medieval cities. This layout can be readily seen in the photo on p. 000, showing the well-preserved remains of Teotihuacan. This city, built over 1,000 years ago by an indigenous population near what is now Mexico City, was centered on two large pyramids. The photo was taken from one; the other can be seen on the left side of the photo.

In the earliest cities, the temple was more than just a religious center. It also served as “a place for meditation and research, a warehouse, an accounting and distributing agency” (Comhaire and Cahnman, 1959, p. 2). Records of animal herds and crop yields were kept there; grain and treasures were stored there; loans were made there—all, of course, under the supervision and control of a high priest or a king who was often believed to be divine. In medieval cities, the economic function of the religious center itself declined, but it was taken over by open-air markets that typically located close to the cathedral.

Another difference between preindustrial and modern cities had to do with who lived where. The wealthiest and most powerful people in virtually all preindustrial cities lived near the center. In the photo of Teotihuacan, for example, the buildings nearest the central mall and pyramids were residences of the high priests; more ordinary people lived toward the outside of the city. This pattern was common for two reasons. First, it was desirable to live near the

religious center, and such a privilege was reserved for priests, military leaders, kings, and their courts. Second, it was safer to live near the center. City-states were frequently at war with one another, and living near the city wall was riskier than living near the center. Thus, the farther from the center, the lower was the social and economic status of the population—just the opposite of what we find in the modern American city. Walled cities sometimes outgrew the area enclosed by their walls, so that some people had to live outside the walls, at least until new ones could be built. As you might expect, this unhappy fate befell those with the lowest social status.

Early cities were denser and more compact than today's cities. When the main mode of transportation is walking, nobody wants to be too far from anything. The ancient city of Uruk, for example, may have had a population of about 29,000 per square mile (computed from Spates and Macdonis, 1987, p. 37), and Ur's population density may have been as great as 125,000 per square mile (Thomlinson, 1976, p. 403). Teotihuacan likely had a population density of around 25,000 per square mile. These figures compare to about 12,000 per square mile in modern Boston and under 10,000 in Washington, DC (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1986a, pp. 42, 418). When early cities grew, their density usually increased, as more and more people crammed into the space inside the city walls.

Closely related to high density was the absence of a distinction between work and home (Sjoberg, 1955, 1960). People worked at home, and they often sold their products on the street outside their homes or through a window in their houses. Both people and businesses were frequently segregated by occupation. In medieval London, for example, streets and neighborhoods were named for the occupational group that resided there. There was a Beer Street, where the breweries were located, and a Baker Street, where the city's bakeries were located.

year 2000, there were more than 380 cities or metropolitan areas worldwide with populations of more than one million people, and there were around 500 such areas by 2015 (Brinkhoff, 2001; World Resources Institute, 1996; The

Globalist, 2015). (The term “metropolitan area” refers to a city and its suburbs.) The 28 largest cities in the world, all with metropolitan populations of more than ten million, are shown in Table 17.2.

Technology, Industrialization, and Urbanization

This rapid urbanization was the result of both technological and social innovations. When inventions such as the steam engine, the spinning jenny, and the automatic weaving machine made mass production possible, the place of work shifted from the home to the factory. Industrialization also created a demand for a substantial labor force. Outside the cities, better roads and inland canals made the movement of both people and food from the countryside to the city far more feasible. Agriculture, too, was transformed by technological changes associated with the Industrial Revolution. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such innovations as crop rotation, selective breeding of animals, and new tools led to dramatic improvements in productivity (Mumford, 1938; Wrigley, 1969). This meant that a larger

agricultural surplus could be produced, and therefore a larger urban population supported.

Social Change and Urbanization

At the same time, important social changes that encouraged urban growth were emerging. One was the development of effective national governments. In contrast to the feudal era, when violent disputes among nobles discouraged travel and trade, national governments created an environment in which national and international trade flourished. National governments also brought about a common monetary system, greater consistency of laws, and uniform systems of weights and measures—all of which are vital to trade. Increased trade led to a growth in manufacturing, which in turn further stimulated urbanization. These trends were reinforced by world exploration, trade,

Table 17.1 Estimated Populations of Major World Cities: 800–1600

Population	Year				
	800	1000	1200	1400	1600
900,000					
800,000	Sian, China				
700,000	Baghdad, Persia				Peking, China Istanbul, Turkey
600,000					
500,000					
		Cordoba, Spain Istanbul, Turkey		Cairo, Egypt	
400,000		Kaifeng, China			Cairo, Egypt Osaka, Japan Tokyo, Japan Kyoto, Japan
				Peking, China	
300,000	Istanbul, Turkey	Sian, China			
			Istanbul, Turkey Fez, Morocco	Paris, France	Naples, Italy Paris, France
200,000	Alexandria, Egypt Kyoto, Japan	Kyoto, Japan	Cairo, Egypt	Kyoto, Japan	London, England
	Cordoba, Spain	Cairo, Egypt	Kamakura, Japan Four cities*	Sian, China Fez, Morocco	Three cities†

Source: Bardo and Hartman (1982), Chandler and Fox (1974).

* Palermo, Italy; Peking, China; Kaifeng, China; Sian, China.

† Venice, Italy; Potasi, Mexico; Sian, China.

and colonization, which created new demand and supplied new raw materials.

Gradually during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the urban business-owning class, called the bourgeoisie, replaced the rural lords and barons as the dominant group in European society. In the city, craftsmen who formerly had owned their own businesses began to work in factories for the bourgeoisie. This change created a new form of social stratification in the city, and power became more concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie, who used it to institute national policies that favored urban growth.

The Demographic Transition and Urbanization

The demographic transition, described in Chapter 16, also contributed dramatically to urbanization. As death rates fell, more children survived to adulthood, and rural areas became overpopulated. To avoid the splitting of farmland into ever-smaller pieces, many societies enacted laws dictating that parents had to pass on a plot of land only to one child. Most children, therefore, were left with no source of economic support in the rural areas at a time when the demand for industrial workers in the cities

Table 17.2 World’s Largest Cities (Cities With Metropolitan Population of Ten Million or Greater): 2023

	<i>Urban Agglomeration</i>	<i>Population in Millions</i>
1	Tokyo, Japan	37.3
2	Delhi, India	32.1
3	Shanghai, China	28.5
4	Dhaka, Bangladash	22.5
5	São Paulo, Brazil	22.4
6	Mexico City, Mexico	22.1
7	Cairo, Egypt	22.1
8	Beijing, China	21.8
9	Mumbai, India	21.3
10	Osaka, Japan	19.0
11	Chongqing, China	17.3
12	Karachi, Pakistan	17.2
13	Kinshasa, Dr Congo	16.3
14	Lagos, Nigeria	15.9
15	Istanbul, Turkey	15.8
16	Buenos Aires, Argentina	15.5
17	Kolkata, India	15.3
18	Manila, Philippines	14.7
19	Guangdong, China	14.3
20	Tianjin, China	14.2
21	Lahore, Pakistan	13.9
22	Rio De Janeiro, Brazil	13.7
23	Bangalore, India	13.6
24	Shenzhen, China	13.1
25	Moscow, Russia	12.7
26	Chennai, India	11.8
27	Bogotá, Colombia	11.5
28	Jakarta, Indonesia	11.2
48	New York City, United States	8.3

Source: World Population review. World Population Prospects, United Nations. U.S. Census 2022. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities>. www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/newyorkcitynewyork/PST045222 (downloaded September 22, 2023).

was increasing. Thus, the *push* of overpopulation in rural areas and the *pull* of employment opportunities in cities led increasing numbers of young people in Europe and North America to leave the countryside and head for the city.

Urban life was hard for most people in the early stages of industrialization. Industrial laborers, who in many cases were only ten years old, worked 13 hours per day, seven days per week (Choldin, 1985, pp. 100–2). They had no health insurance, workers' compensation, or government-mandated safety rules. In many cities, sanitation remained deplorable through much of the nineteenth century. As a result, death rates in cities were higher than in rural areas (Thomlinson, 1976). In fact, urban death rates were so high during the earlier stages of the Industrial Revolution that some of the fastest-growing cities would actually have lost population had it not been for in-migration.

Urbanization in the United States

As in Europe, industrialization was a major source of urban growth in the United States. When the first U.S. Census was taken in 1790, the American population was only 5 percent urban, despite the fact that any town with a population of 2,500 or more was regarded as urban. By 1840, the urban population had risen to about 10 percent. The Civil War was a major

stimulus to industrialization in the United States, and it accelerated an already rapid urbanization. By 1870, the U.S. population was one-quarter urban; by 1900, it was 40 percent urban. By 1920, the majority of the American population lived in cities, and the percentage continued to increase rapidly (except during the Great Depression) until 1960, when it reached about 70 percent. After that, it rose only slowly to about 74 percent in 1980 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983c) and has risen only slightly since then.

Economics of Urban Growth

The growth of different cities at different points in U.S. history reflects the various stages in the development of the U.S. economy (Duncan and Lieberman, 1970; Glaab and Brown, 1967; Glaab, 1963; Hawley, 1981). As Table 17.3 shows, the most rapidly growing cities in early American history were seaports. During the nineteenth century, New York became the pre-eminent American city because it had a great natural harbor, water access to the interior, and a central location relative to early America's population. A key to its development was the construction of transportation systems: first the Erie Canal in 1825, which connected the city to the Great Lakes shipping routes, and later the railroads (Palen, 1987, p. 67).

The next surge of growth, before and during the Civil War, took place in the "inland

Table 17.3 Period of Emergence of Major Urban Centers in the United States

<i>Before 1850</i>	<i>1850–1880</i>	<i>1880–1900</i>	<i>1900–1940</i>	<i>1940–Present</i>
New York	Chicago	Buffalo	Los Angeles	Dallas
Charleston, South Carolina*	St. Louis	Cleveland	Houston	Atlanta
Boston	Cincinnati	Detroit		Miami
Philadelphia	San Francisco	Milwaukee		Seattle
Baltimore	Washington	Minneapolis–St. Paul		Denver
New Orleans	Pittsburgh	Kansas City		San Diego
				San Antonio
				Phoenix

Source: James E. Vance (1976). "Cities in the Shaping of the American Nation," *Journal of Geography* (January): 41–52; Beverly Duncan and Stanley Lieberman (1970). *Metropolis and Region in Transition* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage); and U.S. Bureau of the Census (1913). *Thirteenth Census of the United States* (1910).

* Failed to grow rapidly after 1850, and no longer regarded as major urban center.

ports”—cities located at transshipment points; that is, at the junction of two rivers, or where water routes ended and land transportation took over. Chicago is the leading example: Between 1850 and 1890, its population doubled every ten years, at least. From 1880 to 1900, the most rapid growth occurred in cities whose economies were based almost entirely on manufacturing. Most of these cities, like Cleveland, Buffalo, and Detroit, were located on the Great Lakes. To the west, new port and transshipment cities were also growing, like Minneapolis–St. Paul and San Francisco. From 1900 until the beginning of World War II, the automobile was the dominant force shaping the growth of American cities. Rapid growth continued in Detroit and other auto-manufacturing cities in Michigan and Ohio, as well as in cities near oil fields, such as Los Angeles and Houston. Since World War II, the fastest-growing American cities have been in the Sun Belt—the South and the West. These cities have had diversified economies that benefited from tourism, energy extraction, military spending, and service industries.

Functional Specialization

Note the preceding references to auto-manufacturing cities and cities near oil fields. This illustrates the concept of **functional specialization**: Different cities specialize in different kinds of economic activity. Historically, Detroit has specialized in auto manufacturing, Pittsburgh in steel making, Seattle in aircraft manufacturing, and Hartford and Des Moines in finance and insurance services (Duncan and Lieberman, 1970; Getis, Getis, and Fellman, 1981). Houston's economy is based mainly on oil; New Orleans is a major seaport; Minneapolis and San Francisco are regional trade and commerce centers. The Minneapolis–St. Paul area, for example, has major livestock and grain markets as well as regional distribution centers for a variety of national companies. Some cities, of course, are more diversified. Examples include Boston, Dallas, Atlanta, Indianapolis, and Miami (Noyelle and Stanback, 1983). Often, diversified cities are

more protected from economic fluctuations than cities highly specialized in one industry. Sharp “busts” hit Detroit when imports hurt domestic car sales, Seattle during declines in the aircraft industry, and Houston when the price of oil fell. Much of California struggled with harder economic times in the early 1990s as a result of cutbacks in military spending and base closings. Military spending had been a major stimulus to California's rapid growth during and after World War II (Hooks, 1994), but the same forces that contributed to California's growth during military buildups have made it vulnerable to hard times during military scalebacks.

A few cities, including Washington, Los Angeles, Chicago, and, above all, New York, are national metropolises. In other words, they are the centers of economic activities that are national or international in scope. Many national and multinational corporations have their headquarters in or near these cities; national organizations are headquartered in these places; network television originates from these locations (Hawley, 1981, pp. 244–8). Washington, of course, is virtually guaranteed such a status by its position as the nation's capital. With the rise of the Sun Belt cities, Atlanta also appears to be developing some of the characteristics of a national metropolis. A *megapolis* is a chain of large metropolises that span great distances. The United States has several of these, the most famous being Boston in the north stretching down to Washington, DC, in the south. Others include California's coast from San Diego to the Bay area of Oakland and San Francisco; Florida's coasts from Jacksonville to Miami to the Tampa area; and the largest of them all, the Great Lakes region including cities such as Chicago, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Detroit, and Pittsburgh. The functional specialization of cities, along with other factors, helps to determine which areas grow and which ones do not under a given set of circumstances. Metropolitan growth in the 2010–2015 period is discussed in the box “Metro Areas in the United States: Which Ones Are Growing? Which Ones Aren't?”

A new trend in the past several decades has been the emergence of greater functional

specialization within the larger metropolitan areas. During the 1970s and 1980s, the suburbs increasingly became centers of highly specialized employment. Some, for example, specialized in high-tech electronic and computer-related industries; others developed economies based on major medical centers or sports complexes; yet others developed retail economies centered on shopping malls and related commercial development. In the meantime, downtown areas became more specialized in banking, government, law, and investment (Suro, 1991).

Urban Hierarchy

The United States, like other industrialized countries, has developed a system called an urban hierarchy within which different cities, depending on their size and level of economic activity, may supply goods and services to less populated areas on the one hand, and be dependent on larger cities for goods and services on the other hand (Golden, 1981; Hawley, 1981; Simmons, 1978). Those products and services for which a nationwide market is required tend to be concentrated in the national metropolises. For other goods and services, the market is regional. Cities such as Minneapolis, Kansas City, and San Francisco do not provide goods and services just for the people who live in them, but also for the **hinterland**: a surrounding area that is dependent on the city for goods, services, and markets. Another step down the scale are smaller cities like Peoria, Illinois; Bakersfield, California; Knoxville, Tennessee; and Springfield, Massachusetts. These cities are part of the hinterland of larger cities and rely on those larger cities for certain specialized goods and services. Yet these cities provide other products and services (local television stations, regional shopping malls, smaller-scale wholesaling) for hinterlands of their own (Bourne and Simmons, 1978). This hierarchy continues until you reach the level of the very smallest towns that can support only a gas station, a convenience store, and perhaps a grain elevator.

Urbanization in the Third World

Since World War II, many Third World countries have experienced rapid urbanization. This process results from some of the same social forces that produced urbanization in Europe and North America, although the *push* factors forcing people out of rural areas have been more important than the *pull* factors attracting them to the cities. As discussed in Chapter 16, the decrease in mortality rates that accompanies the demographic transition has happened much more quickly in the Third World than it did in the Western industrialized nations and Japan. As a result, rural overpopulation has been more sudden and severe, and millions of people around the world have left their rural homes for the city.

Unfortunately, many Third World countries have not industrialized to the extent that Europe had when the demographic transition took place there, so millions of people in Third World cities have no useful economic role to play. Lacking any real means of support, they live by the thousands—sometimes by the millions—in shantytowns, or squatter settlements, on the fringes of major cities. The squatters live crowded together in makeshift structures built from cardboard, scrap wood, or metal, without running water, flush toilets, or electricity.

Although the deplorable conditions of today's Third World shantytowns may not be any worse than those of nineteenth-century European working-class neighborhoods, there are some important differences. First, today's Third World urbanization is occurring on a far larger scale. São Paulo, Brazil, for example, has a population of 20.8 million, nearly six times the population of Paris in 1900. Second, urbanization in many Third World countries is running ahead of industrialization, whereas in Europe it tended to follow or accompany industrialization. Thus, urban populations in these countries have grown far beyond what the economy can support. This condition is known as **overurbanization**. The term does not mean that the population in these countries is "too urban"—usually the urban standard of living exceeds that of rural areas, even in the poorest nations—but rather that the economy has not developed enough to employ the urban

population (Gugler, 1982; Palen, 1987; Sovani, 1964; Wellisz, 1971).

This problem is especially severe in the least industrialized countries, such as Mexico, India, Peru, Indonesia, and Thailand. Many of these countries lack the urban hierarchy of industrialized countries. Instead, they are characterized by primate cities (Portes, 1977). A primate city is one large city into which the great share of the country's population and economic growth is channeled. The extreme example is probably Bangkok, Thailand, which has 33 times the population of the country's next-largest city (Spates and Macionis, 1987, p. 272). The Bangkok area once accounted for more than half of Thailand's population, and one out of three Thais still live there, according to the 2010 Thailand census. Many theorists argue that primate cities hinder economic development in two ways. First, they are said to retard economic growth in the rest of the country because the perception develops that the only place where there is opportunity is "the big city" (Bradshaw, 1987; London and Smith, 1988). Second, they are especially subject to overurbanization because people flock to the primate city in hopes of bettering their lives.

We must, however, be careful in generalizing about Third World cities. Some countries have primate cities (especially those with long histories of colonial domination), but others do not. The concept of overurbanization is far more applicable to some countries than to others. A number of Third World nations are rapidly industrializing, and for them overurbanization is not such a problem. Several of the so-called Pacific Rim countries, such as Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong (now part of the People's Republic of China), have industrialized to such an extent that they are able to employ most of their urban populations. In China overurbanization was for a time largely prevented by governmental controls on migration to the city, a solution that would probably only work under China's centralized economic and political system. Today, those controls have been relaxed, but the rapid growth of the Chinese economy has been able to absorb many, though not all, of the growing number of migrants to the cities. Nonetheless, there has been an increase in crowded, substandard housing on the fringes of

China's largest cities, as more people have fled the rural areas for urban opportunities.

Despite the problems in many Third World cities, the urban population continues to soar. Around 80 percent of the population of Latin America is urban, as is nearly 47 percent in Asia and 40 percent in Africa (Population Reference Bureau, 2015). These figures represent a sharp increase since World War II. In fact, there are more than 50 *times* as many people living in Third World cities of over one million today as there were in 1950. In 1950, seven of the world's ten largest cities were in industrialized countries. Today, only two of the world's ten largest cities (Tokyo and New York) are in industrialized countries. The population of some cities in developing countries is very large and growing rapidly. As Table 17.2 shows, 14 of the top 20 most populous cities in 2023 are in developing countries.

Urban Life

The large-scale growth of cities has generated intense debates about the relative merits of urban and rural life. As was previously noted, the city has been both praised as the cradle of civilization, and condemned as impersonal, brutal, and corrupt. Early sociological theories about the city reflected both views. Sociologists sought to identify what it was about city living that seemed, for example, to spur both creativity and deviance. As noted in Chapter 1, urban problems associated with industrialization were a major focus of early sociology in both Europe and the United States. More recently, sociologists have used empirical research to test systematically the accuracy of popular and sociological perceptions about the city. This research has shown such perceptions to be right in some ways and wrong in others.

Differences Between Rural and Urban Life

Probably the earliest systematic sociological comparison of urban and rural life was that of the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1963 [orig. 1887]). Tönnies's theory, like others that followed it, was not simply a comparison of

rural and urban life, but rather a comparison of traditional, preindustrial society—which is rural in nature—and modern industrial society—which is urban. It is, therefore, difficult to sort out the effects of modernization, industrialization, and urbanization in this and other theories.

Tönnies referred to the traditional rural society as *Gemeinschaft*, a German word that, roughly translated, means “community.” In this society, relations between people were close and personal, behavior was governed by widely accepted traditions, and contact with strangers was rare. People were closely bound together by kinship, friendship, and neighborliness. They recognized “common goods—common evils; common friends—common enemies” (Tönnies, 1963 [orig. 1887]). They trusted one another and were careful to fulfill their mutual obligations. Modern, industrial, urban society, or *Gesellschaft*, presented a sharp contrast, according to Tönnies. *Gesellschaft*, roughly translated, means “association,” a term that captures the more formal, instrumental nature of this society. According to Tönnies, people in modern urban societies follow their own individualistic agendas, which are often driven by economic self-interest. As a result, they are less likely to know and care about one another. The city becomes an impersonal arena where everyone looks out only

for themselves. Common identity and consensus based on tradition disappear, and people become isolated and alienated.

As another German sociologist, Georg Simmel (1964 [orig. 1905]), pointed out, part of the reason for these differences is that the city simply contains more people and more situations than any one person can possibly become familiar with. As a result, Simmel believed, urbanites protect themselves from overstimulation by withdrawing and developing what he called a “blasé attitude,” which involves tuning out most of what is going on and paying attention only to that small part that is interesting or useful in terms of personal concerns and goals. According to Simmel, this is why urbanites so often “don’t want to get involved.” (For a modern elaboration of Simmel’s viewpoint, see Milgram, 1970.)

Wirth on Urban Life

In the United States, the most influential sociological theory about urban life has been Louis Wirth’s, presented in his 1938 article entitled “Urbanism as a Way of Life.” Wirth was a product of the “Chicago School” that was so influential in early American sociology (see Chapter 1), and like his colleagues at the University of Chicago, he



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

Metro Areas in the United States: Which Ones Are Growing? Which Ones Aren’t?

Which metropolitan areas are growing fastest as we enter the new millennium? Which ones, by contrast, are losing population? The answers to these questions can be found in the tables in this box. Look first at the following table, which shows the 29 metropolitan areas in the United States that grew by 10 percent or more between 2010 and 2020. Can you make any generalizations about these areas?

Most of the areas that experienced rapid growth are relatively new areas located in the South and the West. Note that Texas, Florida, the Rocky

Mountain states, and the Carolinas are especially well represented. As modern communication techniques (fax, the Internet, express mail) and air travel have given people a wider variety of places to live, the amenities offered by different locales have become more important. And many of these places do have amenities, such as mountains or warm climates, that make them attractive to people seeking a particular lifestyle. Note, too, that several of them are the homes of major universities where a good deal of the research and expertise so important to the postindustrial economy take place.

Table 17.1 Metropolitan Areas Showing the Largest Population Growth Rate (15 Percent or More) 2010–2020

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Metropolitan Area Name</i>	<i>Change, 2010–2020 (%)</i>
1	The Villages, FL Metro Area	39
2	Orlando, FL	25.3
3	Houston, TX	20.3
4	Dallas-Fort Worth, TX	20.0
5	Austin, TX	33.0
6	Nashville, TN	20.9
7	Raleigh, NC	25.1
8	Atlanta, GA	15.2
9	Phoenix, AZ	15.6
10	Seattle, WA	16.8
11	Denver, CO	16.5
12	Charlotte, NC	18.6
13	San Antonio, TX	19.4
14	Las Vegas, NV	16.1
15	Jacksonville, FL	19.3
16	Salt Lake City, UT	15.6

Source: Metropolitan Growth: 2020 Census. U.S. Census. www.newgeography.com/content/007147-metropolitan-growth-2020-census www.newgeography.com/files/2020census-major-metro.pdf (downloaded September 25, 2023).

Now, take a look at the following table, which shows the metropolitan areas that experienced slowest growth, 10 percent or more between 2010 and 2020. Are you able to make any generalizations about these areas?

Most of these metropolitan areas that exhibit slow or even negative growth less than 10 percent are older metropolitan areas in the Northeast and the Midwest as well as a handful in the South. A more recent trend is the loss of population in the West, where growth

in large metropolitan cities is slowing. States such as California, Michigan, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia are well represented in this group. These metropolitan areas have economies based on industrial manufacturing or on getting and shipping raw materials or fuels, such as iron and steel and coal, for manufacturing. Many of them are also located in cold climates with fewer recreational amenities than many of the fast-growing areas enjoy. Only five are in the warm regions of the South.

Table 17.2 Metropolitan Areas Showing the Greatest Population Loss (2 percent or more) 2010–2015

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Metropolitan Area Name</i>	<i>Change, 2000 to 2007 (Percent)</i>
1	Farmington, NM Metro Area	–8.7
2	Pine Bluff, AR Metro Area	–6.5
3	Johnstown, PA Metro Area	–5.1
4	Sierra Vista-Douglas, AZ Metro Area	–3.7
5	Flint, MI Metro Area	–3.5
6	Saginaw, MI Metro Area	–3.4
7	Detroit-Dearborn-Livonia, MI Metro Division	–3.4

Rank	Metropolitan Area Name	Change, 2000 to 2007 (Percent)
8	Cumberland, MD-WV Metro Area	-3.2
9	Weirton-Steubenville, WV-OH Metro Area	-3.2
10	Decatur, IL Metro Area	-3.1
11	Danville, IL Metro Area	-2.9
12	Charleston, WV Metro Area	-2.8
13	Rocky Mount, NC Metro Area	-2.8
14	Youngstown-Warren-Boardman, OH-PA Metro Area	-2.8
15	Ocean City, NJ Metro Area	-2.6
16	Pittsfield, MA Metro Area	-2.6
17	Wheeling, WV-OH Metro Area	-2.5
18	Rockford, IL Metro Area	-2.5
19	Anniston-Oxford-Jacksonville, AL Metro Area	-2.5
20	Albany, GA Metro Area	-2.4
21	Binghamton, NY Metro Area	-2.3
22	Kankakee, IL Metro Area	-2.3
23	Mansfield, OH Metro Area	-2.2
24	East Stroudsburg, PA Metro Area	-2.0
25	Elmira, NY Metro Area	-2.0
26	Bay City, MI Metro Area	-2.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Factfinder, table viewer, 2015 Population Estimates, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2015 - United States - Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Area; and for Puerto Rico. <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk> (downloaded June 20, 2016).

had a strong interest in understanding the social problems that were evident in American cities in the early twentieth century. The large population size of cities, Wirth argued, produces a need for specialization. When this happens, people begin to interact in terms of their particular roles in a situation, rather than with one another as people. In the terminology introduced in Chapter 9 of this book, *primary-group* relations are replaced by *secondary-group* relations. As a result, relationships become "impersonal, superficial, transitory, and segmental" (Wirth, 1964, p. 71).

The high population density of urban areas leads to the type of overstimulation discussed by Simmel, and people respond to it not only by "tuning out" but also by simplifying and stereotyping. Thus, people's images of the city are organized (but simplified) into "Little Italy," "the Gold Coast," "the ghetto," and so forth, and the residents of these areas are psychologically lumped

into categories: "immigrants," "Yuppies," and "the underclass." According to Wirth, this process leads to a greater tolerance of differences in the city, but it also leads to depersonalization, stereotyping, and withdrawal in order to avoid contact with those who are "not like us." A common variation on Wirth's arguments is the notion that high population densities are stressful and lead to pathological behaviors such as violence, crime, conflict, and withdrawal from normal human interaction (Hall, 1966). Evidence for this line of reasoning is provided in part by studies of animals showing that they behave abnormally when crowded beyond some limit (Calhoun, 1962).

Perhaps the most important of all the characteristics of the city, to Wirth, is heterogeneity. It is easy for urbanites to stereotype and avoid one another because they are, in fact, far more diverse than people who came into contact with one another in preindustrial rural societies. Different

professions; different racial, ethnic, and religious groups; different social classes; and different personality types are all mixed together in a relatively confined space. The city also enhances physical and social mobility, so that people interact with different sets of neighbors and co-workers at different times in their lives—an experience far different from that of traditional villagers. As a result, people resist the tendency to “get too close,” knowing that soon they will be associating with a new set of people. (How many of your current classmates will you be close to five years from now?) Consequently, Wirth saw urbanites as isolated and alienated, using one another to advance their own personal interests, and largely devoid of close, meaningful primary-group relationships.

Decline of Community: Myth or Reality?

There is one common theme in the writings of Tönnies, Simmel, Wirth, and others: the idea that urbanization, modernization, and industrialization lead to a decline of community. To understand this, we must understand the meaning of “community,” a term that even sociologists have used in a wide variety of ways (Schwab, 1992; Hillery, 1955). In general, the term **community** refers to a group of people who share three things: They live in a geographically distinct area (such as a city or town); they share cultural characteristics, attitudes, and lifestyles; and they interact with one another on a sustained basis (Schwab, 1992). It is the latter two elements of community that writers such as Simmel and Wirth argue are on the decline in modern urban societies: People share less and less in common and interact with one another less and less. This situation leads to the alienation that decline of community theorists see as a characteristic of modern urban life.

The decline of community hypothesis has stimulated a great deal of research. On the basis of this research, we know today that important points Tönnies, Simmel, and Wirth made about the city are true, but we also know that some of their views were overly pessimistic. It is true that urbanites spend much more of their time in secondary-group relationships than the rural people or villagers of the past, or even the farm population

of today (Reiss, 1959). It is also true that city residents do not and cannot interact with most of the people they encounter, and that they engage in a variety of mechanisms to avoid unwanted interaction (Milgram, 1970). They also think in a stereotyped manner, as Wirth argued, but urbanites have no monopoly on this type of thinking.

Urban Life and Interpersonal Relationships

Nonetheless, certain aspects of the Tönnies-Simmel-Wirth viewpoint have been disproved. First, most urbanites are not lacking in close, interpersonal relationships. Rather, they typically have family and friends with whom they share relationships that are as close and personal as anything found in the traditional *Gemeinschaft*-type society (Bell, 1968; Fischer, 1982; Wellman, 1979). Often, though, the friends of urbanites are not neighbors; they may live miles away, but they interact regularly on the basis of common interests, work, or family background (Wellman, 1979). Second, there is no evidence that people living in cities are more alienated or suffer more mental illness than people living in rural areas (Srole, 1972, 1980; Srole et al., 1962; Fischer, 1984). Some older studies actually found mental illness to be slightly more common in rural areas than in urban areas (Fischer, 1973; Srole, 1972), but more recent research suggests there is not much difference between urban and rural areas in the incidence of mental disorders (Breslau et al., 2014). It is hard to judge accurately just how much mental illness existed in preindustrial rural societies, but there is good reason to believe that there was a significant amount. In the modern era, in the societies that most closely resemble preindustrial societies, mental illness is not unusual. Eaton and Weil (1955), for example, studied the Hutterites, a very traditional religious organization whose members live in rural communities in the northern plains, in a manner that closely approximates Tönnies's concept of *Gemeinschaft*. The researchers found their rates of mental illness to be just as high as those in highly urban New York State. The only difference was that the Hutterites cared for their own members when they were mentally ill, rather than hospitalizing them or sending them to a mental health professional.

Population Density and Crowding

Although Wirth and others saw the high population density of cities as alienating and destructive

of community, research has also found no substantial relationship between population density and mental illness or other pathologies, after controlling for other factors such as poverty (Baldassare, 1979; Booth, Johnson, and Edwards, 1980; Choldin, 1978; Farley, 1982). Some urban lifestyles even thrive on density, such as that of ethnic neighborhoods where interaction is based on kinship (Gans, 1962; Jacobs, 1961). There are some studies showing that feeling crowded is associated with problems, but feeling crowded is not always associated with real crowding, and it may even be a consequence of family conflict (Booth, 1976). Although crowded cities have been blamed by some observers for riots and rising crime rates, there is a serious flaw in this reasoning. Urban population densities have fallen throughout most of the twentieth century; they were lower in the 1960s, when violence broke out in numerous American cities, than they had ever been before; and they are even lower now. There is one qualification to the general conclusion that population density does not by itself cause problems. Crowding within houses or apartments may cause some adverse effects, especially if it is combined with poverty and the presence of small children (Baldassare, 1981; Gove, Hughes, and Galle, 1979). However, no such effect has been shown for population density in the sense of persons per square mile. One study found support for the arguments of Gans and Jacobs in central cities: Higher population density was associated with *lower* rates of violent crime, but in suburban areas, there was no relationship one way or the other (Christens and Speer, 2005). Levy, Phillips and Sampson (2020) found that it isn't just density or even the socioeconomic conditions that lead to more or less violence in a neighborhood but also the conditions of neighborhoods its residents visit and are visited by.

Urban Life and "Getting Involved"

Sociologists also question whether urbanites are as uncaring as they are portrayed to be. To be sure, certain dramatic incidents appear to support this portrayal. In New York City in 1964, for example, a woman named Kitty Genovese was attacked and repeatedly stabbed in the

view of dozens of people. Nobody intervened; indeed, nobody even called the police until after she had died. Or so it was reported at the time. Evidence (Cook, 2015) has since emerged that some neighbors did call the police, but the police did not respond until it was too late. The widespread press coverage of the wrongly reported incident sparked much social science interest in the topic that would become known as the *bystander effect*, where witnesses do not offer assistance to a victim when other people are present. In 1984, a virtually identical incident (to what was originally reported) occurred in Brooklyn, and in St. Louis a woman was attacked in front of a crowd of people filing out of Busch Stadium after a baseball game (Spates and Macionis, 1987, p. 107). In these cases, apparently nobody intervened or even notified the police—they just kept walking by. Certainly, such incidents are very disturbing, and they have often been used as evidence that urbanites don't care about one another.

Diffused Responsibility. There are, however, alternative explanations. For one thing, direct intervention can be dangerous. Around the time of the St. Louis incident, an off-duty fireman in nearby Alton, Illinois, was killed when he saw a man beating a woman in the front yard of a house and tried to stop him. Of course, this doesn't explain why people do not even call the police in such situations. Here sociologists refer to the concept of **diffused responsibility**. It is significant that the firefighter in this example was the only person who witnessed the event, and he did try to do something about it. In the other three instances, a large crowd of people saw the event, and no one person felt individually responsible for doing something about it. Instead, everyone who correctly recognized the situation as an emergency assumed that someone else had called the police, but tragically, nobody had, at least in two of the cases.

Pluralistic Ignorance. Besides the fact that nobody felt responsible, it also appears that many people misidentified the situations as nonemergencies, such as lovers' quarrels. This, too, happens more often when a number of people witness an event, because each person interprets the nonparticipation of others as a cue that the situation is not really an emergency. This phenomenon has been referred to as pluralistic

ignorance (Latane and Darley, 1970; Penrod, 1986, p. 395). Dozens of studies have demonstrated that as the number of people who witness an emergency increases, the chances that anyone will help decrease (Latane, Nida, and Wilson, 1981). These studies suggest that, rather than not caring, urban crowds either do not realize that the situation is an emergency or they assume that someone else is already taking care of it.

When people do recognize a situation as an emergency and understand that others are not likely to intervene, they often do step in, even in the most urban of environments, and sometimes in the face of danger. This can be seen in the case of Reginald Denny, the white truck driver who was dragged from his truck and beaten during the 1992 riots that followed the acquittals of the police in the Rodney King beating case in Los Angeles. Denny's life was saved by four African Americans who understood that if they did not intervene, he would be beaten to death. Despite the danger that Denny's attackers would turn on them, these individuals stepped in, chased away the people attacking Denny, and summoned medical assistance.

Variations in the Urban Experience

One other important consideration that was underemphasized by Wirth and his intellectual predecessors is that, because cities are highly diverse, the experiences of one group of urban residents can be very different from those of others. Herbert Gans (1972), for example, has identified several distinct groups of people who live in central cities and at least one distinct group in the suburbs. These groups are now summarized.

Cosmopolites. These are well-educated and affluent people who like the cultural and entertainment opportunities of the city. Though they may be unmarried or childless if married, they typically have a number of friends with whom they share interests. Often, these friends are not neighbors; common interest, not proximity, draws them together. Cities facilitate this process by providing a critical mass of people with similar interests (Choldin, 1985, pp. 50–52).

Unmarried. These residents live in the city for some of the same reasons as the cosmopolites, but often reside there only during certain parts of their lives, such as during young adulthood before marriage, or after a divorce. Also included

in this group is the substantial LGBTQ+ population that lives in some central cities. The unmarried, too, often have citywide rather than neighborhood-based friendship networks. Though many prefer the city, some also live in today's large suburban apartment complexes.

Ethnic Villagers. These are families with children who live in ethnically segregated neighborhoods, often near their relatives (Gans, 1962). They are working class, but not poor. Gans called their neighborhoods "urban villages" because they have many of the characteristics of a traditional rural village. Extended family relationships are important, relatives often live near one another, and neighborhood interaction is strong. This group is probably the most removed from the urbanites portrayed by Wirth. Many Italian, Puerto Rican, Jewish, and Mexican neighborhoods fit this description, as do some of the newer communities of Asian immigrants and some black and Irish working-class neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are communities in all three senses of our definition of community. Frequently, their residents are strongly attached to the neighborhood and wouldn't move to a "better" one even if they could (Terkel, 1967, p. 198).

The Deprived, the Trapped, and the Downwardly Mobile. These groups (which Gans treated as several distinct, though similar, groups) are made up of the poor and the unemployed. The chronically poor constitute what has come to be called the underclass (Jencks and Peterson, 1991; Wilson, 1987). This group—which probably best fits Wirth's pessimistic view of urban life—is described in greater detail in a later section of this chapter. However, it should be stressed that its difficult situation is the result of extreme poverty, not of urban life per se.

Suburbanites. The final group identified by Gans was suburbanites. This group has become increasingly diverse since Gans wrote his article, and it will also be discussed at some length later in this chapter.

The City and Tolerance

Despite the growth of the urban population and the homogenizing effects of the mass media, important differences between cities and rural areas continue to exist. One difference that has been confirmed by research is that people in cities are more tolerant of diversity and of non-conforming lifestyles, including alcohol use,

nonconforming sexual behaviors, and marijuana use (Fischer, 1975, 1971; Tuch, 1987), than people in rural areas. They are also more tolerant toward different racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural groups (Tuch, 1987; Pew Research Center, 2003) and toward unpopular political views (T. Wilson, 1991). These differences have long been recognized by urban theorists. Simmel, though pessimistic about other aspects of city life, saw this as a great advantage. He argued (1964 [orig. 1905]) that the metropolis “assures the individual of a degree and type of personal freedom to which there is no analogy in other circumstances.” Importantly, though, there are wide differences in tolerance within both cities and rural areas: In each kind of area, some people are far more tolerant than others.

Cities and Social Conflict

Think of the last time you heard about a riot, strike, terrorist attack, or political assassination. Whether it took place in the United States or in another country, chances are it happened in an urban area. Most outbreaks of conflict do. The United States, for example, has a long history of urban rioting, going back at least to violent antiblack rioting in New York City more than 150 years ago during the Civil War. We associate terrorism in our cities with recent decades (the World Trade Center attacks, the Oklahoma City bombing), but its history is much longer than that. For example, in 1910 the headquarters of the *Los Angeles Times* was destroyed by a terrorist bomb, which killed 21 employees. This reality has often led to speculation that city living *causes* conflict, that is, urban living is so stressful and difficult that people can’t handle it and respond by engaging in conflict, which is sometimes violent.

An Arena of Conflict

The reality, however, is quite different. Rather than causing

conflict, the city acts as an arena of conflict. In other words, it serves as the place where societal conflicts are fought out. As conflict theorists point out, social inequality and the existence of competing interest groups work to create conflict in all societies. Notably, the riots and bombings previously described involved groups who felt threatened or were relatively powerless. These conflicts are fought out in the cities for several reasons.

First, the most important political and corporate decisions are made in the cities because that is where governments, corporations, and organizations are headquartered. Thus, the conflicts that affect cities are often national or international in character, but the city is where they are fought out. *Second*, a critical mass of the disaffected is more easily attained in cities. When people with deep grievances are scattered, it is harder for them to get together and act collectively (though mass communications and the Internet have somewhat changed that in recent years). In cities, though, there are enough disaffected people in one place to come together and take action. *Third*, important national and international symbols, such as the World Trade Center and federal office buildings, are usually located in cities. For these reasons, even when dissenters are based in rural areas or distant lands, they often attack symbols of government and commerce located in cities: the World Trade



Photo 17.2 An “alternative” night club above a Vietnamese restaurant in Montreal. The diversity of cities leads urbanites to be somewhat more accepting of different ethnic groups and cultural lifestyles than rural populations are.

Courtesy of John E. Farley

Center; the Pentagon; the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. A *fourth* factor is relative deprivation, which is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. The basic idea of relative deprivation is that people are more likely to engage in conflict when they feel they have been disadvantaged or mistreated relative to someone else. Obviously, such feelings can develop more easily in a big, diverse city, where the wealthy and poor regularly come into contact with each other, than in a homogeneous rural area or village, where even if you are poor, most of the people you see and associate with are equally poor (see Williams, 1977, p. 28). Relatedly, “fuzzy boundaries” between ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods often increase the chance for conflict because they are subject to competing ethnic territorial claims by groups feeling relative deprivation (Legewie and Schaeffer, 2016). *Fifth*, and finally, the costs and benefits of dissent are different in urban and rural areas. The greater freedom of the city, where you can be anonymous if you choose, makes you less likely to “get in trouble” for dissenting than you would in a small town. Thus, it is less costly to you to engage in conflict in the urban setting, and the benefits of conflict may also be greater because there is a better chance of finding the critical mass necessary for an effective movement.

Collective Behavior

Not only violence and conflict but many other forms of collective behavior occur more often in cities for the reasons previously stated. Again, these forms of collective behavior *do not* occur because of any alienating feature of the city but rather because, for many of the reasons previously noted, people come together in crowds and masses more readily in cities than they do in rural areas.

Collective behavior can be defined as large numbers of people acting together in an extraordinary situation, in which usual norms governing behavior do not apply. In some instances, people make up new norms as they go along. Collective behavior occurs in a great variety of forms, including crowds, rumors, panics, riots, “urban legends,” fashions and fads, mass

hysteria, and mass suicide. As different as these things are, they all involve behaviors or shared beliefs by sizable numbers of people that deviate from normal patterns or from past norms (Lofland, 1985, p. 37).

Causes of Collective Behavior

One way in which collective behavior differs from other social behavior is that it does not normally occur in ongoing social groups; that is, groups that interact regularly and share a common purpose (see Chapter 9). Rather, it occurs among aggregates or collectivities: sets of people, often large in number, who interact only in a temporary or superficial way. These sets of people may be localized in one place, in which case they are called **crowds**, or they may be dispersed, as in the case of rumors, urban legends, and fashions (Turner and Killian, 1987). Dispersed collectivities are called **masses**. Obviously, today’s highly urbanized society and its extensive networks of “instant communications” are highly conducive to both the localized and dispersed varieties of collective behavior.

There are two important characteristics of aggregates or collectivities that lead to behavior that does not occur in ordinary, ongoing social groups. First, as the distinction implies, collectivities themselves interact only temporarily, even though they often include many small clusters of friends and acquaintances. Second, unlike groups, collectivities do not have clear boundaries: In other words, it is not clear who belongs to a collectivity and who doesn’t. Consider an outdoor rally on a college campus. Some people are clearly participating; others are “just watching”; still others are “passing through” on their way to somewhere else. Are all of these people part of the crowd? Or does the crowd consist only of those who are actively participating? There is no obvious answer.

Because of these differences, some of the usual norms that govern human behavior can break down in collectivities, and people in collectivities therefore frequently behave in different ways than they otherwise would. Neil Smelser (1963) developed what he called

a value-added theory to identify conditions that increase the likelihood of such collective behavior. Among the key elements of his theory are the breakdown of social control, structural conduciveness and structural strain, and precipitating incidents.

Breakdown of Social Control

Clearly, social control (Chapter 10) is often weaker in collectivities than in groups, because the individual has no ongoing relationship with the collectivity to be concerned about. At the same time, the collectivity frequently develops norms of its own, often on the spot, which may not conform with the usual norms of society. For example, in a crowd it may be acceptable, or even expected, to sing loudly, engage in bawdy or controversial chants, or rush madly toward some common goal or away from some perceived threat. Thus, when interacting with a collectivity, people sometimes do things they would never do either when alone or when part of their everyday, ongoing social groups.

Structural Conduciveness

Although there must be a crowd or a mass in order for collective behavior to occur, crowds and masses do not always result in collective behavior.

Rather, collective behavior occurs when there is **structural conduciveness**—that is, when the situation in some way encourages collective behavior. Just what this means depends on the type of behavior. For example, people spread rumors concerning things they are afraid of or suspect but about which they lack direct information (Rosnow and Fine, 1976). And in the case of a riot, some collective grievance is often (though not always) present (Smelser, 1963). Smelser referred to the conflicts of interest that produce such grievances as structural strain. While structural strain is a type of structural conduciveness, it is *people's response* to that situation that leads to action. In other words, a generalized belief must exist among a sizable segment of the population, arising from the situation, in order for collective behavior to occur. That belief could be a grievance, or the belief that something unusual, such as a natural disaster, is under way or about to happen.

Precipitating Incident

Finally, there is usually a precipitating incident that triggers some type of collective behavior (Smelser, 1963). In the case of fashion, it could be a particular style of clothes or hair worn by a famous person: Figure skater Dorothy Hamill, Princess Diana of Great Britain, and former U.S. first lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis each triggered a major fashion trend in hairstyle when each was at the peak of popularity. In the case of riots, a fight or an arrest often acts as a precipitating incident; the 1992 Los Angeles riots, which were precipitated by the acquittal of police officers in the videotaped beating of Rodney King, illustrate this process, as do the violent outbreaks in recent years in Ferguson, Missouri, Baltimore, and Milwaukee precipitated by the fatal shootings of African Americans by police.

Types of Collective Behavior

As has already been noted, one way to classify the various types of collective behavior is by the type of collectivity involved: crowd or mass. Another is by the predominant type of emotion expressed. According to Lofland (1985), three emotions are commonly expressed by collective behavior: fear, hostility, and joy. Other emotions, such as grief, may also drive collective behavior (Plutchik, 1962). Table 17.4 classifies various types of collective behavior according to the type of collectivity involved and the dominant emotion expressed. Our discussion of collective behavior is organized around this classification system. It should be stressed that the types of collective behavior described in Table 17.4 are not always distinct. Rather, they are ideal types that are only approximated in social reality. It is quite common, for example, for a crowd to represent something of a mixture of two or more of the types of crowd behavior shown in the table.

Collective Behavior in Crowds

When the situation is conducive, there are at least three distinct dynamics that can lead to the

spread of collective behavior. One, which has been known to sociologists for over a century, is *contagion* (Le Bon, 1960 [orig. 1895]). An individual or small group of people in a crowd urges a course of action, or begins to move, chant, sing, or behave in some other visible way, and the behavior rapidly spreads through the crowd (Turner and Killian, 1987, p. 21). This aspect of crowd behavior renders it capable of sudden changes and often leads to the appearance that crowd behavior is unpredictable.

Although it can change quickly, crowd behavior is not necessarily irrational. Crowds do not do everything that is urged on them, they do not imitate everything that some people in the crowd do, and they do not respond to every incident that occurs in their midst or near them (Rose, 1982, pp. 7–8). Rather, they are selective. Moreover, not everyone in the crowd adopts the most visible crowd behaviors (McPhail and Wohlstein, 1983, p. 581). In virtually every crowd action, some people are merely spectators.

Even participants do not always behave in the same way. In crowd situations where violence occurs, for example, usually only a minority of those present participate in the violence. Others cheer them on, and still others just watch (Lewis, 1972; Turner and Killian, 1987). Hence, the crowd is not a mindless collectivity. Behaviors are suggested to the crowd through verbal and nonverbal communication (Wright, 1978). Sometimes the crowd follows these suggestions, sometimes it does not; even when it does, not everyone in the crowd participates.

The second important crowd dynamic is *convergence* (Berk, 1974; Turner and Killian, 1987). This concept refers to the sharing and consequent amplification of emotions, goals, or beliefs by many people in a crowd. As Allport (1924, p. 295) expressed it, “The individual in the crowd behaves just as he would alone, only more so.” In other words, people in the crowd are influenced by common emotions or desires, as we have already seen. When they get in the crowd situation, they act upon these common emotions in a way they might not otherwise, because usual norms do not apply, and because speakers or actions of people in the crowd may intensify these

emotions. More important, though, the behavior of the crowd is not irrational and would not be unpredictable to someone who understood the emotions of the people in the crowd.

One problem with this viewpoint is that the attitudes of those who participate in crowd behavior are not always distinguishable from those of nonparticipants. McPhail (1971), for example, was able to find little attitudinal difference between participants and nonparticipants in urban riots. One answer to this issue may be found in Rose’s (1982, p. 97) notion of “protestors as representative.” He argues that certain groups among whom protest occurs (he cites inner-city black people and college students in the 1960s as examples) do share attitudes conducive to collective behavior, and these attitudes are different from those of others in their society. From this viewpoint, convergence may explain why collective behavior occurred among black people and college students much more than among other groups in the 1960s. It may not be of much use, however, in explaining why some people in these groups participate in protest and others do not.

The third important crowd dynamic is *emergent norms*, the process whereby the crowd collectively and interactively develops its own definition of the situation and norms about how to behave. If the crowd comes to some agreement on such definitions and norms, they then come to dominate the behavior of people in the crowd. If it does not, collective behavior will not occur. Turner and Killian (1987, p. 27) argue that the more unfamiliar and uncertain the situation, the more easily members of a crowd mutually influence one another, which increases the likelihood that the crowd will come to such agreement.

Types of Crowd Behavior

Although collective behavior in crowds usually spreads as a result of one or more of the three dynamics previously discussed, the emotions that lead to that behavior vary widely among different types of crowds. Again referring to Table 17.4, the two examples previously presented can best be classified as cases where the dominant emotion expressed by the crowd is

Table 17.4 Types of Collective Behavior

Type of Collectivity	Dominant Emotion			
	<i>Fear</i>	<i>Hostility</i>	<i>Joy</i>	<i>Mixed or Other</i>
Localized (crowd behavior)	Panics	Mobs Riots Protest crowds	Expressive crowds Public grief	Mass suicides
Dispersed (mass behavior)	Mass hysteria	Vilification	Fads Fashions	Rumors

Source: Adapted from John Lofland, 1985, *Protest: Studies of Collective Behavior and Social Movements*. Reprinted with permission from Transaction, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. The “fear,” “joy,” and “hostility” categories were formulated by Lofland; the “mixed or other” category was added by the authors of this book.

hostility. This emotion typically produces either protest crowds like the ones in the preceding examples (McPhail and Wohlstein, 1983), or the more violent acting crowds, as seen in the case of mobs and riots (Blumer, 1969b). If the dominant emotion is fear, the likely result is panic. Joy leads to expressive crowds, illustrated by the example of a World Series celebration (Blumer, 1969b). Various other emotions or mixtures of emotions can produce other types of crowd behavior, of which public grief and mass suicide are examples. As noted earlier, these crowd types are ideal types; real crowds may only roughly approximate them or may show characteristics reflecting two or more of these types.

Protest Crowds

We have already seen examples of protest crowds: crowds whose purpose is to achieve political goals (McPhail and Wohlstein, 1983) and whose dominant emotion is often hostility or anger (Lofland, 1985). The two student demonstrations previously discussed were examples of protest crowds. Some recent examples of protest crowds include the demonstrations in multiple cities against the shooting of unarmed African Americans leading to the Black Lives Matter movement in 2014. In large part, the Million Man March in 1995 also was a protest crowd, though its celebration of black manhood and its call for responsible actions by the marchers themselves also gave it some of the characteristics of an expressive crowd (discussed in the next section). The Tea Party

protests of summer 2009 were aimed at opposing the return of “big government,” the increase in the national debt following the financial industry bailouts, and the Obama administration’s economic stimulus package. Large protest crowds also occurred in 2010, as opposing sides dueled over Arizona legislation requiring police to check papers of suspected illegal immigrants and requiring legal immigrants to carry their papers at all times. The demonstrations against economic inequality held by the Occupy movement, which began on Wall Street but spread in the following year or so to cities large and small across the United States, would also be examples of protest crowds.

The activities of protest crowds include rallies, marches, picket lines, and sometimes **civil disobedience**—actions such as sit-ins, blocking traffic, and mass trespassing that violate the law but are nonviolent. Although the vast majority of protest crowds remain nonviolent (Eisinger, 1973; Gamson, 1975), they do occasionally turn violent, at which point the protest crowd has been converted into an *acting crowd*.

Expressive Crowds

Expressive crowds are crowds whose predominant action is to express some emotion, usually joy, excitement, or ecstasy. Examples of expressive crowds are audiences at sports events and at rock concerts, and people attending religious revivals. In each of these examples, people collectively express their emotions in ways that they would not in other situations. Such behaviors include cheering, booing, and

throwing streamers at sports events; moving with the music, clapping, and holding up lighted matches or phones at rock concerts; and shouting, singing, arm waving, and “speaking in tongues” at religious revivals.

Although expressive crowds are most often moved by joy or exuberance, they can also express other emotions, such as grief. The thousands of people who lined the streets for the funeral of Princess Diana were expressing a common emotion. Public grief, however, can be either a crowd behavior or a mass behavior. Although the crowds were feeling and expressing grief over the death of Princess Diana, so were millions of others worldwide who were watching the funeral on television. Other examples would be the public outpouring of grief over the sudden deaths of singers Michael Jackson in June 2009 and Prince in 2016. Large crowds formed at sites associated with these singers and at memorials for them. Though many in these crowds were indeed grieving, press reports at the time also described many in the crowds as simply there to celebrate their lives and careers, with spontaneous singing of their songs a common occurrence. The same phenomena played out across the world as people watched on television, blogged online, or shared memories on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and others.

Acting Crowds: Mobs, Riots, and Panics

Protest crowds, expressive crowds, and even casual or conventional crowds can, under the right circumstances, be transformed into *acting crowds*. Acting crowds are crowds that engage in violent or destructive behavior. There are three main types of acting crowds, all of which overlap somewhat: mobs, riots, and panics.

Mobs. A **mob** is an extremely emotional acting crowd that directs its violence against a specific target. This target can be a person, a group of people, or a physical object. Mob violence is often of short duration, because once the mob has vented its anger against its target, it often views its work as finished and breaks up. A recent high-profile mob action was that on January 6, 2021, when a large group of supporters of then-president Donald Trump

violently attacked the U.S. Capitol building in an attempt to stop the certification of Electoral College votes for president-elect Joe Biden. The action by the mob was successful in the short term as the vote was interrupted but resumed and was completed in the early morning hours of January 7.

A type of mob behavior that has been particularly common in the history of the United States (much more so than elsewhere) is the lynch mob, which captures and kills, often by hanging, a person suspected or accused of a crime or other social transgression. In the United States, lynching has frequently been a form of racial violence. It was particularly common in the South between the end of the Civil War and about 1930 (Franklin, 1969, p. 439). Some reports estimate that 2,500 lynchings occurred during the last 16 years of the nineteenth century. The majority of the victims were black males. Although many of them were accused of murder or rape (often without evidence), many others were killed for real or imagined violations of Jim Crow segregation practices (Raper, 1933). These “violations” included such things as being in an area reserved for white people, “talking smart” to white people (especially white women), or simply being too prosperous or well educated.

Lynchings were also fairly common in the West, particularly in the nineteenth century. There, more of the victims were white, although a disproportionate number were of Mexican or Asian ancestry (Mirande, 1987). The nature of these mob actions is captured in the following excerpt from Pitt (1966) concerning one mob during the Gold Rush days in California:

Miners gathered at nearby Devil Springs and vowed to “exterminate the Mexican race from the country.” Thereupon, some Yankees seized one Mexican each at Yaqui’s Camp and at Cherokee Ranch for extraneous reasons and strung them up immediately. Hundreds of miners thrust guns and knives into their belts, roamed angrily over the 5-mile region from San Andreas to Calaveras Forks, and methodically drove out the entire Mexican population—as prospectors had

done in previous seasons—and confiscated all property.

(p. 77)

Riots. The main difference between a mob and a riot is that a riot is less focused on a particular target. A **riot** can be defined as violent crowd behavior aimed against people, property, or both, which is not directed at one specific target. As with mobs, the emotions that most often underlie riots are anger and hostility. Sometimes these emotions are the result of competition between two groups, each of which feels it is being treated unfairly. When this occurs, rioting often takes the form of mass street fighting between opposing groups, or of attacks by crowds of one group against people in another group. Earlier chapters described the frequent history of this type of violence in the United States; similar violence has occurred between Chinese and Malays in Malaysia, Sikhs and Hindus in India, and Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the former Soviet Union.

On other occasions, underlying resentment and feelings of unfair treatment among one group lead that group to rise in violent rebellion. This is often triggered by a precipitating incident, such as an arrest (U.S. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968). In this type of riot, most of the crowd violence is directed against property rather than people, except for violence between the crowd and police or troops. This pattern of violence, marked by rebellion rather than street fighting, was the typical form of violence in the so-called ghetto riots of the 1960s. This pattern was also evident in the recent uprisings in Ferguson, Baltimore, and Milwaukee, mentioned earlier. In riots in which the dominant pattern is rebellion, studies have indicated that when deaths occur, they are usually the result of police action, not actions by rioters (Conot, 1967). In some cases, riots involve combinations of rebellion and attacks on people, as occurred in the 1992 Rodney King riots in Los Angeles (McPhail, 1993).

In some instances, riots occur when protest crowds get out of hand, as occurred in Seattle in 1999 protests against the WTO. They can

also occur when agents of the state seeking to control a protest crowd themselves get out of order, as also appears to have happened in Seattle. Two other prime examples of this are the “police riot” outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968 (U.S. National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, 1968) and the beatings of civil rights demonstrators in 1963 by the Birmingham, Alabama, police.

In all of the preceding examples, hostility or anger was the dominant emotion of the crowd. In other cases, however, joy, exuberance, or the desire to have fun may either lead to or sustain a riot. Sometimes, expressive crowds like those celebrating a sports team victory or students on spring break turn into acting crowds that break windows, loot stores, or fight with police. In some cases, the situation is exacerbated by excessive alcohol consumption by much of the crowd.

Panics. Another type of crowd action is the **panic**. Panics occur when crowds react suddenly to perceived entrapment or exclusion, resulting in spontaneous and often self-destructive behavior. Thus, panics differ from riots and mobs in that fear, rather than anger, is the dominant emotion. There are two common types of panic. In the most common type, people seek to escape some perceived danger, such as a fire, an earthquake, or a military attack. They perceive themselves as entrapped and react accordingly. This reaction is especially likely when the danger is sudden and unexpected, and the escape routes are limited. The other type of panic occurs when a crowd is seeking to gain access to an event or a location and perceives itself to be in danger of being excluded. In both types of panic, surging and pushing occur, and deaths often result from suffocation and trampling.

Turner and Killian (1987) list four main factors characteristic of panic situations. The first is *partial entrapment*—limited escape routes in escape panics, and limited entrance routes in panics directed toward entry. Second is *perceived threat*—a generalized belief, usually sudden, that there is danger of exclusion or entrapment. This leads to an emergent norm that the crowd must act immediately. For example, in

the case of both the rock band The Who concert and the Sheffield soccer match, the crowd suddenly surged forward when people believed that the event they were waiting for had started. Next comes *breakdown of escape route*—the path the crowd is trying to take becomes jammed, so nobody can move through. Finally, there is *failure of front-to-rear communications*—people in back keep pressing forward because they do not know that people in front have blocked their escape routes. In fact, the reverse appears to be true: The rear of the crowd moves forward because people in front are being jammed ever more tightly together.

In addition, Mintz (1951) has noted that once panic behavior begins, it becomes a model and a threat: If you see others pushing in a theater fire situation, you may push back to protect your own position. The disturbance spreads as people press their personal advantage at the group's expense, ultimately to everyone's detriment. At this point, panic behavior has become the norm of the crowd—a situation Smelser (1963) calls the *derived phase* of the panic.

Yet it should be noted that panic behavior appears to be rare. Many incidents of trampling that appear to be the result of panic are actually the result of ignorance—unseen bottlenecks that occur at exits (the failure of front-to-rear communication previously noted) (Clarke, 2002). It is far more typical in an emergency for people to act “as a school of fish” and move together with urgency, helping one another escape. But when an exit becomes blocked, as previously described, those at the back of the crowd do not typically realize this and push harder, trying to get the crowd to move—not primarily out of fear, but out of a sense of shared responsibility. Yet this may have the same outcome as if the pushing had been out of panic. It causes people in the front to be pushed down. But rather than the person behind those on the ground coldly trampling over them in an all-out effort to save themselves, the more common response is for those who are standing to try and help those who have fallen stand up. At which point they themselves may be pushed to the ground. Eventually, the crowd surges forward, and those on the ground are trampled (Clarke, 2002).

Mass Behavior

As previously noted, mass behavior is collective behavior that takes place among dispersed collectivities—people who are separated from one another yet share some common sources of information or communication and respond with similar forms of collective behavior. The most important types of mass behavior are rumors, urban legends, mass hysteria, fashions, and fads. It is important to stress that although these behaviors are treated as mass behaviors, some of them can also occur in crowds. Rumors and the 1974 “streaking” fad (running naked through public places) are two examples. Rumors can and do sweep through crowds, although they can also travel in the absence of crowds. Streaking was usually a crowd behavior, but it spread quickly from place to place by means of communication that did not involve crowds. In fact, the peak of the behavior occurred the day after all three television networks reported it on the evening news (Aguirre, Quarantelli, and Mendoza, 1988).

Types of Mass Behavior

Rumors

Rumors are unconfirmed items of information that are spread by word of mouth and, in some cases, by unconfirmed media reports. Today, many rumors are spread rapidly via the Internet. Rumors can be partially based on fact; however, in all cases, they tend to change as they are spread.

Rumors often begin in a context where something unusual is happening. For example, numerous rumors spread rapidly following the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Rumors are also common when some other form of collective behavior has taken place or is expected to take place. Thus, for example, white people fearful of black violence in cities during the 1960s often believed rumors such as the one that black people had decided to meet at some specified time and march into the downtown area to attack white people and burn stores. At the same time, many African Americans believed rumors that

white gangs or police had beaten, raped, or castrated innocent black people.

Few of these rumors were true. However, all the conditions conducive to rumors were present. Rumors, like other collective behavior, occur when the situation is structurally conducive. Generally, this means that complete, unambiguous, and confirmed information is unavailable; that people are distrustful of sources of information; and that people either want to believe something is true or fear that something is true. In the preceding example, white people and black people knew very little about each other's actions but believed rumors that confirmed their worst fears: the fear by white people that they or their businesses would be attacked by angry black people; the fear by black people of being brutalized by white people, particularly the police. In the absence of such fears, these rumors would have been far less believable.

Rumors have also circulated nationwide concerning certain products and companies. One such rumor that circulated for years was that the corporate logo of Procter and Gamble was a symbol of devil worship. Actually, the logo, which had been used in various versions since 1882, represented something very different. The man in the moon was a popular design in the early days of the company in the late nineteenth century, and the 13 stars on the logo represented the original American states. Despite great efforts over the years by Procter and Gamble to dispel the rumors, they persisted, and in 1991 Procter and Gamble replaced the logo it had used for over a century.

Urban Legends

An **urban legend** is an unsubstantiated story containing a plot that is widely circulated and believed. Urban legends are very similar to rumors, except that they are more complex. Like rumors, they are based on fears and concerns that people have—such as what your partner is up to when you aren't around. Like rumors, they change as they are circulated (Brunvand, 2014).

In some cases, the themes of urban legends are similar to the themes of rumors. Unexpected problems with fast-food or mass-produced food are a common theme, as are stories about mice

in soft-drink bottles or about people eating fast-food fried chicken in the dark, deciding that it “tastes funny,” and turning on the light to discover they are really eating a batter-fried rat that somehow “went through the process.” Such stories carry a moral: If you shirk your responsibilities by opting for fast-food, you will be at risk. A particular aspect that highlights this is the fact that it is usually a woman who supposedly eats the rat, suggesting that if she had attended to the traditional female role and cooked dinner, she would have avoided her awful fate (Fine, 1979).

The key point about urban legends (which are not limited to cities) is that they are not only told but believed. We have heard convincing versions of all the stories previously mentioned, in some cases recounted by fellow sociologists who believed every word of them. Typically, they happened to a “friend of a friend,” and some of them (like the cement car) even got reported in newspapers. They can never be fully verified, however, or if they are verified, it turns out that what actually happened is quite different from what is reported in the story (Brunvand, 1981, 1984, 1986, 2014). They are believed because they call up fears or concerns that are real; because they describe embarrassing situations that we could imagine happening to ourselves; or because they relate to some aspect of modern life that we accept yet find at least mildly disturbing. Often, like true fictional stories, they contain a moral: Don't become involved with your friend's wife; don't eat too much fast-food.

Mass Hysteria

Mass hysteria occurs when many people in a sizable geographic area perceive and respond frantically to some danger. Often the danger is not real or, if real, is not as great as people believe. The Y2K computer bug scare in 1999 is an example of the latter. As discussed in Chapter 16, contagious diseases often lead to mass hysteria. The plagues of medieval Europe, the worldwide influenza epidemic of the early twentieth century, and the current AIDS epidemic have all provoked mass hysteria. Although the danger of disease is real, the hysteria leads people to behave in ways that either heighten the danger or create other problems, while



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

The Earthquake That Wasn't

Scientists agree that it is not possible to predict when and where an earthquake will occur. But that didn't stop self-proclaimed climatologist Iben Browning from predicting a 50-50 chance of a major earthquake on Missouri's New Madrid Fault around December 3, 1990. It also didn't stop thousands of people in a half-dozen states from Arkansas to Indiana from believing his forecast. A dozen or so studies of this outbreak of collective behavior were conducted (including a study one of the authors participated in) which revealed a number of fascinating findings. Surveys revealed that 10 to 25 percent of the population in the area for which the earthquake was predicted clearly believed the forecast, and another 20 to 35 percent gave it some credibility. This was despite scientific disclaimers that Browning's method had been disproven and that, contrary to widely circulated news reports, there was no evidence he had ever successfully predicted an earthquake. Belief in the forecast decreased with level of education, and younger people and women were somewhat more likely to believe it than older people and men. Yet, in all groups, a significant minority believed Browning's forecast.

People also planned and (less often) took a variety of actions to protect themselves from the feared earthquake. Some actions were useful preparation for the earthquake that is indeed likely someday to occur on the New Madrid Fault—storing food and water, securing objects that could fall, learning to turn off utilities. Thus, the scare had the useful effect of increasing earthquake preparedness in the New Madrid seismic zone. But other responses are better described as hysteria, based on unfounded concern about a quake on a particular date. These responses included planning to keep children home from school, to stay home from work, to avoid crossing bridges, and even to leave town. Interestingly, such plans were not particularly related to whether or not people believed the forecast: Rather, they seemed to be a product of communication between significant others. Those whose friends and neighbors planned such actions were also likely to plan them themselves, whether or not they believed in the forecast. This illustrates what Turner, Nigg, and Paz (1986) called the *two-step flow of communications*: People

get their information from the media, such as television reports about earthquake forecasts, and may use these sources to decide what to believe. But when it comes to deciding what to do, they look to their friends for guidance.

Follow-up surveys after the predicted December earthquake failed to materialize showed that the number who actually took such actions was smaller than the number who planned to—but some did so, nonetheless. Around 1 percent of those surveyed in eastern and southeast Missouri, for example, acknowledged leaving the area because of the forecast. About one out of six made some schedule changes. But the majority of these people did so because their children's schools closed as a result of the forecast. Nearly all schools in southeast Missouri, and some in neighboring areas, closed December 2 and 3.

Why did this event happen? For one, people in the Midwest have little experience with earthquakes, yet have been warned that they are in an earthquake-prone area. Their awareness of the risk was heightened by the dramatic videos of damage in San Francisco and Oakland from the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. In such an atmosphere, Browning offered an easy answer, and many people turned to it. In addition, the media had been quite uncritical in reporting—incorrectly, it turns out—that Browning had predicted previous earthquakes, including the one in San Francisco—Oakland. Finally, public apprehension surrounding the impending Persian Gulf War may have played a role: One survey showed that people who expected war with Iraq were also more likely to expect a December earthquake.

Source: Findings from the survey by the author's research group, reported in Farley et al. 1991a, 1991b; and from other surveys reported at a research conference held at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville in May 1991. These findings are summarized in Farley et al., 1991c. Many of these studies are reported in the November 1993 issue of the *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*. A complete account of the event, along with detailed analysis of the surveys and two later ones assessing long-term consequences of the prediction, may be found in Farley, 1998.

doing nothing to curtail the spread of the disease. This happened in the case of the plagues: People spread the disease by fleeing from the cities where it broke out, and doctors refused to treat sick people for fear of contracting the disease themselves. Scapegoats were common: Such diverse groups as Jews, deformed people, and nobles were persecuted for creating this suffering (Thomlinson, 1976, p. 90). Similar reactions occurred in 1999, when a variety of extremist groups predicted doom because of the Y2K computer bug (Southern Poverty Law Center, 1998). Some, for example, argued that the government was understating the Y2K threat because conspirators who secretly controlled the government wanted to create a disaster that would trigger a race war.

Mass hysteria resembles panics, except that it does not take place in crowds, but rather among dispersed masses who often become agitated as a result of rumors or media broadcasts. The best-known example occurred on the night before Halloween in 1938, when Orson Welles broadcast the radio play "The War of the Worlds," based on the book by H. G. Wells. Made to sound like a news report about an invasion by martians, Wells's program was believed by many people who—despite a disclaimer at the midway point that it was only a play—flooded police switchboards with frightened calls. Others gathered in groups to discuss the frightening invasion, and still others jumped in their cars to flee, which created massive traffic jams in some areas. Just how many people really believed the report is a disputed point: It may have been only a tiny percentage (Rosengren et al., 1975), or it may have been as many as a quarter of those who heard it (Cantril, 1940).

Part of the reason that this radio play about an invasion by hostile martians led to mass hysteria was that the world was on the brink of World War II. People felt insecure and afraid; events seemed to be out of control. Fears of war may have also played a role in a more recent, and highly studied, incident of mass hysteria: a 1990 Midwest earthquake scare, precipitated by a pseudoscientific prediction that a damaging earthquake would occur on December 2 or 3. Though scientists discredited the idea that the

date of an earthquake could be predicted, it was widely believed nonetheless. In part, this was because the idea that the region was at risk for a damaging earthquake (which, in the long term, it is) was a new idea that was scary and poorly understood, because earthquakes in that area are infrequent enough that most people have had little experience with them. However, fears relating to the buildup to the Gulf War probably also played a part, since people who expected a war were more likely to believe the prediction of an earthquake than those who did not foresee a war (Farley, 1998). This earthquake prediction and public reaction to it are discussed further in the box "The Earthquake That Wasn't."

Fashions and Fads

Fashions

Two closely related types of collective behavior among masses are fashions and fads. A fashion is a style of appearance or behavior that is favored by a large number of people for a limited amount of time. The most common fashions concern dress and hairstyle (Lofland, 1985, p. 67), although there are also fashions in automobiles, home decoration, landscaping, and city neighborhoods. Even activities are sometimes governed by fashion; for example, surfing, tennis, Transcendental Meditation, and stamp collecting (Irwin, 1977). Language, too, is the subject of fashion. Lofland (1985, p. 67) illustrates this point with the changing terms used by young people to show approval: "Swell!" in the 1930s, "Neat!" in the 1950s, "Right on!" in the 1960s, and "Really!" in the 1970s. By definition, fashions change over time. In this regard, fashions are a product of modern industrialized society. In preindustrial societies, dress and behavior are governed by long-standing traditions that do not change as long as the same society persists (Lofland, 1973). Popular dress in Morocco today, for example, is the same as it was 200 years ago. Contrast this to the United States, where styles of dress today bear little resemblance to those at the time of the American Revolution.

Like other aspects of collective behavior, fashions reflect people's values. During the

1960s, when sexual freedom and new experiences were valued, the miniskirt was popular. In the 1970s, however, that style changed, reflecting two shifts in values: the rise of feminism and a more conservative sexual climate.

Fads

Fads are amusing mass involvements or activities, usually somewhat unconventional, that are temporary in nature. They are similar to fashions, except that they are of shorter duration and are typically adopted by a smaller number of people. The short duration of fads is illustrated by streaking, which came and went in 1974 within a period of about two months, with a peak of intensity that lasted only one week (Aguirre, Quarantelli, and Mendoza, 1988). Fads typically are less serious and more frivolous than fashions and are much less likely to be linked to core values or lifestyles. Besides being more frivolous, fads are often limited to one item or behavior. According to Lofland (1985, p. 69), there are four common types of fads: object fads, such as Hula-Hoops, Beanie Babies, pet rocks, and Trolls; idea fads, such as the practice of astrology; activity fads, such as streaking and bungee jumping; and fads centered on personalities, such as Britney Spears or Leonardo DiCaprio.

The Structure of the City

Human Ecology

In addition to studying human behavior in the city, urban sociologists are very interested in how and why different groups are distributed across the physical space of the city. One of the most influential approaches among sociologists who study the city has been **human ecology**, also sometimes called urban social ecology. Human ecology is concerned with the interrelationships between people and territory (see Park and Burgess, 1921), including how people adjust and adapt to their environment (Hawley, 1981, pp. 9–10, 1950). Specifically, it is concerned with the growth and decline of cities and city neighborhoods and with the distribution within the city of people with different social characteristics, such as race, social class,

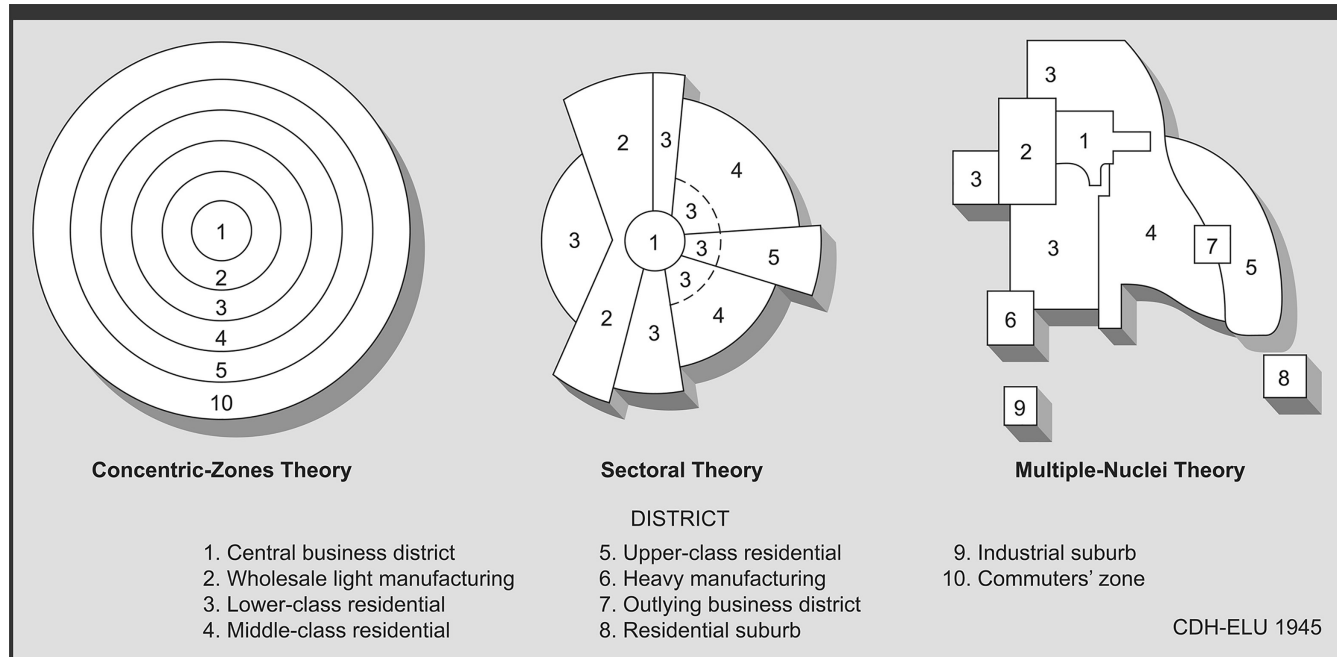
and marital and family status. It is also concerned with the economic processes that shape population distributions and with the distribution of different land uses within urban areas. Duncan (1959) has described human ecology as the study of relationships among population, organization, environment, and technology—a combination sometimes referred to as the POET complex. Because the patterns of interest to human ecologists largely concern population characteristics and are an outgrowth of migration, the ecological orientation is closely related to the sociological specialization of demography, discussed in Chapter 16.

Three Models of City Population Distribution

One of the most important contributions of human ecology has been to improve our understanding of how different land uses and different groups of people are distributed within urban areas, and why they are so distributed. Human ecologists have developed three distinct theories concerning these questions: the concentric-zones model, the sectoral model, and the multiple-nuclei model. And even in the same city, one model may do a good job of describing one social characteristic (such as marital status), whereas another works better for another social characteristic (such as ethnicity).

The **concentric-zones model** (Burgess, 1925) holds that, as one moves away from the center of the city to the fringe—and from older to newer parts of the city—the characteristics of the population and land-use change. As people become more affluent, they move from the center to the fringe, where more space and newer homes are available, and congestion and pollution from nonresidential land uses are less. Families also prefer the fringe because of its bigger yards, quieter neighborhoods, and newer and often better schools. This produces a pattern of rings, as shown in Figure 17.1. Although the boundaries between rings are not as sharply defined as the model suggests, it is generally the case that industry and commercial areas are near the center, and that as one moves out there is a gradual shift from poor or working-class to middle-class and then to affluent neighborhoods. There are also fewer single people and more married people and families.

Figure 17.1 Generalizations of internal structures of cities.



Source: Chauncy D. Harris and Edward L. Ullman (1945), "The Nature of Cities," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 242: 7–17.

The **sectoral model** (Hoyt, 1939) is also based on the notion that people move outward from the center of the city. However, because different groups initially settle in different neighborhoods and move outward, they create sectors with different population characteristics on different sides of town as they move outward. This creates a distribution much like slices of a pie, as shown in the second part of Figure 17.1.

Both the concentric-zones and sectoral model have been criticized on the grounds that they work better for some types of cities than for others. They were developed in Chicago, and both seem to work best for cities like Chicago: ones that have one main center, that are industrially based, and that are not divided by sharp geographical features like mountains or deep river valleys. Cities with the opposite characteristics often develop a **multiple-nuclei** pattern (Harris and Ullman, 1945), in which development occurs around not just one main center, but a number of distinct centers. This pattern is shown in the third diagram in Figure 17.1. This is especially likely when a number of nearby cities grow together into one major urban area, or when an urban area is divided by mountains, ridges, or gorges. It also occurs when suburbs develop into “edge cities,” separate centers of commerce that come to rival the main downtown area, such as Clayton, Missouri, near St. Louis. Many of the fastest-growing cities in recent decades have fit this pattern (Suro, 1991), which has probably led to a shift toward the multiple-nuclei pattern in many areas.

It should, finally, be kept in mind that these models were developed based on studies of industrialized capitalist countries like the United States, which have large-scale transportation systems that have, over time, become increasingly based on auto transportation. Different land-use patterns are found in preindustrial cities and in cities in countries with a history of socialism (Sjoberg, 1955; Shibutani, 1986). And even in industrial capitalist societies, most cities do not neatly fit any one of these models but represent combinations of the three. Also, different social

characteristics can be distributed differently even within the same urban area, as has been discovered by sociologists who study urban social segregation.

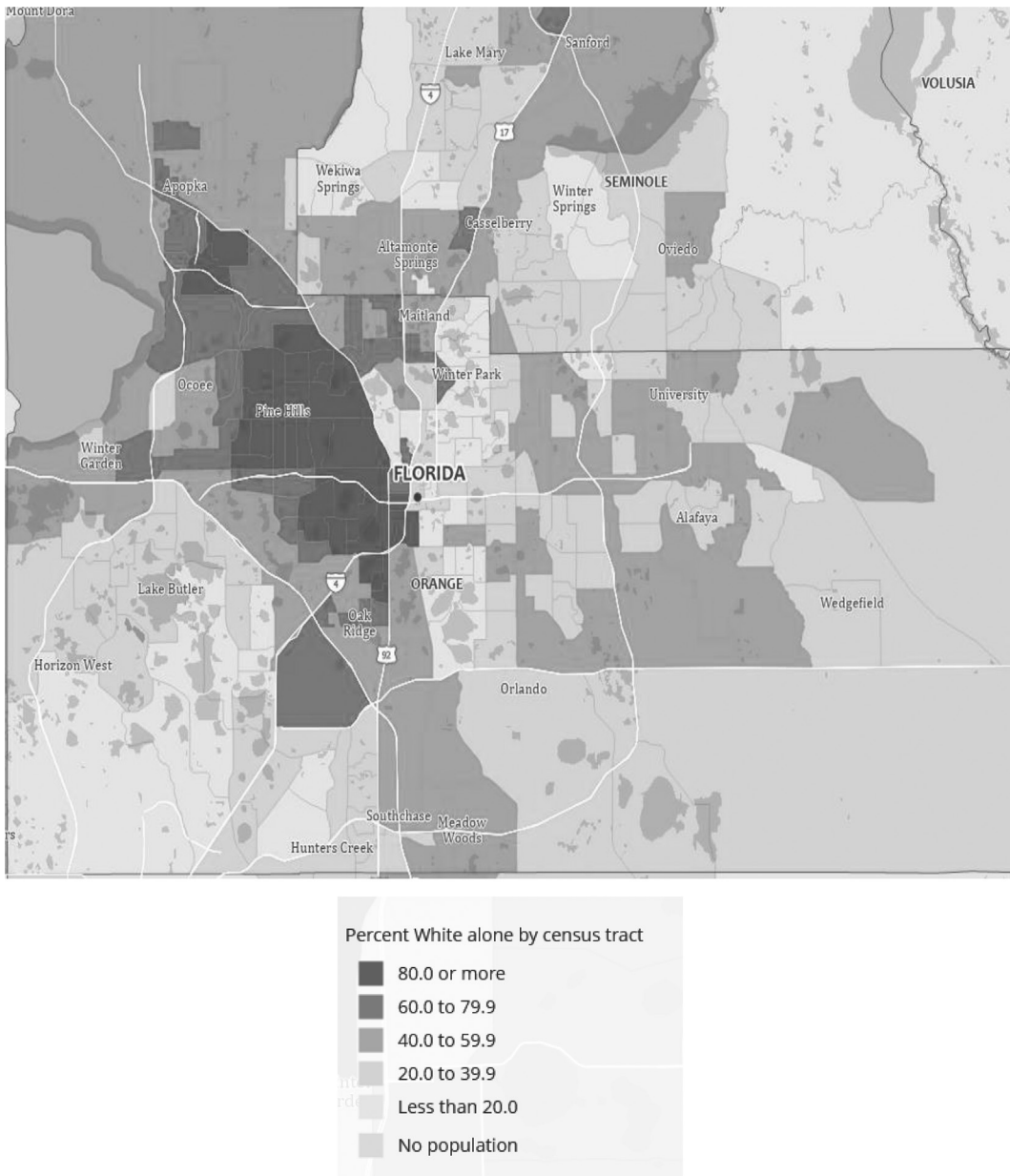
Urban Social Segregation

The models just discussed are all partly based on a pattern sociologists call **social segregation**, in which people with similar social characteristics live together in the same neighborhoods. Social segregation occurs largely because people with similar lifestyles prefer to live together, and some neighborhoods are better suited to a given lifestyle than others (Michelson, 1976, 1977). However, it also develops because people in one group try to keep people in other groups out of their neighborhoods, particularly different racial groups. Sociologists who study urban social segregation ask two main questions about the city: “What are the characteristics on which people are segregated in cities?” and “How are people with a given set of characteristics distributed in urban areas?” Sociologists interested in the second question have drawn heavily upon the concentric-zones, sectoral, and multiple-nuclei models, and they have developed sophisticated techniques using computers and census data to test the accuracy of these models for particular social characteristics. One factor that has made such studies possible is the availability of a wide range of data for census tracts—small neighborhood areas within cities, each of which has a population of about 3,000 to 6,000. An example is shown in Figure 17.2.

Social-Area Analysis and Factorial Ecology

Using a technique they call social-area analysis, sociologists Ehsref Shevky and Wendell Bell (1955) argued that urban social segregation occurs on the basis of three fundamental social characteristics: socioeconomic status, family status, and race or ethnicity. They then identified specific variables from the 1940 and 1950 Censuses that they thought captured each of these concepts. In general, they also found that people were indeed segregated on the basis

Figure 17.2 Racial Composition of Census Tracts, Orange County in Orlando Florida: 2023.



Source: 2020 US Census Demographic Data map Viewer maps.geo.census.gov/ddmv/map.html

of each of the three fundamental characteristics (Shevky and Bell, 1955; Shevky and Williams, 1949; Anderson and Bean, 1961; Van Arsdol, Camilleri, and Schmid, 1958).

Around the time Shevky and Bell were introducing social-area analysis, researchers began to use computers to study human ecology. Through a technique known as factorial

ecology, researchers were able to take large data sets of 100 or more census variables and identify clusters of similar variables that represent underlying dimensions or concepts. This method shows that a broad range of census variables can be reduced to three basic dimensions: socioeconomic status, family status, and race or ethnicity (Rees, 1979; see also Elgie and Clark, 1980; Perle, 1981)—the same three bases of segregation that were identified by Shevky and Bell. In many of these studies, up to 75 percent of the geographic variation in as many as 100 variables can be reduced to these three underlying concepts (Farley, 1985).

Factorial ecology can also be used to map the three dimensions to see whether each better fits the concentric-zones, sectoral, or multiple-nuclei patterns (Boal, 1976; Murdie, 1976). In general, family status fits the concentric-zones model, with unmarried people, childless couples, and renters living near the city's center, and families, children, and homeowners living farther away (Berry and Rees, 1969), though apartment complexes have led more singles to live in the suburbs (Farley, 1985). Socioeconomic status is often distributed according to both the concentric-zones and sectoral models: It is higher going in some directions from the center than others (in other words, sectoral), but it also increases as you move from the center (concentric).

Racial Segregation

The most pervasive form of urban social segregation in the United States is racial segregation, particularly between black people and white people. Levels of segregation in American cities have declined since 1960, but not much. Most African Americans still live in neighborhoods that are mostly African American, and most white people live in neighborhoods that are overwhelmingly white (Logan and Stults, 2011; Logan, 2001; Farley, 2002, 2001b, 1987a; Jakubs, 1986; Massey and Denton, 1987, 1988, 1993; Farley and Frey, 1994). Findings from the 2000 and 2010 Censuses indicate that, despite modest decline in segregation over the course of each decade since 1970, many cities remain quite highly segregated (Logan and Stults, 2011). Older cities in the Midwest and Northeast, with

their long-established patterns of segregation, are the most rigidly segregated (Logan and Stults, 2011; Logan, 2001; Jakubs, 1986; Massey and Denton, 1987; Farley and Frey, 1992).

Unlike some other forms of urban social segregation, racial segregation is mainly the product of discrimination. It is not the product of black preferences, because study after study has shown that most black people prefer to live in racially mixed rather than all-black neighborhoods (Farley et al., 1994, 1979, 1978; Lake, 1981; Pettigrew, 1971). Neither is it a product of affordability. Although most black people cannot afford to live in the wealthiest white neighborhoods, a large portion of the black population can afford to live in many white neighborhoods, but they don't. Studies based on every census from 1960 through 2000 have found that if affordability were the only consideration, our urban areas would be, at most, only about one-quarter as segregated as they actually are (Darden, 1987; Farley, 2005, 1995, 1987b; Kain, 1987; see also Denton and Massey, 1988; Hermalin and Farley, 1973; Taeuber and Taeuber, 1965).

Racial Steering. Today, common forms of racial housing discrimination include racial steering and redlining. Racial steering is a practice whereby real estate agents direct white people toward housing in all-white neighborhoods and black people toward housing in all-black or racially mixed neighborhoods (Lake, 1981; Pearce, 1976; Yinger, 1995). This perpetuates segregation, because in order for integrated neighborhoods to remain integrated, both races must move into them.

At least 36 studies of racial steering were conducted between 1974 and 1987, and the great majority of them found evidence of steering (Yinger, 1995). Nationwide studies in 1989 and 2000 showed that steering and other forms of racial discrimination remained common (Turner et al., 2002; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1991, 2005; Yinger, 1995). The most recent large-scale national study, conducted in 2012, offers encouraging evidence that racial steering in home sales has declined from past levels—on average there was only about a two-percentage-point difference in

the percentage in neighborhoods where housing was shown to white and minority discrimination testers. On the other hand, black and Asian testers were on average shown between 15 and 20 percent fewer houses than white testers (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013).

As of the 2010 Census, the average white person lives in a neighborhood that is 75 percent white—down a little, but not much, from 80 percent white a decade earlier. For black people, the average number is 45 percent African American and just 35 percent white in their neighborhoods. However, this average is skewed by the small number of black people who live in mostly white neighborhoods; the majority live in neighborhoods where the percentage black is higher than the average figure (Farley, 2008). For Latinos, the average neighborhood is 46 percent Latino; and for Asians, only 22 percent Asian, though this number is on the rise for this group (Logan and Stults, 2011; Charles, 2003; Iceland and Wilkes, 2006; Lewis Mumford Center, 2001; Logan et al., 2004; Wilkes and Iceland, 2004).

Discrimination testing in 1996 by a St. Louis fair-housing organization with which I (Farley) work closely illustrates how steering often happens. We tested for racial steering in a suburban municipality in the St. Louis area by sending white and African American prospective home buyers, with similar incomes and family situations, to real estate offices. Although white and black testers went to the same real estate offices and expressed interest in the same type of housing, we found that they were shown houses according to their race in different parts of the town, which was split about in half by a major thoroughfare. Nearly all the white testers were shown housing in the predominantly white half of town on one side of this road,

whereas nearly all the black testers were shown houses on the opposite side where the neighborhoods are racially mixed.

Redlining. Another important form of racial discrimination is redlining: a practice whereby lenders and insurance companies refuse to make loans or sell insurance in certain neighborhoods, usually ones that are racially mixed or predominantly black. Redlining, along with general discrimination in the approval of individual mortgages, makes it a good deal harder for African Americans to purchase homes. In part, for this reason, African Americans are a good deal less likely than white people to be homeowners. Because owning a home is the main source of wealth for all but the wealthiest Americans, this translates into a big difference in net worth: The average net worth of white Americans is about ten times that of African Americans (Oliver and Shapiro, 1995). Studies have shown that minority-group mortgage applicants are much more likely to be rejected for loans than white applicants, even when their incomes are the same. For example, a study by the Boston Federal Reserve found that black and Hispanic loan applicants were 56 percent more likely to be rejected than white applicants



Photo 17.3 Subprime loans were a major cause of the 2008 housing crisis, resulting in widespread foreclosures. These loans were often targeted to minority neighborhoods and were made knowing that the loan could not be repaid or that the house was not worth the amount of the loan. The loans were then quickly sold to banks or loan consolidators, who got stuck with worthless paper.

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with similar risk, income, property, and credit backgrounds (Munnell et al., 1992).

A more recent study also found that neighborhoods of historical redlining linked up remarkably well with the areas hardest hit by subprime mortgages that have now plunged minority homeowners into foreclosure in disproportionate numbers (Hernandez, 2009). These subprime mortgages were a major cause of the housing crash of 2008, as lenders knowingly made subprime loans to people they knew could not pay back the loans, or on properties that were not worth the amount financed. There was no incentive to do otherwise, because, in the absence of effective regulation, the loans could be sold to banks or loan consolidators who then took on all the risk. The borrower paid very high interest and often ended up getting foreclosed, while the purchaser of the loan ended up with worthless paper. The result was an economic crash that began in the housing market, spread throughout the economy, and,

as usually occurs, disproportionately impacted lower-income people and people of color, many of whom lost their homes. Lower-income areas tend to have more residential instability with people moving in and out of homes more frequently than in more affluent areas, and this instability has been found to contribute to non-occupant housing investment that helped spark the real estate bubble that burst in 2008 (Goldstein, 2018). Additionally, research also shows that African American and Hispanic home buyers have been disproportionately steered into subprime loans, even when they qualify for a standard loan (Massey et al., 2016; Rugh et al., 2015; Rugh and Massey, 2010; Squires, 2011; Brooks and Simon, 2007). Redlining also occurs in insurance: In 1998, a jury assessed \$100 million in damages against Nationwide Insurance Company after tests found that the company discriminated against African American homeowners and inner-city neighborhoods (Squires, 1998).



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City

We might assume that when someone is evicted from their home it is because they are already in financial trouble, and while this is often the case, just as often the eviction itself is actually the step that makes poverty a reality for millions of Americans. In *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, sociologist Matthew Desmond (2016) takes the reader on a journey into the lives of the urban poor, where hardship and the relentless pursuit of profit collide in a devastating dance. Desmond uncovers the poignant and sometimes heart-wrenching stories of those struggling to keep a roof over their heads while revealing the predatory nature of the housing market. Desmond's research and personal narratives shed light on the vicious cycle of poverty and eviction in America.

Evicted takes place in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a city that serves as a microcosm of urban poverty in the United States. Through extensive fieldwork, Desmond provides readers with a window into the lives of some of the city's most vulnerable residents, primarily

those in the African American community. The stories he shares are not isolated cases but representative of a national crisis that affects millions. One of the book's most significant sociological insights is the vicious cycle of poverty and eviction. Desmond reveals how, for many low-income families, eviction is not merely a result of poverty but a cause of it. The constant threat of losing one's home forces individuals to divert scarce resources from other necessities like food and health care. This cycle of instability perpetuates poverty and makes escaping it nearly impossible.

The "Double-Edged Sword" of Housing Assistance: The Emotional Toll

Evicted explores the complexities of government housing assistance programs. While these programs aim to alleviate poverty and homelessness, they are often a double-edged sword. Desmond highlights how the limited availability of assistance forces

In addition to denying housing opportunities to minorities, redlining has other damaging consequences: It transforms housing in racially mixed or largely minority neighborhoods from owner occupied to renter occupied; prevents upkeep of buildings; and contributes to the abandonment of homes, apartment buildings, and businesses whose owners cannot obtain loans or insurance. Moreover, by setting these processes in motion, redlining makes white people more reluctant to buy in mixed neighborhoods. In spite of redlining and racial steering, survey data indicate that a sizable segment of the white population has for a long time been

willing to (and in some cases actively desires to) buy homes in racially mixed neighborhoods (Farley et al., 1978, 1979; Lake, 1981). The problem is that racial steering and redlining make it nearly impossible for them to do so.

The Changing City in Postindustrial America

As the United States has gradually undergone the transition from an industrial economy to a postindustrial economy (see Chapter 11), America's urban areas have been profoundly

families into crowded, substandard housing, contributing to health issues and further economic hardship. Through the personal stories of those facing eviction, *Evicted* sheds light on the profound emotional and psychological toll of housing instability. Eviction doesn't merely result in the loss of shelter; it erodes dignity and disrupts family dynamics. Desmond's sociological lens reveals the deep sense of shame and humiliation that eviction inflicts upon individuals and families.

"Poverty Tax" and Profiteering From Misery

Desmond introduces the concept of the "poverty tax," illustrating how impoverished individuals often pay more for basic necessities, including housing. Low-income renters pay exorbitant amounts for substandard housing due to the scarcity of affordable options. Landlords exploit their vulnerability, charging exorbitant rents and imposing hidden fees. This profit-driven system capitalizes on the misery of the poor, trapping them in a cycle of indebtedness. *Evicted* delves into the moral dilemma faced by landlords who must balance their own financial interests with the well-being of their tenants. While some landlords maintain a level of empathy and flexibility, others employ ruthless tactics that further exacerbate the plight of the poor.

Racial Disparities in Evictions and the Inadequacy of Legal Representation

Desmond's research reveals profound racial disparities in evictions. African American families, particularly women, are disproportionately affected by eviction. He argues that these disparities stem from historical and systemic injustices, illustrating how housing instability

perpetuates racial inequality in America. Desmond finds that poor often suffer from an inadequacy of legal representation for impoverished tenants. Many tenants lack access to legal services, leaving them vulnerable to eviction proceedings. Legal assistance could be a critical lifeline, but the underfunding of legal aid programs results in a lack of representation for those in desperate need. The book introduces the concept of "informal eviction," a practice in which landlords use tactics that fall short of a legal eviction to pressure tenants to leave. These tactics include shutting off utilities, changing locks, and making living conditions unbearable. Informal evictions are particularly challenging to document, and they further disempower tenants.

Children Caught in the Crossfire

Housing instability has a devastating impact on children, as shown clearly in the book. Frequent moves disrupt their education and social development, perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Desmond gives us a chilling look at the resilience of children who must navigate an unstable and often unsafe housing landscape. The home has great importance as a foundation for stability and well-being. Housing is not just shelter; it is the cornerstone upon which individuals and families build their lives. Without stable housing, breaking the cycle of poverty becomes nearly impossible. Housing insecurity perpetuates a cycle of poverty, trapping generations of Americans in an intractable system stacked against poor renters. The book provides a revealing ethnography of how housing insecurity fuels poverty and the systemic nature of eviction as a problem, challenging the widely held belief that eviction is the fault of individuals who have failed to work or make enough money.

affected. The declining role of industry, the shift toward a service economy, the changing distribution of wealth and income, and the pervasiveness of the automobile have all brought dramatic changes to American cities since World War II. These changes include the rise of the suburbs; the decline of the central city; the increasing concentration of urban poverty, joblessness, and homelessness; and the shift of urban growth from the so-called Frost Belt (or Rust Belt) of the Midwest and Northeast to the Sun Belt of the South and West. We begin our examination of these changes with a discussion of suburbanization.

The Rise of the Suburbs

As illustrated by Table 17.5, the percentage of Americans living in the suburbs has risen dramatically since World War II. The statistics in the table are based on a concept known as the **metropolitan statistical area (MSA)**. This concept was developed by the United States Census Bureau to reflect the fact that by the end of World War II, the population of urban areas was beginning to expand beyond the legal boundaries of the city. Using counties as building blocks, MSAs are intended to include the full extent of the metropolitan area, both city and suburbs. Each MSA consists of one or more central cities, which must have a combined population

of 50,000 or more, and a suburban ring, which consists of the rest of the county or counties containing the central cities plus any adjoining counties that are largely urban in character and economically linked to the central cities. As an example, the Memphis MSA consists of Shelby County, Tennessee (which contains the city of Memphis), and adjoining Tipton and Fayette Counties, Tennessee; Crittendon County, Arkansas; and DeSoto County, Mississippi. As this example shows, MSAs can cross state lines. As of 2015, there were 389 metropolitan areas in the United States and Puerto Rico (United States Office of Management and Budget, 2015).

Over the past half-century, the proportion of people who live in metropolitan areas has risen steadily, and of these, more and more live in the suburbs rather than the central city. Today, more than half of all Americans live in the suburbs, a complete reversal of the situation that existed just 50 years ago when most lived either in central cities or rural areas. As more people have moved to the suburbs, jobs, retail businesses, office complexes, warehouses, and factories have all followed (Choldin, 1985, pp. 363–9). In most metropolitan areas, the majority of the population is suburban (the average is about 60 percent), and in some areas the majority of economic activity is also suburban. There has been some increase in the percentage of Americans living in principal cities (formerly called central cities) in the

Table 17.5 Percentage of Population in Central/Principal Cities, Suburban Areas, and Outside Metropolitan Areas: 1950–2010

Year	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Total in metropolitan areas	62.4	66.7	68.6	74.8	77.7	80.3	83.7
In central/principal cities*	35.4	33.4	31.4	30.0	30.5	30.3	32.6
In suburban areas	27.0	33.3	37.2	44.8	47.2	50.0	51.0
Outside metropolitan areas	37.5	33.3	31.4	25.2	22.3	19.7	16.3

* Census terminology changed from “central cities” to “principal cities” in 2010.

Note: Data are based on metropolitan area boundaries as they were defined in each census year. New areas were added to metropolitan areas in each census, both because new areas grew large enough to be defined as metropolitan, and because new counties were added to existing areas to reflect the expansion of these areas.

Source: 2010 data are from U.S. Census Bureau (2012), United States Summary: 2010, Population and Housing Counts, Table 8, www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/cph-2-1.pdf (downloaded June 20, 2016). 2000 data are from U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Profiles of General Demographic Characteristics, www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2001/2khus.pdf (downloaded June 20, 2016). 1990 data are from U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990). Current Population Reports, Series P-60, No. 168. 1980 data are from U.S. Bureau of the Census (1983). *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1982–83, p. 15. Data for earlier years are from U.S. Bureau of the Census (1972). *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1972, p. 16.

new century, but the proportion living in the suburbs also continues to grow and is now at a record high. And despite its recent growth, the proportion living in principal cities is less than one-third of Americans and remains lower than it was a half-century ago.

As suburbs have grown, so have gated communities. These are residential housing communities that feature gated entrances and fenced-off boundaries, often with surveillance equipment, strict housing codes that must be adhered to, and guards monitoring those who come and go at the entrances (Blakely and Snyder, 1997). Though built to give residents a greater sense of safety and security, Low (2003) found they actually increase the fear and insecurity of the residents.

Causes of Suburbanization

There are a number of reasons for the tremendous surge of people and economic activity into the suburbs. One is human preference. People want the open space, peace, and quiet of rural areas, but they depend on cities for jobs, services, and a variety of amenities. The suburbs offer the best compromise between these two competing sets of needs and desires (see Glaab, 1963, pp. 233–4). Moreover, for those

who want and can afford a large house and a big yard, the open space of the urban fringe is the obvious choice of location. The generally healthy growth of the economy after World War II made the suburbs affordable to growing numbers of Americans.

Suburbanization is not entirely the product of people's choices, however. Government policy, technology, demographic trends, and economic interests all contributed to the growth of the suburbs (Palen, 1987, pp. 182–7). The U.S. government encouraged and subsidized homeownership through such mechanisms as the home mortgage tax deduction and, after World War II, substantial subsidies of mortgage interest through loan programs administered by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and Veterans Administration (VA). These subsidies enabled millions of middle- and lower-middle-income Americans to purchase their own homes. Although these policies were undoubtedly popular because people wanted to buy homes in the suburbs, it should be stressed that they also served the interests of large-scale real estate developers, who were able to amass great fortunes by mass-producing standardized, relatively low-cost suburban housing.

Another government policy that contributed to suburbanization was the construction of the interstate highway system. The freeways enabled people to commute up to 50 miles within an hour. Finally, the 1950s were the years of the baby boom, which meant a massive surge in families with children—the group with the lifestyle best suited to the suburbs. In short, a number of factors worked together to produce the suburban transformation of the United States after World War II.



Photo 17.4 Collectivities sometimes develop norms that give members of the group alternative guidelines for behavior. Would these people (most of whom are college professors) dress like this outside the group context?

Courtesy of John E. Farley

Life in the Suburbs

Like cities, suburbs have been both praised and condemned. On the one hand, they are

praised as the ideal place to raise children—quieter, safer, and roomier than the city, but with all the urban amenities close by. On the other hand, suburbs are condemned as uninteresting places of conformity where “they all live in little boxes, and all look just the same.” As usual, both the praisers and the condemners overstate their case. On the whole, suburbanites are somewhat more affluent and less heterogeneous than central-city residents, and there are fewer African Americans and Hispanics in the suburbs than in the city. However, the socioeconomic differences are not great, and neither are some lifestyle differences. Research published in the early 1960s showed little difference between city and suburban residents of similar socioeconomic status with respect to organizational participation and cultural and recreational interests (Berk, 1960; Cohen and Hodges, 1963), but more recent research has uncovered some differences. Choldin (1980), for example, found that suburban women are more involved in neighborhood and community organizations than are city women of the same race and socioeconomic status.

There are other ways in which suburbanites differ on average from city residents. Partly because they more often own their homes and thus have a greater investment in their neighborhoods, suburbanites interact more with their neighbors and are in general more involved with their neighborhoods (Choldin, 1980; Fava, 1959; Fischer and Jackson, 1976; Gans, 1967a). Another reason for this interaction is that suburbanites are more likely than city residents to have children, and adult neighbors often become better acquainted because their children are playmates. On the other hand, research results conflict on the question of whether suburbanites’ lives are more centered on their children (Berger, 1960; Gans, 1967a). Gans has characterized suburban neighbors as “quasi-primary groups” because their relationships are typically closer than the secondary-group relationships of the business and commercial world but not as close as the bond between close friends and family members. To a large extent, the suburban neighbor relationship seems to be one of mutual assistance, which is one of the characteristics Tönnies associated with the rural

Gemeinschaft. In general, suburbanites like their place of residence better than city dwellers do, but this partly reflects their higher average socioeconomic status.

Although suburbanites do have some differences from central-city residents in certain ways, on average, suburbs and suburbanites are themselves very diverse, and becoming more so (Schwab, 1992, p. 319). There are wealthy, middle-class, working-class, and poor suburbs. There are predominantly white, black, and Hispanic suburbs, even though African Americans and Hispanics are underrepresented in the suburbs. And there are not only family-oriented suburbs but also suburbs where apartment complexes occupied mostly by unmarried adults and childless couples predominate.

The claim that the suburbs produce a certain type of lifestyle appears to be an overstatement.



Photo 17.5 All this expansion outward from the central city has been an effort to avoid the problems associated with central cities. Yet, as previously stated, exurbs and edge cities seem to be developing some of the same issues as the cities they have sought to escape. However, it is still in the central cities where these problems have been most severe, a pattern to which we now turn our attention.

Michelson's (1977) study of people moving into city and suburban neighborhoods in Toronto offers a better analysis. Michelson found that people largely choose a neighborhood and housing type that fits their lifestyle at a given point in their lives. The city fits the lifestyle of unmarried people and childless couples, especially those who are cosmopolitan in outlook, whereas the suburbs fit the lifestyle of families with children. The only people who are likely to feel real dissatisfaction with their environment are those who for some reason—such as cost—cannot get the kind of housing that fits their lifestyle or aspirations.

Finally, we should note that in a variety of ways, some suburbs are becoming more like central cities. We have already mentioned the growing number of single and divorced people in the suburbs, making them less the domain of family life than they once were. We have also noted the growth of employment and specialized economic activity in the suburbs: More people now commute into some suburbs than out of them. Finally, some suburbs, especially older ones, are developing the problems that have plagued the central cities: job loss, housing abandonment, racial conflict, poverty, and population decline. This has led to the rise of what some call *exurbs* (Crump, 2007). These are developments that lie outside of the suburbs and that are usually inhabited by more wealthy residents with large homes and large wooded yards. A related phenomenon is what is known as the *edge city*. Edge cities have developed just outside the edge of large cities and their suburbs but tend to have all the amenities of a larger city and are largely self-sufficient (Garreau, 1991).

The construction of urban freeways has contributed to suburbanization by making it possible for people to live far from the cities in which they work. Today, one finds trends toward living nearer work, as well as telecommuting via media technology. (iStockphoto)

The Crisis of the Central Cities

While the suburbs have experienced booming growth, the central cities have experienced decline since World War II. Despite a few bright

spots, such as the rejuvenation of the downtown area in many cities, the dominant condition of the larger, older central cities has been deepening crisis. This has been manifested in a number of ways.

Population Decline

The majority of large cities have lost a substantial portion of their population through out-migration. This trend has been particularly pronounced in the Midwest and Northeast: Between 1950 and 1980, St. Louis lost nearly half of its population; Detroit, Cleveland, Boston, Minneapolis, and Cincinnati all lost between one-quarter and one-third; and New York, Chicago, Baltimore, and San Francisco lost between 10 and 20 percent. Most who have left have moved to the suburbs, but in the Midwest and Northeast, many have also moved to other parts of the country.

During the 1980s and 1990s, population decline slowed or reversed in a number of large cities (Haub, 1991; U.S. Census Bureau, 2001n). New York gained population in the 1980s and 1990s after decades of loss, and St. Louis lost less population in the 1980s than in any decade since the 1940s. And in the 1990s and since, several additional large cities that had been losing population, including Chicago, have posted gains. Still, most large cities in the Midwest and Northeast still had much lower populations in 2010 than they did four or five decades earlier, and some that are now gaining population again are only doing so slowly. For example, Chicago, Baltimore, and Milwaukee only grew by 1 percent or less between 2010 and 2015. Detroit, St. Louis, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh continued to lose population during this period. In some cases, the losses have been devastating: St. Louis lost nearly 60 percent of its population—half a million people—between 1950 and 2000. Detroit lost about a million people. Another pattern that emerged in the 1980s is that a number of smaller cities—particularly small industrial cities in the Midwest—suffered pronounced population losses. For some of these cities, like Peoria, Lansing, Evansville, and Flint, this trend continued in the 1990s and since. For example,

Akron and Dayton, Ohio, Rockford, Illinois, Hartford, Connecticut, and Flint, Michigan, all lost population between 2010 and 2015, and Peoria's population remained flat (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016i, 2016j).

The Urban Underclass

As those who could afford to relocate to the suburbs did so, an increasing concentration of the minority poor was left behind in the central cities. Sociologists sometimes refer to the poorest of these poor people, who are often chronically unemployed, as the underclass (see Chapter 11). Wilson (1987, p. 50) uses a study of Chicago to illustrate the growing concentration of poverty in the cities. Between 1970 and 1980, the population of Chicago fell by 11 percent, but the number of poor people living in the city grew by 24 percent. The major reason a number of people living in Chicago (and other central cities) became poor during the 1970s was increased joblessness (Wilson, 1996, 1987). This rise in joblessness occurred for several reasons that are discussed elsewhere in this book: loss of jobs from the central city (Chapter 6), housing segregation that excludes minorities from areas with the greatest job growth (Chapter 7), and limited educational opportunities combined with rising educational requirements for many jobs (Chapter 14). Another factor is the increasing proportion of female-headed households in the central cities; these women literally cannot afford to work in the absence of subsidized day care and health care (Chapters 8 and 16). Finally, one other cause of concentrated poverty is that racial housing segregation concentrates minority groups with high poverty rates into certain neighborhoods (Massey, Gross, and Shibuya, 1994; Massey and Denton, 1993). Sharkey (2014) found that majority black neighborhoods continue to be situated in "spatial disadvantage" as they ever have been. That is, they are segregated into bastions of poverty, homelessness, unemployment, and high crime rates. However, he finds that the black middle class has been able to separate itself from areas of disadvantage mainly by moving to middle-class neighborhoods where they are not the

majority group. The segregation problem is discussed further in Chapter 7. These bastions of disadvantage may also connect with each other over a geographical area. Criminal co-defendants have been found to work together from different neighborhoods, effectively forming a "network of neighborhoods" that remain stable in patterns of crime over time (Papachristos and Bastomski, 2018).

Growing Up in the Underclass

The growth of the urban underclass has major implications for the future of the United States. Historically, the cities have served as a launching ground for upward mobility and assimilation for both the native poor and immigrants (Bradbury, Downs, and Small, 1982). With today's unprecedented concentration of poverty, cities may be losing that function. Poor urban dwellers are more likely than ever to live in neighborhoods where nearly everyone is poor or near-poor. Millions of children today are growing up in neighborhoods where jobs are scarce, in families where nobody can find a job, and in areas where key institutions have left along with the middle class (Wilson, 1987, pp. 140–6). In such an environment, the traditional work ethic doesn't pay, but a "fast buck" can be made through drug dealing, theft, or prostitution. The result has been rapid growth of youth gangs, and in the future, there could be an entire generation of inner-city residents outside the legitimate workforce. Research has confirmed that in such neighborhoods, adolescents are more likely to drop out of school than poor kids in other neighborhoods, and that teenage pregnancy rates are higher (Anderson, 1991; Crane, 1991a, 1991b; McLeod and Shanahan, 1993; Brewster, 1994; Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993).

Homelessness

One effect of the increasing amount and concentration of poverty has been an increase in homelessness. Major increases in homelessness occurred in the 1980s and again with the 2008 economic crisis. The precise number of homeless people is difficult to determine, because people with no permanent place to live are hard to locate and count. The best

estimates are that, in the late 1980s, the number of homeless people in the United States at any one time was somewhere between 400,000 (Jencks, 1994) and 600,000 (Burt and Cohen, 1989). More recently, an effort by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to count the homeless in January 2007 resulted in an estimate of about 672,000 homeless people nationwide (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2008). But homeless people are not just found in shelters and on the streets. They are also in subway stations, “welfare hotels,” and even campgrounds. Also included in many estimates of the homeless are people who have no residence of their own but seek temporary shelter with relatives or friends.

Just when the poverty rate soared in the early 1980s, major cutbacks were made in federal low-income housing programs. This, coupled with the deinstitutionalization of many people with mental illness, contributed to a big surge in the number of homeless, most of whom end up in urban areas. Many people drift in and out of homelessness, and some are homeless for only relatively short periods of time. For this reason, the number of people who experience homelessness at one time or another over a period of five or ten years is much greater than the number homeless at any one time. For example, the Urban Institute estimates that at least 3.5 million Americans have been homeless at some point in time. Homelessness rates had been falling in the first few years of the new century, but the severe economic recession in 2007–2009 led to large increases in the number of people experiencing homelessness. For example, there were large increases in 2008 in the number of homeless families seeking shelter in cities across the United States, including New York, Minneapolis, Phoenix, Atlanta, Boston, Seattle, and many others (Koch, 2008).

The Urban Fiscal Crisis

The combination of an overall population decline and a rise in the number of poor residents is affecting cities in a number of ways. First and foremost, it means a sharp increase

in the proportion of the city’s population that is poor. Poor populations require more services, particularly in the areas of health, welfare, and police protection; however, they pay less in taxes. The consequence is that city governments have had to do more with less, a reality further aggravated by cutbacks in federal aid to cities in the 1980s. City after city has had to curtail needed services; in the worst cases, cities such as New York, Cleveland, and East St. Louis have experienced financial emergencies. Besides cutting back on services, cities have been unable to maintain their aging and overused infrastructures: roads, sewers, mass transit, water systems, and bridges. Thus, the collapse of bridges and sewers has become an increasingly common event in American cities. Any American who lives in or near a major city has experienced the frustrations and delays that result from inadequate transportation systems. The poisoning of children in Flint, Michigan, due to lead can be directly linked to this fiscal crisis. The state of Michigan had taken over the finances of both Flint and Detroit after the cities effectively went bankrupt, and under heavy pressure from the state to save money, the city switched its water source from Lake Huron to the Flint River. When officials failed to add corrosion inhibitors to the river’s polluted water, the corrosion of the city’s aging water pipes put lead into the city’s drinking water—which in turn was covered up for a time by state officials, exposing the city’s residents to lead poisoning for well over a year. As of August 2016, criminal charges have been filed against eight state employees and one city employee.

Uneven Development Among American Cities

Although suburbanization and urban decline have occurred to some extent in all parts of the United States, these trends have been far more pronounced in the Midwest and Northeast (the “Frost Belt”) than in the South and West (the “Sun Belt”). In general, Sun Belt metropolitan areas are growing; Frost Belt metropolitan areas are not. Sociologists refer to such regional differences in urban growth as **uneven development**

(Frisbie and Kasarda, 1988, pp. 657–8; Watkins and Perry, 1977). This term is also sometimes used to describe the differences in growth between cities and suburbs, or between downtown and residential neighborhoods. Sociologists have two fundamental disagreements over the meaning of uneven development among cities in different regions. The first concerns whether Frost Belt and Sun Belt cities are simply at different stages of a similar process of growth and decline or whether they are following fundamentally different courses of development (Frey, 1987). The second concerns whether regional differences in urban development reflect differences in the efficiency and effectiveness of different kinds of cities (the functionalist view) or whether they are the product of fundamental societal inequalities in power and wealth (the conflict view).

Different Processes or Different Stages?

One view about the uneven development of American cities is that Frost Belt and Sun Belt cities are in different stages of a similar process of growth and decline. According to this view, Frost Belt cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, and Cleveland have lost population and become increasingly poor because they are older cities. The quality of housing is deteriorating, and people are moving out. City governments cannot do much about it because they are surrounded by established suburbs and cannot expand their boundaries by annexing these growing areas. Sun Belt cities such as Houston, Phoenix, San Diego, Los Angeles, Tampa, San Antonio, and San Jose are at an earlier stage of development. They are still growing, they have considerable new housing within their boundaries, and they can expand those boundaries outward to accommodate new growth (Fleischman, 1977). In all these ways, they are similar to the Frost Belt cities in the early twentieth century. At that time, the major cities of the Midwest and Northeast were all experiencing rapid growth.

This view that Sun Belt and Frost Belt cities are in different stages of the same process of

growth and decline predicts that the now-growing cities of the West and South will eventually age, become surrounded by suburbs, and begin to lose population. It appeared that this was starting to happen in the 1970s, when Denver, San Francisco, Atlanta, Fort Worth, and Portland, Oregon, all lost population, and Los Angeles barely grew. However, between 1980 and 1990, all of these cities except Denver and Atlanta again grew significantly, and all of them grew between 1990 and 2010. In fact, Denver is now one of the nation's fastest-growing major cities.

An opposing view, which predicts continued growth for these cities, emphasizes the transition from an industrial to a postindustrial economy in the United States. As discussed in Chapter 11, the postindustrial economy is based largely on services, such as commerce, finance, tourism, and real estate, as well as on high-technology industries, such as electronics, aircraft, and energy (see Sale, 1975). From this standpoint, the South and West, with their warmer climates, greater recreational amenities, and abundant energy supplies, are the natural locations of new growth. Proponents of this viewpoint note that even though some Sun Belt cities have lost population recently, the overall growth of MSAs has been far greater in the South and West than in the Northeast and Midwest. In the latter two regions, even some inner suburbs have lost population; in the former two regions, the majority of central cities have gained population, and suburban growth has been even more dramatic. This quote from the president of the Denver Chamber of Commerce shows the reasoning behind the prediction of continued growth: "People want two things as they make a decision of where to live these days. They want a good job and they want a great quality of life. Back in my day, you would have been willing to sacrifice quality of life for a good job. Today, I think this generation is saying, 'No, I want both'" (Madhani, 2016).

Metropolitan statistical areas such as New York, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and St. Louis barely grew, or even lost population, between 1970 and 1990 because suburban growth was at best just sufficient to offset

central-city decline. Most of them grew again in the 1990s and since then but much more slowly than metropolitan areas in other parts of the country. In contrast, the growth rates of the Dallas, Houston, Atlanta, and San Diego MSAs averaged about 45 percent in the 1970s, and, except for Houston, these areas grew by another 33 percent during the 1980s. In the 1990s, their growth averaged 27 percent. Thus, over three decades, these areas grew at a much faster pace than the older manufacturing areas in the Midwest and Northeast. Accordingly, uneven development involves not just the situation of the central city but also the overall rate of metropolitan growth reflecting the various economic specializations of different areas (Watkins and Perry, 1977).

The Conflict Theory of Uneven Development

Conflict theorists argue that uneven development reflects inequalities of wealth and power (Sawers and Tabb, 1984). More powerful interest groups and more powerful cities erect barriers to ensure their own growth and to prevent growth elsewhere that might threaten their interests (Gordon, 1977b; Squires, 1989; Watkins and Perry, 1977, p. 26; see also Molotch, 1976). Many examples can be used to illustrate this process. Federal taxing and spending policies for a number of years generally favored the South and West over the Northeast and Midwest. In other words, Frost Belt cities paid more in taxes and got less back in federal expenditures than cities in the South and West (Watkins and Perry, 1977, p. 50).

Another example concerns uneven development within cities. Large real estate companies, banks, and corporations use their influence with city officials to get such benefits as abatement of property taxes on new developments, or local tax money to upgrade streets, sidewalks, and lighting in neighborhoods where new businesses or expensive housing are being located. In more and more instances businesses secure the land for their projects free or at very low prices through government use of the right of *eminent domain*. This right allows government to

take land from its owners “for the greater good” and “at a fair market price” even when owners don’t want to sell it. In Detroit, this right was used to force over 1,000 families out of the Pole-town neighborhood, at a cost to the government of \$200 million—after which the land was sold to General Motors for \$8 million (Palen, 1987, p. 281; see also Wylie, 1989). Finally, although substantial public money was used to stimulate downtown development in Baltimore, the poor and unemployed did not share in the benefits (Levine, 1987). The project contributed to the development of the downtown area and aided the financial interests of downtown businesses, but it did little for anyone living in the neighborhoods. Thus, uneven development in Baltimore was clearly the product of government policies and benefited certain interest groups who had disproportionate power over the decision-making process. In general, conflict theorists see uneven development as resulting from cooperative actions between governments and wealthy private interests that have disproportionate influence over government (Jaret, 1983).

More generally, conflict theorists point out that cities, just like the societies in which they exist, are greatly shaped by the interests of dominant social groups. Feminists, for example, point out that the structure of the city has traditionally reflected male interests (Wekerle, 1980). The industrial city was built around the notion of males leaving the home for the workplace and women staying behind to tend the home and children. Thus, for the workday at least, the downtown business and financial center became a male domain, the home and neighborhood a female domain. In fact, Boserup (1970) has argued that the separate domains of men and women are a product of urbanization and modernization and would not have occurred without them. The process began in the early stages of urbanization, when men went from rural areas to cities to take advantage of the economic opportunities there, while women were left behind in rural areas to take care of the home (Boserup, 1970, pp. 139–40). This pattern persists in some Third World countries. With industrialization, this separation typically intensifies, as illustrated by the emergence of the housewife role in industrial

society (Degler, 1980), as discussed in Chapter 8. This separation contributes to a situation in which power, authority, and control of wealth become mainly a male domain.

Today, with two-car and two-worker families more common, this has changed to some extent. However, Lopata (1980) and Wekerle (1980) have found that the city still imposes difficulties upon women that it does not on men. The most serious is the limited availability of child care, discussed in Chapters 8 and 13. Using data from Denmark, Sorenson and Dahl (2016) find that couples tend to choose places where the expected wages for men are higher than for women. This preference for locations better suited for the man's employment could explain up to 36 percent of the gender wage gap. Additionally, the study highlights that this mismatch between couples and local employers is most pronounced among couples with young children.

Marxist urban sociologists argue that the structure of the city has always reflected the needs of the capital-owning class (Castells, 1977, 1985; Gottdiener, 1985; Harvey, 1973; Tabb and Sawers, 1978). They point out, for example, that urban land use is in large part determined by what is profitable for banks, corporations, and real estate interests (Feagin, 1983, 1985; Logan and Molotch, 1987; Whitt, 1982). These interests favor growth regardless of its consequences, because they benefit from it (Molotch, 1979). Though the consequences often include urban sprawl that creates pollution, congestion, and racial and class segregation, the growth interests have enough power and influence to nearly always get their way. This can be illustrated by a recent event in the town where I (Farley) lived. A national grocery chain and a shopping center developer requested a subsidy in the form of lower taxes to build a new grocery store. There was widespread opposition expressed at public hearings, in part because the chain planned to close the only grocery store downtown, and the new store would be next door to an existing grocery store. However, the city council approved the subsidy anyway because of fear that the company would close the downtown store anyway and build the new one in another nearby town.

It is not just through politics, however, that the owners of capital shape the city. Such decisions as the opening or closing of a factory, for example, have tremendous impact on a city. Capitalists determine urban growth patterns largely through their decisions about where to locate. The way this process works is illustrated by historical analyses by Gordon (1978, 1977a, 1977b). Gordon's basic premise is that capitalists put their plants where they can make the most money, which in part involves locating wherever workers' wages can be kept low. In today's global economy, this often means anywhere in the world, as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 11. The impacts of such moves on areas left behind are often devastating, and they have been especially severe in the industrial urban areas of the Midwest and Northeast. The booming service economy did create new jobs in these areas in the 1990s and up until the start of the 2008 Great Recession, but the standard of living these new jobs could support was far below that provided by the now lost manufacturing jobs of the past.

Summary

Cities are defined on the basis of population size, density, and heterogeneity. They were made possible by production of an agricultural surplus, the development of regional transportation systems, and growth in demand for urban products.

However, through much of history these factors allowed only limited urbanization, and cities accounted for only a small share of the population in virtually all societies until the Industrial Revolution. The demographic transition added another impetus to urbanization: As rural populations grew beyond the numbers that rural areas could support, people migrated to the city. And as urban economies grew with industrialization and could support more people, growing numbers were drawn to cities. The populations of cities today have reached levels unimagined in the past, and, in a recent development, there are many countries where most people now live in cities.

In the United States, rapid urbanization began in the mid-nineteenth century and continued until around 1960. In the developing world, urbanization has been more recent, and in some countries, the majority of the population is still rural. In some developing countries, urbanization has exceeded the ability of the economy to support an urban population, resulting in massive urban poverty and shantytowns. Even so, the fastest-growing cities in the world today are in the less economically developed countries.

Since the surge of urbanization that accompanied industrialization, sociologists have been interested in the effects of urban living on society and human behavior. Early theorists such as Tönnies, Simmel, and Wirth were generally pessimistic, arguing that urban life resulted in social isolation, impersonal relations, and other problems. Actual research, however, has cast doubt on most of these arguments. Although urbanites may have a greater number of impersonal contacts and client relationships than people in rural areas, they generally do not lack friends and close family relationships, and their mental health is as good as that of people in rural areas. In addition, there is no such thing as the "typical urbanite": There are many different groups of people in urban areas, with many different lifestyles. Some groups have very close relationships with neighbors and kin; others have relationships that are more wide-ranging and are based on common activities and interests rather than neighborhood or kinship. Because of this diversity, urbanites tend to be somewhat more tolerant and enjoy greater personal freedom than people in rural societies.

Collective behavior occurs when large numbers of people act together in extraordinary situations, where usual norms do not apply. Because of the numbers of people available and the ease of communication, it occurs more easily in modern urban settings. It can take place in either crowds or masses; in both cases, the temporary norms of the collectivity permit or encourage behavior that would not normally occur. Collective behavior emerges when the situation is structurally conducive—in other words, the situation generates feelings of fear, anger, happiness, excitement, sorrow, or some other strong

emotion. But even when the situation is conducive, collective behavior does not occur until some precipitating incident triggers it.

The main kinds of crowd behavior are panics, mobs, riots, protest crowds, expressive crowds, and public grief. Obviously, different kinds of conditions generate these various types of collective behavior. A most extreme type of crowd behavior, fortunately very rare, is mass suicide. This behavior illustrates the extent to which the collectivity's norms can replace society's usual norms when conditions are conducive.

The main forms of mass behavior are rumors, urban legends, mass hysteria, fads, and fashions. As with crowd behavior, these different forms of mass behavior reflect different predominant emotions and are generated under different social conditions. Here, too, a precipitating incident, such as a radio broadcast of a rumor, can often trigger widespread collective behavior, but, again, only when the conditions are otherwise conducive.

A key area of urban sociology is human ecology, the study of relationships between population and territory. Social segregation, a pattern whereby people with similar characteristics live together, is found in all cities. Depending on its history, a particular city can exhibit various combinations of three common patterns of population distribution and land use: concentric-zones, sectors, and multiple-nuclei. The most important factors influencing where people live and how they group together are social class, family status, and race or ethnicity. Racial and ethnic segregation have been especially persistent in American cities, and racial segregation has often been the product of deliberate discrimination. In part because of segregation, the poor have become concentrated in central city neighborhoods in some cities, and uneven development between different cities and between different parts of urban areas has widened the economic gaps among these areas.

Since World War II, the bulk of the urban population of the United States, and a good deal of economic activity, have shifted from the central cities to the suburbs. Transportation innovations, preferences for more space, government policy, and economic trends have all

contributed to this development. The suburbs tend to have higher-income populations than cities, a higher percentage of families with children, and a higher percentage of white people. However, as the suburbs are becoming more diverse, some of these differences are gradually decreasing.

Key Terms

urbanization
functional specialization
hinterland
overurbanization
Gemeinschaft
Gesellschaft
community
diffused responsibility
collective behavior
crowds
masses
structural conduciveness
civil disobedience
mob
riot
panic
rumors
urban legend
human ecology
concentric-zones model
sectoral model
multiple-nuclei model
social segregation
metropolitan statistical area (MSA)
uneven development

Exercises

- 1 A major social problem created by the spread of urbanization is called *urban*

sprawl. This is where an urban area spreads across open land as low-density living spaces proliferate and are separated from the areas people work and shop. Large roadways must be devised to join these separated areas, eating up even more open space and leading to increased pollution and consumption of fossil fuels. Research the phenomenon online and investigate why this sprawl might be such a common occurrence in urban environments. Then try to answer the following questions:

- Do you live in a community where this phenomenon is a problem, or do you know someone who lives in such a community?
- Even if you have no practical or indirect experience with urban sprawl, *imagine* that where you live has this problem. What if the area you now live in grew rapidly and developed sprawl? What do you think your reactions would be? What would you want to do about it?

- 2 If you are not familiar with it, look up the Wikipedia entry for the 2005 Hurricane Katrina. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans showed the difficulty of organizing a mass rescue operation in a large urban area. However, it also showed another reality of urban life in the United States. Imagine that Hurricane Katrina had hit area code 90210. Would the residents of that wealthy urban area have to face the same problems of coordination and mobilization as those in New Orleans? Why or why not?

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Chapter 18

Social Movements and Change

Imagine yourself on vacation. Your family has worked hard for this trip—your dad put in many hours of overtime on the assembly line, and at home—in addition to cleaning the house, taking care of your four younger siblings, and cooking all the meals—your mother has spent many hours growing a garden and canning fruits and vegetables so you can eat less expensively and save for this vacation. It will be your first trip to the Gulf Coast, and you are excited. But when you stop at a gas station along the way, you are startled and taken aback to see that the gas station has three restrooms, marked “men,” “women,” and “colored.” When you ask about this, you are even more surprised to find out that in the areas you will be visiting, it is illegal for white people and “Negroes” to swim in the same pools, eat lunch at the same lunch counters, sit together in a theater, or, in some places, even play baseball on the same diamond.

Did the preceding description seem odd to you? Did it anger you? Did it seem unreal? In fact, it could have described a typical experience of an American less than 60 years ago—a time when much of the country was strictly and legally segregated by race, and when social roles were sharply defined by sex. For example, it was generally unacceptable for a married woman—especially with children—to have a career. Female doctors, lawyers, or police officers were so rare as to be considered major oddities. And the idea of black and white children attending school together was considered so radical that the majority of Americans opposed it (Hyman and Sheatsley, 1964).

The preceding description, when compared to the realities of today, offers a vivid illustration of social change. Everywhere in today’s world there are examples of social change. Some, like

the abolition of Jim Crow segregation and public acceptance of women having careers, are the results in large part of social movements. In other words, an important reason that conditions like the preceding ones seem odd today is that people struggled collectively to change them. Hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated against racial segregation, thousands were arrested, hundreds of lawsuits were filed, and dozens of people died in the struggle. As a result, laws mandating separation of the races were abolished, and seem odd to us today (though subtler forms of racial inequality remain commonplace). Similarly, years of public protests and private challenges to sexism gradually undid the notion that the place for women is in the home. (Though, again, big inequalities in the wages of women and men persist.) Race and gender relations, then, are two key areas in which the United States has experienced significant social changes, in no small part because millions of Americans joined together in social movements demanding change.

While some instances of social change have resulted from collective action such as social movements, others may be totally unplanned and seem at first glance to be unrelated to any conscious human action. Similarly, some social change is very gradual, such as the gradual transition of the United States over 200 years from an overwhelmingly rural society to one where most people live in large metropolitan areas. But social change can also be as abrupt as the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

In this chapter, we explore social movements and social change—how do they happen, what is their relationship to one another, and how do they relate to the various aspects of society we examined in preceding chapters?

Social Movements

The examples of change in race and gender relations illustrate a key point about social movements and social change: The two interact, and each can arise from the other. The baby boom and the growth of higher education helped to spawn student activism, but that activism in turn contributed to the changes in race relations and gender roles described in the opening vignette. Because social movements are mutually related to social change in these ways, we begin this chapter with a discussion of social movements.

A **social movement** can be defined as a large number of people acting together on behalf of some objective or idea. Usually, it involves the use of noninstitutionalized means, such as marches and protests, to support or oppose social change. Social movements involve substantial numbers of people and usually continue for an extended length of time (Blumer, 1974). Typically, a social movement will have an ideology—a set of beliefs and values that it seeks to promote. To a large extent, the success of a movement depends on its ability to convince potential participants, as well as the larger public, of the merits of its ideology (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1988, pp. 724–5; Snow et al., 1986; Gerhards and Rucht, 1992). Social movements are more common in industrialized countries than in preindustrial countries, and they are more common in relatively democratic societies than in authoritarian ones. With industrialization, interest groups become far more diverse, and social control weaker, which makes it easier for people to organize against conditions or ideas they oppose. Democracy has similar effects, whereas authoritarian regimes view social movements as a threat and use such techniques as surveillance and imprisonment to immobilize them before they can achieve a popular following.

Several important social movements have sprouted up in the United States in recent years. First is Black Lives Matter (BLM). BLM campaigns against police violence against African Americans, mass incarcerations of black people, and other forms of racism. The movement stated as a social media hashtag (#BlackLivesMatter) in

response to the 2013 acquittal of George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer, in the shooting death of unarmed Florida teen Trayvon Martin. The movement gained further momentum after it organized protests following the killing by police of two more unarmed African Americans in 2014: Eric Garner in New York City and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Anger spiked when juries refused to indict officers in either case. Pointing out the long history of abuse and unequal treatment of black people by police, a topic we looked at in greater detail in Chapter 10, BLM organized large protests in cities across the country, many of which drew large amounts of media attention and much chatter on social media. The data suggest that these social movements have a significant impact. Demonstrations addressing police brutality, such as those associated with BLM, not only signal the importance of the issue but also empower marginalized communities. These movements exert pressure on influential groups, leading to a reduction in officer-involved fatalities among African American and Latino individuals (Olzak, 2021). Controversy was stoked when critics of BLM, many of them white, claimed that a more appropriate slogan would be All Lives Matter, including Democratic presidential candidate Martin O'Malley. After police officers themselves began to come under attack in places like Brooklyn, Baton Rouge, Houston, and Dallas, a countermovement calling itself Blue Lives Matter was formed. But activists for BLM point out that their slogan and their intent has never been to say only black lives matter (only their critics make that claim, they say) and rather that the statement should be read exactly as stated, or even as “black lives matter too.” Maybe part of the resistance to BLM comes from the tactics it employs, more so than its message. Presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton both experienced disruptive protestors at their campaign rallies during the early 2016 primary season.

We now turn our attention to the various kinds and causes of social movements that exist. Some of these are violent, but most are peaceful. Others strive for greater religious understanding and influence, while others attempt to spur or slow social change. As we see

later, the causes of these movements are many, varied, and controversial. The social movement is the most powerful of human forces and yet unwieldy, often unreliable, and only partly understood.

Types of Social Movements

There are five common types of social movements: protest movements, regressive movements, religious movements, communal movements, and personal cults. Although these are classified as different kinds of movements, they do overlap, and a particular movement may contain elements of more than one of the five types. Let us consider each in some detail.

Protest Movements

Protest movements are movements whose objective is to change or oppose some current social condition. This is the most common type of social movement in most industrialized countries; examples in the United States are the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, the gay rights movement, the anti-nuclear movement, the environmental movement, and the peace movement. Most protest movements are reform movements—they are aimed at achieving certain limited reforms, not remaking the entire society. They urge a new policy toward the environment, foreign affairs, or a particular racial or ethnic group—but not a wholesale elimination or remaking of basic social institutions. Occasionally, however, protest movements take the form of **revolution** and revolutionary movements, which seek to remake an entire society through eliminating old institutions and establishing new ones. Revolutionary movements are rare, and when they do happen, it is often only after a series of related reform movements have failed to achieve the objectives they seek. Although rare, successful revolutions do occasionally happen. Countries as diverse as the United States, Russia, France, China, Iran, Mexico, Zimbabwe, and the Philippines have this in common: In every one of these countries, the current system of government is directly or indirectly the product of a revolution at some time in the past.



Photos 18.1 and 18.2 The Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, pictured above, are recent examples of organized social movements, although their goals and objectives varied greatly from one another.

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Regressive Movements

Regressive movements are social movements whose objective is to undo social change or to oppose a protest movement. An example of a regressive movement would be the antifeminist movement, which opposes recent changes in the role and status of women and urges them to remain at home and take care of their children rather than seek outside employment. More extreme forms of regressive movements include the Ku Klux Klan and various neo-Nazi and racist “skinhead” groups, which believe in white supremacy and favor a return to strict racial segregation.

Sometimes a regressive movement forms directly in response to a protest movement. This type of regressive movement is called a countermovement. A current example is the anti-gay rights movement, which opposes legislation banning discrimination based on

sexual orientation and the decision to legalize same-sex marriage by the United States Supreme Court.

Almost any protest movement that becomes large and influential can generate a counter-movement (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1988, pp. 721–2). Countermovements develop among groups whose interests, values, or ways of life are challenged by the original protest movements. Once they have emerged, protest movements and their countermovements often engage in efforts to capture the support of public opinion (McAdam, 1983). Such interaction between opposing movements can become a long-term, sustained process, in which each movement reacts and responds to the actions of the opposing movement (Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996). An example of this can be seen in the efforts of opposing sides in the abortion debate to label themselves “pro-choice” and “pro-life” and to label their opponents as oppressors of women or killers of babies.

Religious Movements

Religious movements can be defined as social movements relating to spiritual or supernatural issues, which oppose or propose alternatives to some aspect of the dominant religious or cultural order (see Lofland, 1985, p. 180; Zald and Ash, 1966; Zald and McCarthy, 1979). This broad category includes many sects, and even some relatively institutionalized churches, that nonetheless oppose some element of the dominant religion or culture. Examples are the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Scientists, and Mormons. This category includes movements that combine a religious message with political protest, such as the Nation of Islam (once popularly called the “Black Muslims”) in the United States and “liberation theology” among Latin American Catholics. Also included in the category of religious movements are cults, such as the Unification Church (the Moonies), the Hare Krishnas, and the Scientologists, as well as movements within major religious organizations, such as the Pentecostal movement within several Protestant denominations and the Catholic Church. Because these types of movement are discussed in Chapter 15, they will not be further explored here.

Communal Movements

Communal movements attempt to bring about change through example by building a model society among a small group. They seek not to challenge conventional society directly but rather to build alternatives to it. This is done in various ways. Some seek to create household collectives, popularly known as communes, in which people live together, share resources and work equally, and base their lives on principles of equality (Kanter, 1972, 1979). Others develop work collectives, in which people often live separately but jointly own, govern, and operate an organization that produces and sells some product (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979). They prefer this approach to the hierarchy and inequality that characterize more typical work organizations.

Personal Cults

A final type of movement, which usually occurs in combination with one of the others, is the personal cult. This kind of social movement revolves around a person as much as around an idea, and that charismatic individual is revered by the people in the movement and elevated to a godlike status. Personal cults seem particularly common among religious and revolutionary political movements. Examples of religious personal cults can be seen in Jim Jones and his People’s Temple, and in David Koresh and the Branch Davidians—both instances that led to mass suicide. In many ways, the Heaven’s Gate group was also a personal cult, with its members following the directives of its leader “Do” to the point of castration and, ultimately, death. An example of a personal cult in a political movement is the cult centered on Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong in the 1960s.

The Causes of Social Movements

It was once thought that social movements were largely the outgrowth of the personality characteristics of their participants, or of their psychological response to social conditions. For example, it was believed that people participate in movements to satisfy a personality need rather than to address a real grievance (Adorno et al., 1950; Carden, 1978; Feuer, 1969), or

that they join social movements because they feel isolated and alienated in today's large-scale and often impersonal society. The problem with both theories, however, is that, according to most studies, movement participants are not very different from the rest of the population in terms of personality or psychological makeup. They are no more "alienated" than other people; rather, they are often drawn into these movements by their friends and family (McAdam, 1986; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1988; Snow, Zurcher, and Eckand-Olson, 1980; Hedstrom, 1994; McAdam and Paulsen, 1994; Opp and Gern, 1993). Today, sociologists look at movement participation in the context of the larger social environment and are more likely to view collective action as a rational response to the constraints, restrictions, and opportunities of that environment.

Smelser (1963), for example, emphasizes the notion of structural strain: conflicts or inequalities in society that are the source of feelings of dissatisfaction, such things as gaps between what leaders preach and what they do. A prime example can be seen in the behavior of former Soviet Communist Party officials, who talked about a government of workers but enjoyed luxuries no Soviet worker could get. In addition, social conditions must be conducive to the formation of a social movement. People seeking to organize movements must have resources available with which to organize, and people must see some usefulness in forming a social movement. Relative-deprivation theory, resource-mobilization theory, and political-process theory are among the theories sociologists use to understand how and when social movements arise.

Relative-Deprivation Theory

Relative-deprivation theory holds that social movements emerge when people feel deprived or mistreated *relative to* either (1) how others are treated or (2) how people feel they *should be* treated (Geschwender, 1964; Gurney and Tierney, 1982). Although this theory also refers to a psychological state or feeling, that state is clearly the product of certain kinds of social conditions. The important point here is that *absolute* deprivation does *not* cause social movements. In a country where everyone is

poor, there is great absolute deprivation but no relative deprivation. Nobody knows anything but poverty, so nobody feels unfairly treated (de Tocqueville, 1955 [orig. 1856]).

In a society where wealth and poverty exist side by side, however, the poor are very conscious of their different situation and may well come to feel deprived. Similarly, when people are led to believe that their lot is going to improve and it does not, they are more likely to feel deprived. This is sometimes called the revolution of rising expectations (Davies, 1962). Social movements and revolutions often occur when conditions have improved but then either stop improving or don't improve as fast as people expect. This fact, along with the fact that more affluent societies have more social movements (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1988), provides some evidence in support of the relative-deprivation theory. It is hard to measure precisely how people feel, however, and studies that have correlated feelings of deprivation with participation in social movements have not generally revealed strong relationships (Muel-ler, 1980; Wilson and Orum, 1976). People who participate in movements often feel quite discontented with the status quo (Opp and Gern, 1993), but many of those who do not participate also feel considerable discontent. These individuals don't become involved because they face barriers to taking action or because they do not get support from others around them (Oegema and Klandermans, 1994). Among those who do become involved, development of a collective identity is a crucial step, so that they not only share a sense of dissatisfaction but identify as individuals with the movement's viewpoint (Gamson, 1990, 1991).

Resource-Mobilization Theory

Resource-mobilization theory argues that social movements emerge when people have access to resources that enable them to organize a movement. This theory assumes that some discontent is always present in a society, but that the resources necessary to form social movements are not always available (McCarthy and Zald, 1973, 1977). Money, communication **technology**, and intellectual elites (from which leaders emerge) are all resources that can

be used to organize a social movement (Zald and McCarthy, 1975). Because these resources are more available in a prosperous economy, growing prosperity is often associated with growing protest. How well a movement taps these resources also influences its chances of success (Morris, 1993; Ganz, 2000). The black civil rights movement of the 1960s was able to gain strength, for example, by tapping significant resources offered by sympathetic white people, including money, legal representation, and direct participation. The mobilization of these resources did not generate the civil rights movement, but it did help to sustain and strengthen the movement once it had become large and influential (Jenkins and Eckert, 1986; McAdam, 1982; Morris, 1984). One of the most important resources any movement can mobilize is interpersonal contacts (Macy, 1991; Opp and Gern, 1993; Hedstrom, 1994). These contacts are the major source of new recruits, as well as of money and other kinds of assistance (Bolton, 1972; Snow et al., 1986; Gerhards and Rucht, 1992). Clearly, such activities as recruitment and fundraising are also facilitated by modern communication technology (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1988, pp. 722–3). They are also helped by a concentration of like-minded people in the same place and by other situations, such as networks from organizations or past movements, that bring like-minded people into contact with one another (Freeman, 1973, 1979; D'Emillio, 1983; Lofland, 1985, Chapter 3; Morris, 1984, pp. 4–12; Wilson, 1973, pp. 140–51; McAdam and Paulsen, 1994). Finally, characteristics of the organization itself influence its ability to successfully mobilize resources. As shown by the experience of two farm worker movements—one successful, one not—organizations with diverse leadership teams including “insiders” and “outsiders” are more likely to succeed than ones with more homogeneous leadership teams (Ganz, 2000).

Political-Process Theory

Closely related to resource-mobilization theory is **political-process theory**. This approach stresses opportunities for movements that are created by larger social and political processes

(Tilly, 1978). The absence of repression that is associated with democratic societies, industrialization, and urbanization, for example, makes it easier for social movements to emerge. When people realize that the system is vulnerable to protest, movements are much more likely to develop (Jenkins and Perrow, 1977). People often make cost-benefit assessments of their potential participation in a social movement: Will the movement, or their participation in it, make any difference? One comparative study demonstrates how social movements are more likely to develop in the proper political environment (Nelkin and Pollack, 1981). It compared the development of the antinuclear power movement in Germany and France. The movement started similarly in both countries, but it grew and prospered in Germany, while it atrophied in France. The reason: The German governmental review procedures provided opportunities for intervention by those opposed to nuclear power plants; the French procedures did not. In at least one case, the mere perception that the system was vulnerable to change led to a successful social movement even when the reality may have been otherwise. A recent study of the 1979 Iranian revolution by Kurzman (1996) shows that a key factor in the revolution was that people believed the monarchy was weak and vulnerable—even though by objective measures it was not. Because they acted on their beliefs, they created a powerful social movement that unexpectedly (to nearly everyone except the people in the movement itself) succeeded in toppling the monarchy.

Necessary Conditions for Social Movements

Taken together, these theories identify a number of important social conditions that must be present in order for a social movement to emerge. First, as pointed out by the relative-deprivation and structural-strain approaches, people must be dissatisfied. Second, as the resource-mobilization approach emphasizes, people who are dissatisfied must be able to communicate with one another. Third, as the political-process model suggests, the movement must be able to survive any attempts at

repression, and it must be seen by potential participants as having a reasonable chance for success. This condition is a product both of its actual chances and of people's sense of their ability to make a difference. Finally, the movement must have adequate resources, including leadership, money, and supporters, to grow and develop. Any one of these by itself is not sufficient to generate a social movement, but when all of them occur together, the likelihood of a movement is greatly increased.

Life Course of a Social Movement

Thus far, we have focused largely on social conditions that lead to the emergence of social movements. This is only the first in a series of stages that movements pass through over time (Blumer, 1969b, 1974; Tilly, 1978; Zald and Ash, 1966). Social movements also go through a phase of organization, followed by bureaucratization or institutionalization. Finally, many movements sooner or later reach a period of decline.



SOCIOLOGICAL INSIGHTS:

Contested Tastes: Social Movements in the Politics of Food

Hey, are you going to eat that goose liver? Can I have it?

In case you didn't know, foie gras is a dish that consists of the liver of a duck or a goose. Yep, you heard that right, and to make matters worse, it's considered a delicacy . . . at least among the people who like it. In Michaela DeSoucey's insightful book, *Contested Tastes: Foie Gras and the Politics of Food*, readers embark on a sociological exploration into the intricate world of the culinary delight known as foie gras. She delves into the cultural, social, and political dimensions of the production and consumption of this controversial delicacy made from the liver of force-fed ducks or geese. DeSoucey unveils the fascinating dynamics of food politics, culture, and identity that revolve around this luxurious delicacy.

DeSoucey explores how food, in this case foie gras, becomes a site of cultural contestation, reflecting broader social and political tensions. She examines the ways in which food practices are deeply intertwined with cultural identity, tradition, and power dynamics. The book delves into the power struggles between various stakeholders in the foie gras industry, including producers, animal rights activists, chefs, and consumers. DeSoucey's analysis highlights the ways in which these groups negotiate and contest the meanings and values associated with foie gras, illustrating broader dynamics of power and resistance in society. DeSoucey's work offers insights into how food consumption is not merely a matter of personal choice but is deeply embedded in social and cultural contexts. She examines how the

consumption of foie gras is tied to notions of luxury, taste, and social distinction, shedding light on the ways in which food choices can be used to construct and perform social identities. The book also delves into the role of social movements and activism in shaping the politics of food. DeSoucey's analysis of the protests and campaigns against foie gras production provides a lens through which to understand the ways in which social movements mobilize around food issues, seeking to influence public opinion and policy.

The book commences by underlining the cultural and culinary significance of foie gras, a dish that has captured the imaginations of both gourmands and animal welfare activists. DeSoucey emphasizes how foie gras embodies a complex nexus of meanings, practices, and controversies, making it a compelling subject for sociological analysis. She delves into the foie gras production process, highlighting the controversial force-feeding method used in its creation. She unravels the ethical concerns raised by animal rights activists as well as the traditional practices deeply rooted in the history and culture of foie gras production. The book also explores the transnational aspects of food markets, revealing the global trade and demand for foie gras. The consumption of this luxury food crosses borders, creating international markets and distribution networks. DeSoucey emphasizes the role of culinary authenticity and tradition in the consumption of foie gras. She discusses how foie gras is deeply embedded in the culinary heritage of regions like France and how notions of authenticity influence consumers' attitudes toward the food.

DeSoucey presents the sociological aspects of the campaign against foie gras, illustrating how activists have used tactics ranging from protests to legislative actions to challenge the food's production. DeSoucey explores the role of food governance and regulation in the controversy surrounding foie gras. She discusses how different countries have implemented policies and regulations to address animal welfare concerns, and how these actions have shaped the production and availability of foie gras. The book underscores the symbolic power of food, especially in relation to foie gras. DeSoucey argues that food is not just a matter of sustenance but a powerful symbol of culture, class, and identity. DeSoucey discusses the class distinctions and culinary hierarchies associated with foie gras. She reveals how this food is often linked to notions of sophistication and privilege, creating social divisions and disparities in culinary tastes.

DeSoucey illustrates how consumers grapple with their ethical concerns and choices, and how producers defend their practices. DeSoucey highlights the cultural flexibility and adaptation in the face of changing food landscapes. She discusses

how foie gras producers have responded to the challenges posed by animal rights activists and changing regulations by adapting their practices. Producers are facing sustained pressure from activist organizations advocating for the prohibition of foie gras. Animal rights groups have launched nationwide campaigns to ban foie gras, citing the inhumane treatment of ducks and geese in the production process. Foie gras producers have also faced legal challenges and compliance issues in response to changing regulations and activism by animal rights groups. For example, the Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal challenging California's ban on foie gras, leaving in place a ruling that upheld the ban . . . or as multiple media outlets reported it "Supreme Court *ducks* fight over foie gras" (see for instance, de Vogue, 2023). Hundreds of restaurants around the world have stopped serving foie gras due to its inherent cruelty, and nationwide retailers have banned its sale. Additionally, several countries have implemented bans on foie gras production, citing animal welfare concerns. Social movements matter and can change the menu . . . even when it comes to goose liver.

Emergence

Movements emerge when conditions are structurally conducive, as previously outlined. An important part of movement emergence is having leaders who recognize that conditions are favorable for a movement and who can successfully tap into people's dissatisfaction and desire to do something about the situation.

Organization

During the organizational phase, the emphasis is on mobilizing people, recruiting new participants, and attracting media attention. At this stage, events such as protest marches, picket lines, petition campaigns, boycotts, and efforts to pass legislation are common. Frequently, there are attempts to build coalitions with other groups with related or similar goals. Building a viable organization is crucial at this stage. A large-scale social movement requires both national and local organization (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald, 1988).

Institutionalization

When a social movement has reached the stage of bureaucratization or institutionalization, it has begun to cross the boundary from something "out of the ordinary" to an accepted part of the political, religious, or cultural patterns of society. Offices and bureaucratic structures are created to complete the tasks of the movement, and if the movement's goals are widely accepted in a society, the movement becomes an ordinary part of the society's social structure.

A risk for every movement is that once the movement reaches the institutionalization stage, it will become a part of the social structure that it originally opposed and take on some of the characteristics of this structure. In fact, it is a common tactic of institutions challenged by social movements to offer leaders of the movements positions within the institution they are challenging. In so doing, they give protest leaders "a stake in the system" and often succeed in getting them to moderate their criticisms. This

process is called *co-optation*. For example, many corporations and governments have hired civil rights activists as community relations or human relations specialists, including in some cases people who had been among their critics.

Decline

Eventually, a movement may decline. This may happen for a number of reasons: the loss of a charismatic leader, loss of support, or perhaps because the movement achieved its goals and did not succeed in developing new ones. Research by Frey, Deitz, and Kalof (1992) suggests that social movements more frequently fail because of factionalism than for any other reason. Although decline is listed last, it may occur at any point in the development of a social movement. Unless it is later reversed, it usually signals the end of a social movement. In a fair number of cases, however, the decline is eventually reversed, as social conditions become conducive to a new round of movement activity.

Social Change

In the remainder of this chapter, we examine the major sources of social change and the processes by which social change takes place, and some key theoretical perspectives on social change and their relationship to the larger sociological perspectives. We also examine long-term social change and how it has occurred in different ways in industrialized Western societies.

What Is Social Change?

We define **social change** as any alteration of behavior patterns, social relationships, or social structure over time. As previously noted, social change can occur *rapidly and unexpectedly* or it can occur *gradually*, often going unnoticed by most for quite some time. It can also be *planned*, as occurred in the 1970s when Canada decided as a nation to guarantee health care to all and established a national health insurance system and, in the present time, as the United States moves forward with implementation of health-care reforms passed in 2010 and intended to

move the United States toward universal health insurance coverage. More often, however, it is *unplanned*, as illustrated by recent dramatic increases in population in the Rocky Mountain states—currently the fastest-growing region of the United States. Unplanned change occurs because of basic social forces that shape people's lives. For example, one reason for the growth of the Rocky Mountain states is that technologies such as fax machines and the Internet have made where people live less important from an economic standpoint. If, for example, hand delivery were the main way to transfer information, the two authors of this book would need to live near each other and near the company that publishes our book. But in fact, neither is the case; today such things as faxes, the Internet, and overnight express mail have long since made that unnecessary. In such an environment, many people who have “always wanted to live in the mountains” can now do so and still make a living. Hence, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, and other Rocky Mountain states have experienced a population boom since the early 1990s.

Every case of social change is somewhat different, with distinct causes and consequences. Each case of social change also has consequences for other aspects of society. For example, higher education, the real estate market, and the workplace have all been affected by changes in the roles of men and women in the family. Such consequences make the study of social change both fascinating and difficult. Part of the task is to synthesize (see connections between) effects of changes in various aspects of society that have been analyzed (taken apart) separately in earlier chapters of this book.

Social change often has an unsettling effect. For example, ranching families in the Rocky Mountain region are finding their lives dramatically changed by the region's growth: Old ways of life are becoming virtually impossible to maintain as, for example, yesterday's ranch becomes today's sprawling suburb. Often, these unsettling effects lead to conflict. In many places in the Rocky Mountain states, for example, fierce battles have broken out between growth advocates and people who want to maintain a traditional or natural environment. Social movements have arisen among ranchers

who want to preserve ranching against suburbanization, tourism, and environmental restoration efforts, such as the reintroduction of wolves. Similarly, environmental movements have sought to protect environmentally sensitive areas from logging, mining, and ranching. Thus, social change feeds social movements and conflicts, just as the reverse is true.



Photo 18.3 Social change, in the form of urbanization and rapid population growth in the Rocky Mountain states, is transforming Utah ranch country into Salt Lake City suburbs.

Courtesy of John E. Farley

Theories of Social Change

Theories of social change may be compared along a couple dimensions. For one, social change can be examined through the functionalist or conflict perspectives. For another, various theories argue that social change may be either *evolutionary* or *cyclical*.

Equilibrium (Functionalist) Versus Conflict Theories of Social Change

When the functionalist perspective is applied to social change, equilibrium is usually a key concept. **Equilibrium** is a state of balance in society, in which the components of society—institutions, social classes, political parties, families—interact with one another in a way that helps the society to function effectively. Equilibrium theory holds that once these various components attain such a balance, the society maintains a stable state until something happens to upset that balance. What could upset the balance? Any change in the social or physical environment of the society could do so. Among the possibilities are external changes, such as shifts in the world price or supply of fuel; technological changes, such as the invention of the automobile, the television, or the Internet; and demographic changes, such as a shift in immigration patterns or birth rates, leading to changes in a society's ethnic composition.

Any of these environmental changes could require a society to change, because the society needs to adapt to the new situation. However, because of the effective balance that was in place in society before the environmental change, the society will change *only* enough to adapt to its new environment. Any change beyond what is needed to adapt would alter the basically effective workings of the society, so the change that occurs is the minimum amount needed to adapt. For example, a sudden increase in world fuel prices might lead to reduced driving or more fuel-efficient cars in the United States. However, it would not likely lead to abandonment of the automobile as the main means of transport, because too much of the society is built around an automobile-based transportation system—about 86 percent of U.S. workers depend on the auto as their main means of transportation to work (McKenzie, 2015).

In contrast, conflict theories see social change coming not so much from the need to adapt to environmental changes as from basic conflicts that are rooted in the society. Karl Marx, the classic conflict theorist, saw conflicts of interest among different social classes as the main driving force of social change. Most conflict theories today use parts of Marx's ideas but add other elements as well.

The basic idea of conflict theories of social change is that, over history, some groups have

dominated other groups and by so doing have obtained more than their proportionate share of scarce resources. This brings about a fundamental conflict of interest between the dominant groups who hold the resources and the exploited groups who are denied resources. When the groups in society act upon these conflicting interests, conflict and social change occur.

An example of this can be seen in race relations. Today, race relations are in some ways quite different from what they were in the past. Although racial discrimination still occurs frequently, it is today illegal and is frowned upon to the extent that those who discriminate usually will not admit to it. Those who are caught in acts of discrimination may face large fines and civil penalties. As noted in Chapter 17, a jury fined Nationwide Insurance Company \$100 million after they were found to have violated fair-housing law (Squires, 1998). Sixty years ago, in contrast, discrimination was so entrenched that schools, public transportation, theaters, and even ball fields were segregated by law in much of the country. Why did the pattern change? A major reason is that social conflict erupted in the 1950s and early 1960s. African Americans and their supporters engaged in mass civil disobedience, economic boycotts, numerous lawsuits, and massive national protests. White supporters of segregation responded with mob attacks by civilians, beatings by police, mass arrests of civil rights demonstrators, and violations of federal court orders by many Southern governors. But the outcome of this change is that racial discrimination was banned by law, and public opinion turned against deliberate racial discrimination and against open expression of prejudice. Hence, social change occurred because of conflicts that arose within society.

Evolutionary Versus Cyclical Changes

Some theories of social change hold that social change is evolutionary, while others hold that it is cyclical. Evolutionary change is unidirectional; in other words, social change proceeds in a predictable direction over time. Usually,

this direction involves increased complexity or an improved quality of life; hence **modernization theory**, discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter 12, is an important example of an evolutionary theory. Karl Marx's theory of social change is also an evolutionary theory, because Marx predicted that societies proceed through a fixed set of stages, beginning with hunting-and-gathering societies and ending with what Marx called the "classless communist society." Yet another example of evolutionary theory is demographic transition theory, discussed in Chapter 16. This theory is evolutionary because it sees all societies over time as moving from high birth and death rates to low birth and death rates. In fact, it is closely related to modernization theory, because it sees the demographic transition as tied to industrialization and urbanization.

Other theories see social change as cyclical. They posit that, over time, societies shift back and forth between opposite patterns. Some time periods, for example, are characterized by innovation and challenges to established ways, while others emphasize a return to traditional values. One example of a cyclical theory can be seen in the work of Pitirim Sorokin (1941), who sees society as shifting between two major forms: ideational culture and sensate culture. Ideational culture emphasizes faith as the key to knowledge and values spirituality. Sensate culture sees empirical, scientific evidence as the path to knowledge and emphasizes a more hedonistic way of life. Sorokin argues that societies tend to shift back and forth over time between ideational and sensate cultures.

Evolutionary and cyclical forms of social change can be hard to sort out, because often both are occurring at the same time. This is illustrated in Figure 18.1. The figure shows a long-term, evolutionary trend upward in a particular social characteristic, but it also shows short-term, cyclical fluctuations. One of the challenges of studying social change is to be able to measure social variables regularly and repeatedly over time. With too short a time span or with unrepresentative points in time, a trend can be badly misread. For example, a sociologist could draw many wrong conclusions by taking measurements only at certain

times: Points A and C suggest no change over time; points B and D suggest a rapid increase; points A, B, C, D, and E suggest a totally cyclic pattern.

Only by measuring points A, B, C, D, E, F, and G do we see the true pattern: a cyclic pattern embedded within a long-term increase.

Modernization: Escalating Social Change

As previously noted, **modernization**—the transition from rural, traditional, agricultural societies to urban, industrial, rationalistic societies—has brought both a degree of social change and a rate of social change unprecedented in human history. For this reason, modernization has been a major topic of study among sociologists interested in social change. There is considerable controversy among these sociologists concerning the nature and social consequences of modernization. In fact, social scientists even disagree on what this process should be called.

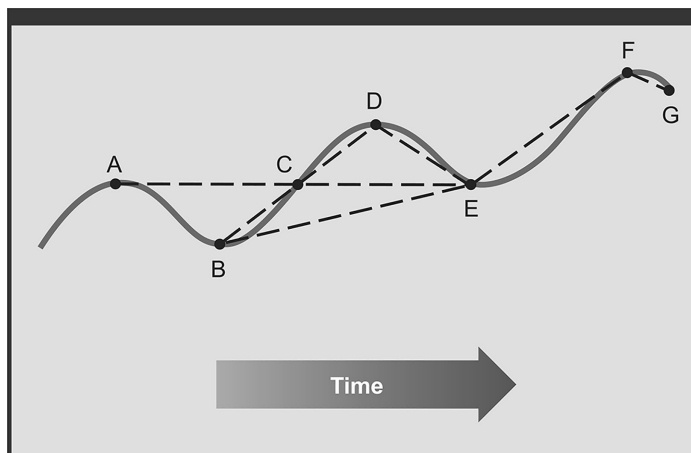
Because of the accelerating pace of social change, the study of social change represents both a huge challenge and a major growth area for sociology. While there is much that we do not yet understand about the changes occurring today, there are some general principles about the consequences of rapid social change that we do understand.

Consequences of Rapid Social Change

Rapid social change gives a distinct advantage to young people over older people. In an era of rapid change, older people must constantly learn new things and “unlearn” old ones. This is one reason for the decreasing respect for older adults. Living a long time no longer means you are especially capable, and experience is not all that valuable when it occurred in a different setting. Young people, moreover, are primarily interested in learning current information that can be used in present-day situations. Of course, what they learn as current soon becomes obsolete. This is especially true in technical areas, such as in computer technology, smartphones, and engineering, where change is especially fast. For these reasons, many people now long for older, simpler times. Of course, the “good old days” were not typically all that good. People lived shorter lives and were sicker; there was often great discrimination against women, ethnic minorities, and religious dissenters; and child labor and the physical and emotional abuse of children were rampant. Because the “good old days” were familiar, however, people tend to look back upon them in a selective way, remembering the positive and forgetting the negative.

The longing for simpler times is one source of religious fundamentalism in both Iran and the United States. In Iran, the Shah’s program of rapid modernization disturbed old patterns and

Figure 18.1 A trend with embedded cycles.



produced a high level of anomie. In the United States, the many changes that occurred during the 1960s also disturbed many people's sense of security by undermining prevailing norms. In both places, people sought security and reduction of anomie by returning to rules of behavior with which they were more familiar. In Chapter 15, we examined in greater detail some of the ways in which the forces of modernization feed the tendency toward fundamentalism, noting a complex relationship between the forces of modernization and secularization on the one hand and fundamentalism on the other. In the new century, this clash remains a key social force affecting events in both the United States and Iran, as well as in many other societies.

Rapid social change also increases the general level of anomie in society. Things are changing so fast that people do not know what to do or how to behave. They literally do not know what the norms are. For example, rapid changes in the roles of men and women, discussed in Chapters 8 and 13, have led to a certain amount of anomie, which in turn has contributed to increased divorce rates. As more women work outside the home the household division of labor is changing. For many young couples this is a major source of stress. We learn how to behave as marriage partners largely by observing our own parents, but for many of us our parents had a different type of marriage than we will or do have. Consequently, we have not learned how to be marriage partners in a dual-career marriage. Contrary to the arguments of those who long for a simpler past, it is not that the new system is "bad," but that we do not understand it (yet) and have not yet developed a workable set of norms to guide our behavior (see, e.g., Hochschild and Machung, 1989). It is in this sense that the speed of change is a source of social problems and further change. It is important to understand, though, that anomie as a result of social change is not a permanent condition; new norms will sooner or later be developed to address the new social situation. This often occurs through processes of conflict and negotiation among different interest groups and between those tied to older and newer ways of doing things.

Case Study: Rapid Social Change—Cyber Life

Today, a key element that is rapidly changing social life in the United States and many other countries across the world is the increasing attention we pay to our cyber lives. From the macro to the micro, cyber life is changing the rules of what is appropriate and inappropriate, what is safe and unsafe in social interaction. Take the unclear rules over when and how one should use a cell phone in public spaces: In the movie theater is clearly a no-no, but what about in a crowded restaurant, on a bus, during a sporting event, driving a car, or in a department store? Many of you may be answering no to all of these, but we bet you have seen more than one person talking on their phones in several, if not all, of these locations. Clearly, the rules about when or when not to talk, text, or surf the Net on your cell phone are still being established. More troubling, however, are the situations when our cyber lives can directly impact or even threaten our general social safety. *Cyberbullying*, for instance, is when any kind of communications—increasingly forms of social media—are used to intimidate, harass, threaten, control, or humiliate. This issue gained national attention when in 2006, 13-year-old Megan Meier hanged herself after communicating online with a homeschooled boy who had supposedly just moved into the neighborhood but was really the mother of one of Megan's classmates who lived down the street (Jones, 2008). The mother felt Megan had slighted her daughter. The troubling case is an extreme version of a phenomenon that has become all too common. Patchin and Hinduja (2016) found that 34.6 percent and 34 percent of teens had been victims of cyberbullying in 2014 and 2015, respectively. From 2007 to 2015, an average of 26.3 percent of respondents reported cyberbullying, with the trend clearly increasing over time as Internet usage also increased.

Today, cyberbullying is still less common than its traditional offline counterpart, but unlike traditional bullying, the cyber variety knows no time or space boundaries. Rumors or smears can live online indefinitely and can be "piled onto" by Internet users from around the globe. The practice of *public shaming* is closely related to cyberbullying (Warner, 2013). This



Photo 18.4 Cyberbullying is a problem that has arisen as cyber life has become a more important part of people's lives, especially for young people.

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is when someone is called out for something they have posted or been videoed doing and then numerous, hundreds, sometimes thousands of others pile on. Normally, this occurs in response to some perceived injustice on the part of the person being shamed, though no evidence exists to suggest such shaming has any positive impact on social change (Stryker, 2013). More than one observer has noted that the virtual mob mentality that follows is potentially unlimited. Whereas public shaming in the past was finite in its scope and duration, public shaming in the Internet age can go on indefinitely and be shared by millions of people (Leopold, 2015). An infamous case is that of a public relations executive who sent an ill-advised tweet just prior to boarding a flight from London to Cape Town, South Africa. The message was meant as a satirical comment on her trip to Africa and the low chances that she would contract AIDS because she was white. Though meant as a sarcastic statement about the state of the world, her tweet was taken literally by users all across the world. By the time she landed, she was the number one trend on Twitter. What she did not realize was that, given the uproar over her tweet during the 11-hour flight, not only were people waiting to film her as she disembarked from the plane, but her public relations firm had already fired her (Leopold, 2015; Ronson, 2015).

Another micro aspect of cyber life that has been cause of concern is the phenomenon known as *sexting*, the act of sending or receiving sexually explicit photos of one's self or others over cell phones or mobile devices. Smith and Duggan (2013) found that "15 percent of adult cell owners have received a sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photo or video of *someone that they know* on their cell phone." In addition, 6 percent reported having sent such a message, while 3 percent reported having forwarded such a message

on to others. By contrast, a slightly earlier survey of 12- to 17-year-olds found that 4 percent had sent sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photos of themselves to others, while 15 percent had received such photos, nearly identical numbers to those of adults. Authorities have been stymied in how to respond to the phenomenon of teen sexting, ranging from little to no intervention, to charging those involved with child pornography. Of course, as suggested by the preceding survey results, sexting is not confined to only young people. Former New York Congressman Anthony Weiner has been caught up in not one but three separate sexting scandals, putting an end to his political career and then ending his attempt at a comeback a few years later.

Cyber life is not just impacting the micro side of social life; it is also having important effects on the macro side. Social media played an enormously important role in creating what has become known as the Arab Spring, a series of popular rebellions, protests, and demonstrations in Middle Eastern countries during the spring of 2010. The countries involved included Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, and even small sporadic protests in Saudi Arabia. Major rebellions broke out in Syria, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. The Syrian civil war continues to rage

with devastating effect until this day. Though the actual extent of social media's usage in forming these protests and uprisings is highly contentious and debatable (Stepanova, 2011), and varied greatly from place to place, there is no doubt that social media played an important role. Word of meetings, strategies, and popular sentiment was spread across multiple platforms to help fan the flames of protest throughout the regions. Another way in which cyber life has had macro impact can be seen in the cases of WikiLeaks and Edward Snowden. In both cases, national security at home and abroad can be said to have been compromised by the hacking or stealing of confidential data that revealed embarrassing secrets of the U.S. government. WikiLeaks, led by Julian Assange, published footage of attacks in Iraq, including civilian casualties that included Iraqi journalists as some of the victims, that had not been made public. It also published hundreds of secret and damaging files about conditions at the Guantanamo Bay detention camp that did great harm to U.S. standing across the globe. Edward Snowden was a former CIA computer contractor working for the National Security Agency (NSA) who copied and leaked files revealing secret government surveillance programs. These programs were started in the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks under the auspices of the Patriot Act but were kept secret from the American people and even most members of Congress. The files revealed that the FBI and NSA not only had access to nearly all emails sent by Americans but also that the NSA had access to Apple, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, and Yahoo accounts, as well as phone records from Verizon. In further embarrassment to the United States, the Snowden files revealed that even foreign leaders of allied countries had been spied on (Burrough, Ellison, and Andrews, 2014). Of course, the U.S. government is not the only government involved in cyber spying. The Chinese and Russian governments have been caught breaking into both public and private servers in the United States and all across the world, including Russian hackers hacking into the files of the Democratic National Committee during the 2016 election, as well as feared attempts to undermine the confidence in the

American voting system, much of which is electronic. In the weeks before the 2016 election, WikiLeaks issued daily batches of stolen emails that had been fed to them by Russian government hackers, in an apparent attempt to influence the outcome of the election. In this case, cyber life is opening up a new avenue for warfare in the twenty-first century.

Summary

Social change and social movements are closely related. Social change often is the result of social movements, and social change can also cause social movements. Although social movements often lead to situations of collective behavior like those discussed in Chapter 17 (e.g., protest marches), social movements differ from collective behavior in important ways. In particular, social movements are more planned and goal-oriented than collective behavior. In addition, they require sustained and often complex organization. Collective behavior does not; in fact, it is typically characterized by a lack of such organization. The main kinds of social movements are protest movements (which may seek either reform or revolutionary change), regressive movements (including counter-movements), religious movements, communal movements, and personal cults. Movements tend to develop when people experience relative deprivation, when they have the necessary resources to organize themselves, and when the situation creates opportunities to alter the conditions that led to dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction, the ability of dissatisfied people to communicate, and a belief that "something can be done" are all critical to the emergence of a social movement. In order to grow, a movement must avoid or survive attempts at repression. Often, unsuccessful attempts at repression become an important organizing tool, as was the case with the African American civil rights movement.

Social change can be defined as any alteration of behavior patterns, social relationships, or social structure over time. Certain cultural patterns, like fads and fashions, change very quickly; others, like political and

social institutions, usually change very slowly. According to the functionalist perspective, societies tend toward equilibrium, a condition in which the various components of the culture function together. Change, therefore, is usually a response to exogenous forces, those originating outside the society. Conflict theorists, in contrast, view change as the norm. Change arises from endogenous factors, especially internal conflicts over the unequal distribution of scarce resources. Early theories of social change were either evolutionary, which often stressed a unilinear progression from a traditional to an industrial society, or cyclical, which sometimes referred to the life cycle of a civilization. These theories are no longer accepted by most sociologists. More widely accepted is the theory of sociocultural evolution, which examines how hunting-and-gathering societies changed into other types of societies. Sociocultural evolution focuses on general patterns, within which there are many individual variations.

Although we live in a period of rapid social change, a long-term perspective teaches us that throughout most of human history, change occurred very slowly. Rapid social change is basically the product of the Industrial Revolution, which began only a few centuries ago. Within that period, traditional agricultural societies have been transformed into technologically advanced industrial (and postindustrial) societies. Sociologists refer to this process and the accompanying political and social changes as modernization. Although many of these changes have increased life expectancy and raised the overall standard of living, the rate of change has led to increased anomie and other social problems as skills and norms quickly become obsolete.

Key Terms

social movement
 revolution
 relative-deprivation theory
 resource-mobilization theory
 technology
 political-process theory

social change
 equilibrium
 modernization theory
 modernization

Exercises

- 1 In analyzing protests against police violence following the murder of George Floyd, how can the concepts from the sociology of social movements, such as resource mobilization, relative deprivation, and political process, help us understand the dynamics and outcomes of these movements? Consider the role of social media, the framing of issues surrounding police violence, and the impact of political context on the success and sustainability of the protests. How might a sociological lens enhance our comprehension of the transformative potential and challenges faced by these movements? Have these movements been effective?
- 2 The September 11, 2001, World Trade Center tragedy has punctuated social concerns about *Internet terrorism*. Such concerns threaten cyberspace freedom and raise questions about future government-imposed controls on the Internet. Some in Congress have even called for the president to have the power to stop virtually all traffic on the Internet.
 - Do you think that certain controls on the Internet are necessary? For example, imagine that the perpetrators of the World Trade Center tragedy had a website that encouraged people to engage in terrorist acts. Such sites do, in fact, exist today. Should such a site be banned? If so, how might this be accomplished? How should this kind of behavior be addressed?
 - Do you think that censorship of the Internet is a problem? If so, how could reasonable controls on terrorist activities on the Internet be imposed, without sacrificing freedom of speech? If controls are needed, how should the government go about imposing them?

3 Interview an older relative or friend about changes in technology, families, race relations, or gender relations, and ask that person to think about ways in which those changes have been both for the better and for the worse. Are you surprised by what that person said? Do you agree or disagree with his or her assessments? How might generational differences relate to how you

and your interviewee see the world? Do people really change their minds about social issues, or is “social change” really just “generational change”?

For a full list of references, please visit the book’s Support Material at www.routledge.com/9781032423593.



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Glossary

Acculturation: A process in which immigrant minority groups are expected to adopt the dominant culture of the host country.

Achieved status: Any status that a person has attained at least in part as a result of something that the person has done.

Acting crowd: A crowd that engages in violent or destructive behavior.

Activity theory: A theory arguing that activity is beneficial to the health and self-esteem of older people, and that there is no social need for them to give up socially valued roles and activities.

Acute disorder: A medical disorder of limited duration, which is followed either by rapid recovery or death.

Affirmative action: Any effort designed to overcome past or institutional discrimination by increasing the number of minorities or females in schools, jobs, or job-training programs.

Age groups: Socially defined categories of people based on age, for example, childhood, adolescence, old age.

Age roles: Roles that are associated with age and carry the expectation that people of different ages should behave differently.

Age stratification: Social inequality among age groups.

Ageism: Prejudice and discrimination based on age.

Agents of socialization: People and institutions that carry out the process of socialization; they act as important influences on the individual's attitudes, beliefs, self-image, and behavior.

Agricultural economy: A system of production based primarily on raising crops through the use of plows and draft animals.

Agriculture: The growing and harvesting of crops in one permanent location, usually facilitated through implements such as the plow.

Alienation: As defined by Marx, the separation or isolation of workers from the products of their labor, or more broadly, feelings or the experience of isolation, powerlessness, or loss of control.

Amalgamation: A process whereby different racial or ethnic groups in a society gradually lose their identities and become one group as a result of intermarriage.

Androgynous societies: Societies in which the roles of men and women differ little, if at all.

Anomie: A condition in society of normlessness—a lack of effective norms governing people's behavior.

Apartheid: The official name for the racial caste system in South Africa, where political and economic rights were historically defined according to which of four official racial groupings—white, black, colored, and Asian—a person belonged to.

Applied sociology: The use of sociological knowledge and methods to solve problems, design policy, and obtain information relevant to making decisions.

Ascribed status: Any status that a person receives through birth, including race, sex, and family of origin.

Asexual: Someone who is not attracted to either sex.

Assimilation: A process by which different ethnic or cultural groups in a society come to share a common culture and social structure.

Authoritarian government: A government in which the leaders have virtually unrestricted power and the people have little or no freedom of expression.

Authoritarian personality: A personality pattern believed by social psychologists to be associated with a psychological need to be prejudiced.

Authority: A right to make decisions and exercise power that is attached to a social position or to an individual and is accepted because people recognize and acknowledge its legitimacy.

Bilineal system: A system in which wealth and kinship are passed on through both males and females.

Birth cohort: The set of all people who were born during a given time period.

Bisexual: A person who is sexually attracted to both men and women.

Bourgeoisie: In a capitalist economy, those who own capital, who constitute the dominant group or ruling class.

Bureaucracy: A form of organization characterized by specialization, hierarchy, formal rules, impersonality, lifelong careers, and a specialized administrative staff.

Capital: Productive capacity in an industrialized economy, including manufacturing and distribution capacity, raw materials, and money.

Capitalist economy: An economic system, found mainly in industrialized countries, in which the means of production are privately owned.

Caste: A grouping into which a person is born that determines that person's status in a caste system.

Caste system: A very closed stratification system in which the group or caste into which a person is born determines that person's social status on a lifelong basis.

Cause and effect: A relationship in which some condition (the effect) is more likely to occur when some other condition (the cause) is present than it otherwise would be.

Central tendency: A measure of where the center of a distribution lies, or where the middle, average, or typical person falls in some distribution of scores or characteristics.

Charismatic authority: Authority that is based on the personal qualities of an individual, such as the ability to excite, inspire, and lead other people.

Child abuse: Extreme or sustained physical or psychological violence directed against children.

Chronic disorder: An extended or ongoing medical disorder from which a patient cannot expect to recover.

Church: A religion with a formalized hierarchy and set of rules that accommodates itself to the larger society.

Civil disobedience: Nonviolent protest actions that violate the law.

Civil religion: A series of beliefs, not associated with any single denomination, that portray a society's institutions and structure as consistent with the will of God.

Civil war: An armed conflict among different groups or factions within the same nation.

Class: A grouping of people with similar socioeconomic status in an industrialized society.

Class consciousness: A situation in which a group of people with a common self-interest correctly perceive that interest, and develop beliefs, values, and norms consistent with advancing that interest.

Class structure: The distribution of wealth and other scarce resources in society.

Class system: A system of social inequality, usually found in modern, industrial societies, in which a person's position in life is influenced by both achieved and ascribed statuses.

Clergy: Religious officials with special authority to conduct ceremonies, establish rules, and administer sacraments.

Cliques: Relatively close and exclusive informal groups with distinct boundaries, usually consisting of about three to nine people.

Closed stratification system: A system of inequality in which opportunities for mobility are relatively limited.

Coercion: An exercise of power that forces people to recognize and obey a group or an individual whose legitimacy they do not accept.

Cognitive-developmental theories: Theories of socialization that emphasize the development of reasoning ability.

Cognitive-dissonance theory: A social-psychological theory that claims that people often adjust their attitudes to make them

- consistent with their behavior to eliminate the stress that results when their attitudes and behaviors are inconsistent.
- Cognitive processes:** Mental processes involved in learning and reasoning.
- Cohabitation:** An arrangement in which an unmarried couple forms a household.
- Collective behavior:** Large numbers of people acting together in an extraordinary situation, in which usual norms governing behavior do not apply.
- Communism:** As used by Karl Marx, a utopian society, to date not attained in the real world, in which all wealth is collectively owned, workers control the workplace, and government is unnecessary.
- Community:** A group of people who live in a geographically distinct area such as a city or town, share cultural characteristics, attitudes, and lifestyles, and interact with one another on a sustained basis.
- Concentrated economy:** An economy in which competition is limited or absent because there are very few producers of any given product.
- Concentric-zones model:** A theory in urban sociology holding that population characteristics and land use change systematically as you move away from the center of the city, such that they are arranged roughly as a series of rings around the center of the city.
- Conflict perspective:** A macrosociological perspective based on the key premise that society is made up of groups that compete, usually with unequal power, for scarce resources; conflict and change are seen as the natural order of things.
- Conservative:** Political ideology that leans to the right of the political spectrum and supports less government intervention in the economy on behalf of the working and middle classes and a more restrictive/traditional stance toward moral or social issues.
- Conspicuous consumption:** Refers to people making lavish purchases of expensive goods and services simply so they will be noticed doing so.
- Contagion:** A process through which a proposed or initiated action is rapidly adopted or imitated by a crowd or mass.
- Content analysis:** A research method based on the systematic examination of the content of some message or communication.
- Continuity theory:** A theory about aging which holds that people adapt best to age role changes when they are able to continue roles and activities that they have experienced and found rewarding earlier in life.
- Control group:** In experimental research, a group that experiences no manipulation of the independent variable; it is used for purposes of comparison to the experimental group.
- Control variable:** A variable that is introduced into an experiment to determine whether correlation between an independent and a dependent variable is the product of some other influence operating on both of them.
- Convergence:** A dynamic in which a crowd acts as one because many people in the crowd share emotions, goals, or beliefs.
- Cooptation:** A process whereby leaders of social movements are led to adopt more moderate positions by being given positions of status or authority in institutions.
- Corporation:** A large-scale private company with multiple owners (called stockholders) that is legally independent and has legal rights and responsibilities separate from either its owners or managers.
- Correlation:** A relationship between two variables in which a change in one is accompanied by a change in the other.
- Counterculture:** A subculture that has developed beliefs, values, symbols, and norms that stand in opposition to those of the larger culture.
- Credentials:** Items of information used to document or support the claim that an individual has certain capabilities, or expertise.
- Crime:** A deviant act that violates a law.
- Cross-cutting cleavages:** Situations in which divisions or issues of conflict divide a society in different ways on different issues.
- Crowd:** A large set of people who are localized in one place and whose interaction is only temporary.
- Crude birth rate:** The number of births occurring in a year per 1,000 population.

Crude death rate: The number of deaths occurring in a year per 1,000 population.

Cult: A religious group that is withdrawn from, and often at odds with, the religious traditions of a society.

Cultural deprivation: A condition that functionalist theorists believe commonly exists among lower-income groups, whereby such groups suffer disadvantages in education and economics because they lack cultural characteristics associated with success.

Cultural diffusion: A process whereby a belief, value, norm, symbol, or practice spreads from one culture into another, or from a sub-culture into the larger culture.

Cultural lag: A pattern whereby some aspect of culture that was once functional persists after social or technological change has eliminated its usefulness.

Cultural relativism: A view that recognizes cultures other than one's own as different, but not odd or inferior; other cultures are not judged by the standards of one's own.

Culture: A set of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and rules for behavior that are held commonly within a society.

Debt or equity: A choice for financial systems to be primarily funded through banks (debt); or stock markets (equity).

Deconcentrated economy: An economy characterized by competition resulting from a large number of producers.

De facto segregation: Racial school segregation that is brought about as a result of housing and neighborhood segregation patterns.

Deindustrialization: A decline in the importance of heavy industry as a source of employment in the United States and other modern economies. Automation, job decentralization, and the transition to a postindustrial economy all play a role in this process.

Democracy: A system in which government is chosen by the people, who enjoy freedom of expression and the right to vote for their leaders.

Demographic transition: A historic process whereby declines in mortality are not immediately followed by declines in fertility, thereby creating a period of rapid population growth.

Demography: The scientific study of human populations.

Denomination: One of several major religions in a society that usually tolerates other religions.

Dependency theories: A group of theories holding that industrialized nations keep Third World nations in a dependent position to maintain the advantages of the industrialized nations.

Dependent variable: A variable that is assumed by the researcher to be the effect of some other variable, called the independent variable.

Derivatives: Are financial instruments whose value are derived from the value of other underlying assets—stocks, bonds, currencies, etc. used as financial insurance but can cause or exacerbate financial panics.

Deterrence: The prevention of crime or deviant behavior through punishment, whereby fear of the punishment prevents people from engaging in the deviant behavior.

Deviance: Behavior that does not conform to the prevailing norms of a society.

Dictatorship: A modern form of authoritarian government in which one person rules by absolute power.

Differential association: A theory that explains criminal behavior as a product of long-term exposure to criminal activities.

Diffused responsibility: A phenomenon that occurs when a large number of people witness a problematic event or situation. With diffused responsibility, people do not act because they assume that somebody else is doing something about the situation.

Dimensions of stratification: The different bases on which people in a society are unequally ranked, including economic (wealth and income), political (power), and prestige (status).

Discrimination: Behavior that treats people unequally on the basis of an ascribed status such as race or sex.

Disease: A condition defined by a medical practitioner as the cause of an illness.

Disengagement theory: A theory, drawing largely on the functionalist perspective, that supports older people giving up their role obligations to create opportunities for younger people.

- Distinction:** A pattern of consumption whereby elites in a society develop exclusive styles and tastes with the express purpose of separating themselves from the mass of society.
- Division of labor:** A characteristic of most societies in which different individuals or groups specialize in different tasks.
- Double or triple jeopardy:** Being a member of two or more minority statuses who may experience multiple form of discrimination and prejudice at the same time.
- Dramaturgical perspective:** A theory arising from the symbolic-interactionist perspective that holds that human behavior is often an attempt to present a particular self-image to others.
- Dyad:** A social group that consists of only two people.
- Dying:** A process of physical deterioration and preparation for death.
- Dysfunction:** A consequence of a social arrangement that is in some way damaging or problematic to the social system.
- Economic structure:** In Marxian terminology, those aspects of social structure that relate to production, wealth, and income.
- Economic systems:** Systems that determine the production and distribution of scarce resources.
- Ego:** In Freudian theory, that part of the personality that mediates between the id and the superego.
- Embeddedness:** Society and the economy are one and the same—the economy is a subsector of society and is governed by the social rules of that society.
- Emergent norms:** A process whereby a crowd collectively and interactively develops its own norms about how to behave.
- Endogamy:** Marriage between people from the same racial, religious, and ethnic groups.
- Epidemiology:** The measurement of the extent of medical disorders in a population, and the social, demographic, and geographic characteristics of those with such disorders.
- Equilibrium:** A condition in which the components of a society function together in a state of balance.
- Estate system:** A relatively closed stratification system, also called a feudal system, that is found in agricultural economies, in which a person's status is determined on the basis of landownership and, frequently, formal title.
- Ethnic group:** A group of people who are recognized as a distinct group on the basis of cultural characteristics such as common ancestry or religion.
- Ethnocentrism:** An attitude commonly found among human groups in which members of the group consider their ways of doing things to be normal, natural, and superior to the ways of other groups.
- Ethnomethodology:** A theory arising from the symbolic-interactionist perspective that argues that human behavior is a product of how people understand the situations they encounter.
- Exchange mobility:** A type of socioeconomic mobility that occurs when some people move to higher positions in the stratification system, while others move to lower positions.
- Exchange, reciprocity, and redistribution:** Three separate principles that economic activity has been organized around over human experience.
- Exchange theory:** A theory holding that people enter a relationship of any kind because each participant expects to gain something from it.
- Exit or voice:** When economic performance is lacking investors can leave an investment (exit); or try to use their influence to change policy (voice).
- Exogamy:** Marriage between people from different racial, ethnic, or religious groups.
- Experiment:** A research method in which the researcher manipulates the independent variable while keeping everything else constant in order to measure the effect on the dependent variable.
- Experimental group:** In experimental research, the group that experiences some manipulation or change of the independent variable.
- Expertise:** An individual's specialized knowledge concerning some specific topic, issue, or scientific discipline.

Exponential growth: Growth based on a percentage rate of increase that results in larger numerical growth in each successive year.

Expressive leaders: People who exercise leadership by taking care of the social and emotional needs of people in their group.

Extended family: A family consisting of more than two generations who live together and share responsibilities for the maintenance of the family.

Fad: An amusing mass involvement or activity, usually somewhat unconventional, that is temporary in nature.

False consciousness: A condition in which people, usually in groups that are relatively powerless, accept beliefs that work against their self-interests.

Family: A group of people related by ancestry, marriage, or adoption who live together, form an economic unit, and cooperatively rear their young.

Family of orientation: The family into which a person is born.

Family of procreation: The family a person forms by marrying and having children.

Fashion: A style of appearance or behavior that is favored by a large number of people for a limited amount of time.

Fee-for-service payment: A method of payment for health care in which providers receive a set amount of money (fee) for each service that they provide.

Feminism: An ideology or a related social movement advocating the ideas that an equal share of scarce resources should go to women and men and that social roles should not be assigned on the basis of sex.

Feminist theory: A theoretical approach emphasizing efforts to understand the causes and societal consequences of gender inequality, and often applying such knowledge to correct this inequality.

Fertility: The number of births occurring in a population.

Fictitious commodities: Include land, labor, and money, and are often thought of as true commodities, but Polanyi argues that they are not, and if treated as so will result in disastrous economic and social destruction, like the Great Depression.

Fictive kin: Family-like relationships among people who are not blood relatives.

Field observation: A research method in which the researcher observes human behavior as it occurs in natural, "real-life" situations.

Financial contagion: When a process of boom and bust, or a financial crisis spreads from one market to another, or from one country to another.

Financial system: The set of institutions that funnel money from savers to competing investors.

Folkways: Relatively minor informal norms that carry only informal sanctions such as mild joking or ridicule, when they are violated.

Forced assimilation: A type of assimilation in which a minority group is required to adopt the culture of the majority group.

Formal organization: A relatively large self-perpetuating social group with a name, an established purpose, a role structure, and a set of rules.

Function: A consequence of a social arrangement that is in some way useful for the social system.

Functional illiteracy: The inability to read, write, add, or subtract well enough to perform everyday tasks.

Functionalist perspective: A macrosociological perspective stressing the basic notion that society is made up of interdependent parts that work together to produce consensus and stability.

Functional specialization: The tendency of different cities or metropolitan areas to specialize in different types of economic activity.

Fundamentalism: A form of religion characterized by strict rules and by literal and unquestioning acceptance of sacred writings and teachings.

Game stage: According to George Herbert Mead, a stage of socialization at which organized activity becomes possible.

Gemeinschaft: According to Toennies, a traditional community in which relations between people are close and personal, behavior is governed by tradition, and contacts with strangers are rare.

- Gender:** Socially learned traits or characteristics that are associated with men or women.
- Gender roles:** Social roles that people are expected to play because they are male or female, which often carry unequal status, rewards, and opportunities. Also called sex roles.
- Gender-role socialization:** The process by which sex roles are taught and learned.
- Generalized other:** Classes of people with whom a person inter-acts on the basis of generalized roles rather than on individual characteristics.
- Gentrification:** The movement of the upper class into older central-city neighborhoods, leading to renovation of buildings and a turnover in neighborhood population.
- Gesellschaft:** According to Toennies, an urban society in which personal goals come before community objectives, relations are impersonal, and tradition is weak.
- Glass ceiling:** An invisible barrier that women in the work-place often encounter that limits their chances to move up in the organization—the jobs with the greatest status and power are usually occupied by males.
- Glass escalator:** A pattern where men who work in traditionally female-dominated occupations often experience an advantage at hiring time, in promotions, and make higher salaries and incomes.
- Global commodity chain theory:** Theories whose focus is on the “chains” of global capital, labor, raw materials, production and consumption that are closely linked together in networks across the world.
- Globalization:** A transition to a world-wide economy that transcends national boundaries.
- Group:** See social group.
- Health:** A condition in which a person can function effectively on the physical, mental, and social levels.
- Health maintenance organization (HMO):** A medical coverage plan in which members prepay their health care and receive services as needed without a fee.
- Heterosexual:** An attraction to members of the opposite sex.
- Hidden curriculum:** The values, beliefs, and habits that are taught in the schools in addition to factual content and skills.
- Hinterland:** The area around a city that is dependent upon the city for goods, services, and markets.
- Homogamy:** “Like marrying like”—marriage between people of similar backgrounds and social characteristics.
- Homosexual:** An attraction to the members of the same sex.
- Human capital:** The pool of trained workers necessary for productivity in modern industrial and postindustrial economies.
- Human ecology:** An area of sociology that is concerned with the relationships of people and their activity to territory and the physical environment.
- Hunting-and-gathering economy:** A level of economic development in which people live on what they can collect, catch, or kill in their natural environment.
- Hypothesis:** A testable statement about reality, usually derived from a theory and developed for purposes of testing some part of that theory.
- Id:** In Freudian theory, that part of the human personality that is a product of natural drives such as hunger, aggression, and sexual desire.
- Ideal culture:** The norms and beliefs that people in a society accept in principle.
- Ideal type:** An abstract definition based on a set of characteristics.
- Ideational superstructure:** A Marxian term for ideology; so named because Marx considered ideology an outgrowth of the economic structure.
- Identification:** A process whereby an individual develops strong positive feelings toward a person acting as an agent of socialization.
- Ideological racism:** The belief that one racial or ethnic group is inherently superior or inferior to another.
- Ideology:** A system of beliefs about reality that often serves to justify a society’s social arrangements.
- Illness:** The condition that occurs when an individual believes that he or she has a medical disorder.

Imperialism: A system in which a more-powerful country uses the resources of a less powerful country to its own advantage, often by controlling that country's economic or political system.

Incest taboo: Societal rules that prohibit marriage or sexual relationships between people defined as being related to each other.

Income: The dollar value of that which a person or family receives during a specified time period, including wages and returns on investment.

Independent variable: A variable that is presumed by the researcher to be the cause of some other variable, called the dependent variable.

Individual discrimination: Behavior by an individual that treats others unequally on the basis of an ascribed status such as race or sex.

Industrial economy: A level of economic development in which machines are used to manufacture things of value.

Infant mortality rate: The number of deaths in a year of people under 1 year of age per 1,000 births.

Informal structure: The actual day-to-day norms, roles, statuses, and behaviors that exist within an organization, which differ from the official and formal structure of the organization.

Ingroup: A social group that a person belongs to or identifies with.

Institution: A form of organization, with supporting sets of norms, that performs basic functions in a society, is strongly supported by that society's culture, and is generally accepted as an essential element of the society's social structure.

Institutional discrimination: Behaviors or arrangements in social institutions that intentionally or unintentionally favor one race, sex or ethnic group—usually the majority group—over another.

Institutional racism: Institutional discrimination on the basis of race.

Institutional sexism: Systematic practices and patterns within social institutions that lead to inequality between men and women.

Institutionalization A process whereby a condition or social arrangement becomes accepted as a normal and necessary part of a society.

Instrumental leaders People who exercise leadership in a group by focusing attention on the task to be done and by suggesting effective ways of completing that task.

Intergenerational mobility Attainment by people of a socioeconomic status higher or lower than that of their parents.

Interlocking directorate The presence of some of the same people on boards of directors of different corporations.

Intersexual The current term used for those born with both male and female genitalia.

Invisible hand Adam Smith's theoretical proposition that through the process of supply, demand and competition free markets create the best economic outcome for everyone.

Iron law of oligarchy A principle stated by Robert Michels that argues that in any organization, power will become concentrated in the hands of the leaders, who may then use that power to protect their own interests.

Kinship A pattern in which people are related by ancestry, marriage, or adoption but can live independently from one another.

Labeling theory A theory holding that deviance is defined by societal reactions to certain behaviors, not by the behaviors themselves.

Laity The general membership of a religion, who play a limited, and often passive, role in religious activities.

Language A set of symbols through which the people in a society communicate with one another.

Latent function A function of a social arrangement that is not evident and is often unintended.

Laws Officially stated social norms that carry formal, specific, and publicized sanctions when violated, and which are enforced through formal agencies of social control.

Legal-rational authority Authority that is tied to a position rather than to an individual, and which is based on principles of law or on an individual's proper appointment to a position.

Legitimate power Power that others accept as proper.

LGBT Collective identifier for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender individuals.

Liberal Political ideology that leans to the left of the political spectrum and supports more government intervention in the marketplace on behalf of the working and middle classes; while favoring a more lenient stance when it comes to regulating moral behavior.

Life expectancy The number of years that the average person in a society can be expected to live, based on current patterns of mortality.

Linguistic relativity A theory holding that language not only reflects, but also helps to shape, people's perceptions of reality.

Lobbyists People who are paid by special interest groups to attempt to influence legislation.

Looking-glass self A self-image based on an individual's understanding of messages from others about what kind of person that individual is.

Macrosociology Those areas of sociology that are concerned with large-scale patterns operating at the level of the group or society.

Majority group A group of people who are in an advantaged social position relative to other groups, often having the power to discriminate against those other groups.

Manifest function A function of a social arrangement that is evident and, often, intended.

Marriage A socially approved arrangement between a male and a female that involves an economic and a sexual relationship.

Mass A large number of people who are physically separated yet interact and are subject to common social influences.

Mass hysteria A behavior in which people dispersed over a sizable geographic area perceive and respond to a threat, either real or imagined.

Mass media Popular published and broadcast means of communication, including television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and motion pictures, that reach a substantial segment of the public.

Master status A status that has a dominant influence in shaping a person's life and identity.

Material culture Physical objects that are the product of a group or society.

Matriarchy A form of society in which females possess power and the right of decision making.

Matrilineal system A system in which wealth and kinship are passed on through females.

Matrilocality A residency pattern in which married couples live with the wife's family.

Maturation theory A theory about aging which holds that developmental processes lead most people to become better adjusted and more accepting of themselves as their adult life progresses. This theory, based on Erikson's developmental theories, powerfully rejects ageist stereotypes.

Mean The arithmetic average of a set of numbers or scores, dividing the sum of the scores by the number of scores.

Means of production Those goods or services, including land in an agricultural society and capital in an industrial society, that a person must own to produce things of value.

Means tested benefits Programs that test whether or not you have the means to get by on your own or whether you need some kind of assistance from the government.

Median The middle score or number in a distribution of scores or numbers.

Medically indigent The condition of lacking health insurance and not having sufficient resources to pay for one's own health care.

Medicalization A trend whereby an increasing number of conditions and problems are defined as diseases and treated by the institution of medicine.

Medicine An institution found in some form in all societies, whose purpose is to treat illness.

Meritocracy A reward system based on ability and achievement rather than social background.

Metropolitan statistical area (MSA) An area consisting of a central city or cluster of up to three central cities, the remainder of the county containing the central cities, and any adjacent counties that are urban in character and linked to those cities.

- Microsociology** An area of sociology that is concerned with interaction of individual with larger societal influences.
- Migration** Large-scale movement of people to different neighborhoods, areas, or countries.
- Military-industrial complex** A grouping of powerful individuals and organizations who share a common interest in large military expenditures.
- Minority group** A group of people who are in a disadvantaged position relative to one or more groups in their society, and who are often the victims of discrimination.
- Mixed economy** An economic system in which the government provides extensive social services and performs some major economic functions while manufacturing and other industries are at least in part privately owned. Also called democratic socialism.
- Mob** An extremely emotional acting crowd that directs its violence against a specific target.
- Mode** The most frequently occurring number or score in a distribution of numbers or scores.
- Modeling** A process whereby the behavior of a significant other is observed and imitated.
- Moderate** Political ideology that falls somewhere between liberals and conservatives on issues, or mix the social and economic views of conservatives and liberals and tend to be somewhat less interested in or knowledgeable about politics in general.
- Modernization** The process of development of industrial societies from agricultural societies, and the accompanying social, economic, and cultural changes.
- Modernization theory** A theory holding that developing countries will follow the same general pattern of development as industrial nations.
- Monarchy** A form of authoritarian government with a hereditary ruler whose absolute power is based on traditional authority.
- Monogamy** The marriage of one husband to one wife.
- Monopoly** A condition in which there is only one producer of a given product, thereby eliminating competition.
- Monotheism** A religion that teaches the existence of one God.
- Mores** Informal but serious social norms, violations of which result in strong sanctions.
- Mortality** The number of deaths occurring in a society.
- Multiculturalism** A viewpoint that values and embraces cultural diversity, viewing different experiences and viewpoints as a source of strength and adaptability rather than division.
- Multinational corporation** A large corporation that produces or sells its products, and usually owns property, in a large number of countries.
- Multiple-nuclei model** A theory holding that population groups and land use in urban areas tend to concentrate in distinct and scattered clusters, often around a number of distinct centers of activity scattered around an urban area.
- National health insurance** A governmentally mandated system of health insurance for the entire population, based on fee-for-service payment, that is funded through taxes or through a combination of taxes and employer-paid insurance.
- National health service** A system of health care operated by the government, in which doctors become salaried employees of the government or are paid a fixed amount per patient.
- Nation-state** A legally recognized government that effectively rules a relatively large geographic area and provides services, including military protection, law enforcement, and the regulation of commerce.
- Natural sciences** Those sciences that are concerned with the natural or physical world, including chemistry, biology, physics, astronomy, geology, oceanography, and meteorology.
- Negotiated order** The character of an organization that is the product of fluid agreements arising from the ongoing interaction of its members.
- Neolocality** A residency pattern in which married couples form a separate household and live in their own residence.
- Nomadic** A society in which members move from place to place rather than living permanently in one place.

- Nonmaterial culture** Abstract creations, such as knowledge or values, that are produced by a society.
- Norm of maximization** A value in capitalist countries of trying to derive maximum benefits from scarce resources.
- Norms** Socially defined rules and expectations concerning behavior.
- Nuclear family** A family that is restricted to a parent or parents and their unmarried children.
- Occupational segregation** A pattern whereby two groups—most often men and women—hold different kinds of jobs.
- Oligarchy** A form of authoritarian government in which a small group rules with absolute power. Also sometimes refers to the tendency of large-scale organizations to be ruled by their leaders, even if they are formally democratic.
- Oligopoly** A condition in which there are only a few producers of a given product, so that competition is limited or nonexistent.
- Open stratification system** A system of inequality in which opportunities to move to a higher or lower status are relatively great.
- Operational definition** A precise statement of the meaning of a variable or categories of a variable for the purpose of measurement.
- Organized skepticism** A norm or principle specifying that scientists will be required to support their claims about reality through observed evidence.
- Outgroup** A group that a person does not belong to or identify with.
- Overlapping cleavages** Divisions or issues of conflict in society that divide people along generally similar lines on different issues.
- Overurbanization** A situation, common among less developed countries, in which the population of cities expands beyond what can be supported by the economy of these cities.
- Panic** An acting crowd that is suddenly swept by fear and responds with spontaneous and often self-destructive behavior.
- Participant observation** A form of field observation in which the researcher participates in some way in the behavior that is being studied.
- Patriarchy** A form of society in which males possess power and the right of decision making.
- Patrilineal system** A system in which wealth and kinship are passed on through males.
- Patrilocality** A residency pattern in which married couples live with the husband's family.
- Personality need** A psychological need for a particular attitude, belief, or behavior that arises from the particular personality type of an individual.
- Perspective** A general approach to a subject, including a set of questions to be addressed, a theoretical framework, and, often, a set of values.
- Placebo** A nonmedicated substance that can provide relief against an illness because patients believe that their condition is being treated.
- Play stage** According to George Herbert Mead, a stage of socialization in which the child acquires language, recognizes the self as a separate entity, and learns norms from significant others.
- Pluralism** A process whereby different racial, ethnic, or cultural groups in a society retain some of their own cultural characteristics while sharing others with the larger society.
- Pluralist model** A theory holding that power is dispersed among a number of competing power centers, each representing a different interest group.
- Political action committee (PAC)** Creations of special interest groups to raise money for their causes and funnel money to political candidates who support their positions.
- Political parties** Organizations, usually with different viewpoints or ideologies, that run slates of candidates for elective office.
- Political-process theory** A theory arguing that social movements arise in response to opportunities created by political and social processes, such as modernization, democratization, and economic growth.
- Political socialization** A process through which political beliefs and values are learned through interactions with others and from messages received from the media.

Polyandry A form of marriage in which a woman has more than one husband.

Polygamy Any form of marriage that involves more than two partners.

Polygyny A form of marriage in which a man has more than one wife.

Polytheism A religion that teaches the existence of two or more gods.

Population projections Estimates of the future size and composition of populations, based on specific assumptions about future fertility, mortality, and migration.

Postindustrial economy A modern economy dominated by services, technical knowledge, and information, rather than industry.

Poverty The condition of having an extremely low income and standard of living, either in comparison with other members of society (relative poverty), or in terms of the ability to acquire basic necessities (absolute poverty).

Power The ability of a person or group to get people to behave in particular ways.

Power elite A relatively small group that holds a disproportionate share of power in a society or a political system.

Precipitating incident An event, often dramatic, unexpected, or highly publicized, that acts as a trigger for collective behavior under conditions of structural conduciveness.

Prejudice A categorical and unfounded attitude or belief concerning a group.

Prestige The degree to which a person is respected and well-regarded by others.

Primary deviance Deviant behaviors that are short-term or cease with adult status.

Primary group A small, close-knit group whose members interact because they value or enjoy one another as people.

Primary sector That part of an economy consisting of the direct extraction of natural resources from the environment.

Profane Aspects of everyday life, which are not usually associated with religion.

Progressive tax A tax that requires those with higher incomes to pay a greater percentage of their income in taxes.

Projection A process by which a person denies or minimizes personal shortcomings by exaggerating the extent to which these same shortcomings occur in others.

Proletariat In a capitalist economy, the class who work for wages or salaries and who are employed by the owners of capital.

Protestant ethic A belief in hard work, frugality, and material success that Max Weber associated with the emergence of Protestantism in Europe.

Qualitative interviewing An open-ended interview technique involving greater attention to the depth of the answers and less to standardization. Questions are aimed at getting general information the researcher wants to obtain, keeping open the possibility of asking new questions suggested by the respondent's answer to the initial ones.

Qualitative research An approach to sociological research that uses in-depth observation and interviewing techniques to find beliefs, meanings, and social behaviors that lie beneath the easily observable surface.

Quantitative research An approach to sociological research that expresses results as numbers and uses statistical techniques to sort out cause-effect relationships among a number of variables.

Racial caste system A closed stratification system in which castes are established on the basis of race.

Racial group A category of people who (1) share some socially recognized physical characteristic (such as skin color or facial features) and (2) are recognized by themselves and others as a distinct status group.

Racism Any attitude, belief, behavior, or institutional arrangement that has the intent or effect of favoring one race over another.

Rational maximization The idea that humans make conscious, deliberate decisions based on weighing alternatives and the choices we have, *maximizing* the things we want while minimizing the things we do not.

Rationalization In Weberian sociology, the process by which tradition, faith, and personal relationships are set aside in the conduct of business, with decisions being made on the basis of what is expected to work best.

Reactivity The tendency of people being studied by social scientists to react to the researcher or to the fact that they are being studied.

- Real culture** The norms and principles that people in a society actually practice.
- Real wages** Wage and salary levels expressed in terms of purchasing power to adjust for the effects of inflation.
- Rebellion** A movement to express disapproval of or to change policies or specific officeholders, often using force, but without changing the structure of the government.
- Relative-deprivation theory** A theory holding that social movements emerge when people feel deprived or mis-treated relative to others, or relative to what they feel they should be receiving.
- Reliability** The ability of a measurement process to produce consistent results when the same variable is measured several times.
- Religion** Formalized beliefs and practices that are directed toward the sacred elements in a culture.
- Research** The process of systematic observation used in all sciences.
- Resocialization** A process occurring in total institutions designed to undo the effects of previous socialization and teach an individual new and different beliefs, attitudes, and behavior patterns.
- Resource-mobilization theory** A theory arguing that social movements grow when they are able to obtain and use available resources successfully.
- Resources** In Sewell's theory, things that actually exist in material reality and have inherent limitations.
- Revolution** A rapid fundamental change in the basic institutions, relationships, and ideologies within a society.
- Riot** An outbreak of violent crowd behavior, aimed against people, property, or both, that is not focused on one specific target.
- Rites of passage** Formal or informal rituals marking the passage from one age group or age role to another.
- Ritual** A system of established rites and ceremonies that is often religious in nature.
- Role** See social role.
- Role conflict** Conflicting or opposing expectations attached to different roles played by the same person.
- Role model** A significant other from whom a child learns to play a role.
- Role set** A set of related roles attached to one social position or status.
- Role strain** A condition in which one role contains conflicting expectations.
- Ruling class** In Marxist terminology, the class that owns the means of production and therefore enjoys a dominant economic and political position in society.
- Rumor** An unconfirmed item of information spread by word of mouth and sometimes by unconfirmed media reports.
- Sacred** That which inspires awe, reverence, fear, or deep respect in people.
- Sacred philosophy** A form of religion that does not revolve around a deity but does have a concept of the sacred from which moral and philosophical principles and behavioral norms are derived.
- Sample** A subset of some larger population that is studied for the purposes of drawing conclusions about that larger population.
- Sanctions** A form of direct social control that uses rewards and punishments to encourage conformity to social norms.
- Scapegoat** A person or group against whom an individual displaces feelings of anger or frustration that cannot be expressed toward the true source of the individual's feelings.
- Scarce resources** Material goods, statuses, and other things that people want, but that do not exist in sufficient quantities to satisfy everybody's needs or desires.
- Schemas** In Sewell's theory, things that virtually exist and are unlimited.
- Science** An approach to understanding the world based on systematic observation and generalization, which is used to generate theories to explain what is observed and to predict future results under similar conditions.
- Second shift** Employed women finding they must take on the primary role of homemaker as well.
- Secondary deviance** Chronic deviant behavior by people who come to identify themselves as deviants.
- Secondary group** A social group, large or small, that exists for some purpose beyond the relationships among the group's members.

Secondary sector That part of an economy consisting of the making or manufacturing of tangible physical products.

Sect A religious group, often created through a schism with an established church, that is not well-integrated into the larger society.

Sectoral model A theory holding that urban population groups and land use are arranged in pie-shaped segments extending outward in different directions from the center of the city.

Secularization A process in which the influence of religion in a society declines.

Self A distinct identity attached to a person; an awareness of that person's existence as a separate entity.

Self-fulfilling prophecy A process in which people's belief that a certain event will occur leads people to behave in such a way that they cause the expected event to happen.

Self-image The totality of the type of person that one perceives oneself to be.

Self-regulating market The idea that markets regulate themselves through the invisible hand and should be left alone from governmental interference.

Serial monogamy A system in which people engage in a series of monogamous relationships; it usually occurs as a result of divorce and remarriage.

Sex The physical or biological characteristic of being male or female. See also gender.

Sexism Structured inequality between men and women, and the norms and beliefs that support such inequality.

Sex roles See gender roles.

Sexual orientation The classification of an individual's sexual and emotional preference for asexual, bisexual, homosexual or heterosexual relationships and lifestyles.

Sickness A condition in which a person is recognized by others as having a medical problem or disorder.

Sick role A social role played by people who are recognized by others as having a sickness, which exempts them from normal role obligations.

Significant others Specific individuals with whom a person interacts and who are important in that person's life.

Social change The alteration of behavior patterns, social relationships, institutions, and social structure over time.

Social channeling A process whereby socialization prepares an individual for a particular role in life.

Social class See class.

Social construction of reality A process in which people's experience of reality is largely determined by the meanings they attach to that reality.

Social control Those processes that minimize deviance from social norms.

Social evolution A gradual process of social change whereby a society develops, increases in complexity, and offers its members a better quality of life.

Social group A set of two or more people who interact regularly, share some common purpose, and have some structure of roles and statuses.

Social institution See institution.

Social learning A process by which attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are learned from significant others in a person's social environment or subculture.

Social movement A large number of people acting together on behalf of a shared objective or idea.

Social network The collections of people and groups you have some social connection to.

Social psychology An important subspecialty of both sociology and psychology that is concerned with the interaction of the individual with larger societal forces.

Social role A set of behavioral expectations that are attached to a social position or status.

Social sciences Those sciences that are concerned with the study of human behavior, including sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, political science, and, by some definitions, history.

Social segregation The tendency for people with similar social characteristics to live together in the same neighborhoods.

Social structure The organization of society, including institutions, social positions, the relationships among social positions, the groups that make up the society, and the

- distribution of scarce resources within the society.
- Socialist economy** An economic system, normally found in industrialized countries, in which the means of production are publicly owned.
- Socialization** The process by which new members of a society are taught to participate in that society, learn their roles, and develop a self-image.
- Society** A relatively self-contained and organized group of people who interact under some shared political authority within some reasonably well-defined geographic area.
- Sociocultural evolution** The process whereby hunting and gathering societies develop into more technologically advanced societies.
- Socioeconomic mobility** The movement of people to higher or lower positions within the stratification system.
- Socioeconomic status (SES)** A person's overall position within the stratification system, reflecting such things as income, wealth, educational level, and occupational prestige.
- Sociological imagination** A series of insights or perspectives toward society that is achieved through the study of sociology.
- Sociological perspective** A belief that questions about human social behavior can be answered through systematic observation of the influences of human groups and societal arrangements on behavior.
- Sociology** The systematic study of society, human social behavior, and social groups.
- Sociopath** A personality type characterized by a poorly developed sense of right and wrong and the absence of guilt for harm caused to others.
- Special interest groups** People who come together to support particular issues or interests and use their financial resources to hire lobbyists in an attempt to influence legislation.
- Speculation** When investors invest in something purely to make money from the sale of the investment, not to produce a good or service with that investment.
- Status** Any position within a social system. The term "status" is also sometimes used to refer to prestige.
- Status quo** The existing set of arrangements within a society.
- Stereotype** An exaggerated belief concerning a group of people that assumes that nearly everyone in the group possesses a certain characteristic.
- Stereotype threat** activation of a stereotype that risks confirming a negative belief about one's group.
- Stratification** A pattern whereby scarce resources, such as wealth, income, power, and prestige, are distributed unequally among the members of a society.
- Street crime** Illegal acts directed against people or property, including murder, robbery, and rape.
- Structural conduciveness** A condition in which the social situation is favorable for the emergence of a particular behavior, such as collective behavior or a social movement.
- Structural mobility** A type of socioeconomic mobility that occurs because of an increasing proportion of jobs in the higher-status, white-collar categories.
- Subculture** A set of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, symbols, and norms held by a group sharing some common experience or situation within a larger society.
- Subjective class** The class to which people perceive that they belong.
- Subsistence level** A level of economic production that meets a population's minimum needs but produces no surplus.
- Superego** In Freudian psychology, that part of the personality that internalizes the norms and expectations of society and of significant others.
- Surplus** Whatever an economy produces in excess of the minimum needed to keep everyone alive.
- Survey research** Any research in which a population is asked a set of questions by a researcher, who then analyzes the responses.
- Symbol** Anything including words, signs, and gestures, that is used to represent something else.
- Symbolic-interactionist perspective** A major microsocio-logical perspective stressing the importance of messages from others and from society, how people understand and

interpret these messages, and how this process affects people's behaviors.

Symbolic racism A modern type of racial prejudice that does not express overtly prejudiced attitudes but does blame minority groups for any disadvantages that they experience.

Technology The application of scientific knowledge to a practical task.

Terrorism The use of violence, usually against civilian targets, as a means of intimidation or social control.

Tertiary sector That part of an economy consisting of producing and processing information and providing services.

The state A society's set of political institutions that, according to Weber, hold a legitimate monopoly over physical violence in a given territory.

Theory A set of interrelated statements about reality, usually involving one or more cause-and-effect relationships.

Third-party payment A system of health-care payment in which providers of health care are paid by someone other than the patient, usually government or an insurance company.

Thomas theorem A sociological principle that states that situations defined by people as real, are real in their consequences.

Total institution An organization or group that has complete control over an individual and that usually engages in a process of resocialization.

Totalitarian government An extreme form of authoritarian government that takes total control over all aspects of life.

Tracking An educational practice in which students are grouped according to their teachers' judgments of their ability.

Traditional authority Authority based on long-standing custom, often reinforced by a sacred element.

Transgender Someone whose gender identity is different than their sex—a person is born male, for instance, but feels in every way that they are female.

Transsexual A transgendered person who takes the step of going through hormone therapy or surgery to change their sex.

Triad A social group that consists of three people.

Underclass Poor people who are chronically unemployed or underemployed and who lack the necessary skills to obtain stable, quality employment.

Uneven development The tendency of some cities or neighborhoods to grow and prosper while others stagnate or decline.

Universal benefits Programs that go to all citizens to ensure a decent standard of living to all, regardless of what happens to them in the marketplace.

Unobtrusive observation A type of field observation in which the researcher does not interact with the people being studied, participate in the behavior being studied, or reveal his or her identity as a researcher.

Urbanization The process whereby an increasing share of a population lives in cities.

Urban legend An unsubstantiated story containing a plot, which is widely circulated and believed.

Validity The ability of measurement process to measure correctly that which it is intended to measure.

Values Personal preferences, likes and dislikes, or judgments about what is good and desirable or bad and undesirable.

Variable Any concept that can take on different values or be classified into different categories.

Veto groups Interest groups that possess the power to block policy changes or proposed laws that threaten their interests.

Victimless crime Illegal acts in which the only victims are the offenders.

War Armed conflict among different nations.

Wealth The total value of everything that a person or family owns, less any debts.

Welfare states modern states whose main responsibility is to provide for the welfare of their citizens.

White-collar crime Illegal acts committed by members of high-status groups.

World-system theory A form of dependency theory that divides all countries into core, peripheral, and semiperipheral nations, in which the more developed nations keep the less developed ones in a weak and dependent position.

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Index

Note: Page numbers in *italics* indicate a figure and page numbers in **bold** indicate a table on the corresponding page.

- ability grouping 455, 458
- abortion legality 495–496; *see also* *Roe v. Wade*
- absolute poverty 149–150, 150
- acculturation 449
- achieved status 74, 139
- acquaintance rapes 426
- acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) 423–424, 432
- acute disorders 511
- acting crowds 569–571
- activism and sociology 16–17
- activity theory 16
- Addams, Jane 15
- administrative staff 270
- Adorno, Theodor 175–176
- adult socialization 122–126
- affectional support by families 422
- affirmative action: argument in favor of 205–207; debate over 204–209; effectiveness of 207–208; legal and political status of 208–209; reverse discrimination and 204–205
- Affordable Care Act (ACA) 159, 193–194, 389, 527, 530–532
- African Americans: as colonized minorities 186; cultural assimilation 94; current status of 190, 203; discrimination against 177, 191–192, 195, 199, 202, 311; economic exploitation 187–189; infant mortality rate 326; institutional discrimination 174–175; leaving welfare 388; low-wage work 245; lynchings 569; one-parent families and **441**, **442**, 440–442; poverty rates 151, 167–168, 178; prejudice against 176; protesting police violence against 43; racial profiling 203, 313–315; race relations 200–201; segregation 184, 189–190; sexual harassment concerns 245; slavery concerns 173; social construct of race 171; sociology characteristics 5; urban poverty 200–201; urbanization impact on 497; voter turnout 8; voting patterns 397, 398
- African Methodist Episcopal Church 496
- African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church 496
- Afrocentrism 183
- age group 450
- agents of socialization 114–122
- Agnew, Spiro 308
- agricultural economies 337–338, 373
- Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) 387
- AIDS 509, 511
- Ailes, Roger 237
- Alaskan Natives 186
- Albus, James 349
- alcoholism 7, 115
- alcohol prohibition 295, 308
- alienation of workers 277
- Al-Qaeda network 503
- amalgamation process 185
- American Broadcasting Company (ABC) 277
- American Community Survey* (U.S. Census) **187**, **195**
- American culture: diffusion of 96–98; introduction to 94; seeds of change 96; social structure of 94–98, **95**; values/beliefs 94–98
- American Dental Association (ADA) 380
- American Dream 317
- American Enterprise Institute 380
- American family culture 78
- American Indians 186, 187, 188, 190, 195
- American Lung Association 276
- American Medical Association (AMA) 380
- American Sociological Association (ASA) 15, 509
- Amherst, Jeffrey 200
- analytical skills 341
- androgynous societies 217
- androgyny 255
- Anglo-conformity 182
- Anomie and deviance and crime 317–319, **318**
- Anthony, Susan B. 294
- anthropology 5, 10, 74
- apartheid 138, 184
- Apathetic voter 399
- applied sociology 18
- artificial intelligence 349
- Asch, Solomon 259, **261**
- ascribed status 73, 74, 76, 138, 139
- Asian Americans 94, 194–197, **194**, **197**, **198**, 397
- assault weapons 303
- assembly-line workers 143
- assimilation in culture 93
- assimilationist theories in race/ethnic relations 182–183
- authoritarian societies 175, 269, 596
- authority and power 377–378
- automation 190, 340
- automobile production, worldwide 359
- autonomous work groups 288
- baby boom generation 584
- back-stage behavior 59
- Bales, R. F. 240, 266, 421
- bases of authority 287

- Beccaria, Cesare 298
 Becker, Howard 29
 becoming human through socialization 102
 Beecher, H. W. 495
 behavior *see* human behavior
 beliefs, defined 68
 Bell, Daniel 340
 Bellah, R. 494
 Bhagavad-Gita 481
 Biden, Joe 311, 321, 569
 bigness, and power 357
 bilineal system 420
 bilingualism 69
 Bill of Rights (1791) 493
 biological differences in gender 218
 biological theory of deviant behavior 316–317
 birth rate declines 339
 bisexuality 252
 black church in America 496–497
 Black Lives Matter (BLM) 58, 203, 204, 313, 315, 568, 596
 Black Panthers 309
 Black Power 183, 479
 Blagojevich, Rod 308
 Bland, Sandra 314
 Block, Fred 371
 blue-collar occupations 144, 284
 Blumer, Herbert 17
 bodily capital 372
 bonds 364
 boom economy 362
 bourgeoisie 13
 BP Deepwater Horizon spill 276, 307, 322, 361
 Branch Davidian cult 92
 Brayer, Menachem M. 249
 breakdown of escape route 571
 breaking rules 318
 breastfeeding 232
 Bretton Woods system 365
 Bridgestone-Firestone tires 276
 Brown, Michael 204, 314, 315, 596
 Browning, Iben 273
 Brown Power 183
 Buddhism 87, 482
 Buffett, Warren 367
 bureaucracy: alienation of workers 277; alternatives to 290;
 COVID-19 pandemic 277–279; decision avoidance 274;
 democracy and 271; dysfunctions of 274–275; evaluation
 of 274; female managers 273; flexibility in 279–281; goal
 displacement 276; informal structure of 279; interactionist
 view of 279–283; introduction to 269–270; large-scale
 tasks and 270–271; lone minority in 282–283; Marx, Karl,
 on 272; middle manager roles in 281–282; normalization
 of deviance 275–276; overview of 269–279; pervasive-
 ness of 272–274; primary groups/informal structure 280;
 professionals in 280–281; reasons for 270–271; ritualism
 277; secretarial roles in 281; self-perpetuation 276; socialist
 bureaucracy 286; tendency to expand 276–277; trained
 incapacity 274–275; in workplace 269–283
 Bureau of Narcotics 295
 Bush, George H. W. 208, 209
 Bush, George W. 88, 97, 199, 208, 209, 262, 378, 394, 498
 Business Roundtable 380
 bystander effect 314–315

 Calvinism 492–493
 cancer 513–514
 Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study 28
 Canadian culture 69
 capital, defined 346
 capital gains tax reductions 382
 capitalism 492: conflict perspective and 385; corporate capitalism
 346, 352–356, **355**; individual capitalism 346–347; indus-
 trialization and 348; international competition and 356;
 introduction to 11–13; market and productivity 352; norm
 of maximization 351; overview of 346; social class and
 142–143; stratification 160; stratification and 142, 160, 166
 capital punishment 298–299
 Carlson, Gretchen 230
 Carter, Jimmy 267
 caste systems 138–138
 Castile, Philando 315
 Castro, Fidel 261
 Catholic Church 320, 377
 Census Bureau 27, 154, 235
 Center on Education and the Workforce 465
 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 252
 central cities 151, 157, 168, 186
Challenger (space shuttle) disaster 18, 275, 310
 changing relationships 8
 charismatic authority 377
 charity care 526–527
 cheating culture 320–321
 Chernobyl nuclear disaster 86, 513
 Cherokee tribe 186
 Chesney-Lind, Meda 247, 328
 Chicago School 15, 59, 560
 Chicanismo 183
 child abuse/neglect 114, 425–426
 Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) 155, 527
 child support 438
 China 12; androgynous societies 217; development 401–402;
 overurbanization 556–557; socialism 347–348; TABS
 model 392–393; World's Largest Cities **553**
 Chippewa (Ojibwa) tribe 187
 Choctaw tribe 186
 Christians 81, 248–249
 Christian women's rights 248
 Christianity 484
 Christian schools 498–499
 chronic disorders 511
 churches 488–489; in America 493–494
 civil disobedience 568
 civil religion 494
 Civil Rights Act (1964) 43, 238, 247
 civil rights movements: activism and 16–17, 597; impact of
 51, 126, 184, 246; origin of 602; resource mobilization
 599–600; self-determination and 286; social structure
 changes 200
 Civil War 15, 188, 189, 384, 554, 554, 569
 class 450–452

- class consciousness 91, 147–149, **146**
- classless communist society 13
- class mobility 140–141
- class structure 142
- climate change 337
- Clinton, Bill 97, 158, 209, 308, 444
- Clinton, Hillary: democratic nominee 394; disruptive campaign
 - protestors 596; popular vote win 97, 228, 395; voter dislike 267; voter support 378, 397
- Cloward, Richard 319
- cognitive development theories 108–114, **109**, 127
- cognitive dissonance theory 177
- cognitive processes 108
- cognitive science 71
- cohabitation and marriage 430
- Cohen, Albert 318, 329
- collective behavior: causes of 565–566; in crowds 566–567;
 - defined 565; fads 575; fashions 574–575; mass behavior 571; overview of 565–575, **568**, 592; types of 566
- collectives 266
- collectivist-democratic model of authority 287
- Collins, Randall 17, 48, 55, 59
- colonialism 179
- colonized minorities 186
- Columbia* (space shuttle) disaster 18–19
- Columbine shooting 301
- Committee for Economic Development (CED) 380
- common sense 3–4
- communal movements 597, 609
- communication: failure of front-to-rear communications 571;
 - front-to-rear communications 571; nonverbal communication 567; one-way communication 119; self-image perspective on 57
- communism 348–350, 495
- community and urban life 561–562
- community colleges 462
- comparable worth 236
- compensatory education 451–452
- computer geek subculture 87–89
- Comte, Auguste 11, 45
- concentrated economy 354
- concentration consequences 356–358
- concentric-zones model 575, 579
- concrete operations stage 110
- conflicting messages 120–121
- conflict perspective: capitalism and 385; culture and social
 - structure 82–84, 83, 86–90, 98; deviance 327–328; families 424–427; gender roles and 242; inequalities in society 599; modern economic systems 362; overview 44, 48–51; racial/ethnic relations 178–182; social change 604–605; socialization and 126–127; stratification and 160–161, 163; uneven development 590–591; urban life 563
- conformity within groups 259–260, 260
- Confucianism 482–483
- Confucian nations 81
- conglomerates 356
- consensus perspective 46–47
- conservatism 96
- conservatives, defined 393
- conspicuous consumption 133
- consumer fraud in health care 306
- contagion 567
- contemporary feminism 243–246, **245**
- content, in child socialization 105
- content analysis 37
- contradictory social class locations 143–144, **144**
- control group 30
- control variables 29–30
- conventional level 112
- convergence 567
- Cooley, Charles Horton 16, 17, 57, 58, 103–104
- cooperation perspective 46–47, 51
- cooperatives 266
- co-optation, defined 603
- corporate capitalism 346, 354–356, 355
- corporate crime 306–307, 322–323
- corporate elite 147
- corporate management 347
- corporations, defined 143
- corporatist-statist welfare states 390
- correlation, defined 28–29
- Coser, Lewis 51, 52
- cosmopolites 563
- Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) 380
- countercultures 92
- countermovement groups 596–598, 406
- courtship 415–416
- courtship violence 426–427
- COVID-19 pandemic 131, 151, 156, 158; crisis communication
 - and trust 279; employee well-being and mental health 278; globalization and supply chain resilience 278; organizational culture and values 278; organizational resilience and adaptability 278; and postmodernism 345; remote work and digital transformation 277–278; technology and surveillance 278–279
- credentials, defined 378, 448–449
- crime: corporate crime 306–307; defined 294–295; hate crimes
 - 196–198, **197**, **198**; medical experimentation crime 310; nuclear materials crime 310; organized crime 307–308; overview 299–311; political crime 308–311; poverty link 159; rising rates of 299; state-corporate crime 310; street crime 299–311, **301**, 299, 311; victimless crimes 305; white-collar crime 305–306, 315; *see also* deviance
- criminal characteristics 311–316, **312**
- critical race theory 179
- critical thinking skills 17
- Cronkite, Walter 101
- cross-cutting cleavages 92
- crowding in urban life 561–562
- crowds: acting crowds 568–569; collective behavior in 566–567;
 - defined 565; example dynamics 567–568; expressive crowds 568–569; protests crowds 567–568; types of behavior 567–571, **568**, 592
- crude birth rate 532
- crude death rate 533
- cults 491
- cultural adaptation 90
- cultural assimilation 93
- cultural diffusion 86–87
- cultural integration 81

- cultural lag 86, 240
cultural relativism 82
Cultural Revolution in China 246
cultural transmission 449–450
cultural variation 79, **80**
culture, defined 68–73
culture and social structure: American culture 94–98, **95**; cognitive development and 110–111; conflict between 82–84, **83**; conflict perspective 82–85, **83**, 91–92; culture, defined 68–73; false consciousness 84–85; functionalist perspective 86; gender roles 216–217, **219**; ideology 72; incompatibility between 85–92; introduction to 68; multiculturalism 92–94; perspectives on 78–79, **80**, **83**; social institutions 77–78, **77**; social norms 72–73; social structure, defined 73–78, **74**, **77**; societal structure, defined 67; subculture 87–90; summary of 98; universal social tasks 80–81; *see also* subculture
currency trading 359
curanderismo 521
Current Population Survey (U.S. Census) 37
Currie, Elliot 238, 299
cyberbullying 607
cyber life, as social change 607–609
cyclical social change 605–606, **606**
- Dahl, Robert 591
Dahrendorf, Ralf 48
data archives 36–37
data sources in research 36–37
dating process 415–416, 417–419
death penalty 298–299
debt system (banks) 364
decision avoidance 274–275
decline of social movements 603
Declining Significance of Race, The (Wilson) 200–202
Deegan, Mary Jo 51, 53–54
Deepwater Horizon spill 307, 322
The Deficit Myth (Obama) 391–392
deindustrialization 156–157, 202, 336, 344
delayed marriage 429, 429–430
democracy: bureaucracy and 271; direct democracy 386; oligarchy vs. 264–265; organizational democracy 273; representative democracy 386; unions and 268
Democracy in America (de Tocqueville) 494
demographic transition 537–538; in Europe 538–539; in North America 538–539; theory 539
demography: equation 534–535; fertility 532–533, **534**; migration 534; mortality 533–534; population 534–535
democratization 339, 341
Democrats, defined 395
Denny, Reginald 563
denominations 489–490, **490**
Department of Education 455
Department of Housing and Urban Development 588
dependency theories 164, 402
dependent variables 27
deprived urbanites 563
derivatives 366–368
derived phase of panic 571
descent patterns 420
- Desmond, Matthew 582–583
deterrence 297
detracking 457–458
development, politics of 401–406
deviance: anomie and 317–319, **318**; biological theory of deviant behavior 316–317; capital punishment 298–299; cheating culture 320–321; conflict perspective 327–328; corporate culture and crime 322; criminal characteristics 310–315, **312**; defined 294, 295; differential association 319–320; feminist criminology 328–331; functionalist perspective 326–327; introduction to 294; labeling tradition 323–326; lower-class culture and 320; psychological theory of deviant behavior 316–317; questions about studying 326; racial bias and 312–316; rule making 294–296; self-fulfilling prophecy 324–325; social control 296–297; societal explanations of 317–326, **320**; sociological view of 294–299; statistics on 311–312, **312**, 316; subcultural explanations of 319–322
dharma, rules of 480, 482
dictatorships 386
differential association 319–320
diffused responsibility 562
dimensions of stratification 132
Dimon, Jamie 307
direct democracy 386
direct mail 498
discrimination: against African Americans 177, 192–193, 195, 197, 203, 311; employment inequality 247–248; freedom from in workplace 287; individual discrimination 174; institutional discrimination 174–175; minority discrimination 50, 191; prejudice vs. 176, **177**; racial steering 579–580; redlining 580–581; reverse discrimination 204–205; sex discrimination 217; sexual pay discrimination 235; *see also* racial discrimination
distinction, defined 133
distribution of power 380–383
diversity 17, 92–94
divine right 84
division of labor 75, 269
divorce: causes of 436–437; changing laws 437–438; effect on women/children 437–438; overview of 434–438, **435**; social research on 23; sociological imagination and 9–10; U.S. statistics on 434–436, **435**
- domestic abuse 115, 301
domestic production 359
domestic terrorism 301
Domhoff, G. William 379, 380, 381
dominant groups 48, 173
dominion concept 287
double jeopardy 226
downsizing 283
downwardly mobile urbanites 563
dramaturgical perspective 59–60
drug abuse 115
dual-earner families 409
duality of structure theory 85–86
Du Bois, W. E. B. 15, 48
Durkheim, Émile: anomie and deviance and crime 317–319, **318**; deviance amounts 331; functionalist perspective 78–79; overview of 11, 14–18, 45; on suicide 26

- dyad, defined 258
- dysfunctions: bureaucracy 274–279; deviance 327; gender roles 242; group processes 262; inequality **162**, 162–165; perspective of 47; in subculture 90
- early sociologists 11–15
- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) 389
- Eastern mysticism 87
- East German socialization 353
- “Echo chambers” of influence 394
- economic dominance 359
- Economic Policy Institute (2019) 131
- economic sociology 368–371
- economic stimulus package 568
- economic structure 83
- economy and society: agricultural economies 337–338; economic sociology 368–371, 370; economic systems 335–336; embedded economy 371; financial systems 363–366, 363; growth of urbanization 554–556; hunting-and-gathering economies 337; impact on families 420; independence of women 436–437; industrial economies 338–340; introduction 11, 335–336; labor force and stratification 341–342; modern economic systems 344–362, **349**, **355**; postindustrial economies 341–342; sectors of 335–336; self-regulating market 371; summary of 373–374; *see also* postindustrial economies; poverty
- education: for citizenship 449; compensatory 452; conflict perspective on 452–453; equal opportunity/inequality 450–452; and health 515–516; hidden curriculum 450, 460–462; higher 462–466; inequality 454–460; latent functions of 449–450; manifest functions of 447–449; in postindustrial economies 342–343; quality of American education 467–471; school as babysitter 450; technical training 448–449
- Edwards, Richard 351
- efficiency wages 289
- ego, defined 107
- Eisenhower, Dwight 494
- embedded economy 371
- emergence of social movements 602
- emergent norms 567
- eminent domain 590
- emotional collective behavior 566–567
- emotional support by families 421–422
- employment inequality: discrimination 247–248; hiring patterns 234–235; occupational segregation 236–237; sexual inequality 231, 231–239, **232**, 233
- Encinia, Brian 314
- endogamy 413–414
- Engels, Friedrich 272
- environmental aspects 79
- environmental movements 597
- environmental pollution 514
- environmental quality 513
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 238
- equilibrium principles 46–47
- epidemiology 513–514
- equilibrium state 604–605
- equal opportunity 450–452
- equity system (stocks) 364
- Erikson, Kai T. 107–108
- Eskimo culture 70–71
- estate system 139
- ethnic groups 171; *see also* racial/ethnic relations; specific ethnic groups
- ethnic inequality 184
- ethnicity 514–515
- ethnic prejudice 295
- ethnic villagers 563
- ethnocentrism 81–82
- ethnomethodology 55–57
- European Americans 195
- European sociology 15
- Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (Desmond) 582–583
- evolutionary social change 605–606, **606**
- excessive criticism in child socialization 106
- exchange mobility 140
- exchange principle 370
- exchange theory 62–63, 414
- exclusive relationships 416
- excommunication from religious organizations 297
- exogamy 413–414
- experimental group 30–31
- experiments 30–31
- expertise, defined 377
- explanation, in science 5
- exploitation of workers 372–373
- exponential growth 536–537
- expressive crowds 568–569
- expressive leader 266–267
- extended families 411
- extramarital sex 422–423
- extreme poverty 164
- extreme rightist groups 92
- Facebook 119, 265
- factorial ecology 577, 579
- fads as collective behavior 575
- failure of front-to-rear communications 571
- fair footrace analogy 205
- false consciousness 49, 84–85
- families: affectional support by 422; changes to 123–124; changing patterns of 427–434, **429**; child abuse 425–426; conflict analysis 424–427; courtship violence 426–427; defined 411; economics and 420–421; female-householder families 155–156, 440, **441**, **442**; fewer/no children 433–434; functions of 420–424; importance in socialization 114; influence on gender roles 220–221, 240–242; membership in 412; men’s contributions in 428; nonmarital sex 422–423; poverty and 442–444, **443**; as regulators of sexual behavior 422–423; religious training from 421; role inequality within 424; single-parent families 440–444, **441**, **442**, **443**; socialization and emotional support 421; social structure and 427; spouse abuse 426; status transferal 420–421; summary of 445; violence within 424–425; *see also* marriage; single-parent families
- Family Leave Act (1993) 233
- family of orientation 412
- family of procreation 412

- Farm Bureau 380
- Farnham, Christie 115
- fashions as collective behavior 574–575
- fearful collective behavior 566
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) 309
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) 204
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 275
- Federal Housing Administration (FHA) 584
- female gender roles 215
- female-householder families 155–156, 440, **441**, *441*
- female managers 273
- feminism: contemporary feminism 243–246, **245**; emergence
 - of 243; gender roles and 243–244; new feminism 246;
 - origins of 243; social theory of 247; uneven development of cities 590
- feminist criminology 328–331
- feminist movement 597
- feral children 101
- fertility 532–533, *534*
- feudal systems 138, 338, 348
- fictitious commodities 371
- fictive kin 412
- field experiments 31
- field observation 34–36
- financial contagion 365–366
- financial crises 365–366
- financial systems: crises in 365–366, 588; defined 363; derivatives 366–368; overview 363–366, *363*
- First Amendment, U.S. Constitution 494
- fiscal crisis and urbanization 588
- fixed response questions 33
- flexibility in bureaucracy 279–280
- Floyd, George 315, 378
- folkways 72, 294
- foreign aid 405
- formal operations stage 110
- formal organization 257–258
- formal rules/regulations 269
- formal sanctions 297
- fossil fuels 361
- Frank, Andre Gunder 402
- Freeh, Louis 309
- Free Speech Movement (FSM) 113
- free trade 284, 380–381
- French Canadians 69
- Freud, Sigmund 107–108
- front-stage behavior 59
- front-to-rear communications 571
- Frost Belt 586
- function, defined 45–49
- functionalism 344
- functionalist perspective: culture vs. structure 86–87, 98;
 - deviance 326–327; gender roles 240; modern economic systems 361–362; perspectives in sociology 44, 78–79; racial/ethnic relations 182–183; social change 604–605; socialization and 126–127; the state and 385–386
- functional specialization 555–556
- function of subculture 555–556
- funhouse mirrors analogy 56
- fundamentalism 495–499
- Gallup Poll 427, 433
- game stage 105
- Gandhi, Indira 218
- gang behavior 318–319, 326
- Gans, Herbert 35, 163
- Garfinkel, Harold 55
- Garner, Eric 315, 596
- Gates, Bill 340
- gay rights movement 254, 597
- Gemeinschaft*, defined 558, 561, 585
- gender 517
- gender inequality: male dominance 217–218; origins of
 - 239–240; power in the home 229–230; public opinion on 249–251, *251*; religious influence on 248–249; sexism and 214; sexual harassment 237–239; sexual inequality 226–230, *227*, **232**, *231*, 231–237; *see also* wage gap
- gender roles: androgynous societies 217; class mobility and
 - 140–141; cultural lag in 240; cultural variation 216–218, *219*; defined 214–218; development of 220; dysfunctions of 242; employment inequality *231*, **232**, *233*, 231–237; family influence on 220–221, 266–267; female roles 215; functionalist perspective 240–241; impact of 247–251, *251*; introduction to 213; learning of 225; looking-glass self 225; male roles 215, 244; modeling of 225–226; sexual orientation 252–254; social construction of 230–231; socialization of 218–220, **223**, 236; summary of 254–255; teaching at home 220–221; teaching at school 222–224, **223**; teaching by media 222–224; teaching by peers 224–225; in United States 214–216; variations in 215–216; women in business 228–229; women in politics 228, *227*
- gender wage gap 43
- General Accounting Office 307
- General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) 380
- generalization, in science 5
- generalized other 105
- Generation X 253
- Genovese, Kitty 562
- German Americans 195
- gerrymandering 395, 395
- Gesellschaft*, defined 558
- Gini coefficient 132
- glass ceiling 216, 228
- glass escalator 228
- global commodity chain theory 164
- global finance institutions 164–165
- global inequality *131*
- globalization: consequences of 358–360; defined 283–284; job
 - impact by 198; postindustrial economies 340, 353; social change and 606; socialism and 354; work organization trends and 283–290
- global stratification 164–166
- global warming 344
- global welfare 389–391
- goal displacement in bureaucracy 276
- Goffman, Erving 59
- good boy/good girl stage 112
- Google employment 289
- Gorbachev, Mikhail 347
- Gore, Al 97

- government-owned organizations 346
 government policy on poverty 158
 Gray, Freddie 314
 Great Depression 131, 156, 267, 365
 Great Recession: economic recovery following 97, 106; economic/
 social chaos from 141, 371; inequality trend 134; liberal
 decline after 394; poverty and 149; wage levels 358, 362
 Greeley, A. 492
 gross domestic product (GDP) 362, 367
 gross national income (GNI) 162
 group characteristics/dynamics: complexity of 258–259; confor-
 mity within 259–260, 260; dysfunctional group processes
 262–263; outside threats 289–260–262, 261; overview
 258–263, 260, 261; primary/secondary groups 259; size of
 258–259; summary of 290
 group conflict 90, 91
 group polarization 262–263
 groups/organizations in workplace: bureaucracy 269–283; dif-
 ferences between 257–258; globalization and work trends
 283–290; group characteristics/dynamics 258–263, 260,
 261; introduction to 263; leadership in 266–267; oligarchy
 vs. democracy 265–266; organizations 263–264; social
 networks 264–265
 groupthink 262
 gun control need 301, 301–303, 302
- hacienda* systems 139
 Hadden, J. 497
 Hall, Richard 263
 Hare Krishna cult 92
 Harlow, Harry 102
 hate crimes 196–197, 197, 198
 health and society 509: cancer, epidemiology of 513–514; causes
 of death in United States 512; education 515–516; gender
 and 517; illness 516–517; income and 514; meaning
 of 516–517; mental disorders 519–520; mental health
 518–519; modernization 511–512; personal outlook
 517–518; power, environmental quality 513; race, ethnicity
 514–515; sickness 516–517; sick role 510–511; social
 inequality 514
 health care: ACA 530–532; cost of 529–530, 531; care funding
 350; national health insurance 528–530; national health
 service 530
 Heaven's Gate cult 92
 Hell's Angels 92, 326
Herzinsuffizienz 516
 heterosexuality 252
 hidden curriculum 450
 hierarchy 269
 higher education: access to college 462–463; community colleges
 462; pays 465, 465–466, 466; students of color 463–465,
 464
 Hill, Anita 238
 Hinduism 480, 481–482
 hip-hop subculture 87, 89
 hiring patterns 234–235
 Hirschfeld, Lawrence 171
 Hispanic Americans: affirmative action and 207–208; as col-
 onized minorities 186–187; current status of 190–194;
 discrimination against 191, 195, 202; institutional
 discrimination 174–175; language and 69; low-wage work
 245; population growth 199–200; poverty rates 151, 178;
 racial steering 174; War on Drugs and 295–296
 Hochschild, Arlie 399–400, 431–432
 Homans, George 60, 61
 home influence on gender roles 22–221
 homelessness 587–588
 homicide rates 159
 homogamy 414
 homosexuality: discrimination against 199; gay rights movement 254,
 597; LGBTQ+ persons 252, 412, 418; prejudice against 175;
 same-sex marriage 598, 430–433; transsexual persons 252
 Hoover, Herbert 385
 Hoover Institute 380
 Horatio Alger myth 141
 hormonal differences in gender 218
 hostile collective behavior 566
 housework conflicts 12
 human behavior: back-stage behavior 59; complications in 8–9;
 defined 3; economic sociology and 368; front-stage behav-
 ior 59; linear behavior 9; meteorology analogy 7; moral
 reasoning/behavior 111, 113–114; predictable behavior
 9; scientific study of 4–5; societal explanations of deviant
 behavior 317–326, 318; theories of deviance 316
 human capital 448
 human ecology 575–577, 576
 human groups 3
 human resources 448
 human trafficking 165
 hunting-and-gathering economies 337, 348
 Hurricane Andrew 274
 Hussein, Saddam 199
 Husserl, Edmund 55
 hypochondriacs 526
 hypothesis and theory 25–26
- id, defined 107
 ideal culture 95
 ideal type description 269
 ideational super-structure 82–83, 83
 identification process 49
 ideological conflicts 49
 ideological racism 173
 ideological sexism 214
 ideology 72, 84
 illegal drug use 293
 illness 516–517
 immigrants/immigration 176, 398, 568
 imperialism 403–404
 impersonality 270
 imprisonment rates 293, 296
 incest taboo 80–81, 413, 422
 income 514: defined 132; distribution 133–134, 134; inequality
 134; lower-income taxpayers 382; low wages 157–158;
 power and 378; universal basic income 350; upper-income
 taxpayers 382; wage gap 215–216, 231, 232, 231–237; wage
 levels 283–284, 357; wage penalty 233
 increased inequality among genders 217
 independence 449–450
 independent variables 26–27

- individual capitalism 346–347
- individual discrimination 174
- individualism 289, 351
- industrial age 13
- industrial economies 338–340
- industrialization: capitalism and 348; deindustrialization 156–157, 202; economics of 338–340; false consciousness 84; norm of maximization 351; social equality from 339; socialism and 352; standard of living increases 373; urbanization and 552–554, **552**, **553**; world-system theory 405–406; *see also* postindustrial economies
- Industrial Revolution 11, 13, 15, 21, 52, 338, 354, 401, 403
- inequality 480
- infant mortality rate 534; among African Americans 326
- inflation-adjusted wages 284
- informal eviction 583
- informal sanctions 297
- informal segregation 192
- informal structure of bureaucracy 277
- information-based economies 352
- ingroups 261
- inheritance patterns 420
- innovation 318
- institutional discrimination 174–175
- institutionalization 49, 447, 497, 601–603
- institutionalized sects 491
- institutional sexism 214
- institutions 77, 77–78, 164–165
- institution of medicine: scientific 521; traditional 520–521
- instrumental leader 266
- interactionist theories of socialization 103–106, 126
- interactionist view of bureaucracy 279–283
- interdependency 14, 45
- interest groups 294, 378
- intergenerational mobility 139
- intergroup inequality 187–189
- interlocking directorates 356
- intermediate status groups 194–197, **194**, **197**, **198**
- internal colonialism theory 179
- internal labor markets 289
- international comparisons of mobility 135–136
- international competition 340, 356
- international loans 405
- International Monetary Fund (IMF) 165, 405
- international perspective on racial/ethnic relations 183–185
- International Typographical Union 268
- interpersonal relationships 561
- interpretation, in child socialization 105
- interpretation of situations/messages 54
- intersexual people 252
- invisible hand notion 369
- Iran-Contra case 309
- iron law of oligarchy 379
- Islam 82, 484–487, **486**
- Islamic State group 195
- Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL) terrorists 195, 503
- isolated children 101
- Jackson, Jesse 497
- Janis, Irving 262
- Japan 364, 404
- Japanese Americans 195
- Japanese work organization 285–286
- Jargon subculture 89
- Jewish Americans: discrimination against 199; as intermediate status groups 194–198, **197**, **198**
- Jewish women's rights 249
- Jews 81
- Jim Crow practices 138, 327, 569
- Jiobu's theory 25
- job/career changes/choices 123, 202, 202
- job status 461–462
- joyous collective behavior 566
- Judeo-Christian societies 81
- juvenile delinquency 328, 330
- Kaepernick, Colin 43
- karma 482
- Katz, Jack 54, 56
- Kauzlarich, David 309
- Keating, Charles 308
- Kelly, Dean 477
- Kennedy, John F. 262
- Khomeini, A. 479
- Kindleberger, Charles 365
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. **112**, 113, 199, 378
- King, Rodney 563, 566, 570
- Kinsey, Alfred 422
- Kinsey, Charles 315
- kinship, defined 411
- knowledge, defined 68
- Kohlberg, Lawrence 108–109, 127
- Kohn, Melvin 461
- Korean War 125
- Krisberg, Barry 312
- Ku Klux Klan 92, 175, 597
- labeling tradition 323–325
- labor force and stratification 341–342
- Lake, Howie, II 315
- language, defined 69–71
- language development 110
- large-scale tasks and bureaucracy 270–271
- latent function 46, 63, 115
- Latin Americans 185–186, 196, 397
- law and order stage 112
- laws, defined 72
- leadership 266–267, 269
- legal-rational authority 410
- legitimate power 377–378
- Lenin, V. I. 403
- Lenski, Gerhard 51, 52, 493
- LGBTQ+ (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender) persons 197, 252–254, 412, 563
- Liazos, Alexander 326
- liberal Islam 504–505
- liberals, defined 391
- liberal welfare states 389–390
- Liebow, Elliot 322
- lifecycle roles 123

- life expectancy 436, 533, 536
- life imprisonment 297
- lifelong careers 270
- linear behavior 9
- linguistic relativity debate 70–71
- loans by banks 364
- lobbyists 396–397
- lone minority in bureaucracy 282–283
- looking-glass self 57–58, 105, 128, 225
- Los Angeles Times* office bombing (1910) 564
- Lovejoy, E. 495
- lower class 148, 320–321, 425
- lower-income taxpayers 382
- lower-middle class 148
- lower-quality teaching 470–471
- lower-upper class 147–148
- low wages 157–158

- macrosociology 44–47, **50**, 60–64, **60**
- Madoff, Bernie 293
- Mahayana 482
- majority groups 172, 199
- male dominance/power 217–218, 243, 242–243, 254
- male gender roles 215
- Malcolm X 479, 497
- Malinowski, Bronislaw 78
- Malthusian theory 539–540
- managerial staff 270
- manifest functions 46, 63, 114
- mansplaining 251
- manufacturing jobs 340
- maquiladoras*, employment in 360
- marijuana criminalization 295
- Marijuana Tax Act (1937) 295
- marital sex 424
- market crash fears 367
- marriage: changing patterns of 427–434, **429**; choices 123–124; cohabitation and 429–430; courtship 415–416; defined 411–416, **410**; delayed marriage/singlehood **429**, 429–433; disruption/divorce 434–440, **435**; exogamy vs. endogamy 413–414; extended and nuclear 411; gay and lesbian couples 430–433; inheritance/descent patterns 420; introduction to 411; marriage patterns 412–413; mate selection 413–414; patterns within 417; power and authority within 417–420; remarriage 439–440; residency patterns 417, 420; romantic love 414–415; same-sex marriage 430, 433, 496, 498; spousal differences 414; summary of 445; unmarried urbanites 563; unrealistic expectations 437; *see also* divorce
- marriage penalty 382
- Martin, Trayvon 416, 596
- Marxist population theory 540
- Marx, Karl (Marxism): bureaucracy and 272; communism 348–350, **349**; conflict of interest and capitalism 160; overview of 11–13, 49; postmodernism and 343; racism 183; reserve army of the unemployed 362; social change theory 604, 605; social class, defined 142; social structure and culture 82; stratification 166, 168; wealth and power 379
- mass behavior: as collective behavior 571, 592; mass hysteria 572, 574; rumors 571; urban legends 572
- mass education: functionalist perspective on 447–450; origins of 447; in United States 447; *see also* education
- masses, defined 565
- mass hysteria 572, 574
- mass production 283
- mass society 87–90
- master race concept 173
- master statuses 74, 254
- material culture 68
- mate selection 413
- matriarchy 417
- matrilineal system 420
- matrilocality 419
- Matthews, Rick 309
- McCain, John 199
- McClelland, David 401
- McDonald, Laquan 314
- Mead, George Herbert 16, 58, 58–60
- Mead, Margaret 217, 239, 329
- means of production 16
- means tested benefits 425
- Mears, Ashley 372–373
- media importance in socialization 140–142
- media influence on gender roles 248–249
- Medicaid 387, 388, 389, 527
- medical experimentation crime 309
- medical institution: ability to pay 526–527; nurses 525, 525–526; patients 526; physicians 524–525; roles 524–526; stratification in 524–526
- medicalization: limits 523–524; nondisease conditions 524; reasons for 523
- medically indigent 527
- medicine 510; growth of **522**
- megalopolis 555
- Meier, Meagan 607
- Meir, Golda 218
- Menendez, Nadine 320–321
- Menendez, Robert 320–321
- men's contributions in families 428
- mental disorders 519–520
- mental health 518–519
- mental illness 316
- mercantilism 389
- meritocratic criteria 271
- meritocracy 448–449
- Merton, Robert 16, 45, 47, 75, **177**, 317–311, 321
- meteorology analogy 7
- metropolitan statistical area (MSA) 583
- Mexican Americans: as colonized minorities 187, 188; cultural assimilation 93; racism against 173–174; slavery and 195; Mexico's Maquiladora program 380
- microsociology 44, 53–60, **60**
- middle class 425
- middle manager roles in bureaucracy 281–282
- migration 534, 534
- Millennial generation 253
- Miller, Walter B. 320
- Million Man March 568
- Mills, C. Wright 9, 16, 48, 379, 389
- Mind, Self, and Society* (Mead) 16

- minimum wage 155, 157–158
- minority groups: current status of 190–194; discrimination against 177, 193; racial/ethnic relations 173, 186–194, **187, 186**
- mixed economies 350
- mobilizing congregations 498
- mobs 569
- modeling behavior 119
- moderates, defined 393
- modern capitalism 492
- modern economic systems: capitalism 344–347, 351–352; changing scale of 354–362, **355**; communism 348–350, **349**; concentration consequences 356–358; conflict perspective 361–362; corporate capitalism 354–356, **355**; free trade vs. protectionism 386–361; functionalist perspective 362; globalization consequences 358–359; interlocking directorates 356–358; mixed economies 350; multinational corporations 358; overview of **349, 350**; social consequences of 350–354; socialism 347–348; unemployment cycles 361–362
- modernization: cancer, epidemiology of 513–514; health benefits of 511–512
- modernization theories 401–402, 405–406, 606–609
- Modern Monetary Theory (MMT) 391–393
- Moffitt, Robert 387
- Molotch, Harvey 590
- monarchies 386
- monogamy 413, 445
- monopolies 352, 355
- moral crusades 295
- moral development stages 115
- morality 533, 533–534; constraint 111; cooperation 111–112
- moral reasoning/behavior 111–114
- Moses, Bob 456–457
- Muhammad 484–485
- multiculturalism 92–94, 183
- multinational corporations 358, 380
- multiple-nuclei pattern 577
- Murdock, George Peter 79, **80**
- Murray, Charles 387
- Muslim Americans 194–196, **197, 198**
- Muslim women's rights 248–249

- Nader, Ralph 97, 381
- National Academy of Sciences 29, 201, 207
- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 467
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) 16, 185, 192, 381
- National Commission on Excellence in Education 467
- National Education Association (NEA) 381
- national health insurance 528–529; cost of care 529–530, **531**
- national health service 530
- National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey 426
- National Labor Relations Act (1935) 382–383
- National Organization for Women (NOW) 381
- National Rifle Association (NRA) 397
- National Security Agency (NSA) 609
- Nation of Islam 598
- Nation-state weakness 361

- Native Americans: as colonized minorities 186, 189; cultural assimilation 94; current status of 190–191; gender roles 217; segregation 189
- natural experiments 31
- natural science 5
- nature vs. nurture 103
- Navajo (Diné) tribe 186
- Nazism (Nazi Germany) 82, 386
- need satisfaction stage 112
- negotiated order 280
- Niebuhr, H. R. 489
- Neo-Nazi organizations 92, 597
- New Deal 134, 385
- new feminism 246
- Nietzsche, Friedrich 344
- Nixon, Richard 267, 310, 378, 392
- no-fault divorce law 437
- nomadic societies 337
- nonmarital sex 422–423
- nonmaterial culture 68
- nonstandard employment 235
- nonverbal communication 567
- nonworking poor 154, 168
- normalization of deviance 275–276
- norm of maximization 335, 351, 368, 370
- norms and social roles 102
- norms of science 5
- North American culture 72
- North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) 360, 361, 380
- nuclear families 411
- nuclear materials crime 310
- nuclear weapons 339
- nurse practitioner 525, 525–526
- nurturance process 120

- Obama, Barack 391–392: Affordable Care Act 159, 528, 530; African American support for 568; celebrity status of 97; economic stimulus package 568; election of 191, 378; government spending increases 394; hate crimes and 197; legislation against hate crimes 433; national health insurance and 394; race relations 199; reelection of 397
- Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) 253, 432–433
- object permanence 110
- observation, in science 5
- occupational prestige 145–146
- occupational segregation 235
- occupy movements 568
- Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement 568, 597
- Ohlin, Lloyd 319
- Oklahoma City bombing (1995) 564
- oligopolistic economy (oligopoly) 354, 357
- O'Malley, Martin 596
- one-way communication 119
- online dating 418–419
- open stratification system 137–138, 166
- operational definitions 27
- organizational culture 280
- organizational democracy 286–288
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 131, 149

- organization phase of social movements 602
- organizations 263–264
- organized crime 307–308
- organized skepticism 5
- outgroups 261
- out-of-wedlock births 155–156, 440
- outsourcing 283, 310
- overconforming to rules 318
- overlapping cleavages 91
- overurbanization 556, 557
- overwork inequality 234
- ozone depletion 361

- panics 570
- Pantaleo, Daniel 314
- parenting 124
- Park, Robert 59
- Park, Robert E. 15
- Parkinson's law 277
- Parsons, Talcott 16, 17, 45, 222, 240, 280, 326, 327, 448, 477, 483, 510, 511
- partial entrapment 570
- participant observation 35–36
- part-time employment 284
- patriarchy 417
- patrilineal system 420
- patrilocality 417
- patriot movements 196
- Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) 158
- peer importance in socialization 117
- peer influence on gender roles 224
- peer relations 450
- Pentecostal movement 598
- People's Home imagery 390
- perceived threat 570
- permanent singlehood 429, 429
- Persian Gulf War 404, 573
- personal cults 598
- personal interview research 33
- personality need 175
- personal outlook 517–518
- perspectives in sociology: conflict perspective 48–49, 51; consensus/cooperation 46–47; cooperation perspective 46–47, 51; culture and social structure 78–85, **80**, **83**; dramaturgical perspective 59–60; ethnomethodology 54–57; exchange theory 62–63; function, defined 45–46; functionalist perspective 44, 78–79; interpretation of situations/messages 54; introduction to 44; looking-glass self 57–58; macrosociology 44–53, **60**, **60**–64, **50**; microsociology 44, 53–64, **50**; overview of 44; perspective, defined 44; self-fulfilling prophecy 57–58; social construction of reality 54–58; social roles 58; summary of 64–65; symbolic-interactionists 58–59; synthesis of 51, 60–64; *see also* sociology
- Petit bourgeoisie* 142, 144
- Pew Research Center 252–253, 419
- physical environment 79, 86
- Piaget, Jean 103, 108, 109, 111–112
- Pinochet, Augusto 405
- placebo 522
- play stage 104–105
- pluralism 183
- pluralistic ignorance 562
- pluralist model of power 379
- POET complex 575
- Pokémon Go!* (app game) 335, 368
- Polanyi, Karl 368, 369–371, 374
- political action committees (PACs) 356, 379, 381, 396, 498
- political assassins 564
- political crime 308–311
- political freedom in Czechoslovakia 246
- political ideology: apathetic voter 399; introduction to 393–395, 395; lobbyists 396–397; special interest groups 396–397; summary of 406–407; two party system 395–396; voting patterns 397–400
- political-process theory 600
- politics: of affirmative action 208–209; in America 494–495; of development 404–406; political science studies 10; stratification and 132; women in politics 228, 227
- polyandry 413
- polygamy 413
- polygyny 413
- Ponzi scheme 293, 306–307
- Pope, L. 489
- population declines 586–587
- population density in urban life 561–562
- population distribution 575, 577
- population explosion 536
- population growth 535–536; current and projected population **542**; demographic transition 537–538; exponential growth 536–537; future 542; history 536; summary 542–544
- population projections 535
- postconventional level 113
- postindustrial economies: labor force and stratification 341–342; postmodernism 343–344; professionalization 342; science and education 342–343; shift to 341–344; urbanization and 583–586
- postmodernism 55, 343–345
- postpartum sex taboo 45, 46
- poverty: causes of 153–159, **154**; consequences of 159–160; current situation 150–151, **150**; defined 149; demographics of 151–153, **152**, **153**; extreme poverty 164; family structure and 442–444, **443**; government policy on poverty 158–159; introduction to 149; low wages 157–158; one-parent families and 440–442, **441**, **442**; out-of-wedlock births 155–156; relative vs. absolute 149; tax 583; unemployment and 156–157; welfare and 387; work experience 154–155
- power 513; authority and 377–378; beneficiaries of 381–382; defined 377; differences 382–383; distribution of 380–383; exchange theory and 62–63; global welfare 389–392; government by the wealthy 381; legitimate power 377–378; in marriages 417; measurement of 379–380; in modern societies 377–379; other sources of 378; overview 383; the state 383–385; summary of 406–407; unequal power 62; wealth and income 379; welfare reform 386–389
- Power Elite, The* (Mills) 381
- power elite model 379, 381, 383
- precipitating incident 566
- preconventional level 112
- predictable behavior 6

- prediction, in science 5
- prejudice as racism 173–174
- prejudice vs. discrimination 177–178, **177**
- premarital childbearing 443, 444
- premarital sex 422, 423, 429, 500
- preoperational stage 110
- primary deviance 324
- primary groups 259, 280, 290, 337, 560
- primary sector 335
- primary socialization 122
- primitive communism 348
- privatization 283, 284, 350
- professionalization 281, 342
- professionals in bureaucracy 280–281
- profiling technique 316–317
- prohibition 308, 414
- projection process 176
- proletariat 13
- prostitution 305, 308
- Protestantism 351, 476, 492
- Protestant ethic 491–492
- Protestantism 491–493
- Protestant work ethic 402
- protest crowds 568
- protesters as representative notion 567
- protest movements 597
- psychological theory of deviant behavior 177
- psychology and social science 10
- psychosocial stages 108
- psychological support 477–479
- psychosomatic illnesses 238
- public shaming 607, 608
- Puerto Ricans 93, 179, 186, 187, 188, 210, 563
- Pulse nightclub shooting 301
- punishment avoidance stage 112
- punishment process 120
- Putin, Vladimir 347

- qualitative interviewing 35
- qualitative research methods 30
- quality control circle (QC circle) 285, 288, 289
- quantitative research methods 30
- quasi-primary groups 585
- questionnaires 32
- Qur'an (Koran) 485, 504

- race 450–452, 514–515
- racial caste system 138, 182, 183–185
- racial discrimination: banning of 605; as common 579, 605;
 - crime levels and 318–319; economic disadvantages and 202; forms of 210; labor contracts and 180; minority groups status 190–194; prejudiced attitudes and 177; redlining 580; unrest caused by 51; welfare reform and 388; *see also* racism
- racial/ethnic relations: affirmative action 204–210; assimilation in Latin America 185; class mobility and 140–141; class vs. 202–204; conflict perspective 178–183; deviance and crime 311–312; exploitation of intergroup inequality 187–189; functionalist perspective 182–183; hate crimes 196–197, **197**, **198**; impact on divorce 434; intermediate status groups 194–197, **194**, **197**, **198**; international perspective 183–185; introduction to 171; job/career changes 202–204; majority groups 172, 199; minority groups 172–173, 186–194, **186**, **187**; one-parent families and 440–444, **441**, **442**; prejudice and 115; racism 173–175; social-psychological theories 175–177; social-structural theories 178–183; societal changes 200–201; summary 210; theories/causes 175–183, **177**; in United States 185, 199–210
- racial groups 171–173, 178, 179, 181, 185
- racial profiling 203, 313–315, 325, 394
- racial segregation 192, **578**, 579–581
- racial steering 174, 579–580
- racism: defined 173; historical explanations 183; ideological racism 173; individual discrimination 174; institutional discrimination 174–175; overview 173–175; prejudice as 173–174; symbolic racism 177; *see also* racial discrimination
- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. 79
- Radical Equations: The Algebra Project* (Moses) 456–457
- random-dialing computer programs 32
- randomly assigned groups 31
- Rational Choice theory 369
- rationalization 13, 270, 492
- rationalizing maximizers 369
- reactivity, in social sciences 8
- reading tables 37
- Reagan Revolution 480
- Reagan, Ronald: affirmative action 208–209; *Challenger* space shuttle disaster 275; election of 96; government poverty programs 158; Iran-Contra case 309; leadership of 267
- real culture 94
- real-life problems and sociology 17–21
- rebellion 318
- reciprocity principle 370
- redistribution principle 370
- redlining 580–581
- reform movements 597
- regressive movements 597–598
- reincarnation 481–482
- relative-deprivation theory 599
- relative poverty 149
- reliability, defined 27
- religion: Buddhism 482; Christianity 484; churches 488–489;
 - conflict analysis 479–480; Confucianism 482–483; cults 491; definition 477; denominations 489–490, **490**; dysfunctions of 479; and economy 491–493; functionalist analysis 476–479; fundamentalism and 495–499; Hinduism 481–482; identity and psychological support 477–479; and inequality 480; importance in socialization 116–117; institutionalized sects 491; institutions **478**; Islam 484–487, **486**; Judaism 483–484; nineteenth century 494–495; and politics in America 494–495; preferences in United States 485; right 495–499; sects 488–489; social change 479; social control 477; social solidarity 476–477; twentieth century 495; in United States 487–488, **488**; Weber's theory 492–493
- The Religious Factor* (Lenski) 493
- religious movements 598
- religious training from families 421
- remarriage 439–440

- representational approach power 380
- representative democracy 386
- Republicans, defined 395
- research: data sources in 36–37; on human behavior 8; personal
 - interview research 33; quantitative and qualitative 30, 37; sampling research 34; in science 4–5; social research on divorce 23; social theory and 23–26, 25; sociology 30; survey research 31–34; theory and 25
- reserve army of the unemployed 362
- residency patterns 417, 419–420
- Reskin, Barbara 215, 235, 237, 242, 273
- resocialization in total institutions 124–125
- resource-deprivation theory 599
- resources, defined 85
- retreatism 318
- reverse discrimination 204–205
- revolution, defined 597
- reward process 120
- Rice, Tamir 314
- right-wing militia movement 196
- riots 570
- risky shift 262
- ritualism 277, 318
- roaring 20s era 384
- robot economy 13
- Roe v. Wade* 409, 434, 496
- role changes and socialization 124
- role inequality within families 424
- role models 104
- roles: of conflict 49; conflict and strain 75; inequality within families 424; life-cycle roles 123–124; middle manager roles 281–282; secretarial roles 281; social roles 58; in social status 74, 76; social structure and 75; workplace roles 280; *see also* gender roles
- romantic love 414–416
- Romney, Mitt 220, 397, 398, 528
- Roosevelt, Franklin Delano 32, 134, 267, 365, 384, 385
- rule making 294–296
- rumors 571–572
- rural vs. urban life 557–558
- Russian government hackers 609
- Russian Revolution (1917) 404
- Ryan, George 308

- Salamoni, Blane 315
- same-sex marriage 252, 253, 411, 430–433, 498, 598
- sampling research 34
- Sanders, Bernie 97, 196, 196, 394, 433, 596
- Sandinista government, Nicaragua 405
- Sandy Hook shooting 301
- Savelsberg, Joachim 293
- Santos, George 320
- savings-and-loan industry fraud 307
- Scandinavian workplace innovations 286–288
- scapegoats 176
- scarce resources 48
- school importance in socialization 116
- school influence on gender roles 221–222, 223
- schools: and job status 461–462; orientation 461–462; unequal funding of 453; and unequal mobility 452–453
- science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) 236–237
- science and sociology 3, 4–5
- science in postindustrial economies 342–343
- scientific medicine 521; blends of 521
- Scott, Walter 314
- secondary deviance 324
- secondary groups 259, 260, 290, 450, 560
- secondary markets 364
- secondary sector 336
- Second Shift, The* (Hochschild) 428, 431–432
- second shift role 229
- secretarial roles in bureaucracy 281
- sectoral model 577
- sects 488–489, 490
- security organization 264
- segregation: of African Americans 184–185, 189–190; informal segregation 192; occupational segregation 236–237; racial segregation 578, 579–582; social segregation 577
- Shi'ite Muslims 486
- selective exposure 119
- self-determination 286
- self-esteem 106
- self-fulfilling prophecy 57–58, 324–325, 331, 454
- self-fulfillment 503
- self-identity 104
- self-image 105
- self-interest conflicts 48, 49
- self-perpetuation in bureaucracy 276
- self-regulating market 371
- self-sacrificial behavior 368, 370
- semiautomatic military-style weapons 301
- sensate culture 605
- sensorimotor stage 110
- September 11attacks: minority harassment after 197; poverty levels and 151; recession following 284; response to 88; rumors following 571
- serial monogamy 413
- Sewell, William 85–86, 453, 457
- sex and gender roles *see* gender roles
- sex discrimination 12, 217, 243
- “Sex in America” survey 423
- sexism 214
- sex stereotyping 224
- sexting 608
- sexual assault 248–249
- sexual behavior and families 422–423
- sexual behavior and media influence 118–119
- sexual harassment 237–239, 245
- sexual inequality 231–237, 231, 232
- sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) 422, 509
- sexual orientation 252–254
- sexual pay discrimination 235
- sexual revolutions 16, 422, 423
- shared knowledge and beliefs 68
- shared values 71–72
- Sharkey, Patrick 304
- sickness 516–517
- sick role 510–511; criticisms of 511
- significant others 104
- Simmel, Georg 558, 560, 561, 564, 592

- Simpson, O. J. 194
- Singh, J. A. L. 101
- singlehood 124, 429, 429
- single-parent families: demographics on 409; out-of-wedlock births 155–156; overview of 440–444, **441**, **442**, **443**
- Sioux (Lakota) tribe 187
- Slager, Michael 314
- slavery 173, 195
- smallpox-spreading blankets 195
- Smith, Adam 13, 113, 351, 369–371, 389, 608
- Snowden, Edward 609
- social activism 16
- social anthropology 78
- social-area analysis 577, **578**, 579
- social change 479: consequences of 606–607; cyber life 607–609; defined 603; equilibrium state and 604–605; escalation of 606; evolutionary vs. cyclical 605–606, **606**; functionalist vs. conflict theories 604–605; overview of 603–609, **606**; summary of 609–610; theories of 604–606, **606**
- social channeling 127
- social class 460–461: class consciousness 147–149, **146**; composite definition of 143; contradictory class locations 143–144, **145**; defined 142–143; Marxian definition of 142–143; occupational prestige 145, 146; racial/ethnic relations 202–204; subjective definition of 144–145
- social construction of reality 54–58
- social construct of race 171
- social contracts 113
- social control 296–297, 477, 566
- social-democratic parties 354
- social democratic welfare states 390–391
- social dynamics 11, 13
- social environment 79
- social equality 339
- social experiments 31
- social groups 10, 257
- social inequality 403, 514–516
- social institutions 77–78, **77**, 114
- Social Justice* (newspaper) 495
- socialism: bureaucracy of 286–287; international competition and 357; lessening viability of 352–354; market and productivity 352; overview 347–348
- socialization 449–450: in adulthood 122–126; agents of 114–122; becoming human through 102; cognitive development theories 108–114, **109**; conflicting messages 120–122; conflict perspective 126–127; by families 421–422; functionalist perspective 126; gender roles 218–225, **223**; interactionist theories of 103–106; introduction to 101–102; lifecycle roles 123–124; nature vs. nurture 103; overview of theories 114; process of 120, 125; resocialization in total institutions 124–126; role changes 124; social interaction and 107–108; summary of 127–128; theories of 103–114, **109**
- social learning 176
- social movements: Black Lives Matter 204, 315, 568, 596–597; causes of 598–600; communal movements 598; decline of 603; emergence of 602; environmental movements 597; feminist movement 597; gay rights movement 254, 597; institutionalization of 602; introduction to 596; life course of 601–603; necessary conditions for 600–601; organization phase of 602–603; overview of 596–597; personal cults 598; political-process theory 600; protest movements 597; regressive movements 597–598; relative-deprivation theory 599; religious movements 598; resource-deprivation theory 599; social change 603–609, **606**; types of 597–598; *see also* civil rights movement
- social networks 264–265
- social norms 72–73
- social prestige and stratification 133
- social-psychological theories of race relations 175–177
- social psychology 16
- social roles 58
- social science: Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study 28–29; data sources in research 36–37; experiments 30–31; field observation 34–36; measuring variables 26–29; objective approach to 8–9; reading tables 37; sociology and 10; sociology as 5–10; summary of 38; survey research 31–34; values and 24–25
- social sciences, defined 3
- social security administration 271
- social segregation 577
- social solidarity 476–477
- social statics 11
- social status 73–74, **74**
- social structure 73–78, **74**, **77**, 83, 427
- social theory and research 23–26, 25
- social theory of feminism 247
- societal explanations of deviant behavior 317–326, **318**
- societal function 46
- societal structure, defined 68
- socioeconomic inequality 341
- socioeconomic mobility 137–142
- socioeconomic status 142
- sociological imagination 9–10, 12
- sociological perspective 17
- sociology: activism and 16–17; applied sociology 18; cause and effect 23; characteristics of 3; common sense and 3, 4; defined 3; diversity in sociological perspective 17; early sociologists 11–15; emergence and development of 11–15; other social sciences and 10; overview 10; personal journey to 19–20; as problem-solving tool 21; real-life problems and 17–21; research methods 28–29; as science 4–5; as social science 5–9; social theory and research 23–26, 25; summary of 21–22; symbolic-interactionism 16; theories 23–26, 25; U.S. development of 15; as value neutral 16; values 23–24; view of deviance and crime 294–299; *see also* perspectives in sociology
- solidarity 14, 46
- Sorokin, Pitirim 605
- Soros, George 381
- South African caste system 138, 184–185
- South American country 72
- Southern Belle 115
- Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) 479
- Soviet Union: bureaucracy 274; gender role 216–217; religious conflicts in 474; socialism 347–348; and U.S. 339
- Spanish-American War 185, 188
- special interest groups 395–396
- speculation 365
- Spencer, Herbert 45
- Spend, then Tax and Borrow (STAB) model 391–393

- spirituality values 605
- split labor-market theory 179–180
- sports injuries and socialization 121
- spousal differences 414
- spouse abuse 115
- Stampp, K. 480
- standard of living increases 13, 338–339
- State 383–385
- state-corporate crime 310
- state-sponsored religion 490
- status, defined 73, 74
- status quo 48
- status transferal 420–421
- Steele, Claude 459
- stereotypes 174, 220–221, 222–224
- stereotype threat 206, 459
- Sterling, Alton 314
- Strangers in Their Own Land* (Hochschild) 399–400
- stratification: conflict perspective 160–161, 163; defined 132–133; dimensions of 132; dysfunctions of inequality 162, 163–165; estate system 139; exchange mobility 140; functionalist perspective 160, 163; global stratification 164–167; functionalist and conflict perspectives 160; income distribution 133–136, 134; international comparisons of mobility 141–142; introduction to 131–132; in medical institution 524–526; overview of 76–77; politics and 132; poverty in U.S. 149–160, 150, 152, 153, 154; social class in U.S. 142–149, 144, 146; social prestige and 133; socioeconomic mobility 137–142; summary of 166, 167; synthesis of 162, 163–165; wealth distribution 136–137, 135, 136, 137
- streaking behavior 571
- Streeck, Wolfgang 335
- street crime 299–305, 301, 302, 311
- stress and socialization 121
- strikebreakers 149, 339
- Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) 165
- structural conduciveness 566
- structural hole 265
- structural mobility 138
- structural variation 79
- subculture: computer geek subculture 89; dysfunctions in 90; explanations of deviance and crime 319–323; function of 90; Hip-Hop subculture 87, 89; jargon subculture 87, 89; overview of 87–90; of violence 321–322
- subjective definition of social class 144–145
- subordinate group 173
- subprime loans 580, 581
- subsistence levels 337
- substantive-rationality 287
- suburbanites 563
- suburbs/suburbanization 583–586, 583
- suicide 26
- Sun Belt 555
- Sunni Muslims 486, 487
- super-ego, defined 107
- surplus 337
- surrogate mothers 434
- survey questions 33–34
- survey research 31–32, 33
- Sutherland, Edwin 305, 319
- Swann, C. 497
- Swedish culture 79
- symbolic interaction 454–460
- symbolic-interactionist perspective 44, 53–60, 63, 65, 103, 279, 510, 542
- symbolic racism 177
- symbols, defined 69
- Syria bombings 46
- tabula rasa*, defined 104
- Taliban regime 248
- Tax and Borrow, then Spend (TABS) model 391–393
- tax reform 382
- teacher expectations: effect of 454; schoolwide level 454–455
- Tea Party movement 394, 568
- technological environment 79
- technological inventions 338
- technology: social media 264; social movements and 599; STEM fields 236–237; urbanization 552–553, 552, 553
- telephone interviews 32–33
- televangelism 496–497
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) 387
- terrorism 196, 301, 564; Internet 610
- tertiary sector 336
- Thatcher, Margaret 218
- theft rates 300
- theory: defined 5; explanation vs. prediction 25; field observation 34–35; generation of 26; hypothesis 25–26, 38; research and 25; in social research 23–26, 25; values vs. 24–25
- Third World countries 156–157, 217, 358; dependency theories 402; industrial economics 339; modernization theories 401–402; politics of development 401–406; uneven development 401; urbanization in 556–557; world-system theory 403–406
- Thirteenth Amendment 189
- Thomas, Clarence 237
- Thomas, W. I. 55
- Thomas theorem 55
- Tiananmen Square uprising 348, 405
- tolerance in urban life 563–564
- total fertility rate 532–533
- total institutions 124–126
- Touraine, Alain 340
- tracking 455, 457–458, 458
- traditional authority 377
- traditional medicine 520–521; blends of 521; working of 522–523
- Transcendental Meditation (TM) 87, 503, 504, 574
- transgender persons 259
- transsexual persons 252
- trapped urbanites 563
- Triad, defined 258
- Trilateral Commission 380
- triple jeopardy 226
- true agriculture 337
- Trump, Donald 185, 209, 310, 311, 321: ACA repeal attempt 159; border wall promise 199; election of 96–98; lack of common agenda 381; loss of popular vote 284, 395, 398; moderate Republicans against 394; opposition to affirmative action 209; racism by 197; voter demographics 398

- Truskoski, Elaine 281
 Truth, Sojourner 495
 Tumin, Melvin 161
 Twitter 265
 two-party system 395
- underclass 202
 undocumented immigrants 398
 unemployment: among minority groups 190; deindustrialization 156–157; modern economic systems 361–362; poverty and 156–157; recent trends 156; reserve army of the unemployed 362
 unequal mobility 452–453
 unequal power 62
 uneven development of cities 588–591
 unhappy marriages 438–439
 union representation, declines 284
 United States (U.S.): black church in 496–497; churches in 493–494; development of sociology 15–16; mass education in 447; politics 494–495; poverty in 149–160, **150**, **152**, **153**; quality of education 467–471, **468**; racial caste system 138, 182, 183–185; racial/ethnic relations 188, 199–210; religion in 487–488, **488**, 494–495; same-sex marriage **498**; sex and gender roles 217–216; social class in 142–149, **144**, **146**; statistics on divorce 434–436, **435**; urbanization 554–556, **554**; workplace change in 288–289
 universal basic income (UBI) 350
 universal benefits 390
 universal ethical principles 113
 universalism 270
 universal social tasks 80–81
 unmarried urbanites 563
 unobtrusive observation 36
 upper-class voters 397, 398
 upper-income taxpayers 382
 upper-middle class 147–148
 urban hierarchy 556
 urbanization (urban society): beginnings of 84; central cities 586–588; collective behavior 565–575, **568**; demographic transition 553–554, **553**; economics of growth 554–555; fastest growing metropolitan areas 558–560; fiscal crisis and 588; functional specialization 555–556; human ecology 575–577, **576**; introduction to 11, 549; overview of 551; population declines 586–587; population distribution 575, **577**; in postindustrial economies 583–591; preindustrial city 551; racial segregation 189, **578**, 579–581; relative deprivation of blacks 602; rise of cities 551; social-area analysis 577–582, **578**; social change and 552–553, **552**; structure of 575–582; suburbs/suburbanization 582–586, **585**; summary of 591–593; technology and industrialization 552–554; in third world 556–557; uneven development 588–591; urban life 557–565; urban underclass 587; in U.S. 554–556, **554**
- Urban League 381
 urban legends 572
 urban life: bystander effect 562; community and 561; interpersonal relationships 561; overview of 557–565; population density/crowding 561–562; rural life vs. 557–558; social conflict and 564–565; unmarried urbanites 563; variations in experiences 563; Wirth, Louis, theory on 558–560
 urban poverty 17
 urban underclass 587–588
 U.S. Census 37
 U.S. Conference of Mayors 388
 U.S. Department of Labor 208
 U.S. sociology 15–17
 U.S. Supreme Court 209, 323, 432, **498**
- validity and reliability 27–28
 value conflicts 49
 value-rationality 287
 values in social research 23–24
 Valujet crash 257, 276, 307
 Van Dyke, Jason 314
 variables: control variables 29–30; correlation 28–29; defined 26; dependent variables 27; independent variables 26–27; measuring in social science 26–28; operational definitions 27; validity and reliability 27–28
 Vaughan, Diane 18, 20, 275, 310
 very important people (VIPs) 372
 Veterans Administration (VA) 584
 veto groups 379
 victimless crimes 305
 Vietnam War 16, 96, 122, 127, 378, 495
 violence: conflict vs. 49; courtship violence 426–427; crime rates 562; within families 424–427; female criminality 328; media influence 118; protesting against police violence 43; subculture of 321–322
 Violence Against Women act (1994) 305
 Virginia Tech shooting 301
 voice, defined 364
 voting patterns of political groups 397–399
 Voting Rights Act (1965) 456
- wage gap 591, 231, **231**, 232, **232**
 wage levels 284–285, 357
 wage penalty 233
 Wallerstein, Immanuel 164, 403
 Ward, Lester 15
 Warner, W. Lloyd 143
 War on Drugs 163, 293, 295, 296, 312, 327
 War on Poverty 16, 150, 151
 wars/revolutions 339
 Watergate burglary 310
 wealth: defined 132; distribution of 133–137, **134**, 136, **136**, **137**; power and 379
 Weaver, Randy 309
 Weber, Max 488, 491: bases of authority 287; bureaucracy and 270–271, 290; dominion concept 287; norm of maximization 351; overview of 11, 12, 51, 52; postmodernism and 344; power, defined 377; Protestant work ethic 402; social class and 422; the state 383–386; theory 492–493; wealth and power 379
 Weld, T. 495
 welfare dependency 154, 168
 welfare reform 246, 386–389
 welfare states: corporatist-statist welfare states 390; defined 383; development of 385; evaluation of 391; global welfare 389–391; liberal welfare states 389–390; social democratic welfare states 391

- Wells, H. G. 574
- white supremacists 179, 597
- whistleblowers 287
- white Americans 94, 183, 205, 531, 580
- white-collar crime 305–307, 310
- white-collar occupations 144
- white ethnic Americans 194–198, 197, 198
- Whyte, William F. 35
- Wilson, J. 493
- Wilson, William Julius 17, 201, 202, 203, 387
- Wirth, Louis 558, 559–561
- women: in business 228; Christian women's rights 248, 249; effect of divorce 437–438; female criminality 329; female-householder families 155–156, 440, **441**, **442**; female managers 273; independence of 436–437; Jewish women's rights 248; Muslim women's rights 248; in politics 226–228, 227; *see also* feminism; gender inequality; gender roles
- women's movement 250
- worker cooperatives 286–287
- worker-owned industries 353
- work experience of poor 154–155
- working class 141, 144–145, 148
- working poor 151
- work organization trends: alternatives to bureaucracy 290; globalization and 283–289; Japanese work organization 285–286; organizational democracy 286–288; Scandinavian workplace innovations 286, 288; workplace change in U.S. 288–289
- workplace roles 280
- World Bank 164, 165
- world system theory: analysis of 405–406; critiques of 406; foreign aid 405; international loans 405; introduction to 403; overview of 164, 403–406; relationships within 403
- World Trade Center 196, 564, 571, 610
- World Trade Organization (WTO) 165, 570
- World War I 308, 422
- World War II 194–195, 303, 339, 555, 583–584
- Wright, Erik Olen 143, 144, **144**, 166, 167
- yard sale analogy 63–64
- Yeltsin, Boris 347
- Y2K computer bug scare 572, 574
- Zhang, Cui-xia 12
- Zimmerman, George 313, 314, 596
- Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG) 196