

GLOBAL
EDITION



Sociology

SIXTEENTH EDITION

John J. Macionis



Pearson



This book is offered to teachers of sociology in the hope that it will help our students understand their place in today's society and in tomorrow's world.

John J. Macionis

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Sociology

Sixteenth Edition

Global Edition

John J. Macionis

Kenyon College



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The Power of Society to guide our choices in marriage partners

The Sociological Perspective

- 1.1: Explain how the sociological perspective differs from common sense.
 - SEEING THE GENERAL IN THE PARTICULAR
 - SEEING THE STRANGE IN THE FAMILIAR
 - SEEING SOCIETY IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES
 - SEEING SOCIOLOGICALLY: MARGINALITY AND CRISIS

The Importance of a Global Perspective

- 1.2: State several reasons that a global perspective is important in today's world.

Applying the Sociological Perspective

- 1.3: Identify the advantages of sociological thinking for developing public policy, for encouraging personal growth, and for advancing in a career.
 - SOCIOLOGY AND PUBLIC POLICY
 - SOCIOLOGY AND PERSONAL GROWTH
 - CAREERS: THE "SOCIOLOGY ADVANTAGE"

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SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIOLOGY
SCIENCE AND SOCIOLOGY

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 - THE SOCIAL-CONFLICT APPROACH
 - FEMINISM AND GENDER-CONFLICT THEORY
 - RACE-CONFLICT THEORY
 - THE SYMBOLIC-INTERACTION APPROACH

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The Power of Society to guide our attitudes on social issues such as abortion

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CULTURE, NATION, AND SOCIETY
HOW MANY CULTURES?

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 - LANGUAGE
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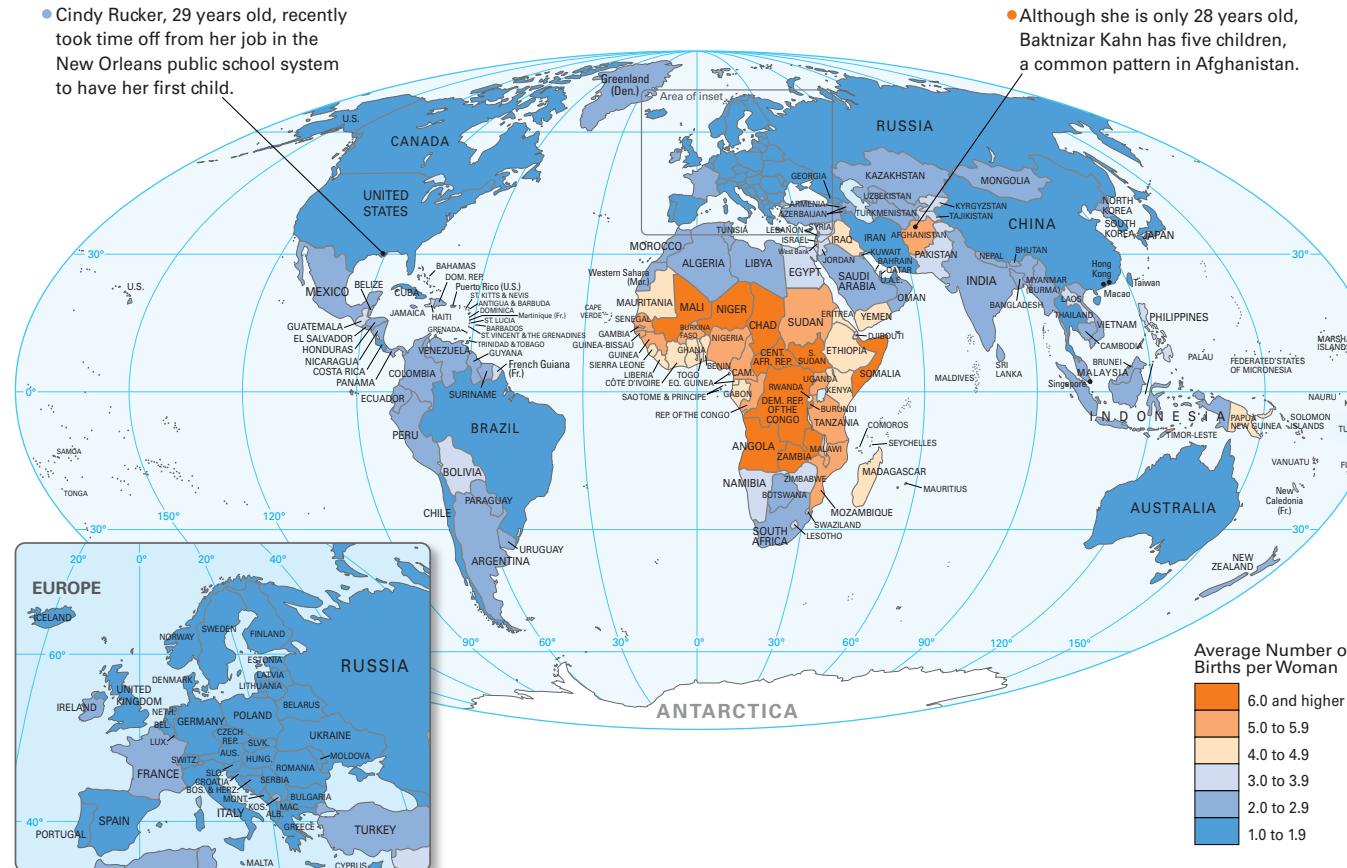
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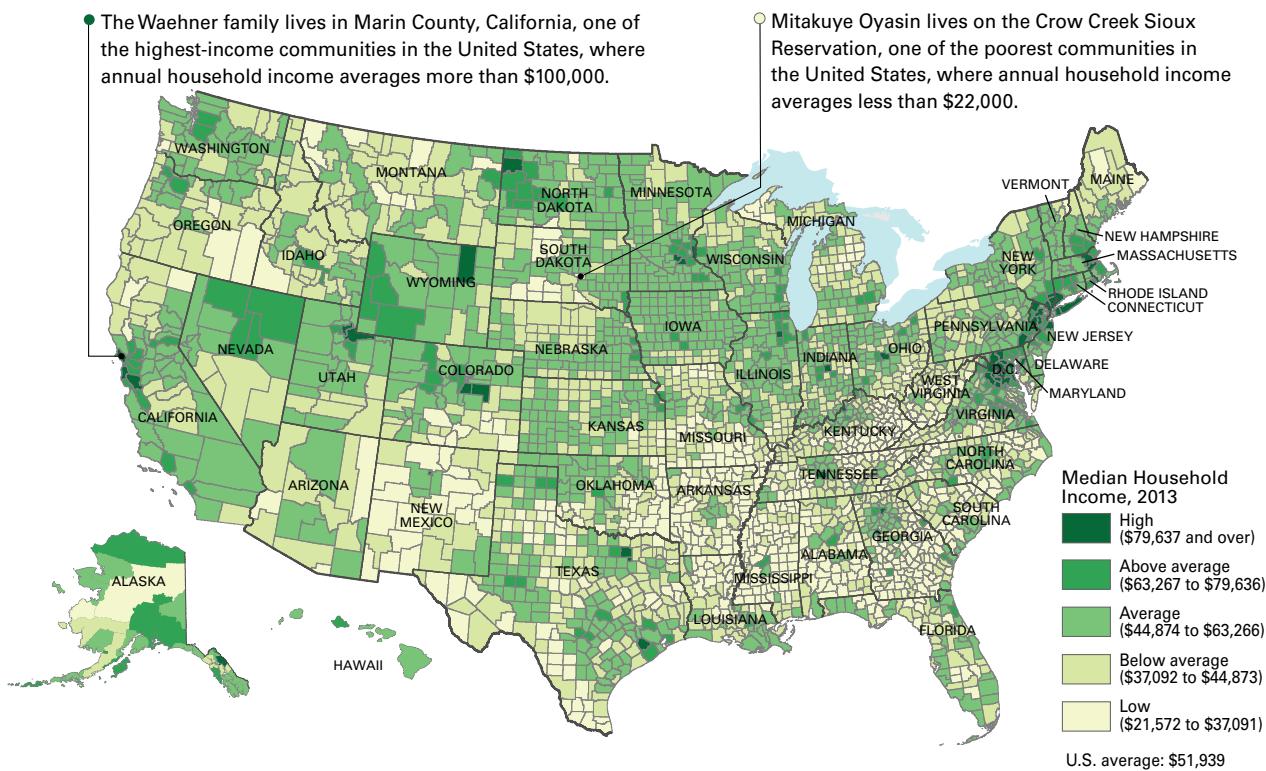
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Preface

Our world challenges us like never before. Even as the economy climbs out of recession, unemployment remains high and the economic future is uncertain here in the United States and around the world. For decades, income inequality in our society has steadily increased, just as it is increasing for the world as a whole. There is a lot of anger about how our national leaders in Washington are doing—or not doing—their jobs. Technological disasters of our own making threaten the natural environment, and patterns of extreme weather only add to the mounting evidence of global warming.

Perhaps no one should be surprised to read polls that tell us most people are anxious about their economic future, unhappy with our political system, and worried about the state of the planet. Many of us simply feel overwhelmed, as if we were up against forces we can barely understand—much less control.

That's where sociology comes in. For more than 150 years, sociologists have been working to better understand how society operates. We sociologists may not have all the answers, but we have learned quite a lot that we can share with you. A beginning course in sociology is your introduction to the fascinating and very useful study of the social world. After all, we all have a stake in understanding our world and doing all we can to improve it.

Sociology, Sixteenth Edition, provides you with comprehensive understanding of how this world works. You will find this book to be informative, engaging, and even entertaining. Before you have finished the first chapter, you will discover that sociology is not only useful—it is also a great deal of fun. *Sociology is a field of study that can change the way you see the world and open the door to many new opportunities.* What could be more exciting than that?

What's New in This Edition

Here's a quick summary of the new material found throughout *Sociology, Sixteenth Edition*.

- **Learning Objectives.** Each major section of every chapter begins with a specific Learning Objective. These Learning Objectives have been reorganized and streamlined for this new edition. All Learning Objectives are listed at the beginning of each chapter and they organize the summary at the end of each chapter.
- **Updated Power of Society figures.** If you could teach your students only one thing in the introductory course, what would it be? Probably, most instructors would an-

swer, “*to understand the power of society to shape people’s lives.*” Each chapter begins with a Power of Society figure that does exactly that—forcing students to give up some of their cultural common sense that points to the importance of “personal choice” by showing them evidence of how society shapes our major life decisions.

- A **new design** makes this edition of the text the cleanest and easiest ever to read. Also, the photo and art programs have been thoroughly reviewed and updated.
- Much more on **social media**. More than ever before, social life revolves around computer-based technology that shapes networks and social movements. The discussion of social media has been expanded and updated throughout the text.
- **More scholarship dealing with race, class, and gender.** Just as this revision focuses on patterns that apply to all of U.S. society, it also highlights dimensions of social difference. This diversity focus includes more analysis of race, class, and gender throughout the text, including new scholarship. Other dimensions of difference include transgender as well as disability issues. “Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender” boxed features highlight specific diversity issues, and “Seeing Ourselves” national maps show social patterns in terms of geography, highlighting rural-urban and regional differences.
- This revision has all the **most recent data** on income, wealth, poverty, education, employment, and other important issues. Political developments are also up-to-date, including the mid-2015 U.S. Supreme Court decision that extends legal same-sex marriage throughout the country.

Here is a brief summary of some of the material that is new, chapter by chapter:

Chapter 1: Sociology: Perspective, Theory, and Method

The updated Power of Society figure shows how race, schooling, and age guide people’s choice of marriage partners. The revised chapter highlights the latest on same-sex marriage, including the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling. Find updates on the number of children born to women in nations around the world; the number of high-income, middle-income, and low-income nations; and the changing share of minorities in major sports. As in every chapter, the photography program has been substantially revised and updated, with all captions written by the author.

Chapter 2: Sociological Investigation

The updated Power of Society figure demonstrates how race shapes young men's odds of going to college or ending up in prison. The revised chapter contains new data on economic inequality, extramarital relationships, and the share of the population that claims to be multiracial.

Chapter 3: Culture

The updated Power of Society figure contrasts high- and low-income nations in popular support for access to abortion. The discussion of cultural values has been revised and expanded. The 2015 terrorist violence in Paris is the center of an expanded discussion of dealing with cultural differences. A new global map shows the percentage of foreign-born people in countries around the world, and a new Global Snapshot shows the use of English, Spanish, and Chinese as first and second languages around the world. The revised chapter has updates on the income and wealth of the Asian American, Hispanic American, and African American communities, as well as new data on the number of languages spoken as a measure of this country's cultural diversity, the declining number of languages spoken around the world, the extent of global illiteracy, patterns of immigration, the debate over official English, the life goals for people entering college, the latest symbols used in texting language, and the share of all web pages written in English.

Chapter 4: Society

The updated Power of Society figure shows the expanding use of social networking sites over time throughout the U.S. population. The revised chapter has new facts and updates on social media, the extent of computer use, and various other measures of modernity. An increasing amount of popular culture has been incorporated into the discussions of classical theory.

Chapter 5: Socialization

The updated Power of Society figure shows that class guides use of the mass media, documenting that people without a high school diploma spend much more time watching television than people with a college degree. The revised chapter has new discussion of Osagie Obasogie's research on how blind people perceive race. Find the latest on the share of people who claim to be multiracial, time spent watching television and using smartphones, the link between television and violence, and the share of the world's children who work for income.

Chapter 6: Social Interaction in Everyday Life

The updated Power of Society figure shows how age guides the extent of networking using social media. The

discussion of reality building addresses how films expand people's awareness of the challenges of living with various disabilities. The revised chapter has updates on use of networking sites by age in the United States, the increasing scope of Facebook and Twitter around the world, the consequences of smartphone technology for everyday life, and expanded discussion of the history of humor.

Chapter 7: Groups and Organizations

The updated Power of Society figure shows how class affects organizational affiliations. The revised chapter has updates on the size and global scope of McDonald's, the increasing extent of Internet use around the world, the social effects of the expansion of Facebook as a global network, the number of political incumbents who won reelection in 2014, and the disproportionate share of managerial positions held by white males. There is expanded coverage of the steady loss of privacy in our social world.

Chapter 8: Sexuality and Society

The updated Power of Society figure tracks the trend toward the acceptance of same-sex marriage over time. There is new discussion of epigenetic theory of sexual orientation and also new discussion of the high risk of suicide among transgender people. Find updates on laws regulating marriage between first cousins, the 2015 Supreme Court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage, the latest data on the share of high school students who report having had sexual intercourse, the latest research on sexual attraction and sexual identity, the extent of rape and "acquaintance rape" across the United States, and the size of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community.

Chapter 9: Deviance

The updated Power of Society figure shows how race places some categories of the U.S. population at much higher risk of being incarcerated for a drug offense. Find the latest statistical information on the extent of legal gambling across the United States; the increasing extent of legal "medical marijuana" use; recent research on the cost of incarceration; the share of white-collar criminals who end up in jail; mining deaths as a reflection of corporate crime; and the number of serious crimes recorded for 2013. There is analysis of patterns of arrest for "person crimes" and "property crimes" by age, sex, race, and ethnicity for 2013. Attention is also given to the decreasing gender gap in crime rates. The chapter reports the number of police in the United States and the number of people in prison; it provides a statistically based exploration of the use of the death penalty and highlights recent legal changes to capital punishment laws. Finally, there is greater attention to the increasing number of people who are incarcerated in the United States.

Chapter 10: Social Stratification

The updated Power of Society figure compares two communities in Florida—one affluent and one economically struggling—and finds striking effects of class on life expectancy. The revised chapter has numerous updates on social inequality in Russia, China, and South Africa, and on the extent of economic inequality in selected nations around the world. The Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life photo essay has been refreshed.

Chapter 11: Social Class in the United States

The updated Power of Society figure shows how race and ethnicity set the odds that a child in the United States will live in poverty. The revised chapter has the latest data for all measures of economic inequality in the United States, including income and wealth, the economic assets of the richest U.S. families, and the educational achievement of various categories of the population. The chapter has the most recent trends in pay for Wall Street executives and also new data showing that the recent recession has reduced average family wealth. New data show the racial gap in home ownership, the odds of completing a four-year college degree for people at various class levels, and the extent of poverty in the United States. There is updated discussion of the American dream in an age of economic recession as well as the increasing social segregation experienced by low-income families. There are 2013 data on the extent of poverty, the number of working poor, changes in the minimum wage, the rise in income inequality, and how poverty interacts with age, sex, race, and ethnicity. There are new data on economic mobility as well as the extent of homelessness.

Chapter 12: Global Stratification

The updated Power of Society figure shows how the nation into which a person is born sets the odds of surviving to the age of five. The chapter has updates on declining infant mortality in the world; garment factory work in Bangladesh; the distribution of income and wealth and the number of people in the world who are poor; the average income for the world as a whole; the number and updated social profile of nations at different levels of development; the latest UN data on quality of life in various regions of the world; and the latest data on global debt. Recent data illuminate economic trends in various regions of the world and confirm the increasing economic gap between the highest- and lowest-income nations. There are updates on wealth and well-being in selected nations at each level of economic development. Finally, find updated discussion of the extent of slavery in the world.

Chapter 13: Gender Stratification

The updated Power of Society figure shows how gender shapes people's goals and ambitions. The revised chapter

describes the first woman to pitch a winning game in the Little League World Series. Find updates on life expectancy for U.S. women and men; the share of degrees earned by each sex in various fields of study; the share of U.S. women and men in the labor force, the share working full time, and the share in many sex-typed occupations; the share of large corporations with women in leadership positions; the number of small businesses owned by women; unemployment rates for women and men; and the latest data on income and wealth by gender. Find the latest global rankings of nations in terms of gender equality. There are also new data on the highest-paid women and men in entertainment as well as the share of the richest people in the country who are women. There are the most recent statistics on women in political leadership positions reflecting the 2014 elections, the latest data on women in the military, and updated discussion of violence against women and men. The coverage of intersection theory reflects the most recent income data.

Chapter 14: Race and Ethnicity

The updated Power of Society figure shows how race and ethnicity influence voting preferences and demonstrates that Democratic candidates enjoy strong support among minority communities. The revised chapter adds Osagie Obasogie's recent research on the meaning of race to people who have been blind since birth. Find updates on the share and size of all racial and ethnic categories of the U.S. population; the share of households in which members speak a language other than English at home; the share of U.S. marriages that are interracial; the number of American Indian and Alaskan Native nations and tribal groups; and the income levels and poverty rates, extent of schooling, and average age for all major racial and ethnic categories of the U.S. population. New research using the social distance scale has been included showing a long-term increase in tolerance among college students. The chapter now includes discussion of controversial police violence against African Americans, including the 2014 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. New discussion highlights trends including the increasing share of American Indians who claim to be of mixed racial background and the increasing share of African Americans who are within the middle class.

Chapter 15: Aging and the Elderly

The revised Power of Society figure shows how gender shapes the process of caregiving for older people in the United States. The chapter has new data on the share of U.S. adults without any retirement savings, the latest on life expectancy and the gradual "graying" of the U.S. population, and the effect of class and race on how elderly people assess their health. Included are the latest figures on the in-

come, wealth, and poverty rates of people in various age categories throughout the life course. There is also updated discussion of who provides care for aging parents, the extent of elder abuse, and the extent of physician-assisted suicide.

Chapter 16: The Economy and Work

The updated Power of Society figure demonstrates how race and ethnicity guide the type of work people do. The revised chapter has updates on the increasing size of Walmart; the share of economic output in the private and public sectors for the United States and for other nations; the share of the U.S. population by race and ethnicity in the labor force; and the latest on the share of public and private sector workers in a union as well as the recent political conflict between several states and public service unions. There is updated discussion of the debate concerning “right-to-work” laws and an updated National Map shows which states have—and have not—enacted such laws. There are new data indicating the share of women and men who are self-employed. The discussion of unemployment now points out the increasing problem of extended unemployment with updated discussion of the “jobless recovery.”

Chapter 17: Politics and Government

The updated Power of Society figure shows the effect of age on voting preferences, revealing that people under the age of thirty were critical to the outcome of the 2012 presidential election. There is updated discussion and analysis of the changing political landscape in the Middle East, including the war in Syria that has resulted in millions of refugees seeking protection in neighboring countries and in Europe. The revised chapter has updates on the number of people employed in government; the cost of operating the government; voter turnout and voter preferences involving race, ethnicity, and gender in the 2012 and 2014 elections; the number of lobbyists and political action committees in the country; the latest on the number of people barred from voting based on a criminal conviction; recent political trends involving college students; new data on the declining level of political freedom in the world; the latest data on the extent of terrorism and casualties resulting from such conflict; the latest nuclear disarmament negotiations, recent changes in nuclear proliferation, and changing support for Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) as a peacekeeping policy; and the latest data on global and U.S. military spending as well as expanding opportunities for women in the U.S. military. There is new discussion of the growing importance of income inequality as an issue in the 2016 presidential campaign, and updated discussion of the importance of “swing states” and how the Electoral College may discourage voter turnout in most states.

Chapter 18: Families

The updated Power of Society figure shows the effect of class on the likelihood that marriage will endure, documenting longer-term marriages among more socially privileged people and shorter-term marriages among disadvantaged people. There is updated discussion of the importance of grandparents in the process of childrearing, the experience of loneliness and families in later life, and the trend of moving in with relatives as a strategy to cut living expenses during the current recession. An updated National Map shows the divorce rate for states across the country. The revised chapter has updates on the number of U.S. households and families; the share of young women in low-income countries who marry before the age of eighteen; the cost of raising a child for parents at various class levels; the share of youngsters in the United States who are “latchkey kids”; the income gap that separates Hispanic and African American families from non-Hispanic white families; the rising average age at first marriage; the incidence of court-ordered child support and the frequency of nonpayment; and the rate of domestic violence against women and also children. Data for 2015 show the number of nations that permit same-sex marriage and recent political change in this country leading up to the 2015 Supreme Court decision guaranteeing the right to same-sex marriage. There are also new data showing the increasing share of U.S. adults living alone, the child care arrangements for working mothers with young children, and the relative frequency of various types of interracial marriage.

Chapter 19: Religion

The updated Power of Society figure shows how religious affiliation—or the lack of it—is linked to traditional or progressive family values. The revised chapter has updates on the populations identifying with all world religions. The latest data show the extent of religious belief in the United States as well as the share of people favoring various denominations. There is updated discussion of a trend away from religious affiliation among young people and more discussion of Islam in the United States. There is expanded discussion of the increasing share of seminary students who are women as well as the secularization debate. There is updated discussion of the use of electronic media to share religious ideas.

Chapter 20: Education

The updated Power of Society figure shows the importance of race and ethnicity in shaping the opportunity to attend college. The revised chapter has new global data showing the relative academic performance of U.S. children, comparing them to children in Japan and other nations. There are updated statistical profiles of schooling in India, Japan, and other countries. New data identify the share of U.S.

adults who have completed high school and college, how income affects access to higher education, and how a college education is linked to earnings later on. There are new statistics on the number of colleges and universities in the United States as well as the financial costs of attending them. The latest data guide discussion of community colleges in the United States and the diverse student body they enroll. The revised chapter includes the latest trends in dropping out of high school, performance on the SAT, high school grade inflation, and the spread of charter and magnet schools. A new report from the National Center for Education Statistics documents modest improvements in U.S. public schools over the last two decades. Find the latest data on the gender imbalance on U.S. college and university campuses.

Chapter 21: Health and Medicine

The updated Power of Society figure documents a key health trend—the increasing rate of obesity among all categories of the U.S. population. The revised chapter has updated discussion of prejudice against people based on body weight. There are updates on global patterns of health including improvements in the well-being of young children, the rate of cigarette smoking, the use of smokeless tobacco, and the frequency of illness resulting from tobacco use. The revised chapter has new discussion of how gender shapes patterns involving eating disorders, the latest patterns involving AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, the link between impoverished living conditions and lack of medical care demonstrated by the recent Ebola crisis, and the ongoing debate involving euthanasia. The revised chapter reports that the government now pays for most health care in the United States and also explains how people pay the rest of their medical bills.

Chapter 22: Population, Urbanization, and Environment

The updated Power of Society figure shows that concern for environmental issues, while typically greater in high-income nations than in low-income nations, remains low in the United States. A new opening describes debate over global warming and changing weather patterns. The chapter has the most recent data on the size of the U.S. population as well as fertility and mortality rates for the United States and for various world regions, new data for infant mortality and life expectancy, new global population projections, and updated coverage of trends in urbanization. Find the latest data on the racial and ethnic populations of the nation's largest cities. A new section gives expanded coverage of social life in rural places. New discussions highlight urbanization in low-income regions of the world, changes in water consumption, and the declining size of the planet's rain forests.

Chapter 23: Collective Behavior and Social Movements

The updated Power of Society figure shows in which nations people are more or less likely to engage in public demonstrations. The revised chapter illustrates important ideas with current debates such as the share of political campaign ads that are deceptive, the ongoing conflict in Syria, and efforts in the United States to remove the Confederate flag from the South Carolina capitol building. The revised chapter highlights recent social movements such as the Black Lives Matter political movement that sprang up in response to police violence against African American men. Find data illustrating the increasing importance of the Internet as a source of information about elections and other political events as well as the latest data on the share of college students who report being politically active.

Chapter 24: Social Change: Traditional, Modern, and Postmodern Societies

The updated Power of Society figure identifies nations in which people look more favorably—and less favorably—on scientific advances. The revised chapter has updates on life expectancy and other demographic changes to U.S. society. The discussion assessing social life in the United States has been reframed by the latest data on the well-being of the U.S. population, identifying trends that are positive and others that are troubling.

Supplements for the Instructor

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL WITH TEST BANK This learning program offers an Instructor's Manual that will be of interest even to those who have never chosen to use one before. The manual—now revised by John Macionis—goes well beyond the expected detailed chapter outlines and discussion questions to provide summaries of important current events and trends, recent articles from *Teaching Sociology* that are relevant to classroom discussions, suggestions for classroom activities, and supplemental lecture material for every chapter of the text.

The Test Bank—again, written by the author—reflects the material in the text—both in content and in language—far better than the testing file available with any other introductory sociology textbook. The file contains more than 100 items per chapter—in multiple-choice, true/false, and essay formats. For all of the questions, the correct answer is provided, as well as the Bloom's level of cognitive reasoning the question requires of the student, the learning objective that the question tests, and the difficulty level.

POWERPOINT® LECTURE SLIDES These PowerPoint slides combine graphics and text in a colorful format to help you convey sociological principles in a visual and engaging

way. Each chapter of the textbook has between fifteen and twenty-five slides that effectively communicate the key concepts in that chapter. Also available are PowerPoint slides that contain only the chapter outline, for instructors who wish to build their own unique set of slides, and additionally a set of slides that contains only the art and photos within each chapter.

Recognizing Diversity: A Word about Language

This text has a commitment to describe the social diversity of the United States and the world. This promise carries with it the responsibility to use language thoughtfully. In most cases, the text uses the terms "African American" and "person of color" rather than the word "black." Similarly, we use the terms "Latino," "Latina," and "Hispanic" to refer to people of Spanish descent. Most tables and figures refer to "Hispanics" because this is the term the Census Bureau uses when collecting statistical data about our population.

Students should realize, however, that many individuals do not describe themselves using these terms. Although the word "Hispanic" is commonly used in the eastern part of the United States and "Latino" and the feminine form "Latina" are widely heard in the West, across the United States people of Spanish descent identify with a particular ancestral nation, whether it be Argentina, Mexico, some other Latin American country, or Spain or Portugal in Europe.

The same holds for Asian Americans. Although this term is a useful shorthand in sociological analysis, most people of Asian descent think of themselves in terms of a specific country of origin, say, Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, or Vietnam.

In this text, the term "Native American" refers to all the inhabitants of the Americas (including Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands) whose ancestors lived here prior to the arrival of Europeans. Here again, however, most people in this broad category identify with their historical society, such as Cherokee, Hopi, Seneca, or Zuni. The term "American Indian" refers to only those Native Americans who live in the continental United States, not including Native peoples living in Alaska or Hawaii.

On a global level, this text avoids the word "American"—which literally designates two continents—to refer to just the United States. For example, referring to this country, the term "the U.S. economy" is more precise than "the American economy." This convention may seem a small point, but it implies the significant recognition that we in this country represent only one society (albeit a very important one) in the Americas.

In Appreciation

The conventional practice of crediting a book to a single author hides the efforts of dozens of women and men who have helped create *Sociology, Sixteenth Edition*. I offer my deep and sincere thanks to the Pearson editorial team, including Dickson Musslewhite, vice-president of product development; and Billy Grieco, senior acquisitions editor in sociology, for their steady enthusiasm in the pursuit of both innovation and excellence.

Day-to-day work on the book is shared by various members of the "author team." Barbara Reilly, principal of Reilly Editorial Services, Inc., is a key member of this group. Indeed, if anyone "sweats the details" as much as I do, it is Barbara! Kimberlee Klesner works closely with me to ensure that all the data in this revision are the very latest available. Kimberlee brings enthusiasm that matches her considerable talents, and I thank her for both.

I want to thank all the members of the Pearson sales staff, the men and women who have represented this text with such confidence and enthusiasm over the years. My hat goes off especially to Tricia Murphy and Brittany Pogue-Mohammed Acosta, who share responsibility for our marketing campaign.

Thanks, also, to Blair Brown and Maria Lange for managing the design, and to Melissa Sacco of Lumina Datamatics and Marianne Peters-Riordan of Pearson Education for managing the production process. Copyediting of the manuscript was skillfully done by Donna Mulder.

It goes without saying that every colleague knows more about a number of topics covered in this book than the author does. For that reason, I am grateful to the hundreds of faculty and the many students who have written to me to offer comments and suggestions. Thank you, one and all, for making a difference!

Finally, I dedicate this sixteenth edition of *Sociology* to Elyse Alexander, a remarkable woman who has agreed to have me as her husband. Elyse's sharp mind, contagious creativity, and ability to create beauty in her surroundings bring much joy to my life. She is also my partner in the pursuit of change. For all these gifts, I feel profound love and gratitude.

With best wishes to my colleagues and with love to all,



About the Author

John J. Macionis (pronounced “ma-SHOWnis”) has been in the classroom teaching sociology for more than forty years. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, John earned a bachelor’s degree from Cornell University, majoring in sociology, and then completed a doctorate in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania.

His publications are wide-ranging, focusing on community life in the United States, interpersonal intimacy in families, effective teaching, humor, new information technology, and the importance of global education. In addition to authoring this best-seller, Macionis has also written *Society: The Basics*, the most popular paperback text in the field, now in its fourteenth edition. He collaborates on international editions of the texts: *Sociology: Canadian Edition*; *Society: The Basics, Canadian Edition*; and *Sociology: A Global Introduction*. *Sociology* is also available for high school students and in various foreign-language editions. Unlike other authors, John takes personal responsibility for writing all electronic content, just as he authors all the supplemental material. John proudly resists the trend toward “outsourcing” such material to non-sociologists.

In addition, Macionis edited the best-selling anthology *Seeing Ourselves: Classic, Contemporary, and Cross-Cultural Readings in Sociology*, also available in a Canadian edition. Macionis and Vincent Parrillo have written the leading urban studies text, *Cities and Urban Life*, soon available in a sixth edition. Macionis is also the author of *Social Problems*, now in its sixth edition and the leading book in this field. The latest on all the Macionis textbooks, as well as information and dozens of Internet links of interest to students and faculty in sociology, are found at the author’s personal website: www.macionis.com or www.TheSociologyPage.com. Follow John on this Facebook author page: John J. Macionis. Additional information and instructor resources are found at the Pearson site: www.pearsonglobaleditions.com/macionis

John Macionis recently retired from full-time teaching at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, where he was Professor and Distinguished Scholar of Sociology. During that time, he chaired the Sociology Department, directed the college’s multidisciplinary program in humane studies, presided over the campus senate and the college’s faculty, and taught sociology to thousands of students.

In 2002, the American Sociological Association presented Macionis with the Award for Distinguished



Contributions to Teaching, citing his innovative use of global material as well as the introduction of new teaching technology in his textbooks.

Professor Macionis has been active in academic programs in other countries, having traveled to some fifty nations. He writes, “I am an ambitious traveler, eager to learn and, through the texts, to share much of what I discover with students, many of whom know little about the rest of the world. For me, traveling and writing are all dimensions of teaching. First, and foremost, I am a teacher—a passion for teaching animates everything I do.”

At Kenyon, Macionis taught a number of courses, but his favorite classes have been Introduction to Sociology and Social Problems. He continues to enjoy extensive contact with students across the United States and around the world.

John now lives near New York City, and in his free time, he enjoys tennis, swimming, hiking, and playing oldies rock-and-roll. He is an environmental activist in the Lake George region of New York’s Adirondack Mountains, where he works with a number of organizations, including the Lake George Land Conservancy, where he serves as president of the board of trustees.

Professor Macionis welcomes (and responds to) comments and suggestions about this book from faculty and students. Contact him at his Facebook pages or email: macionis@kenyon.edu.

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Pearson would like to thank the following people for their work on the content of the Global Edition:

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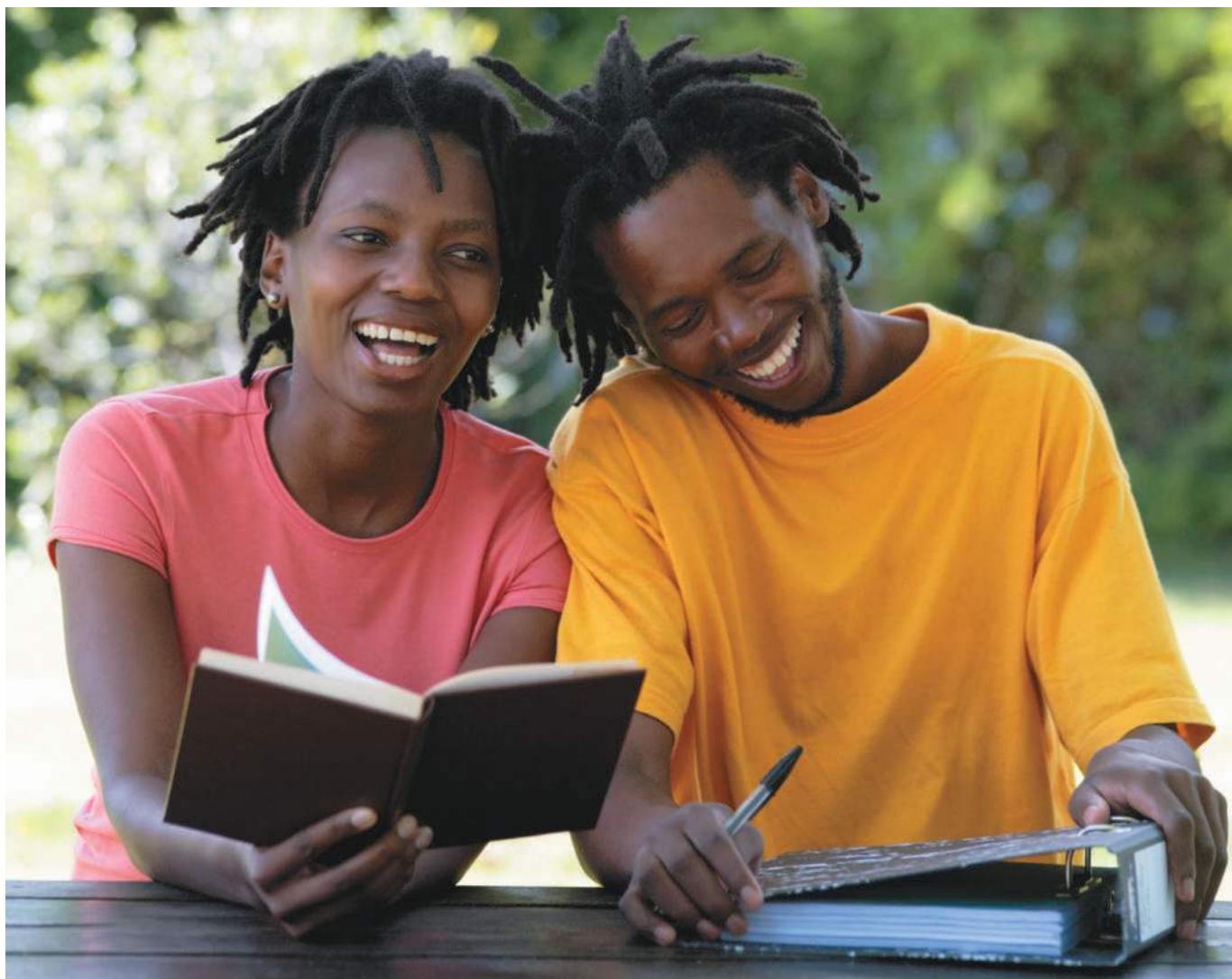
Chapter 1

The Sociological Perspective



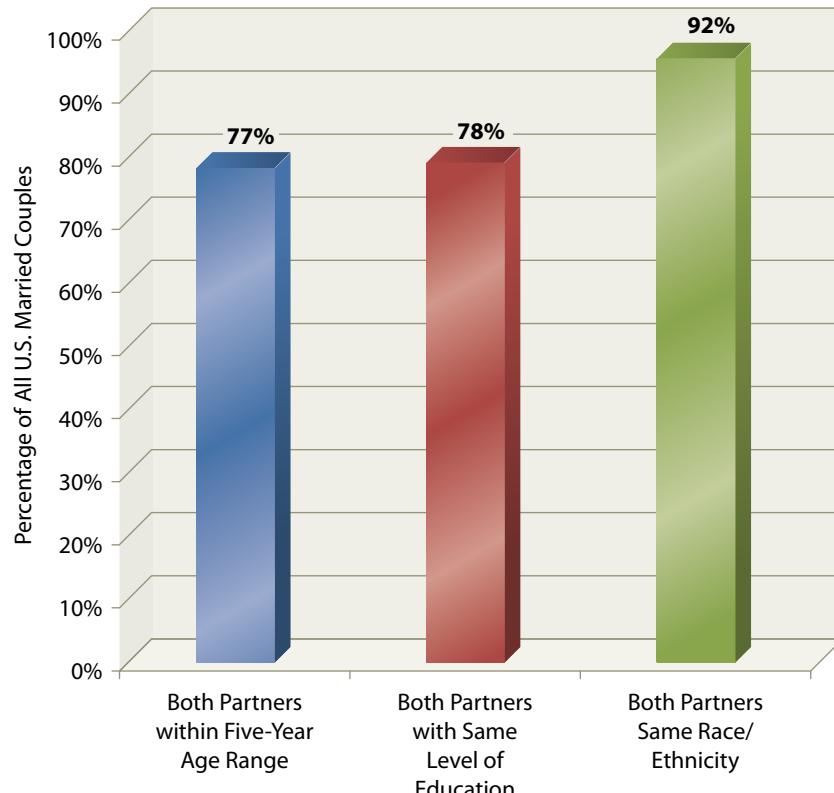
Learning Objectives

- 1.1** Explain how the sociological perspective differs from common sense.
- 1.2** State several reasons that a global perspective is important in today's world.
- 1.3** Identify the advantages of sociological thinking for developing public policy, for encouraging personal growth, and for advancing in a career.
- 1.4** Link the origins of sociology to historical social changes.
- 1.5** Summarize sociology's major theoretical approaches.
- 1.6** Apply sociology's major theoretical approaches to the topic of sports.



The Power of Society

to guide our choices in marriage partners



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

Do we simply “pick” our marriage partners? In 77 percent of all married couples in the United States, both partners are within five years of age of each other; in 78 percent, both partners have achieved the same level of schooling; and in 92 percent of married couples, both partners are of the same racial or ethnic category. Although we tend to think of love and marriage as very personal matters, it is clear that society guides the process of selecting a spouse.

Chapter Overview

You are about to begin a course that could change your life. Sociology is a new and exciting way of understanding the world around you. It will change what you see and how you think about the world around you, and it may well change how you think about yourself. Chapter 1 of the text introduces the discipline of sociology. The most important skill to gain from this chapter is the ability to use what we call the *sociological perspective*. This chapter also introduces *sociological theory*, which helps you build understanding from what you see using the *sociological perspective*.

From the moment he first saw Tonya step off the subway train, Dwayne knew she was “the one.” As the two walked up the stairs to the street and entered the building where they were both taking classes, Dwayne tried to get Tonya to stop and talk. At first, she ignored him. But after class, they met again, and she agreed to join him for coffee. That was three months ago. Today, they are engaged to be married.

If you were to ask people in the United States, “Why do couples like Tonya and Dwayne marry?” it is a safe bet that almost everyone would reply, “People marry because they fall in love.” Most of us find it hard to imagine a happy marriage without love; for the same reason, when people fall in love, we expect them to think about getting married.

But is the decision about whom to marry really just a matter of personal feelings? There is plenty of evidence to show that if love is the key to marriage, Cupid’s arrow is carefully aimed by the society around us.

Society has many “rules” about whom we should and should not marry. Up until about a decade ago, all states had laws that ruled out half the population by banning people from marrying someone of the same sex, even if the couple was deeply in love. But there are other rules as well. Sociologists have found that people, especially when they are young, are very likely to marry someone close in age, and people of all ages typically marry others in the same racial category, of similar social class background, of much the same level of education, and with a similar degree of physical attractiveness (Schwartz & Mare, 2005; Schoen & Cheng, 2006; Feng Hou & Myles, 2008; Shafer & Zhenchao, 2010; Shafer, 2013; see Chapter 18, “Families,” for details). People do end up making choices about whom to marry, but society narrows the field long before they do. ■



When it comes to love, the decisions people make do not simply result from the process philosophers call “free will.” Sociology shows us the power of society to guide all our life decisions in much the same way that the seasons influence our choice of clothing.

The Sociological Perspective

1.1 Explain how the sociological perspective differs from common sense.

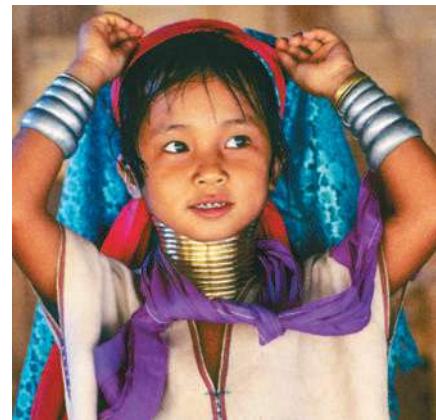
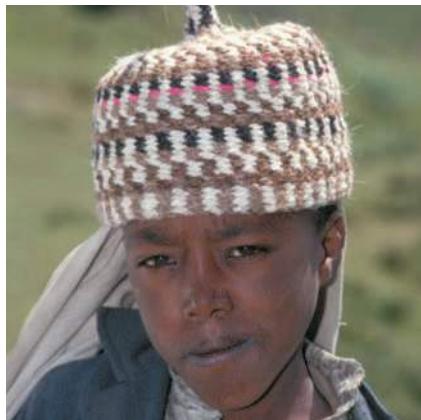
Sociology is the systematic study of human society. Society refers to people who live in a defined territory and share a way of life. At the heart of sociology’s investigation of society is a special point of view called the *sociological perspective*.

Seeing the General in the Particular

One good way to define the *sociological perspective* is *seeing the general in the particular* (Berger, 1963). This definition tells us that sociologists look for general patterns in the behavior of particular people. Although every individual is unique, a society shapes the lives of people in patterned ways that are evident as we discover how various categories (such as children and adults, women and men, the rich and the poor) live very differently. We begin to see the world sociologically by realizing how the general categories into which we fall shape our particular life experiences.

sociology the systematic study of human society

sociological perspective sociology’s special point of view that sees general patterns of society in the lives of particular people



We can easily see the power of society over the individual by imagining how different our lives would be had we been born in place of any of these children from, respectively, Kenya, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Peru, South Korea, and India.

For example, the Power of Society figure shows how the social world guides people to select marriage partners from within their own social categories. This is why the large majority of married couples are about the same age, have similar educational backgrounds, and share the same racial and ethnic identity. What about social class? How does social class position affect what women look for in a spouse? In a classic study of women's hopes for their marriages, Lillian Rubin (1976) found that higher-income women typically expected the men they married to be sensitive to others, to talk readily, and to share feelings and experiences. Lower-income women, she found, had very different expectations and were looking for men who did not drink too much, were not violent, and held steady jobs. Obviously, what women expect in a marriage partner has a lot to do with social class position.

This text explores the power of society to guide our actions, thoughts, and feelings. We may think that marriage results simply from the personal feelings of love. Yet the sociological perspective shows us that factors such as age, schooling, race and ethnicity, sex, and social class guide our selection of a partner. It might be more accurate to think of love as a feeling we have for others who match up with what society teaches us to want in a mate.

Seeing the Strange in the Familiar

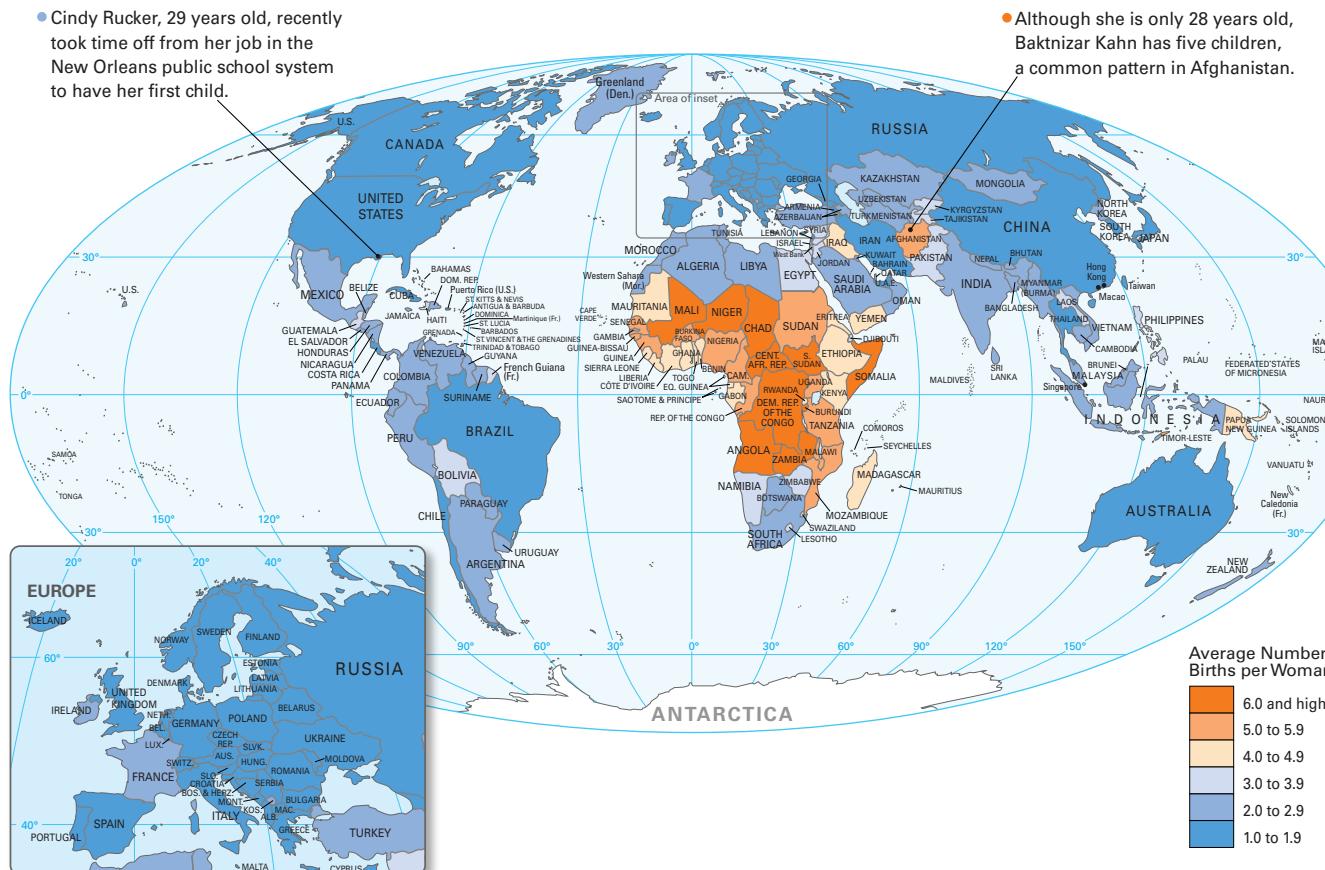
At first, using the sociological perspective may seem like *seeing the strange in the familiar*. Consider how you might react if someone were to say to you, "You fit all the right categories, which means you would make a wonderful spouse!" We are used to thinking that people fall in love and decide to marry based on personal feelings. But the sociological perspective reveals the initially strange idea that society shapes what we think and do.

Because we live in an individualistic society, learning to see how society affects us may take a bit of practice. If someone asked you why you "chose" to enroll at your particular college, you might offer one of the following reasons:

- "I wanted to stay close to home."
- "I got a basketball scholarship."
- "With a journalism degree from this university, I can get a good job."
- "My girlfriend goes to school here."
- "I didn't get into the school I *really* wanted to attend."

Any of these responses may well be true. But do they tell the whole story?

Window on the World



Global Map 1-1 Women's Childbearing in Global Perspective

Is childbearing simply a matter of personal choice? A look around the world shows that it is not. In general, women living in poor countries have many more children than women in rich nations. Can you point to some of the reasons for this global disparity? In simple terms, such differences mean that if you had been born into another society (whether you are female or male), your life might be quite different from what it is now.

SOURCES: Data from Population Reference Bureau (2014), Martin et al. (2015).

Thinking sociologically about going to college, it's important to realize that only 7 out of every 100 people in the world have earned a college degree, with the enrollment rate much higher in high-income nations than in poor countries (Barro & Lee, 2010; OECD, 2012; World Bank, 2012). A century ago, even in the United States most people had little or no chance to go to college. Today, enrolling in college is within the reach of far more men and women. But a look around the classroom shows that social forces still have much to do with who ends up on campus. For instance, most U.S. college students are young, generally between eighteen and about thirty. Why? Because our society links college attendance to this period of life. But more than age is involved, because just 42 percent of men and women between eighteen and twenty-four actually end up on campus.

Another factor is cost. Because higher education is so expensive, college students tend to come from families

with above-average incomes. As Chapter 20 ("Education") explains, if you are lucky enough to belong to a family earning more than \$119,000 a year, you are almost 60 percent more likely to go to college than someone whose family earns less than \$28,000. Is it reasonable, in light of these facts, to ignore the power of society and say that attending college is simply a matter of personal choice?

Seeing Society in Our Everyday Lives

Another way to appreciate the power of society is to consider the number of children women have. As shown in Global Map 1-1, the average woman in the United States has about two children during her lifetime. In the Philippines, however, the average is about three; in Guatemala, about four; in Afghanistan, five; in Uganda, six; and in Niger, the average woman has more than seven children (Population Reference Bureau, 2014).

Diversity Snapshot

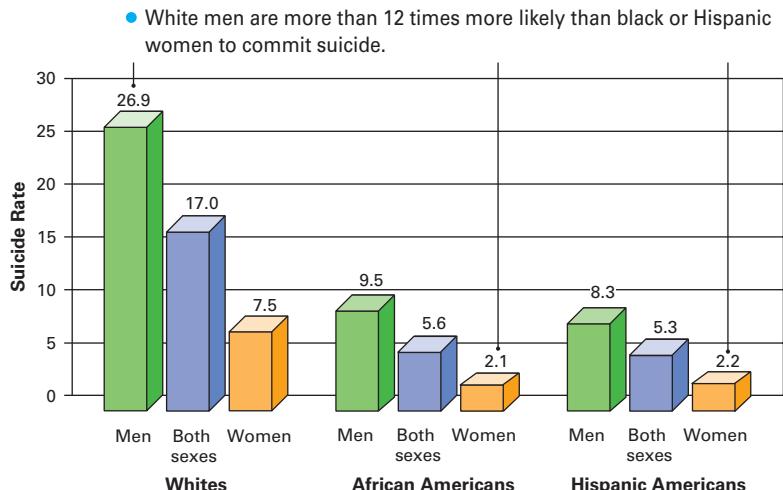


Figure 1–1 Rate of Death by Suicide, by Race and Sex, for the United States

Suicide rates are higher for white people than they are for black people and Hispanic people. Within each category, suicide rates are higher for men than for women. Rates indicate the number of deaths by suicide for every 100,000 people in each category for 2013.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014).

What accounts for these striking differences? Because poor countries provide women with less schooling and fewer economic opportunities, women's lives are centered in the home; such women also have less access to contraception. Clearly, society has much to do with the decisions women and men make about childbearing.

Another illustration of the power of society to shape even our most private choices comes from the study of suicide. What could be a more personal choice than the decision to end your own life? But Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), one of sociology's pioneers, showed that even here, social forces are at work.

Examining official records in France, his own country, Durkheim found that some categories of people were more likely than others to take their own lives. Men, Protestants, wealthy people, and the unmarried had much higher suicide rates than women, Catholics and Jews, the poor, and married people. Durkheim explained the differences in terms of *social integration*: Categories of people with strong social ties had low suicide rates, and more individualistic categories of people had high suicide rates.

In Durkheim's time, men had much more freedom than women. But despite its advantages, freedom weakens social ties and thus increases the risk of suicide. Likewise, more individualistic Protestants were more likely to commit suicide than more tradition-bound Catholics and Jews, whose rituals encourage stronger social ties.

The wealthy have much more freedom than the poor, but once again, at the cost of a higher suicide rate.

A century later, Durkheim's analysis still holds true. Figure 1–1 shows suicide rates for various categories of people in the United States. Keep in mind that suicide is very rare—a rate of 10 suicides for every 100,000 people is about the same as 6 inches in a mile. Even so, we can see some interesting patterns. In 2013, there were 17 recorded suicides for every 100,000 white people, three times the rate for African Americans (5.6) or Hispanics (5.3). For all categories of people, suicide was more common among men than among women. White men (26.9) were more than three times as likely as white women (7.5) to take their own lives. Among African Americans, the rate for men (9.5) was almost five times higher than for women (2.1). Among Hispanics, the rate for men (8.3) was nearly four times higher than the rate for women (2.2) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Applying Durkheim's logic, the higher suicide rate among white people and men reflects their greater wealth and freedom, just as the lower rate among women and

African Americans reflects their limited social choices. As Durkheim did a century ago, we can see general patterns in the personal actions of particular individuals.

Seeing Sociologically: Marginality and Crisis

Anyone can learn to see the world using the sociological perspective. But two situations help people see clearly how society shapes individual lives: living on the margins of society and living through a social crisis.

From time to time, everyone feels like an outsider. For some categories of people, however, being an outsider—not part of the dominant group—is an everyday experience. The greater people's social marginality, the better they are able to use the sociological perspective.

For example, no African American grows up in the United States without understanding the importance of race in shaping people's lives. Songs by rapper Jay-Z express the anger he feels, not only about the poverty he experienced growing up but also about the many innocent lives lost to violence in a society with great social inequality based on race. His lyrics and those of many similar artists are spread throughout the world by the mass media as statements of how some people of color—especially African Americans living in the inner city—feel that their hopes and dreams are crushed by society. But white people, as the dominant

majority, think less often about race, believing that race affects only people of color and not themselves despite the privileges provided by being white in a multiracial society. All people at the margins of social life, including not just racial minorities but also women, gay people, people with disabilities, and the very old, are aware of social patterns that others rarely think about. To become better at using the sociological perspective, we must step back from our familiar routines and look at our own lives with a new curiosity.

Periods of change or crisis make everyone feel a little off balance, encouraging us to use the sociological perspective. The sociologist C. Wright Mills (1959) illustrated this idea using the Great Depression of the 1930s. As the unemployment rate soared to 25 percent, people who were out of work could not help but see general social forces at work in their particular lives. Rather than saying, “Something must be wrong with me; I can’t find a job,” they took a sociological approach and realized, “The economy has collapsed; there are no jobs to be found!” Mills believed that using what he called the “sociological imagination” in this way helps people understand not only their society but also their own lives, because the two are closely related. The Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life box on page 36 takes a closer look.

Just as social change encourages sociological thinking, sociological thinking can bring about social change. The more we learn about how “the system” operates, the more we may want to change it in some way. Becoming aware of the power of gender, for example, has caused many women and men to try to reduce gender inequality in our society.

The Importance of a Global Perspective

1.2 State several reasons that a global perspective is important in today’s world.

As new information technology draws even the farthest reaches of the planet closer together, many academic disciplines are taking a **global perspective**, *the study of the larger world and our society’s place in it*. What is the importance of a global perspective for sociology?

First, global awareness is a logical extension of the sociological perspective. Sociology shows us that our place in society shapes our life experiences. It stands to reason, then, that the position of our society in the larger world system affects everyone in the United States.

The world’s 194 nations can be divided into three broad categories according to their level of economic development (see Global Map 12–1). **High-income countries** are the *nations with the highest overall standards of living*. The



People with the greatest privileges tend to see individuals as responsible for their own lives. Those at the margins of society, by contrast, are quick to see how race, class, and gender can create disadvantages. The rap artist Jay-Z has given voice to the frustration felt by many African Americans living in this country’s inner cities.

seventy-six countries in this category include the United States and Canada, Argentina, the nations of Western Europe, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Japan, and Australia. Taken together, these nations produce most of the world’s goods and services, and the people who live there own most of the planet’s wealth. Economically speaking, people in these countries are very well off, not because they are smarter or work harder than anyone else but because they were lucky enough to be born in a rich region of the world.

A second category is **middle-income countries**, *nations with a standard of living about average for the world as a whole*. People in any of these seventy nations—many of the countries of Eastern Europe, some of Africa, and almost all of Latin America and Asia—are as likely to live in rural villages as in cities and to walk or ride tractors, scooters, bicycles, or animals as to drive automobiles. On average, they receive eight years of schooling. Most middle-income countries also have considerable social inequality within their own borders, so that some people are extremely rich (members of the business elite in nations across North Africa, for example), but many more lack safe housing and adequate nutrition (people living in the shanty settlements that surround Lima, Peru, or Mumbai, India).

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

The Sociological Imagination: Turning Personal Problems into Public Issues

As Mike opened the envelope, he felt the tightness in his chest. The letter he dreaded was in his hands—his job was finished at the end of the day. After eleven years! Years in which he had worked hard, sure that he would move up in the company. All those hopes and dreams were now suddenly gone. Mike felt like a failure. Anger at himself—for not having worked even harder, for having wasted eleven years of his life in what had turned out to be a dead-end job—swelled up inside him.

But as he returned to his workstation to pack his things, Mike soon realized that he was not alone. Almost all his colleagues in the tech support group had received the same letter. Their jobs were moving to India, where the company was able to provide telephone tech support for less than half the cost of employing workers in California.

By the end of the weekend, Mike was sitting in the living room with a dozen other ex-employees. Comparing notes and sharing ideas, they now realized that they were simply a few of the victims of a massive outsourcing of jobs that is part of what analysts call the “globalization of the economy.”

In good times and bad, the power of the sociological perspective lies in making sense of our individual lives. We see that many of our particular problems (and our successes, as well) are not unique to us but are the result of larger social trends. Half a century ago, sociologist C. Wright Mills pointed to the power of what he called the sociological imagination to help us understand everyday events. As he saw it, society—not people’s personal failings—is the main cause of poverty and other social problems. By turning *personal problems* into *public issues*, the sociological imagination also is the key to bringing people together to create needed change.

In this excerpt, Mills (1959:3–5) explains the need for a sociological imagination:^{*}

When society becomes industrialized, a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman. When classes rise or fall, a man is employed or unemployed; when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher; a store clerk, a radar man; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a father. Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both.

Yet men do not usually define the troubles they endure in terms of historical change The well-being they enjoy, they do not usually impute to the big ups and downs of the society in which they live. Seldom aware of the intricate connection between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history, ordinary men do not usually know what this connection means for the kind of men they are becoming and for the kinds of history-making in which they might take part. They do not possess the quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of men and society, of biography and history, of self and world

What they need . . . is a quality of mind that will help them [see] what is going on in the world and . . . what may be happening within themselves. It is this quality . . . [that] may be called the sociological imagination.

What Do You Think?

1. As Mills sees it, how are personal troubles different from public issues? Explain this difference in terms of what happened to Mike in the story above.
2. Living in the United States, why do we often blame ourselves for the personal problems we face?
3. How can using the sociological imagination give us the power to change the world?

*In this excerpt, Mills uses “man” and male pronouns to apply to all people. As far as gender was concerned, even this outspoken critic of society reflected the conventional writing practices of his time.

The remaining forty-eight nations of the world are **low-income countries**, *nations with a low standard of living in which most people are poor*. Most of the poorest countries in the world are in Africa, and a few are in Asia. Here again, a few people are very rich, but the majority struggle to get

by with poor housing, unsafe water, too little food, and perhaps most serious of all, little chance to improve their lives.

Chapter 12 (“Global Stratification”) explains the causes and consequences of global wealth and poverty. But every chapter of this text makes comparisons between the

United States and other nations for five reasons:

1. **Where we live shapes the lives we lead.** As we saw in Global Map 1–1, women living in rich and poor countries have very different lives, as suggested by the number of children they

global perspective the study of the larger world and our society's place in it

high-income countries the nations with the highest overall standards of living

middle-income countries nations with a standard of living about average for the world as a whole

low-income countries nations with a low standard of living in which most people are poor

have. To understand ourselves and appreciate how others live, we must understand something about how countries differ, which is one good reason to pay attention to the global maps found throughout this text.

- 2. Societies throughout the world are increasingly interconnected.** Historically, people in the United States took only passing note of the countries beyond our own borders. In recent decades, however, the United States and the rest of the world have become linked as never before. Electronic technology now transmits sounds, pictures, and written documents around the globe in seconds.

One effect of new technology is that people the world over now share many tastes in food, clothing, and music. Rich countries such as the United States influence other nations, whose people are ever more likely to gobble up our Big Macs and Whoppers, dance to the latest hip-hop music, and speak English.

But the larger world also has an impact on us. We all know the contributions of famous immigrants such as Arnold Schwarzenegger (who came to the United States from Austria) and Gloria Estefan (who came from Cuba). About 1.25 million immigrants enter the United States each year, bringing their skills and talents, along with their fashions and foods, greatly increasing the racial and cultural diversity of this country (Hoefer, Rytina, & Baker, 2012; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2014).

- 3. What happens in the rest of the world affects life here in the United States.** Trade across national boundaries has created a global economy. Large corporations make and market goods worldwide. Stock traders in New York pay close attention to the financial markets in Tokyo and Hong Kong even as wheat farmers in Kansas watch the price of grain in the former Soviet republic of Georgia. Because most new jobs in the United States involve international trade, global understanding has never been more important.

In the last several decades, the power and wealth of the United States have been challenged by what some analysts have called “the rise of the rest,” meaning the increasing power and wealth of the rest of the world. As nations such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China have expanded their economic production, many of the manufacturing and office jobs that once supported a large share of the U.S. labor force have moved overseas. One consequence of this trend is that, as the country struggles to climb out of the recent recession, the unemployment rate remains high and may stay high for years to come. As many analysts see it, our current “jobless recovery” is one result of a new global economy that is reshaping societies all around the world (Zakeria, 2008).

4. Many social problems that we face in the United States are far more serious elsewhere. Poverty is a serious problem in the United States, but as Chapter 12 (“Global Stratification”) explains, poverty in Latin America, Africa, and Asia is both more common and more serious. In the same way, although women have lower social standing than men in the United States, gender inequality is much greater in the world’s poor countries.

5. Thinking globally helps us learn more about ourselves. We cannot walk the streets of a distant city without thinking about what it means to live in the United States. Comparing life in various settings also leads to unexpected lessons. For instance, were you to visit a squatter settlement in Chennai, India, you would likely find people thriving in the love and support of family members despite desperate poverty. Why, then, are so many poor people in our own country angry and alone? Are material things—so central to our definition of a “rich” life—the best way to measure human well-being?

In sum, in an increasingly interconnected world, we can understand ourselves only to the extent that we understand others. Sociology is an invitation to learn a new way of looking at the world around us. But is this invitation worth accepting? What are the benefits of applying the sociological perspective?

Applying the Sociological Perspective

- 1.3 Identify the advantages of sociological thinking for developing public policy, for encouraging personal growth, and for advancing in a career.**

Applying the sociological perspective is useful in many ways. First, sociology is at work guiding many of the laws and policies that shape our lives. Second, on an individual level, making use of the sociological perspective leads to important personal growth and expanded awareness. Third, studying sociology is excellent preparation for the world of work.

Sociology and Public Policy

Sociologists have helped shape public policy—the laws and regulations that guide how people in communities live and work—in countless ways, from racial desegregation and school busing to laws regulating divorce. For example, in her study of how divorce affects people’s income, the sociologist Lenore Weitzman (1985, 1996) discovered that women who leave marriages typically experience a dramatic loss of income. Recognizing this fact, many states passed laws that have increased women’s claims to marital

property and enforced fathers' obligations to provide support for women raising their children.

Sociology and Personal Growth

By applying the sociological perspective, we are likely to become more active and aware and to think more critically in our daily lives. Using sociology benefits us in four ways:

- 1. The sociological perspective helps us assess the truth of "common sense."** We all take many things for granted, but that does not make them true. One good example is the idea that we are free individuals who are personally responsible for our own lives. If we think we decide our own fate, we may be quick to

praise very successful people as superior and consider others with fewer achievements personally deficient. A sociological approach, by contrast, encourages us to ask whether such common beliefs are actually true and, to the extent that they are not, why they are so widely held. The Thinking About Diversity box takes a look at low-wage jobs and explains how the sociological perspective sometimes makes us rethink common-sense ideas about other people and their work.

- 2. The sociological perspective helps us see the opportunities and constraints in our lives.** Sociological thinking leads us to see that in the game of life, society deals the cards. We have a say in how to play the hand, however, and the more we understand the game, the better players

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America

All of us know people who work at low-wage jobs as waitresses at diners, clerks at drive-throughs, or sales associates at discount stores such as Walmart. We see such people just about every day. Many of us actually are such people. In the United States, "common sense" tells us that the jobs people have and the amount of money they make reflect their personal abilities as well as their willingness to work hard.

Barbara Ehrenreich (2001) had her doubts. To find out what the world of low-wage work is really like, the successful journalist and author decided to leave her comfortable middle-class life to live and work in the world of low-wage jobs. She began in Key West, Florida, taking a job as a waitress for \$2.43 an hour plus tips. Right away, she found out that she had to work much harder than she ever imagined. By the end of a shift, she was exhausted, but after sharing tips with the kitchen staff, she averaged less than \$6.00 an hour. This was barely above the minimum wage at the time and provided just enough income to pay the rent on her tiny apartment, buy food, and cover other basic expenses. She had to hope that she didn't get sick, because the job did not provide health insurance and she couldn't afford to pay for a visit to a doctor's office.



After working for more than a year at a number of other low-wage jobs, including cleaning motels in Maine and working on the floor of a Walmart in Minnesota, she had rejected quite a bit of "common sense." First, she now knew that tens of millions of people with low-wage jobs work very hard every day. If you don't think so, Ehrenreich says, try one of these jobs yourself. Second, these jobs require not just hard work (imagine thoroughly cleaning three motel rooms per hour all day long) but also special skills and real intelligence (try waiting on ten tables in a restaurant at the same time and keeping everybody happy). She found that the people she worked with were, on average, just as smart, clever, and funny as those she knew who wrote books for a living or taught at a college.

Why, then, do we think of low-wage workers as lazy or as having less ability? It surprised Ehrenreich to learn that many low-wage workers felt this way about themselves. In a society that teaches us to believe personal ability is everything, we learn to size up people by their jobs. Subject to the constant supervision, random drug tests, and other rigid rules that usually come along with low-wage jobs, Ehrenreich imagined that many people end up feeling unworthy, even to the point of not trying for anything better. Such beliefs, she concludes, help support a society of extreme inequality in which some people live very well thanks to the low wages paid to the rest.

What Do You Think?

1. Have you ever held a low-wage job? If so, would you say you worked hard? What was your pay? Were there any benefits?
2. Ehrenreich claims that most well-off people in the United States are dependent on low-wage workers. What does she mean by this?
3. How much of a chance do most people with jobs at Wendy's or Walmart have to enroll in college and to work toward a different career? Explain.

we become. Sociology helps us learn more about the world so that we can pursue our goals more effectively.

- 3. The sociological perspective empowers us to be active participants in our society.** The more we understand how society works, the more active citizens we become. As C. Wright Mills (1959) explained in the box, it is the sociological perspective that turns a personal problem (such as being out of work) into a public issue (a lack of good jobs). As we come to see how society affects us, we may support society as it is, or we may set out with others to change it.
- 4. The sociological perspective helps us live in a diverse world.** North Americans represent just 5 percent of the world's people, and as the remaining chapters of this book explain, many of the other 95 percent live very differently than we do. Still, like people everywhere, we tend to define our own way of life as "right," "natural," and "better." The sociological perspective encourages us to think critically about the relative strengths and weaknesses of all ways of life, including our own.

Careers: The "Sociology Advantage"

Most students at colleges and universities today are very interested in getting a good job. A background in sociology is excellent preparation for the working world. Of course, completing a bachelor's degree in sociology is the right choice for people who decide they would like to go on to graduate work and eventually become a secondary school teacher, college professor, or researcher in this field. Throughout the United States, tens of thousands of men and women teach sociology in universities, colleges, and high schools. But just as many professional sociologists work as researchers for government agencies or private foundations and businesses, gathering important information on social behavior and carrying out evaluation research. In today's cost-conscious world, agencies and companies want to be sure that the programs and policies they set in place get the job done at the lowest cost. Sociologists, especially those with advanced research skills, are in high demand for this kind of work (Deutscher, 1999; American Sociological Association, 2015).

In addition, a smaller but increasing number of professional sociologists work as clinical sociologists. These women and men

work, much as clinical psychologists do, with the goal of improving the lives of troubled clients. A basic difference is that sociologists focus on difficulties not in the personality but in the individual's web of social relationships.

But sociology is not just for people who want to be sociologists. People who work in criminal justice—in police departments, probation offices, and corrections facilities—gain the "sociology advantage" by learning which categories of people are most at risk of becoming criminals as well as victims, assessing the effectiveness of various policies and programs at preventing crime, and understanding why people turn to crime in the first place. Similarly, people who work in health care—including doctors, nurses, and technicians—also gain a sociology advantage by learning about patterns of health and illness within the population, as well as how factors such as race, gender, and social class affect human well-being.

The American Sociological Association (2002, 2011a, 2011b; 2015) reports that sociology is also excellent preparation for jobs in dozens of additional fields, including advertising, banking, business, education, government, journalism, law, public relations, and social work. In almost any type of work, success depends on understanding how various categories of people differ in beliefs, family patterns, and other ways of life. Unless you plan to have a job that never involves dealing with people, you should consider the workplace benefits of learning more about sociology.



Just about every job in today's economy involves working with people. For this reason, studying sociology is good preparation for your future career. In what ways does having "people skills" help police officers perform their job?

The Origins of Sociology

1.4 Link the origins of sociology to historical social changes.

Like the “choices” made by individuals, major historical events rarely just happen. The birth of sociology was itself the result of powerful social forces.

Social Change and Sociology

Striking changes took place in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Three kinds of change were especially important in the development of sociology: the rise of a factory-based industrial economy, the explosive growth of cities, and new ideas about democracy and political rights.

A NEW INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY During the Middle Ages in Europe, most people plowed fields near their homes or worked in small-scale *manufacturing* (a term derived from Latin words meaning “to make by hand”). By the end of the eighteenth century, inventors used new sources of energy—the power of moving water and then steam—to operate large machines in mills and factories. Instead of laboring at home or in small groups, workers became part of a large and anonymous labor force, under the control of strangers who owned the factories. This change in the system of production took people out of their homes, weakening the traditions that had guided community life for centuries.

THE GROWTH OF CITIES Across Europe, landowners took part in what historians call the *enclosure movement*—they fenced off more and more farmland to create grazing areas for sheep, the source of wool for the thriving textile mills.



What we see depends on our point of view. When gazing at the stars, lovers see romance, but scientists see thermal reactions. How does using the sociological perspective change what we see in the world around us?

Without land, countless tenant farmers had little choice but to head to the cities in search of work in the new factories.

As cities grew larger, these urban migrants faced many social problems, including pollution, crime, and homelessness. Moving through streets crowded with strangers, they faced a new and impersonal social world.

POLITICAL CHANGE Europeans in the Middle Ages viewed society as an expression of God’s will: From the royalty to the serfs, each person up and down the social ladder played a part in the holy plan. This theological view of society is captured in lines from the old Anglican hymn “All Things Bright and Beautiful”:

The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them high and lowly
And ordered their estate.

But as cities grew, tradition came under attack. In the writings of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), John Locke (1632–1704), and Adam Smith (1723–1790), we see a shift in focus from a moral obligation to God and king to the pursuit of self-interest. In the new political climate, philosophers spoke of *personal liberty* and *individual rights*. Echoing these sentiments, our own Declaration of Independence states that every person has “certain unalienable rights,” including “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

The French Revolution, which began in 1789, was an even greater break with political and social tradition. The French social analyst Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) thought the changes in society brought about by the French Revolution were so great that they amounted to “nothing short of the regeneration of the whole human race” (1955:13, orig. 1856).

A NEW AWARENESS OF SOCIETY Huge factories, exploding cities, a new spirit of individualism—these changes combined to make people more aware of their surroundings. The new discipline of sociology was born in England, France, and Germany—precisely where the changes were greatest.

Science and Sociology

And so it was that the French social thinker Auguste Comte (1798–1857) coined the term *sociology* in 1838 to describe a new way of looking at society. This makes sociology one of the youngest academic disciplines—far newer than history, physics, or economics, for example.

Of course, Comte was not the first person to think about the nature of society. Such questions fascinated many of the brilliant thinkers of ancient civilizations, including the Chinese philosopher K'ung Fu-tzu, or Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.), and the Greek philosophers Plato

(c. 427–347 B.C.E.) and Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.).¹ Over the next several centuries, the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180), the medieval thinkers Saint Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) and Christine de Pisan (c. 1363–1431), and the English playwright William Shakespeare (1564–1616) wrote about the workings of society.

Yet these thinkers were more interested in imagining the ideal society than in studying society as it really was. Comte and other pioneers of sociology all cared about how society could be improved, but their major objective was to understand how society actually operates.

Comte (1975, orig. 1851–54) saw sociology as the product of a three-stage historical development. During the earliest, the *theological stage*, from the beginning of human history to the end of the European Middle Ages about 1350 C.E., people took a religious view that society expressed God's will.

With the dawn of the Renaissance in the fifteenth century, the theological approach gave way to a *metaphysical stage* of history in which people saw society as a natural rather than a supernatural system. Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), for example, suggested that society reflected not the perfection of God so much as the failings of a selfish human nature.

What Comte called the *scientific stage* of history began with the work of early scientists such as the Polish astronomer Copernicus (1473–1543), the Italian astronomer and physicist Galileo (1564–1642), and the English physicist and mathematician Isaac Newton (1642–1727). Comte's contribution came in applying the scientific approach—first used to study the physical world—to the study of society.²

Comte's approach is called **positivism**, a scientific approach to knowledge based on "positive" facts as opposed to mere speculation. As a positivist, Comte believed that society operates according to its own laws, much as the physical world operates according to gravity and other laws of nature.

¹ The abbreviation B.C.E. means "before the common era." We use this throughout the text instead of the traditional B.C. ("before Christ") to reflect the religious diversity of our society. Similarly, in place of the traditional A.D. (*anno Domini*, or "in the year of our Lord"), we use the abbreviation C.E. ("common era").

² Illustrating Comte's stages, the ancient Greeks and Romans viewed the planets as gods; Renaissance metaphysical thinkers saw them as astral influences (giving rise to astrology); by the time of Galileo, scientists understood planets as natural objects moving according to natural laws.

Comte's Three Stages of Society		
Theological Stage (the Church in the Middle Ages)	Metaphysical Stage (the Enlightenment and the ideas of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau)	Scientific Stage (modern physics, chemistry, sociology)

By the beginning of the twentieth century, sociology had spread to the United States and showed the influence of Comte's ideas. Today, most sociologists still consider science a crucial part of sociology. But as Chapter 2 ("Sociological Investigation") explains, we now realize that human behavior is far more complex than the movement of planets or even the actions of other living things. We are creatures of imagination and spontaneity, so human behavior can never be fully explained by any rigid "laws of society." In addition, early sociologists such as Karl Marx (1818–1883), whose ideas are discussed in Chapter 4 ("Society"), were troubled by the striking inequalities of industrial society. They hoped that the new discipline of sociology would not just help us understand society but also lead to change toward greater social justice.

Sociological Theory

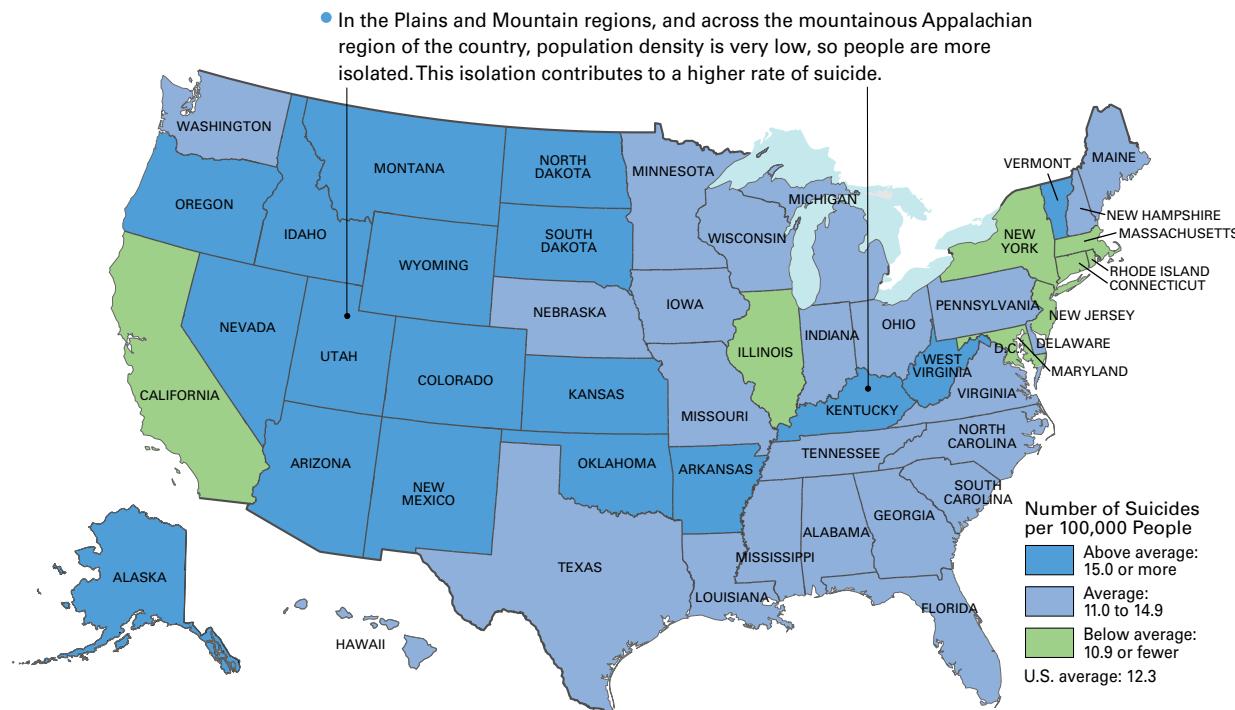
1.5 Summarize sociology's major theoretical approaches.

The desire to translate observations into understanding brings us to the important aspect of sociology known as *theory*. A **theory** is a statement of how and why specific facts are related. The job of sociological theory is to explain social behavior in the real world. For example, recall Emile Durkheim's theory that categories of people with low social integration (men, Protestants, the wealthy, and the unmarried) are at higher risk of suicide.

As the next chapter ("Sociological Investigation") explains, sociologists test their theories by gathering evidence using various research methods. Durkheim did exactly this, finding out which categories of people were more likely to commit suicide and which were less likely and then devising a theory that best squared with all available evidence. National Map 1–1 on page 42 displays the suicide rate for each of the fifty states.

In deciding which theory to use, sociologists face two basic questions: What issues should we study? And how should we connect the facts? In the process of answering these questions, sociologists look to one or more theoretical approaches as "road maps." Think of a **theoretical approach** as a basic image of society that guides thinking and research. Sociologists make use of three major theoretical approaches: the *structural-functional approach*, the *social-conflict approach*, and the *symbolic-interaction approach*.

Seeing Ourselves



National Map 1–1 Suicide Rates across the United States

This map shows which states have high, average, and low suicide rates. Look for patterns. By and large, high suicide rates occur where people live far apart from one another. More densely populated states have low suicide rates. Do these data support or contradict Durkheim's theory of suicide? Why?

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015).

The Structural-Functional Approach

The **structural-functional approach** is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. As its name suggests, this approach points to **social structure**, any relatively stable pattern of social behavior. Social structure gives our lives shape—in families, the workplace, the classroom, and the community. This approach also looks for a structure's **social functions**, the consequences of any social pattern for the operation of society as a whole. All social structures, from a simple handshake to complex religious rituals, function to keep society going, at least in its present form.

The structural-functional approach owes much to Auguste Comte, who pointed out the need to keep society unified at a time when many traditions were breaking down. Emile Durkheim, who helped establish the study of sociology in French universities, also based his work on this approach. A third structural-functional pioneer was the English sociologist Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). Spencer compared society to the human body. Just as the structural parts of the human body—the skeleton, muscles, and various internal organs—function

interdependently to help the entire organism survive, social structures work together to preserve society. The structural-functional approach, then, leads sociologists to identify various structures of society and investigate their functions.

Robert K. Merton (1910–2003) expanded our understanding of the concept of social function by pointing out that any social structure probably has many functions, some more obvious than others. He distinguished between **manifest functions**, the recognized and intended consequences of any social pattern, and **latent functions**, the unrecognized and unintended consequences of any social pattern. For example, the manifest function of the U.S. system of higher education is to provide young people with the information and skills they need to perform jobs after graduation. Perhaps just as

social functions the consequences of a social pattern for the operation of society as a whole

manifest functions the recognized and intended consequences of any social pattern

latent functions the unrecognized and unintended consequences of any social pattern

important, although less often acknowledged, is college's latent function as a "marriage broker," bringing together young people of similar social backgrounds. Another latent function of higher education is to limit unemployment by keeping millions of young people out of the labor market, where many of them might not easily find jobs.

But Merton also recognized that not all the effects of social structure are good. Thus a **social dysfunction** is *any social pattern that may disrupt the operation of society*. Globalization of the economy may be good for some companies, but it also can cost workers their jobs as production moves overseas. Therefore, whether any social patterns are helpful or harmful for society is a matter about which people often disagree. In addition, what is functional for one category of people (say, high profits for Wall Street bank executives) may well be dysfunctional for other categories of people (workers who lose pension funds invested in banks that fail or people who cannot pay their mortgages and end up losing their homes).

EVALUATE

The main idea of the structural-functional approach is its vision of society as stable and orderly. The main goal of the sociologists who use this approach, then, is to figure out "what makes society tick."

In the mid-1900s, most sociologists favored the structural-functional approach. In recent decades, however, its influence has declined. By focusing on social stability and unity, critics point out, structural-functionalism ignores inequalities of social class, race, and gender, which cause tension and conflict. In general, its focus on stability at the expense of conflict makes this approach somewhat conservative. As a critical response, sociologists developed the social-conflict approach.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING How do manifest functions differ from latent functions? Give an example of a manifest function and a latent function of automobiles in the United States.

The Social-Conflict Approach

The **social-conflict approach** is a framework for building theory that sees society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict and change. Unlike the structural-functional emphasis on solidarity and stability, this approach highlights inequality and change. Guided by this approach, which includes the gender-conflict and race-conflict approaches, sociologists investigate how factors such as social class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and age are linked to a society's unequal distribution of money, power, education, and social prestige. A conflict analysis rejects the idea that social structure promotes the operation of society as a whole, focusing instead on how social patterns benefit some people while hurting others.

Sociologists using the social-conflict approach look at ongoing conflict between dominant and disadvantaged categories of people—the rich in relation to the poor, white people



The social-conflict approach points out patterns of inequality in everyday life. The TV series *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* takes a close-up look at the lives of extremely affluent women. In what ways do they depend on the work of people of lower social position?

in relation to people of color, and men in relation to women. Typically, people on top try to protect their privileges while the disadvantaged try to gain more for themselves.

A social-conflict analysis of our educational system shows how schooling carries class inequality from one generation to the next. For example, secondary schools assign students to either college preparatory or vocational training programs. From a structural-functional point of view, such "tracking" benefits everyone by providing schooling that fits students' abilities. But social-conflict analysis argues that tracking often has less to do with talent than with social background, with the result that well-to-do students are placed in higher tracks while poor children end up in the lower tracks.

Thus young people from privileged families get the best schooling, which leads them to college and later to high-income careers. The children of poor families, by contrast, are not prepared for college and, like their parents before them, typically get stuck in low-paying jobs. In both cases, the social standing of one generation is passed on to the next, with schools justifying the practice in terms of individual merit (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Oakes, 1982, 1985; Brunello & Checchi, 2007).

social-conflict approach a framework for building theory that sees society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict and change

gender-conflict theory (feminist theory) the study of society that focuses on inequality and conflict between women and men

race-conflict theory the study of society that focuses on inequality and conflict between people of different racial and ethnic categories

feminism support of social equality for women and men

Many sociologists use the social-conflict approach not just to understand society but also to bring about societal change that would reduce inequality. Karl Marx, whose ideas are discussed at length in Chapter 4 (“Society”), championed the cause of the workers in what he saw as their battle against factory owners. In a well-known statement (inscribed on his monument in London’s Highgate Cemetery), Marx asserted, “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.”

Feminism and Gender-Conflict Theory

One important social-conflict theory is **gender-conflict theory** (or **feminist theory**), *the study of society that focuses on inequality and conflict between women and men*. The gender-conflict approach is closely linked to **feminism**, *support of social equality for women and men*.



We can use the sociological perspective to look at sociology itself. All of the most widely recognized pioneers of the discipline were men. This is because in the nineteenth century, it was all but unheard of for women to be college professors, and few women took a central role in public life. But Jane Addams was an early sociologist in the United States, who founded Hull House, a Chicago settlement house where she spent many hours helping young people.

The importance of gender-conflict theory lies in making us aware of the many ways in which our way of life places men in positions of power over women: in the home (where men are usually considered “head of the household”), in the workplace (where men earn more income and hold most positions of power), and in the mass media (where, for instance, more men than women are hip-hop stars).

Another contribution of feminist theory is making us aware of the importance of women to the development of sociology. Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) is regarded as the first woman sociologist. Born to a wealthy English family, Martineau made her mark in 1853 by translating the writings of Auguste Comte from French into English. In her own published writings, she documented the evils of slavery and argued for laws to protect factory workers, defending workers’ right to unionize. She was particularly concerned about the position of women in society and fought for changes in education policy so that women could have more options in life than marriage and raising children.

In the United States, Jane Addams (1860–1935) was a sociological pioneer whose contributions began in 1889 when she helped found Hull House, a Chicago settlement house that provided assistance to immigrant families. Although widely published—Addams wrote eleven books and hundreds of articles—she chose the life of a public activist over that of a university sociologist, speaking out on issues involving immigration and the pursuit of peace. Though her pacifism during World War I was the subject of much controversy, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931.

All chapters of this book consider the importance of gender and gender inequality. For an in-depth look at feminism and the social standing of women and men, see Chapter 13 (“Gender Stratification”).

Race-Conflict Theory

Another important type of social-conflict theory is **race-conflict theory**, *the study of society that focuses on inequality and conflict between people of different racial and ethnic categories*. Just as men have power over women, white people have numerous social advantages over people of color including, on average, higher incomes, more schooling, better health, and longer life expectancy.

Race-conflict theory also points out the contributions made by people of color to the development of sociology. Ida Wells Barnett (1862–1931) was born to slave parents but rose to become a teacher and then a journalist

and newspaper publisher. She campaigned tirelessly for racial equality and, especially, to put an end to the lynching of black people. She wrote and lectured about racial inequality throughout her life (Lengerman & Niebrugge-Brantley, 1998).

An important contribution to understanding race in the United States was made by William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868–1963). Born to a poor Massachusetts family, Du Bois (pronounced doo-boyss) enrolled at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and then at Harvard University, where he earned the first doctorate awarded by that university to a person of color. Du Bois then founded the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, which was an important center of sociological research in the early decades of the twentieth

century. Like most people who follow the social-conflict approach (whether focusing on class, gender, or race), Du Bois believed that sociologists should not simply learn about society's problems but also try to solve them. He therefore studied the black communities across the United States, pointing to numerous social problems ranging from educational inequality to a political system that denied people their right to vote and the terrorist practice of lynching. Du Bois spoke out against racial inequality and participated in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (E. Wright, 2002a, 2002b). The Thinking About Diversity box takes a closer look at the ideas of W. E. B. Du Bois.

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

W. E. B. Du Bois: A Pioneer in Sociology

One of sociology's pioneers in the United States, William Edward Burghardt Du Bois saw sociology as the key to solving society's problems, especially racial inequality. Du Bois earned a Ph.D. in sociology from Harvard University and established the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory, one of the first centers of sociological research in the United States. He helped his colleagues in sociology—and people everywhere—to see the deep racial divisions in the United States. White people can simply be "Americans," Du Bois pointed out; African Americans, however, have a "double consciousness," reflecting their status as people who are never able to escape identification based on the color of their skin.

In his sociological classic *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899), Du Bois explored Philadelphia's African American community, identifying both the strengths and the weaknesses of people who were dealing with overwhelming social problems on a day-to-day basis. He challenged the belief—widespread at that time—that blacks were inferior to



whites, and he blamed white prejudice for creating the problems that African Americans faced. He also criticized successful people of color for being so eager to win white acceptance that they gave up all ties with the black community that needed their help.

Despite notable achievements, Du Bois gradually grew impatient with academic study, which he felt was too detached from the everyday struggles experienced by people of color. Du Bois wanted change. It was the hope of sparking public action against racial separation that led Du Bois, in 1909, to participate in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an organization that has been active in supporting racial equality for more than a century. As the editor of the organization's magazine, *Crisis*, Du Bois worked tirelessly to challenge laws and social customs that deprived African Americans of the rights and opportunities enjoyed by the white majority.

Du Bois described race as the major problem facing the United States in the twentieth century. Early in his career, he was hopeful about overcoming racial divisions. By the end of his life, however, he had grown bitter, believing that little had changed. At the age of ninety-three, Du Bois left the United States for Ghana, where he died two years later.

What Do You Think?

1. If he were alive today, what do you think Du Bois would say about racial inequality in the twenty-first century?
2. How much do you think African Americans today experience a "double consciousness"?
3. In what ways can sociology help us understand and reduce racial conflict?

SOURCES: Based in part on Baltzell (1967), Du Bois (1967, orig. 1899), Wright (2002a, 2002b), and personal communication with Earl Wright II.

EVALUATE

The various social-conflict theories have gained a large following in recent decades, but like other approaches, they have met with criticism. Because any social-conflict theory focuses on inequality, it largely ignores how shared values and interdependence unify members of a society. In addition, say critics, to the extent that it pursues political goals, a social-conflict approach cannot claim scientific objectivity. Supporters of social-conflict theory respond that *all* theoretical approaches have political consequences.

A final criticism of both the structural-functional and the social-conflict approaches is that they paint society in broad strokes—in terms of “family,” “social class,” “race,” and so on. A third type of theoretical analysis—the symbolic-interaction approach—views society less in general terms and more as the everyday experiences of individual people.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Why do you think sociologists characterize the social-conflict approach as “activist”? What is it actively trying to achieve?

The Symbolic-Interaction Approach

The structural-functional and social-conflict approaches share a **macro-level orientation**, *a broad focus on social structures that shape society as a whole*. Macro-level sociology takes in the big picture, rather like observing a city from high above in a helicopter and seeing how highways help people move from place to place or how housing differs from rich to poor neighborhoods. Sociology also uses a **micro-level orientation**, *a close-up focus on social interaction in specific situations*. Exploring urban life in this way occurs at street level, where you might watch how children invent games on a school playground or how pedestrians respond to homeless people they pass on the street. The **symbolic-interaction approach**, then, is *a framework for building theory that sees society as the product of the everyday interactions of individuals*.

How does “society” result from the ongoing experiences of tens of millions of people? One answer, explained

macro-level orientation *a broad focus on social structures that shape society as a whole*

structural-functional approach *a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability*

social-conflict approach *a framework for building theory that sees society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict and change*

micro-level orientation *a close-up focus on social interaction in specific situations*

symbolic-interaction approach *a framework for building theory that sees society as the product of the everyday interactions of individuals*

in Chapter 6 (“Social Interaction in Everyday Life”), is that society is nothing more than the shared reality that people construct for themselves as they interact with one another. Human beings live in a world of symbols, attaching *meaning* to virtually everything, from the words on a page to the wink of an eye. We create “reality,” therefore, as we define our surroundings, decide what we think of others, and shape our own identities.

The symbolic-interaction approach has roots in the thinking of Max Weber (1864–1920), a German sociologist who emphasized the need to understand a setting from the point of view of the people in it. Weber’s approach is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (“Society”).

Since Weber’s time, sociologists have taken micro-level sociology in a number of directions. Chapter 5 (“Socialization”) discusses the ideas of George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), who explored how our personalities develop as a result of social experience. Chapter 6 (“Social Interaction in Everyday Life”) presents the work of Erving Goffman (1922–1982), whose *dramaturgical analysis* describes how we resemble actors on a stage as we play our various roles. Other contemporary sociologists, including George Homans and Peter Blau, have developed *social-exchange analysis*. In their view, social interaction is guided by what each person stands to gain or lose from the interaction. In the ritual of courtship, for example, people seek mates who offer at least as much—in terms of physical attractiveness, intelligence, and social background—as they offer in return.

EVALUATE

Without denying the existence of macro-level social structures such as the family and social class, the symbolic-interaction approach reminds us that society basically amounts to *people interacting*. That is, micro-level sociology tries to show how individuals actually experience society. But on the other side of the coin, by focusing on what is unique in each social scene, this approach risks overlooking the widespread influence of culture, as well as factors such as class, gender, and race.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING How does a micro-level analysis differ from a macro-level analysis? Provide an illustration of a social pattern at both levels.

APPLYING THEORY

Major Theoretical Approaches

	Structural-Functional Approach	Social-Conflict, Gender-Conflict, and Race-Conflict Approaches	Symbolic-Interaction Approach
What is the level of analysis?	Macro-level	Macro-level	Micro-level
What image of society does the approach have?	Society is a system of interrelated parts that is relatively stable. Each part works to keep society operating in an orderly way. Members generally agree about what is morally right and morally wrong.	Society is a system of social inequalities based on class (Marx), gender (gender-conflict theory and feminism), and race (race-conflict theory). Society operates to benefit some categories of people and harm others. Social inequality causes conflict that leads to social change.	Society is an ongoing process. People interact in countless settings using symbolic communications. The reality people experience is variable and changing.
What core questions does the approach ask?	How is society held together? What are the major parts of society? How are these parts linked? What does each part do to help society work?	How does society divide a population? How do advantaged people protect their privileges? How do disadvantaged people challenge the system seeking change?	How do people experience society? How do people shape the reality they experience? How do behavior and meaning change from person to person and from one situation to another?

The Applying Theory table summarizes the main characteristics of sociology's major theoretical approaches: the structural-functional approach, the social-conflict approach, feminism and the gender-conflict approach, the race-conflict approach, and the symbolic-interaction approach. Each of these approaches is helpful in answering particular kinds of questions about society. However, the fullest understanding of our social world comes from using all of them, as you can see in the following analysis of sports in the United States.

Applying the Approaches: The Sociology of Sports

1.6 Apply sociology's major theoretical approaches to the topic of sports.

Who doesn't enjoy sports? Children as young as six or seven take part in organized sports, and many teens become skilled at three or more. Weekend television is filled with sporting events for viewers of all ages, and whole sections of our newspapers are devoted to teams, players, and scores. In the United States, top players such as Colin Kaepernick (football), Michael Phelps (swimming), LeBron James (basketball), and Serena Williams (tennis) are among our most famous celebrities. Sports in the United States are also a multibillion-dollar industry. What can we learn by applying sociology's major theoretical approaches to this familiar part of everyday life?

The Functions of Sports

A structural-functional approach directs our attention to the ways in which sports help society operate.

The manifest functions of sports include providing recreation as well as offering a means of getting in physical shape and a relatively harmless way to let off steam. Sports have important latent functions as well, which include building social relationships and also creating tens of thousands of jobs across the country. Participating in sports encourages competition and the pursuit of success, both of which are values that are central to our society's way of life.

Sports also have dysfunctional consequences. For example, colleges and universities try to field winning teams to build a school's reputation and also to raise money from alumni and corporate sponsors. In the process, however, these schools sometimes recruit students for their athletic skill rather than their academic ability. This practice not only lowers the academic standards of the college or university but also shortchanges athletes, who spend little time doing the academic work that will prepare them for later careers (Upthegrove, Roscigno, & Charles, 1999).

Sports and Conflict

A social-conflict analysis of sports points out that the games people play reflect their social standing. Some sports—including tennis, swimming, golf, sailing, and skiing—are expensive, so taking part is largely limited to the well-to-do. Football, baseball, and basketball, however, are accessible to people at almost all income levels. Thus the games people play are not simply a matter of individual choice but also a reflection of their social standing.

From a feminist point of view, we notice that throughout history men have dominated the world of sports. In

the nineteenth century, women had little opportunity to engage in athletic competition, and those who did received little attention (Shaulis, 1999; Feminist Majority Foundation, 2015). For example, the first modern Olympic Games, held in 1896, barred women from competition. The 2016 Olympics, by contrast, will include women competing in twenty-eight sports, including boxing. Throughout most of the twentieth century, Little League teams barred girls based on the traditional ideas that girls and women lack the strength to play sports and risk losing their femininity if they do. Like the Olympics, Little League is now open to females as well as males. But even today, our society still encourages men to become athletes while expecting women to be attentive observers and cheerleaders. At the college level, men's athletics attracts a greater amount of attention and resources compared to women's athletics, and men greatly outnumber women as coaches, even in women's sports (Welch & Sigelman, 2007). At the professional level, women also take a back seat to men,

Diversity Snapshot

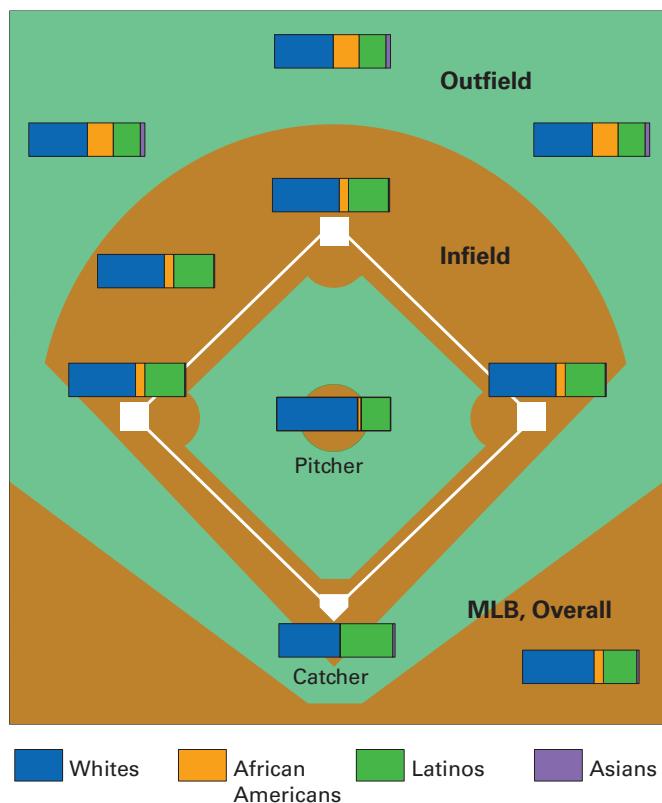


Figure 1–2 “Stacking” in Professional Baseball

Does race play a part in professional sports? Looking at the various positions in professional baseball, we see that white players are more likely to play the central positions in the infield, while people of color are more likely to play in the outfield. What do you make of this pattern?

SOURCE: Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (2014).

particularly in the sports with the most earning power and social prestige. In a listing of the world's highest-paid athletes, the first woman (tennis star Maria Sharapova) appears thirty-fourth on the list (Forbes, 2015).

Race also figures in sports. For decades, big league sports excluded people of color, who were forced to form leagues of their own. Only in 1947 did Major League Baseball admit the first African American player when Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers. More than fifty years later, professional baseball honored Robinson's amazing career by retiring his number 42 on *all* of the teams in the league. In 2013, African Americans (13 percent of the U.S. population) accounted for 9 percent of Major League Baseball players, 67 percent of National Football League (NFL) players, and 77 percent of National Basketball Association (NBA) players (Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, 2014).

One reason for the high number of African Americans in some professional sports is that athletic performance—in terms of batting average or number of points scored per game—can be precisely measured and is not influenced by racial prejudice. It is also true that some people of color make a particular effort to excel in athletics, where they see greater opportunity than in other careers (Steele, 1990; Edwards, 2000; Harrison, 2000). In recent years, in fact, African American athletes have earned higher salaries, on average, than white players. *Forbes* (2015) reports that five of the six highest-earning athletes are people who are racial or ethnic minorities.

But the race-conflict approach helps us to see that racial discrimination still exists in professional sports. For one thing, race is linked to the *positions* athletes play on the field, in a pattern called “stacking.” Figure 1–2 shows the results of a study of race in professional baseball. Notice that white athletes are more concentrated in the central “thinking” positions of pitcher (69 percent) and catcher (52 percent). By contrast, African Americans represent only 3 percent of pitchers and there are no black catchers at all. At the same time, 8 percent of infielders are African Americans, as are 25 percent of outfielders, positions characterized as requiring “speed and reactive ability” (Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, 2014).

More broadly, African Americans have a large share of players in only five sports: baseball, basketball, football, boxing, and track. In baseball, this share has been declining, from 19 percent in 1995 to 8.2 percent in 2013. And across all professional sports, the vast majority of managers, head coaches, and team owners are white (Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, 2014).

Who benefits most from professional sports? Although many individual players get sky-high salaries and millions of fans enjoy following their teams, the vast profits sports



The life of legendary baseball player Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play in Major League Baseball, is portrayed in the 2013 film 42. Sports remain an important element of social life in countless communities across the United States. Sociology's major theoretical approaches all contribute to our understanding of the role of sports in society.

generate are controlled by a small number of people—predominantly white men. In sum, sports in the United States are bound up with inequalities based on gender, race, and wealth.

Sports as Interaction

At the micro-level, a sporting event is a complex, face-to-face interaction. In part, play is guided by the players' assigned positions and the rules of the game. But players are also spontaneous and unpredictable. Following the symbolic-interaction approach, we see sports less as a system and more as an ongoing process.

From this point of view, too, we expect each player to understand the game a little differently. Some players enjoy a setting of stiff competition; for others, love of the game may be greater than the need to win.

In addition, the behavior of any single player may change over time. A rookie in professional baseball, for example, may feel self-conscious during the first few games in the big leagues but go on to develop a comfortable sense

of fitting in with the team. Coming to feel at home on the field was slow and painful for Jackie Robinson, who knew that many white players, and millions of white fans, resented his presence. In time, however, his outstanding ability and his confident and cooperative manner won him the respect of the entire nation.

The major theoretical approaches—the structural-functional approach, the social-conflict approach, which includes gender-conflict/feminist theory and race-conflict theory, and the symbolic-interaction approach—provide different insights into sports, and none by itself presents the whole story. Applied to any issue, each approach generates its own interpretations. To appreciate fully the power of the sociological perspective, you should become familiar with all these approaches.

The Controversy & Debate box on page 50 discusses the use of the sociological perspective and reviews many of the ideas presented in this chapter. This box raises a number of questions that will help you understand how sociological generalizations differ from the common stereotypes we encounter every day.

Controversy & Debate

Is Sociology Nothing More Than Stereotypes?

Jena: (*raising her eyes from her notebook*) Today in sociology class, we talked about stereotypes.

Marcia: (*trying to focus on her science lab*) OK, here's one: Roommates don't like to be disturbed when they're studying.

Jena: Seriously, my studious friend, we all have stereotypes, even professors.

Marcia: (*becoming faintly interested*) Like what?

Jena: Professor Chandler said today in class that if you're a Protestant, you're likely to kill yourself. And then Yannina—this girl from, I think, Ecuador—says something like, "You Americans are rich, you marry, and you love to divorce!"

Marcia: My brother said to me last week that "everybody knows you have to be black to play professional basketball." Now there's a stereotype!

College students, like everyone else, are quick to make generalizations about people. And as this chapter has explained, sociologists, too, love to generalize by looking for social patterns. However, beginning students of sociology may wonder if generalizations aren't really the same thing as stereotypes. For example, are the statements reported by Jena and Marcia true generalizations or false stereotypes?

Let's first be clear that a **stereotype** is a *simplified description applied to every person in some category*. Each of the statements made at the beginning of this box is a stereotype that is false for three reasons. First, rather than describing averages, each statement describes every person in some category in exactly the same way; second, even though many stereotypes often contain an element of truth, each statement ignores facts and distorts reality; and third, each statement seems to be motivated by bias, sounding more like a "put-down" than a fair-minded observation.



A sociology classroom is a good place to get at the truth behind common stereotypes.

What about sociology? If our discipline looks for social patterns and makes generalizations, does it express stereotypes? The answer is no, for three reasons. First, *sociologists do not carelessly apply any generalization to everyone in a category*. Second, *sociologists make sure that a generalization squares with the available facts*. And third, *sociologists offer generalizations fair-mindedly, with an interest in getting at the truth*.

Jena remembered her professor saying (although not in quite the same words) that the suicide rate among Protestants is higher than among Catholics or Jews. Based on information presented earlier in this chapter, that is a true statement. However, the way Jena incorrectly reported the classroom remark—"If you're a Protestant, you're likely to kill yourself"—is not good sociology. It is not a true generalization because the vast majority of Protestants do no such thing. It would be just as wrong to jump to the conclusion that a particular friend, because he is a Protestant male, is about to end his own life. (Imagine refusing to lend money to a roommate who happens to be a Baptist, explaining, "Well, given the way people like you commit suicide, I might never get paid back!")

Second, sociologists shape their generalizations to the available facts. A more factual version of the statement Yannina made in class is that, on average, the U.S. population does have a high standard of living, almost everyone in our society does marry at some point in life, and although few people take pleasure in divorcing, our divorce rate is also among the world's highest.

Third, sociologists try to be fair-minded and want to get at the truth. The statement made by Marcia's brother, about African Americans and basketball, is an unfair stereotype rather than good sociology for two reasons. First, although African Americans are overly represented in professional basketball relative to their share of the population, the statement—as made earlier—is simply not true; second, the comment seems motivated by bias rather than truth-seeking.

The bottom line is that good sociological generalizations are *not* the same as harmful stereotypes. A college sociology course is an excellent setting for getting at the truth behind common stereotypes. The classroom encourages discussion and offers the factual information you need to decide whether a particular statement is a valid sociological generalization or a harmful or unfair stereotype.

What Do You Think?

1. Can you think of a common stereotype of sociologists? What is it? After reading this box, do you still think it is valid?
2. Do you think taking a sociology course can help correct people's stereotypes? Why or why not?
3. Can you think of a stereotype of your own that might be challenged by sociological analysis?

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 1 The Sociological Perspective

Why do couples marry?

We asked this question at the beginning of this chapter. The commonsense answer is that people marry because they are in love. But as this chapter has explained, society guides our everyday lives, and the power of society affects everything we do, think, and feel. Look at the

three photographs, each showing a couple that, we can assume, is “in love.” In each case, can you provide some of the rest of the story? By looking at the categories that the people involved represent, explain how society is at work in bringing the two people together.



Beyoncé Giselle Knowles, widely known as Beyoncé, performs in New York's Madison Square Garden with her husband Jay-Z (Shawn Corey Carter). Looking at this couple, who married in 2008, what social patterns do you see?



In 2014, David Burtka and Neil Patrick Harris were married. They are raising two young children. Ten years ago, when this couple began dating, it is likely that few people imagined that same-sex marriage would become legal throughout the United States within a decade.



In 2013, eighty-six-year-old Hugh Hefner, founder of Playboy Enterprises, married twenty-six-year-old model Crystal Harris. What social patterns do you see in this relationship?

Hint Society is at work on many levels. Consider (1) rules about same-sex and other-sex marriage, (2) laws defining the categories of people whom one may marry, (3) the importance of race and ethnicity, (4) the importance of social class, (5) the importance of age, and (6) the importance of social exchange (what each partner offers the other). All societies enforce various rules that state who should or should not marry whom.

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

- Analyze the marriages of your parents, other family members, and friends in terms of class, race, age, and other factors. What evidence can you find that society guides the feelings that we call “love”?
- From a sociological perspective, think about any changes in household patterns in your society in recent times. Are these leading to equality or marginality? Are there any social problems, such as crime or homelessness?
- Think about celebrities like sportspersons, actors, singers, and writers from other countries who are popular in your social circle. What role does social media and information technology play in bringing these celebrities closer to you?
- Considering social exchange analysis, how are your social interactions guided by what you stand to gain or lose from them? What minimum expectations do you have from your friends and what are you willing to offer them in return?
- What kind of sports do you like to play? Do you think that your gender plays any role in your choice of sports?
- Go to www.sociologyinfocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 1 The Sociological Perspective

The Sociological Perspective

1.1 Explain how the sociological perspective differs from common sense. (pages 31–35)

The **sociological perspective** reveals the power of society to shape individual lives.

- What we commonly think of as personal choice—whether or not to go to college, how many children we will have, even the decision to end our own life—is affected by social forces.
- Peter Berger described the sociological perspective as “seeing the general in the particular.”
- C. Wright Mills called this point of view the “sociological imagination,” claiming it transforms personal troubles into public issues.
- The experience of being an outsider or of living through a social crisis can encourage people to use the sociological perspective.

sociology the systematic study of human society

society people who live in a defined territory and share a way of life

sociological perspective sociology’s special point of view that sees general patterns of society in the lives of particular people

global perspective the study of the larger world and our society’s place in it

high-income countries nations with the highest overall standards of living

middle-income countries nations with a standard of living about average for the world as a whole

low-income countries nations with a low standard of living in which most people are poor

Applying the Sociological Perspective

1.3 Identify the advantages of sociological thinking for developing public policy, for encouraging personal growth, and for advancing in a career. (pages 37–39)

Research by sociologists plays an important role in shaping **public policy**.

On a **personal level**, using the sociological perspective helps us see the opportunities and limits in our lives and empowers us to be active citizens.

A background in sociology is excellent preparation for success in many different .

The Origins of Sociology

1.4 Link the origins of sociology to historical social changes. (pages 40–41)

Rapid social change in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made people more aware of their surroundings and helped trigger the development of sociology:

- The **rise of an industrial economy** moved work from homes to factories, weakening the traditions that had guided community life for centuries.
- The **explosive growth of cities** created many social problems, such as crime and homelessness.
- **Political change** based on ideas of individual liberty and individual rights encouraged people to question the structure of society.

Auguste Comte named sociology in 1838 to describe a new way of looking at society.

- Early philosophers had tried to describe the ideal society.
- Comte wanted to understand society as it really is by using **positivism**, a way of understanding based on science.
- Karl Marx and many later sociologists used sociology to try to make society better.

positivism a scientific approach to knowledge based on “positive” facts as opposed to mere speculation

The Importance of a Global Perspective

1.2 State several reasons that a global perspective is important in today’s world. (pages 35–37)

Where we live—in a **high-income country** like the United States, a **middle-income country** such as Brazil, or a **low-income country** such as Mali—shapes the lives we lead. Societies throughout the world are increasingly interconnected.

- New technology allows people around the world to share popular trends.
- Immigration from around the world increases the racial and ethnic diversity of the United States.
- Trade across national boundaries has created a global economy.

Many social problems that we face in the United States are far more serious in other countries.

Learning about life in other societies helps us learn more about ourselves.

Sociological Theory

1.5 Summarize sociology's major theoretical approaches. (pages 41–46)

A **theory** states how facts are related, weaving observations into insight and understanding. Sociologists use three major **theoretical approaches** to describe the operation of society.

- **macro-level** The **structural-functional approach** explores how **social structures**—patterns of behavior, such as religious rituals or family life—work together to help society operate.
- Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, and Herbert Spencer helped develop the structural-functional approach.
- Thomas Merton pointed out that social structures have both **manifest functions** and **latent functions**; he also identified **social dysfunctions** as patterns that may disrupt the operation of society.

The **social-conflict approach** shows how inequality creates conflict and causes change.

- Karl Marx helped develop the social-conflict approach.
- **Gender-conflict theory**, also called **feminist theory**, focuses on ways in which society places men in positions of power over women. Harriet Martineau is regarded as the first woman sociologist.
- **Race-conflict theory** focuses on the advantages—including higher income, more schooling, and better health—that society gives to white people over people of color.
- W. E. B. Du Bois identified the “double consciousness” of African Americans.

macro-level The **symbolic-interaction approach** studies how people, in everyday interaction, construct reality.

- Max Weber’s claim that people’s beliefs and values shape society is the basis of the social-interaction approach.
- Social-exchange analysis states that social life is guided by what each person stands to gain or lose from the interaction.

theory a statement of how and why specific facts are related
theoretical approach a basic image of society that guides thinking and research

structural-functional approach a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability

social structure any relatively stable pattern of social behavior
social functions the consequences of any social pattern for the operation of society as a whole

manifest functions the recognized and intended consequences of any social pattern

latent functions the unrecognized and unintended consequences of any social pattern

social dysfunction any social pattern that may disrupt the operation of society

social-conflict approach a framework for building theory that sees society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict and change

gender-conflict theory (feminist theory) the study of society that focuses on inequality and conflict between women and men

feminism support of social equality for women and men

race-conflict theory the study of society that focuses on inequality and conflict between people of different racial and ethnic categories

macro-level orientation a broad focus on social structures that shape society as a whole

micro-level orientation a close-up focus on social interaction in specific situations

symbolic-interaction approach a framework for building theory that sees society as the product of the everyday interactions of individuals

Applying the Approaches: The Sociology of Sports

1.6 Apply sociology's major theoretical approaches to the topic of sports. (pages 47–50)

The Functions of Sports

The structural-functional approach looks at how sports help society function smoothly.

- Manifest functions of sports include providing recreation, a means of getting in physical shape, and a relatively harmless way to let off steam.
- Latent functions of sports include building social relationships and creating thousands of jobs.

Sports and Conflict

The social-conflict approach looks at the links between sports and social inequality.

- Historically, as feminism shows us, sports have benefited men more than women.
- Some sports are accessible mainly to affluent people.
- Race-conflict theory highlights the existence of racial discrimination in professional sports.

Sports as Interaction

The social-interaction approach looks at the different meanings and understandings people have of sports.

- Within a team, players affect each other’s understanding of the sport.
- The reaction of the public can affect how players perceive their sport.

stereotype a simplified description applied to every person in some category

Chapter 2

Sociological Investigation



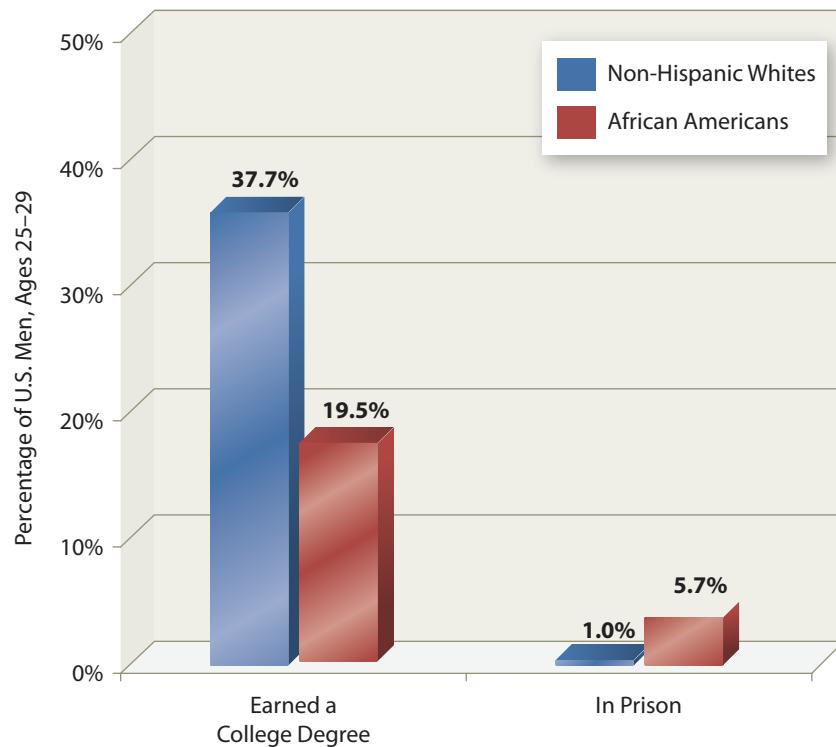
Learning Objectives

- 2.1** Explain how scientific evidence often challenges common sense.
- 2.2** Describe sociology's three research orientations.
- 2.3** Identify the importance of gender and ethics in sociological research.
- 2.4** Explain why a researcher might choose each of sociology's research methods.



The Power of Society

to influence our life chances



SOURCES: U.S. Census Bureau (2014) and U.S. Department of Justice (2014).

Do we simply “decide” our future? Among young men in their late twenties, part of the privilege of being white compared to being black is having double the odds of earning a college degree. Among African Americans, part of the disadvantage of being a person of color compared to being white is having six times the odds of being in jail or prison. While we all make choices, society sets the terrain of our life journey.

Chapter Overview

Having learned to use the sociological perspective and how to make use of sociological theory, it is time to learn how sociologists “do” research. This chapter explains the process of sociological investigation or how sociologists gather knowledge about the world. First, the chapter looks at science as a way of knowing and then discusses two limitations to scientific sociology that have given rise to two other approaches to knowing—interpretive sociology and critical sociology. Second, the chapter explains and illustrates four methods of data collection.

While on a visit to Atlanta during the winter holiday season, the sociologist Lois Benjamin (1991) called up the mother of an old college friend. Benjamin was eager to learn about Sheba; both women had dreamed about earning a graduate degree, landing a teaching job, and writing books. Now a successful university professor, Benjamin had seen her dream come true. But as she soon found out, this was not the case with Sheba.

Benjamin recalled early signs of trouble. After college, Sheba had begun graduate work at a Canadian university. But in letters to Benjamin, Sheba became more and more critical of the world and seemed to be cutting herself off from others. Some classmates wondered if she was suffering from a personality disorder. But as Sheba saw it, the problem was racism. As an African American woman, she felt she was the target of racial hostility. Before long, she flunked out of school, blaming the failure on her white professors. At this point, she left North America, earning a Ph.D. in England and then settling in Nigeria. Benjamin had not heard from her friend in the years since.

Benjamin was happy to hear that Sheba had returned to Atlanta. But her delight dissolved into shock when she saw Sheba and realized that her friend had suffered a mental breakdown and was barely responsive to anyone.

For months, Sheba’s emotional collapse troubled Benjamin. Obviously, Sheba was suffering from serious psychological problems. Having felt the sting of racism herself, Benjamin wondered if this might have played a part in Sheba’s story. Partly as a tribute to her old friend, Benjamin set out to explore the effects of race in the lives of bright, well-educated African Americans in the United States.

Benjamin knew she was calling into question the common belief that race is less of a barrier than it used to be, especially to talented African Americans (Wilson, 1978). But her own experiences—and Sheba’s too, she believed—seemed to contradict such thinking.

To test her ideas, Benjamin spent the next two years asking 100 successful African Americans across the country how race affected their lives. In the words of these “Talented One Hundred”¹ men and women, she found evidence that even among privileged African Americans, racism remains a heavy burden.



Later in this chapter, we will take a closer look at Lois Benjamin’s research. For now, notice how the sociological perspective helped her spot broad social patterns in the lives of individuals. Just as important, Benjamin’s work shows us the *doing* of sociology, the process of *sociological investigation*.

Many people imagine that scientists work only in laboratories, using complex equipment and carefully taking measurements. But as this chapter explains, although some sociologists do conduct scientific research in laboratories,

most work on neighborhood streets, in homes and workplaces, in schools and hospitals, in bars and prisons—in short, wherever people can be found.

This chapter examines the methods that sociologists use to conduct research. Along the way, we shall see that research involves not just ways of gathering information but also controversies about values: Should researchers strive to be objective? Or should they point to the need for change? Certainly Lois Benjamin did not begin her study just to show that racism exists; she wanted to bring racism out in the open as a way to challenge it. We shall tackle questions of values after presenting the basics of sociological investigation.

¹W. E. B. Du Bois used “The Talented Tenth” to refer to African American leaders.

Basics of Sociological Investigation

2.1 Explain how scientific evidence often challenges common sense.

Sociological investigation starts with two simple requirements. The first was the focus of Chapter 1: *Apply the sociological perspective*. This point of view reveals curious patterns of behavior all around us that call for further study. It was Lois Benjamin's sociological imagination that prompted her to wonder how race affects the lives of talented African Americans.

This brings us to the second requirement: *Be curious and ask questions*. Benjamin wanted to learn more about how race affects people who are high achievers. She began by asking questions: Who are the leaders of this nation's black community? What effect does being part of a racial minority have on their view of themselves? On the way white people perceive them and their work?

Seeing the world sociologically and asking questions are basic to sociological investigation. As we look for answers, we need to realize that there are various kinds of "truth."

Science as One Type of Truth

Saying that we "know" something can mean many things. Most people in the United States, for instance, say they believe in God. Few claim to have direct contact with God,



In a complex and ever-changing world, there are many different "truths." This Peace Corps volunteer on a small island in the South Pacific learned a crucial lesson—that other people often see things in a different way. There is great value in our own scientific approach to truth, but there are also important truths in the ancient traditions of people living around the world.

but they say they believe all the same. We call this kind of knowing "belief" or "faith."

A second kind of truth comes from recognized experts. Students with a health problem, for example, may consult a campus physician or search the Internet for articles written by experts in the field.

A third type of truth is based on simple agreement among ordinary people. Most of us in the United States would probably say we "know" that sexual intercourse among ten-year-old children is wrong. But why? Mostly because just about everyone we know says it is.

People's "truths" differ the world over, and we often encounter "facts" at odds with our own sense of truth. Imagine yourself a Peace Corps volunteer just arrived in a small, traditional village in Latin America. Your job is to help local people grow more crops. On your first day in the fields, you observe a strange practice: After planting seeds, the farmers lay a dead fish on top of the soil. When you ask about this, they explain that the fish is a gift to the god of the harvest. A village elder adds sternly that the harvest was poor one year when no fish were offered.

From that society's point of view, using fish as gifts to the harvest god makes sense. The people believe in it, their experts endorse it, and everyone seems to agree that the system works. But with scientific training in agriculture, you have to shake your head and wonder. The scientific "truth" in this situation is something entirely different: The decomposing fish fertilize the ground, producing a better crop.

Science represents a fourth way of knowing. **Science** is a logical system that bases knowledge on direct, systematic observation. Standing apart from faith, the wisdom of "experts," and general agreement, scientific knowledge rests on **empirical evidence**, that is, information we can verify with our senses.

Our Peace Corps example does not mean that people in traditional villages ignore what their senses tell them or that members of technologically advanced societies use only science to know things. A medical researcher using science to develop a new drug for treating cancer, for example, may still practice her religion as a matter of faith, turn to financial experts when making decisions about money, and pay attention to the political opinions of her family and friends. In short, we all hold various kinds of truths at the same time.

Common Sense versus Scientific Evidence

Like the sociological perspective, scientific evidence sometimes challenges our common sense. Here

are six statements that many North Americans assume are true:

- 1. "Poor people are far more likely than rich people to break the law."** Not true. If you regularly watch television shows like *COPS*, you might think that police arrest only people from "bad" neighborhoods. Chapter 9 ("Deviance") explains that poor people do stand out in the official arrest statistics. But research also shows that police and prosecutors are more likely to treat well-to-do people more leniently, as when a Hollywood celebrity is accused of shoplifting or drunk driving. Some laws are even written in a way that criminalizes poor people more and affluent people less.
- 2. "The United States is a middle-class society in which most people are more or less equal."** False. Data presented in Chapter 11 ("Social Class in the United States") show that the richest 5 percent of U.S. families control about 65 percent of the nation's total wealth, but almost half of all families have scarcely any wealth at all. The gap between the richest people and average people in the United States has never been greater (Wolff, 2014).
- 3. "Most poor people don't want to work."** Wrong. Research described in Chapter 11 indicates that this statement is true of some but not most poor people. In fact, more than four in ten poor individuals in the United States are children and elderly people who are not expected to work.
- 4. "Differences in the behavior of females and males are just 'human nature.'**" Wrong again. Much of what we call "human nature" is constructed by the society in which we live, as Chapter 3 ("Culture") explains. Further, as Chapter 13 ("Gender Stratification") argues, some societies define "feminine" and "masculine" very differently from the way we do.
- 5. "People change as they grow old, losing many interests as they focus on their health."** Not really. Chapter 15 ("Aging and the Elderly") reports that aging does very little to change our personalities. Problems of health do increase in old age, but by and large, elderly people keep the distinctive personalities they have had throughout their adult lives.
- 6. "Most people marry because they are in love."** Not always. To members of our society, few statements are so obvious. Surprisingly, however, in many societies, marriage has little to do with love. Chapter 18 ("Families") explains why.

These examples confirm the old saying that "it's not what we *don't* know that gets us into trouble as much as the things we *do* know that *just aren't so*." While growing up we have all heard many widely accepted "truths," been

bombarded by "expert" advice in the popular media, and felt pressure to accept the opinions of people around us. As adults, we need to evaluate more critically what we see, read, and hear. Sociology can help us do that.

Three Ways to Do Sociology

2.2 Describe sociology's three research orientations.

"Doing" sociology means learning about the social world. There is more than one way to do this. Just as sociologists can use one or more theoretical approaches (described in Chapter 1, "The Sociological Perspective"), they may also use different research orientations. The following sections describe three ways to do research: positivist sociology, interpretive sociology, and critical sociology.

Positivist Sociology

Chapter 1 explained how early sociologists such as Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim applied science to the study of society just as natural scientists investigate the physical world. **Positivist sociology**, then, is *the study of society based on systematic observation of social behavior*. A positivist orientation to the world assumes that an objective reality exists "out there." The job of the scientist is to discover this reality by gathering empirical evidence, facts we can verify with our senses, say, by seeing, hearing, or touching.

CONCEPTS, VARIABLES, AND MEASUREMENT Let's take a closer look at how science works. A basic element of science is the **concept**, *a mental construct that represents some part of the world in a simplified form*. Sociologists use concepts to label aspects of social life, including "the family" and "the economy," and to categorize people in terms of their "gender" or "social class."

A **variable** is *a concept whose value changes from case to case*. The familiar variable "price," for example, has a value that changes from item to item in a supermarket. Similarly, we use the concept "social class" to describe people's social standing as "upper class," "middle class," "working class," or "lower class."

The use of variables depends on **measurement**, *a procedure for determining the value of a variable in a specific case*. Some variables are easy to measure, as when you step on a

concept a mental construct that represents some aspect of the world in a simplified form

variable a concept whose value changes from case to case

scale to see how much you weigh. But measuring sociological variables can be far more difficult. For example, how would you measure a person's social class? You might start by looking at the clothing people wear, listening to how they speak, or noting where they live. Or trying to be more precise, you might ask about their income, occupation, and education.

Because most variables can be measured in more than one way, sociologists often have to decide which factors to consider. For example, having a very high income might qualify a person as "upper class." But what if the income comes from selling automobiles, an occupation most people think of as "middle class"? Would having only an eighth-grade education make the person "lower class"? In a case like this, sociologists usually combine these three measures—income, occupation, and education—to determine social class, as described in Chapter 10 ("Social Stratification") and Chapter 11 ("Social Class in the United States").

Sociologists also face the problem of dealing with huge numbers of people. For example, how do you

report income for thousands or even millions of U.S. families? Listing streams of numbers would carry little meaning and tells us nothing about the population as a whole. To solve this problem, sociologists use *descriptive statistics* to state what is "average" for a large number of people. The Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life box explains how.

Defining Concepts Measurement is always somewhat arbitrary because the value of any variable in part depends on how it is defined. In addition, it is easy to see that there is more than one way to measure abstract concepts such as "love," "family," or "intelligence."

Good research therefore requires that sociologists **operationalize a variable** by specifying exactly what is to be measured before assigning a value to a variable. Before measuring the concept of "social class," for example, you would have to decide exactly what you were going to measure—say, income level, years of schooling, or occupational prestige. Sometimes sociologists measure several of these

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

Three Useful (and Simple) Descriptive Statistics

The admissions office at your school is preparing a new brochure, and as part of your work-study job in that office, your supervisor asks you to determine the average salary received by last year's graduating class. To keep matters simple, assume that you talk to only seven members of the class (a real study would require contacting many more) and gather the following data on their present incomes:

\$30,000	\$42,000	\$22,000
\$165,000	\$22,000	\$35,000
\$34,000		

Sociologists use three different descriptive statistics to report averages. The simplest statistic is the *mode*, the value that occurs *most often* in a series of numbers. In this example, the mode is \$22,000, since that value occurs two times and each of the others occurs only once. If all the values were to occur only once, there would be no mode; if two different values each occurred two or three times, there would be two modes. Although it is easy to identify, sociologists rarely use the mode because it reflects only some of the numbers and is therefore a crude measure of the "average."

A more common statistic, the *mean*, refers to the *arithmetic average* of a series of numbers, calculated by adding all the values together and dividing by the number of cases. The sum of the seven incomes is \$350,000. Dividing by 7 yields a mean income of \$50,000. But notice that the mean

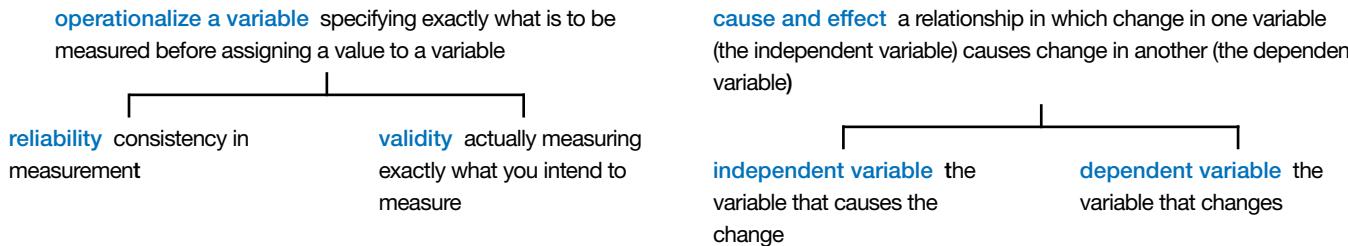
in this case is not a very good "average" because it is higher than six of the seven incomes and is not particularly close to any of the actual numbers. Because the mean is "pulled" up or down by an especially high or low value (in this case, the \$165,000 paid to one graduate, an athlete who signed as a rookie with the Cincinnati Reds farm team), it can give a distorted picture of data that include one or more extreme scores.

The *median* is the *middle case*, the value that occurs midway in a series of numbers arranged from lowest to highest. Here the median income for the seven graduates is \$34,000, because when the numbers are placed in order from lowest to highest, this value occurs exactly in the middle, with three incomes higher and three lower. (With an even number of cases, the median is halfway between the two middle cases.) Unlike the mean, the median is not affected by any extreme scores. In such cases, the median gives a better picture of what is "average" than the mean.

What Do You Think?

1. Your grade point average (GPA) is an example of an average. Is it a mode, a median, or a mean? Explain.
2. Sociologists generally use the median instead of the mean when they study people's incomes. Can you see why?
3. Do a quick calculation of the mean, median, and mode for these simple numbers: 1, 2, 5, 6, 6.

ANSWERS: mode = 6, median = 5, mean = 4.



things; in such cases, they need to specify exactly how they plan to combine these variables into one overall score. The next time you read the results of a study, notice the way the researchers operationalize each variable. How they define terms can greatly affect the results.

Even the researchers at the U.S. Census Bureau sometimes struggle with operationalizing a concept. Take the case of measuring the racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. population. Back in 1977, researchers at the U.S. Census Bureau defined race and ethnicity by asking people to make a choice from this list: white, black, Hispanic, Asian or Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaska Native. One problem with this system is that someone can be both Hispanic *and* white or black; similarly, people of Arab ancestry might not identify with any of these choices. Just as important, an increasing number of people in the United States are *multiracial*. In response to the changing face of the U.S. population, the 2000 census was the first one to allow people to describe their race and ethnicity by selecting more than one category from an expanded menu of choices and almost 7 million people did so. But many of these people selected both "Hispanic" and also a nationality, such as "Mexican." The result was an overcount of the number of multiracial people. In 2010, census researchers adjusted the process, providing clearer instructions and operationalizing the concept of "race" by offering five racial categories, "some other race," and fifty-seven multiracial options. In 2010, 9 million people identified themselves as "multiracial." By 2013, this figure had increased to about 9.4 million people (about 3 percent of the population).

Reliability and Validity For a measurement to be useful, it must be both reliable and valid. **Reliability** refers to *consistency in measurement*. A measurement is reliable if repeated measurements give the same result time after time. But consistency does not guarantee **validity**, which means *actually measuring exactly what you intend to measure*.

Getting a valid measurement is sometimes tricky. For instance, say you want to know just how religious the students at your college are. You might decide to ask students how often they attend religious services. But is going to a church, temple, or mosque really the same thing as being religious? People may attend religious services because of

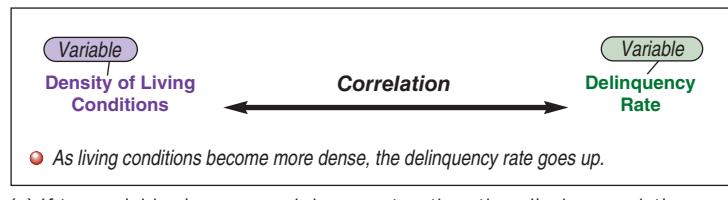
cause and effect a relationship in which change in one variable (the independent variable) causes change in another (the dependent variable)

independent variable the variable that causes the change
dependent variable the variable that changes

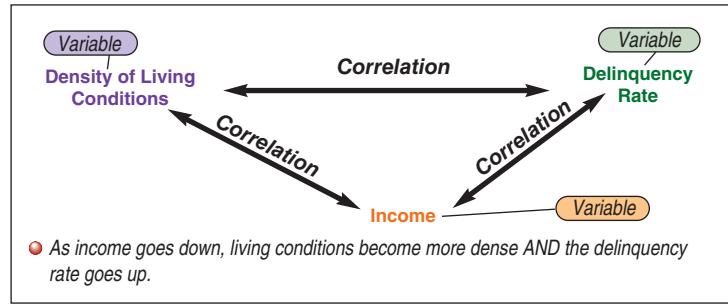
deep personal beliefs, but they may also do so out of habit or because others pressure them to go. And what about spiritual people who avoid organized religion altogether? Even when a measurement yields consistent results (making it reliable), it may not measure what we want it to (therefore lacking validity). Chapter 19 ("Religion") suggests that measuring religiosity should take account of not only participation in prayer services but also the beliefs a person holds and the degree to which a person lives by religious convictions. Good sociological research depends on careful measurement, which is always a challenge to researchers.

Relationships among Variables Once measurements are made, investigators can pursue the real payoff: seeing how variables are related. The scientific ideal is **cause and effect**, *a relationship in which change in one variable causes change in another*. Cause-and-effect relationships occur around us every day, as when studying hard for an exam results in a high grade. *The variable that causes the change* (in this case, how much you study) is called the **independent variable**. *The variable that changes* (the exam grade) is called the **dependent variable**. The value of one variable depends on the value of another. Linking variables in terms of cause and effect is important because it allows us to *predict* the outcome of future events—if we know one thing, we can accurately predict another. For example, knowing that studying hard results in a better exam grade, we can predict with confidence that a typical individual who studies hard for the next exam will receive a higher grade than if that person does not study at all.

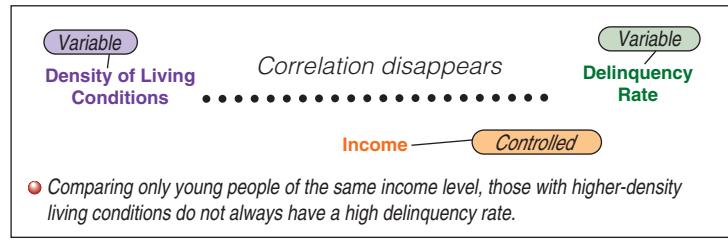
But just because two variables change together does not mean that they are linked by a cause-and-effect relationship. For example, sociologists have long observed that juvenile delinquency is more common among young people who live in crowded housing. Say we operationalize the variable "juvenile delinquency" as the number of times a person under the age of eighteen has been arrested, and we define "crowded housing" by a home's number of square feet of living space per person. It turns out that these variables are related: Delinquency rates are high in densely populated neighborhoods. But should we conclude that crowding in the home (in this case, the independent variable) is what causes delinquency (the dependent variable)?



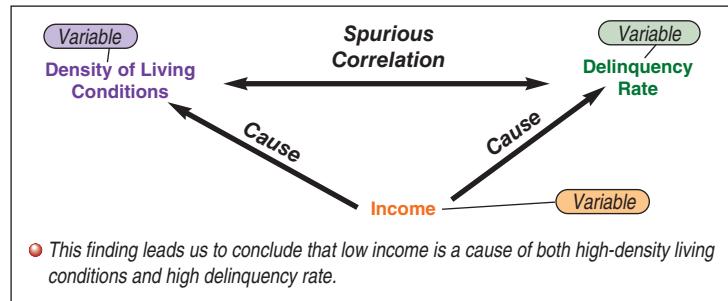
(a) If two variables increase and decrease together, they display correlation.



(b) Here we consider the effect of a third variable: income. Low income may cause both high-density living conditions and a high delinquency rate.



(c) When we control for income—that is, examine only young people of the same income level—we find that density of living conditions and delinquency rate no longer increase and decrease together.



(d) Density of living conditions and delinquency rate are correlated, but their correlation is *spurious* because neither one causes the other.

Figure 2–1 Correlation and Cause: An Example

Correlation is not the same as cause. The four figures above explain why.

Not necessarily. **Correlation** is a relationship in which two (or more) variables change together. We know that density and delinquency are correlated because they change together, as shown in part (a) of Figure 2–1. This relationship *may* mean that crowding causes more arrests, but it could also mean that some third factor is causing change in *both* of the variables under observation. To identify a third variable, think what kinds of people live in crowded housing: people with less money and few choices—the poor. Poor children are also

more likely to end up with police records. In reality, crowded housing and juvenile delinquency are found together because *both* are caused by a third factor—poverty—as shown in part (b) of Figure 2–1. In short, the apparent connection between crowding and delinquency is “explained away” by a third variable—low income—that causes them both to change. So our original connection turns out to be a **spurious correlation**, *an apparent but false relationship between two (or more) variables that is caused by some other variable*.

Exposing a correlation as spurious requires a bit of detective work, assisted by a technique called **control**, *holding constant all variables except one in order to see clearly the effect of that variable*. In our example, we suspect that income level may be causing a spurious link between housing density and delinquency. To check whether the correlation between delinquency and crowding is spurious, we control for income—that is, we hold income constant by looking at only young people of one income level. If the correlation between density and delinquency remains, that is, if young people of the same income level living in more crowded housing show higher rates of arrest than young people in less crowded housing, we have more reason to think that crowding does, in fact, cause delinquency. But if the relationship disappears when we control for income, as shown in part (c) of Figure 2–1, then we know we were dealing with a spurious correlation. In fact, research shows that the correlation between crowding and delinquency just about disappears if income is controlled (Fischer, 1984). So we have now sorted out the relationship among the three variables, as illustrated in part (d) of the figure. Housing density and juvenile delinquency have a spurious correlation; evidence shows that both variables rise or fall according to income.

To sum up, correlation means only that two (or more) variables change together. To establish cause and effect, three requirements must be met: (1) a demonstrated correlation, (2) an independent (causal) variable that occurs before the dependent variable, and (3) no evidence that a third variable could be causing a spurious correlation between the two.

Natural scientists usually have an easier time than social scientists in identifying cause-and-effect relationships because most natural scientists work in laboratories, where they can control other variables. Carrying out research in a workplace or on the streets, however, makes control very difficult, so sociologists often have to settle for demonstrating only correlation. Also, human behavior is highly complex, involving dozens of causal variables at any one time, so establishing all the cause-and-effect relationships in any situation is extremely difficult.

THE IDEAL OF OBJECTIVITY Ten students are sitting around a dorm lounge discussing the dream vacation spot for the upcoming spring break. Do you think one place will end up being everyone's clear favorite? That hardly seems likely.

In scientific terms, each of the ten people probably operationalizes the concept "dream vacation" differently. For one, it might be a deserted, sunny beach in Mexico; for another, the choice might be New Orleans, a lively city with a very active social scene; for still another, hiking the Rocky Mountains below snow-capped peaks may be the choice. Like so many other "bests" in life, the best vacations turn out to be mostly a matter of individual taste.

Personal values are fine when it comes to choosing travel destinations, but they pose a challenge to scientific research. Remember, science assumes that reality is "out there." Scientists need to study this reality without changing it in any way, and so they strive for **objectivity, personal neutrality in conducting research**. Objectivity means that researchers carefully hold to scientific procedures and do not let their own attitudes and beliefs influence the results.

Scientific objectivity is an ideal rather than a reality, of course, because no one can be completely neutral. Even the topic someone chooses to study reflects a personal interest of one sort or another, as Lois Benjamin showed us in the reasons for her decision to investigate race. But the scientific ideal is to keep a professional distance or sense of detachment from the results, however they turn out. With this ideal in mind, you should do your best when conducting research to see that conscious or unconscious biases do not distort your findings. As an extra precaution, many researchers openly state their personal leanings in their research reports so that readers can interpret the conclusions with those considerations in mind.

The German sociologist Max Weber expected that people would select their research topics according to their personal beliefs and interests. Why else, after all, would one person study world hunger, another investigate the effects of racism, and still another examine how children manage in one-parent families? Knowing that people select topics that are *value-relevant*, Weber urged researchers to be *value-free* in their investigations. Only by controlling their personal feelings and opinions (as we expect any professionals to do) can researchers study the world *as it is* rather than tell us *how they think it should be*. This detachment, for Weber, is a crucial element of science that sets it apart from politics. Politicians are committed to particular outcomes; scientists try to maintain an open mind about the results of their investigations, whatever they may turn out to be.

Weber's argument still carries much weight, although most sociologists admit that we can never be

completely value-free or even aware of all our biases. Keep in mind, however, that sociologists are not "average" people: Most are white, highly educated, and much more politically liberal than the population as a whole (Klein & Stern, 2004; Cardiff & Klein, 2005). Remember that sociologists, like everyone else, are influenced by their social backgrounds.

One way to limit distortion caused by personal values is **replication**, *repetition of research by other investigators*. If other researchers repeat a study using the same procedures and obtain the same results, we gain confidence that the results are accurate (both reliable and valid). The need for replication in scientific investigation probably explains why the search for knowledge is called "*re*-research" in the first place.



One principle of scientific research is that sociologists and other investigators should try to be objective in their work, so that their personal values and beliefs do not distort their findings. But such a detached attitude may discourage the connection needed for people to open up and share information. Thus sociologists have to decide how much to pursue objectivity and how much to show their own feelings.

Keep in mind that following the logic of science does not guarantee objective, absolute truth. What science offers is an approach to knowledge that is *self-correcting* so that in the long run, researchers stand a good chance of limiting their biases. Objectivity and truth lie, then, not in any one study but in the scientific process itself as it continues over time.

SOME LIMITATIONS OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIOLOGY

Science is one important way of knowing. Yet, applied to social life, science has several important limitations.

- 1. Human behavior is too complex for sociologists to predict any individual's actions precisely.** Astronomers calculate the movement of objects in the skies with remarkable precision, but comets and planets are nonthinking objects. Humans, by contrast, have minds of their own, so no two people react to any event (whether it be a sports victory or a natural disaster) in exactly the same way. Sociologists must therefore be satisfied with showing that *categories* of people *typically* act in one way or another. This is not a failing of sociology. It simply reflects the fact that we study creative, spontaneous people.
- 2. Because humans respond to their surroundings, the presence of a researcher may affect the behavior being studied.** An astronomer's gaze has no effect on a distant comet. But most people react to being observed. Try staring at someone for a few minutes and see for yourself. People being watched may become anxious, angry, or defensive; others may be especially friendly or helpful. The act of studying people can cause their behavior to change.

3. Social patterns vary; what is true in one time or place may not hold true in another. The same laws of physics will apply tomorrow as today, and they hold true all around the world. But human behavior is so variable that there are no universal sociological laws.

4. Because sociologists are part of the social world they study, they can never be 100 percent value-free when conducting social research. Barring a laboratory mishap, chemists are rarely personally affected by what goes on in their test tubes. But sociologists live in their "test tube," the society they study. Therefore, social scientists may find it difficult to control—or even to recognize—personal values that may distort their work.

Interpretive Sociology

Not all sociologists agree that science is the only way—or even the best way—to study human society. This is because, unlike planets or other elements of the natural world, humans do not simply move around as objects in ways that can be measured. Even more important, people are active creatures who attach meaning to their behavior, and meaning is not easy to observe directly.

Therefore, sociologists have developed a second research orientation, known as **interpretive sociology**, *the study of society that focuses on the meanings people attach to their social world*. Max Weber, the pioneer of this framework, argued that the proper focus of sociology is *interpretation*, or understanding the meaning that people create in their everyday lives.



A basic lesson of social research is that being observed affects how people behave. Researchers can never be certain precisely how this will occur; some people resent public attention, but others become highly animated when they think they have an audience.



THE IMPORTANCE OF MEANING

Interpretive sociology does not reject science completely, but it does change the focus of research. Interpretive sociology differs from positivist sociology in four ways. First, positivist sociology focuses on actions—on what people do—because that is what we can observe directly. Interpretive sociology, by contrast, focuses on people's understanding of their actions and their surroundings. Second, positivist sociology claims that objective reality exists "out there," but interpretive sociology counters that reality is subjective, constructed by people in the course of their everyday lives. Third, positivist sociology tends to favor *quantitative* data—numerical measurements of people's behavior—while interpretive sociology favors *qualitative* data, or researchers' perceptions of how people understand their world. Fourth, the positivist orientation is best suited to research in a laboratory, where investigators conducting an experiment stand back and take careful measurements. On the other hand, the interpretive orientation claims that we learn more by interacting with people, focusing on subjective meaning, and learning how they make sense of their everyday lives. As the chapter will explain, this type of research often uses personal interviews or fieldwork and is best carried out in a natural or everyday setting.

WEBER'S CONCEPT OF VERSTEHEN Max Weber believed the key to interpretive sociology lay in *Verstehen* (pronounced "fair-SHTAY-in"), the German word for "understanding." The interpretive sociologist does not just observe *what* people do but also tries to understand *why* they do it. The thoughts and feelings of subjects, which scientists tend to dismiss because they are difficult to measure, are the focus of the interpretive sociologist's attention.

Interpretive sociology does not reject the practice of observing behavior or even the use of numerical measures. Many sociologists combine a positivist focus on observing behavior patterns with an interpretive effort to study how people understand their behavior and their social world.

Critical Sociology

Like the interpretive orientation, critical sociology developed in reaction to what many sociologists saw as the limitations of positivist sociology. In this case, however, the problem involves the central principle of scientific research: objectivity.

Positivist sociology holds that reality is "out there" and the researcher's task is to study and document how

Research Orientations

positivist sociology the study of society based on systematic observation of social behavior

interpretive sociology the study of society that focuses on the meanings people attach to their social world

critical sociology the study of society that focuses on the need for social change

society works. But Karl Marx, who founded the critical orientation, rejected the idea that society exists as a "natural" system with a fixed order. To assume that society is somehow "fixed," he claimed, is the same as saying that society cannot be changed. Positivist sociology, from this point of view, supports the status quo. **Critical sociology**, by contrast, is *the study of society that focuses on the need for social change*.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHANGE Rather than asking the scientific question "How does society work?" critical sociologists ask moral and political questions, such as "Should society exist in its present form?" and "Why can't our society have less inequality?" Their answers to these questions, typically, are that society should not remain as it is and that we should try to make our world more socially equal. Critical sociology does not reject science completely—Marx (like critical sociologists today) used the scientific method to learn about inequality. But critical sociology does reject the positivist claim that researchers should try to be "objective" and limit their work to studying the status quo.

One recent account of this orientation, echoing Marx, claims that the point of sociology is "not just to research the social world but to change it in the direction of democracy and social justice" (Feagin & Hernán, 2001:1). In making value judgments about how society should be improved, critical sociology rejects Weber's goal that researchers be value-free and emphasizes instead that they should be social activists in pursuit of greater social equality.

Sociologists using the critical orientation seek to change not just society but also the character of research itself. They often identify personally with their research subjects and encourage them to help decide what to study and how to do the work. Typically, researchers and subjects use their findings to provide a voice for less powerful people and to advance the political goal of a more equal society (Feagin & Hernán, 2001; Perrucci, 2001).

SOCIOLOGY AS POLITICS Positivist sociologists object to taking sides in this way, charging that to the extent that critical sociology (whether feminist, Marxist, or of some other critical orientation) becomes political, it lacks objectivity and it cannot correct for its own biases. Critical

sociologists reply that *all* research is political or biased—either it calls for change or it does not; sociologists thus have no choice about their work being political, but they can choose *which* positions to support.

Critical sociology is an activist orientation that ties knowledge to action and seeks not just to understand the world as it exists but also to improve it. Researchers using a critical approach often take a positivist interest in measuring some social pattern such as income inequality. But the motivation for their research is to bring about some change, typically change toward a society with greater equality. In general terms, then, positivist sociology appeals to researchers with nonpolitical or more conservative political views; critical sociology appeals to those whose politics range from liberal to radical left.

Research Orientations and Theory

Is there a link between research orientations and sociological theory? There is no precise connection, but each of the three research orientations—positivist, interpretive, and critical—does stand closer to one of the theoretical approaches presented in Chapter 1 (“The Sociological Perspective”). The positivist orientation has an important factor in common with the structural-functional approach—both are concerned with understanding society as it is. In the same way, interpretive sociology has in common with the symbolic-interaction approach a focus on the meanings people attach to their social world. Finally, critical sociology has in common with the social-conflict approach the fact that both seek to reduce social inequality. The Summing Up table provides a quick review of the differences among the three research orientations. Many sociologists favor one orientation over another; however, because each provides useful insights, it is a good idea to become familiar with all three (Gamson, 1999).

SUMMING UP

Three Research Orientations in Sociology

	Positivist Sociology	Interpretive Sociology	Critical Sociology
What is reality?	Society is an orderly system. There is an objective reality “out there.”	Society is ongoing interaction. People construct reality as they attach meanings to their behavior.	Society is patterns of inequality. Reality is that some categories of people dominate others.
How do we conduct research?	Using a scientific orientation, the researcher carefully observes behavior, gathering empirical, ideally quantitative, data. Researcher tries to be a neutral observer.	Seeking to look “deeper” than outward behavior, the researcher focuses on subjective meaning. The researcher gathers qualitative data, discovering the subjective sense people make of their world. Researcher is a participant.	Seeking to go beyond positivism’s focus on studying the world as it is, the researcher is guided by politics and uses research as a strategy to bring about desired social change. Researcher is an activist.
What is the corresponding theoretical approach?	Structural-functional approach	Symbolic-interaction approach	Social-conflict approach

Issues Affecting Sociological Research

2.3 Identify the importance of gender and ethics in sociological research.

Both gender and ethics play important parts in sociological investigation. We deal with these factors in turn.

Gender

Sociologists also know that research is affected by **gender**, *the personal traits and social positions that members of a society attach to being female or male*. Margrit Eichler 1988 identifies five ways in which gender can shape research:

1. Androcentricity. *Androcentricity* (literally, “focus on the male”) refers to approaching an issue from a male perspective. Sometimes researchers act as if only men’s activities are important, ignoring what women do. For years, researchers studying occupations focused on the paid work of men and overlooked the housework and child care traditionally performed by women. Research that seeks to understand human behavior cannot ignore half of humanity.

Gynocentrism—seeing the world from a female perspective—can also limit good sociological investigation. However, in our male-dominated society, this problem arises less often.

2. Overgeneralizing. This problem occurs when researchers use data drawn from people of only one sex to support conclusions about “humanity” or “society.” Gathering information by talking to only male students and then drawing conclusions about an entire campus would be an example of overgeneralizing.

3. Gender blindness. Failing to consider gender at all is known as gender blindness. As is evident throughout

this text, the lives of men and women differ in countless ways. A study of growing old in the United States might suffer from gender blindness if it overlooked the fact that most elderly men live with their wives but elderly women typically live alone.

4. **Double standards.** Researchers must be careful not to distort what they study by judging men and women differently. For example, a family researcher who labels a couple as “man and wife” may define the man as the “head of the household” and treat him as important, paying little attention to a woman whom the researcher assumes simply plays a supporting role.
5. **Interference.** Another way gender can distort a study is if a subject reacts to the sex of the researcher, interfering with the research operation. While studying a small community in Sicily, for instance, Maureen Giovannini (1992) found that many men treated her as a woman rather than as a researcher. Some thought it was wrong for an unmarried woman to speak privately with a man. Others denied Giovannini access to places they considered off-limits to women.

There is nothing wrong with focusing research on people of one sex or the other. But all sociologists, as well as people who read their work, should be mindful of how gender can affect an investigation.

Research Ethics

Like all researchers, sociologists must be aware that research can harm as well as help subjects or communities. For this reason, the American Sociological Association (ASA)—the major professional association of sociologists in North America—has established formal guidelines for conducting research (1997).

Sociologists must try to be skillful and fair-minded in their work. They must disclose all research findings without omitting significant data. They should make their results available to other sociologists who may want to conduct a similar study.

Sociologists must also make sure that the subjects taking part in a research project are not harmed, and they must stop their work right away if they suspect that any subject is at risk of harm. Researchers are also required to protect the privacy of anyone involved in a research project, even if they come under pressure from authorities, such as the police or the courts, to release confidential information. Researchers must also get the *informed consent* of participants, which means that the subjects must understand the responsibilities and risks that the research involves before agreeing to take part.

Another guideline concerns funding. Sociologists must reveal in their published results the sources of all financial support. They must avoid accepting money from a source



If you ask only male subjects about their attitudes or actions, you may be able to support conclusions about “men” but not more generally about “people.” What would a researcher have to do to ensure that research data support conclusions about all of society?

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

Studying the Lives of Hispanics

Jorge: If you are going to include Latinos in your research, you need to learn a little about their culture.

Mark: I'm interviewing lots of different families. What's special about interviewing Latinos?

Jorge: Sit down and I'll tell you a few things you need to know....

Because U.S. society is racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse, all of us have to work with people who differ from ourselves. The same is true of sociologists. Learning, in advance, the ways of life of any category of people can ease the research process and ensure that there will be no hard feelings when the work is finished.

Gerardo Marín and Barbara Van Oss Marín (1991) have identified five areas of concern in conducting research with Hispanic people:

1. **Be careful with terms.** The Maríns point out that the term "Hispanic" is a label of convenience used by the U.S. Census Bureau. Few people of Spanish descent think of themselves as "Hispanic"; most identify with a particular country (generally, with a Latin American nation, such as Mexico or Argentina, or with Spain).
2. **Be aware of cultural differences.** By and large, the United States is individualistic and competitive. Many Hispanics, by contrast, place more value on cooperation and community. An outsider may judge the behavior of a Hispanic subject as conformist or overly trusting when in fact the person is simply trying to be helpful. Researchers



if there is any question of a conflict of interest. For example, researchers must never accept funding from any organization that seeks to influence the research results for its own purposes.

The federal government also plays a part in research ethics. Colleges and universities that seek federal funding for research involving human subjects must have an *institutional review board* (IRB) to review grant applications and ensure that research will not violate ethical standards.

should also realize that Hispanic respondents might express agreement with a particular statement merely out of politeness.

3. **Anticipate family dynamics.** Generally speaking, Hispanic cultures have strong family loyalties. Asking subjects to reveal information about another family member may make them uncomfortable or even angry. The Maríns add that in the home, a researcher's request to speak privately with a Hispanic woman may provoke suspicion or outright disapproval from her husband or father.
4. **Take your time.** Spanish cultures, the Maríns explain, tend to place the quality of relationships above simply getting a job done. A non-Hispanic researcher who tries to hurry an interview with a Hispanic family out of a desire not to delay the family's dinner may be considered rude for not proceeding at a more sociable and relaxed pace.
5. **Think about personal space.** Finally, Hispanics typically maintain closer physical contact than many non-Hispanics. Thus researchers who seat themselves across the room from their subjects may seem standoffish. Researchers might also wrongly label Hispanics as "pushy" if they move closer than non-Hispanic people find comfortable.

Of course, Hispanics differ among themselves just as people in any category do, and these generalizations apply to some more than to others. But investigators should be aware of cultural dynamics when carrying out any research, especially in the United States, where hundreds of distinctive categories of people make up our multicultural society.

What Do You Think?

1. Give a specific example of damage to a study that might take place if researchers are not sensitive to the culture of their subjects.
2. What do researchers need to do to avoid the kinds of problems noted here?
3. Discuss the research process with classmates from various cultural backgrounds. In what ways are the concerns raised by people of different cultural backgrounds similar? In what ways do they differ?

Finally, there are global dimensions to research ethics. Before beginning research in another country, an investigator must become familiar enough with that society to understand what people *there* are likely to regard as a violation of privacy or a source of personal danger. In a diverse society such as the United States, the same rule applies to studying people whose cultural background differs from your own. The Thinking About Diversity box offers some tips on the sensitivity outsiders should apply when studying Hispanic communities.

Research Methods

2.4 Explain why a researcher might choose each of sociology's research methods.

A **research method** is a systematic plan for doing research. Four commonly used methods of sociological investigation are experiments, surveys, participant observation, and the use of existing data. None is better or worse than any other. Rather, just as a carpenter selects a particular tool for a specific task, researchers select a method—or mix several methods—according to whom they want to study and what they wish to learn.

Testing a Hypothesis: The Experiment

The **experiment** is a research method for investigating cause and effect under highly controlled conditions. Experiments closely follow the logic of science, and experimental research is typically *explanatory*, asking not just what happens but also why. In most cases, researchers create an experiment to test a **hypothesis**, a statement of a possible relationship between two (or more) variables. A hypothesis typically takes the form of an *if-then* statement: *If* this particular thing were to happen, *then* that particular thing will result.

In an experiment, a researcher gathers the evidence needed to reject or not to reject the hypothesis in four steps: (1) State which variable is the *independent variable* (the “cause” of the change) and which is the dependent variable (the “effect,” the thing that is changed). (2) Measure the initial value of the dependent variable. (3) Expose the dependent variable to the independent variable (the “cause” or “treatment”). (4) Measure the dependent variable again to see what change, if any, took place. If the expected change took place, the experiment supports the hypothesis; if not, the hypothesis must be modified.

But a change in the dependent variable could be due to something other than the supposed cause. (Think back to our discussion of spurious correlations.) To be certain that they identify the correct cause, researchers carefully control other factors that might affect the outcome of the experiment. Such control is easiest to achieve in a laboratory, a setting specially constructed to neutralize outside influences.

Another strategy to gain control is dividing subjects into an *experimental group* and a *control group*. Early in the study, the researcher measures the dependent variable for subjects in both groups but later exposes only the experimental group to the independent variable or treatment. (The control group typically gets a *placebo*, a treatment that the members of the group think is the same but really has no effect on the experiment.) Then the investigator measures the subjects in both groups again. Any

factor occurring during the course of the research that influences people in the experimental group (say, a news event) would do the same to those in the control group, thus controlling or “washing out” the factor. By comparing the before and after measurements of the two groups, a researcher can learn how much of the change is due to the independent variable.

THE HAWTHORNE EFFECT Researchers need to be aware that subjects’ behavior may change simply because they are getting special attention, as one classic experiment revealed. In the late 1930s, the Western Electric Company hired researchers to investigate worker productivity in its Hawthorne factory near Chicago (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). One experiment tested the hypothesis that increasing the available lighting would raise worker output. First, researchers measured worker productivity or output (the dependent variable). Then they increased the lighting (the independent variable) and measured output a second time. Productivity had gone up, a result that supported the hypothesis. But when the research team later turned the lighting back down, productivity increased again. What was going on? The researchers concluded that the employees were working harder (even if they could not see as well) simply because people were paying attention to them and measuring their output. Although this conclusion has been called into question by the results of later research, social scientists still use the term **Hawthorne effect** to refer to a change in a subject’s behavior caused simply by the awareness of being studied (Leavitt & List, 2009).

ILLUSTRATION OF AN EXPERIMENT: THE “STANFORD COUNTY PRISON” Prisons can be violent settings, but is this due simply to the “bad” people who end up there? Or as Philip Zimbardo suspected, does the prison itself somehow cause violent behavior? This question led Zimbardo to devise a fascinating experiment, which he called the “Stanford County Prison” (Zimbardo, 1972; Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973).

Zimbardo thought that once inside a prison, even emotionally healthy people are likely to engage in violence. Thus Zimbardo treated the *prison setting* as the independent variable capable of causing *violence*, the dependent variable.

To test this hypothesis, Zimbardo’s research team constructed a realistic-looking “prison” in the basement of the psychology building on the campus of California’s Stanford University. Then they placed an ad in the local newspaper, offering to pay young men to help with a two-week research project. To each of the seventy who responded they administered a series of physical and psychological tests and then selected the healthiest twenty-four.

The next step was to randomly assign half the men to be “prisoners” and half to be “guards.” The plan called for the guards and prisoners to spend the next two weeks in



Philip Zimbardo's research helps explain why violence is a common element in our society's prisons. At the same time, his work demonstrates the dangers that sociological investigation poses for subjects and the need for investigators to observe ethical standards that protect the welfare of people who participate in research.

the mock prison. The prisoners began their part of the experiment soon afterward when the city police "arrested" them at their homes. After searching and handcuffing the men, the police drove them to the local police station, where they were fingerprinted. Then police transported their captives to the Stanford prison, where the guards locked them up. Zimbardo started his video camera rolling and watched to see what would happen next.

The experiment turned into more than anyone had bargained for. Both guards and prisoners soon became embittered and hostile toward one another. Guards humiliated the prisoners by assigning them tasks such as cleaning out toilets with their bare hands. The prisoners resisted and insulted the guards. Within four days, the researchers removed five prisoners who displayed "extreme emotional depression, crying, rage and acute anxiety" (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973:81). Before the end of the first week, the situation had become so bad that the researchers had to cancel the experiment. Zimbardo explains:

The ugliest, most base, pathological side of human nature surfaced. We were horrified because we saw some boys (guards) treat others as if they were despicable animals, taking pleasure in cruelty, while other boys (prisoners) became servile, dehumanized robots who thought only of escape, of their own individual survival and of their mounting hatred for the guards. (Zimbardo, 1972:4)

The events that unfolded at the "Stanford County Prison" supported Zimbardo's hypothesis that prison violence is rooted in the social character of the jail setting, not in the personalities of guards and prisoners. This finding

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raises questions about our society's prisons, suggesting the need for basic reform. Notice, too, that this experiment shows the potential of research to threaten the physical and mental well-being of subjects. Such dangers are not always as obvious as they were in this case. Therefore, researchers must carefully consider the potential harm to subjects at all stages of their work and halt any study, as Zimbardo did, if subjects suffer harm of any kind.

EVALUATE

In carrying out the "Stanford County Prison" study, the researchers chose to do an experiment because they were interested in testing a hypothesis. In this case, Zimbardo and his colleagues wanted to find out if the prison setting itself (rather than the personalities of individual guards and prisoners) is the cause of prison violence. The fact that the "prison" erupted in violence—even when using guards and prisoners with "healthy" profiles—supports their hypothesis.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What was Zimbardo's conclusion? How might Zimbardo's findings help explain the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. soldiers after the 2003 invasion?

Asking Questions: Survey Research

A **survey** is a research method in which subjects respond to a series of statements or questions on a questionnaire or in an interview. The most widely used of all research methods, the survey is well suited to studying what cannot be observed directly, such as political attitudes or religious beliefs. Sometimes surveys provide clues about cause and effect, but typically they yield *descriptive* findings, painting a picture of people's views on some issue.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE A survey targets some **population**, *the people who are the focus of research*. Lois Benjamin, in her study of racism described at the beginning of this chapter, studied a select population—talented African Americans. Other surveys, such as political polls that predict election results, treat every adult in the country as the population.

Obviously, contacting millions of people is impossible for even the best-funded and most patient researcher. Fortunately, there is an easier way that yields accurate results: Researchers collect data from a **sample**, *a part of a population that represents the whole*. Benjamin chose 100 talented African Americans as her sample. National political polls typically survey a sample of about 1,000 people.

Everyone uses the logic of sampling all the time. If you look at students sitting near you and notice five or six heads nodding off, you might conclude that the class finds the day's lecture dull. In reaching this conclusion, you are making a judgment about *all* the people in the class (the population) from observing *some* of your classmates (the sample).

But how can researchers be sure that a sample really represents the entire population? One way is through *random sampling*, in which researchers draw a sample from the population at random so that every person in the population has an equal chance of being selected. The mathematical laws of probability dictate that a random sample is likely to represent the population as a whole. Selecting a random sample usually involves listing everyone in the population and using a computer to make random selections to make up the sample.

Beginning researchers sometimes make the mistake of assuming that “randomly” walking up to people on the street or in a mall produces a sample that is representative of the entire city. But this technique does *not* produce a random sample because it does not give every person an equal chance to be included in the study. For one thing, on any street or in any mall whether in a rich neighborhood or near a college campus, we will find more of some kinds of people than others. The fact that the researcher may find some categories of people to be more approachable than others is another source of bias.

Although constructing a good sample is no simple task, it offers a considerable savings in time and expense. We are spared the tedious work of contacting everyone in a population, yet we can obtain essentially the same results.

population the people who are the focus of research

sample a part of a population that represents the whole

USING QUESTIONNAIRES Selecting subjects is just the first step in carrying out a survey. Also needed is a plan for asking questions and recording answers. Most surveys use a questionnaire for this purpose.

A **questionnaire** is *a series of written questions a researcher presents to subjects*. One type of questionnaire provides not only the questions but also a selection of fixed responses (similar to a multiple-choice examination). This *closed-ended format* makes it fairly easy to analyze the results, but by narrowing the range of responses, it can also distort the findings. For example, Frederick Lorenz and Brent Bruton (1996) found that the number of hours per week students say they study for a college course depends on the options offered to them on the questionnaire. When the researchers presented students with options ranging from one hour or less to nine hours or more, 75 percent said that they studied four hours or less per week. But when subjects in a comparable group were given choices ranging from four hours or less to twelve hours or longer (a higher figure that suggests students should study more), they suddenly became more studious; only 34 percent reported that they studied four hours or less each week.

A second type of questionnaire, using an *open-ended format*, allows subjects to respond freely, expressing various shades of opinion. The drawback of this approach is that the researcher has to make sense out of what can be a very wide range of answers.

The researcher must also decide how to present questions to subjects. Most often, researchers use a *self-administered survey*, mailing or e-mailing questionnaires to respondents and asking them to complete the form and send it back. Since no researcher is present when subjects read the questionnaire, it must be both inviting and clearly written. *Pretesting* a self-administered questionnaire with a small number of people before sending it to the entire sample can prevent the costly problem of finding out—too late—that instructions or questions were confusing.

Using the mail or e-mail allows a researcher to contact a large number of people over a wide geographic area at minimal expense. But many people who receive such questionnaires treat them as junk mail, so typically

survey a research method in which subjects respond to a series of statements or questions on a questionnaire or in an interview

questionnaire a series of written questions a researcher presents to subjects

interview a series of questions a researcher asks respondents in person

no more than half are completed and returned (in 2010, 74 percent of people returned U.S. Census Bureau forms). Researchers must send follow-up mailings (or, as the Census Bureau does, visit people's homes) to urge reluctant subjects to respond.

Finally, keep in mind that many people are not capable of completing a questionnaire on their own. Young children obviously cannot, nor can many hospital patients or a surprising number of adults who simply lack the required reading and writing skills.

CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS An **interview** is a series of questions a researcher asks respondents in person. In a closed-format design, researchers read a question or statement and then ask the subject to select a response from several that are presented. More commonly, however, interviews are open-ended so that subjects can respond as they choose and researchers can probe with follow-up questions. In either case, the researcher must guard against influencing a subject, which can be as easy as raising an eyebrow when a person begins to answer.

Although subjects are more likely to complete a survey if contacted personally by the researcher, interviews have some disadvantages: Tracking people down can be costly and takes time, especially if subjects do not live in the same area. Telephone interviews allow far greater "reach," but the

impersonality of cold calls by telephone (especially when reaching answering machines) can lower the response rate.

In both questionnaires and interviews, how a question is worded greatly affects how people answer. For example, when asked during the 2008 presidential campaign if Barack Obama's race would make them less likely to vote for him, only 3 or 4 percent of people said yes. Yet if the question was changed to ask if the United States is ready to elect a black president, then almost 20 percent expressed some doubt. Similarly, if researchers asked U.S. adults if they support our military, a large majority of people said yes. Yet when researchers asked people if they supported what the military was trying to do in Iraq, most said no.

When it comes to survey questions, the exact wording will always affect responses. This is especially true if emotionally loaded language is used. Any words that trigger an emotional response in subjects will sway the results. For instance, using the expression "welfare mothers" rather than "women who receive public assistance" adds an emotional element to a question that encourages people to express a negative attitude.

Another problem is that researchers may confuse respondents by asking a double question, such as "Do you think that the government should reduce the deficit by cutting spending and raising taxes?" The issue here is that a subject could very well agree with one part of the question



Focus groups are a type of survey in which a small number of people representing a target population are asked for their opinions about some issue or product. Here a sociology professor asks students to evaluate textbooks for use in her introductory class.

but not the other, so that forcing a subject to say yes or no distorts the opinion the researcher is trying to measure.

Conducting a good interview means standardizing the technique—treating all subjects in the same way. But this, too, can be problematic. Drawing people out requires establishing rapport, which in turn depends on responding naturally to the particular person being interviewed, as you would in a normal conversation. In the end, researchers have to decide where to strike the balance between uniformity and rapport (Lavin & Maynard, 2001).

ILLUSTRATION OF SURVEY RESEARCH: STUDYING THE AFRICAN AMERICAN ELITE This chapter began by explaining how Lois Benjamin came to investigate the effects of racism on talented African American men and women. Benjamin suspected that personal achievement did not prevent hostility based on skin color. She believed this because of her own negative experiences after becoming the first black professor at the University of Tampa. But was she the exception or the rule? To answer this question, Benjamin set out to discover whether—and if so, how—racism affected other successful African Americans.

Benjamin chose to interview subjects rather than distribute a questionnaire because she wanted to talk with her subjects, ask follow-up questions, and pursue topics that might come up in conversation. A second reason Benjamin favored interviews over questionnaires is that racism is a sensitive topic. A supportive investigator can make it easier for subjects to respond to painful questions more freely.

Because conducting interviews takes a great deal of time, Benjamin had to limit the number of people in her study. Benjamin settled for a sample of 100 men and women. Even this small number kept Benjamin busy for more than two years as she scheduled interviews, traveled all over the country, and met with her respondents. She spent two more years analyzing the tapes of her interviews, deciding what the hours of talk told her about racism, and writing up her results.

Benjamin began by interviewing people she knew and asking them to suggest others. This strategy is called *snowball sampling* because the number of individuals included grows rapidly over time. Snowball sampling is an easy way to do research: We begin with familiar people who introduce us to their friends and colleagues. The drawback is that snowball sampling rarely produces a sample that is representative of the larger population. Benjamin's sample probably contained many like-minded individuals, and it was certainly biased toward people willing to talk openly about race. She understood these problems and tried to include in her sample people of both sexes, of different ages, and from different regions of the country. The Thinking About Diversity box on page 74 presents a statistical

profile of Benjamin's respondents and some tips on how to read tables.

Benjamin based all her interviews on a series of questions with an open-ended format so that her subjects could say whatever they wished. As usually happens, the interviews took place in a wide range of settings. She met subjects in offices (hers or theirs), in hotel rooms, and in cars. So as not to be distracted by having to take notes, Benjamin tape-recorded the conversations, which lasted from two-and-one-half to three hours.

As research ethics demand, Benjamin offered full anonymity to participants. Even so, many—including notables such as Vernon E. Jordan Jr. (former president of the National Urban League) and Yvonne Walker-Taylor (first woman president of Wilberforce University)—were used to being in the public eye and allowed Benjamin to use their names.

What surprised Benjamin most about her research was how eagerly many people responded to her request for an interview. These normally busy men and women seemed to want to go out of their way to contribute to her project. Benjamin reports, too, that once the interviews were under way, many became very emotional, and about 40 of her 100 subjects cried. For them, apparently, the research provided a chance to release feelings and share experiences that they had never revealed to anyone before. How did Benjamin respond to the expression of such sentiments? She reports that she cried right along with her respondents.

Of the research orientations described earlier in the chapter, you will see that Benjamin's study fits best under interpretive sociology (she explored what race meant to her subjects) and critical sociology (she undertook the study partly to document that racial prejudice still exists). Many of her subjects reported fearing that race might someday undermine their success, and others spoke of a race-based “glass ceiling” preventing them from reaching the highest positions in our society. Benjamin concluded that despite the improving social standing of African Americans, black people in the United States still feel the sting of racial hostility.

EVALUATE

Professor Benjamin chose the survey as her method because she wanted to ask a lot of questions and gather information from her subjects. Certainly, some of the information she collected could have been done using a questionnaire. But she decided to carry out interviews because she was dealing with a complex and sensitive topic. Interacting with her subjects one on one for several hours, Benjamin could put them at ease, discuss personal matters, and ask them follow-up questions.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Do you think this research could have been carried out by a white sociologist? Why or why not?

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

Lois Benjamin's African American Elite: Using Tables in Research

Say you want to present a lot of information about a diverse population. How do you do it quickly and easily? The answer is by using a *table*. A table provides a lot of information in a small amount of space, so learning to read tables can increase your reading efficiency. When you spot a table, look first at the title to see what information it contains. The table presented here provides a profile of the 100 subjects participating in Lois Benjamin's research. Across the top of the table, you will see eight variables that describe these men and women. Reading down each column, note the categories within each variable; the percentages in each column add up to 100.

Starting at the top left, we see that Benjamin's sample was mostly men (63 percent versus 37 percent women). In terms of age, most of the respondents (68 percent) were in the middle stage of life, and most grew up in a predominantly black community in the South or in the North or Midwest region of the United States.

These individuals are indeed a professional elite. Notice that half have earned either a doctorate (32 percent) or a medical or law degree (17 percent). Given their extensive

education (and Benjamin's own position as a professor), we should not be surprised that the largest share (35 percent) work in academic institutions. In terms of income, these are wealthy individuals, with most (64 percent) earning more than \$50,000 annually back in 1990 (a salary that only 42 percent of full-time workers make even today).

Finally, we see that these 100 individuals are generally left-of-center in their political views. In part, this reflects their extensive schooling (which encourages progressive thinking) and the tendency of academics to fall on the liberal side of the political spectrum.

What Do You Think?

1. Why are statistical data, such as those in this table, an efficient way to convey a lot of information?
2. Looking at the table, can you determine how long it took most people to become part of this elite? Explain your answer.
3. Do you see any ways in which this African American elite might differ from a comparable white elite? If so, what are the differences you see?

The Talented One Hundred: Lois Benjamin's African American Elite

Sex	Age	Childhood Racial Setting	Childhood Region	Highest Educational Degree	Job Sector	Income	Political Orientation
Male 63%	35 or younger 6%	Mostly black 71%	West 6%	Doctorate 32%	College or university 35%	More than \$50,000 64%	Radical left 13%
Female 37%	36 to 54 68%	Mostly white 15%	North or Midwest 32%	Medical or law 17%	Private, for-profit 17%	\$35,000 to \$50,000 18%	Liberal 38%
	55 or older 26%	Racially mixed 14%	South 38%	Master's 27%	Private, nonprofit 9%	\$20,000 to \$34,999 12%	Moderate 28%
			Northeast 12%	Bachelor's 13%	Government 22%	Less than \$20,000 6%	Conservative 5%
			Other 12%	Less 11%	Self-employed 14%		Depends on issue 14%
					Retired 3%		Unknown 2%
100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

SOURCE: Adapted from Lois Benjamin, *The Black Elite: Facing the Color Line in the Twilight of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1991), p. 276.

In the Field: Participant Observation

Lois Benjamin's research demonstrates that sociological investigation takes place not only in laboratories but also "in the field," that is, where people carry on their everyday lives. The most widely used strategy for field study is **participant observation**, a research method in which investigators systematically observe people while joining them in their routine activities.

This method allows researchers an inside look at social life in any natural setting, from a nightclub to a religious seminary. Sociologists call their account of social life in some setting a *case study*. Cultural anthropologists use participant observation to study other societies, calling this method *fieldwork* and calling their research results an *ethnography*.

research method a systematic plan for doing research

experiment a research method for investigating cause and effect under highly controlled conditions

survey a research method in which subjects respond to a series of statements or questions on a questionnaire or in an interview

participant observation a research method in which investigators systematically observe people while joining them in their routine activities

use of existing sources a research method in which a researcher uses data already collected by others

At the beginning of a field study, most investigators do not have a specific hypothesis in mind. In fact, they may not yet realize what the important questions will turn out to be. Thus most participant observation is *exploratory* and *descriptive*.

As its name suggests, participant observation has two sides. On one hand, getting an insider's look depends on becoming a participant in the setting—"hanging out" with the research subjects and trying to act, think, and even feel the way they do. Compared to experiments and survey research, participant observation has few hard-and-fast rules. But it is precisely this flexibility that allows investigators to explore the unfamiliar and adapt to the unexpected.

Unlike other research methods, participant observation may require that the researcher enter the setting not for a week or two but for months or even years. At the same time, however, the researcher must maintain some distance while acting as an observer, mentally stepping back to record field notes and later to interpret them. Because the investigator must both "play the participant" to win acceptance and gain access to people's lives and "play the observer" to maintain the distance needed for thoughtful analysis, there is an inherent tension in this method. Carrying out the twin roles of insider participant and outsider observer often comes down to a series of careful compromises.

Most sociologists perform participant observation alone, so they—and readers, too—must remember that the results depend on the work of a single person. Participant observation usually falls within interpretive sociology, yielding mostly qualitative data—the researcher's accounts of people's lives and what they think of themselves and the world around them—although researchers sometimes collect some quantitative (numerical) data. From a scientific point of view, participant observation is a "soft" method that relies heavily on personal judgment and lacks scientific rigor. Yet its personal approach is also a strength: Where a high-profile team of sociologists administering formal surveys might disrupt many social settings, a sensitive participant observer can often gain important insight into people's behavior.

**ILLUSTRATION OF PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION:
STUDYING THE HOMELESS IN JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI**
Did you ever wonder what life was like in some new and unfamiliar place? For one young sociologist, this question

has been at the center of his life. Joseph "Piko" Ewoodzie was born in Ghana, in West Africa, and moved to the United States with his family as a teenager. His father's work as a preacher required the family to move frequently, and in the process of moving, Ewoodzie had to find his way into several new communities, from midwestern Illinois to East Coast New York, and from the low-income South Bronx to the more affluent White Plains.

In 2012, Ewoodzie found himself back in the Midwest, about to embark on research for a doctoral dissertation in sociology. Already familiar with some regions of the United States, Ewoodzie had long wanted to see firsthand what life was like in the Deep South. In addition, he was curious about the lives of people whom we sometimes think of as the "poorest of the poor," those without a place to live. So he decided to study the homeless population of Jackson, Mississippi. More specifically, he set out to understand how this population, living at the margins of society, managed to get something to eat on a regular basis.

Like anyone engaged in sociological investigation, Ewoodzie considered a range of research methods. Should he develop a questionnaire and then walk around downtown Jackson asking anyone who appeared to be homeless to fill one out? Should he try to get an office on the campus of a local college and invite homeless people to come in and sit down for an interview? It was easy to see that neither of these strategies would be likely to work. Besides, Ewoodzie wanted to do more than gather information about the eating habits of homeless people. He was eager to experience their social world for himself and to discover how they lived, where they slept, and with whom they socialized. So he decided to move to Jackson and immerse himself in the homeless community. In short, he decided to become a participant observer.

Ewoodzie knew participant observation was the right method for his study, but he was still unsure of the exact steps needed to accomplish his research goal. On his first Monday morning in Jackson, he stopped by Peaches Café. He needed breakfast and this seemed as good a choice as any, and it offered the opportunity to try his hand at engaging the local people. A woman who introduced herself as Ms. Stella was single-handedly

working the grill and serving the food. Ewoodzie sat down at the counter and as the bacon sizzled, tried to figure out what to do next. Should he tell her he was a graduate student in sociology? Should he mention his interest in studying food?

After a while, he mustered up the courage to engage in small talk with a couple of guys in a booth behind him. They were talking about a basketball game that, luckily, he had watched on television the night before. He chatted with them until the topic of conversation switched to something he knew nothing about and, feeling awkward, he disengaged. His first day on the job had already taught him how difficult starting the process of fieldwork can be.

When Ewoodzie returned to Peaches the following day, the same two gentlemen were there. He exchanged greetings with them, falling into a conversation that, this time, covered a wider range of topics. The next day, it seemed almost natural to pick up the conversation with the two men, Ms. Stella, and several other customers. Ewoodzie was well on his way to becoming a “regular.” Now he was in a position to strike up conversations with others and to begin learning about life in Jackson. Researchers call this part of the research experience the process of “breaking in” to the new social scene, a step that takes patience and persistence. One thing that helped in this case was Ewoodzie’s accent, which identified him as a non-Southerner. Hearing his voice, people were curious and quick to ask him where he was from. When they found out he was from Ghana, the locals—all of whom were African Americans—wanted to learn about life there.

These conversations gave Ewoodzie the opening he needed to ask about life in Jackson. But he needed to move ahead because he wanted to focus his study on homeless people. From the contacts he had made in the café, he learned about the “Opportunity Center,” a nearby facility that served homeless people as a day shelter. The next step in the research was to visit the Opportunity Center.

When Ewoodzie first arrived at the Opportunity Center, affectionately known as “the OC,” he met Ray and Billy, working at the reception desk. He would find out later that, at that time, they were both homeless. Within a few days, Ewoodzie was able to make friends with Ray and Billy. They were eager to help him and offered to provide information about the Opportunity Center and the people it served.

Ewoodzie soon learned that, on a typical day, the Opportunity Center served about 100 men and about a dozen women, providing a place to store personal belongings, to make phone calls, and to use bathrooms and showers. Further, the OC served as an address that clients could use to apply for a job or seek government assistance. The facility also was a social center for most of the clients, a place where they could stay informed about how others were

doing and also exchange information about new opportunities for food and places to sleep.

Ray and Billy were a good source of information about Jackson’s soup kitchens and shelters. They also filled Ewoodzie in on various other locations, such as parks, churches, and bus stations, where people who are homeless eat, sleep, and just hang out. With this new information in hand, Ewoodzie knew what steps were needed to complete his research. Over several months, working in the field for ten to twelve hours a day, he visited all of these facilities and locations and in the process became immersed in the lives of Jackson’s homeless men.

Billie and Ray’s assistance illustrates the importance of *key informants* in field research. Such people are not only a source of information but also serve to introduce a researcher to others in the community. Using a key informant allows easy access to that person’s social network. Knowing people to contact in each new setting—and being able to say “I’m a friend of Billy and Ray; they said I should get in touch with you”—is obviously very helpful in gaining additional information. But using a key informant also has risks. Because any person has a particular circle of acquaintances, a key informant’s guidance is certain to “spin” or bias the study in one way or another. In addition, in the eyes of others, the reputation of the key informant—whether good or bad—usually rubs off on the investigator. So although a key informant is helpful early on, a skillful participant observer will soon seek a broader range of contacts.

Over the months that followed, Ewoodzie spent most of each day joining in conversations with homeless people. He learned about their lives and about how they made it through the day. As he got to know people better, he explained more about his research project to them. Because he had taken time to build meaningful relationships with his subjects, most people not only were willing to talk to him but also offered intimate details about their lives—personal details that a researcher never would have gathered in a single meeting using a questionnaire or even an interview. Ewoodzie also credits some of this warm reception to the South’s cultural tradition of hospitality.

As is typical of researchers who choose the method of participant observation, Ewoodzie jotted down notes as he engaged in conversation. Sometimes when he couldn’t keep pace with the flow of information, he excused himself to go to the bathroom just so that he could have a few minutes to write down detailed notes. At times, he recorded conversations using his smart phone, but he did so only after asking and receiving the subject’s permission. After each day in the field, he spent several evening hours at the apartment turning his rough notes into a detailed record of his research.

As he neared the end of his months in the field, Ewoodzie reflected about what he had learned. Some homeless people had relatives living in or near Jackson and spent some time staying with family. But most of the homeless people he had come to know were living on their own and appeared regularly at the Opportunity Center and at various soup kitchens and homeless shelters. Most of the people he studied were unemployed; some had income from paid work, and most received income assistance from the government. He was surprised to learn that they used the money they had not so much for food as for medical needs and necessities such as clothing, for entertainment, and to supply their addictions to alcohol or other drugs.

But perhaps the most surprising finding to come from Ewoodzie's (forthcoming) research was that the

typical homeless person in Jackson rarely, if ever, went a day without food. Four or five soup kitchens operated in the city on any given day, and church groups and other organizations also offered food at least several days each week. Sometimes students from a nearby college would bring leftovers from the campus dining hall to feed the homeless at a nearby park. So, as long as a person stayed connected to the social network that revolved around the OC, there was no need to go hungry. At the same time, there was little choice about what to eat, and the quality of the food was uneven at best. In addition, food was not available around the clock. Breakfast and lunch were pretty much a sure thing; dinner was less certain. As a result, most homeless individuals built a "stash" from meals available earlier in the day to which they could turn later on if nothing else was available.

From his participant observation research, Ewoodzie learned much more than he intended at the outset. He saw that the greatest challenge faced by this group of homeless men was not, in fact, a lack of food. Perhaps their most immediate concern was the limited availability of safe and comfortable shelter. The homeless population of the city was greater than the number of available beds in shelters so that, especially in cold or wet weather, not everyone could find a safe space indoors. A second concern was the lack of public transportation to many places that homeless people frequented. And looking ahead, Ewoodzie concluded that the greatest long-term need among the homeless was improved literacy skills, which he saw as essential to their being able to look for, get, and hold jobs.



Participant observation is a method of sociological research that allows a researcher to investigate people as they go about their everyday lives in some "natural" setting. At its best, participant observation makes you a star in your own reality show; but living in what may be a strange setting far from home for months at a time is always challenging. Here, Joseph Ewoodzie observes students from a local college helping to provide a meal to homeless people.

Research of this kind is often used by officials in government and other organizations in formulating and re-defining public policy. Ewoodzie hopes that his research will result in programs that go beyond *maintaining* homeless people in their present state toward *expanding* their opportunities to become self-supporting community members.

EVALUATE

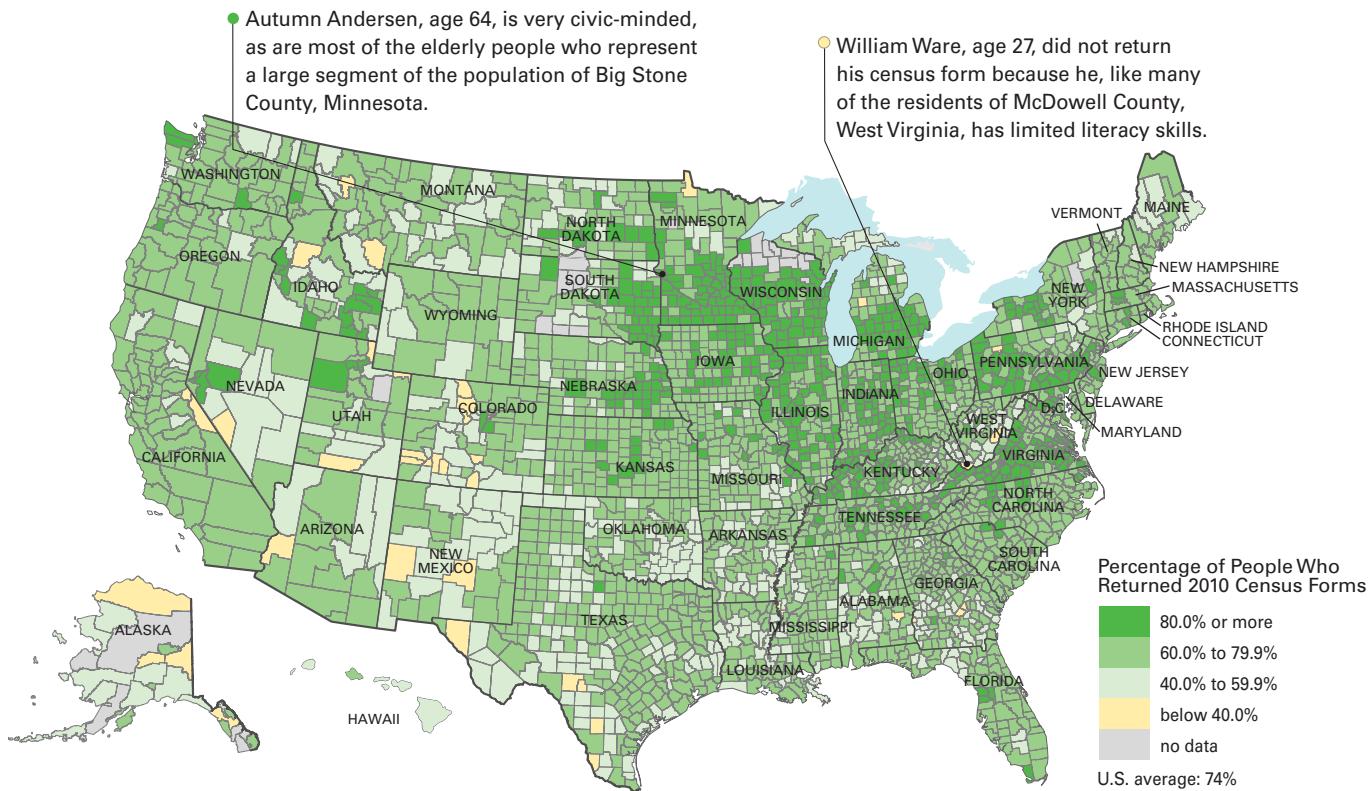
To study the homeless population in Jackson, Mississippi, Joseph Ewoodzie chose participant observation as his research method. This was a good choice because he did not have a specific hypothesis to test, nor did he know at the outset exactly what the questions or issues would turn out to be. Ewoodzie was able to complete his study for very little money, although he had to spend long days for many months in the field. By moving to Jackson and then both participating in and observing the social life at the city's facilities for homeless people, Ewoodzie gradually was able to build an understanding and to prepare a detailed description of the way of life typical of the city's homeless population.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Give an example of a topic for sociological research that would be best studied using (1) an experiment, (2) a survey, and (3) participant observation.

Using Available Data: Existing Sources

Not all research requires investigators to collect their own data. Sometimes sociologists analyze existing sources, data already collected by others.

Seeing Ourselves



National Map 2-1 Census Participation Rates across the United States

Every ten years, the Census Bureau conducts a census of all U.S. households, mailing forms to each address. About 75 percent of U.S. households returned their form, as directed by law. But participation rates were higher in some places than in others. Looking at the map, what patterns do you see? What might explain lower return rates in southwestern Texas along the Mexican border and in New Mexico? What might explain the higher return rates in urban areas close to both coasts and in the Midwest?

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2010).

The most widely used statistics in social science are gathered by government agencies. The U.S. Census Bureau carries out a comprehensive statistical study of the U.S. population every ten years and this agency also continuously updates a wide range of data about the U.S. population. National Map 2-1 provides a look at the share of households that filled out and returned their information forms as part of the 2010 national census.

Comparable data about Canada are available from Statistics Canada, a branch of that nation's government. For international data, there are various publications of the United Nations and the World Bank. In short, data about the whole world are as close as your library or the Internet.

Using available data, such as government statistics or the findings of individual researchers, saves time and money. This approach has special appeal to sociologists with low budgets. For anyone, however, government data are generally more extensive and more accurate than what most researchers could obtain on their own.

But using existing data has problems of its own. For one thing, available data may not exist in the exact form needed.

For example, you may be able to find the average salary paid to professors at your school but not separate figures for the amounts paid to women and to men. Further, there are always questions about the meaning and accuracy of work done by others. For example, in his classic study of suicide, Emile Durkheim soon discovered that there was no way to know whether a death classified as a suicide was really an accident or vice versa. In addition, various agencies use different procedures and categories in collecting data, so comparisons may be difficult. In the end, then, using existing data is a little like shopping for a used car: There are plenty of bargains out there, but you have to shop carefully.

ILLUSTRATION OF THE USE OF EXISTING SOURCES: A TALE OF TWO CITIES Why might one city have been home to many famous people and another produced hardly any famous people at all? To those of us living in the present, historical data offer a key to unlocking secrets of the past. The award-winning study *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia*, by E. Digby Baltzell (1979), is a good example of how a researcher can use available data to do historical research.

This story begins when Baltzell made a chance visit to Bowdoin College in Maine. As he walked into the college library, he saw up on the wall three large portraits—of the celebrated author Nathaniel Hawthorne, the famous poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Franklin Pierce, the fourteenth president of the United States. He soon learned that all three men were members of the same class at Bowdoin, graduating in 1825. How could it be, Baltzell wondered, that this small college had graduated more famous people in a single year than his own, much bigger University of Pennsylvania had graduated in its entire history? To answer this question, Baltzell was soon paging through historical documents to see whether New England had really produced more famous people than his native Pennsylvania.

What were Baltzell's data? He turned to the *Dictionary of American Biography*, twenty volumes profiling more than 13,000 outstanding men and women in fields such as politics, law, and the arts. The dictionary told Baltzell who was great, and he realized that the longer the biography, the more important the person is thought to be.

By the time Baltzell had identified the seventy-five individuals with the longest biographies, he saw a striking pattern. Massachusetts had the most by far, with twenty-one of the seventy-five top achievers. The New England states, combined, claimed thirty-one of the entries. By contrast, Pennsylvania could boast of only two, and all the states in the Middle Atlantic region had just twelve. Looking more closely, Baltzell discovered that most of New England's great achievers had grown up in and around the city of Boston. Again, in stark contrast, almost no one of comparable standing came from his own Philadelphia, a city with many more people than Boston.

What could explain this remarkable pattern? Baltzell drew inspiration from the German sociologist Max Weber (1958, orig. 1904–05), who argued that a region's record of achievement was influenced by its major religious beliefs (see Chapter 4, "Society"). In the religious differences between Boston and Philadelphia, Baltzell found the answer to his puzzle. Boston was originally a Puritan settlement, founded by people who highly valued the pursuit of excellence and public achievement. Philadelphia, by contrast, was settled by Quakers, who believed in equality and avoided public notice.

Both the Puritans and the Quakers were fleeing religious persecution in England, but the two religions produced quite different cultural patterns. Convinced of humanity's innate sinfulness, Boston's Puritans built a rigid society in which family, church, and school regulated people's behavior. The Puritans celebrated hard work as a

means of glorifying God and viewed public success as a reassuring sign of God's blessing. In short, Puritanism fostered a disciplined life in which people both sought and respected achievement.

Philadelphia's Quakers, by contrast, built their way of life on the belief that all human beings are basically good. They saw little need for strong social institutions to "save" people from sinfulness. They believed in equality, so that even those who became rich considered themselves no better than anyone else. Thus rich and poor alike lived modestly and discouraged one another from standing out by seeking fame or running for public office.

In Baltzell's sociological imagination, Boston and Philadelphia took the form of two social "test tubes": Puritanism was poured into one, Quakerism into the other. Centuries later, we can see that different "chemical reactions" occurred in each case. The two belief systems led to different attitudes toward personal achievement, which in turn shaped the history of each region. Today, we can see that Boston's Kennedys (despite being Catholic) are only one of that city's many families who exemplify the Puritan pursuit of recognition and leadership. By contrast, there has never been even one family with such public stature in the entire history of Philadelphia.

Baltzell's study used scientific logic, but it also illustrates the interpretive orientation by showing how people understood their world. His research reminds us that sociological investigation often involves mixing research orientations to fit a particular problem.



The unexpected observation that three famous people—Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Franklin Pierce—were all members of a single class at a small New England college prompted sociologist E. Digby Baltzell to analyze how different religious ethics affected patterns of achievement in New England and Pennsylvania.

EVALUATE

The main reason Baltzell chose to use existing sources is that this is a good way to learn about history. The *Dictionary of American Biography* offers a great deal of information about people who lived long ago and obviously are not available for an interview. At the same time, existing sources were not created with the purpose of answering a modern-day sociologist's questions. For this reason, using such documents requires a critical eye and a good deal of creative thinking.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What other questions about life in the past might you wish to answer using existing sources? What sources might you use to find the answers?

The Summing Up table provides a quick review of the four major methods of sociological investigation. We now turn to our final consideration: the link between research results and sociological theory.

Research Methods and Theory

No matter how sociologists collect their data, they have to turn facts into meaning by building theory. They do this in two ways: inductive logical thought and deductive logical thought.

Inductive logical thought is *reasoning that transforms specific observations into general theory*. In this mode, a researcher's thinking runs from the specific to the general and goes something like this: "I have some interesting data here; I wonder what they mean." Baltzell's research illustrates the inductive logical model. His data showed that one region of the country (the Boston area) had produced many more high achievers than another (the Philadelphia region). He worked "upward" from ground-level observations to the high-flying theory that religious values were a key factor in shaping people's attitudes toward achievement.

inductive logical thought reasoning that transforms specific observations into general theory

deductive logical thought reasoning that transforms general theory into specific hypotheses suitable for testing

A second type of logical thought moves "downward," in the opposite direction: **Deductive logical thought** is *reasoning that transforms general theory into specific hypotheses suitable for testing*. The researcher's thinking runs from the general to the specific: "I have this hunch about human behavior; let's collect some data and put it to the test." Working deductively, the researcher first states the theory in the form of a hypothesis and then selects a method by which to test it. To the extent that the data support the hypothesis, a researcher concludes that the theory is correct; on the other hand, data that refute the hypothesis suggest that the theory needs to be revised or perhaps rejected entirely.

Philip Zimbardo's "Stanford County Prison" experiment illustrates deductive logic. Zimbardo began with the general theory that a social environment can change human behavior. He then developed a specific, testable hypothesis: Placed in a prison setting, even emotionally well-balanced young men will behave violently. The violence that erupted soon after his experiment began supported Zimbardo's hypothesis. Had his experiment produced friendly behavior between prisoners and guards, his hypothesis clearly would have been wrong.

Just as researchers often employ several methods over the course of one study, they typically use *both* kinds of logical thought. Figure 2-2 illustrates both types of reasoning: inductively building theory from observations and deductively making observations to test a theory.

SUMMING UP

Four Research Methods

	Experiment	Survey	Participant Observation	Existing Sources
Application	For explanatory research that specifies relationships between variables Generates quantitative data	For gathering information about issues that cannot be directly observed, such as attitudes and values Useful for descriptive and explanatory research Generates quantitative or qualitative data	For exploratory and descriptive study of people in a "natural" setting Generates qualitative data	For exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory research whenever suitable data are available
Advantages	Provides the greatest opportunity to specify cause-and-effect relationships Replication of research is relatively easy.	Sampling, using questionnaires, allows surveys of large populations. Interviews provide in-depth responses.	Allows study of "natural" behavior Usually inexpensive	Saves time and expense of data collection Makes historical research possible
Limitations	Laboratory settings have an artificial quality. Unless the research environment is carefully controlled, results may be biased.	Questionnaires must be carefully prepared and may yield a low return rate. Interviews are expensive and time-consuming.	Time-consuming Replication of research is difficult. Researcher must balance roles of participant and observer.	Researcher has no control over possible biases in data. Data may only partially fit current research needs.

Finally, turning facts into meaning usually involves organizing and presenting statistical data. Precisely how sociologists arrange their numbers affects the conclusions they reach. In short, preparing their results amounts to spinning reality in one way or another.

Often we conclude that an argument must be true simply because there are statistics to back it up. However, we must look at statistics with a cautious eye. After all, researchers choose what data to present, they interpret their statistics, and they may use tables and graphs to steer readers toward particular conclusions.

Putting It All Together: Ten Steps in Sociological Investigation

We can summarize this chapter by outlining ten steps in the process of carrying out sociological investigation. Each step takes the form of an important question.

- 1. What is your topic?** Being curious and applying the sociological perspective can generate ideas for social research at any time and in any place. Pick a topic that you find interesting and important to study.
- 2. What have others already learned?** You are probably not the first person with an interest in the issue you have selected. Visit the library to see what theories and methods other researchers have applied to your topic. In reviewing the existing research, note problems that have come up to avoid repeating past mistakes.
- 3. What, exactly, are your questions?** Are you seeking to explore an unfamiliar social setting? To describe some category of people? To investigate cause and effect among variables? If your study is exploratory or descriptive, identify *whom* you wish to study, *where* the research will take place, and *what* kinds of issues you want to explore. If it is explanatory, you must also formulate the hypothesis to be tested and operationalize each variable.
- 4. What will you need to carry out research?** How much time and money are available to you? Is special equipment or training necessary? Will you be able to complete the work yourself? You should answer all these questions as you plan the research project.
- 5. Are there ethical concerns?** Not all research raises serious ethical questions, but you must be sensitive to this possibility. Can the research cause harm or threaten anyone's privacy? How might you design the study to minimize the chances for injury? Will you promise anonymity to the subjects? If so, how will you ensure that anonymity will be maintained?
- 6. What method will you use?** Consider all major research strategies, as well as combinations of methods. Keep in mind that the best method depends on

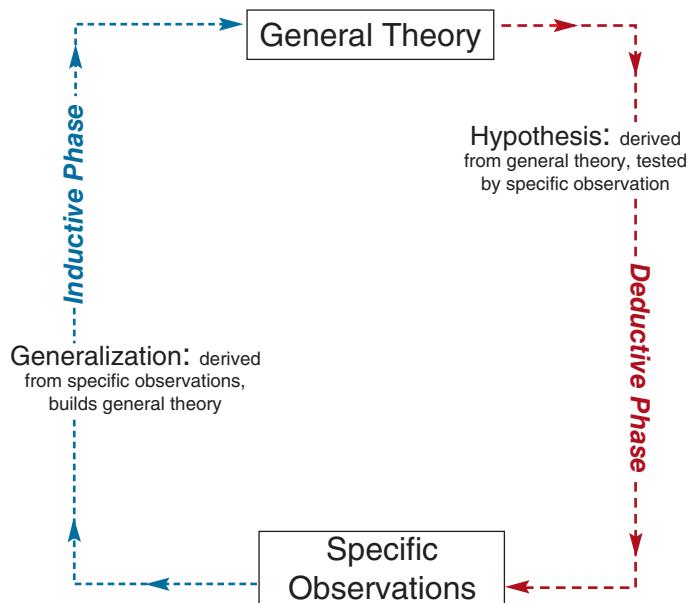


Figure 2–2 Deductive and Inductive Logical Thought

Sociologists link theory and method through both inductive and deductive logic.

- the kinds of questions you are asking as well as the resources available to you.
- 7. How will you record the data?** Your research method is a plan for data collection. Record all information accurately and in a way that will make sense later (it may be some time before you actually write up the results of your work). Watch out for any bias that may creep into the research.
- 8. What do the data tell you?** Study the data in terms of your initial questions and decide how to interpret the data you have collected. If your study involves a specific hypothesis, you must decide whether the data you collected requires that you confirm, reject, or modify the original hypothesis. Keep in mind that there may be several ways to look at your data, depending on which theoretical approach you use, and you should consider them all.
- 9. What are your conclusions?** Prepare a final report stating your conclusions. How does your work advance sociological theory? Does it suggest ways to improve research methods? Does your study have policy implications? What would the general public find interesting in your work? Finally, evaluate your own work. What problems arose during the research process? What questions were left unanswered?
- 10. How can you share what you've learned?** Consider submitting your research paper to a campus newspaper or magazine or making a presentation to your class, a campus gathering, or perhaps a meeting of professional sociologists. The point is to share what you have learned with others and to let them respond to your work.

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 2 Sociological Investigation

What are friends for?

Sociological research is the key to a deeper understanding of our everyday social world and also to knowing more about ourselves. Take friendship, for example. Everyone knows it is fun to be surrounded by friends. But did you



One ten-year study of older people found that those women and men who had many friends were significantly less likely to die over the course of the research than those with few or no friends. Other long-term research confirms that people with friends not only live longer but also healthier lives than those without friends. What are the variables in this study? What conclusion is drawn about the relationship between the variables?



Another study looked at 3,000 women diagnosed with breast cancer and compared the rate of survival for women with many friends with that for women with few or no friends. What do you think they concluded about the effect of friendship on surviving a serious illness?

know that friendship has real benefits for human health? What do you think they might be? Take a look at the photos shown here and learn more about what research has taught us about the positive effects of having friends.



Perhaps the reason that friendship improves health is that friends raise our spirits and give us a more positive attitude about our lives. A final study placed young college students carrying heavy backpacks at the base of a steep hill and asked them how tough it would be to climb to the top. Subjects in the company of a friend were much more optimistic that they could make the climb than those standing there alone. Would you expect that the better the friend, the more positive the person's attitude?



The “friendship effect” improves the health of men, too. A study of older men found that those with many friends had lower rates of heart disease than those without friends. How could you be sure of the causal direction linking these variables? That is, how can we be sure that friendship is improving health rather than good health encouraging friendship?

Hint In the first case, researchers defined having friends as the independent variable, and they defined longevity and health as the dependent variables. On average, those with friends (the experimental group) actually lived longer and were healthier than those without friends (the control group). In the second case, researchers found that women with many friends were several times more likely to survive their illness than those without friends. In the third case, researchers found that the longer the people had been friends, the more positive the subject’s attitude about making the climb turned out to be. The fourth case reminds us that correlation does not demonstrate cause and effect. This study, covering over six years, looked at more than 700 men, some with many friends (the experimental group) and also other men of comparable health (the control group) and few friends. Finding those with friends had better heart health tells us that friendship is the independent or causal variable. Long live friendship!

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

1. The research studies discussed above demonstrate that friendship means more to people than we might think. Recall Emile Durkheim’s study of suicide in Chapter 1. How did he use sociological research to uncover more about the importance of relationships? Which one of the research methods discussed in this chapter did he use in his study of suicide?
2. As this chapter has explained, sociology involves more than a distinctive perspective and theoretical approaches. The discipline is also about learning—gaining more information about the operation of society all around us. It’s possible that you will go on to study more sociology and you might even end up doing sociological research. But there is value in knowing how to carry out a sound research project even if you never do it yourself. The value of such knowledge lies in this: In a society that feeds us a steady diet of information, knowing how to gather accurate information gives you the skills to assess what you read. The next time you hear someone—perhaps a candidate running for political office—making a claim about some issue, why not see if you can find existing data and assess the truth of the claim for yourself?
3. How can sociologists use their findings to help bring about change for social equality and justice? Give examples of sociologists in your country or other countries who have helped bring about this kind of change. Discuss which sections of society have benefitted, and how.
4. Go to www.sociologyinfofocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 2 Sociological Investigation

Basics of Sociological Investigation

2.1 Explain how scientific evidence often challenges common sense. (pages 58–59)

Two basic requirements for **sociological investigation** are

- Know how to apply the sociological perspective.
- Be curious and ready to ask questions about the world around you.

What people accept as “truth” differs around the world.

- **Science**—a logical system that bases knowledge on direct, systematic observation—is one form of truth.
- Scientific evidence gained from sociological research often challenges common sense.

science a logical system that bases knowledge on direct, systematic observation

empirical evidence information we can verify with our senses

Three Ways to Do Sociology

2.2 Describe sociology’s three research orientations.

Positivist sociology studies society by systematically observing social behavior. (pages 59–66)

Positivist sociology

- requires carefully operationalizing variables and ensuring that measurement is both reliable and valid
- observes how variables are related and tries to establish cause and effect
- sees an objective reality “out there”
- favors quantitative data
- is well suited to research in a laboratory
- demands that researchers be objective and suspend their personal values and biases as they conduct research
- is loosely linked to structural-functional theory

Interpretive sociology focuses on the meanings that people attach to behavior.

Interpretive sociology

- sees reality as constructed by people in the course of their everyday lives
- favors qualitative data
- is well suited to research in a natural setting
- is linked to symbolic-interaction theory

Critical sociology uses research to bring about social change.

Critical sociology

- asks moral and political questions
- focuses on inequality
- rejects the principle of objectivity, claiming that all research is political
- is linked to social-conflict theory

positivist sociology the study of society based on systematic observation of social behavior

concept a mental construct that represents some part of the world in a simplified form

variable a concept whose value changes from case to case

measurement a procedure for determining the value of a variable in a specific case

operationalize a variable specifying exactly what is to be measured before assigning a value to a variable

reliability consistency in measurement

validity actually measuring exactly what you intend to measure

cause and effect a relationship in which change in one variable causes change in another

independent variable the variable that causes the change

dependent variable the variable that changes

correlation a relationship in which two (or more) variables change together

spurious correlation an apparent but false relationship between two (or more) variables that is caused by some other variable

control holding constant all variables except one in order to see clearly the effect of that variable

objectivity personal neutrality in conducting research

replication repetition of research by other investigators

interpretive sociology the study of society that focuses on discovering the meanings people attach to their social world

critical sociology the study of society that focuses on the need for social change

Issues Affecting Sociological Research

2.3 Identify the importance of gender and ethics in sociological research. (pages 66–68)

Gender, involving both researcher and subjects, can affect research in five ways:

- androcentrism
- overgeneralizing
- gender blindness
- double standards
- interference

Research ethics require researchers to

- protect the privacy of subjects
- obtain the informed consent of subjects
- indicate all sources of funding
- submit research to an institutional review board (IRB) to ensure it doesn't violate ethical standards

gender the personal traits and social positions that members of a society attach to being female or male

Research Methods

2.4 Explain why a researcher might choose each of sociology's research methods. (pages 69–81)

The **experiment** allows researchers to study cause and effect between two or more variables in a controlled setting.

- Researchers conduct an experiment to test a **hypothesis**, a statement of a possible relationship between two (or more) variables.

Example of an experiment: Zimbardo's "Stanford County Prison"

- **Survey** research uses questionnaires or interviews to gather subjects' responses to a series of questions.
- Surveys typically yield descriptive findings, painting a picture of people's views on some issue.

Example of a survey: Benjamin's "Talented One Hundred"

Through **participant observation**, researchers join with people in a social setting for an extended period of time.

- Participant observation, also called *fieldwork*, allows researchers an "inside look" at a social setting. Because researchers are not attempting to test a specific hypothesis, their research is exploratory and descriptive.

Example of participant observation: Ewoodzie's "Study of the Homeless in Jackson, Mississippi"

Sometimes researchers analyze **existing sources**, data collected by others.

- Using existing sources, especially the widely available data collected by government agencies, can save researchers time and money.
- Existing sources are the basis of historical research.

Example of using existing sources: Baltzell's "Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia"

Researchers use both inductive and deductive logical thought.

- Using inductive logical thought, a researcher moves "upward" from the specific to the general.
- Using deductive logical thought, a researcher moves "downward" from the general to the specific.

Ten important steps in carrying out sociological research move from selecting a topic to sharing the results of research.

research method a systematic plan for doing research

experiment a research method for investigating cause and effect under highly controlled conditions

hypothesis a statement of a possible relationship between two (or more) variables

Hawthorne effect a change in a subject's behavior caused simply by the awareness of being studied

survey a research method in which subjects respond to a series of statements or questions on a questionnaire or in an interview

population the people who are the focus of research

sample a part of a population that represents the whole

questionnaire a series of written questions a researcher presents to subjects

interview a series of questions a researcher asks respondents in person

participant observation a research method in which investigators systematically observe people while joining them in their routine activities

inductive logical thought reasoning that transforms specific observations into general theory

deductive logical thought reasoning that transforms general theory into specific hypotheses suitable for testing

Chapter 3

Culture



Learning Objectives

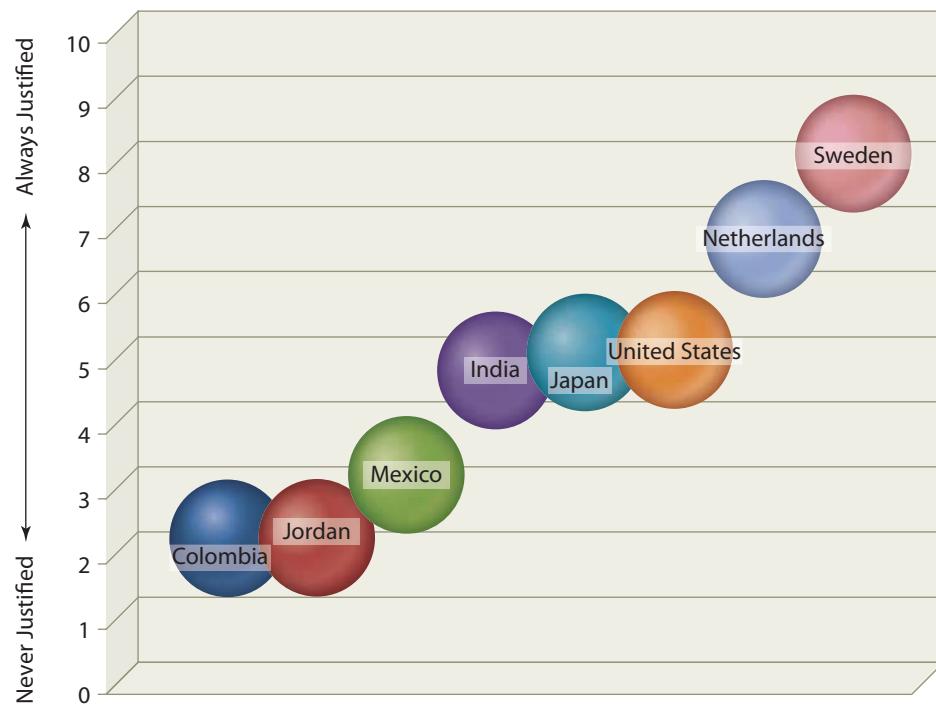
- 3.1 Explain the development of culture as a human strategy for survival.
- 3.2 Identify common elements of culture.
- 3.3 Discuss dimensions of cultural difference and cultural change.
- 3.4 Apply sociology's macro-level theories to gain greater understanding of culture.
- 3.5 Critique culture as limiting or expanding human freedom.



The Power of Society

to guide our attitudes on social issues such as abortion

Survey Question: "Please tell me whether you think abortion can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between."



Is how we feel about abortion as “personal” an opinion as we may think? If we compare the attitudes of people around the world, we see remarkable variation from country to country. People living in Sweden, for example, claim that abortion is almost always justified; people living in Colombia, by contrast, almost never support this procedure. For people living in the United States, abortion is an issue on which public opinion is fairly evenly divided. By making such global comparisons, we see that society guides people’s attitudes on various issues, which is part of the way of life we call culture.

Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on the concept of “culture,” which refers to a society’s entire way of life. Notice that the root of the word “culture” is the same as that of the word “cultivate,” suggesting that people living together in a society actually “grow” their way of life over time.

Min-jun Lee is intently studying the computer screen when his wife, Su-bin, pulls up a chair.

“I’m trying to finish organizing our investments,” Min-jun explains, speaking in Korean.

“I didn’t realize that we could do that online in our own language,” Su-bin says, reading the screen. “That’s great. I like that a lot.”

Min-jun and Su-bin are not alone in feeling this way. Back in 1990, executives of Charles Schwab & Co., a large investment brokerage corporation, gathered at the company’s headquarters in San Francisco to discuss ways to expand their business. They came up with the idea that the company would profit by giving greater attention to the increasing cultural diversity of the United States. Pointing to data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau, they saw that the number of Asian Americans was rising rapidly, not just in San Francisco but also all over the country. The data also showed that Asian Americans, on average, were doing pretty well financially. That’s still true, with more than half of today’s Asian American families earning more than \$76,000 a year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

At the 1990 meeting, Schwab’s leaders decided to launch a diversity initiative, assigning three executives to work on building awareness of the company among Asian Americans. The program really took off, and today Schwab employs more than 300 people who speak Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, or some other Asian language. Having account executives who speak languages other than English is smart because research shows that most immigrants who come to the United States prefer to communicate in their first language, especially when dealing with important matters such as investing their money. In addition, the company has launched websites using Korean, Chinese, and other Asian languages. Min-jun and Su-bin Lee are just two of the millions of people who have opened accounts with companies that reach out to them in a language other than English.

Schwab now manages a significant share of the investments made by Asian Americans, who spent about \$325 billion in 2013. So any company would do well to follow the lead Schwab has taken. Other ethnic and racial categories that represent even larger markets in the United States are African Americans (spending more than \$580 billion) and Hispanics (\$687 billion) (Fattah, 2002; Karrfalt, 2003; U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). ■



Businesses like Schwab have learned that the United States is the most *multicultural* nation of all. This cultural diversity reflects the country’s long history of receiving immigrants from all over the world. The ways of life found around the world differ, not only in language and forms of dress but also in preferred foods, musical tastes, family patterns, and beliefs about right and wrong. Some of the world’s people have many children, while others have few; some honor the elderly, while others seem to glorify youth. Some societies are peaceful, while others are warlike; and societies around the world embrace a thousand different religious beliefs as well as particular ideas about what is polite and rude, beautiful and

ugly, pleasant and repulsive. This amazing human capacity for so many different ways of life is a matter of human culture.

What Is Culture?

3.1 Explain the development of culture as a human strategy for survival.

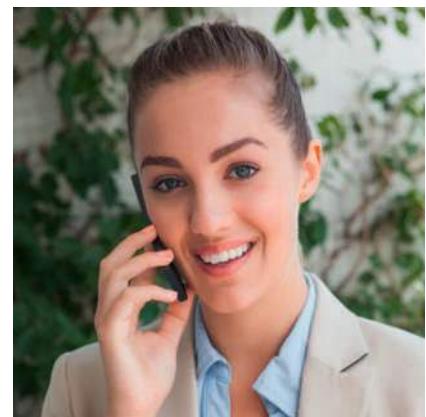
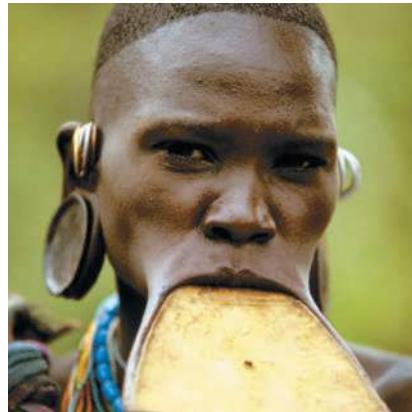
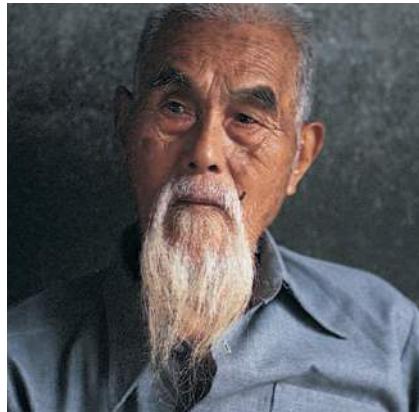
Culture is the ways of thinking, the ways of acting, and the material objects that together form a people’s way of life. Culture includes what we think, how we act, and what we own. Culture is both our link to the past and our guide to the future.

To understand all that culture is, we must consider both thoughts and things. **Nonmaterial culture** is *the ideas created by members of a society*, ideas that range from art to Zen. **Material culture**, by contrast, is *the physical things created by members of a society*, everything from armchairs to zippers.

Culture shapes not only what we do but also what we think and how we feel—elements of what we commonly, but wrongly, describe as “human nature.” The

warlike Yanomamö of the Brazilian rain forest think aggression is natural, but halfway around the world, the Semai of Malaysia live quite peacefully. The cultures of the United States and Japan both stress achievement and hard work, but members of our society value individualism more than the Japanese, who value collective harmony.

Given the extent of cultural differences in the world and people’s tendency to view their own way of life as



Human beings around the globe create diverse ways of life. Such differences begin with outward appearance: Contrast the women shown here from Ethiopia, India, Myanmar, Tibet, and the United States and the men from Taiwan (Republic of China), Kenya, Ecuador, and Australia. Less obvious but of even greater importance are internal differences, since culture also shapes our goals in life, our sense of justice, and even our innermost personal feelings.



For centuries in the United States, cultural differences between immigrants and those already living here have been a source of conflict. In Europe today, the same is true. In 2015, protests against the increasing number of Islamic immigrants attracted large numbers of people. Here, a crowd in Leipzig, Germany, marches in opposition to Islamic immigration as a lone counter-protester makes his case for tolerance.

"natural," it is no wonder that travelers often find themselves feeling uneasy as they enter an unfamiliar culture. This uneasiness is **culture shock**, *personal disorientation when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life*. People can experience culture shock right here in the United States when, say, African Americans explore an Iranian neighborhood in Los Angeles, college students venture into the Amish countryside in Ohio, or New Yorkers travel through small towns in the Deep South. But culture shock is most intense when we travel abroad: The Thinking Globally box tells the story of a researcher from the United States as he makes his first visit to the home of the Yanomamö living in the Amazon region of South America.

January 2, high in the Andes Mountains of Peru. Here in the rural highlands, people are poor and depend on one another. The culture is built on cooperation among family members and neighbors who have lived nearby for many generations. Today, we spent an hour watching a new

culture the ways of thinking, the ways of acting, and the material objects that together form a people's way of life

nonmaterial culture the ideas created by members of a society

material culture the physical things created by members of a society

house being constructed. A young couple had invited their families and many friends, who arrived at about 6:30 in the morning, and right away they began building. By midafternoon, most of the work was finished, and the couple then provided a large meal, drinks, and music that continued for the rest of the day.

No particular way of life is "natural" to humanity, even though most people around the world view their own behavior that way. The cooperative spirit that comes naturally in small communities high in the Andes Mountains of Peru is very different from the competitive living that comes naturally to many people in, say, Chicago or New York City. Such variations come from the fact that as human beings, we join together to create our own way of life. Every other animal, from ants to zebras, behaves very much the same all around the world because behavior is guided by *instincts*, biological programming over which the species has no control. A few animals—notably chimpanzees and related primates—have the capacity for limited culture, as researchers have noted by observing them using tools and teaching simple skills to their offspring. But the creative power of humans is far greater than that of any other form of life and has resulted in countless ways of "being human." In short, *only humans rely on culture rather than instinct to create a way of life and ensure our survival* (Harris, 1987; Morell, 2008). To understand how human culture came to be, we need to look back at the history of our species.

Culture and Human Intelligence

Scientists tell us that our planet is 4.5 billion years old. Life appeared about 1 billion years later. Fast-forward another 2 to 3 billion years, and we find dinosaurs ruling Earth. It was after these giant creatures disappeared, some 65 million years ago, that our history took a crucial turn with the appearance of the animals we call primates.

The importance of primates is that they have the largest brains relative to body size of all living creatures. About 12 million years ago, primates began to evolve along two different lines, setting humans apart from the great apes, our closest relatives. Some 5 million years ago, our distant human ancestors climbed down from the trees of Central Africa to move about in the tall grasses. There, walking upright, they learned the advantages of hunting in groups and made use of fire, tools, and weapons; built simple shelters; and

Thinking Globally

Confronting the Yanomamö: The Experience of Culture Shock

A small aluminum motorboat chugged steadily along the muddy Orinoco River, deep within South America's vast tropical rain forest. The anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon was nearing the end of a three-day journey to the home territory of the Yanomamö, one of the most technologically simple societies on Earth.

Some 12,000 Yanomamö live in villages scattered along the border of Venezuela and Brazil. Their way of life could not be more different from our own. The Yanomamö wear little clothing and live without electricity, automobiles, cell phones, or other conveniences most people in the United States take for granted. Their traditional weapon, used for hunting and warfare, is the bow and arrow. Since most of the Yanomamö knew little about the outside world, Chagnon would be as strange to them as they would be to him.

By 2:00 in the afternoon, Chagnon had almost reached his destination. The heat and humidity were becoming unbearable. He was soaked with perspiration, and his face and hands swelled from the bites of gnats swarming around him. But he hardly noticed, so excited was he that in just a few moments, he would be face to face with people unlike any he had ever known.



Chagnon's heart pounded as the boat slid onto the riverbank. He and his guide climbed from the boat and headed toward the sounds of a nearby village, pushing their way through the dense undergrowth. Chagnon describes what happened next:

I looked up and gasped when I saw a dozen burly, naked, sweaty, hideous men staring at us down the shafts of their drawn arrows! Immense wads of green tobacco were stuck between their lower teeth and lips, making them look even more hideous, and strands of dark green slime dripped or hung from their nostrils—strands so long that they clung to their [chests] or drizzled down their chins.

My next discovery was that there were a dozen or so vicious, underfed dogs snapping at my legs, circling me as if I were to be their next meal. I just stood there holding my notebook, helpless and pathetic. Then the stench of the decaying vegetation and filth hit me and I almost got sick. I was horrified. What kind of welcome was this for the person who came here to live with you and learn your way of life, to become friends with you? (1992:11–12)

Fortunately for Chagnon, the Yanomamö villagers recognized his guide and lowered their weapons. Though reassured that he would survive the afternoon, Chagnon was still shaken by his inability to make any sense of the people surrounding him. And this was going to be his home for the next year and a half! He wondered why he had given up physics to study human culture in the first place.

What Do You Think?

1. Can you think of an experience of your own similar to the one described here? Explain what happened.
2. Do you think you ever caused culture shock in others? What did you learn from this experience?
3. Why is it difficult for people who live within different cultural systems to interact without discomfort? At the same time, are there benefits gained from doing so?

fashioned basic clothing. These Stone Age achievements may seem modest, but they mark the point at which our ancestors set off on a distinct evolutionary course, making culture their primary strategy for survival. By about 250,000 years ago, our own species, *Homo sapiens* (Latin for “intelligent person”), had finally emerged. Humans continued to evolve so that by about 40,000 years ago, people who looked more or less like us roamed the planet. With larger brains, these “modern” *Homo sapiens*

developed culture rapidly, as the wide range of tools and cave art from this period suggests.

About 12,000 years ago, the founding of permanent settlements and the creation of specialized occupations in the Middle East (today’s Iraq and Egypt) marked the “birth of civilization.” About this point, the biological forces we call instincts had mostly disappeared, replaced by a more efficient survival scheme: *fashioning the natural environment for ourselves*. Ever since, humans have made and remade

their world in countless ways, resulting in today's fascinating cultural diversity.

Culture, Nation, and Society

The term "culture" calls to mind other similar terms, such as "nation" and "society," although each has a slightly different meaning. *Culture* refers to a shared way of life. A *nation* is a political entity, a territory with designated borders, such as the United States, Canada, Peru, or Zimbabwe. *Society*, the topic of Chapter 4, is the organized interaction of people who typically live in a nation or some other specific territory.

The United States, then, is both a nation and a society. But many nations, including the United States, are *multicultural*; that is, their people follow various ways of life that blend (and sometimes clash).

How Many Cultures?

In the United States, how many cultures are there? The best way to identify the number of cultures is to count the number of languages. The Census Bureau lists 382 languages spoken in this country—almost half of them (169) are native languages, with the rest brought by immigrants from nations around the world (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

Globally, experts document more than 7,000 languages, suggesting the existence of just as many distinct cultures. Yet with the number of languages spoken around the world declining, about 4,000 of the world's languages now are spoken by fewer than 10,000 people. Experts expect that the coming decades may see the disappearance of hundreds of these languages, and perhaps half the world's languages may even disappear before the end of this century (Crystal, 2010). Languages on the endangered list include Gullah, Pennsylvania German, and Pawnee (all spoken in the United States), Han (spoken in northwestern Canada), Oro (spoken in the Amazon region of Brazil), Sardinian (spoken on the European island of Sardinia), Aramaic (the language of Jesus of Nazareth, still spoken in the Middle East), Nu Shu (a language spoken in southern China that is the only one known to be used exclusively by women), and Wakka Wakka as well as several other Aboriginal tongues spoken in Australia. As you might expect, when a language is becoming extinct, the last people to speak it are the oldest members of a society. What accounts for the worldwide decline in the number of spoken languages? The main reason is globalization itself, including high-technology communication, increasing international migration, and the expanding worldwide economy (UNESCO, 2001; Barovick, 2002; Hayden, 2003; Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2014).

The Elements of Culture

3.2 Identify common elements of culture.

Although cultures vary greatly, they all have common elements, including symbols, language, values, and norms. We begin our discussion with the one that is the basis for all the others: symbols.

Symbols

Like all creatures, humans use their senses to experience the surrounding world, but unlike others, we also try to give the world *meaning*. Humans transform elements of the world into *symbols*. A **symbol** is anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share a culture. A word, a whistle, a wall covered with graffiti, a flashing red light, a raised fist—all serve as symbols. We can see the human capacity to create and manipulate symbols reflected in the very different meanings associated with the simple act of winking an eye, which can convey interest, understanding, or insult.

Societies create new symbols all the time. The Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life box describes some of the "cyber-symbols" that have developed along with our increasing use of computers for communication.

We are so dependent on our culture's symbols that we take them for granted. However, we become keenly aware of the importance of a symbol when someone uses it in an unconventional way, as when a person burns a U.S. flag during a political demonstration. Entering an unfamiliar culture also reminds us of the power of symbols; culture shock is really the inability to "read" meaning in strange surroundings. Not understanding the symbols of a culture leaves a person feeling lost and isolated, unsure of how to act, and sometimes frightened.

Culture shock is a two-way process. On one hand, travelers *experience* culture shock when encountering people whose way of life is different. For example, North Americans who consider dogs beloved household pets might be put off by the Masai of eastern Africa, who ignore dogs and never feed them. The same travelers might be horrified to find that in parts of Indonesia and the People's Republic of China, people roast dogs for dinner.

On the other hand, a traveler may *inflict* culture shock on local people by acting in ways that offend them. A North American who asks for a steak in an Indian restaurant may unknowingly offend Hindus, who consider cows sacred and never to be eaten. Global travel provides almost endless opportunities for this kind of misunderstanding.

Symbolic meanings also vary within a single society. To some people in the United States, a fur coat represents

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

New Symbols in the World of Texting

Molly: gr8 to c u!

Greg: u 2

Molly: jw about next time

Greg: idk, lotta work!

Molly: np, xoxoxo

Greg: thanx, bcnu

The world of symbols changes all the time. One reason that people create new symbols is that we develop new ways to communicate. Today, 90 percent of adults in the United States own cell phones and 80 percent of adults—especially those who are young—use mobile text-messaging on a regular basis. Researchers report that cell phone owners between eighteen and twenty-four years of age typically send or receive more than 100 messages a day (Pew Research Center, 2011, 2014).

Here are some of the most common text-messaging symbols:

bb/bby baby

b be

bc becausebff best friends, forever

b4 before

bbl be back later

brb be right back

btw by the way

cu see you

cya see ya

def definitely

f f*ck

ftw for the win

fwiw for what it's worth

g2g got to go

gr8 great

h/o hold on

idc I don't care

ia I agree

idk I don't know

idts I don't think so

iirc if I recall correctly
 imho in my honest opinion
 imo in my opinion
 irl in real life
 jk just kidding
 j/s just saying
 jw just wondering
 l8r later
 lmao laugh my ass off
 lol laugh out loud
 myob mind your own business
 nagl not a good look
 np no problem
 nvm never mind
 omg oh my gosh
 plz/pls please
 ppl people
 prob/probs probably
 qpsa ¿Que pasa?
 rt right
 smh shaking my head
 sup what's up
 tbh to be honest
 tbqh to be quite honest
 thanx/thx/ty thanks
 tmi too much information
 ttyl talk to you later
 ttys talk to you soon
 u you
 uok you okay?
 ur you are
 w/with
 w/e whatever
 w/o without
 wtf what the f*ck
 wth what the hell/heck
 y why
 ? question
 2 to, two
 4 for, four



What Do You Think?

1. What does the creation of symbols such as those listed here suggest about culture?
2. Do you think that using such symbols is a good way to communicate? Does it lead to confusion or misunderstanding? Why or why not?
3. What other kinds of symbols can you think of that are new to your generation?

SOURCES: J. Rubin (2003), Berteau (2005), (2009), Lenhart (2010), and Pew Research Center (2014).



People throughout the world communicate not just with spoken words but also with bodily gestures. Because gestures vary from culture to culture, they can occasionally be the cause of misunderstandings. For instance, the commonplace “thumbs up” gesture we use to express “Good job!” can get a person from the United States into trouble in Iran and a number of other countries, where people take it to mean “Up yours!”

a prized symbol of success, but to others it represents the inhumane treatment of animals. In the debate about flying the Confederate flag over the South Carolina statehouse a few years ago, some people saw the flag as a symbol of regional pride, but others saw it as a symbol of racial oppression.

Language

An illness in infancy left Helen Keller (1880–1968) blind and deaf. Without these two senses, she was cut off from the symbolic world, and her social development was greatly limited. Only when her teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, broke through Keller’s isolation using sign language did Helen Keller begin to realize her human potential. This remarkable woman, who later became a famous educator herself, recalls the moment she first understood the concept of language:

We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the smell of honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water, and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand, she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was

flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul; gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! (Keller, 1903:24)

Language, the key to the world of culture, is *a system of symbols that allows people to communicate with one another*. Humans have created many alphabets to express the hundreds of languages we speak. Several examples are shown in Figure 3–1. Even rules for writing differ: Most people in Western societies write from left to right, but people in northern Africa and western Asia write from right to left, and people in eastern Asia write from top to bottom.

Of the 7,000 languages in the world today, which language is spoken most widely? As Figure 3–2 shows, Chinese (including Mandarin, Cantonese, and dozens of other dialects) is the most widely used first language, meaning that it is spoken at home by some 1.2 billion people. English is the most widely spoken second language; it is used in most nations of the world (except for many nations in western Africa and China).

Language not only allows communication but is also the key to **cultural transmission**, *the process by which one generation passes culture to the next*. Just as our bodies contain the genes of our ancestors, our culture contains countless symbols of those who came before us. Language is the key that unlocks centuries of accumulated wisdom.

Throughout human history, every society has transmitted culture by using speech, a process sociologists call the “oral cultural tradition.” Some 5,000 years ago, humans invented writing, although at that time only a privileged few learned to read and write. Not until the twentieth century did high-income nations

Arabic	Korean
Armenian	Farsi
Cambodian	Russian
Chinese	Spanish
Greek	
Hebrew	
Hindi	
Read	
English	
Persian	

Figure 3–1 Human Languages: A Variety of Symbols

Here the English word “read” is written in twelve of the thousands of languages humans use to communicate with one another.

boast of nearly universal literacy. Still, perhaps 10 percent of U.S. adults (more than 20 million people) are functionally illiterate, unable to read and write in a society that increasingly demands such skills. In low-income countries of the world, at least one-third of adults are illiterate (U.S. Department of Education, 2008; World Bank, 2015).

Language skills may link us with the past, but they also spark the human imagination to connect symbols in new ways, creating an almost limitless range of future possibilities. Language sets humans apart as the only creatures who are self-conscious, aware of our limitations and ultimate mortality, yet able to dream and to hope for a future better than the present.

DOES LANGUAGE SHAPE REALITY? Does someone who thinks and speaks using Cherokee, an American Indian language, experience the world differently from other North Americans who think in, say, English or Spanish? Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf claimed that the answer is yes, since each language has its own distinctive symbols that serve as the building blocks of reality (Sapir, 1929, 1949; Whorf, 1956, orig. 1941). Further, they noted that each language has words or expressions not found in any other symbolic system. Finally, all languages fuse symbols with distinctive emotions so that, as multilingual people know, a single idea may “feel” different when spoken in Spanish rather than in English or Chinese.

Formally, the **Sapir-Whorf thesis** holds that *people see and understand the world through the cultural lens of language*. In the decades since Sapir and Whorf published their work, however, scholars have taken issue with this proposition. The widespread belief that, for example, Eskimos experience “snow” differently because they have many words for it is not true; Inuit speakers have about the same number of words for snow as English speakers do.

So how does language affect our reality? Current thinking is that although we do fashion reality out of our symbols, evidence supports the claim that language does not *determine* reality in the way Sapir and Whorf claimed. For example, we know that children understand the idea of “family” long before they learn that word; similarly, adults can imagine new ideas or things

language a system of symbols that allows people to communicate with one another

cultural transmission the process by which one generation passes culture to the next

Sapir-Whorf thesis the idea that people see and understand the world through the cultural lens of language

Global Snapshot

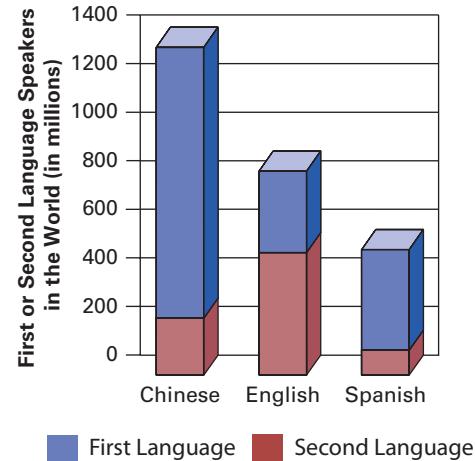


Figure 3–2 Language in Global Perspective

A “first language” refers to the language learned first as a child and the language that people typically speak at home. Almost 1.2 billion people speak Chinese as their first language, far more than the 414 million people whose first language is Spanish added to the 335 million people whose first language is English. English is the most widespread second language, however, and is commonly used in the vast majority of countries in the world.

SOURCE: Lewis, Simons, & Fennig (2014).

before devising a name for them (Kay & Kempton, 1984; Pinker, 1994).

Values and Beliefs

What accounts for the popularity of Hollywood film characters such as James Bond, Neo, Erin Brockovich, Lara Croft, and Rocky Balboa? Each is ruggedly individualistic, going it alone and relying on personal skill and savvy to challenge “the system.” We are led to admire such characters by certain **values**, *culturally defined standards that people use to decide what is desirable, good, and beautiful and that serve as broad guidelines for social living*. People who share a culture use values to make choices about how to live.

Values are broad principles that support **beliefs**, *specific thoughts or ideas that people hold to be true*. In other words, values are abstract standards of goodness, and beliefs are particular matters that individuals consider true or false. For example, because most U.S. adults share the *value* of providing equal opportunities for all, they believe that a qualified woman could serve as president of the United States, as Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaigns have demonstrated (NORC, 2013:403).

values culturally defined standards that people use to decide what is desirable, good, and beautiful and that serve as broad guidelines for social living

beliefs specific ideas that people hold to be true

KEY VALUES OF U.S. CULTURE Because U.S. culture is a mix of ways of life from other countries all around the world, it is highly diverse. Even so, the sociologist Robin Williams Jr. (1970) identified ten values that are widespread in the United States and viewed by many people as central to our way of life:

1. **Equal opportunity.** Most people in the United States favor not *equality of condition* but *equality of opportunity*. We believe that our society should provide everyone with the chance to get ahead according to individual talents and efforts.
2. **Achievement and success.** Our way of life encourages competition so that each person's rewards should reflect personal merit. A successful person is given the respect due a "winner."
3. **Material comfort.** Success in the United States generally means making money and enjoying what it will buy. Although we sometimes say that "money won't buy happiness," most of us pursue wealth all the same.
4. **Activity and work.** Popular U.S. heroes, from tennis champions Venus and Serena Williams to the winners of television's *American Idol*, are "doers" who get the job done. Our culture values action over reflection and taking control of events over passively accepting fate.
5. **Practicality and efficiency.** We value the practical over the theoretical, what will "get us somewhere" over what is interesting "for its own sake." Many young people hear their parents give the advice: "It's good to enjoy what you study, but major in something that will help you get a job!"
6. **Progress.** We are an optimistic people who, despite waves of nostalgia, believe that the present is better than the past. We celebrate progress, viewing the "very latest" as the "very best."
7. **Science.** We expect scientists to solve problems and improve the quality of our lives. We believe we are rational, logical people, and our focus on science probably explains our cultural tendency (especially among men) to look down on emotion and intuition as sources of knowledge.
8. **Democracy and free enterprise.** Members of our society believe that individuals have rights that governments should not take away. We believe that

a just political system is based on free elections in which citizens elect government leaders and on an economy that responds to the choices of individual consumers.

9. **Freedom.** We favor individual initiative over collective conformity. While we accept the idea that everyone has at least some responsibilities to others, we believe that people should look out for themselves and be free to pursue their personal goals.
10. **Racism and group superiority.** Despite strong ideas about equal opportunity and freedom, most people in the United States still judge individuals according to gender, race, ethnicity, and social class. In general, U.S. culture values males over females, whites over people of color, rich over poor, and people with northwestern European backgrounds over those whose ancestors came from other parts of the world. Although we like to describe ourselves as a nation of equals, there is little doubt that some of us are "more equal" than others.

VALUES: OFTEN IN HARMONY, SOMETIMES IN CONFLICT In many ways, cultural values go together. Williams's list includes examples of *value clusters* that are part of our way of life. For instance, we value activity and hard work because we expect effort to lead to achievement and success and result in greater material comfort.

Sometimes, however, one key cultural value contradicts another. Take the first and last items on Williams's list, for example: People in the United States believe in equality of opportunity, yet they may also look down on others because of their sex or race. Value conflict causes strain and often leads to awkward balancing acts in our beliefs. Sometimes we decide that one value is more important than another by, for example, supporting equal opportunity while opposing same-sex marriage. In such cases, people simply try to live with the contradictions.

VALUES: CHANGE OVER TIME Like all elements of culture, values change over time. People in the United States have always valued hard work. But, as the U.S. population has become more diverse, more people wonder whether hard work is really enough to "get ahead." For more people in all racial and ethnic categories, too, a single-minded focus on work is giving way to an increasing importance on leisure—having time off from work to do things such as reading, travel, or community service that provide enjoyment and satisfaction. Similarly, although the importance of material comfort remains strong, more people are seeking personal growth through meditation and other spiritual activity.

VALUES: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE Values vary from culture to culture around the world. In general, the values that are important in higher-income countries differ somewhat from those common in lower-income countries.

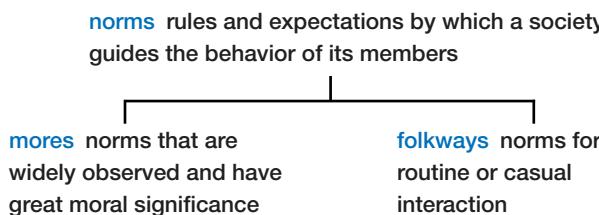
Because lower-income nations contain populations that are vulnerable, people in these countries develop cultures that value survival. This means that people place a great deal of importance on physical safety and economic security. They worry about having enough to eat and a safe place to sleep at night. Lower-income nations also tend to be traditional, with values that celebrate the past and emphasize the importance of family and religious beliefs. These nations, in which men have most of the power, typically discourage or forbid practices such as divorce and abortion.

People in higher-income countries develop cultures that value individualism and self-expression. These countries are rich enough that most of their people take survival for granted, focusing their attention instead on which “lifestyle” they prefer and how to achieve the greatest personal happiness. In addition, these countries tend to be secular-rational, placing less emphasis on family ties and religious beliefs and more on people thinking for themselves and being tolerant of others who differ from them. In higher-income countries, too, women have social standing more equal to men and there is widespread support for practices such as divorce and abortion (World Values Survey, 2015). Figure 3–3 on page 98 shows how selected countries of the world compare in terms of their cultural values.

Norms

Most people in the United States are eager to gossip about “who’s hot” and “who’s not.” Members of American Indian societies, however, typically condemn such behavior as rude and divisive. Both patterns illustrate the operation of **norms**, *rules and expectations by which a society guides the behavior of its members*. In everyday life, people respond to each other with *sanctions*, rewards or punishments that encourage conformity to cultural norms.

MORES AND FOLKWAYS William Graham Sumner (1959, orig. 1906), an early U.S. sociologist, recognized that some norms are more important to our lives than others. Sumner coined the term **mores** (pronounced “MORE-ayz”)



How does the popularity of the television show *The Voice* illustrate many of the key values of U.S. culture? The idea of talented people overcoming challenges on their way up is deeply rooted in the culture of the United States. Sawyer Fredericks is a sixteen-year-old singer and songwriter who grew up on a farm in upstate New York and was schooled at home. In 2015, his career took off after he won the televised competition on *The Voice*, the youngest person to ever do so. He now has a recording contract and many popular videos on YouTube.

to refer to *norms that are widely observed and have great moral significance*. Certain mores include *taboos*, such as our society’s insistence that adults not engage in sexual relations with children.

People pay less attention to **folkways**, *norms for routine or casual interaction*. Examples include ideas about appropriate greetings and proper dress. In short, mores distinguish between right and wrong, and folkways draw a line between right and *rude*. A man who does not wear a tie to a formal dinner party may raise eyebrows for violating folkways. If, however, he were to arrive at the party wearing *only* a tie, he would violate cultural mores and invite a more serious response.

SOCIAL CONTROL Mores and folkways are the basic rules of everyday life. Although we sometimes resist pressure to conform, we can see that norms make our dealings with others more orderly and predictable. Observing or breaking the rules of social life prompts a response from others in the form of either reward or punishment. Sanctions—whether an approving smile or a raised eyebrow—operate

Global Snapshot

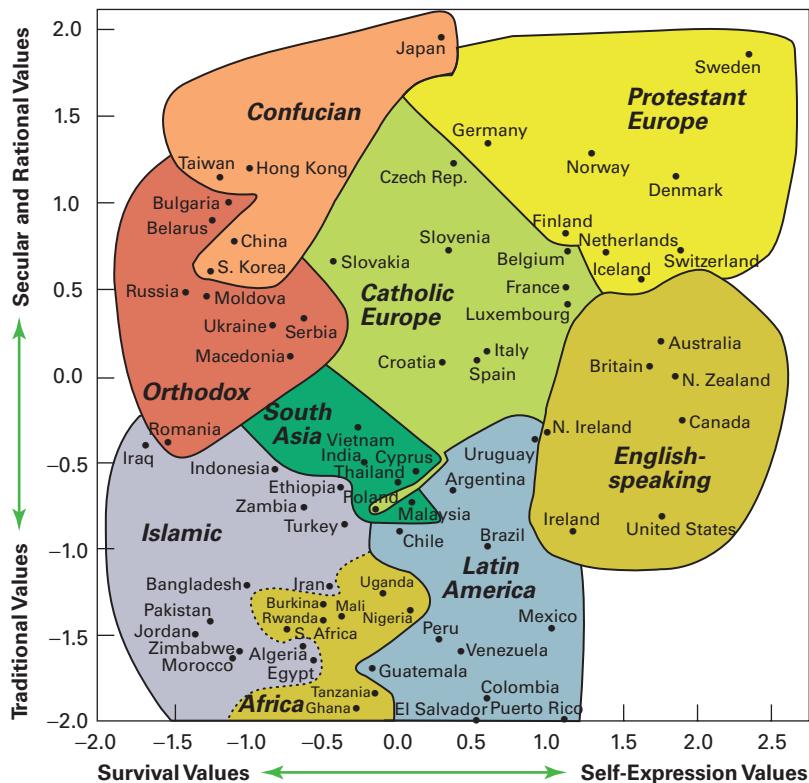


Figure 3–3 Cultural Values of Selected Countries

A general global pattern is that higher-income countries tend to be secular and rational and favor self-expression. By contrast, the cultures of lower-income countries tend to be more traditional and concerned with economic survival. Each region of the world has distinctive cultural patterns, including religious traditions, that affect values. Looking at the figure, what patterns can you see? How does the United States compare to Britain, Sweden, and other high-income countries?

SOURCE: Inglehart & Welzel (2014).

as a system of **social control**, attempts by society to regulate people's thoughts and behavior.

As we learn cultural norms, we gain the capacity to evaluate our own behavior. Doing wrong (say, downloading a term paper from the Internet) can cause both *shame* (the painful sense that others disapprove of our actions) and *guilt* (a negative judgment we make of ourselves). Of all living things, only cultural creatures can experience shame and guilt. This is probably what U.S. author Mark Twain had in mind when he remarked that people “are the only animals that blush—or need to.”

Ideal and Real Culture

Values and norms do not describe actual behavior so much as they suggest how we *should* behave. We must remember that *ideal* culture always differs from *real* culture, which is what actually occurs in everyday life.

For example, most women and men agree on the importance of sexual faithfulness in marriage, and most say they live up to that standard. Even so, about 17 percent of married people report having been sexually unfaithful to their spouses at some point in their marriage (NORC, 2013:2549). But a culture’s moral standards are important even if they are sometimes broken, calling to mind the old saying “Do as I say, not as I do.”

Material Culture and Technology

In addition to symbolic elements such as values and norms, every culture includes a wide range of physical human creations called *artifacts*. The Chinese eat with chopsticks rather than forks, the Japanese put mats rather than rugs on the floor, and many men and women in India prefer flowing robes to the close-fitting clothing common in the United States. The material culture of a people may seem as strange to outsiders as their language, values, and norms.

A society’s artifacts partly reflect underlying cultural values. The warlike Yanomamö carefully craft their weapons and prize the poison tips on their arrows. By contrast, our society’s emphasis on individualism and independence goes a long way toward explaining our high regard for the automobile: We own more than 250 million motor vehicles—more than one for every licensed driver—and even in an age of high gasoline prices, many of these are the large sport utility vehicles we might expect rugged, individualistic people to choose.

In addition to reflecting values, material culture also reflects a society’s **technology**, knowledge that people use to make a way of life in their surroundings. The more complex a society’s technology is, the more its members are able (for better or worse) to shape the world for themselves. Advancements in technology have allowed us to crisscross the country with superhighways and to fill them with automobiles. At the same time, the internal-combustion engines in those cars release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, which contributes to air pollution and global warming.

Because we attach great importance to science and praise sophisticated technology, people in our society tend to judge cultures with simpler technology as less advanced than our own. Some facts support such an assessment. For example, life expectancy for children born

in the United States is now almost seventy-nine years; the life span of the Yanomamö is only about forty years.

However, we must be careful not to make self-serving judgments about other cultures. Although many Yanomamö are eager to acquire modern technology (such as steel tools and shotguns), they are generally well fed by world standards, and most are very satisfied with their lives (Chagnon, 1992). Remember, too, that while our powerful and complex technology has produced work-reducing devices and seemingly miraculous medical treatments, it has also contributed to unhealthy levels of stress and obesity in the population and created weapons capable of destroying in a blinding flash everything that humankind has achieved.

Finally, technology is not equally distributed within our population. Although many of us cannot imagine life without a personal computer, television, and smart phone, many members of U.S. society cannot afford these luxuries. Others reject them on principle. The Amish, who live in small farming communities in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, reject most modern conveniences on religious grounds. With their traditional black clothing and horse-drawn buggies, the Amish may seem like a curious relic of the past. Yet their communities flourish, grounded in strong families that give everyone a sense of identity and purpose. Some researchers who have studied the Amish have concluded that these communities are “islands of sanity in a culture gripped by commercialism and technology run wild” (Hostetler, 1980:4; Kraybill & Olshan, 1994).

New Information Technology and Culture

Many rich nations, including the United States, have entered a postindustrial phase based on computers and new information technology. Industrial production is centered on factories and machinery that generate material goods. By contrast, postindustrial production is based on computers and other electronic devices that create, process, store, and apply information.

In this new information economy, workers need symbolic skills in place of the mechanical skills of the industrial age. Symbolic skills include the ability to speak, write, compute, design, and create images in fields such as art, advertising, and entertainment. In today’s computer-based economy, people with creative jobs are generating new cultural ideas, images, and products all the time.



Standards of beauty—including the color and design of everyday surroundings—vary significantly from one culture to another. This Ndebele couple in South Africa dresses in the same bright colors they use to decorate their home. Members of North American and European societies, by contrast, make far less use of bright colors and intricate detail, so their housing and clothing appear much more subdued.

Cultural Diversity: Many Ways of Life in One World

3.3 Discuss dimensions of cultural difference and cultural change.

In the United States, we are aware of our cultural diversity when we hear several different languages being spoken on the streets of New York or in a school yard in Los Angeles. Compared to a country like Japan, whose historic isolation makes it the most *monocultural* of all high-income nations, centuries of immigration have made the United States the most *multicultural* of all high-income countries.

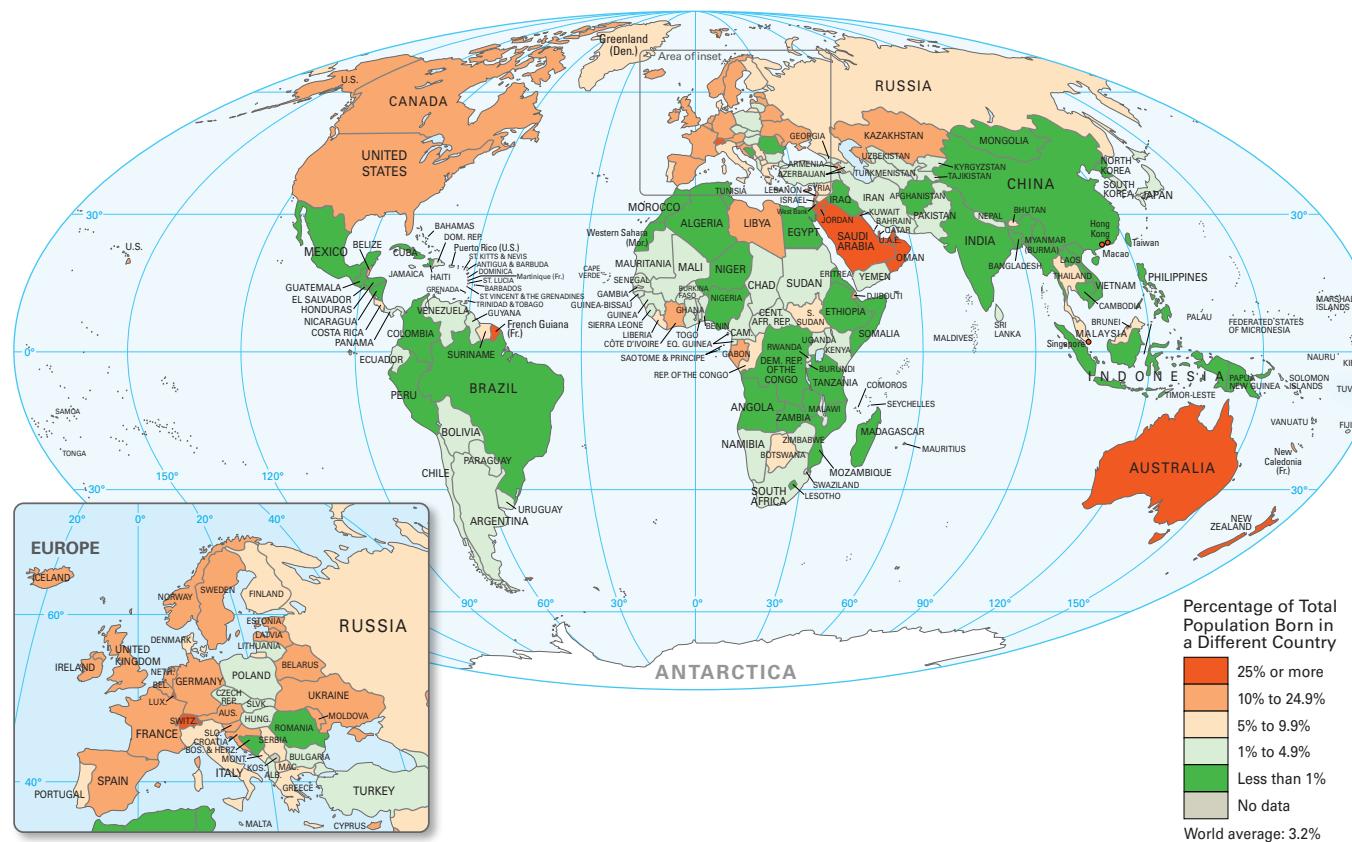
Between 1820 (when the government began keeping track of immigration) and 2014, more than 82 million people came to our shores. Our cultural mix continues to increase as about 1.3 million people arrive each year. A century ago, almost all immigrants came from Europe; today, almost 80 percent arrive from Latin America or Asia (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2014).

To understand the reality of life in the United States, we must move beyond broad cultural patterns and shared values to consider cultural diversity. As diverse as our country is, there are other countries where the experience of cultural diversity is even greater. Global Map 3-1 on page 100 shows the share of population born in another country for all the nations of the world.

High Culture and Popular Culture

Cultural diversity involves not just immigration but also social class. In fact, in everyday talk, we usually

Window on the World



Global Map 3–1 Foreign-Born Population in Global Perspective

We have all heard the United States described as a “nation of immigrants.” This is true in the sense that everyone living in this country either came from some other nation or had ancestors who did. But, in global perspective, the United States does not have the highest share of its population born abroad—in this respect, this country is not even in the top fifty nations! Overall, 14 percent of the U.S. population was born abroad, which is less than Sweden (16 percent), Canada (21 percent), Saudi Arabia (31 percent), Bahrain (55 percent), or United Arab Emirates (84 percent).

use the term “culture” to mean art forms such as classical literature, music, dance, and painting. We describe people who regularly go to the opera or the theater as “cultured,” because we think they appreciate the “finer things in life.”

We speak less kindly of ordinary people, assuming that everyday culture is somehow less worthy. We are tempted to judge the music of Haydn as “more cultured” than hip-hop, couscous as better than cornbread, and polo as more polished than Ping-Pong.

These differences arise because many cultural patterns are readily available to only some members of a society. Sociologists use the term **high culture** to refer to *cultural patterns that distinguish a society's elite* and **popular culture** to designate *cultural patterns that are widespread among a society's population*.

Common sense may suggest that high culture is superior to popular culture, but sociologists are uneasy with

such judgments for two reasons. First, neither elites nor ordinary people share all the same tastes and interests; people within both categories differ in many ways. Second, do we praise high culture because it is inherently better than popular culture or simply because its supporters have more money, power, and prestige? For example, there is no difference at all between a violin and a fiddle; however, we name the instrument a violin when it is used to produce classical music typically enjoyed by a person of higher position and we call it a fiddle when the musician plays country tunes appreciated by people with lower social standing.

high culture cultural patterns that distinguish a society's elite

popular culture cultural patterns that are widespread among a society's population

We should also remember that our country's culture is made up of the life patterns of *all* our people. What's more, this national culture is being created all the time—not just by people whose names are familiar to all of us, but also by countless people including those living in some of the most disadvantaged neighborhoods in the country. The Thinking About Diversity box on page 102 provides a case in point.

Subculture

The term **subculture** refers to *cultural patterns that set apart some segment of a society's population*. People who ride "chopper" motorcycles, people who build their lives around yoga, Ohio State football fans, the southern California "beach crowd," Elvis impersonators, and wilderness campers all display subcultural patterns.

It is easy but often inaccurate to place people in some subcultural category because almost everyone participates in many subcultures without necessarily having much commitment to any of them. In some cases, however, cultural differences can set people apart from one another with tragic results. Consider the former nation of Yugoslavia in southeastern Europe. The 1990s' civil war there was fueled by extreme cultural diversity. This *one* small country with a population about equal to the Los Angeles metropolitan area used *two* alphabets, embraced *three* religions, spoke *four* languages, was home to *five* major nationalities, was divided into *six* political republics, and absorbed the cultural influences of *seven* surrounding countries. The cultural conflict that plunged this nation into civil war shows that subcultures are a source not only of pleasing variety but also of tension and even violence.

Many people view the United States as a "melting pot" where many nationalities blend into a single "American" culture (Gardyn, 2000). But given so much cultural diversity, how accurate is the "melting pot" image? For one thing, subcultures involve not just *difference* but also *hierarchy*. Too often what we view as "dominant" or "mainstream" culture are patterns favored by powerful segments of the population, and we view the lives of disadvantaged people as "subculture." But are the cultural patterns of rich skiers on the slopes of Aspen, Colorado, any less a subculture than the cultural patterns of low-income skateboarders on the streets of Los Angeles? Some sociologists therefore prefer to level the playing field of society by emphasizing multiculturalism.



Reality television is based on popular culture rather than high culture. *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo* chronicled the everyday life of seven-year-old Alana "Honey Boo Boo" Thompson and her parents in rural Georgia. While some critics objected to the show as "low-brow," others applauded the portrayal of a "real" low-income family.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a perspective recognizing the cultural diversity of the United States and promoting equal standing for all cultural traditions. Multiculturalism represents a sharp change from the past, when our society downplayed cultural diversity and defined itself primarily in terms of well-off European and especially English immigrants. Today there is a spirited debate about whether we should continue to focus on historical traditions or highlight contemporary diversity.

E pluribus unum, the Latin phrase that appears on all U.S. coins, means "out of many, one." This motto symbolizes not only our national political union but also the idea that immigrants from around the world have come together to form a new way of life.

But from the outset, the many cultures did not melt together as much as harden into a hierarchy. At the top were the English, who formed a majority early in U.S. history and established English as the nation's dominant language. Further down, people of other backgrounds were advised to model themselves after "their betters." In practice, then, "melting" was really a process of Anglicization—adoption of English ways. As multiculturalists see it, early in our history, this society set up the English way of life as an ideal that everyone else should imitate and by which everyone should be judged. In simple terms, culture can operate in support of social inequality.

Ever since, historians have reported events from the point of view of the English and other people of European ancestry, paying little attention to the perspectives

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

Popular Culture Born in the Inner City: The DJ Scene and Hip-Hop Music

Aaron Jerald (AJ) O'Bryant probably never thought he would help change U.S. culture. In 1960, he was born into a social world where the odds were stacked against him. His family lived in a low-income, African American neighborhood on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Orphaned at thirteen, he moved in with his grandmother, who lived in the South Bronx, close to an intersection that was a known gathering point for local gang members.

In the 1970s, the South Bronx was brewing with social problems. As factories closed, the area lost thousands of good-paying manufacturing jobs, and unemployment and poverty were on the rise. Drug use, crime, and violence became part of everyday life.

Not surprisingly, AJ entered his teenage years thinking that violence was the way to express his frustration. He got into fights on the streets and at school, to the point of being expelled for throwing another student through a window. His grandmother enrolled him at a local school for “at-risk” young people, but he found little to like in the classroom. Within a few years, he dropped out of school and began selling drugs, which earned him fast cash as he tried to stay one step ahead of the police.

Like young people everywhere, AJ wanted to earn the respect of others. He also had a love for music. As the new “DJ” scene emerged in New York City in the mid-1970s, AJ was captivated by Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flowers, and Pete “DJ” Jones. Perhaps most of all, he idolized a young DJ named Kool Herc. AJ remembers the first time he saw Herc. “People in the Bronx were saying ‘Yo, there’s this dude named Herc, and this dude is crazy.’ He was at the park on Sedgewick Avenue. So the next thing is I’m sitting there watching this dude and he’s drawing a crowd.” AJ was hooked on this music scene and wanted to be part of it.

AJ didn’t know the first thing about DJing, but he hung out with other DJs. They became skilled at operating a turntable and playing records, figuring out *which* records to play and *what part* of records people wanted to hear, and they developed a whole set of rules and conventions that would define the new DJ scene.



In the summer of 1977, AJ did his first public performance in the local park. Although people from around New York had come to see the main act, a well-known DJ named Lovebug Star Ski, there were also many people from AJ’s community who showed up to see *him*. He knew he was starting to make it as a DJ, and as his reputation spread, AJ lost interest in drug dealing. He was becoming a local hero. AJ explains, “The guys who own the stores close by the park would bring me beer or whatever I wanted for doing my music because it attracted lots of people and made money for them.”

AJ’s reputation continued to grow as he took part in “battles,” competitions between DJs not unlike the competitions for respect in gang culture. In a battle, DJs would each play for an hour, switching back and forth. The DJ who succeeded in working the crowd into a frenzy was the winner.

AJ’s big break came as the result of a challenge to battle a DJ named Flash, the star of the South Bronx DJ scene, and to do it in Flash’s territory. At first, AJ refused, thinking he could never hope to sway Flash’s own neighborhood crowd. But his mentor, Lovebug Star Ski, insisted, and AJ agreed.

The night of the battle, more than 500 people packed the Dixie Club in Flash’s neighborhood. Even before the competition started, there were rowdy cheers for Flash. Seeing Flash haul in some new and expensive equipment further intimidated AJ as he began his set. He started with “Groove to Get Down” by T-Connection, “Catch a Groove” by Juice, and “Funky Granny” by Kool & The Gang—rhythms that were funky and new to most of the audience. As he moved from one record to the next, the crowd began to groove with him. Then AJ pulled off a wild moment when Lovebug Star Ski jumped up onto the stage to rhyme with AJ’s music. The crowd lost their minds.

Flash followed with his own set and he did his usual amazing work. The crowd cheered for their local DJ, but everyone knew that *both* men had put on very impressive performances. AJ had made it in the larger South Bronx DJ scene, a feat that would lead to opportunities that no doubt saved him from the dangerous social world of drugs and gangs that surrounded him.

AJ and many other young people like him did not make headlines in the New York papers. But they created a style of musical performance—DJing—that is now popular on campuses across the United States. And the musical style that emerged from that movement—hip-hop or rap music—has become the most popular type of music among this country’s young people.

What Do You Think?

1. Is the DJ scene part of popular culture or high culture? Why?
2. What does this story tell us about who creates new cultural patterns?
3. Can you think of other cultural patterns that were born among low-income people?

SOURCE: Ewoodzie, Joseph. *Break Beats in the Bronx: Rediscovering Hip Hop’s Early Years*. University of North Carolina Press, forthcoming.

multiculturalism a perspective recognizing the cultural diversity of the United States and promoting equal standing for all cultural traditions

Eurocentrism the dominance of European (especially English) cultural patterns

Afrocentrism emphasizing and promoting African cultural patterns

and accomplishments of Native Americans and people of African and Asian descent. Multiculturalists criticize this as **Eurocentrism**, *the dominance of European (especially English) cultural patterns*. Molefi Kete Asante (1988), a supporter of multiculturalism, recalls that many fifteenth-century Europeans believed that the Earth was the center of the universe; today, he continues, many people still consider European culture to be the center of the social universe.

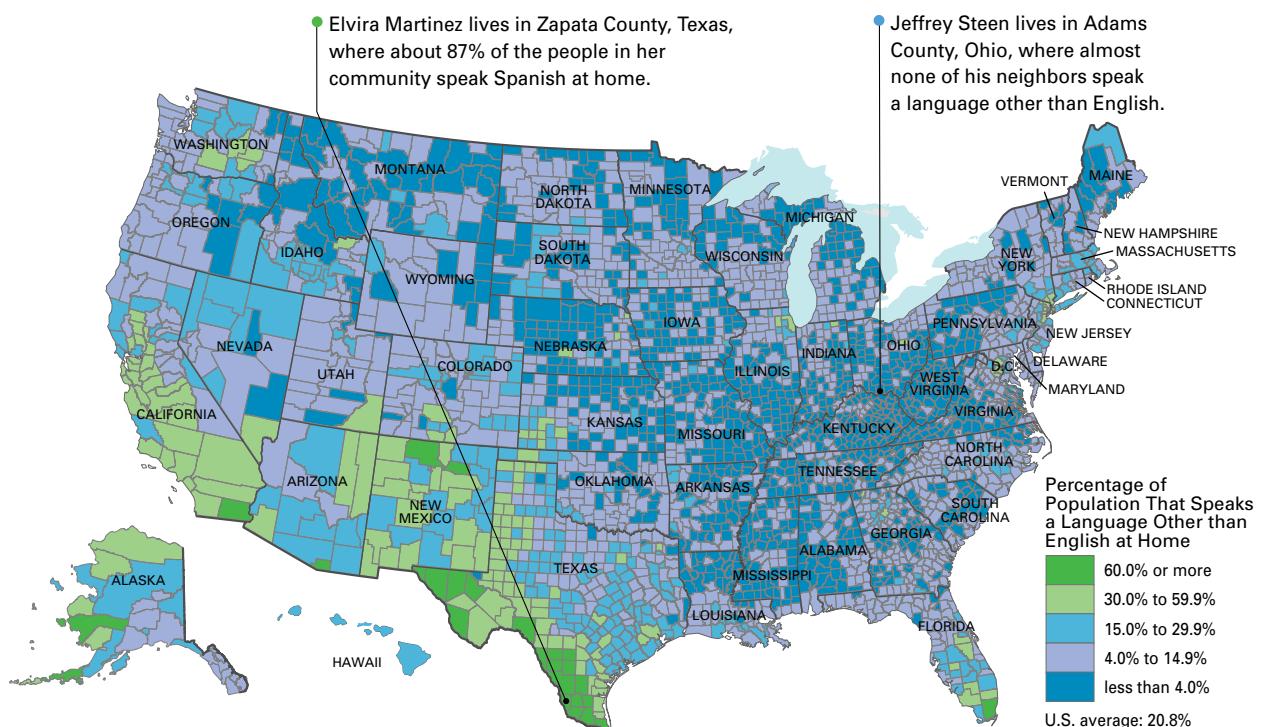
One controversial issue involves language. Some people believe that English should be the official language of the United States; by 2015, legislatures in thirty-one states

had enacted laws making it the official language (ProEnglish, 2015). But some 62 million men and women—one in five—speak a language other than English at home. Spanish is the second most commonly spoken language, and across the country we hear several hundred other tongues, including Italian, German, French, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese, as well as many Native American languages. National Map 3–1 shows where in the United States large numbers of people speak a language other than English at home.

Supporters of multiculturalism say it is a way of coming to terms with our country’s increasing social diversity. With the Asian and Hispanic populations of this country increasing rapidly, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts that by 2043, people of African, Asian, and Hispanic ancestry will be a majority of this country’s population.

Supporters also claim that multiculturalism is a good way to strengthen the academic achievement of African American children. To counter Eurocentrism, some multicultural educators call for **Afrocentrism**, *emphasizing and promoting African cultural patterns*, which they see as

Seeing Ourselves



National Map 3–1 Language Diversity across the United States

Of more than 296 million people age five or older in the United States, the Census Bureau reports that 62 million (21 percent) speak a language other than English at home. Of these, 62 percent speak Spanish and 16 percent speak an Asian language (the Census Bureau lists a total of 37 languages and language categories, each of which is favored by more than 100,000 people). The map shows that non-English speakers are concentrated in certain regions of the country. Which ones? What do you think accounts for this pattern?

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

Student Snapshot

- Compared to college students 45 years ago, today's students are less interested in developing a philosophy of life and more interested in making money.

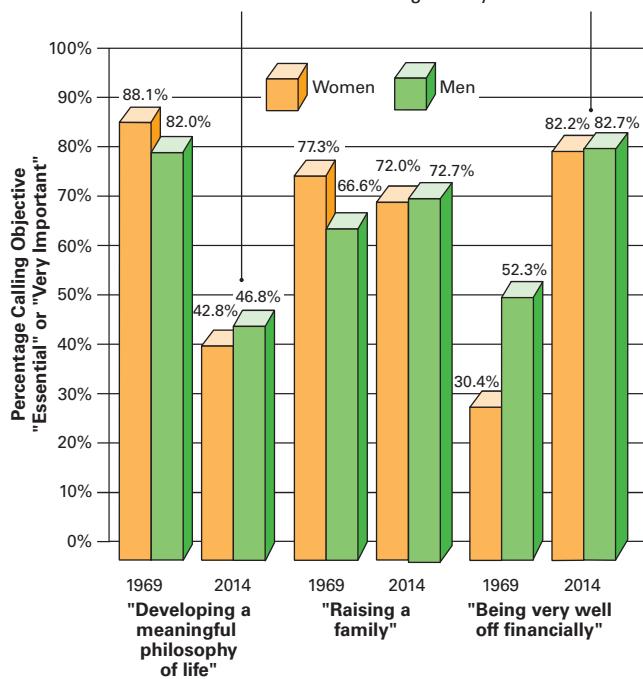


Figure 3–4 Life Objectives of First-Year College Students, 1969 and 2014

Researchers have surveyed first-year college students every year since 1969. While attitudes about some things such as the importance of family have stayed about the same, attitudes about other life goals have changed dramatically.

SOURCE: Astin et al. (2002) and Eagan et al. (2014).

necessary after centuries of minimizing or ignoring the cultural achievements of African societies and African Americans.

Although multiculturalism has found favor in recent years, it has drawn its share of criticism as well. Opponents say it encourages divisiveness rather than unity because it urges people to identify with their own category rather than with the nation as a whole. In addition, critics say, multiculturalism actually harms minorities themselves. Multicultural policies (from African American studies to all-black dorms) seem to support the same racial segregation that our nation has struggled so long to overcome. Furthermore, in the early grades, an Afrocentric curriculum may deny children a wide range of important knowledge and skills by forcing them to study only certain topics from a single point of view.

Finally, the global concern with terrorism has drawn the issue of multiculturalism into the spotlight. In 2015, two Islamist terrorists attacked the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*, a French weekly satirical magazine, killing twelve people including the paper's editor and a French police

officer. As the attackers saw it, the paper had published material disrespectful of their religious beliefs. In the days that followed, more than 5 million people across France marched to denounce the use of deadly violence in responding to cultural affronts. Around the world, we now confront the challenge of being respectful of cultural differences while at the same time defending human life and the core cultural value of free expression of opinion. Some people believe that an extreme form of Islam is trying to impose itself on the relatively open and tolerant culture that exists in Western, high-income nations. There are also some people, both in the West and in other parts of the world, who believe that the United States and other rich nations have imposed their way of life on others. In a world of cultural difference and conflict, we have much we need to learn about tolerance and peacemaking.

Counterculture

Cultural diversity also includes outright rejection of conventional ideas or behavior. **Counterculture** refers to *cultural patterns that strongly oppose those widely accepted within a society*.

During the 1960s, for example, a youth-oriented counterculture rejected mainstream culture as overly competitive, self-centered, and materialistic. Instead, hippies and other counterculturalists favored a cooperative lifestyle in which "being" was more important than "doing" and the capacity for personal growth—or "expanded consciousness"—was prized over material possessions like homes and cars. Such differences led some people to "drop out" of the larger society.

Countercultures are still flourishing. At the extreme, small militaristic communities (made up of people born in this country) or bands of religious militants (from other countries) exist in the United States, some of them engaging in violence intended to threaten our way of life.

Cultural Change

Perhaps the most basic human truth of this world is that "all things shall pass." Even the dinosaurs, which thrived on this planet for 160 million years, exist today only as fossils. Will humanity survive for millions of years to come? All we can say with certainty is that given our reliance on culture, for as long as we survive, the human record will show continuous change.

Figure 3–4 shows changes in attitudes among first-year college students between 1969 (the height of the 1960s' counterculture) and 2013. Some attitudes have changed only slightly: Today, as a generation ago, most men and women look forward to raising a family. But today's students are less concerned with developing a philosophy of life and much more interested in making money.

Change in one dimension of a cultural system usually sparks changes in others. For example, today's college women are much more interested in making money because women are now far more likely to be in the labor force than their mothers or grandmothers were. Working for income may not change their interest in raising a family, but it does increase the age at first marriage, the age of first childbirth, and the divorce rate. Such connections illustrate the principle of **cultural integration**, *the close relationships among various elements of a cultural system*.

CULTURAL LAG Some elements of culture change faster than others. William Ogburn (1964) observed that technology moves quickly, generating new elements of material culture (things) faster than nonmaterial culture (ideas) can keep up with them. Ogburn called this inconsistency **cultural lag**, *the fact that some cultural elements change more quickly than others, disrupting a cultural system*. For example, in a world in which a woman can give birth to a child by using another woman's egg, which has been fertilized in a laboratory with the sperm of a total stranger, how are we to apply traditional ideas about motherhood and fatherhood?

CAUSES OF CULTURAL CHANGE Cultural changes are set in motion in three ways. The first is *invention*, the process of creating new cultural elements. Invention has given us the telephone (1876), the airplane (1903), and the computer (late 1940s); each of these elements of material culture has had a tremendous impact on our way of life. The same is true of the minimum wage (1938), school desegregation (1954), and women's shelters (1975), each an important element of nonmaterial culture. The process of invention goes on all the time, as indicated by the thousands of applications submitted every year to the U.S. Patent Office.

Discovery, a second cause of cultural change, involves recognizing and understanding more fully something already in existence—perhaps a distant star or the foods of another culture or women's athletic ability. Many discoveries result from painstaking scientific research, and others happen by a stroke of luck, as in 1898, when Marie Curie left a rock on a piece of photographic paper, noticed that emissions from the rock had exposed the paper, and thus discovered radium.

The third cause of cultural change is *diffusion*, the spread of cultural traits from one society to another. Because new information technology sends information around the globe in seconds, cultural diffusion has never been greater than it is today.

Certainly our own society has contributed many significant cultural elements to the world, ranging from computers to jazz. Of course, diffusion works the other way, too, so that much of what we assume to be "American"

actually comes from elsewhere. Most of the clothing we wear and the furniture we use, as well as the watch we carry and the money we spend, all had their origin in other cultures (Linton, 1937).

It is certainly correct to talk about "American culture," especially when we are comparing our way of life to the culture of some other society. But this discussion of cultural change shows us that culture is always complex and always changing. The Thinking About Diversity box on page 106 offers a good example of the diverse and dynamic character of culture with a brief look at the history of rock-and-roll music.

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

December 10, a small village in Morocco. Watching many of our fellow travelers browsing through a tiny ceramics factory, we have little doubt that North Americans are among the world's greatest shoppers. We delight in surveying hand-woven carpets in China or India, inspecting finely crafted metals in Turkey, or collecting the beautifully colored porcelain tiles we find here in Morocco. Of course, all these items are wonderful bargains. But one major reason for the low prices is unsettling: Many products from the world's low- and middle-income countries are produced by children—some as young as five or six—who work long days for pennies per hour.

We think of childhood as a time of innocence and freedom from adult burdens like regular work. In poor countries throughout the world, however, families depend on income earned by children. So what people in one society think of as right and natural, people elsewhere find puzzling and even immoral. Perhaps the Chinese philosopher Confucius had it right when he noted that "all people are the same; it's only their habits that are different."

Just about every imaginable idea or behavior is commonplace somewhere in the world, and this variation from culture to culture causes travelers both excitement and, at times, distress. The Australians flip light switches down to turn them on; North Americans flip them up. The British drive on the left side of the road; North Americans drive on the right side. The Japanese give names to city blocks; North Americans name streets. Egyptians stand very close to others when engaged in conversation; North Americans are used to maintaining several feet of "personal space." Bathrooms lack toilet paper in much of rural Morocco, causing considerable discomfort for North Americans, who recoil at the thought of having to the left hand for bathroom hygiene, as some Moroccans do.

Given that a particular culture is the basis for each person's reality, it is no wonder that people everywhere exhibit **ethnocentrism**, *the practice of judging another culture by the standards of one's own culture*. Some degree of

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

Early Rock-and-Roll: Race, Class, and Cultural Change

In the 1950s, rock-and-roll emerged as a major part of U.S. popular culture. Before then, mainstream “pop” music was aimed at white adults. Songs were written by professional composers, recorded by long-established record labels, and performed by well-known artists such as Perry Como, Eddie Fisher, Doris Day, and Patti Page. Just about every big-name performer of the 1950s was white.

At that time, the country was rigidly segregated racially, which created differences in the cultures of white people and black people. In the subcultural world of African Americans, music had sounds and rhythms reflecting jazz, gospel singing, and rhythm and blues. These musical styles were created by African American composers and performers working with black-owned record companies broadcast on radio to an almost entirely black audience.

Class, too, divided the musical world of the 1950s, even among whites. A second musical subculture was country and western, a musical style popular among poorer whites, especially people living in the South. Like rhythm and blues, country and western music had its own composers and performers, its own record labels, and its own radio stations.

“Crossover” music was rare, meaning that very few performers or songs moved from one musical world to gain popularity in another. But this musical segregation began to break down about 1955 with the birth of rock-and-roll. Rock was a new mix of older musical patterns, blending mainstream pop with country and western and, especially, rhythm and blues.

As rock-and-roll drew together musical traditions, it soon divided society in a new way—by age. Rock was the first music clearly linked to the emergence of a youth culture—rock was all the rage among teenagers but was little appreciated by their parents. Rockers took a rebellious stand against “adult” culture, looked like what parents might have called “juvenile delinquents,” and claimed to be “cool,” an idea that most parents did not even understand.

Young people idolized performers sporting sideburns, turned-up collars, and black leather jackets. By 1956, the unquestioned star of rock-and-roll was a poor white southern boy from Tupelo, Mississippi, named Elvis Aron Presley. With rural roots, Elvis Presley knew country and western music,



and after moving to Memphis, Tennessee, he learned black gospel and rhythm and blues.

Presley became the first superstar of rock-and-roll not just because he had talent but also because he had great crossover power. With early hits including “Hound Dog” (a rhythm and blues song originally recorded by Big Mama Thornton) and “Blue Suede Shoes” (written by country and western star Carl Perkins), Presley broke down many of the musical walls based on race and class.

By the end of the 1950s, popular music developed in many new directions, creating soft rock (Ricky Nelson, Pat Boone), rockabilly (Johnny Cash), and dozens of doo-wop groups, both black and white. In the 1960s, rock expanded further, including folk music (the Kingston Trio; Peter, Paul, and Mary; Bob Dylan), surf music (the Beach Boys, Jan and Dean), and the “British invasion” led by the Beatles.

Starting on the clean-cut, pop side of rock, the Beatles soon shared the spotlight with another British band proud of its “delinquent” clothing and street fighter looks—the Rolling Stones. By now, music was a huge business, including not just the hard rock of the Beatles and Stones but also softer “folk rock” performed by the Byrds, the Mamas and the Papas, Simon and Garfunkel, and Crosby, Stills, and Nash. In addition, “Motown” (named after the “motor city,” Detroit) and “soul” music launched the careers of dozens of African American stars, including James Brown, Aretha Franklin, the Four Tops, the Temptations, and Diana Ross and the Supremes.

On the West Coast, San Francisco developed political rock music performed by Jefferson Airplane, the Grateful Dead, and Janis Joplin. West Coast spin-off styles included “acid rock,” influenced by drug use, performed by the Doors and Jimi Hendrix. The jazz influence returned as “jazz rock” and was played by groups such as Chicago and Blood, Sweat, and Tears.

This brief look at the birth of rock-and-roll shows the power of race and class to shape subcultural patterns. It also shows that the production of culture became a megabusiness. Most of all, it shows us that culture does not stand still but is a living process, changing, adapting, and reinventing itself over time.

What Do You Think?

1. Our way of life shaped rock-and-roll. In what ways did the emergence of rock-and-roll change U.S. culture?
2. Throughout this period of musical change, most musical performers were men. What does this tell us about our way of life? Is today’s popular music still dominated by men?
3. Carry on the story of musical change to the present. (Think of disco, heavy metal, punk rock, rap, and hip-hop.)

SOURCE: Based on Stuessy & Lipscomb (2008).

Elvis Presley (*center*) drew together the music of rhythm and blues singers, such as Big Mama Thornton (*left*), and country and western stars, including Carl Perkins (*right*). The development of rock-and-roll illustrates the ever-changing character of U.S. culture.

ethnocentrism the practice of judging another culture by the standards of one's own culture

cultural relativism the practice of judging a culture by its own standards

ethnocentrism is necessary for people to be emotionally attached to their way of life. But ethnocentrism also generates misunderstanding and sometimes conflict.

Members of every cultural system tend to prefer what they know and are wary about what is different. The ancient Romans took this view of difference to an extreme, using the same word for both “stranger” and “enemy.” Even language is culturally biased. Centuries ago, people in Europe and North America referred to China as the “Far East.” But this term, unknown to the Chinese, is an ethnocentric expression for a region that is far to the east of us. The Chinese name for their country translates as “Central Kingdom,” suggesting that they, like us, see their own society as the center of the world.

The alternative to ethnocentrism is **cultural relativism**, *the practice of judging a culture by its own standards*. Cultural relativism can be difficult for travelers to adopt: It requires not only openness to unfamiliar values and norms but also the ability to put aside the cultural standards we have known all our lives. Even so, as people from different parts of the world come into increasing contact with one another, the importance of understanding other cultures becomes ever greater.

As the opening to this chapter explained, businesses in the United States are learning the value of marketing to a culturally diverse population. Similarly, businesses are learning that success in the global economy depends on awareness of cultural patterns around the world. IBM, for example, now provides technical support for its products using websites in thirty-five languages (IBM, 2015).

This trend is a change from the past, when many corporations used marketing strategies that lacked sensitivity to cultural diversity. When translated into Spanish, Coors’s phrase “Turn It Loose” startled Spanish-speaking customers by proclaiming that the beer would cause diarrhea. Braniff Airlines translated its slogan “Fly in Leather” so carelessly into Spanish that it read “Fly Naked.” Similarly, Eastern Airlines’ slogan “We Earn Our Wings Every Day” became “We Fly Daily to Heaven.” Even poultry giant Frank Perdue fell victim to poor marketing when his pitch “It Takes a Tough Man to Make a Tender Chicken” was transformed into the Spanish words reading “A Sexually Excited Man Will Make a Chicken Affectionate” (Helin, 1992).

But cultural relativism introduces problems of its own. If almost any kind of behavior is the norm *somewhere* in the world, does that mean everything is equally right? Does the fact that some Indian and Moroccan families benefit from having their children work long hours justify child labor? Since we are all members of a single species, surely



In the world’s low-income countries, most children must work to provide their families with needed income. This young boy works long hours carrying firewood in Laos. Is it ethnocentric for people living in high-income nations to condemn the practice of child labor because we think youngsters belong in school? Why or why not?

there must be some universal standards of proper conduct. But what are they? And in trying to develop them, how can we avoid imposing our own standards on others? There are no simple answers to these questions. But when confronting an unfamiliar cultural practice, it is best to resist making judgments before grasping what people in that culture understand the issue to be. Remember also to think about your own way of life as others might see it. After all, what we gain most from studying others is better insight into ourselves.

A Global Culture?

Today, more than ever, we can observe many of the same cultural practices the world over. Walking the streets of Seoul, South Korea; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Chennai, India; Cairo, Egypt; or Casablanca, Morocco, we see people wearing jeans, hear familiar music, and read ads for many of the same products we use at home. Are we witnessing the birth of a single global culture?

Societies now have more contact with one another than ever before, thanks to the flow of goods, information, and people:

- 1. The global economy: The flow of goods.** International trade has never been greater. The global economy has spread many of the same consumer goods—from cars and TV shows to music and fashions—throughout the world.
- 2. Global communications: The flow of information.** The Internet and satellite-assisted communications enable people to experience the sights and sounds of events taking place thousands of miles away, often as they happen. Cell phone communication instantly links people all around the world, just as new technology enables text messages written in one language to be delivered in another (Simonite, 2012). In addition, although less than one-third of Internet users speak English as their first language, most of the world's Web pages are written in English (Smartling, 2012). This fact helps explain why, as we saw in Figure 3–2, English is rapidly emerging as the preferred second language around the world.
- 3. Global migration: The flow of people.** Knowing about the rest of the world motivates people to move to where they imagine life will be better. In addition, today's transportation technology, especially air travel, makes relocating easier than ever before. As a result, in most countries, significant numbers of people were born elsewhere, including more than 41 million people in the United States, which is 13 percent of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

These global links help make the cultures of the world more similar. Even so, there are three important limitations to the global culture thesis. First, the global flow of goods, information, and people is uneven in different parts of the world. Generally speaking, urban areas (centers of commerce, communication, and people) have stronger ties to one another, while many rural villages remain isolated. In addition, the greater economic and military power of North America and Western Europe means that these regions influence the rest of the world more than the rest of the world influences them.

Second, the global culture thesis assumes that people everywhere are able to *afford* various new goods and services. As Chapter 12 ("Global Stratification") explains, desperate poverty in much of the world deprives people of even the basic necessities of a safe and secure life.

Third, although many cultural practices are now found in countries throughout the world, people everywhere do not attach the same meanings to them. Do children in Tokyo draw the same lessons from reading the Harry Potter books as children in New York or London? Similarly, we enjoy foods from around the world while knowing little about the lives of the people who created them. In short, people everywhere still see the world through their own cultural lenses.

Theories of Culture

3.4 Apply sociology's macro-level theories to gain greater understanding of culture.

Sociologists investigate how culture helps us make sense of ourselves and the surrounding world. Here we will examine several macro-level theoretical approaches to understanding culture. A micro-level approach to the personal experience of culture, which emphasizes how individuals not only conform to cultural patterns but also create new patterns in their everyday lives, is the focus of Chapter 6 ("Social Interaction in Everyday Life").

Structural-Functional Theory: The Functions of Culture

The structural-functional approach explains culture as a complex strategy for meeting human needs. Borrowing from the philosophical doctrine of *idealism*, this approach considers values the core of a culture (Parsons, 1966; Williams, 1970). In other words, cultural values direct our lives, give meaning to what we do, and bind people together. Countless other cultural traits have various functions that support the operation of society.

Thinking functionally helps us understand an unfamiliar way of life. Consider the Amish farmer plowing hundreds of acres on an Ohio farm with a team of horses. His farming methods may violate our cultural value of efficiency, but from the Amish point of view, hard work functions to develop the discipline necessary for a highly religious way of life. Long days of working together not only make the Amish self-sufficient but also strengthen family ties and unify local communities.

Of course, Amish practices have dysfunctions as well. The hard work and strict religious discipline are too demanding for some, who end up leaving the community. Then, too, strong religious beliefs sometimes prevent compromise; slight differences in religious practices have caused the Amish to divide into different communities (Kraybill, 1989; Kraybill & Olshan, 1994).

If cultures are strategies for meeting human needs, we would expect to find many common patterns around the world. **Cultural universals** are *traits that are part of every known culture*. Comparing hundreds of cultures, George Murdock (1945) identified dozens of cultural universals. One common element is the family, which functions everywhere to control sexual reproduction and to oversee the care of children. Funeral rites, too, are found everywhere, because all human communities cope with the reality of death. Jokes are another cultural universal, serving as a safe means of releasing social tensions.

EVALUATE

The strength of structural-functional theory is that it shows how culture operates to meet human needs. Yet by emphasizing a society's dominant cultural patterns, this approach largely ignores the cultural diversity that exists in many societies, including our own. Also, because this approach emphasizes cultural stability, it downplays the importance of change. In short, cultural systems are not as stable or a matter of as much agreement as structural-functional theory leads us to believe.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING In the United States, what are some of the functions of sports, July Fourth celebrations, and Black History Month?

Social-Conflict Theory: Inequality and Culture

The social-conflict approach stresses the link between culture and inequality. Any cultural trait, from this point of view, benefits some members of society at the expense of others.

Why do certain values dominate a society in the first place? Many conflict theorists, especially Marxists, argue that culture is shaped by a society's system of economic production. "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being," Karl Marx proclaimed; "it is their social being that determines their consciousness" (Marx & Engels, 1978:4, orig. 1859). Social-conflict theory, then, is rooted in the philosophical doctrine of *materialism*, which holds that a society's system of material production (such as our own capitalist economy) has a powerful effect on the rest of a culture. This materialist approach contrasts with the idealist leanings of structural functionalism.

Social-conflict analysis ties our cultural values of competitiveness and material success to our country's capitalist economy, which serves the interests of the nation's wealthy elite. The culture of capitalism further teaches us to think that rich and powerful people work harder or longer than others and therefore deserve their wealth and privileges. It also encourages us to view capitalism as somehow "natural," discouraging us from trying to reduce economic inequality.

Eventually, however, the strains of inequality erupt into movements for social change. Two historical examples in the United States are the civil rights movement and the women's movement. A more recent example is the Occupy Wall Street movement, which has focused on our society's increasing economic inequality. All these movements seek greater equality, and all have encountered opposition from defenders of the status quo.

Feminist Theory: Gender and Culture

As Marx saw it, culture is rooted in economic production. Therefore, our society's culture largely reflects the capitalist economic system. Feminists agree with Marx's claim



All around the world, families are part of a society's way of life. From a structural-functional point of view, we might ask if this universal character reflects the fact that families carry out important tasks not easily accomplished in other ways. What tasks do families perform?

that culture is an arena of conflict, but they see this conflict as being rooted in gender.

Gender refers to *the personal traits and social positions that members of a society attach to being female or male*. From a feminist point of view, gender is a crucial dimension of social inequality, a topic that Chapter 10 ("Gender Stratification") examines in detail. As that chapter explains, men have greater access to the workforce than women do and so men earn more income. Men also have greater power in our national political system; for example, all forty-four of this country's presidents have been men. In addition, on the level of everyday experience, men exercise the most power in the typical household.

Feminists claim that our culture is "gendered." This means that our way of life reflects the ways in which our society defines what is male as more important than what is female. This inequality is evident in the language we use. We tend to say "man and wife," a phrase used in traditional wedding vows; we almost never hear the phrase "woman and husband." Similarly, the masculine word "king" conveys power and prestige, with a meaning that is almost entirely positive. The comparable feminine word "queen" has a range of meanings, some which are negative.

Not only does our culture define what is masculine as dominant in relation to what is feminine, but also our way of life defines this male domination as "natural." Such a system of beliefs serves to justify gender inequality by claiming it cannot be changed.

In short, cultural patterns reflect and support gender inequality. Cultural patterns also perpetuate this inequality to the extent that they carry it forward into the future.

EVALUATE

Social-conflict theory suggests that cultural systems do not address human needs equally, allowing some people to dominate others. Marx focused on economic inequality and analyzed culture as an expression of capitalism. Feminists focus on gender and understand culture as a reflection of male domination. All these dimensions of inequality are “built into” our way of life. At the same time, such inequality also generates pressure toward change.

Yet by stressing the divisiveness of culture, all social-conflict analysis understates ways in which cultural patterns integrate members of a society. Thus, we should consider both social-conflict and structural-functional insights for a fuller understanding of culture.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING How might a social-conflict analysis of college fraternities and sororities differ from a structural-functional analysis?

Sociobiology: Evolution and Culture

We know that culture is a human creation, but does human biology influence how this process unfolds? A third way of thinking, standing with one leg in biology and one in sociology, is **sociobiology**, *a theoretical approach that explores ways in which human biology affects how we create culture*.

Sociobiology rests on the theory of evolution proposed by Charles Darwin in *On the Origin of Species* (1859). Darwin asserted that living organisms change over long periods of time as a result of *natural selection*, a matter of four simple principles. First, all living things live to reproduce themselves. Second, the blueprint for reproduction is in the genes, the basic units of life that carry traits of one generation into the next. Third, some random variation in genes allows a species to “try out” new life patterns in a particular



Using an evolutionary perspective, sociobiologists explain that different reproductive strategies give rise to a double standard: Men treat women as sexual objects more than women treat men that way. While this may be so, many sociologists counter that behavior—such as that shown here—is more correctly understood as resulting from a culture of male domination.

environment. This variation allows some organisms to survive better than others and pass on their advantageous genes to their offspring. Fourth and finally, over thousands of generations, the genetic patterns that promote reproduction survive and become dominant. In this way, as biologists say, a species *adapts* to its environment, and dominant traits emerge as the “nature” of the organism.

Sociobiologists claim that the large number of cultural universals reflects the fact that all humans are members of a single biological species. It is our common biology that underlies, for example, the apparently universal “double standard” of sexual behavior. As the sex researcher Alfred Kinsey put it, “Among all people everywhere in the world, the male is more likely than the female to desire sex with a variety of partners” (quoted in Barash, 1981:49). But why?

We all know that children result from joining a woman’s egg with a man’s sperm. But the biological importance of a single sperm and of a single egg is quite different. For healthy men, sperm represent a “renewable resource” produced by the testes throughout most of the life course. A man releases hundreds of millions of sperm in a single ejaculation—technically, enough to fertilize every woman in North America (Barash, 1981:47). A newborn female’s ovaries, however, contain her entire lifetime supply of eggs. A woman generally releases a single egg cell from her ovaries each month. So although men are biologically capable of fathering thousands of offspring, women are able to bear only a relatively small number of children.

Given this biological difference, men reproduce their genes most efficiently by being promiscuous—readily engaging in sex with any willing partner. But women look differently at reproduction. Each of a woman’s relatively few pregnancies demands that she carry the child for nine months, give birth, and provide care for years afterward. Thus efficient reproduction on the part of a woman depends on carefully selecting a mate whose qualities (beginning with the likelihood that he will simply stay around) will contribute to her child’s survival and, later, successful reproduction.

The double standard certainly involves more than biology and is tangled up with the historical domination of women by men. But sociobiology suggests that this cultural pattern, like many others, has an underlying “biologic.” Simply put, the double standard exists around the world because biological differences lead women and men everywhere to favor distinctive reproductive strategies.

EVALUATE

Sociobiology has generated intriguing theories about the biological roots of some cultural patterns. The approach, however, remains controversial for two main reasons.

First, some critics fear that sociobiology may revive biological arguments, from over a century ago, that claimed the superiority of one race or sex. But defenders counter that sociobiology rejects the

APPLYING THEORY

Culture

	Structural-Functional Theory	Social-Conflict and Feminist Theories	Sociobiology Theory
What is the level of analysis?	Macro-level	Macro-level	Macro-level
What is culture?	Culture is a system of behavior by which members of societies cooperate to meet their needs.	Culture is a system that benefits some people and disadvantages others.	Culture is a system of behavior that is partly shaped by human biology.
What is the foundation of culture?	Cultural patterns are rooted in a society's core values and beliefs.	Marx claimed that cultural patterns are rooted in a society's system of economic production. Feminist theory says cultural conflict is rooted in gender.	Cultural patterns are rooted in humanity's biological evolution.
What core questions does the approach ask?	How does a cultural pattern help society operate? What cultural patterns are found in all societies?	How does a cultural pattern benefit some people and harm others? How does a cultural pattern support social inequality?	How does a cultural pattern help a species adapt to its environment?

past pseudoscience of racial and gender superiority. In fact, they say, sociobiology unites all of humanity because all people share a single evolutionary history. Sociobiology does assert that men and women differ biologically in some ways that culture cannot easily overcome. But far from claiming that males are somehow more important than females, sociobiology emphasizes that both sexes are vital to human reproduction and survival.

Second, say the critics, sociobiologists have little evidence to support their theories. Research to date suggests that biological forces do not *determine* human behavior in any rigid sense. Rather, humans *learn* behavior within a cultural system. The contribution of sociobiology, then, lies in explaining why some cultural patterns seem easier to learn than others (Barash, 1981).

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Using the sociobiology approach, explain why a cultural pattern such as sibling rivalry (by which children in the same family often compete and even fight with one another) is widespread.

Because any analysis of culture requires a broad focus on the workings of society, the three theoretical approaches discussed in this chapter are all macro-level in scope. The Applying Theory table summarizes the main insights of each of these three approaches.

The symbolic-interaction approach, with its micro-level focus on behavior in everyday situations, will be explored in Chapter 6 (“Social Interaction in Everyday Life”).

Does culture bind us to each other and to the past? Or does culture enhance our capacity for individual thought and independent choice?

Culture as Constraint

As symbolic creatures, humans cannot live without culture. But the capacity for culture does have some drawbacks. We may be the only animal to name ourselves, but living in a symbolic world means that we are also the only creatures who experience alienation. In addition, culture is largely a matter of habit, which limits our choices and drives us to repeat troubling patterns, such as racial prejudice and sex discrimination, in each new generation.

Our society’s emphasis on competitive achievement urges us toward excellence, yet this same pattern also isolates us from one another. Material things comfort us in some ways but divert us from the security and satisfaction that come from close relationships and spiritual strength.

Culture as Freedom

For better or worse, human beings are cultural creatures, just as ants and elephants are prisoners of their biology. But there is a crucial difference. Biological instincts create a ready-made world; culture forces us to make choices as we make and remake a world for ourselves. No better evidence of this freedom exists than the cultural diversity of our own society and the even greater human diversity found around the world.

Learning more about this cultural diversity is one goal shared by sociologists. Wherever we may live, the better we understand the workings of the surrounding culture, the better prepared we are to use the freedom it offers us.

Culture and Human Freedom

3.5 Critique culture as limiting or expanding human freedom.

This chapter leads us to ask an important question: To what extent are human beings, as cultural creatures, free?

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 3 Culture

What clues do we have to a society's cultural values?

The values of any society—that is, what that society thinks is important—are reflected in various aspects of everyday life. One aspect of everyday life in which cultural values often manifest are advertisements. Advertisements typically attempt to express associations between their products and the values consumers hold. The messages communicated by advertisements vary across societies based on cultural values. Consider the descriptions of advertisements below and the values that are represented by their messages.

In Western societies, many of which favor the cultural values of individualism, freedom and choice, advertisements may depict their products as ways for consumers to express themselves or assert their individuality. For example, one English-language advertisement for Ray-Ban sunglasses prominently says “NEVER HIDE” at the top while depicting a bicyclist (wearing sunglasses) soaring through the air in front of a group of other bicyclists who are following her. Such advertisements reinforce values congruent with individualism, such as standing out from the crowd, leading the pack rather than following, and aspiring to new heights as an individual.

In contrast, Eastern societies, like China and South Korea, have historically emphasized cultural values such as group

harmony and social cohesion. Advertisements in these societies typically promote their products as a means to fit in with others or emphasize values pertaining to family, harmonious interpersonal relations, and tradition. For example, one Adidas advertising campaign that was initially launched in China depicts a group of young women running together and reads (in Chinese), “With my girls, nothing is impossible.” Unlike the Ray-Ban ad, none of the girls are seeking to stand out or lead the others. Such messages seek to appeal to the values of prioritizing relationships and accomplishing collective goals rather than individual ones.

However, culture is dynamic, and a society’s values may gradually shift over time. With increased economic growth, urbanization, and exposure to foreign media, individualistic values are also being increasingly endorsed in traditionally collectivistic cultures. Likewise, advertisements in Eastern societies are increasingly incorporating individualistic themes, especially the content aimed at younger consumers. For example, one recent South Korean commercial for Nike depicts determined young athletes rejecting pessimistic remarks from an experienced athlete that they should give up on their athletic ambitions and adopt conventional roles.





Hint Advertisements may serve as subtle everyday reflections of cultural values, given that advertisers seek to leverage the values, desires, and goals of consumers in order to market their products and services. Advertisements may also reinforce cultural values by glorifying people who exhibit valued traits. For instance, advertisements for beauty products influence the public's standards for qualities that are deemed beautiful. By subtly portraying their products and services as critical tools that consumers can use to conform to cultural values, advertisements can be examined as both an expression and enforcer of those values. But with increasing globalization and exchange of ideas across cultures, cultural values that may have traditionally been communicated in advertisements are shifting dynamically.

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

- Analyze the advertisements of three foreign brands in your country and discuss how they influence and have been influenced by your country's cultural values.
- Do you know someone on your campus who has lived in another country or a cultural setting different from what is familiar to you? Try to engage in conversation with someone whose way of life is significantly different from your own. Try to discover something that you accept or take for granted in one way that the other person sees in a different way and try to understand why.
- Go to www.sociologyinfofocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 3 Culture

What Is Culture?

3.1 Explain the development of culture as a human strategy for survival. (pages 88–92)

Culture is a **way of life**.

- Culture is shared by members of a society.
- Culture shapes how we act, think, and feel.

Culture is a **human trait**.

- Although several species display a limited capacity for culture, only human beings rely on culture for survival.

Culture is a **product of evolution**.

- As the human brain evolved, culture replaced biological instincts as our species' primary strategy for survival.

We experience **culture shock** when we enter an unfamiliar culture and are not able to "read" meaning in our new surroundings. We create culture shock for others when we act in ways they do not understand.

culture the ways of thinking, the ways of acting, and the material objects that together form a people's way of life

nonmaterial culture the ideas created by members of a society

material culture the physical things created by members of a society

culture shock personal disorientation when experiencing an unfamiliar way of life

The Elements of Culture

3.2 Identify common elements of culture. (pages 92–99)

Culture relies on **symbols** in the form of words, gestures, and actions to express meaning.

- The fact that different meanings can come to be associated with the same symbol (for example, a wink of an eye) shows the human capacity to create and manipulate symbols.
- Societies create new symbols all the time (for example, new computer technology has sparked the creation of new cyber-symbols).

Language is the symbolic system by which people in a culture communicate with one another.

- People use language—both spoken and written—to transmit culture from one generation to the next.
- Because every culture is different, each language has words or expressions not found in any other language.

Values are abstract standards of what *ought* to be (for example, equality of opportunity).

- Values can sometimes be in conflict with one another.
- Lower-income countries have cultures that value survival; higher-income countries have cultures that value individualism and self-expression.

Beliefs are specific statements that people who share a culture hold to be true (for example, "A qualified woman could be elected president").

Norms, rules that guide human behavior, are of two types:

- **mores** (for example, sexual taboos), which have great moral significance
- **folkways** (for example, greetings or dining etiquette), which are matters of everyday politeness

Technology and Culture

- A society's **artifacts**—the wide range of physical human creations that together make up a society's material culture—reflect underlying cultural values and technology.
- The more complex a society's technology, the more its members are able to shape the world as they wish.

symbol anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share a culture

language a system of symbols that allows people to communicate with one another

cultural transmission the process by which one generation passes culture to the next

Sapir-Whorf thesis the idea that people see and understand the world through the cultural lens of language

values culturally defined standards that people use to decide what is desirable, good, and beautiful and that serve as broad guidelines for social living

beliefs specific ideas that people hold to be true

norms rules and expectations by which a society guides the behavior of its members

mores norms that are widely observed and have great moral significance

folkways norms for routine or casual interaction

social control attempts by society to regulate people's thoughts and behavior

technology knowledge that people use to make a way of life in their surroundings

Cultural Diversity: Many Ways of Life in One World

3.3 Discuss dimensions of cultural difference and cultural change. (pages 99–108)

We live in a **culturally diverse society**.

- This diversity is due to our country's history of immigration.
- Diversity reflects regional differences.

- Diversity reflects differences in social class that set off **high culture** (available only to elites) from **popular culture** (available to average people).

A number of values are central to our way of life. But **cultural patterns** are not the same throughout our society. **Subculture** is based on differences in interests and life experiences.

- Hip-hop fans and jocks are two examples of youth subcultures in the United States.

Multiculturalism is an effort to enhance appreciation of cultural diversity.

- Multiculturalism developed as a reaction to the earlier “melting pot” idea, which was thought to result in minorities’ losing their identity as they adopted mainstream cultural patterns.

Counterculture is strongly at odds with conventional ways of life.

- Any militant group in the United States that would plot to destroy Western society would be an example of a counterculture.

Cultural change results from

- invention** (examples include the telephone and the computer)
- discovery** (for example, the recognition that women are capable of political leadership)
- diffusion** (for example, the growing popularity of various ethnic foods and musical styles)

Cultural lag results when some parts of a cultural system change faster than others.

How do we understand cultural differences?

- Ethnocentrism** links people to their society but can cause misunderstanding and conflict between societies.
- Cultural relativism** is increasingly important as people of the world come into more contact with each other.

high culture cultural patterns that distinguish a society’s elite
popular culture cultural patterns that are widespread among a society’s population

subculture cultural patterns that set apart some segment of a society’s population

counterculture cultural patterns that strongly oppose those widely accepted within a society

multiculturalism a perspective recognizing the cultural diversity of the United States and promoting equal standing for all cultural traditions

Eurocentrism the dominance of European (especially English) cultural patterns

Afrocentrism emphasizing and promoting African cultural patterns
cultural integration the close relationships among various elements of a cultural system

cultural lag the fact that some cultural elements change more quickly than others, disrupting a cultural system

ethnocentrism the practice of judging another culture by the standards of one’s own culture

cultural relativism the practice of judging a culture by its own standards

Theories of Culture

3.4 Apply sociology’s macro-level theories to gain greater understanding of culture. (pages 108–11)

Structural-functional theory views culture as a relatively stable system built on core values. All cultural patterns play some part in the ongoing operation of society.

Social-conflict theory sees culture as a dynamic arena of inequality and conflict. Cultural patterns benefit some categories of people more than others.

Feminist theory highlights how culture is “gendered,” dividing activities between the sexes in ways that give men greater power and privileges than women have.

Sociobiology explores how the long history of evolution has shaped patterns of culture in today’s world.

cultural universals traits that are part of every known culture

gender the personal traits and social positions that members of a society attach to being female or male

sociobiology a theoretical approach that explores ways in which human biology affects how we create culture

Culture and Human Freedom

3.5 Critique culture as limiting or expanding human freedom. (page 111)

- Culture can limit the choices we make.
- As cultural creatures, we have the capacity to shape and reshape our world to meet our needs and pursue our dreams.

Chapter 4

Society

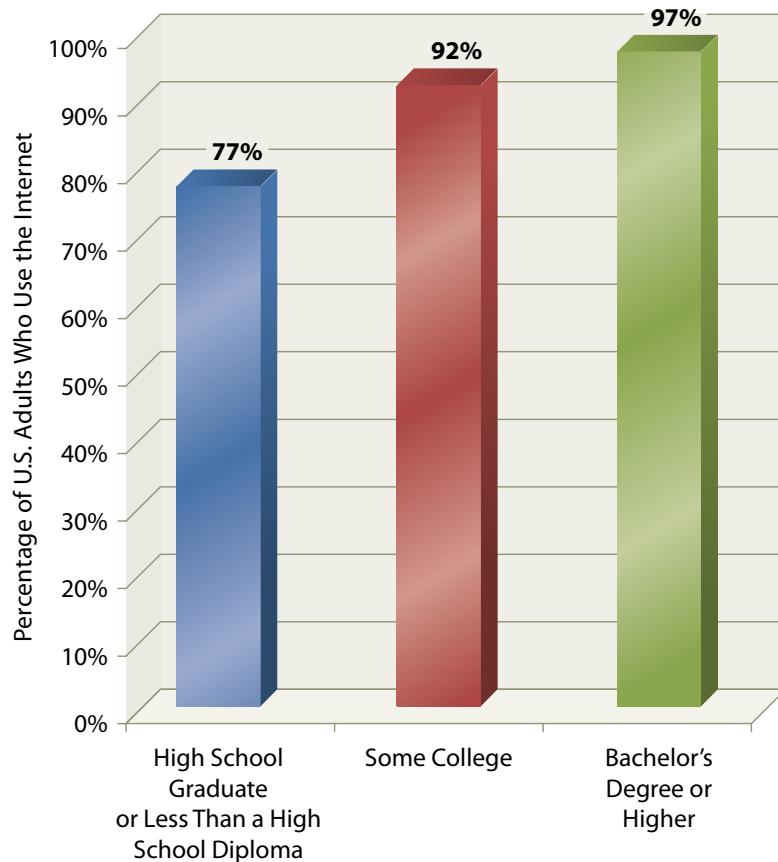


Learning Objectives

- 4.1** Describe how technological development has shaped the history of human societies.
- 4.2** Analyze the importance of class conflict to the historical development of human societies.
- 4.3** Demonstrate the importance of ideas to the development of human societies.
- 4.4** Contrast the social bonds typical of traditional and modern societies.
- 4.5** Summarize the contributions of Lenski, Marx, Weber, and Durkheim to our understanding of social change.



The Power of Society to shape access to the Internet



SOURCE: Gallup Poll (2013).

Is computer technology such as the Internet accessible to everyone in the United States? For some people, the Internet is as close as their smartphone; however, others have never used this technology. Almost everyone who has earned a college degree is online, in contrast to only three-quarters of adults who have not attended college. How would you explain this link between education and using the Internet?

Chapter Overview

We all live within a social world. This chapter explores how societies are organized and also explains how societies have changed over the centuries. The story of human societies over time is guided by the work of one of today's leading sociologists, Gerhard Lenski, and three of sociology's founders, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile Durkheim.

Sididi Ag Inaka has never sent a text message. He has never spoken on a cell phone. And he has never logged on to the Internet. Does such a person really exist in today's high-technology world? Well, how about this: Neither Inaka nor anyone in his family has ever been to a movie, watched television, or even read a newspaper.

Are these people visitors from another planet? Prisoners on some remote island? Not at all. They are Tuareg nomads who wander over the vast Sahara in the western African nations of Mali and Niger. Known as the "blue men of the desert" for the flowing blue robes worn by both men and women, the Tuareg herd camels, goats, and sheep and live in camps where the sand blows and the daytime temperature often reaches 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Life is hard, but most Tuareg try to hold on to traditional ways. With a stern look, Inaka says, "My father was a nomad. His father was a nomad. I am a nomad. My children will be nomads."

The Tuareg are among the world's poorest people. In times when there is little rain, they and their animals are at risk of losing their lives. Perhaps someday the Tuareg people can gain some of the wealth that comes from mining uranium below the desert across which they have traveled for centuries. But whatever their economic fate, Inaka and his people are a society set apart, with little knowledge of the larger world and none of its advanced technology. But Inaka does not complain: "This is the life of my ancestors. This is the life that we know" (Buckley, 1996; Matloff, 1997; Lovgren, 1998; McConnell, 2007).



Society refers to *people who interact in a defined territory and share a culture*. In this chapter, you will learn more about human societies with the help of four important sociologists. We begin with the approach of **Gerhard Lenski**, who describes how societies have changed over the past 10,000 years. Lenski points to the importance of *technology* in shaping any society. Then we turn to three of sociology's founders. **Karl Marx**, like Lenski, took a long historical view of societies. But Marx's story of society is all about *social conflict* that arises as people work within an economic system to produce material goods. **Max Weber** tells a different tale, showing that the power of *ideas* shapes society. Weber contrasted the traditional thinking of simple societies with the rational thought that dominates complex societies today. Finally, **Emile Durkheim** helps us see the different ways that traditional and modern societies hang together.

All four visions of society answer a number of important questions: What makes the way of life of people such as the Tuareg of the Sahara so different from your life as a college student in the United States? How and why do all societies change over time? What forces divide a society?

What forces hold a society together? This chapter will provide answers to all of these questions as we look at the work of important sociologists.

Gerhard Lenski: Society and Technology

4.1 Describe how technological development has shaped the history of human societies.

Members of our society, who take things like television and texting for granted, must wonder at the nomads of the Sahara, who live the same simple life their ancestors did centuries ago. The work of Gerhard Lenski (Nolan & Lenski, 2010) helps us understand the great differences among societies that have existed throughout human history.

Lenski uses the term **sociocultural evolution** to mean *changes that occur as a society gains new technology*. With only simple technology, societies such as the Tuareg have little control over nature, so they can support just a small number of

people. Societies with complex technology such as cars and cell phones, while not necessarily “better,” are certainly more productive so that they can support hundreds of millions of people with far more material affluence.

Inventing or adopting new technology sends ripples of change throughout a society. When our ancestors first discovered how to make a sail so that the power of the wind could move a boat, they created a new form of transportation that eventually would take them to new lands, greatly expand their economy, and increase their military power. In addition, the more technology a society has, the faster it changes. Technologically simple societies change very slowly; Sididi Ag Inaka says he lives “the life of my ancestors.” How many people in U.S. society can say that they live the way their grandparents or great-grandparents did? Because modern, high-technology societies such as our own change so fast, people usually experience major social changes during a single lifetime. Imagine how surprised your great-grandmother would be to hear about “Googling” and text-messaging, replacement hearts and test-tube babies, or 4G phones and iPads.

Drawing on Lenski’s work, we will examine five types of societies defined by their technology: hunting and gathering societies, horticultural and pastoral societies, agrarian societies, industrial societies, and postindustrial societies. Characteristics of each of these types of society are reviewed in the Summing Up table on page 120.

Hunting and Gathering Societies

In the simplest of all societies, people live by **hunting and gathering**, *making use of simple tools to hunt animals and gather vegetation for food*. From the time that our species appeared 3 million years ago until about 12,000 years ago, *all* humans were hunters and gatherers. Even in 1800, many hunting and gathering societies could be found around the world. But today just a few remain, including the Aka and Pygmies of Central Africa, the Bushmen of southwestern Africa, the Aborigines of Australia, the Kaska Indians of northwestern Canada, the Batek and Semai of Malaysia, and isolated native people living in the Amazon rain forest.

With little ability to control their environment, hunters and gatherers spend most of their time looking for game and



After a nearby forest was burned, these Aboriginal women in Australia spent the day collecting roots, which they will use to make dye for their clothing. Members of such societies live closely linked to nature.

collecting plants to eat. Only in lush areas with lots of food do hunters and gatherers have much chance for leisure. Because it takes a large amount of land to support even a few people, hunting and gathering societies have just a few dozen members. They must also be nomadic, moving on to find new sources of vegetation or to follow migrating animals. Although they may return to favored sites, they rarely form permanent settlements.

Hunting and gathering societies depend on the family to obtain and distribute food, to protect its members, and to teach their way of life to the children. Everyone’s life is much the same; people spend most of their time getting their next meal. Age and gender have some effect on what individuals do. Healthy adults do most of the work, leaving the very young and the very old to help out as they can. Women gather vegetation—which provides most of the food—while men take on the less certain job of hunting. Although men and women perform different tasks, most hunters and gatherers probably see the sexes as having about the same social importance (Leacock, 1978).

Hunting and gathering societies usually have a *shaman*, or spiritual leader, who enjoys high prestige but has to work to find food like everyone else. In short, people in hunting and gathering societies come close to being socially equal.

Hunters and gatherers use simple weapons—the spear, bow and arrow, and stone knife—but rarely do they use them to wage war. Their real enemy is the forces of nature: Severe storms and droughts can kill off their food

society people who interact in a defined territory and share a culture

Gerhard Lenski
(society is defined by level of technology)

Karl Marx (society is defined by type of social conflict)

Max Weber (society is defined by ideas/ mode of thinking)

Emile Durkheim
(society is defined by type of solidarity)

SUMMING UP

Sociocultural Evolution

Type of Society	Historical Period	Productive Technology	Population Size	Settlement Pattern	Social Organization	Examples
Hunting and Gathering Societies	Only type of society until about 12,000 years ago; still common several centuries ago; the few examples remaining today are threatened with extinction	Primitive weapons	25–40 people	Nomadic	Family-centered; specialization limited to age and sex; little social inequality	Pygmies of Central Africa, Bushmen of southwestern Africa, Aborigines of Australia, Semai of Malaysia, Kaska Indians of Canada
Horticultural and Pastoral Societies	From about 12,000 years ago, with decreasing numbers after about 3000 B.C.E.	Horticultural societies use hand tools for cultivating plants; pastoral societies are based on the domestication of animals.	Settlements of several hundred people, connected through trading ties to form societies of several thousand people	Horticulturalists form small permanent settlements; pastoralists are nomadic.	Family-centered; religious system begins to develop; moderate specialization; increased social inequality	Middle Eastern societies about 5000 B.C.E., various societies today in New Guinea and other Pacific islands, Yanomamö today in South America
Agrarian Societies	From about 5,000 years ago, with large but decreasing numbers today	Animal-drawn plow	Millions of people	Cities become common, but they generally contain only a small proportion of the population.	Family loses significance as distinct religious, political, and economic systems emerge; extensive specialization; increased social inequality	Egypt during construction of the Great Pyramids, medieval Europe, numerous predominantly agrarian societies of the world today
Industrial Societies	From about 1750 to the present	Advanced sources of energy; mechanized production	Millions of people	Cities contain most of the population.	Distinct religious, political, economic, educational, and family systems; highly specialized; marked social inequality persists, lessening somewhat over time	Most societies today in Europe, North America, Australia, and Japan, which generate most of the world's industrial production
Postindustrial Societies	Emerging in recent decades	Computers that support an information-based economy	Millions of people	Population remains concentrated in cities but begins to decentralize.	Similar to industrial societies, with information processing and other service work gradually replacing industrial production	Industrial societies are now entering the postindustrial stage.

supply in a short span of time, and there is little they can do for someone who has a serious accident or illness. Being constantly at risk in this way encourages people to cooperate and share, a strategy that raises everyone's chances of survival. But the truth is that many die in childhood, and no more than half reach the age of twenty.

During the past century, societies with more powerful technology have closed in on the few remaining hunters and gatherers, reducing their food supply. As a result, hunting and gathering societies are disappearing. Fortunately, study of this way of life has given us valuable information about human history and our basic ties to the natural world.

Horticultural and Pastoral Societies

Some 10,000 to 12,000 years ago, a new technology began to change the lives of human beings. People developed **horticulture**, *the use of hand tools to raise crops*. Using a hoe to work

the soil and a digging stick to punch holes in the ground to plant seeds may not seem like something that would change the world, but these inventions allowed people to give up gathering in favor of growing food for themselves. The first humans to plant gardens lived in fertile regions of the Middle East. Cultural diffusion spread this knowledge to America and Asia and eventually all over the world.

Not all societies were quick to give up hunting and gathering for horticulture. Hunters and gatherers living where food was plentiful probably saw little reason to change their ways. People living in dry regions (such as the deserts of Africa or the Middle East) or mountainous areas found little use for horticulture because they could not grow much anyway. Such people (including the Tuareg) were more likely to adopt **pastoralism**, *the domestication of animals*. Today, societies that mix horticulture and pastoralism can be found throughout South America, Africa, and Asia.

Because growing plants and raising animals greatly increased food production, populations expanded from dozens to hundreds of people. Pastoralists remained nomadic, leading their herds to fresh grazing lands. But horticulturalists formed settlements, moving only when the soil gave out. Joined by trade, these settlements formed extended societies with populations reaching into the thousands.

Once a society is capable of producing a *material surplus*—more resources than are needed to feed the population—not everyone has to work at providing food. Greater specialization results: Some make crafts, while others engage in trade, cut hair, apply tattoos, or serve as priests. Compared to hunting and gathering societies, horticultural and pastoral societies are more socially diverse because their members engage in a wider range of work.

But being more productive does not make a society “better” in every sense. As some families produce more than others, they become richer and more powerful. Horticultural and pastoral societies have greater inequality, with elites using government power—and military force—to serve their own interests. But leaders do not have the ability to travel or to communicate over large distances, so they can control only a small number of people rather than rule over vast empires.

Religion also differs among types of societies. Hunters and gatherers believe that many spirits inhabit the world. Horticulturalists, however, are more likely to think of one God as the creator of the world. Pastoral societies carry this belief further, seeing God as directly involved in the well-being of the entire world. The pastoral roots of Judaism and Christianity are evident in the term “pastor” and the common view of God as a shepherd (“The Lord is my shepherd,” says Psalm 23) who stands watch over us all.

Agrarian Societies

About 5,000 years ago, another revolution in technology was taking place in the Middle East, one that would end up changing life on Earth. This was the emergence of **agriculture**, *large-scale cultivation using plows harnessed to animals or more powerful energy sources*. So important was the invention of the animal-drawn plow, along with other breakthroughs of the period—including irrigation, the wheel, writing, numbers, and the use of various metals—that this moment in history is often called the “dawn of civilization.”

Using animal-drawn plows, farmers could cultivate fields far bigger than the garden-sized plots planted by horticulturalists. Plows have the added advantage of turning and aerating the soil, making it more fertile. As a



What would it be like to live in a society with simple technology? That's the premise of the television show *Survivor*. What advantages do societies with simple technology afford their members? What disadvantages do you see?

result, farmers could work the same land for generations, encouraging the development of permanent settlements. With the ability to grow a surplus of food and to transport goods using animal-powered wagons, agrarian societies greatly expanded in size and population. About 100 c.e., for example, the agrarian Roman Empire contained some 70 million people spread over 2 million square miles (Nolan & Lenski, 2010).

Greater production meant even more specialization. Now there were dozens of distinct occupations, from farmers to builders to metalworkers. With so many people producing so many different things, people invented money as a common standard of exchange, and the old barter system—in which people traded one thing for another—was abandoned.

Agrarian societies have extreme social inequality, typically even more than modern societies such as our own. In most cases, a large number of the people are peasants or slaves, who do most of the work. Elites therefore have time for more “refined” activities, including the study of philosophy, art, and literature. This explains the historical link between “high culture” and social privilege noted in Chapter 3 (“Culture”).

Among hunters and gatherers and also among horticulturalists, women provide most of the food, which gives them social importance. Agriculture, however, raises men to a position of social dominance. Using heavy metal plows pulled by large animals, agrarian societies put men in charge of food production. Women are left with the support tasks, such as weeding and carrying water to the fields (Boulding, 1976; Fisher, 1979).

In agrarian societies, religion reinforces the power of elites by defining both loyalty and hard work as moral obligations. Many of the “Wonders of the Ancient World,” such as the Great Wall of China and the Great Pyramids of

Egypt, were possible only because emperors and pharaohs had almost absolute power and could order their people to work for a lifetime without pay.

Of the societies described so far, agrarian societies have the most social inequality. Agrarian technology also gives people a greater range of life choices, which is the reason that agrarian societies differ more from one another than horticultural and pastoral societies do.

Industrial Societies

Industrialism, which first took hold in the rich nations of today's world, is *the production of goods using advanced sources of energy to drive large machinery*. Until the industrial era began, the major source of energy had been the muscles of humans and the animals they tended. Around the year 1750, people turned to water power and then steam boilers to operate mills and factories filled with larger and larger machines.

Industrial technology gave people such power to alter their environment that change took place faster than ever before. It is probably fair to say that the new industrial societies changed more in one century than the earlier agrarian societies had changed over the course of the previous thousand years. As explained in Chapter 1 ("The Sociological Perspective"), change was so rapid that it sparked the birth of sociology itself. By 1900, railroads crossed the land, steamships traveled the seas, and steel-framed skyscrapers reached far higher than any of the old cathedrals that symbolized the agrarian age.

But that was only the beginning. Soon automobiles allowed people to move quickly almost anywhere, and electricity powered homes full of modern "conveniences" such as refrigerators, washing machines, air conditioners, and entertainment centers. Electronic communication, beginning with the telegraph and the telephone and followed by radio, television, and computers, gave people the ability to reach others instantly, all over the world.

Work also changed. In agrarian communities, most men and women worked in the home or in the fields nearby. Industrialization drew people away from home to factories situated near energy sources (such as coalfields) that powered their machinery. The result was a weakening of close working relationships, strong family ties, and

many of the traditional values, beliefs, and customs that guide agrarian life.

December 28, Moray, in the Andes highlands of Peru. We are high in the mountains in a small community of several dozen families, miles from the nearest electric line or paved road. At about 12,000 feet, breathing is hard for people not used to the thin air, so we walk slowly. But hard work seems to be no problem for the man and his son out on a field near their home tilling the soil with a horse and plow. Too poor to buy a tractor, these people till the land in the same way that their ancestors did 500 years ago.

With industrialization, occupational specialization became greater than ever. Today, the kind of work you do has a lot to do with your standard of living, so people now often size up one another in terms of their jobs rather than according to their family ties, as agrarian people do. Rapid change and people's tendency to move from place to place also make social life more anonymous, increase cultural diversity, and promote subcultures and countercultures, as described in Chapter 3 ("Culture").

Industrial technology changes the family, too, reducing its traditional importance as the center of social life. No longer does the family serve as the main setting for work, learning, and religious worship. As Chapter 18 ("Families") explains, technological change also plays a part in making families more diverse, with a greater share of single people, divorced people, single-parent families, and stepfamilies.

Perhaps the greatest effect of industrialization has been to raise living standards, which increased fivefold in the United States over the past century. Although at first new technology only benefits the elite few, industrial technology is so productive that over time just about everyone's income rises so that people live longer and more comfortable lives. Even social inequality decreases slightly, as explained in Chapter 10 ("Social Stratification"), because industrial societies provide extended schooling and greater political rights for everyone. Around the world, industrialization has had the effect of increasing the demand for a greater political voice, a pattern evident in South Korea, Taiwan, the People's Republic of China, the nations of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and in 2011, in Egypt and other nations of the Middle East.

sociocultural evolution changes that occur as a society gains new technology

hunting and gathering	horticulture	agriculture	industrialism	postindustrialism
the use of simple tools to hunt animals and gather vegetation for food	the use of hand tools to raise crops	large-scale cultivation using plows harnessed to animals or more powerful energy sources	the production of goods using advanced sources of energy to drive large machinery	the production of information using computer technology
	pastoralism the domestication of animals			



Does advancing technology make society better? In some ways, perhaps. However, many films and TV shows—as far back as *Frankenstein* (left) in 1931 and as recently as the 2013 film *Iron Man 3* (right)—have expressed the concern that new technology not only solves old problems but also creates new ones. All the sociological theorists discussed in this chapter shared this ambivalent view of the modern world.

Postindustrial Societies

Many industrial societies, including the United States, have now entered a new phase of technological development, and we can extend Lenski's analysis to take account of recent trends. A generation ago, the sociologist Daniel Bell (1973) coined the term **postindustrialism** to refer to *the production of information using computer technology*. Production in industrial societies centers on factories and machinery generating material goods; postindustrial production relies on computers and other electronic devices that create, process, store, and apply information. Just as people in industrial societies learn mechanical skills, people in postindustrial societies such as ours develop information-based skills and carry out their work using computers and other forms of high-technology communication.

As Chapter 16 ("The Economy and Work") explains, a postindustrial society uses less and less of its labor force for industrial production, and the work can be performed almost anywhere. At the same time, more jobs become available for clerical workers, teachers, writers, sales managers, and marketing representatives, all of whom have in common jobs that involve processing information.

The Information Revolution, which is at the heart of postindustrial society, is most evident in rich nations, yet new information technology affects people in all countries around the world. As discussed in Chapter 3 ("Culture"), a worldwide flow of products, people, and information now links societies and has advanced a global culture. In this sense, the postindustrial society is at the heart of globalization.

The Limits of Technology

More complex technology has made life better by raising productivity, reducing infectious disease, and sometimes just relieving boredom. But technology provides no quick fix

for social problems. Poverty, for example, remains a reality for some 45.3 million women and men in the United States (see Chapter 11, "Social Class in the United States") and just over 1 billion people worldwide (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014; World Bank, 2014; see Chapter 12, "Global Stratification").

Technology also creates new problems that our ancestors (and people like Sididi Ag Inaka today) could hardly imagine. Industrial and postindustrial societies give us more personal freedom, but they often lack the sense of community that was part of preindustrial life. Most seriously, an increasing number of the world's nations have used nuclear technology to build weapons that could send the entire world back to the Stone Age—if humanity survives at all.

Advancing technology has also threatened the physical environment. Each stage in sociocultural evolution has introduced more powerful sources of energy and increased our appetite for Earth's resources. Ask yourself whether we can continue to pursue material prosperity without permanently damaging our planet by consuming its limited resources or poisoning it with pollution (see Chapter 22, "Population, Urbanization, and Environment").

Technological advances have improved life and brought the world's people closer. But establishing peace, ensuring justice, and protecting the environment are problems that technology alone cannot solve.

Karl Marx: Society and Conflict

4.2 Analyze the importance of class conflict to the historical development of human societies.

The first of our classic visions of society comes from Karl Marx (1818–1883), an early giant in the field of sociology whose influence continues today. Keenly aware of how the

Industrial Revolution had changed Europe, Marx spent most of his adult life in London, the capital of what was then the vast British Empire. He was awed by the size and productive power of the new factories going up all over Britain. Along with other industrial nations, Britain was producing more goods than ever before, drawing raw materials from around the world and churning out finished products at a dizzying rate.

What astounded Marx even more was that the riches produced by this new technology ended up in the hands of only a few people. As he walked around the city of London, he could see for himself that a handful of aristocrats and industrialists enjoyed lives of luxury and privilege, living in fabulous mansions staffed by many servants. At the same time, most people lived in slums and labored long hours for low wages. Some even slept in the streets, where they were likely to die young from diseases brought on by cold and poor nutrition.

Marx saw his society in terms of a basic contradiction: In a country so rich, how could so many people be so poor? Just as important, he asked, how can this situation be changed? Many people think Marx set out to tear societies apart. But he was motivated by compassion and wanted to help a badly divided society create a new and more just social order.

social conflict the struggle between segments of society over valued resources

capitalists people who own and operate factories and other businesses in pursuit of profits

proletarians people who sell their labor for wages

At the heart of Marx's thinking is the idea of **social conflict**, *the struggle between segments of society over valued resources*. Social conflict can, of course, take many forms: Individuals quarrel, colleges have long-standing sports rivalries, and nations sometimes go to war. For Marx, however, the most important type of social conflict was *class conflict* arising from the way a society produces material goods.

Society and Production

Living in the nineteenth century, Marx observed the early decades of industrial capitalism in Europe. This economic system, Marx explained, turned a small part of the population into **capitalists**, *people who own and operate factories and other businesses in pursuit of profits*. A capitalist tries to make a profit by selling a product for more than it costs to produce. Capitalism turns most of the population into industrial workers, whom Marx called **proletarians**, *people who sell their labor for wages*. To Marx, a system of capitalist production always ends up creating conflict between capitalists and workers. To keep profits high, capitalists keep wages low. But workers want higher wages. Since profits and wages come from the same pool of funds, the result is conflict. As Marx saw it, this conflict could end only with the end of capitalism itself.

All societies are composed of **social institutions**, *the major spheres of social life, or societal subsystems, organized to meet human needs*. Examples of social institutions include the economy, the political system, the family, religion, and education. In his analysis of society, Marx argued that one institution—the economy—dominates all the others and defines the character of the entire society. Drawing on the philosophical approach called *materialism*, which says that how humans produce material goods shapes their experiences, Marx believed that the other social institutions all operate in a way that supports a society's economy. Lenski focused on how technology molds a society but, for Marx, it is the economy that forms a society's "real foundation" (1959:43, orig. 1859).

Marx viewed the economic system as society's *infrastructure* (*infra* is Latin, meaning "below"). Other social institutions, including the family, the political system, and religion, are built on this foundation; they form society's *superstructure* and support the economy. Marx's theory is illustrated in Figure 4-1. For example, under capitalism, the legal system protects capitalists' wealth, and the family allows capitalists to pass their property from one generation to the next.

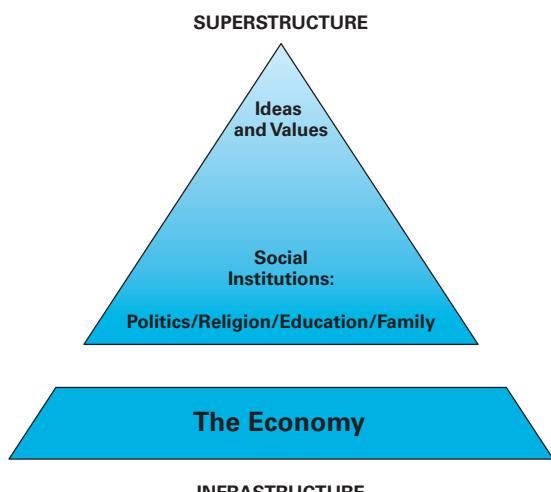


Figure 4-1 Karl Marx's Model of Society

This diagram illustrates Marx's materialist view that the system of economic production shapes the entire society. Economic production involves both technology (industry, in the case of capitalism) and social relationships (for capitalism, the relationship between capitalists, who own the factories and businesses, and workers, who provide labor). On this infrastructure, or foundation, rests society's superstructure, including its major social institutions as well as core cultural values and ideas. Marx maintained that every part of a society operates to support the economic system.

Marx was well aware that most people living in an industrial capitalist system do not recognize how capitalism shapes the operation of their

entire society. Most people, in fact, regard the right to own private property or pass it on to their children as "natural." In the same way, many of us tend to see rich people as having "earned" their money through long years of schooling and hard work; we see the poor, on the other hand, as lacking skills and the personal drive to make more of themselves. Marx rejected this type of thinking, calling it **false consciousness**, *explaining social problems as the shortcomings of individuals rather than as the flaws of society*. Marx was saying, in effect, that it is not "people" who make society so unequal but rather the system of capitalist production. False consciousness, he believed, hurts people by hiding the real cause of their problems.

class conflict conflict between entire classes over the distribution of a society's wealth and power

class consciousness workers' recognition of themselves as a class unified in opposition to capitalists and ultimately to capitalism itself

control of European societies. To Marx's way of thinking, then, new technology was only part of the Industrial Revolution; it also served as a class revolution in which capitalists overthrew the old agrarian elite.

Industrialization also led to the formation of the proletariat. English landowners converted fields once plowed by serfs into grazing land for sheep to produce wool for the textile mills. Forced from the land, millions of people migrated to cities and had little choice but to work in factories. Marx envisioned these workers one day joining together to form a revolutionary class that would overthrow the capitalist system.

Conflict and History

For Marx, conflict is the engine that drives social change. Sometimes societies change at a slow, *evolutionary* rate. But they may erupt in rapid, *revolutionary* change.

To Marx, early hunters and gatherers formed primitive communist societies. *Communism* is a system in which people commonly own and equally share food and other things they produce. People in hunting and gathering societies do not have much, but they share what they have. In addition, because everyone does the same kind of work, there are no class differences and thus little chance of social conflict.

With technological advance comes social inequality. Among horticultural, pastoral, and early agrarian societies—which Marx lumped together as the "ancient world"—warfare was frequent, and the victors turned their captives into slaves.

Agriculture brings still more wealth to a society's elite but does little for most other people, who labor as serfs and are barely better off than slaves. As Marx saw it, the state supported the feudal system (in which the elite or nobility had all the power), assisted by the church, which claimed that this arrangement reflected the will of God. This is why Marx thought that feudalism was simply "exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions" (Marx & Engels, 1972:337, orig. 1848).

Gradually, new productive forces started to break down the feudal order. As trade steadily increased, cities grew, and merchants and skilled craftworkers formed the new capitalist class or *bourgeoisie* (a French word meaning "people of the town"). After 1800, the bourgeoisie also controlled factories, becoming richer and richer so that they soon rivaled the ancient landowning nobility. For their part, the nobles looked down their noses at this upstart "commercial" class, but in time, these capitalists took

Capitalism and Class Conflict

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." With these words, Marx and his collaborator, Friedrich Engels, began their best-known statement, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1972:335, orig. 1848). Industrial capitalism, like earlier types of society, contains two major social classes: the ruling class, whose members (capitalists or bourgeoisie) own productive property, and the oppressed (proletarians), who sell their labor, reflecting the two basic positions in the productive system. Like masters and slaves in the ancient world and like nobles and serfs in feudal systems, capitalists and proletarians are engaged in class conflict today. Currently, as in the past, one class controls the other as productive property. Marx used the term **class conflict** (and sometimes *class struggle*) to refer to *conflict between entire classes over the distribution of a society's wealth and power*.

Class conflict is nothing new. What distinguishes the conflict in capitalist society, Marx pointed out, is how out in the open it is. Agrarian nobles and serfs, for all their differences, were bound together by traditions and mutual obligations. Industrial capitalism dissolved those ties so that loyalty and honor were replaced by "naked self-interest." Because the proletarians had no personal ties to the capitalists, Marx saw no reason for them to put up with their oppression.

Marx knew that revolution would not come easily. First, workers must *become aware* of their oppression and see capitalism as its true cause. Second, they must *organize and act* to address their problems. This means that false consciousness must be replaced with **class consciousness**, *workers' recognition of themselves as a class unified in opposition to capitalists and ultimately to capitalism itself*. Because the inhumanity of early capitalism was plain for him to see, Marx concluded that industrial workers would soon rise up to destroy this economic system.

How would the capitalists react? Their wealth made them strong. But Marx saw a weakness in the capitalist armor. Motivated by a desire for personal gain, capitalists feared competition with other capitalists. Marx predicted, therefore, that capitalists would be slow to band together despite their common interests. In addition, he reasoned, capitalists kept employees' wages low in order to maximize profits, which made the workers' misery ever greater. In the long run, Marx believed, capitalists would bring about their own undoing.

Capitalism and Alienation

Marx also condemned capitalist society for producing **alienation**, *the experience of isolation and misery resulting from powerlessness*. To the capitalists, workers are nothing more than a source of labor, to be hired and fired at will. Dehumanized by their jobs (repetitive factory work in the past and processing orders on a computer today), workers find little satisfaction and feel unable to improve their situation. Here we see another contradiction of capitalist society: As people develop technology to gain power over the world, the capitalist economy gains more control over people.

Marx noted four ways in which capitalism alienates workers:

- 1. Alienation from the act of working.** Ideally, people work to meet their needs and to develop their personal potential. Capitalism, however, denies workers a say

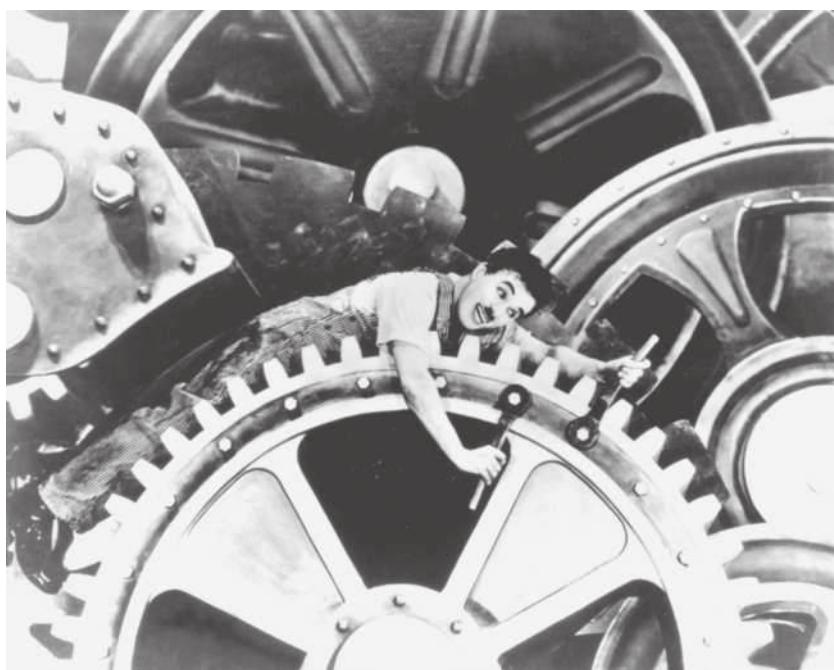
in what they make or how they make it. Further, much of the work is a repetition of routine tasks. The fact that today we replace workers with machines whenever possible would not have surprised Marx. As far as he was concerned, capitalism had turned human beings into machines long ago.

- 2. Alienation from the products of work.** The product of work belongs not to workers but to capitalists, who sell it for profit. Thus, Marx reasoned, the more of themselves workers invest in their work, the more they lose.
- 3. Alienation from other workers.** Through work, Marx claimed, people build bonds of community. Industrial capitalism, however, makes work competitive rather than cooperative, setting each person apart from everyone else and offering little chance for companionship.
- 4. Alienation from human potential.** Industrial capitalism alienates workers from their human potential. Marx argued that a worker "does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not freely develop his physical and mental energies, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker, therefore, feels himself to be at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless" (1964: 124–25, orig. 1848). In short, industrial capitalism turns an activity that should express the best qualities in human beings into a dull and dehumanizing experience.

Marx viewed alienation, in its various forms, as a barrier to social change. But he hoped that industrial workers would overcome their alienation by uniting into a true social class, aware of the cause of their problems and ready to change society.

Revolution

The only way out of the trap of capitalism, Marx argued, is to remake society. He imagined a system of production that could provide for the social needs of all. He called this system *socialism*. Although Marx knew that such a dramatic change would not come easily, he must have been disappointed that he did not live to see workers in England rise up. Still, convinced that capitalism was a social evil, he believed that in time the working majority would realize they held the key to a better future. This change would certainly be revolutionary and perhaps even violent. Marx believed that a socialist society would bring class conflict to an end.



A common fear among thinkers in the early industrial era was that people, now slaves to the new machines, would be stripped of their humanity. No one captured this idea better than the comic actor Charlie Chaplin, who wrote and starred in the 1936 film *Modern Times*.

Chapter 10 (“Social Stratification”) explains more about changes in industrial-capitalist societies since Marx’s time and why the revolution he envisioned never took place. In addition, as Chapter 17 (“Politics and Government”) explains, Marx failed to foresee that the revolution he imagined could take the form of repressive regimes, such as Stalin’s government in the Soviet Union, that would end up killing tens of millions of people (R. F. Hamilton, 2001). But in his own time, Marx looked toward the future with hope: “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win” (Marx & Engels, 1972:362, orig. 1848).

Max Weber: The Rationalization of Society

4.3 Demonstrate the importance of ideas to the development of human societies.

With a wide-ranging knowledge of law, economics, religion, and history, Max Weber (1864–1920) produced what many experts regard as the greatest individual contribution ever made to sociology. This scholar, born to a prosperous family in Germany, had much to say about how modern society differs from earlier types of social organization.

Weber understood the power of technology, and he shared many of Marx’s ideas about social conflict. But he disagreed with Marx’s philosophy of materialism. Weber’s philosophical approach, called *idealism*, emphasized how human ideas—especially beliefs and values—shape society. He argued that the most important difference among societies is not how people produce things but how people think about the world. In Weber’s view, modern society was the product of a new way of thinking.

Weber compared societies in different times and places. To make the comparisons, he relied on the *ideal type*, *an abstract statement of the essential characteristics of any social phenomenon*. Following Weber’s approach, for example, we might speak of “preindustrial society” and “industrial society” as ideal types. The use of the word “ideal” does not mean that one or the other is “good” or “best.” Nor does an ideal type refer to any actual society. Rather, think of an ideal type as a way of defining a type of society in its pure form. We have already used ideal types in comparing “hunting and gathering societies” with “industrial societies” and “capitalism” with “socialism.”

Two Worldviews: Tradition and Rationality

Rather than categorizing societies according to their technology or productive systems, Weber focused on ways that people think about their world. Members of preindustrial societies, Weber explained, are bound by *tradition*, and people in industrial-capitalist societies are guided by *rationality*.

By **tradition**, Weber meant *values and beliefs passed from generation to generation*. In other words, traditional people are guided by the past, and they feel a strong attachment to long-established ways of life. They consider particular actions right and proper mostly because they have been accepted for so long.

People in modern societies, however, favor **rationality**, *a way of thinking that emphasizes deliberate, matter-of-fact calculation of the most efficient way to accomplish a particular task*. Sentimental ties to the past have no place in a rational worldview, and tradition becomes simply one type of information. Typically, modern people think and act on the basis of what they see as the present and future consequences of their choices. They evaluate jobs, schooling, and even relationships in terms of what they put into them and what they expect to receive in return.

Weber viewed both the Industrial Revolution and the development of capitalism as evidence of modern rationality. Such changes are all part of the **rationalization of society**, *the historical change from tradition to rationality as the main type of human thought*. Weber went on to describe modern society as “disenchanted” because scientific thinking has swept away most of people’s sentimental ties to the past.

The eagerness to develop new technology and the willingness of people to adopt it as part of their daily lives are



To the outside observer, the trading floor of a stock exchange may look like complete craziness. But Weber saw such activity as a clear expression of modern rationality.

rationalization of society the historical change from tradition to rationality as the main type of human thought

tradition values and beliefs passed from generation to generation

rationality a way of thinking that emphasizes deliberate, matter-of-fact calculation of the most efficient way to accomplish a particular task

strong indicators of how rationalized a society is. To illustrate the global pattern of rationalization, Global Map 4-1 shows where in the world personal computers are found. In general, members of high-income societies in North America and Europe use personal computers the most, but these devices are rare in low-income nations.

Why are some societies more eager than others to develop and adopt new technology? Those with a more rational worldview might consider new computer or medical technology a breakthrough, but those with a very

traditional culture might reject such devices as a threat to their way of life. The Tuareg nomads of northern Mali, described at the beginning of this chapter, shrug off the idea of using telephones: Why would anyone herding animals in the desert need a cell phone?

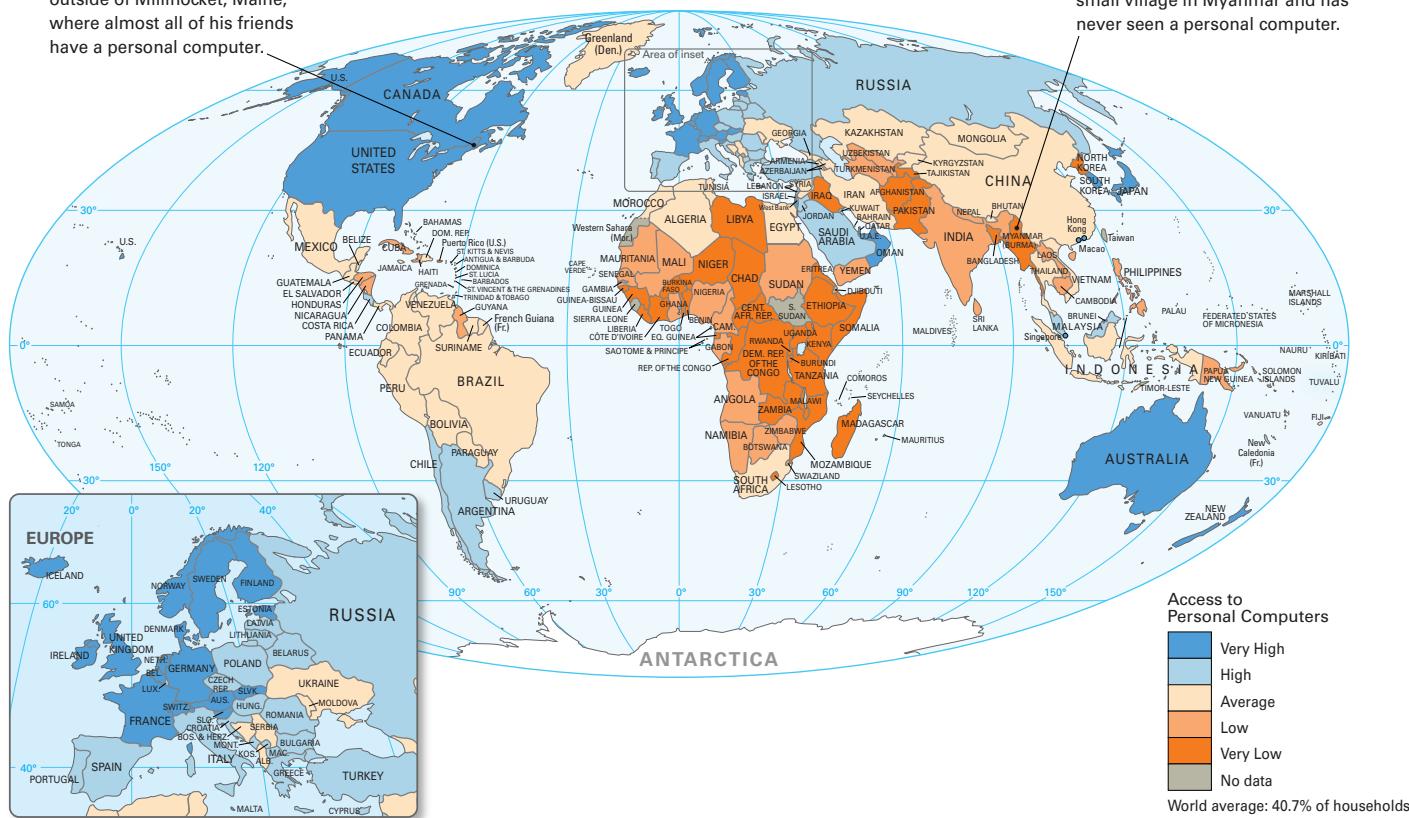
Similarly, in the United States, the Amish refuse to have telephones in their homes because it is not part of their traditional way of life.

In Weber's view, whether there is a lot or very little technological innovation depends on how a society's people understand their world. Many people throughout history have had the opportunity to adopt new technology, but only in the rational cultural climate of Western Europe did people exploit scientific discoveries to spark the Industrial Revolution (Weber, 1958, orig. 1904–5).

Window on the World

- Jean Boulanger, age 14, lives outside of Millinocket, Maine, where almost all of his friends have a personal computer.

- Lis Vang, also age 14, lives in a small village in Myanmar and has never seen a personal computer.



Global Map 4-1 High Technology in Global Perspective

Countries with traditional cultures cannot afford, choose to ignore, or even intentionally resist new technology that nations with highly rationalized ways of life quickly embrace. Personal computers, at the center of today's productive technology, are commonplace in high-income countries such as the United States. In low-income nations, by contrast, they are unknown to most people.

SOURCE: United Nations (2010) and International Telecommunication Union (2014).

Is Capitalism Rational?

Is industrial capitalism a rational economic system? Here again, Weber and Marx ended up on different sides. Weber considered industrial capitalism highly rational because capitalists try to make money in any way they can. Marx, however, thought capitalism irrational because it fails to meet the basic needs of most of the people (Gerth & Mills, 1946:49).

Weber's Great Thesis: Protestantism and Capitalism

Weber spent many years considering how and why industrial capitalism developed in the first place. Why did it emerge in parts of Western Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

Weber claimed that the key to the birth of industrial capitalism lay in the Protestant Reformation. Specifically, he saw industrial capitalism as the major outcome of Calvinism, a Christian religious movement founded by John Calvin (1509–1564). Calvinists approached life in a formal and rational way that Weber characterized as *inner-worldly asceticism*. This mind-set leads people to deny themselves worldly pleasures in favor of a highly disciplined focus on economic pursuits. In practice, Calvinism encouraged people to put their time and energy into their work; in modern terms, we might say that such individuals become good businesspeople or entrepreneurs (Berger, 2009).

Another of Calvin's most important ideas was *predestination*, the belief that an all-knowing and all-powerful God had predestined some people for salvation and others for damnation. Believing that everyone's fate was set before birth, early Calvinists thought that people could only guess at what their destiny was and that, in any case, they could do nothing to change it. So Calvinists swung between hopeful visions of spiritual salvation and anxious fears of eternal damnation.

Frustrated at not knowing their fate, Calvinists gradually came to a resolution of sorts. Wouldn't those chosen for glory in the next world, they reasoned, see signs of divine favor in *this* world? In this way, Calvinists came to see worldly prosperity as a sign of God's grace. Eager to gain this reassurance, Calvinists threw themselves into a quest for business success, applying rationality, discipline, and hard work to their tasks. They were certainly pursuing wealth, but they were not doing this for the sake of money, at least not to spend on themselves because any self-indulgence would be sinful. Neither were Calvinists likely to use their wealth for charity. To share their wealth with the poor seemed to go against God's will because they viewed poverty as a sign of God's rejection. Calvinists' duty was pressing forward in what they saw as their personal *calling* from God, reinvesting the

money they made for still greater success. It is easy to see how such activity—saving money, using wealth to create more wealth, and adopting new technology—became the foundation of capitalism.

Other world religions did not encourage the rational pursuit of wealth the way Calvinism did. Catholicism, the traditional religion in most of Europe, taught a passive, "otherworldly" view: Good deeds performed humbly on Earth would bring rewards in heaven. For Catholics, making money had none of the spiritual significance it had for Calvinists. Weber concluded that this was the reason that industrial capitalism developed primarily in areas of Europe where Calvinism was strong.

Weber's study of Calvinism provides striking evidence of the power of ideas to shape society. Not one to accept simple explanations, Weber knew that industrial capitalism had many causes. But by stressing the importance of ideas, Weber tried to counter Marx's strictly economic explanation of modern society.

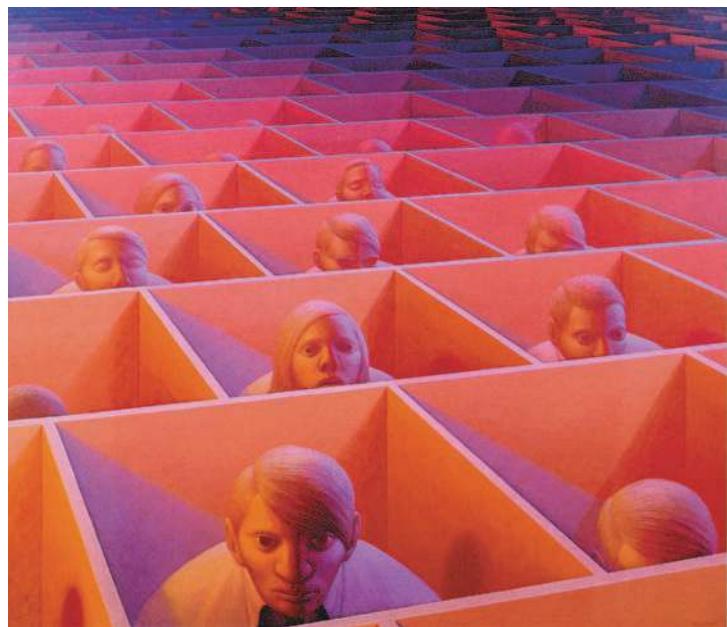
As the decades passed, later generations of Calvinists lost much of their early religious enthusiasm. But their drive for success and personal discipline remained, and what started out as a *religious* ethic was gradually transformed into a *work* ethic. In this sense, Weber considered industrial capitalism to be a "disenchanted" religion, with wealth no longer valued as a sign of salvation but for its own sake. This transformation is seen in the fact that the practice of "accounting," which to early Calvinists meant keeping a daily record of their moral deeds, before long came to mean simply keeping track of money.

Rational Social Organization

According to Weber, rationality is the basis of modern society, giving rise to both the Industrial Revolution and capitalism. He went on to identify seven characteristics of rational social organization:

- 1. Distinctive social institutions.** In hunting and gathering societies, the family is the center of all activity. Gradually, however, religious, political, and economic systems develop as separate social institutions. In modern societies, new institutions—including education and health care—also appear. Specialized social institutions are a rational strategy to meet human needs efficiently.
- 2. Large-scale organizations.** Modern rationality can be seen in the spread of large-scale organizations. As early as the horticultural era, small groups of political officials made decisions concerning religious observances, public works, and warfare. By the time Europe had developed agrarian societies, the Catholic church had grown into a much larger organization with thousands of officials. In today's modern, rational society, almost everyone works for large formal organizations, and federal and state governments employ tens of millions of workers.

- 3. Specialized tasks.** Unlike members of traditional societies, people in modern societies are likely to have very specialized jobs. The Yellow Pages (in a telephone directory or online at yellowpages.com) suggest just how many thousands of different occupations there are today.
- 4. Personal discipline.** Modern societies put a premium on self-discipline. Most business and government organizations expect their workers to be disciplined, and a disciplined focus on the job is also encouraged by our cultural values of achievement and success.
- 5. Awareness of time.** In traditional societies, people measure time according to the rhythm of sun and seasons. Modern people, by contrast, schedule events precisely by the hour and even the minute. Clocks began appearing in European cities some 500 years ago, about the same time commerce began to expand. Soon people began to think (to borrow Benjamin Franklin's phrase) that "time is money."
- 6. Technical competence.** Members of traditional societies size up one another on the basis of *who* they are—their family ties. Modern rationality leads us to judge people according to *what* they are, with an eye toward their education, skills, and abilities. Most workers have to keep up with the latest skills and knowledge in their field in order to be successful.
- 7. Impersonality.** In a rational society, technical competence is the basis for hiring, so the world becomes impersonal. People interact as specialists concerned with particular tasks rather than as individuals concerned



Max Weber agreed with Karl Marx that modern society is alienating to the individual, but they identified different causes of this problem. For Marx, economic inequality is the reason; for Weber, the problem is isolating and dehumanizing bureaucracy. George Tooker's painting *Landscape with Figures* echoes Weber's sentiments.

George Tooker, *Landscape with Figures*, 1963, egg tempera on gesso panel, 26 × 30 in. Private collection. Reproduction courtesy D. C. Moore Gallery, New York.

with one another as people. Because showing your feelings can threaten personal discipline, modern people tend to devalue emotion.

All these characteristics can be found in one important expression of modern rationality: bureaucracy.

RATIONALITY, BUREAUCRACY, AND SCIENCE Weber considered the growth of large, rational organizations one of the defining traits of modern societies. Another term for this type of organization is *bureaucracy*. Weber believed that bureaucracy has much in common with capitalism—another key factor in modern social life:

Today, it is primarily the capitalist market economy which demands that the official business of public administration be discharged precisely, unambiguously, continuously, and with as much speed as possible. Normally, the very large capitalist enterprises are themselves unequaled models of strict bureaucratic organization. (1978:974, orig. 1921)

As Chapter 7 ("Groups and Organizations") explains, we find aspects of bureaucracy in today's businesses, government agencies, labor unions, and universities. Weber considered bureaucracy highly rational because its elements—offices, duties, and policies—help achieve specific goals as efficiently as possible. To Weber, capitalism, bureaucracy, and also science—the highly disciplined pursuit of knowledge—are all expressions of the same underlying factor that defines modern society: rationality.

RATIONALITY AND ALIENATION Weber agreed with Marx that industrial capitalism was highly productive. Weber also agreed with Marx that modern society generates widespread alienation, although Weber pointed to different reasons. Marx thought alienation was caused by economic inequality. Weber blamed alienation on bureaucracy's countless rules and regulations. Bureaucracies, Weber warned, treat a human being as a "number" or a "case" rather than as a unique individual. In addition, working for large organizations demands highly specialized and often tedious routines. In the end, Weber saw modern society as a vast and growing system of rules trying to regulate everything, and he feared that modern society would end up crushing the human spirit.

Like Marx, Weber found it ironic that modern society, meant to serve humanity, turns on its creators and enslaves them. Just as Marx described the dehumanizing effects of industrial capitalism, Weber portrayed the modern individual as "only a small cog in a ceaselessly moving mechanism that prescribes to him an endlessly fixed routine of march" (1978:988, orig. 1921). Although Weber could see the advantages of modern society, he was deeply pessimistic about the future. He feared that in the end the rationalization of society would reduce human beings to robots.

Emile Durkheim: Society and Function

4.4 Contrast the social bonds typical of traditional and modern societies.

"To love society is to love something beyond us and something in ourselves." These are the words (1974:55, orig. 1924) of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), another of the discipline's founders. In Durkheim's ideas we find another important vision of human society.

Structure: Society beyond Ourselves

Emile Durkheim's great insight was recognizing that society exists beyond ourselves. Society is more than the individuals who compose it. Society was here long before we were born, it shapes us while we live, and it will remain long after we are gone. Patterns of human behavior—cultural norms, values, and beliefs—exist as established structures, or *social facts*, that have an objective reality beyond the lives of individuals.

Because society is bigger than any one of us, it has the power to guide our thoughts and actions. This is why studying individuals alone (as psychologists or biologists do) can never capture the heart of the social experience. A classroom of college students taking a math exam, a family gathered around a table sharing a meal, people quietly waiting their turn in a doctor's office—all are examples of the countless situations that have a familiar organization apart from any particular individual who has ever been part of them.

Once created by people, Durkheim claimed, society takes on a life of its own and demands a measure of obedience from its creators. We experience the power of society when we see lives falling into common patterns or when we feel the tug of morality during a moment of temptation.

Function: Society as System

Having established that society has structure, Durkheim turned to the concept of *function*. The significance of any social fact, he explained, is more than what individuals see in their immediate lives; social facts help along the operation of society as a whole.

Consider crime. As victims of crime, individuals experience pain and loss. But taking a broader view, Durkheim saw that crime is vital to the ongoing life of society itself. As Chapter 9 ("Deviance") explains, only by defining acts as wrong do people construct and defend morality, which gives direction and meaning to our collective life. For this reason, Durkheim rejected the common view of crime as abnormal. On the contrary, he concluded, crime is "normal" for the most basic of reasons: A society could not exist without it (1964a, orig. 1893; 1964b, orig. 1895).

Personality: Society in Ourselves

Durkheim said that society is not only "beyond ourselves" but also "in ourselves," helping to form our personalities. How we act, think, and feel is drawn from the society that nurtures us. Society shapes us in another way as well—by providing the moral discipline that guides our behavior and controls our desires. Durkheim believed that human beings need the restraint of society because as creatures who can want more and more, we are in constant danger of being overpowered by our own desires. As he put it, "The more one has, the more one wants, since satisfactions received only stimulate instead of filling needs" (1966:248, orig. 1897).

Nowhere is the need for societal regulation better illustrated than in Durkheim's study of suicide (1966, orig. 1897), which was described in Chapter 1 ("The Sociological Perspective"). Why is it that rock stars—from Del Shannon,



Durkheim's observation that people with weak social bonds are prone to self-destructive behavior stands as stark evidence of the power of society to shape individual lives. When rock-and-roll singers become famous, they are wrenched out of familiar life patterns and existing relationships, sometimes with deadly results. The history of rock-and-roll contains many tragic stories of this kind, including (from left) Janis Joplin's and Jimi Hendrix's deaths by drug overdose (both 1970), Kurt Cobain's suicide (1994), the drugs-induced death of Michael Jackson (2009), and the death of Whitney Houston attributed to cocaine use and drowning (2012).

Elvis Presley, Janis Joplin, and Jim Morrison to Jimi Hendrix, Keith Moon, Kurt Cobain, Michael Jackson, and Whitney Houston—seem so prone to self-destruction? Durkheim had the answer long before the invention of the electric guitar: Now as back then, the *highest* suicide rates are found among categories of people with the *lowest* level of societal integration. In short, the enormous freedom of the young, rich, and famous carries a high price in terms of the risk of suicide.

Modernity and Anomie

Compared to traditional societies, modern societies impose fewer restrictions on everyone. Durkheim acknowledged the advantages of modern-day freedom, but he warned of increased **anomie**, *a condition in which society provides little moral guidance to individuals*. The turbulent lives of many celebrities (think of Justin Bieber or Lindsay Lohan) and the more serious pattern by which celebrities can be “destroyed by fame” (think of Michael Jackson) well illustrates the destructive effects of anomie. Sudden fame tears people from their families and familiar routines, disrupts established values and norms, and breaks down society’s support and regulation of the individual—sometimes with fatal results. Therefore, Durkheim explained, an individual’s desires must be balanced by the claims and guidance of society—a balance that is sometimes difficult to achieve in the modern world. Durkheim would not have been surprised to see a rising suicide rate in modern societies such as the United States.

Evolving Societies: The Division of Labor

Like Marx and Weber, Durkheim lived through the rapid social change that swept across Europe during the

mechanical solidarity social bonds, based on common sentiments and shared moral values, that are strong among members of preindustrial societies

organic solidarity social bonds, based on specialization and interdependence, that are strong among members of industrial societies

division of labor specialized economic activity

nineteenth century as the Industrial Revolution unfolded. But Durkheim offered his own understanding of this change.

In preindustrial societies, he explained, tradition operates as the social cement that binds people together. In fact, what he termed the *collective conscience* is so strong that the community moves quickly to punish anyone who dares to challenge conventional ways of life. Durkheim used the term **mechanical solidarity** to refer to *social bonds, based on common sentiments and shared moral values, that are strong among members of preindustrial societies*. In practice, mechanical solidarity is based on *similarity*. Durkheim called these bonds “mechanical” because people are linked together in lockstep, with a more or less automatic sense of belonging together and acting alike.

With industrialization, Durkheim continued, mechanical solidarity becomes weaker and weaker, and people are much less bound by tradition. But this does not mean that society dissolves. Modern life creates a new type of solidarity. Durkheim called this new social integration **organic solidarity**, defined as *social bonds, based on specialization and interdependence, that are strong among members of industrial societies*. The solidarity that was once rooted in likeness is now based on *differences* among people who find that their specialized work—as plumbers, college students, midwives, or sociology instructors—makes them rely on other people for most of their daily needs.

For Durkheim, then, the key to change in a society is an expanding **division of labor**, or *specialized economic activity*. Weber said that modern societies specialize in order to become more efficient, and Durkheim filled out the picture



In traditional societies, people dress the same and everyone does much the same work. These societies are held together by strong moral beliefs. Modern societies, illustrated by urban areas in this country, are held together by a system of production in which people perform specialized work and rely on one another for all the things they cannot do for themselves.



by showing that members of modern societies count on tens of thousands of others—most of them strangers—for the goods and services needed every day. As members of modern societies, we depend more and more on people we trust less and less. Why do we look to people we hardly know and whose beliefs may well differ from our own? Durkheim's answer was "because we can't live without them."

So modern society rests far less on *moral consensus* and far more on *functional interdependence*. Herein lies what we might call "Durkheim's dilemma": The technological power and greater personal freedom of modern society come at the cost of declining morality and the rising risk of anomie.

Like Marx and Weber, Durkheim worried about the direction society was taking. But of the three, Durkheim was the most optimistic. He saw that large, anonymous societies gave people more freedom and privacy than small towns. Anomie remains a danger, but Durkheim hoped we would be able to create laws and other norms to regulate our behavior.

How can we apply Durkheim's views to the Information Revolution? The Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life box on page 134 suggests that Durkheim, as well as two of the other theorists whose ideas we have considered in this chapter, would have had much to say about today's new computer technology.

Critical Review: Four Visions of Society

4.5 Summarize the contributions of Lenski, Marx, Weber, and Durkheim to our understanding of social change.

This chapter opened with several important questions about society. We will conclude by summarizing how each of the four visions of society answers these questions.

What Holds Societies Together?

How is something as complex as society possible? Lenski claims that members of a society are united by a shared culture, although cultural patterns become more diverse as a society gains more complex technology. He also points out that as technology becomes more complex, inequality divides a society more and more, although industrialization reduces inequality somewhat.

Marx saw in society not unity but social division based on class position. From his point of view, elites may force an uneasy peace, but true social unity can occur only if production becomes a cooperative process. To Weber, the members of a society share a worldview. Just as tradition joined people together in the past, so modern societies have created rational, large-scale organizations that connect people's lives. Finally, Durkheim made solidarity the focus of his work. He contrasted the mechanical solidarity of preindustrial societies, which

is based on shared morality, with modern society's organic solidarity, which is based on specialization.

How Have Societies Changed?

According to Lenski's model of sociocultural evolution, societies differ mostly in terms of changing technology. Modern society stands out from past societies in terms of its enormous productive power. Marx, too, noted historical differences in productivity yet pointed to continuing social conflict (except perhaps among simple hunters and gatherers). For Marx, modern society is distinctive mostly because it brings that conflict out into the open. Weber considered the question of change from the perspective of how people look at the world. Members of preindustrial societies have a traditional outlook; modern people take a rational worldview. Finally, for Durkheim, traditional societies are characterized by mechanical solidarity based on moral likeness. In modern industrial societies, mechanical solidarity gives way to organic solidarity based on productive specialization.

Why Do Societies Change?

As Lenski sees it, social change comes about through technological innovation that over time transforms an entire society. Marx's materialist approach highlights the struggle between classes as the engine of change, pushing societies toward revolution. Weber, by contrast, pointed out that ideas contribute to social change. He demonstrated how a particular worldview—Calvinism—set in motion the Industrial Revolution, which ended up reshaping all of society. Finally, Durkheim pointed to an expanding division of labor as the key dimension of social change.

The fact that these four approaches are so different does not mean that any one of them is right or wrong in an absolute sense. Society is exceedingly complex, and our understanding of society benefits from applying all four visions.



How do we understand something as complex as human society? Each of the thinkers profiled in this chapter offers insights about the meaning and importance of modern society. Each has a somewhat different view and provides a partial answer to a very complex issue.

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

Today's Information Revolution: What Would Durkheim, Weber, and Marx Have Thought?

Colleen: Didn't Marx predict there'd be a class revolution?

Masako: Well, yes, but in the information age, what are the classes that are supposed to be in conflict?

New technology is changing our society at a dizzying pace. Were they alive today, the founding sociologists discussed in this chapter would be eager observers of the current scene. Imagine for a moment the kinds of questions Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx might ask about the effects of computer technology on our everyday lives.

Durkheim, who emphasized the increasing division of labor in modern society, would probably wonder if new information technology is pushing work specialization even further. There is good reason to think that it is. Because electronic communication (say, a website) gives anyone a vast market (currently about 3 billion people access the Internet), people can specialize far more than if they were trying to make a living in a small geographic area. For example, while most small-town lawyers have a general practice, an information age attorney, living anywhere, can provide specialized guidance on, say, prenuptial agreements or electronic copyright law. As we move into the electronic age, the number of highly specialized small businesses (some of which end up becoming very large) in all fields is increasing rapidly.

Durkheim might also point out that the Internet threatens to increase our experience of anomie. Using computers has a tendency to isolate people from personal relationships with others. In one recent survey, nine out of ten people in the United States said that they "sometimes" or "often" felt ignored by someone in their own home who was spending

too much time texting or otherwise using a mobile device (Annenberg Center Digital Future, 2014). Perhaps, as one analyst puts it, as we expect more from our machines, we expect less from each other (Turkle, 2011). An additional problem is that, although the Internet offers a flood of information, it provides little in the way of moral guidance about what is wise or good or worth knowing.

Weber believed that modern societies are distinctive because their members share a rational worldview, and nothing illustrates this worldview better than bureaucracy. But will bureaucracy be as important during the twenty-first century? Here is one reason to think it may not: Although organizations will probably continue to regulate workers performing the kinds of routine tasks that were common in the industrial era, much work in the postindustrial era involves imagination. Consider such "new age" work as designing homes, composing music, and writing software. This kind of creative work cannot be regulated in the same way as putting together automobiles as they move down an assembly line. Perhaps this is the reason many high-technology companies have done away with worker dress codes and having employees punch in and out on a time clock.

Finally, what might Marx make of the Information Revolution? Since Marx considered the earlier Industrial Revolution a *class* revolution that allowed the owners of industry to dominate society, he would probably be concerned about the emergence of a new symbolic elite. Some analysts point out that film and television writers, producers, and performers now enjoy vast wealth, international prestige, and enormous power. Just as people without industrial skills stayed at the bottom of the class system in past decades, so people without symbolic skills may well become the "underclass" of the twenty-first century. Globally, there is a "digital divide" by which most people in rich countries, but few people in poor countries, are part of the Information Revolution (International Telecommunications Union, 2012).

Durkheim, Weber, and Marx greatly improved our understanding of industrial societies. As we continue into the postindustrial age, there is plenty of room for new generations of sociologists to carry on.



Just as the steam engine changed society beginning more than two centuries ago, so computer technology continues to transform society today—from the operation of our institutions to everyday social life.

What Do You Think?

- As we try to understand the Information Revolution that defines our postindustrial society, which of the founding sociologists considered in this chapter—Marx, Weber, or Durkheim—do you find most useful? Why?
- What do you think of the goal of Microsoft founder Bill Gates to have a computer in every home? In what ways has the development of computer technology made our lives better? Try to be specific about what has improved.
- In what ways do you think computer technology has harmed our society or made life more challenging? Again, be specific about the problems you see.

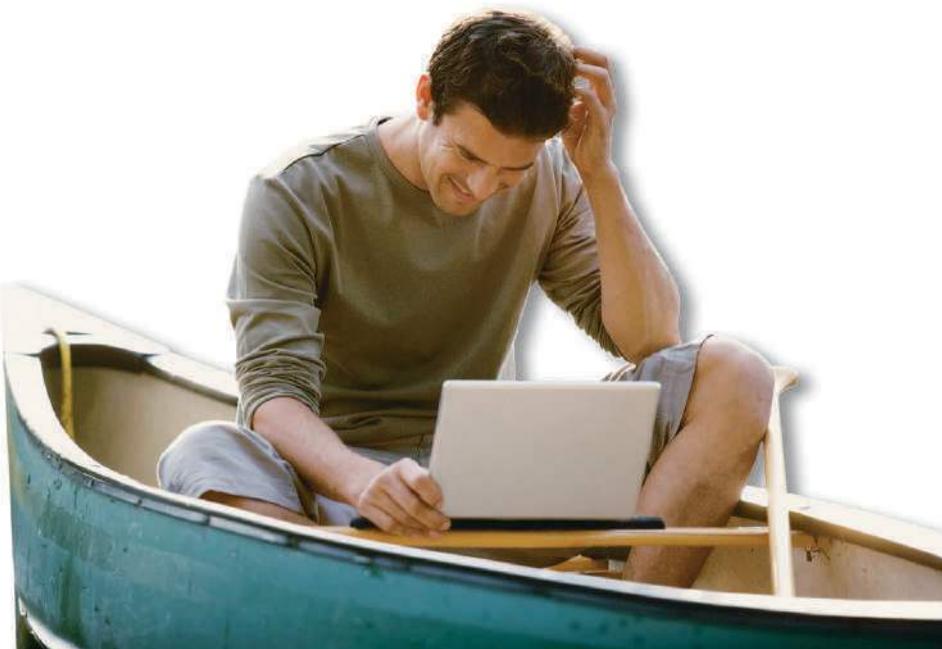
Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 4 Society

Does having advanced technology make a society better?

The four thinkers discussed in this chapter all had their doubts. Here's a chance for you to do some thinking about the pros and cons of computer technology in terms of its effect on our everyday lives. For each of the three photos

shown here, answer these questions: What do you see as the advantages of this technology for our everyday lives? What are the disadvantages?



Mark has recently started a new job and he decided to carry a laptop equipped so that he can access the Internet and receive email even out on the lake. What advantages and disadvantages do you think this technology provides to Mark?



Andy's parents have learned that letting him play video games on a computer tablet ensures that they'll be able to enjoy a distraction-free restaurant meal. Assess the use of computer technology as a form of recreation.



Whether we're college students or famous actresses, most of us have become accustomed to staying in touch with friends as we ride in a car, wait for our dinner in a restaurant, go for a daily walk, or pass the time during a break in a sporting event. What advantages and disadvantages do you see in cell phone technology?

Hint In the first case, being linked to the Internet allows us to stay in touch with the office, and this may help our careers. At the same time, being "connected" in this way blurs the line between work and play, just as it may allow work to come into our lives at home. In addition, employers may expect us to be on call 24-7.

In the second case, computer gaming can certainly be fun and it may develop various sensory-motor skills. At the same time, the rise of computer gaming discourages physical play and plays a part in the alarming increase of obesity, which now affects more than one in five children. Also, personal computer technology has the effect of isolating individuals, not only from the natural world but also from other people.

In the third case, cell phones allow us to talk with others and to send and receive text messages. Of course, we all know that cell phones and cars don't add up to safe driving. In addition, doesn't talking on cell phones in public end up reducing our privacy? And what about the other people around us? How do you feel about having to listen to the personal conversations of people sitting nearby?

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

1. The defining trait of a postindustrial society is computer technology. Spend a few minutes walking around your apartment, dorm room, or home trying to identify every device that has a computer chip in it. How many did you find? Were you surprised by the number?
2. Is modern society good for us? This chapter makes clear that the founders of sociology were aware that modern societies provide many benefits, but all of them were also

critical of modern society. Based on what you have read in this chapter, list three ways in which you would argue modern society is better than traditional societies. Also point to three ways in which you think traditional societies are better than modern societies.

3. Go to www.sociologyinfocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 4 Society

Gerhard Lenski: Society and Technology

4.1 Describe how technological development has shaped the history of human societies. (pages 118–23)

Gerhard Lenski points to the importance of **technology** in shaping any society.

Hunting and Gathering Societies

- have only a few dozen members, are built around the family, and are nomadic
- consider men and women roughly equal in social importance; men use simple tools to hunt animals and women gather vegetation

Horticultural and Pastoral Societies

- raise animals for food and use hand tools to raise crops
- show greater specialization of work
- show increasing levels of social inequality

Agrarian Societies

- use plows harnessed to animals or more powerful energy sources to enable large-scale cultivation
- show even greater specialization, with dozens of distinct occupations
- have extreme social inequality, and reduce the importance of women

Industrialization

- uses advanced sources of energy to drive large machinery
- moves work from home to factory, and reduces the traditional importance of the family
- reduces the traditional importance of the family
- raises living standards

Postindustrialization

- shifts production from heavy machinery making material things to computers processing information
- requires a population with information-based skills
- is the driving force behind the Information Revolution, a worldwide flow of information that now links societies with an emerging global culture

society people who interact in a defined territory and share a culture

sociocultural evolution Lenski's term for the changes that occur as a society gains new technology

hunting and gathering making use of simple tools to hunt animals and gather vegetation for food

horticulture the use of hand tools to raise crops

pastoralism the domestication of animals

agriculture large-scale cultivation using plows harnessed to animals or more powerful energy sources

industrialism the production of goods using advanced sources of energy to drive large machinery

postindustrialism the production of information using computer technology

Karl Marx: Society and Conflict

4.2 Analyze the importance of class conflict to the historical development of human societies. (pages 123–27)

Karl Marx's **materialist approach** claims that societies are defined by their economic systems: How humans produce material goods shapes their experiences.

Conflict and History

Marx traced conflict between social classes in societies as the source of social change throughout history:

- In “ancient” societies, masters dominated slaves.
- In agrarian societies, nobles dominated serfs.
- In industrial-capitalist societies, capitalists dominate proletarians.

Capitalism

Marx focused on the role of **capitalism** in creating inequality and class conflict in modern societies.

- The ruling class (capitalists) oppresses the working class (proletarians).
- Capitalism alienates workers from the act of working, from the products of work, from other workers, and from their own potential.
- Marx predicted that a workers' revolution would overthrow capitalism and replace it with socialism, a system of production that would provide for the social needs of all.

social conflict the struggle between segments of society over valued resources

capitalists people who own and operate factories and other businesses in pursuit of profits

proletarians people who sell their labor for wages

social institutions the major spheres of social life, or societal subsystems, organized to meet human needs

false consciousness Marx's term for explanations of social problems as the shortcomings of individuals rather than as the flaws of society

class conflict conflict between entire classes over the distribution of a society's wealth and power

class consciousness Marx's term for workers' recognition of themselves as a class unified in opposition to capitalists and ultimately to capitalism itself
alienation the experience of isolation and misery resulting from powerlessness

Max Weber: The Rationalization of Society

4.3 Demonstrate the importance of ideas to the development of human societies. (pages 127–30)

Max Weber's **idealist approach** emphasizes the power of ideas to shape society.

Ideas and History

Weber traced the ideas—especially beliefs and values—that have shaped societies throughout history.

- Members of preindustrial societies are bound by **tradition**.
- Members of industrial-capitalist societies are guided by **rationality**.

The Rise of Rationality

Weber focused on the growth of large, rational organizations as the defining characteristic of modern societies.

- Increasing rationality gave rise to both the Industrial Revolution and capitalism.
- Protestantism (specifically, Calvinism) encouraged the rational pursuit of wealth, laying the groundwork for the rise of industrial capitalism.
- Weber feared that excessive rationality, while promoting efficiency, would stifle human creativity.

ideal type an abstract statement of the essential characteristics of any social phenomenon

tradition values and beliefs passed from generation to generation

rationality a way of thinking that emphasizes deliberate, matter-of-fact calculation of the most efficient way to accomplish a particular task

rationalization of society Weber's term for the historical change from tradition to rationality as the main type of human thought

Emile Durkheim: Society and Function

4.4 Contrast the social bonds typical of traditional and modern societies. (pages 131–33)

Emile Durkheim claimed that society has an existence apart from its individual members.

Structure and Function

Durkheim believed that because society is bigger than any one of us, it dictates how we are expected to act in any given social situation.

- Social elements (such as crime) have functions that help society operate.
- Society also shapes our personalities and provides the moral discipline that guides our behavior and controls our desires.

Evolving Societies

Durkheim traced the evolution of social change by describing the different ways societies throughout history have guided the lives of their members.

- In preindustrial societies, **mechanical solidarity** guides the social life of individuals.
- Industrialization and the **division of labor** weaken traditional bonds, so that social life in modern societies is characterized by **organic solidarity**.
- Durkheim warned of increased **anomie** in modern societies, as society provides little moral guidance to individuals.

anomie Durkheim's term for a condition in which society provides little moral guidance to individuals

mechanical solidarity Durkheim's term for social bonds, based on common sentiments and shared moral values, that are strong among members of preindustrial societies

organic solidarity Durkheim's term for social bonds, based on specialization and interdependence, that are strong among members of industrial societies

division of labor specialized economic activity

Critical Review: Four Visions of Society

4.5 Summarize the contributions of Lenski, Marx, Weber, and Durkheim to our understanding of social change. (pages 133–34)

- All four see modern societies as distinct from societies of the past.
- Each thinker highlights a different dimension of change: For Lenski, it is technology; for Marx it is social conflict; for Weber it is ideas; for Durkheim it is the increasing degree of specialization.

Chapter 5

Socialization



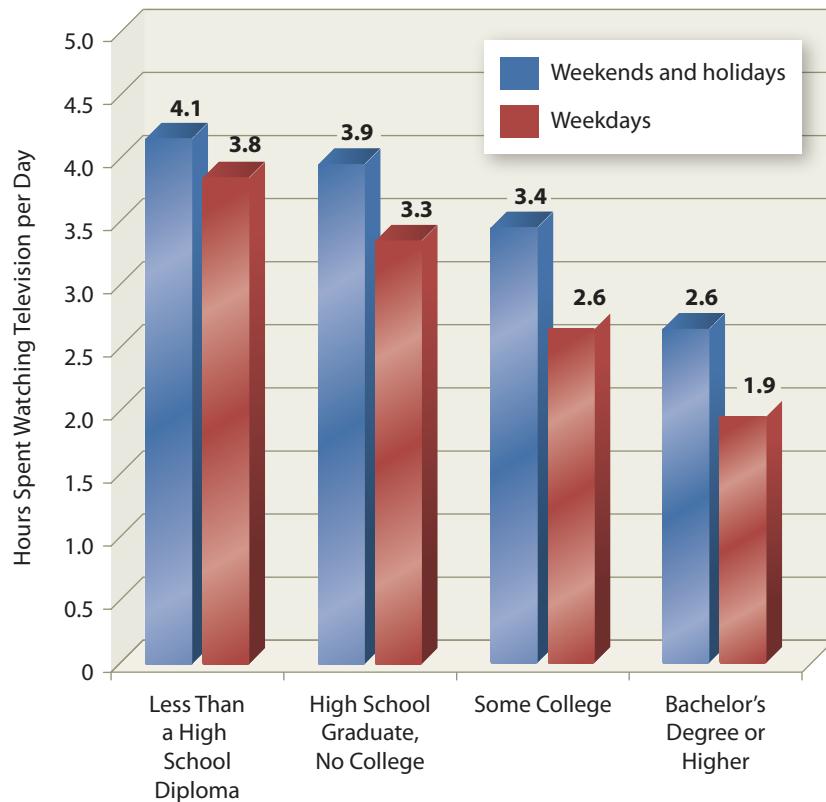
Learning Objectives

- 5.1** Describe how social interaction is the foundation of personality.
- 5.2** Explain six major theories of socialization.
- 5.3** Analyze how the family, school, peer groups, and the mass media guide the socialization process.
- 5.4** Discuss how our society organizes human experience into distinctive stages of life.
- 5.5** Characterize the operation of total institutions.



The Power of Society

to shape how much television we watch



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014).

How conscious is our decision to spend time in front of the television? People with less than a high school diploma watch considerably more television—spending roughly twice as much time per week in front of the screen—than people who have earned a college degree. Although we tend to think we make choices about television watching (as well as our use of other mass media), society guides our behavior in this respect as it does in so many others.

Chapter Overview

Having completed our review of two macro-level chapters, Chapters 3 (“Culture”) and 4 (“Society”), that explore our social world, we turn now to a micro-level look at how individuals become members of society through the process of socialization.

On a cold winter day in 1938, a social worker walked quickly to the door of a rural Pennsylvania farmhouse. Investigating a case of possible child abuse, the social worker entered the home and soon discovered a five-year-old girl hidden in a second-floor storage room. The child, whose name was Anna, was wedged into an old chair with her arms tied above her head so that she couldn’t move. She was wearing filthy clothes, and her arms and legs were as thin as matchsticks (Davis, 1940).

Anna’s situation can only be described as tragic. She had been born in 1932 to an unmarried and mentally impaired woman of twenty-six who lived with her strict father. Angry about his daughter’s “illegitimate” motherhood, the grandfather did not even want the child in his house, so for the first six months of her life, Anna was passed among several welfare agencies. But her mother could not afford to pay for her care, and Anna was returned to the hostile home of her grandfather.

To lessen the grandfather’s anger, Anna’s mother kept Anna in the storage room and gave her just enough milk to keep her alive. There she stayed—day after day, month after month, with almost no human contact—for five long years.

Learning of Anna’s rescue, the sociologist Kingsley Davis immediately went to see the child. He found her with local officials at a county home. Davis was stunned by the emaciated girl, who could not laugh, speak, or even smile. Anna was completely unresponsive, as if alone in an empty world.



Social Experience: The Key to Our Humanity

5.1 Describe how social interaction is the foundation of personality.

Socialization is so basic to human development that we sometimes overlook its importance. But here, in the terrible case of an isolated child, we can see what humans would be like without social contact. Although physically alive, Anna hardly seems to have been human. We can see that without social experience, a child is not able to act or communicate in a meaningful way and seems to be as much an object as a person.

Sociologists use the term **socialization** to refer to *the lifelong social experience by which people develop their human potential and learn culture*. Unlike other living species, whose behavior is mostly or entirely set by biology, humans need social experience to learn their culture and to survive. Social experience is also the foundation of **personality**, *a person’s fairly consistent patterns of acting, thinking, and feeling*. We build a personality by internalizing—taking in—our surroundings. But

without social experience, as Anna’s case shows, personality hardly develops at all.

Human Development: Nature and Nurture

Anna’s case makes clear that humans depend on others to provide the care and nurture needed not only for physical growth but also for personality to develop. A century ago, however, people mistakenly believed that humans were born with instincts that determined their personality and behavior.

THE BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES: THE ROLE OF NATURE
Charles Darwin’s groundbreaking 1859 study of evolution, described in Chapter 3 (“Culture”), led people to think that human behavior was instinctive, simply our “nature.” Such ideas led to claims that the U.S. economic system reflects “instinctive human competitiveness,” that some people are “born criminals,” or that women are “naturally” emotional while men are “naturally” rational.

People trying to understand cultural diversity also misunderstood Darwin’s thinking. Centuries of world exploration had taught Western Europeans that people



Human infants display various *reflexes*—biologically based behavior patterns that enhance survival. The sucking reflex, which actually begins before birth, enables the infant to obtain nourishment. The grasping reflex, triggered by placing a finger on the infant’s palm, causing the hand to close, helps the infant to maintain contact with a parent and, later on, to grasp objects. The Moro reflex, activated by startling the infant, has the infant swinging both arms outward and then bringing them together across the chest. This action, which disappears after several months of life, probably developed among our evolutionary ancestors so that a falling infant could grasp the body hair of a parent.

behaved quite differently from one society to another. But Europeans linked these differences to biology rather than culture. It was an easy step, although incorrect and very damaging, to claim that members of technologically simple societies were biologically less evolved and therefore “less human.” This ethnocentric view helped justify colonialism: Why not take advantage of others if they seem not to be human in the same sense that you are?

THE SOCIAL SCIENCES: THE ROLE OF NURTURE In the twentieth century, biological explanations of human behavior came under fire. The psychologist John B. Watson (1878–1958) developed a theory called *behaviorism*, which holds that behavior is not instinctive but learned. Thus people everywhere are equally human, differing only in their cultural patterns. In short, Watson rooted human behavior not in nature but in *nurture*.

Today, social scientists are cautious about describing *any* human behavior as instinctive. This does not mean that biology plays no part in human behavior. Human life, after all, depends on the functioning of the body. We also know that children often share biological traits (like height and hair color) with their parents and that heredity plays a part in intelligence, musical and artistic talent, and personality (such as how you react to frustration). However, whether you develop your inherited potential depends on how you are raised. For example, unless children use their brain early in life, the brain does not fully develop (Goldsmith, 1983; Begley, 1995).

Without denying the importance of nature, then, we can correctly say that nurture matters more in shaping human behavior. More precisely, *nurture is our nature*.

Social Isolation

As the story of Anna shows, being cut off from the social world is very harmful to human beings. For ethical

reasons, researchers can never place people in total isolation to study what happens. But in the past, they have studied the effects of social isolation on nonhuman primates.

RESEARCH WITH MONKEYS In a classic study, the psychologists Harry and Margaret Harlow (1962) placed rhesus monkeys—whose behavior is in some ways surprisingly similar to that of humans—in various conditions of social isolation. They found that complete isolation (with adequate nutrition) for even six months seriously disturbed the monkeys’ development. When returned to their group, these monkeys were passive, anxious, and fearful.

The Harlows then placed infant rhesus monkeys in cages with an artificial “mother” made of wire mesh with a wooden head and the nipple of a feeding tube where the breast would be. These monkeys also survived but were unable to interact with others when placed in a group.

But monkeys in a third category, isolated with an artificial wire mesh “mother” covered with soft terry cloth, did better. Each of these monkeys would cling to its mother closely. Because these monkeys showed less developmental damage than earlier groups, the Harlows concluded that the monkeys benefited from this closeness. The experiment confirmed how important it is that adults cradle infants affectionately.

Finally, the Harlows discovered that infant monkeys could recover from about three months of isolation. But by about six months, isolation caused irreversible emotional and behavioral damage.

STUDIES OF ISOLATED CHILDREN Tragic cases of children isolated by abusive family members show the damage caused by depriving human beings of social experience. We will review three such cases.

Anna: The Rest of the Story The rest of Anna's story squares with the Harlows' findings. After her discovery, Anna received extensive medical attention and soon showed improvement. When Kingsley Davis visited her after ten days, he found her more alert and even smiling (perhaps for the first time in her life). Over the next year, Anna made slow but steady progress, showing more interest in other people and gradually learning to walk. After a year and a half, she could feed herself and play with toys.

But as the Harlows might have predicted, five long years of social isolation had caused permanent damage. At age eight, her mental development was less than that of a two-year-old. Not until she was almost ten did she begin to use words. Because Anna's mother was mentally retarded, perhaps Anna was also. The riddle of Anna's life was never solved, however, because she died at age ten of a blood disorder, possibly related to the years of abuse she suffered (Davis, 1940, 1947).

Another Case: Isabelle A second case involves another girl found at about the same time as Anna and under similar circumstances. After more than six years of virtual isolation, this girl, named Isabelle, displayed the same lack of responsiveness as Anna. But Isabelle had the benefit of an intensive learning program directed by psychologists. Within a week, Isabelle was trying to speak, and a year and a half later, she knew some 2,000 words. The psychologists concluded that intensive effort had pushed Isabelle through six years of normal development in only two years. By the time she was fourteen, Isabelle was attending sixth-grade classes, damaged by her early ordeal but on her way to a relatively normal life (Davis, 1947).

A Third Case: Genie A more recent case of childhood isolation involves a California girl abused by her parents (Curtiss, 1977; Rymer, 1994). From the time she was two, Genie was tied to a potty chair in a dark garage. In 1970, when she was rescued at age thirteen, Genie weighed only fifty-nine pounds and had the mental development of a one-year-old. With intensive treatment, she became physically healthy, but her language ability remains that of a young child. Today, Genie lives in a home for developmentally disabled adults and rarely makes a sound.

EVALUATE

All evidence points to the crucial importance of social experience in personality development. Human beings can recover from abuse and short-term isolation. But there is a point—precisely when is unclear from the small number of cases studied—at which isolation in childhood causes permanent developmental damage.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What do studies of isolated children teach us about the importance of social experience?



The personalities we develop depend largely on the environment in which we live. When a child's world is shredded by violence, the damage (including losing the ability to trust) can be profound and lasting. This drawing was made by a child living through the daily violence of the civil war in Syria. What are the likely effects of such experiences on a young person's self-confidence and capacity to form trusting ties?

Understanding Socialization

5.2 Explain six major theories of socialization.

Socialization is a complex, lifelong process. The following discussions highlight the work of six researchers—Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan, George Herbert Mead, and Erik H. Erikson—who have made lasting contributions to our understanding of human development.

Sigmund Freud's Elements of Personality

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) lived in Vienna at a time when most Europeans considered human behavior to be biologically fixed. Trained as a physician, Freud gradually turned to the study of personality and mental disorders and eventually developed the celebrated theory of psychoanalysis.

BASIC HUMAN NEEDS Freud claimed that biology plays a major part in human development, although not in terms of specific instincts, as is the case in other species. Rather, he theorized that humans have two basic needs or drives that are present at birth. First is a need for sexual and emotional bonding, which he called the "life instinct," or *eros* (named after the Greek god of love). Second, we share an aggressive drive he called the "death instinct," or *thanatos* (the Greek word for "death"). These opposing forces, operating at an unconscious level, create deep inner tension.

FREUD'S MODEL OF PERSONALITY Freud combined basic needs and the influence of society into a model of personality with three parts: id, ego, and superego. The **id** (Latin for “it”) represents *the human being's basic drives*, which are unconscious and demand immediate satisfaction. Rooted in biology, the id is present at birth, making a newborn a bundle of demands for attention, touching, and food. But society opposes the self-centered id, which is why one of the first words a child typically learns is “no.”

To avoid frustration, a child must learn to approach the world realistically. This is done through the **ego** (Latin for “I”), which is *a person's conscious efforts to balance innate pleasure-seeking drives with the demands of society*. The ego arises as we become aware of our distinct existence and face the fact that we cannot have everything we want. In the human personality, the **superego** (Latin for “above or beyond the ego”) is *the cultural values and norms internalized by an individual*. The superego operates as our conscience, telling us *why* we cannot have everything we want. The superego begins to form as a child becomes aware of parental demands and matures as the child comes to understand that everyone's behavior should take account of cultural norms.

PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT To the id-centered child, the world is a bewildering assortment of physical sensations that bring either pleasure or pain. As the superego develops, however, the child learns the moral concepts of right and wrong. Initially, in other words, children can feel good only in a physical way (such as by being held and cuddled), but after three or four years, they feel good or bad according to how they judge their behavior against cultural norms (doing “the right thing”).

The id and superego remain in conflict, but in a well-adjusted person, the ego manages these two opposing forces. If conflicts are not resolved during childhood, Freud claimed, they may surface as personality disorders later on.

Culture, in the form of the superego, *represses* selfish demands, forcing people to look beyond their own desires. Often the competing demands of self and society result in a compromise that Freud called *sublimation*. Sublimation redirects selfish drives into socially acceptable behavior. For example, marriage makes the satisfaction of sexual urges socially acceptable, and competitive sports are an outlet for aggression.

EVALUATE

In Freud's time, few people were ready to accept sex as a basic human drive. More recent critics have charged that Freud's work presents humans in male terms and devalues women (Donovan & Littenberg, 1982). Freud's theories are also difficult to test scientifically. But Freud influenced everyone who later studied human personality. Of special importance to sociology are his ideas that we internalize social norms and that childhood experiences have a lasting impact on personality.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What are the three elements in Freud's model of personality? Explain how each one operates.

Jean Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development

The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980) studied human *cognition*, how people think and understand. As Piaget watched his own three children grow, he wondered not just what they knew but also how they made sense of the world. Piaget went on to identify four stages of cognitive development.

THE SENSORIMOTOR STAGE Stage one is the **sensorimotor stage**, *the level of human development at which individuals experience the world only through their senses*. For about the first two years of life, the infant knows the world only through the five senses: touching, tasting, smelling, looking, and listening. “Knowing” to young children amounts to what their senses tell them.

THE PREOPERATIONAL STAGE About age two, children enter the **preoperational stage**, *the level of human development at which individuals first use language and other symbols*. Now children begin to think about the world mentally and use imagination. But “pre-op” children between about two and six still attach meaning only to specific experiences and objects. They can identify a toy as their “favorite” but cannot explain what *types* of toys they like.

Lacking abstract concepts, a child also cannot judge size, weight, or volume. In one of his best-known experiments, Piaget placed two identical glasses containing equal amounts of water on a table. He asked several children aged five and six if the amount in each glass was the same. They nodded that it was. The children then watched Piaget take one of the glasses and pour its contents into a taller, narrower glass so that the level of the water in the glass was higher. He asked again if each glass held the same amount. The typical five- or six-year-

old now insisted that the taller glass held more water. By about age seven, children are able to think abstractly and realize that the amount of water stays the same.

THE CONCRETE OPERATIONAL STAGE Next comes the **concrete operational stage**, *the level of human development*

Freud's Model of Personality

id a human being's basic drives	ego a person's conscious efforts to balance innate pleasure-seeking drives with the demands of society	superego the cultural values and norms internalized by an individual
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Piaget's Stages of Development

sensorimotor stage	the level of human development at which individuals experience the world only through their senses	preoperational stage	the level of human development at which individuals first use language and other symbols	concrete operational stage	the level of human development at which individuals first see causal connections in their surroundings	formal operational stage	the level of human development at which individuals think abstractly and critically
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at which individuals first see causal connections in their surroundings. Between the ages of seven and eleven, children focus on how and why things happen. In addition, children now attach more than one symbol to a particular event or object. If, for example, you say to a child of five, "Today is Wednesday," she might respond, "No, it's my birthday!"—indicating that she can use just one symbol at a time. But a ten-year-old at the concrete operational stage would be able to respond, "Yes, and it's also my birthday."

THE FORMAL OPERATIONAL STAGE The last stage in Piaget's model is the **formal operational stage**, *the level of human development at which individuals think abstractly and critically.* At about age twelve, young people begin to reason abstractly rather than thinking only of concrete situations. If, for example, you were to ask a seven-year-old, "What would you like to be when you grow up?" you might receive a concrete response such as "a teacher." But most teenagers can think more abstractly and might reply, "I would like a job that helps others." As they gain the capacity for abstract thought, young people also learn to understand metaphors. Hearing the phrase "A penny for your thoughts" might lead a child to ask for a coin, but a teenager will recognize a gentle invitation to intimacy.

EVALUATE

Freud saw human beings torn by opposing forces of biology and culture. Piaget saw the mind as active and creative. He saw an ability to engage the world unfolding in stages as the result of both biological maturation and social experience.

But do people in all societies pass through all four of Piaget's stages? Living in a traditional society that changes slowly probably limits a person's capacity for abstract and critical thought. Even in the United States, perhaps 30 percent of people never reach the formal operational stage (Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971).

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What are Piaget's four stages of cognitive development? What does his theory teach us about socialization?

Lawrence Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg (1981) built on Piaget's work to study *moral reasoning*, or how individuals judge situations as right or wrong. Here again, development occurs in stages.

Young children who experience the world in terms of pain and pleasure (Piaget's sensorimotor stage) are at the

preconventional level of moral development. At this early stage, in other words, "rightness" amounts to "what feels good to me." For example, a young child may simply reach for something on a table that looks shiny, which is the reason parents of young children have to "childproof" their homes.

The *conventional level*, Kohlberg's second stage, appears by the teen years (corresponding to Piaget's final, formal operational stage). At this point, young people lose some of their selfishness as they learn to define right and wrong in terms of what pleases parents and conforms to cultural norms. Individuals at this stage also begin to assess intention in reaching moral judgments instead of simply looking at what people do. For example, they understand that stealing food to feed one's hungry children is not the same as stealing an iPod to sell for pocket change.

In Kohlberg's final stage of moral development, the *postconventional level*, people move beyond their society's norms to consider abstract ethical principles. Now they think about liberty, freedom, or justice, perhaps arguing that what is legal still may not be right. When the African American activist Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955, she violated that city's segregation laws in order to call attention to the racial injustice of the law.

EVALUATE

Like the work of Piaget, Kohlberg's model explains moral development in terms of distinct stages. But whether this model applies to people in all societies remains unclear. Further, many people in the United States apparently never reach the postconventional level of moral reasoning, although exactly why is still an open question.

Another problem with Kohlberg's research is that his subjects were all boys. He committed a common research error, described in Chapter 2 ("Sociological Investigation"), by generalizing the results of male subjects to all people. This problem led a colleague, Carol Gilligan, to investigate how gender affects moral reasoning.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What are Kohlberg's three stages of moral development? What does his theory teach us about socialization?

Carol Gilligan's Theory of Gender and Moral Development

Carol Gilligan compared the moral development of girls and boys and concluded that the two sexes use different standards of rightness.



Childhood is a time to learn principles of right and wrong. According to Carol Gilligan, however, boys and girls define what is “right” in different ways. After reading about Gilligan’s theory, can you suggest what these two children might be arguing about?

Boys, Gilligan (1982, 1990) claims, have a *justice perspective*, relying on formal rules to define right and wrong. Girls, by contrast, have a *care and responsibility perspective*, judging a situation with an eye toward personal relationships and loyalties. For example, as boys see it, stealing is wrong because it breaks the law. Girls are more likely to wonder why someone would steal and to be sympathetic toward a person who steals, say, to feed her family.

Kohlberg treats rule-based male reasoning as superior to the person-based female approach. Gilligan notes that impersonal rules dominate men’s lives in the workplace, but personal relationships are more relevant to women’s lives as mothers and caregivers. Why, then, Gilligan asks, should we set up male standards as the norms by which to judge everyone?

EVALUATE

Gilligan’s work sharpens our understanding of both human development and gender issues in research. Yet the question remains, does nature or nurture account for the differences between females and males? In Gilligan’s view, cultural conditioning is at work, a view that finds support in other research. Nancy Chodorow (1994) claims that children grow up in homes in which, typically, mothers do much more nurturing than fathers. As girls identify with mothers, they become more concerned with care and responsibility to others. By contrast, boys become more like fathers, who are often detached from the home, and develop the same formal and detached personalities. Perhaps the moral reasoning of females and males will become more similar as more women organize their lives around the workplace.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING According to Gilligan, how do boys and girls differ in their approach to understanding right and wrong?

George Herbert Mead’s Theory of the Social Self

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) developed the theory of *social behaviorism* to explain how social experience develops an individual’s personality (1962, orig. 1934).

THE SELF Mead’s central concept is the **self**, *the part of an individual’s personality composed of self-awareness and self-image*. Mead’s genius was in seeing the self as the product of social experience.

First, said Mead, *the self is not there at birth; it develops*. The self is not part of the body, and it does not exist at birth. Mead rejected the idea that personality is guided by biological drives (as Freud asserted) or biological maturation (as Piaget claimed).

Second, *the self develops only with social experience*, as the individual interacts with others. Without interaction, as we see from cases of isolated children, the body grows, but no self emerges.

Third, Mead continued, *social experience is the exchange of symbols*. Only people use words, a wave of the hand, or a smile to create meaning. We can train a dog using reward and punishment, but the dog attaches no meaning to its actions. Human beings, by contrast, find meaning in almost every action.

Fourth, Mead stated that *seeking meaning leads people to imagine other people’s intentions*. In short, we draw conclusions from people’s actions, imagining their underlying intentions. A dog responds to *what you do*; a human responds to *what you have in mind* as you do it. You can train a dog to go to the hallway and bring back an umbrella, which is handy on a rainy day. But because the dog doesn’t understand intention, if the dog cannot find the umbrella, it is incapable of the *human* response: to look for a raincoat instead.

Fifth, Mead explained that *understanding intention requires imagining the situation from the other’s point of view*. Using symbols, we imagine ourselves “in another person’s shoes” and see ourselves as that person does. We can therefore anticipate how others will respond to us even before we act. A simple toss of a ball requires stepping outside ourselves to imagine how another will catch our throw. All social interaction involves seeing ourselves as others see us—a process that Mead termed *taking the role of the other*.

THE LOOKING-GLASS SELF As we interact with others, the people around us become a mirror (an object that people used to call a “looking glass”) in which we can see ourselves. What we think of ourselves, then, depends on how we think others see us. For example, if we think others see us as clever, we will think of ourselves in the same way. But if we feel they think of us as clumsy, then that is how we will see ourselves. Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929) used the phrase **looking-glass self** to mean *a self-image based on how we think others see us* (1964, orig. 1902).

THE I AND THE ME Mead's sixth point is that *by taking the role of the other, we become self-aware*. Another way of saying this is that the self has two parts. One part of the self operates as the subject, being active and spontaneous. Mead called the active side of the self the "I" (the subjective form of the personal pronoun). The other part of the self works as an object, that is, the way we imagine others see us. Mead called the objective side of the self the "me" (the objective form of the personal pronoun). All social experience has both components: We initiate an action (the I-phase, or subject side, of self), and then we continue the action based on how others respond to us (the me-phase, or object side, of self).

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF According to Mead, the key to developing the self is learning to take the role of the other. Because of their limited social experience, infants can do this only through *imitation*. They mimic behavior without understanding underlying intentions, and so at this point, they have no self.

As children learn to use language and other symbols, the self emerges in the form of *play*. Play involves assuming roles modeled on **significant others**, people, such as parents, who have special importance for socialization. Playing "mommy and daddy" is an important activity that helps young children imagine the world from a parent's point of view.

Gradually, children learn to take the roles of several others at once. This skill lets them move from simple play (say, playing catch) with one other to complex *games* (such as baseball) involving many others. By about age seven, most children have the social experience needed to engage in team sports.

Figure 5–1 charts the progression from imitation to play to games. But there is a final stage in the development of the self. A game involves taking the role of specific people in just one situation. Everyday life demands that we see ourselves in terms of cultural norms as *any member of our society might*. Mead used the term **generalized other** to refer to *widespread cultural norms and values we use as references in evaluating ourselves*.

As life goes on, the self continues to change along with our social experiences. But no matter how much the world



George Herbert Mead wrote, "No hard-and-fast line can be drawn between our own selves and the selves of others." This statement helps to explain the immense importance of "significant others" in our lives. How does this father affect the self emerging in his son?

shapes us, we always remain creative beings, able to react to the world around us. Thus, Mead concluded, we play a key role in our own socialization.

EVALUATE

Mead's work explores the character of social experience itself. In the symbolic interaction of human beings, he believed he had found the root of both self and society.

Mead's view is completely social, allowing no biological element at all. This is a problem for critics who stand with Freud (who said our general drives are rooted in the body) and Piaget (whose stages of development are tied to biological maturity).

Be careful not to confuse Mead's concepts of the I and the me with Freud's id and superego. For Freud, the id originates in our biology, but Mead rejected any biological element of the self (although he never clearly spelled out the origin of the I). In addition, the id and the superego are locked in continual combat, but the I and the me work cooperatively together (Meltzer, 1978).

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Explain the meaning and importance of Mead's concepts of the I and the me. What did Mead mean by "taking the role of the other"? Why is this process so important to socialization?

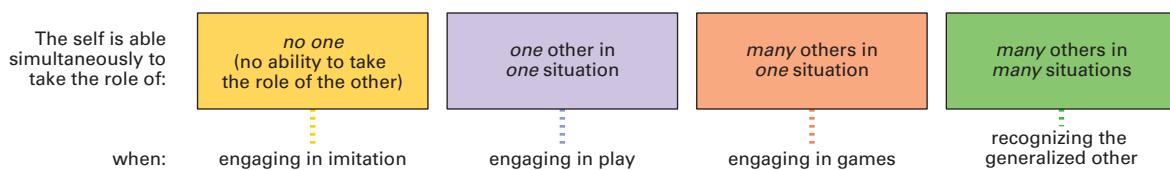


Figure 5–1 Building on Social Experience

George Herbert Mead described the development of the self as a process of gaining social experience. That is, the self develops as we expand our capacity to take the role of the other.

Erik H. Erikson's Eight Stages of Development

Although some analysts (including Freud) point to childhood as the crucial time when personality takes shape, Erik H. Erikson (1902–1994) took a broader view of socialization. He explained that we face challenges throughout the life course (1963, orig. 1950).

Stage 1: Infancy—the challenge of trust (versus mistrust). Between birth and about eighteen months, infants face the first of life's challenges: to establish a sense of trust that their world is a safe place. Family members play a key part in how any infant meets this challenge.

Stage 2: Toddlerhood—the challenge of autonomy (versus doubt and shame). The next challenge, up to age three, is to learn skills to cope with the world in a confident way. Failing to gain self-control leads children to doubt their abilities.

Stage 3: Preschool—the challenge of initiative (versus guilt). Four- and five-year-olds must learn to engage their surroundings—including people outside the family—or experience guilt at failing to meet the expectations of parents and others.

Stage 4: Preadolescence—the challenge of industriousness (versus inferiority). Between ages six and thirteen, children enter school, make friends, and strike out on their own more and more. They either feel proud of their accomplishments or fear that they do not measure up.

Stage 5: Adolescence—the challenge of gaining identity (versus confusion). During the teen years, young people struggle to establish their own identity. In part, teenagers identify with others, but they also want to be unique. Almost all teens experience some confusion as they struggle to establish an identity.

Stage 6: Young adulthood—the challenge of intimacy (versus isolation). The challenge for young adults is to form and maintain intimate relationships with others. Making close friends (and especially falling in love) involves balancing the need to bond with the need to have a separate identity.

Stage 7: Middle adulthood—the challenge of making a difference (versus self-absorption). The challenge of middle age is contributing to the lives of others in the family, at work, and in the larger world. Failing at this, people become self-centered, caught up in their own limited concerns.

Stage 8: Old age—the challenge of integrity (versus despair). As the end of life approaches, people hope to look back on what they have accomplished with a sense of integrity and satisfaction. For those who have been self-absorbed, old age brings only a sense of despair over missed opportunities.

EVALUATE

Erikson's theory views personality formation as a lifelong process, with success at one stage (say, as an infant gaining trust) preparing us to meet the next challenge. However, not everyone faces these

challenges in the exact order presented by Erikson. Nor is it clear that failure to meet the challenge of one stage of life means that a person is doomed to fail later on. A broader question, raised earlier in our discussion of Piaget's ideas, is whether people in other cultures and in other times in history would define a successful life in Erikson's terms.

In sum, Erikson's model points out that many factors, including the family and school, shape our personalities. In the next section, we take a close look at these important agents of socialization.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING In what ways does Erikson take a broader view of socialization than other thinkers presented in this chapter?

Agents of Socialization

5.3 Analyze how the family, school, peer groups, and the mass media guide the socialization process.

Every social experience we have affects us in at least a small way. However, several familiar settings have special importance in the socialization process. These include the family, school, peer group, and the mass media.

The Family

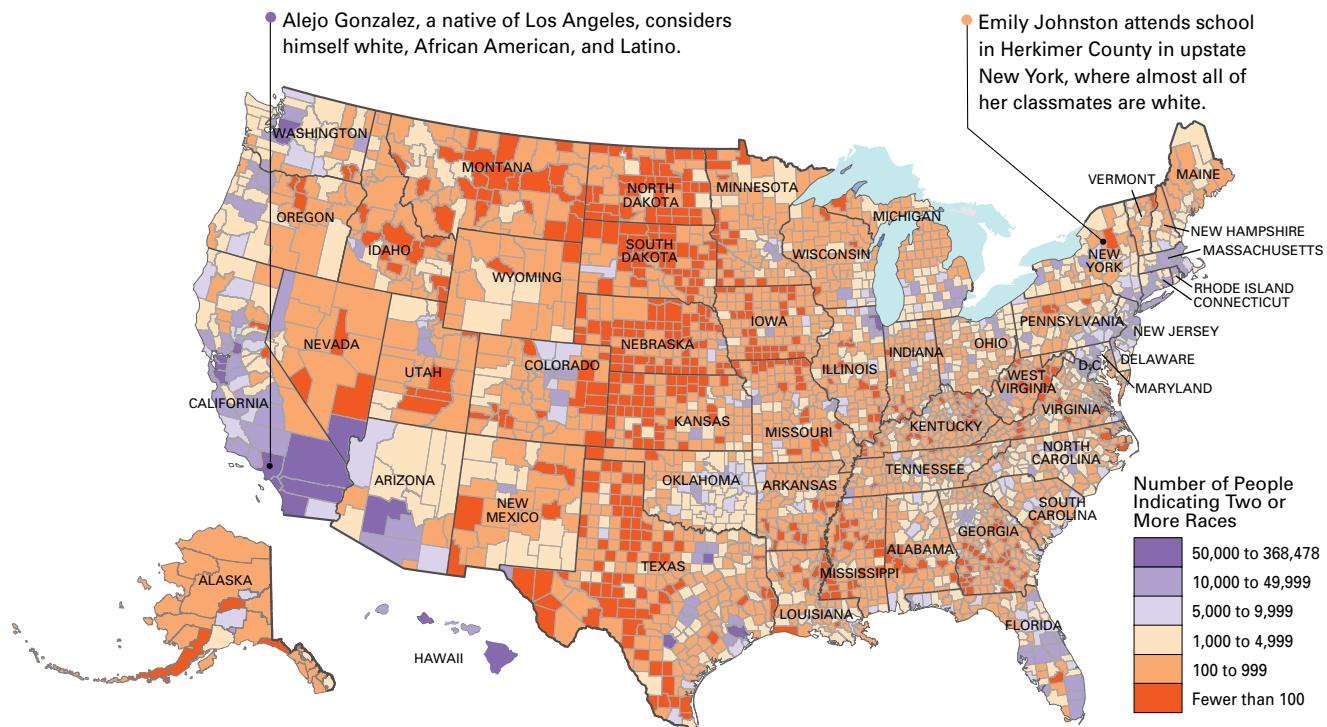
The family affects socialization in many ways. For most people, in fact, the family may be the most important socialization agent of all.

NURTURE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD Infants are totally dependent on others for care. The responsibility for providing a safe and caring environment typically falls on parents and other family members. For several years—at least until children begin school—the family also has the job of teaching children skills, values, and beliefs. Overall, research suggests, nothing is more likely to produce a happy, well-adjusted child than a loving family (Gibbs, 2001).

Not all family learning results from intentional teaching by parents. Children also learn from the type of environment adults create for them. Whether children learn to see themselves as strong or weak, smart or stupid, loved or simply tolerated—and as Erik Erikson suggests, whether they see the world as trustworthy or dangerous—depends largely on the quality of the surroundings provided by parents and other caregivers.

RACE AND CLASS Through the family, parents give a social identity to children. In part, social identity involves race. Racial identity can be complex because, as Chapter 14 ("Race and Ethnicity") explains, societies define race in various and changing ways. In recent decades, for example, more people have chosen to identify themselves as multiracial, involving two or more racial categories. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that, in 2013, 9.4 million people or 3.0 percent of the nation's population considered themselves to be multiracial. This share is more than twice the figure of 1.4 percent that was reported as recently as 2000 and is

Seeing Ourselves



National Map 5–1 Racially Mixed People across the United States

This map shows, for 2013, the county-by-county distribution of people who described themselves as racially mixed. How do you think growing up in an area with a high level of racially mixed people (such as Los Angeles or Miami) would be different from growing up in an area with few such people (for example, in upstate New York or the Plains States in the middle of the country)?

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

certain to keep going up because about 6 percent of all births in the United States are now recorded as multiracial (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). National Map 5–1 shows where people who describe themselves as racially mixed live.

Race also affects how we see ourselves and how we see others. Many people think of race as something obvious, a category based on a physical trait such as skin color. Osagie Obasogie (2013) interviewed people who have been blind since birth to discover that they think about race in very much the same terms as sighted people. This finding suggests that, rather than “seeing” race with our eyes, we learn to “see” race as a result of the ways our society defines various categories of people.

Social class, like race, plays a large part in shaping a child’s personality. Whether born into families of high or low social position, children gradually come to realize that their family’s social standing affects how others see them and, in time, how they come to see themselves.

In addition, research shows that class position affects not just how much money parents have to spend on their children but also what parents expect of them (Ellison, Bartkowski, & Segal, 1996). Parents of all social class backgrounds want their children to be successful and to make

a difference in the world. But when asked to pick from a list of traits that are desirable in a child, lower-class parents are far more likely than upper-class parents to point to “obedience” as a key trait in a child. By contrast, well-to-do parents are more likely than low-income parents to praise children who can “think for themselves” (NORC, 2013).

What accounts for the difference? Melvin Kohn (1977) explains that people of lower social standing usually have limited education and perform routine jobs under close supervision. Expecting that their children will hold similar positions, they encourage obedience and may even use physical punishment like spanking to get it. Because well-off parents have had more schooling, they usually have jobs that demand independence, imagination, and creativity, so they try to inspire the same qualities in their children. Consciously or not, all parents act in ways that encourage their children to follow in their footsteps.

Wealthier parents are more likely to push their children to achieve, and they also typically provide their daughters and sons with an extensive program of leisure activities, including sports, travel, and music lessons. These enrichment activities—far less available to children growing up in low-income families—build *cultural capital*,



Wealthy parents give their children advantages that go beyond money. Research shows that they talk more to their children, enhancing their intellectual development. All parents can help their children simply by engaging them in conversation.

which advances learning and creates a sense of confidence in these children that they will succeed later in life (Lareau, 2002; Smith et al., 2013).

Social class also affects how long the process of growing up takes, as the Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life box explains.

The School

Schooling enlarges children's social world to include people with backgrounds different from their own. It is only as they encounter people who differ from themselves that children come to understand the importance of factors such as race and social position. As they do, they are likely to cluster in playgroups made up of one class, race, and gender. Schools also teach children how to think about differences involving race and class (Kahn, 2012).

GENDER Schools join with families in socializing children into gender roles. Studies show that at school, boys engage in more physical activities and spend more time outdoors, and girls are more likely to help teachers with various housekeeping chores. Boys also engage in more aggressive behavior in the classroom, while girls are typically quieter and better behaved (Best, 1983; Jordan & Cowan, 1995).

WHAT CHILDREN LEARN Schooling is not the same for children living in rich and poor communities. As Chapter 20 ("Education") explains, children from well-off families typically have a far better experience in school than those whose families are poor.

What children learn in school goes beyond the formally planned lessons. Schools also informally teach many things, which together might be called the *hidden curriculum*. Activities such as spelling bees teach children not only how to spell words but also how society divides the population into "winners" and "losers." Organized sports help students develop their strength and skills and also teach children important life lessons in cooperation and competition.

For most children, school is also the first experience with bureaucracy. The school day is based on impersonal rules and a strict time schedule. Not surprisingly, these are also the traits of the large organizations that will employ young people later in life.

The Peer Group

By the time they enter school, children have discovered the **peer group**, a social group whose members have interests, social position, and age in common. Unlike the family and the school, the peer group lets children escape the direct supervision of adults. Among their peers, children learn how to form relationships on their own. Peer groups also offer the chance to discuss interests that adults may not share with their children (such as clothing and popular music) or permit (such as drugs and sex).

It is not surprising, then, that parents often express concern about who their children's friends are. In a rapidly changing society, peer groups have great influence, and the attitudes of young and old may differ because of a "generation gap." The importance of peer groups typically peaks during adolescence, when young people begin to break away from their families and think of themselves as adults.

Even during adolescence, however, parental influence on children remains strong. Peers may affect short-term interests such as music or films, but parents have greater influence on long-term goals, such as going to college (Davies & Kandel, 1981).

Finally, any neighborhood or school is made up of many peer groups. As Chapter 7 ("Groups and Organizations") explains, individuals tend to view their own group in positive terms and put down other groups. In addition, people are influenced by peer groups they would like to join, a process sociologists call **anticipatory socialization**, learning that helps a person achieve a desired position. In school, for example, young people may copy the styles

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

Are We Grown Up Yet? Defining Adulthood

Solly: (*seeing several friends walking down the dorm hallway, just returned from dinner*) Yo, guys! Jeremy's twenty-one today. We're going down to the Box Car to celebrate.

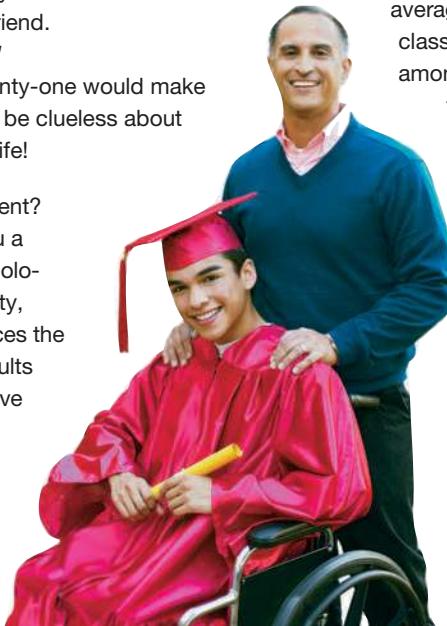
Matt: (*shaking his head*) Dunno, dude. I got a lab to finish up. It's just another birthday.

Solly: Not just any birthday, my friend. He's twenty-one—an adult!

Matt: (*sarcastically*) If turning twenty-one would make me an adult, I wouldn't still be clueless about what I want to do with my life!

Are you an adult or still an adolescent? Does turning twenty-one make you a "grown-up"? According to the sociologist Tom Smith (2003), in our society, there is no one factor that announces the onset of adulthood. In fact, the results of his survey—using a representative sample of 1,398 people over the age of eighteen—suggest that many factors play a part in our decision to consider a young person "grown up."

According to the survey, the single most important transition in claiming adult standing in the United States



What significance does graduating from college have in the process of becoming an adult?

today is the completion of schooling. But other factors are also important: Smith's respondents linked adult standing to taking on a full-time job, gaining the ability to support a family financially, no longer living with parents, and finally, marrying and becoming a parent. In other words, almost everyone in the United States thinks a person who has done *all* of these things is fully "grown up."

At what age are these transitions likely to be completed? On average, the answer is about twenty-six. But such an average masks an important difference based on social class. People who do not attend college (more common among people growing up in lower-income families) typically finish school before age twenty, and a full-time job, independent living, marriage, and parenthood may follow in a year or two. Those from more privileged backgrounds are likely to attend college and may even go on to graduate or professional school, delaying the process of becoming an adult for as long as ten years, past the age of thirty.

What Do You Think?

1. Do you consider yourself an adult? Why or why not?
2. At what age do you think adulthood begins? Why? Do patterns of growing up differ for females and males? Explain.
3. What importance do you think social class has in the process of becoming an adult?

and slang of a group they hope will accept them. Later in life, a young lawyer who hopes to become a partner in the law firm may conform to the attitudes and behavior of the firm's partners in order to be accepted.

The Mass Media

August 30, Isle of Coll, off the west coast of Scotland. The last time we visited this remote island, there was no electricity and most of the people spoke the ancient Gaelic language. Now that a power cable comes from the mainland, homes have electric lights, modern appliances, television, and computers that access the Internet. Today, most of the islanders have cell phones and routinely text others all over Britain and around the world. Technology and the new social media have pushed this remote place into a vastly larger, more connected world. So much has changed: The last traces of the island's historic culture are quickly disappearing, with only rare performances of traditional dancing or music. Today, most of the population consists of mainlanders who ferry over with their cars to spend time in their vacation homes. And everyone now speaks English.

The **mass media** are *the means for delivering impersonal communications to a vast audience*. The term *media* (plural of *medium*) comes from the Latin word for "middle," suggesting that the media connect people. *Mass* media resulted as communications technology (first newspapers and then radio, television, films, and the Internet) spread information on a massive scale. A century ago, families and local communities held the greatest control over the socialization process; today, the mass media rival these other agents of socialization in importance.

The mass media are important not only because they are so powerful but also because their influence is likely to differ from that of the family, the local school, and the peer group. In short, the mass media introduce people to ideas and images that reflect the larger society and the entire world.

In the United States today, the mass media have an enormous influence on our attitudes and behavior. Today, 76 percent of U.S. households have a personal computer, and 72 percent of households are connected to the Internet.

Global Snapshot

- In high-income countries such as the United States, television is an important part of socialization.
- In low-income countries such as Zimbabwe, the mass media play a smaller role in socialization.

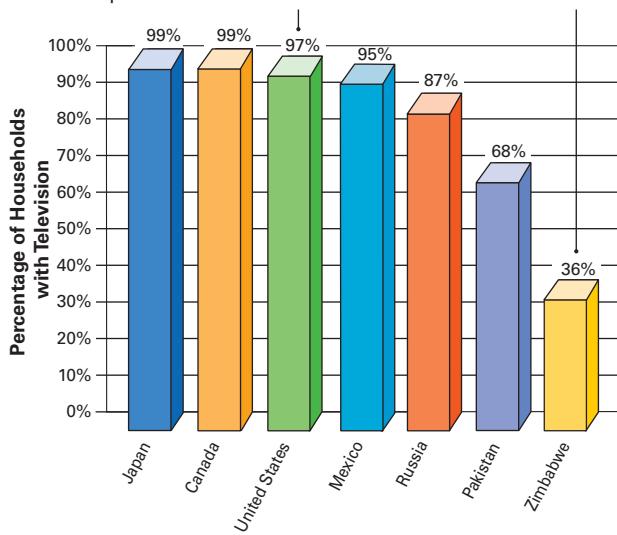


Figure 5–2 Television Ownership in Global Perspective

Television is popular in high- and middle-income countries, where almost every household owns at least one TV set.

SOURCE: International Telecommunication Union (2014).

Television, introduced in the 1930s, became the dominant medium after World War II, and 97 percent of U.S. households now have at least one set (the same share of households that have a telephone). Nine out of ten of the households with television also have cable or satellite connections. As Figure 5–2 shows, the United States has one of the highest rates of television ownership in the world. Almost everyone in our country spends some time watching television but, as the Power of Society figure at the beginning of this chapter points out, it is people with less education (who are also those with lower incomes) who spend the most time watching TV, a pattern that also holds for playing video games (TVB, 2012; International Telecommunication Union, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014; U.S. Department of Labor, 2014).

THE EXTENT OF MASS MEDIA EXPOSURE Just how “glued to the tube” are we? Survey data show that about 80 percent of U.S. adults watch television regularly, and the average adult watches about four hours a day. Older adults watch television about six hours a day. Children and teens watch less television than typical adults, but they make up for it with more time on computers and smart phones. African American children spend slightly more time watching television than Hispanic children and much more time watching TV than white children do (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2012; Nielsen Media Research, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

About two-thirds of U.S. children report that the television is typically on during meals, and more than 70 percent claim that parents do not limit the amount of time

they spend in front of the screen. Younger children favor watching television and playing video games; as children get older, music videos and web surfing become a bigger part of the mix. At all ages, boys favor video games and girls lean toward music videos (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010; TVB, 2012; Nielsen Media Research, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

In today’s society, years before children learn to read, television watching is a part of their daily routine. As they grow, children spend as many hours in front of a television as they do in school or interacting with their parents. This extensive television viewing shows no signs of change despite the fact that, according to research, the more children watch television the slower their cognitive development, the more passive they become, the less they use their imagination, and the higher their risk of obesity. It is not that television is directly harmful to children; rather, extensive television takes time away from interaction with parents and peers, as well as exercise and other activities that are more likely to promote development and good health (American Psychological Association, 1993; Fellman, 1995; Shute, 2010).

TELEVISION AND POLITICS The comedian Fred Allen once quipped that we call television a “medium” because it is “rarely well done.” For a number of reasons, television (as well as other mass media) provokes plenty of criticism. Some liberal critics argue that for most of television’s history, racial and ethnic minorities have not been visible or have been included only in stereotypical roles (such as African Americans playing butlers and maids, Asian Americans playing gardeners, or Hispanics playing new immigrants). In recent years, however, minorities have moved closer to center stage on television. There are ten times as many Hispanic actors on prime-time television as there were in the 1970s, and they play a far larger range of characters (Lichter & Amundson, 1997; Fetto, 2003b).

From another perspective, conservative critics charge that the television and film industries are dominated by a liberal “cultural elite.” In recent years, they claim, “politically correct” media have advanced liberal causes, including feminism and gay rights (Rothman, Powers, & Rothman, 1993; Goldberg, 2002). But not everyone agrees, and some counter that the popularity of Fox News, home to Sean Hannity, Bill O’Reilly, and other conservative commentators, suggests that television programming offers “spin” from both sides of the political spectrum (Rothman, Powers, & Rothman, 1993; B. Goldberg, 2002; Pew Center for People and the Press, 2012). One recent study looked at the political identification of people in the audience of various media outlets and confirmed that the mass media overall present a wide spectrum of political opinion. Our choices in media content range from *New Yorker* and *Slate* on the left to *CBS News* and *USA Today* near the center, to *Fox News* and the *Rush Limbaugh Show* on the right (Mitchell et al., 2014). The fact that there is a wide range of political opinion out there does not mean that the average person experiences

very much of this diversity. On the contrary, researchers point out that, when it comes to the mass media, liberals and conservatives inhabit different worlds by sticking close to those specific media outlets that present viewpoints with which they already agree (Mitchell et al., 2014).

TELEVISION AND VIOLENCE In 1996, the American Medical Association (AMA) issued the startling statement that violence in television and films was so widespread that it posed a hazard to public health. Surveys confirm that three-fourths of U.S. adults say they have either walked out of a movie or turned off television in response to excessive violence. There is little doubt that violence is part of television programming. Almost two-thirds of television programs contain violence, and in most such scenes, characters engaging in violent behavior show no remorse and are not punished (Rideout, 2007).

Public concern about violence in the mass media is especially high when it comes to children. About two-thirds of parents say that they are “very concerned” that their children are exposed to too much media violence. Research has found a correlation between the amount of time children spend watching television and using video games and aggressive behavior such as fighting, the early use of alcohol and other illegal drugs, and even trouble sleeping. In 2011, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a recommendation that children’s television time be limited to two hours a day, and that parents not permit children under the age of two to watch television at all (Robinson et al., 2001; Garrison et al., 2011; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012).

Back in 1997, the television industry adopted a rating system for programming. In addition, televisions manufactured after 2000 have a “V-chip” that allows parents to block programming that they do not wish their children to watch. But there is no simple technology that permits parents to control their children’s access to violence on the many electronic devices that are now widely used by young people. Of course, we may wonder whether watching sexual or violent programming is itself the cause of harm to young people or whether, for example, children who receive little attention from parents or who suffer from other risk factors end up watching more television. In any case, we might well ask why the mass media contain so much sex and violence in the first place.

Television and the other mass media enrich our lives with entertaining and educational programming. The media also increase our exposure to diverse cultures and provoke discussion of current issues. At the same time, the power of the media—especially television—to shape how we think remains highly controversial.



Concern with violence and the mass media extends to the world of video games, especially those popular with young boys. Among the most controversial games, which include high levels of violence, is *Grand Theft Auto V*. Do you think the current rating codes are sufficient to guide parents and children who buy video games, or would you support greater restrictions on game content?

EVALUATE

This section shows that socialization is complex, with many different factors shaping our personalities as we grow. In addition, these factors do not always work together. For instance, children learn certain things from peer groups and the mass media that may conflict with what they learn at home.

Beyond family, school, peer group, and the media, other spheres of life also play a part in social learning. For most people in the United States, these include the workplace, religious organizations, the military, and social clubs. In the end, socialization proves to be not just a simple matter of learning but also a complex balancing act as we absorb information from a variety of sources. In the process of sorting and weighing all the information we receive, we form our own distinctive personalities.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Identify all the major agents of socialization discussed in this section of the chapter. What are some of the unique ways that each of these helps us develop our individual personalities?

Socialization and the Life Course

5.4 Discuss how our society organizes human experience into distinctive stages of life.

Although childhood has special importance in the socialization process, learning continues throughout our lives. An overview of the life course reveals that our society organizes human experience according to age—namely, the stages of life we know as childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age.

Childhood

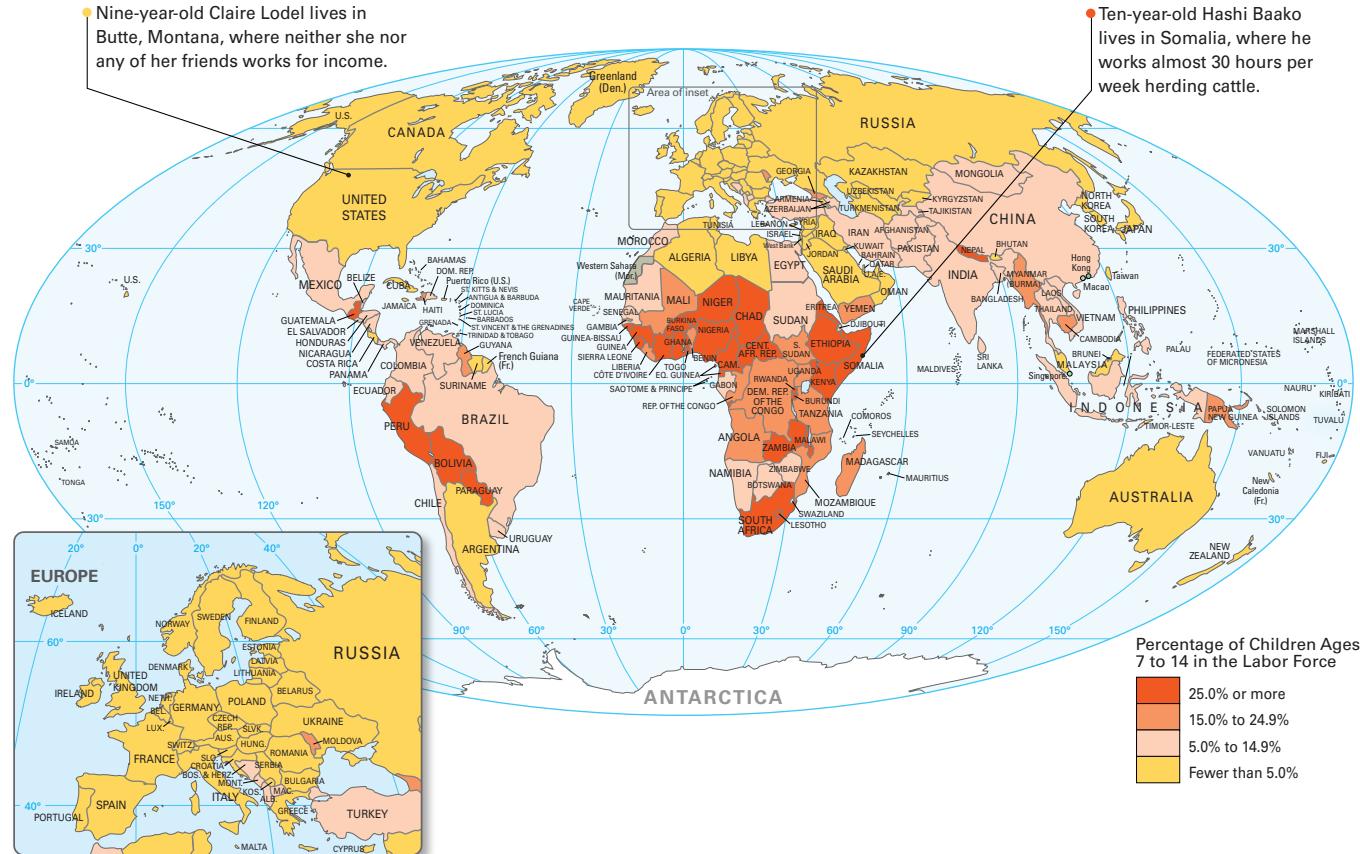
The next time you go shopping for athletic shoes, check where the shoes on display are made. Most brands are manufactured in countries such as Taiwan and Indonesia where wages are far lower than they are in the United States. What is not stated anywhere on the shoes is that many of these products are made by children who spend their days working in factories instead of going to school. About 168 million of the world's children work, with 59 percent of working children doing farming. Almost half of the world's working children are in Asia, while more than one-third are in Africa. About half of these children labor full time, and much of this work carries risks to a child's physical and mental health. For their efforts, working children earn very little—typically, about 50 cents an hour (Human Rights Watch, 2006; Thrupkaew, 2010; International Labour Organization, 2013; U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). Global Map 5–1 shows that child labor is most common in Africa and Asia.

The idea of children working long days in factories may be disturbing to people who live in high-income nations because we think of *childhood*—roughly the first twelve years of life—as a carefree time of learning and play. Yet as the historian Philippe Ariès (1965) explains, the whole idea of “childhood” is fairly new in human history. During the Middle Ages, children of four or five were treated like adults and expected to fend for themselves.

We defend our idea of childhood pointing to the fact that children are biologically immature. But a look back in time and around the world shows that the concept of childhood is grounded not in biology but in culture (LaRossa & Reitzes, 2001). In rich countries, not everyone has to work, so childhood can be extended to allow time for young people to learn the skills they will need in a high-technology workplace.

Because childhood in the United States lasts such a long time, some people worry when children seem to be growing up too fast. In part, this "hurried child" syndrome results from changes in the family—including high divorce rates and both parents in the labor force—that leave children with less

Window on the World



Global Map 5–1 Child Labor in Global Perspective

Because industrialization extends childhood and discourages children from working and other activities considered suitable only for adults, child labor is uncommon in the United States and other high-income countries. In less economically developed nations of the world, however, children are a vital economic asset, and they typically begin working as soon as they are able. How would childhood in, say, the African nation of Chad or Ghana differ from that in the United States or Canada?

SOURCE: UNICEF (2014).

supervision. In addition, “adult” programming on television (not to mention in films and on the Internet) carries grown-up concerns such as sex, drugs, and violence into young people’s lives. Today’s ten- to twelve-year-olds, says one executive of a children’s television channel, have interests and experiences that were typical of twelve- to fourteen-year-olds a generation ago. Perhaps this is why, compared to kids fifty years ago, today’s children have higher levels of stress and anxiety (Hymowitz, 1998; Gorman, 2000; Hoffman, 2010).

Adolescence

At the same time that industrialization created childhood as a distinct stage of life, adolescence emerged as a buffer between childhood and adulthood. We generally link *adolescence*, or the teenage years, with emotional and social turmoil as young people struggle to develop their own identities. Again, we are tempted to attribute teenage rebelliousness and confusion to the biological changes of puberty. But it is in fact the result of cultural inconsistency. For example, the mass media glorify sex and schools hand out condoms, even as parents urge restraint. Consider, too, that an eighteen-year-old may face the adult duty of going to war but lacks the adult right to drink a beer. In short, adolescence is a time of social contradictions, when people are no longer children but not yet adults.

As is true of all stages of life, adolescence varies according to social background. Most young people from working-class families move directly from high school into the adult world of work and parenting. Wealthier teens, however, have the resources to attend college and perhaps graduate school, stretching their adolescent years into the late twenties and even the thirties (Smith, 2003).

Adulthood

If stages of the life course were based on biological changes, it would be easy to define *adulthood*. Regardless of exactly when it begins, adulthood is the time when most of life’s accomplishments take place, including pursuing a career and raising a family. Personalities are largely formed by then, although marked changes in a person’s environment—such as unemployment, divorce, or serious illness—may cause significant changes to the self.

EARLY ADULTHOOD During early adulthood—until about age forty—young adults learn to manage day-to-day affairs for themselves, often juggling conflicting priorities: schooling, job, partner, children, and parents. During this stage of life, many women try to “do it all,” a pattern that reflects the fact that our culture gives them the major responsibility for child rearing and housework even if they have demanding jobs outside the home.

MIDDLE ADULTHOOD In middle adulthood—roughly ages forty to sixty-five—people sense that their life circumstances are pretty well set. They also become more aware of the fragility of health, which the young typically take



In recent decades, some people have become concerned that U.S. society is shortening childhood, pushing children to grow up faster and faster. The television show *Toddlers and Tiaras* shows young girls performing and acting much like older women might do. Do television programs such as this one contribute to a “hurried child syndrome”? Do you see this as a problem or not? Why?

for granted. Women who have spent many years raising a family find middle adulthood emotionally trying. Children grow up and require less attention, and husbands become absorbed in their careers, leaving some women with spaces in their lives that are difficult to fill. Many women who divorce also face serious financial problems (Weitzman, 1985, 1996). For all these reasons, an increasing number of women in middle adulthood return to school and seek new careers.

For everyone, growing older means experiencing physical decline, a prospect our culture makes especially challenging for women. Because good looks are considered more important for women, the appearance of wrinkles and graying hair can be traumatic. Men have their own particular difficulties as they get older. Some must admit that they are never going to reach earlier career goals. Others realize that the price of career success has been neglect of family or personal health.

Old Age

Old age—the later years of adulthood and the final stage of life itself—begins around the mid-sixties. In the United States,



A cohort is a category of similar-age people who share common life experiences. Just as audiences at Rolling Stones concerts in the 1960s were mainly young people, so many of the group's fans today are the same people, now over age sixty. Mick Jagger (*left*) recently turned seventy.

about one in seven people has reached the age of sixty-five, and the elderly now outnumber teenagers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Once again, societies attach different meanings to this stage of life. As explained in Chapter 15 ("Aging and the Elderly"), it is older members of traditional societies who typically control most of the land and other wealth. Also, since traditional societies change slowly, older people possess useful wisdom gained over their lifetime, which earns them much respect.

In industrial societies, however, most younger people work and live apart from their parents, becoming independent of their elders. Rapid change also gives our society a "youth orientation" that defines the young as more "hip" and "with it," and what is old as unimportant or even obsolete. To younger people, the elderly may seem out of touch with new trends and fashions, and their knowledge and experience may seem of little value.

Perhaps this anti-elderly bias will decline as the share of older people in the United States steadily increases. The percentage of the U.S. population over age sixty-five has more than tripled in the past hundred years. With life expectancy still increasing, most men and women in their mid-sixties today (the "young elderly") can look forward

to living decades longer. Analysts predict that by 2060, the number of seniors will double to more than 98 million, and the "average" person in the United States will have reached the age of forty-three (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Old age differs in an important way from earlier stages in the life course. Growing up typically means entering new roles and taking on new responsibilities, but growing old is the opposite experience—leaving roles that provided both satisfaction and social identity. For some people, retirement is a period of restful activity, but for others, it can mean losing valued routines and even outright boredom. Like any life transition, retirement demands learning new patterns while at the same time letting go of habits from the past.

Death and Dying

Throughout most of human history, low living standards and limited medical technology meant that death from accident or disease could come at any stage of life. Today, however, 86 percent of people in the United States die after age fifty-four (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014).

After observing many people as they were dying, the psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969) described death as an orderly transition involving five distinct stages. Typically, a person first faces death with *denial*, perhaps out of fear and perhaps because our culture tends to ignore the reality of death. The second phase is *anger*, when a person facing death sees it as a gross injustice. Third, anger gives way to *negotiation* as the person imagines the possibility of avoiding death by striking a bargain with God. The fourth response, *resignation*, is often accompanied by psychological depression. Finally, a complete adjustment to death requires *acceptance*. At this point, no longer paralyzed by fear and anxiety, the person whose life is ending sets out to find peace and makes the most of whatever time remains.

More recent research has shown that Kübler-Ross simplified the process of dying—not everyone passes through these stages or does so in the order in which she presents them (Konigsberg, 2011). At the same time, this research has helped draw attention to death and dying. As the share of women and men in old age increases, we can expect our culture to become more comfortable with the idea of death. In recent years, people in the United States have started talking about death more openly, and the trend is toward viewing dying as preferable to prolonged suffering. More married couples now prepare for death with legal and financial planning. This openness may ease somewhat the pain of the surviving spouse, a consideration for women, who, more often than not, outlive their husbands.

The Life Course: Patterns and Variations

This brief look at the life course points to two major conclusions. First, although each stage of life is linked to the biological process of aging, the life course is largely a social construction. For this reason, people in other societies may experience a stage of life quite differently or, for that matter, not at all. Second, in any society, the stages of the life course present certain problems and transitions that involve learning something new and, in many cases, unlearning familiar routines.

Societies organize the life course according to age, but other forces, such as class, race, ethnicity, and gender, also shape people's lives. This means that the general patterns described in this chapter apply somewhat differently to various categories of people.

People's life experiences also vary, depending on when, in the history of the society, they were born. A **cohort** is a category of people with something in common, usually their age. Because members of a particular age cohort are generally influenced by the same economic and cultural trends, they tend to have similar attitudes and values. Women and men born in the 1940s and 1950s, for example, grew up during a time of economic expansion that gave them a sense of optimism. Today's college students, who have grown up in an age of economic uncertainty, are less confident about the future.

Resocialization: Total Institutions

5.5 Characterize the operation of total institutions.

A final type of socialization, experienced by more than 3 million people in the United States, involves being confined—usually against their will—in prisons or mental hospitals (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014; U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). This is the world of the **total institution**, a setting in which people are isolated from the rest of society and manipulated by an administrative staff.



The TV show *Orange Is the New Black* provides a look inside the world of prison. Prisons are one example of a total institution in which inmates dress alike and carry out daily routines under the direct supervision and control of institutional staff. What do we expect prison to do to young people convicted of crimes? How well do you think prisons do what people expect them to?

According to Erving Goffman (1961), total institutions have three important characteristics. First, staff members supervise all aspects of daily life, including when and where residents (often called "inmates") eat, sleep, and work. Second, life in a total institution is controlled and standardized, with the same food, uniforms, and activities for everyone. Third, formal rules dictate when, where, and how inmates perform their daily routines.

The purpose of such rigid routines is **resocialization**, radically changing an inmate's personality by carefully controlling the environment. Prisons and mental hospitals physically isolate inmates behind fences, barred windows, and locked doors and limit their access to the telephone, mail, and visitors. The institution becomes their entire world, making it easier for the staff to bring about personality change—or at least obedience—in the inmate.

Resocialization is a two-part process. First, the staff breaks down the new inmate's existing identity. For example, an inmate must give up personal possessions, including clothing and grooming articles used to maintain a distinctive appearance. Instead, the staff provides standard-issue clothes so that everyone looks alike. The staff subjects new inmates to "mortifications of self," which can include searches, head shaving, medical examinations, fingerprinting, and assignment of a serial number. Once inside the walls, individuals also give up their privacy as guards routinely inspect their living quarters.

In the second part of the resocialization process, the staff tries to build a new self in the inmate through a system of rewards and punishments. Having a book to read, watching television, or making a telephone call may seem like minor pleasures to the outsider, but in the rigid environment of the total institution, gaining such simple privileges as these can be a powerful motivation to conform. The length of confinement typically depends on how well the inmate cooperates with the staff.

Total institutions affect people in different ways. Some inmates may end up “rehabilitated” or “recovered,” but others may change little, and still others may become hostile and bitter. Over a long period of time, living in a rigidly controlled environment can leave some people *institutionalized*, without the capacity for independent living.

But what about the rest of us? Does socialization crush our individuality or empower us to reach our creative potential? The Controversy & Debate box takes a closer look at this question.

Controversy & Debate

Are We Free within Society?

Mike: Sociology is a really interesting course. Since my professor started telling us how to look at the world with a sociological eye, I’m realizing that a lot of who I am and where I am is because of society.

Kim: (teasingly) Oh, so society is responsible for you turning out so smart and witty and good-looking?

Mike: No, that’s all me. But I’m seeing that being at college and playing football is maybe not all me. I mean, it’s at least also about social class and gender. What people are and the society around them can never be completely separated.

This chapter stresses one key theme: Society shapes how we think, feel, and act. If this is so, then in what sense are we free? To answer this important question, consider the Muppets, puppet stars of television and film that many of us remember from childhood. Watching the antics of Kermit the Frog, Miss Piggy, and the rest of the troupe, we almost believe they are real rather than objects controlled from backstage or below. As the sociological perspective points out, human beings are like puppets in that we, too, respond to backstage forces. Society, after all,

gives us a culture and also shapes our lives according to class, race, and gender. If this is so, can we really claim to be free?

Sociologists answer this question with many voices. The politically liberal response is that individuals are *not* free of society—in fact, as social creatures, we never could be. But if we have to live in a society with power over us, then it is important to do what we can to make our world more socially just. We can do this by trying to lessen inequality, working to reduce class differences and to eliminate barriers to opportunity that hold back minorities, including women. A more conservative response is that, yes, society does shape our lives but we should also realize that we can remain free all the same because, first, to the extent that we believe in our way of life, society does not seem oppressive. Second, even when we run up against social barriers that we do not accept, we remain free because society can never dictate our dreams. Our history as a nation, right from the revolutionary acts that led to its founding, is one story after another of people pursuing personal goals despite great odds.

All of these arguments can be found in George Herbert Mead’s analysis of socialization. Mead knew that society makes demands on us, sometimes limiting our options. But he also saw that human beings are spontaneous and creative, capable of continually acting on society both with acceptance and with efforts to bring about change. Mead noted the power of society while still affirming the human capacity to evaluate, criticize, and ultimately choose and change.

In the end, then, we may seem like puppets, but this impression is correct only on the surface. A crucial difference is that we have the ability to stop, look up at the “strings” that make us move, decide what we think about them, and even yank on the strings defiantly (Berger, 1963:176). If our pull is strong enough, we can accomplish more than we might think. As Margaret Mead once remarked, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

What Do You Think?

1. Do you think that our society gives more freedom to males than to females? Why or why not?
2. Do you think that most people in our society feel that they have some control over their lives or not? Why?
3. Has learning about socialization increased or decreased your feeling of freedom? Why?



Does understanding more about how society shapes our lives give us greater power to “cut the strings” and choose for ourselves how to live?

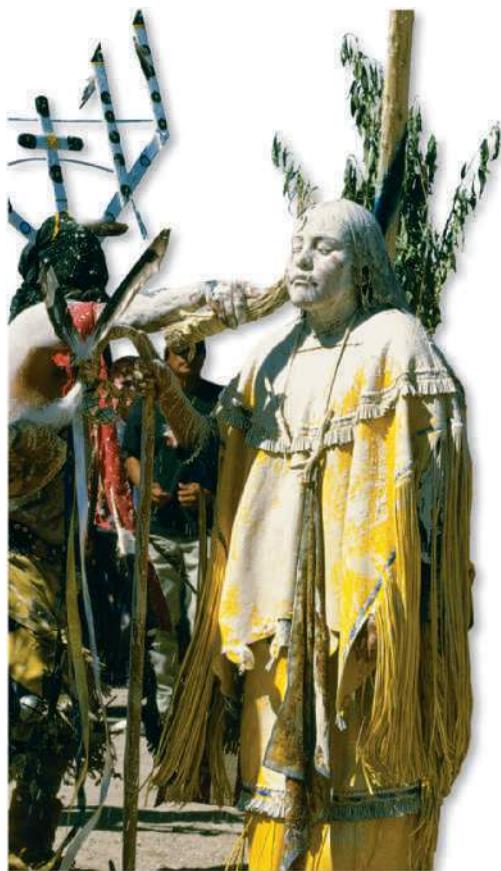
Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 5 Socialization

When do we grow up and become adults?

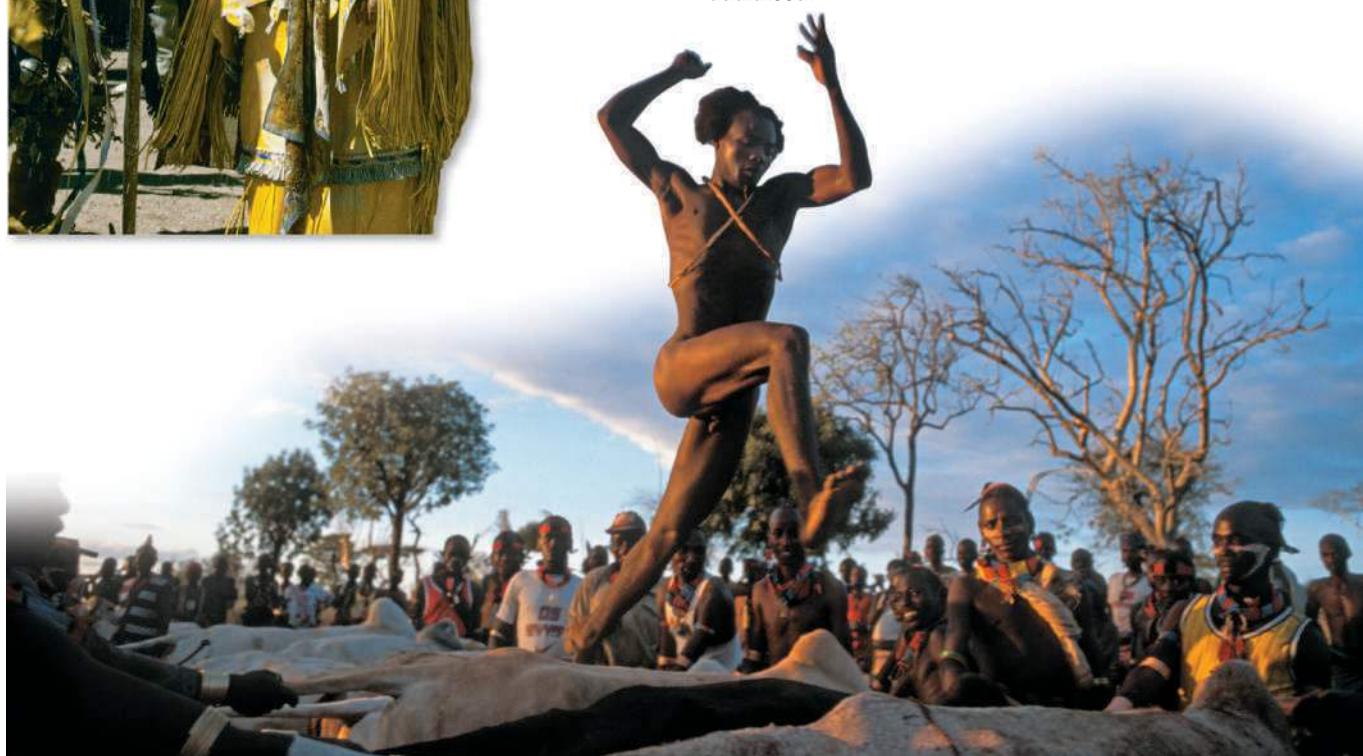
As this chapter explains, many factors come into play in the process of moving from one stage of the life course to another. In global perspective, what makes our society unusual is that there is no one event that clearly tells everyone (and us, too) that the milestone of adulthood has been reached. We

have important events that say, for example, when someone completes high school (graduation ceremony) or becomes married (wedding ceremony). Look at the photos shown here. In each case, what do we learn about how the society defines the transition from one stage of life to another?



On the San Carlos Reservation in Arizona, young Apache girls perform the Sunrise Dance to mark their transition to adulthood. Carefully painted by an elder according to Apache tradition, each girl holds a special staff, which symbolizes her hope for a long and healthy life and spiritual happiness. Many of the world's societies time these coming-of-age rituals to correspond to a girl's first menstrual cycle. Why do you think this is so?

Among the Hamer people in the Omo Valley of Ethiopia, young boys must undergo a test to mark their transition to manhood. Usually the event is triggered by the boy's expressing a desire to marry. In this ritual, witnessed by everyone in his society, the boy must jump over a line of bulls selected by the girl's family. If he succeeds in doing this three times, he is declared a man and the wedding can take place (marking the girl's transition to womanhood). Does our society have any ceremony or event similar to this to mark the transition to adulthood?





These young men and women in Seoul, South Korea, are participating in a Confucian ceremony to mark their becoming adults. This ritual, which takes place on the twentieth birthday, defines young people as full members of the community and also reminds them of all the responsibilities they are now expected to fulfill. If we had such a ritual in the United States, at what age would it take place? Would a person's social class affect the timing of this ritual?

Hint Societies differ in how they structure the life course, including which stages of life are defined as important, which years of life various stages correspond to, and how clearly movement from one stage to another is marked. Given our cultural emphasis on individual choice and freedom, many people tend to say "You're only as old as you feel" and let people decide these things for themselves. When it comes to reaching adulthood, our society is not very clear—the box on page 151 points out many factors that figure into becoming an adult. So there is no widespread "adult ritual" as we see in these photos. Keep in mind that, for us, class matters a lot in this process, with young people from more affluent families staying in school and delaying full adulthood until well into their twenties or even their thirties. Finally, in tough economic times, the share of young people in their twenties living with parents goes way up, which can delay adulthood for an entire cohort.

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

1. Reaching adulthood can be both confusing and exciting. How did your family support you in this state of transition? Discuss any ceremonies, rituals, or celebrations that your family or community has to mark the transition to adulthood. Are these rituals common across all classes or is it specific to your family and social class?
2. In what sense are human beings free? After reading through this chapter, develop a personal statement of the extent to which you think you are able to guide your own life. Notice that some of the thinkers discussed in this chapter (such as Sigmund Freud) argued that there are sharp limits on our ability to act freely; by contrast, others (especially George Herbert Mead) claimed that human beings have significant ability to be creative. What is your personal statement about the extent of human freedom?
3. Looking at adolescents in your society, do you note any contradictions in the ways friends, family, educational institutions, and the government view you and your peers? Does social background influence this stage in any way? If yes, discuss how.
4. Go to www.sociologyinfocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 5 Socialization

Social Experience: The Key to Our Humanity

5.1 Describe how social interaction is the foundation of personality. (pages 141–43)

Socialization is a **lifelong process**.

- Socialization develops our humanity as well as our particular personalities.
- The importance of socialization is seen in the fact that extended periods of social isolation result in permanent damage (cases of Anna, Isabelle, and Genie).

Socialization is a matter of **nurture** rather than **nature**.

- A century ago, most people thought human behavior resulted from biological instinct.
- For us as human beings, it is our nature to nurture.

socialization the lifelong social experience by which people develop their human potential and learn culture

personality a person's fairly consistent patterns of acting, thinking, and feeling

Understanding Socialization

5.2 Explain six major theories of socialization. (pages 143–48)

Sigmund Freud's model of the human personality has three parts:

- **id**: innate, pleasure-seeking human drives
- **superego**: the demands of society in the form of internalized values and norms
- **ego**: our efforts to balance innate, pleasure-seeking drives and the demands of society

Jean Piaget believed that human development involves both biological maturation and gaining social experience. He identified four stages of cognitive development:

- The **sensorimotor stage** involves knowing the world only through the senses.
- The **preoperational stage** involves starting to use language and other symbols.
- The **concrete operational stage** allows individuals to understand causal connections.
- The **formal operational stage** involves abstract and critical thought.

Lawrence Kohlberg applied Piaget's approach to stages of moral development:

- We first judge rightness in **preconventional** terms, according to our individual needs.

- Next, **conventional** moral reasoning takes account of parental attitudes and cultural norms.
- Finally, **postconventional** reasoning allows us to criticize society itself.

Carol Gilligan found that gender plays an important part in moral development, with males relying more on abstract standards of rightness and females relying more on the effects of actions on relationships.

To **George Herbert Mead**:

- The **self** is part of our personality and includes self-awareness and self-image.
- The self develops only as a result of social experience.
- Social experience involves the exchange of symbols.
- Social interaction depends on understanding the intention of another, which requires taking the role of the other.
- Human action is partly spontaneous (the I) and partly in response to others (the me).
- We gain social experience through imitation, play, games, and understanding the **generalized other**.

Charles Horton Cooley used the term **looking-glass self** to explain that we see ourselves as we imagine others see us.

Erik H. Erikson identified challenges that individuals face at each stage of life from infancy to old age.

id Freud's term for the human being's basic drives

ego Freud's term for a person's conscious efforts to balance innate pleasure-seeking drives with the demands of society

superego Freud's term for the cultural values and norms internalized by an individual

sensorimotor stage Piaget's term for the level of human development at which individuals experience the world only through their senses

preoperational stage Piaget's term for the level of human development at which individuals first use language and other symbols

concrete operational stage Piaget's term for the level of human development at which individuals first see causal connections in their surroundings

formal operational stage Piaget's term for the level of human development at which individuals think abstractly and critically

self George Herbert Mead's term for the part of an individual's personality composed of self-awareness and self-image

looking-glass self Cooley's term for a self-image based on how we think others see us

significant others people, such as parents, who have special importance for socialization

generalized other George Herbert Mead's term for widespread cultural norms and values we use as references in evaluating ourselves

Agents of Socialization

5.3 Analyze how the family, school, peer groups, and the mass media guide the socialization process. (pages 148–53)

The **family** is usually the first setting of socialization.

- Family has the greatest impact on attitudes and behavior.
- A family's social position, including race and social class, shapes a child's personality.
- Ideas about gender are learned first in the family.

Schools give most children their first experience with bureaucracy and impersonal evaluation.

- Schools teach knowledge and skills needed for later life.
- Schools expose children to greater social diversity.
- Schools reinforce ideas about gender.

The **peer group** helps shape attitudes and behavior.

- The peer group takes on great importance during adolescence.
- The peer group frees young people from adult supervision.

The **mass media** have a huge impact on socialization in modern, high-income societies.

- The average U.S. child spends as much time watching television and videos as attending school and interacting with parents.
- The mass media often reinforce stereotypes about gender and race.
- The mass media expose people to a great deal of violence.

peer group a social group whose members have interests, social position, and age in common

anticipatory socialization learning that helps a person achieve a desired position

mass media the means for delivering impersonal communications to a vast audience

The emotional and social turmoil of **adolescence** results from cultural inconsistency in defining people who are not children but not yet adults. Adolescence varies by social class.

Adulthood is the stage of life when most accomplishments take place. Although personality is now formed, it continues to change with new life experiences.

Old age is defined as much by culture as biology.

- Traditional societies give power and respect to elders.
- Industrial societies define elders as unimportant and out of touch.

Acceptance of **death and dying** is part of socialization for the elderly. This process typically involves five stages: denial, anger, negotiation, resignation, and acceptance.

cohort a category of people with something in common, usually their age

Resocialization: Total Institutions

5.5 Characterize the operation of total institutions. (pages 157–58)

Total institutions include prisons, mental hospitals, and monasteries.

- Staff members supervise all aspects of life.
- Life is standardized, with all inmates following set rules and routines.

Resocialization is a two-part process:

- breaking down inmates' existing identity
- building a new self through a system of rewards and punishments

total institution a setting in which people are isolated from the rest of society and manipulated by an administrative staff

resocialization radically changing an inmate's personality by carefully controlling the environment

Socialization and the Life Course

5.4 Discuss how our society organizes human experience into distinctive stages of life. (pages 153–57)

The concept of **childhood** is grounded not in biology but in culture. In high-income countries, childhood is extended.

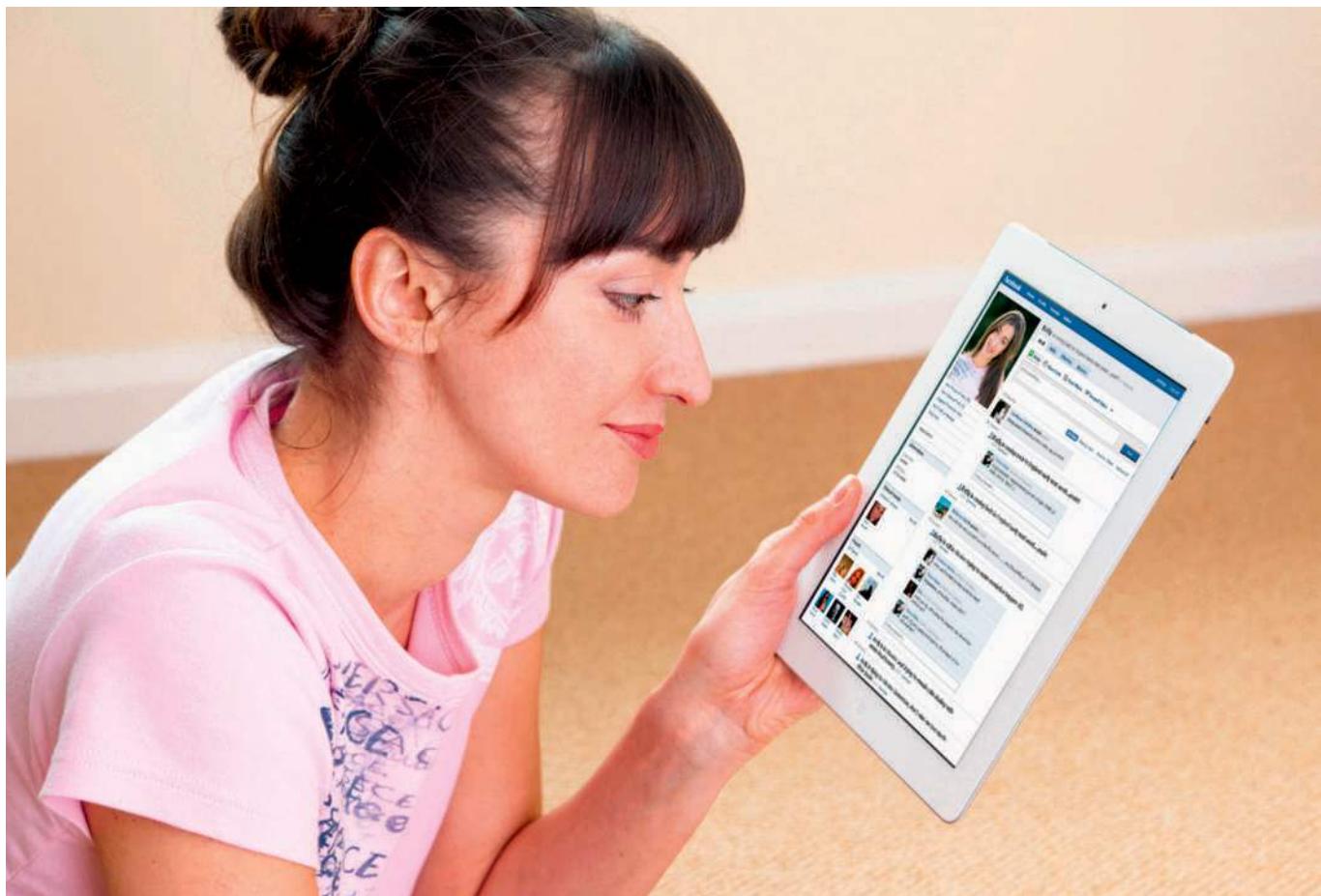
Chapter 6

Social Interaction in Everyday Life



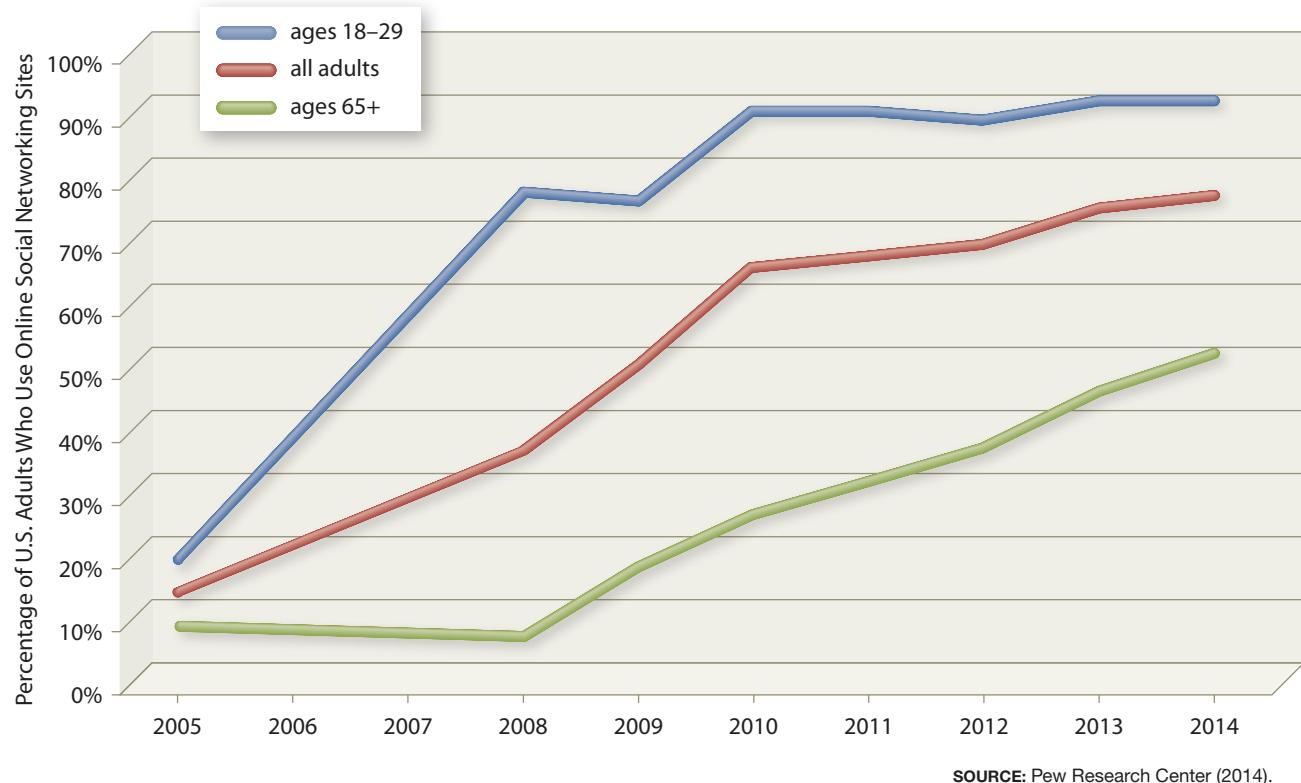
Learning Objectives

- 6.1** Explain how social structure helps us to make sense of everyday situations.
- 6.2** State the importance of status to social organization.
- 6.3** State the importance of role to social organization.
- 6.4** Describe how we socially construct reality.
- 6.5** Apply Goffman's analysis to several familiar situations.
- 6.6** Construct a sociological analysis of three aspects of everyday life: emotions, language, and humor.



The Power of Society

to guide the way we do social networking



SOURCE: Pew Research Center (2014).

Is our use of social networking sites as much of a personal choice as we may think? In 2005, just 10 percent of U.S. adults were making use of social networking sites such as Facebook; by 2014, almost three out of four adults were. But age is a powerful predictor of who uses social media: While less than half of people age sixty-five or older were using social networking sites, 89 percent of people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine were doing so.

Chapter Overview

This chapter takes a “micro-level” look at society, examining patterns of everyday social interaction. First, the chapter identifies important social structures, including status and role, which guide our behavior and link us to others. Then it explains how we construct reality in social interaction. Finally, the chapter applies the lessons learned to three elements of everyday life: emotions, language, and humor.

Harold and Sybil are on their way to another couple’s home in an unfamiliar area near Fort Lauderdale, Florida. For the last twenty minutes, as Sybil sees it, they have been driving in circles, searching in vain for Coconut Palm Road.

“Look, Harold,” says Sybil. “There are some people up ahead. Let’s ask for directions.” Harold, gripping the wheel ever more tightly, begins muttering under his breath. “I know where I am. I don’t want to waste time talking to strangers. Just let me get us there.”

“I’m sure you know where you are, Harold,” Sybil responds, looking straight ahead. “But I don’t think you know where you’re going. Why have you never bought a GPS?”

Harold and Sybil are lost in more ways than one: Not only can’t they find where their friends live, but they also cannot understand why they are growing angrier with each passing minute.

What’s going on? Like most men, Harold cannot stand getting lost. The longer he drives around, the more incompetent he feels. Sybil can’t understand why Harold doesn’t pull over to ask someone the way to Coconut Palm Road. If she were driving, she thinks to herself, they would already be comfortably settled in with their friends.

Why don’t men like to ask other people for directions? Because men are so eager to claim competence and independence, they are uncomfortable asking for any type of help and are reluctant to accept it. In addition, to ask another person for assistance is the same as saying, “You know something I don’t know.” If it takes Harold a few more minutes to find Coconut Palm Road on his own—and to keep his sense of being in control—he thinks that’s the way to go.

Women are more in tune with others and strive for connectedness. From Sybil’s point of view, asking for help is right because sharing information builds social bonds and at the same time gets the job done. Asking for directions seems as natural to Sybil as searching on his own is to Harold. Obviously, getting lost is sure to create conflict for Harold and Sybil as long as neither one understands the other’s point of view.



Such everyday social patterns are the focus of this chapter. The central concept is **social interaction**, *the process by which people act and react in relation to others*. We begin by presenting the rules and building blocks of everyday experience and then explore the almost magical way in which face-to-face interaction creates the reality in which we live.

Social Structure: A Guide to Everyday Living

6.1 Explain how social structure helps us to make sense of everyday situations.

October 21, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. This morning we leave the ship and make our way along the docks toward

the center of Ho Chi Minh City, known to an earlier generation as Saigon. The government security officers wave us through the heavy metal gates. Pressed against the fence are dozens of men who operate cyclos (bicycles with small carriages attached to the front), the Vietnamese version of taxicabs. We wave them off and spend the next twenty minutes shaking our heads at several drivers who pedal alongside, pleading for our business. The pressure is uncomfortable. We decide to cross the street but realize suddenly that there are no stop signs or signal lights—and the street is an unbroken stream of bicycles, cyclos, motorbikes, and small trucks. The locals don’t bat an eye; they just walk at a steady pace across the street, parting waves of vehicles that immediately close in again behind them. Walk right into traffic? With our small children on our backs? Yup, we did it; that’s the way it works in Vietnam.

Members of every society rely on social structure to make sense of everyday situations. As our family's introduction to the busy streets of Vietnam suggests, the world can be confusing, even frightening, when society's rules are unclear. Let's take a closer look at the ways in which societies organize everyday life.

Status

6.2 State the importance of status to social organization.

In every society, people build their everyday lives using the idea of **status**, *a social position that a person holds*. In everyday use, the word *status* generally means "prestige," as when we say that a college president has more "status" than a newly hired assistant professor. But sociologically speaking, both "president" and "professor" are statuses, or positions, within the collegiate organization.

Status is part of our social identity and helps define our relationship to others. As Georg Simmel (1950:307, orig. 1902), one of the founders of sociology, once pointed out, before we can deal with anyone, we need to know who the person is.

Status Set

Each of us holds many statuses at once. The term **status set** refers to *all the statuses a person holds at a given time*. A teenage girl may be a daughter to her parents, a sister to her brother, a student at her school, and a goalie on her soccer team.

Status sets change over the life course. A child grows up to become a parent, a student graduates to become a lawyer, and a single person marries to become a husband or wife, sometimes becoming single again as a result of death or divorce. Joining an organization or finding a job enlarges our status set; withdrawing from activities makes it smaller. Over a lifetime, people gain and lose dozens of statuses.

Ascribed and Achieved Status

Sociologists classify statuses in terms of how people attain them. An **ascribed status** is *a social position a person receives at birth or takes on involuntarily later in life*. Examples

status set all the statuses a person holds at a given time

master status a status that has special importance for social identity, often shaping a person's entire life

of ascribed statuses include being a daughter, a Cuban, a teenager, or a widower. Ascribed statuses are matters about which we have little or no choice.

By contrast, an **achieved status** refers to *a social position a person takes on voluntarily that reflects personal ability and effort*. Achieved statuses in the United States include college student, Olympic athlete, nurse, software writer, police officer, and thief.

In the real world, of course, most statuses involve a combination of ascription and achievement. That is, people's ascribed statuses influence the statuses they achieve. People who achieve the status of lawyer, for example, are likely to share the ascribed benefit of being born into relatively well-off families. By the same token, many less desirable statuses, such as criminal, drug addict, or unemployed worker, are more easily achieved by people born into poverty.

Master Status

Some statuses matter more than others. A **master status** is *a status that has special importance for social identity, often shaping a person's entire life*. For most people, a job is a master status because it reveals a great deal about a person's social background, education, and income. In a few cases, name is a master status; being in the Bush or Kennedy family attracts attention and creates opportunities.

A master status can be negative as well as positive. Take, for example, serious illness. Sometimes people, even longtime friends, avoid cancer patients or people with AIDS because of their illnesses. As another example, the fact that all societies limit the opportunities of women makes gender a master status.

Sometimes a physical disability serves as a master status to the point where we dehumanize people by seeing them only in terms of their disability. The Thinking About Diversity box shows how.

Role

6.3 State the importance of role to social organization.

A second important social structure is **role**, *behavior expected of someone who holds a particular status*. A person *holds* a status and *performs* a role (Linton, 1937). For example, holding the status of student leads you to perform the role of attending classes and completing assignments.

Both statuses and roles vary by culture. In the United States, the status of "uncle" refers to the brother of a

status a social position that a person holds

ascribed status a social position a person receives at birth or takes on involuntarily later in life

achieved status a social position a person takes on voluntarily that reflects personal ability and effort

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

Physical Disability as a Master Status

Physical disability works in much the same ways as class, gender, or race in defining people in the eyes of others. In the following interviews, two women explain how a physical disability can become a master status—a trait that overshadows everything else about them. The first voice is that of twenty-nine-year-old Donna Finch, who lives with her husband and son in Muskogee, Oklahoma, and holds a master's degree in social work. She is also blind.

Most people don't expect handicapped people to grow up; they are always supposed to be children.... . You



Modern technology means that most soldiers who lose limbs in war now survive and return to civilian life. How do you think the loss of an arm or a leg affects a person's social identity and sense of self?

aren't supposed to date, you aren't supposed to have a job, somehow you're just supposed to disappear. I'm not saying this is true of anyone else, but in my own case I think I was more intellectually mature than most children, and more emotionally immature. I'd say that not until the last four or five years have I felt really whole.

Rose Helman is an elderly woman who has retired from her job and lives near New York City. She suffers from spinal meningitis and is also blind.

You ask me if people are really different today than in the '20s and '30s. Not too much. They are still fearful of the handicapped. I don't know if *fearful* is the right word, but uncomfortable at least. But I can understand it somewhat; it happened to me. I once asked a man to tell me which staircase to use to get from the subway out to the street. He started giving me directions that were confusing, and I said, "Do you mind taking me?" He said, "Not at all." He grabbed me on the side with my dog on it, so I asked him to take my other arm. And he said, "I'm sorry, I have no other arm." And I said, "That's all right, I'll hold onto the jacket." It felt funny hanging onto the sleeve without the arm in it.

What Do You Think?

1. Have you ever had a disease or disability that became a master status? If so, how did others react?
2. How might such a master status affect someone's personality?
3. Can being very fat or very thin serve as a master status? Why or why not?

SOURCE: Based on Orlansky and Heward (1981).

mother or a father. In Vietnam, the word for “uncle” is different on the mother’s and father’s sides of the family, and the two men have different responsibilities. In every society, actual role performance varies with an individual’s unique personality, and some societies permit more individual expression of a role than others.

Role Set

Because we hold many statuses at once—a status set—everyday life is a mix of many roles. Robert Merton (1968)

role behavior expected of someone who holds a particular status

role set a number of roles attached to a single status

introduced the term **role set** to identify *a number of roles attached to a single status*.

Figure 6–1 on page 168 shows four statuses of one person, each status linked to a different role set. First, as a professor, this woman interacts with students (the teacher role) and with other academics (the colleague role). Second, in her work as a researcher, she gathers and analyzes data (the fieldwork role) that she uses in her publications (the author role). Third, the woman occupies the status of “wife,” with a marital role (such as confidante and sexual partner) toward her husband, with whom she shares household duties (domestic role). Fourth, she holds the status of “mother,” with routine responsibilities for her children (the maternal role), as well as toward their school and other organizations in her community (the civic role).

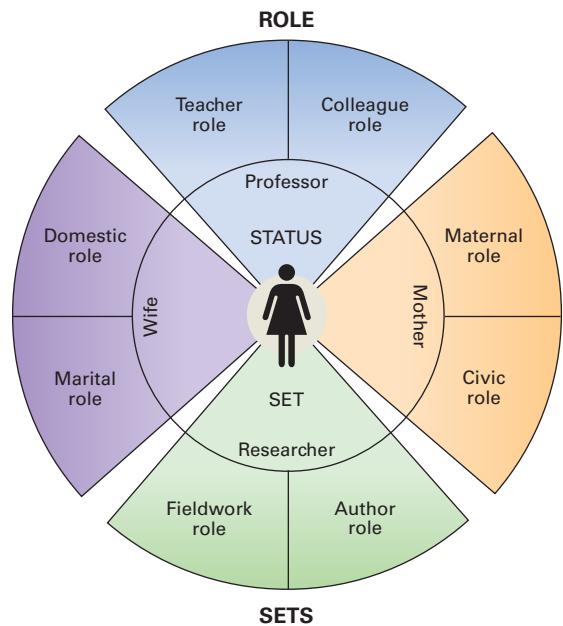


Figure 6-1 Status Set and Role Sets

A status set includes all the statuses a person holds at a given time. The status set defines *who we are* in society. The many roles linked to each status define *what we do*.

A global perspective shows that the roles people use to define their lives differ from society to society. In low-income countries, people spend fewer years as students, and family roles are often very important to social identity. In high-income nations, people spend more years as students, and family roles are typically less important to social identity. Another dimension of difference involves housework. As Global Map 6-1 on the next page shows, especially in poor countries, housework falls heavily on women.

Role Conflict and Role Strain

People in modern, high-income nations juggle many responsibilities demanded by their various statuses and roles. As most mothers (and more and more fathers) can testify, the combination of parenting and working outside the home is physically and emotionally draining. Sociologists thus recognize **role conflict** as *conflict among the roles connected to two or more statuses*.

We experience role conflict when we find ourselves pulled in various directions as we try to respond to the many statuses we hold. One response to role conflict is deciding that "something has to go." More than one politician, for example, has decided not to run for office because of the conflicting demands of a hectic campaign schedule and family life. In other cases, people put off having children in order to stay on the "fast track" for career success.

Even roles linked to a single status may make competing demands on us. **Role strain** refers to *tension among the roles connected to a single status*. A college professor may

role conflict conflict among the roles connected to two or more statuses
role strain tension among the roles connected to a single status

enjoy being friendly with students. At the same time, however, the professor must maintain the personal distance needed to evaluate students fairly. In short, performing the various roles attached to even one status can be something of a balancing act.

One strategy for minimizing role conflict is separating parts of our lives so that we perform roles for one status at one time and place and carry out roles connected to another status in a completely different setting. A familiar example of this idea is deciding to "leave the job at work" before heading home to the family.

Role Exit

After she left the life of a Catholic nun to become a university sociologist, Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh began to study her own experience of *role exit*, the process by which people disengage from important social roles. Studying a range of "exes," including ex-nuns, ex-doctors, ex-husbands, and ex-alcoholics, Ebaugh identified elements common to the process of becoming an "ex."

According to Ebaugh (1988), the process begins as people come to doubt their ability to continue in a certain role. As they imagine alternative roles, they ultimately reach a tipping point when they decide to pursue a new life. Even as they are moving on, however, a past role can continue to influence their lives. Exes carry with them a self-image shaped by an earlier role, which can interfere with building a new sense of self. For example, an ex-nun may hesitate to wear stylish clothing and makeup.

Exes must also rebuild relationships with people who knew them in their earlier life. Learning new social skills is another challenge. For example, Ebaugh reports, ex-nuns who enter the dating scene after decades in the church are often surprised to learn that sexual norms are very different from those they knew when they were teenagers.

The Social Construction of Reality

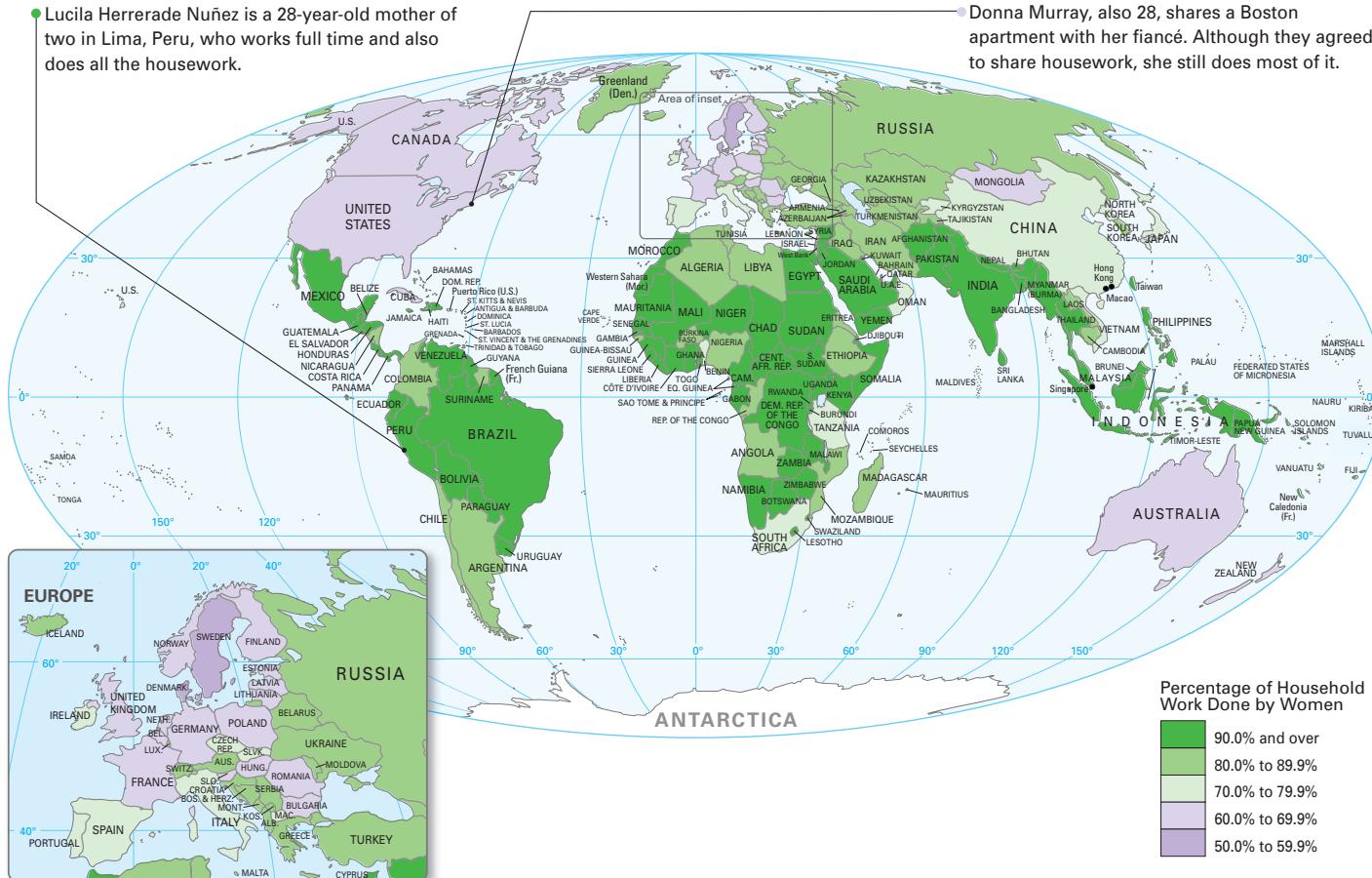
6.4 Describe how we socially construct reality.

In 1917, the Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello wrote a play called *The Pleasure of Honesty* about a character named Angelo Baldovino, a brilliant man with a

Window on the World

- Lucila Herrera de Nuñez is a 28-year-old mother of two in Lima, Peru, who works full time and also does all the housework.

- Donna Murray, also 28, shares a Boston apartment with her fiancé. Although they agreed to share housework, she still does most of it.



Global Map 6–1 Housework in Global Perspective

Throughout the world, housework is a major part of women's routines and identities. This is especially true in poor nations of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, where the social position of women is far below that of men. But our society also defines housework and child care as "feminine" activities, even though women and men have the same legal rights and most women work outside the home.

SOURCE: United Nations (2010).

checkered past. Baldovino enters the fashionable home of the Renni family and introduces himself in a peculiar way:

Inevitably we construct ourselves. Let me explain. I enter this house and immediately I become what I have to become, what I can become: I construct myself. That is, I present myself to you in a form suitable to the relationship I wish to achieve with you. And, of course, you do the same with me. (1962:157-58)

Baldovino suggests that although behavior is guided by status and role, we have the ability to shape who we are and to guide what happens from moment to moment. In other words, “reality” is not as fixed as we may think.

The **social construction of reality** is *the process by which people creatively shape reality through social interaction.*

This idea is the foundation of the symbolic-interaction approach, described in Chapter 1 (“The Sociological Perspective”). As Baldovino’s remark suggests, quite a bit of “reality” remains unclear in everyone’s mind, especially in unfamiliar situations. So we present ourselves in terms that suit the setting and our purposes, we try to guide what happens next, and as others do the same, reality takes shape. Social interaction, then, is a complex negotiation that builds reality. Most everyday situations involve at least some agreement about what’s going on. But how people see events depends on their different backgrounds, interests, and intentions.

“STREET SMARTS” What people commonly call “street smarts” is actually a form of constructing reality. In his autobiography *Down These Mean Streets*, Piri Thomas recalls moving to an apartment in Spanish Harlem. Returning



Flirting is an everyday experience in reality construction. Each person offers information to the other and hints at romantic interest. Yet the interaction proceeds with a tentative and often humorous air so that either individual can withdraw at any time without further obligation.

home one evening, young Piri found himself cut off by Waneko, the leader of the local street gang, who was flanked by a dozen others.

"Whatta ya say, Mr. Johnny Gringo," drawled Waneko. *Think man, I told myself, think your way out of a stomping. Make it good.* "I hear you 104th Street coolies are supposed to have heart," I said. "I don't know this for sure. You know there's a lot of streets where a whole 'click' is made out of punks who can't fight one guy unless they all jump him for the stomp." I hoped this would push Waneko into giving me a fair one. His expression didn't change.

"Maybe we don't look at it that way."

Crazy, man, I cheer inwardly, the cabron is falling into my setup.... "I wasn't talking to you," I said. "Where I come from, the pres is president 'cause he got heart when it comes to dealing."

Waneko was starting to look uneasy. He had bit on my worm and felt like a sucker fish. His boys were now light on me. They were no longer so much interested in stomping me as seeing the outcome between Waneko and me. "Yeah," was his reply....

I knew I'd won. Sure, I'd have to fight; but one guy, not ten or fifteen. If I lost, I might still get stomped, and if I won I might get stomped. I took care of this with my next sentence. "I don't know you or your boys," I said, "but they look cool to me. They don't feature as punks." I had left him out purposely when I said "they." Now

his boys were in a separate class. I had cut him off. He would have to fight me on his own, to prove his heart to himself, to his boys, and most important, to his turf. He got away from the stoop and asked, "Fair one, Gringo?" (1967:56–57)

This situation reveals the drama—sometimes subtle, sometimes savage—by which human beings creatively build reality. But, of course, not everyone enters a situation with equal standing. If a police officer had happened to drive by when Piri and Waneko were fighting, both young men might have ended up in jail.

The Thomas Theorem

By displaying his wits and fighting with Waneko until they both tired, Piri Thomas won acceptance by the gang. What took place that evening in Spanish Harlem is an example of the **Thomas theorem**, named after W. I. Thomas and Dorothy Thomas (1928): *Situations that are defined as real are real in their consequences.*

Applied to social interaction, the Thomas theorem means that although reality is initially "soft" as it is being shaped, it can become "hard" in its effects. In the case just described, local gang members saw Piri Thomas act in a worthy way, so in their eyes, he *became* worthy.

Ethnomethodology

Most of the time, we take social reality for granted. To become more aware of the world we help create, Harold Garfinkel (1967) devised **ethnomethodology**, *the study of the way people make sense of their everyday surroundings.* This approach begins by pointing out that everyday behavior rests on a number of assumptions. When you ask someone the simple question "How are you?" you usually want to know how the person is doing in general, but you might really be wondering how the person is dealing with a specific physical, mental, spiritual, or financial challenge. However, the person being asked probably assumes that you are not really interested in details about any of these things, that you are just "being polite."

One good way to try to uncover the assumptions we make about reality is to break the rules. For example, the next time someone greets you by saying, "How are you?" offer details from your last physical examination or explain all the good and bad things that have happened since you woke up that morning and see how the person reacts.

The results are predictable, because we all have some idea of the "rules" of everyday interaction. The person will most likely become confused or irritated by your unexpected behavior—a reaction that helps us see not only what the rules are but also how important they are to everyday reality.

Reality Building: Class and Culture

People do not build everyday experience out of thin air. In part, how we act or what we see in our surroundings depends on our interests. Gazing at the sky on a starry night, for example, lovers discover romance, and scientists see hydrogen atoms fusing into helium. Social background also affects what we see, which is why residents of Spanish Harlem experience a different world than people living on Manhattan's pricey Upper East Side.

In global perspective, reality construction varies even more. Consider these everyday situations: People waiting for their luggage in a Swedish airport stand behind a yellow line about ten feet from the conveyor belt that carries the bags and then step forward only when they see their bags passing by; in the United States, people in the luggage claim area of an airport typically push right up to the conveyor system and lean forward looking for their own bags to appear. In Saudi Arabia, the law forbids women to drive cars, a ban unthinkable in the United States. In this country, people assume that "a short walk" means a few blocks or a few minutes; in the Andes Mountains of Peru, this same phrase means traveling a few miles.

The point is that people build reality from the surrounding culture. Chapter 3 ("Culture") explains how people the world over find different meanings in specific gestures, so inexperienced travelers can find themselves building an unexpected and unwelcome reality. Similarly, in a study of popular culture, JoEllen Shively (1992) screened western films to men of European descent and to Native American men. The men in both categories claimed to enjoy the films, but for very different reasons. White men interpreted the films as praising rugged people striking out for the West and conquering the forces of nature. Native American men saw in the same films a celebration of land and nature. Given their different cultures, it is as if people in the two categories saw two different films.

Films also have an effect on the reality we all experience. In 2012, the New York Disabilities Film Festival screened films dealing with autism, blindness, cerebral palsy, and mental illness. These films, which were also screened in ten other urban areas, raised awareness of the lives of people and their families as they cope with these serious personal challenges.

The Increasing Importance of Social Media

The social construction of reality has always involved face-to-face social interaction. In recent years, however, this process has also been aided by computer technology. The concept of **social media** refers to *technology that links people in*



People build reality from their surrounding culture. Yet because cultural systems are marked by diversity and even outright conflict, reality construction always involves tensions and choices. Turkey is a nation with a mostly Muslim population, but it has also embraced Western culture. Here women confront starkly different definitions of what is "feminine."

social activity. Although newspapers and other print media are older examples of social media, more recent computer technology is much more powerful because it connects a far larger number of people. In addition, computer-based technology is interactive, allowing individuals not only to receive messages but also to send information to others.

In the past, when people came together to form communities based on a common interest, they gathered in a single location. Even a generation ago, few people imagined the dramatic changes that computer technology would bring to the landscape of social interaction. Today, of course, most people in the United States and nations around the world participate in various online communities with countless others who share some interest. Participants may be anywhere in physical space, and they are people whom we may or may not ever meet in person.

The expansion of social media can be seen in the explosive increase in the public's use of social networking sites. Facebook, which began formal operation in 2004, now has some 1.4 billion members worldwide. Similarly, Twitter was launched in 2006 as a social networking and micro-blogging system that allows users to send and receive short text messages called "tweets." It now boasts about 288 million registered users.

Some sociologists have argued that the rise of social media has connected people in new ways but weakened social ties among people who share physical space. Take the case of two college roommates, each of whom might be interacting with thousands of other people while sitting just a few feet apart in the same dorm room, barely paying attention to



In 2012, the Chinese government decided to require all students to take “patriotism” classes supporting the Chinese Communist Party. In an age of social media, the reaction was immediate as millions of students, linked by smartphone technology, mobilized against a plan they denounced as “brainwashing.” Have you ever used social networking sites to engage in political action?

each other. Among U.S. adults, 90 percent say that they feel ignored by household members who are using electronic devices (USC Annenberg School Center for the Digital Future, 2014). Much the same argument was made about the spread of telephone technology more than a century ago.

Like every major change in society, the rise of social media will spark controversy and debate. But there is little doubt that this trend is reshaping all aspects of everyday life from the way people engage in social movements to the way they look for romance (Farrell, 2011; Turkle, 2012).

Dramaturgical Analysis: The “Presentation of Self”

6.5 Apply Goffman’s analysis to several familiar situations.

Erving Goffman (1922–1982) was another sociologist who analyzed social interaction, explaining that people live their lives much like actors performing on a stage. If we imagine ourselves as directors observing what goes on in the theater of everyday life, we are doing what Goffman called **dramaturgical analysis**, *the study of social interaction in terms of theatrical performance*.

Dramaturgical analysis offers a fresh look at the concepts of status and role. A status is like a part in a play, and a role serves as a script, supplying dialogue and action for the characters. Goffman described each individual’s “performance” as the **presentation of self**, *a person’s efforts to create specific impressions in the minds of others*. This process,

sometimes called *impression management*, begins with the idea of personal performance (Goffman, 1959, 1967).

Performances

As we present ourselves in everyday situations, we reveal information to others both consciously and unconsciously. Our performance includes how we dress (in theatrical terms, our costume), the objects we carry (props), and our tone of voice and gestures (our demeanor). In addition, we vary our performance according to where we are (the set). We may joke loudly in a restaurant, for example, but lower our voice when entering a church, temple, or mosque. People design settings, such as homes or offices, to bring about desired reactions in others.

AN APPLICATION: THE DOCTOR’S OFFICE

Consider how physicians set up their offices to convey particular information to an audience of patients. The fact that medical doctors enjoy high prestige and power in the United States is clear upon entering a doctor’s office. First, the doctor is nowhere to be seen. Instead, in what Goffman describes as the “front region” of the setting, the patient encounters a receptionist, or gatekeeper, who decides whether and when the patient can meet the doctor. A simple glance around the doctor’s waiting room, with patients (often impatiently) waiting to be invited into the inner sanctum, leaves little doubt that the doctor and the staff are in charge.

The “back region” is composed of the examination room plus the doctor’s private office. Once inside the office, the patient can see a wide range of props, such as medical books and framed degrees, that give the impression that the doctor has the specialized knowledge necessary to call the shots. The doctor is usually seated behind a desk—the larger the desk, the greater the statement of power—and the patient is given only a chair.

The doctor’s appearance and manner offer still more information. The white lab coat (costume) may have the practical function of keeping clothes from becoming dirty, but its social function is to let others know at a glance the physician’s status. A stethoscope around the neck and a medical chart in hand (more props) have the same purpose. A doctor uses highly technical language that is often mystifying to the patient, again emphasizing that the doctor is in charge. Finally, patients use the title “doctor,” but they, in turn, are often addressed by their first names, which further shows the doctor’s dominant position. The overall message of a doctor’s performance is clear: “I will help you, but you must allow me to take charge.”

Nonverbal Communication

The novelist William Sansom describes a fictional Mr. Preedy, an English vacationer on a beach in Spain:

He took care to avoid catching anyone's eye. First, he had to make it clear to those potential companions of his holiday that they were of no concern to him whatsoever. He stared through them, round them, over them—eyes lost in space. The beach might have been empty. If by chance a ball was thrown his way, he looked surprised; then let a smile of amusement light his face (Kindly Preedy), looked around dazed to see that there were people on the beach, tossed it back with a smile to himself and not a smile *at* the people....

[He] then gathered together his beach-wrap and bag into a neat sand-resistant pile (Methodical and Sensible Preedy), rose slowly to stretch his huge frame (Big-Cat Preedy), and tossed aside his sandals (Carefree Preedy, after all). (1956:230–31)

Without saying a single word, Mr. Preedy offers a great deal of information about himself to anyone watching him. This is the process of **nonverbal communication**, *communication using body movements, gestures, and facial expressions rather than speech*.

People use many parts of the body to convey information through *body language*. Facial expressions are the most important type of body language. Smiling, for instance, shows pleasure, although we distinguish among the deliberate smile of Kindly Preedy on the beach, a spontaneous smile of joy at seeing a friend, a pained smile of embarrassment after spilling a cup of coffee, and the full, unrestrained smile of self-satisfaction that we often associate with winning some important contest.

Eye contact is another key element of nonverbal communication. Generally, we use eye contact to invite social interaction. Someone across the room "catches our eye," sparking a conversation. Avoiding another's eyes, by contrast, discourages communication. Hands, too, speak for us. Common hand gestures in our society convey, among other things, an insult, a request for a ride, an invitation for someone to join us, or a demand that others stop in their tracks. Gestures also supplement spoken words. For example, pointing at someone in a threatening way gives greater emphasis to a word of warning, just as shrugging the shoulders adds an air of indifference to the phrase "I don't know" and rapidly waving the arms adds urgency to the single word "Hurry!"

In everyday interaction, body language is an important way in which we transmit information to an audience as well as "read" information in the behavior of others. To people who have limited skills in the spoken language



Source: © 2002 David Sipress from cartoonbank.com. All rights reserved.

used by those around them, body language takes on special importance. Similarly, to people who have a physical impairment—perhaps older people who have lost some of their ability to hear—"reading" body language can enhance understanding (Stepanikova et al., 2011).

BODY LANGUAGE AND DECEPTION As any actor knows, it is very difficult to pull off a perfect performance in front of others. In everyday interaction, unintended body language can contradict our planned meaning: A teenage boy offers an explanation for getting home late, for example, but his mother begins to doubt his words because he avoids looking her in the eye. The teenage celebrity on a television talk show claims that her recent musical flop is "no big deal," but the nervous swing of her leg suggests otherwise. Because nonverbal communication is hard to control, it offers clues to deception in much the same way that changes in breathing, pulse rate, perspiration, and blood pressure recorded on a lie detector indicate that a person is lying.

Detecting dishonest performances is difficult because no single bodily gesture tells us for sure that someone is lying. But nervous movement of the hands or feet can be a sign of deception. Similarly, moving the head back or stepping away from someone—ways of adding to the distance between people—may be signs of deception. More generally, because any performance involves so much body language, few people can engage in deception (especially when they feel a strong emotion) without some slip-up or "leaking" information that raises the suspicions of a careful observer. The key to detecting lies is to view the whole performance with an eye for inconsistencies.

Gender and Performances

Because women are socialized to respond to others, they tend to be more sensitive than men to nonverbal communication. Research suggests that women “read” men better than men “read” women (Farris et al., 2008). Gender is also one of the key elements in the presentation of self, as the following sections explain.

Demeanor *Demeanor*—the way we act and carry ourselves—is a clue to social power. Simply put, powerful people enjoy more freedom in how they act. At the office, off-color remarks, swearing, or putting your feet on the desk may be acceptable for the boss but rarely, if ever, for employees. Similarly, powerful people can interrupt others; less powerful people are expected to show respect through silence (Smith-Lovin & Brody, 1989; Henley, Hamilton, & Thorne, 1992; Johnson, 1994).

Because women generally occupy positions of lesser power, demeanor is a gender issue as well. As Chapter 13



In social settings, men typically take up more physical space than women. This pattern reflects men’s relatively greater social power. Recently, the New York City subway system launched a campaign to discourage the practice of “manspreading,” by which men take up more than one seat on a crowded train.

(“Gender Stratification”) explains, 38 percent of all working women in the United States hold clerical or service jobs under the control of supervisors, typically men (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). Women, then, learn to craft their personal performances more carefully than men and to defer to men more often in everyday interaction.

USE OF SPACE How much space does a personal performance require? Power plays a key role here; the more power you have, the more space you use. Men typically command more space than women, whether pacing back and forth before an audience or casually sitting on a bench. Why? Our culture has traditionally measured femininity by how *little* space women occupy—the standard of “daintiness”—and masculinity by how *much* territory a man controls—the standard of “turf” (Henley, Hamilton, & Thorne, 1992). In 2014, New York City subway officials launched a campaign to discourage “manspreading,” the male practice of spreading the knees to take up more than one seat on the train (Fitzsimmons, 2014).

For both sexes, the concept of **personal space** refers to *the surrounding area over which a person makes some claim to privacy*. In the United States, people typically position themselves several feet apart when speaking; throughout the Middle East, by contrast, people stand much closer. Just about everywhere, men (with their greater social power) often intrude into women’s personal space. If a woman moves into a man’s personal space, however, he is likely to take it as a sign of sexual interest.

STARING, SMILING, AND TOUCHING Eye contact encourages interaction. In conversations, women hold eye contact more than men. But men have their own brand of eye contact: staring. When men stare at women, they are claiming social dominance and defining women as sexual objects.

Although it often shows pleasure, smiling can also be a sign of trying to please someone or submission. In a male-dominated world, it is not surprising that women smile more than men (Henley, Hamilton, & Thorne, 1992).

Finally, mutual touching suggests intimacy and caring. Apart from close relationships, touching is generally something men do to women (but less often, in our culture, to other men). A male physician touches the shoulder of his female nurse as they examine a report, a young man touches the back of his woman friend as he guides her across the street, or a male tennis instructor touches young women as he teaches them to hit a serve. In such examples, the intent of touching may be harmless and may bring little response, but it amounts to a subtle ritual by which men claim dominance over women.

Idealization

People behave the way they do for many, often complex reasons. Even so, Goffman suggests, we construct performances to *idealize* our intentions. That is, we try to convince



Hand gestures vary widely from one culture to another. Yet people everywhere chuckle, grin, or smirk to indicate that they don't take another person's performance seriously. Therefore, the world over, people who cannot restrain their mirth tactfully cover their faces.

others (and perhaps ourselves) that what we do reflects ideal cultural standards rather than selfish motives.

Idealization is easily illustrated by returning to the world of doctors and patients. In a hospital, doctors engage in a performance commonly described as "making rounds." Entering the room of a patient, the doctor often stops at the foot of the bed and silently reads the patient's chart. Afterward, doctor and patient talk briefly. In ideal terms, this routine involves a doctor making a personal visit to check on a patient's condition.

In reality, the picture is not so perfect. A doctor may see several dozen patients a day and remember little about many of them. Reading the chart is a chance to recall the patient's name and medical problems, but revealing the impersonality of medical care would undermine the cultural ideal of the doctor as deeply concerned about the welfare of others.

We recognize that most people do their jobs in order to make money. Doctors, college professors, and other professionals, however, speak of their work as "careers" and typically idealize the motives for entering a chosen field. They describe their work as "making a contribution to science," "helping others," "serving the community," and even "answering a calling from God." Rarely do they admit the more common, less honorable, motives: the income, power, prestige, and leisure time that these occupations provide.

We all use idealization to some degree. When was the last time you smiled and spoke politely to someone you do not like? Have you acted interested in a class that was really boring? Such little lies in our performances help us get through everyday life. Even when we suspect that others are putting on an act, we are unlikely to challenge their performances for reasons that we shall examine next.

Embarrassment and Tact

The famous speaker giving a campus lecture keeps mispronouncing the college's name; the head coach rises to speak at the team's end-of-season banquet unaware of the napkin

still tucked in her dress; the student enters the lecture hall late and soaking wet, attracting the gaze of hundreds of classmates. As carefully as individuals may try to craft their performances, slip-ups of all kinds occur. The result is *embarrassment*, discomfort following a spoiled performance. Goffman describes embarrassment as "losing face."

Embarrassment is an ever-present danger because idealized performances usually contain some deception. In addition, most performances involve juggling so many elements that one thoughtless moment can shatter the intended impression.

A curious fact is that an audience often overlooks flaws in a performance, allowing the actor to avoid embarrassment. If we do point out a misstep ("Excuse me, but your fly is open"), we do it quietly and only to help someone avoid even greater loss of face. In Hans Christian Andersen's classic fable "The Emperor's New Clothes," the child who blurts out the truth, that the emperor is parading about naked, is scolded for being rude.

Often members of an audience actually help the performer recover from a flawed performance. *Tact* is helping someone "save face." After hearing a supposed expert make an embarrassingly inaccurate remark, for example, tactful people may ignore the comment, as if it had never been spoken, or react with mild laughter treating what was said as a joke. Or they may simply respond, "I'm sure you didn't mean that," an indication that someone heard the statement but will not allow it to destroy the actor's performance. With such efforts in mind, we can understand Abraham Lincoln's comment that "tact is the ability to describe others the way they see themselves."

Why is tact so common? Because embarrassment creates discomfort not just for the actor but for everyone else as well. Just as a theater audience feels uneasy when an actor forgets a line, people who observe awkward behavior are reminded of how fragile their own performances often are. Socially constructed reality thus functions like a dam holding back a sea of chaos. When one person's

performance springs a leak, others tactfully help make repairs. Everyone lends a hand in building reality, and no one wants it suddenly swept away.

In sum, Goffman's research shows that although behavior is spontaneous in some respects, it is more patterned than we like to think. Four centuries ago, William Shakespeare captured this idea in lines that still ring true:

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

Interaction in Everyday Life: Three Applications

6.6 Construct a sociological analysis of three aspects of everyday life: emotions, language, and humor.

The final sections of this chapter illustrate the major elements of social interaction by focusing on three dimensions of everyday life: emotions, language, and humor.

Emotions: The Social Construction of Feeling

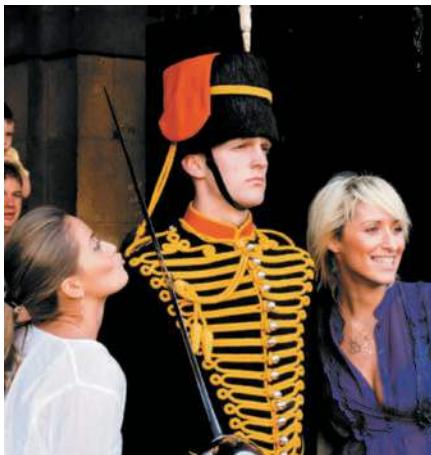
Emotions, more commonly called *feelings*, are an important element of human social life. In truth, what we *do* often matters less than how we *feel* about it. Emotions seem very personal because they are "inside." Even so, just as society guides our behavior, it guides our emotional life.

THE BIOLOGICAL SIDE OF EMOTIONS Studying people all over the world, Paul Ekman (1980a, 1980b, 1998, 2003) reports that people everywhere express six basic emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, and surprise. In addition, Ekman found that people in every society use much the same facial expressions to show these emotions. Ekman believes that some emotional responses are "wired" into human beings; that is, they are biologically programmed in our facial features, muscles, and central nervous system.

Why might this be so? Over centuries of evolution, emotions developed in the human species because they serve a social purpose: supporting group life. Emotions are powerful forces that allow us to overcome our self-centeredness and build connections with others. Thus the capacity for emotion arose in our ancestors along with the capacity for culture (Turner, 2000).



To most people in the United States, these expressions convey anger, fear, disgust, happiness, surprise, and sadness. But do people elsewhere in the world define them in the same way? Research suggests that all human beings experience the same basic emotions and display them to others in the same basic ways. But culture plays a part by specifying the situations that trigger one emotion or another.



Many of us think that emotions are simply part of our biological makeup. While there is a biological foundation to human emotion, sociologists have learned that what triggers an emotion—as well as when, where, and to whom the emotion is displayed—is shaped by culture. Similarly, every society has situations or settings in which some people are forbidden to display any emotion at all. Look at each of these photos and explain why members of the palace guard, courtside assistants at professional tennis matches, and soldiers facing those of higher rank typically must “keep a straight face.”

THE CULTURAL SIDE OF EMOTIONS But culture does play an important role in guiding human emotions. First, Ekman explains, culture defines *what triggers* an emotion. Whether people define the departure of an old friend as joyous (causing happiness), insulting (arousing anger), a loss (producing sadness), or mystical (provoking surprise and awe) has a lot to do with culture. Second, culture provides rules for the *display* of emotions. For example, most people in the United States express emotions more freely with family members than with colleagues in the workplace. Similarly, we expect children to express emotions freely to parents, but parents tend to hide their emotions from their children. Third, culture guides how we *value* emotions. Some societies encourage the expression of emotion; others expect members to control their feelings and maintain a “stiff upper lip.” Gender also plays a part; traditionally, at least, many cultures expect women to show emotions, but they discourage emotional expression by men as a sign of weakness. In some cultures, of course, this pattern is less pronounced or even reversed.

EMOTIONS ON THE JOB In the United States, most people are freer to express their feelings at home than on the job. The reason, as sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild (1979, 1983) explains, is that the typical company tries to regulate not only the behavior of its employees but also their emotions. Take the case of the busy airline flight attendant who offers each passenger a drink, a bag of pretzels, and a smile. Do you think that this smile may convey real pleasure at serving the customer? It may. But Hochschild’s study points to a different conclusion: The smile is an emotional script demanded by the airline management as the right way to perform the job. Therefore, from Hochschild’s research we see an added dimension of the “presentation of self” described by Erving Goffman. Not only do our

everyday life presentations to others involve surface acting but they also involve the “deep acting” of emotions.

With these patterns in mind, it is easy to see that we socially construct our emotions as part of our everyday reality, a process sociologists call *emotion management*. The Controversy & Debate box links the emotions displayed by women who decide to have an abortion to their political views and to their personal view of terminating a pregnancy.

Language: The Social Construction of Gender

As Chapter 3 (“Culture”) explains, language is the thread that weaves members of a society into the symbolic web we call culture. Language communicates not only a surface reality but also deeper levels of meaning. One such level involves gender. Language defines men and women differently in terms of both power and value (Thorne, Kramarae, & Henley, 1983; Henley, Hamilton, & Thorne, 1992).

LANGUAGE AND POWER A young man proudly rides his new motorcycle up his friend’s driveway and boasts, “Isn’t she a beauty?” On the surface, the question has little to do with gender. Yet why does he use the pronoun *she* instead of *he* or *it* to refer to his prized possession?

The answer is that men often use language to establish control over their surroundings. A man attaches a female pronoun to a motorcycle (or car, boat, or other object) because it reflects the power of *ownership*. Perhaps this is also why, in the United States and elsewhere, a woman who marries traditionally takes the last name of her husband. Because many of today’s married women value their independence, some (at least 10 percent) now keep their own name or combine the two family names (Gooding & Kreider, 2010).

Controversy & Debate

Managing Feelings: Women's Abortion Experiences

Liz: I just can't be pregnant! I'm going to see my doctor tomorrow about an abortion. There's no way I can deal with a baby at this point in my life!

Jen: I can't believe you'd do that, Liz! How are you going to feel a few years from now when you think about what that *child* would be doing if you'd let it live?

Few issues today generate as much emotion as abortion. In a study of women's abortion experiences, the sociologist Jennifer Keys (2002) discovered emotional scripts or "feeling rules" that guided how women feel about ending a pregnancy.

Keys explains that emotional scripts arise from the political controversy surrounding abortion. The antiabortion movement defines abortion as a personal tragedy, the "killing of an unborn child." Given this definition, women who terminate a pregnancy through abortion are doing something morally wrong and can expect to feel grief, guilt, and regret. So intense are these feelings, according to supporters of this position, that such women often suffer from "postabortion syndrome."

Those who take the pro-choice position have an opposing view of abortion. From this point of view, the woman's problem is the *unwanted pregnancy*; abortion is an acceptable medical solution. Therefore, the emotion common to women who terminate a pregnancy should be not guilt but relief.

In her research, Keys conducted in-depth interviews with forty women who had recently had abortions and found that all of them used such scripts to "frame" their situation in an antiabortion or pro-choice manner. In part, this construction of reality reflected the women's own attitudes



The words that doctors and nurses use guide whether a woman having an abortion defines the experience in positive or negative terms.

about abortion. In addition, however, the women's partners and friends typically encouraged specific feelings about the event. Ivy, one young woman in the study, had a close friend who was also pregnant. "Congratulations!" she exclaimed when she learned of Ivy's condition. "We're going to be having babies together!" Such a statement established one "feeling rule"—having a baby is *good*—which sent the message to Ivy that her planned abortion should trigger guilt. Working in the other direction, Jo's partner was horrified by the news that she was pregnant. Doubting his own ability to be a father, he blurted out, "I would rather put a gun to my head than have this baby!" His panic not only defined having the child as a mistake but alarmed Jo as well. Clearly, her partner's reaction made the decision to end the pregnancy a matter of relief from a terrible problem.

Medical personnel also play a part in this process of reality construction by using specific terms. Nurses and doctors who talk about "the baby" encourage the antiabortion framing of abortion and provoke grief and guilt. On the other hand, those who use language such as "pregnancy tissue," "fetus," or "the contents of the uterus" encourage the pro-choice framing of abortion as a fairly routine medical procedure leading to relief. Olivia began using the phrase "products of conception," which she picked up from her doctor. Denise spoke of her procedure as "taking the extra cells out of my body. Yeah, I did feel some guilt when I thought that this was the beginning of life, but my body is full of life—you have lots of cells in you."

After undergoing the procedure, most women reported actively trying to manage their feelings. Explained Ivy, "I never used the word 'baby.' I kept saying to myself that it was not formed yet. There was nothing there yet. I kept that in my mind." On the other hand, Keys found that all of the women in her study who leaned toward the antiabortion position did use the term "baby." Gina explained, "I do think of it as a baby. The truth is that I ended my baby's life.... Thinking that makes me feel guilty. But—considering what I did—maybe I *should* feel guilty." Believing that what she had done was wrong, in other words, Gina actively called out the feeling of guilt—in part, Keys concluded, to punish herself.

What Do You Think?

1. In your own words, what are "emotional scripts" or "feeling rules"?
2. Can you apply the idea of "feeling rules" to the experience of getting married?
3. In light of this discussion, how accurate is it to say that our feelings are not quite as personal as we may think they are?

LANGUAGE AND VALUE Typically, the English language treats as masculine whatever has greater value, force, or significance. For instance, the word *virtuous*, meaning “morally worthy” or “excellent,” comes from the Latin word *vir*, meaning “man.” On the other hand, the adjective *hysterical*, meaning “emotionally out of control,” comes from the Greek word *hystera*, meaning “uterus.”

In many familiar ways, language also confers different value on the two sexes. Traditional masculine terms such as *king* and *lord* have a positive meaning, while comparable feminine terms, such as *queen*, *madam*, and *dame*, can have negative meanings. Similarly, use of the suffixes *-ette* and *-ess* to denote femininity usually devalues the words to which they are added. For example, a *major* has higher standing than a *majorette*, as does a *host* in relation to a *hostess* or a *master* in relation to a *mistress*. Language both mirrors social attitudes and helps perpetuate them.

Given the importance of gender in everyday

life, perhaps we should not be surprised that women and men sometimes have trouble communicating with each other. In fact, some people comment, with more than a little seriousness, that the two sexes often seem to be speaking different languages.



Most of us have had the unpleasant experience of being “chewed out” at work for doing something that displeased the boss. Do you think women and men in positions of power can show anger with the same response from an audience? In other words, do we tolerate more of this type of emotional expression from managers of one sex than the other?

Yogi Berra’s line “It’s *déjà vu* all over again”; or statements that mix up words, such as Oscar Wilde’s line “Work is the curse of the drinking class.” Even switching around syllables does the trick, as in the case of the country song “I’d Rather Have a Bottle in Front of Me than a Frontal Lobotomy.”

You can also build a joke the other way around, leading the audience to expect an unconventional answer and then delivering a very ordinary one. When a reporter asked the famous gangster Willy Sutton why he continued to rob banks, for example, he replied dryly, “Because that’s where the money is.” Regardless of how a joke is constructed, the greater the opposition or difference that is created between the two definitions of reality, the greater is the humor that results.

When telling jokes, the comedian uses various strategies to strengthen this opposition and make the joke funnier. One common technique is to present the first, or conventional, remark in conversation with another actor and then to turn toward the audience (or the camera) to deliver the second, unexpected line. In a Marx Brothers movie, Groucho remarks, “Outside of a dog, a book is a man’s best friend.” Then, raising his voice and turning to the camera, he adds, “And *inside* of a dog, it’s too dark to read!” Such “changing channels” emphasizes the difference between the two realities. Following the same logic, stand-up comedians may “reset” the audience to conventional expectations by interjecting the phrase, “But seriously, folks, …” between jokes. Monty Python comedian

Reality Play: The Social Construction of Humor

Humor has played an important part in everyday life for all of human history. Everyone laughs at a joke, but few people stop to think about what makes something funny. We can apply many of the ideas developed in this chapter to explain how, by using humor, we “play with reality” (Macionis, 1987; Wright, 2013).

THE FOUNDATION OF HUMOR Humor is produced by the social construction of reality; it arises as people create and contrast two different realities. Generally, one reality is *conventional*, that is, what culture leads people to expect in a specific situation. The other reality is *unconventional*, an unexpected violation of cultural patterns. Humor arises from the contradictions, ambiguities, and double meanings found in differing definitions of the same situation.

There are countless ways to mix realities and generate humor. Reality play can be found in single statements that contradict themselves, such as “Nostalgia is not what it used to be”; statements that repeat themselves, such as

John Cleese did this with his trademark line, "And now for something completely different."

Comedians pay careful attention to their performances—the precise words they use and the timing of their delivery. A joke is well told if the comedian creates the sharpest possible opposition between the realities; in a careless performance, the joke falls flat. Because the key to humor lies in the collision of realities, we can see why the climax of a joke is termed the "*punch line*."

THE DYNAMICS OF HUMOR: "GETTING IT" After hearing a joke, did you ever say, "I don't get it"? To "get" humor, members of the audience must understand both the conventional and the unconventional realities well enough to appreciate their difference. A comedian may make getting a joke harder by leaving out some important information. In such cases, listeners must pay attention to the stated elements of the joke and then fill in the missing pieces on their own. A simple example is the comment



Because humor involves challenging established conventions, most U.S. comedians—including Aziz Ansari—have been social "outsiders," members of racial or ethnic minorities.

of the movie producer Hal Roach on his one hundredth birthday: "If I had known I would live to be one hundred, I would have taken better care of myself!" Here, getting the joke depends on realizing that Roach must have taken pretty good care of himself because he did make it to one hundred. Or as my own father, who lived to the age of ninety-five, used to say, "At my age, I don't even buy green bananas anymore!" "Sure, who knows how long he's going to live!", we would think to ourselves to "finish" the joke.

Here is an even more complex joke: What do you get if you cross an insomniac, an agnostic, and a dyslexic? Answer: A person who stays up all night wondering if there is a dog. To get this one, you need a good bit of information: you must know that insomnia is an inability to sleep, that an agnostic doubts the existence of God, and dyslexia causes a person to reverse the letters in words.

Why would a comedian want the audience to make this sort of effort to understand a joke? Our enjoyment of a joke is increased by the pleasure of figuring out for ourselves all the pieces needed to "get it." In addition, getting the joke makes you an "insider" compared to those who don't get it. We have all experienced the frustration of *not* getting a joke: fear of being judged stupid, along with a sense of being excluded from a pleasure shared by others. Sometimes someone may tactfully explain the joke so that the other person doesn't feel left out. But as the old saying goes, if a joke has to be explained, it isn't very funny.

THE TOPICS OF HUMOR All over the world, people smile and laugh, making humor a universal element of human culture. But because the world's people live in different cultures, humor rarely travels well.

October 1, Kobe, Japan. Is it possible share a joke with people who live halfway around the world? At dinner, I ask two Japanese college women to tell me a joke. "You know 'crayon'?" Asako asks. I nod. "How do you ask for a crayon in Japanese?" I respond that I have no idea. She laughs out loud as she says what sounds like "crayon crayon." Her companion Mayumi laughs too. My wife and I sit awkwardly, with a quizzical look on our faces. Asako relieves some of our embarrassment by explaining that the Japanese word for "give me" is *kureyo*, which sounds like "crayon." I force a smile.

What is humorous to the Japanese may be lost on the Chinese, South Africans, or people in the United States. Even the social diversity of our own country means that different types of people will find humor in different situations. New Englanders, southerners, and westerners have their own brands of humor, as do

Latinos and Anglos, fifteen- and fifty-year-olds, construction workers and rodeo riders.

But for everyone, topics that lend themselves to double meanings or controversy generate humor. In the United States, the first jokes many of us learned as children concerned bodily functions kids are not supposed to talk about. The mere mention of "unmentionable acts" or even certain parts of the body can dissolve young faces in laughter.

Are there jokes that do break through the culture barrier? Yes, but they must touch on universal human experiences such as, say, turning on a friend:

I think of a number of jokes, but none seems likely to work. Understanding jokes about the United States is difficult for people who know little of our culture. Is there something more universal? Inspiration: "Two fellows are walking in the woods and come upon a huge bear. One guy leans over and tightens up the laces on his running shoes. 'Jake,' says the other, 'what are you doing? You can't outrun this bear!' 'I don't have to outrun the bear,' responds Jake. 'All I have to do is outrun *you!*'" Smiles all around.

Humor often walks a fine line between what is funny and what is "sick" or offensive. During the Middle Ages, people used the word *humors* (derived from the Latin *humidus*, meaning "moist") to refer to the various bodily fluids believed to regulate a person's health. Researchers today document the power of humor to reduce stress and improve health. One recent study of cancer patients, for example, found that the greater people's sense of humor, the greater their odds of surviving the disease. Such findings confirm the old saying that "laughter is the best medicine" (Bakalar, 2005; Svebak, cited in M. Elias, 2007). At the extreme, however, people who always take conventional reality lightly risk being defined as deviant or even mentally ill (a common stereotype shows insane people laughing uncontrollably, and for a long time mental hospitals were known as "funny farms").

Then, too, every social group considers certain topics too sensitive for humorous treatment, and joking about them risks criticism for having a "sick" sense of humor (and being labeled "sick" yourself). People's religious beliefs, tragic accidents, or appalling crimes are some of the topics of sick jokes or no jokes at all. Even years later, there have been no jokes about the victims of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

THE FUNCTIONS OF HUMOR Humor is found everywhere because it works as a safety valve for potentially disruptive sentiments. Put another way, humor provides

an acceptable way to discuss a sensitive topic without appearing to be serious or offending anyone. Having said something controversial, people can use humor to defuse the situation by simply stating, "I didn't mean anything by what I said—it was just a joke!"

People also use humor to relieve tension in uncomfortable situations. One study of medical examinations found that most patients try to joke with doctors to ease their own nervousness (Baker et al., 1997).

HUMOR AND CONFLICT Humor may be a source of pleasure, but it can also be used to put down other people. Men who tell jokes about women, for example, are typically expressing some measure of hostility toward them (Powell & Paton, 1988; Benokraitis & Feagin, 1995). Similarly, jokes about gay people reveal tensions about sexual orientation. Real conflict can be masked by humor in situations where one or both parties choose not to bring the conflict out into the open (Primoggia & Varracalli, 1990).

"Put-down" jokes make one category of people feel good at the expense of another. After collecting and analyzing jokes from many societies, Christie Davies (1990) confirmed that ethnic conflict is one driving force behind humor in most of the world. The typical ethnic joke makes fun of some disadvantaged category of people, at the same time making the joke teller feel superior. Given the Anglo-Saxon traditions of U.S. society, Poles and other ethnic and racial minorities have long been the butt of jokes in the United States, as have Newfoundlanders in eastern Canada, the Irish in Scotland, Sikhs in India, Turks in Germany, Hausas in Nigeria, Tasmanians in Australia, and Kurds in Iraq.

Disadvantaged people also make fun of the powerful, although usually with some concern about who might be listening. Women in the United States joke about men, just as African Americans find humor in white people's ways and poor people poke fun at the rich. Throughout the world, people target their leaders with humor, and officials in some countries take such jokes seriously enough to arrest those who do not show proper respect (Speier, 1998).

In sum, humor is much more important than we may think. It is a means of mental escape from a conventional world that is never entirely to our liking (Flaherty, 1984, 1990; Yoels & Clair, 1995). This fact helps explain why so many of our nation's comedians are from the ranks of historically marginalized peoples, including Jews and African Americans. As long as we maintain a sense of humor, we assert our freedom and are not prisoners of reality. By putting a smile on our faces, we can change ourselves and the world just a little and for the better.

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 6 Social Interaction in Everyday Life

How do we construct the reality we experience?

This chapter suggests that Shakespeare may have had it right when he said, “All the world’s a stage.” And if so, then the Internet may be the latest and greatest stage so far. When we use social media websites, as Goffman explains, we present ourselves as we want others to see us. Everything we write about ourselves as well as how we arrange our page creates an impression in the mind of anyone interested in “checking us out.” Take a look at

the website page below, paying careful attention to all the details. What is the young man explicitly saying about himself? What can you read “between the lines”? That is, what information can you identify that he may be trying to conceal, or at least purposely not be mentioning? How honest do you think his “presentation of self” is? Why? Do a similar analysis of the young woman’s profile shown as well on the next page.

The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer window displaying a social media profile for "Mike King" on the "JoinFriends" website. The URL in the address bar is http://www.joinfriends.com/home.php?#/profile.php?v=info&edit_info=all&ref=nur. The browser interface includes standard buttons for back, forward, stop, and search.

Profile Information:

- Personal Information:**
 - Activities: partying, chilling with friends, working on my music (guitar, freestyle), lifting, working out, wind surfing, skydiving, skiing, jet skiing
 - Interests: sports, travelling
 - Favorite Music: basically everything except country
 - Favorite TV Shows: Naked and Afraid, Game of Thrones, Homeland, True Detective
 - Favorite Movies: Batman: The Dark Knight, Wedding Crashers, Pineapple Express, Superbad, The Breakfast Club, Wolf of Wall Street, Fast and Furious
 - Favorite Books: Sports Biographies/ Autobiographies
 - About Me: Looking to have a good time and just live my life.
- Information:**
 - Networks: North Jersey, NJ
 - Relationship Status: Single
 - Birthday: April 4, 1990
- Friends:** 641 friends

My Profile:

- Networks: North Jersey, NJ
- Sex: Male
- Birthday: April 4, 1990
- Hometown: Wayne, NJ
- Relationship Status: Single
- Interested In: Women
- Looking For: Friendship, Dating, A Relationship, Networking
- Political Views: Very Liberal

Buttons: Wall, Info, Photos, Add, Setting, Logout, Find people you know, Edit Information.

Hint Just about every element of a presentation conveys information about us to others, so all the information found on a website like this one is significant. Some information is intentional—for example, what people write about themselves and the photos they choose to post. Other information may be unintentional but is nevertheless picked up by the careful viewer who may be noting such things as these:

- The length and tone of the person's profile. Is it a long-winded list of talents and accomplishments or humorous and modest?
- The language used. Poor grammar may be a clue to educational level.
- The hour of the day or night that the person wrote the material. A person creating his profile at 11 p.m. on a Saturday night may not be quite the party person he describes himself to be.

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

1. Look at your social media profile and try to read between the lines as a sociologist. How are you presenting yourself on a social media page and online in general? What kind of social image are you trying to construct for others through your profile picture, description, and areas of interest? How much information about you is intentional and how much is unintentional? Are you providing information freely or are you trying to control it?
2. Think about the importance of your social status and role in your learning and actions in everyday life. Do you feel that your everyday language, level of emotions, and sense of humor are different from people from other societies? What differences do you see? Are there any similarities? Do you think that people develop their expressions and emotions by virtue of the social structures they belong to?
3. What does a small meal mean to you? Do you think people from different social backgrounds would perceive it differently? What does this tell you about the construction of social reality?
4. Go to www.sociologyinfofocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 6 Social Interaction in Everyday Life

Social Structure: A Guide to Everyday Living

6.1 Explain how social structure helps us to make sense of everyday situations. (pages 165–66)

Social structure refers to social patterns that guide our behavior in everyday life. The building blocks of social structure are status and role.

social interaction the process by which people act and react in relation to others

Status

6.2 State the importance of status to social organization. (page 166)

Status is a social position that is part of our social identity and that defines our relationships to others.

A status can be either an

- **ascribed status**, which is involuntary (for example, being a teenager, an orphan, or a Mexican American), or an
- **achieved status**, which is earned (for example, being an honors student, a pilot, or a thief).

A **master status**, which can be either ascribed or achieved, has special importance for a person's identity (for example, being blind, a doctor, or a Kennedy).

status a social position that a person holds

status set all the statuses a person holds at a given time

ascribed status a social position a person receives at birth or takes on involuntarily later in life

achieved status a social position a person takes on voluntarily that reflects personal ability and effort

master status a status that has special importance for social identity, often shaping a person's entire life

Role

6.3 State the importance of role to social organization. (pages 166–68)

Role conflict results from tension among roles linked to two or more statuses (for example, a woman who juggles her responsibilities as a mother and a corporate CEO).

Role strain results from tension among roles linked to a single status (for example, the college professor who enjoys personal interaction with students but at the same time knows that social distance is necessary in order to evaluate students fairly).

role behavior expected of someone who holds a particular status

role set a number of roles attached to a single status

role conflict conflict among the roles connected to two or more statuses

role strain tension among the roles connected to a single status

The Social Construction of Reality

6.4 Describe how we socially construct reality. (pages 168–72)

Through **social interaction**, we construct the reality we experience.

- For example, two people interacting both try to shape the reality of their situation.

The **Thomas theorem** says that the reality people construct in their interaction has real consequences for the future.

- For example, a teacher who believes a certain student to be intellectually gifted may well encourage exceptional academic performance.

Ethnomethodology is a strategy to reveal the assumptions people have about their social world.

- We can expose these assumptions by intentionally breaking the “rules” of social interaction and observing the reactions of other people.

Both **culture** and **social class** shape the reality people construct.

- For example, a “short walk” for a New Yorker is a few city blocks, but for a peasant in Latin America, it could be a few miles.

The expansion of **social media** has dramatically changed how people interact.

- The social construction of reality no longer requires people to have face-to-face interaction.

social construction of reality the process by which people creatively shape reality through social interaction

Thomas theorem W. I. Thomas's claim that situations defined as real are real in their consequences

ethnomethodology Harold Garfinkel's term for the study of the way people make sense of their everyday surroundings

social media technology that links people in social activity

Dramaturgical Analysis: The “Presentation of Self”

6.5 Apply Goffman's analysis to several familiar situations. (pages 172–76)

Dramaturgical analysis explores social interaction in terms of theatrical performance: A status operates as a part in a play, and a role is a script.

Performances are the way we present ourselves to others.

- Performances are both conscious (intentional action) and unconscious (nonverbal communication).
- Performances include costume (the way we dress), props (objects we carry), and demeanor (tone of voice and the way we carry ourselves).

Gender affects performances because men typically have greater social power than women. Gender differences involve *demeanor*, *use of space*, and *smiling*, *staring*, and *touching*.

- **Demeanor**—With greater social power, men have more freedom in how they act.
- **Use of space**—Men typically command more space than women.
- **Staring and touching** are generally done by men to women.
- **Smiling**, as a way to please another, is more commonly done by women.

Idealization of performances means we try to convince others that our actions reflect ideal culture rather than selfish motives.

Embarrassment is the “loss of face” in a performance. People use **tact** to help others “save face.”

dramaturgical analysis Erving Goffman’s term for the study of social interaction in terms of theatrical performance

presentation of self Erving Goffman’s term for a person’s efforts to create specific impressions in the minds of others

nonverbal communication communication using body movements, gestures, and facial expressions rather than speech

personal space the surrounding area over which a person makes some claim to privacy

Interaction in Everyday Life: Three Applications

6.6 Construct a sociological analysis of three aspects of everyday life: emotions, language, and humor. (pages 176–81)

Emotions: The Social Construction of Feeling

The same basic emotions are biologically programmed into all human beings, but culture guides what triggers emotions, how people display emotions, and how people value emotions. In everyday life, the presentation of self involves managing emotions as well as behavior.

Language: The Social Construction of Gender

Gender is an important element of everyday interaction. Language defines women and men as different types of people, reflecting the fact that society attaches greater power and value to what is viewed as masculine.

Reality Play: The Social Construction of Humor

Humor results from the difference between conventional and unconventional definitions of a situation. Because humor is a part of culture, people around the world find different situations funny.

Chapter 7

Groups and Organizations



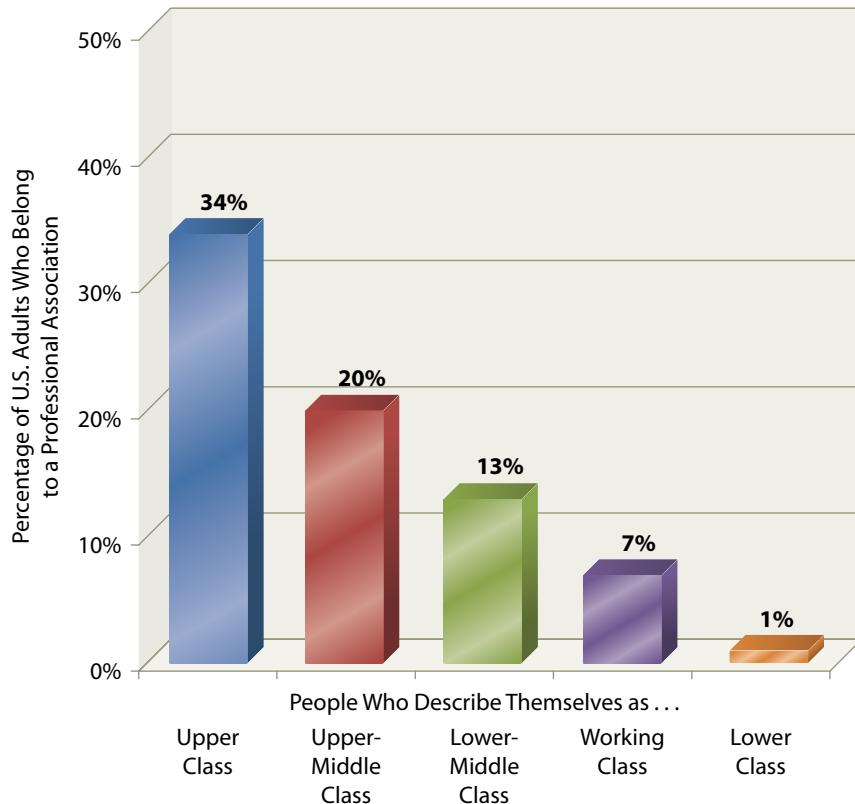
Learning Objectives

- 7.1** Explain the importance of various types of groups to social life.
- 7.2** Describe the operation of large, formal organizations.
- 7.3** Summarize the changes to formal organizations over the course of the last century.



The Power of Society

to link people into groups



SOURCE: World Values Survey (2015).

Does your social class influence which groups and organizations you join? Professional organizations attract people who work as physicians, nurses, lawyers, and college teachers. Look at how social class affects membership in such organizations—people who identified themselves as being “upper class” were five times more likely to be members of professional organizations than people who said they were “working class.” And almost no one who claimed to be “lower class” reported being in such an organization. Membership in groups and organizations is not simply a matter of choice; it is also a reflection of the way society is organized.

Chapter Overview

We spend much of our lives within the collectivities that sociologists call social groups and formal organizations. This chapter begins by analyzing social groups, both small and large, highlighting the differences between them. Then the focus shifts to formal organizations that carry out various tasks in our modern society.

With the workday over, Juan and Jorge pushed through the doors of the local McDonald's restaurant. "Man, am I hungry," announced Juan, heading right into line. "Look at all the meat I'm gonna eat." But Jorge, a recent immigrant from a small village in Guatemala, is surveying the room with a sociological eye. "There is much more than food to see here. This place is all about America!"

And so it is, as we shall see. Back in 1948, people in Pasadena, California, paid little attention to the opening of a new restaurant by brothers Maurice and Richard McDonald. The McDonald brothers' basic concept, which was soon called "fast food," was to serve meals quickly and cheaply to large numbers of people. The brothers trained employees to do specialized jobs: One person grilled hamburgers while others "dressed" them, made French fries, whipped up milkshakes, and presented the food to the customers in assembly-line fashion.

As the years went by, the McDonald brothers prospered, and they opened several more restaurants, including one in San Bernardino. It was there, in 1954, that Ray Kroc, a traveling blender and mixer salesman, paid them a visit.

Kroc was fascinated by the efficiency of the brothers' system and saw the potential for a whole chain of fast-food restaurants. The three launched the plan as partners. In 1961, in the face of rapidly increasing sales, Kroc bought out the McDonalds (who returned to running their original restaurant) and went on to become one of the great success stories of all time. Today, McDonald's is one of the most widely known brand names in the world, with more than 36,000 restaurants serving 69 million people daily throughout the United States and in 118 other countries (McDonald's, 2014). ■



The success of McDonald's points to more than just the popularity of burgers and fries. The organizational principles that guide this company have come to dominate social life in the United States and elsewhere. As Jorge correctly observed, this one small business transformed not only the restaurant industry but also our entire way of life.

We begin this chapter with an examination of *social groups*, the clusters of people with whom we interact in everyday life. As you will learn, the scope of group life in the United States expanded greatly during the twentieth century. From a world of families, local neighborhoods, and small businesses, our society now relies on the operation of huge corporations and other bureaucracies that sociologists describe as *formal organizations*. Understanding this expanding scale of social life and appreciating what it means for us as individuals are the main objectives of this chapter.

Social Groups

7.1 Explain the importance of various types of groups to social life.

Almost everyone wants a sense of belonging, which is the essence of group life. A **social group** is *two or more people who identify with and interact with one another*. Human

beings come together in couples, families, circles of friends, churches, clubs, businesses, neighborhoods, and large organizations. Whatever the form, a group is made up of people with shared experiences, loyalties, and interests. In short, while keeping their individuality, members of social groups also think of themselves as a special "we."

Not every collection of individuals forms a group. People all over the country with a status in common, such as women, homeowners, soldiers, millionaires, college graduates, and Roman Catholics, are not a group but a *category*. Though they know that others hold the same status, most are strangers to one another. Similarly, students sitting in a large stadium interact to a very limited extent. Such a loosely formed collection of people in one place is a *crowd* rather than a group.

However, the right circumstances can quickly turn a crowd into a group. Unexpected events, from power failures to terrorist attacks, can make people bond quickly with strangers.

Primary and Secondary Groups

Friends often greet one another with a smile and the simple phrase "Hi! How are you?" The response is usually "Fine, thanks. How about you?" This answer is often more scripted

social group two or more people who identify with and interact with one another

primary group a small social group whose members share personal and lasting relationships

secondary group a large and impersonal social group whose members pursue a specific goal or activity

than sincere. Explaining how you are *really* doing might make people feel so awkward that they would beat a hasty retreat.

Social groups are of two types, depending on their members' degree of personal concern for one another. According to Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929), a **primary group** is a *small social group whose members share personal and lasting relationships*. Joined by *primary relationships*, people spend a great deal of time together, engage in a wide range of activities, and feel that they know one another pretty well. In short, they show real concern for one another. The family is every society's most important primary group.

Cooley called personal and tightly integrated groups "primary" because they are among the first groups we experience in life. In addition, family and friends have primary importance in the socialization process, shaping our attitudes, behavior, and social identity.

Members of primary groups help one another in many ways, but they generally think of the group as an end in itself rather than as a means to some goal. In other words, we prefer to think that family and friendship link people who "belong together." Members of a primary group also tend to view each other as unique and irreplaceable. Especially in the family, we are bound to others by emotion and loyalty. Brothers and sisters may not always get along, but they always remain "family."

In contrast to the primary group, the **secondary group** is a *large and impersonal social group whose members pursue a specific goal or activity*. In most respects, secondary groups have characteristics opposite to those of primary groups. *Secondary relationships* involve weak emotional ties and little personal knowledge of one another. Many secondary groups exist for only a short time, beginning and ending without particular significance. Students enrolled in the same course at a large university—who may or may not see one another again after the semester ends—are one example of a secondary group.

Secondary groups include many more people than primary groups. For example, dozens or even hundreds of people may work together in the same company, yet most of them pay only passing attention to one another. In some cases, time may transform a group from secondary to primary, as with co-workers who share an office for many years and develop closer relationships. But generally, members of a secondary group do not think of themselves as "we." Secondary ties need not be hostile or cold, of course. Interactions among students, co-workers, and business associates are often quite pleasant even if they are impersonal.

Unlike members of primary groups, who display a *personal orientation*, people in secondary groups have a *goal orientation*. Primary group members define each other according to *who* they are in terms of family ties or personal qualities, but people in secondary groups look to one another for

what they are, that is, what they can do for each other. In secondary groups, we tend to "keep score," aware of what we give others and what we receive in return. This goal orientation means that secondary group members usually remain formal and polite. In a secondary relationship, therefore, we ask the question "How are you?" without expecting a truthful answer.

The Summing Up table on page 190 reviews the characteristics of primary and secondary groups. Keep in mind that these traits define two types of groups in ideal terms; most real groups contain elements of both. For example, a women's group on a university campus may be quite large (and therefore secondary), but its members may identify strongly with one another and provide lots of mutual support (making it seem primary).



As human beings, we live our lives as members of groups. Such groups may be large or small, temporary or long-lasting, and can be based on kinship, cultural heritage, or some shared interest.

SUMMING UP

Primary Groups and Secondary Groups

	Primary Group	Secondary Group
Quality of relationships	Personal orientation	Goal orientation
Duration of relationships	Usually long-term	Variable; often short-term
Breadth of relationships	Broad; usually involving many activities	Narrow; usually involving few activities
Perception of relationships	Ends in themselves	Means to an end
Examples	Families, circles of friends	Co-workers, political organizations

Many people think that small towns and rural areas have mostly primary relationships and that large cities are characterized by more secondary ties. This generalization is partly true, but some urban neighborhoods—especially those populated by people of a single ethnic or religious category—are very tightly knit.

Group Leadership

How do groups operate? One important element of group dynamics is leadership. Though a small circle of friends may have no leader at all, most large secondary groups place leaders in a formal chain of command.

TWO LEADERSHIP ROLES Groups typically benefit from two kinds of leadership. **Instrumental leadership** refers to *group leadership that focuses on the completion of tasks*. Members look to instrumental leaders to make plans, give orders, and get things done. **Expressive leadership**, by contrast, is *group leadership that focuses on the group's well-being*. Expressive leaders take less interest in achieving goals than in raising group morale and minimizing tension and conflict among members.

Because they concentrate on performance, instrumental leaders usually have formal secondary relationships with other members. These leaders give orders and reward or punish members according to how much the members contribute to the group's efforts. Expressive leaders build more personal primary ties. They offer sympathy to a member going through tough times, keep the group united, and lighten serious moments with humor. Typically, successful instrumental leaders enjoy more *respect* from members, and expressive leaders generally receive more *personal affection*.

THREE LEADERSHIP STYLES Sociologists also describe leadership in terms of decision-making style. **Authoritarian leadership** focuses on instrumental concerns, takes personal charge of decision making, and demands that group members obey orders. Although this leadership style may win little affection from the group, a fast-acting authoritarian leader is appreciated in a crisis.

Democratic leadership is more expressive and makes a point of including everyone in the decision-making

process. Although less successful in a crisis situation, democratic leaders generally draw on the ideas of all members to develop creative solutions to problems.

Laissez-faire leadership allows the group to function more or less on its own (*laissez-faire* in French means “leave it alone”). This style is typically the least effective in promoting group goals (White & Lippitt, 1953; Ridgeway, 1983).

Group Conformity

Groups influence the behavior of their members by promoting conformity. “Fitting in” provides a secure feeling of belonging, but at the extreme, group pressure can be unpleasant and even dangerous. As experiments by Solomon Asch and Stanley Milgram showed, even strangers can encourage conformity.

ASCH'S RESEARCH Solomon Asch (1952) recruited students for what he told them was a study of visual perception. Before the experiment began, he explained to all but one member in a small group that their real purpose was to put pressure on the remaining person. Arranging six to eight students around a table, Asch showed them a “standard” line, as drawn on Card 1 in Figure 7-1, and asked them to match it to one of three lines on Card 2.

Anyone with normal vision could easily see that the line marked “A” on Card 2 is the correct choice. At the beginning of the experiment, everyone made the matches correctly. But then Asch's secret accomplices began answering incorrectly, leaving the uninformed student (seated at the table so as to answer next to last) bewildered and uncomfortable.

What happened? Asch found that one-third of all subjects chose to conform by answering incorrectly. Apparently, many of us are willing to compromise our own judgment to avoid the discomfort of being seen as different, even by people we do not know.

MILGRAM'S RESEARCH Stanley Milgram, a former student of Solomon Asch's, conducted conformity experiments of his own. In Milgram's controversial study (1963, 1965; Miller, 1986), a researcher explained to male recruits that they would be taking part in a study of how punishment

affects learning. One by one, he assigned the subjects to the role of teacher and placed another person—actually an accomplice of Milgram's—in a connecting room to pose as a learner.

The teacher watched as the learner was seated in what looked like an electric chair. The researcher applied electrode paste to one of the learner's wrists, explaining that this would "prevent blisters and burns." The researcher then attached an electrode to the wrist and secured the leather straps, explaining that these would "prevent excessive movement while the learner was being shocked." The researcher assured the teacher that although the shocks would be painful, they would cause "no permanent tissue damage."

The researcher then led the teacher back to the next room, explaining that the "electric chair" was connected to a "shock generator," actually a phony but realistic-looking piece of equipment with a label that read "Shock Generator, Type ZLB, Dyson Instrument Company, Waltham, Mass." On the front was a dial that appeared to regulate electric shock from 15 volts (labeled "Slight Shock") to 300 volts (marked "Intense Shock") to 450 volts (marked "Danger: Severe Shock").

Seated in front of the "shock generator," the teacher was told to read aloud pairs of words. Then the teacher was to repeat the first word of each pair and wait for the learner to recall the second word. Whenever the learner failed to answer correctly, the teacher was told to apply an electric shock.

The researcher directed the teacher to begin at the lowest level (15 volts) and to increase the shock by another 15 volts every time the learner made a mistake. And so the teacher did. At 75, 90, and 105 volts, the teacher heard moans from the learner; at 120 volts, shouts of pain; at 270 volts, screams; at 315 volts, pounding on the wall; after that, dead silence. None of forty subjects assigned to the role of teacher during the initial research even questioned the procedure before reaching 300 volts, and twenty-six of the subjects—almost two-thirds—went all the way to 450 volts. Even Milgram was surprised at how readily people obeyed authority figures.

Milgram (1964) then modified his research to see if groups of ordinary people—not authority figures—could pressure people to administer electrical shocks, as Asch's groups had pressured individuals to match lines incorrectly.

This time, Milgram formed a group of three teachers, two of whom were his accomplices. Each of the three teachers was to suggest a shock level when the learner made an error; the rule was that the group would then administer the *lowest* of the three suggested levels. This arrangement gave the person not "in" on the experiment the power to deliver a lesser shock regardless of what the others said.

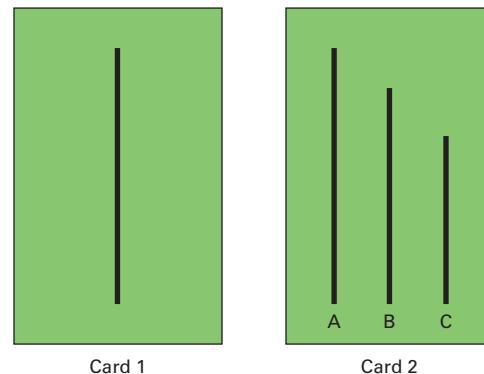


Figure 7-1 Cards Used in Asch's Experiment in Group Conformity

In Asch's experiment, subjects were asked to match the line on Card 1 to one of the lines on Card 2. Many subjects agreed with the wrong answers given by others in their group.

SOURCE: Asch (1952).

The accomplices suggested increasing the shock level with each error, putting pressure on the third member to do the same. The subjects in these groups applied voltages three to four times higher than the levels applied by subjects acting alone. In this way, Milgram showed that people are likely to follow the lead of not only legitimate authority figures but also groups of ordinary individuals, even when it means harming another person.

JANIS'S "GROUPTHINK" Experts also cave in to group pressure, says Irving L. Janis (1972, 1989). Janis argues that a number of U.S. foreign policy errors, including the failure to foresee Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor during World War II and our ill-fated involvement in the Vietnam War, resulted from group conformity among our highest-ranking political leaders.

Common sense tells us that group discussion improves decision making. Janis counters that group members often seek agreement that closes off other points of view. Janis called this process **groupphink**, *the tendency of group members to conform, resulting in a narrow view of some issue*.

A classic example of groupphink led to the failed invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. Looking back, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., an adviser to President John F. Kennedy, confessed to feeling guilty for "having kept so quiet during those crucial discussions in the Cabinet Room," adding that the group discouraged anyone from challenging what, in hindsight, Schlesinger considered "nonsense" (quoted in Janis, 1972:30, 40). Groupphink may also have been a factor in the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 when U.S. leaders were led to believe—erroneously—that Iraq had stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction. Closer to home, one professor suggests that college faculties are subject to groupphink because they share political attitudes that are overwhelmingly liberal (Klein, 2010).

Reference Groups

How do we assess our own attitudes and behavior? Frequently, we use a **reference group**, a social group that serves as a point of reference in making evaluations and decisions.

A young man who imagines his family's response to a woman he is dating is using his family as a reference group. A supervisor who tries to predict her employees' reaction to a new vacation policy is using them in the same way. As these examples suggest, reference groups can be primary or secondary. In either case, our need to conform shows how others' attitudes affect us.

We also use groups that we do *not* belong to for reference. Being well prepared for a job interview means showing up dressed the way people in that company dress for work. Conforming to groups we do not belong to is a strategy to win acceptance by others and illustrates the process of *anticipatory socialization*, described in Chapter 5 ("Socialization").

STOUFFER'S RESEARCH Samuel Stouffer and his colleagues (1949) conducted a classic study of reference group dynamics during World War II. Researchers asked soldiers to rate their own or any competent soldier's chances of promotion in their army unit. You might guess that soldiers serving in outfits with a high promotion rate would be optimistic about advancement. Yet Stouffer's research pointed to the opposite conclusion: Soldiers in army units with low promotion rates were actually more positive about their chances to move ahead.



A triad is a group made up of three people. A triad is more stable than a dyad because conflict between any two persons can be mediated by the third member. Even so, should the relationship between any two become more intense in a positive sense, those two are likely to exclude the third.

in-group a social group toward which a member feels respect and loyalty

out-group a social group toward which a person feels a sense of competition or opposition

The key to understanding Stouffer's results lies in the groups against which soldiers measured themselves. Those assigned to units with lower promotion rates looked around them and saw people making no more headway than they were. That is, although they had not been promoted, neither had many others, so they did not feel slighted. However, soldiers in units with a higher promotion rate could easily think of people who had been promoted sooner or more often than they had. With such people in mind, even soldiers who had been promoted were likely to feel shortchanged.

The point is that we do not make judgments about ourselves in isolation, nor do we compare ourselves with just anyone. Regardless of our situation in *absolute* terms, we form a subjective sense of our well-being by looking at ourselves *relative* to specific reference groups.

In-Groups and Out-Groups

Each of us favors some groups over others, based on political outlook, social prestige, or even just manner of dress. On the college campus, for example, left-leaning student activists may look down on fraternity members, whom they consider too conservative; fraternity members, in turn, may snub the "nerds," who they feel work too hard. People in every social setting make positive and negative evaluations of members of other groups.

Such judgments illustrate another important element of group dynamics: the opposition of in-groups and out-groups. An **in-group** is a social group toward which a member feels respect and loyalty. An in-group exists in relation to an **out-group**, a social group toward which a person feels a sense of competition or opposition. In-groups and out-groups are based on the idea that "we" have valued traits that "they" lack.

Tensions between groups sharpen the groups' boundaries and give people a clearer social identity. However, members of in-groups generally hold overly positive views of themselves and unfairly negative views of various out-groups.

Power also plays a part in intergroup relations. A powerful in-group can define others as a lower-status out-group. Historically, in countless U.S. towns and cities, many white people viewed people of color as an out-group and subordinated them socially, politically, and economically. Minorities who internalize these negative attitudes often struggle to overcome negative self-images. In this way, in-groups and out-groups foster

loyalty but also generate conflict (Tajfel, 1982; Bobo & Hutchings, 1996).

Group Size

The next time you go to a small party or gathering, try to arrive first. If you do, you will be able to watch some fascinating group dynamics. Until about six people enter the room, every person who arrives shares a single conversation. As more people arrive, the group divides into two clusters, and it divides again and again as the party grows. Size plays an important role in how group members interact.

To understand why, note the mathematical number of relationships among two to seven people. As shown in Figure 7–2, two people form a single relationship; adding a third person results in three relationships; adding a fourth person yields six. Increasing the number of people one at a time, then, expands the number of relationships much more rapidly since every new individual can interact with everyone already there. Thus by the time seven people join one conversation, twenty-one “channels” connect them. With so many open channels, at this point the group usually divides into smaller conversation groups.

THE DYAD The German sociologist Georg Simmel (1858–1918) studied social dynamics in the smallest groups. Simmel (1950, orig. 1902) used the term **dyad** (Greek for “pair”) to designate *a social group with two members*. Simmel explained that social interaction in a dyad is usually more intense than in larger groups because neither member shares the other’s attention with anyone else. In the United States, love affairs, marriages, and the closest friendships are typically dyadic.

But like a stool with only two legs, dyads are unstable. Both members of a dyad must work to keep the relationship going; if either withdraws, the group collapses. Because the stability of marriages is important to society, the marital dyad is supported by legal, economic, and often religious ties.

THE TRIAD Simmel also studied the **triad**, *a social group with three members*, which contains three relationships, each uniting two of the three people. A triad is more stable than a dyad because one member can act as a mediator should the relationship between the other two become strained. Such group dynamics help explain why members of a dyad (say, a married couple) often seek out a third person (such as a counselor) to discuss tensions between them.

On the other hand, two of the three can pair up at times to press their views on the third, or two may intensify their relationship, leaving the other feeling left out. For example, when two of the three develop a romantic interest in each other, they will come to understand the meaning of the old saying, “Two’s company, three’s a crowd.”

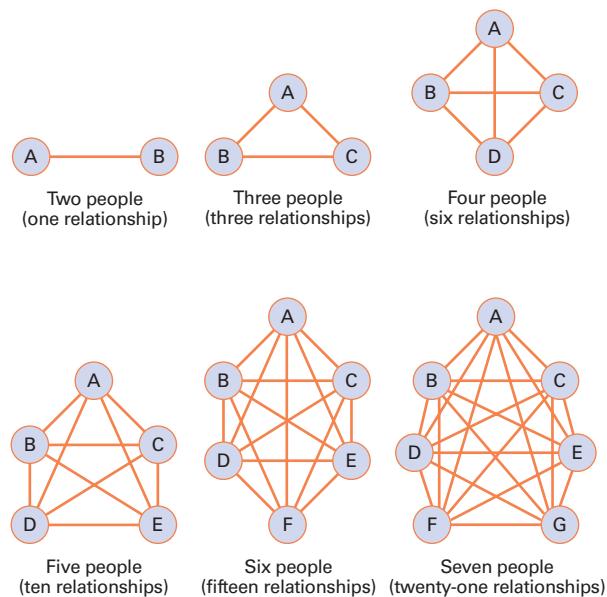


Figure 7-2 Group Size and Relationships

As the number of people in a group increases, the number of relationships that link them increases much faster. By the time six or seven people share a conversation, the group usually divides into two. Why are relationships in smaller groups typically more intense?

SOURCE: Created by the author.

As groups grow beyond three people, they become more stable and capable of withstanding the loss of one or more members. At the same time, increases in group size reduce the intense personal interaction possible only in the smallest groups. This is why larger groups are based less on personal attachment and more on formal rules and regulations.

Social Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

Race, ethnicity, class, and gender each play a part in group dynamics. Peter Blau (1977; Blau, Blum, & Schwartz, 1982; South & Messner, 1986) points out three ways in which social diversity influences intergroup contact:

- 1. Large groups turn inward.** Blau explains that the larger a group is, the more likely its members are to have relationships just among themselves. Say a college is trying to enhance social diversity by increasing the number of international students. These students may add a dimension of difference, but as the number of students from a particular nation increases, they become more likely to form their own social group. Thus efforts to promote social diversity may have the unintended effect of promoting separatism.
- 2. Heterogeneous groups turn outward.** The more internally diverse a group is, the more likely its members are to interact with outsiders. Members of campus groups

that recruit people of both sexes and various social backgrounds typically have more intergroup contact than those with members of one social category.

3. Physical boundaries create social boundaries. To the extent that a social group is physically segregated from others (by having its own dorm or dining area, for example), its members are less likely to interact with other people.

Networks

A **network** is a web of weak social ties. Think of a network as a “fuzzy” group containing people who come into occasional contact but who lack a sense of boundaries and belonging. If you think of a group as a “circle of friends,” think of a network as a “social web” expanding outward, often reaching great distances and including large numbers of people.

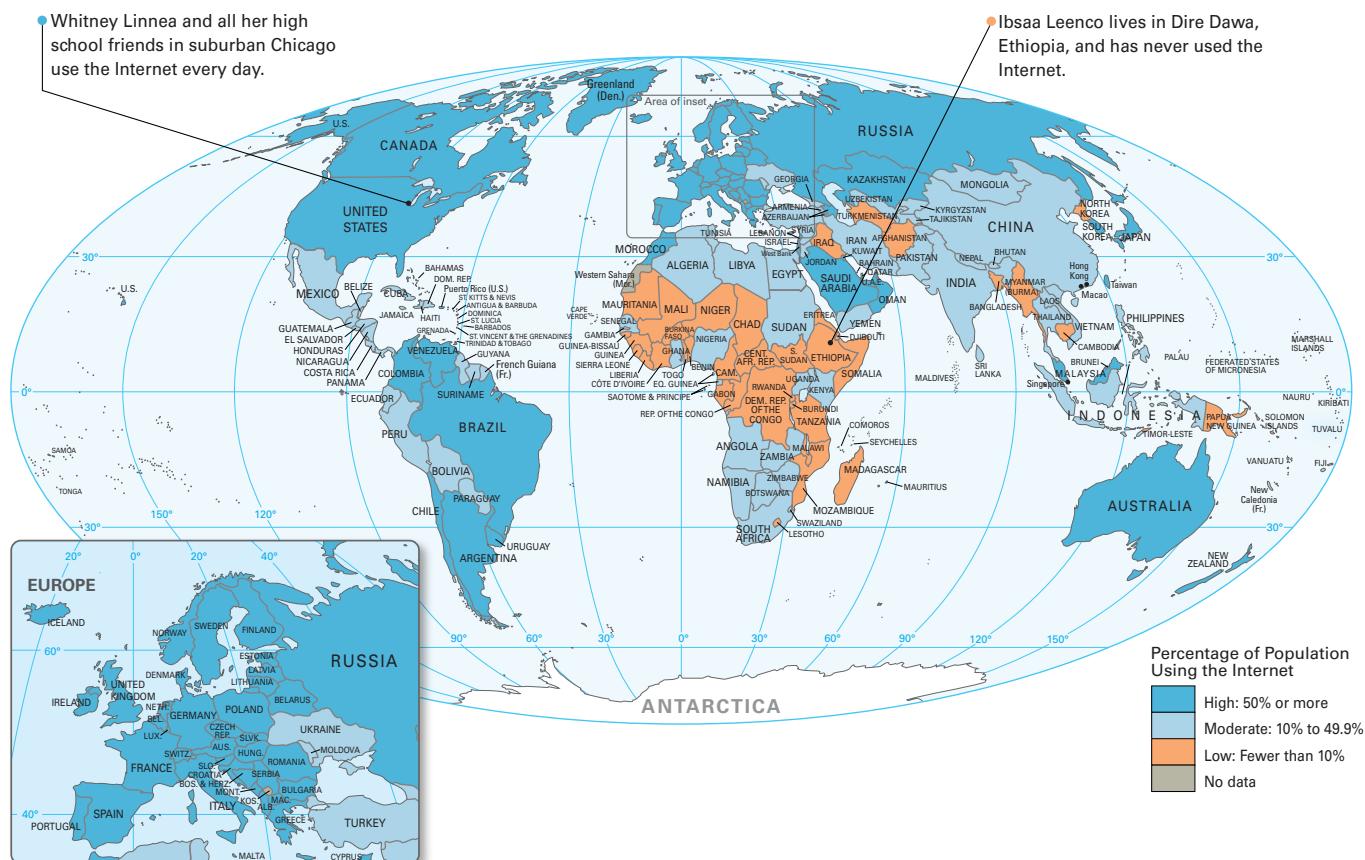
The largest network of all is the World Wide Web of the Internet. But the Internet has expanded much more

in some global regions than in others. Global Map 7–1 shows that Internet use is high in rich countries such as the United States and the countries of Western Europe and far less common in poor nations in Africa and Southeast Asia.

Closer to home, some networks come close to being groups, as is the case with college classmates who stay in touch after graduation through class newsletters and annual reunions. More commonly, however, a network includes people we know of or who know of us but with whom we interact only rarely, if at all. As one woman known as a community organizer explains, “I get calls at home, [and] someone says, ‘Are you Roseann Navarro? Somebody told me to call you. I have this problem . . .’” (quoted in Kaminer, 1984:94).

Network ties often give us the sense that we live in a “small world.” In a classic experiment, Stanley Milgram (1967; Watts, 1999) gave letters to subjects in Kansas and Nebraska intended for a few specific people in Boston who were unknown to the original subjects. No addresses were

Window on the World



Global Map 7–1 Internet Users in Global Perspective

This map shows how the Information Revolution has affected countries around the world. In most high-income nations, at least one-half of the population uses the Internet. By contrast, only a small share of people in low-income nations does so. What effect does this pattern have on people's access to information? What does this mean for the future in terms of global inequality?

SOURCE: International Telecommunication Union (2015).

supplied, and the subjects in the study were told to send the letters to others they knew personally who might know the target people. Milgram found that the target people received the letters with, on average, six subjects passing them on. This result led Milgram to conclude that just about everyone is connected to everyone else by “six degrees of separation.” Later research, however, has cast doubt on Milgram’s conclusions. Examining Milgram’s original data, Judith Kleinfeld points out that most of Milgram’s letters (240 out of 300) never arrived at their destinations (Wildavsky, 2002). Those letters that did arrive typically were given to people who were wealthy, a fact that led Kleinfeld to conclude that rich people are far better connected across the country than ordinary men and women. Illustrating this assertion, convicted swindler Bernard Madoff was able to recruit more than 5,000 clients entirely through his extensive business networks, with each new client encouraging several others to sign up. In the end, these people and their organizations lost some \$50 billion in the largest Ponzi pyramid scheme of all time (Lewis, 2010).

Network ties may be weak, but they can be a powerful resource. For immigrants who are trying to become established in a new community, businesspeople seeking to expand their operations, or new college graduates looking for a job, *who you know* is often as important as *what you know* (Hagan, 1998; Petersen, Saporta, & Seidel, 2000).

Networks are based on people’s colleges, clubs, neighborhoods, political parties, and personal interests. Obviously, some networks contain people with considerably more wealth, power, and prestige than others; that explains the importance of being “well connected.” The networks of more privileged categories of people—such as the members of an expensive country club—are a valuable form of “social capital,” which can lead to benefits such as higher-paying jobs (Green, Tigges, & Diaz, 1999; Lin, Cook, & Burt, 2001).

Some people also have denser networks than others; that is, they are connected to more people. Typically, the largest social networks include people who are affluent, young, well educated, and living in large cities. Networks are also dynamic. Typically, about half of the individuals in a person’s social network change over a period of about seven years (Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997; Podolny & Baron, 1997; Mollenhorst, 2009).

Gender shapes networks. Although the networks of men and women are typically the same size, women include more relatives (and more women) in their networks, and men include more co-workers (and more men). Research suggests that women’s ties do not carry quite the same clout as the “old-boy” networks that men often rely on for career and social advancement. Even so, research suggests that as gender equality increases in the United States, the networks of women and men are becoming more alike (Reskin & McBrier, 2000; Torres & Huffman, 2002).



The 2010 film *The Social Network* depicts the birth of Facebook, now one of the largest social networking sites in the world. In what ways have Internet-based social networks changed social life in the United States?

Social Media and Networking

Networks have long operated as webs of weak social ties involving dozens, hundreds, and for the very “well connected,” even thousands of people. In recent decades, networks have become far larger along with the development of social media based on computer technology. **Social media** refers to *technology that links people in social activity*.

Computer-based social media have exploded in popularity over the past decade. Consider the case of Facebook, which began when a Harvard University sophomore named Mark Zuckerberg developed a simple interactive website for part of his campus in 2003. This site quickly evolved into an early form of what we know today and, within a month, half the campus was using it. Facebook expanded to other campuses, invited high school students to join, and by 2006 was open to anyone over age thirteen with computer access and an e-mail account. By 2011, 600 million people were involved in Facebook networks—double the population of the United States—and by the end of 2014, the number had passed 1.3 billion. Today, Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking sites connect people all over the world.

Formal Organizations

7.2 Describe the operation of large, formal organizations.

A century ago, most people lived in small groups of family, friends, and neighbors. Today, our lives revolve more and more around **formal organizations**, *large secondary groups organized to achieve their goals efficiently*. Formal organizations, such as business corporations and government agencies, differ from families and neighborhoods in their impersonality and their formally planned atmosphere.

When you think about it, organizing more than 316 million people in this country to participate in a

single society is truly remarkable. It is even more amazing when you think that this effort involves activities that range from paving roads to collecting taxes, from schooling children to delivering the mail. To carry out almost all of these tasks, we rely on different types of large formal organizations.

Types of Formal Organizations

Amitai Etzioni (1975) identified three types of formal organizations, distinguished by the reasons people participate in them: utilitarian organizations, normative organizations, and coercive organizations.

UTILITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS Just about everyone who works for income belongs to a *utilitarian organization*, one that pays people for their efforts. Large businesses, for example, generate profits for their owners and income for their employees. Becoming part of a utilitarian organization such as a business or government agency is usually a matter of individual choice, although most people must join one or another such organization to make a living.

NORMATIVE ORGANIZATIONS People join *normative organizations* not for income but to pursue some goal they think is morally worthwhile. Sometimes called *voluntary associations*, these include community service groups (such as the PTA, the Lions Club, the League of Women Voters, and the Red Cross), as well as political parties and religious organizations. In global perspective, people living in the United States and other high-income nations with relatively democratic political systems are likely to join voluntary associations. A recent study found that 74 percent of first-year college students in the United States claimed to have participated in some volunteer activity within the past year (Eagan et al., 2014).

COERCIVE ORGANIZATIONS Membership in *coercive organizations* is involuntary. People are forced to join these organizations as a form of punishment (prisons) or treatment (some psychiatric hospitals). Coercive organizations have special physical features, such as locked doors and barred windows, and are supervised by security personnel. They isolate people, whom they label “inmates” or “patients,” for a period of time in order to radically change their attitudes and behavior. Recall from Chapter 5 (“Socialization”) the power of a total institution to change a person’s sense of self.

It is possible for a single organization to fall into *all* three categories from the point of view of different individuals. For example, a mental hospital serves as a coercive organization for a patient, a utilitarian organization for a psychiatrist, and a normative organization for a hospital volunteer.

Origins of Formal Organizations

Formal organizations date back thousands of years. Elites who controlled early empires relied on government officials to collect taxes, undertake military campaigns, and build monumental structures, from the Great Wall of China to the pyramids of Egypt.

However, early organizations had two limitations. First, they lacked the technology to let people travel over large distances, to communicate quickly, and to gather and store information. Second, the preindustrial societies they were trying to rule had traditional cultures. **Tradition**, according to German sociologist Max Weber, consists of *behavior, values, and beliefs passed from generation to generation*. Tradition makes a society conservative, Weber explained, because it limits an organization’s productive efficiency and ability to change.

By contrast, Weber described the modern worldview as based on **rationality**, *a way of thinking that emphasizes deliberate, matter-of-fact calculation of the most efficient way to accomplish a particular task*. A rational worldview pays little attention to the past and encourages productive efficiency because it is open to any changes that might get the job done better or more quickly.

The rise of the modern world rests on what Weber called the **rationalization of society**, *the historical change from tradition to rationality as the main type of human thought*. Modern society, he claimed, becomes “disenchanted” as sentimental ties give way to a rational focus on science, complex technology, and the organizational structure called “bureaucracy.”

Characteristics of Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy is *an organizational model rationally designed to perform tasks efficiently*. Bureaucratic officials regularly create and revise policy to increase efficiency. To appreciate the power and scope of bureaucratic organization, consider that any one of more than 400 million telephones in the United States can connect you within seconds to any other phone in a home, business, automobile, or even a hiker’s backpack on a remote trail in the Rocky Mountains. Such instant communication was beyond the imagination of people who lived in the ancient world.

Our telephone system depends on technology such as electricity, fiber optics, and computers. But the system could not exist without the bureaucracy that keeps track

rationalization of society the historical change from tradition to rationality as the main type of human thought

tradition behavior, values, and beliefs passed from generation to generation

rationality a way of thinking that emphasizes deliberate, matter-of-fact calculation of the most efficient way to accomplish a particular task

of every telephone call—noting which phone calls which other phone, when, and for how long—and then presents the relevant information to some 300 million telephone users in the form of a monthly bill (FCC, 2010; CTIA, 2012).

What specific traits promote organizational efficiency? Max Weber (1978, orig. 1921) identified six key elements of the ideal bureaucratic organization:

- 1. Specialization.** Our ancestors spent most of their time performing the general task of looking for food and shelter. Bureaucracy, by contrast, assigns people highly specialized jobs.
- 2. Hierarchy of positions.** Bureaucracies arrange workers in a vertical ranking. Each person is supervised by someone “higher up” in the organization while in turn supervising others in lower positions. Usually, with few people at the top and many at the bottom, bureaucratic organizations take the form of a pyramid.
- 3. Rules and regulations.** Cultural tradition counts for little in a bureaucracy. Instead, rationally enacted rules and regulations guide a bureaucracy’s operation. Ideally, a bureaucracy operates in a completely predictable way.
- 4. Technical competence.** Bureaucratic officials have the technical competence to carry out their duties. Bureaucracies typically hire new members according to set standards and then monitor their performance. Such impersonal evaluation contrasts with the ancient custom of favoring relatives, whatever their talents, over strangers.
- 5. Impersonality.** Bureaucracy puts rules ahead of personal whim so that both clients and workers are treated in the same way. From this impersonal approach comes the image of the “faceless bureaucrat.”
- 6. Formal, written communications.** It is said that the heart of bureaucracy is not people but paperwork. Instead of the casual, face-to-face talk that characterizes interaction within small groups, bureaucracy relies on formal, written memos and reports, which accumulate in vast files.

Bureaucratic organization promotes efficiency by carefully hiring workers and limiting the unpredictable effects of personal taste and opinion. The Summing Up table on page 198 reviews the differences between small social groups and large bureaucratic organizations.

Organizational Environment

No organization operates in a vacuum. The performance of any organization depends not only on its own goals and policies but also on the **organizational environment**, *factors outside an organization that affect its operation*. These factors include technology, economic and political trends, current events, the available workforce, and other organizations.



Weber described the operation of the ideal bureaucracy as rational and highly efficient. In real life, however, organizations often operate very differently than Weber’s model, as can be seen in the television show *The Mindy Project*.

Modern organizations are shaped by *technology*, including copiers, fax machines, telephones, and computers. This technology gives employees access to more information and more people than ever before. At the same time, modern technology allows managers to monitor worker activities much more closely than in the past (Markoff, 1991).

Economic and political trends affect organizations. All organizations are helped or hurt by periodic economic growth or recession. Most industries also face competition from abroad as well as changes in laws—such as new environmental standards—at home.

Population patterns also affect organizations. The average age, typical level of education, social diversity, and size of a local community determine the available workforce and sometimes the market for an organization’s products or services.

Current events can have significant effects on organizations that are far removed from the location of the events themselves. Events such as the sweeping political revolutions in the Middle East in 2011 and the reelection of President Obama in the 2012 presidential election affect the operation of both government agencies and business organizations.

Other organizations also contribute to the organizational environment. To be competitive, a hospital must be responsive to the insurance industry and to organizations representing doctors, nurses, and other health care workers. It must also be aware of the equipment and procedures available at nearby facilities, as well as their prices.

The Informal Side of Bureaucracy

Weber’s ideal bureaucracy deliberately regulates every activity. In actual organizations, however, human beings are creative (and stubborn) enough to resist bureaucratic regulation. Informality may amount to simply cutting corners

SUMMING UP

Small Groups and Formal Organizations

	Small Groups	Formal Organizations
Activities	Much the same for all members	Distinct and highly specialized
Hierarchy	Often informal or nonexistent	Clearly defined according to position
Norms	General norms, informally applied	Clearly defined rules and regulations
Membership criteria	Variable; often based on personal affection or kinship	Technical competence to carry out assigned tasks
Relationships	Variable and typically primary	Typically secondary, with selective primary ties
Communications	Typically casual and face-to-face	Typically formal and in writing
Focus	Person-oriented	Task-oriented

on your job, but it can also provide the flexibility needed to adapt and prosper.

In part, informality comes from the personalities of organizational leaders. Studies of U.S. corporations document that the qualities and quirks of individuals—including personal charisma, interpersonal skills, and the willingness to recognize problems—can have a great effect on organizational outcomes (Halberstam, 1986; Baron, Hannan, & Burton, 1999).

Authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire types of leadership (described earlier in this chapter) reflect individual personality as much as any organizational plan. In the “real world” of organizations, leaders sometimes seek to benefit personally by abusing organizational power. Many of the corporate leaders of banks and insurance companies that collapsed during the financial meltdown of 2008 walked off with huge “golden parachutes.” Throughout the business world, leaders take credit for the efforts of the people who work for them, at least when things go well. In addition, the importance of many secretaries to how well a boss performs is often much greater than most people think (and greater than a secretary’s official job title and salary suggest).

Communication offers another example of organizational informality. Memos and other written communications are the formal way to spread information throughout an organization. Typically, however, individuals also create informal networks, or “grapevines,” that spread information quickly, if not always accurately. Grapevines, using both word of mouth and e-mail, are particularly important to rank-and-file workers because higher-ups often try to keep important information from them.

The spread of e-mail has “flattened” organizations somewhat, allowing even the lowest-ranking employee to bypass immediate superiors and communicate directly with the organization’s leader or with all fellow employees at once. Some organizations object to such “open-channel” communication and limit the use of e-mail. Microsoft Corporation (whose founder, Bill Gates, has an unlisted e-mail address that helps him limit his mail to a few hundred messages a day) pioneered the development of screens

that filter out messages from everyone except certain approved people (Gwynne & Dickerson, 1997).

Using new information technology as well as age-old human ingenuity, members of organizations often try to break free of rigid rules in order to personalize procedures and surroundings. Such efforts suggest that we should take a closer look at some of the problems of bureaucracy.

Problems of Bureaucracy

We rely on bureaucracy to manage everyday life efficiently, but many people are uneasy about large organizations. Bureaucracy can dehumanize and manipulate us, and some say it poses a threat to political democracy. These dangers are discussed in the following sections.

BUREAUCRATIC ALIENATION Max Weber held up bureaucracy as a model of productivity. However, Weber was keenly aware of bureaucracy’s ability to *dehumanize* the people it is supposed to serve. The same impersonality that fosters efficiency also keeps officials and clients from responding to one another’s unique personal needs. Typically, officials at large government and corporate agencies must treat each client impersonally as a standard “case.” In 2008, for example, the U.S. Army accidentally sent letters to family members of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, addressing the recipients as “John Doe” (“Army Apologizes,” 2009).

Formal organizations breed *alienation*, according to Weber, by reducing the human being to “a small cog in a ceaselessly moving mechanism” (1978:988, orig. 1921). Although formal organizations are designed to benefit people, Weber feared that people might well end up serving formal organizations.

BUREAUCRATIC INEFFICIENCY AND RITUALISM On Labor Day 2005, as people in New Orleans and other coastal areas were battling to survive in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, 600 firefighters from around the country assembled in a hotel meeting room in Atlanta awaiting deployment. Officials of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) explained to the crowd that they were first

going to be given a lecture on “equal opportunity, sexual harassment, and customer service.” Then, the official continued, they would each be given a stack of FEMA pamphlets with the agency’s phone number to distribute to people in the devastated areas. A firefighter stood up and shouted, “This is ridiculous! Our fire departments and mayors sent us down here to save lives, and you’ve got us doing *this*?” The FEMA official thundered back, “You are now employees of FEMA, and you will follow orders and do what you are told!” (“Places,” 2005:39).

People sometimes describe this inefficiency as too much “red tape,” a reference to the ribbon used by slow-working eighteenth-century English administrators to wrap official parcels and records (Shipley, 1985).

To Robert Merton (1968), red tape amounts to a new twist on the already familiar concept of group conformity. He coined the term **bureaucratic ritualism** to describe *a focus on rules and regulations to the point of undermining an organization’s goals*. In short, rules and regulations should be a means to an end, not an end in themselves that takes the focus away from the organization’s stated goals. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, for example, the U.S. Postal Service continued to help deliver mail addressed to Osama bin Laden at a post office in Afghanistan, despite the objections of the FBI. It took an act of Congress to change the policy (Bedard, 2002).

BUREAUCRATIC INERTIA If bureaucrats sometimes have little reason to work very hard, they have every reason to protect their jobs. Officials typically work to keep an organization going even after its original goal has been realized. As Weber put it, “Once fully established, bureaucracy is among the social structures which are hardest to destroy” (1978:987, orig. 1921).

Bureaucratic inertia refers to *the tendency of bureaucratic organizations to perpetuate themselves*. Formal organizations tend to take on a life of their own beyond their formal objectives. For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has offices in nearly every county in all fifty states, even though only one county in seven has any working farms. Usually, an organization stays in business by redefining its goals. For example, the Agriculture Department now performs a broad range of work not directly related to farming, including nutritional and environmental research.



George Tooker’s painting *Government Bureau* is a powerful statement about the human costs of bureaucracy. The artist paints members of the public in a drab sameness—reduced from human beings to mere “cases” to be disposed of as quickly as possible. Set apart from others by their positions, officials are “faceless bureaucrats” concerned more with numbers than with providing genuine assistance (notice that the artist places the fingers of the officials on calculators).

George Tooker, *Government Bureau*, 1956. Egg tempera on gesso panel, 19 × 29 inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, George A. Hearn Fund, 1956 (56.78). Photograph © 1984 The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Image source: Art Resource, NY.

political **oligarchy**, *the rule of the many by the few* (1949, orig. 1911). According to what Michels called the “iron law of oligarchy,” the pyramid shape of bureaucracy places a few leaders in charge of the resources of the entire organization.

Weber believed that a strict hierarchy of responsibility resulted in high organizational efficiency. But Michels countered that this hierarchical structure also concentrates power and thus threatens democracy because officials can and often do use their access to information, resources, and the media to promote their own personal interests.

Furthermore, bureaucracy helps distance officials from the public, as in the case of the corporate president or public official who is “unavailable for comment” to the local press or the U.S. president who withholds documents from Congress claiming “executive privilege.” Oligarchy, then, thrives in the hierarchical structure of bureaucracy and reduces leaders’ accountability to the people.

Political competition, term limits, and a legal system that includes various checks and balances prevent the U.S. government from becoming an out-and-out oligarchy. Even so, incumbents, who generally have more visibility, power, and money than their challengers, enjoy a significant advantage in U.S. politics. In the 2014 midterm elections, 82 percent of senators and 95 percent of members of the House of Representatives who were on the ballot were able to win reelection.

Oligarchy

Early in the twentieth century, Robert Michels (1876–1936) pointed out the link between bureaucracy and

The Evolution of Formal Organizations

7.3 Summarize the changes to formal organizations over the course of the last century.

The problems of bureaucracy—especially the alienation it produces and its tendency toward oligarchy—stem from two organizational traits: hierarchy and rigidity. To Weber, bureaucracy was a top-down system: Rules and regulations made at the top guide every facet of people's lives down the chain of command. A century ago in the United States, Weber's ideas took hold in an organizational model called *scientific management*. We take a look at this model and then examine three challenges over the course of the twentieth century that gradually led to a new model: the *flexible organization*.

Scientific Management

Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911) had a simple message: Most businesses in the United States were sadly inefficient. Managers had little idea of how to increase their business's output, and workers relied on the same tired skills of earlier generations. To increase efficiency, Taylor explained, business should apply the principles of science. **Scientific management** is thus *the application of scientific principles to the operation of a business or other large organization*.

Scientific management involves three steps. First, managers carefully observe the task performed by each worker, identifying all the operations involved and measuring the time needed for each. Second, managers analyze their data, trying to discover ways for workers to perform each job more efficiently. For example, managers might decide to give the worker different tools or to reposition various work operations within the factory. Third, management provides guidance and incentives for workers to do their jobs more quickly. If a factory worker moves 20 tons of pig iron in one day, for example, management shows the worker how to do the job more efficiently and then provides higher wages as the worker's productivity rises. Taylor concluded that if scientific principles were applied in this way, companies would become more profitable, workers would earn higher wages, and consumers would benefit by paying lower prices.

A century ago, auto pioneer Henry Ford put it this way: "Save ten steps a day for each of 12,000 employees, and you will have saved fifty miles of wasted motion and misspent energy" (Allen & Hyman, 1999:209). In the early 1900s, the Ford Motor Company and many other businesses followed Taylor's lead and made improvements in efficiency. Today, corporations carefully review every aspect of their operation in a never-ending effort to increase efficiency.

The principles of scientific management suggested that workplace power should reside with owners and executives, who have historically paid little attention to the

ideas of their workers. Formal organizations have also faced important challenges, involving race and gender, rising competition from abroad, and the changing nature of work. We now take a brief look at each of these challenges.

The First Challenge: Race and Gender

In the 1960s, critics charged that big businesses and other organizations engaged in unfair hiring practices. Rather than hiring on the basis of competence as Weber had proposed, organizations excluded women and other minorities, especially from positions of power. Hiring on the basis of competence is only partly a matter of fairness; it is also a matter of enlarging the talent pool to promote efficiency.

PATTERNS OF PRIVILEGE AND EXCLUSION Even in the early twenty-first century, as shown in Figure 7–3, non-Hispanic white men in the United States—32 percent of the working-age population—still held 63 percent of management jobs. Non-Hispanic white women made up 32 percent of the population but held just 25 percent of managerial positions (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2014). The members of other minorities lagged further behind.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977; Kanter & Stein, 1979) claims that excluding women and minorities from the workplace ignores the talents of half the population. Furthermore, underrepresented people in an organization often feel like socially isolated out-groups—uncomfortably visible, taken less seriously, and given fewer chances for promotion. Sometimes what passes for "merit" or good work in an organization is simply being of the right social category (Castilla, 2008).

Opening up an organization so that change and advancement happen more often, Kanter claims, improves everyone's on-the-job performance by motivating employees to become "fast-trackers" who work harder and are more committed to the company. By contrast, an organization with many dead-end jobs turns workers into less productive "zombies" who are never asked for their opinion on anything. An open organization encourages leaders to seek out the input of all employees, which usually improves decision making.

THE "FEMALE ADVANTAGE" Some organizational researchers argue that women bring special management skills that strengthen an organization. According to Deborah Tannen (1994), women have a greater "information focus" and more readily ask questions in order to understand an issue. Men, by contrast, have an "image focus" that makes them wonder how asking questions in a particular situation will affect their reputation.

In another study of women executives, Sally Helgesen (1990) found three other gender-linked patterns. First, women place greater value on communication skills than men and

share information more than men do. Second, women are more flexible leaders who typically give their employees greater freedom. Third, compared to men, women tend to emphasize the interconnectedness of all organizational operations. These patterns, which Helgesen dubbed the *female advantage*, help make companies more flexible and democratic.

In sum, one challenge to conventional bureaucracy is to become more open and flexible in order to take advantage of the experience, ideas, and creativity of everyone, regardless of race or gender. The result goes right to the bottom line: greater profits.

The Second Challenge: The Japanese Work Organization

In 1980, the U.S. corporate world was shaken to discover that the most popular automobile model sold in this country was not a Chevrolet, Ford, or Plymouth but the Honda Accord, made in Japan. Several years ago, the Japanese corporation Toyota passed General Motors to become the largest carmaker in the world (*Forbes*, 2014). This is quite a change. As late as the 1950s, U.S. automakers dominated car production, and the label "Made in Japan" was generally found on products that were cheap and poorly made. The success of the Japanese auto industry, as well as companies making cameras and other products, drew attention to the "Japanese work organization." How was so small a country able to challenge the world's economic powerhouse?

Japanese organizations reflect that nation's strong collective spirit. In contrast to the U.S. emphasis on rugged individualism, the Japanese value cooperation. In effect, formal organizations in Japan are more like large primary groups. A generation ago, William Ouchi (1981) highlighted five differences between formal organizations in Japan and those in the United States. First, Japanese companies hired new workers in groups, giving everyone the same salary and responsibilities. Second, many Japanese companies hired workers for life, fostering a strong sense of loyalty. Third, with the idea that employees would spend their entire careers there, many Japanese companies trained workers in all phases of their operations. Fourth, although Japanese corporate leaders took final responsibility for their organization's performance, they involved workers in "quality circles" to discuss decisions that affected them. Fifth, Japanese companies played a large role in the lives of workers, providing home mortgages, sponsoring recreational activities, and scheduling social events. Together, such policies encourage much more loyalty

Diversity Snapshot

- Compared to their percentage of the total population, white men are overrepresented in senior management positions.

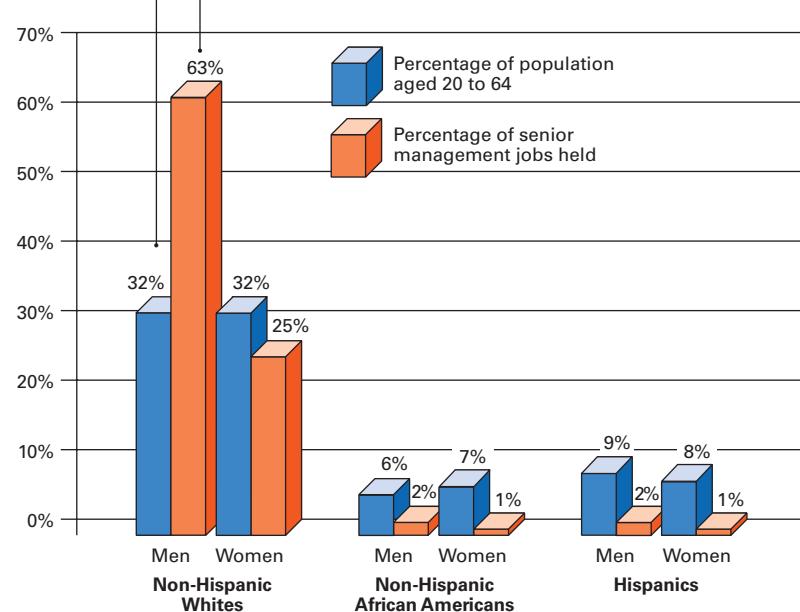


Figure 7–3 U.S. Managers in Private Industry, by Race, Gender, and Ethnicity, 2013

White men are more likely than their population size suggests to be managers in private industry. The opposite is true for white women and other minorities. What factors do you think may account for this pattern?

SOURCES: U.S. Census Bureau (2014) and U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2014).

among members of Japanese organizations than is typically the case in their U.S. counterparts.

Not everything has worked well for Japan's corporations. About 1990, the Japanese economy entered a recession that has lasted for two decades. During this downturn, many Japanese companies have changed their policies, no longer offering workers jobs for life or many of the other benefits noted by Ouchi. But the long-term outlook for Japan's business organizations remains bright.

In recent years, the widely admired Toyota corporation has also seen challenges. After expanding its operations to become the world's largest carmaker, Toyota was forced to recall millions of automobiles due to mechanical problems, suggesting that one consequence of the company's rapid growth was losing focus on what had been the key to its success all along—quality (Saporito, 2010).

The Third Challenge: The Changing Nature of Work

Beyond rising global competition and the need to provide equal opportunity for all, pressure to modify conventional organizations is coming from changes in the

nature of work itself. Chapter 4 ("Society") described the shift from industrial to postindustrial production. Rather than working in factories using heavy machinery to make *things*, more and more people are using computers and other electronic technology to create or process *information*. The postindustrial society, then, is characterized by information-based organizations.

Frederick Taylor developed his concept of scientific management at a time when jobs involved tasks that, though often backbreaking, were routine and repetitive. Workers shoveled coal, poured liquid iron into molds, welded body panels to automobiles on an assembly line, or shot hot rivets into steel girders to build skyscrapers. In addition, many of the industrial workers in Taylor's day were immigrants, most of whom had little schooling and many of whom knew little English. The routine nature of industrial jobs, coupled with the limited skills of the labor force, led Taylor to treat work as a series of fixed tasks, set down by management and followed by employees.

Many of today's information age jobs are very different: The work of designers, artists, writers, composers, programmers, business owners, and others now demands individual creativity and imagination. Here are several ways in which today's organizations differ from those of a century ago:

- 1. Creative freedom.** As one Hewlett-Packard executive put it, "From their first day of work here, people are given important responsibilities and are encouraged to grow" (cited in Brooks, 2000:128). Today's organiza-

tions now treat employees with information age skills as a vital resource. Executives can set production goals but cannot dictate how a worker is to accomplish tasks that require imagination and discovery. This gives highly skilled workers *creative freedom*, which means less day-to-day supervision as long as they generate good results in the long run.

- 2. Competitive work teams.** Organizations typically give several groups of employees the freedom to work on a problem, offering the greatest rewards to those who come up with the best solution. Competitive work teams, a strategy first used by Japanese organizations, draw out the creative contributions of everyone and at the same time reduce the alienation often found in conventional organizations (Maddox, 1994; Yeatts, 1994).
- 3. A flatter organization.** By spreading responsibility for creative problem solving throughout the workforce, organizations take on a flatter shape. That is, the pyramid shape of conventional bureaucracy is replaced by an organizational form with fewer levels in the chain of command, as shown in Figure 7–4.
- 4. Greater flexibility.** The typical industrial age organization was a rigid structure guided from the top. Such organizations may accomplish a large amount of work, but they are not especially creative or able to respond quickly to changes in the larger environment. The ideal model in the information age is a more open, *flexible* organization that both generates new ideas and adapts quickly to the rapidly changing global marketplace.

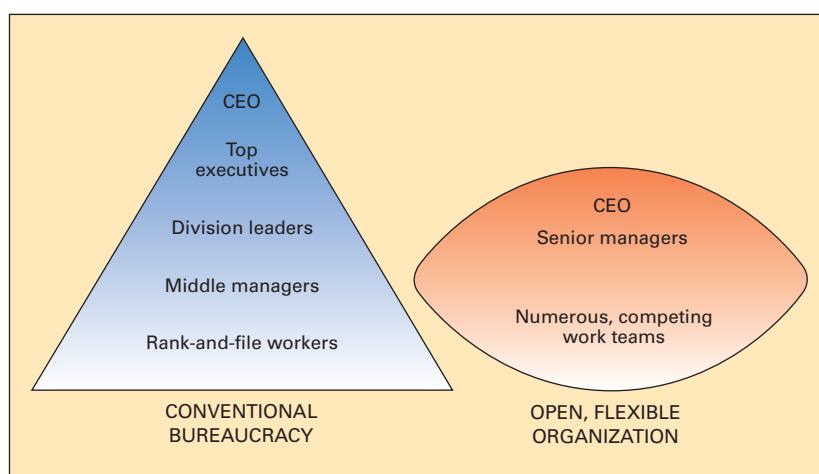


Figure 7–4 Two Organizational Models

The conventional model of bureaucratic organizations has a pyramid shape, with a clear chain of command. Orders flow from the top down, and reports of performance flow from the bottom up. Such organizations have extensive rules and regulations, and their workers have highly specialized jobs. More open and flexible organizations have a flatter shape, more like a football. With fewer levels in the hierarchy, responsibility for generating ideas and making decisions is shared throughout the organization. Many workers do their jobs in teams and have a broad knowledge of the entire organization's operation.

SOURCE: Created by the author.

What does all this mean for formal organizations? As David Brooks puts it, "The machine is no longer held up as the standard that healthy organizations should emulate. Now it's the ecosystem" (2000:128). Today's "smart" companies seek out intelligent, creative people (AOL's main building is called "Creative Center 1") and nurture the growth of their talents.

Keep in mind, however, that many of today's jobs do not involve creative work at all. More correctly, the postindustrial economy has created two very different types of work: high-skill creative work and low-skill service work. Work in the fast-food industry, for example, is routine and highly supervised and thus has much more in common with the factory work of a century ago than with the creative teamwork typical of today's information organizations. Therefore, at the same time that some organizations have taken on a flexible, flatter form, others continue to use the rigid chain of command.



The best of today's information age jobs—including working at Google, the popular search engine website—allow people lots of personal freedom as long as they produce good ideas. At the same time, many other jobs, such as working the counter at McDonald's, involve the same routines and strict supervision found in factories a century ago.

The “McDonaldization” of Society

As noted in the opening to this chapter, McDonald's has enjoyed enormous success, now operating more than 36,000 restaurants in the United States and around the world. Japan has more than 3,164 Golden Arches; Europe has 7,600 restaurants, and in 2012 McDonald's opened a giant restaurant in London that employs 500 people and seats 1,500 customers.

McDonald's is far more than a restaurant chain; it is a symbol of U.S. culture. Not only do people around the world associate McDonald's with the United States, but also here at home, one poll found that 98 percent of schoolchildren could identify Ronald McDonald, making him as well known as Santa Claus.

Even more important, the organizational principles that underlie McDonald's are coming to dominate our entire society. Our culture is becoming "McDonaldized," an awkward way of saying that we model many aspects of life on this restaurant chain: Parents buy toys at worldwide chain stores all carrying identical merchandise; we drop in for a ten-minute oil change while running errands; face-to-face communication is being replaced more and more by e-mail, voice mail, and texting; more vacations take the form of resorts and tour packages; television packages the news in the form of ten-second sound bites; college admissions officers size up students they have never met by glancing at their GPA and SAT scores; and professors assign ghost-written textbooks¹ and evaluate students with tests mass-produced for them by publishing companies. The list goes on and on.

FOUR PRINCIPLES What do all these developments have in common? According to George Ritzer (1993), the McDonaldization of society rests on four organizational principles:

1. **Efficiency.** Ray Kroc, the marketing genius behind the expansion of McDonald's back in the 1950s, set out

to serve a hamburger, French fries, and a milkshake to a customer in exactly fifty seconds. Today, one of the company's most popular menu items is the Egg McMuffin, an entire breakfast in a single sandwich. In the restaurant, customers dispose of their trash and stack their own trays as they walk out the door or, better still, drive away from the pickup window taking whatever mess they make with them. Such efficiency is now central to our way of life. We tend to think that anything done quickly is, for that reason alone, good.

2. **Predictability.** An efficient organization wants to make everything it does as predictable as possible. McDonald's prepares all food using set formulas. Company policies guide the performance of every job.
3. **Uniformity.** The first McDonald's operating manual set the weight of a regular raw hamburger at 1.6 ounces, its size at 3.875 inches across, and its fat content at 19 percent. A slice of cheese weighs exactly half an ounce. Fries are cut precisely 9/32 of an inch thick.

Think about how many objects around your home, the workplace, and the campus are designed and mass-produced according to a standard plan. Not just our environment but also our life experiences—from traveling the nation's interstates to sitting at home viewing television—are more standardized than ever before.

Almost anywhere in the world, a person can walk into a McDonald's restaurant and purchase the same sandwiches, drinks, and desserts prepared in precisely the same way.² Uniformity results from a highly

² As McDonald's has "gone global," a few products have been added or changed to reflect local tastes. For example, in Uruguay, customers enjoy the McHuevo (hamburger with poached egg on top); Norwegians can buy McLaks (grilled salmon sandwiches); the Dutch favor the Groenteburger (vegetable burger); in Thailand, McDonald's serves Samurai pork burgers (pork burgers with teriyaki sauce); the Japanese can purchase a Chicken Tatsuta Sandwich (chicken seasoned with soy and ginger); Filipinos eat McSpaghetti (spaghetti with tomato sauce and bits of hot dog); and in India, where Hindus eat no beef, McDonald's sells a vegetarian Maharaja Mac (Sullivan, 1995).

¹ A number of popular sociology books were not written by the person whose name appears on the cover. This book is not one of them. Even the test bank and the material in Revel were written by the author.

rational system that specifies every action and leaves nothing to chance.

4. Control. The most unreliable element in the McDonald's system is the human beings who work there. After all, people have good and bad days, sometimes let their minds wander, or simply decide to try something a different way. To minimize the unpredictable human element, McDonald's has automated its equipment to cook food at a fixed temperature for a set length of time. Even the cash register at McDonald's is keyed to pictures of the items so that ringing up a customer's order is as simple as possible.

Similarly, automatic teller machines are replacing bank tellers, highly automated bakeries now produce bread while people stand back and watch, and chickens and eggs (or is it eggs and chickens?) emerge from automated hatcheries. In supermarkets, laser scanners at self-checkouts are phasing out human checkers. We do most of our shopping in malls, where everything from temperature and humidity to the kinds of stores and products sold are subject to continuous control and supervision (Ide & Cordell, 1994).

CAN RATIONALITY BE IRRATIONAL? There is no doubt about the popularity or efficiency of McDonald's. But there is another side to the story.

Max Weber was alarmed at the increasing rationalization of the world, fearing that formal organizations would cage our imaginations and crush the human spirit. As Weber saw it, rational systems were efficient but dehumanizing. McDonaldization bears him out. Each of the four principles just discussed limits human creativity, choice, and freedom. Echoing Weber, Ritzer states that "the ultimate irrationality of McDonaldization is that people could lose control over

the system and it would come to control us" (1993:145). Perhaps even McDonald's understands this—the company has now expanded its more upscale offerings to include premium roasted coffee and salad selections that are more sophisticated, fresh, and healthful (Philadelphia, 2002).

The Future of Organizations: Opposing Trends

Early in the twentieth century, ever-larger organizations arose in the United States, most taking on the bureaucratic form described by Max Weber. In many respects, these organizations resembled armies led by powerful generals who issued orders to their captains and lieutenants. Foot soldiers, working in the factories, did what they were told.

With the emergence of a postindustrial economy around 1950, as well as rising competition from abroad, many organizations evolved toward a flatter, more flexible model that prizes communication and creativity. Such "intelligent organizations" (Pinchot & Pinchot, 1993; Brooks, 2000) have become more productive than ever. Just as important, for highly skilled people who now enjoy creative freedom, these organizations cause less of the alienation that so worried Weber.

But this is only half the story. Although the postindustrial economy has created many highly skilled jobs over the past half-century, it has created even more routine service jobs. Fast-food companies now represent the largest pool of low-wage labor, aside from migrant workers, in the United States (Schlosser, 2002). Work of this kind, which Ritzer terms "McJobs," offers few of the benefits that today's highly skilled workers enjoy. On the contrary, the automated routines that define work in the fast-food industry, telemarketing, and similar fields are very much the same as those that Frederick Taylor described a century ago.

Today, organizational flexibility gives better-off workers more freedom but often means the threat of "downsizing" and job loss for many rank-and-file employees. Organizations facing global competition seek out creative employees, but they are also eager to cut costs by eliminating as many routine jobs as possible. The net result is that some people are better off than ever, while others worry about holding their jobs and struggle to make ends meet—a trend that Chapter 11 ("Social Class in the United States") explores in detail.

U.S. organizations are the envy of the world for their productive efficiency. For example, there are few places on Earth where the mail arrives as quickly and dependably as it does in this country. But we should remember that the future is far brighter for some workers than for others. In addition, as the Controversy & Debate box explains, organizations pose an increasing threat to our privacy—something to keep in mind as we envision our organizational future.



This new data center for the National Security Administration (NSA) in Utah will have the capacity to store a hundred times more data than humanity has created in the entire history of the computer. The NSA's pattern of monitoring telephone calls and e-mails caused national alarm in 2013, sparking criticism that this practice represents a large loss of personal privacy. How much are you willing to allow government officials to oversee your personal communications with the goal of keeping terrorism at bay?

Controversy & Debate

Computer Technology, Large Organizations, and the Assault on Privacy

Jake completes a page on Facebook, which includes his name and college, e-mail address, photo, biography, and current personal interests. It can be accessed by billions of people around the world.

Late for a meeting with a new client, Sarah drives her car through a yellow light as it turns red at a main intersection. A computer linked to a pair of cameras notes the violation and takes one picture of her license plate and another of her sitting in the driver's seat. In seven days, she receives a summons to appear in traffic court.

Julio looks through his mail and finds a letter from a data services company telling him that he is one of about 145,000 people whose name, address, Social Security number, and credit file have recently been sold to criminals posing as businesspeople. With this information, other people can obtain credit cards or take out loans in his name.

These cases show that today's organizations—which know more about us than ever before and more than most of us realize—pose a growing threat to personal privacy. Large organizations are necessary for today's society to operate. In some cases, organizations using or selling information about us may actually be helpful. But cases of identity theft are on the rise, and personal privacy is on the decline.

In the past, small-town life gave people little privacy. But at least if people knew something about you, you were just as likely to know something about them. Today, unknown people "out there" can access information about each of us all the time without our learning about it.

In part, the loss of privacy is a result of more and more complex computer technology. Are you aware that every e-mail you send and every website you visit leaves a record in one or more computers? These records can be retrieved by people you don't know as well as by employers and other public officials.

The nature of the U.S. economy is another factor causing the erosion of privacy. Why are more and more organizations trying to learn more and more about us? The reason is simple: Personal information that businesses collect can be traded for economic gain (Rainie & Anderson, 2014).

Another part of today's loss of privacy reflects the number and size of formal organizations. As explained in this chapter, large organizations tend to treat people impersonally, and they have a huge appetite for information. Mix large organizations with ever more complex computer technology, and it is no wonder that many people are concerned about who knows what about them and what other people are doing with this information.

For decades, the level of personal privacy in the United States has been declining. Early in the twentieth century, when state agencies began issuing driver's licenses, they generated files for every licensed driver. Today, officials can send this information at the touch of a button to the police and to all sorts of other organizations. The Internal Revenue Service and the Social Security Administration, as well as government agencies that benefit veterans, students, the unemployed, and the poor, all collect mountains of personal information.

Business organizations now do much the same thing. Most of us use credit—the U.S. population now has more than 1 billion credit cards, an average of five per adult—but the companies that do "credit checks" collect and distribute information about us to almost anyone who asks.

Then there are the small cameras found not only at traffic intersections but also in stores, public buildings, and parking garages and across college campuses. So-called security cameras may increase public safety—say, by discouraging a mugger or even a terrorist—at the cost of the little privacy we have left. In the United Kingdom, the typical resident of London appears on closed-circuit television about 300 times every day, and all this "tracking" is stored in computer files. Here in the United States, New York City already has 4,000 surveillance cameras in the streets and subway system, which city officials claim might well have prevented an attack such as the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. Conventional aircraft and drones equipped with multiple, high-resolution camera allow police and other officials to track the movement of people and vehicles across whole cities (Rossen & Connor, 2013; Timberg, 2014).

Government monitoring of the population has been expanding steadily in recent years. After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the federal government took steps (including passage of the USA PATRIOT Act) to strengthen national security. Today, government officials closely monitor not only people entering the country but also the activities of all of us. It is possible that these efforts increase national security, but it is certain that they erode personal privacy.

Some legal protections remain. Every state has laws that give citizens the right to examine some records about themselves kept by employers, banks, and credit bureaus. The federal Privacy Act of 1974 also limits the exchange of personal information among government agencies and permits citizens to examine and correct most government files. In response to rising levels of identity theft, Congress is likely to pass more laws to regulate the sale of credit information. But the danger to privacy and individual rights is rising. One recent analysis concluded that within a few years governments will have access to the technology needed to completely monitor and record virtually everything people say or do within a country. Many organizations—private as well as public—already have information about us and experts estimate that 90 percent of U.S. households are profiled in databases somewhere. Can current laws ensure that privacy will remain part of our way of life?

What Do You Think?

1. Do you think that the use of surveillance cameras in public places enhances or reduces personal security? Explain.
2. What about automatic toll payment technology (such as E-ZPass) that allows you to move more quickly through highway toll gates but also collects information on where you go and when you get there?
3. Do you think laws will ensure that some privacy remains, or are we on a road to the elimination of personal privacy?

SOURCES: Heymann (2002), O'Harrow (2005), Tingwall (2008), Werth (2008), Hui (2010), Stein (2011), and Rainie & Anderson (2014).

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 7 Groups and Organizations

What have we learned about the way modern society is organized?

This chapter explains that since the opening of the first McDonald's restaurant in 1948, the principles that underlie the fast-food industry—efficiency, predictability, uniformity, and control—have spread to many aspects of our everyday lives. Here is a chance to identify aspects of McDonaldization in several familiar routines. Can you

identify specific elements of McDonaldization in two of the photos shown here? That is, in what ways does the organizational pattern or the technology involved increase efficiency, predictability, uniformity, and control? In a third photo, what elements do you see that are clearly not McDonaldization? Why?



Small, neighborhood businesses like this one were once the rule in the United States. But the number of "mom and pop" businesses is declining as "big box" discount stores and fast-food chains expand. Why are small stores disappearing? What social qualities of these stores are we losing in the process?

Automated teller machines became common in the United States in the early 1970s. A customer with an electronic identification card can complete certain banking operations (such as withdrawing cash) without having to deal with a human bank teller. What makes the ATM one example of McDonaldization? Do you like using ATMs? Why or why not?



At checkout counters in many supermarkets, customers lift each product through a laser scanner linked to a computer in order to identify what the product is and what it costs. The customer then inserts a credit or debit card to pay for the purchases.



Hint This process, which is described as the “McDonaldization of society,” has made our lives easier in some ways, but it has also made our society ever more impersonal, gradually diminishing our range of human contact. Also, although this organizational pattern is intended to serve human needs, it may end up doing the opposite by forcing people to live according to the demands of machines. Max Weber feared that our future would be an overly rational world in which we all might lose much of our humanity.

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

1. Can you trace features of McDonaldization in interactions with your family and friends? To what extent do you think our relationships and societies are becoming mechanical, perfunctory, and impersonal day by day?
2. Modern organizations are increasingly using informal channels like Twitter and Facebook to manage their business activities. To what extent do you think bureaucracy works in the new organizational environment? What are the challenges and problems that might be faced?
3. What are some of the challenges faced by formal organizations? Do you think people from different ages perceive and react differently to these challenges? How do they cope with changes in organizations?
4. Go to www.sociologyinfofocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 7 Groups and Organizations

Social Groups

7.1 Explain the importance of various types of groups to social life. (pages 188–95)

Social groups are two or more people who identify with and interact with one another.

- A **primary group** is small, personal, and lasting (examples include family and close friends).
- A **secondary group** is large, impersonal and goal-oriented, and often of shorter duration (examples include a college class or a corporation).

Elements of Group Dynamics

Group leadership

- **Instrumental leadership** focuses on completing tasks.
- **Expressive leadership** focuses on a group's well-being.
- *Authoritarian leadership* is a "take charge" style that demands obedience; *democratic leadership* includes everyone in decision making; *laissez-faire leadership* lets the group function mostly on its own.

Group conformity

- The Asch, Milgram, and Janis research shows that group members often seek agreement and may pressure one another toward conformity.
- Individuals use **reference groups**—including both **in-groups** and **out-groups**—to form attitudes and make evaluations.

Group size and diversity

- Georg Simmel described the **dyad** as intense but unstable; the **triad**, he said, is more stable but can dissolve into a dyad by excluding one member.
- Peter Blau claimed that larger groups turn inward, socially diverse groups turn outward, and physically segregated groups turn inward.

Networks are relational webs that link people with little common identity and limited interaction. Being "well connected" in networks is a valuable type of social capital.

- **Social media** based on computer technology have involved people in more and more social networks that now extend around the world.

social group two or more people who identify with and interact with one another

primary group a small social group whose members share personal and lasting relationships

secondary group a large and impersonal social group whose members pursue a specific goal or activity

instrumental leadership group leadership that focuses on the completion of tasks

expressive leadership group leadership that focuses on the group's well-being

groupthink the tendency of group members to conform, resulting in a narrow view of some issue

reference group a social group that serves as a point of reference in making evaluations and decisions

in-group a social group toward which a member feels respect and loyalty

out-group a social group toward which a person feels a sense of competition or opposition

dyad a social group with two members

triad a social group with three members

network a web of weak social ties

social media technology that links people in social activity

Formal Organizations

7.2 Describe the operation of large, formal organizations. (pages 195–99)

Formal organizations are large secondary groups organized to achieve their goals efficiently.

- **Utilitarian organizations** pay people for their efforts (examples include a business or government agency).
- **Normative organizations** have goals people consider worthwhile (examples include voluntary associations such as the PTA).
- **Coercive organizations** are organizations people are forced to join (examples include prisons and mental hospitals).

All formal organizations operate in an **organizational environment**, which is influenced by

- technology
- political and economic trends
- current events
- population patterns
- other organizations

Modern Formal Organizations: Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy, which Max Weber saw as the dominant type of organization in modern societies, is based on

- specialization
- hierarchy of positions
- rules and regulations
- technical competence
- impersonality
- formal, written communications

Problems of bureaucracy include

- bureaucratic alienation
- bureaucratic inefficiency and ritualism
- bureaucratic inertia
- oligarchy

formal organization a large secondary group organized to achieve its goals efficiently

tradition behavior, values, and beliefs passed from generation to generation

rationality a way of thinking that emphasizes deliberate, matter-of-fact calculation of the most efficient way to accomplish a particular task

rationalization of society the historical change from tradition to rationality as the main type of human thought

bureaucracy an organizational model rationally designed to perform tasks efficiently

organizational environment factors outside an organization that affect its operation

bureaucratic ritualism a focus on rules and regulations to the point of undermining an organization's goals

bureaucratic inertia the tendency of bureaucratic organizations to perpetuate themselves

oligarchy the rule of the many by the few

The Evolution of Formal Organizations

7.3 Summarize the changes to formal organizations over the course of the last century. (pages 200–5)

Conventional Bureaucracy

- In the early 1900s, Frederick Taylor's **scientific management** applied scientific principles to increase productivity.

More Open, Flexible Organizations

- In the 1960s, Rosabeth Moss Kanter proposed that opening up organizations for all employees, especially women and other minorities, increased organizational efficiency.
- In the 1980s, global competition drew attention to the Japanese work organization's collective orientation.

The Changing Nature of Work

Recently, the rise of a postindustrial economy has created two very different types of work:

- highly skilled and creative work (examples include designers, consultants, programmers, and executives)
- low-skilled service work associated with the "McDonaldization" of society, based on efficiency, uniformity, and control (examples include jobs in fast-food restaurants and telemarketing).

The Future of Organizations: Opposing Trends

- In our postindustrial society, many organizations are evolving toward a "flatter," more flexible model that encourages worker creativity.
- At the same time, other organizations that provide services require more workers to perform "McJobs," which describes low-wage, routine work.

scientific management Frederick Taylor's term for the application of scientific principles to the operation of a business or other large organization

Chapter 8

Sexuality and Society



Learning Objectives

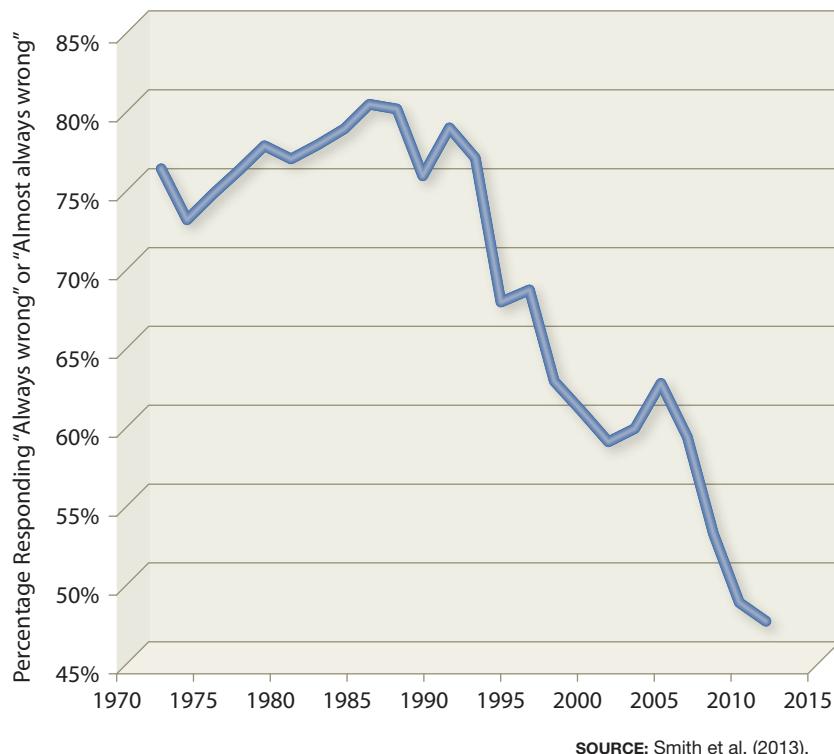
- 8.1** Describe how sexuality is both a biological and a cultural issue.
- 8.2** Explain changes in sexual attitudes in the United States.
- 8.3** Analyze factors that shape sexual orientation.
- 8.4** Discuss several current controversies involving sexuality.
- 8.5** Apply sociology's major theories to the topic of sexuality.



The Power of Society

to shape our attitudes on social issues involving sexuality

Survey Question: "What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex—do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?"



SOURCE: Smith et al. (2013).

Does society shape our opinions on issues involving sexuality? Back in 1973, more than three-fourths of U.S. adults expressed the opinion that sexual relations between two people of the same sex was wrong. By about 1990, however, this attitude began to change, and by 2012, such disapproval was expressed by less than half of the population. This change in public opinion about same-sex relations is a key reason for the dramatic expansion of same-sex marriage, which now has the support of most U.S. adults. Although we tend to think of our attitudes as personal choices, larger social trends are also at work.

Chapter Overview

Sex. No one can doubt that it is an important dimension of our lives. But, as this chapter explains, sex is not simply a biological process linked to reproduction. It is society, including culture and patterns of inequality, that shapes patterns of sexual behavior and gives meaning to sexuality in our everyday lives.

Pam Goodman walks along the hallway with her friends Jen Delosier and Cindy Thomas. The three young women are sophomores at Jefferson High School, in Jefferson City, a small town in the Midwest.

"What's happening after school?" Pam asks.

"Dunno," replies Jennifer. "Maybe Todd is coming over."

"Got the picture," adds Cindy. "We're so gone."

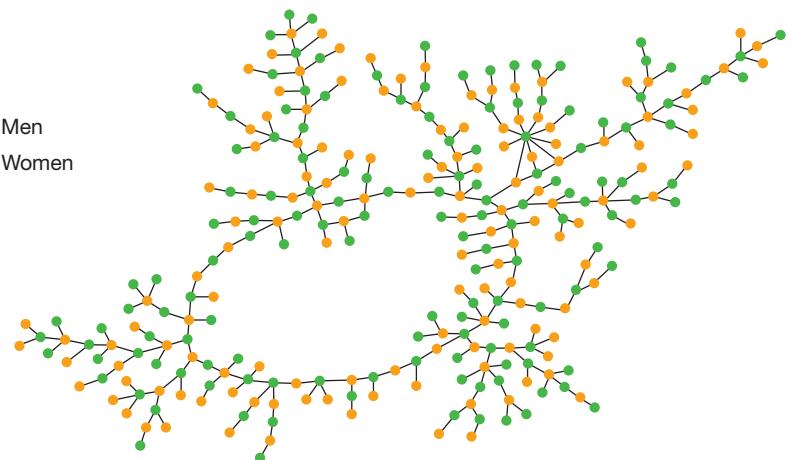
"Shut up!" Pam stammers, smiling. "I hardly know Todd."

"OK, but ..." The three girls break into laughter.

It is no surprise that young people spend a lot of time thinking and talking about sex. And as the sociologist Peter Bearman discovered, sex involves more than just talk. Bearman and two colleagues (Bearman, Moody, & Stovel, 2004) conducted confidential interviews with 832 students at the high school in a midwestern town he called Jefferson City, learning that 573 (69 percent of the students) had had at least one "sexual and romantic relationship" during the previous eighteen months. So most, but not all, of these students are sexually active.

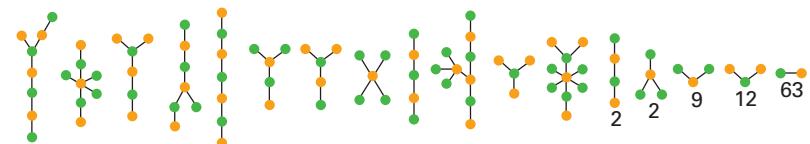
Bearman wanted to learn about sexual activity in order to understand the problem of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among young people. Why are the rates of STDs so high? And what can account for the sudden "outbreaks" of disease that involve dozens of young people in the community?

To find the answers to these questions, Bearman asked the students to identify their sexual partners (promising, as a matter of research ethics, not to reveal any confidential information). This allowed him to trace connections between individual students in terms of sexual activity, which revealed a surprising pattern: Sexually active students were linked to each other through networks of common partners much more than anyone might have expected. In all, common partners linked half of the sexually active students, as shown in the diagram.



Other relationships

(If a pattern was observed more than once, numeral indicates frequency.)



SOURCE: Bearman, Moody, and Stovel (2004).

Awareness of the connections among people can help us understand how STDs spread from one infected person to many others in a short period of time. Bearman's study also shows that research can teach us a great deal about human sexuality, which is an important dimension of social life. You will also see that sexual attitudes and behavior have changed dramatically over the course of the past century in the United States.

Understanding Sexuality

8.1 Describe how sexuality is both a biological and a cultural issue.

How much of your thoughts and actions every day involve sexuality? If you are like most people, your answer would have to be "quite a lot," because sexuality is about much

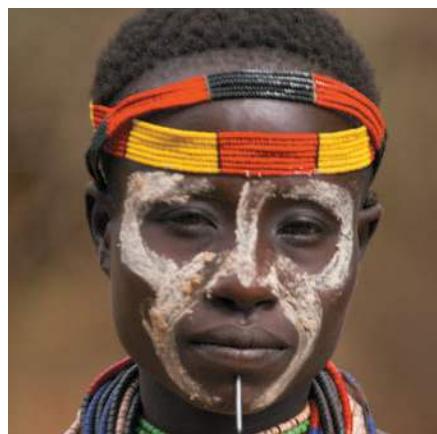
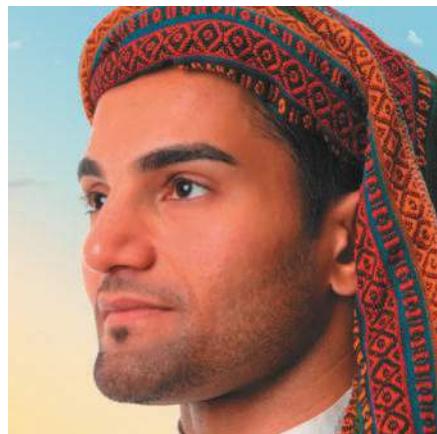
more than having sex. Sexuality is a theme found almost everywhere—in sports, on campus, in the workplace, and especially in the mass media. There is also a sex industry that includes pornography and prostitution, both of which are multibillion-dollar businesses in this country. The bottom line is that sexuality is an important part of how we think about ourselves as well as how others think about us. For this reason, there are few areas of everyday life in which sexuality does not play some part.

Although sex is a big part of everyday life, U.S. culture has long treated sex as taboo; even today, many people avoid talking about it. As a result, although sex can produce much pleasure, it also causes confusion, anxiety, and sometimes outright fear. Even scientists long considered sex off limits as a topic of research. Not until the middle of the twentieth century did researchers turn their attention to this vital dimension of social life. Since then, as this chapter explains, we have discovered a great deal about human sexuality.

Sex: A Biological Issue

Sex refers to *the biological distinction between females and males*. From a biological point of view, sex is the way the human species reproduces. A female ovum and a male sperm, each containing twenty-three matching chromosomes (biological codes that guide physical development), combine to form an embryo. To one of these pairs of chromosomes—the pair that determines the child's sex—the mother contributes an X chromosome and the father contributes either an X or a Y. Should the father contribute an X chromosome, a female (XX) embryo results; a Y from the father produces a male (XY) embryo. A child's sex is thereby determined biologically at the moment of conception.

The sex of an embryo guides its development. If the embryo is male, the growth of testicular tissue starts to produce large amounts of testosterone, a hormone that triggers the development of male genitals (sex organs). If little testosterone is present, the embryo develops female genitals.



We claim that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, which suggests the importance of culture in setting standards of attractiveness. All of the people pictured here—from Kenya, Arizona, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Ethiopia, and Ecuador—are considered beautiful by members of their own society. At the same time, sociobiologists point out that in every society on Earth, people are attracted to youthfulness. The reason, as sociobiologists see it, is that attractiveness underlies our choices about reproduction, which is most successfully accomplished in early adulthood.

Sex and the Body

Some differences in the body set males and females apart. Right from birth, the two sexes have different **primary sex characteristics**, namely, *the genitals, organs used for reproduction*. At puberty, as people reach sexual maturity, additional sex differentiation takes place. At this point, people develop **secondary sex characteristics**, *bodily development, apart from the genitals, that distinguishes biologically mature females and males*. Mature females have wider hips for giving birth, milk-producing breasts for nurturing infants, and deposits of soft, fatty tissue that provide a reserve supply of nutrition during pregnancy and breast feeding. Mature males typically develop more muscle in the upper body, more extensive body hair, and deeper voices. Of course, these are general differences; some males are smaller and have less body hair and higher voices than some females.

Keep in mind that sex is not the same thing as gender. *Gender* is an element of culture and refers to the personal

primary sex characteristics

the genitals, organs used for reproduction

secondary sex characteristics

bodily development, apart from the genitals, that distinguishes biologically mature females and males

traits and patterns of behavior (including responsibilities, opportunities, and privileges) that a culture attaches to being female or male. Chapter 13 (“Gender Stratification”) explains that gender is an important dimension of social inequality.

INTERSEXUAL PEOPLE Sex is not always as clear-cut as has just been described. The term **intersexual people** refers to *people whose bodies (including genitals) have both female and male characteristics*. Intersexuality is both natural and very rare, involving well below 1 percent of a society’s population. An older term for intersexual people is *hermaphrodites* (derived from Hermaphroditus, the child of the mythological Greek gods Hermes and Aphrodite, who embodied both sexes). A true hermaphrodite has both a female ovary and a male testis.

However, our culture demands that sex be clear-cut, a fact evident in the requirement that parents record the sex of their new child at birth as either female or male. In the United States, some people respond to intersexual individuals with confusion or even disgust. But attitudes in other societies can be quite different: The Pokot of eastern Africa, for example, pay little attention to what they consider a rare biological error, and the Navajo look on intersexual people with awe, seeing in them the full potential of both the female and the male (Geertz, 1975).

TRANSSEXUALS **Transsexuals** are *people who feel they are one sex even though biologically they are the other*. Estimates suggest that one or two out of every 1,000 people who are born experience the feeling of being trapped in a body of the wrong sex and have a desire to be the other sex.

Some people in this situation respond to this feeling by undergoing *gender reassignment*, surgical alteration of their genitals and breasts, usually accompanied by hormone treatments. This medical process is complex and takes months or even years, but it helps many people gain a joyful sense of finally becoming on the outside the person that they feel they are on the inside (Gagné, Tewksbury, & McGaughey, 1997; Olyslager & Conway, 2007).



We are used to thinking of sex as a clear-cut issue of being female or male. But transsexual people do not fit such simple categories. In 2008, Thomas Beatie, age thirty-four, became pregnant and gave birth to a healthy baby girl; since then, he has given birth to two additional children. Beatie, who was born a woman, had surgery to remove his breasts and legally changed his sex from female to male, but nonetheless chose to bear children. What is your response to cases such as this?

Sex: A Cultural Issue

Sexuality has a biological foundation. But like all aspects of human behavior, sexuality is also very much a cultural issue. Biology may explain some animals’ mating rituals, but humans have no similar biological program. Although there is a biological “sex drive” in the sense that people find sex pleasurable and may want to engage in sexual activity, our biology does not dictate any specific ways of being sexual any more than our desire to eat dictates any particular foods or table manners.

CULTURAL VARIATION Almost every sexual practice shows considerable variation from one society to another. In his pioneering research study of sexuality in the United States, Alfred Kinsey and his colleagues (1948) found that most heterosexual couples reported having intercourse in a single position—face to face, with the woman on the bottom and the man on top. Halfway around the world, however, on islands in the South Seas, most couples *never* have sex in this way. In fact, when the people of the South Seas learned of this practice from Western missionaries, they poked fun at it as the strange “missionary position.”

Even the simple practice of showing affection varies from society to society. Most people in the United States kiss in public, but the Chinese kiss only in private. The French kiss publicly, often twice (once on each cheek), and the Belgians kiss three times (starting on either cheek). The Maoris of New Zealand rub noses, and most people in Nigeria don’t kiss at all.

Modesty, too, is culturally variable. If a woman stepping into a bath is disturbed by someone entering the room, what body parts do you think she would cover? Helen Colton (1983) reports that an Islamic woman covers her face, a Laotian woman covers her breasts, a Samoan woman covers her navel, a Sumatran woman covers her

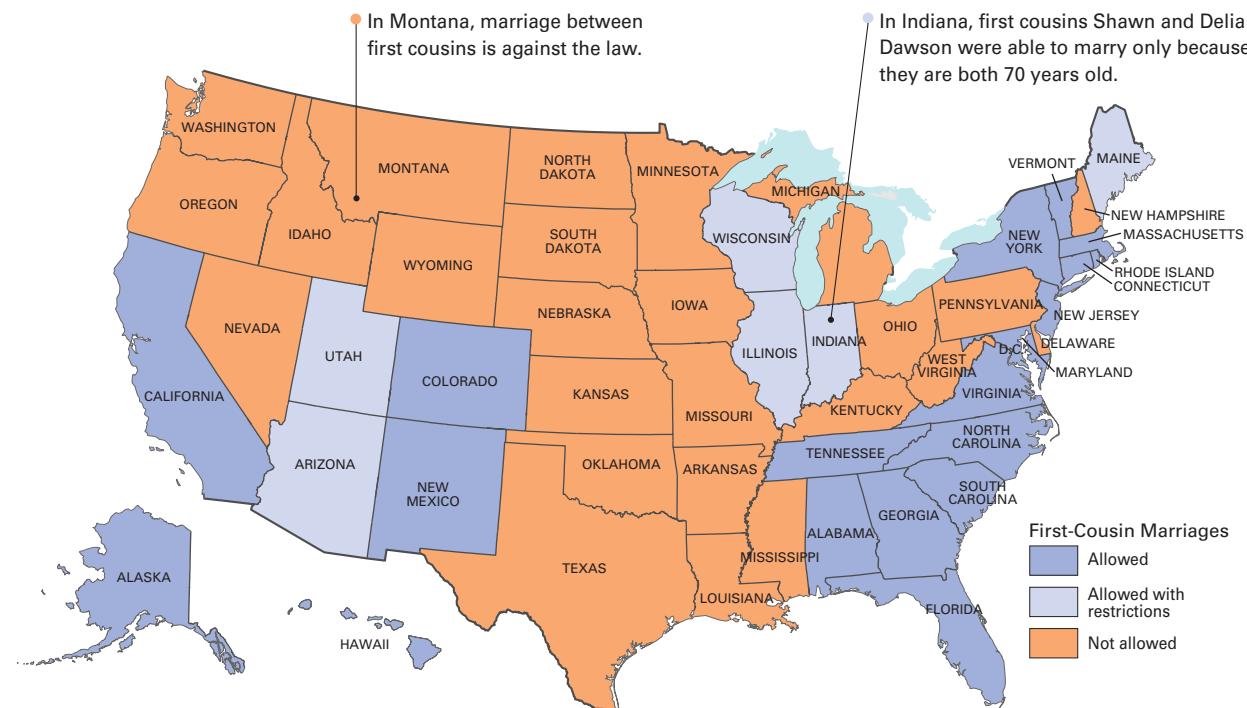
knees, and a European woman covers her breasts with one hand and her genital area with the other.

Around the world, some societies restrict sexuality, and others are more permissive. In China, for example, norms closely regulate sexuality so that few people have sexual intercourse before their wedding day. In the United States, at least over the last few decades, intercourse prior to marriage has become the norm, and some people choose to have sex even without strong commitment.

The Incest Taboo

When it comes to sex, do all societies agree on anything? The answer is yes. One cultural universal—an element that is found in every society the world over—is the **incest taboo**, *a norm forbidding sexual relations or marriage between certain relatives*. In the United States, both law and cultural mores prohibit close relatives (including brothers and sisters, parents and children) from having sex or marrying. But in another example of cultural variation, exactly which family members are included in a society’s incest taboo varies from state to state. National Map 8–1 shows that half the states outlaw marriage between first cousins and

Seeing Ourselves



National Map 8–1 First-Cousin Marriage Laws across the United States

There is no single view on first-cousin marriages in the United States: Twenty-five states forbid such unions, nineteen allow them, and six allow them with restrictions.* In general, states that permit first-cousin marriages are found in New England, the Southeast, and the Southwest.

* Of the six states that allow first-cousin marriages with restrictions, five states permit such marriages when couples are past childbearing age.

half do not; a few states permit this practice but with restrictions (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015).

Some societies (such as the North American Navajo) apply incest taboos only to the mother and others on her side of the family. Throughout history, in a number of countries members of the nobility intermarried with relatives. There are even societies on record (including ancient Peru and Egypt) in which noble families formed brother-sister marriages. This pattern was a strategy to keep power within a single family (Murdock, 1965, orig. 1949).

Why does at least some form of incest taboo exist in every society around the world? Part of the reason is rooted in biology: Reproduction between close relatives of any species raises the odds of producing offspring with mental or physical problems. But why, of all living species, do only humans observe an incest taboo? This fact suggests that controlling sexuality among close relatives is a necessary element of *social organization*. For one thing, the incest taboo limits sexual competition in families by restricting sex to spouses (ruling out, for example, a sexual relationship between parent and child). Second, because family ties define people's rights and obligations toward one another, reproduction between close relatives would hopelessly confuse kinship lines: If a mother and son had a daughter, would the child consider the male a father or a brother? Third, by requiring people to marry outside their immediate families, the incest taboo serves to integrate the larger society as people look beyond their close kin when seeking to form new families.

The incest taboo has long been a sexual norm in the United States and throughout the world. But many other sexual norms have changed over time. In the twentieth century, as the next section explains, our society experienced both a sexual revolution and a sexual counterrevolution.

Sexual Attitudes in the United States

8.2 Explain changes in sexual attitudes in the United States.

What do people in the United States think about sex? Our cultural attitudes about sexuality have always been somewhat contradictory. Most European immigrants arrived with rigid ideas about "correct" sexuality, typically limiting sex to reproduction within marriage. The early Puritan settlers of New England demanded strict conformity in attitudes and behavior, and they imposed severe penalties for any sexual misconduct, even if it took place in the privacy of the home. Some regulation of sexuality has continued ever since. As late as the 1960s, several states prohibited the sale of condoms in stores. Until 2003, when the Supreme Court struck them down, laws in thirteen states banned sexual acts between partners of the same sex. Even today, adultery laws that forbid married people from having sex with a person other than their spouse are on the books in twenty-four states, and "fornication" laws, which forbid intercourse by unmarried couples, are still on the books in six states.

But this is just one side of the story. As Chapter 3 ("Culture") explains, because U.S. culture is individualistic, many of us believe that people should be free to do pretty much as they wish as long as they cause no direct harm to others. The idea that what people do in the privacy of their own home is no one else's business makes sex a matter of individual freedom and personal choice.

When it comes to sexuality, is the United States restrictive or permissive? The answer is both. On one hand, many



Over the course of the past century, social attitudes in the United States have become more accepting of most aspects of human sexuality. What do you see as some of the benefits of this greater openness? What are some of the negative consequences?



people in the United States still view sexual restraint to be an important indicator of personal morality (for women even more than for men). On the other hand, sex is more and more a part of the mass media that people encounter every day. One recent study concluded that young people feel that most of the television shows they watch and the music they listen to have sexual themes. Furthermore, researchers conclude that the number of scenes in television shows with sexual content has been increasing over time (Kunkel et al., 2005; DeAngelis, 2011). Within this complex framework, we now turn to changes in sexual attitudes and behavior that have taken place in the United States over the past century.

The Sexual Revolution

Over the past century, the United States witnessed profound changes in sexual attitudes and practices. The first indications of this change came with industrialization in the 1920s, as millions of women and men migrated from farms and small towns to rapidly growing cities. There, living apart from their families and meeting new people in the workplace, young people enjoyed considerable sexual freedom, one reason that decade became known as the “Roaring Twenties.”

In the 1930s and 1940s, the Great Depression and World War II slowed the rate of change. But in the post-war period, after 1945, a researcher named Alfred Kinsey set the stage for what later came to be known as the *sexual revolution*. In 1948, Kinsey and his colleagues published their first study of sexuality in the United States, and it raised eyebrows everywhere. The national uproar resulted not so much from what he said as from the fact that scientists were actually studying sex, a topic many people were uneasy talking about even in the privacy of their homes.

Kinsey also had some interesting things to say. His two books (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey et al., 1953) became best sellers partly because they revealed that people in the United States, on average, were far less conventional in sexual matters than most had thought. These books encouraged a new openness toward sexuality, which helped set the sexual revolution in motion.

In the late 1960s, the revolution truly came of age. Youth culture dominated public life, and expressions like “sex, drugs, and rock-and-roll” and “if it feels good, do it” summed up a new, freer attitude toward sex. The baby boom generation, born between 1946 and 1964, became the first cohort in U.S. history to grow up with the idea that sex was part of people’s lives, whether they were married or not.

New technology also played a part in the sexual revolution. The birth control pill, introduced in 1960, not only prevented pregnancy but also made “protected” sex

more convenient. Unlike a condom or a diaphragm, which must be applied at the time of intercourse, the pill could be taken like a daily vitamin supplement. Now women as well as men could engage in sex spontaneously without any special preparation.

Because women were historically subject to greater sexual regulation than men, the sexual revolution had special significance for them. Society’s “double standard” allows (and even encourages) men to be sexually active but expects women to be virgins until marriage and faithful to their husbands afterward. The survey data in Figure 8–1 show the narrowing of the double standard as a result of the sexual revolution. Among people born between 1933 and 1942 (that is, people who are in their seventies and early eighties today), 56 percent of men but just 16 percent of women report having had two or more sexual partners by the time they reached age twenty. Compare this wide gap to the pattern among the baby boomers born between 1953 and 1962 (people now in their fifties and early sixties),

Diversity Snapshot

- Nancy Houck, now 76 years old, has lived most of her life in a social world where men have had much more sexual freedom than women.
- Sarah Roholt, 56, is a baby boomer who feels that she and her women friends have pretty much the same sexual freedom as men.

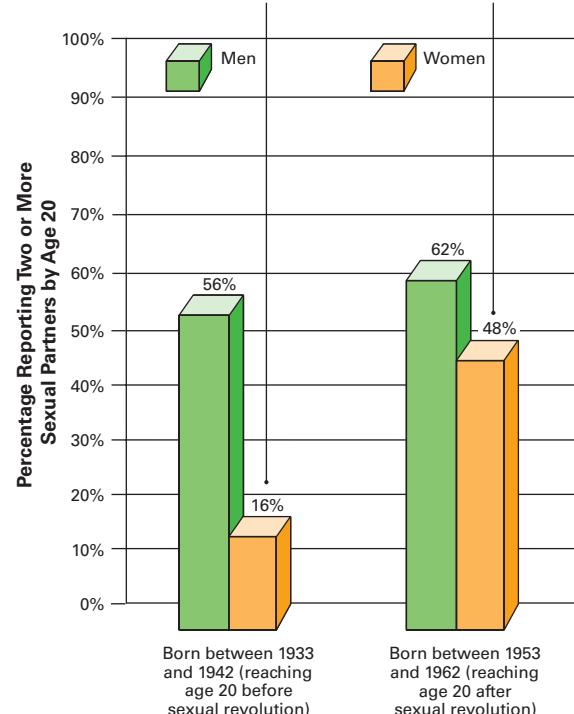


Figure 8–1 The Sexual Revolution: Closing the Double Standard

Although a larger share of men than women reports having had two or more sexual partners by age twenty, the sexual revolution greatly reduced this gender difference.

SOURCE: Laumann et al. (1994:198).

who came of age after the sexual revolution. In this category, 62 percent of men and 48 percent of women say they had two or more sexual partners by age twenty (Laumann et al., 1994:198). The sexual revolution increased sexual activity overall, but it changed women's behavior more than men's.

Greater openness about sexuality develops as societies become richer and the opportunities for women increase. With these facts in mind, look for a pattern in the global use of birth control shown in Global Map 8–1.

The Sexual Counterrevolution

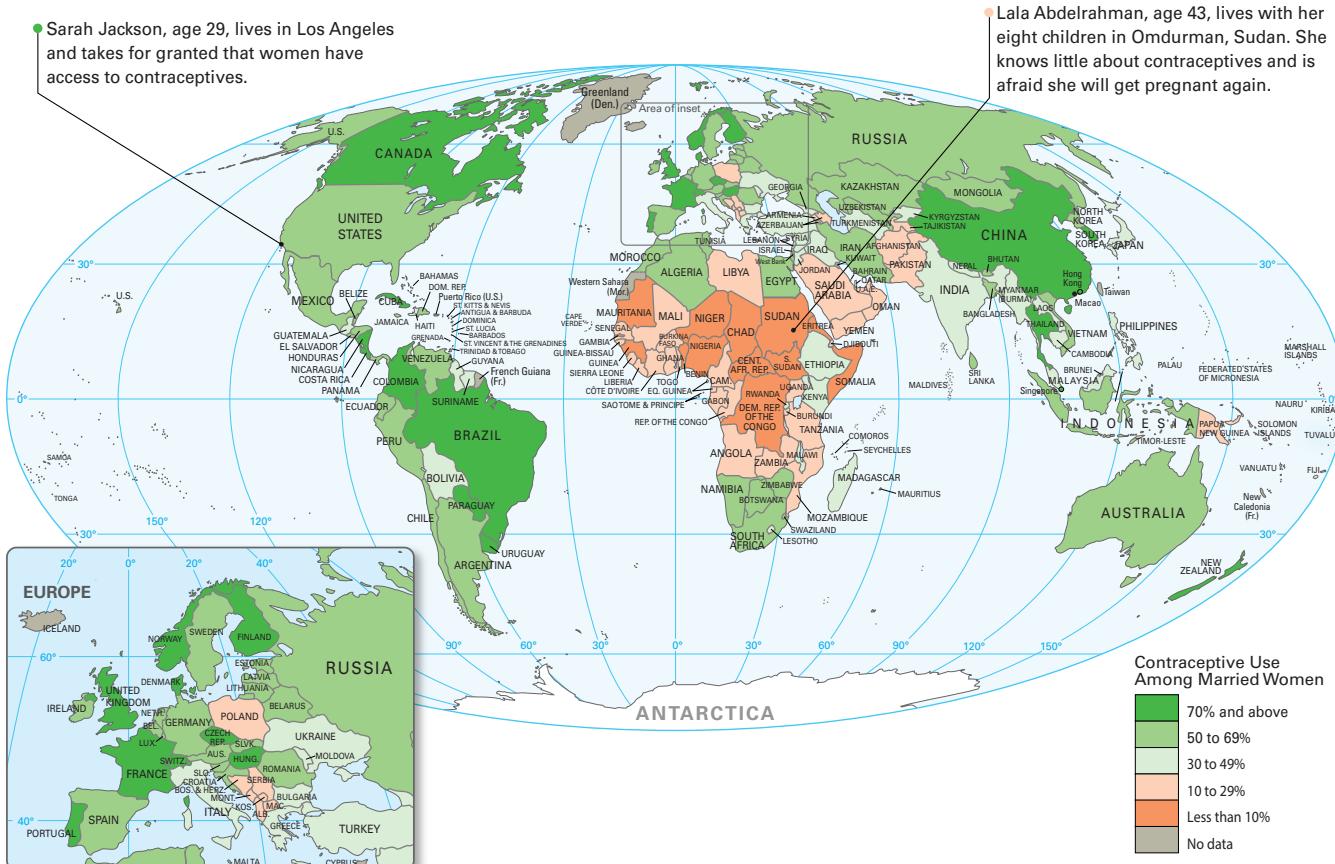
The sexual revolution made sex a topic of everyday discussion and sexual activity more a matter of individual choice. However, by 1980, the climate of sexual freedom that had marked the late 1960s and 1970s was criticized by some people as evidence of our country's moral decline, and the *sexual counterrevolution* began.

Politically speaking, the sexual counterrevolution was a conservative call for a return to "family values" and a change from sexual freedom back toward what critics saw as the sexual responsibility valued by earlier generations. Critics of the sexual revolution objected not just to the idea of "free love" but also to trends such as cohabitation (heterosexual couples living together without being married) and unmarried couples having children.

Looking back, the sexual counterrevolution did not greatly change the idea that people should decide for themselves when and with whom to have a sexual relationship. But whether for moral reasons or concerns about sexually transmitted diseases, more people began limiting their number of sexual partners or choosing not to have sex at all.

Is the sexual revolution over? It is true that many people are making more careful decisions about sexuality. But as the rest of this chapter explains, the ongoing sexual revolution is evident in the fact that there is now greater

Window on the World



Global Map 8–1 Contraceptive Use in Global Perspective

The map shows the percentage of married women using modern contraceptive methods (such as barrier methods, contraceptive pill, implants, injectables, intrauterine devices, or sterilization). In general, how do high-income nations differ from low-income nations? Can you explain this difference?

SOURCES: Data from United Nations (2008) and Population Reference Bureau (2014).

acceptance of premarital sex as well as increasing tolerance for various sexual orientations.

Premarital Sex

In light of the sexual revolution and the sexual counter-revolution, how much has sexual behavior in the United States really changed? One interesting trend involves premarital sex—sexual intercourse before marriage—among young people.

Consider, first, what U.S. adults *say* about premarital intercourse. Table 8–1 shows that about 27 percent characterize sexual relations before marriage as “always wrong” or “almost always wrong.” Another 16 percent consider premarital sex “wrong only sometimes,” and about 54 percent say premarital sex is “not wrong at all” (Smith et al., 2013:421). Public opinion is much more accepting of premarital sex today than a generation ago, but even so, our society remains divided on this issue.

Now let’s look at what young people actually *do*. For women, there has been a marked change over time. The Kinsey studies reported that among people born in the early 1900s, about 50 percent of men but just 6 percent of women had had premarital sexual intercourse before age nineteen. Studies of baby boomers, born after World War II, show a slight increase in premarital intercourse among men and a large increase—to about one-third—among women. The most recent studies show that 47 percent of high school students have had premarital sexual intercourse. Broken down by race and ethnicity, this share is 61 percent among African American students, 49 percent among Hispanics, 44 percent among whites, and 23 percent among Asian Americans. But the sexual experience of high school students who have been sexually active is limited—only 15 percent of them report four or more sexual partners. Over the last twenty years, the statistics tracking sexual activity among high school students have shown a gradual trend downward (Laumann et al., 1994; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014).

A common belief is that an even larger share of young people engages in oral sex. This choice reflects the fact that this practice avoids the risk of pregnancy; in addition, many young people see oral sex as something less than “going all the way.” Recent research suggests that the share of young people between the age of fifteen and nineteen who have had oral sex is 48 percent for boys and 46 percent for girls, which is about the same as the share (47 percent) who have had intercourse (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Therefore, mass media claims of an “oral sex epidemic” are almost certainly exaggerated.

Finally, a significant minority of young people choose abstinence (not having sexual intercourse). Many also choose not to have oral sex, which, like intercourse, can

Table 8–1 How We View Premarital and Extramarital Sex

Survey Question: “There’s been a lot of discussion about the way morals and attitudes about sex are changing in this country. If a man and a woman have sexual relations before marriage, do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all? What about a married person having sexual relations with someone other than the marriage partner?”

	Premarital Sex	Extramarital Sex
“Always wrong”	21.0%	78.4%
“Almost always wrong”	5.5	11.9
“Wrong only sometimes”	15.8	6.7
“Not wrong at all”	54.1	1.2
“Don’t know”/No answer	3.6	1.8

SOURCE: General Social Surveys, 1972–2012: Codebook (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 2013), pp. 421–22.

transmit disease. Even so, research confirms the fact that premarital sex is widely accepted among young people today.

Sex between Adults

Judging from the mass media, people in the United States are very active sexually. But do popular images reflect reality? The Laumann study (1994), the largest study of sexuality since Kinsey’s groundbreaking research, found that frequency of sexual activity varies widely in the U.S. population. One-third of adults report having sex with a partner a few times a year or not at all, another one-third have sex once or several times a month, and the remaining one-third have sex with a partner two or more times a week. In short, no single stereotype accurately describes sexual activity in the United States.

Despite the widespread image of “swinging singles” promoted on television shows such as *Sex and the City*, it is married people who have sex with partners the most. Married people also report the highest level of satisfaction—both emotional and physical—with their partners (Laumann et al., 1994).

Extramarital Sex

What about married people having sex outside of marriage? This practice, commonly called “adultery” (sociologists prefer the more neutral term *extramarital sex*), is widely condemned. Table 8–1 shows that about 90 percent of U.S. adults consider a married person having sex with someone other than the marital partner “always wrong” or “almost always wrong.” The norm of sexual fidelity within marriage has been and remains a strong element of U.S. culture.

But, of course, actual behavior does not always live up to the cultural ideal. Research suggests that about 17 percent of married people report having been sexually

unfaithful to a spouse. Researchers also report that this share is higher among men (about 19 percent) than among women (about 12 percent). Stating this the other way around, 81 percent of men and 88 percent of women remain sexually faithful to their partners throughout their married lives. Research indicates that the incidence of extramarital sex is higher among the young than the old, higher among people of low social position than among those who are well off, higher among those who report no religious affiliation and, as we might expect, also higher among those who report a low level of happiness in their marriage (Laumann et al., 1994:214; Smith, 2006; Smith et al., 2013:2549).

Sex over the Life Course

Patterns of sexual activity change with age. In the United States, most young men and women become sexually active by the age of seventeen. By the time they reach their mid-twenties, about 90 percent of both women and men report being sexually active with a partner at least once during the past year (Reece et al., 2010; Chandra et al., 2011; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012).

Overall, adults report having sexual intercourse about sixty-two times a year, which is slightly more often than once a week. Young adults report the highest frequency of sexual intercourse at eighty-four times per year. This number falls to sixty-four times for adults in their forties and declines further to about ten times per year for adults in their seventies.

From another angle, by about age sixty, less than half of adults (54 percent of men and 42 percent of women) say they have had sexual intercourse one or more times during the past year. By age seventy, just 43 percent of men and 22 percent of women report the same behavior (Smith, 2006; Reece et al., 2010).

Sexual Orientation

8.3 Analyze factors that shape sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation is a person's romantic and emotional attraction to another person. The norm in all human societies is **heterosexuality** (*hetero* is Greek for "the other

of two"), meaning *sexual attraction to someone of the other sex*. Yet in every society, a significant share of people experience **homosexuality** (*homo* is Greek for "the same"), *sexual attraction to someone of the same sex*. Keep in mind that people do not necessarily fall into just one of these categories; they may have varying degrees of attraction to both sexes.

The idea that sexual orientation is not always clear-cut is confirmed by the existence of **bisexuality**, *sexual attraction to people of both sexes*. Some bisexual people are equally attracted to males and females; many others are more attracted to one sex than the other. Finally, **asexuality** refers to a lack of sexual attraction to people of either sex. Figure 8–2 shows each of these sexual orientations in relation to the others.

It is important to remember that sexual *attraction* is not the same thing as sexual *behavior*. Many people, perhaps even most people, have experienced attraction to someone of the same sex, but far fewer ever engage in same-sex behavior. This is in large part because our culture discourages such actions.

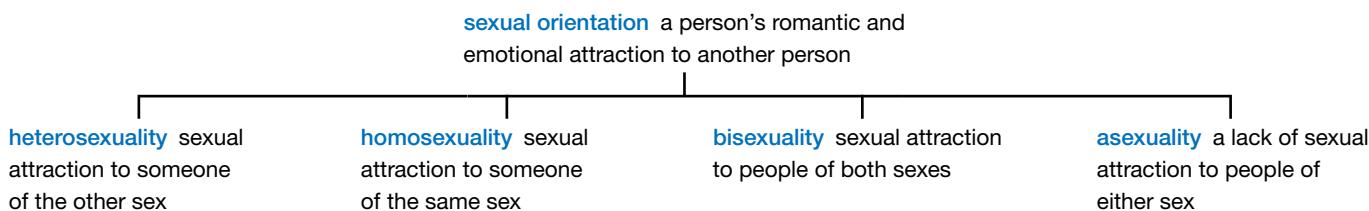
In the United States and around the world, heterosexuality emerged as the norm because, biologically speaking, heterosexual relations permit human reproduction. Even so, most societies tolerate homosexuality, and some have even celebrated it. Among the ancient Greeks, for example, upper-class men considered homosexuality the highest form of relationship, partly because they looked down on women as intellectually inferior. As men saw it, heterosexuality was necessary only so they could have children, and "real" men preferred homosexual relations (Kluckhohn, 1948; Ford & Beach, 1951; Greenberg, 1988).

What Gives Us a Sexual Orientation?

The question of how people come to have a particular sexual orientation is strongly debated. The arguments cluster into two general positions: sexual orientation as a product of society and sexual orientation as a product of biology.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: A PRODUCT OF SOCIETY

This approach argues that people in any society attach meanings to sexual activity, and these meanings differ from place to place and over time. As Michel Foucault



(1990, orig. 1978) points out, for example, there was no distinct category of people called “homosexuals” until just over a century ago, when scientists and eventually the public as a whole began defining people that way. Throughout history, many people no doubt had what we would call “homosexual experiences,” but neither they nor others saw in this behavior the basis for any special identity.

Anthropological studies show that patterns of homosexuality differ from one society to another. In Siberia, for example, the Chukchee Eskimo have a practice in which one man dresses as a female and does a woman’s work. The Sambia, who dwell in the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea, have a ritual in which young boys perform oral sex on older men in the belief that eating semen will make them more masculine. In southeastern Mexico, a region in which ancient religions recognize gods who are both female and male, the local culture defines people not only as female and male but also as *muxes* (MOO-shays), a third sexual category. *Muxes* are men who dress and act as women, some only on ritual occasions, some all the time. Such diversity around the world shows that sexual expression is not fixed by human biology but is socially constructed (Murray & Roscoe, 1998; Blackwood & Wieringa, 1999; Rosenberg, 2008).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: A PRODUCT OF BIOLOGY A growing body of evidence suggests that sexual orientation is innate, or rooted in human biology, in much the same way that people are born right-handed or left-handed. Arguing this position, Simon LeVay (1993) links sexual orientation to the structure of a person’s brain. LeVay studied the brains of both homosexual and heterosexual men and found a small but important difference in the size of the hypothalamus, a part of the brain that regulates hormones. Such an anatomical difference, he claims, plays a part in shaping a person’s sexual orientation.

Genetics may also influence sexual orientation. One study of forty-four pairs of brothers, all homosexual, found that thirty-three pairs had a distinctive genetic pattern involving the X chromosome. The gay brothers also had an unusually high number of gay male relatives—but only on their mother’s side. Such evidence leads some researchers to think there may be a “gay gene” located on the X chromosome (Hamer & Copeland, 1994). More recently, some researchers have advanced an *epigenetic* theory of sexual orientation. This means that sexual orientation is not caused directly by a gene but by a process of biological development after birth involving hormones and the brain. Such a theory is consistent with the position that biology plays a key role in guiding sexual orientation and also offers an explanation for the fact that, so far, no one has identified a “gay gene” (Blue, 2012; Richards, 2013).

Diversity Snapshot

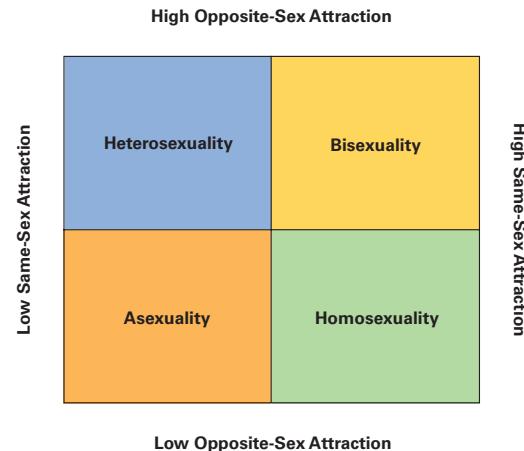


Figure 8–2 Four Sexual Orientations

A person’s levels of same-sex attraction and opposite-sex attraction are two distinct dimensions that combine in various ways to produce four major sexual orientations.

SOURCE: Adapted from Storms (1980).

EVALUATE

Mounting evidence supports the conclusion that sexual orientation is rooted in biology or “nature,” although exactly how this process works is still under study. It is also likely that nurture plays some part. Remember that sexual orientation is not a matter of neat categories. Most people who think of themselves as homosexual have had some heterosexual experiences, just as many people who think of themselves as heterosexual have had some homosexual experiences. Explaining sexual orientation, then, is not easy.

There is also a political issue here with great importance for gay men and lesbians. To the extent that sexual orientation is based in biology, homosexuals have no more choice about their sexual orientation than they do about their skin color. If this is so, shouldn’t gay men and lesbians expect the same legal protection from discrimination as African Americans?

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What evidence supports the position that sexual behavior is constructed by society? What evidence supports the position that sexual orientation is rooted in biology?

How Many Gay People Are There?

What share of our population is gay? This is a difficult question to answer because, as noted earlier, sexual orientation is not a matter of neat categories. In addition, not all people are willing to reveal their sexuality to strangers or even to family members. Kinsey estimated that about 4 percent of males and 2 percent of females have an exclusively same-sex orientation, although he pointed out that most people experience same-sex attraction at some point in their lives.

The results of research surveys show that how homosexuality is defined makes a big difference in the size of the homosexual population. Some social

Diversity Snapshot

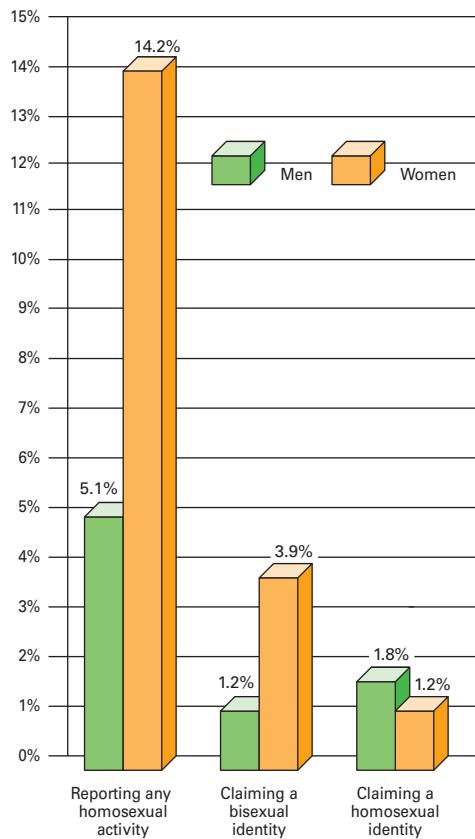


Figure 8–3 Share of the Population That Is Bisexual or Homosexual

Although more women than men report having had a homosexual experience, more men than women claim to have a homosexual identity.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014).

scientists put the gay share of the population as high as 10 percent. This is about the share of U.S. adults who say that they have *ever* felt any sexual attraction to a person of the same sex. But feeling some sexual attraction and acting on it are two different issues. As Figure 8–3 shows, 5.1 percent of U.S. men and 14.2 percent of U.S. women between the ages of fifteen and forty-four reported engaging in homosexual activity *at some time in their lives*. Then there is the issue of sexual identity. When asked how they define themselves in terms of sexual orientation, just 1.8 percent of men and 1.2 percent of women said that they defined themselves as “partly” or “entirely” homosexual.

In recent surveys, 1.2 percent of men and 3.9 percent of women described themselves as bisexual. But bisexual experiences appear to be fairly common (at least for a time) among younger people, especially on college and university campuses (Laumann et al., 1994; Leland, 1995; Reece et al., 2010; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Many bisexuals do not think of themselves as

either gay or straight, and their behavior reflects aspects of both gay and straight living.

The Gay Rights Movement

In recent decades, public opinion about sexual orientation has shown a remarkable change. In the United States and in much of the world, public attitudes toward homosexuality have been moving toward greater acceptance. Back in 1973, as shown in the Power of Society figure at the beginning of this chapter, about three-fourths of adults in the United States claimed that homosexual relations were “always wrong” or “almost always wrong.” Although that percentage changed little during the 1970s and 1980s, by 2012 it had dropped to 46 percent (Pew Research Center, 2012; Smith et al., 2013:422).

Among college students, who are typically more tolerant of homosexuality than the general population, we see a similar trend toward acceptance. In 1980, as Figure 8–4 shows, about half of college students supported laws prohibiting homosexual relationships; in the following decades, that share declined dramatically. The most recent surveys on this issue asked students whether they



One factor that has advanced the social acceptance of homosexuality is the inclusion of openly gay characters in the mass media, especially films and television shows. Laverne Cox, who is transgender, portrays the transgender character Sophia Burset on the television show *Orange Is the New Black*. Do you think transgender characters will advance social acceptance of transgender people?

Student Snapshot

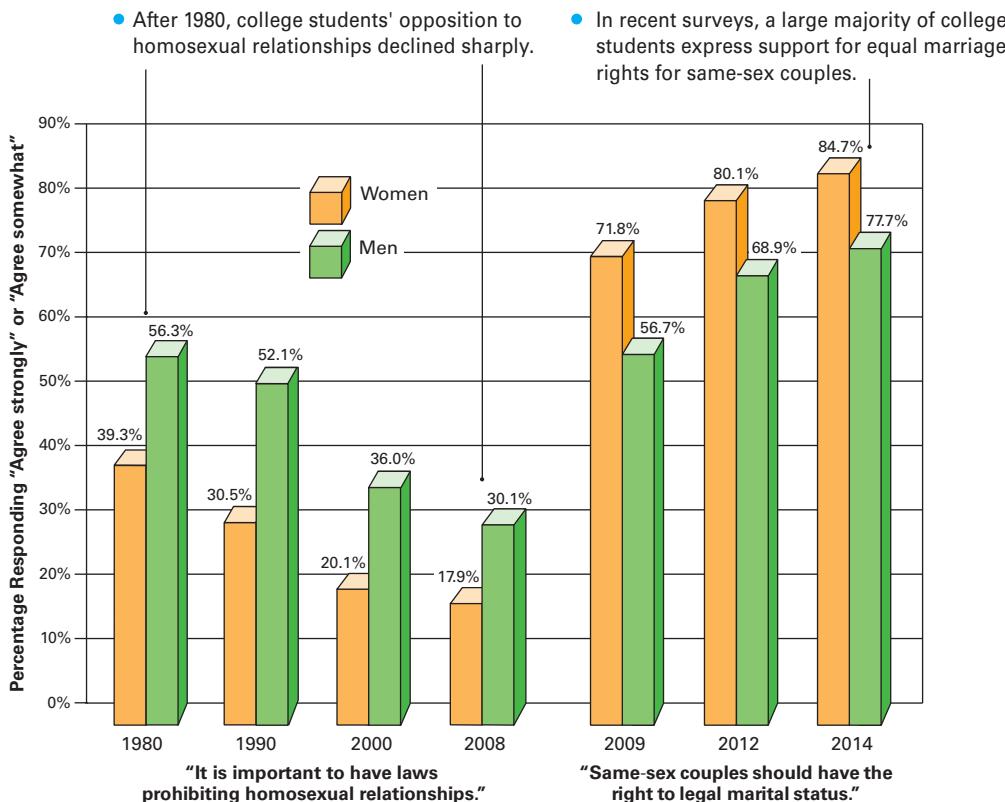


Figure 8–4 Attitudes about Homosexual Relationships and Same-Sex Marriage among First-Year College Students, 1980–2014

The historical trend among college students is toward greater tolerance of homosexual relationships, a view now held by a large majority. Eight in ten first-year college students report that they support legal same-sex marriage.

SOURCES: Astin et al. (2002) and Eagan et al. (2014).

supported same-sex couples having the legal right to marry; by 2014, as the figure shows, more than three-quarters of college students claimed to support legal same-sex marriage (Astin et al., 2002; Eagan et al., 2014).

In large measure, this change was brought about by the gay rights movement, which began in the middle of the twentieth century. Up to that time, most people in this country did not discuss homosexuality, and it was common for employers (including the federal government and the armed forces) to fire anyone who was gay or lesbian (or was even *accused* of being gay). Mental health professionals, too, took a hard line, describing homosexual people as "sick" and sometimes placing them in mental hospitals where, it was hoped, they might be "cured."

Facing such prejudice, it is no surprise that most lesbians and gay men remained "in the closet," closely guarding the secret of their sexual orientation. But the gay rights movement gained strength during the 1960s. One early milestone occurred in 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association (APA) declared that it would no longer define homosexuality as an illness; the organization stated

that it was nothing more than "a form of sexual behavior." In 2009, the APA went a step further and condemned the use of psychological therapy in an effort to make gay people straight (Cracy, 2009).

The gay rights movement also began using the term **homophobia** to describe *discomfort over close personal interaction with people thought to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual* (Weinberg, 1973). The concept of homophobia turns the tables on society: Instead of asking "What's wrong with gay people?" the question becomes "What's wrong with people who can't accept a different sexual orientation?"

In 2004, a number of cities and towns in the United States began to allow gay couples to marry, although these unions were later declared illegal. But gay marriage became legal in Massachusetts in 2004 and within ten years had become legal in thirty-six states. Then, in 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court (*Obergefell v. Hodges*) declared that all states are required to license same-sex marriage and also to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states. This decision effectively ended the national debate over the legality of same-sex marriage.

Transgender

As the gay rights movement has gained acceptance for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, there has also been greater tolerance of people who challenge conventional gender patterns. **Transgender** is a broad concept that refers to *appearing or behaving in ways that challenge conventional cultural norms concerning how females and males should look and act*. People in the transgender community do not think of themselves or express their sexuality according to conventional standards. In other words, transgender people disregard conventional ideas about femininity or masculinity in favor of combining feminine and masculine traits or perhaps embodying something entirely different.

Transgender is not a sexual orientation. Transgender people may think of themselves as gay or lesbian, heterosexual, bisexual, asexual, as some combination of these categories, or in entirely different terms.

Researchers estimate that about three in every 1,000 adults in the United States have a transgender identity. This amounts to about 700,000 people (Gates, 2011). It is becoming common to speak about the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) population. Because someone may identify with more than one of these categories, no exact number can be placed on the size of the LGBT population. But estimates suggest that almost 4 percent of the U.S. adult population—or about 9 million people—are within the LGBT community (Gates, 2011).

Transgender people are at high risk of rejection and discrimination, as well as physical or sexual violence. For a majority of people who report any of these experiences,

the events were serious enough to cause them to consider or attempt suicide (Hass, Rodgers, & Herman, 2014).

Sexual Issues and Controversies

8.4 Discuss several current controversies involving sexuality.

Sexuality lies at the heart of a number of controversies in the United States today. Here we take a look at four key issues: teen pregnancy, pornography, prostitution, and sexual violence.

Teen Pregnancy

Because being sexually active carries the risk of pregnancy, this behavior demands a high level of personal responsibility. Teenagers may be biologically mature enough to conceive, but many are not emotionally mature enough to appreciate the consequences of their actions. Surveys lead researchers to estimate that there are some 625,000 teen pregnancies in the United States each year, most of them unplanned. This country's rate of births to teens is higher than that of most other high-income countries and is almost twice the rate in Canada (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2014; Ventura, Hamilton, & Mathews, 2014).

Among people in all racial and ethnic categories, low levels of parental education and income sharply increase the likelihood that a young woman will become sexually

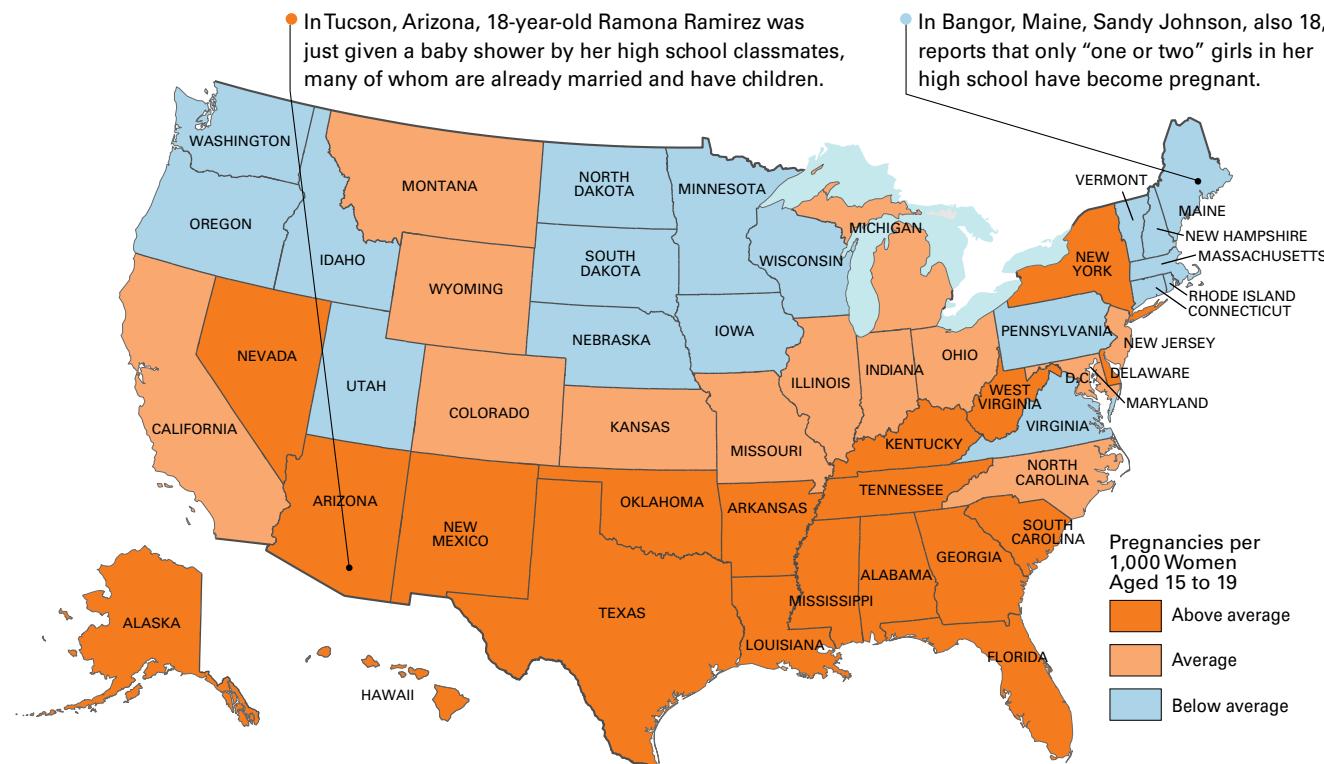
active and have an unplanned child. In addition, compared to young women who live with both biological parents, those who live with a mother and a stepfather or in some other family arrangement have triple the odds of having a child by age nineteen. To add to the challenge, having unplanned children raises the risk that young women (as well as young fathers-to-be) will not complete high school and will end up living in poverty (Martinez, Copen, & Abma, 2011).

Did the sexual revolution raise the level of teenage pregnancy? Perhaps surprisingly, the answer is no. The rate of pregnancy among U.S. teens in 1950 was higher than it is today, partly because people back then married at a younger age. Because abortion was against the law, many pregnancies led to quick marriages. As a result, many teens became pregnant, but almost 90 percent of these



Pregnancy among unmarried teenage women, once a social taboo, has become part of the mass media with shows like MTV's *Teen Mom* and *16 and Pregnant*. Such shows clearly convey the many challenges that face young mothers-to-be. Would you expect these shows to have any effect on the country's teen pregnancy rate? Explain.

Seeing Ourselves



National Map 8–2 Teenage Pregnancy Rates across the United States

The map shows pregnancy rates for women aged fifteen to nineteen in 2010. In what regions of the country are rates high? Where are they low? What explanation can you offer for these patterns?

SOURCE: Alan Guttmacher Institute (2014).

women were already married or married soon after. In recent years, the teenage pregnancy rate has fallen to its lowest level in decades. However, although this rate is lower, about 80 percent of these women are unmarried. In a slight majority (60 percent) of such cases, the women keep their babies; in the remainder, they have abortions (26 percent) or miscarriages (14 percent) (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2014; Ventura, Hamilton, & Mathews, 2014). National Map 8–2 shows the pregnancy rates for women between the ages of fifteen and nineteen throughout the United States.

Pornography

Pornography is *sexually explicit material intended to cause sexual arousal*. But what is or is not pornographic has long been a matter of debate. Recognizing that different people view portrayals of sexuality differently, the U.S. Supreme Court gives local communities the power to decide for themselves what violates "community standards" of decency and lacks "redeeming social value."

Definitions aside, pornography is very popular in the United States and throughout most of the world. Sexually explicit videos, movies, and magazines, telephone "sex lines," and thousands of Internet websites make up

a thriving industry that takes in at least \$10 billion each year in the United States and about \$100 billion worldwide. Most pornography in the United States is created in California, and the vast majority of consumers of pornography around the world are men (Steinhauer, 2008).

Traditionally, people have criticized pornography on *moral* grounds. As national surveys confirm, 60 percent of U.S. adults are concerned that "sexual materials lead to a breakdown of morals" (Smith et al., 2013:423). Today, however, pornography is also seen as a *power* issue because most of it degrades women, portraying them as the sexual playthings of men.

Some critics also claim that pornography is a cause of violence against women. Although it is difficult to prove a scientific cause-and-effect relationship between what people view and how they act, the public shares a concern about pornography and violence, with almost half of adults holding the opinion that pornography encourages people to commit rape (Smith et al., 2013:424).

Although people everywhere object to sexual material they find offensive, many also value the principle of free speech and the protection of artistic expression. Nevertheless, pressure to restrict pornography is building from an unlikely coalition of conservatives (who oppose

pornography on moral grounds) and liberals (who condemn it for political reasons).

Prostitution

Prostitution is *the selling of sexual services*. Often called “the world’s oldest profession,” prostitution has been widespread throughout recorded history. In the United States today, about one in eleven adult men reports having paid for sex at some time (Smith et al., 2013). Because most people think of sex as an expression of intimacy between two people, they find the idea of sex for money disturbing. As a result, prostitution is against the law everywhere in the United States except for parts of rural Nevada.

Around the world, prostitution is most common in poor countries, where patriarchy is strong and traditional cultural norms limit women’s ability to earn a living.

TYPES OF PROSTITUTION Most prostitutes (many prefer the morally neutral term “sex workers”) are women, and they fall into different categories. *Call girls* are elite prostitutes, typically young, attractive, and well-educated women who arrange their own “dates” with clients by texting or telephone. The classified pages of any large city newspaper contain numerous ads for “escort services,” by which women (and sometimes men) offer both companionship and sex for a fee.

In the middle category are prostitutes who are employed in “massage parlors” or brothels under the control of managers. These sex workers have less choice about their clients, receive less money for their services, and get to keep no more than half of the money they earn.

At the bottom of the hierarchy are *streetwalkers*, women and men who “work the streets” of large cities around the

country. Some female streetwalkers are under the control of male pimps who take most of their earnings. Many others are people with a substance addiction who sell sex in order to buy drugs. Both types of people are at high risk of becoming the victims of violence (Davidson, 1998; Estes, 2001).

The lives of sex workers, then, are diverse, with some earning more than others and some at greater risk of violence. But studies point to one thing that most of these women have in common: They consider their work degrading. As one researcher suggested, one minute the sex worker is adored as “the most beautiful woman,” while the next she is condemned as a “slut” (Barton, 2006).

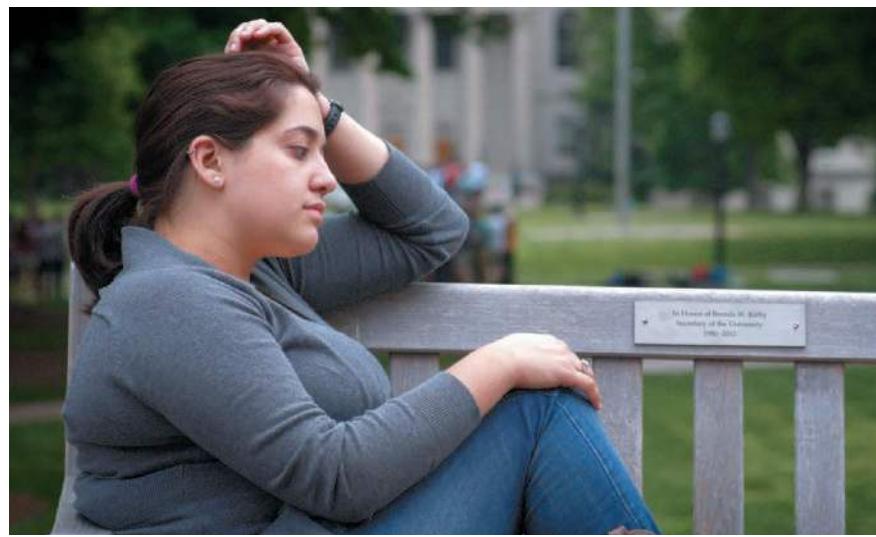
Most prostitutes offer heterosexual services. However, gay male prostitutes also trade sex for money. Researchers report that many gay prostitutes end up selling sex after having suffered rejection by family and friends because of their sexual orientation (Weisberg, 1985; Boyer, 1989; Kruks, 1991).

A VICTIMLESS CRIME? Prostitution is against the law almost everywhere in the United States, but many people consider it a *victimless crime* (defined in Chapter 9, “Deviance,” as a crime in which there is no obvious victim). As a result, instead of enforcing prostitution laws all the time, police stage only occasional crackdowns. This policy reflects a desire to control prostitution while also recognizing that it is impossible to eliminate it entirely.

Many people take a “live and let live” attitude about prostitution and say that adults ought to be able to do as they please so long as no one is harmed or forced to do anything. But is prostitution really victimless? The sex trade subjects many women to kidnapping, emotional abuse, and outright violence and also plays a part in spreading sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS.

In addition, many poor women—especially in low-income nations—become trapped in a life of selling sex. Thailand, in Southeast Asia, has as many as 2 million prostitutes, representing about 10 percent of all women in the labor force. The younger the person is who begins to work in prostitution, the greater the risks of harm. About half of the women working as prostitutes in Thailand are teenagers—many begin working before they even reach their teens—and these women typically suffer physical and emotional abuse and run a high risk of becoming infected with HIV (Wonders & Michalowski, 2001; Kapstein, 2006; UN-AIDS, 2010; Silverman, 2011).

In the past, the focus of attention has been on the women who earn money as sex workers. But prostitution would not exist at all if it were not for demand on the



The recent documentary film *The Hunting Ground* provides a close-up and disturbing look at the problem of sexual assault on the college campus. The film investigates the scope of rape and other assault at U.S. colleges and universities and includes personal accounts by victims, including the young woman shown here. What programs and policies are in place on your campus to address the issue of sexual violence?

part of men. For this reason, law enforcement is now more likely to target “Johns” when they attempt to buy sex.

Sexual Violence: Rape and Date Rape

Ideally, sexual activity occurs within a loving relationship between consenting adults. In reality, however, sex can be twisted by hate and violence. Here we consider two types of sexual violence: rape and date rape.

RAPE Although some people think rape is motivated only by a desire for sex, it is actually an expression of power—a violent act that uses sex to hurt, humiliate, or control another person. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2014), around 80,000 women each year report to the police that they have been raped. This reflects only the reported cases; the actual number of rapes is almost certainly several times higher.

The official government definition of rape is “the carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will.” Thus official rape statistics include only victims who are women. But men, too, are raped—in about 11 percent of all cases. Most men who rape men are not homosexual; they are heterosexuals who are motivated by a desire not for sex but to dominate another person.

DATE RAPE A common myth is that rape involves strangers. In reality, however, only about 15 percent of rapes fit this pattern. About 85 percent of known cases of rape involve people who know one another—more often than not, pretty well—and these crimes usually take place in familiar surroundings, especially the home and the campus. For this reason, the term “date rape” or “acquaintance rape” is used to refer to forcible sexual violence against women by men they know (Laumann et al., 1994; U.S. Department of Justice, 2014).

A second myth, often linked to date rape, is that the woman must have done something to encourage the man and made him think she wanted to have sex. Perhaps the victim agreed to go out with the offender. Maybe she even invited him into her room. But, of course, acting in this way no more justifies rape than it would any other type of physical assault.

Although rape is a physical attack, it often leaves emotional and psychological scars. Beyond the brutality of being physically violated, rape by an acquaintance also undermines a victim’s sense of trust. Psychological scars are especially serious among the two-thirds of rape victims who are under eighteen and even more so among the one-third who are under the age of twelve. The home is no refuge from rape: One-third of all victims under the age of eighteen are attacked by their own fathers or stepfathers (Snyder, 2000).

How common is date rape? One study found that about 10 percent of a sample of high school students in the

United States reported being the victim of sexual or physical violence inflicted by boys they were dating. About 15 percent of high school girls and 6 percent of high school boys reported being forced into having sexual intercourse against their will. The risk of abuse is especially high among girls who become sexually active before reaching the age of fifteen (Dickinson, 2001; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

Nowhere has the issue of date rape been more widely discussed in recent years than on college campuses, where the danger of date rape is high. The collegiate environment promotes easy friendships and encourages trust among young people who still have much to learn about relationships and about themselves. As the Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life box explains, the same college environment that encourages communication provides few social norms to help guide young people’s sexual experiences. To counter the problem, many schools now actively address myths about rape through on-campus workshops. In addition, greater attention is now focused on the abuse of alcohol, which increases the likelihood of sexual violence.

Theories of Sexuality

8.5 Apply sociology’s major theories to the topic of sexuality.

Applying sociology’s various theoretical approaches gives us a better understanding of human sexuality. The following sections discuss the three major approaches, and the Applying Theory table highlights the key insights of each approach.

Structural-Functional Theory

The structural-functional approach highlights the contribution of any social pattern to the overall operation of society. Because sexuality can have such important consequences, society regulates this type of behavior.

THE NEED TO REGULATE SEXUALITY From a biological point of view, sex allows our species to reproduce. But culture and social institutions regulate *with whom* people reproduce. For example, most societies condemn a married person for having sex with someone other than his or her spouse. To allow sexual passion to go unchecked would threaten family life, especially the raising of children.

The fact that the incest taboo exists everywhere shows that no society permits completely free choice in sexual partners. Reproduction by family members other than married partners would break down the system of kinship and hopelessly confuse human relationships.

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

When Sex Is Only Sex: The Campus Culture of “Hooking Up”

Brynn: My mom told me once that she didn't have sex with my dad until after they were engaged.

Katy: I guess times have really changed!

Have you ever been in a sexual situation and not been sure of the right thing to do? Most colleges and universities highlight two important rules. First, sexual activity must take place only when both participants have given clear statements of consent. The consent principle is what makes “having sex” different from date rape. Second, no one should knowingly expose another person to a sexually transmitted disease, especially when the partner is unaware of the danger.

These rules are very important, but they say little about the larger issue of what sex means. For example, when is it “right” to have a sexual relationship? How well do you have to know the other person? If you do have sex, are you obligated to see the person again?

Two generations ago, there were informal rules for campus sex. Dating was considered part of the courtship process. That is, “going out” was the way in which women and men evaluated each other as possible marriage partners while they sharpened their own sense of what they wanted in a mate. Because, on average, marriage took place in the early twenties, many college students became engaged and married while they were still in school. In this cultural climate, sex was viewed by college students as part of a relationship



that carried a commitment—a serious interest in the other person as a possible marriage partner.

Today, the sexual culture of the campus is very different. Partly because people now marry much later, the culture of courtship has declined dramatically. About three-fourths of women in a national survey point to a relatively new campus pattern, the culture of “hooking up.” What exactly is “hooking up”? Most describe it in words like these: “When a girl and a guy get together for a physical encounter—anything from kissing to having sex—and don’t necessarily expect anything further.”

Student responses to the survey suggest that hookups have three characteristics. First, most couples who hook up know little about each other. Second, a typical hookup involves people who have been drinking alcohol, usually at a campus party. Third, most women are critical of the culture of hooking up and express little satisfaction with these encounters. Certainly, some women (and men) who hook up simply walk away, happy to have enjoyed a sexual experience free of further obligation. But given the powerful emotions that sex can unleash, hooking up often leaves someone wondering what to expect next: “Will you call me tomorrow?” “Will I see you again?”

The survey asked women who had experienced a recent hookup to report how they felt about the experience a day later. A majority of respondents said they felt “awkward,” about half felt “disappointed” and “confused,” and one in four felt “exploited.” Clearly, for many people, sex is more than a physical encounter. In addition, because today’s campus climate is very sensitive to charges of sexual exploitation, there is a need for clearer standards of fair play.

What Do You Think?

1. How extensive is the pattern of hooking up on your campus?
2. What do you see as the advantages of sex without commitment? What are the disadvantages of this kind of relationship?
3. Do you think men and women are likely to answer the preceding questions differently? Explain.

SOURCE: Based in part on Marquardt and Glenn (2001).

Historically, the social control of sexuality was strong, mostly because sex often led to childbirth. We see these controls at work in the traditional distinction between “legitimate” reproduction (within marriage) and “illegitimate” reproduction (outside marriage). But once a society develops the technology to control births, its sexual norms become more permissive. In the United States, over the course of the twentieth century,

sex moved beyond its basic reproductive function and became accepted as a form of intimacy and even recreation (Giddens, 1992).

LATENT FUNCTIONS: THE CASE OF PROSTITUTION It is easy to see that prostitution is harmful because it spreads disease and exploits women. But are there latent functions that help explain why prostitution is so widespread?

APPLYING THEORY

Sexuality

	Structural-Functional Theory	Symbolic-Interaction Theory	Social-Conflict and Feminist Theories
What is the level of analysis?	Macro-level	Micro-level	Macro-level
What is the importance of sexuality for society?	Society depends on sexuality for reproduction. Society uses the incest taboo and other norms to control sexuality in order to maintain social order.	Sexual practices vary among the many cultures of the world. Some societies allow individuals more freedom than others in matters of sexual behavior.	Sexuality is linked to social inequality. U.S. society regulates women's sexuality more than men's, which is part of the larger pattern of men dominating women.
Has sexuality changed over time? How?	Yes. As advances in birth control technology separate sex from reproduction, societies relax some controls on sexuality.	Yes. The meanings people attach to virginity and other sexual matters are all socially constructed and subject to change.	Yes and no. Some sexual standards have relaxed, but society still defines women in sexual terms, just as homosexual people are harmed by society's heterosexual bias.

According to Kingsley Davis (1971), prostitution performs several useful functions. It is one way to meet the sexual needs of a large number of people who may not have ready access to sex, including soldiers, travelers, people who are not physically attractive, or people too poor to attract a marriage partner. Some people favor prostitution because they want sex without the “hassle” of a relationship. As a number of analysts have pointed out, “Men don’t pay for sex; they pay so they can *leave*” (Miracle, Miracle, & Baumeister, 2003:421).

EVALUATE

The structural-functional approach helps us see the important part sexuality plays in the organization of society. The incest taboo and other cultural norms also suggest that society has always paid attention to who has sex with whom and, especially, who reproduces with whom.

Functionalist analysis sometimes ignores gender; when Kingsley Davis wrote of the benefits of prostitution for society, he was really talking about the benefits to *men*. In addition, the fact that sexual patterns change over time, just as they differ in remarkable ways around the world, is ignored by this perspective. To appreciate the varied and changeable character of sexuality, we now turn to the symbolic-interaction approach.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Compared to traditional societies, why do modern societies give people more choice about matters involving sexuality?

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUALITY Almost all social patterns involving sexuality saw considerable change over the course of the twentieth century. One good illustration is the changing importance of virginity. A century ago, our society’s norm—for women, at least—was virginity before marriage. This norm was strong because there was no effective means of birth control, and virginity was the only guarantee a man had that his bride-to-be was not carrying another man’s child.

Today, in a society that uses birth control to separate sex from reproduction, people define sexual activity differently. Attitudes toward sex become more permissive and,



The control of women's sexuality is a common theme in human history. During the Middle Ages, European men devised the “chastity belt”—a metal device locked about a woman’s groin that prevented sexual intercourse (and probably interfered with other bodily functions as well). While such devices are all but unknown today, the social control of sexuality continues. Can you point to examples?

Symbolic-Interaction Theory

The symbolic-interaction approach highlights how, as people interact, they construct everyday reality. As Chapter 6 (“Social Interaction in Everyday Life”) explains, people sometimes construct very different realities, so the views of one group or society may well differ from those of another. In the same way, our understanding of sexuality can and does change over time, just as it differs from one society to another.

as a result, the virginity norm has weakened considerably. In the United States, among people born between 1963 and 1974, just 16.3 percent of men and 20.1 percent of women reported being virgins at first marriage (Laumann et al., 1994:503). Of course, among some categories of the population, the virginity norm is defined as more important; in others, it is less so.

In the same way, the rule that priests in the Catholic Church should be celibate is officially defended as a means to ensure that, by giving up marriage and children, a priest will have greater commitment to the work of the Church. Yet, the Catholic Church did not enact this rule until the twelfth century—more than a thousand years after Christ. Clearly, whether members of the clergy should be celibate is a matter of disagreement from one religious organization to another (Shipley, 2009).

A final example of our society's construction of sexuality involves young people. A century ago, childhood was a time of innocence in sexual matters. In recent decades, however, thinking has changed. Although few people encourage sexual activity between children, nine out of ten

U.S. adults say children should be educated about sex in the public schools by the time they are teenagers so that they can make intelligent choices about their behavior as they grow older (Smith et al., 2013).

GLOBAL COMPARISONS Around the world, different societies attach different meanings to sexuality. For example, the anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1938), who spent years learning the ways of life of the Melanesian people of southeastern New Guinea, reported that adults paid little attention when young children engaged in sexual experimentation with one another. Parents in Melanesia shrugged off such activity because, before puberty, sex cannot lead to reproduction. Is it likely that most parents in the United States would respond the same way?

Sexual practices also vary from culture to culture. Male circumcision of infant boys (the practice of removing all or part of the foreskin of the penis) is common in the United States but rare in most other parts of the world. A practice sometimes referred to incorrectly as female circumcision (removal of the clitoris) is rare in the United States and much of the world but common in parts of Africa and the Middle East (Crossette, 1995; Huffman, 2000). (For more about this practice, more accurately called "female genital mutilation," see the Thinking About Diversity box in Chapter 13, "Gender Stratification.")

EVALUATE

The strength of the symbolic-interaction approach lies in revealing the constructed character of familiar social patterns. Understanding that people "construct" sexuality, we can better appreciate the variety of sexual attitudes and practices found over the course of history and around the world.

One limitation of this approach, however, is that not all sexual practices are so variable. Men everywhere have always been more likely to see women in sexual terms than the other way around. Some broader social structure must be at work in a pattern that is this widespread, as we shall see in the following section, on the social-conflict approach.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What evidence can you provide that human sexuality is socially constructed?



From a social-conflict point of view, sexuality is not so much a "natural" part of our humanity as it is a socially constructed pattern of behavior. Sexuality plays an important part in social inequality: By defining women in sexual terms, men devalue them as objects. Would you consider the behavior shown here to be "natural" or socially directed? Why?

Social-Conflict and Feminist Theories

As you have seen in earlier chapters, the social-conflict approach (particularly the gender-conflict or feminist approach) highlights dimensions of inequality. This approach shows how sexuality both reflects patterns of social inequality and helps perpetuate them. Feminism, a social-conflict approach focusing on gender inequality, links sexuality to the domination of women by men.

SEXUALITY: REFLECTING SOCIAL INEQUALITY Recall our discussion of prostitution, a practice that is outlawed almost everywhere in the United States. Enforcement of prostitution laws is uneven at best, especially when it comes to who is and is not likely to be arrested. Gender bias is evident here: Although two people are involved, the record shows that police are far more likely to arrest (less powerful) female prostitutes than (more powerful) male clients. Similarly, of all women engaged in prostitution, it is streetwalkers—women with the least income and most likely to be minorities—who face the highest risk of arrest (Saint James & Alexander, 2004). We might also wonder whether so many women would be involved in prostitution in the first place if they had the economic opportunities equal to those of men.

More generally, which categories of people in U.S. society are most likely to be defined in terms of their sexuality? The answer, once again, is those with less power: women compared to men, people of color compared to whites, and gays and lesbians compared to heterosexuals. In this way, sexuality, a natural part of human life, is used by society to define some categories of people as less worthy.

SEXUALITY: CREATING SOCIAL INEQUALITY Social-conflict theorists, especially feminists, point to sexuality as the root of inequality between women and men. Defining women in sexual terms amounts to devaluing them from full human beings into objects of men's interest and attention. Is it any wonder that the word *pornography* comes from the Greek word *porne*, meaning "harlot" or "prostitute"?

If men define women in sexual terms, it is easy to see pornography—almost all of which is consumed by males—as a power issue. Because pornography typically shows women focused on pleasing men, it supports the idea that men have power over women.

Men have power over women in the world of reproductive health care as well. During 2012, more than 400 laws were introduced in state legislatures across the country to limit the right of a woman and her doctor to make decisions about abortion. In recent years, many state legislatures—made up mostly of men—have mandated that women must endure waiting periods, look at ultrasound images of a fetus, and undergo various medically unnecessary physical procedures before a woman and her doctor can make a decision to terminate a pregnancy. As former Michigan governor Jennifer Granholm suggests, men can better appreciate this gender-based power imbalance by imagining a legislature in which 80 percent of members were women requiring that men, before they can obtain a prescription for Viagra, present a letter from a sexual partner testifying to their inability

to have an erection, or requiring men to watch an ultrasound of their testicles while listening to a doctor point to millions of "pre-human lives" that are about to end (Granholm, 2012).

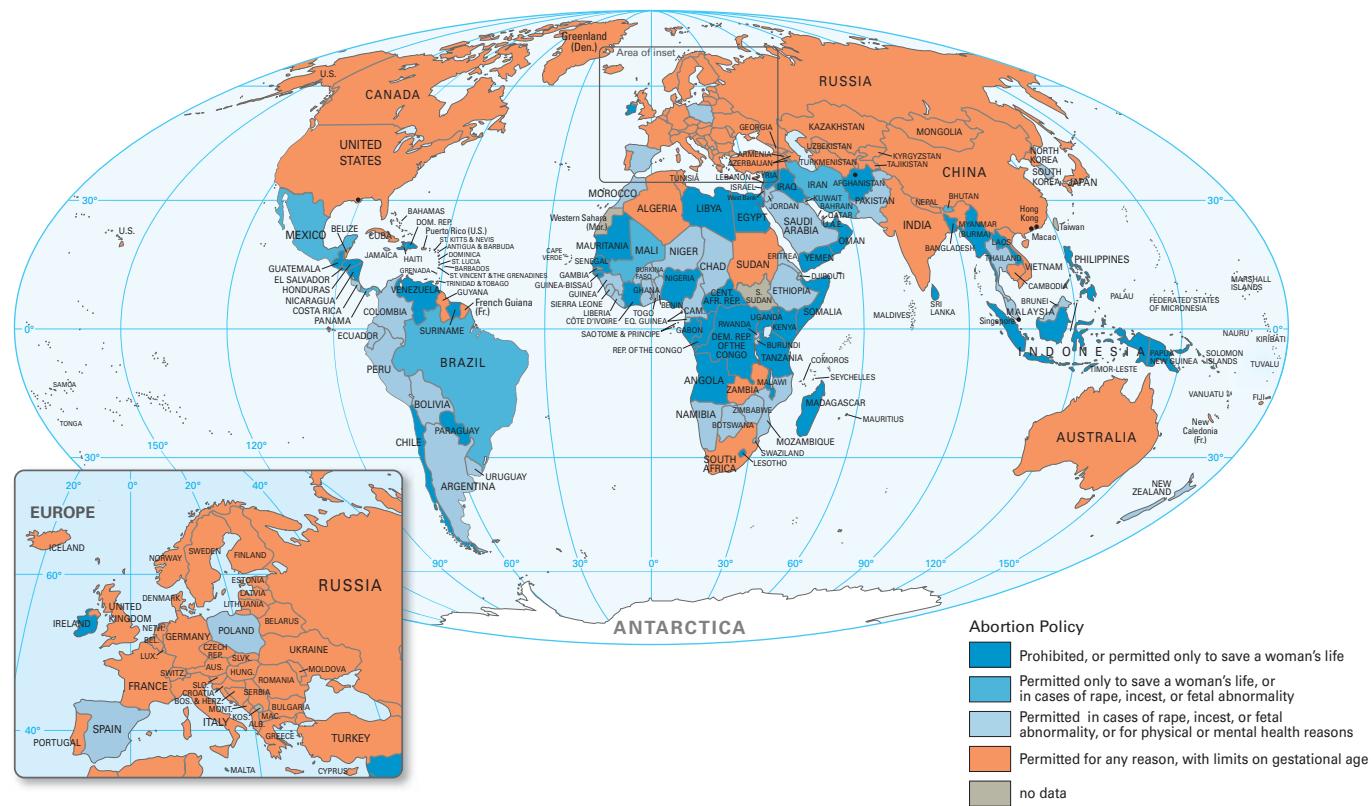
Reformers such as Granholm would like to end legislation that limits women's choices. But some radical critics doubt that the element of power can ever be removed from heterosexual relations (Dworkin, 1987). Most social-conflict theorists do not object to heterosexuality, but they do agree that sexuality can and does degrade women. Our culture often describes sexuality in terms of sport (men "scoring" with women) and violence ("slamming," "banging," and "hitting on," for example, are verbs used for both fighting and sex).

Another recent development by African American feminists and people in other minority communities centers on the concept of *reproductive justice*. While many women and men have debated whether or not women should be able to obtain abortions or otherwise control their own bodies, the reproductive justice movement points out that many women are disadvantaged to the point that they really are not able to make choices about their own lives. Only when women and girls have social, economic, and political equality in the United States, in other words, will there be reproductive justice. From another angle, it is important to understand the social conditions that contribute, for example, to an abortion rate among African American women that is more than three times higher than among white women (Pickert, 2013; Ross, 2013).

QUEER THEORY Finally, social-conflict theory has taken aim not only at men dominating women but also at heterosexuals dominating homosexuals. In recent years, as lesbians and gay men have sought public acceptance, a gay voice has arisen in sociology. The term **queer theory** refers to *a body of research findings that challenges the heterosexual bias in U.S. society*.

Queer theory begins with the claim that our society is characterized by **heterosexism**, *a view that labels anyone who is not heterosexual as "queer."* Our heterosexual culture victimizes a wide range of people, including gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, intersexuals, transsexuals, and even asexual people. Although most people agree that bias against women (sexism) and people of color (racism) is wrong, heterosexism is widely tolerated and sometimes well within the law. For example, U.S. military forces cannot legally discharge a female soldier simply for "acting like a woman" because this would be a clear case of gender discrimination. But, until the law changed at the end of 2010, the military forces could and did discharge women and men for homosexuality if they were sexually active.

Window on the World



Global Map 8–2 Women's Access to Abortion in Global Perspective

In global perspective, just sixty-eight nations permit a woman to obtain an abortion for a wide variety of reasons. Generally, these are high-income nations, including many countries in Europe and North America. What pattern do you see involving countries that place the greatest restriction on abortion?

SOURCE: Population Reference Bureau (2012).

Heterosexism is also part of everyday culture (Kitzinger, 2005). When we describe something as “sexy,” for example, don’t we really mean attractive to *heterosexuals*?

EVALUATE

The social-conflict approach shows that sexuality is both a cause and an effect of inequality. In particular, it helps us understand men’s power over women and heterosexual people’s domination of homosexual people.

At the same time, this approach overlooks the fact that many people do not see sexuality as a power issue. On the contrary, many couples enjoy a vital sexual relationship that deepens their commitment to one another. In addition, the social-conflict approach pays little attention to steps U.S. society has taken toward reducing inequality. Today’s men are less likely to describe women as sex objects than they were a few decades ago. One of the most important issues in the workplace today is ensuring that all employees remain free from sexual harassment. Rising public concern (see Chapter 13, “Gender Stratification”) has reduced the abuse of sexuality in the workplace. Likewise, there is ample evidence that the gay rights movement has secured greater opportunities and social acceptance for gay people.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING How does sexuality play a part in creating social inequality?

This chapter closes with a look at what is perhaps the most divisive issue involving sexuality: **abortion**, *the deliberate termination of a pregnancy*. According to global research carried out in 2008, about one in five of all pregnancies ended in abortion. In addition, researchers concluded that half of all abortions performed during that year were “unsafe.” For any nation, the level of economic development is closely linked to the abortion rate. Around the world, 86 percent of all abortions took place in less economically developed countries, as did 98 percent of the “unsafe” abortions (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2012; Sedgh et al., 2012). A major reason for the high rate of unsafe procedures is that, as Global Map 8–2 shows, most nations either prohibit or place substantial restrictions on a woman’s ability to have an abortion.

In the United States, the U.S. Supreme Court has supported a woman’s legal access to abortion since 1973. But the debate over this procedure—which some see as a moral issue and others see as the foundation of social equality between the sexes—goes on. There seems to be no middle ground in the debate over this controversial issue. The Controversy & Debate box helps explain why.

Controversy & Debate

The Abortion Controversy

Frank: The abortion people are marching again across campus.

Marvin: For or against?

Frank: Both. I'm not sure which came first, but somebody said there have already been some fights...

A black van pulls up in front of the storefront in a busy section of the city. Two women get out of the front seat and cautiously look up and down the street. After a moment, one nods to the other, and they open the rear door to let a third woman out of the van. Standing to the right and left of the woman, the two quickly escort her inside the building.

This scene might describe two federal marshals taking a convict to a police station, but it is actually an account of two clinic workers helping a woman who has decided to have an abortion. Why are they so cautious? Anyone who has read the papers in recent years knows about the angry confrontations at abortion clinics across North America. Some opponents have even targeted and killed doctors who carried out abortions, more than 1 million of which are performed in the United States each year (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2014). It is one of the most hotly debated issues of our day.

Abortion has not always been so controversial. In colonial times, midwives and other healers performed abortions with little community opposition and with full approval of the law. But controversy arose about 1850, when early medical doctors wanted to eliminate the competition they faced from midwives and other traditional health providers, whose income came largely from ending pregnancies. By 1900, medical doctors had succeeded in getting every state to pass a law banning abortion.

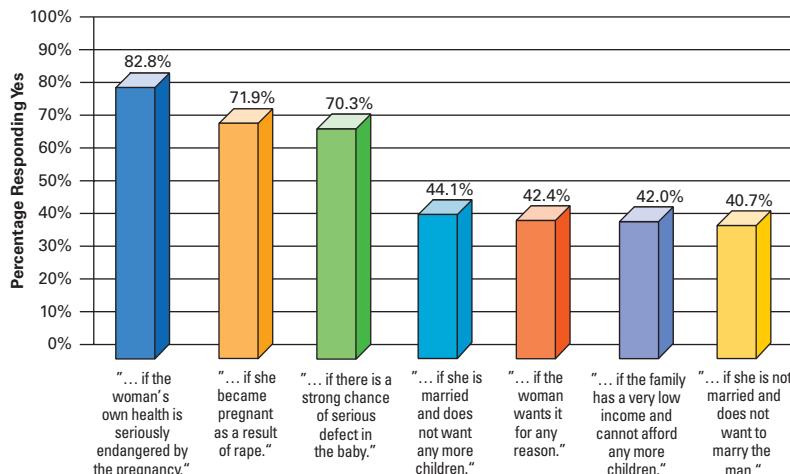
Such laws greatly reduced the number of abortions. Those that did occur were performed “underground,” as secretly as possible. Many women who wanted abortions—especially those who were poor—had little choice but to seek help from unlicensed “back alley” abortionists, sometimes with tragic results due to unsanitary conditions and the use of medically dangerous techniques.

By the 1960s, opposition to antiabortion laws was rising. In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court made a landmark decision (in the cases of *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*), striking down all state laws banning abortion. In effect, this action established a woman’s legal access to abortion nationwide.

Even so, the abortion controversy continues and about 46 percent of people in the United States claim that abortion is “very important” in making a choice of political candidates (Pew Research Center, 2014). On one side of the issue are people who describe themselves as “pro-choice,” supporting a woman’s right to choose abortion. On the other side are those who call themselves “pro-life,” opposing abortion as morally wrong; these people would like to see the Supreme Court reverse its 1973 decision.

How strong is the support for each side of the abortion controversy? A recent national survey asked a sample of adults the question “Should it be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion if the woman

Survey Question: “It should be possible for a pregnant woman to obtain a legal abortion . . .”



When Should the Law Allow a Woman to Choose Abortion?

The extent of public support for legal abortion depends on how the issue is presented.

SOURCE: Smith et al. (2013:407–9).

wants it for any reason?” In response, 42 percent said yes (placing them in the pro-choice camp) and 53 percent said no (expressing the pro-life position); the remaining 5 percent offered no opinion (Smith et al., 2013:409).

A closer look shows that circumstances make a big difference in how people see this issue. The figure shows that large majorities of U.S. adults favor legal abortion if a pregnancy seriously threatens a woman’s health, if the pregnancy is a result of rape, or if a fetus is likely to have a serious defect. The bottom line is that about 42 percent support access to abortion under any circumstances, but about 83 percent support access to abortion under some circumstances (Smith et al., 2013:407–9).

Many of those who take the pro-life position feel strongly that abortion amounts to killing unborn children—nearly 53 million since *Roe v. Wade* was passed in 1973. To them, people never have the right to end innocent life in this way. But pro-choice advocates are no less committed to the position that women must have control over their own bodies. If pregnancy decides the course of women’s lives, women will never be able to compete with men on equal terms, whether it is on campus or in the workplace. Therefore, access to legal, safe abortion is a necessary condition to women’s full participation in society (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2014).

What Do You Think?

1. The more conservative, pro-life position sees abortion as a moral issue, and the more liberal, pro-choice position views abortion as a power issue. Compare these positions to how conservatives and liberals view the issue of pornography.
2. Surveys show that men and women have almost the same opinions about abortion. Does this surprise you? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think the abortion controversy is often so bitter? Do you think our nation can find a middle ground on this issue?

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

Chapter 8 Sexuality and Society

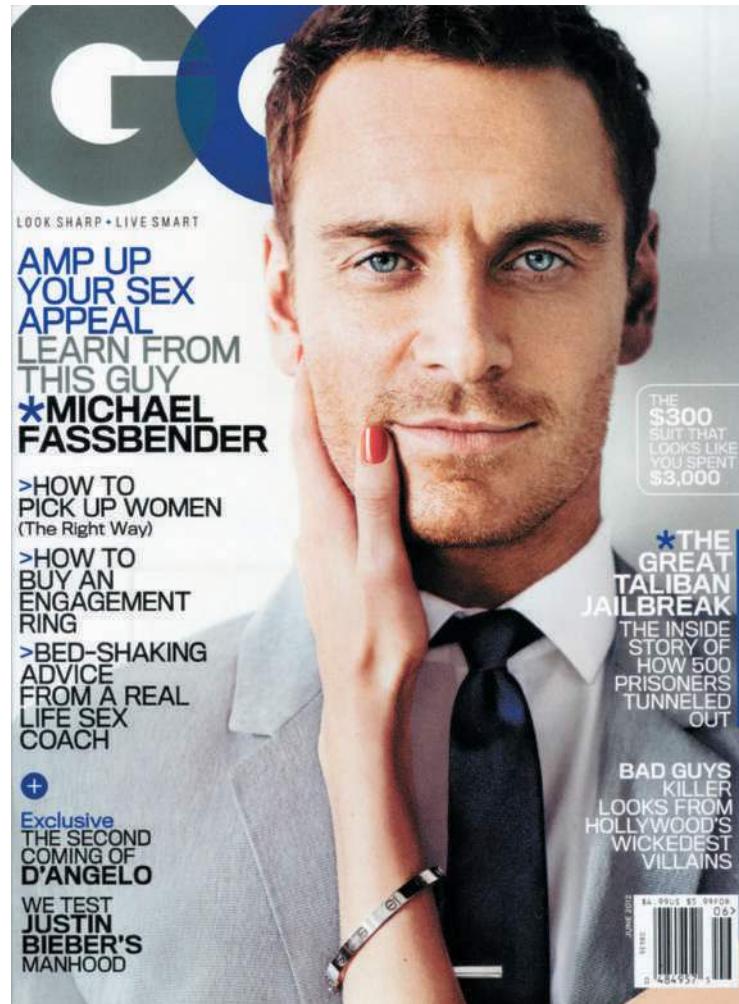
How do the mass media play into our society's views of human sexuality?

Far from it being a “natural” or simply “biological” concept, cultures around the world attach all sorts of meanings to human sexuality. The magazine covers presented here show how the mass media—in this case, popular magazines—

reflect our own culture’s ideas about sexuality. In each case, can you “decode” the magazine cover and explain its messages? To what extent do you think the messages are true?

Magazines like this one are found at the checkout lines of just about every supermarket and discount store in the United States. Looking just at the cover, what can you conclude about women’s sexuality in our society?





Messages about sexuality are directed to men as well as to women. Here is a recent issue of GQ. What messages about masculinity can you find? Do you see any evidence of heterosexual bias?

Hint The messages we get from mass media sources like these not only tell us about sexuality but also tell us what sort of people we ought to be. There is a lot of importance attached to sexuality for women, placing pressure on women to look good to men and to define life success in terms of attracting men with their sexuality. Similarly, being masculine means being successful, sophisticated, in charge, and able to attract desirable women. When the mass media endorse sexuality, it is almost always according to the norm of heterosexuality.

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

1. Looking at the *Cosmopolitan* cover, what evidence of heterosexual bias do you see? Explain.
2. Based on what you have read in this chapter, what evidence supports the argument that sexuality is constructed by society?
3. Go to www.sociologyinfofocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

Chapter 8 Sexuality and Society

Understanding Sexuality

8.1 Describe how sexuality is both a biological and a cultural issue. (pages 212–16)

Sex is biological, referring to bodily differences between females and males.

Gender is cultural, referring to behavior, power, and privileges a society attaches to being female or male.

Sexuality is a **biological issue**.

- Sex is determined at conception as a male sperm joins a female ovum.
- Males and females have different genitals (*primary sex characteristics*) and bodily development (*secondary sex characteristics*).
- *Intersexual people (hermaphrodites)* have some combination of male and female genitalia.
- *Transsexual people* feel they are one sex although biologically they are the other.

Sexuality is a **cultural issue**.

- For humans, sex is a matter of cultural meaning and personal choice rather than biological programming.
- Sexual practices vary considerably from one society to another (examples include kissing, ideas about modesty, and standards of beauty).
- The *incest taboo* exists in all societies because regulating sexuality, especially reproduction, is a necessary element of social organization. Specific taboos vary from one society to another.

sex the biological distinction between females and males

primary sex characteristics the genitals, organs used for reproduction

secondary sex characteristics bodily development, apart from the genitals, that distinguishes biologically mature females and males

intersexual people people whose bodies (including genitals) have both female and male characteristics

transsexuals people who feel they are one sex even though biologically they are the other

incest taboo a norm forbidding sexual relations or marriage between certain relatives

Sexual Attitudes in the United States

8.2 Explain changes in sexual attitudes in the United States. (pages 216–20)

The **sexual revolution**, which peaked in the 1960s and 1970s, drew sexuality out into the open. Baby boomers were the first generation to grow up with the idea that sex was a normal part of social life.

The **sexual counterrevolution**, which began around 1980, aimed criticism at “permissiveness” and urged a return to more traditional “family values.”

Beginning with the work of Alfred Kinsey, researchers have studied sexual behavior in the United States and reached many interesting conclusions:

- Premarital sexual intercourse became more common during the twentieth century.
- About 47% of high school students in the United States have had sexual intercourse; only 15% report having had four or more sexual partners.
- Among all U.S. adults, sexual activity varies: One-third report having sex with a partner a few times a year or not at all; another one-third have sex once to several times a month; the remaining one-third have sex two or more times a week.
- Extramarital sex is widely viewed as wrong, and just 17% of married people (19% of married men and 12% of married women) report being sexually unfaithful to their spouses at some time.
- By their mid-twenties, about 90% of men and women report becoming sexually active with at least one partner; by age seventy, 43% of men and 22% of women report having had sexual intercourse during the previous year.

Sexual Orientation

8.3 Analyze factors that shape sexual orientation. (pages 220–24)

Sexual orientation is a person’s romantic and emotional attraction to another person. Four sexual orientations are:

- heterosexuality
- homosexuality
- bisexuality
- asexuality

Most research supports the claim that sexual orientation is rooted in biology in much the same way as being right-handed or left-handed.

Sexual orientation is not a matter of neat categories because many people who think of themselves as heterosexual have homosexual experiences; the reverse is also true.

- The share of the U.S. population that is homosexual depends on how you define “homosexuality.”
- About 5% of adult men and 14% of adult women report engaging in homosexual activity at some point in their lives; 1.8% of men and 1.2% of women define themselves

as homosexual; 1.2% of men and 3.9% of women claim a bisexual identity.

In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that all states must allow same-sex marriage.

Transgender refers not to a sexual orientation but to appearing or behaving in ways that challenge conventional cultural norms about how females and males should look and act.

sexual orientation a person's romantic and emotional attraction to another person

heterosexuality sexual attraction to someone of the other sex

homosexuality sexual attraction to someone of the same sex

bisexuality sexual attraction to people of both sexes

asexuality a lack of sexual attraction to people of either sex

homophobia discomfort over close personal interaction with people thought to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual

transgender appearing or behaving in ways that challenge conventional cultural norms concerning how females and males should look and act

several times higher. About 11% of rape cases involve men as victims. Rape is a violent crime in which victim and offender typically know one another.

Abortion Laws banned abortion in all states by 1900. Opposition to these laws rose during the 1960s, and in 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court declared these laws unconstitutional. Today, more than 1 million abortions are performed each year. People who describe themselves as "pro-choice" support a woman's right to choose abortion; people who call themselves "pro-life" oppose abortion on moral grounds.

pornography sexually explicit material intended to cause sexual arousal

prostitution the selling of sexual services

abortion the deliberate termination of a pregnancy

Sexual Issues and Controversies

8.4 Discuss several current controversies involving sexuality. (pages 224–27)

Teen Pregnancy About 625,000 U.S. teenagers become pregnant each year. The rate of teenage pregnancy has dropped since 1950, when many teens married and had children. Today, most pregnant teens are not married and are at high risk of dropping out of school and being poor.

Pornography The law allows local communities to set standards of decency. Conservatives condemn pornography on moral grounds; liberals view pornography as a power issue, condemning it as demeaning to women.

Prostitution The selling of sexual services is illegal almost everywhere in the United States. Many people view prostitution as a victimless crime, but it victimizes women and spreads sexually transmitted diseases.

Sexual Violence About 80,000 rapes are reported each year in the United States, but the actual number is probably

Theories of Sexuality

8.5 Apply sociology's major theories to the topic of sexuality. (pages 227–33)

Structural-functional theory highlights society's need to regulate sexual activity and especially reproduction. One universal norm is the incest taboo, which keeps family relations clear.

Symbolic-interaction theory emphasizes the various meanings people attach to sexuality. The social construction of sexuality can be seen in sexual differences between societies and in changing sexual patterns over time.

Social-conflict theory links sexuality to social inequality. **Feminist theory** claims that men dominate women by devaluing them to the level of sexual objects. **Queer theory** claims our society has a heterosexual bias, defining anything different as "queer."

queer theory a body of research findings that challenges the heterosexual bias in U.S. society

heterosexism a view that labels anyone who is not heterosexual as "queer"

Chapter 9

Deviance



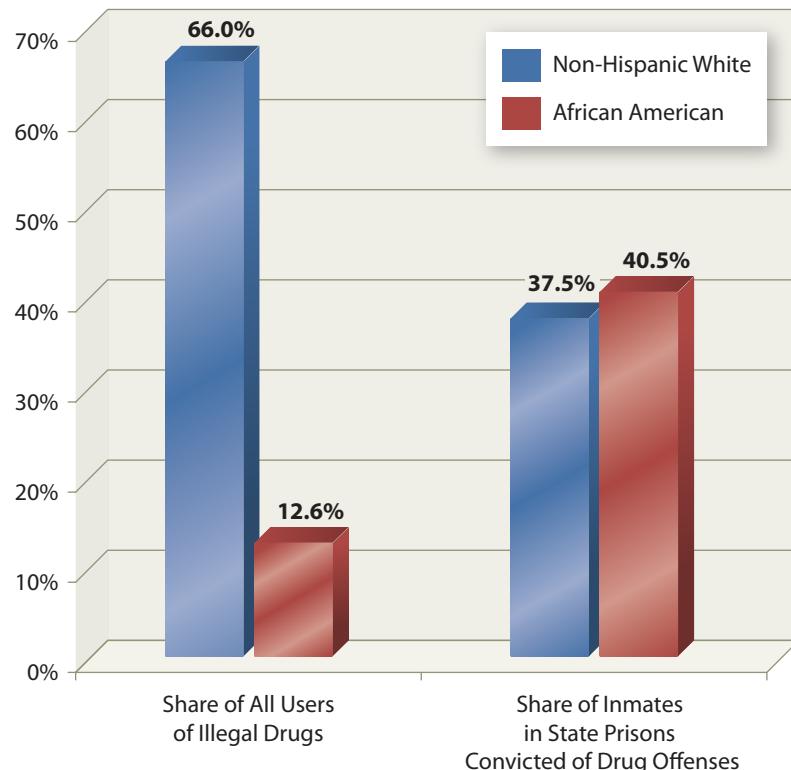
Learning Objectives

- 9.1** Explain how sociology addresses limitations of a biological or psychological approach to deviance.
- 9.2** Apply structural-functional theories to the topic of deviance.
- 9.3** Apply symbolic-interaction theories to the topic of deviance.
- 9.4** Apply social-conflict theories to the topic of deviance.
- 9.5** Identify patterns of crime in the United States and around the world.
- 9.6** Analyze the operation of the criminal justice system.



The Power of Society

to affect the odds of being incarcerated for using drugs



SOURCES: U.S. Department of Justice (2014) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2014).

Does everyone—regardless of race—run the same risk of being sent to prison if they engage in illegal drug use? Non-Hispanic whites account for 66.0 percent of all people over the age of fifteen who report using any illegal drug. By contrast, African Americans account for 12.6 percent of all people using any illegal drug. Yet, African Americans represent 40.5 percent of all inmates in state prisons locked up for drug offenses, which is more than three times what we might expect based on their share of the population using drugs. Non-Hispanic whites account for 37.5 percent of drug-offense inmates, which is just over half the expected percentage based on population share. The types of illegal drugs people use and the way our society views both drug use and race combine to place African Americans at much higher risk of being incarcerated for these offenses.

Chapter Overview

Common sense may suggest that some things are simply “right” and some things are simply “wrong.” We also tend to think—or hope—that most of us, at least most of the time, know the difference. But the line between “good” and “bad” is constructed by society in a way that invites our attention. This chapter investigates how and why society encourages both conformity and deviance. This chapter also introduces the concept of crime and surveys the operation of the criminal justice system.

“I was like the guy lost in another dimension, a stranger in town, not knowing which way to go.” With these words, Bruce Glover recalls the day he returned to his hometown of Detroit, Michigan, after being away for twenty-six years—a long stretch in a state prison. Glover was a young man of thirty when he was arrested for running a call girl ring. Found guilty at trial, he was given a stiff jail sentence.

Now fifty-six, he shakes his head as he says, “My mother passed while I was gone. I lost everything.” On the day he walked out of prison, he had nowhere to go and no way to get there. He had no driver’s license or other valid identification, which our society requires of people who are looking for a job and a place to live. Glover had no money to buy the clothes he needed to go out and begin his life all over again. He turned to a prison official and asked for help. Only with the assistance of a state agency was he finally able to get some money and locate temporary housing (Jones, 2007).



This chapter explores issues involving crime and criminals, asking why some categories of people are at higher risk of being offenders—and victims—than others. In addition, the chapter explains how our criminal justice system handles offenders and also how it tackles the broader question of why societies develop standards of right and wrong in the first place. As you will see, law is simply one part of a complex system of social control: Society teaches us all to conform to countless rules, at least most of the time. We begin our investigation by defining several basic concepts.

What Is Deviance?

9.1 Explain how sociology addresses limitations of a biological or psychological approach to deviance.

Deviance is the recognized violation of cultural norms. Norms guide almost all human activities, so the concept of deviance is quite broad. One category of deviance is **crime**, the violation of a society’s formally enacted criminal law. Even criminal deviance spans a wide range, from minor traffic violations to prostitution, sexual assault, and murder.

Most familiar examples of nonconformity are negative instances of rule breaking, such as stealing from a campus bookstore, assaulting a fellow student, or driving a car while

intoxicated. But we also define especially righteous people—students who speak up too much in class or people who are overly enthusiastic about new computer technology—as deviant, even if we give them a measure of respect. What deviant actions or attitudes, whether negative or positive, have in common is some element of *difference* that causes us to think of another person as an “outsider” (Becker, 1966).

Not all deviance involves action or even choice. The very *existence* of some categories of people can be troublesome to others. To the young, elderly people may seem hopelessly “out of it,” and to some whites, the mere presence of people of color may cause discomfort. Able-bodied people often view people with disabilities as an out-group, just as rich people may shun the poor for falling short of their high-class standards.

Social Control

All of us are subject to **social control**, attempts by society to regulate people’s thoughts and behavior. Often this process is informal, as when parents praise or scold their children or when friends make fun of our choice of music or style of dress. Cases of serious deviance, however, may involve the **criminal justice system**, the organizations—police, courts, and prison officials—that respond to alleged violations of the law.

deviance the recognized violation of cultural norms

crime the violation of a society’s formally enacted criminal law

social control attempts by society to regulate people’s thoughts and behavior

criminal justice system the organizations—police, courts, and prison officials—that respond to alleged violations of the law

How a society defines deviance, who is branded as deviant, and what people decide to do about deviance all have to do with the way society is organized. Only gradually, however, have people recognized that the roots of deviance are deep in society, as the chapter now explains.

The Biological Context

Chapter 5 (“Socialization”) explained that a century ago, most people assumed—incorrectly, as it turns out—that human behavior was the result of biological instincts. Early interest in criminality therefore focused on biological causes. In 1876, Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), an Italian physician who worked in prisons, theorized that criminals stand out physically, with low foreheads, prominent jaws and cheekbones, hairiness, and unusually long arms. In other words, Lombroso claimed that criminals look like our apelike ancestors.

Had Lombroso looked more carefully, he would have found the physical features he linked to criminality throughout the entire population. We now know that no physical traits distinguish criminals from noncriminals.

In the middle of the twentieth century, William Sheldon took a different approach, suggesting that general body structure might predict criminality (Sheldon, Hartl, & McDermott, 1949). He cross-checked hundreds of young men for body type and criminal history and concluded that criminality was most likely among boys with muscular, athletic builds. Sheldon Glueck and Eleanor Glueck (1950) confirmed Sheldon’s conclusion but cautioned that a powerful build does not necessarily *cause* or even *predict* criminality. Parents, they suggested, tend to be somewhat distant from powerfully built sons, who in turn grow up to show less sensitivity toward others. Moreover, in a self-fulfilling prophecy, people who expect muscular boys to be bullies may act in ways that bring about the aggressive behavior they expect.

Today, researchers in the field of genetics are cautiously investigating possible links between biology and crime. Some research already suggests that such a link may exist. In 2003, scientists at the University of Wisconsin reported results of a twenty-five-year study of crime among 400 boys. The researchers collected DNA samples from each boy and noted any history of trouble with the law. The researchers concluded that genetic factors (especially defective genes that, say, make too much of an enzyme) together with environmental factors (especially abuse early in life) were strong predictors of adult crime and violence. They noted, too, that these factors together were a better predictor of crime than either one alone (Lemonick, 2003; Pinker, 2003; Cohen, 2011; Shanks, 2011).

EVALUATE

Biological theories offer a limited explanation of crime. The best guess at present is that biological traits in combination with environmental factors explain some serious crime. Or, put another way, learning more about human genetics may help social researchers

better direct their attention to specific aspects of the social environment that may encourage or discourage criminal behavior. But the biggest problem with a purely biological approach to understanding crime is that most of the actions we define as deviant are carried out by people who are biologically quite normal.

In addition, because a biological approach looks at the individual, it offers no insight into how some kinds of behaviors come to be defined as deviant in the first place. Therefore, although there is much to be learned about how human biology may affect behavior, research currently puts far greater emphasis on social influences.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What does biological research add to our understanding of crime? What are the limitations of this approach?

Personality Factors

Like biological theories, psychological explanations of deviance focus on abnormality in the individual personality. Some personality traits are inherited, but most psychologists think that personality is shaped primarily by social experience. Deviance, then, is viewed as the result of “unsuccessful” socialization.

Classic research by Walter Reckless and Simon Dinitz (1967) illustrates the psychological approach. Reckless and Dinitz began by asking a number of teachers to categorize twelve-year-old male students as either likely or unlikely to get into trouble with the law. They then interviewed both the boys and their mothers to assess each boy’s self-concept and how he related to others. Analyzing their results, Reckless and Dinitz found that the “good boys” displayed a strong



Deviance is always a matter of difference. Deviance emerges in everyday life as we encounter people whose appearance or behavior differs from what we consider “normal.” Who is the “deviant” in this photograph? From whose point of view?



Why is it that street-corner gambling like this is usually against the law but playing the same games in a fancy casino is not?

conscience (what Freud called superego), could handle frustration, and identified with conventional cultural norms and values. The “bad boys,” by contrast, had a weaker conscience, displayed little tolerance of frustration, and felt out of step with conventional culture.

As we might expect, the “good boys” went on to have fewer run-ins with the police than the “bad boys.” Because all the boys lived in an area where delinquency was widespread, the investigators attributed staying out of trouble to a personality that controlled deviant impulses. Based on this conclusion, Reckless and Dinitz called their analysis *containment theory*.

In a more recent study, researchers followed 500 nonidentical twin boys from birth until they reached the age of thirty-two. Twins were used so that researchers could compare each of the twins to his brother controlling for social class and family environment. Observing the boys when they were young, parents, teachers, and the researchers assessed their level of self-control, ability to withstand frustration, and ability to delay gratification. Echoing the earlier conclusions of Reckless and Dinitz, the researchers found that the brother who had lower scores on these measures in childhood almost always went on to get into more trouble, including criminal activity (Moffitt et al., 2011).

EVALUATE

Psychologists have shown that personality patterns have some connection to deviance. Some serious criminals are psychopaths who do not feel guilt or shame, have no fear of punishment, and have little or no sympathy for the people they harm (Herpertz & Sass, 2000). More generally, the capacity for self-control and the ability to withstand frustration do seem to be skills that promote conformity. However, as noted in the case of the biological approach, most

serious crimes are committed by people whose psychological profiles are normal.

Both the biological and psychological approaches view deviance as a trait of individuals. The reason that these approaches have had limited value in explaining deviance is that wrongdoing has more to do with the organization of society. We now turn to a sociological approach, which explores where ideas of right and wrong come from, why people define some rule breakers but not others as deviant, and what role power plays in this process.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Why do biological and psychological analyses fail to explain deviance very well?

The Social Foundations of Deviance

Although we tend to view deviance as the free choice or personal failings of individuals, all behavior—deviance as well as conformity—is shaped by society. Three social foundations of deviance identified here will be detailed later in this chapter:

1. **Deviance varies according to cultural norms.** No thought or action is inherently deviant; it becomes deviant only in relation to particular norms. Because norms vary from place to place, deviance also varies. State law permits prostitution in rural areas of Nevada, although the practice is outlawed in the rest of the United States. As of 2015, medical use of marijuana is legal in twenty-three states plus Washington, D.C., and illegal in other states. Just four states—Colorado, Washington, Alaska, and Oregon (plus the District of Columbia)—allow adults to engage in recreational use of marijuana, a practice that is illegal in other states. Drivers on a new highway in western Texas can legally travel at 85 miles per hour, a speed that will draw quick attention from police everywhere else in the country. Just two states (Utah and Hawaii) do not have any form of legal gambling; forty-eight states do. Thirty-nine states have gambling casinos, including twenty-eight that permit casinos on Indian reservations, and fourteen that permit casinos at racetracks. Text messaging while driving is legal in only two states but against the law in forty-four others (four other states forbid the practice for young drivers). Would you think that everyone could at least agree that fresh milk is good for you? Not so fast: Selling raw milk is legal in ten states and banned or heavily regulated in all the others (Ozersky, 2010; American Gaming Association, 2014; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015).

Further, most cities and towns have at least one unique law. For example, Fort Lee, New Jersey, bans

texting while walking; Mobile, Alabama, outlaws the wearing of stiletto-heeled shoes; Pine Lawn, Missouri, bans saggy, “low-rider” pants; in Juneau, Alaska, it is illegal to bring a flamingo into a barbershop; South Padre Island, Texas, bans the wearing of neckties; Mount Prospect, Illinois, has a law against keeping pigeons or bees; Topeka, Kansas, bans snowball fights; Halethorp, Maryland, bans passionate kissing in public; and Beverly Hills, California, regulates the number of tennis balls allowed on the court at one time (Wittenauer, 2007; Belofsky, 2010; Newcomb, 2012; Bielanko, 2013).

Around the world, deviance is even more diverse. Albania outlaws any public display of religious faith, such as the Catholic practice of “crossing” oneself; Cuba regulates private ownership of personal computers and limits access to the Internet; Vietnam can prosecute citizens for meeting with foreigners; Malaysia does not allow women to wear tight-fitting jeans; Saudi Arabia bans the sale of red flowers on Valentine’s Day; and Iran bans wearing makeup by women and forbids anyone from playing rap music (Chopra, 2008).

2. People become deviant as others define them that way. Everyone violates cultural norms at one time or another. Have you ever walked around talking to yourself or “borrowed” a pen from your workplace? Whether such behavior defines us as mentally ill or criminal depends on how others perceive, define, and respond to it.

3. How societies set norms and how they define rule breaking both involve social power. The law, declared Karl Marx, is the means by which powerful people protect their interests. A homeless person who stands on a street corner speaking out against the government risks arrest for disturbing the peace; a mayoral candidate during an election campaign who does exactly the same thing gets police protection. In short, norms and how we apply them reflect social inequality.



Durkheim claimed that deviance is a necessary element of social organization, serving several important functions. After several unarmed African American men died at the hands of police officers, people across the country took to the streets to affirm their community ties as they joined their voices to say what should be obvious—the lives of all people matter. Has any event on your campus caused a similar reaction?

Durkheim's Basic Insight

In his pioneering study of deviance, Emile Durkheim (1964a, orig. 1893; 1964b, orig. 1895) made the surprising claim that there is nothing abnormal about deviance. In fact, it performs four essential functions:

- 1. Deviance affirms cultural values and norms.** As moral creatures, people must prefer some attitudes and behaviors to others. But any definition of virtue rests on an opposing idea of vice: There can be no good without evil and no justice without crime. Deviance is needed to define and support morality.
- 2. Responding to deviance clarifies moral boundaries.** By defining some individuals as deviant, people draw a boundary between right and wrong. For example, a college marks the line between academic honesty and cheating by disciplining students who cheat on exams.
- 3. Responding to deviance brings people together.** People typically react to serious deviance with shared outrage.

Structural-Functional Theories: The Functions of Deviance

9.2 Apply structural-functional theories to the topic of deviance.

The key insight of the structural-functional approach is that deviance is a necessary part of social organization. This point was made a century ago by Emile Durkheim.

In doing so, Durkheim explained, they reaffirm the moral ties that bind them. For example, in August 2014, police used a choke hold while arresting a New York City man for a minor crime causing his death. In the days that followed, people across the country joined together in demonstrations against police using deadly force against African Americans.

- 4. Deviance encourages social change.** Deviant people push a society's moral boundaries, suggesting alternatives to the status quo and encouraging change. Today's deviance, declared Durkheim, can become tomorrow's morality (1964b:71, orig. 1895). For example, rock-and-roll, condemned as immoral in the 1950s, became a multibillion-dollar industry just a few years later (see the Thinking About Diversity box in Chapter 3, "Culture"). In recent years, hip-hop music has followed the same path from marginality to mainstream respectability.

AN ILLUSTRATION: THE PURITANS OF MASSACHUSETTS BAY Kai Erikson's classic study of the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay brings Durkheim's theory to life. Erikson (2005b, orig. 1966) shows that even the Puritans, a disciplined and highly religious group, created deviance to clarify their moral boundaries. In fact, Durkheim might well have had the Puritans in mind when he wrote this:

Imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes, properly so called, will there be unknown; but faults which appear [insignificant] to the layman will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary consciousness For the same reason, the perfect and upright man judges

his smallest failings with a severity that the majority reserve for acts more truly in the nature of an offense. (1964b:68–69, orig. 1895)

Deviance is thus not a matter of a few "bad apples" but a necessary condition of "good" social living.

Deviance may be found in every society, but the *kind* of deviance people generate depends on the moral issues they seek to clarify. The Puritans, for example, experienced a number of "crime waves," including the well-known outbreak of witchcraft in 1692. With each response, the Puritans answered questions about the range of proper beliefs by celebrating some of their members and condemning others as deviant.

Erikson discovered that even though the offenses changed, the proportion of people the Puritans defined as deviant remained steady over time. This stability, he concluded, confirms Durkheim's claim that society creates deviants to mark its changing moral boundaries. In other words, by constantly defining a small number of people as deviant, the Puritans maintained the moral shape of their society.

Merton's Strain Theory

Some deviance may be necessary for a society to function, but Robert Merton (1938, 1968) argued that society can be set up in a way that encourages too much deviance. Specifically, the extent and type of deviance people engage in depend on whether a society provides the *means* (such as schooling and job opportunities) to achieve cultural *goals* (such as financial success). Merton's strain theory is illustrated in Figure 9–1.

Conformity lies in pursuing cultural goals through approved means. Therefore, the U.S. "success story" is someone who gains wealth and prestige through talent, schooling, and hard work. But not everyone who wants conventional success has the opportunity to attain it. For example, people raised in poverty may have little hope of becoming successful if they play by the rules. According to Merton, the strain between our culture's emphasis on wealth and the lack of opportunities to get rich may encourage some people, especially the poor, to engage in stealing, drug dealing, or other forms of street crime. Merton called this type of deviance *innovation*—using unconventional means (street crime) rather than conventional means (hard work at a "straight" job) to achieve a culturally approved goal (wealth).

The inability to reach a cultural goal may also prompt another type of deviance that Merton calls *ritualism*. For example, many people may not care much about becoming rich but rigidly stick to the rules (the conventional means) anyway in order to at least feel "respectable."

A third response to the inability to succeed is *retreatism*: rejecting both cultural goals and conventional means so that a person in effect "drops out." Some alcoholics, drug addicts, and street people can be described as retreatists. The

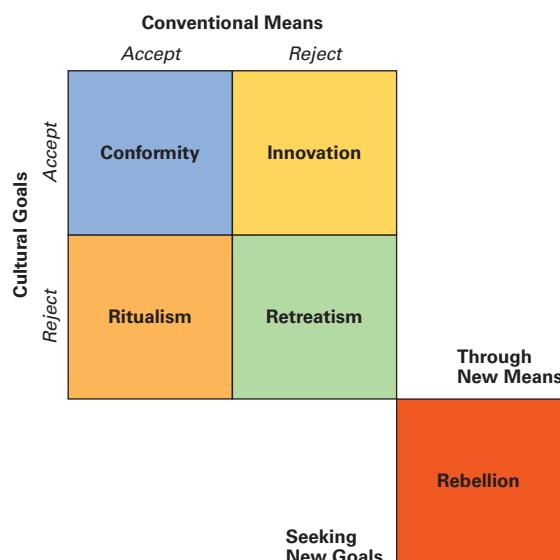


Figure 9–1 Merton's Strain Theory of Deviance

Combining a person's view of cultural goals and the conventional means to obtain them allowed Robert Merton to identify various types of deviance.

SOURCE: Merton (1968).

deviance of retreatists lies in their unconventional lifestyle and also in what seems to be their willingness to live this way.

The fourth response to failure is *rebellion*. Like retreatists, rebels such as radical “survivalists” reject both the cultural definition of success and the conventional means of achieving it, but they go one step further by forming a counterculture supporting alternatives to the existing social order.

Deviant Subcultures

Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1966) extended Merton’s theory, proposing that crime results not simply from limited legitimate (legal) opportunity but also from readily accessible illegitimate (illegal) opportunity. In short, deviance or conformity arises from the *relative opportunity structure* that frames a person’s life.

The life of Al Capone, a notorious gangster, illustrates Cloward and Ohlin’s theory. As the son of poor immigrants, Capone faced barriers of poverty and ethnic prejudice, which lowered his odds of achieving success in conventional terms. Yet as a young man during Prohibition (when alcoholic beverages were banned in the United States between 1920 and 1933), Capone found in his neighborhood people who could teach him how to sell alcohol illegally—a source of illegitimate opportunity. Where the structure of opportunity favors criminal activity, Cloward and Ohlin predict the development of *criminal subcultures*, such as Capone’s criminal organization or today’s inner-city street gangs.

But what happens when people are unable to find *any* opportunity, legal or illegal? Then deviance may take one of two forms. One is *conflict subcultures*, such as armed street gangs that engage in violence out of frustration and a desire for respect. Another possible outcome is the development of *retreatist subcultures*, in which deviants drop out and abuse alcohol or other drugs.

Albert Cohen (1971, orig. 1955) suggests that delinquency is most common among lower-class youths because they have the least opportunity to achieve conventional success. Neglected by society, they seek self-respect by creating a delinquent subculture that defines as worthy the traits these youths do have. Being feared on the street may not win many points with society as a whole, but it may satisfy a young person’s desire to “be somebody” in the local neighborhood.

Walter Miller (1970, orig. 1958) adds that delinquent subcultures are characterized by (1) *trouble*, arising from frequent conflict with teachers and police; (2) *toughness*, the value placed on physical size and strength, especially among males; (3) *smartness*, the ability to succeed on the



Young people cut off from legitimate opportunity often form subcultures that many people view as deviant. Gang subcultures are one way young people gain the sense of belonging denied to them by the larger culture.

streets, to outsmart or “con” others, and to avoid being similarly taken advantage of; (4) a *need for excitement*, the search for thrills or danger; (5) a *belief in fate*, a sense that people lack control over their own lives; and (6) a *desire for freedom*, often expressed as anger toward authority figures.

Finally, Elijah Anderson (1994, 2002; Kubrin, 2005) explains that in poor urban neighborhoods, most people manage to conform to conventional or “decent” values. Yet faced with neighborhood crime and violence, indifference or even hostility from police, and sometimes neglect by their own parents, some young men decide to live by the “street code.” To show that they can survive on the street, a young man displays “nerve,” a willingness to stand up to any threat. Following this street code, which is also evident in much recent rap music, the young man believes that a violent death is better than being “dissed” (disrespected) by others. Some manage to escape the dangers, but the risk of ending up in jail—or worse—is very high for these young men, who have been pushed to the margins of our society.

EVALUATE

Durkheim made an important contribution by pointing out the functions of deviance. However, there is evidence that a community does not always come together in reaction to crime; sometimes fear of crime causes people to withdraw from public life (Liska & Warner, 1991; Warr & Ellison, 2000).

Merton’s strain theory has been criticized for explaining some kinds of deviance (stealing, for example) better than others (such as crimes of passion or mental illness). Also, not everyone seeks success in the conventional terms of wealth, as strain theory suggests.

The general argument of Cloward and Ohlin, Cohen, Miller, and Anderson—that deviance reflects the opportunity structure

of society—has been confirmed by subsequent research (Allan & Steffensmeier, 1989; Uggen, 1999). However, these theories fall short by assuming that everyone shares the same cultural standards for judging right and wrong. In addition, if we define crime to include not only burglary and auto theft but also fraud and other crimes carried out by corporate executives and Wall Street tycoons, then more high-income people will be counted as criminals.

Finally, all structural-functional theories suggest that everyone who breaks important rules will be labeled deviant. However, becoming deviant is actually a highly complex process, as the next section explains.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Why do you think many of the theories just discussed seem to say that crime is more common among people with lower social standing?

Symbolic-Interaction Theories: Defining Deviance

9.3 Apply symbolic-interaction theories to the topic of deviance.

The symbolic-interaction approach explains how people define deviance in everyday situations. From this point of view, definitions of deviance and conformity are surprisingly flexible.

Labeling Theory

The main contribution of symbolic-interaction analysis is **labeling theory**, *the idea that deviance and conformity result not so much from what people do as from how others respond to those actions*. Labeling theory stresses the relativity of deviance, meaning that people may define the same behavior in any number of ways.

Consider these situations: A college student takes a sweater off the back of a roommate's chair and packs it for a weekend trip, a married woman at a convention in a distant city has sex with an old boyfriend, and a city mayor gives a big contract to a major campaign contributor. We might define the first situation as carelessness, borrowing, or theft. The consequences of the second case depend largely on whether the woman's behavior becomes known back home. In the third situation, is the official choosing the best contractor or paying off a political debt? The social construction of reality is a highly variable process of detection, definition, and response.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DEVIANCE Edwin Lemert (1951, 1972) observed that some norm violations—say, skipping school or underage drinking—provoke slight reaction from others and have little effect on a person's self-concept. Lemert calls such passing episodes *primary deviance*.

But what happens if people take notice of someone's deviance and really make something of it? After an audience has defined some action as primary deviance, the individual may begin to change, taking on a deviant identity by talking, acting, or dressing in a different way, rejecting the people who are critical, and repeatedly breaking the rules. Lemert (1951:77) calls this change of self-concept *secondary deviance*. He explains that "when a person begins to employ ... deviant behavior as a means of defense, attack, or adjustment to the ... problems created by societal reaction," deviance becomes secondary. For example, say that people have begun describing a young man as an "alcohol abuser," which establishes primary deviance. These people may then exclude him from their friendship network. His response may be to become bitter toward them, start drinking even more, and seek the company of others who approve of his drinking. These actions mark the beginning of secondary deviance, a deeper deviant identity.

STIGMA Secondary deviance marks the start of what Erving Goffman (1963) calls a *deviant career*. As people develop a stronger commitment to deviant behavior, they typically acquire a **stigma**, *a powerfully negative label that greatly changes a person's self-concept and social identity*.

A stigma operates as a master status (see Chapter 6, "Social Interaction in Everyday Life"), overpowering other aspects of social identity so that a person is discredited in the minds of others and becomes socially isolated. Often a person gains a stigma informally as others begin to see the individual in deviant terms. Sometimes, however, an entire community formally stigmatizes an individual through what Harold Garfinkel (1956) calls a *degradation ceremony*. A criminal trial is one example, operating much like a high school graduation ceremony in reverse: A person stands before the community and is labeled in negative rather than positive terms.

RETROSPECTIVE AND PROJECTIVE LABELING Once people stigmatize an individual, they may engage in *retrospective labeling*, interpreting someone's past in light of some present deviance (Scheff, 1984). For example, after discovering that a priest has sexually molested a child, others rethink his past, perhaps musing, "He always did want to be around young children." Retrospective labeling, which distorts a person's biography by being highly selective, typically deepens a deviant identity.

Similarly, people may engage in *projective labeling* of a stigmatized person, using the person's deviant identity to predict future actions. Regarding the priest, people might say, "He's going to keep at it until he gets caught." The more people in someone's social world think such things, the more these definitions affect the individual's self-concept, increasing the chance that they will come true.

LABELING DIFFERENCE AS DEVIANCE Is a homeless man who refuses to allow police to take him to a city shelter

on a cold night simply trying to live independently, or is he “crazy”? People have a tendency to treat behavior that irritates or threatens them not simply as different but as deviance or even mental illness.

The psychiatrist Thomas Szasz (1961, 1970, 2003, 2004) charges that people are too quick to apply the label of mental illness to conditions that simply amount to a difference we don’t like. The only way to avoid this troubling practice, Szasz continues, is to abandon the idea of mental illness entirely. The world is full of people who think or act differently in ways that may irritate us, but such differences are not grounds for defining someone as mentally ill. Such labeling, Szasz claims, simply enforces conformity to the standards of people powerful enough to impose their will on others.

Most mental health care professionals reject the idea that mental illness does not exist. But they agree that it is important to think critically about how we define “difference.” First, people who are mentally ill are no more to blame for their condition than people who suffer from cancer or some other physical problem. Therefore, having a mental or physical illness is no grounds for a person being labeled “deviant.” Second, ordinary people without the medical knowledge to diagnose mental illness should avoid using such labels just to make people conform to their own standards of behavior.

The Medicalization of Deviance

Labeling theory, particularly the ideas of Szasz and Goffman, helps explain an important shift in the way our society understands deviance. Over the past fifty or sixty years, the growing influence of psychiatry and medicine in the United States has led to the **medicalization of deviance**, *the transformation of moral and legal deviance into a medical condition*.

Medicalization amounts to swapping one set of labels for another. In moral terms, we evaluate people or their behavior as “bad” or “good.” However, the scientific objectivity of medicine passes no moral judgment, instead using clinical diagnoses such as “sick” or “well.”

To illustrate, until the mid-twentieth century, people generally viewed alcoholics as morally weak people easily tempted by the pleasure of drink. Gradually, however, medical specialists redefined alcoholism so that most people now consider it a disease, rendering people “sick” rather than “bad.” In the same way, obesity, drug

labeling theory the idea that deviance and conformity result not so much from what people do as from how others respond to those actions

stigma a powerfully negative label that greatly changes a person’s self-concept and social identity

medicalization of deviance the transformation of moral and legal deviance into a medical condition



In 2012, James Egan Holmes entered a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, and opened fire on people watching the film, killing 12 people and injuring 70 others. He was arrested, and at his trial he pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity. In 2015, the jury rejected the insanity claim and Holmes was convicted of 12 counts of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Despite the court’s finding, does simply committing such a horrific crime give us grounds to wonder about a person’s sanity? What difference does a finding of “insane” rather than “guilty” make? Explain.

addiction, child abuse, sexual promiscuity, and other behaviors that used to be strictly moral matters are widely defined today as illnesses for which people need help rather than punishment.

Similarly, behaviors that used to be defined as criminal—such as smoking marijuana—are more likely today to be seen as a form of treatment. By the beginning of 2015, twenty-three states had enacted medical marijuana laws and four states plus Washington, D.C., now permit recreational marijuana use (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015).

The Difference Labels Make

Whether we define deviance as a moral or a medical issue has three consequences. First, it affects *who responds* to deviance. An offense against common morality usually brings about a reaction from members of the community or the police. A medical label, however, places the situation under the control of clinical specialists, including counselors, psychiatrists, and physicians.

A second issue is *how people respond* to deviance. A moral approach defines deviants as offenders subject to punishment. Medically, however, they are patients who need treatment. Punishment is designed to fit the crime,

but treatment programs are tailored to the patient and may involve virtually any therapy that a specialist thinks might prevent future deviance.

Third, and most important, the two labels differ on the *personal competence of the deviant person*. From a moral standpoint, whether we are right or wrong, at least we take responsibility for our own behavior. Once we are defined as sick, however, we are seen as unable to control (or if “mentally ill,” even to understand) our actions. People who are labeled incompetent are in turn subjected to treatment, often against their will. For this reason alone, attempts to define deviance in medical terms should be made with extreme caution.

Sutherland's Differential Association Theory

Learning any behavioral pattern, whether conventional or deviant, is a process that takes place in groups. According to Edwin Sutherland (1940), a person's tendency toward conformity or deviance depends on the amount of contact with others who encourage or reject conventional behavior. This is Sutherland's theory of *differential association*.

A number of research studies confirm the idea that young people are more likely to engage in delinquency if they believe members of their peer groups encourage such activity (Akers et al., 1979; Miller & Mathews, 2001). One investigation focused on sexual activity among eighth-grade students. Two strong predictors of such behavior for young girls was having a boyfriend who encouraged sexual relations and having girlfriends they believed would approve of such activity. Similarly, boys were encouraged to become sexually active by friends who rewarded them with high status in their peer group (Little & Rankin, 2001).



All social groups teach their members skills and attitudes that encourage certain behavior. In recent years, discussion on college campuses has focused on the dangers of binge drinking, a behavior that results in several dozen deaths each year among young people in the United States. How much of a problem is binge drinking on your campus?

Hirschi's Control Theory

The sociologist Travis Hirschi (1969; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1995) developed *control theory*, which states that social control depends on people anticipating the consequences of their behavior. Hirschi assumes that everyone finds at least some deviance tempting. But the thought of a ruined career keeps most people from breaking the rules; for some, just imagining the reactions of family and friends is enough. On the other hand, individuals who feel they have little to lose by deviance are likely to become rule breakers.

Specifically, Hirschi links conformity to four different types of social control:

- 1. Attachment.** Strong social attachments encourage conformity. Weak family, peer, and school relationships leave people freer to engage in deviance.
- 2. Opportunity.** The greater a person's access is to legitimate opportunity, the greater are the advantages of conformity. By contrast, someone with little confidence in future success is more likely to drift toward deviance.
- 3. Involvement.** Extensive involvement in legitimate activities—such as holding a job, going to school, or playing sports—inhibits deviance (Langbein & Bess, 2002). By contrast, people who simply “hang out” waiting for something to happen have time and energy to engage in deviant activity.
- 4. Belief.** Strong belief in conventional morality and respect for authority figures restrain tendencies toward deviance. People who have a weak conscience (and who are left unsupervised) are more open to temptation (Stack, Wasserman, & Kern, 2004).

Hirschi's analysis combines a number of earlier ideas about the causes of deviant behavior. Note that a person's relative social privilege as well as family and community environment is likely to affect the risk of deviant behavior (Hope, Grasmick, & Pointon, 2003).

EVALUATE

The various symbolic-interaction theories all see deviance as a reality that may emerge within the process of interaction. Labeling theory links deviance not to the action but to the *reaction* of others. Thus some people are defined as deviant but others who think or behave in the same way are not. The concepts of secondary deviance, deviant career, and stigma show how being labeled deviant can become a lasting self-concept.

Yet labeling theory has several limitations. First, because it takes a highly relative view of deviance, labeling theory ignores the fact that some kinds of behavior—such as murder—are condemned just about everywhere. Therefore, labeling theory is most usefully applied to less serious issues, such as sexual promiscuity or mental illness. Second, research on the consequences of deviant labeling does not clearly show whether

deviant labeling produces further deviance or discourages it (Smith & Gartin, 1989; Sherman & Smith, 1992). Third, not everyone resists being labeled deviant; some people actively seek it out (Vold & Bernard, 1986). For example, people take part in civil disobedience and willingly subject themselves to arrest in order to call attention to social injustice.

Sociologists consider Sutherland's differential association theory and Hirschi's control theory important contributions to our understanding of deviance. But why do society's norms and laws define certain kinds of activities as deviant in the first place? This question is addressed by social-conflict analysis, the focus of the next section.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Clearly define primary deviance, secondary deviance, deviant career, and stigma.

Theories of Class, Race, and Gender: Deviance and Inequality

9.4 Apply social-conflict theories to the topic of deviance.

The social-conflict approach, as summarized in the Applying Theory table, links deviance to social inequality. That is, who or what is labeled deviant depends on which categories of people hold power in a society.

Deviance and Power

Alexander Liazos (1972) points out that the people we tend to define as deviants—the ones we dismiss as “nuts” and “sluts”—are typically not as bad or harmful as they are *powerless*. Bag ladies and unemployed men on street corners, not corporate polluters or international arms dealers, carry the stigma of deviance.

Social-conflict theory explains this pattern in three ways. First, all norms—especially the laws of any society—generally reflect the interests of the rich and powerful. People who threaten the wealthy are likely to be labeled

deviant, either for taking people's property (“common thieves”) or for advocating a more egalitarian society (“political radicals”). As noted in Chapter 4 (“Society”), Karl Marx argued that the law and all other social institutions support the interests of the rich. Or as Richard Quinney puts it, “Capitalist justice is by the capitalist class, for the capitalist class, and against the working class” (1977:3).

Second, even if their behavior is called into question, the powerful have the resources to resist deviant labels. The majority of the executives involved in recent corporate scandals have yet to be arrested; only a few have gone to jail.

Third, the widespread belief that norms and laws are natural and good masks their political character. For this reason, although we may condemn the unequal application of the law, we give little thought to whether the laws themselves are really fair or not.

Deviance and Capitalism

In the Marxist tradition, Steven Spitzer (1980) argues that deviant labels are applied to people who interfere with the operation of capitalism. First, because capitalism is based on private control of wealth, people who threaten the property of others—especially the poor who steal from the rich—are prime candidates for being labeled deviant. On the other hand, the rich who take advantage of the poor are less likely to be labeled deviant. For example, landlords who charge poor tenants high rents and evict anyone who cannot pay are not considered criminals; they are simply “doing business.”

Second, because capitalism depends on productive labor, people who cannot or will not work risk being labeled deviant. Many members of our society think people who are out of work, even through no fault of their own, are somehow deviant.

Third, capitalism depends on respect for authority figures, causing people who resist authority to be labeled deviant. Examples are children who skip school or talk back to parents and teachers and adults who do not cooperate with employers or police.

APPLYING THEORY

Deviance

	Structural-Functional Theory	Symbolic-Interaction Theory	Social-Conflict Theory	Race-Conflict and Feminist Theories
What is the level of analysis?	Macro-level	Micro-level	Macro-level	Macro-level
What is deviance?	Deviance is a basic part of social organization.	Deviance is part of socially constructed reality that emerges in interaction.	Deviance results from social inequality.	Deviance reflects racial and gender inequality.
What part does it play in society?	By defining deviance, society sets its moral boundaries.	Deviance comes into being as individuals label something deviant.	Norms, including laws, reflect the interests of powerful members of society.	Deviant labels are more readily applied to women and other minorities.
What is important about deviance?	Deviance is universal: It exists in all societies.	Deviance is variable: Any act or person may or may not be labeled deviant.	Deviance is political: People with little power are at high risk of being labeled deviant.	Deviance is a means of control: Dominant categories of people discredit others as a means to dominate them.



The 2013 film *The Wolf of Wall Street* presents a troubling look at extensive fraud and corruption in the world of “boiler room” brokerages that have flourished in recent decades. To some, the shady dealings of these brokers are examples of white-collar crime involving criminal acts by individuals of high social position. To others, the entire world of Wall Street is corrupt enough to be considered an example of corporate crime, in which whole companies engage in illegal practices in pursuit of profit by any means necessary.

Fourth, anyone who directly challenges the capitalist status quo is likely to be defined as deviant. Such has been the case with labor organizers, radical environmentalists, and antiwar activists.

On the other side of the coin, society positively labels whatever supports the operation of capitalism. For example, winning athletes enjoy celebrity status because they express the values of individual achievement and competition, both vital to capitalism. Also, Spitzer notes, we condemn using drugs of escape (marijuana, psychedelics, heroin, and crack) as deviant but encourage drugs (such as alcohol and caffeine) that promote adjustment to the status quo.

The capitalist system also tries to control people who are not economically productive. The elderly, people with mental or physical disabilities, and Robert Merton’s retreatists (people addicted to alcohol or other drugs) are a “costly yet relatively harmless burden” on society. Such people, claims Spitzer, are subject to control by social welfare agencies. But people who openly challenge the capitalist system, including the inner-city underclass and revolutionaries—Merton’s innovators and rebels—are controlled by the criminal justice system and, in times of crisis, military forces such as the National Guard.

Note that both the social welfare and criminal justice systems blame individuals, not the system, for social problems. Welfare recipients are considered unworthy freeloaders, poor people who express rage at their plight are labeled rioters, anyone who challenges the government is branded a radical or a communist, and those who try to gain illegally what they will never get legally are rounded up as common criminals.

White-Collar Crime

In a sign of things to come, a Wall Street stockbroker named Michael Milken made headlines back in 1987 when he was jailed for business fraud. Milken attracted attention because not since the days of Al Capone had anyone made so much money in one year: \$550 million—about \$1.5 million a day (Swartz, 1989).

Milken engaged in **white-collar crime**, defined by Edwin Sutherland (1940) as *crime committed by people of high social position in the course of their occupations*. White-collar crimes do not involve violence and rarely attract police to the scene with guns drawn. Rather, white-collar criminals use their powerful offices to illegally enrich themselves and others, often causing significant public harm in the process. For this reason, sociologists sometimes call white-collar offenses that occur in government offices and corporate boardrooms “crime in the suites” as opposed to “crime in the streets.”

The most common white-collar crimes are bank embezzlement, business fraud, bribery, and antitrust violations. Sutherland (1940) explains that such

white-collar offenses typically end up in a civil hearing rather than a criminal courtroom. *Civil law* regulates business dealings between private parties, and *criminal law* defines the individual’s moral responsibilities to society. In practice, then, someone who loses a civil case pays for damage or injury but is not labeled a criminal. Corporate officials are also protected by the fact that most charges of white-collar crime target the organization rather than individuals.

When white-collar criminals are charged and convicted, they usually escape punishment. A government study found that those convicted of fraud and punished with a fine ended up paying less than 10 percent of what they owed; most managed to hide or transfer their assets to avoid paying up. Among white-collar criminals convicted of the more serious crime of embezzlement, only about half ever served a day in jail. One accounting found that just 55 percent of the embezzlers convicted in the U.S. federal courts served prison sentences; the rest were put on probation or issued a fine (U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2015). As some analysts see it, until courts impose more prison terms, we should expect white-collar crime to remain widespread (Shover & Hochstetler, 2006).

Corporate Crime

Sometimes whole companies, not just individuals, break the law. **Corporate crime** is *the illegal actions of a corporation or people acting on its behalf*.

white-collar crime crime committed by people of high social position in the course of their occupations

corporate crime the illegal actions of a corporation or people acting on its behalf

organized crime a business supplying illegal goods or services

Corporate crime ranges from knowingly selling faulty or dangerous products to deliberately polluting the environment (Derber, 2004). The collapse of a number of major U.S. corporations in recent years cost tens of thousands of people their jobs and their pensions. Even more seriously, 127 people died in underground coal mines between 2009 and 2014; hundreds more died from “black lung” disease caused by years of inhaling coal dust. The annual death toll for all job-related hazards in the United States runs into the thousands, and each year more than a million people are injured on the job seriously enough to require time away from work (Frank, 2007; Jafari, 2008; U.S. Department of Labor, Mine Safety and Health Administration, 2014; U.S. Department of Labor, 2014).

Organized Crime

Organized crime is a business supplying illegal goods or services. Sometimes criminal organizations force people to do business with them, as when a gang extorts money from shopkeepers for “protection.” In most cases, however, organized crime involves the sale of illegal goods and services—often sex, drugs, and gambling—to willing buyers.

Organized crime has flourished in the United States for more than a century. The scope of its operations expanded among immigrants, who found that this society was not willing to share its opportunities with them. Some ambitious individuals (such as Al Capone, mentioned earlier) made their own success, especially during Prohibition, when the government banned the production and sale of alcohol.

The Italian Mafia is a well-known example of organized crime. But other criminal organizations involve African Americans, Chinese, Colombians, Cubans, Haitians, Nigerians, and Russians, as well as others of almost every racial and ethnic category. Today, organized crime involves a wide range of activities, from selling illegal drugs to prostitution to credit card fraud to selling false identification papers to illegal immigrants (Valdez, 1997; U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011).

Race-Conflict Theory: Hate Crimes

What people consider deviant reflects the relative power and privilege of different categories of people. We will illustrate this pattern by looking, first, at how racial and ethnic hostility motivates hate crimes. Then we will explore how gender is linked to deviance.

A **hate crime** is a criminal act against a person or a person’s property by an offender motivated by racial or other bias. A hate crime may express hostility toward someone’s race, religion, ethnicity or ancestry and, since 2009, sexual orientation, or physical disability. The federal government recorded 5,928 hate crimes in 2013 (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014).



The television series *Boardwalk Empire* offers an inside look at the lives of gangsters in this country’s history. How accurately do you think the mass media portray organized crime? Explain.

In 1998, people across the country were stunned by the brutal killing of Matthew Shepard, a gay student at the University of Wyoming, by two men filled with hatred toward homosexuals. The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (2014) reported that 18 murders and 2,001 hate crimes against gay and lesbian people occurred in 2013. People who contend with multiple stigmas, such as gay men of color, are especially likely to be victims. Yet it can happen to anyone: In 2013, 23 percent of hate crimes based on race targeted white people (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014).

By 2013, forty-five states and the federal government had enacted legislation that increased penalties for crimes motivated by hatred (Anti-Defamation League, 2013). Supporters are gratified, but opponents charge that such laws, which increase penalties based on the attitudes of the offender, punish “politically incorrect” thoughts. The Thinking About Diversity box on page 252 takes a closer look at the issue of hate crime laws.

Feminist Theory: Deviance and Gender

In 2009, several women in Sudan were convicted of “dressing indecently.” The punishment was imprisonment and, in several cases, ten lashes. The crime these women committed was wearing trousers (BBC, 2009).

This is an exceptional case, but the fact is that virtually every society in the world places stricter controls on women than on men. Historically, our own society has centered the lives of women on the home. In the United States even today, women’s opportunities in the workplace, in politics, in athletics, and in the military are more limited than men’s.

Elsewhere in the world, as the preceding example suggests, the constraints on women are greater still. In Saudi Arabia, women cannot vote or legally operate motor

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

Hate Crime Laws: Should We Punish Attitudes as Well as Actions?

On a cool October evening, nineteen-year-old Todd Mitchell, an African American, was standing with some friends in front of their apartment complex in Kenosha, Wisconsin. They had just seen the film *Mississippi Burning* and were fuming over a scene that showed a white man beating a young black boy while he knelt in prayer.

"Do you feel hyped up to move on some white people?" asked Mitchell. Minutes later, they saw a young white boy walking toward them on the other side of the street. Mitchell commanded, "There goes a white boy; go get him!" The group swarmed around the youngster, beating him bloody



Do you think this example of vandalism should be prosecuted as a hate crime? In other words, should the punishment be more severe than if the spray painting were just "normal" graffiti? Why or why not?

and leaving him on the ground in a coma. The attackers took the boy's tennis shoes as a trophy.

Police soon arrested the teenagers and charged them with the beating. Mitchell went to trial as the ringleader, and the jury found him guilty of aggravated battery *motivated by racial hatred*. Instead of the usual two-year sentence, Mitchell went to jail for four years.

As this case illustrates, hate crime laws punish a crime more severely if the offender is motivated by bias against some category of people. Supporters make three arguments in favor of hate crime legislation. First, as noted in the text discussion of crime, the offender's intentions are always important in weighing criminal responsibility, so considering hatred an intention is nothing new. Second, victims of hate crimes typically suffer greater injury than victims of crimes with other motives. Third, a crime motivated by racial or other bias is more harmful because it inflames the public mood more than a crime carried out, say, for money.

Critics counter that while some hate crime cases involve hard-core racism, most are impulsive acts by young people. Even more important, critics maintain, hate crime laws are a threat to First Amendment guarantees of free speech. Hate crime laws allow courts to sentence offenders not just for their actions but also for their attitudes. As the Harvard University law professor Alan Dershowitz cautions, "As much as I hate bigotry, I fear much more the Court attempting to control the minds of its citizens." In short, according to critics, hate crime statutes open the door to punishing beliefs rather than behavior.

In 1993, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the sentence handed down to Todd Mitchell. In a unanimous decision, the justices stated that the government should not punish an individual's beliefs. But, they reasoned, a belief is no longer protected when it becomes the motive for a crime.

What Do You Think?

1. Do you think crimes motivated by hate are more harmful than those motivated by greed? Why or why not?
2. Do you think minorities such as African Americans should be subject to the same hate crime laws as white people? Why or why not?
3. Do you favor or oppose hate crime laws? Why?

SOURCES: Terry (1993), Sullivan (2002), and Hartocollis (2007).

vehicles; in Iran, women who dare to expose their hair or wear makeup in public can be whipped; and not long ago, a Nigerian court convicted a divorced woman of bearing a child out of wedlock and sentenced her to death by stoning; her life was later spared out of concern for her child (Eboh, 2002; Jefferson, 2009).

Gender also figures in the theories of deviance you read about earlier in the chapter. Robert Merton's strain theory, for example, defines cultural goals in terms of

financial success. Traditionally, at least, this goal has had more to do with the lives of men because women have been taught to define success in terms of relationships, particularly marriage and motherhood (Leonard, 1982). A more woman-focused theory might recognize the "strain" that results from the cultural ideal of equality clashing with the reality of gender-based inequality.

According to labeling theory, gender influences how we define deviance because people commonly use different

standards to judge the behavior of females and males. Further, because society puts men in positions of power over women, men often escape direct responsibility for actions that victimize women. In the past, at least, men who sexually harassed or assaulted women were labeled only mildly deviant and sometimes escaped punishment entirely.

By contrast, women who are victimized may have to convince others—even members of a jury—that they were not to blame for their own sexual harassment or assault. Research confirms an important truth: Whether people define a situation as deviance—and, if so, who the deviant is—depends on the sex of both the audience and the actors (King & Clayson, 1988).

Finally, despite its focus on social inequality, much social-conflict analysis does not address the issue of gender. If economic disadvantage is a primary cause of crime, as social-conflict theory suggests, why do women (whose economic position is much worse than men's) commit far fewer crimes than men?

EVALUATE

According to social-conflict theory, a capitalist society's inequality in wealth and power shapes its laws and how they are applied. The criminal justice and social welfare systems thus act as political agents, controlling categories of people who are a threat to the capitalist system. Race-conflict theory highlights the fact that, for some members of our society, race and ethnicity can make some categories of people appear deviant. Likewise, gender has much to do with who is, and who is not, defined as deviant.

Like other approaches to deviance, social-conflict theories have their critics. First, a Marxist approach implies that laws and other cultural norms are created directly by the rich and powerful. At the very least, this is an oversimplification, as laws also protect workers, consumers, and the environment, sometimes opposing the interests of corporations and the rich.

Second, social-conflict analysis argues that criminality springs up only to the extent that a society treats its members unequally. However, as Durkheim noted, deviance exists in all societies, whatever their economic system and their degree of inequality.

Finally, keep in mind that, while class, race, and gender still affect the process of defining deviance, our society now treats all categories of people in a more equal manner than was true a century ago.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING In a sentence, explain how social-conflict theory understands deviance. State one limitation of this approach.

Crime

9.5 Identify patterns of crime in the United States and around the world.

Crime is the violation of criminal laws enacted by a locality, a state, or the federal government. All crimes are composed of two elements: the *act* itself (or in some cases, the

crimes against the person (violent crimes) crimes that direct violence or the threat of violence against others	crimes against property (property crimes) crimes that involve theft of money or property belonging to others
victimless crimes violations of law in which there are no obvious victims	

failure to do what the law requires) and *criminal intent* (in legal terminology, *mens rea*, or "guilty mind"). Intent is a matter of degree, ranging from willful conduct to negligence. Someone who is negligent does not deliberately set out to hurt anyone but acts (or fails to act) in a way that results in harm. Prosecutors weigh the degree of intent in deciding whether, for example, to charge someone with first-degree murder, second-degree murder, or negligent manslaughter. Alternatively, they may consider a killing justifiable, as in self-defense.

Types of Crime

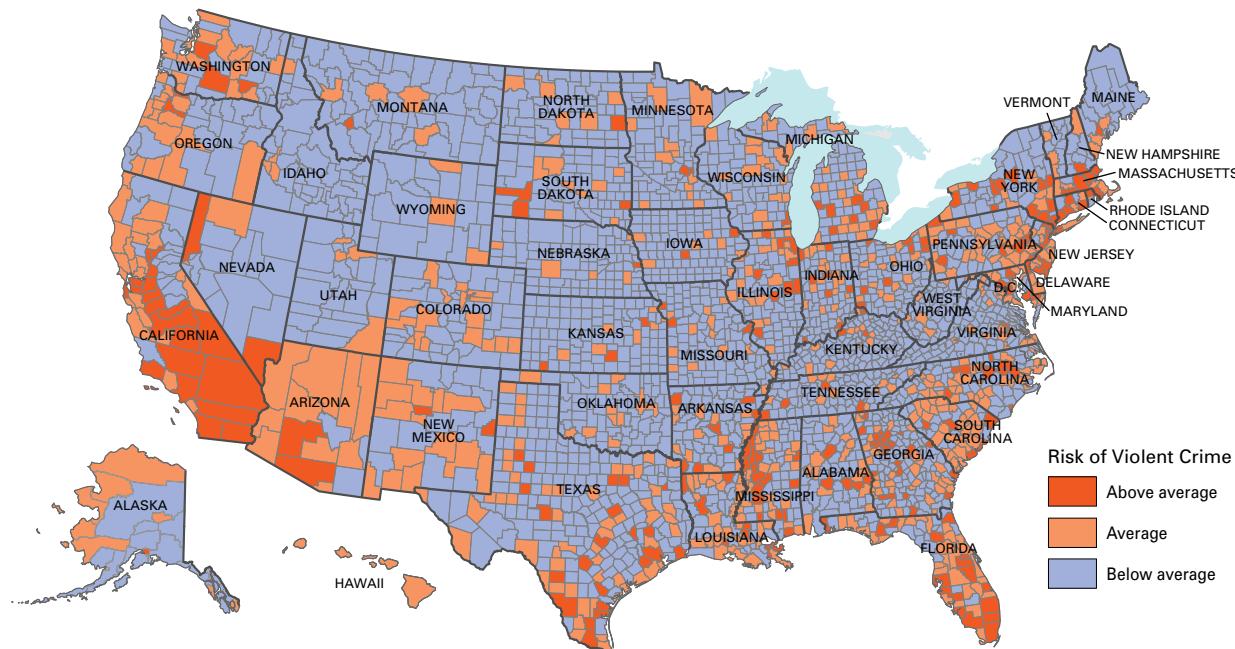
In the United States, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) gathers information on criminal offenses and regularly reports the results in a publication called *Crime in the United States*. Two major types of crime make up the FBI "crime index."

Crimes against the person, also called *violent crimes*, are *crimes that direct violence or the threat of violence against others*. Violent crimes include murder and manslaughter (legally defined as "the willful killing of one human being by another"), aggravated assault ("an unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury"), rape ("penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object or oral penetration of a sex organ of another person without the consent of the victim"), and robbery ("taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person or persons by force or threat of force or violence and/or putting the victim in fear"). National Map 9–1 on page 254 shows a person's risk of becoming a victim of violent crime in counties all across the United States.

Crimes against property, also called *property crimes*, are *crimes that involve theft of property belonging to others*. Property crimes include burglary ("the unlawful entry of a structure to commit a [serious crime] or a theft"), larceny-theft ("the unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession of another"), auto theft ("the theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle"), and arson ("any willful or malicious burning or attempt to burn the personal property of another").

A third category of offenses, not included in major crime indexes, is **victimless crimes**, *violations of law in which there are no obvious victims*. Also called *crimes without complaint*, they include illegal drug use, prostitution,

Seeing Ourselves



National Map 9–1 The Risk of Violent Crime across the United States

This map shows the risk of becoming a victim of violent crime. In general, the risk is highest in low-income, rural counties that have a large population of men between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four. After reading this section of the text, see whether you can explain this pattern.

SOURCE: CAP Index (2015).

and gambling. The term “victimless crime” is misleading, however. How victimless is a crime when young people steal to support a drug habit? What about a young pregnant woman who, by smoking crack, permanently harms her baby? Perhaps it is more correct to say that people who commit such crimes are both offenders and victims.

Because public views of victimless crimes vary greatly, laws differ from place to place. In the United States, although gambling and prostitution are legal in only limited areas, both activities are common across the country.

Criminal Statistics

Statistics gathered by the FBI show crime rates rising from 1960 to 1990 and then declining. Even so, police count nearly 10 million serious crimes each year. Figure 9–2 shows the trends for various serious crimes.

Always read crime statistics with caution, because they include only crimes known to the police. Almost all homicides are reported, but assaults—especially among people who know one another—often are not. Police records include an even smaller share of the property crimes that occur, especially when the crime involves losses that are small.

Researchers check official crime statistics using *victimization surveys*, in which they ask a representative sample of people if they have had any experience with crime. Victimization surveys carried out in 2013 showed that the actual number of serious crimes was more than twice as high as police reports indicate (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015).

The Street Criminal: A Profile

Using government crime reports, we can gain a general description of the categories of people most likely to be arrested for violent and property crimes.

AGE Official crime rates rise sharply during adolescence, peak in the late teens, and then fall as people get older. People between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four represent just 14 percent of the U.S. population, but in 2013, they accounted for 35.6 percent of all arrests for violent crimes and 40.7 percent of arrests for property crimes (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014).

GENDER Although each sex makes up roughly half the country’s population, police collared males in 62.2 percent

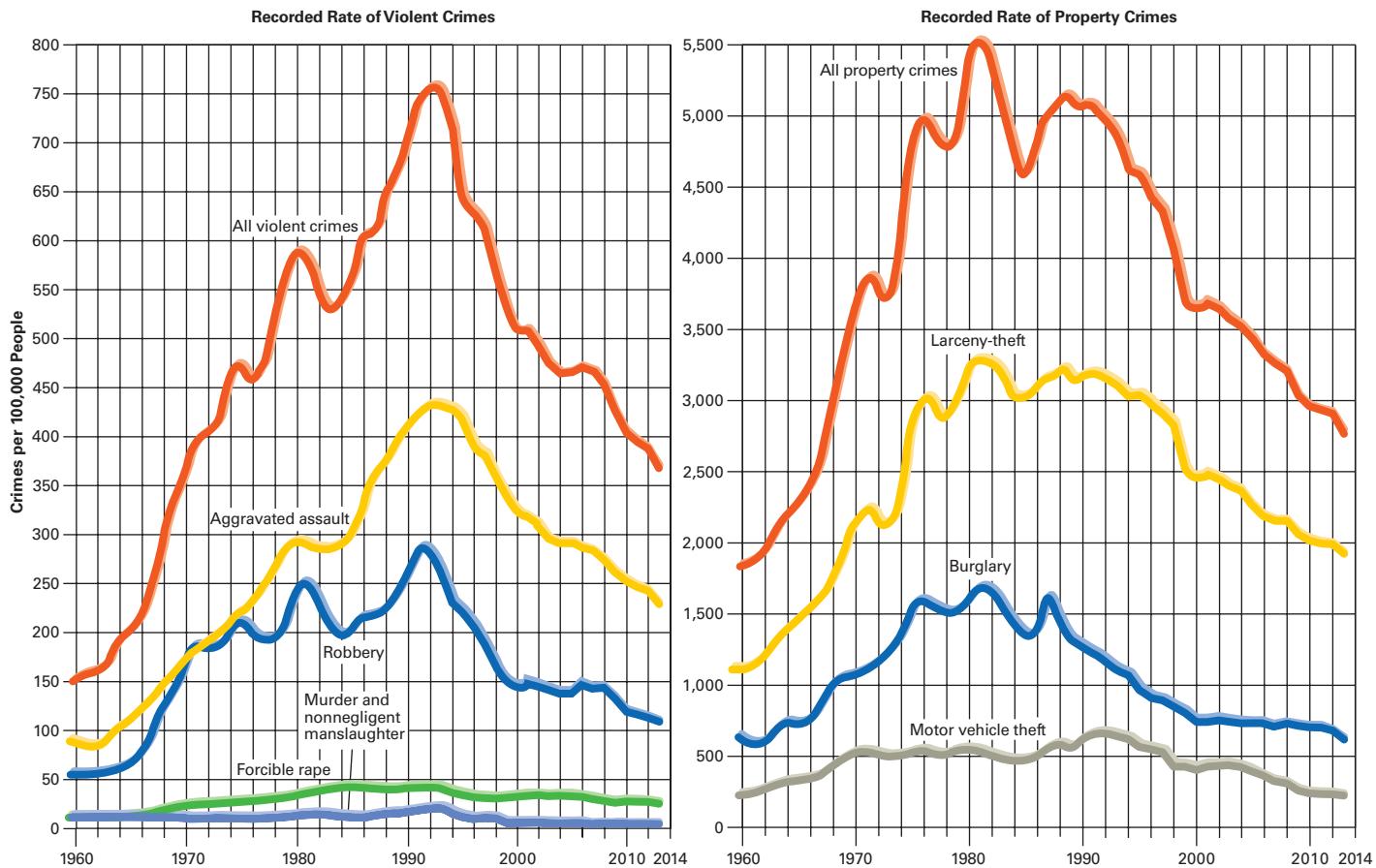


Figure 9-2 Crime Rates in the United States, 1960–2013

The graphs show the rates for various violent crimes and property crimes during recent decades. Since about 1990, the trend in crime rates has been downward.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation (2014).

of all property crime arrests in 2013; the other 37.8 percent of arrests involved women. In other words, men are arrested almost twice as often as women for property crimes. In the case of violent crimes, the difference is even greater, with 79.9 percent of arrests by police involving males and just 20.1 percent of the arrests involving females (a four-to-one ratio).

How do we account for the dramatic difference? It may be that some law enforcement officials are reluctant to define women as criminals. In fact, all over the world, the greatest gender differences in crime rates occur in societies that most severely limit the opportunities of women. In the United States, however, the difference in arrest rates for women and men is narrowing, which probably indicates increasing sexual equality in our society. Between 2004 and 2013, there was a 15.5 percent *increase* in arrests of women for property crimes and a 9.6 percent *decrease* in arrests of men (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014).

SOCIAL CLASS The FBI does not assess the social class of arrested persons, so no statistical data of the kind given for age and gender are available. But research has long indicated that street crime is more widespread among people of lower social position (Thornberry & Farnsworth, 1982; Wolfgang, Thornberry, & Figlio, 1987).

Yet the link between class and crime is more complicated than it appears on the surface. For one thing, many people look on the poor as less worthy than the rich, whose wealth and power confer "respectability" (Tittle, Villemez, & Smith, 1978; Elias, 1986). And although crime—especially violent crime—is a serious problem in the poorest inner-city communities, most of these crimes are committed by a few repeat offenders. The majority of the people who live in poor communities have no criminal record at all (Wolfgang, Figlio, & Sellin, 1972; Elliott & Ageton, 1980; Harries, 1990).

The connection between social standing and criminality also depends on the type of crime. If we expand our



What actions a society allows or outlaws sometimes seem curious. For example, almost everywhere, our society forbids consenting adults from buying or selling sex. Yet, it's perfectly legal for film producers to pay people to have sex in front of a camera. Why do you think this might be the case?

definition of crime beyond street offenses to include white-collar crime and corporate crime, the "common criminal" suddenly looks much more affluent and may live in a \$100 million home.

RACE AND ETHNICITY Both race and ethnicity are strongly linked to crime rates, although the reasons are many and complex. Official statistics show that 68.9 percent of arrests for FBI index crimes in 2013 involved white people. However, the African American arrest rate was higher than the rate for whites in proportion to their representation in the general population. African Americans make up 13.2 percent of the population but account for 29.0 percent of arrests for property crimes (versus 68.2 percent for whites) and 38.7 percent of arrests for violent crimes (versus 58.4 percent for whites) (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014).

There are several reasons for the disproportionate number of arrests among African Americans. First, race in the United States closely relates to social standing, which, as already explained, affects the likelihood of engaging in street crimes. Many poor people living in the midst of wealth come to perceive society as unjust and are therefore more likely to turn to crime to get their share (Blau & Blau, 1982; Anderson, 1994; Martinez, 1996).

Second, black and white family patterns differ: 71.5 percent of non-Hispanic black children (compared to 53.2 percent of Hispanic children and 29.3 percent of non-Hispanic white children) are born to

single mothers. Single parenting carries two risks: Children receive less supervision and are at greater risk of living in poverty. With about 38 percent of African American children growing up poor (compared to about 11 percent of non-Hispanic white children), no one should be surprised at the proportionately higher crime rates for African Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014; Martin et al., 2015).

Third, prejudice prompts white police to arrest black people more readily and leads citizens to report African Americans more willingly, so people of color are overly criminalized (Chiricos, McEntire, & Gertz, 2001; Quillian & Pager, 2001; Demuth & Steffensmeier, 2004).

Fourth, remember that the official crime index does not include arrests for offenses ranging from drunk driving to white-collar violations. This omission contributes to the view of the typical criminal as a person of color. If we broaden our definition of crime to include drunk driving, business fraud, embezzlement, stock swindles, and cheating on income tax returns, the proportion of white criminals rises dramatically.

Keep in mind, too, that categories of people with high arrest rates are also at higher risk of being victims of crime. In the United States, for example, African Americans are six times as likely as white people to die as a result of homicide (Rogers et al., 2001; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014).

Finally, some categories of the population have unusually low rates of arrest. People of Asian descent, who account for about 5.5 percent of the population, figure in only 1.3 percent of all arrests. As Chapter 14 ("Race and Ethnicity") explains, Asian Americans enjoy higher than



"You look like this sketch of someone who's thinking about committing a crime."

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average educational achievement and income. Also, Asian American culture emphasizes family solidarity and discipline, both of which keep criminality down.

Crime in Global Perspective

By world standards, the crime rate in the United States is high. Although recent crime trends are downward, there were 14,196 murders in the United States in 2013, which amounts to one every thirty-seven minutes around the clock. In large cities such as New York, rarely does a day go by without someone being killed as a result of criminal violence.

The rates of violent crime and also property crime in the United States are several times higher than in Europe. The contrast is even greater between our country and the nations of Asia, especially Japan, where rates of violent and property crime are among the lowest in the world.

Elliott Currie (1985) suggests that crime stems from our culture's emphasis on individual economic success, frequently at the expense of strong families and neighborhoods. The United States also has extraordinary cultural diversity—a result of centuries of immigration—that can lead to conflict. In addition, economic inequality is higher in this country than in most other high-income nations. Thus our society's relatively weak social fabric, combined with considerable frustration among the poor, increases the level of criminal behavior.

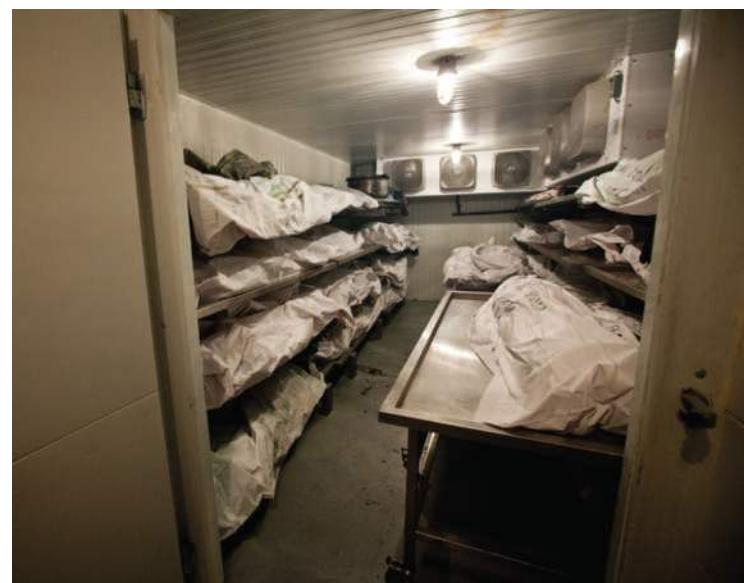
Another factor contributing to violence in the United States is extensive private ownership of guns. Research shows us that 69 percent of murder victims in the United States die from shootings. The U.S. rate of handgun homicides is more than seven times higher than the rate in Canada, a country that strictly limits handgun ownership. By 2015, deaths from firearms (which have been rising) are expected to surpass deaths from auto accidents (which have been falling) for the first time in U.S. history (Goodwin, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2014).

Across all regions of the United States, the trend in gun ownership is down. In the 1970s, half of U.S. households had at least one gun. This share fell to about 40 percent by the mid-1990s. Surveys conducted in 2012 suggest that one or more guns are found in just about one-third of all U.S. households. But even at that level, there are more guns (about 285 million) than adults in this country, and 40 percent of these weapons are handguns, the weapons commonly used in violent crimes. In large part, gun ownership reflects people's fear of crime, yet the easy availability of guns in this country also makes crime more deadly (NORC, 2013:438; Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2013).

Supporters of gun control claim that restricting gun ownership would reduce the number of murders in the United States. For example, the number of murders each year in the nation of Canada (505), where the law prevents most people from owning guns, is lower than the number of killings in the metropolitan areas surrounding New York (688), Chicago (608), or Los Angeles (594). But as critics of gun control point out, laws regulating gun ownership do not keep guns out of the hands of criminals, who almost always obtain guns illegally. They also claim that gun control is no magic bullet in the war on crime: The number of people in the United States killed each year by knives alone is three times the number of Canadians killed by weapons of all kinds (J. D. Wright, 1995; Munroe, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2014; U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014).

The U.S. population remains evenly divided over the issue of gun control, with 52 percent of people saying it is more important to protect the personal right to own a gun and 46 percent saying it is more important to control gun ownership. But the momentum in this debate may be shifting in the wake of the fatal shooting of twenty children and six adults at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut in 2012. This tragic mass killing stunned the nation and rallied the forces seeking greater gun control (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Crime rates are high in some of the largest cities of the world, including Lima, Peru; São Paulo, Brazil; and Manila, Philippines—all of which have rapid population growth and millions of desperately poor people. Outside of big cities, however, the traditional character of low-income



When economic activity such as selling illegal drugs takes place outside of the law, people turn to violence rather than courts to settle disagreements. In Central America, drug violence has pushed the homicide rate to the highest level in the world.

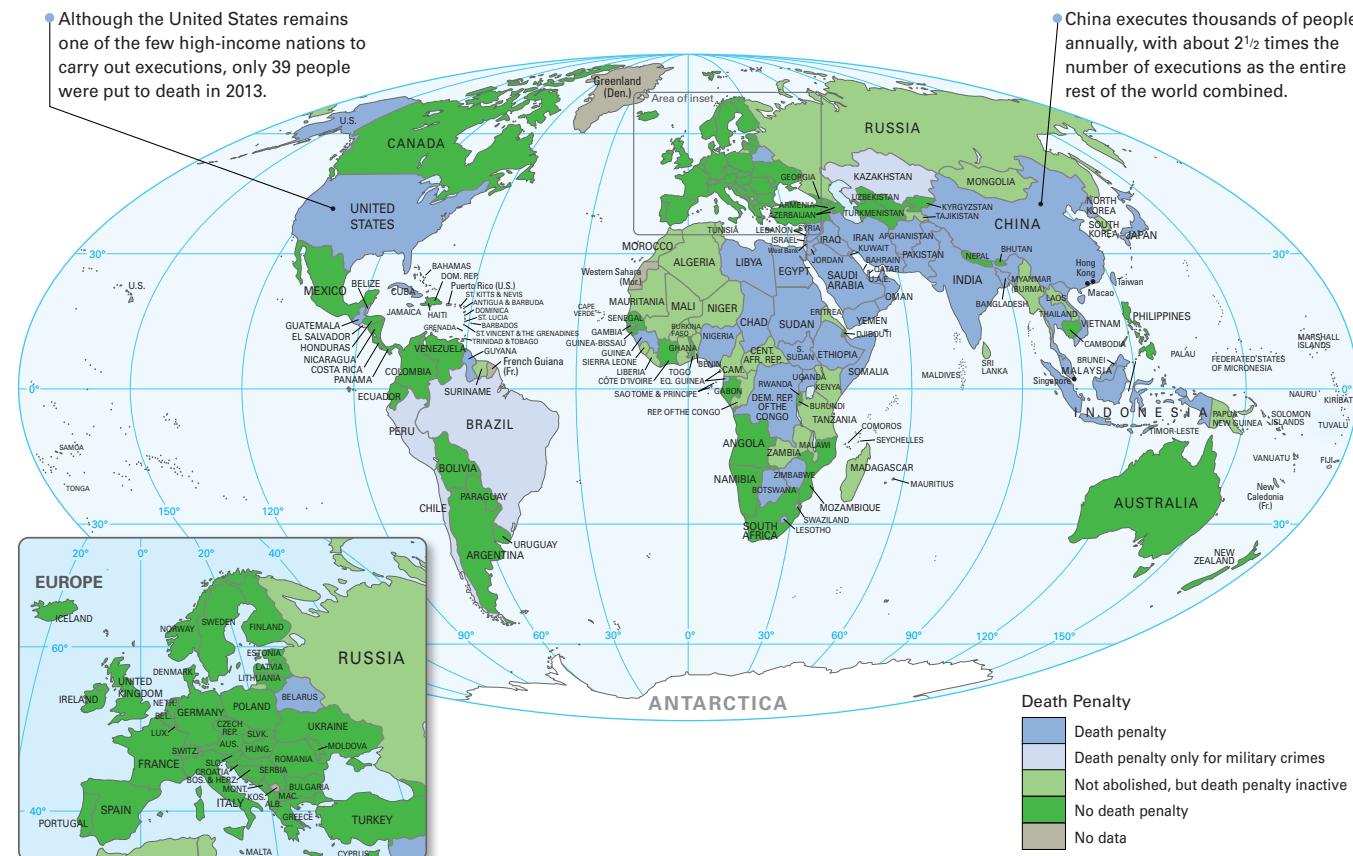
societies and their strong families allow local communities to control crime informally.

Some types of crime have always been multinational, such as terrorism, espionage, and arms dealing (Martin & Romano, 1992). But today, the globalization we are experiencing on many fronts also extends to crime. A recent case in point is the illegal drug trade. In part, the problem of illegal drugs in the United States is a *demand* issue. That is, the demand for cocaine and other drugs in this country is high, and many people risk arrest or even a violent death for a chance to get rich in the drug trade. But the *supply* side of the issue is just as important. The South American nation of Colombia has long looked to cocaine production as a significant part of its national economy. Similarly, about 90 percent of cocaine that enters the United States comes through Mexico, enriching at least some of that

nation's people (and causing violence that affects many more). Clearly, drug dealing and many other crimes are closely related to social and economic conditions both in the United States and elsewhere.

Different countries have different strategies for dealing with crime. The use of capital punishment (the death penalty) is one example. According to Amnesty International (2014), China executes more people than the rest of the world combined—probably in the thousands—but does not divulge its numbers. Of the 778 documented executions in 2013, nearly 80 percent were in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. Global Map 9–1 shows which countries currently use capital punishment. The global trend is toward abolishing the death penalty: Amnesty International (2014) reports that since 1985, sixty-seven nations have ended this practice.

Window on the World



Global Map 9–1 Capital Punishment in Global Perspective

The map identifies fifty-eight countries in which the law allows the death penalty for ordinary crimes; in seven more, the death penalty is reserved for exceptional crimes under military law or during times of war. The death penalty does not exist in ninety-eight countries; in thirty-five more, although the death penalty remains in law, no execution has taken place in more than ten years. Compare rich and poor nations: What general pattern do you see? In what way are the United States and Japan exceptions to this pattern?

SOURCE: Amnesty International (2014).

The U.S. Criminal Justice System

9.6 Analyze the operation of the criminal justice system.

The criminal justice system is a society's formal system of social control. We shall briefly examine the key elements of the U.S. criminal justice system: police, courts, and the system of punishment and corrections. First, however, we must understand an important principle that underlies the entire system, the idea of due process.

Due Process

Due process is a simple but very important idea: The criminal justice system must operate according to law. This principle is grounded in the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution—known as the Bill of Rights—adopted by Congress in 1791. The Constitution offers various protections to any person charged with a crime. Among these are the right to counsel, the right to refuse to testify against oneself, the right to confront all accusers, freedom from being tried twice for the same crime, and freedom from being “deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.” Furthermore, the Constitution gives all people the right to a speedy and public trial by jury and freedom from excessive bail and from “cruel and unusual” punishment.

In general terms, the concept of due process means that anyone charged with a crime must receive (1) fair notice of legal proceedings, (2) the opportunity to present a defense during a hearing on the charges, which must be conducted according to law, and (3) a judge or jury that weighs evidence impartially (Inciardi, 2000).

Due process limits the power of government, with an eye toward this nation's cultural support of individual rights and freedoms. Deciding exactly how far government can go is an ongoing process that makes up much of the work of the judicial system, especially the U.S. Supreme Court.

Police

The police generally serve as the primary point of contact between a society's population and the criminal justice system. In principle, the police maintain public order by enforcing the law. Of course, there is only so much that the 626,942 full-time police officers in the United States can do to monitor the activities of 316 million people. As a result, the police use a great deal of personal judgment in deciding which situations warrant their attention and how to handle them.

How do police officers carry out their duties? In a study of police behavior in five cities, Douglas Smith and Christy

Visher (1981; Smith, 1987) concluded that because they must act swiftly, police officers quickly size up situations in terms of six factors. First, the more serious they think the situation is, the more likely they are to make an arrest. Second, officers take account of the victim's wishes in deciding whether or not to make an arrest. Third, the odds of arrest go up the more uncooperative a suspect is. Fourth, officers are more likely to take into custody someone they have arrested before, presumably because this suggests guilt. Fifth, the presence of observers increases the chances of arrest. According to Smith and Visher, the presence of observers prompts police to take stronger control of a situation, if only to move the encounter from the street (the suspect's turf) to the police department (where law officers have the edge). Sixth, all else being equal, police officers are more likely to arrest people of color than whites, perceiving suspects of African or Latino descent as either more dangerous or more likely to be guilty.



Police must be allowed discretion if they are to handle effectively the many different situations they face every day. At the same time, it is important for police to treat people fairly. In 2014, Staten Island police confronted Eric Garner, who was selling cigarettes illegally. Police took this man down, and one officer used a chokehold that was later determined to have killed him. What standards should be applied to guide the use of force by police to restrain someone accused of a crime?

Courts

After arrest, a court determines a suspect's guilt or innocence. In principle, U.S. courts rely on an adversarial process involving attorneys—one representing the defendant and another representing the state—in the presence of a judge, who monitors legal procedures.

In practice, however, 97 percent of criminal convictions result from the process of **plea bargaining**, *a legal negotiation in which a prosecutor reduces a charge in exchange for a defendant's guilty plea*. Without ever going to trial, for example, the state may offer a defendant charged with burglary a lesser charge, perhaps possession of burglary tools, in exchange for a guilty plea (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014).

Plea bargaining is widespread because it spares the system the time and expense of trials. A trial is usually unnecessary if there is little disagreement over the facts of the case. In addition, because the number of cases entering the system annually has doubled over the past decade, prosecutors could not bring every case to trial even if they wanted to. By quickly resolving most of their work, the courts channel their resources into the most important cases.

But a system of plea bargaining pressures defendants (who are presumed innocent) to plead guilty. A person can exercise the right to a trial, but only at the risk of receiving a more severe sentence if found guilty at trial. Furthermore, low-income defendants enter the process with the guidance of a public defender—typically an overworked and underpaid attorney who may devote little time to even the most serious cases. In a 2012 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court recognized that although plea bargaining may be efficient, it can compromise due process by undercutting both the adversarial process and the rights of defendants to effective legal representation.



Television shows like *Suits* suggest that the criminal justice system carefully weighs the guilt and innocence of defendants. But as explained here, only 3 percent of criminal cases are actually resolved through a formal trial.

Punishment

In 2011, on a sunny Saturday morning in Tucson, Arizona, Congressional Representative Gabrielle Giffords sat down behind a folding table positioned in front of a supermarket. At two minutes before 10 o'clock, she tweeted "My 1st Congress on Your Corner starts now. Please stop by to let me know what's on your mind." Shortly after that, a taxi pulled to the curb nearby and dropped off a single passenger, a troubled young man who had violence on his mind. He paid the cab fare with a \$20 bill, and then he walked toward Ms. Giffords and pulled out a Glock 19 pistol loaded with thirty-one cartridges. Gunshots rang out for fifteen deadly seconds. The human toll: twenty people shot, including six who died (von Drehle, 2011).

Such cases force us to wonder about the reasons for acts of violence and also to ask how a society should respond to such acts. In the case of the Tucson shootings, the offender appears to have been suffering from serious mental illness, so there is some question about the extent to which he is responsible for his actions (Cloud, 2011). But typically, of course, the question of responsibility is resolved when a suspect is apprehended and put on trial. If a suspect is found to be responsible for the actions, the next step is punishment.

What does a society gain through the punishment of wrongdoers? Scholars answer with four basic reasons: retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation, and societal protection.

RETRIBUTION The oldest justification for punishment is to satisfy people's need for **retribution**, *an act of moral vengeance by which society makes the offender suffer as much as the suffering caused by the crime*. Retribution rests on a view of society as a moral balance. When criminality upsets this balance, punishment in equal measure restores the moral order, as suggested in the ancient code calling for "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

In the Middle Ages, most Europeans viewed crime as sin—an offense against God as well as society that required a harsh response. Today, although critics point out that retribution does little to reform the offender, many people consider vengeance reason enough for punishment.

DETERRENCE A second justification for punishment is **deterrence**, *the attempt to discourage criminality through the use of punishment*. Deterrence is based on the eighteenth-century Enlightenment idea that humans, as calculating and rational creatures, will not break the law if they think that the pain of punishment will outweigh the pleasure of the crime.

Deterrence emerged as a reform measure in response to the harsh punishments based on retribution. Why put someone to death for stealing if theft can be discouraged with a prison

Four Justifications for Punishment

retribution an act of moral vengeance by which society makes the offender suffer as much as the suffering caused by the crime	deterrence the attempt to discourage criminality through the use of punishment	rehabilitation a program for reforming the offender to prevent later offenses	societal protection rendering an offender incapable of further offenses temporarily through imprisonment or permanently by execution
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sentence? As the concept of deterrence gained acceptance in industrial nations, the execution and physical mutilation of criminals in most high-income societies were replaced by milder forms of punishment such as imprisonment.

Punishment can deter crime in two ways. *Specific deterrence* is used to convince an individual offender that crime does not pay. Through *general deterrence*, the punishment of one person serves as an example to others.

REHABILITATION The third justification for punishment is *rehabilitation*, *a program for reforming the offender to prevent later offenses*. Rehabilitation arose along with the social sciences in the nineteenth century. Since then, sociologists have claimed that crime and other deviance spring from a social environment marked by poverty or a lack of parental supervision. Logically, then, if offenders learn to be deviant, they can also learn to obey the rules; the key is controlling their environment. *Reformatories* or *houses of correction* provided controlled settings where people could learn proper behavior (recall the description of total institutions in Chapter 5, “Socialization”).

Like deterrence, rehabilitation motivates the offender to conform. In contrast to deterrence and retribution, which simply make the offender suffer, rehabilitation encourages constructive improvement. Unlike retribution, which demands that the punishment fit the crime, rehabilitation tailors treatment to each offender. Thus identical crimes would prompt similar acts of retribution but different rehabilitation programs.

SOCIETAL PROTECTION A final justification for punishment is *societal protection*, *rendering an offender incapable of further offenses temporarily through imprisonment or permanently by*

execution. Like deterrence, societal protection is a rational approach to punishment intended to protect society from crime.

Currently, about 2.2 million people are jailed in the United States. Although the crime rate has gone down in recent years, the number of offenders locked up across the country has gone up, more than quadrupling since 1980. This rise in the prison population reflects tougher public attitudes toward crime and punishing offenders and stiffer sentences handed down by courts. The trend also reflects an increasing number of drug-related arrests—half of all federal inmates are serving time for drug offenses. As a result, the United States now incarcerates about one of every one hundred adults—a larger share of its population than all but one other nation (the tiny island nation of Seychelles)—a fact that leads some critics to label this country the “incarceration nation.” Although the “get-tough” policies enacted decades ago were initially praised for reducing street crime, now analysts claim that sending so many people to prison actually may be pushing up poverty rates (Pew Center on the States, 2010; Zacharia, 2012; International Centre for Prison Studies, 2013; Tierney, 2013; U.S. Department of Justice, 2014).

EVALUATE

The Summing Up table reviews the four justifications for punishment. However, an accurate assessment of the consequences of punishment is no simple task.

The value of retribution lies in Durkheim’s claim that punishing the deviant person increases society’s moral awareness. For this reason, punishment was traditionally a public event. Although the last public execution in the United States took place in Kentucky more than seventy years ago, today’s mass media ensure public awareness of executions carried out inside prison walls (Kittrie, 1971).

SUMMING UP

Four Justifications for Punishment

Retribution	The oldest justification for punishment. Punishment is society’s revenge for a moral wrong. In principle, punishment should be equal in severity to the crime itself.
Deterrence	An early modern approach. Crime is considered social disruption, which society acts to control. People are viewed as rational and self-interested; deterrence works because the pain of punishment outweighs the pleasure of crime.
Rehabilitation	A modern strategy linked to the development of social sciences. Crime and other deviance are viewed as the result of social problems (such as poverty) or personal problems (such as mental illness). Social conditions are improved; treatment is tailored to the offender’s condition.
Societal protection	A modern approach easier to carry out than rehabilitation. Even if society is unable or unwilling to rehabilitate offenders or reform social conditions, people are protected by the imprisonment or execution of the offender.

Does punishment deter crime? Despite our extensive use of punishment, our society has a high rate of **criminal recidivism**, *later offenses by people previously convicted of crimes*. About three-fourths of prisoners in state penitentiaries have been jailed before, and about two-thirds of people released from prison are arrested again within three years (DeFina & Arvanites, 2002; U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). So does punishment really deter crime? According to researchers, just 46 percent of all violent crimes and 36 percent of all property crimes are known to police, and of what is known, only about one in five crimes results in an arrest. Most crimes, therefore, go unpunished, so the old saying that “crime doesn’t pay” rings hollow.

Prisons provide short-term societal protection by keeping offenders off the streets, but they do little to reshape attitudes or behavior in the long term (Carlson, 1976; R. A. Wright, 1994). Perhaps rehabilitation is an unrealistic expectation, because according to Sutherland’s theory of differential association, locking up criminals together for years probably strengthens criminal attitudes and skills. Imprisonment also stigmatizes prisoners, making it harder for them to find legitimate employment later on (Pager, 2003). Finally, prison breaks the social ties inmates may have in the outside world, which, following Hirschi’s control theory, makes inmates more likely to commit new crimes upon release.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What are society’s four justifications for punishment? Does sending offenders to prison accomplish each of them? Why?

The Death Penalty

Perhaps the most controversial issue involving punishment is the death penalty. Between 1973 and 2015, more than 8,400 people were sentenced to death in U.S. courts; 1,394 executions were carried out.



To increase the power of punishment to deter crime, capital punishment was long carried out in public. Here is a photograph from the last public execution in the United States, with twenty-two-year-old Rainey Bethea standing on the scaffold moments from death in Owensboro, Kentucky, on August 16, 1937. Children as well as adults were in the crowd. Now that the mass media report the story of executions across the country, states carry out capital punishment behind closed doors.

In thirty-three states, the law allows the state to execute offenders convicted of very serious crimes such as first-degree murder. But although a majority of states do permit capital punishment, only seven states carried out executions in 2014. Across the United States, more than half of the 2,979 people on death row in early 2014 were in just four states: California, Texas, Florida, and Pennsylvania (Death Penalty Information Center, 2014; U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014).

Opponents of capital punishment point to research suggesting that the death penalty has limited value as a crime deterrent. Countries such as Canada, where the death penalty has been abolished, have not seen a rise in the number of murders. Critics also point out that the United States is the only Western, high-income nation that routinely executes offenders. As public concern about the death penalty has increased, the use of capital punishment has declined, falling from eighty-five executions in 2000 to thirty-five in 2014.

Public opinion surveys reveal that the share of U.S. adults who claim to support the death penalty as a punishment for murder remains high (60 percent) and has been fairly stable over time (Smith et al., 2013). College students hold about the same attitudes as everyone else, with about 60 percent of first-year students expressing support for the death penalty (Eagan et al., 2015).

But judges, criminal prosecutors, and members of trial juries are less and less likely to call for the death penalty. One reason is that because the crime rate has come down in recent years, the public now has less fear of crime and is less interested in applying the most severe punishment.

A second reason is public concern that the death penalty may be applied unjustly. The analysis of DNA evidence—a recent advance—from old crime scenes has shown that many people were wrongly convicted of a crime. Across the country, between 1973 and 2015, 150 people who had been sentenced to death were released from death row, including 20 in which new DNA evidence demonstrated their innocence. By 2015, reflecting their concerns about the fairness of capital punishment, the governors of Oregon, Washington, Colorado, and Pennsylvania declared a moratorium on all executions. A third reason for the decline in the use of the death penalty is that more states now permit judges and juries to sentence serious offenders to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Such punishment offers to protect society from dangerous criminals who can be “put away” forever without requiring an execution.

Fourth and finally, many states now shy away from capital punishment because of the high cost of prosecuting capital cases. Death penalty cases

require more legal work and demand superior defense lawyers, often at public expense. In addition, such cases commonly include testimony by various paid “experts,” including physicians and psychiatrists, which also runs up the costs of trial. Then there is the cost of many appeals that almost always follow a conviction leading to the sentence of death. When all these factors are put together, the cost of a death penalty case typically exceeds the cost of sending an offender to prison for life. So it is easy to see why states often choose not to seek the death penalty (Dwyer, 2011).

Organizations opposed to the death penalty are challenging this punishment in court. In 2008, for example, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the use of lethal injection against the charge that this procedure amounts to cruel and unusual punishment, which would be unconstitutional (Greenhouse, 2008). In 2012, the people of California voted in a state referendum to uphold the use of the death penalty, although that state has executed just thirteen offenders in the last thirty-eight years. In 2014, the Obama administration began to study death sentences seeking evidence of racial bias. Most recently, in 2015, the Supreme Court agreed to hear another case that could affect future use of the death penalty (Baker, 2014). Overall, there is no indication at present that the United States will end the use of the death penalty. But the trend is away from this type of punishment.

Community-Based Corrections

Prisons certainly keep convicted criminals off the streets, but the evidence suggests that they do little to rehabilitate most offenders. Furthermore, prisons are expensive to operate. One study put the average cost of supporting one prison inmate for a year at \$31,286. This amount is in addition to the initial cost of building the detention facilities (Vera Institute of Justice, 2012).

One alternative to the traditional prison that has been adopted by cities and states across the country is **community-based corrections**, *correctional programs operating within society at large rather than behind prison walls*. Community-based corrections have three main advantages: They reduce costs, reduce overcrowding in prisons, and allow for supervision of convicts while eliminating the hardships of prison life and the stigma that accompanies going to jail. In general, the idea of community-based corrections is not so much to punish as to reform; such programs are therefore usually offered to individuals who have committed less serious offenses and appear to be good prospects for avoiding future criminal violations. In principle, community-based corrections promise to lower the cost of the criminal justice system. At the same time, limited implementation of this approach has not resulted in any significant decrease in the country’s prison population (Vera Institute of Justice, 2012).

PROBATION One form of community-based corrections is *probation*, a policy permitting a convicted offender to remain in the community under conditions imposed by a court, including regular supervision. Courts may require that a probationer receive counseling, attend a drug treatment program, hold a job, avoid associating with “known criminals,” or anything else a judge thinks is appropriate. Typically, a probationer must check in with an officer of the court (the probation officer) on a regular schedule to make sure the guidelines are being followed. Should the probationer fail to live up to the conditions set by the court or commit a new offense, the court may revoke probation and send the offender to jail.

SHOCK PROBATION A related strategy is *shock probation*, a policy by which a judge orders a convicted offender to prison for a short time but then suspends the remainder of the sentence in favor of probation. Shock probation is thus a mix of prison and probation, used to impress on the offender the seriousness of the situation without resorting to full-scale imprisonment. In some cases, shock probation takes place in a special “boot camp” facility where offenders might spend one to three months in a military-style setting intended to teach discipline and respect for authority (Cole & Smith, 2002).

PAROLE *Parole* is a policy of releasing inmates from prison to serve the remainder of their sentences in the local community under the supervision of a parole officer. Although some sentences specifically deny the possibility of parole, most inmates become eligible for parole after serving a certain portion of their sentences behind bars. At that time, a parole board evaluates the risks and benefits of the inmate’s early release from prison. If parole is granted, the parole board monitors the offender’s conduct until the sentence is completed. Should the offender not comply with the conditions of parole or be arrested for another crime, the board can revoke parole and return the offender to prison to complete the sentence.

EVALUATE

Researchers have carefully studied both probation and parole to see how well these programs work. Evaluations of both these policies are mixed. There is little question that probation and parole programs are much less expensive than conventional imprisonment; they also free up room in prisons for people who commit more serious crimes. Yet research suggests that although probation and shock probation do seem to work for some people, they do not significantly reduce recidivism. Parole is also useful to prison officials as a means to encourage good behavior among inmates. But levels of crime among those released on parole are so high that a number of states as well as the federal government have terminated their parole programs entirely.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What are three types of community-based corrections? What are their advantages? What are their limitations?

Such evaluations point to a sobering truth: The criminal justice system—operating on its own—cannot eliminate crime. As the Controversy & Debate box explains, although

police, courts, and prisons do have an effect on crime rates, crime and other forms of deviance are not just the acts of “bad people” but reflect the operation of society itself.

Controversy & Debate

Violent Crime Is Down—But Why?

Duane: I'm a criminal justice major, and I want to be a police officer. Crime is a huge problem in America, and police are what keep the crime rate low.

Sandy: I'm a sociology major. As for the crime rate, I'm not sure it's quite that simple....

During the 1980s, crime rates shot upward. Just about everyone lived in fear of violent crime, and in many large cities, the numbers killed and wounded made whole neighborhoods seem like war zones. There seemed to be no solution to the problem.

Yet in the 1990s, serious crime rates began to fall, until by 2000, they were at levels not seen in more than a generation. Why? Researchers point to several reasons:

1. **A reduction in the youth population.** It was noted earlier that young people (particularly males) are responsible for much violent crime. During the 1990s, the population aged fifteen to twenty-four dropped by 5 percent (in part because of the legalization of abortion in 1973).
2. **Changes in policing.** Much of the drop in crime (as well as the earlier rise in crime) took place in large cities. Within the New York City limits, the number of murders fell from 2,245 in 1990 to just 335 in 2013. Part of the reason for the decline is that the city has adopted a policy of *community policing*, which means that police are concerned not just with making arrests but also with preventing crime before it happens. Officers get to know the areas they patrol and stop young men for jaywalking or other minor infractions so they can check them for



One reason that crime has gone down is that there are more than 2 million people incarcerated in this country. This has caused severe overcrowding of facilities such as this Chino, California, prison.

concealed weapons (the word has gotten around that you can be arrested for carrying a gun). There are also more police at work in large cities. Los Angeles added more than 2,000 police officers in the 1990s, which contributed to its drop in violent crime during that period.

3. **More prisoners.** Between 1985 and 2014, the number of inmates in jails and prisons soared from 750,000 to more than 2.2 million. The main reason for this increase is tough laws that demand prison time for certain crimes, such as drug offenses. Mass incarceration has consequences. As one analyst put it, “When you lock up an extra million people, it's got to have some effect on the crime rate” (Franklin Zimring, quoted in Witkin, 1998:31).
4. **A better economy.** The U.S. economy boomed during the 1990s. Unemployment was down, reducing the likelihood that some people would turn to crime out of economic desperation. The logic here is simple: More jobs equal fewer crimes. But government data show that, through the end of 2013, crime rates continued to fall (Crutchfield, 2014).
5. **The declining drug trade.** Many analysts agree that the most important factor in reducing rates of violent crime was the decline of crack cocaine. Crack came on the scene about 1985, and violence spread as young people—especially in the inner cities and increasingly armed with guns—became part of a booming drug trade. By the early 1990s, however, the popularity of crack began to fall as people saw the damage it was causing to entire communities. This realization, coupled with steady economic improvement and stiffer sentences for drug offenses, helped bring about the turnaround in violent crime.

The current picture looks better relative to what it was a decade or two ago. But one researcher cautions, “It looks better ... only because the early 1990s were so bad. So let's not fool ourselves into thinking everything is resolved. It's not.”

What Do You Think?

1. Do you support the policy of community policing? Why or why not?
2. What are the pros and cons of building more prisons?
3. Which of the factors mentioned here do you think is the most important in crime control? Which is least important? Why?

SOURCES: Winship and Berrien (1999), Donahue and Leavitt (2000), Rosenfeld (2002), Liptak (2008), Mitchell (2008), Antifinger (2009), and U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation (2012).

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 9 Deviance

Heroes and villains: Helping us obey the rules (at least most of the time)

As this chapter explained, every society is a system of social control that encourages conformity to certain norms and discourages deviance or norm breaking. One way society does this is through the construction of heroes and villains. Heroes, of course, are people we are supposed to “look up to” and use as role models. Villains are people whom we

“look down on” and reject their example. Societies and organizations of all types create heroes and villains that serve as guides to everyday behavior. In each case that follows, why is the individual being honored as a hero? What are the values or behaviors that we are encouraged to copy in our own lives?

Nations honor individuals through awards, monuments, statues, and postage stamps. Depicted here is a statue of Nelson Mandela, the former President of South Africa, who played a critical role in the abolition of apartheid in the country. How might such statues and monuments of national heroes promote socially beneficial conduct and behaviors? What about villainous behaviors—how might monuments or memorials of tragedies and atrocities caution or discourage behaviors deemed harmful to society?



Religious organizations, too, use heroes to encourage certain behavior and beliefs. The Roman Catholic Church has defined the Virgin Mary and more than 10,000 other men and women as “saints.” For what reasons might someone be honored in this way? What do saints do for the rest of us?



The Nobel Prize is an international award conferred by various Swedish and Norwegian institutions that recognize outstanding contributions in academic and scientific fields as well as activities promoting peace. For instance, in 1979 Mother Teresa of Calcutta was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work to overcome poverty. In 2014, Pakistani education activist Malala Yousafzai and Indian child rights activist Kailash Satyarthi were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to champion the basic rights of children and speak out against their exploitation. What are the qualities that make contributions in academics, sciences, and social activism exemplary? How do we deem whether an achievement is of “heroic” proportions?



Hint A society without heroes and villains would be one in which no one cared what people thought or how they acted. There would be no consensus on what qualities and behaviors are desirable. Although all societies may designate heroes and villains to promote or discourage certain behaviors, the specific qualities that are deemed especially heroic and villainous may vary across cultures and contexts. For instance, a society facing threats such as disease and social conflicts may honor scientists or leaders who address these problems as heroes, while a society that is relatively secure and stable may especially value individuals who are great innovators or serve as a source of inspiration for others.

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

1. Do athletic teams, fraternities and sororities, and even people in a college classroom create heroes and villains? Explain how and why.
2. Based on the material presented in this chapter, we might say that “Deviance is a difference that makes a difference.” That is, deviance is constructed as part of social life because, as Emile Durkheim argued, it is a necessary part of society. Make a (private) list of ten negative traits that have been directed at you (or that

you have directed at yourself). Then look at your list and try to determine what it says about the society we live in. Why, in other words, do these differences make a difference to members of our society?

3. Go to www.sociologyinfocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 9 Deviance

What Is Deviance?

9.1 Explain how sociology addresses limitations of a biological or psychological approach to deviance. (pages 240–43)

Deviance refers to norm violations ranging from minor infractions, such as bad manners, to major infractions, such as serious violence.

Biological theories focus on individual abnormality and explain human behavior as the result of biological instincts.

Psychological theories focus on individual abnormality and see deviance as the result of “unsuccessful socialization.”

Sociological theories view all behavior—deviance as well as conformity—as products of society. Sociologists point out that

- what is deviant varies from place to place according to cultural norms
- behavior and individuals become deviant as others define them that way
- what and who a society defines as deviant reflect who has and does not have social power

deviance the recognized violation of cultural norms

crime the violation of a society’s formally enacted criminal law

social control attempts by society to regulate people’s thoughts and behavior

criminal justice system the organizations—police, courts, and prison officials—that respond to alleged violations of the law

Structural-Functional Theories: The Functions of Deviance

9.2 Apply structural-functional theories to the topic of deviance. (pages 243–46)

Durkheim claimed that deviance is a normal element of society that affirms cultural norms and values, clarifies moral boundaries, brings people together, and encourages social change.

Merton’s **strain theory** explains deviance in terms of a society’s cultural goals and the means available to achieve them. Deviant subcultures are discussed by Cloward and Ohlin, Cohen, Miller, and Anderson.

Symbolic-Interaction Theories: Defining Deviance

9.3 Apply symbolic-interaction theories to the topic of deviance. (pages 246–49)

Labeling theory claims that deviance depends less on what someone does than on how others react to that behavior.

If people respond to primary deviance by stigmatizing a person, secondary deviance and a deviant career may result.

The **medicalization of deviance** is the transformation of moral and legal deviance into a medical condition. In practice, this means a change in labels, replacing “good” and “bad” with “sick” and “well.”

Sutherland’s **differential association theory** links deviance to how much others encourage or discourage such behavior.

Hirschi’s **control theory** states that imagining the possible consequences of deviance often discourages such behavior. People who are well integrated into society are less likely to engage in deviant behavior.

labeling theory the idea that deviance and conformity result not so much from what people do as from how others respond to those actions

stigma a powerfully negative label that greatly changes a person’s self-concept and social identity

medicalization of deviance the transformation of moral and legal deviance into a medical condition

Theories of Class, Race, and Gender: Deviance and Inequality

9.4 Apply social-conflict theories to the topic of deviance. (pages 249–53)

Based on Karl Marx’s ideas, social-conflict theory holds that laws and other norms operate to protect the interests of powerful members of any society. In a capitalist society, law operates to support the capitalist economy.

- **White-collar offenses** are committed by people of high social position as part of their jobs. Sutherland claimed that such offenses are rarely prosecuted and are most likely to end up in civil rather than criminal court.
- **Corporate crime** refers to illegal actions by a corporation or people acting on its behalf. Although corporate crimes cause considerable public harm, most cases of corporate crime go unpunished.
- **Organized crime** has a long history in the United States, especially among categories of people with few legitimate opportunities.
- Race-conflict theory and feminist theory explain that what people consider deviant reflects the relative power and privilege of different categories of people.
- **Hate crimes** are crimes motivated by racial or other bias; they target people who are already disadvantaged based on race, gender, or sexual orientation.
- In the United States and elsewhere, societies control the behavior of women more closely than that of men.

white-collar crime crime committed by people of high social position in the course of their occupations
corporate crime the illegal actions of a corporation or people acting on its behalf
organized crime a business supplying illegal goods or services
hate crime a criminal act against a person or a person's property by an offender motivated by racial or other bias

Crime

9.5 Identify patterns of crime in the United States and around the world. (pages 253–58)

Crimes against the person (violent crime) include murder, aggravated assault, and forcible rape.

Crimes against property (property crime) include burglary, larceny-theft, and arson.

- Sixty-three percent of people arrested for property crimes and 80 percent of people arrested for violent crimes are male.
- Street crime is more common among people of lower social position. Including white-collar and corporate crime makes class differences in criminality smaller.
- More whites than African Americans are arrested for street crimes. However, African Americans are arrested more often than whites in relation to their population size. Asian Americans have a lower-than-average rate of arrest.

crimes against the person crimes that direct violence or the threat of violence against others; also known as *violent crimes*

crimes against property crimes that involve theft of property belonging to others; also known as *property crimes*

victimless crimes violations of law in which there are no obvious victims

- Police use personal discretion in deciding whether and how to handle a situation.
- Research suggests that police are more likely to make an arrest if the offense is serious, if bystanders are present, or if the suspect is African American or Latino.

Courts rely on an adversarial process in which attorneys—one representing the defendant and one representing the state—present their cases in the presence of a judge who monitors legal procedures.

- In practice, U.S. courts resolve most cases through plea bargaining. Though efficient, this method puts less powerful people at a disadvantage.

There are four justifications for **punishment**: retribution, deterrence, rehabilitation, and societal protection.

- The **death penalty** remains controversial in the United States, the only high-income Western nation that routinely executes serious offenders. The trend is toward fewer executions.
- **Community-based corrections** include probation and parole. These programs lower the cost of supervising people convicted of crimes and reduce prison overcrowding but have not been shown to reduce recidivism.

plea bargaining a legal negotiation in which a prosecutor reduces a charge in exchange for a defendant's guilty plea
retribution an act of moral vengeance by which society makes the offender suffer as much as the suffering caused by the crime

deterrence the attempt to discourage criminality through the use of punishment

rehabilitation a program for reforming the offender to prevent later offenses

societal protection rendering an offender incapable of further offenses temporarily through imprisonment or permanently by execution

criminal recidivism later offenses by people previously convicted of crimes

community-based corrections correctional programs operating within society at large rather than behind prison walls

The U.S. Criminal Justice System

9.6 Analyze the operation of the criminal justice system. (pages 259–64)

The **police** maintain public order by enforcing the law.

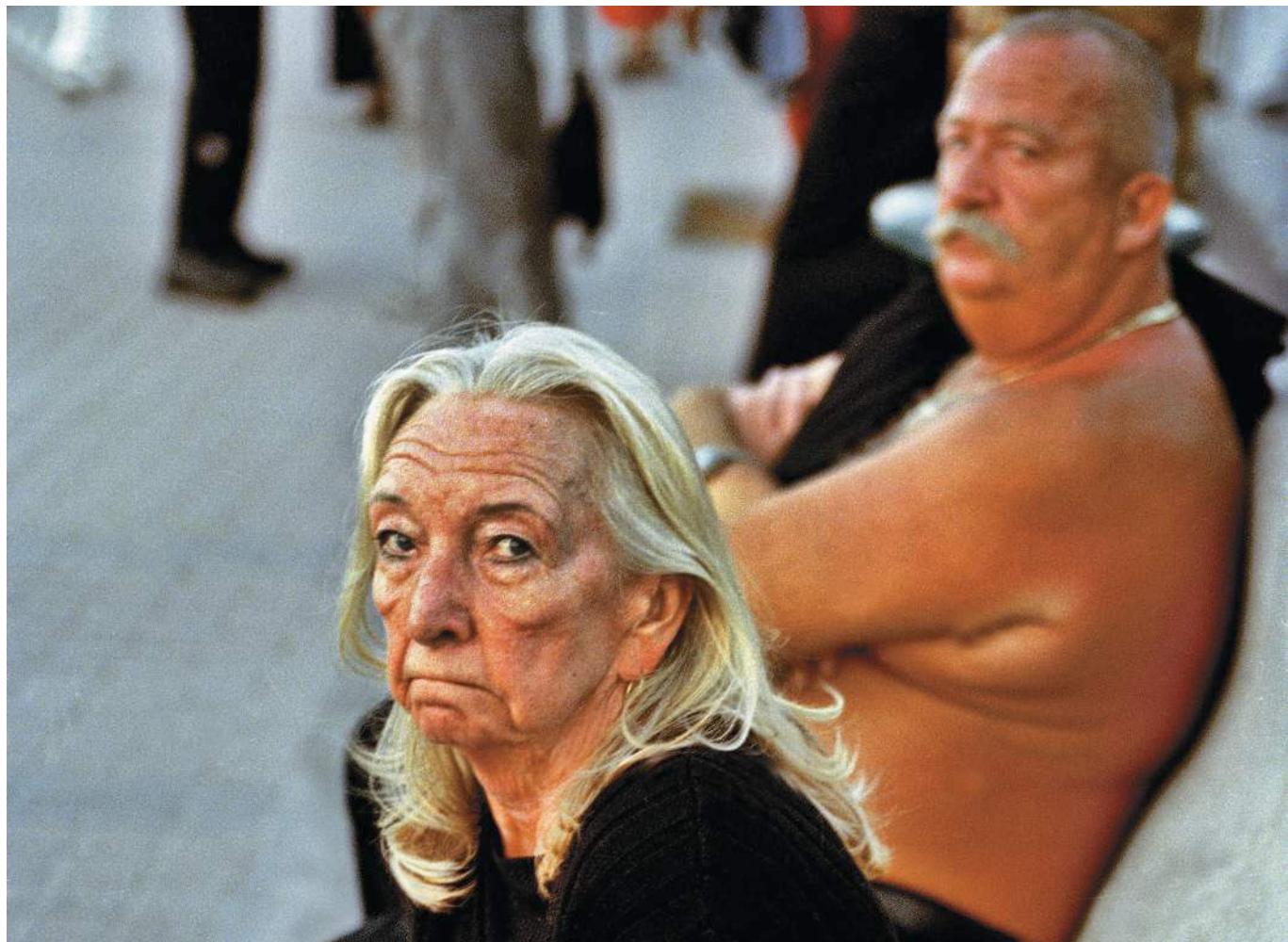
Chapter 10

Social Stratification

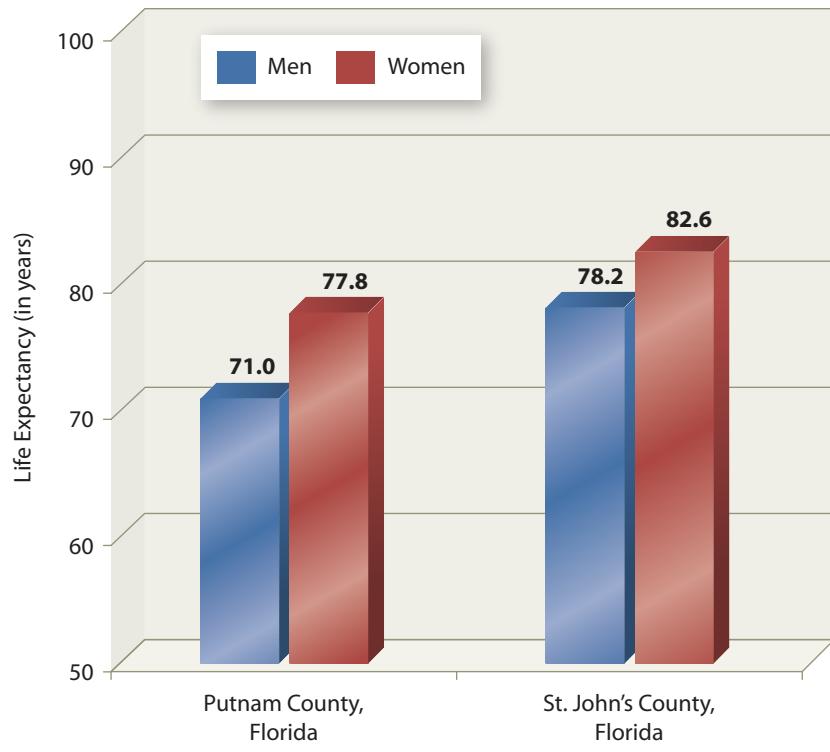


Learning Objectives

- 10.1** Identify four principles that underlie social stratification.
- 10.2** Apply the concepts of caste, class, and meritocracy to societies around the world.
- 10.3** Explain how cultural beliefs justify social inequality.
- 10.4** Apply sociology's major theories to the topic of social inequality.
- 10.5** Analyze the link between a society's technology and its social stratification.



The Power of Society to affect life expectancy



SOURCE: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2014).

How does where we reside affect our chances to live to a ripe old age? In the state of Florida, two northern counties near Jacksonville that are situated side by side provide an answer to this question. Putnam County has relatively low average income, while oceanfront St. John's County has higher average income and home values that are twice as high. In 2010, men in Putnam County had a life expectancy of 71.0 years; in St. John's County, the figure was 78.2 years. Among women, life expectancy was 77.8 years in Putnam County compared to 82.6 years in St. John's County. In these differences we see the power of society—in this case, the importance of social class—to affect not only people's quality of life but also how long they live.

Chapter Overview

This chapter introduces the central concept of social stratification, the focus of the next six chapters of the text. Social stratification is very important because our social standing affects almost everything about our lives.

On April 10, 1912, the ocean liner *Titanic* slipped away from the docks of Southampton, England, on its maiden voyage across the North Atlantic to New York. A proud symbol of the new industrial age, the towering ship carried 2,300 men, women, and children. Some of the passengers were enjoying more luxury than most travelers today could imagine. By contrast, poor passengers crowded the lower decks, journeying to what they hoped would be a better life in the United States.

Two days out, the crew received radio warnings of icebergs in the area but paid little notice. Then, near midnight, as the ship steamed swiftly westward, a lookout was stunned to see a massive shape rising out of the dark ocean directly ahead. The ship steered hard to port, but moments later, the *Titanic* collided with a huge iceberg, as tall as the ship itself. The impact split open the ship's side as if the grand vessel were a giant tin can.

Seawater exploded into the ship's lower levels. Within twenty-five minutes of impact, alarms had sounded and people were rushing for the lifeboats. By 2:00 A.M., the bow was completely submerged, and the stern rose high above the water. Minutes later, all the ship's lights went out. Clinging to the deck, quietly observed by those huddled in lifeboats, hundreds of helpless passengers and crew solemnly passed their final minutes before the ship disappeared into the frigid Atlantic (Lord, 1976). ■



The tragic loss of more than 1,600 lives made the sinking of the *Titanic* headline news around the world. Looking back at this terrible accident with a sociological eye, we note that some categories of passengers had much better odds of survival than others. Reflecting that era's traditional ideas about gender, women and children were allowed to board the lifeboats first, with the result that 80 percent of the people who died were men. Class, too, was at work. More than 60 percent of people holding first-class tickets were saved because they were on the upper decks, where warnings were sounded first and lifeboats were accessible. Only 36 percent of the second-class passengers survived, and of the third-class passengers on the lower decks, only 24 percent escaped drowning. On board the *Titanic*, class turned out to mean much more than the quality of accommodations—it was a matter of life or death.

The fate of the passengers on the *Titanic* dramatically illustrates how social inequality affects the way people live and sometimes whether they live at all. This chapter explains the meaning of social stratification and explores how patterns of inequality differ around the world and throughout human history. Chapter 11 continues the story by examining social inequality in the United States, and Chapter 12 takes a broader look at how our country fits into a global system of wealth and poverty.

What Is Social Stratification?

10.1 Identify four principles that underlie social stratification.

For tens of thousands of years, humans lived in small hunting and gathering societies. Although members of these bands might single out one person as swifter, stronger, or more skillful in collecting food, everyone had roughly the same social standing. As societies became more complex—a process detailed in Chapter 4 (“Society”—a major change came about. Societies began to elevate specific categories of people above others, giving some parts of the population more wealth, power, and prestige than others.

Social stratification, a system by which a society ranks categories of people in a hierarchy, is based on four important principles:

1. **Social stratification is a trait of society, not simply a reflection of individual differences.** Many of us think of social standing in terms of personal talent and effort, and as a result, we often exaggerate the extent to which we control our own fate. Did a higher percentage of the first-class passengers on the *Titanic* survive because they were better swimmers than second- and third-class passengers? No. They did better because of

their privileged position on the ship, which gave them first access to the lifeboats. Similarly, children born into wealthy families are more likely than children born into poverty to enjoy good health, do well in school, succeed in a career, and live a long life. Neither the rich nor the poor created social stratification, yet this system shapes the lives of us all.

2. **Social stratification carries over from generation to generation.** We have only to look at how parents pass their social position on to their children to see that stratification is a trait of societies rather than individuals. Some people, especially in high-income societies, do experience **social mobility**, *a change in position within the social hierarchy*. Social mobility may be upward or downward. We celebrate the achievements of rare individuals such as Gisele Bundchen (from Brazil) and rapper Jay-Z (United States), neither of whom ever finished high school but both of whom nevertheless managed to rise to fame and fortune. Some people move downward in the social hierarchy because of business failures, illness, divorce, or economic recession and rising unemployment. More often people move *horizontally*; they switch from one job to another at about the same social level. The social standing of most people remains much the same over their lifetime.
3. **Social stratification is universal but variable.** Social stratification is found everywhere. Yet *what* is unequal and *how* unequal it is varies from one society to another. In some societies, inequality is mostly a matter of prestige; in others, wealth or power is the key element of difference. In addition, some societies contain more inequality than others.



The personal experience of poverty is clear in this photograph of mealtime in a homeless shelter. The main sociological insight is that although we feel the effects of social stratification personally, our social standing is largely the result of the way society (or a world of societies) structures opportunity and reward. To the core of our being, we are all products of social stratification.

4. **Social stratification involves not just inequality but beliefs as well.** Any system of inequality not only gives some people more than others but also defines these arrangements as fair. Just as the details of inequality vary, the explanations of *why* people should be unequal differ from society to society.

Caste and Class Systems

10.2 Apply the concepts of caste, class, and meritocracy to societies around the world.

Sociologists distinguish between *closed systems*, which allow for little change in social position, and *open systems*, which permit much more social mobility. Closed systems are called *caste systems*, and more open systems are called *class systems*.

The Caste System

A **caste system** is *social stratification based on ascription, or birth*. A pure caste system is closed because birth alone determines a person's entire future, allowing little or no social mobility based on individual effort. People live out their lives in the rigid categories assigned to them, without the possibility of change for the better or worse.

AN ILLUSTRATION: INDIA Many of the world's societies, most of them agrarian, are caste systems. In India, much of the population still lives in traditional villages where the caste system continues to be part of everyday life. The traditional Indian system identifies four major castes (or *varnas*, from a Sanskrit word that means "color"): Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra. On the local level, each of these is composed of hundreds of subcaste groups (*jatis*).

From birth, a caste system determines the direction of a person's life. First, with the exception of farming, which is open to everyone, families in each caste perform one type of work, as priests, soldiers, barbers, leather workers, street sweepers, and so on.

Second, a caste system demands that people marry others of the same ranking. If people were to enter into "mixed" marriages with members of other castes, what rank would their children hold? Sociologists call this pattern of marrying within a social category *endogamous marriage* (*endo*-stems from the Greek word for "within"). According to tradition—this practice is now rare and is found only in remote rural areas—Indian parents select their children's future

marriage partners, often before the children reach their teens.

Third, caste guides everyday life by keeping people in the company of “their own kind.” Norms reinforce this practice by teaching, for example, that a “purer” person of a higher caste is “polluted” by contact with someone of lower standing.

Fourth, caste systems rest on powerful cultural beliefs. Indian culture is built on the Hindu tradition that doing the caste’s life work and accepting an arranged marriage are moral duties.

CASTE AND AGRARIAN LIFE Caste systems are typical of agrarian societies because agriculture demands a life-long routine of hard work. By teaching a sense of moral duty, a caste system ensures that people are disciplined for a lifetime of work and are willing to perform the same jobs as their parents. Thus the caste system has hung on in rural areas of India some seventy years after being formally outlawed. People living in the industrial cities of India have many more choices about work and marriage partners than people in rural areas.

Another country long dominated by caste is South Africa, although the system of *apartheid*, or separation of the races, is no longer legal and is now in decline. The Thinking Globally box on page 274 takes a closer look.

The Class System

Because a modern economy must attract people to work in many occupations other than farming, it depends on developing people’s talents in diverse fields. This gives rise to a **class system**, *social stratification based on both birth and individual achievement*.



In rural India, the traditional caste system still shapes people’s lives. This girl is a member of the “untouchables,” a category below the four basic castes. She and her family are clothes washers, people who clean material “polluted” by blood or human waste. Such work is defined as unclean for people of higher caste position. In the cities, by contrast, caste has given way to a class system where achievement plays a greater part in social ranking and income and consumption are keys to social standing.

Caste and Class Systems		
caste system social stratification based on ascription, or birth	class system social stratification based on both birth and individual achievement	meritocracy social stratification based on personal merit

Class systems are more open than caste systems, so people who gain schooling and skills may experience social mobility. As a result, class distinctions become blurred, and even blood relatives may have different social standings. Categorizing people according to their color, sex, or social background comes to be seen as wrong in modern societies as all people gain political rights and, in principle, equal standing before the law. In addition, work is no longer fixed at birth but involves some personal choice. Greater individuality also translates into more freedom in selecting a marriage partner.

MERITOCRACY The concept of **meritocracy** refers to *social stratification based on personal merit*. Because industrial societies need to develop a broad range of abilities beyond farming, stratification is based not just on the accident of birth but also on *merit* (from a Latin word meaning “earned”), which includes a person’s knowledge, abilities, and effort. A rough measure of merit is the importance of a person’s job and how well it is done. To increase the extent of meritocracy, industrial societies expand equality of opportunity and teach people to expect unequal rewards based on individual performance.

A pure meritocracy has never existed, but in such a system social position would depend entirely on a person’s ability and effort. Such a system would have ongoing social mobility, blurring social categories as individuals



Thinking Globally

Race as Caste: A Report from South Africa

Jerome: Wow. I've been reading about racial caste in South Africa. I'm glad that's history.

Reggie: But racial inequality is far from over....

At the southern tip of the African continent lies South Africa, a country about the size of Alaska with a population of about 54 million. For 300 years, the native Africans who lived there were ruled by white people, first by the Dutch traders and farmers who settled there in the mid-seventeenth century and then by the British, who colonized the area early in the nineteenth century. By the early 1900s, the British had taken over the entire country, naming it the Union of South Africa.

In 1961, the nation declared its independence from Britain, calling itself the Republic of South Africa, but freedom for the black majority was still decades away. To ensure their political control over the black population, whites instituted the policy of *apartheid*, or racial separation. Apartheid, written into law in 1948, denied blacks national citizenship, ownership of land, and any voice in the nation's government. As a lower caste, blacks received little schooling and performed menial, low-paying jobs. White people with even average wealth had at least one black household servant.

The members of the white minority claimed that apartheid protected their cultural traditions from the influence of people they considered inferior. When blacks resisted apartheid, whites used brutal military repression to maintain their power. Even so, steady resistance—especially from younger blacks, who demanded a political voice and economic opportunity—gradually forced the country to change. Criticism from other industrial nations added to the pressure.



By the mid-1980s, the tide began to turn as the South African government granted limited political rights to people of mixed race and Asian ancestry. Next came the right of all people to form labor unions, to enter occupations once limited to whites, and to own property. Officials also repealed apartheid laws that separated the races in public places.

The pace of change increased in 1990 with the release from prison of Nelson Mandela, who led the fight against apartheid. In 1994, the first national election open to all races made Mandela president, ending centuries of white minority rule.

Despite this dramatic political change—and strong economic growth during the last decade—social stratification in South Africa is still based on race. Even with the right to own property, one-fourth of black South Africans and half of young black adults have no work, and 45 percent of the population lives below the country's poverty line. The worst off are some 7 million *ukuhleleleka*, which means “marginal people” in the Xhosa language. Soweto-by-the-Sea may sound like a summer getaway, but it is a shantytown within the city of Johannesburg that is home to thousands of people who live crammed into shacks made of packing crates, corrugated metal, cardboard, and other discarded materials. Recent years have seen increasing signs of prosperity, some shopping centers have been built, and most streets are now paved. But two-thirds of families live on \$6,500 or less annually and the poorest 10 percent of families lack electricity and indoor sewage systems. In some neighborhoods, women line up to take a turn at a single water tap that serves as many as 1,000 people. Jobs are hard to come by, with an unemployment rate of about 25 percent for all adults and 33 percent among young adults.

South Africa's current president, Jacob Zuma, who has been president since 2009, leads a nation still crippled by its history of racial caste. Tourism is up and holds the promise of an economic boom in years to come, but the economy is still dominated by the white minority. The country can break from the past only by providing real opportunity to all its people.

What Do You Think?

1. How has race been a form of caste in South Africa?
2. Although apartheid is no longer law, why does racial inequality continue to shape South African society?
3. Does race operate as an element of caste in the United States? Explain your answer.

SOURCES: Mabry & Masland (1999), Murphy (2002), McGroarty & Maylie (2012), Statistics South Africa (2014), and World Bank (2015).

continuously move up or down in the system, depending on their latest performance.

Caste societies define merit in different terms, emphasizing loyalty to the system—that is, dutifully performing whatever job comes with the social position a person

has from birth. Because they assign jobs before anyone can know anything about a person's talents or interests, caste systems waste human potential. On the other hand, because caste systems clearly assign everyone a “place” in society and a general type of work, they are very stable

and orderly. A need for some amount of order is one reason industrial and postindustrial societies keep some elements of caste—such as letting wealth pass from generation to generation—rather than becoming complete meritocracies. A pure meritocracy would have individuals moving up and down the social ranking all the time. Such extreme social mobility would pull apart families and other social groupings. After all, economic performance is not everything: Would we want to evaluate our family members solely on how successful they are in their jobs outside the home? Probably not. Class systems in industrial societies develop some meritocracy to promote productivity and efficiency, but they keep caste elements, such as family, to maintain order and social unity.

STATUS CONSISTENCY *Status consistency* is the degree of uniformity in a person's social standing across various dimensions of social inequality. A caste system has limited social mobility and high status consistency, so the typical person has the same relative ranking with regard to wealth, power, and prestige. The greater mobility of class systems produces less status consistency, so people are ranked higher on some dimensions of social standing and lower on others. In the United States, for example, most college professors with advanced academic degrees enjoy high social prestige but earn only modest incomes. Low status consistency means that it is harder to define people's social position. Therefore, the lines between *classes* are much harder to define than the lines that separate *castes*.

Caste and Class: The United Kingdom

The mix of caste and meritocracy in class systems is well illustrated by the United Kingdom (Great Britain—consisting of England, Wales, and Scotland—and Northern Ireland), an industrial nation with a long agrarian history.

ARISTOCRATIC ENGLAND In the Middle Ages, England had an aristocratic society that resembled a caste system. At the top, the aristocrats included the leading members of the church, who were thought to speak with the authority of God. Some clergy were local priests who were not aristocrats and who lived simple lives. But the highest church officials lived in palaces and presided over an organization that owned much land, which was the major source of wealth. Church leaders, typically referred to as the *first estate* in France and other European countries, also had a great deal of power to shape the political events of the day.

The rest of the aristocracy, which in France and other European countries was known as the *second estate*, was a hereditary nobility that made up barely 5 percent of the population. The royal family—the king and queen at the top of the power structure—as well as lesser nobles (including several hundred families headed by men titled as dukes, earls, and barons) together owned most of the nation's

land. Most of the men and women within the aristocracy were wealthy due to their ownership of land, and they had many servants for their homes as well as ordinary farmers to work their fields. With all their work done for them by others, members of the aristocracy had no occupation and came to believe that engaging in a trade or any other work for income was beneath them. Aristocrats used their leisure time to develop skills in horseback riding and warfare and to cultivate refined tastes in art, music, and literature.

To prevent their vast landholdings from being divided by heirs after they died, aristocrats devised the law of *primogeniture* (from the Latin meaning "firstborn"), which required that all property pass to the oldest son or other male relation. Younger sons had to find other means of support. Some of these men became leaders in the church—where they would live as well as they were used to—and helped tie together the church and the state by having members of the same families running both. Other younger sons within the aristocracy became military officers or judges or took up other professions considered honorable for gentlemen. In an age when no woman could inherit her father's property and few women had the opportunity to earn a living on their own, a noble daughter depended for her security on marrying well.

Below the high clergy and the rest of the aristocracy, the vast majority of men and women were simply called *commoners* or, in France and other European countries, the *third estate*. Most commoners were serfs working land owned by nobles or the church. Unlike members of the aristocracy, most commoners had little schooling and were illiterate.

As the Industrial Revolution expanded England's economy, some commoners living in cities made enough money to challenge the nobility. More emphasis on meritocracy, the increasing importance of money, and the expansion of schooling and legal rights eventually blurred the difference between aristocrats and commoners and gave rise to a class system.

Perhaps it is a sign of the times that these days, traditional titles are put up for sale by aristocrats who need money. In 1996, for example, Earl Spencer—the brother of the late Princess Diana—sold one of his titles, Lord of Wimbledon, to raise the \$300,000 he needed to redo the plumbing in one of his large homes (McKee, 1996).

THE UNITED KINGDOM TODAY The United Kingdom has a class system, but caste elements from England's aristocratic past still play a part in social standing. A small number of British families continue to hold considerable inherited wealth and enjoy high prestige, receive schooling at excellent universities, and are members of social networks in which people have substantial political influence. A traditional monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, is the United Kingdom's head of state, and Parliament's House of Lords is composed of "peers," about half of whom are aristocrats of noble birth.



In 2011, Prince William, second in line to the British throne, married commoner Catherine Middleton, who then took the title, "Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cambridge." They now take their place as part of a royal family that traces its ancestry back more than a thousand years—an element of caste that remains in the British class system.

However, control of government has passed to the House of Commons, where the prime minister and other leaders reach their positions by achievement—winning an election—rather than by birth. Another sign of a more open system is the fact that in 2011, Prince William, the queen's grandson, married Catherine Middleton, a woman who was a commoner (although from a relatively privileged family) and thus might be said to have "earned" her new position.

Lower in the class hierarchy, roughly one-fourth of the British people form the middle class. Many earn comfortable incomes from professions and business and are likely to have investments in the form of stocks and bonds. Below the middle class, perhaps half of all Britons consider themselves "working-class," earning modest incomes through manual labor. The remaining one-fourth of the British people make up the lower class, the poor who lack steady work or who work full time but are paid too little to live comfortably. Most lower-class Britons live in the nation's northern and western regions, which have been further impoverished by the closings of mines and factories.

The British mix of caste elements and meritocracy has produced a highly stratified society with some opportunity to move upward or downward, much the same as exists

in the United States (Long & Ferrie, 2007). Historically, British society has been somewhat more castelike than the United States, a fact reflected in the importance attached to linguistic accent. Distinctive patterns of speech develop in any society when people are set off from one another over several generations. People in the United States treat accent as a clue to where a person lives or grew up (we can easily identify a midwestern "twang" or a southern "drawl"). In the United Kingdom, however, accent is a mark of social class, with upper-class people speaking "the King's English" but most people speaking "like commoners." So different are these two accents that the British seem to be, as the saying goes, "a single people divided by a common language."

Another Example: Japan

Social stratification in Japan also mixes caste and meritocracy. Japan is both the world's oldest continuously operating monarchy and a modern society where wealth follows individual achievement.

ARISTOCRATIC JAPAN By the fifth century C.E., Japan was an agrarian society with a rigid caste system, ruled by an imperial family, containing both aristocrats and commoners. The emperor ruled by divine right (meaning that he claimed that God intended him to rule), and his military leader (*shogun*) enforced the emperor's rule with the help of regional nobles or warlords.

Below the nobility were the *samurai*, a warrior caste whose name means "to serve." This second rank of Japanese society was made up of soldiers who learned martial arts and who lived by a code of honor based on absolute loyalty to their leaders.

As in Great Britain, most people in Japan at this time in history were commoners who worked very hard to live from day to day. Unlike their European counterparts, however, Japanese commoners were not lowest in rank. At the bottom were the *burakumin*, or "outcasts," looked down on by both lord and commoner. Like the lowest-caste groups in India, these outcasts lived apart from others, performed the most distasteful work, and could not change their social standing.

MODERN JAPAN By the 1860s (the time of the Civil War in the United States), the nobles realized that Japan's traditional caste system would prevent the country from entering the modern industrial era. Besides, as in Britain, some nobles were happy to have their children marry wealthy commoners who had more money than they did. As Japan opened up to the larger world, the traditional caste system weakened. In 1871, the Japanese legally banned the social category of *burakumin*, although some people still looked down on those whose ancestors held this rank. After Japan's defeat in World War II, the nobles lost their privileges and, although the emperor remains as a symbol of Japan's traditions, he has little real power.

Social stratification in Japan is very different from the rigid caste system of centuries ago. Today, Japanese society consists of “upper,” “upper-middle,” “lower-middle,” and “lower” classes. The exact lines between these classes are unclear to most Japanese, and many people do move between classes over time. But because Japanese culture tends to respect tradition, family background is never far from the surface when sizing up someone’s social standing. Officially, everyone is equal before the law, but in reality, many people still look at one another through the centuries-old lens of caste.

Finally, traditional ideas about gender continue to shape Japanese society. Legally, the two sexes are equal, but men dominate women in many ways. Because Japanese parents are more likely to send sons than daughters to college, there is a significant gender gap in education. With the recent economic downturn in Japan, many more women have entered the labor force. But most working women fill lower-level support positions in the corporate world. In Japan, only about 8 percent of seats in the national parliament are held by women, and women represent just four percent of all members of corporate boards of directors. In short, individual achievement in Japan’s modern class system operates in the shadow of centuries of traditional male privilege (Norbeck, 1983; Brinton, 1988; French, 2002; OECD, 2012, 2015).

Classless Societies? The Former Soviet Union

Nowhere in the world do we find a society without some degree of social inequality. Yet some nations have claimed to be classless.

THE SECOND RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which rivaled the United States as a military superpower in the mid- to late twentieth century, was born out of a revolution in Russia in 1917. The Russian Revolution ended the feudal aristocracy in which a nobility ruled the country and transferred farms, factories, and other productive property from private ownership to state control.

The Russian Revolution was guided by the ideas of Karl Marx, who believed that private ownership of productive property was the basis of social classes (see Chapter 4, “Society”). When the state took control of the economy, Soviet officials boasted that they had created the first modern classless society.

Critics, however, pointed out that based on their jobs, the Soviet people were actually stratified into four unequal categories. At the top were high government officials, known as *apparatchiks*. Next came the Soviet intelligentsia,

including lower government officials, college professors, scientists, physicians, and engineers. Below them were manual workers and, at the lowest level, the rural peasantry.

In reality, the Soviet Union was not classless at all. But putting factories, farms, colleges, and hospitals under state control did create more economic equality (although with sharp differences in power) than in capitalist societies such as the United States.

THE MODERN RUSSIAN FEDERATION In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union with a new economic program known as *perestroika* (“restructuring”). Gorbachev saw that although the Soviet system had reduced economic inequality, living standards lagged far behind those of other industrial nations. Gorbachev tried to generate economic growth by reducing the inefficient centralized control of the economy, which had proved to be inefficient.

Gorbachev’s economic reforms turned into one of the most dramatic social movements in history. People in the Soviet Union and in other socialist countries of Eastern Europe blamed their poverty and their lack of basic freedoms on the repressive ruling class of Communist party officials. Beginning in 1989, people throughout Eastern Europe toppled their socialist governments, and at the end of 1991, the Soviet Union itself collapsed, with its largest republic remaking itself as the Russian Federation.

The Soviet Union’s story shows that social inequality involves more than economic resources. Soviet society did not have the extremes of wealth and poverty found in the United Kingdom, Japan, and the United States. But an elite class existed all the same, based on political power rather than wealth.



One of the major events of the twentieth century was the socialist revolution in Russia, which led to the creation of the Soviet Union. Following the ideas of Karl Marx, the popular uprising overthrew a feudal aristocracy, as depicted in the 1920 painting *Bolshevik* by Boris Mikhailovich Kustodiev.



China has the fastest-growing economy of all the major nations and currently manufactures more products than even the United States. With more and more money to spend, the Chinese are now a major consumer of automobiles—a fact that probably saved the Buick brand from extinction.

What about social mobility in so-called classless societies? During the twentieth century, there was as much upward social mobility in the Soviet Union as in the United States. Rapidly expanding industry and government drew many poor rural peasants into factories and offices. This trend illustrates what sociologists call **structural social mobility**, *a shift in the social position of large numbers of people due more to changes in society itself than to individual efforts*.

November 24, Odessa, Ukraine. The first snow of our voyage flies over the decks as our ship docks at Odessa, the former Soviet Union's southernmost port on the Black Sea. We gaze up the Potemkin Steps, the steep stairway up to the city, where bloody violence that eventually led to the Russian Revolution took place. It has been several years since our last visit, and much has changed; in fact, the Soviet Union itself has collapsed. Has life improved? For some people, certainly: There are now chic boutiques where well-dressed shoppers buy fine wines, designer clothes, and imported perfumes. But for most people, life seems much worse. Flea markets line the curbs as families sell their home furnishings. When meat costs \$4 a pound and the average person earns about \$30 a month, people become desperate. Even the city has to save money by turning off streetlights after 8:00 p.m. The spirits of most people seem as dim as Odessa's streets.

During the 1990s, the forces of structural social mobility in the new Russian Federation turned downward. One indicator is that the average life span for Russian men dropped by five years and for women by two years. Many factors were involved in this decline, including economic turbulence and Russia's poor health care system. Only in

the last few years has the average life span in Russia recovered to what it was in 1990 (Mason, 2004; World Bank, 2012; Population Reference Bureau, 2014).

The hope was that in the long run, closing inefficient state industries would improve the nation's economic performance. The economy has expanded and, compared to many struggling nations in Western Europe, Russia is doing pretty well economically. Today, the poverty rate has dropped to about 11 percent—half of what it was in 2002. But many Russians continue to face hard times. In addition, there is widespread concern both inside and outside of Russia that President Putin's increasing control over the country is eroding political freedoms and discouraging investment from abroad (Zuckerman, 2006; Wendle, 2009; World Bank, 2014).

China: Emerging Social Classes

Sweeping political and economic change has affected not just the former Soviet Union but also the People's Republic of China. After the Communist revolution in 1949, the state took control of all farms, factories, and other productive property. Communist party leader Mao Zedong declared all types of work to be equally important, so officially, social classes no longer existed.

The new program greatly reduced economic inequality. But as in the Soviet Union, social differences remained. The country was ruled by a political elite with enormous power and considerable privilege; below them were managers of large factories as well as skilled professionals; next came industrial workers; at the bottom were rural peasants, who were not even allowed to leave their villages and migrate to cities.

Further economic change came in 1978 when Mao died and Deng Xiaoping became China's leader. The state gradually loosened its hold on the economy, allowing a new class of business owners to emerge. In 2012, Xi Jinping became the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, which continues to control the country. In recent years, many political leaders have prospered and they have joined the ranks of the small but wealthy elite who control new privately run industries. China's economy has experienced years of rapid growth, which only recently has slowed. One sign of greater prosperity is the fact that the nation is now included among the middle-income countries. Much of this recent economic growth has been concentrated in cities, especially in coastal areas, where living standards have soared far above those in China's rural interior. A sign

of the times is that the luxury automobile producer Bentley now sells more of its cars in China than in its home nation, Great Britain (Richburg, 2011; United Nations, 2014).

Since the late 1990s, the booming cities along China's coast have become home to many thousands of people made rich by the expanding economy. In addition, the stronger economy in the coastal regions of the country has attracted more than 250 million young migrants and family members from rural areas in search of better jobs (CIA World Factbook, 2015). Millions more want to move to the booming coastal cities, but the government still restricts movement, which has the effect of slowing upward social mobility. For those who have been allowed to move, jobs are generally better than the work that people knew before. But many of these new jobs are dangerous, and higher wages are offset by higher costs of living in the city. As a result the majority of the migrants remain poor.

In general, however, China's population has experienced structural upward mobility as the economy has expanded by about 10 percent annually over the past three decades. China now has the world's second largest economy (after that of the United States). This rise reflects in part how much of the world's manufacturing takes place in China, which is now the world's largest exporter (Wu & Treiman, 2007; Chang, 2008; Powell, 2008; World Bank, 2014).

One new category in China's social hierarchy consists of the *hai gui*, a term derived from words meaning "returned from overseas" or "sea turtles." The ranks of the "sea turtles" are increasing by tens of thousands each year as young women and men return from education in other countries, in many cases from college and university campuses in the United States. These young people, most from privileged families to begin with, typically return to China to find many opportunities and soon become very influential (Liu & Hewitt, 2008).

The young members of rich and politically well-connected families have emerged as a new economic and political aristocracy. To illustrate, Xi Jinping, the new Communist Party leader and since 2013 the nation's president, is himself the son of an early leader in the Chinese Communist Party. Sometimes called "princelings," these powerful people (who are mostly men) may feud among themselves as they seek to gain influence. But most observers of the current scene in China agree that they represent another force to be reckoned with (Beech, 2012; Johnson, 2012).

In China, a new class system is emerging, with the nation's elite now a mix of the old Party officials, new business leaders, and a new "aristocratic" class of well-connected people. Economic inequality in China has

Global Snapshot

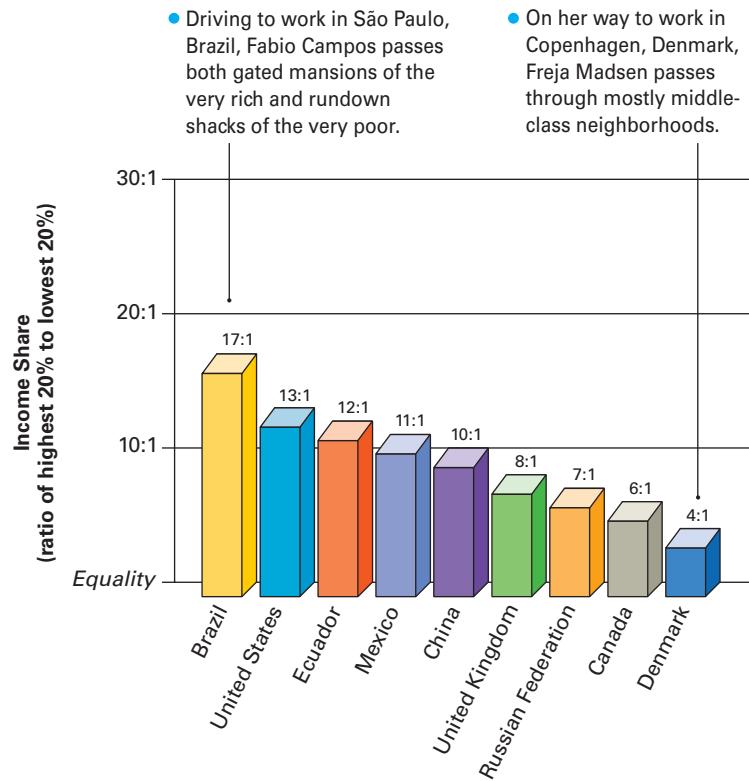


FIGURE 10–1 Economic Inequality in Selected Countries, 2014

Many low- and middle-income countries have greater economic inequality than the United States. But the United States has more economic inequality than most high-income nations.

SOURCES: U.S. Census Bureau (2014) and World Bank (2015).

increased as many members of this new business and political elite have become millionaires and even billionaires. As Figure 10–1 shows, economic inequality in China is now slightly greater than it is in the United Kingdom. With so much change under way in China, that country's social stratification is likely to remain dynamic for some time to come (Bian, 2002; Johnson, 2012; CIA World Factbook, 2015).

Ideology: Supporting Stratification

10.3 Explain how cultural beliefs justify social inequality.

How do societies persist without sharing resources more equally? The highly stratified British aristocracy and the caste system in Japan each survived for centuries, and for 2,000 years, people in India accepted the idea that they should be privileged or poor based on the accident of birth.

A major reason that social hierarchies endure is **ideology**, *cultural beliefs that justify particular social arrangements, including patterns of inequality*. A belief—for example, the idea that rich people are smart and poor people are lazy—is ideological to the extent that it supports inequality by defining it as fair.

Plato and Marx on Ideology

According to the ancient Greek philosopher Plato (427–347 B.C.E.), every culture considers some type of inequality just. Although Karl Marx understood this, he was far more critical of inequality than Plato. Marx criticized capitalist societies for defending wealth and power in the hands of a few as “a law of the marketplace.” Capitalist law, he continued, defines the right to own property and ensures that money stays within the same families from one generation to the next. In short, Marx concluded, culture and institutions combine to support a

society’s elite, which is why established hierarchies last such a long time.

Historical Patterns of Ideology

Ideology changes along with a society’s economy and technology. Because agrarian societies depend on most people’s lifelong labor, they develop caste systems that make carrying out the duties of a person’s social position or “station” a moral responsibility. With the rise of industrial capitalism, an ideology of meritocracy emerges, defining wealth and power as prizes to be won by the individuals who perform the best. This change means that the poor—often given charity under feudalism—come to be looked down on as personally undeserving. This harsh view is found in the ideas of the early sociologist Herbert Spencer, as explained in the Thinking About Diversity box.

History shows how difficult it is to change social stratification. However, challenges to the status quo always

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

The Meaning of Class: Is Getting Rich “the Survival of the Fittest”?

Jake: “My dad is amazing. He’s really smart!”

Frank: “You mean he’s rich. He owns I don’t know how many businesses.”

Jake: “Do you think people get rich without being smart?”

It’s a question we all wonder about. How much is our social position a matter of intelligence? What about hard work? Being born to the “right family”? Even “dumb luck”?

More than in most societies, in the United States we link social standing to personal abilities including intelligence. Everyone knows that Mark Zuckerberg is the guy who made Facebook what it is today. He has been on the cover of *Time* magazine and has amassed a personal fortune of more than \$30 billion. It is easy to imagine that this Harvard dropout is a pretty smart guy.

But the idea that social standing is linked to intelligence goes back a long time. We have all heard the words “the survival of the fittest,” which describe our society as a competitive jungle in which the “best” survive and the rest fall behind. The phrase was coined by one of sociology’s pioneers, Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), whose ideas about social inequality are still widespread today.

Spencer, who lived in England, eagerly followed the work of the natural scientist Charles Darwin (1809–1882). Darwin’s theory of biological evolution held that a species changes physically over many generations as it adapts to the natural environment. Spencer incorrectly applied Darwin’s theory to the operation of society, which does not operate according to biological principles. In Spencer’s distorted view, society became the “jungle,” with the “fittest” people rising to wealth and the “failures” sinking into miserable poverty.

It is no surprise that Spencer’s views, wrong as they were, were popular among the rising U.S. industrialists of the day. John D. Rockefeller (1839–1937), who made a vast fortune building the oil industry, recited Spencer’s “social gospel” to young children in Sunday school. As Rockefeller saw it, the growth of giant corporations—and the astounding wealth of their owners—was merely the result of the survival of the fittest, a basic fact of nature. Neither Spencer nor Rockefeller had much sympathy for the poor, seeing poverty as evidence of individuals’ failing to measure up in a competitive world. Spencer opposed social welfare programs because he thought they penalized society’s “best” people (through taxes) and rewarded its “worst” members (through welfare benefits). By incorrectly using Darwin’s theory, the rich could turn their backs on everyone else, assuming that inequality was inevitable and somehow “natural.”

Today, sociologists point out that our society is far from a meritocracy, as Spencer claimed. And it is not the case that companies or individuals who generate lots of money necessarily benefit society. The people who made hundreds of millions of dollars selling subprime mortgages in recent years certainly ended up hurting just about everyone. But Spencer’s view that the “fittest” rise to the top remains widespread in our very unequal and individualistic culture.

What Do You Think?

1. How much do you think inequality in our society can correctly be described as “the survival of the fittest”? Why?
2. Why do you think Spencer’s ideas are still popular in the United States today?
3. Is how much you earn a good measure of your importance to society? Why or why not?

arise. The traditional idea that “a woman’s place is in the home,” for example, has given way to increased economic opportunities for women in many societies today. The continuing progress toward racial equality in South Africa is another case of the widespread rejection of the ideology of apartheid. The popular uprisings against political dictatorships across the Middle East that began in 2011 show us that this process of challenging entrenched social stratification continues.

Theories of Social Inequality

10.4 Apply sociology’s major theories to the topic of social inequality.

Why does social stratification exist at all? Sociological theories provide several different insights into the causes and consequences of social inequality. We present three theoretical approaches—structural-functional theory, social-conflict theory, and symbolic-interaction theory. We begin with the structural-functional approach, which claims that social inequality plays a vital part in the smooth operation of society. This argument was set forth more than sixty years ago by Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (1945).

Structural-Functional Theory: The Davis-Moore Thesis

The **Davis-Moore thesis** states that *social stratification has beneficial consequences for the operation of society*. How else, ask Davis and Moore can we explain the fact that some form of social stratification has been found in every society?

Davis and Moore note that modern societies have hundreds of occupational positions of varying importance. Certain jobs—say, washing windows or answering a telephone—are fairly easy and can be performed by almost anyone. Other jobs—such as designing new generations of computers or transplanting human organs—are difficult and demand the scarce talents of people with extensive and expensive training.

Therefore, Davis and Moore explain, the greater the functional importance of a position, the more rewards a society attaches to it. This strategy promotes productivity and efficiency because rewarding important work with income, prestige, power, and leisure encourages people to do these jobs and to work better, longer, and harder. In short, unequal rewards (the foundation of social stratification) benefit society as a whole.

Davis and Moore claim that any society could be egalitarian, but only to the extent that people are willing to let *anyone* perform *any* job. Equality would also demand



Oprah Winfrey earns more than \$100 million a year, which has helped her to build a personal fortune estimated to exceed \$3 billion. Guided by the Davis-Moore thesis, why would societies reward some people with so much more fame and fortune than others? How would Karl Marx answer this question?

that someone who carries out a job poorly be rewarded the same as someone who performs it well. Such a system would offer little incentive for people to try their best, thereby reducing the society’s productive efficiency.

The Davis-Moore thesis suggests the reason stratification exists; it does not state what rewards a society should give to any occupational position or how unequal the rewards should be. It merely points out that positions a society considers more important must offer enough rewards to draw talented people away from less important work.

EVALUATE

Although the Davis-Moore thesis is an important contribution to understanding social stratification, it has provoked criticism. Melvin Tumin (1953) wondered, first, how we assess the importance of a particular occupation. Perhaps the high rewards our society gives to physicians result partly from deliberate efforts by the medical profession to limit the supply of physicians and thereby increase the demand for their services.

Furthermore, do rewards actually reflect the contribution someone makes to society? With income of about \$105 million per

year, boxer Floyd Mayweather, the world's highest-paid athlete in 2014, earned more in two days than President Obama earned all year. Would anyone argue that boxing is more important than leading a country? What about members of the U.S. military serving in Iraq or Afghanistan? Facing the risks of combat, a private first-class in the U.S. Army earned only \$22,000 (plus housing and food benefits) in 2015 (Pomerantz & Rose, 2010; Defense Finance and Accounting Service, 2015). And we might also wonder about the heads of the big Wall Street financial firms that collapsed in 2008. It seems reasonable to conclude that these corporate leaders made some bad and harmful decisions, yet their salaries were astronomical. Even after finishing its worst year ever, with losses of \$27 billion, Merrill Lynch paid bonuses of more than \$1 million to each of more than 700 employees. Lloyd Blankfein, CEO of Goldman Sachs, paid himself a stock bonus worth \$12.6 million (an amount that it would take an army private 575 years to earn), despite his company's falling profits during 2010, a year in which salaries and benefits in the financial industry hit an all-time high. Increased government regulation and lackluster performance led most Wall Street companies to trim salaries and bonuses between 2011 and 2014. Even so, as one analyst put it, "while payouts may be disappointing, they are still far higher than what most people will ever see" (Roth, 2011; Badenhausen, 2012; Moore, 2012; Goodman, 2014).

Even top executives who perform badly and lose their jobs do surprisingly well. During the recent financial industry meltdown, Chuck Prince was forced to resign as head at Citigroup, but not before receiving a "severance package" worth more than \$30 million. When insurance giant AIG failed, corporate leader Martin Sullivan left the company, receiving \$47 million on the way out (Beck & Simon, 2008; Scherer, 2008). Do corporate executives deserve such megasalaries for their contributions to society?

Second, Tumin claimed that Davis and Moore ignore how caste elements of social stratification can prevent the development of individual talent. Born to privilege, rich children have opportunities to develop their abilities that many gifted poor children never have.

Third, living in a society that places so much emphasis on money, we tend to overestimate the importance of high-paying work; what do stockbrokers or people who trade international currencies really contribute to society? For the same reason, it is difficult for us to see the value of work that is not oriented toward making money, such as parenting, creative writing, playing music in a symphony, or just being a good friend to someone in need (Packard, 2002).

Finally, the Davis-Moore thesis ignores how social inequality may promote conflict and even outright revolution. This criticism leads us to the social-conflict approach, which provides a very different explanation for social inequality.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING State the Davis-Moore thesis in your own words. What are Tumin's criticisms of this thesis?

Social-Conflict Theories: Karl Marx and Max Weber

Social-conflict analysis argues that rather than benefiting society as a whole, social stratification benefits some people and disadvantages others. This analysis draws heavily on the ideas of Karl Marx, with contributions from Max Weber.

KARL MARX: CLASS CONFLICT Karl Marx, whose ideas are discussed at length in Chapter 4 ("Society"), explained that most people have one of two basic relationships to the means of production: They either own productive property or labor for others. Different productive roles arise from different social classes. In medieval Europe, aristocratic families, including high church officials and titled nobles, owned the land on which peasants labored as farmers. In industrial class systems, the capitalists (or the bourgeoisie) own the factories, which use the labor of workers (the proletarians).

Marx lived during the nineteenth century, a time when a small number of industrialists in the United States were amassing great fortunes. The business tycoons who led the country's move into the industrial age included Andrew Carnegie (steel), J. P. Morgan (finance and steel), John D. Rockefeller (oil), and John Jacob Astor (real estate; Astor was the richest passenger on the *Titanic* and one of the few very rich passengers to drown when the ship sank). All of them lived in fabulous mansions staffed by dozens of servants. Even by today's standards, their incomes were staggering. For example, Carnegie earned about \$20 million a year in 1900 (more than \$570 million in today's dollars), when the average worker earned roughly \$500 a year (Baltzell, 1964; Williamson, 2015).

Marx explained that capitalist society *reproduces the class structure* in each new generation. This happens as families gain wealth and pass it down from generation to generation. But, he predicted, oppression and misery would eventually drive the working majority to come together to overthrow capitalism in favor of a socialist system that would put an end to class differences.

EVALUATE

Marx has had enormous influence on sociological thinking. But his revolutionary ideas, calling for the overthrow of capitalist society, also make his work highly controversial.

One of the strongest criticisms of Marxism is that it denies a central idea of the Davis-Moore thesis: that a system of unequal rewards is necessary to place talented people in the right jobs and to motivate them to work hard. Marx separated reward from performance; his egalitarian ideal was based on the principle "from each according to his ability; to each according to his needs" (Marx & Engels, 1972:388, orig. 1848). However, failure to reward individual performance may be precisely what caused the low productivity of the former Soviet Union and other socialist economies around the world. Defenders of Marxism respond to such criticism by asking why people assume that humanity is inherently selfish rather than social, and they note that individual rewards are not the only way to motivate people to perform their social roles (Clark, 1991).

A second problem is that the revolutionary change Marx predicted has failed to happen, at least in advanced capitalist societies. The next section explains why.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING How does Marx's view of social stratification differ from the Davis-Moore thesis?

WHY NO MARXIST REVOLUTION?

Despite Marx's prediction, capitalism is still thriving. Why have industrial workers not overthrown capitalism? Ralf Dahrendorf (1959) suggested four reasons:

1. Fragmentation of the capitalist class.

Today, millions of stockholders, rather than single families, own most large companies. Day-to-day corporate operations are in the hands of a large class of managers, who may or may not be major stockholders. With stock widely held—about half of households in the United States own stocks—more and more people have a direct stake in the capitalist system (Federal Reserve Board, 2014).

2. A higher standard of living.

As Chapter 16 ("The Economy and Work") explains, a century ago, most workers were in factories or on farms employed in **blue-collar occupations**, *lower-prestige jobs that involve mostly manual labor*. Today, most workers are engaged in **white-collar occupations**, *higher-prestige jobs that involve mostly mental activity*. These jobs are in sales, customer support, management, and other service fields. Most of today's white-collar workers do not think of themselves as an "industrial proletariat." Just as important, the average income in the United States rose almost tenfold over the course of the twentieth century, even allowing for inflation, and the number of hours in the workweek decreased. For that reason, even in tough economic times, most of today's workers are better off than workers were a century ago, an example of structural social mobility. One result of this rising standard of living is that more people are content with the status quo and less likely to press for change.

3. More worker organizations.

Workers today have the right to form labor unions, to make demands of management, and to back up their demands with threats of work slowdowns and strikes. As a result, labor disputes are settled without threatening the capitalist system.

4. Greater legal protections.

Over the past century, the government passed laws to make workplaces safer. In addition, unemployment insurance, disability protection, and Social Security now provide workers with greater financial security.



Back in the Great Depression of the 1930s, "tent cities" that were home to desperately poor people could be found in much of the United States. The depression came to an end, but poverty persisted. The recent recession sparked a resurgence of tent cities, including this one outside Sacramento, California. How would structural-functional analysis explain such poverty? What about the social-conflict approach?

Yet some observers claim that Marx's analysis of capitalism is still largely valid (Domhoff, 1983; Hout, Brooks, & Manza, 1993; Foroohar, 2011). First, wealth remains highly concentrated, with 37 percent of all privately owned property in the hands of just 1 percent of the U.S. population (Wolff, 2014). Second, many of today's white-collar jobs offer no more income, security, or satisfaction than factory work did a century ago. Third, many, if not most, of today's workers feel squeezed by high unemployment, company downsizing, jobs moving overseas, and job benefits being cut to balance budgets. Fourth, the income and benefits that today's workers do enjoy came about through exactly the class conflict Marx described. In addition, as the conflict between public worker labor unions and state government in Wisconsin, Ohio, and other states in recent years shows, workers still struggle to hold on to what they have. Fifth, although workers have gained some legal protections, ordinary people still face disadvantages that the law cannot overcome. Therefore, social-conflict theorists claim, even without a socialist revolution in the United States, Marx was still mostly right about capitalism.

blue-collar occupations

lower-prestige jobs that involve mostly manual labor

white-collar occupations

higher-prestige jobs that involve mostly mental activity

A *Counterpoint* These developments suggest that U.S. society has smoothed many of capitalism's rough edges.

MAX WEBER: CLASS, STATUS, AND POWER Max Weber, whose approach to social analysis is described in Chapter 4 (“Society”), agreed with Karl Marx that social stratification causes social conflict, but he viewed Marx’s economics-based model as simplistic. Instead, he claimed that social stratification involves three distinct dimensions of inequality.

The first dimension is economic inequality—the issue so important to Marx—which Weber termed *class position*. Weber did not think of classes as well-defined categories but as a continuum ranging from high to low. Weber’s second dimension is *status*, or social prestige, and the third is *power*.

Weber’s Socioeconomic Status Hierarchy Marx viewed social prestige and power as simple reflections of economic position and did not treat them as distinct dimensions of inequality. But Weber noted that status consistency in modern societies is often quite low: For instance, a local official might exercise great power yet have little wealth or social prestige.

Weber, then, portrays social stratification in industrial societies as a multidimensional ranking rather than a hierarchy of clearly defined classes. In line with Weber’s thinking, sociologists use the term **socioeconomic status (SES)** to refer to a *composite ranking based on various dimensions of social inequality*.

Inequality in History Weber claimed that each of his three dimensions of social inequality stands out at different points



The extent of social inequality in agrarian systems is greater than that found in industrial societies. One indication of the unchallenged power of rulers is the monumental structures built over years with the unpaid labor of common people. Although the Taj Mahal in India is among the world’s most beautiful buildings, it was built as a tomb for a single individual.

in the evolution of human societies. Status or social prestige is the main difference in agrarian societies, taking the form of honor. Members of these societies (whether nobles or servants) gain status by conforming to cultural norms that apply to their particular rank.

Industrialization and the development of capitalism eliminate traditional rankings based on birth but create striking financial inequality. Thus in an industrial society, the crucial difference between people is the economic dimension of class.

Over time, industrial societies witness the growth of a bureaucratic state. Bigger government and the spread of all sorts of other organizations make power more important in the stratification system. Especially in socialist societies, where government regulates many aspects of life, high-ranking officials become the new ruling elite.

This historical analysis points to a final difference between Weber and Marx. Marx thought societies could eliminate social stratification by abolishing the private ownership of productive property that is the basis of capitalism. Weber doubted that overthrowing capitalism would significantly lessen social stratification. It might reduce economic differences, he reasoned, but socialism would increase inequality by expanding government and concentrating power in the hands of a political elite. Popular uprisings against socialist bureaucracies in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union show that discontent can be generated by socialist political elites, a fact that supports Weber’s position.

EVALUATE

Max Weber’s multidimensional view of social stratification has greatly influenced sociological thinking. But critics (particularly those who favor Marx’s ideas) argue that although social class boundaries may have blurred, industrial and postindustrial societies still show striking patterns of social inequality.

As you will see in Chapter 11 (“Social Class in the United States”), income inequality has been increasing in the United States. Although some people still favor Weber’s multidimensional hierarchy, in light of this trend, others think that Marx’s view of the rich versus the poor is closer to the truth.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What are Weber’s three dimensions of social inequality? According to Weber, which of them would you expect to be most important in the United States? Why?

Symbolic-Interaction Theory: Stratification in Everyday Life

Because social stratification has to do with the way an entire society is organized, sociologists (Marx and Weber included) typically treat it as a macro-level issue. But a micro-level analysis of social stratification is also important because people’s social standing affects their everyday interactions. The Applying Theory table summarizes the contributions of the three approaches to an understanding of social stratification.

APPLYING THEORY

Social Stratification

	Structural-Functional Theory	Social-Conflict Theory	Symbolic-Interaction Theory
What is the level of analysis?	Macro-level	Macro-level	Micro-level
What is social stratification?	Stratification is a system of unequal rewards that benefits society as a whole.	Stratification is a division of a society's resources that benefits some people and harms others.	Stratification is a factor that guides people's interactions in everyday life.
What is the reason for our social position?	Social position reflects personal talents and abilities in a competitive economy.	Social position reflects the way society divides resources.	The products we consume all say something about social position.
Are unequal rewards fair?	Yes. Unequal rewards boost economic production by encouraging people to work harder and try new ideas. Linking greater rewards to more important work is widely accepted.	No. Unequal rewards only serve to divide society, creating "haves" and "have-nots." There is widespread opposition to social inequality.	Maybe. People may or may not define inequality as fair. People may view their social position as a measure of self-worth, justifying inequality in terms of personal differences.

In most communities, people interact primarily with others of about the same social standing. To some extent, this is because people tend to live with others like themselves. In larger public spaces, such as a shopping mall, we see couples or groups made up of individuals whose appearance and shopping habits are similar. People with very different social standing commonly keep their distance from one another. Well-dressed people walking down the street on their way to an expensive restaurant, for example, might move across the sidewalk or even cross the street to avoid getting close to others they think are homeless people.

Finally, just about everyone realizes that the way we dress, the car we drive (or the bus we ride), and even the food and drink we order at the campus snack bar say something about our budget and personal tastes. Sociologists use the term **conspicuous consumption** to refer to *buying and using products because of the "statement" they make about social position*. Ignoring the water fountain in favor of paying for bottled water tells people you have extra money to spend. And no one needs a \$100,000 automobile to get around, of course, but driving up in such a vehicle says "I have arrived" in more ways than one.

EVALUATE

A micro-level analysis of social stratification helps us see patterns of social inequality in our everyday lives. At the same time, the limitation of this approach is that it has little to say about how and why broad patterns of social inequality exist, which was the focus of the structural-functional and social-conflict approaches.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Point to several ways in which social stratification shapes the way people of different social positions behave in the course of a typical day.

Social Stratification: Facts and Values

How we understand social inequality is guided by theory. But our understanding of stratification is also shaped by the values we hold. To illustrate how this is so, we begin with the following lines written by the novelist Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.:

The year was 2081 and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution and the unceasing vigilance of agents of the Handicapper General.

With these words, Vonnegut (1968:7) begins the story of Harrison Bergeron, an imaginary account of a future United States in which all social inequality has been abolished. Vonnegut warns that although attractive in principle, equality can be a dangerous concept in practice. His story describes a nightmare of social engineering in which every individual talent that makes one person different from another is systematically neutralized by the government.

To eliminate differences that make one person "better" than another, Vonnegut's state requires that physically attractive people wear masks that make them average-looking, that intelligent people wear earphones that generate distracting noise, and that the best athletes and dancers be fitted with weights to make them as clumsy as everyone else. In short, although we may imagine that social equality would liberate people to make the most of their talents, Vonnegut concludes that an egalitarian society could exist only if everyone is reduced to the lowest common denominator. In Vonnegut's view, this would amount not to liberation but to oppression.

Like Vonnegut's story, all of this chapter's explanations of social stratification involve value judgments. The Davis-Moore thesis states not only that social stratification is universal but also that it is necessary to make society highly productive. Class differences in U.S. society, from this point of view, reflect both variation in human abilities and the relatively unequal importance of different jobs. Taken together, these facts lead us to see complete equality as undesirable because it could be achieved only in a rigid and inefficient society that cared little for developing individual talent and rewarding excellence.

Social-conflict analysis, advocated by Karl Marx, takes a much more positive view of equality. Marx thought that inequality is harmful because it causes both human suffering and conflict between haves and have-nots. As he saw it, social stratification springs from injustice and greed. As a result, Marx wanted people to share resources equally.

The connection between intelligence and social class is one of the most troublesome issues in social science. For one thing, defining and measuring “intelligence” is difficult. Also, the idea that elites are somehow “better” than others challenges our democratic culture.

Social Stratification and Technology: A Global Perspective

10.5 Analyze the link between a society’s technology and its social stratification.

We can weave together a number of observations made in this chapter to show that a society’s technology affects its type of social stratification. This analysis draws on Gerhard Lenski’s model of sociocultural evolution, detailed in Chapter 4 (“Society”).

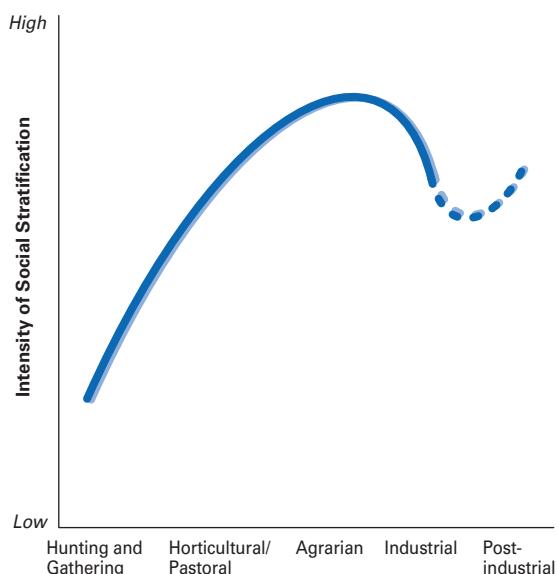


Figure 10–2 Social Stratification and Technological Development: The Kuznets Curve

The Kuznets curve shows that greater technological sophistication is generally accompanied by more pronounced social stratification. The trend reverses itself as industrial societies relax rigid, castelike distinctions in favor of greater opportunity and equality under the law. Political rights are more widely extended, and there is even some leveling of economic differences. However, the emergence of postindustrial society has brought an upturn in economic inequality, as indicated by the broken line added by the author.

SOURCES: Based on Kuznets (1955) and Lenski (1966).

Hunting and Gathering Societies

With simple technology, members of hunting and gathering societies produce only what is necessary for day-to-day living. Some people may produce more than others, but the group’s survival depends on all sharing what they have. Thus no categories of people are better off than others.

Horticultural, Pastoral, and Agrarian Societies

As technological advances create a surplus, social inequality increases. In horticultural and pastoral societies, a small elite controls most of the surplus. Large-scale agriculture is more productive still, and striking inequality—as great as at any time in history—places the nobility in an almost godlike position over the masses.

Industrial Societies

Industrialization turns the tide, pushing inequality downward. Prompted by the need to develop individual talents, meritocracy takes hold and weakens the power of traditional aristocracy. Industrial productivity also raises the living standards of the historically poor majority. Specialized work demands schooling for all, sharply reducing illiteracy. A literate population, in turn, presses for a greater voice in political decision making, reducing social inequality and lessening men’s domination of women.

Over time, even wealth becomes somewhat less concentrated (contradicting Marx’s prediction). In the 1920s, the richest 1 percent of the U.S. population owned about 40 percent of all wealth in the country, a figure that fell to 30 percent by the 1980s as taxes—which have higher rates for people with higher incomes—paid for new government programs benefiting the poor (Williamson & Lindert, 1980; Beeghley, 1989; U.S. House of Representatives, 1991). Such trends help explain why Marxist revolutions occurred in *agrarian* societies—such as Russia (1917), Cuba (1959), and Nicaragua (1979)—where social inequality is most pronounced, rather than in industrial societies as Marx had predicted. However, wealth inequality in the United States turned upward again after 1990, and it is once again at about the same level that it was in the 1920s (Wolff, 2014). With the goal of reducing this trend of increasing economic inequality, the Obama administration in 2013 won the support of Congress to modestly increase federal income tax rates on high-income individuals.

The Kuznets Curve

In human history, then, technological advances first increase but then moderate the extent of social stratification. Greater inequality is functional for agrarian societies, but industrial societies benefit from a more equal system. This historical trend, recognized by the Nobel Prize-winning economist Simon Kuznets (1955, 1966), is illustrated by the Kuznets curve, shown in Figure 10–2.

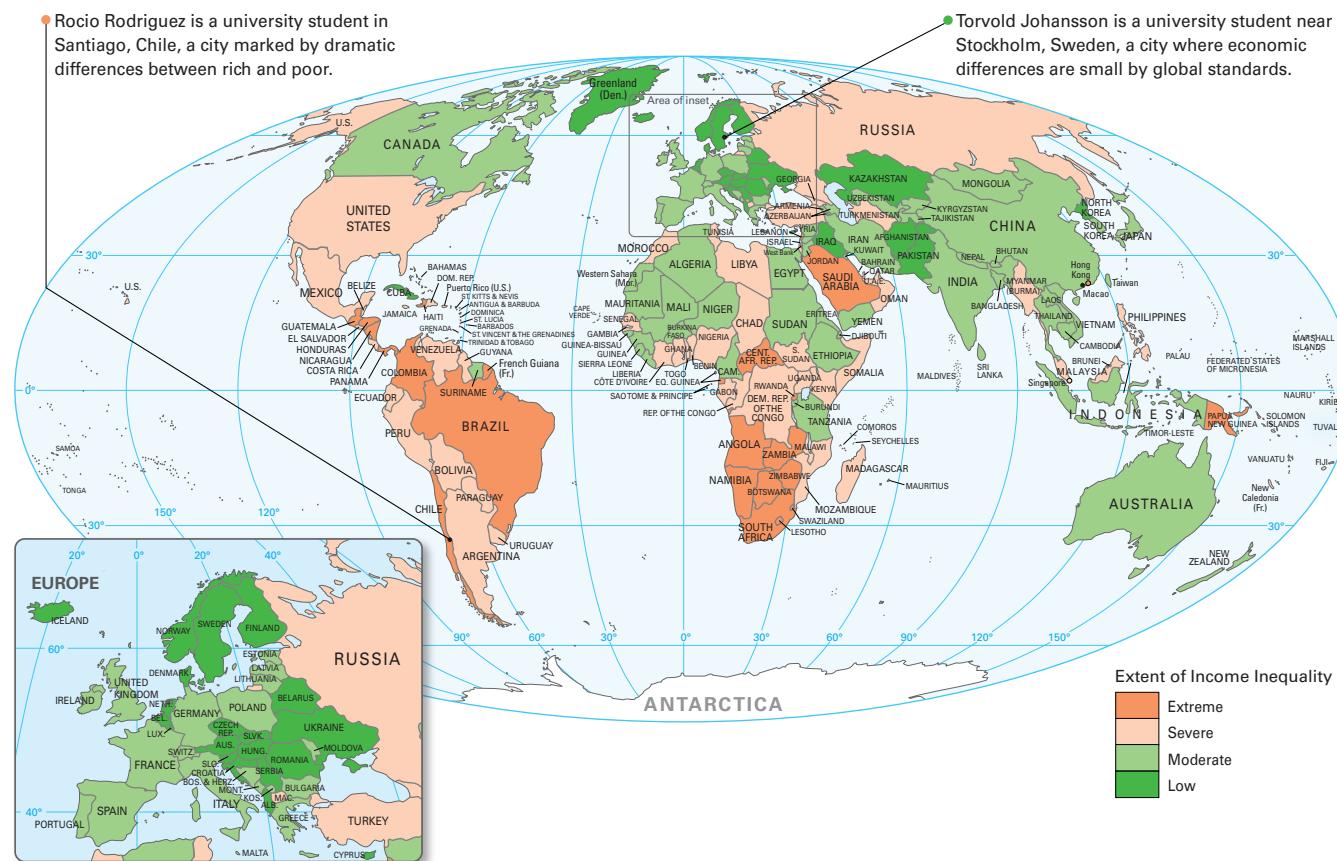
Social inequality around the world generally supports the Kuznets curve. Global Map 10–1 shows that high-income nations that have passed through the industrial era (including the United States, Canada, and the nations of Western Europe) have somewhat less income inequality than nations in which a larger share of the labor force remains in farming (as is common in Latin America and Africa). At the same time, it is important to remember that income inequality reflects not just technological development but also the political and economic priorities of a country. Income disparity in the United States may have declined during much of the last century, but this country still has more economic inequality than Canada, European nations, and Japan (although less than some other high-income nations, including Chile and Singapore).

Another criticism of the Kuznets curve is that it was developed by comparing societies at different levels of

economic development (what sociologists call “cross-sectional data”). Such data do not let us predict the future of any one society. In the United States, recent trends showing increases in economic inequality suggest that the Kuznets curve may require serious revision—represented by the broken line in Figure 10–2. The fact that U.S. society is experiencing greater economic inequality as the Information Revolution moves forward (see Chapter 11) suggests that the long-term trend may differ from what Kuznets projected half a century ago.

The next chapter (“Social Class in the United States”) examines inequality in our own nation, highlighting recent economic polarization. Then Chapter 12 (“Global Stratification”) surveys social inequality throughout the world, explaining why some nations have so much more wealth than others. As you will learn, at all levels, the study of social stratification involves a mix of facts and values about the shape of a just society.

Window on the World



Global Map 10–1 Income Inequality in Global Perspective

Societies throughout the world differ in the rigidity and extent of their social stratification and their overall standard of living. This map highlights income inequality. Generally speaking, the United States stands out among high-income nations, such as Great Britain, Sweden, Japan, and Australia, as having greater income inequality. The less economically developed countries of Latin America and Africa, including Colombia, Brazil, and the Central African Republic, as well as much of the Arab world, exhibit the most pronounced inequality of income. Is this pattern consistent with the Kuznets curve?

SOURCE: Based on Gini coefficients obtained from the World Bank (2015).

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 10 Social Stratification

Can you identify elements of caste and meritocracy in U.S. society?

This chapter explains that modern societies are class systems that combine elements of caste and meritocracy. Using the sociological perspective, you can see both caste

and meritocracy in operation in many everyday situations. Here are three examples to get you started. Look at the photos shown here, and then start your own list.

One of the most demanding jobs you can ever have is being a parent. And traditionally at least, most parenting is performed by women, with gender operating as a caste element. Why do you think our society does not pay parents for their work? What difference in meaning can you see between the phrases “fathering a child” and “mothering a child”?



Lil Wayne was born in New Orleans to a nineteen-year-old mother who worked as a cook and a father who soon abandoned his family. By the age of nine, this talented young man had a recording contract. He is now one of the highest-paid entertainers—an example of a “rags to riches” move upward in social standing.



In 2009, Judge Sonia Sotomayor became the first Hispanic woman to join the U.S. Supreme Court. Her record of achievement began at Cardinal Spellman High School in the Bronx (New York), where she was valedictorian. Of more than 100 justices who have served on the Supreme Court, how many do you think have been Hispanic? How many have been women?



Hint The fact that parenting is not paid work means that people should raise children not for money but out of moral duty. “Fathering a child” may suggest only biological paternity; “mothing a child” implies deep involvement in a child’s life, indicating how gender has long been a caste element linking women to nurturing. Careers that emphasize merit are typically those jobs that are regarded as especially important and that require rare talents; even so, most successful musical performers have been male. Judge Sotomayor is the first Hispanic and just the third woman (along with Sandra Day O’Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg) to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. There have been just two African American justices (Thurgood Marshall and Clarence Thomas).

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

1. Think about social stratification in your society. Ask your parents and grandparents about the major factors defining social stratification when they were young. Compare their situation with yours. Are the factors the same, or are there any changes? What does this tell you about social mobility?
2. Compare your society with two others anywhere in the world in terms of being closed or open. To what extent do you think your society supports the idea of meritocracy?
3. Why does social inequality exist at all? Do you think social inequality is reflected in people’s attitudes, their cultural values, and in the politics of a country? To what extent do you think your society supports the idea of an aristocracy?
4. “Socio-cultural evolution and development in industry and technology should lead to social equality.” Considering this statement from a sociologist’s perspective, to what extent do you feel that it applies to your country?
5. Go to www.sociologyinfofocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 10 Social Stratification

What Is Social Stratification?

10.1 Identify four principles that underlie social stratification. (pages 271–72)

Social stratification

- is a trait of society, not simply a reflection of individual differences
- is found in all societies but varies according to *what* is unequal and *how* unequal it is
- carries over from one generation to the next
- is supported by a system of cultural beliefs that defines certain kinds of inequality as just
- takes two general forms: caste systems and class systems

social stratification a system by which a society ranks categories of people in a hierarchy

social mobility a change in position within the social hierarchy

Caste and Class Systems

10.2 Apply the concepts of caste, class, and meritocracy to societies around the world. (pages 272–79)

Caste Systems

- are based on birth (ascription) and permit little or no social mobility
- shape a person's entire life, including occupation and marriage
- are common in traditional, agrarian societies

An Illustration: India

Although the caste system is formally outlawed in India, it is still observed in rural areas, where agriculture demands a lifetime of hard work and discipline.

- In traditional villages, caste determines the work people perform and whom they may marry.
- Powerful cultural beliefs make observing caste rules a moral duty.

Class Systems

- are based on both birth (ascription) and **meritocracy** (individual achievement)
- permit some social mobility based on individual achievement
- are common in modern industrial and postindustrial societies
- **Status consistency** in class systems is low due to increased social mobility.

Caste and Class: The United Kingdom

- In the Middle Ages, England had a castelike aristocracy, including the leading clergy and a hereditary nobility. The vast majority of people were commoners.
- Today's British class system mixes caste and meritocracy, producing a highly stratified society with some social mobility.

Caste and Class: Japan

- In the Middle Ages, Japan had a rigid caste system in which an imperial family ruled over nobles and commoners.
- Today's Japanese class system still places great importance on family background and traditional gender roles.

Classless Societies? The Former Soviet Union

- Although the Russian Revolution in 1917 attempted to abolish social classes, the new Soviet Union was still stratified based on unequal job categories and the concentration of power in the new political elite. Economic development created new types of jobs, which resulted in **structural social mobility**.
- Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the forces of structural social mobility have turned downward and the gap between rich and poor has increased.

China: Emerging Social Classes

- Economic reforms introduced after the Communist revolution in 1949—including state control of factories and productive property—greatly reduced economic inequality, although social differences remained.
- In the last thirty years, China's government has loosened control of the economy, causing the emergence of a new class of business owners and an increase in economic inequality.

caste system social stratification based on ascription, or birth

class system social stratification based on both birth and individual achievement

meritocracy social stratification based on personal merit

status consistency the degree of uniformity in a person's social standing across various dimensions of social inequality

structural social mobility a shift in the social position of large numbers of people due more to changes in society itself than to individual efforts

Ideology: Supporting Stratification

10.3 Explain how cultural beliefs justify social inequality. (pages 279–81)

- Cultural beliefs justify patterns of social inequality.
- Ideology reflects both a society's economic system and its level of technology.

ideology cultural beliefs that justify particular social arrangements, including patterns of inequality

Theories of Social Inequality

10.4 Apply sociology's major theories to the topic of social inequality. (pages 281–86)

Structural-functional theory points to ways social stratification helps society operate.

- The Davis-Moore thesis states that social stratification is universal because of its functional consequences.
- In caste systems, people are rewarded for performing the duties of their position at birth.
- In class systems, unequal rewards attract the ablest people to the most important jobs and encourage effort.

Social-conflict theory claims that stratification divides societies in classes, benefiting some categories of people at the expense of others and causing social conflict.

- Karl Marx claimed that capitalism places economic production under the ownership of capitalists, who exploit the proletarians who sell their labor for wages.
- Max Weber identified three distinct dimensions of social stratification: economic class, social status or prestige, and power. Conflict exists between people at various positions on a multidimensional hierarchy of **socioeconomic status (SES)**.
- **Symbolic-interaction theory**, a micro-level analysis, explains that we size up people by looking for clues to their social standing.

- **Conspicuous consumption** refers to buying and displaying products that make a "statement" about social class.
- People's attitudes about social inequality reflect not just facts but also politics and values concerning how a society should be organized.

Davis-Moore thesis the functional analysis claiming that social stratification has beneficial consequences for the operation of society

blue-collar occupations lower-prestige jobs that involve mostly manual labor

white-collar occupations higher-prestige jobs that involve mostly mental activity

socioeconomic status (SES) a composite ranking based on various dimensions of social inequality

conspicuous consumption buying and using products because of the "statement" they make about social position

Social Stratification and Technology: A Global Perspective

10.5 Analyze the link between a society's technology and its social stratification. (pages 286–87)

- Gerhard Lenski identifies five types of societies defined by their productive technology: hunting and gathering, horticultural and pastoral, agrarian, industrial, and postindustrial societies.
- Lenski explains that advancing technology initially increases social stratification, which is most intense in agrarian societies.
- Industrialization reverses the trend, reducing social stratification.
- In postindustrial societies, social stratification again increases.

Chapter 11

Social Class in the United States



Learning Objectives

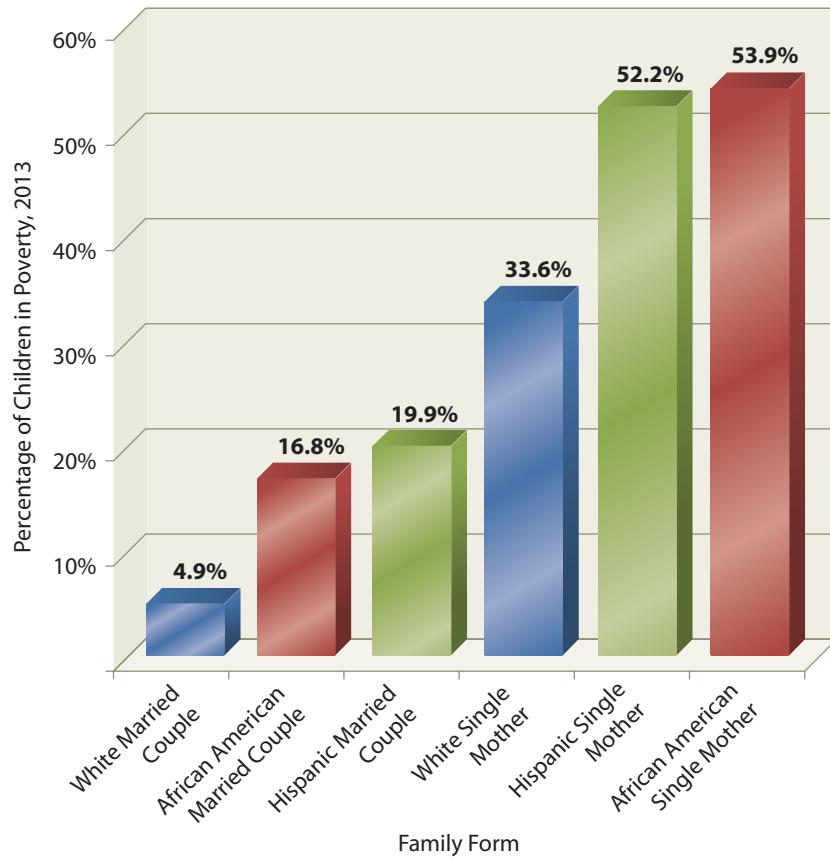
- 11.1** Describe the distribution of income and wealth in the United States.
- 11.2** Explain how someone's position at birth affects social standing later in life.
- 11.3** Describe the various social class positions in U.S. society.

- 11.4** Analyze how social class position affects health, values, politics, and family life.
- 11.5** Assess the extent of social mobility in the United States.
- 11.6** Discuss patterns of poverty and increasing economic inequality in the United States.



The Power of Society

to shape our chances of living in poverty



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

In the United States, what are a person's odds of being born into poverty? Our social position reflects factors such as our race and ethnicity as well as the marital status of our parents. Of all white children born to a U.S. married couple, 4.9 percent (about five out of every 100 children) are poor. By contrast, the share in poverty is more than three times higher for comparable African American children, and four times higher for comparable Hispanic children. The same pattern holds for children born to single mothers, except that the odds of being poor jump even more dramatically for African American and Hispanic children.

Chapter Overview

How much social inequality is there in the United States? This chapter will help you to understand the extent of social class differences in this country. The chapter begins with a close-up look at important measures of social stratification. You will discover that there are numerous dimensions of inequality in our society, and that the amount of social inequality is increasing.

Rosa Urias leans forward, pushing and pulling the vacuum cleaner across the thick carpet, a motion she has repeated thousands of times to the point that her right wrist and elbow are sore. It is now almost five o'clock in the afternoon, and this forty-five-year-old single mother of two is on her third cleaning job of the day. She works with her cousin Melitsa Sermiento, thirty-six, cleaning nine apartments and five houses each week. The two women, who both came to the United States from El Salvador, divide the money they earn, giving each one an annual income of about \$28,000, barely enough to pay the bills in New York City.

But there is no shortage of work cleaning homes. Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers make more than enough money to hire people like Rosa and Melitsa to dust their tables, mop their floors, and clean their sinks and scrub their toilets while they are out doing their high-paying jobs, working out at the health club, or having lunch with friends.

Rosa reaches up over the bathroom sink to turn on a light. She pulls the silver chain, but it breaks and she stands there with part of the chain hanging from her hand. She looks over at Melitsa, and both do their best to laugh it off. Then Rosa turns serious and says softly, in Spanish, "My daughter tells me I need some new dreams" (Eisenstadt, 2004).

New York may be a single large city, but the social world in which Rosa and Melitsa live is not the same as the social world of the people who hire these women. How different are the lives of the richest people in the United States and the lives of those who work hard all day just to get by? What about the lives of those who do not even have the security of steady work? This chapter answers all these questions, explaining some of the different "worlds" found in U.S. society, how different we are, and why the differences are getting bigger. ■



Dimensions of Social Inequality

11.1 Describe the distribution of income and wealth in the United States.

The United States differs from most European nations and Japan in never having had a titled nobility. With the significant exception of our racial history, we have never known a caste system that rigidly ranks categories of people.

Even so, U.S. society is highly stratified. Not only do the rich have most of the money, but they also receive the most schooling, enjoy the best health, and consume the most goods and services. Such privilege contrasts sharply with the poverty of millions of women and men who worry about money for next month's rent or to pay a doctor's bill when a child becomes ill. Many people think of the United States as a middle-class society, but is this really the case?

Income

One important dimension of inequality is **income**, *earnings from work or investments*. The Census Bureau reports that the median U.S. family income in 2013 was \$63,815. The pie chart in the middle of Figure 11–1 illustrates the distribution of income among all U.S. families.¹ The richest 20 percent of families (earning at least \$121,000 annually, with a mean of about \$207,000) received 48.8 percent of all income, while the bottom 20 percent (earning less than \$29,000, with a mean of about \$16,000) received only 3.8 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

¹The Census Bureau reports both mean and median incomes for families ("two or more persons related by blood, marriage, or adoption") and households ("two or more persons sharing a living unit"). In 2013, mean family income was \$84,687, higher than the median (\$63,815) because high-income families pull up the mean but not the median. For households, these figures are somewhat lower—a mean of \$72,641 and a median of \$51,939—largely because households are more likely than families to contain a single adult.

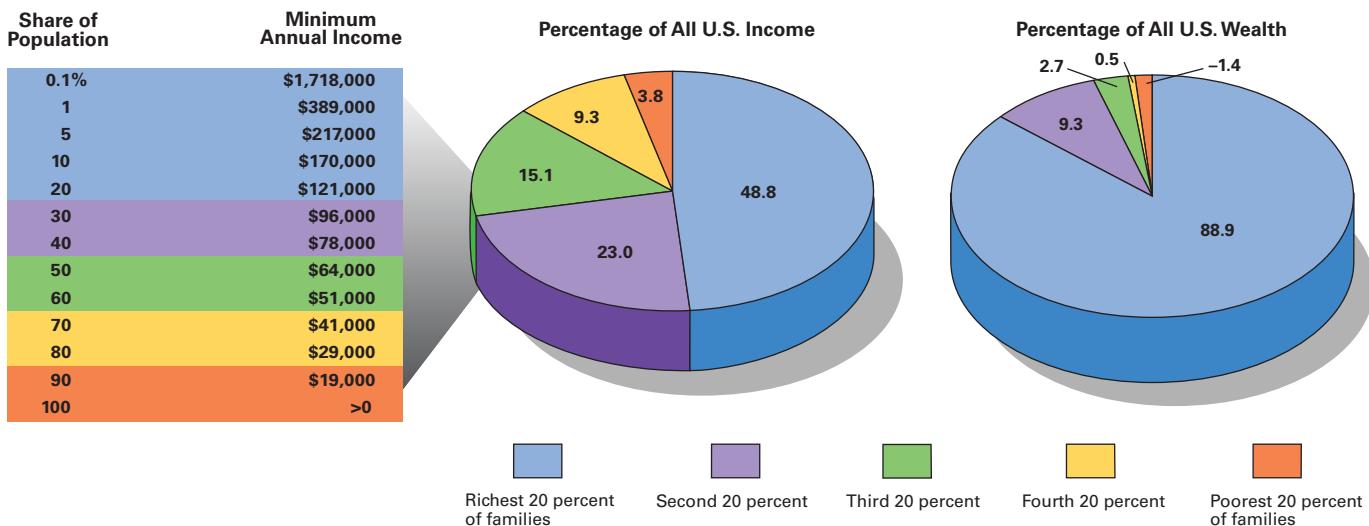


Figure 11–1 Distribution of Income and Wealth in the United States, 2013

Income and especially wealth are divided unequally in U.S. society.

SOURCES: Income data from U.S. Census Bureau (2014); wealth data based on Wolff (2014) and author estimates.

The table at the left in Figure 11–1 provides a closer look at income distribution. In 2013, the highest-paid 5 percent of U.S. families earned at least \$217,000 (averaging \$359,000), or 21.2 percent of all income, more than the total earnings of the lowest-paid 40 percent. At the very top of the income pyramid, the richest one-tenth of 1 percent earned at least \$1.7 million.

During recent decades, income inequality has increased. One part of this trend is that the very richest people now receive a much larger share of all income. For example, in 1978, the highest-paid 0.1 percent of all earners received 2.7 percent of all income. By 2011, this elite category (people making \$1.7 million or more a year) took home a share that is more than three times larger, equaling 9 percent of all income (Fox, 2009; Internal Revenue Service, 2014).

Wealth

Income is only a part of a person's or family's **wealth**, *the total value of money and other assets, minus outstanding debts*. Wealth—including stocks, bonds, and real estate—is distributed more unequally than income. The reductions in taxes on income earned by individuals and on wealth passed from one generation to the next that were enacted by Congress a decade ago have made this inequality even greater (Wahl, 2003; Keister & Southgate, 2012).

The pie chart on the right in Figure 11–1 shows the distribution of wealth. The richest 20 percent of U.S. families own roughly 89 percent of the country's wealth. High up in this privileged category are the wealthiest 5 percent of families—the “very rich,” who own 65 percent of all

private property. Richer still, with wealth in the tens of millions of dollars, are the 1 percent of families that qualify as “super-rich” and possess about 37 percent of this nation’s privately held resources (Wolff, 2014). At the top of the wealth pyramid, the ten richest U.S. families have a combined net worth of more than \$461 billion (Forbes, 2014). This amount equals the total property of 5.7 million average families, including enough people to fill the cities of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

The wealth of the average U.S. family is currently about \$81,200 (Applebaum, 2012; Bricker et al., 2014). After reaching roughly \$120,000 in 2007, average wealth dropped significantly as the country entered an economic recession and the value of investments and housing declined. By 2010, average family wealth had fallen to a level not seen since the mid-1990s and only small gains have been posted since then.

Family wealth reflects the value of homes, cars, investments, insurance policies, retirement pensions, furniture, clothing, and all other personal property, minus a home mortgage and other debts. The wealth of average people is not only less than that of the rich, however, but also different in kind. Most people's wealth centers on a home and a car—that is, property that generates no income—but the wealth of the rich is mostly in the form of stocks and other income-producing investments.

When financial assets are balanced against debts, the lowest-ranking 40 percent of U.S. families have little or no wealth at all. The negative percentage that is shown in Figure 11–1 for the poorest 20 percent of the population means that these families actually live in debt.

Power

In the United States, wealth is an important source of power. The small proportion of families that controls most

income earnings from work or investments

wealth the total value of money and other assets, minus outstanding debts

Table 11–1 The Relative Social Prestige of Selected Occupations in the United States

White-Collar Occupations	Prestige Score	Blue-Collar Occupations
Physician	86	
Lawyer	75	
College/university professor	74	
Physicist, astronomer	73	
Architect	73	
Dentist	72	
Member of the clergy	69	
Psychologist	69	
Pharmacist	68	
Optometrist	67	
Registered nurse	66	
Secondary school teacher	66	
Elementary school teacher	66	
Accountant	65	
Athlete	65	
Electrical engineer	64	
Economist	63	
Veterinarian	62	
Airplane pilot	61	
Computer programmer	61	
Sociologist	61	
Editor, reporter	60	
	60	Police officer
Actor	58	
Radio or TV announcer	55	
Librarian	54	
	53	Aircraft mechanic
	53	Firefighter
Dental hygienist	52	
Painter, sculptor	52	
Social worker	52	
	51	Electrician
Real estate agent	49	
Bookkeeper	47	
	47	Machinist
Musician, composer	47	
	47	Mail carrier
Photographer	45	
Bank teller	43	
	42	Secretary
	40	Tailor
	39	Farmer
	36	Carpenter
	36	Bricklayer, stonemason
	36	Hairdresser
	36	Child care worker
	35	Baker
	34	Bulldozer operator
	31	Auto body repairer
Retail apparel salesperson	30	
Cashier	29	
	28	Truck driver
	28	Garbage collector
	28	Taxi driver
	28	Waiter, waitress
	27	Bellhop
	25	Bartender
	23	Household laborer
	22	Door-to-door salesperson
	22	Janitor
	9	Shoe shiner

SOURCE: Adapted from *General Social Surveys, 1972–2012: Cumulative Codebook* (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 2013:2993–3000).

of the nation's wealth also shapes the agenda of the entire society. As explained in Chapter 17 ("Politics and Government"), some sociologists argue that such concentrated wealth weakens democracy because the political system serves the interests of the super-rich.

Occupational Prestige

In addition to generating income, work is also an important source of social prestige. We commonly evaluate each other according to the kind of work we do, giving greater respect to those who do what we consider important work and less respect to others with more modest jobs. Sociologists measure the relative prestige of various occupations (Smith et al., 2011). Table 11–1 shows that people give high prestige to occupations such as physician, lawyer, and engineer that require extensive training and generate high income. By contrast, less prestigious work—as a waitress or janitor, for example—pays less and requires less schooling. Occupational prestige rankings are much the same in all high-income nations (Lin & Xie, 1988).

In any society, high-prestige occupations go to privileged categories of people. In Table 11–1, for example, the highest-ranking occupations are dominated by men. We have to go more than a dozen jobs down the list to find "secondary school teacher" and "registered nurse," careers chosen mostly by women. Similarly, many of the lowest-prestige jobs are commonly performed by people of color.

Schooling

Industrial societies have expanded opportunities for schooling, but some people still receive much more education than others. In 2013, although 88 percent of women and men aged twenty-five and older had completed high school, just 32 percent of women and men were college graduates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Schooling affects both occupation and income, since most (but not all) of the better-paying white-collar jobs shown in Table 11–1 require a college degree or other advanced study. Most blue-collar jobs, which bring lower income and social prestige, require less schooling.

U.S. Stratification: Merit and Caste

11.2 Explain how someone's position at birth affects social standing later in life.

As we discussed in Chapter 10 ("Social Stratification"), the U.S. class system is partly a meritocracy in that social position reflects individual talent and effort. But it also has caste elements, because birth—which socially locates each person in a particular family, as well as assigning traits

such as race, ethnicity, and gender—plays a part in what we become later in life.

Ancestry

Nothing affects social standing in the United States as much as being born into a particular family, which has a strong bearing on schooling, occupation, and income. Research suggests that more than one-third of our country's richest individuals—those with hundreds of millions of dollars in wealth—acquired some of their fortunes from inheritance (Miller & Newcomb, 2005; Harford, 2007). Inherited poverty shapes the future of tens of millions of others.

Race and Ethnicity

Race is closely linked to social position in the United States. On average, whites have a higher occupational position than African Americans and also receive more schooling. The median African American family's income was \$41,588 in 2013, just 57 percent of the \$72,624 earned by non-Hispanic white families. This inequality in income makes a real difference in people's lives. For example, the share of non-Hispanic white families (72 percent) who own their homes is significantly larger than the comparable share of black families (42 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Families that include married couples earn more than families with a single parent. With this fact in mind, some of the racial difference in income results from the larger share of single-parent families among African Americans. Comparing only families headed by married couples, African Americans earned 80 percent as much as non-Hispanic white families.

Over time, the income difference builds into a huge wealth gap. A recent survey of families by the Federal Reserve found that median wealth for minority families, including African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans (\$18,100), is just 13 percent of the median (\$142,000) for non-Hispanic white families (Bricker et al., 2014).

Social ranking involves ethnicity as well. People of English ancestry have always enjoyed the most wealth and the greatest power in U.S. society. The Latino population—the largest U.S. racial or ethnic minority—has long been disadvantaged. In 2013, the median income among Hispanic families was \$42,269, which is 58 percent of the median income for non-Hispanic white families. A detailed examination of how race and ethnicity affect social standing is presented in Chapter 14 ("Race and Ethnicity").

Gender

Of course, both men and women are found in families at every class level. Yet on average, women have less income, wealth, and occupational prestige than men. Among single-parent families, those headed by a woman are nearly twice as likely to be poor than those headed by a man. Chapter 13 ("Gender Stratification") examines the link between gender and social stratification.

Social Classes in the United States

11.3 Describe the various social class positions in U.S. society.

As Chapter 10 ("Social Stratification") explained, rankings in a caste system are rigid and obvious to all. Defining social categories in a more fluid class system such as ours, however, is not so easy.

There is an old joke about two friends who order a pizza, asking that it be cut into six slices because they aren't hungry enough to eat eight. Sociologists do the same thing with social class: Some slice the population into more classes than others. At one extreme, people find as many as six or even seven social classes; at the other, some follow Karl Marx and see two major classes: capitalists and proletarians. Still others side with Max Weber, claiming that stratification creates not clear-cut classes but a multidimensional status hierarchy.

Defining classes in U.S. society is difficult because of our relatively low level of status consistency. Especially toward the middle of the hierarchy, people's standing in one dimension may not be the same as their standing in another. For example, a government official may have the power to administer a multimillion-dollar budget yet



These women have appeared on the television program *Real Housewives of New Jersey*. Using the categories discussed in the pages that follow, within which social class category do you think they fall? Why?

may earn only a modest personal income. Similarly, many members of the clergy enjoy ample prestige but only moderate power and low pay. Or consider a “card shark,” a skillful gambler who hustles other people, winning little public respect but lots of money.

Finally, the social mobility characteristic of class systems—again, most pronounced around the middle—means that social position may change during a person’s lifetime, further blurring class boundaries. With these issues in mind, we will examine four general rankings: the upper class, the middle class, the working class, and the lower class.

The Upper Class

Families in the upper class—5 percent of the U.S. population—earn at least \$217,000 a year, and some earn ten times that much or more. Along with high income comes significant wealth. The core of the upper class is a much smaller share of the population, including people whose wealth can only be described as vast. In 2014, *Forbes* magazine profiled the richest 400 people in the country, who were worth at least \$1.5 billion (and as much as \$79 billion). Karl Marx described these men and women as “capitalists”—the owners of the means of production along with most of the nation’s private wealth. Many upper-class people are business owners, executives in large corporations, or senior government officials. Historically, the upper class has been composed mostly of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, but this is less true today (Pyle & Koch, 2001).

UPPER-UPPERS The *upper-upper class*, sometimes called “blue bloods” or simply “society,” includes less than 1 percent of the U.S. population (Coleman & Neugarten, 1971; Baltzell, 1995). Membership is almost always the result of

birth, as suggested by the joke that the easiest way to become an upper-upper is to be born one. Most but not all of these families possess enormous wealth, which is primarily inherited. As a general rule, the more a family’s income comes from inherited wealth in the form of stocks and bonds, real estate, and other investments, the stronger a family’s claim to being a member of the upper-upper class. For this reason, members of the upper-upper class are said to have “old money.”

Set apart by their wealth, upper-uppers live in old, exclusive neighborhoods, such as Beacon Hill in Boston, Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia, the Gold Coast of Chicago, and Nob Hill in San Francisco. Their children typically attend private schools with others of similar background and complete their schooling at high-prestige colleges and universities. In the tradition of European aristocrats, they study liberal arts rather than vocational skills.

Women of the upper-upper class do volunteer work for charitable organizations. Such activities serve a dual purpose: They help the larger community, and they build networks that broaden this elite’s power (Ostrander, 1980, 1984).

LOWER-UPPERS Most upper-class people actually fall into the *lower-upper class*. The queen of England has a fortune of \$500 million—more than enough to be included in the upper class—but her membership in the upper-upper class reflects not only money but her family tree. J. K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter books, is probably worth twice as much—more than \$1 billion—but this self-made woman (who was once on welfare) stands at the top of the lower-upper class. The major difference, in other words, is that members of the lower-upper class are the “working rich” who get their money mostly by earning it rather than from inheritance. These well-to-do families—



People often distinguish between the “new rich” and families with “old money.” Men and women who suddenly begin to earn high incomes tend to spend their money on status symbols because they enjoy the new thrill of high-roller living and they want others to know of their success. Those who grow up surrounded by wealth, by contrast, are used to a privileged way of life and are more quiet about it. Thus the conspicuous consumption of the lower-upper class (left) can differ dramatically from the more private pursuits and understatement of the upper-upper class (right).



who make up 3 or 4 percent of the U.S. population—generally live in large homes in expensive neighborhoods, own vacation homes near the water or in the mountains, and send their children to private schools and good colleges. Yet most of the “new rich” do not gain entry into the most exclusive clubs and associations of “old money” families.

In the United States, what we often call the American dream has been to earn enough to join the ranks of the lower-upper class. The athlete who signs a multimillion-dollar contract, the actress who lands a starring role in a Hollywood film, the computer whiz who creates the latest Internet site to capture the public’s attention, and even the person who hits it big by winning a huge lottery jackpot are the talented achievers and lucky people who reach the lower-upper class.

The Middle Class

Made up of 40 to 45 percent of the U.S. population, the large middle class has a tremendous influence on our culture. Television programs and movies usually show middle-class people, and most commercial advertising is directed at these average consumers. The middle class contains far more racial and ethnic diversity than the upper class.

UPPER-MIDDLE People in the top half of this category are called the *upper-middle class*, based on above-average income in the range of \$121,000 to \$217,000 a year. Such income allows upper-middle-class families to live in comfortable homes in fairly expensive areas, own several automobiles, and build investments. Two-thirds of upper-middle-class children graduate from college, and postgraduate degrees are common. Many go on to high-prestige careers as physicians, engineers, lawyers, accountants, and business executives. Lacking the power of the richest people to influence national or international events, upper-middles often play an important role in local political affairs.

AVERAGE-MIDDLE The rest of the middle class falls close to the center of the U.S. class structure. *Average-middles* typically work at less prestigious white-collar jobs as bank branch managers, high school teachers, and government office workers or in highly skilled blue-collar jobs such as electrical work and carpentry. Family income is between \$51,000 and \$121,000 a year, which is roughly the national average.²

²In some parts of the United States where the cost of living is very high (say, New York City or San Francisco), a family might need \$150,000 or more in annual income to reach the middle class.



What would you say about the social class standing of the Harrison family and their friend Chumlee, who star in the popular reality television show *Pawn Stars*? What about the work of running a family business? What about their dress and interests? What about the fact that none of the stars is a college graduate? What about the fact that they have recently made a fortune from their television show? Doesn’t their situation show that social class position is often complex and contradictory?

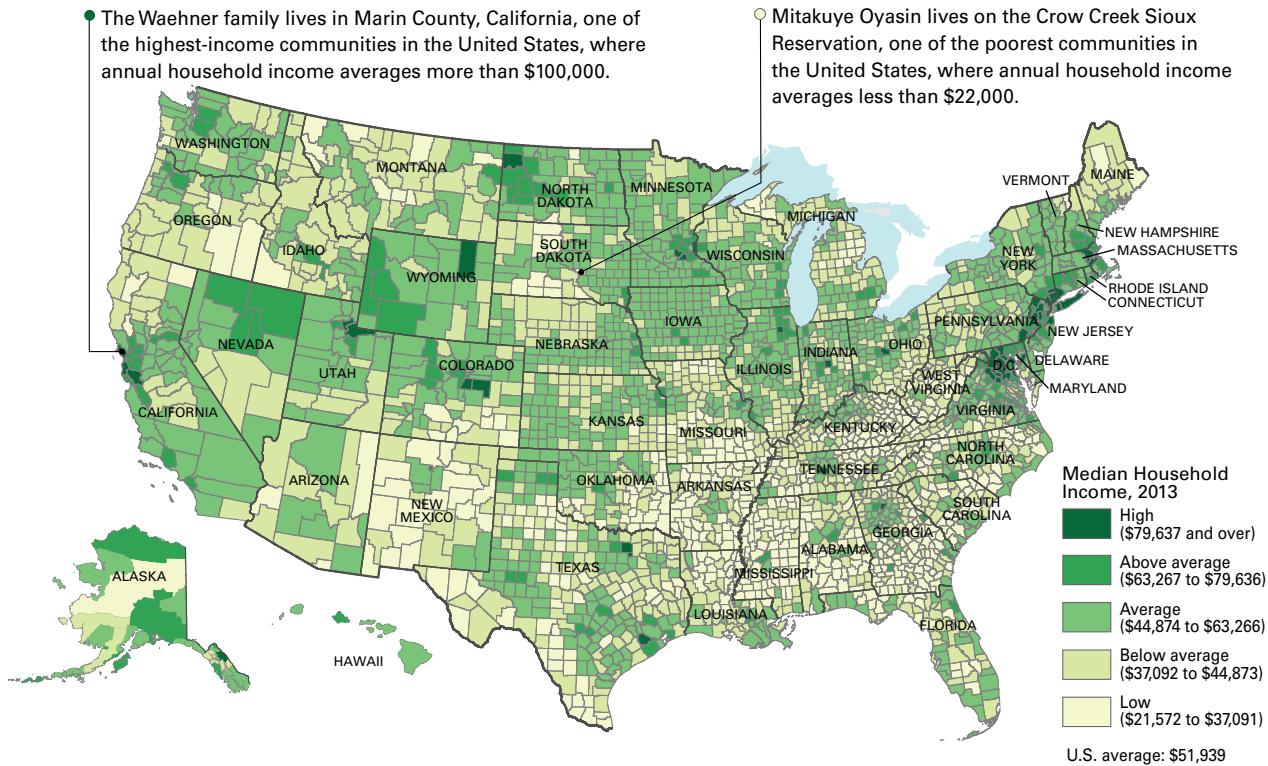
Middle-class people typically build up a small amount of wealth over the course of their working lives, mostly in the form of a house and a retirement investment account. Middle-class men and women are likely to be high school graduates, but the odds are less than fifty-fifty that they will complete a four-year college degree, and those who do will typically attend a less expensive, state-supported college or university.

The Working Class

About one-third of the population falls within the working class (sometimes called the *lower-middle class*). In Marxist terms, the working class forms the core of the industrial proletariat. The blue-collar jobs held by members of the working class yield a family income of between \$29,000 and \$51,000 a year, somewhat below the national average. Working-class families have little or no wealth and are vulnerable to financial problems caused by unemployment or illness.

Many working-class jobs provide little personal satisfaction—because the work requires discipline but rarely imagination—and jobs subject workers to continual supervision. These jobs also offer fewer benefits, such as medical insurance and pension plans. More than half of working-class families own their own homes, which are usually located in lower-cost neighborhoods. Earning a four-year college degree becomes a reality for only about one-fifth of working-class children.

Seeing Ourselves



National Map 11-1 Household Income across the United States, 2013

This map shows the median household income (that is, how much money, on average, a household earned) in the more than 3,000 counties that make up the United States for the year 2013. The richest counties, shown in the darker shades of green, are not spread randomly across the country. Nor are the poorest U.S. counties, which are shown in the lightest colors. Looking at the map, what patterns do you see in the distribution of wealth and poverty across the United States? What can you say about wealth and poverty in urban and rural areas?

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

The Lower Class

The remaining 20 percent of our population make up the lower class. Low income makes their lives insecure and difficult. In 2013, the federal government classified 45.3 million people (14.5 percent of the population) as poor. Millions more—called the “working poor”—are slightly better off, holding low-wage jobs that provide little satisfaction and minimal income. Seventy-six percent of lower-class children manage to complete high school, but less than 15 percent ever complete a four-year college degree.

Society residentially segregates the lower class, especially when the poor are racial or ethnic minorities. About 43 percent of lower-class families own their own homes, typically in the least desirable neighborhoods. Most poor neighborhoods are found in our nation’s inner cities, but lower-class families also live in rural communities, especially in the South.

The recent recession has increased the size of the lower class all over the United States. Yuma, Arizona, recently recorded the highest official unemployment rate

(about 22 percent) for all U.S. cities. Average income for Yuma residents is only about \$22,000 a year. More than one hundred cities in the West (including El Centro, California), the South (such as Macon, Georgia), and the Midwest (including Zanesville, Ohio) struggle with high unemployment and report per-person income of barely \$20,000 a year, well below the national average (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014; U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). National Map 11-1 shows an important measure of social class—median household income—for all the counties in the United States.

The Difference Class Makes

11.4 Analyze how social class position affects health, values, politics, and family life.

Social stratification affects nearly every dimension of our lives. We will briefly examine some of the ways social standing is linked to our health, values and attitudes, politics, and family life.

Health

Health is closely related to social standing. Children born into poor families are twice as likely to die from disease, neglect, accidents, or violence during their first years of life as children born into privileged families. Among adults, people with above-average incomes are almost twice as likely as low-income people to describe their health as excellent.

Government researchers have found that income level has a lot to do with whether or not people get the medical care they need. When compared with people in the highest-income category, people in the lowest-income category were thirteen times more likely to go without needed medical attention. The long-term consequence of not getting medical attention, typically coupled to a lower level of nutrition and living in a more stressful environment, is easy to guess: Average life expectancy for low-income people is five years less than for affluent people (Singh, 2010; Adams, Kirzinger, & Martinez, 2012).

Values and Attitudes

Some cultural values vary from class to class. The “old rich” have an unusually strong sense of family history because they have one or more ancestors who made a lot of money and their social position is based on wealth passed down from generation to generation. Secure in their birth-right privileges, upper-uppers also favor understated manners and tastes, as if to say “I don’t need to ‘show off’ to prove who I am.” In this respect, old money people differ from many “new rich” who engage in conspicuous consumption or what we now call “bling,” using homes, cars, and even airplanes as status symbols to make a statement about their social position.

Affluent people with greater education and financial security are also more tolerant of controversial behavior such as homosexuality. Working-class people, who grow up in an atmosphere of greater supervision and discipline and are less likely to attend college, tend to be less tolerant (Lareau, 2002; Smith et al., 2011).

Social class has a great deal to do with self-concept. People with higher social standing experience more confidence in everyday interaction for the simple reason that others tend to view them as having greater importance. The Thinking About Diversity box on page 302 describes the challenges faced by one young woman from a poor family attending a college where most students are from more well-off families.

Politics

Do political attitudes follow class lines? The answer is yes, with high-income people leaning toward Republican candidates and low-income people favoring Democrats. But a

close look shows that the pattern is more complex. A desire to protect their wealth prompts most well-off people to be more conservative on *economic* issues, favoring, for example, lower taxes. But on *social* issues such as abortion and gay rights, highly educated, more affluent people are more liberal. People of lower social standing, by contrast, tend to be economic liberals, favoring government social programs that benefit them. But they typically hold more conservative views on social issues (Smith et al., 2011).

Another important pattern is that people who are well-off financially are *involved* in politics. Recent survey research found that more than 90 percent of the well-off people were registered to vote. In the 2012 presidential election, 80 percent of these people actually voted.

A very different pattern appears among less well-off people who tend to *opt out* of politics. Barely half of low-income people reported being registered to vote. In the 2012 presidential election, only about one-fourth of them said that they turned out to vote (Smith et al., 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2015).



Compared to high-income people, low-income people are only half as likely to report good health and, on average, live about five fewer years. The toll of low income—played out in inadequate nutrition, little medical care, and high stress—is easy to see on the faces of the poor, who look old before their time.

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

The Power of Class: A Low-Income Student Asks, “Am I as Good as You?”

Marcella grew up without the privileges that most other students on the campus of this private, liberal arts college take for granted. During her senior year, she and I talked at length about her college experiences and why social class presented a huge challenge to her. Marcella is not her real name; she wishes to remain anonymous. I have summarized what she has said about her college life in the story that follows.

When I came here, I entered a new world. I found myself in a place that seemed strange and sometimes dangerous. All around me were people with habits and ideas I did not understand. A thousand times, I thought to myself, I hope all of you will realize that there are other worlds out there and that I am from one of them. Will you accept me?

I am a child of poverty, a young woman raised in a world of want and violence. I am now on the campus of an elite college. I may have a new identity as a college student. But my old life is still going on in my head. I have not been able to change how I think of myself.

Do you want to find out more about me? Learn more about the power of social class to shape how we feel about ourselves? Here is what I want to say to you.

When I was growing up, I envied most of you. You lived in a middle-class bubble, a world that held you, protected you, and comforted you. Not me. While your parents were discussing current events, planning family trips, and looking out for you, my father and mother were screaming at each other. I will never be able to forget summer nights when I lay in my bed, sticky with sweat, biting my fingernails as a telephone crashed against the wall that separated my room from theirs. My father was drunk and out of control; my mother ducked just in time.

Your fathers and mothers work in office buildings. They have good jobs, as doctors, lawyers, and architects; they are corporate managers; they run small businesses. Your mothers and fathers are people who matter. My mom takes the bus to a hospital where she works for \$10 an hour cleaning up after people. She spends her shift doing what she is told. My dad? Who knows. He was a

deadbeat, a drunk, a drug addict. I don't know if he still is or not. I haven't heard from him in eight years.

You grew up in a nice neighborhood and probably lived for many years in one house. My family lived in low-cost rental housing. We moved a lot. When there was no money for rent, we packed up our stuff and moved to a new place. It seemed like we were always running away from something.

You grew up with books, with trips to the library, with parents who read to you. You learned how to speak well and have an impressive vocabulary. I never heard a bedtime story, and I had maybe one inspiring teacher. Most of what I know I had to learn on my own. Maybe that's why I always feel like I am trying to catch up to you.

You know how to use forks, knives, and spoons the right way. You know how to eat Chinese food and what to order at a Thai restaurant. You have favorite Italian dishes. You know how to order wine. You know about German beers, Danish cheeses, and French sauces. Me? I grew up having Thanksgiving dinner on paper plates, eating turkey served by social service volunteers. When you ask me to go with you to some special restaurant, I make some excuse and stay home. I can't afford it. More than that, I am afraid you will find out how little I know about things you take for granted.

How did I ever get to this college? I remember one of my teachers telling me “You have promise.” The college admissions office accepted me. But I am not sure why. I was given a scholarship that covers most of my tuition. That solved one big problem, and now I am here. But sometimes I am not sure I will stay. I have to study more than many of you to learn things you already know. I have to work two part-time jobs to make the money I needed to buy a used computer, clothes, and the occasional pizza at the corner place where many of you spend so much time.

It's amazing to me that I am here. I realize how lucky I am. But now that I am here, I realize that the road is so much longer than I thought it would be. Getting to this college was only part of the journey. The scholarship was only part of the answer. The biggest challenge for me is what goes on every day—the thousands of ways in which you live a life that I still don't really understand, the thousands of things that I won't know or that I will do wrong that will blow my cover, and show me up for the fraud I am.



What Do You Think?

1. How does this story show that social class involves much more than how much money a person has?
2. Why does Marcella worry that other people will think she is a “fraud”? If you could speak to her about this fear, what would you say?
3. Have you ever had similar feelings about being less important than—or better than—someone else based on social class position? Explain.

Family and Gender

Social class also shapes family life. In general, working-class parents encourage children to conform to conventional norms and to respect authority figures. These parents set boundaries for their children, providing clear directives that are to be obeyed. In families with higher incomes, by contrast, parents pass along a different “cultural capital” to their children. These parents are more flexible with their kids, reasoning with them rather than telling them what to do. The goal here is to develop children’s special talents, and parents do this by placing children in many organized activities and encouraging them to express their individuality and to use their imagination freely.

For both low- and high-income families, parents are looking to the future. The odds are that less privileged children will have jobs that require them to follow rules and that more privileged children will have careers that require more creativity (Kohn, 1977; McLeod, 1995; Lareau, 2002, 2007).

Then, of course, there is the simple importance of money. The more money a family has, the more resources parents can use to develop their children’s talents and abilities. Researchers estimate that affluent families will spend \$506,610 raising a child born in 2013 to the age of eighteen. Middle-class people will spend \$304,480, and a lower-income family will spend \$218,680 (Lino, 2014). Privilege leads to privilege as family life reproduces the class structure in each generation.

Class also shapes our world of relationships. In a classic study of married life, Elizabeth Bott (1971, orig. 1957) found that most lower-income couples divide their responsibilities according to gender roles, so that men and women live rather different lives. More affluent couples, by contrast, are more egalitarian, sharing more activities and expressing greater intimacy. More recently, Karen Walker (1995) discovered that, among less well-off people, friendships typically serve as sources of material assistance; among people with higher incomes, friendships are likely to involve shared interests and leisure pursuits.

Social Mobility

11.5 Assess the extent of social mobility in the United States.

Ours is a dynamic society marked by quite a bit of social movement. Earning a college degree, landing a higher-paying job, or marrying someone who earns a good income contributes to *upward social mobility*; dropping out of school, losing a job, or becoming divorced (especially for women) may result in *downward social mobility*.

Over the long term, social mobility is not so much a matter of changes in individuals as changes in society itself. In the first half of the twentieth century, for example, industrialization expanded the U.S. economy, pushing up

living standards. Even people who were not good swimmers rode the rising tide of prosperity. In recent decades, the closing of U.S. factories has pushed *structural social mobility* in a downward direction, dealing economic setbacks to many people. The economic downturn that hit hard at the end of 2007 has reduced income and economic opportunities in a way that millions of people continue to feel today.

Sociologists distinguish between shorter- and longer-term changes in social position. **Intragenerational social mobility** is *a change in social position occurring during a person’s lifetime* (*intra* is Latin for “within”). **Intergenerational social mobility**, *upward or downward social mobility of children in relation to their parents*, is important because it usually reveals long-term changes in society, such as industrialization, that affect everyone (*inter* is Latin for “between”).

Research on Mobility

In few societies do people think about “getting ahead” as much as in the United States. Lady Gaga claims her parents both grew up in lower-class families; last year, she earned more than \$60 million. Johnny Depp was born in Kentucky to a father who was an engineer and a mother who was a waitress; last year, he pulled in \$100 million. Moving up—if not always to the point of becoming a superstar—is the American dream. But does everyone move up, even a little? Is there as much social mobility as we like to think?

One recent study of intergenerational mobility shows that about 32 percent of U.S. men have the same type of work as their fathers, 37 percent have been upwardly mobile (for example, a son born to a father with a blue-collar job now does white-collar work), and 32 percent have been downwardly mobile (for example, the father has a white-collar job and the son does blue-collar work). Among women, 27 percent showed no change in relation to their fathers, 46 percent were upwardly mobile, and 28 percent were downwardly mobile (Beller & Hout, 2006). The Thinking About Diversity box on page 304 provides the results of another study of long-term social mobility.

Horizontal social mobility—changing jobs at the same class level—is even more common; overall, about 80 percent of children show at least some type of change in occupational work in relation to their fathers (Hout, 1998; Beller & Hout, 2006).

intragenerational social mobility a change in social position occurring during a person’s lifetime

intergenerational social mobility upward or downward social mobility of children in relation to their parents

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

Is Social Mobility the Exception or the Rule?

How likely is it to move up in U.S. society? What about the odds of moving down? What share of people, as adults, ends up staying right where they started as children? To answer these questions, Lisa A. Keister used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY), a long-term study of 9,500 men and women. These people were first studied in 1979 during their youth—when they were between fourteen and twenty-two years old and living at home with one or both parents. The same people were studied again as adults in 2000, when they ranged in age from thirty-five to forty-three years old. About 80 percent of the subjects were married and all had households of their own.

What Keister wanted to know was how the economic standing of the subjects may have changed over their lifetimes, which she measured by estimating (from NLSY data) their amount of wealth at two different times. In 1979, because the subjects were young and living at home, she measured the family wealth of the subjects' parents. Keister placed each subject's family in one of five wealth quintiles—from the richest 20 percent down to the poorest 20 percent—and these quintiles are shown in the vertical axis of the accompanying table. In 2000, she measured the wealth of the same people, who were now living in households of their own. Wealth rankings in 2000 are shown in the horizontal axis of the table.

So what did Keister learn? How much social mobility, in terms of household wealth, took place over the course of twenty-one years? Looking at the table, we can learn a great deal. The cell in the upper left corner shows us that, of the richest 20 percent of subjects in 1979, 55 percent of these young people went on to remain in the top wealth category in 2000. Obviously, because these people were starting out in the top category, there could be no upward movement (although some of the subjects were richer as adults than they were when they were young). Twenty-five percent of the richest subjects in 1979 had dropped one level to the second quintile. That means that 80 percent of

the richest people in 1979 were still quite well off in 2000; only 20 percent of the richest people were downwardly mobile across two or more categories (9 percent who fell two levels, 6 percent who fell three levels, and 5 percent who fell to the lowest wealth level).

A similar pattern is seen as we begin with the poorest subjects—those who were in the lowest wealth quintile in 1979. Obviously, again, because these people started out in the lowest category, they had nowhere to go but up. But 45 percent of these men and women remained in the lowest wealth category as adults (the bottom-right box), and 27 percent moved up one quintile. Another 28 percent of the poorest people moved up two or more quintiles as adults (11 percent who rose two levels, 9 percent who rose three levels, and 8 percent who rose to the richest level).

For subjects in the middle ranges, the data show that mobility was somewhat more pronounced. For those who started in the second richest quintile, just 33 percent ended up in the same place. The remaining 67 percent moved up or down at least one level, although the most common move was rising or falling one level. Of those in the third (or middle) quintile, 35 percent ended up in the same rank as adults, and 65 percent moved up or down at least one level. Again, most of those who moved shifted just one level. Similarly, of those who started out in the fourth quintile, 35 percent ended up in the same ranking as adults, and 65 percent moved in most cases one level up or down.

So what can we conclude about patterns of wealth mobility over a generation between 1979 and 2000? The first conclusion is that a majority of people did experience some mobility, moving up or down one or more levels. So mobility was the rule rather than the exception. Second, movement downward was about as common as movement upward. Third, movement was somewhat more common among people closer to the middle of the wealth hierarchy—the largest share of people who “stayed put” (55 percent among those who started out at the top and 45 percent of those who started out at the bottom) were at one or the other extreme.

Childhood Standing, 1979	Adult Standing, 2000				
	Richest 20%	Second 20%	Third 20%	Fourth 20%	Poorest 20%
Richest 20% →	55	25	9	6	5
Second 20% →	25	33	23	11	8
Third 20% →	13	21	35	20	11
Fourth 20% →	7	14	20	35	24
Poorest 20% →	8	9	11	27	45

What Do You Think?

1. What about the results presented here surprises you? Explain.
2. Overall, how well do the results presented here square with what you imagine most people in this country think about mobility?
3. How do you think the recent economic recession has affected patterns of social mobility?

Research points to five general conclusions about social mobility in the United States:

- 1. Social mobility over the past century has been fairly high.** A high level of mobility is what we would expect in an industrial class system. Most men and women show some mobility in relation to their parents.
- 2. Within a single generation, social mobility is usually small.** Most young families increase their income over time as they gain education, skills, and job experience—some social mobility occurs as people move through the life course. For example, a typical family headed by a thirty-year-old earned about \$61,000 in 2013; a typical family headed by a forty-five-year-old earned \$81,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Yet only a few people move “from rags to riches” (the way author J. K. Rowling did) or lose a lot of money (a number of rock stars who made it big had little money a few years later). Most social mobility involves limited movement within one class level rather than striking moves between classes.
- 3. The long-term trend in social mobility has been upward.** Industrialization, which greatly expanded the U.S. economy, and the growth of white-collar work over the course of the twentieth century have raised living standards. In recent decades, however, mobility has been downward about as often as it has been upward (Keister, 2005).

- 4. Since the 1970s, social mobility has been uneven.** Real income (adjusted for inflation) rose steadily during the twentieth century until the 1970s. Since then, as shown in Figure 11–2, real income has risen and fallen with overall smaller gains than was the case before 1970.
- 5. The short-term trend in social mobility has been downward.** Especially since the beginning of the recent recession in 2007, the middle class has become smaller as income and wealth have declined. As a result, 85 percent of people who identify themselves as “middle class” say that keeping the same standard of living has become more difficult (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Mobility by Income Level

The experience of social mobility depends on where in the social class system you happen to be. Figure 11–3 on page 306 shows how U.S. families at different income levels made out between 1980 and 2013. Well-to-do families (the highest 20 percent at each point in time, but not all the same families over the entire period) saw their incomes jump 56 percent, from an average of \$127,983 in 1980 to \$206,687 in 2013. People in the middle of the population also had gains, but more modest ones. The lowest-income 20 percent saw a 7 percent decrease in earnings.

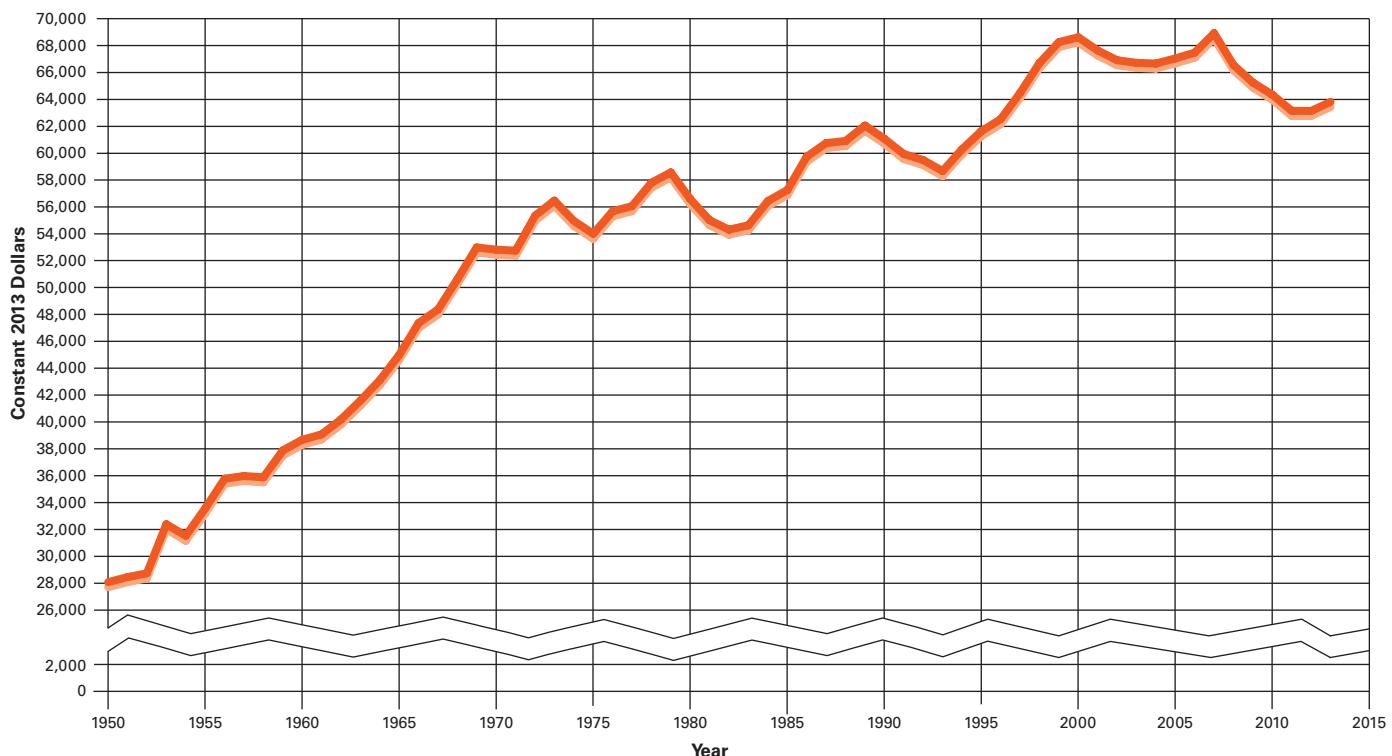


Figure 11–2 Median Annual Income, U.S. Families, 1950–2013

Average family income in the United States grew rapidly between 1950 and 1970. In the decades since then, however, income increased at a lower and less even rate. After 2007, the economic recession pushed median income downward with some recovery evident in the last few years.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

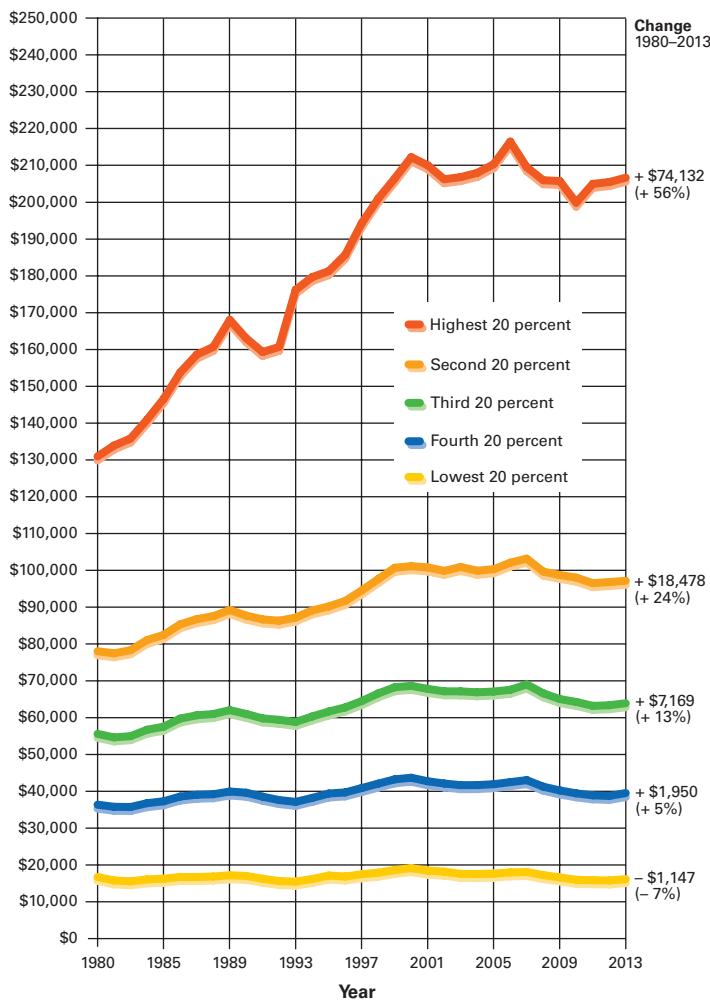


Figure 11–3 Mean Annual Income, U.S. Families, 1980–2013
(in 2013 dollars, adjusted for inflation)

The gap between high-income and low-income families is wider today than it was in 1980.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

For the families at the top of the income scale (the highest 5 percent), recent decades have brought a windfall. Families in this category, with average income of more than \$182,000 in 1980, were making \$358,722 in 2013—almost twice as much as in 1980. Research shows that, within this elite category, families in the top 1 percent and the top one-tenth of the top 1 percent, have enjoyed the greatest gains of all in both income and wealth (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014; Reeves, 2015).

Mobility: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender

White people in the United States have always been in a more privileged position than people of African or Hispanic descent. Through the economic expansion of the 1980s and 1990s, many more African Americans entered the ranks of the wealthy. But overall, the real income of African Americans has changed little in three decades. African American family income as a percentage of white

family income has fallen slightly from 61 percent in 1975 to 57 percent in 2013. Compared with white families, Latino families lost more ground, earning 66 percent as much as white families in 1975 and 58 percent as much in 2013 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Historically, feminists point out, women in U.S. society have had limited opportunity for upward mobility because the clerical jobs (such as secretary) and service positions (such as food server) widely held by women offer few opportunities for advancement.

Over time, however, the earnings gap between women and men has been narrowing. Women working full time in 1980 earned 60 percent as much as men working full time; by 2013, women were earning 78 percent as much (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Mobility and Marriage

Research points to the conclusion that marriage has an important effect on social standing. In a study of women and men in their forties, Jay Zagorsky (2006) found that people who marry and stay married accumulate about twice as much wealth as people who remain single or who divorce. Reasons for this difference include the fact that couples who live together typically enjoy double incomes and also pay roughly half the bills they would have if they were single and living in separate households.

It is also likely that compared to single people, married men and women work harder in their jobs and save more money. Why? The main reason is that they are working not just for themselves but also to support others who are counting on them.

Just as marriage pushes social standing upward, divorce usually makes social position go down. Couples who divorce take on the financial burden of supporting two households. After divorce, women are hurt more than men because it is typically the man who earns more. Many women who divorce lose not only most of their income but also benefits such as health care and insurance coverage (Weitzman, 1996).

The American Dream: Still a Reality?

The expectation of upward social mobility is deeply rooted in U.S. culture. Throughout most of our history, the economy has grown steadily, raising living standards. Even today, for some people at least, the American dream is alive and well. In 2013, more than one in four U.S. families earned \$100,000 or more, compared with just one in twelve back in 1967 (in dollars controlled for inflation). “Millionaire households” in the United States now number almost 8 million, twice the number in 1995 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014; Wolff, 2014).

Yet not all indicators are positive. Note these disturbing trends:

- 1. For many workers, earnings have stalled.** Between 1958 and 1978, the annual income of a fifty-year-old male worker with a full-time job climbed by about 71 percent (from \$31,748 to \$54,310 in constant 2013 dollars). Between 1978 and 2013, however, this worker's income *decreased* by 11 percent, even as the number of hours worked increased and the cost of necessities like housing, education, and medical care went way up (Russell, 1995; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).
- 2. More jobs offer little income.** The expanding global economy has moved many industrial jobs overseas, reducing the number of high-paying factory jobs here in the United States. Computer-controlled robots have eliminated still more jobs. At the same time, the expansion of our service economy means that more of today's jobs—in fast-food restaurants or large discount stores—offer relatively low wages.
- 3. The recent recession brought economic decline.** The median net worth for U.S. families reached a high point of about \$120,000 in 2007. With the economic recession that began by the end of that year, this figure had fallen to \$81,200 by 2013. This drop reflected both a drop in housing values throughout most of the United States and also a decline in the value of other investments.
- 4. Young people are remaining at home.** Currently, more than half of young people aged eighteen to twenty-four (58 percent of men and 52 percent of women) are living with their parents. Since 1975, the average age at marriage has moved upward five years (to 27.0 years for women and 29.3 years for men).

Over the past generation, more people have become rich. Even so, in the years after the onset of the recent recession, the number of people worth more than \$5 million actually declined, as the value of investments and homes went down. In this sense, some of the rich have "shared the pain," although they are not suffering like most "ordinary" people. At the top of the class system, however, the very rich claim an ever-increasing share of all wealth (Wolff, 2014). Over the past several decades, the highest-paid corporate executives have enjoyed a runaway rise in their earnings.

The picture is different at the middle of the class structure and below that. The increasing share of low-paying jobs has brought downward mobility for millions of families, feeding the fear that the chance to enjoy a middle-class lifestyle is slipping away. Two generations ago, most people defined being "middle class" in terms of having a college education, a professional job, and a house in the suburbs. Today, according to one recent survey, more than 80 percent said being "middle class" meant having a secure job. Surveys also confirm that fewer and fewer people think of themselves as "middle class" and that the share of people

who say they are in the "lower-middle class" or the "lower class" is on the rise. Some sobering numbers underlie these trends. As a glance back at Figure 11–2 shows, although median family income doubled in the generation between 1950 and 1973, it grew by only 13 percent over almost two generations. The recent recession actually pushed median income downward, with some gains in the last few years (CNBC, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

The Global Economy and the U.S. Class Structure

Underlying the shifts in U.S. class structure is global economic change. Much of the industrial production that gave U.S. workers high-paying jobs a generation ago has moved overseas. With less industry at home, the United States now serves as a vast market for industrial goods such as cars and popular items like stereos, cameras, and computers made in China, Japan, South Korea, and elsewhere.

High-paying jobs in manufacturing, held by 28 percent of the U.S. labor force in 1960, support only 9 percent of workers today (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). In their place, the economy now offers service work, which often pays far less. A traditionally high-paying corporation like USX (formerly United States Steel) now employs fewer people than the expanding McDonald's chain, and fast-food clerks make only a fraction of what steelworkers earn.

The global reorganization of work has not been bad news for everyone. On the contrary, the global economy is driving upward social mobility for educated people who specialize in law, finance, marketing, and computer technology. Even allowing for the recent economic downturn, the global economic expansion helped push up the stock market more than eighteen-fold between 1980 and 2015, increasing the wealth of families with money to invest over this period.

But the same trend has hurt many average workers, who have lost their factory jobs and now perform low-wage service work. In addition, many companies (General Motors and Ford are recent examples) have downsized, cutting the ranks of their workforce in their efforts to stay competitive in world markets. As a result, even though 52 percent of all families contain two or more workers—more than twice the share in 1950—many families are working harder simply to hold on to what they have (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Poverty and the Trend Toward Increasing Inequality

11.6 Discuss patterns of poverty and increasing economic inequality in the United States.

Even in a rich nation such as the United States, there is a lot of talk about poverty. Social stratification creates both

relative poverty the lack of resources of some people in relation to those who have more

absolute poverty a lack of resources that is life-threatening

"haves" and "have-nots." All systems of social inequality create poverty, or at least **relative poverty**, *the lack of resources of some people in relation to those who have more*. A more serious but preventable problem is **absolute poverty**, *a lack of resources that is life-threatening*.

As Chapter 12 ("Global Stratification") explains, just over 1 billion human beings—one person in seven—are at risk of absolute poverty. Even in the affluent United States, families go hungry, live in inadequate housing, and suffer poor health because of a serious lack of resources.

The Extent of Poverty

In 2013, the government classified 45.3 million men, women, and children—14.5 percent of the population—as poor. This count of relative poverty refers to families with incomes below an official poverty line, which for a family of four in that year was set at \$23,834. The poverty line is about three times what the government estimates people must spend for food. But the income of the average poor family was just 59 percent of this amount. This means that the typical poor family had to get by on an income of about \$14,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Figure 11–4 shows that the official poverty rate fell during the 1960s, and then rose

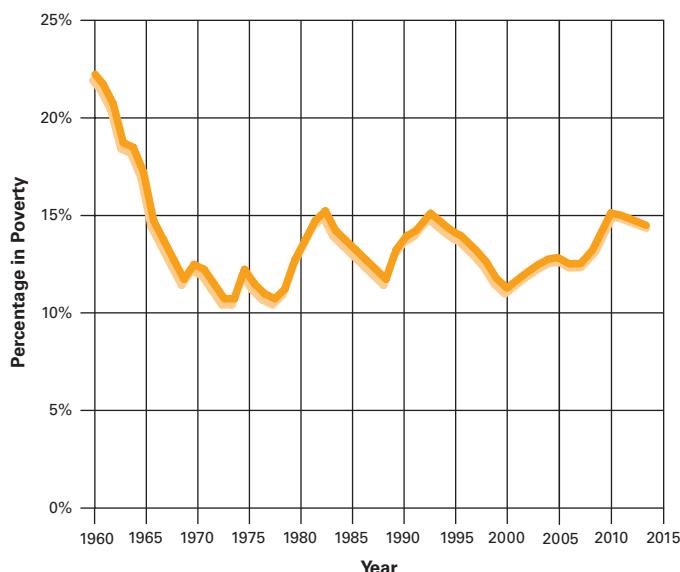


Figure 11–4 The Poverty Rate in the United States, 1960–2013

The share of our population in poverty fell dramatically between 1960 and 1970. Since then, the poverty rate has remained between 10 and 15 percent of the population.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

and fell within a narrow range in the decades since, rising with the recent recession.

Who Are the Poor?

Although no single description fits all poor people, poverty is pronounced among certain categories of our population. Where these categories overlap, the problem is especially serious.

AGE A generation ago, the elderly were at greatest risk for poverty. But thanks to better retirement programs offered today by private employers and the government, the poverty rate for people over age sixty-five fell from 30 percent in 1967 to 9.5 percent—well below the national average—in 2013. Looking at it from another angle, about 9.3 percent (4.2 million) of the poor are elderly (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Today the burden of poverty falls more heavily on children. In 2013, 19.9 percent of people under age eighteen (14.7 million children) and 19.4 percent of people age eighteen to twenty-four (5.8 million young adults) were poor. Put another way, 45.2 percent of the U.S. poor are young people no older than twenty-four.

RACE AND ETHNICITY Two-thirds of all poor people are white (including those who also say they are Hispanic); 24 percent of the poor are African Americans. But in relation to their overall numbers, African Americans are almost three times as likely as non-Hispanic whites to be poor. In 2013, 27.2 percent of African Americans (11 million people) lived in poverty, compared to 23.5 percent of Hispanics (12.7 million), 10.5 percent of Asian Americans (1.8 million), and 9.6 percent of non-Hispanic whites (18.8 million). The poverty gap between whites and minorities has changed little since 1975.

People of color have especially high rates of child poverty. Among African American children, 38.3 percent are poor; the comparable figures are 30.4 percent among Hispanic children and 10.7 percent among non-Hispanic white children (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

GENDER AND FAMILY PATTERNS Of all poor people age eighteen or older, 59 percent are women and 41 percent are men. This difference reflects the fact that women who head households are at high risk of poverty. Of all poor families, 51 percent are headed by women with no husband present; just 11 percent of poor families are headed by single men.

The United States has thus experienced a **feminization of poverty**, *the trend of women making up an increasing proportion of the poor*. In 1960, only 25 percent of all poor households were headed by women; the majority of poor families had both wives and husbands in the home. By 2013, however, the share of poor households headed by a single woman had more than doubled to 51 percent.

The feminization of poverty is one result of a larger trend: the rapidly increasing number of households at all class levels headed by single women. This trend, coupled with the fact that households headed by women are at high risk of poverty, helps explain why women and their children make up an increasing share of the U.S. poor.

URBAN AND RURAL POVERTY In the United States, the greatest concentration of poverty is found in central cities, where the 2013 poverty rate stood at 19 percent. The poverty rate in suburbs is 11.1 percent. Thus the poverty rate for urban areas as a whole is 14.2 percent—somewhat lower than the 16.1 percent found in rural areas. National Map 11–2 on page 310 shows that most of the counties with the highest poverty rate in the United States are rural.

Wherever poor families may live, they are becoming more socially segregated. That is, as income inequality increases, the odds that poor families live in communities in which most people are poor are also increasing. A majority of low-income families still live in communities in which most people are not poor. But almost 30 percent of the poor now live in mostly poor communities, a sharp increase from about 20 percent in 1980 (Pew Research Center, 2012; Taylor, 2012).

Explaining Poverty

The richest nation on Earth contains tens of millions of poor people, a fact that raises serious questions. It is true, as some analysts remind us, that most poor people in the United States are far better off than the poor in other countries: 33 percent of U.S. poor families own a home, at least 64 percent own a car, and about 81 percent say they usually have enough food (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2015). But there is little doubt that poverty harms the overall well-being of millions of people in this country.

Why is there poverty in the first place? We will examine two opposing explanations for poverty that lead to a lively and important political debate.

ONE VIEW: BLAME THE POOR One approach holds that *the poor are mostly responsible for their own poverty*. Throughout this nation's history, people have placed a high cultural value on self-reliance, convinced that social standing is mostly a matter of individual talent and effort. According to this view, society offers plenty of opportunities to anyone who is able and willing to take advantage of them, and the poor are those

people who cannot or will not work due to a lack of skills, schooling, or motivation.

In his study of poverty in Latin American cities, the anthropologist Oscar Lewis (1961) noted that many poor become trapped in a *culture of poverty*, a lower-class subculture that can destroy people's ambition to improve their lives. Raised in poor families, children become resigned to their situation, producing a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty.

In 1996, hoping to break the cycle of poverty in the United States, Congress changed the welfare system, which had provided federal funds to assist poor people since 1935. The federal government continues to send money to the states to distribute to needy people, but benefits carry strict time limits—in most cases, no more than two years at a stretch and a lifetime total of five years as an individual moves in and out of the welfare system. The stated purpose of this reform was to force people to be self-supporting and move them away from dependency on government.

ANOTHER VIEW: BLAME SOCIETY A different position, argued by William Julius Wilson (1996a, 1996b; Mouw, 2000), holds that *society is mostly responsible for poverty*. Wilson points to the loss of jobs in the inner cities as the main cause of poverty, claiming that there is simply not enough work to support families. Wilson sees any apparent lack of trying on the part of poor people as a result of little opportunity rather than a cause of poverty. From Wilson's point of view, Lewis's analysis amounts to

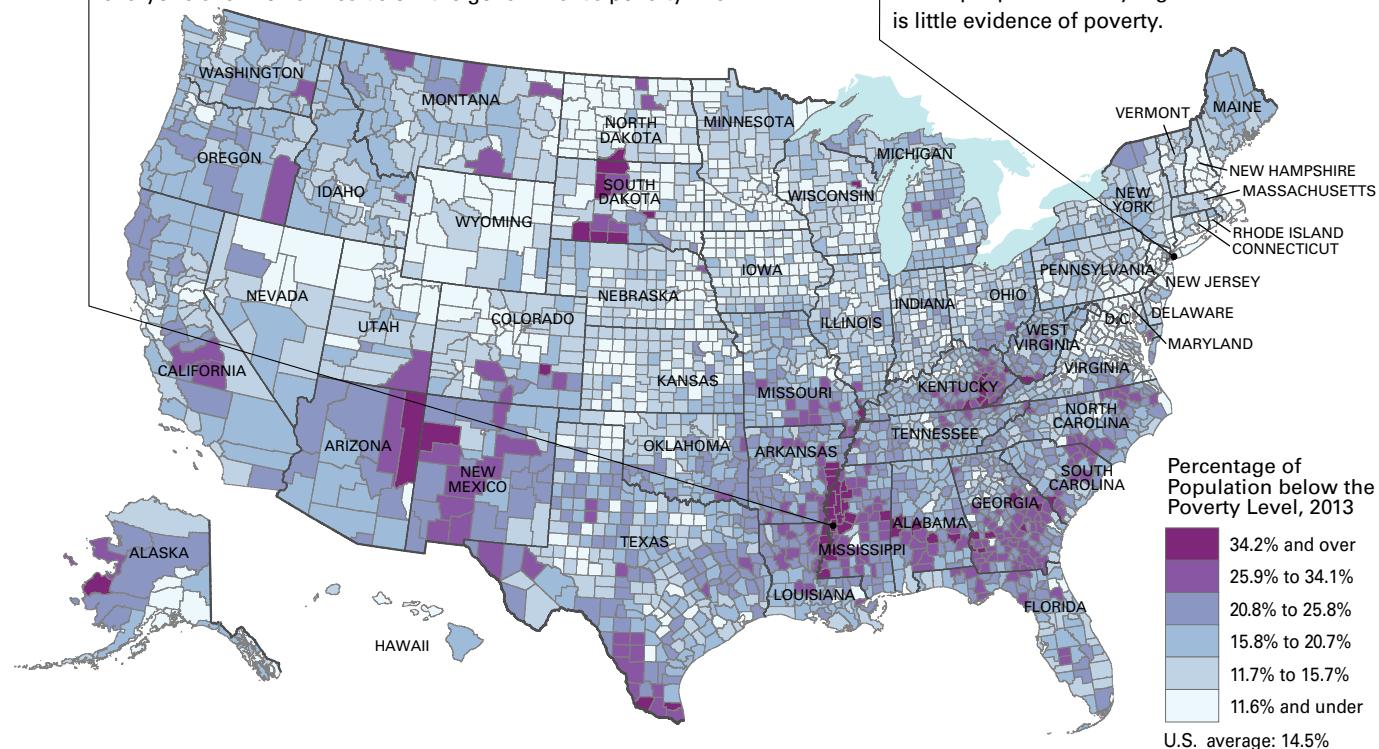


Henry Ossawa Tanner captured the humility and humanity of impoverished people in his painting *The Thankful Poor*. This insight is important in a society that tends to define poor people as morally unworthy and deserving of their bitter plight.

SOURCE: Henry Ossawa Tanner (1859–1937), *The Thankful Poor*. Private collection. Art Resource, New York.

Seeing Ourselves

Anna Mae Peters lives in Nitta Yuma, Mississippi. Almost everyone she knows lives below the government's poverty line.



National Map 11–2 Poverty across the United States, 2013

This map shows that the poorest counties in the United States—where the poverty rate is more than twice the national average—are in Appalachia, across the Deep South, along the border with Mexico, near the Four Corners region of the Southwest, and in the Dakotas. Can you suggest some reasons for this pattern?

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

blaming the victims for their own suffering. The Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life box provides a closer look at Wilson's argument and how it would shape public policy.

EVALUATE

The U.S. public is evenly divided over whether the government or people themselves should take responsibility for reducing poverty (Smith et al., 2013:508). And here's what we know about poverty and work: Government statistics show that 56 percent of the heads of poor households did not work at all during 2013, and an additional 30 percent worked only part time (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Such facts seem to support the "blame the poor" side of the argument, because one major cause of poverty is not holding a job.

But the *reasons* that people do not work seem more in step with the "blame society" position. Middle-class women may be able to combine working and child rearing, but this is much harder for poor women who cannot afford child care, and few of today's employers provide child care programs. As William Julius Wilson explains, many people are idle not because they are avoiding work but because there are not enough jobs to go around. In short, the most effective way to reduce poverty is to ensure a greater supply

of jobs as well as child care for parents who work (Wilson, 1996a; Bainbridge, Meyers, & Waldfogel, 2003).

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Explain the view that the poor should take responsibility for poverty and the view that society is responsible for poverty. Which is closer to your own view?

The Working Poor

Not all poor people are jobless. The *working poor* command the sympathy and support of people on both sides of the poverty debate. In 2013, some 14 percent of heads of poor families (1.3 million women and men) worked at least fifty weeks of the year and yet could not escape poverty. Another 30 percent of these heads of families (2.7 million people) remained poor despite part-time employment. Put differently, 3.2 percent of full-time workers earn so little that they remain poor (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Since July 2009, the federal minimum wage has been \$7.25 per hour. (Some states or municipalities set higher wage levels; in 2012, the nation's highest minimum wage was \$10.24 per hour in San Francisco.) Several large

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

When Work Disappears, the Result Is Poverty

The U.S. economy has created tens of millions of new jobs in recent decades. Yet African Americans who live in inner cities have faced a catastrophic loss of work. Unemployment rates were sky high even before the recent recession, which has only made the problem worse. William Julius Wilson points out that although people continue to talk about welfare reform, few Democratic or Republican leaders have said anything about the lack of work in central cities.

With the loss of inner-city jobs, Wilson continues, for the first time in U.S. history a large majority of the adults in our inner cities are not working. Studying the Washington Park area of Chicago, Wilson found a troubling trend. Back in 1950, most adults in this African American community had jobs, but by the mid-1990s, two-thirds did not. As one elderly woman who moved to the neighborhood in 1953 explained:

When I moved in, the neighborhood was intact. It was intact with homes, beautiful homes, mini-mansions, with stores, laundromats, with Chinese cleaners. We had drugstores. We had hotels. We had doctors over on 39th Street. We had doctors' offices in the neighborhood. We had the middle class and the upper-middle class. It has gone from affluent to where it is today. (Wilson, 1996b:28)

Why has this neighborhood declined? Wilson's eight years of research point to one answer: There are barely any jobs. It is the loss of work that has pushed people into desperate pov-



William Julius Wilson spent years studying neighborhoods like this one in Chicago. He now teaches at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

employers, including Walmart and McDonald's, have also recently raised their minimum wage. But at the federal minimum wage of \$7.25, working is no guarantee of escaping poverty—even earning \$8.00 per hour, a full-time worker cannot lift an urban family of four above the poverty line.

erty, weakened families, and made people turn to welfare. In nearby Woodlawn, Wilson identified more than 800 businesses that had operated in 1950; today, just 100 remain. In addition, a number of major employers in the past—including Western Electric and International Harvester—closed their plant doors in the late 1960s. The inner cities have fallen victim to economic change, including downsizing and the loss of industrial jobs that have moved overseas.

Wilson paints a grim picture. But he also believes we have the power to create new jobs. Wilson proposes attacking the problem in stages. First, the government could hire people to do all kinds of work, from clearing slums to putting up new housing. Such a program, modeled on the Works Progress Administration (WPA) created in 1935 during the Great Depression, would move people from welfare to work and in the process create much-needed hope. In addition, federal and state governments must improve schools by enacting performance standards and providing more funding. Of special importance is ensuring that children learn the language skills and computer skills they need to perform the jobs being created by the Information Revolution. Improved regional public transportation would connect cities (where people need work) and suburbs (where most jobs now are). In addition, more affordable child care would help single mothers and fathers balance the responsibilities of employment and parenting.

Wilson claims that his proposals are well grounded in research. But he knows that politics revolves around other considerations as well. For one thing, if the public *thinks* there are jobs available, it is hard to change the perception that the poor are simply avoiding work. He also concedes that his proposals, at least in the short term, are more expensive than continuing to funnel welfare assistance to jobless communities.

But what are the long-term costs of allowing our cities to decay while suburbs prosper? On the other hand, what would be the benefits of giving everyone the hope and satisfaction that are supposed to define our way of life?

What Do You Think?

1. If Wilson were running for public office, do you think he would be elected? Why or why not?
2. In your opinion, why are people so reluctant to see inner-city poverty as a problem?
3. Where do you agree with Wilson's analysis of poverty? Where do you disagree?

Currently, it would take an hourly wage of about \$11.46 to do that. In different terms, half of all of today's workers now earn less than about \$28,000 a year, which puts most people below, at, or close to the poverty line for a family of four (Raum, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).



Is society responsible for poverty or are individuals themselves to blame? When it comes to homeless families, most people think society should do more, but many people see homeless adults as choosing to live the way they do.

Individual ability and personal effort do play a part in shaping social position. So do decisions like dropping out of school and deciding to have a child without enough family income to support everyone. However, the weight of sociological evidence points to society, not individual character traits, as the primary cause of poverty because more and more of the jobs that are available offer only low wages. In addition, the poor are *categories* of people—female heads of families, people of color, people isolated from the larger society in inner-city areas—who face special barriers and limited opportunities.

The Controversy & Debate box takes a closer look at current welfare policy. Understanding this important social issue can help us decide how our society should respond to the problem of poverty, as well as the problem of homelessness, discussed next.

Homelessness

In 2014, the government's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) conducted a national survey of cities and towns to find out how many people in the United States were homeless on a single night in January. The answer was about 578,400, including people living in shelters, in transitional housing, and on the street. As with earlier estimates of the homeless population, critics claimed that the HUD survey undercounted the homeless, who may well number several

million people. In addition, they add, evidence suggests that the number of homeless people in the United States is increasing (Kaufman, 2004; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2014).

The familiar stereotypes of homeless people—men sleeping in doorways and women carrying everything they own in a shopping bag—have been replaced by the “new homeless”: people thrown out of work because of plant closings, women who take their children and leave home to escape domestic violence, women and men forced out of apartments by rent increases, and others unable to meet mortgage or rent payments because of low wages or no work at all. To-

day, no stereotype paints a complete picture of the homeless.

The large majority of homeless people report that they do not work, although about 18 percent have at least a part-time job (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2014). Working or not, all homeless people have one thing in common: *poverty*. For that reason, the explanations of poverty just presented also apply to homelessness. Some (more conservative) people blame the *personal traits* of the homeless themselves. One-third of homeless people are substance abusers, and 28 percent are mentally ill. More broadly, a fraction of 1 percent of our population, for one reason or another, seems unable to cope with our complex and highly competitive society (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013; U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2014).

Other (more liberal) people see homelessness as resulting from *societal factors*, including low wages and a lack of low-income housing (Kozol, 1988; Bohannan, 1991; Kaufman, 2004). Supporters of this position note that 37 percent of the homeless consists of entire families, and they point to children as the fastest-growing category of the homeless.

No one disputes that a large proportion of homeless people are personally impaired to some degree, but untangling what is cause and what is effect is not so easy. Long-term, structural changes in the U.S. economy, cutbacks in social service budgets, and the recent economic downturn have all contributed to the problem of homelessness.

Controversy & Debate

The Welfare Dilemma

Marco: (*rushing in the door*) Sorry I'm late. I stopped at the store and got stuck behind some welfare mother in the checkout line.

Sergi: (*looking back with a confused grin*) Exactly what does a person on welfare look like?

What is your image of a "welfare recipient"? If you are like many people in the United States, you might think of a middle-aged African American woman. But you would be wrong. In truth, the typical person receiving welfare in this country is a child who is white.

There is a lot of confusion about welfare, as well as disagreement about whether it is a good or bad idea. In 1996, Congress decided to end the federal government's role in providing income assistance to poor households. In place of this federal program, new state-run programs now offer limited help to the poor, but they require people who receive aid to get job training or find work—or have their benefits cut off.

To understand how we got to where we are, let's begin by explaining what, exactly, welfare is. The term "welfare" refers to an assortment of policies and programs designed to improve the well-being of some low-income people.

Until the welfare reform of 1996, most people used the term to refer to just one part of the overall system, Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), a federal program of monthly financial support for parents (mostly single women) to care for themselves and their children. In 1996, about 5 million households received AFDC for some part of the year.

Conservatives opposed AFDC, claiming that rather than reducing child poverty, it made the problem worse, in two ways. First, they claimed that AFDC weakened families, because it paid benefits to poor mothers only if no husband lived in the home. As a result, the government was providing an economic incentive to poor women to have children outside of marriage. To conservatives, marriage is a key to reducing poverty: Only one in seventeen married-couple families is poor; more than nine in ten AFDC families were headed by an unmarried woman.

Second, conservatives believe that welfare encourages poor people to become dependent on government handouts, and cite the fact that eight out of ten poor heads of households did not have full-time jobs and only 5 percent of single mothers receiving AFDC worked full time, compared to more than half of nonpoor single mothers. Conservatives say that welfare gradually moved well beyond its original purpose of short-term help to nonworking women with children (say, after divorce or death of a husband) and gradually became a way of life. Once trapped in dependency, poor women would raise children who were themselves likely to be poor as adults.

Liberals have a different view. Why, they ask, do people object to government money going to poor mothers and children when most "welfare" actually goes to richer people? The cost of AFDC was as high as \$25 billion annually—no

small sum, to be sure, but much less than the \$672 billion in annual Social Security benefits Uncle Sam provides to 47 million senior citizens, most of whom are not poor. And it is just a small fraction of the more than \$1 trillion "bailout money" Congress voted in 2008 and 2009 to assist the struggling financial industry.

Liberals insist that most poor families who turn to public assistance are truly needy. The typical household receives only about \$375 per month in assistance, hardly enough to attract people to a life of welfare dependency. Even with some additional money in the form of food stamps, households assisted by welfare still struggle well below the poverty line. Therefore, liberals see public assistance as a "Band-Aid approach" to the serious social problems of too few jobs and too much income inequality in the United States. As for the charge that public assistance weakens families, liberals see single parenting as a broad trend found at all class levels in many countries.

Back in 1996, the conservative arguments carried the day, ending the AFDC program. Our society's individualistic culture has always encouraged us to blame people themselves (rather than society) for poverty, which becomes a sign not of need but of laziness and personal failure. This view of the poor is probably what led Congress to replace the federal AFDC program with state-run programs called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), requiring poor adults to get job training and limiting income assistance to two consecutive years with a lifetime limit of five years.

By 2008, the new TANF policy had reduced the number of households receiving income assistance by about 60 percent. Many single parents who were once on welfare have taken jobs or are receiving job training. In addition, the rate of out-of-wedlock births has fallen. With these facts in mind, conservatives who supported welfare reform see the new program as a huge success. But liberals claim that the reform is far from successful. They point out that many of the people who are now working earn so little pay that they are hardly better off than before. In addition, half of these workers have no health insurance. In other words, the reform has greatly reduced the number of people receiving welfare but has done little to reduce the extent of poverty.

What Do You Think?

1. How does our cultural emphasis on self-reliance help explain the controversy surrounding public assistance? Why do people not criticize benefits (such as home mortgage interest deductions) for people who are better off?
2. Do you approve of the time limits on benefits built into the TANF program? Why or why not?
3. Do you think the Obama administration will reduce poverty? Explain your answer.

SOURCES: Licher & Crowley (2002), Licher & Jayakody (2002), Von Drehle (2008); U.S. Census Bureau (2014); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2014).

The Trend Toward Increasing Inequality

This chapter has explained that there is a rising level of debate about income inequality in the United States. Economic inequality has reached levels not seen in this country since 1929, just before the Great Depression. As shown in Figure 11–5, the 1920s was a decade that saw steady gains in income for the highest-earning 1 percent of the population who, just before the stock market crash, were receiving almost 25 percent of all income.

For several decades following the Depression, the trend was toward greater income equality. By the 1970s, as the figure shows, the richest 1 percent received less than 10 percent of all income. During the last thirty years, however, the trend has reversed direction. Today, the highest-paid 1 percent of the population enjoys about the same share of all income that the top earners received in 1929.

The United States has always been a nation in which most people expect some degree of economic inequality. This country's core values of competitive individualism and personal responsibility support the idea that people should receive rewards in proportion to their talents, abilities, and efforts.

Even so, people are now losing confidence that this is, in fact, the case. In a recent survey, U.S. adults were presented with the statement, "Differences in income in America are too large." In response, 63 percent agreed and only 16 percent disagreed (the remainder said that they neither agreed nor disagreed or that they did not know) (Smith et al., 2013:2225). Other surveys find that a large majority of people agree with the statement, "This is a country in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer" (Kohut, 2011).

Are the Very Rich Worth the Money?

Such widespread concern about economic inequality suggests serious problems. First, in a society in which most think there is too much income inequality, people doubt that the highest-paid individuals are really worth the money they are paid. Certainly, there are some very smart, very talented, and very hardworking women and men in our country who are rewarded with high incomes. People in the entertainment industry are among the highest paid of all. Beyoncé tops the list with earnings of \$115 million in 2014, earning more than Ellen DeGeneres (\$70 million), Sofia Vergara (\$37 million), and Kanye West (\$30 million). Such high incomes are what we have come to expect very popular media stars to receive, and we may justify such pay

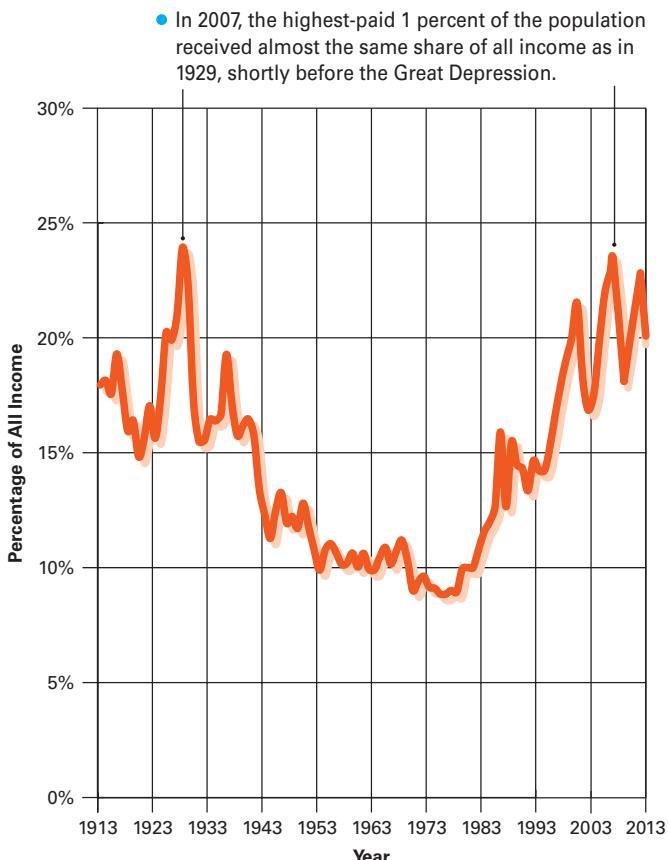


Figure 11–5 The Share of All Income Earned by the Richest 1 Percent, 1913–2013

In 1929, the richest 1 percent of the U.S. population earned almost one-fourth of all income. This share declined in the decades that followed, dipping below 10 percent by the mid-1970s. In recent decades, however, the trend has been toward greater income inequality. By 2007, the top 1 percent was earning almost one-fourth of all income once again, although this share fell with the onset of the economic recession.

SOURCE: Saez & Piketty (2015).

because their talent allows these celebrities to attract huge numbers of viewers and generate vast sums of advertising money.

But we should be careful not to assume that income is directly related to talent, ability, and effort. In 2011, Alex Rodriguez of the New York Yankees took home the biggest paycheck among major league ballplayers, at \$32 million. This amount almost equals the money paid that season to the entire Kansas City Royals team, whose players surely offer more talent, ability, and effort than even the single best player on the Yankees. Another Yankee—Babe Ruth—who was arguably the greatest ballplayer of all time earned only \$80,000 (or \$1.2 million in today's dollars) in his highest-paid seasons (1930 and 1931) with the Yankees.

In recent years, doubts about how much the rich in the corporate world deserve their rewards have been increasing. In 2013, according to *CNN/Money*, Larry Ellison, CEO of Oracle, was the highest-earning CEO, receiving total compensation of \$78.4 million in salary, bonus, stock options, and other perks. That year, the country's ten highest-paid CEOs averaged just over \$30 million each in earnings. Looking back in time, we see that today's corporate CEOs are earning more now than ever. In 1970, the compensation of top CEOs was about forty times what the average company employee earned. In 2013, top CEOs earned more than 400 times the company average. Between 2010 and 2013, average CEO compensation jumped more than 20 percent and the upward trend shows no sign of ending (Helman, 2011; Roth, 2011; Corporate Library, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2014).

Defenders of such high pay claim that companies pay whatever it takes to attract the most talented people to top leadership, which helps companies perform better. Critics counter that paying a CEO a lot of money is no guarantee that the company will perform well (Helman, 2011).

Can the Rest of Us Get Ahead?

A second problem that accompanies increasing inequality in the United States is rising doubt that people who are willing to work hard can get ahead. The idea that those willing to make the effort can enjoy economic security and expect to improve social standing over time is at the heart of the American dream. But, in recent decades, while people at the top of the income hierarchy have been generously rewarded, average people who work hard have been struggling to hang on to what they have. With



The issue of economic inequality has become a major concern, especially among people with a liberal political orientation. Although there was little mention of this issue in presidential politics for decades, President Obama has stated that reducing economic inequality is among the most important challenges facing the United States.

good-paying jobs harder to find, it is not surprising that the share of people who say that they believe their family can achieve the American dream has declined—from 76 percent in 2001 to 40 percent in 2014 (CNN/ORC International Poll, 2014).

Today, some analysts are claiming that the United States is no longer the “land of opportunity” (Stiglitz, 2012). In addition, the public’s awareness of economic inequality is as high as it has been since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Should the trend toward greater economic inequality persist, and should the loss of confidence in our system of social inequality continue, the demands for basic change to our society are sure to intensify.

Finally, as we debate the shape of inequality here at home, we must remember that the drama of social stratification extends far beyond the borders of the United States. The most striking social inequality is found not by looking inside one country but by comparing living standards in various parts of the world. In Chapter 12, we broaden our focus by investigating global stratification.

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 11 Social Class in the United States

How do we understand inequality in the United States?

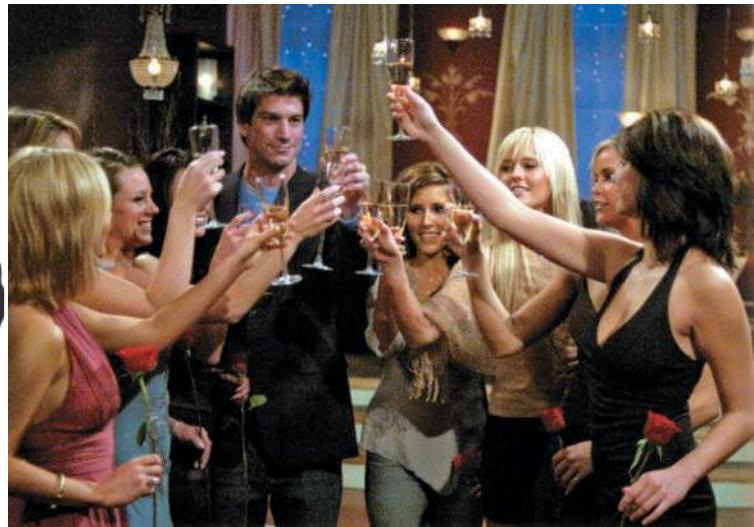
This chapter sketches the class structure of the United States and how people end up in their position in our system of social inequality. How accurately do you think the mass media reflect the reality of inequality

in our society? Look at the three photos of television shows, one from back in the 1950s and the other two from today. What messages about social standing, and how we get there, does each show convey?

In *The Millionaire*, a popular television show that ran from 1955 until 1960, a very rich man (who was never fully shown on camera) had the curious hobby of giving away \$1 million to other people he had never even met. Each week, he gave his personal assistant, Michael Anthony, a check to pass along to “the next millionaire.” Anthony tracked down the person and handed over the money, and the story went on to reveal how such great wealth from out of nowhere changed someone’s life for better (or sometimes for worse). What does this story line seem to suggest about social class position?



In the TV show *The Bachelor*, first aired in 2002, a young bachelor works his way through a collection of twenty-five attractive young women, beginning with group dates, moving on to overnight visits with three “finalists,” and (in most cases) proposing to his “final selection.” Much of the interaction takes place in a lavish, 7,500-square-foot home somewhere in southern California. What does this show suggest is the key to social position? What message does this show promote about the importance of marriage for women?





Project Runway, which began in 2004, places twelve or more fashion designers in competition, gradually eliminating them until only one “winner” remains. What messages about social position and achieving success does this show present to young people?

Hint In general, the mass media present social standing as a reflection of an individual's personal traits and sometimes sheer luck. In *The Millionaire*, wealth was visited on some people for no apparent reason at all. In *The Bachelor*, women try to gain the approval of a man. In *Project Runway*, the key to success is fashion sense and ingenuity. But social structure is also involved in ways that we easily overlook. Is becoming a millionaire really a matter of luck? Is there any significance to the fact that (as of 2011) all the bachelors on that show have been white? Does everyone with a lot of creativity have an equal chance to achieve success? Does social standing result from personal competition as much as television shows suggest?

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

1. Some countries include meritocratic elements in their social structure on the one hand and social position markers such as ancestry, gender, race, and ethnicity on the other. Consider the social structure of your country. How different is your country from others across the globe?
2. Is income the only factor that affects and can measure social mobility, or are there any others? How do these factors affect mobility within a person's life and across generations? Do you think that a country's social structure and culture play any role in supporting mobility or opposing it?
3. As a sociologist, would you blame individuals for increasing poverty and social inequality, or would you blame society? What are the viewpoints of various sociologists on this issue?
4. Go to www.sociologyinfocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 11 Social Class in the United States

Dimensions of Social Inequality

11.1 Describe the distribution of income and wealth in the United States. (pages 294–96)

Social stratification involves many dimensions:

- **Income**—Earnings from work and investments are unequal, with the richest 20% of families earning thirteen times as much as the poorest 20% of families.
- **Wealth**—The total value of all assets minus debts, wealth is distributed more unequally than income, with the richest 20% of families holding 89% of all wealth.
- **Power**—Income and wealth are important sources of power.
- **Occupational prestige**—Work generates not only income but also prestige. White-collar jobs generally offer more income and prestige than blue-collar jobs. Many lower-prestige jobs are performed by women and people of color.
- **Schooling**—Schooling affects both occupation and income. Some categories of people have greater opportunities for schooling than others.

income earnings from work or investments

wealth the total value of money and other assets, minus outstanding debts

U.S. Stratification: Merit and Caste

11.2 Explain how someone's position at birth affects social standing later in life. (pages 296–97)

Although the United States is a meritocracy, social position in this country involves some caste elements:

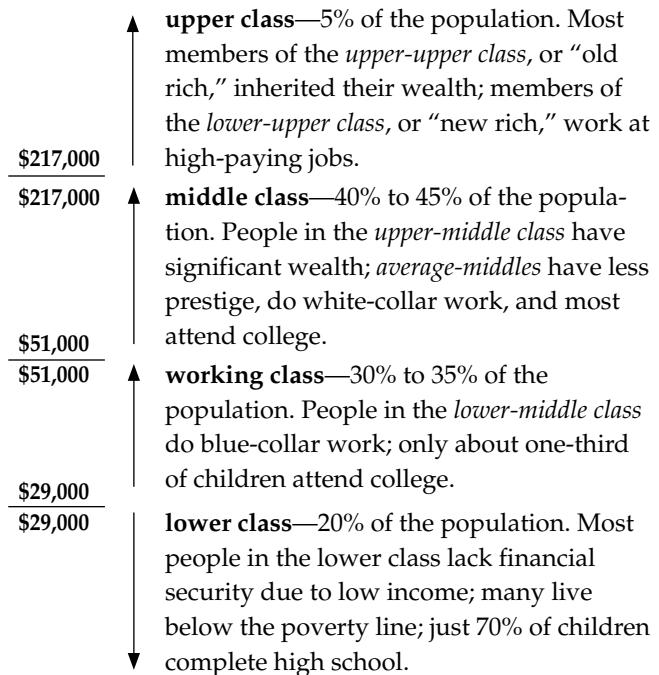
- **Ancestry**—Being born into a particular family affects a person's opportunities for schooling, occupation, and income.
- **Race and ethnicity**—Non-Hispanic white families enjoy high social standing based on income and wealth. By contrast, African American and Hispanic families remain disadvantaged.
- **Gender**—On average, women have less income, wealth, and occupational prestige than men.

Social Classes in the United States

11.3 Describe the various social class positions in U.S. society. (pages 297–300)

Defining **social classes** in the United States is difficult because of low status consistency and relatively high social mobility. But we can describe four general rankings:

- the upper class
- the middle class
- the working class
- the lower class



The Difference Class Makes

11.4 Analyze how social class position affects health, values, politics, and family life. (pages 300–3)

Health

- Rich people, on average, live longer and receive better health care than poor people.

Values and Attitudes

- Affluent people, with greater education and financial security, display greater tolerance than working-class people.

Politics

- Affluent people tend to be more conservative on economic issues and more liberal on social issues than poor people.
- Affluent people, who are better served by the political system, are more likely to vote than poor people.

Family and Gender

- Affluent families pass on advantages in the form of “cultural capital” to their children.
- Class also shapes the division of family responsibilities, with lower-class people maintaining more traditional gender roles.

Social Mobility

11.5 Assess the extent of social mobility in the United States. (pages 303–7)

- Social mobility is common in the United States, as it is in other high-income countries, but typically only small changes occur from one generation to the next.
- Between 1980 and 2013, the richest 20% of U.S. families enjoyed a 56% jump in annual income, while the 20% of families with the lowest income experienced a 7% decrease.
- Historically, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and women have had less opportunity for upward mobility in U.S. society than white men.
- The American dream—the expectation of upward social mobility—is deeply rooted in our culture. Although high-income families are earning more and more, many average families are struggling to hold on to what they have.
- Marriage encourages upward social mobility. Divorce lowers social standing.
- The global reorganization of work has created upward social mobility for educated people in the United States but has hurt average workers, whose factory jobs have moved overseas and who are forced to take low-wage service work.

intragenerational social mobility a change in social position occurring during a person’s lifetime

intergenerational social mobility upward or downward social mobility of children in relation to their parents

Poverty and the Trend Toward Increasing Inequality

11.6 Discuss patterns of poverty and increasing economic inequality in the United States. (pages 307–15)

Poverty Profile

- The government classifies 45.3 million people, 14.5% of the population, as poor.
- About 45% of the poor are under age twenty-five.
- Sixty-six percent of the poor are white (both Hispanic and non-Hispanic), but in relation to their population size, African Americans are more likely to be poor.
- The **feminization of poverty** refers to the trend by which more poor families are headed by women.
- About 44% of the heads of poor families are among the “working poor” who work at least part time but do not earn enough to lift a family of four above the poverty line.
- An estimated 1.6 million people are homeless for some time during the course of a year. Research carried out on a single night in January 2014 tallied 578,424 homeless people in the United States.

Explanations of Poverty

- Blame individuals: The *culture of poverty* thesis states that poverty is caused by shortcomings in the poor themselves (Oscar Lewis).
- Blame society: Poverty is caused by society’s unequal distribution of wealth and lack of good jobs (William Julius Wilson).

Increasing Social Inequality

- In recent decades, inequality of income and wealth has increased.
- Surveys show that most people think that income differences in the United States are too large.
- Many people are concerned that hard work may not be enough to get ahead.

relative poverty the lack of resources of some people in relation to those who have more

absolute poverty a lack of resources that is life-threatening

feminization of poverty the trend of women making up an increasing proportion of the poor

Chapter 12

Global Stratification



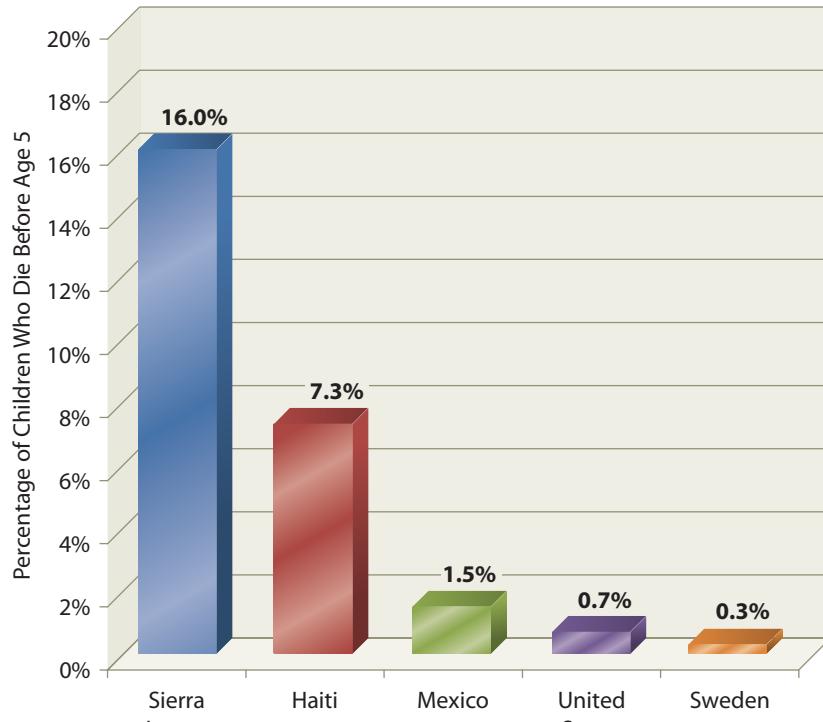
Learning Objectives

- 12.1** Describe the division of the world into high-, middle-, and low-income countries.
- 12.2** Discuss patterns and explanations of poverty around the world.
- 12.3** Apply sociological theories to the topic of global inequality.



The Power of Society

to determine a child's chance of survival to age five



SOURCE: UNICEF (2014).

In a world of unequal economic development, how does a child's country of birth affect the chances of survival? Of all children born in Sierra Leone, a low-income nation on Africa's western coast, 16 percent die before reaching the age of five. In Haiti, another low-income nation, 7 percent of children suffer this fate. In high-income nations, the share is much lower. In the United States, less than 1 percent of children will die so early in life. In nations, including Sweden, with more extensive social welfare systems, the share is even lower.

Chapter Overview

Social stratification involves not just people within a single country; it is also a worldwide pattern with some nations far more economically productive than others. This chapter shifts the focus from inequality within the United States to inequality found in the world as a whole. The chapter begins by describing global inequality and then provides two theoretical models that explain global stratification.

April 24, 2013, started out like most other days in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. More than 3,000 workers filed in the doors of the vast garment factory in Rana Plaza to begin another day-long shift. Yet a feeling of fear hung in the air. On the stairways up to the workrooms, many of the employees talked about cracks in the building that had appeared the day before. For a time, the building was evacuated, and the owner of the factory, Sohel Rana, called in an engineer to look at the cracks. The engineer shook his head, concluding that the building was no longer safe. But Mr. Rana and his senior executives scoffed at the warning. They knew the financial cost of shutting down the factory. They ordered workers to report to the factory the next day as usual.

But the cost—not only in money but also in human lives—of keeping the factory open turned out to be far higher. About an hour after work began, a massive generator on an upper floor switched on, sending waves of vibration throughout the building. A minute later, the whole factory fell in on itself so quickly that people had no time to react. As the dust began to clear, people on the street looked in horror at a massive pile of concrete and steel, and the roar of the collapsing building gave way to the cries of trapped survivors screaming for help. More than two weeks later, after the last bodies had been pulled from the rubble, the human death toll had reached 1,129 and more than 2,500 people had been injured.

The results of a government investigation made it clear that the factory had been a disaster waiting to happen. The investigators concluded that Rana Plaza was constructed using sub-standard materials so that it was not strong enough to support the weight of the people working there along with the generators and other heavy equipment. The building's owner clearly cut corners in the construction. But city officials also shared in the responsibility because they had approved the construction despite evidence that the building would not be safe. The collapse of Rana Plaza may be the deadliest event of its kind, but it is only the latest in a long history of fires and collapsing factory buildings in Bangladesh and in other low-income nations.

Taking a broader perspective, this tragedy reflects a global economy in which millions of people in low-income countries work in unsafe conditions to make clothing and other products for people living in rich nations. In Bangladesh, garment factories are big business; clothing accounts for 81 percent of that nation's total economic exports. One-fifth of these garments end up in stores across the United States. The reason so much of the clothing we buy is made in poor countries like Bangladesh is simple economics: Bangladeshi garment workers, a large majority of whom are women, labor for close to twelve hours a day, typically six days a week, and yet rarely earn much more than that nation's minimum wage of \$68 a month. The pay amounts to less than \$1 an hour, which is a small share of what garment workers earn in the United States. Such low wages are the reason that stores including Walmart and JCPenney can sell clothes at such low prices. People cleaning up the rubble of the collapsed Rana Plaza could see, among the pieces of concrete, torn clothing with labels including Benetton and Bonmarché (Yardley, 2013; World Bank, 2014; Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers & Exporters Association, 2015). ■



Garment workers in Bangladesh are among the roughly 1 billion of the world's people who work hard every day and yet remain poor (World Bank, 2014). As this chapter explains, although poverty is a reality in the United States and other

nations, the greatest social inequality is not *within* nations but *between* them (Goesling, 2001). We can understand the full dimensions of poverty only by exploring **global stratification, patterns of social inequality in the world as a whole**.

Global Stratification: An Overview

12.1 Describe the division of the world into high-, middle-, and low-income countries.

Chapter 11 (“Social Class in the United States”) described social inequality in the United States. In global perspective, however, social stratification is far greater. The pie chart at the left in Figure 12–1 divides the world’s total income by fifths of the population. Recall from Chapter 11 that the richest 20 percent of the U.S. population earn about 49 percent of the national income (see Figure 11–1). The richest 20 percent of global population, however, receive about 77 percent of world income. At the other extreme, the poorest 20 percent of the U.S. population earn slightly less than 4 percent of our national income; the poorest fifth of the world’s people struggle to survive on just 2 percent of global income.

In terms of wealth, as the pie chart at the right in Figure 12–1 shows, global inequality is even greater. A rough estimate is that the richest 20 percent of the world’s adults own about 95 percent of the planet’s wealth. About half of all wealth is owned by about 1 percent of the world’s adult population. On the other extreme, the poorest half of the world’s adults own less than 1 percent of all global wealth. In terms of dollars, about half the world’s families have less than \$3,641 in total wealth, far less than the \$81,200 in wealth for the typical family in the United States (Bricker et al., 2014; Davies, Lluberas, & Shorrocks, 2014).

Because the United States is among the world’s richest countries, even people in the United States with income well below the government’s poverty line live far better than the majority of people on the planet (Milanovic, 2011). The average person living in a rich nation such as the United States is extremely well off by world standards. Any one of the world’s richest people (in 2015, the world’s three richest people—Bill Gates and Warren Buffet in the United States and Carlos Slim Helú in Mexico—were each worth more than \$72 billion) has personal wealth that exceeds the

total economic output of more than 100 of the world’s countries (World Bank, 2014; *Forbes*, 2015).

A Word about Terminology

Classifying the 194 independent nations on Earth into categories ignores many striking differences. These nations have rich and varied histories, speak different languages, and take pride in distinctive cultures. However, various models have been developed that help distinguish countries on the basis of global stratification.

One global model, developed after World War II, labeled the rich, industrial countries the “First World”; the less industrialized, socialist countries the “Second World”; and the nonindustrialized, poor countries the “Third World.” But the “three worlds” model is less useful today. For one thing, it was a product of Cold War politics by which the capitalist West (the First World) faced off against the socialist East (the Second World) while other nations (the Third World) remained more or less on the sidelines. But the sweeping changes in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s mean that a distinctive Second World no longer exists.

Another problem is that the “three worlds” model lumped together more than 100 countries as the Third World. In reality, some relatively better-off nations of the Third World (such as Chile in South America) have fifteen times the per-person productivity of the poorest countries of the world (such as Ethiopia in East Africa).

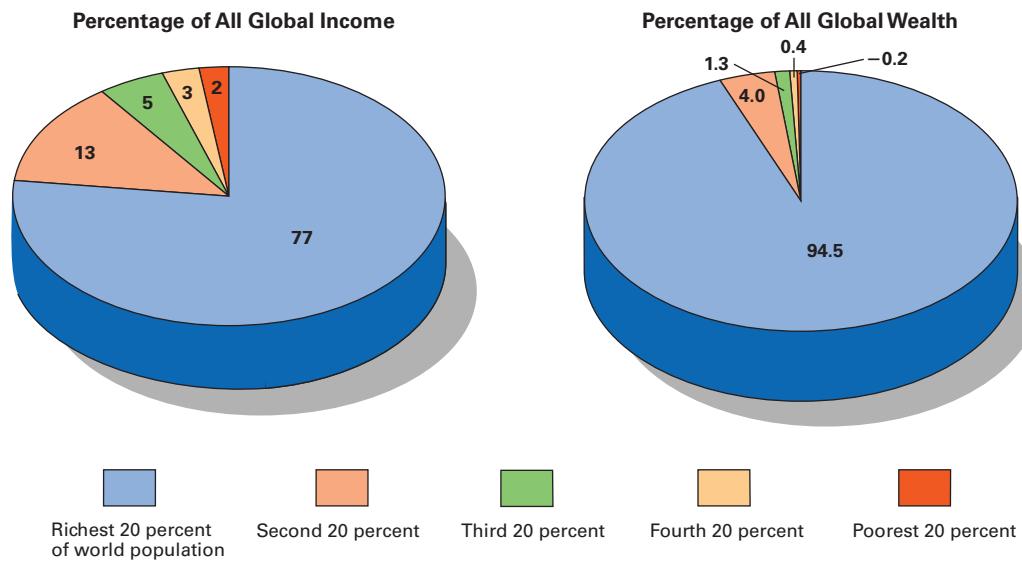


Figure 12–1 Distribution of Global Income and Wealth

Global income is very unequal, with the richest 20 percent of the world’s people earning almost fifty times as much as the poorest 20 percent. Global wealth is even more unequally divided, with the richest 20 percent owning 95 percent of private wealth and the poorest half of the world’s people having barely anything at all.

SOURCES: Based on Milanovic (2009, 2011) and Davies, Lluberas, and Shorrocks (2014).

global stratification patterns of social inequality in the world as a whole

high-income countries
the nations with the highest overall standards of living

middle-income countries
nations with a standard of living about average for the world as a whole

low-income countries
nations with a low standard of living in which most people are poor

These facts call for a modestly revised system of classification. The seventy-six **high-income countries** are defined as *the nations with the highest overall standards of living*. These nations have a per capita gross national income (GNI) greater than \$15,000. The world's seventy **middle-income countries** are not as rich; they are *nations with a standard of living about average for the world as a whole*. Their per capita GNI is less than \$15,000 but greater than \$3,500. The remaining forty-eight **low-income countries** are *nations with a low standard of living in which most people are poor*. In these nations, per capita GNI is less than \$3,500 (United Nations Development Programme, 2014; World Bank, 2014).

This model has two advantages over the older "three worlds" system. First, it focuses on economic development rather than political structure (capitalist or socialist). Second, it gives a better picture of the relative economic development of various countries because it does not lump together all less developed nations into a single "Third World."

When envisioning global stratification, keep in mind that there is social stratification within every nation. In Bangladesh, for example, garment factory owners may earn as much as \$1 million a year, which is several thousand times more than

their workers earn. The full extent of global inequality is even greater, because the wealthiest people in rich countries such as the United States live worlds apart from the poorest people in low-income nations such as Bangladesh, Haiti, and Sudan.

High-Income Countries

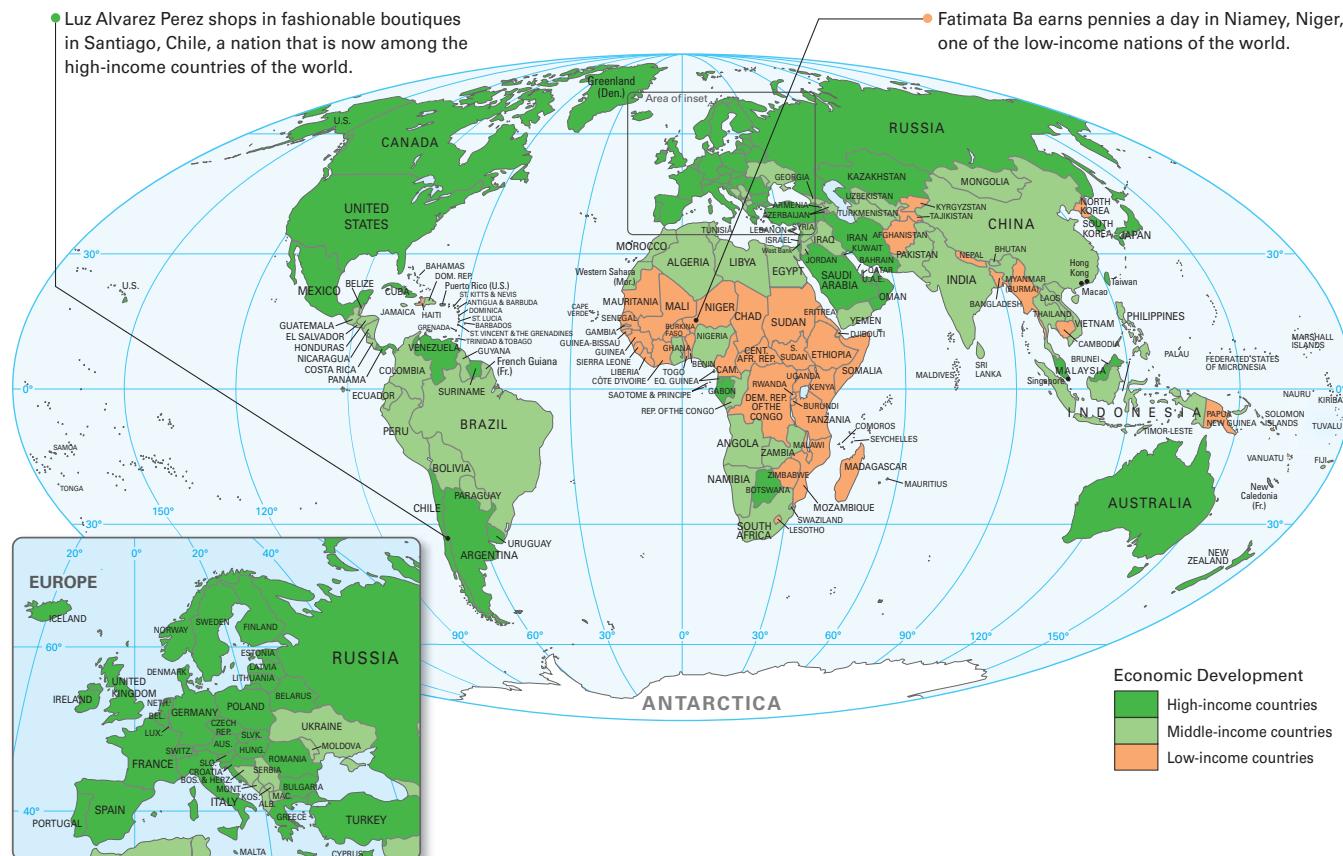
In nations where the Industrial Revolution first took place more than two centuries ago, productivity increased more than one hundredfold. To understand the power of industrial and computer technology, consider that Japan—a small Asian nation about the size of the state of Kentucky—is as economically productive as the entire continent of Africa south of the Sahara, which has a land area more than twice the size of the United States.

Global Map 12–1 shows that the high-income nations of the world include the United States, Canada, Mexico,



The United States is among the world's high-income countries, in which industrial technology and economic expansion have produced material prosperity. The presence of market forces is evident in this view of New York City (above, left). India has recently become one of the world's middle-income countries (above, right). An increasing number of motor vehicles fill city streets. Mali (left) is among the world's low-income countries. As the photograph suggests, these nations have limited economic development as well as rapidly increasing populations. The result is widespread poverty.

Window on the World



Global Map 12–1 Economic Development in Global Perspective

In high-income countries—including the United States, Canada, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, the nations of Western Europe, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, Australia, the Russian Federation, Japan, and New Zealand—a highly productive economy provides people, on average, with material plenty. Middle-income countries—including most of Latin America and Asia—are less economically productive, with a standard of living about average for the world as a whole but far below that of the United States. These nations also have a significant share of poor people who are barely able to feed and house themselves. In the low-income countries of the world, poverty is severe and widespread. Although small numbers of elites live very well in the poorest nations, most people struggle to survive on a small fraction of the income common in the United States.

Note: Data for this map are provided by the United Nations and the World Bank. Each country's economic productivity is measured in terms of its gross national income (GNI), which is the total value of all the goods and services produced by a country's economy within its borders in a given year, plus net compensation and property income from abroad. Dividing each country's GNI by the country's population gives us the per capita (per-person) GNI and allows us to compare the economic performance of countries of different population sizes. High-income countries have a per capita GNI of more than \$15,000. Many are far richer than this, however; the figure for the United States exceeds \$53,000. Middle-income countries have a per capita GNI ranging from \$3,500 to \$14,999. Low-income countries have a per capita GNI of less than \$3,500. Figures used here reflect the World Bank's "purchasing power parities" system, which is an estimate of what people can buy using their income in the local economy.

SOURCES: Data from United Nations Development Programme (2014) and the World Bank (2014).

Argentina, Chile, the nations of Western Europe, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, the Russian Federation, Malaysia, Australia, and New Zealand.

These countries cover roughly 48 percent of Earth's land area, including parts of five continents, and they lie mostly in the Northern Hemisphere. In 2014, the total population of these nations was about 1.75 billion, or about 24 percent of the world's people. About three-fourths of the people in high-income countries live in or

near cities (Population Reference Bureau, 2014; World Bank, 2014).

Significant cultural differences exist among high-income countries; for example, the nations of Europe recognize more than thirty official languages. But these societies all produce enough economic goods and services to enable their people to lead comfortable lives. Per capita income (that is, average income per person per year) ranges from about \$15,000 annually (in Botswana, Bulgaria,

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

Las Colonias: “America’s Third World”

“We wanted to have something for ourselves,” explains Olga Ruiz, who has lived in the border community of College Park, Texas, for eleven years. There is no college in College Park, nor does this dusty stretch of rural land have sewer lines or even running water. Yet this town is one of some 2,300 settlements that have sprouted up in southern Texas along the 1,200-mile border with Mexico that runs from El Paso to Brownsville. Together, they are home to roughly 500,000 people.

Many people speak of *las colonias* (Spanish for “the colonies”) as “America’s Third World” because these desperately poor communities look much like their counterparts in Mexico or many other middle- or low-income nations. But this is the United States, and almost all of the people living in the *colonias* are Mexican Americans, 85 percent of them legal residents and more than half U.S. citizens.

Anastacia Ledsema, now seventy-two years old, moved to a *colonia* called Sparks more than forty years ago. Born in Mexico, Ledsema married a Texas man, and together they



and Iran) to more than \$50,000 annually (in the United States, Norway, and Singapore). In fact, people in high-income countries enjoy 59 percent of the world’s total income.

In a high-income nation such as the United States, even the poor have a higher economic standard of living than about half the people in a middle-income nation such as Brazil and almost all of the people in a (less well-off) middle-income nation such as China (Milanovic, 2011). Even so, the populations of the United States and other high-income countries include many low-income people. The residents of the poorest communities in the United States are better off economically than more than half the world’s people, but they represent a striking contrast to what most of the people living in this country take for granted. The Thinking About Diversity box profiles the striking poverty that exists in *las colonias* along our country’s southern border.

paid \$200 for a quarter-acre lot in a new border community. For months, they camped out on their land. Step by step, they invested their labor and their money to build a modest house. Not until 1995 did their small community get running water—a service that had been promised by developers years before. When the water line finally did arrive, however, things changed more than they expected. “When we got water,” recalls Ledsema, “that’s when so many people came in.” The population of Sparks quickly doubled to about 3,000, overwhelming the water supply so that sometimes the faucet does not run at all.

The residents of all the *colonias* know that they are poor, and with annual per capita income of about \$6,000, they are. The Census Bureau has declared the county surrounding one border community to be the poorest in the United States. Concerned over the lack of basic services in so many of these communities, Texas officials have banned new settlements. But most of the people who move here—even those who start off sleeping in their cars or trucks—see these communities as the first step on the path to the American dream. Oscar Solis, a neighborhood leader in Panorama Village, a community with a population of about 150, is proud to show visitors around the small but growing town. “All of this work we have done ourselves,” he says with a smile, “to make our dream come true.”

What Do You Think?

1. Are you surprised that such intense poverty exists in a rich country like the United States? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever had experiences with poverty such as that described here in other parts of the United States? If so, where?
3. What do you think the future holds for the families living in *las colonias*? Explain your prediction.

SOURCES: Based on Schaffer (2002) and *The Economist* (2011).

Production in rich nations is capital-intensive; it is based on factories, big machinery, and advanced technology. Most of the largest corporations that design and market computers, as well as most computer users, are located in high-income countries. High-income countries control the world’s financial markets, so daily events in the financial exchanges of New York, London, and Tokyo affect people throughout the world. In short, rich nations are very productive because of their advanced technology and because they control the global economy.

Middle-Income Countries

Middle-income countries have a per capita income of between \$3,500 and \$15,000, which falls in a range close to the median (about \$10,525) for all the world’s nations taken



In general, when natural disasters strike high-income nations, property damage may be great, but loss of life is low. Hurricane Sandy, which was characterized as a “superstorm” (left), struck the East Coast of the United States in 2012, resulting in more than \$60 billion in damage and seventy-two deaths. The earthquake that hit Haiti (right) in 2010, by contrast, resulted in more than 300,000 deaths.

together. About 53 percent of the people in middle-income countries live in or near cities, and industrial jobs are common. The remaining 47 percent of people live in rural areas, where most are poor and lack access to schools, medical care, adequate housing, and even safe drinking water.

Looking at Global Map 12–1, we see that seventy of the world’s nations fall into the middle-income category. At the high end are Costa Rica (Latin America), Montenegro (Europe), and Thailand (Asia), where annual income is about \$14,000. At the low end are Nicaragua (Latin America), Ghana (Africa), and Syria (Middle East), with less than \$5,000 annually in per capita income.

One cluster of middle-income countries used to be part of the Second World. These countries, found in Eastern Europe and Western Asia, had mostly socialist economies until popular revolts between 1989 and 1991 swept their governments aside. Since then, these nations have introduced more free-market systems. These middle-income countries include Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and Turkmenistan.

Other middle-income nations include Peru and Brazil in South America and Namibia and South Africa in Africa. Both India and the People’s Republic of China have entered the middle-income category, which now includes most of Asia.

Taken together, middle-income countries span roughly 36 percent of Earth’s land area and are home to about 4.5 billion people, or about 60 percent of humanity. Some very large countries (such as China) are far less crowded than other smaller nations (such as El Salvador), but compared to high-income countries, these societies are densely populated.

Low-Income Countries

Low-income countries, where most people are very poor, are mostly agrarian societies with some industry. Forty-eight low-income countries, identified in Global Map 12–1,

are spread across Central and East Africa and Asia. Low-income countries cover 17 percent of the planet’s land area and are home to about 990 million people, or 14 percent of humanity. Population density is generally high, although it is greater in Asian countries (such as Bangladesh) than in Central African nations (such as Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

In poor countries, 35 percent of the people live in cities; most inhabit villages and farms as their ancestors have done for centuries. In fact, half the world’s people are farmers, most of whom follow cultural traditions. With limited industrial technology, they cannot be very productive, one reason that many suffer severe poverty. Hunger, disease, and unsafe housing shape the lives of the world’s poorest people.

Those of us who live in rich nations such as the United States find it hard to understand the scope of human need that exists in much of the world. From time to time, televised pictures of struggle, such as the recent Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone and Liberia, give us shocking glimpses of the poverty and day-to-day life-and-death battle involving many people in low-income nations. Behind these images lie cultural, historical, and economic forces that we shall explore in the remainder of this chapter.

Global Wealth and Poverty

12.2 Discuss patterns and explanations of poverty around the world.

October 14, Manila, Philippines. What caught my eye was how clean she was—a girl no more than seven or eight years old. She was wearing a freshly laundered dress, and her hair was carefully combed. She stopped to watch us, following us with her eyes: Camera-toting Americans stand out here, one of the poorest neighborhoods in the entire world.

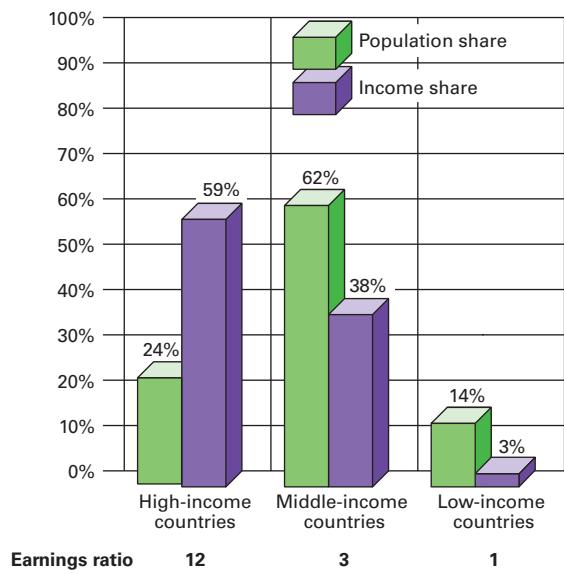


Figure 12–2 The Relative Share of Income and Population by Level of Economic Development

For every dollar earned by people in low-income countries, people in high-income countries earn \$12.

SOURCES: Based on Population Reference Bureau (2014) and World Bank (2014).

Fed by methane from decomposing garbage, the fires never go out on Smokey Mountain, the vast garbage dump on the north side of Manila. Smoke covers the hills of refuse like a thick fog. But Smokey Mountain is more than a dump; it is a neighborhood that is home to thousands of people. It is hard to imagine a setting more hostile to human life. Amid the smoke and the squalor, men and women do what they can to survive. They pick plastic bags from the garbage and wash them in the river, and they collect cardboard boxes or anything else they can sell. What chance do their children have, coming from families that earn only a few hundred dollars a year, with hardly any opportunity for schooling, year after year breathing this foul air? Against this backdrop of human tragedy, one lovely little girl has put on a fresh dress and gone out to play.

Now our taxi driver threads his way through heavy traffic as we head for the other side of Manila. The change is amazing: The smoke and smell of the dump give way to neighborhoods that could be in Miami or Los Angeles. A cluster of yachts floats on the bay in the distance. No more rutted streets; now we glide quietly along wide boulevards lined with trees and filled with expensive Japanese cars. We pass shopping plazas, upscale hotels, and high-rise office buildings. Every block or so we see the gated entrance to yet another exclusive residential community with security guards standing watch. Here, in large, air-conditioned homes, the rich of Manila live—and many of the poor work.

Low-income nations are home to some rich and many poor people. The fact that most people live on incomes of

just a few hundred dollars a year means that the burden of poverty is far greater there than among the poor of the United States. This is not to suggest that U.S. poverty is a minor problem. In so rich a country, too little food, substandard housing, and no medical care for tens of millions of people—almost half of them children—amount to a national tragedy.

The Severity of Poverty

Poverty in poor countries is more severe than it is in rich countries. A key reason that the quality of life differs so much around the world is that economic productivity is lowest in precisely the regions where population growth is highest. Figure 12–2 shows the proportion of world population and global income for countries at each level of economic development. High-income countries are by far the most advantaged, with 59 percent of global income supporting just 24 percent of humanity. In middle-income nations, 62 percent of the world's people earn 38 percent of global income. This leaves 14 percent of the planet's population with just 3 percent of global income. In short, for every dollar received by individuals in a low-income country, someone in a high-income country takes home \$12.

Table 12–1 shows the extent of wealth and well-being in specific countries around the world. The first column of figures gives gross national income (GNI) for a number of high-, middle-, and low-income countries.¹ The United States, a large and highly productive nation, had a 2013 GNI of \$17 trillion; Japan's GNI was \$4.8 trillion. A comparison of GNI figures shows that the world's richest nations are thousands of times more productive than the poorest countries.



Around the world, wealth has a lot to do with health. In low-income nations, such as Liberia, diseases such as the recent ebola outbreak are a commonplace threat to human life.

¹ Gross national income is the value of all the goods and services produced by a country's economy within its borders in a given year, plus all the income earned abroad by its people and companies.

Table 12–1 Wealth and Well-Being in Global Perspective, 2014

Country	Gross National Income (\$ billions)	GNI per Capita (PPP US\$)*	Quality of Life Index
High-Income			
Norway	338	66,520	.944
Australia	982	42,450	.933
United States	16,992	53,750	.914
Canada	1,498	42,610	.902
Sweden	448	46,680	.898
United Kingdom	2,446	38,160	.892
South Korea	1,679	33,440	.891
Japan	4,812	37,790	.890
Middle-Income			
<i>Eastern Europe</i>			
Serbia	89	12,480	.745
Ukraine	408	8,970	.734
Albania	29	10,400	.716
<i>Latin America</i>			
Costa Rica	66	13,570	.763
Brazil	2,956	14,750	.744
Ecuador	169	10,720	.711
<i>Asia</i>			
Thailand	900	13,430	.722
China	16,085	11,850	.719
India	6,700	5,350	.586
<i>Middle East</i>			
Egypt	885	10,790	.682
Iraq	499	14,930	.642
<i>Africa</i>			
Algeria	513	13,070	.717
Namibia	22	9,490	.624
Low-Income			
<i>Latin America</i>			
Haiti	18	1,720	.471
<i>Asia</i>			
Cambodia	44	2,890	.584
Bangladesh	499	3,190	.558
Papua New Guinea	18	2,430	.492
<i>Africa</i>			
Kenya	123	2,780	.535
Ethiopia	130	1,380	.435
Mali	24	1,540	.407
Guinea	14	1,160	.392
Democratic Republic of the Congo	50	740	.338

*These data are purchasing power parity (PPP) calculations, which avoid currency rate distortion by showing the local purchasing power of each domestic currency.

SOURCES: United Nations Development Programme (2014) and World Bank (2014).

The second column of figures in Table 12–1 divides GNI by the entire population size to give an estimate of what people can buy with their income in the local economy. The per capita GNI for rich countries like the United

States, Sweden, and Canada is very high, exceeding \$40,000. For middle-income countries, the figures range from about \$5,300 in India to almost \$15,000 in Brazil. In the world's low-income countries, per capita GNI is just one or two thousand dollars. In Niger or in Mali, for example, a typical person labors all year to make what the average worker in the United States earns in a week.

The last column of Table 12–1 is a measure of the quality of life in the various nations. This index, calculated by the United Nations (2014), is based on income, education (extent of adult literacy and average years of schooling), and longevity (how long people typically live). Index values are decimals that fall between extremes of 1 (highest) and 0 (lowest). By this calculation, Norwegians enjoy the highest quality of life (.944), with residents of the United States close behind (.914). At the other extreme, people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Africa have the lowest quality of life (.338).

RELATIVE VERSUS ABSOLUTE POVERTY The distinction between relative and absolute poverty, made in Chapter 11 ("Social Class in the United States"), has an important application to global inequality. People living in rich countries generally focus on *relative poverty*, meaning that some people lack resources that are taken for granted by others. By definition, relative poverty exists in every society, rich or poor.

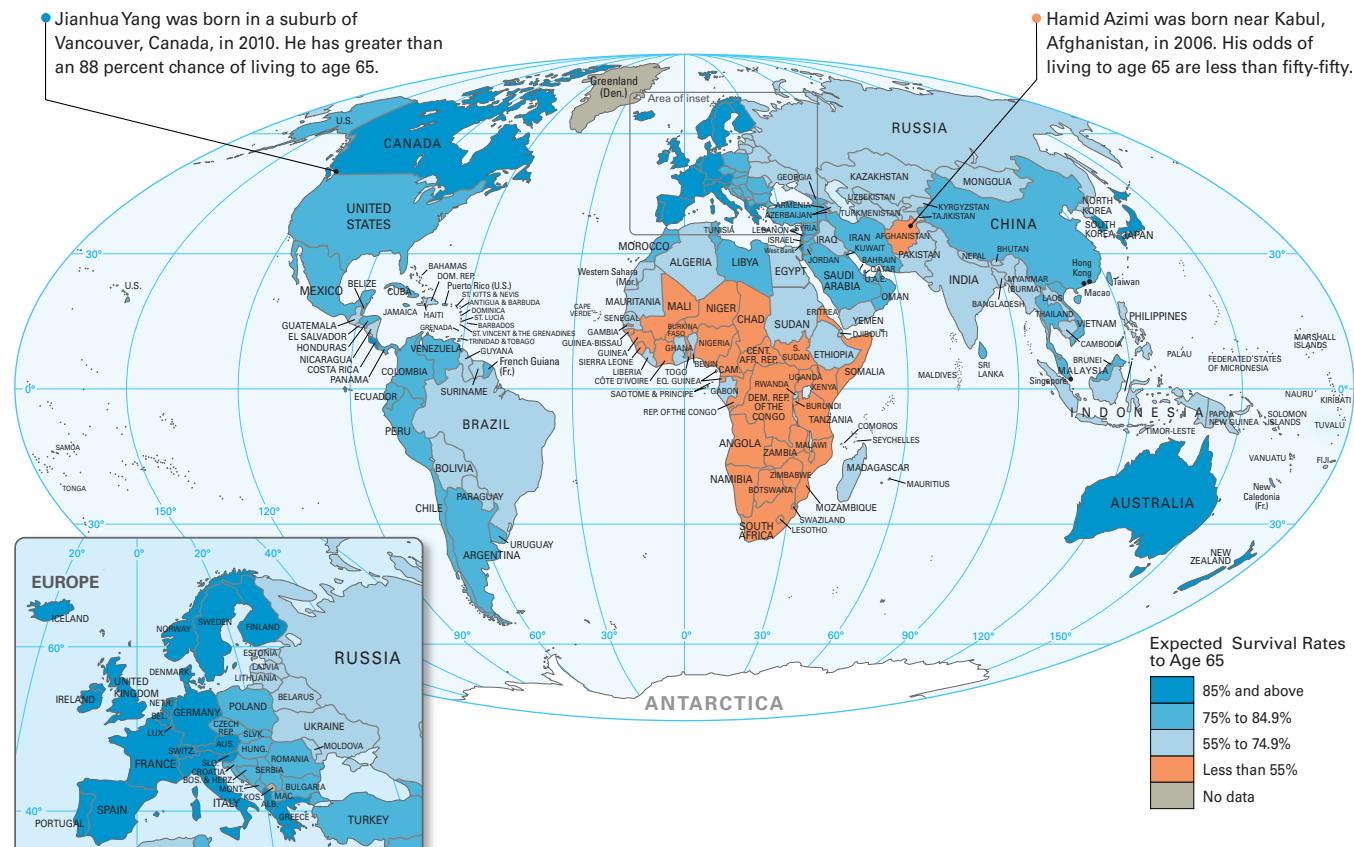
More important in global perspective, however, is *absolute poverty*, a lack of resources that is life-threatening. Human beings in absolute poverty lack the nutrition necessary for health and long-term survival. To be sure, some absolute poverty exists in the United States. But such immediately life-threatening poverty strikes only a very small proportion of the U.S. population. In low-income countries, by contrast, almost one-half of the people live on about \$1.25 a day and are in desperate need.

Because absolute poverty is deadly, people in low-income nations face an elevated risk of dying young. Global Map 12–2 lets us explore this pattern by presenting the odds of living to the age of sixty-five that are typical for the nations of the world. In many rich societies, more than 85 percent of people reach this age; the figure for the United States is 84 percent. In the world's poorest countries, however, the odds of living to age sixty-five are less than one in three and one in ten children does not survive to the age of five (United Nations, 2013).

The Extent of Poverty

Poverty in poor countries is more widespread than it is in rich nations such as the United States. Chapter 11 ("Social Class in the United States") noted that the U.S. government officially classifies 14.5 percent of the population as poor. In low-income countries, however, most people live no better than the poor in the United States, and many are far worse off. As Global Map 12–2 on page 330 shows, the low odds

Window on the World



Global Map 12–2 The Odds of Surviving to the Age of Sixty-Five in Global Perspective

This map identifies expected survival rates to the age of sixty-five for nations around the world. In thirty-nine of the world's nations, including most high-income countries, more than 85 percent of people live to this age. In the United States, due to lower survival rates among the poor, the share is 84 percent. But in low-income nations, death often comes early, with just one-third of people reaching the age of sixty-five.

SOURCE: United Nations (2013).

of living to the age of sixty-five in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa indicate that absolute poverty is greatest there, where one-fourth of the population is malnourished. In the world as a whole, at any given time, 11.3 percent of the people—about 805 million—suffer from chronic hunger, which leaves them less able to work and puts them at high risk of disease (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, 2014).

The typical adult in a rich nation such as the United States consumes about 3,750 calories a day, an excess that contributes to widespread obesity and related health problems. The typical adult in a low-income country not only consumes just 2,769 calories a day but also does more physical labor. Together, these factors result in undernourishment: too little food or not enough of the right kinds of food (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, 2014; World Health Organization, 2015).

In the ten minutes it takes to read this section of the chapter, about 100 people in the world who are sick and

weakened from hunger will die. This number amounts to about 25,000 people a day, or 9 million people each year. Clearly, easing world hunger is one of the most serious responsibilities facing humanity today (United Nations World Food Programme, 2008).

Poverty and Children

Death comes early in poor societies, where families lack adequate food, safe water, secure housing, and access to medical care. In the world's low-income nations, one-fifth of all children do not receive enough nutrition to be healthy (World Bank, 2014).

Tens of millions of these children beg, steal, sell sex, or work for drug gangs to provide income needed by their families. But they pay a high price. Such children miss out on schooling and are likely to fall victim to disease and violence. Many young girls become pregnant, truly a matter of children having children. (Consortium for Street Children, 2011).



Tens of millions of children fend for themselves every day on the streets of poor cities where many fall victim to disease, drug abuse, and violence. What do you think should be done to ensure that children like these in Bangalore, India, receive adequate nutrition and a quality education?

Roughly half of all street children are found in Latin American cities such as Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro, where half of all children grow up in poverty. Many people in the United States know these cities as exotic travel destinations, but they are also home to thousands of street children living in makeshift huts, under bridges, or in alleyways (Leopold, 2007; Levinson & Bassett, 2007; Consortium for Street Children, 2011).

Poverty and Women

In rich societies, much of the work women do is undervalued, underpaid, or overlooked entirely. In poor societies, women face even greater disadvantages. Most of the people who work in sweatshops like the one described in the opening to this chapter are women.

To make matters worse, tradition keeps women out of many jobs in low-income nations. In Bangladesh, for example, women work in garment factories because that society's conservative Muslim religious norms bar them from most other paid work and limit their opportunity for advanced schooling (Bearak, 2001). At the same time, traditional norms in poor societies give women primary responsibility for child rearing and maintaining the household. Analysts estimate that in poor countries, although women produce about 70 percent of the food, men own 90 percent of the land. In many low-income countries, the land used by married couples is owned by the husband as a matter of law. This means that gender inequality is far greater than it is in high-income nations. As a result, analysts estimate, about 70 percent of the world's roughly 1 billion people living at or near absolute poverty are women (United Nations, 2010; Landsea Center for Women's Land Rights, 2011; World Bank, 2015).

Finally, most women in poor countries receive little or no reproductive health care. Limited access to birth control keeps women at home with their children, keeps the birth rate high, and limits the economic production of the country. In addition, the world's poorest women typically give birth without help from trained health care personnel. Figure 12–3 illustrates a stark difference between low- and high-income countries in this regard.

Slavery

Poor societies have many problems in addition to hunger, including illiteracy, warfare, and even slavery. The British Empire banned slavery in 1833, followed by the United States in 1865. But slavery is a reality for an estimated 20 million men, women, and children (International Labour Organization, 2012).

Anti-Slavery International describes five types of slavery. The first is *chattel slavery*, in which one person owns another. In spite of the fact that this practice is against the law almost everywhere in the world, several million people fall into this category. The buying and selling of slaves—generally people of one ethnic or caste group

Global Snapshot

- Compared to a woman in the United States, an Ethiopian woman is far less likely to give birth with the help of medical professionals and is much more likely to die in childbirth.

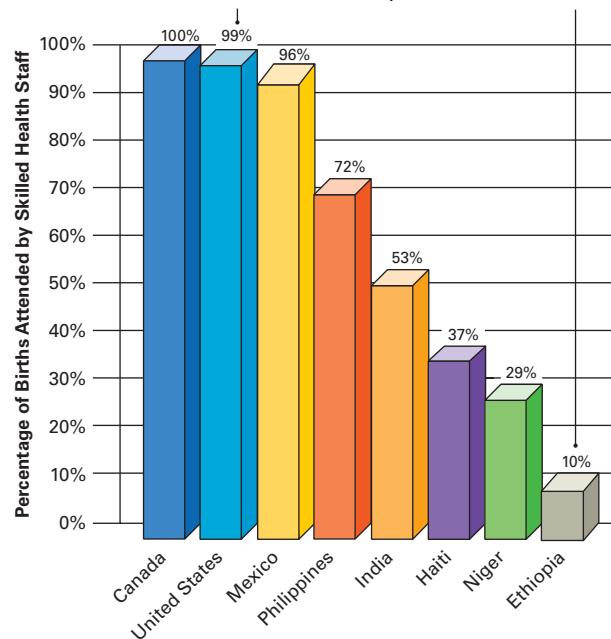


Figure 12–3 Percentage of Births Attended by Skilled Health Staff

In the United States, most women give birth with the help of medical professionals, but this is usually not the case in low-income nations.

SOURCE: World Bank (2015).

Thinking Globally

“God Made Me to Be a Slave”

Fatma Mint Mamadou is a young woman living in North Africa’s Islamic Republic of Mauritania. Asked her age, she pauses, smiles, and shakes her head. She has no idea when she was born. Nor can she read or write. What she knows is tending camels, herding sheep, hauling bags of water, sweeping, and serving tea to her owners. This young woman is one of perhaps 500,000 slaves in Mauritania, which represents about 18 percent of that nation’s population.

In the central region of this nation, having dark brown skin almost always means being a slave to an Arab owner. Fatma accepts her situation; she has known nothing else. She explains in a matter-of-fact voice that she is a slave like her mother before her and her grandmother before that. “Just as God created a camel to be a camel,” she shrugs, “he created me to be a slave.”

Fatma, her mother, and her brothers and sisters live in a squatter settlement on the edge of Nouakchott, Mauritania’s capital city. Their home is a 9-by-12-foot hut that they built



Human slavery continues to exist in the twenty-first century.

enslaving members of another—still takes place in many countries throughout Asia, the Middle East, and especially Africa. The Thinking Globally box describes the reality of one slave’s life in the African nation of Mauritania.

A second type of bondage is *slavery imposed by the state*. In this case, a government imposes forced labor on people convicted of criminal violations or on others simply because the government needs their labor. In China, for example, people who engage in prostitution or other crimes or who are addicted to drugs or engage in political dissent are subject to forced labor. In North Korea, the government can force people to work for almost any reason at all.

A third and common form of bondage is *child slavery*, in which desperately poor families send their children out

from wood scraps and other materials found at construction sites. The roof is nothing more than a piece of cloth; there is no plumbing or furniture. The nearest water comes from a well a mile down the road.

In this region, slavery began more than 500 years ago, about the time Columbus sailed west toward the Americas. As Arab and Berber tribes raided local villages, they made slaves of the people, and so it has been for dozens of generations ever since. In 1905, the French colonial rulers of Mauritania banned slavery. After the nation gained independence in 1961, the new government reaffirmed the ban. However, slavery was not officially abolished until 1981, and even then, it was not made a crime. In 2007, the nation passed legislation making the practice of slavery an offense punishable by up to ten years in prison, and the government now provides monetary compensation to victims of slavery. But the new laws have done little to change strong traditions and prosecutions are rare and serious penalties for those convicted even rarer. The sad truth is that some societies still endorse slavery or near-slavery so that people like Fatma still have no conception of “freedom to choose.”

The next question is more personal: “Are you and other girls ever raped?” Again, Fatma hesitates. With no hint of emotion, she responds, “Of course, in the night the men come to breed us. Is that what you mean by rape?”

What Do You Think?

1. How does tradition play a part in keeping people in slavery?
2. What might explain the fact that the world still tolerates slavery?
3. Explain the connection between slavery and poverty.

SOURCES: Based on Burkett (1997), Fisher (2011), and Anti-Slavery International (2015).

into the streets to beg or steal or do whatever they can to survive. Probably tens of millions of children—many in the poorest countries of Latin America and Africa—fall into this category. In addition, an estimated 10 million children are forced to labor daily in the production of tobacco, sugarcane, cotton, and coffee in more than seventy nations.

Fourth, *debt bondage* is the practice by which an employer pays wages to workers that are less than what the employer charges the workers for company-provided food and housing. Under such an arrangement, workers can never pay their debts so, for practical purposes, workers are enslaved. Many sweatshop workers in low-income nations fall into this category.

Fifth, *servile forms of marriage* may also amount to slavery. In India, Thailand, and some African nations, families

marry off women against their will. Many end up as slaves working for their husband's family; some are forced into prostitution.

An additional form of slavery is *human trafficking*, the moving of men, women, and children from one place to another for the purpose of performing forced labor. Women or men are brought to a new country with the promise of a job and then forced to become prostitutes or farm laborers, or "parents" adopt children from another country and then force them to work in sweatshops. Such activity is big business: Next to trading in guns and drugs, trading in people brings the greatest profit to organized crime around the world (Orhant, 2002; International Labor Organization, 2013; Anti-Slavery International, 2015).

In 1948, the United Nations issued its Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states, "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms." Unfortunately, more than six decades later, this social evil still exists.

Explanations of Global Poverty

What accounts for severe and extensive poverty in so much of the world? The rest of this chapter provides answers using the following facts about poor societies:

- Technology.** About one-quarter of people in low-income countries farm the land using human muscle or animal power. With limited energy sources, economic production is modest.
- Population growth.** As Chapter 22 ("Population, Urbanization, and Environment") explains, the poorest countries have the world's highest birth rates. Despite the death toll from poverty, the populations of poor countries in Africa double every twenty-five years. In sub-Saharan Africa, 43 percent of the people are under the age of fifteen. With so many people entering their childbearing years, the wave of population increase will roll into the future with the population of Africa increasing from 1.1 billion today to an estimated 2.5 billion by 2050. The result is likely to be more poverty. Why? The population of Uganda, for example, has swelled by about 4 percent annually in recent years; even with some economic development, living standards there have fallen. This is far from an isolated case. Globally, just about all future population increase

will be in lower-income countries (Population Reference Bureau, 2014).

- Cultural patterns.** Poor societies are usually traditional. Holding on to long-established ways of life means resisting change—even change that promises a richer material life.
- Social stratification.** Low-income societies distribute their wealth very unequally. Chapter 10 ("Social Stratification") explained that social inequality is greater in agrarian societies than in industrial societies. In Brazil, for example, 75 percent of all farmland is owned by just 4 percent of the people (Galano, 1998; IBGE, 2006; Frayssinet, 2009).
- Gender inequality.** Gender inequality in poor societies keeps women from holding jobs, which typically means they have many children. An expanding population, in turn, slows economic development. Many analysts conclude that raising living standards in much of the world depends on improving the social standing of women.
- Global power relationships.** A final cause of global poverty lies in the relationships between the nations of the world. Historically, wealth flowed from poor societies to rich nations through **colonialism**, *the process by which some nations enrich themselves through political and economic control of other nations*. The countries of Western Europe colonized much of Latin America beginning just over five centuries ago. Such global exploitation allowed some nations to develop economically at the expense of other nations.

Although 130 former colonies gained their independence over the course of the twentieth century, exploitation continues today through **neocolonialism** (*neo* is Greek for "new"), *a new form of global power relationships that involves not direct political control but economic exploitation by multinational corporations*. A **multinational corporation** is *a large business that operates in many countries*. Corporate leaders often impose their will on countries in which they do business to create favorable economic conditions for the operation of their corporations, just as colonizers did in the past (Bonanno, Constance, & Lorenz, 2000).

Theories of Global Stratification

12.3 Apply sociological theories to the topic of global inequality.

There are two major explanations for the unequal distribution of the world's wealth and power: *modernization theory* and *dependency theory*. Each theory suggests a different solution to the suffering of hungry people in much of the world.

colonialism the process by which some nations enrich themselves through political and economic control of other nations

neocolonialism a new form of global power relationships that involves not direct political control but economic exploitation by multinational corporations

Modernization Theory

Modernization theory is a model of economic and social development that explains global inequality in terms of technological and cultural differences between nations. Modernization theory, which follows the structural-functional approach, emerged in the 1950s, a time when U.S. society was fascinated by new developments in technology. To showcase the power of productive technology and also to counter the growing influence of the Soviet Union, U.S. policymakers drafted a market-based foreign policy that has been with us ever since (Rostow, 1960, 1978; Bauer, 1981; Berger, 1986; Firebaugh, 1996; Firebaugh & Sandhu, 1998).

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE Until a few centuries ago, the entire world was poor. Because poverty is the norm throughout human history, modernization theory claims that it is *affluence* that demands an explanation.

Affluence came within reach of a growing share of people in Western Europe during the late Middle Ages as world exploration and trade expanded. Soon after, the Industrial Revolution transformed first Western Europe and then North America. Industrial technology and the spirit of capitalism created new wealth as never before. At first, this wealth benefited only a few individuals. But industrial technology was so productive that gradually the living standards of even the poorest people began to improve. Absolute poverty, which had plagued humanity throughout history, was finally in decline.

In high-income countries, where the Industrial Revolution began in the late 1700s or early 1800s, the standard of living jumped at least fourfold during the twentieth century. As middle-income nations in Asia and Latin America have industrialized, they too have become richer. But with limited industrial technology, low-income countries have changed much less.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE Why didn't the Industrial Revolution sweep away poverty throughout the world? Modernization theory points out that not every society wants to adopt new technology. Doing so requires a cultural environment that emphasizes the benefits of material wealth and new ideas.

Modernization theory identifies *tradition* as the greatest barrier to economic development. In some societies, strong family systems and a reverence for the past discourage people from adopting new technologies that would raise their living standards. Even today, many traditional people—from the Amish in North America to Islamic people in the Middle East to the Semai of Malaysia—oppose new technology as a threat to their families, customs, and religious beliefs. Max Weber (1958, orig. 1904–05) found that at the end of the Middle Ages, Western Europe's cultural environment favored change. As discussed in Chapter 4 ("Society"), the Protestant Reformation reshaped

traditional Christian beliefs to generate a progress-oriented way of life. Wealth—looked on with suspicion by the Catholic church—became a sign of personal virtue, and the growing importance of individualism steadily replaced the traditional emphasis on family and community. Taken together, these new cultural patterns nurtured the Industrial Revolution.

ROSTOW'S STAGES OF MODERNIZATION Modernization theory holds that the door to affluence is open to all. As technological advances spread around the world, all societies should gradually industrialize. According to Walt Rostow (1960, 1978), modernization occurs in four stages:

- 1. Traditional stage.** Socialized to honor the past, people in traditional societies cannot easily imagine that life could or should be any different. They therefore build their lives around families and local communities, following well-worn paths that allow little individual freedom or change. Life is often spiritually rich but lacking in material goods.

A century ago, much of the world was in this initial stage of economic development. Nations such as Bangladesh, Niger, and Somalia are still at the traditional stage and remain poor. Even in countries, such as India, that have recently joined the ranks of middle-income nations, certain elements of the population have remained highly traditional.

- 2. Take-off stage.** As a society shakes off the grip of tradition, people start to use their talents and imagination, sparking economic growth. A market emerges as people produce goods not just for their own use but also to trade with others for profit. Greater individualism, a willingness to take risks, and a desire for material goods also take hold, often at the expense of family ties and time-honored norms and values.

Great Britain reached take-off by about 1800, the United States by 1820. Thailand, a middle-income country in eastern Asia, is now in this stage. Such development is typically speeded by help from rich nations, including foreign aid, the availability of advanced technology and investment capital, and opportunities for schooling abroad.

- 3. Drive to technological maturity.** As this stage begins, "growth" is a widely accepted idea that fuels a society's pursuit of higher living standards. A diversified economy drives a population eager to enjoy the benefits of industrial technology. At the same time, however, people begin to realize (and sometimes regret) that industrialization is eroding traditional family and local community life. Great Britain reached this point by about 1840, the United States by 1860. Today, Mexico, the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico, and Poland are among the nations driving to technological maturity.



In rich nations such as the United States, most parents expect their children to enjoy years of childhood, largely free from the responsibilities of adult life. This is not the case in poor nations across Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Poor families depend on whatever income their children can earn, and many children as young as six or seven work full days weaving or performing other kinds of manual labor. Child labor lies behind the low prices of many products imported for sale in this country.

At this stage of development, absolute poverty is greatly reduced. Cities swell with people who leave rural villages in search of economic opportunity. Specialization creates the wide range of jobs that we find in our economy today. An increasing focus on work makes relationships less personal. Growing individualism generates social movements demanding greater political rights. Societies approaching technological maturity also provide basic schooling for all their people and advanced training for some. The newly educated consider tradition “backward” and push for further change. The social position of women steadily approaches that of men.

4. High mass consumption. Economic development steadily raises living standards as mass production stimulates mass consumption. Simply put, people soon learn to “need” the expanding array of goods that their society produces. The United States, Japan, and other rich nations moved into this stage by 1900. Now entering this level of economic development are two former British colonies that are prosperous small societies of eastern Asia: Hong Kong (part of the People’s Republic of China since 1997) and Singapore (independent since 1965).

THE ROLE OF RICH NATIONS Modernization theory claims that high-income countries play four important roles in global economic development:

1. Controlling population. Because population growth is greatest in the poorest societies, rising population can overtake economic advances. Rich nations can help limit population growth by exporting birth control technology and promoting its use. Once economic development is under way, birth rates should decline, as they have in industrialized nations, because children are no longer an economic asset.

2. **Increasing food production.** Rich nations can export high-tech farming methods to poor nations to increase agricultural yields. Such techniques, collectively referred to as the Green Revolution, include new hybrid seeds, modern irrigation methods, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides for insect control.
3. **Introducing industrial technology.** Rich nations can encourage economic growth in poor societies by introducing machinery and information technology, which raise productivity. Industrialization also shifts the labor force from farming to skilled industrial and service jobs.
4. **Providing foreign aid.** Investment capital from rich nations can boost the prospects of poor societies trying to reach Rostow’s take-off stage. Foreign aid can raise farm output by helping poor countries buy more fertilizer and build irrigation projects. In the same way, financial and technical assistance can help build power plants and factories to improve industrial output. Each year, the United States provides more than \$25 billion in foreign aid to developing countries (ForeignAssistance.gov, 2015).

EVALUATE

Modernization theory has many influential supporters among social scientists (Parsons, 1966; Moore, 1977, 1979; Bauer, 1981; Berger, 1986; Firebaugh & Beck, 1994; Firebaugh, 1996, 1999; Firebaugh & Sandu, 1998). For decades, it has shaped the foreign policy of the United States and other rich nations. Supporters point to rapid economic development in Asia—especially in South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong—as proof that the affluence achieved in Western Europe and North America is within the reach of all countries.

But modernization theory comes under fire from socialist countries (and left-leaning analysts in the West) as little more than a defense of capitalism. Its most serious flaw, according to critics, is that modernization simply has not occurred in many poor countries.

Economic indicators reported by the United Nations show that living standards in a number of nations, including Haiti and Nicaragua in Latin America and Sudan, Ghana, and Rwanda in Africa, are little changed—and are in some cases worse—than in 1960 (United Nations Development Programme, 2008).

A second criticism of modernization theory is that it fails to recognize how rich nations, which benefit from the status quo, often block the path to development for poor countries. Centuries ago, critics charge, rich countries industrialized from a position of global strength. Can we expect poor countries today to do so from a position of global weakness?

Third, modernization theory treats rich and poor societies as separate worlds, ignoring the ways in which international relations have affected all nations. Many countries in Latin America and Asia are still struggling to overcome the harm caused by colonialism, which boosted the fortunes of Europe.

Fourth, modernization theory holds up the world's most developed countries as the standard for judging the rest of humanity, revealing an ethnocentric bias. We should remember that our Western idea of “progress” has caused us to rush headlong into a competitive, materialistic way of life, which uses up the world’s scarce resources and pollutes the natural environment.

Fifth and finally, modernization theory suggests that the causes of global poverty lie almost entirely in the poor societies themselves. Critics see this analysis as little more than blaming the victims for their own problems. Instead, they argue, an analysis of global inequality should focus just as much on the behavior of rich nations as it does on the behavior of poor ones and also on the global economic system. Concerns such as these reflect a second major approach to understanding global inequality, dependency theory.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING State the important ideas of modernization theory, including Rostow’s four stages of economic development. Point to several strengths and weaknesses of this theory.



Modernization theory claims that corporations that build factories in low-income nations help people by providing them with jobs and higher wages than they had before; dependency theory views these factories as “sweatshops” that exploit workers. In response to the Olympic Games selling sports clothing produced by sweatshops, these women staged a protest in Athens, Greece; they are wearing white masks to symbolize the “faceless” workers who make much of what we wear. Is any of the clothing you wear made in sweatshop factories?

Dependency Theory

Dependency theory is a model of economic and social development that explains global inequality in terms of the historical exploitation of poor nations by rich ones. This analysis, which follows the social-conflict approach, puts the main responsibility for global poverty on rich nations, which for centuries have systematically impoverished low-income countries and made them dependent on the rich ones—a destructive process that continues today.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE Everyone agrees that before the Industrial Revolution, there was little affluence in the world. Dependency theory asserts, however, that people living in poor countries were actually better off economically in the past than their descendants are now. André Gunder Frank (1975), a noted supporter of this theory, argues that the colonial process that helped develop rich nations also *underdeveloped* poor societies.

Dependency theory is based on the idea that the economic positions of rich and poor nations of the world are linked and cannot be understood apart from each other. Poor nations are not simply lagging behind rich ones on the “path of progress”; rather, the prosperity of the most developed countries came largely at the expense of less developed ones. In short, some nations became rich only because others became poor. Both are products of the global commerce that began five centuries ago.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLONIALISM Late in the fifteenth century, Europeans began exploring the Americas to the west, Africa to the south, and Asia to the east in order to establish colonies. They were so successful that a century

ago, Great Britain controlled about one-fourth of the world’s land, boasting that “the sun never sets on the British Empire.” The United States, itself originally a collection of small British colonies on the eastern seaboard of North America, soon pushed across the continent, purchased Alaska, and gained control of Haiti, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines, the Hawaiian Islands, part of Panama, and Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

As colonialism spread, there emerged a brutal form of human exploitation—the international slave trade—beginning about 1500 and continuing until 1850. Even as the world was turning away from slavery, Europeans took control of most of the African continent, as Figure 12–4 shows, and dominated most of the continent until the early 1960s.

Formal colonialism has almost disappeared from the world. However, according to dependency theory, political liberation has not translated into economic independence. Far from it—the economic relationship between poor and

rich nations continues the colonial pattern of domination. This neocolonialism is the heart of the capitalist world economy.

WALLERSTEIN'S CAPITALIST WORLD ECONOMY Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 1979, 1983, 1984) explains global stratification using a model of the “capitalist world economy.” Wallerstein’s term *world economy* suggests that the prosperity of some nations and the poverty and dependency of other countries result from a global economic system. He traces the roots of the global economy to the beginning of colonization more than 500 years ago, when Europeans began gathering wealth from the rest of the world. Because the world economy is based in the high-income countries, it is capitalist in character.²

Wallerstein calls the rich nations the *core* of the world economy. Colonialism enriched this core by funneling raw materials from around the world to Western Europe, where they fueled the Industrial Revolution. Today, multinational corporations operate profitably worldwide, channeling wealth to North America, Western Europe, Australia, and Japan.

Low-income countries represent the *periphery* of the world economy. Drawn into the world economy by colonial exploitation, poor nations continue to support rich ones by providing inexpensive labor and a vast market for industrial products. The remaining countries are considered the *semiperiphery* of the world economy. They include middle-income countries like India and Brazil that have closer ties to the global economic core.

According to Wallerstein, the world economy benefits rich societies (by generating profits) and harms the rest of the world (by causing poverty). The world economy thus makes poor nations dependent on rich ones. This dependency involves three factors:

- 1. Narrow, export-oriented economies.** Poor nations produce only a few crops for export to rich countries. Examples include coffee and fruit from Latin American nations, oil from Nigeria, hardwoods from

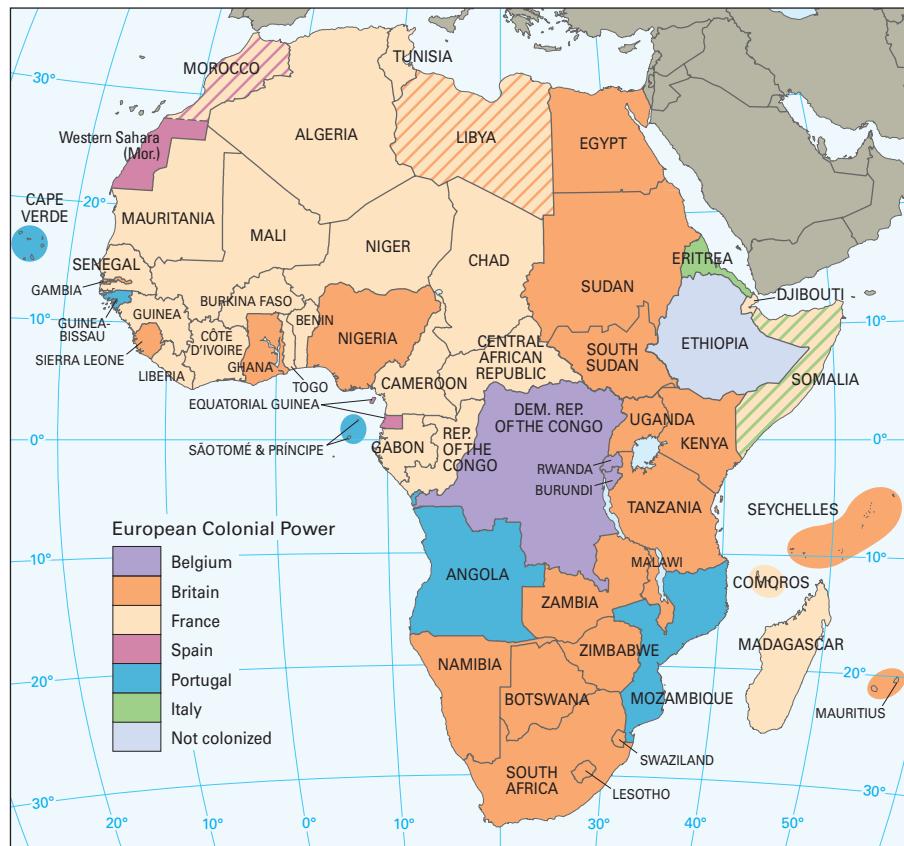


Figure 12–4 Africa's Colonial History

For more than a century, most of Africa was colonized by European nations, with France dominating in the northwestern region of the continent and Great Britain dominating in the east and south.

the Philippines, and palm oil from Malaysia. Today’s multinational corporations purchase raw materials cheaply in poor societies and transport them to core nations, where factories process them for profitable sale. Thus poor nations develop few industries of their own.

- 2. Lack of industrial capacity.** Without an industrial base, poor societies face a double bind: They count on rich nations to buy their inexpensive raw materials, and they must then try to buy from the rich nations the few expensive manufactured goods they can afford. In a classic example of this dependency, British colonialists encouraged the people of India to raise cotton but prevented them from weaving their own cloth. Instead, the British shipped Indian cotton to their own textile mills in Birmingham and Manchester, manufactured the cloth, and shipped finished goods back to

modernization theory a model of economic and social development that explains global inequality in terms of technological and cultural differences between nations

dependency theory a model of economic and social development that explains global inequality in terms of the historical exploitation of poor nations by rich ones

²This discussion also draws on A. G. Frank (1980, 1981), Delacroix and Ragin (1981), Bergesen (1983), Dixon and Boswell (1996), and Kentor (1998).

India, where the very people who harvested the cotton bought the garments.

Dependency theorists claim that the Green Revolution—widely praised by modernization theorists—works the same way. Poor countries sell cheap raw materials to rich nations and then must buy expensive fertilizers, pesticides, and machinery in return. Typically, rich countries profit from this exchange far more than poor nations.

3. Foreign debt. Unequal trade patterns have plunged poor countries into debt. Collectively, the poor nations of the world owe rich countries some \$5.5 trillion; hundreds of billions of dollars are owed to the United States. Such staggering debt paralyzes a country, causing high unemployment and rampant inflation (World Bank, 2015).

THE ROLE OF RICH NATIONS Modernization theory and dependency theory assign very different roles to rich nations. Modernization theory holds that rich countries *produce wealth* through capital investment and new technology. Dependency theory views global inequality in terms of how countries *distribute wealth*, arguing that rich nations have *overdeveloped* themselves as they have *underdeveloped* the rest of the world.

Dependency theorists dismiss the idea that programs developed by rich countries to control population and boost agricultural and industrial output raise living standards in poor countries. Instead, they claim, such programs actually benefit rich nations and the ruling elites, not the poor majority, in low-income countries (Kontor, 2001).

The hunger activists Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins (1986; Lappé, Collins, & Rosset, 1998) maintain that the capitalist culture of the United States encourages people to think of poverty as somehow inevitable. In this line of reasoning, poverty results from “natural” processes, including having too many children, and natural disasters such as droughts. But global poverty is far from inevitable; in their view, it results from deliberate policies. Lappé and Collins point out that the world already produces enough food to allow every person on the planet to become quite fat. Moreover, India and most of Africa actually *export* food, even though many people in African nations go hungry.

According to Lappé and Collins, the contradiction of poverty amid plenty stems from the rich-nation

policy of producing food for profit, not people. That is, corporations in rich nations cooperate with elites in poor countries to grow and export profitable crops such as coffee, which means using land that could otherwise produce basics such as beans and corn for local families. Governments of poor countries support the practice of growing for export because they need food profits to repay foreign debt. According to Lappé and Collins, the capitalist corporate structure of the global economy is at the core of this vicious cycle.

EVALUATE

The main idea of dependency theory is that no nation becomes rich or poor in isolation, because a single global economy shapes the destiny of all nations. Pointing to continuing poverty in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, dependency theorists claim that development simply cannot proceed under the constraints now imposed by rich countries. Rather, they call for radical reform of the entire world economy so that it operates in the interests of the majority of people.

Critics charge that dependency theory wrongly treats wealth as if no one gets richer without someone else getting poorer. Corporations, small business owners, and farmers can and do create new wealth through hard work and imaginative use of new technology. After all, they point out, the entire world's wealth has increased tenfold since 1950.

Second, dependency theory is wrong in blaming rich nations for global poverty because many of the world's poorest countries (such as Ethiopia) have had little contact with rich nations. On the contrary, a long history of trade with rich countries has dramatically improved the economies of many nations, including Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Hong Kong (all former British colonies), as well as South Korea and Japan. In short, say the critics, most evidence shows that foreign investment by rich nations encourages economic



Although the world continues to grow richer, billions of people are being left behind. This shantytown of Cité Soleil, Haiti, is typical of many cities in low-income countries. What can you say about the quality of life in such a place?

growth, as modernization theory claims, and not economic decline, as dependency theory holds (Vogel, 1991; Firebaugh, 1992).

Third, critics call dependency theory simplistic for pointing the finger at a single factor—the capitalist market system—as the cause of global inequality (Worsley, 1990). Dependency theory views poor societies as passive victims and ignores factors inside these countries that contribute to their economic problems. Sociologists have long recognized the vital role of culture in shaping people's willingness to embrace or resist change. Under the rule of the ultratraditional Muslim Taliban, for example, Afghanistan became economically isolated, and its living standards sank to among the lowest in the world. Is it reasonable to blame capitalist nations for that country's stagnation?

Nor can rich societies be held responsible for the reckless behavior of foreign leaders whose corruption and militarism impoverish their countries. Examples include the regimes of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, François Duvalier in Haiti, Manuel Noriega in Panama, Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire (today's Democratic Republic of the Congo), Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, and Muammar el-Qaddafi in Libya. Some leaders even use food supplies as weapons in internal political struggles, leaving the masses starving, as in the African nations of Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia. Likewise, many countries throughout the world have done little to improve the status of women or control population growth.

Fourth, critics say that dependency theory is wrong to claim that global trade always makes rich nations richer and poor nations poorer. For example, in 2014, the United States had a trade deficit of \$737 billion, meaning that this nation imports nearly three-quarters of a trillion dollars' more goods than it sells abroad. The single greatest debt (\$343 billion) was owed to China, whose profitable trade has now pushed that country into the ranks of the world's middle-income nations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

Fifth, critics fault dependency theory for offering only vague solutions to global poverty. Most dependency theorists urge poor nations to end all contact with rich countries, and some call for nationalizing foreign-owned industries. In other words, dependency theory is really an argument for some type of world socialism. In light of the difficulties that socialist societies (even better-off socialist countries such as Russia) have had in meeting the needs of their own people, critics ask, should we really expect such a system to rescue the entire world from poverty?

CHECK YOUR LEARNING State the main ideas of dependency theory. What are several of its strengths and weaknesses?

The Applying Theory table summarizes the main arguments of modernization theory and dependency theory.

The Future of Global Stratification

Among the most important trends in recent decades is the development of a global economy. In the United States, rising production and sales abroad bring profits to many corporations and their stockholders, especially those who already have substantial wealth. At the same time, the global economy has moved manufacturing jobs abroad, closing factories in this country and hurting many average workers. The net result: greater economic inequality in the United States.

People who support the global economy claim that the expansion of trade results in benefits for all countries involved. For this reason, they endorse policies like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed by the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Critics of expanding globalization make other claims: Manufacturing jobs are being lost in the United States, and more manufacturing now takes place abroad in factories where workers are paid little and few laws ensure workplace safety. In addition, other critics of expanding globalization point to the ever-greater stresses that our economy places on the natural environment.

But perhaps the greatest concern is the vast economic inequality that exists between the world's countries. The concentration of wealth in high-income countries, coupled with the grinding poverty in low-income nations, may well be the biggest problem facing humanity in the twenty-first century.

Both modernization theory and dependency theory offer some understanding of this urgent problem. In evaluating these theories, we must consider empirical evidence. Over the course of the twentieth century, living standards rose in most of the world. Even the economic output of the poorest 25 percent of the world's people almost tripled during those 100 years. As a result, the share of the world's population living on less than \$1.25 a day fell from about 52 percent in 1981 to about 43 percent in 1990 and to about 15 percent in 2014 (Chen & Ravallion, 2012; World Bank, 2014).

APPLYING THEORY

Global Poverty

	Modernization Theory	Dependency Theory
Which theoretical approach is applied?	Structural-functional approach	Social-conflict approach
How did global poverty come about?	The whole world was poor until some countries developed industrial technology, which allowed mass production and created affluence.	Colonialism moved wealth from some countries to others, making some nations poor as it made other nations rich.
What are the main causes of global poverty today?	Traditional culture and a lack of productive technology.	Neocolonialism—the operation of multinational corporations in the global, capitalist economy.
Are rich countries part of the problem or part of the solution?	Rich countries are part of the solution, contributing new technology, advanced schooling, and foreign aid.	Rich countries are part of the problem, making poor countries economically dependent and in debt.

Global Snapshot

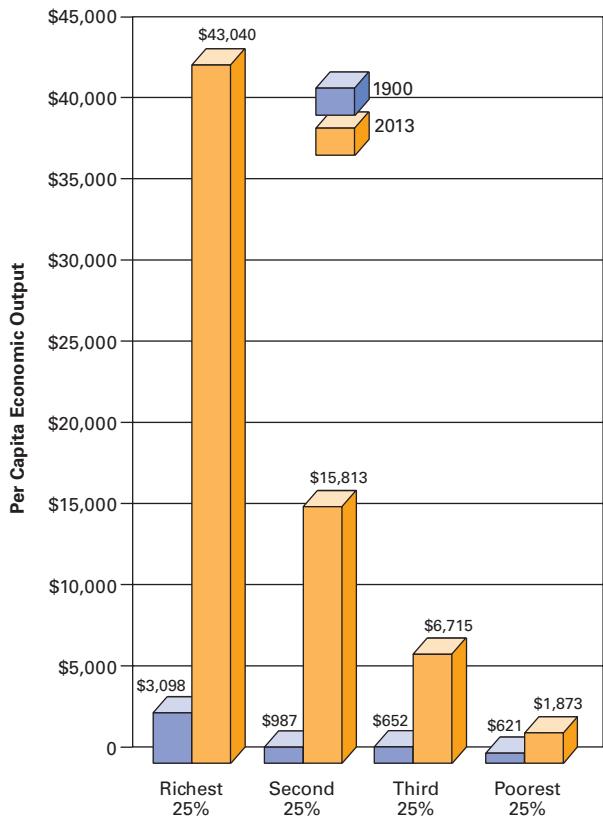


Figure 12–5 The World’s Increasing Economic Inequality

The gap between the richest and poorest people in the world in 2013 was more than five times bigger than it was in 1900.

SOURCE: World Bank (2014).

So far, the greatest reduction in poverty has taken place in Asia, a region generally regarded as an economic success story. Back in 1981, about 77 percent of the population of East Asia was living on less than \$1.25 per day. By 2011, however, that share had declined dramatically to about 8 percent. Signaling this trend toward greater prosperity, in 2005, two very large Asian countries—India and China—joined the ranks of the middle-income nations (Sala-i-Martin, 2002; Bussollo et al., 2007; Davies et al., 2008; Chen & Ravallion, 2012; World Bank, 2015).

During the 1970s, Latin America enjoyed significant economic growth, which pushed the share of its population living in \$1.25-per-day poverty down to 12 percent by 1981. During the 1980s and 1990s, however, this number changed very little, with additional small gains after about 2005. By 2011, the share of people living in poverty was about 4.6 percent (Chen & Ravallion, 2012; World Bank, 2015).

Sub-Saharan Africa represents the greatest challenge in humanity’s efforts to reduce poverty. By 2011, for the first time, less than half the people (47 percent) of this global region were living at \$1.25-per-day poverty or less. This poverty rate is still well above that of other world

regions. Yet analysts are optimistic about Africa’s future, pointing out that this region has enjoyed average economic growth of more than 5 percent a year over the past decade. In addition, six of the ten fastest developing countries in the world are now in southern Africa (Sala-i-Martin, 2002; Chen & Ravallion, 2012; Perry, 2012).

Looking at the world as a whole, the good news is that, in *absolute* terms, living standards are rising. Over the course of the last century, economic output has increased for both rich and poor nations. But the troubling trend is that living standards in rich and poor countries are not rising at the same rate. As a result, the *relative* gap between the rich and the poor in the world is increasing and, in 2013, this divide was nearly five times larger than it was back in 1900. Figure 12–5 shows that the lower-income people in the world are being left behind.

Recent trends suggest the need to look critically at both modernization and dependency theories. The fact that governments have played a large role in the economic growth that has occurred in Asia and elsewhere challenges modernization theory and its free-market approach to development. On the other hand, since the upheavals in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, a global reevaluation of socialism has been taking place. Because socialist nations have a record of decades of poor economic performance and political repression, many low-income nations are unwilling to follow the advice of dependency theory and place economic development entirely under government control.

Although the world’s future is uncertain, we have learned a great deal about global stratification. One insight offered by modernization theory is that poverty is partly a *problem of technology*. A higher standard of living for a surging world population depends on the ability of poor nations to raise their agricultural and industrial productivity. A second insight, derived from dependency theory, is that global inequality is also a *political issue*. Even with higher productivity, the human community must address crucial questions concerning how resources are distributed, both within societies and around the globe.

Although economic development raises living standards, it also places greater strains on the natural environment. As nations such as India and China—with a combined population of 2.7 billion—become more affluent, their people will consume more energy and other resources (China has recently passed Japan to become the second-largest consumer of oil, behind the United States). Richer nations also produce more solid waste and create more pollution.

Finally, the vast gulf that separates the world’s richest and poorest people puts everyone at greater risk of war and terrorism as the poorest people challenge the social arrangements that threaten their existence (Lindauer & Weerapana, 2002). In the long run, we can achieve peace on this planet only by ensuring that all people enjoy a significant measure of dignity and security.

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 12 Global Stratification

How much social inequality can we find if we look around the world?

This chapter explains that a global perspective reveals even more social stratification than we find here in the United States. Around the world, an increasing number of people in lower-income countries are traveling to higher-income

nations in search of jobs. As “guest workers,” they perform low-wage work that the country’s own more well-off citizens do not wish to do. In such cases, the rich and poor truly live “worlds apart.”

Many guest workers come to Dubai from India to take jobs building this country’s new high-rise hotels and business towers. With very little income, they often sleep six to a small room. How do you think living in a strange country, with few legal rights, affects these workers’ ability to improve their working conditions?



Guest workers in Dubai labor about twelve hours a day but earn only between \$50 and \$175 a month. Do you think the chance to take a job like this in a foreign country is an opportunity (income is typically twice what people can earn at home), or is it a form of exploitation?





Oil wealth has made some of the people of Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, among the richest in the world. Dubai's wealthiest people can afford to ski on snow—in one of the hottest regions of the world—on enormous indoor ski slopes like this one. Is there anything about this picture that makes you uncomfortable? Explain your reaction.

Hint Dubai's recent building boom has been accomplished using the labor of about 1 million guest workers, who actually make up about 85 percent of the population of the United Arab Emirates. Recent years have seen a rising level of social unrest, including labor strikes, which has led to some improvements in working and living conditions and better health care. But guest workers have no legal rights to form labor unions, nor do they have any chance to gain citizenship.

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

1. Look at the social status, living conditions, health, and wages of the average “guest worker” in developed countries. What is the status of people from your society who choose to become guest workers? What problems do they face?
2. Look at the latest gross national income and quality of life indexes of your country. How are these two index values interrelated? What information do these index values reveal about your country’s productivity, poverty, and social inequality?
3. Evaluate how Immanuel Wallerstein’s dependency theory applies to your country. Look at the corresponding category of your country. What is the evidence for neo-colonialism in your country? Does it help in economic and social development?
4. Go to www.sociologyinfocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 12 Global Stratification

Global Stratification: An Overview

12.1 Describe the division of the world into high-, middle-, and low-income countries. (pages 323–27)

High-Income Countries

- contain 24% of the world's people
- receive 59% of global income
- have a high standard of living based on advanced technology
- produce enough economic goods to enable their people to lead comfortable lives
- include 76 nations, among them the United States, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, the nations of Western Europe, Israel, Saudi Arabia, the Russian Federation, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and Australia

Middle-Income Countries

- contain 62% of the world's people
- receive 38% of global income
- have a standard of living about average for the world as a whole
- include 70 nations, among them the nations of Eastern Europe, Peru, Brazil, Namibia, Egypt, Indonesia, India, and the People's Republic of China

Low-Income Countries

- contain 14% of the world's people
- receive 3% of global income
- have a low standard of living due to limited industrial technology
- include 48 nations, generally in Central and East Africa and Asia, among them Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and Bangladesh

global stratification patterns of social inequality in the world as a whole

high-income countries the nations with the highest overall standards of living

middle-income countries nations with a standard of living about average for the world as a whole

low-income countries nations with a low standard of living in which most people are poor

Global Wealth and Poverty

12.2 Discuss patterns and explanations of poverty around the world. (pages 327–33)

All societies contain **relative poverty**, but low-income nations face widespread **absolute poverty** that is life-threatening.

- Worldwide, about 805 million people are at risk due to poor nutrition.
- About 9 million people each year die each year from diseases caused by poverty.
- Throughout the world, women are more likely than men to be poor. Gender bias is strongest in poor societies.
- At least 20 million men, women, and children live in conditions that can be described as slavery.

Factors Causing Poverty

- Lack of technology limits production.
- High birth rates produce rapid population increase.
- Traditional cultural patterns make people resist change.
- Extreme social inequality distributes wealth very unequally.
- Extreme gender inequality limits the opportunities of women.
- Colonialism allowed some nations to exploit other nations; neocolonialism continues today.

colonialism the process by which some nations enrich themselves through political and economic control of other nations

neocolonialism a new form of global power relationships that involves not direct political control but economic exploitation by multinational corporations

multinational corporation a large business that operates in many countries

Theories of Global Stratification

12.3 Apply sociological theories to the topic of global inequality. (pages 333–40)

Modernization theory maintains that nations achieve affluence by developing advanced technology. This process depends on a culture that encourages innovation and change. Walt Rostow identified four stages of development:

- *Traditional stage*—People's lives are built around families and local communities. (Example: Democratic Republic of the Congo)
- *Take-off stage*—A market emerges as people produce goods not just for their own use but also to trade with others for profit. (Example: Thailand)
- *Drive to technological maturity*—Economic growth and higher living standards are goals; schooling is widely available; women's social standing improves. (Example: Mexico)
- *High mass consumption*—Advanced technology fuels mass production and mass consumption as people now "need" countless goods. (Example: United States)

Modernization theory claims . . .

- Rich nations can help poor nations by providing technology to control population size, increase food production, and expand industrial and information economy output and by providing foreign aid to pay for new economic development.
- Rapid economic development in Asia shows that affluence is within reach of other nations.

Critics claim . . .

- Rich nations do little to help poor countries and benefit from the status quo. Low living standards in much of Africa and South America result from the policies of rich nations.
- Because rich nations, including the United States, control the global economy, many poor nations struggle to support their people and cannot follow the path to development taken by rich countries centuries ago.

Dependency theory maintains that global wealth and poverty were created by the colonial process beginning 500 years ago that developed rich nations and underdeveloped poor nations. This capitalist process continues today in the form of neocolonialism—economic exploitation of poor nations by multinational corporations.

Immanuel Wallerstein's identified three categories of nations in a capitalist world economy:

- *Core*—the world's high-income countries, which are home to multinational corporations
- *Semiperiphery*—the world's middle-income countries with ties to core nations
- *Periphery*—the world's low-income countries, which provide low-cost labor and a vast market for industrial products

Dependency theory claims . . .

- Three key factors—export-oriented economies, a lack of industrial capacity, and foreign debt—make poor countries dependent on rich nations and prevent their economic development.
- Radical reform of the entire world economy is needed so that it operates in the interests of the majority of people.

Critics claim . . .

- Dependency theory overlooks the tenfold increase in global wealth since 1950 and the fact that the world's poorest countries have had weak, not strong, ties to rich countries.
- Rich nations are not responsible for cultural patterns and political corruption that block economic development in many poor nations.

The Future of Global Stratification

- Global stratification is partly a matter of national differences in productive technology and partly a political matter involving how economic resources are distributed among nations and within nations.
- Although all regions of the world have made economic gains in absolute terms, the gap between rich and poor nations is more than five times larger than it was a century ago.

modernization theory a model of economic and social development that explains global inequality in terms of technological and cultural differences between nations

dependency theory a model of economic and social development that explains global inequality in terms of the historical exploitation of poor nations by rich ones

Chapter 13

Gender Stratification



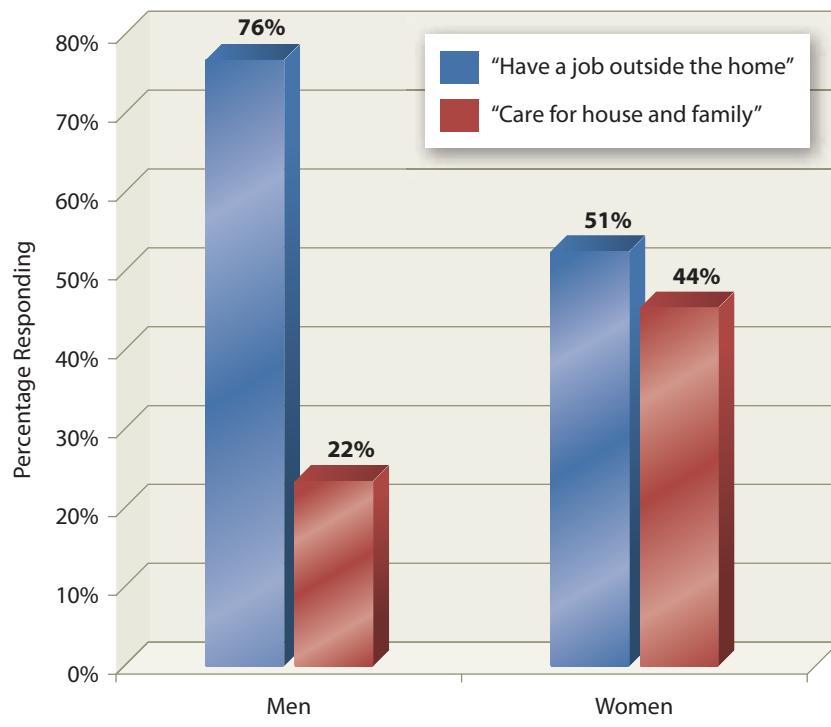
Learning Objectives

- 13.1** Describe the ways in which society creates gender stratification.
- 13.2** Explain the importance of gender to socialization.
- 13.3** Analyze the extent of gender inequality in various social institutions.
- 13.4** Apply sociology's major theories to gender stratification.
- 13.5** Contrast liberal, radical, and socialist feminism.



The Power of Society to guide our life choices

Survey Question: “If you were free to do either, would you prefer to have a job outside the home, or would you prefer to stay at home and take care of the house and family?”



SOURCE: Gallup (2012).

A recent survey asked U.S. adults this question, and men and women gave different answers. Among men it was no contest, with a large majority choosing the job outside the home. Among women, however, it was much closer, with only a very slight majority choosing the job. Or, from another angle, women were twice as likely as men to choose taking care of home and family. The difference in female and male responses shows the power of gender to shape our lives down to the very personal choices we make about how to live.

Chapter Overview

We live in a world organized around not only the differences of social class but also around the concepts of feminine and masculine, which sociologists call “gender.” This chapter examines gender, explores the meaning societies attach to being female or male, and explains why gender is an important dimension of social stratification.

At first we traveled quite alone . . . but before we had gone many miles, we came on other wagonloads of women, bound in the same direction. As we reached different cross-roads, we saw wagons coming from every part of the country and, long before we reached Seneca Falls, we were a procession.

So wrote Charlotte Woodward in her journal as she made her way in a horse-drawn wagon along the rutted dirt roads leading to Seneca Falls, a small town in upstate New York. The year was 1848, a time when slavery was legal in much of the United States and the social standing of all women, regardless of color, was far below that of men. Back then, in much of the country, women could not own property, keep their own wages if they were married, draft a will, file lawsuits in a court (including lawsuits seeking custody of their own children), or attend college, and husbands were widely viewed as having unquestioned authority over their wives and children.

Some 300 women gathered at Wesleyan Chapel in Seneca Falls to challenge this second-class citizenship. They listened as their leader, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, called for expanding women’s rights and opportunities, including the right to vote. At that time, most people considered such a proposal absurd and outrageous. Even many of those attending the conference were shocked by the idea of women having a political voice: Stanton’s husband, Henry, rode out of town in protest (Gurnett, 1998).

Much has changed since the Seneca Falls convention, and many of Stanton’s proposals are now accepted as matters of basic fairness. But as this chapter explains, women and men still lead different lives in the United States and elsewhere in the world; in most respects, men are still in charge. This chapter explores the importance of gender and explains that gender, like class position, is a major dimension of social stratification. ■



Gender and Inequality

13.1 Describe the ways in which society creates gender stratification.

Chapter 8 (“Sexuality and Society”) explained that biological differences divide the human population into categories of female and male. **Gender** refers to the personal traits and social positions that members of a society attach to being female or male. Gender, then, is a dimension of social organization, shaping how we interact with others and even how we think about ourselves. More important, gender also involves *hierarchy*, placing men and women in different positions in terms of power, wealth, and other resources. This is why sociologists speak of **gender stratification**, the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and privilege between men and women. In short, gender affects the

opportunities and constraints we face throughout our lives.

Male-Female Differences

Many people think there is something “natural” about gender distinctions because the two sexes do have some biological differences. But we must be careful not to think of social differences in biological terms. In 1848, for example, women were denied the vote because many people assumed that women did not have enough intelligence or any interest

gender the personal traits and social positions that members of a society attach to being female or male

gender stratification the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and privilege between men and women



The world of sports has always been more open to males than to females. Little League baseball barred girls until 1973. Recently, Mo'ne Davis, who owns a 70 miles-per-hour fastball, became the first Little League player in history to be featured on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* magazine.

in politics. Such attitudes had nothing to do with biology; they reflected the *cultural* patterns of that time and place.

Another example is athletic performance. In 1925, most people—both women and men—believed that the best women runners could never compete with men in a marathon. Today, as Figure 13–1 shows, the gender gap has greatly narrowed, and the best women runners routinely post better times than the fastest men of decades past. Here again, most of the differences between men and women turn out to be socially created.

Differences in physical ability between the sexes do exist. On average, males are 10 percent taller than females, 20 percent heavier, and 30 percent stronger, especially in the upper body. On the other hand, women outperform men in the ultimate game of life itself: Life expectancy for men is 76.4 years, and women can expect to live 81.2 years (Ehrenreich, 1999; Fryar, Gu, & Ogden, 2012; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014).

In adolescence, males do a bit better on the mathematics and reading parts of the SAT, while females show stronger writing skills, and researchers claim that these differences reflect both biology and socialization (Lewin, 2008; College Board, 2014). However, research does not point to any overall differences in intelligence between males and females.

Biologically, then, men and women differ in limited ways, with neither one naturally superior. But culture can define the two sexes differently, as the global study of gender described in the next section shows.

Gender in Global Perspective

The best way to see how gender is based in culture is by comparing one society to another. Three important studies highlight just how different “masculine” and “feminine” can be.

THE ISRAELI KIBBUTZ In Israel, collective settlements are called *kibbutzim*. The *kibbutz* (the singular form of the word) has been an important setting for gender research because gender equality is one of its stated goals; men and women share in both work and decision making.

In recent decades, *kibbutzim* have become less collective and thus less distinctive organizations. But for much of their history, both sexes shared most everyday jobs. Many men joined women in taking care of children, and women joined men in repairing buildings and providing armed security. Both sexes made everyday decisions for the group. Girls and boys were raised in the same way; in many cases, young children were raised together in dormitories away from parents. Women and men in the *kibbutzim* achieved remarkable (although not complete) social

Diversity Snapshot

- The women's movement of the 1960s encouraged women to show their true abilities.

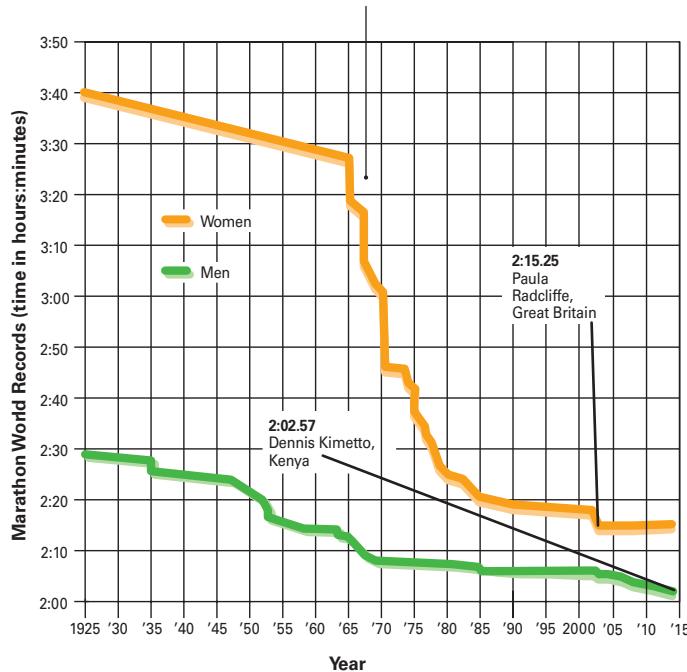


Figure 13–1 Men's and Women's Athletic Performance

Do men naturally outperform women in athletic competition? The answer is not obvious. Early in the twentieth century, men outpaced women by more than an hour in marathon races. But as opportunities for women in athletics have increased, women have been closing the performance gap. Only twelve and one-half minutes separate the current world marathon records for women (set in 2003) and for men (set in 2014).

SOURCE: Marathonguide.com (2015).

equality, evidence that cultures define what is feminine and what is masculine.

MARGARET MEAD'S RESEARCH The anthropologist Margaret Mead carried out groundbreaking research on gender. If gender is based in the biological differences between men and women, she reasoned, people everywhere should define "feminine" and "masculine" in the same way; if gender is cultural, these concepts should vary.

Mead (1963, orig. 1935) studied three societies in New Guinea. In the mountainous home of the Arapesh, Mead observed men and women with remarkably similar attitudes and behavior. Both sexes, she reported, were cooperative and sensitive to others—in short, what our culture would label "feminine."

Moving south, Mead then studied the Mundugumor, whose headhunting and cannibalism stood in striking contrast to the gentle ways of the Arapesh. In this culture, both sexes were typically selfish and aggressive, traits we define as "masculine."

Finally, traveling west to the Tchambuli, Mead discovered a culture that, like our own, defined females and males differently. But, Mead reported, the Tchambuli *reversed* many of our ideas of gender: Females were dominant and rational, and males were submissive, emotional, and nurturing toward children. Based on her observations, Mead concluded that culture is the key to gender distinctions, because what one society defines as masculine another may see as feminine.

Some critics view Mead's findings as "too neat," as if she saw in these societies just the patterns she was looking for. Deborah Gewertz (1981) challenged what she called Mead's "reversal hypothesis," pointing out that Tchambuli males are really the more aggressive sex. Gewertz explains that Mead visited the Tchambuli (who themselves spell their name Chambri) during the 1930s, after they had lost much of their property in tribal wars, and observed men rebuilding their homes, a temporary role for Chambri men.

GEORGE MURDOCK'S RESEARCH In a broader study of more than 200 preindustrial societies, George Murdock (1937) found some global agreement on which tasks are feminine and which masculine. Hunting and warfare, Murdock observed, generally fall to men, and home-centered tasks such as cooking and child care tend to be women's work. With their simple technology, preindustrial societies apparently assign roles reflecting men's and women's physical characteristics. With their greater size and strength,



In every society, people assume that certain jobs, patterns of behavior, and ways of dressing are "naturally" feminine while others are just as obviously masculine. But in global perspective, we see remarkable variety in such social definitions. These men, Wodaabe pastoral nomads who live in the African nation of Niger, are proud to engage in a display of beauty most people in our society would consider feminine.

men hunt game and protect the group; because women bear children, they do most of the work in the home.

Beyond this general pattern, Murdock found much variety. Consider agriculture: Women did the farming in about the same number of societies as men; in most societies, the two sexes divided this work. When it came to many other tasks, from building shelters to tattooing the body, Murdock found that preindustrial societies of the world were as likely to turn to one sex as the other.

EVALUATE

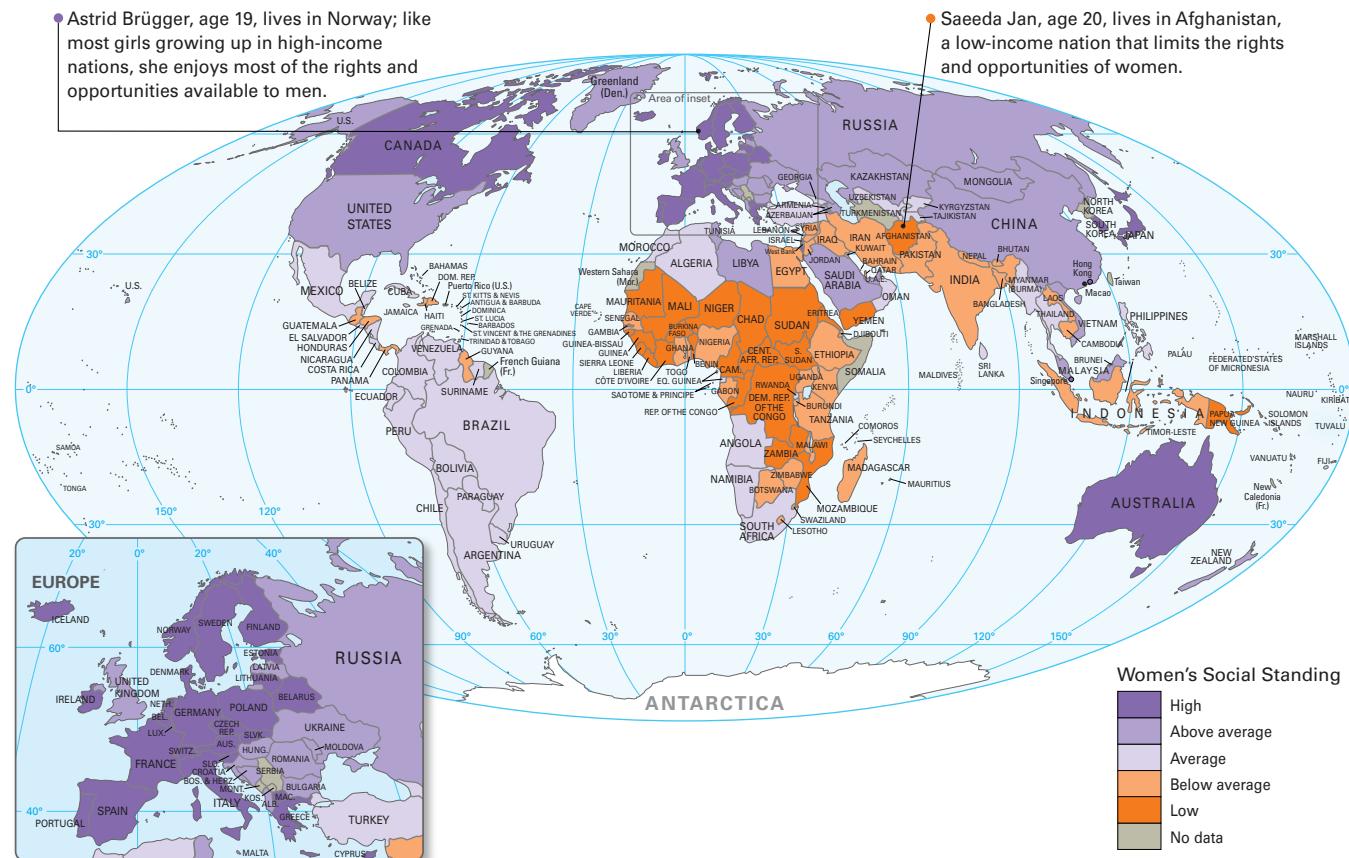
Global comparisons show that, overall, societies do not consistently define tasks as feminine or masculine. With industrialization, the importance of muscle power declines, further reducing gender differences (Nolan & Lenski, 2010). In sum, gender is too variable to be a simple expression of biology; what it means to be female and male is mostly a creation of society.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING By comparing many cultures, what do we learn about the origin of gender differences?

Patriarchy and Sexism

Conceptions of gender vary, and there is evidence of societies in which women have greater power than men. One example is the Musuo, a very small society in southwestern China's Yunnan province, in which women control most property, select their sexual partners, and make most decisions about everyday life. The Musuo appear to be a case of **matriarchy** ("rule by mothers"), a form of social organization in which females dominate males, which has only rarely been documented in human history.

Window on the World



Global Map 13-1 Women's Power in Global Perspective

Women's social standing in relation to men's varies around the world. In general, women live better in rich countries than in poor countries. Even so, some nations stand out: In the Netherlands, Sweden, Slovenia, and Switzerland women come closest to social equality with men.

SOURCE: Data from United Nations Development Programme (2014).

The pattern found almost everywhere in the world is **patriarchy** ("rule by fathers"), a form of social organization in which males dominate females. Global Map 13-1 shows the great variation in the relative power and privilege of women that exists from country to country. According to the United Nations' Gender Inequality Index, Slovenia, Switzerland, Germany, and Sweden give women the highest social standing; by contrast, women in Afghanistan, Chad, Niger, and Yemen have the lowest social standing compared with men. Of the world's 194 nations, the United States was ranked forty-seventh in terms of gender equality (United Nations Development Programme, 2014).

matriarchy a form of social organization in which females dominate males

patriarchy a form of social organization in which males dominate females

sexism the belief that one sex is innately superior to the other

The justification for patriarchy is **sexism**, the belief that one sex is innately superior to the other. Sexism is not just a matter of individual attitudes; it is also built into the institutions of society. **Institutional sexism** is found throughout the economy, with women highly concentrated in low-paying jobs. Similarly, the legal system has long excused violence against women, especially on the part of boyfriends, husbands, and fathers.

THE COSTS OF SEXISM Sexism limits the talents and the ambitions of the half of the human population, who are women. Although men benefit in some respects from sexism, their privilege comes at a high price. Masculinity in our culture encourages men to engage in many high-risk behaviors: using tobacco and alcohol, playing dangerous sports, and even driving recklessly. As Marilyn French (1985) argues, patriarchy drives men to relentlessly seek control, not only of women but also of themselves and their world. Thus masculinity is linked not only to accidents but also to suicide, violence, and stress-related diseases. The **Type A personality**—marked by chronic impatience, driving

ambition, competitiveness, and free-floating hostility—is one cause of heart disease and an almost perfect match with the behavior our culture considers masculine (Ehrenreich, 1983).

Finally, as men seek control over others, they lose opportunities for intimacy and trust. As one analyst put it, competition is supposed to “separate the men from the boys.” In practice, however, it separates men from men and from everyone else (Raphael, 1988).

MUST PATRIARCHY GO ON? In preindustrial societies, women have little control over pregnancy and childbirth, which limits the scope of their lives. In those same societies, men’s greater height and physical strength are valued resources that give them power. But industrialization, including birth control technology, increases people’s choices about how to live. In societies like our own, biological differences offer little justification for patriarchy.

But males are socially dominant in the United States and elsewhere. Does this mean that patriarchy is inevitable? Some researchers claim that biological factors such as differences in hormones and slight differences in brain structure “wire” the two sexes with different motivations and behaviors—especially aggressiveness in males—making patriarchy difficult or perhaps even impossible to change (Goldberg, 1974; Rossi, 1985; Popenoe, 1993b; Udry, 2000). However, most sociologists believe that gender is socially constructed and *can* be changed. The fact that no society has completely eliminated patriarchy does not mean that we must remain prisoners of the past.

To understand why patriarchy continues today, we must examine how gender is rooted and reproduced in society, a process that begins in childhood and continues throughout our lives.

Gender and Socialization

13.2 Explain the importance of gender to socialization.

From birth until death, gender shapes human feelings, thoughts, and actions. Children quickly learn that their society considers females and males different kinds of people; by about age three, they begin to think of themselves in these terms.

In the past, many people in the United States traditionally described women using terms such as “emotional,” “passive,” and “cooperative.” By contrast, men were described as “rational,” “active,” and “competitive.” It is curious that we were taught for so long to think of gender in terms of one sex being opposite to the other, especially because women and men have so much in common and also because research suggests that most people develop personalities that are a mix of feminine and masculine traits (Bem, 1993).

Just as gender affects how we think of ourselves, so it teaches us how to behave. **Gender roles** (also known as

sex roles) are *attitudes and activities that a society links to each sex*. A culture that defines males as ambitious and competitive encourages them to seek out positions of leadership and play team sports. To the extent that females are defined as deferential and emotional, they are expected to be supportive helpers and quick to show their feelings.

Gender and the Family

The first question people usually ask about a newborn—“Is it a boy or a girl?”—has great importance because the answer involves not just sex but also the likely direction of the child’s life. In fact, gender is at work even before a child is born, especially in lower-income nations, because parents hope their firstborn will be a boy rather than a girl (Pappas, 2011).

Soon after birth, family members welcome infants into the “pink world” of girls or the “blue world” of boys (Bernard, 1981). People even send gender messages in the way they handle infants. One researcher at an English university presented an infant dressed as either a boy or a girl to a number of women; her subjects handled the “female” child tenderly, with frequent hugs and caresses, while treating the “male” child more aggressively, often lifting him up high in the air or bouncing him on a knee (Bonner, 1984; Tavris & Wade, 2001). The lesson is



Sex is a biological distinction that develops prior to birth. Gender is the meaning that a society attaches to being female or male. Gender differences are a matter of power, because what is defined as masculine typically has more importance than what is defined as feminine. Infants begin to learn the importance of gender by the way parents treat them. Do you think this child is a girl or a boy? Why?

clear: The female world revolves around cooperation and emotion, and the male world puts a premium on independence and action.

Gender and the Peer Group

About the time they enter school, children begin to move outside the family and make friends with others of the same age. Considerable research points to the fact that young children tend to form single-sex play groups (Martin & Fabes, 2001).

Peer groups teach additional lessons about gender. After spending a year watching children at play, Janet Lever (1978) concluded that boys favor team sports with complex rules and clear objectives such as scoring runs or making touchdowns. Such games nearly always have winners and losers, reinforcing masculine traits of aggression and control.

Girls, too, play team sports. But, Lever explains, girls also play hopscotch, jump rope, or simply talk, sing, or dance. These activities have few rules, and rarely is victory the ultimate goal. Instead of teaching girls to be competitive, Lever explains, female peer groups promote the interpersonal skills of communication and cooperation, presumably the basis for girls' future roles as wives and mothers.

The games we play offer important lessons for our later lives. Lever's observations recall Carol Gilligan's gender-based theory of moral reasoning, discussed in Chapter 5 ("Socialization"). Boys, Gilligan (1982) claims, reason according to abstract principles. For them,

"rightness" amounts to "playing by the rules." By contrast, girls consider morality a matter of responsibility to others.

Gender and Schooling

Gender shapes our interests and beliefs about our own abilities, guiding areas of study and, eventually, career choices (Correll, 2001). The types of courses people take in high school still reflect traditional gender patterns. For example, more girls than boys learn secretarial skills and take vocational classes such as cosmetology and food services. On the other hand, classes in woodworking and auto mechanics attract mostly young men.

Because women represent 57 percent of people on the campus and earn 57 percent of all bachelor's degrees, it is no surprise that they are now well represented in many fields of study that once excluded them, including mathematics, chemistry, and biology. But men still predominate in many fields, including engineering (earning 81 percent of all bachelor's degrees), computer science (82 percent), and the physical sciences (60 percent). Women tend to cluster in library science (87 percent of all bachelor's degrees), education (80 percent), and psychology (77 percent). In sociology, for 2012, women earned 69 percent of bachelor's degrees, 66 percent of master's degrees, and 63 percent of doctorates (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Gender and the Mass Media

Since television captured the public imagination in the early 1950s, white males have held center stage; racial and ethnic minorities were all but absent from television until the early 1970s. Even when both sexes appeared on camera, men generally played the brilliant detectives, fearless explorers, and skilled surgeons. Women played the less capable characters, often unnecessary except for the sexual interest they added to the story. In recent years, more women have taken starring roles, but female stars earn less than their male counterparts. The ten highest-paid male actors averaged a total of \$214 million in earnings (including endorsements) in 2014; this compared to \$140 for the ten highest-paid women actors (*Forbes*, 2014).

Historically, advertisements have shown women in the home, cheerfully using cleaning products, serving food, trying out appliances, and modeling clothes. Men predominate in ads for cars, travel, banking services, industrial companies, and alcoholic beverages. The authoritative voiceover—the voice that describes a product on television and radio—is almost always male (Davis, 1993; Coltrane & Messineo, 2000; Messineo, 2008; Statista, 2015).

A careful study of gender in advertising reveals that men usually appear taller than women, implying male superiority. Women, by contrast, are more frequently presented lying down (on sofas and beds) or, like children,



In our society, the mass media have enormous influence on our attitudes and behavior, and what we see shapes our view of gender. In the 2012 film *Hunger Games*, we see Jennifer Lawrence playing Katniss Everdeen, a take-charge, female lead character. Such a portrayal is an exception to the conventional pattern by which active males play against more passive females. In your opinion, how much can the mass media change conventional ideas about gender? Why?

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

The Beauty Myth

Beth: I can't eat lunch. I need to be sure I can get into that black dress for tonight.

Sarah: Maybe eating is more important than looking good for Tom.

Beth: That's easy for you to say. You're a size 2, and Jake adores you!

The Duchess of Windsor once remarked, "A woman cannot be too rich or too thin." The first half of her observation might apply to men as well, but certainly not the second. After all, the vast majority of ads placed by the \$57-billion-a-year U.S. cosmetics industry and the \$60-billion diet industry target women.

According to Naomi Wolf (1990), certain cultural patterns add up to a "beauty myth" that is damaging to women. First, the foundation of the beauty myth is the notion, taught from an early age, that women should measure their worth in



One way our culture supports the beauty myth is through beauty pageants for women; over the years, contestants have become thinner and thinner.

terms of physical appearance or, more specifically, how physically attractive they are to men. Of course, the standards of beauty embodied by the *Playboy* centerfold or the 100-pound New York fashion model are out of reach for most women.

Second, our society teaches women to prize relationships with men, whom they presumably attract with their beauty. Striving for beauty not only drives women to be extremely disciplined but also forces them to be highly attentive to and responsive to men. In short, beauty-minded women try to please men and avoid challenging male power.

Belief in the beauty myth is one reason that so many young women are focused on body image, particularly being as thin as possible, often to the point of endangering their health. During the past several decades, the share of young women who develop an eating disorder such as anorexia nervosa (dieting to the point of starvation) or bulimia (binge eating followed by vomiting) has risen dramatically.

The beauty myth, then, is the idea that striving to be physically attractive to men is the key to women's happiness. As Wolf sees it, however, such efforts are more likely to end up standing between women and their power and worthwhile accomplishments.

The beauty myth affects males as well: Men are told repeatedly that they should want to possess beautiful women. Such ideas about beauty reduce women to objects and motivate thinking about women as if they were dolls rather than human beings.

There can be little doubt that the idea of beauty is important in everyday life. According to Wolf, the question is whether beauty is about how we look or how we act.

What Do You Think?

1. Is there a "money myth" that states that people's income is a simple reflection of their talent? Does it apply more to one sex than to the other?
2. Can you see a connection between the beauty myth and the rise of eating disorders among young women in the United States?
3. Among people with physical disabilities, do you think that issues of "looking different" are more serious for women or for men? Why?

seated on the floor. Men's facial expressions and behavior give off an air of competence and imply dominance; women often appear childlike, submissive, and sexual. Men focus on the products being advertised, and women often focus on the men (Goffman, 1979; Cortese, 1999).

Advertising also perpetuates what Naomi Wolf (1990) calls the "beauty myth." The Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life box takes a closer look at how this myth affects both women and men.

Gender and Social Stratification

13.3 Analyze the extent of gender inequality in various social institutions.

Gender involves more than how people think and act. It is also about how society is organized, how our lives are affected by social hierarchy. The reality of gender stratification

can be seen in just about every aspect of our everyday lives. We look, first, to the world of working women and men.

Working Women and Men

In 1900, just 20 percent of women but 80 percent of men were in the U.S. labor force. Today, the share of women has almost tripled, to 57 percent, while the share of men has fallen to 69 percent. As the Power of Society figure at the beginning of this chapter points out, our society continues to encourage men more than women to work for income.

Among people in the labor force, 70 percent of women and 82 percent of men work full time. From another angle, 47 percent of all U.S. jobs are held by women, and 53 percent are held by men (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). Men may still dominate the labor force, but the once common view that earning income is a man's role no longer holds true.

Factors that have contributed to change in the U.S. labor force include the decline of farming, the growth of cities, shrinking family size, and a rising divorce rate. In the United States, along with most other nations of the world, women in the labor force working for income is now the rule rather than the exception. Women make up almost half the U.S. paid labor force, and 51 percent of U.S. married couples depend on two incomes.

In the past, many younger women in the labor force were childless. But today, 59 percent of married women with children under age six are in the labor force, as are 70 percent of married women with children between six and seventeen years of age. For families maintained by a woman (including single, widowed, divorced, or separated women with children), the comparable figures are 62 percent of women with younger children and 73 percent of women with older children (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014).

GENDER AND OCCUPATIONS Although women are closing the gap with men as far as working for income is

Table 13–1 Jobs with the Highest Concentrations of Women, 2014

Occupation	Number of Women Employed	Percentage in Occupation Who Are Women
1. Speech-language pathologist	135,000	98.4%
2. Preschool or kindergarten teacher	645,000	97.2%
3. Dental hygienist	170,000	97.1%
4. Medical transcriptionist	56,000	97.1%
5. Dental assistant	264,000	96.6%
6. Child care worker	1,163,000	95.5%
7. Hairdresser or cosmetologist	719,000	94.6%
8. Secretary or administrative assistant	2,821,000	94.2%
9. Medical assistant	471,000	92.8%
10. Dietician or nutritionist	114,000	92.4%

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Labor (2015)

concerned, the work done by the two sexes remains very different. The U.S. Department of Labor (2015) reports a high concentration of women in two types of jobs. Administrative support work draws 22 percent of working women, most of whom are secretaries or other office workers. These are called "pink-collar jobs" because 73 percent are filled by women. Another 16 percent of employed women perform service work. Most of these jobs are in the food service industries, child care, and health care.

Table 13–1 shows the ten occupations with the highest concentrations of women. These jobs tend to be at the low end of the pay scale, with limited opportunities for advancement and with men as supervisors (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

Men dominate most other job categories, including the building trades, where 99 percent of brickmasons, stonemasons, and heavy-equipment mechanics are men. Likewise, men make up 85 percent of architects and engineers, 88 percent of police officers, 67 percent of lawyers, 63 percent of physicians and surgeons, and 56 percent of corporate managers. According to a recent survey, just twenty-four of the S&P 500 companies in the United States have a woman as their chief executive officer, and just 17 percent of the seats on corporate boards of directors are held by women. Of the 200 highest-paid corporate chief executive officers (CEOs), just eleven are women. Such a gender imbalance leads many people to support increasing the leadership role of women in the business world. This claim is made not only as a matter of fairness but also because research into the earnings of this country's largest corporations shows that the companies with more women in leadership positions are more profitable (Graybow, 2007; Equilar, 2014; Fortune, 2014; Catalyst, 2015; U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

Gender stratification in everyday life is easy to see: Female nurses assist male physicians, female secretaries serve male executives, and female flight attendants are under the command of male airline pilots. In any field, the greater a job's income and prestige, the more likely it is to be held by a man. For example, women represent 97 percent of kindergarten teachers, 81 percent of elementary and middle school teachers, 57 percent of secondary school educators, 50 percent of college and university professors, and 26 percent of college and university presidents (American Council on Education, 2012; U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

How are women kept out of certain jobs? By defining some kinds of work as "men's work," society defines women as less competent than men. In a study of coal mining in southern West Virginia, Suzanne Tallichet (2000) found that most men considered it "unnatural" for women to work in the mines. Women who did so were defined as deviant and subject to labeling as "sexually loose" or as lesbians. Such labeling made these women outcasts, presented a challenge to holding the job, and made advancement all but impossible.

In the corporate world, too, the higher in the company we look, the fewer women we find. You hardly ever hear anyone say out loud that women don't belong at the top levels of a company. But many people seem to feel this way, which can prevent women from being promoted. Sociologists describe this barrier as a *glass ceiling* that is not easy to see but blocks women's careers all the same.

One challenge to male domination in the workplace comes from women who are entrepreneurs. There are now more than 8 million woman-owned businesses in the United States, double the number of a decade ago; they employ 7.6 million people and generate \$1.2 trillion in sales. By starting their own businesses, women have shown that they can make opportunities for themselves apart from large, male-dominated companies (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Gender and Unemployment

The unemployment rates for women and men typically rise and fall together, with men having a slightly higher level of joblessness. For 2014, the unemployment rate for adult women stood at 5.6 percent, just below the figure of 5.7 percent for adult men (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

High unemployment among men reflects the fact that men's work is heavily in manufacturing, and many factory jobs have moved abroad. But the recent recession also brought job losses in the administrative support and service work that is performed mostly by women. During the last two years, as the nation has struggled to climb out of recession, the unemployment rate for men has fallen faster than the rate among women (Kochlar, 2011; U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

Gender, Income, and Wealth

In 2013, the median earnings for women working full time were \$39,157, and men working full time earned \$50,033. This means that for every dollar earned by men, women earned about 78 cents. These earnings differences are greatest among older workers because older working women typically have less education and seniority than older working men. Earning differences are smaller among younger workers because younger men and women tend to have similar schooling and work experience.

The gender gap also varies according to occupation. Among pharmacists, for example, the gender gap is relatively small, with women earning 95 percent as much as men. Among corporate CEOs, however, the gap is much greater, with women earning just 69 percent as much as men (Goudreau, 2012).

Among all full-time workers regardless of age, 23 percent of women earned less than \$25,000 in 2013, compared with 15 percent of comparable men. At the upper end of the income scale, men were almost twice as likely as women (27 percent versus 15 percent) to earn more than \$75,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

The main reason women earn less is the *type* of work they do: largely clerical and service jobs. In effect, jobs and gender interact. People still perceive jobs with less clout as "women's work," just as people devalue certain work simply because it is performed by women (England, Hermsen, & Cotter, 2000; Cohen & Huffman, 2003).

In recent decades, supporters of gender equality have proposed a policy of "comparable worth," paying people not according to the historical double standard but according to the level of skill and responsibility involved in the work. As an example of the problem, consider the case of floral designers, the people who make attractive displays of flowers. These workers—most of whom are women—earn about \$12.50 an hour. At the same time, the people who drive the vans and other small trucks to deliver these flower arrangements—most of whom are men—earn about \$16 an hour (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). It is hard to see why floral arrangers would earn just 78 percent as much as van drivers. Is there a difference in the level of skill or training required? Or does the disparity reflect gender stratification?

In response to such patterns, several nations, including Great Britain and Australia, have adopted comparable worth policies, but these policies have found limited acceptance in the United States. As a result, women in this country lose as much as \$1 billion in income annually.

A second cause of gender-based income disparity has to do with society's view of the family. Both men and women have children, of course, but our culture gives more of the responsibility of parenting to women. Pregnancy and raising small children keep many younger women out of the labor force at a time when their male peers are making significant career advancements. When women workers return to the labor force, they have less job experience and seniority than their male counterparts. These facts help explain a pattern documented by researchers: Women who live in states with greater access to oral contraceptives earn more over their careers than women who live in states that provide less access to contraception (Stier, 1996; Waldfogel, 1997; Grandoni, 2012).

In addition, women who choose to have children may be unable or unwilling to take on fast-paced jobs that tie up their evenings and weekends. To avoid role strain, they may take jobs that offer shorter commuting distances, more flexible hours, and employer-provided child care services. Women pursuing both a career and a family are torn between their dual responsibilities in ways that men are not. One study found that more than half of women in competitive jobs took time off to have children, compared to about 12 percent of men. Similarly, later in life, women are more likely than men to take time off from work to care for aging parents (Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Hewlett, Sherbin, & Forster, 2010). Role conflict is also experienced by women on campus: One recent study found that, among tenured college and university faculty, 70 percent of men were married with children compared to 44 percent of women (Ceci & Williams, 2011; Mason, 2013).

The two factors noted so far—type of work and family responsibilities—account for about two-thirds of the earnings difference between women and men. A third factor—discrimination against women—accounts for most of the remainder (Fuller & Schoenberger, 1991). Because overt discrimination is illegal, it is practiced in subtle ways. Women on their way up the corporate ladder often run into the glass ceiling described earlier; company officials may deny its existence, but it effectively prevents many women from rising above middle management.

For all these reasons, women earn less than men in all major occupational categories. Even so, many people think that women own most of the country's wealth, perhaps because women typically outlive men. Government statistics tell a different story: Fifty-eight percent of people with \$2 million or more in assets are men, although older widows are highly represented in this elite club (Johnson & Raub, 2006; Internal Revenue Service, 2014). Just 12 percent of the people identified by *Forbes* magazine as the richest people in the United States in 2014 were women (*Forbes*, 2014).

Housework: Women's "Second Shift"

In the United States, housework has always presented a cultural contradiction: We claim that keeping a home is essential for family life, but people get little reward for doing

Diversity Snapshot

- On average, women spend considerably more time doing housework than men.

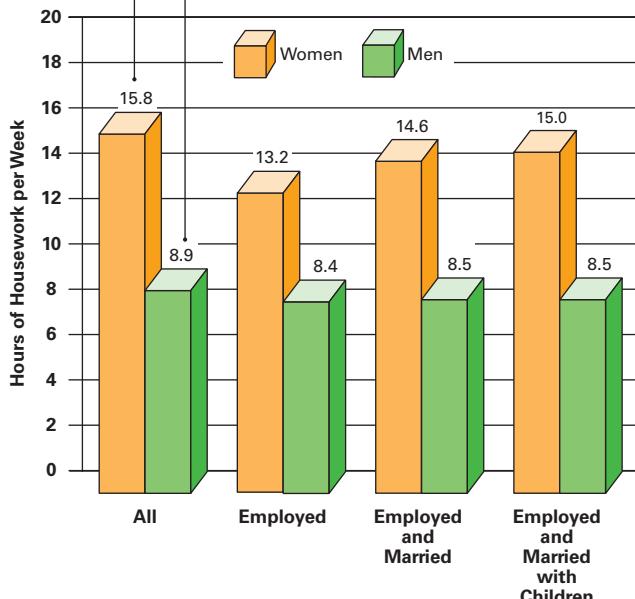


Figure 13–2 Housework: Who Does How Much?

Regardless of employment or family status, women do more housework than men. What effect do you think the added burden of housework has on women's ability to advance in the workplace?

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014).

it (Bernard, 1981). Here, as around the world, taking care of the home and children has been considered "women's work" (see Global Map 6–1). As women have entered the labor force, the amount of housework women do has gone down, but the *share* done by women has stayed the same. Figure 13–2 shows that overall women average 15.8 hours a week of housework, compared to 8.9 hours for men. As the figure shows, women in all categories do significantly more housework than men (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

Men do support the idea of women entering the paid labor force, and most count on the money women earn. But many men resist taking on an equal share of household duties (Heath & Bourne, 1995; Harpster & Monk-Turner, 1998; Stratton, 2001).

Gender and Education

A century ago, college was considered appropriate only for (well-to-do) men. By 1980, however, women earned a majority of all associate and bachelor's degrees. In 2012, women were a majority (57 percent) of the students on college and university campuses across the United States, earning 57 percent of all bachelor's degrees (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

According to recent research, women have a more positive view of the value of a college degree compared to men. This is a gender-linked difference that holds among all major racial and ethnic categories. As a result, among U.S. adults between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine, 37 percent of women have completed a four-year college degree, compared to just 31 percent of men (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

As college doors have opened wider to women in recent decades, differences in men's and women's majors have become smaller. In 1970, for example, women accounted for just 17 percent of bachelor's degrees in the natural sciences, computer science, and engineering; by 2012, the proportion had more than doubled to 36 percent.

In 1992, for the first time, women earned a majority of postgraduate degrees, which are often a springboard to high-prestige jobs. In all areas of study in 2012, women earned 60 percent of all master's degrees and 51 percent of all doctorates (including 63 percent of all Ph.D. degrees in sociology). Women have also broken into many graduate fields that used to be almost all male. For example, in 1970, only a few hundred women received a master of business administration (M.B.A.) degree, compared to more than 87,000 women in 2013 (46 percent of all such degrees) (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Despite this progress, men still predominate in some professional fields. In 2012, men received 53 percent of law degrees (LL.B. and J.D.), 52 percent of medical degrees (M.D.), and 54 percent of dental degrees (D.D.S. and D.M.D.) (U.S.

Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Many people in our society may still define high-paying professions (and the drive and competitiveness needed to succeed in them) as masculine. But the share of women in all these professions has risen and is now close to half. When will statistical parity be reached? Probably not for at least a few more years. For example, the American Bar Association (2014) reports that in 2013, men still accounted for 52.4 percent of law school students across the United States.

Based on the educational gains women have made, some analysts suggest that education is the one social institution where women rather than men predominate. More broadly, women's relative advantages in school performance have prompted a national debate about whether men are in danger of being left behind.

Gender and Politics

A century ago, almost no women held elected office in the United States. In fact, women were legally barred from voting in national elections until the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920. However, a few women were candidates for political office even before

they could vote. The Equal Rights party supported Victoria Woodhull for the U.S. presidency in 1872; perhaps it was a sign of the times that she spent Election Day in a New York City jail. Table 13–2 identifies milestones in women's gradual movement into U.S. political life.

Today, thousands of women serve as mayors of cities and towns across the United States, and tens of thousands hold responsible administrative jobs in the federal government. At the state level, 24.2 percent of state legislators in 2015 were women (up from just 5 percent in 1971). National Map 13–1 on page 358 shows where in the United States women have made the greatest political gains.

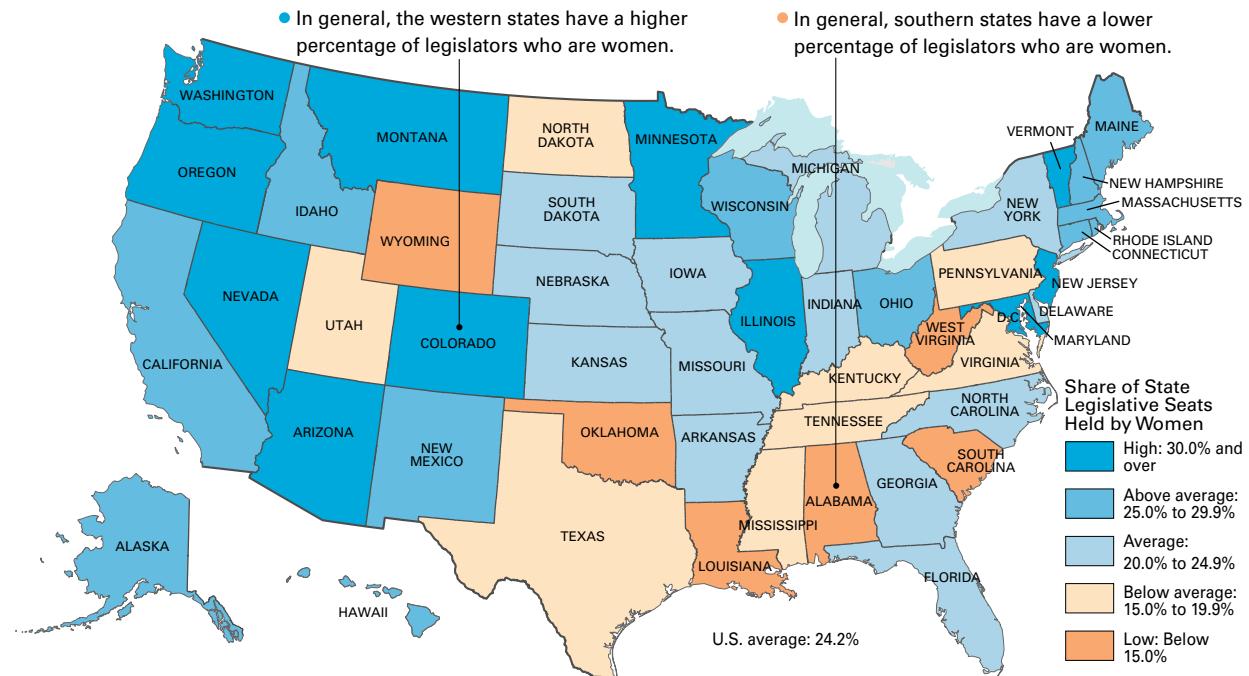
Change is also coming to the highest levels of power. The 114th Congress, which was sworn in in 2015, included 84 women (19 percent of 435 members) in the House of Representatives and 20 women (20 percent of 100 members) in the Senate. These percentages are the highest ever in the history of the United States. In addition, 6 of the 50 state governors (12 percent) were women (Center for American Women and Politics, 2015).

Women make up half of Earth's population, but they hold just 22 percent of seats in the world's 190 parliamentary governments. This number is considerably higher

Table 13–2 Significant Firsts for Women in U.S. Politics

1869	Law allows women to vote in Wyoming Territory.
1872	First woman to run for the presidency (Victoria Woodhull) represents the Equal Rights party.
1917	First woman elected to the House of Representatives (Jeannette Rankin of Montana).
1924	First women elected state governors (Nellie Taylor Ross of Wyoming and Miriam "Ma" Ferguson of Texas); both followed their husbands into office. First woman to have her name placed in nomination for the vice-presidency at the convention of a major political party (Lena Jones Springs, a Democrat).
1931	First woman to serve in the Senate (Hattie Caraway of Arkansas); completed the term of her husband upon his death and won reelection in 1932.
1932	First woman appointed to the presidential cabinet (Frances Perkins, secretary of labor in the cabinet of President Franklin D. Roosevelt).
1964	First woman to have her name placed in nomination for the presidency at the convention of a major political party (Margaret Chase Smith, a Republican).
1972	First African American woman to have her name placed in nomination for the presidency at the convention of a major political party (Shirley Chisholm, a Democrat).
1981	First woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court (Sandra Day O'Connor).
1984	First woman to be successfully nominated for the vice-presidency (Geraldine Ferraro, a Democrat).
1988	First woman chief executive to be elected to a consecutive third term (Madeleine Kunin, governor of Vermont).
1992	Political "Year of the Woman" yields record number of women in the Senate (six) and the House (forty-eight), as well as first African American woman to win election to U.S. Senate (Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois), first state (California) to be served by two women senators (Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein), and first woman of Puerto Rican descent elected to the House (Nydia Velazquez of New York).
1996	First woman appointed secretary of state (Madeleine Albright).
2000	First former First Lady to win elected political office (Hillary Rodham Clinton, senator from New York).
2001	First woman to serve as national security adviser (Condoleezza Rice); first Asian American woman to serve in a presidential cabinet (Elaine Chao).
2005	First African American woman appointed secretary of state (Condoleezza Rice).
2007	First woman elected as Speaker of the House (Nancy Pelosi).
2008	For the first time, women make up a majority of a state legislature (New Hampshire).
2013	Record number of women in the Senate (twenty) and the House (seventy-eight). Also, New Hampshire becomes the first state to have all-women leadership as the governor and all U.S. senators and members of Congress are women.
2014	First woman to head Federal Reserve (Janet Yellen).

Seeing Ourselves



National Map 13–1 Women in State Government across the United States

Although women make up half of U.S. adults, in 2015 just 24 percent of the seats in state legislatures are held by women. Look at the state-by-state variations in the map. In which regions of the country have women gained the greatest political power? What do you think accounts for this pattern?

SOURCE: Center for American Women and Politics (2015).

than the 3 percent of seats women held fifty years ago. In part, this rise reflects the fact that 111 countries have adopted some form of gender quota (either constitutional, enacted into legislation, or a voluntary goal of political parties) that ensures women a greater political voice. Even so, only in thirty-one countries, among them Sweden and Norway, do women represent at least one-third of the members of parliament (Paxton, Hughes, & Green, 2006; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015).

Finally, gender is linked to politics in another way—by shaping political attitudes. In general, women are somewhat more likely than men to favor liberal positions, such as expanding social programs that provide a “safety net” for people who are in need. On the other hand, men are somewhat more likely than women to favor conservative positions, such as building a stronger military. This difference in political attitudes is sometimes called the *gender gap*. In the 2012 presidential election, 55 percent of women, but just 45 percent of men, voted to reelect the Democratic presidential candidate, Barack Obama.

Gender and the Military

Since colonial times, women have served in the U.S. armed forces. Yet in 1940, at the outset of World War II, just

2 percent of armed forces personnel were women. In 2015, women represented 15 percent of all deployed U.S. troops as well as people serving in all capacities in the armed forces.

Clearly, women make up a growing share of the U.S. military, and virtually all military assignments are now open to both women and men. In 2013, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced that women would be allowed to serve in ground-combat operations, where gaining leadership experience is widely viewed as crucial for career advancement. For years, of course, women have been engaged in combat operations, because in today’s high-tech military, the line between troop support and outright combat is not easy to draw, as women serving in Iraq have learned. In fact, between May 2003 and March 2015, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan claimed the lives of 162 female soldiers (Domi, 2013; U.S. Department of Defense, 2015).

The debate on women’s role in the military has been going on for centuries. Some people object to opening doors in this way, claiming that women lack the physical strength of men. Others point out that military women are better educated and score higher on intelligence tests than military men. But the heart of the issue is our society’s deeply held view of women as *nurturers*—people who give life and help others—which clashes with the image of women trained to kill.

Whatever our views of women and men, the reality is that military women are in harm's way. In part, this fact reflects the strains of a military short of personnel. In addition, the type of insurgency that surrounds our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan can bring violent combat to any soldier at any time. Finally, our modern warfare technology blurs the distinction between combat and noncombat personnel. A combat pilot can fire missiles at a target miles away; by contrast, non-fighting medical evacuation teams must travel directly into the line of fire (Kaminer, 1997; McGirk, 2006).

Are Women a Minority?

A **minority** is *any category of people distinguished by physical or cultural difference that a society sets apart and subordinates*. Given the clear economic disadvantage of being a woman in our society, it seems reasonable to say that women are a minority in the United States even though they outnumber men.¹

Even so, most white women do not think of themselves in this way. This is partly because, unlike racial minorities (including African Americans) and ethnic minorities (say, Hispanics), white women are well represented at all levels of the class structure, including the very top.

Bear in mind, however, that at every class level, women typically have less income, wealth, education, and power than men. Patriarchy makes women dependent on men—first their fathers and later their husbands—for their social standing (Bernard, 1981).

Violence against Women

In the nineteenth century, men claimed the right to rule their households, even to the point of using physical discipline against their wives, and a great deal of “manly” violence is still directed against women. A government report calculated that 388,647 aggravated assaults against women occurred in 2014. To this number can be added 266,107 rapes or sexual assaults and 2.1 million simple assaults (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015).

Gender violence is also an increasingly important issue on college and university campuses. According to research carried out by the U.S. Department of Justice, in a given academic year, about 3 percent of female college students become victims of rape (either attempted or completed). Over a typical college career, estimates suggest that between 10 and 20 percent of college women experience rape or attempted rape. In 90 percent of all cases, the victim knew the offender, and most of the assaults took place in the woman's living quarters.

Campus violence against women, then, is a serious problem. Note, in addition, that the level of violence

against young women *not* enrolled in college is substantially higher (U.S. Department of Justice, 2012; Sinozich & Langton, 2014).

Off campus as well, most gender-linked violence occurs where men and women interact most: in the home. Richard Gelles (cited in Roesch, 1984) argues that with the exception of the police and the military, the family is the most violent organization in the United States, and it is women who suffer most of the injuries. The risk of violence is especially great for low-income women living in families that face a great deal of stress; low-income women also have fewer options to get out of a dangerous home (Smolowe, 1994; Frias & Angel, 2007).

Violence toward women also occurs in casual relationships. As noted in Chapter 9 (“Deviance”), most rapes involve men known, and often trusted, by their victims. Dianne Herman (2001) claims that abuse of women is built into our way of life. All forms of violence against women—from the catcalls that intimidate women on city streets to a pinch in a crowded subway to physical assaults that occur at home—express what she calls a “rape culture” of men trying to dominate women. Feminists explain that sexual violence is fundamentally about *power*, not sex, and therefore should be understood as a dimension of gender stratification.

In global perspective, violence against women is built into other cultures in many different ways. One case in point is the practice of female genital mutilation, a painful and often dangerous surgical procedure that is performed in more than two dozen countries and is also known to occur in the United States, as shown in Global Map 13–2 on page 360. The Thinking About Diversity box on page 361 describes an instance of female genital mutilation that took place in California and asks whether this practice, which some people defend as promoting “morality,” amounts to a case of violence against women.

Violence against Men

If our way of life encourages violence against women, it may encourage even more violence against men. As noted in Chapter 9 (“Deviance”), in 80 percent of cases in which police make an arrest for a violent crime, including murder, robbery, and assault, the offender is a male. In addition, 78 percent of murder victims (and 50 percent of the victims of all of violent crime) are men (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2014; U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014).

Our culture tends to define masculinity in terms of aggression and violence. “Real men” work and play hard, speed on the highways, and let nothing stand in their way. A higher crime rate is one result. But even when no laws are broken, men’s lives involve more stress and isolation than women’s lives, which is one reason that the suicide rate for men is almost four times higher than for women (Centers for

¹ Sociologists use the term “minority” instead of “minority group” because, as explained in Chapter 7 (“Groups and Organizations”), women make up a *category*, not a group. People in a category share a status or identity but generally do not know one another or interact.

Window on the World



Global Map 13–2 Female Genital Mutilation in Global Perspective

Female genital mutilation is known to be performed in at least twenty-nine countries around the world. Across Africa, the practice is common and affects a majority of girls in the eastern African nations of Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia. In several Asian nations, the practice is limited to a few ethnic minorities. In the United States, Canada, several European nations, and Australia, there are reports of the practice among some immigrants.

SOURCES: Population Reference Bureau (2010), United Nations (2012), and World Health Organization (2015).

Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). In addition, as noted earlier, men live, on average, about five fewer years than women.

Violence is not simply a matter of choices made by individuals. It is cultural—that is, built into our very way of life, with resulting harm to both men and women. In short, the way any society constructs gender plays an important part in how violent or peaceful that society will be.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment refers to *comments, gestures, or physical contacts of a sexual nature that are deliberate, repeated, and unwelcome*. During the 1990s, sexual harassment became an issue of national importance that rewrote the rules for workplace interaction between women and men.

Most (but not all) victims of sexual harassment are women. The reason is that, first, our culture encourages men to be sexually assertive and to see women in sexual terms. As a result, social interaction between men and women in the workplace, on campus, and elsewhere can easily take on sexual overtones. Second, most people in positions of power—including business executives, doctors, bureau chiefs, assembly-line supervisors, professors, and military officers—are men who oversee the work of women. Surveys carried out in widely different work settings show that about 3 percent of women claim that they have been harassed on the job in the last year and about half of women say they receive unwanted sexual attention (Smith et al., 2013:1486).

Sexual harassment is sometimes obvious and direct: A supervisor may ask for sexual favors from an employee

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

Female Genital Mutilation: Violence in the Name of Morality

Meserak Ramsey, a woman born in Ethiopia and now working as a nurse in California, paid a visit to an old friend's home. Soon after arriving, she noticed her friend's eighteen-month-old daughter huddled in the corner of a room in obvious distress. "What's wrong with her?" she asked.

Ramsey was shocked when the woman said her daughter had recently had a clitoridectomy, the surgical removal of the clitoris. This type of female genital mutilation—performed by a midwife, a tribal practitioner, or a doctor and typically without anesthesia—is common in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Egypt, and is known to be practiced in certain cultural groups in other nations around the world. It is illegal in the United States.

Among members of highly patriarchal societies, husbands demand that their wives be virgins at marriage and remain sexually faithful thereafter. The point of female genital mutilation is to eliminate sexual feeling, which, people assume, makes women less likely to violate sexual norms and thus be more desirable to men who seek to control them. In about one-fifth of all cases an even more severe procedure, called infibulation, is performed, in which the entire external genital area is removed and the surfaces are stitched together, leaving only a small hole for urination and menstruation. Before marriage, a husband retains the right to open the wound and ensure himself of his bride's virginity.



These young women have just undergone female genital mutilation. What do you think should be done about this practice?

and make threats if the advances are refused. Courts have declared that such *quid pro quo* sexual harassment (the Latin phrase means "one thing in return for another") is a violation of civil rights.

More often, however, the problem of unwelcome sexual attention is a matter of subtle behavior—sexual

How many women have undergone female genital mutilation? Worldwide, estimates suggest that at least 3 million girls (most live in Africa) undergo this procedure annually. Although the annual number is declining, globally, the number of women who have been cut in this way exceed 100 million (Kristof & Wu Dunn, 2010; World Health Organization, 2015). In the United States, there are no official data, but it is likely that hundreds or even thousands of such procedures are performed every year. In most cases, immigrant mothers and grandmothers who have themselves been mutilated insist that young girls in their family follow their example. Indeed, many immigrant women demand the procedure because their daughters now live in the United States, where sexual mores are more lax. "I don't have to worry about her now," the girl's mother explained to Meserak Ramsey. "She'll be a good girl."

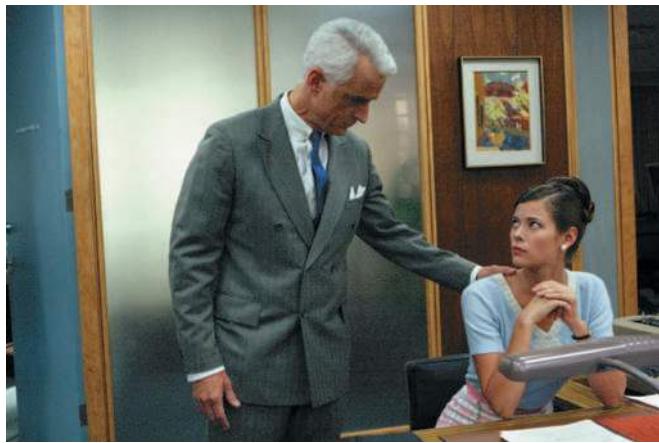
Medically, the consequences of genital mutilation include more than the loss of sexual pleasure. Pain is intense and can persist for years. There is also danger of infection, infertility, and even death. Ramsey knows the anguish all too well: She herself underwent genital mutilation as a young girl. She is one of the lucky ones who has had few medical problems since. But the extent of her suffering is suggested by this story: She invited a young U.S. couple to stay at her home. Late at night, she heard the woman's cries and burst into their room to investigate, only to learn that the couple was making love and the woman had just had an orgasm. "I didn't understand," Ramsey recalls. "I thought that there must be something wrong with American girls. But now I know that there is something wrong with me." Or with a system that inflicts such injury in the name of traditional morality.

What Do You Think?

1. Is female genital mutilation a medical procedure or a means of social control? Explain your answer.
2. Can you think of other examples of physical mutilation imposed on women? What are they?
3. What do you think should be done about female genital mutilation in places where it is widespread? Do you think respect for human rights should override respect for cultural differences in this case?

SOURCES: Crossette (1995), Boyle, Songora, & Foss (2001), and Sabatini (2011).

teasing, off-color jokes, comments about someone's looks—that may or may not be intended to harass anyone. But based on the *effect* standard favored by many feminists, such actions add up to creating a *hostile environment* for women in the workplace. Incidents of this kind are far more complex because they involve different perceptions



In recent decades, our society has recognized sexual harassment as an important problem. At least officially, unwelcome sexual attention is no longer tolerated in the workplace. The television show *Mad Men*, which gives us a window back to the early 1960s, shows us our society before the more recent wave of feminism began.

of the same behavior. For example, a man may think that repeatedly complimenting a co-worker on her appearance is simply being friendly. The co-worker, on the other hand, may believe that the man is thinking of her in sexual terms and is not taking her work seriously, an attitude that could harm her job performance and prospects for advancement.

Pornography

Chapter 8 (“Sexuality and Society”) defined *pornography* as sexually explicit material that causes sexual arousal. However, people take different views of exactly what is and what is not pornographic; the law gives local communities the power to define whether sexually explicit material violates “community standards of decency” and lacks “any redeeming social value.”

APPLYING THEORY

Gender

	Structural-Functional Theory	Symbolic-Interaction Theory	Social-Conflict and Intersection Theories
What is the level of analysis?	Macro-level	Micro-level	Macro-level
What does gender mean?	Parsons described gender in terms of two complementary patterns of behavior: masculine and feminine.	Numerous sociologists have shown that gender is part of the reality that guides social interaction in everyday situations.	Engels described gender in terms of the power of one sex over the other. Gender interacts with class, race, and ethnicity to create various levels of disadvantage.
Is gender helpful or harmful?	Helpful. Gender gives men and women distinctive roles and responsibilities that help society operate smoothly. Gender builds social unity as men and women come together to form families.	Hard to say; gender is both helpful and harmful. In everyday life, gender is one of the factors that help us relate to one another. At the same time, gender shapes human behavior, placing men in control of social situations. Men tend to initiate most interactions, while women typically act in a more deferential manner.	Harmful. Gender limits people's personal development. Gender divides society by giving power to men to control the lives of women. Intersection theory explains that minority women face multiple disadvantages.

Traditionally, people have raised concerns about pornography as a *moral* issue. But pornography also plays a part in gender stratification. From this point of view, pornography is really a *power* issue because most pornography dehumanizes women, depicting them as the playthings of men.

In addition, there is widespread concern that pornography encourages violence against women by portraying them as weak and undeserving of respect. Men show contempt for women defined in this way by striking out against them. Surveys show that about half of U.S. adults think that pornography encourages people to commit rape (Smith et al., 2013:424).

Like sexual harassment, pornography raises complex and sometimes conflicting concerns. Despite the fact that some material may offend just about everyone, many people defend the rights of free speech and artistic expression. Nevertheless, pressure to restrict pornography has increased in recent decades, reflecting both the long-standing concern that pornography weakens morality and the more recent concerns that it is demeaning and threatening to women.

Theories of Gender

13.4 Apply sociology’s major theories to gender stratification.

Why does gender exist in all known societies? Sociology’s macro-level approaches—the structural-functional and social-conflict approaches—address the central place of gender in social organization. In addition, the symbolic-interaction approach helps us see the importance of gender in everyday life. The Applying Theory table summarizes the important insights offered by each of these approaches.

Structural-Functional Theory

The structural-functional approach views society as a complex system of many separate but integrated parts. From

this point of view, gender serves as a means to organize social life.

As Chapter 3 ("Culture") explained, the earliest hunting and gathering societies had little power over biology. Lacking effective birth control, women could do little to prevent pregnancy, and the responsibilities of child care kept them close to home. At the same time, men's greater strength made them better suited for warfare and hunting. Over the centuries, this sex-based division of labor became institutionalized and largely taken for granted (Lengermann & Wallace, 1985; Freedman, 2002).

Industrial technology opens up a much greater range of cultural possibilities. With human muscle power no longer the main energy source, the physical strength of men becomes less important. In addition, the ability to control reproduction gives women greater choices about how to live. Modern societies relax traditional gender roles as the societies become more meritocratic because rigid roles waste an enormous amount of human talent. Yet change comes slowly because gender is deeply rooted in culture.

GENDER AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION As Talcott Parsons (1942, 1951, 1954) observed, gender helps integrate society, at least in its traditional form. Gender forms a *complementary* set of roles that links women and men into family units and gives each sex responsibility for carrying out important tasks. Women take the lead in managing the day-to-day life of the household and raising children. Men connect the family to the larger world as they participate in the labor force.

Thus gender plays an important part in socialization. Society teaches boys—presumably destined for the labor force—to be rational, self-assured, and competitive. Parsons called this complex of traits *instrumental* qualities. To prepare girls for child rearing, socialization stresses *expressive* qualities, such as emotional responsiveness and sensitivity to others.

Society encourages gender conformity by instilling in men and women a fear that straying too far from accepted standards of masculinity or femininity will cause rejection by the opposite sex. In simple terms, women learn to reject nonmasculine men as sexually unattractive, and men learn to reject unfeminine women. In sum, gender integrates society both structurally (in terms of what we do) and morally (in terms of what we believe).

EVALUATE

Influential in the 1950s, this approach has lost much of its standing today. First, structural-functionalism assumes a singular vision of society that is not shared by everyone. For example, historically, many women have worked outside the home because of economic necessity, a fact not reflected in Parsons's conventional, middle-class view of social life. Second, Parsons's



In the 1950s, Talcott Parsons proposed that sociologists interpret gender as a matter of *differences*. As he saw it, masculine men and feminine women formed strong families and made for an orderly society. In recent decades, however, social-conflict theory has reinterpreted gender as a matter of *inequality*. From this point of view, U.S. society places men in a position of dominance over women.

analysis ignores the personal strains and social costs of rigid gender roles. Third, in the eyes of those seeking sexual equality, Parsons's gender "complementarity" amounts to little more than women submitting to male domination.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING In Parsons's analysis, what functions does gender perform for society?

Symbolic-Interaction Theory

The symbolic-interaction approach takes a micro-level view of society, focusing on face-to-face interaction in everyday life. As suggested in Chapter 6 ("Social Interaction in Everyday Life"), gender affects everyday interaction in a number of ways.

GENDER AND EVERYDAY LIFE If you watch women and men interacting, you will probably notice that women typically engage in more eye contact than men do. Why? Holding eye contact is a way of encouraging the conversation to continue; in addition, looking directly at someone clearly shows the other person that you are paying attention.

This pattern is an example of sex roles, defined earlier as the way a society defines how women and men should think and behave. To understand such patterns, consider the fact that people with more power tend to take charge of social encounters. When men and women engage one another, as they do in families and in the workplace, it is men who typically initiate the interaction. That is, men speak first, set the topics of discussion, and control the outcomes. With less power, women are expected to be more *deferential*,

meaning that they show respect for others of higher social position. In many cases, this means that women (just like children or others with less power) spend more time being silent and also encouraging men (or others with more power) not just with eye contact but by smiling or nodding in agreement. As a technique to control a conversation, men often interrupt others, just as they typically feel less need to ask the opinions of other people, especially those with less power (Tannen, 1990, 1994; Henley, Hamilton, & Thorne, 1992; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999).

GENDER AND REALITY CONSTRUCTION If a woman is planning to marry a man, should she take his last name or keep her own? This decision is about more than how she will sign a check: It also affects how employers will see her and even her future pay.

In the United States today, at least 10 percent of women who marry men keep their own name. This is a decline from the 1990s, when the share peaked at about 23 percent. Research shows that women who marry in their thirties (after they have started a career) are much more likely to keep their own name than women who marry in their early twenties. Research also shows that subjects asked to assess women's personal traits typically perceive those who take their husband's last name as more caring, dependent, and emotional (traditional feminine qualities). By contrast, they assess women who keep their maiden names as more ambitious, talented, and capable (more competitive against others, including men). Data on salaries reveal a significant difference in pay: Married women who keep their own name end up earning about 40 percent more than those who adopt their husband's name (Gooding & Kreider, 2010; Shellenbarger, 2011).

Such patterns demonstrate how gender shapes the reality we experience in everyday life. They also suggest that women who face a decision about surnames when they marry may consider the choice they make will carry particular meaning to others and have important consequences.

EVALUATE

The strength of the symbolic-interaction approach is helping us see how gender plays a part in shaping almost all our everyday experiences. Our society defines men (and everything we consider to be masculine) as having more value than women (and what is defined as feminine). For this reason, just about every familiar social encounter is "gendered" so that men and women interact in distinctive and unequal ways.

The symbolic-interaction approach suggests that individuals socially construct the reality they experience as they interact every day, using gender-linked traits such as clothing and demeanor (and, for women, also last name) as elements of their personal "performances" that shape ongoing reality.

Gender plays a part in the reality we experience. Yet, as a structural dimension of society, gender is at least largely beyond the immediate control of any of us as individuals as it gives some people power over others. In other words, patterns of everyday social interaction reflect our society's gender stratification. Everyday interaction also helps reinforce this inequality. For example, to the extent that fathers take the lead in dinner table discussions, the entire family learns to expect men to "display leadership" and "show their wisdom." As mothers do the laundry, children learn that women are expected to do household chores.

A limitation of the symbolic-interaction approach is that by focusing on situational social experience, it says little about the broad patterns of inequality that set the rules for our everyday lives. To understand the roots of gender stratification, we have to "kick it up a level" to see more closely how society makes men and women unequal. We will do this using the social-conflict approach.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Point to several ways that gender shapes the everyday face-to-face interactions of individuals.

Social-Conflict Theory

From a social-conflict point of view, gender involves much more than differences in behavior—gender is a structural system of *power* that provides privilege to some and disadvantage to others. Consider the striking similarity between the way traditional ideas about gender benefit men and harm women and the way ideas about race benefit men and disadvantage racial and ethnic minorities. Conventional ideas about gender do not make society operate smoothly, as a structural-functional analysis suggests. On the contrary, gender is a societal structure that creates division and tension, with men seeking to protect their privileges as women challenge the status quo.

As earlier chapters noted, the social-conflict approach draws heavily on the ideas of Karl Marx. Yet as far as gender is concerned, Marx was a product of his times, and his writings focused almost entirely on men. However, his friend and collaborator Friedrich Engels did develop a theory of gender stratification.

GENDER AND CLASS INEQUALITY Looking back through history, Engels saw that in hunting and gathering societies, the activities of women and men, though different, had equal importance. A successful hunt brought men great prestige, but the vegetation gathered by women provided most of a group's food supply. As technological advances led to a productive surplus, social equality and communal sharing gave way to private property and ultimately a class hierarchy, and men gained significant power over women. With surplus wealth to pass on to heirs, upper-class men needed to be sure that their sons were their own, which led them to control the sexuality of women. The desire to control both women's sexuality and private property brought about monogamous marriage and the family. Women were taught to remain

virgins until marriage, to remain faithful to their husbands thereafter, and to build their lives around bearing and raising one man's children. Family law ensures that property is transmitted within families from one generation to the next, keeping the class system intact.

According to Engels (1902, orig. 1884), the rise of capitalism makes male domination even stronger. First, capitalism uses trade and industrial production to create more wealth, which gives greater power to men as income earners and owners of property. Second, an expanding capitalist economy depends on turning people, especially women, into consumers who seek personal fulfillment by buying and using products. Third, society assigns women the task of maintaining the home to free men to work in factories. The double exploitation of capitalism, as Engels saw it, lies in paying low wages for male labor and paying women no wages at all.

EVALUATE

Social-conflict analysis is strongly critical of conventional ideas about gender, claiming that society would be better off if we minimized or even did away with this dimension of social structure. That is, this approach regards conventional families, which traditionalists consider personally and socially positive, as a social evil. A problem with social-conflict analysis, then, is that it minimizes the extent to which women and men live together cooperatively and often happily in families. A second problem lies in the assertion that capitalism is the basis of gender stratification. In fact, agrarian societies are typically more patriarchal than industrial-capitalist societies. In addition, although socialist nations, including the People's Republic of China and the former Soviet Union, did move women into the labor force, by and large they provided women with very low pay in sex-segregated jobs (Rosendahl, 1997; Haney, 2002).

CHECK YOUR LEARNING According to Engels, how does gender support social inequality in a capitalist class system?



The basic insight of intersection theory is that various dimensions of social stratification—including race and gender—can add up to great disadvantages for some categories of people. Just as African Americans earn less than whites, women earn less than men. Thus African American women confront a “double disadvantage,” earning just 63 cents for every dollar earned by non-Hispanic white men. How would you explain the fact that some categories of people are much more likely to end up in low-paying jobs like this one?

Intersection Theory

In recent years, an additional social-conflict approach has gained great importance in sociology: intersection theory. The key insight of intersection theory is that there are multiple systems of stratification based on race, class, and gender, and these systems do not operate independently of one another. On the contrary, these dimensions of inequality intersect and interact. Formally, then, **intersection theory** is *analysis of the interplay of race, class, and gender, which often results in multiple dimensions of disadvantage*. Research shows that disadvantages linked to race and gender often combine to produce especially low social standing for some people (Ovadia, 2001).

Income data confirm the basic claim of intersection theory. Looking first at race and ethnicity, the median income

in 2013 for African American women working full time was \$34,285, which is 83 percent as much as the \$41,539 earned by non-Hispanic white women; Hispanic women earned \$30,271—just 73 percent as much as their white counterparts. Looking at gender, African American women earned 84 percent as much as African American men, and Hispanic women earned 93 percent as much as Hispanic men.

To explore the “intersection” of these dimensions of inequality, we find that some categories of women experience greater disadvantages. African American women earned only 63 percent as much as non-Hispanic white men, and Hispanic women earned just 56 percent as much (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). These income differences reflect minority women’s lower positions in the occupational and educational hierarchies.

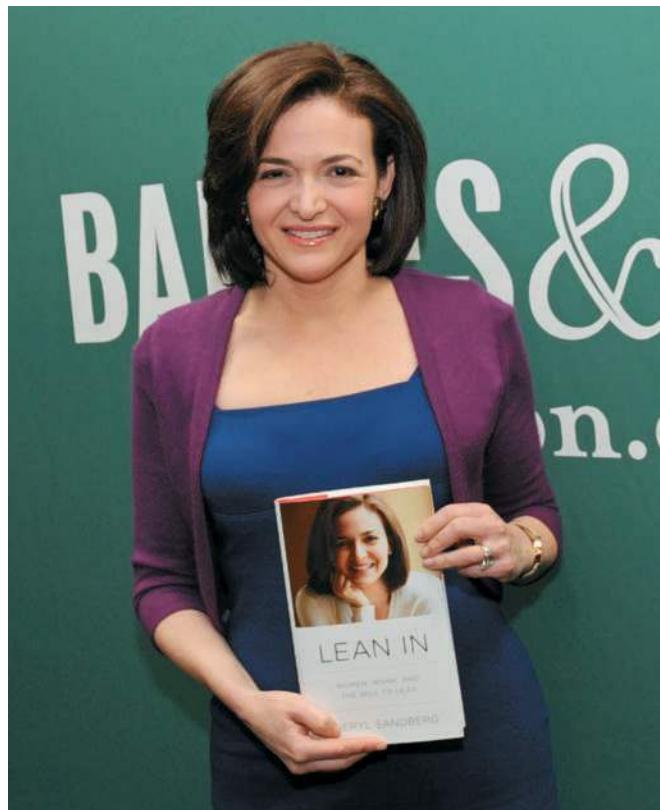
Intersection theory helps us to see that although gender has a powerful effect on our lives, it does not operate alone. Class position, race and ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation form a multilayered system that provides disadvantages for some and privileges for others (Saint Jean & Feagin, 1998).

EVALUATE

If it is true that women are disadvantaged, it is also the case that some women are disadvantaged more than others. This insight is the first contribution of intersection theory. In addition, this approach helps us understand that, although the lives of all women are shaped by gender, there is no single “woman’s experience.” Rather, white women, Hispanic women, women of color (and also older women, women with disabilities, and lesbians) all have particular social standing and experiences that must be understood on their own terms.

A remaining issue that must be addressed is what people should do about gender stratification. This concern leads to another expression of social-conflict theory—feminism.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING State the basic idea of intersection theory. How does this theory help us understand the complexity of social stratification?



In her recent book, Sheryl Sandberg, an executive at *Facebook*, describes the workplace barriers—including discrimination and sexual harassment—faced by women in our society. Sandberg also claims that to overcome these barriers, women must reject societal definitions of women as second-class citizens and “lean in” toward the goal of greater leadership positions. Critics suggest that the barriers to success faced by average women are far greater than those overcome by privileged women such as Sandberg.

Feminism

13.5 Contrast liberal, radical, and socialist feminism.

Feminism is support of social equality for women and men, in opposition to patriarchy and sexism. The first wave of feminism in the United States began in the 1840s as women opposed to slavery, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, drew parallels between the oppression of African Americans and the oppression of women. Their main objective was obtaining the right to vote, which was finally achieved in 1920. But other disadvantages persisted, causing a second wave of feminism to arise in the 1960s that continues today.

Basic Feminist Ideas

Feminism views the everyday lives of women and men through the lens of gender. How we think of ourselves (gender identity), how we act (gender roles), and our social standing as women or men (gender stratification) are all rooted in the operation of society.

Although feminists disagree about many things, most support five general principles:

- 1. Taking action to increase equality.** Feminist thinking is political; it links ideas to action. Feminism is critical of the status quo, pushing for change toward social equality for women and men. Many feminists are also guided by intersection theory to seek equality based on race and class as well as gender.
- 2. Expanding human choice.** Feminists argue that cultural ideas about gender divide the full range of human qualities into two opposing and limiting spheres: the female world of emotion and cooperation and the male world of rationality and competition. As an alternative, feminists propose a “reintegration of humanity” by which all individuals develop all human traits (French, 1985).
- 3. Eliminating gender stratification throughout society.** Feminism opposes laws and cultural norms that limit the education, income, and job opportunities of women. For this reason, feminists have long supported passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution, which states, in its entirety, “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of sex.” The ERA was first proposed in Congress in 1923. Although it has widespread support, it has yet to become law.
- 4. Ending sexual violence.** Today’s women’s movement seeks to eliminate sexual violence. Feminists argue that patriarchy distorts the relationships between women and men, encouraging violence against women in the form of rape, domestic abuse,

sexual harassment, and pornography (Dworkin, 1987; Freedman, 2002).

5. Promoting sexual freedom. Finally, feminism advocates women having control over their sexuality and reproduction. Feminists support the free availability of birth control information. As Figure 13–3 shows, about two-thirds of married women of childbearing age in the United States use contraception; the use of contraceptives is far less common in many lower-income nations. Most feminists also support a woman's right to choose whether to have children or to end a pregnancy, rather than allowing men—as husbands, physicians, and legislators—to control their reproduction. Many feminists also support gay people's efforts to end prejudice and discrimination in a largely heterosexual culture (Ferree & Hess, 1995; Armstrong, 2002).

Types of Feminism

Although feminists agree on the importance of gender equality, they disagree on how to achieve it: through liberal feminism, socialist feminism, or radical feminism (Stacey, 1983; Vogel, 1983; Ferree & Hess, 1995; Armstrong, 2002; Freedman, 2002). The Applying Theory table highlights the key arguments made by each type of feminist thinking.

LIBERAL FEMINISM *Liberal feminism* is rooted in classic liberal thinking that individuals should be free to develop their own talents and pursue their own interests. Liberal feminists accept the basic organization of our society but seek to expand the rights and opportunities of women. As they see it, gender should not operate as a form of caste, to the disadvantage of women. As an important step to achieving this goal, they support the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. Liberal feminists also support reproductive freedom for all women. They respect the family as a social institution but seek changes in society, including more widely available maternity and paternity leave and child care for parents who work.

Given their beliefs in the rights of individuals, liberal feminists think that women should advance according to

Global Snapshot

- Achen Eke, age 24 and mother of three, lives in Uganda, where most women do not have access to contraception.
- Chen-chi Bai, age 31 and the mother of one boy, lives in China, where contraception is encouraged and widely practiced.

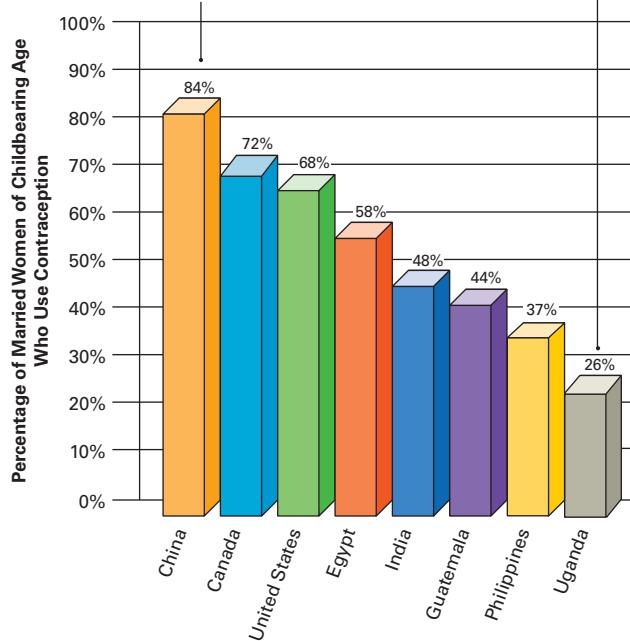


Figure 13–3 Use of Contraception by Married Women of Childbearing Age

In the United States, most married women of childbearing age use contraception. In many lower-income countries, however, most women do not have the opportunity to make this choice.

SOURCE: Population Reference Bureau (2014).

their individual efforts and merit, rather than by working collectively for change. Both women and men, through personal achievement, are capable of improving their lives, as long as society removes legal and cultural barriers.

SOCIALIST FEMINISM *Socialist feminism* evolved from the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. From this

APPLYING THEORY

Feminism

	Liberal Feminism	Socialist Feminism	Radical Feminism
Does it accept the basic order of society?	Yes. Liberal feminism seeks change only to ensure equality of opportunity.	No. Socialist feminism supports an end to social classes and to family gender roles that encourage "domestic slavery."	No. Radical feminism supports an end to the family system.
How do women improve their social standing?	Individually, according to personal ability and effort.	Collectively, through socialist revolution.	Collectively, by working to eliminate gender itself.

point of view, capitalism increases patriarchy by concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a small number of men. Socialist feminists do not think the reforms supported by liberal feminists go far enough. They believe that the family form fostered by capitalism must change in order to replace “domestic slavery” with some collective means of carrying out housework and child care. Replacing the traditional family can come about only through a socialist revolution that creates a state-centered economy to meet the needs of all.

RADICAL FEMINISM Like socialist feminism, *radical feminism* finds liberal feminism inadequate. Radical feminists believe that patriarchy is so firmly entrenched that even a socialist revolution would not end it. Instead, reaching the goal of gender equality means that society must eliminate gender itself.

One possible way to achieve this goal is to use new reproductive technology that has been developed by scientists in recent decades (see Chapter 18, “Families”). This technology has the ability to separate women’s bodies from the process of childbearing. With an end to motherhood, radical feminists reason, society could leave behind the entire family system, liberating women, men, and children from the oppression of family, gender, and sex itself (Dworkin, 1987). Radical feminism seeks an egalitarian and gender-free society, a revolution much more sweeping than that sought by Marx.

MULTICULTURAL AND GLOBAL FEMINISM The three types of feminism considered so far are strategies for change. They also tend to portray women as a single category of humanity, defined by their sex and subordinated by their society. In recent decades, however, new feminist perspectives have highlighted not only the common situation faced by all women but also their social and cultural differences (Collins, 2000; hooks, 2000; Tong, 2009).

Multicultural feminism draws on the insights provided by intersection theory. That is, while all women have a common position of oppression in relation to men, the life experiences of women differ according to their race, ethnicity, and class position. To put this differently, gender stratification cannot be completely understood without also taking account of racial oppression and class differences. In other words, systems of hierarchy are multidimensional with various types of oppression that combine in their effects.

In the same way, global feminism attempts to recognize the common oppression in the lives of all the world’s women, while also paying attention to their different positions within a world of nations set apart from one

another by the system of global stratification. This simply means that the life experiences of women living in high-income nations are shaped by both oppression linked to gender and privilege linked to living in the core of the global capitalist economy. Similarly, the life experiences of women living in low-income nations reflect both gender stratification and their social location in an exploited region of the world.

Public Support for Feminism

Because all of the various types of feminism call for significant change, feminism has always been controversial. Today, about 18 percent of U.S. adults support the idea that “women should return to their traditional roles in society” (Pew Research Center, 2012). It is also true that only about 20 percent of U.S. adults claim that they are willing to identify themselves as feminists (“The Barrier That Didn’t Fall,” 2008).

But, over time, the share of the population seeking opportunity and equality for women has steadily increased. The most dramatic changes took place in the early 1970s; later changes have been far smaller. A larger share of women than men express support for feminism.

Most men and women who express criticism of feminism hold conventional ideas about gender. Some men oppose gender equality for the same reason that many white people have historically opposed social equality for people of color: They do not want to give up their privileges. Other men and women, including those who are neither rich nor powerful, distrust a social movement (especially its radical expressions) that attacks the traditional family and rejects social patterns that have guided male-female relations for centuries.

Men who have been socialized to value strength and dominance may feel uneasy about feminist ideals of men as gentle and warm (Doyle, 1983). Similarly, some women whose lives center on their husband and children may think that feminism does not value the social roles that give meaning to their lives. In general, opposition to feminism is greatest among women who have the least education and those who do not work outside the home (Marshall, 1985; Ferree & Hess, 1995; CBS News Polls, 2005).

Race and ethnicity play some part in shaping people’s attitudes toward feminism. In general, African Americans (especially African American women) express the greatest support of feminist goals, followed by whites, with Hispanic Americans holding somewhat more traditional attitudes when it comes to gender (Kane, 2000).

Support for feminism is strong and widely evident in academic circles. But this does not mean that feminism is accepted uncritically. Some sociologists charge that feminism ignores a growing body of evidence that men and women think and act in somewhat different ways, and these differences may make complete gender equality impossible. Furthermore, say critics, with its drive to increase women's presence in the workplace, feminism undervalues the crucial and unique contribution women make to the development of children, especially in the first years of life (Baydar & Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Popenoe, 1993b; Gibbs, 2001).

Finally, there is the question of *how* women should go about improving their social standing. A large majority of adults in the United States think that women should have equal rights, but 70 percent also say that women should advance individually, according to their training and abilities; only 10 percent favor women's rights groups or collective action (Smith et al., 2013:585).

For these reasons, most opposition to feminism is directed toward its socialist and radical forms, while support for liberal feminism is widespread. In addition, we are seeing an unmistakable trend toward greater gender equality. In 1977, 65 percent of all adults endorsed the statement "It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." By 2012, the share supporting this statement had dropped sharply, to 31 percent (Smith et al., 2013: 449).

Gender: Looking Ahead

Predictions about the future are no more than educated guesses. Just as economists disagree about the likely inflation rate a year from now, sociologists can offer only general observations about the likely future of gender and society.

Looking back, change has been remarkable. A century ago, women were second-class citizens, without access to many jobs, barred from public office, and with no right to vote. Although women remain socially disadvantaged, the movement toward equality has surged ahead. Two-thirds of people entering the workforce in the 1990s were women, and by 2000, for the first time, a majority of families had both husband and wife in the paid labor force. Today's economy depends a great deal on the earnings of women. In addition, more than one in five married men in the United States have wives who earn more than they do (Fry & Cohn, 2010). As the share of women in higher education continues to rise, women's participation in the labor force has gone up along with the range of work that they perform.

Many factors have contributed to this long-term transformation. Perhaps most important, industrialization and

advances in computer technology have shifted the nature of work from physically demanding tasks that favored male strength to jobs that require thought and imagination. This change puts women and men on an even footing. Also, because birth control technology has given us greater control over reproduction, women's lives are less constrained by unwanted pregnancies.

Many women and men have deliberately pursued social equality. For example, sexual harassment complaints in the workplace are taken much more seriously today than they were a generation ago. Another important trend is the increasing share of college degrees that are earned by women. This trend, in turn, is likely to reduce the earnings gap in the years to come as more women assume positions of power in the corporate and political worlds (Foroohar, 2011). As these trends unfold, social change involving gender in the twenty-first century may turn out to be as great as those that have already taken place.



How much do you think conceptions of gender will change over your lifetime? Will there be more change in the lives of women or men? Why?

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 13 Gender Stratification

Can you spot “gender messages” in the world around you?

As this chapter makes clear, gender is one of the basic organizing principles of everyday life. Most of the places we go and most of the activities we engage in as part of our daily routines are “gendered,” meaning that they are defined as either more masculine or more

feminine. Understanding this fact, corporations keep gender in mind when they market products to the public. Take a look at the ads shown here. In each case, can you explain how companies use gender to sell these products?



There are a lot of gender dynamics going on in this ad. What do you see?



Generally, our society defines cosmetics as feminine because most cosmetics are marketed toward women. How and why is this ad different?



What gender messages do you see in this ad?

Hint Looking for “gender messages” in ads is a process that involves several levels of analysis. Start on the surface by noting everything obvious in the ad, including the setting, the background, and especially the people. Then notice how the people are shown—what they are doing, how they are situated, their facial expressions, how they are dressed, and how they appear to relate to each other. Finally, state what you think is the message of the ad, based on both the ad itself and also what you know about the surrounding society.

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

1. Look through some recent magazines and select three advertisements that involve gender. In each case, provide analysis of how gender is used in the ad.
2. Study the patterns of how women are represented in your country’s workforce. Do they enjoy equal opportunities and wages as men, or are there any differences? Does society and socialization influence women’s employment choices and development?
3. Apply Friedrich Engels’ social-conflict theory to your society and look at the patterns of gender inequality and stratification. How are women controlled sexually, socially, and economically? What are the reasons for this?
4. Go to www.sociologyinfofocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 13 Gender Stratification

Gender and Inequality

13.1 Describe the ways in which society creates gender stratification. (pages 347–51)

Gender refers to the meaning a culture attaches to being female or male.

- Evidence that gender is rooted in culture includes global comparisons by Margaret Mead and others showing how societies define what is feminine and masculine in various ways.
- Gender is not only about difference: Because societies give more power and other resources to men than to women, gender is an important dimension of social stratification. **Sexism** is built into the operation of social institutions.
- Although some degree of **patriarchy** is found almost everywhere, it varies throughout history and from society to society.

gender the personal traits and social positions that members of a society attach to being female or male

gender stratification the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and privilege between men and women

matriarchy a form of social organization in which females dominate males

patriarchy a form of social organization in which males dominate females

sexism the belief that one sex is innately superior to the other

Gender and Socialization

13.2 Explain the importance of gender to socialization. (pages 351–53)

Through the socialization process, gender becomes part of our personalities (**gender identity**) and our actions (**gender roles**). All the major agents of socialization—family, peer groups, schools, and the mass media—reinforce cultural definitions of what is feminine and masculine.

gender roles (also known as sex roles) attitudes and activities that a society links to each sex

Gender and Social Stratification

13.3 Analyze the extent of gender inequality in various social institutions. (pages 353–62)

Gender stratification shapes the **workplace**:

- A majority of women are now in the paid labor force, but 38% hold clerical or service jobs.

- Comparing full-time U.S. workers, women earn 78% as much as men.

Gender stratification shapes **family life**:

- Most unpaid housework is performed by women, whether or not they hold jobs outside the home.
- Pregnancy and raising small children keep many women out of the labor force at a time when their male peers are making important career gains.

Gender stratification shapes **education**:

- Women now earn 57% of bachelor's degrees.
- Women make up 48% of law school students and are an increasing share of graduates in professions traditionally dominated by men, including medicine and business administration.

Gender stratification shapes **politics**:

- Although the number of women in politics has increased significantly, the vast majority of elected officials, especially at the national level, are men.
- Women make up only about 15% of U.S. military personnel.

Violence against women and men is a widespread problem linked to how a society defines gender.

- **Sexual harassment** mostly victimizes women because our culture encourages men to be assertive and to see women in sexual terms.
- **Pornography** portrays women as sexual objects. Many see pornography as a moral issue; because pornography dehumanizes women, it is also a power issue.

minority any category of people distinguished by physical or cultural difference that a society sets apart and subordinates

sexual harassment comments, gestures, or physical contacts of a sexual nature that are deliberate, repeated, and unwelcome

Theories of Gender

13.4 Apply sociology's major theories to gender stratification. (pages 362–66)

Structural-functional theory suggests that

- in preindustrial societies, distinctive roles for males and females reflect biological differences between the sexes.
- in industrial societies, marked gender inequality becomes dysfunctional and gradually decreases.

Talcott Parsons described gender differences in terms of complementary roles that promote the social integration of families and society as a whole.

Symbolic-interaction theory suggests that

- individuals use gender as one element of their personal performances as they socially construct reality through everyday interactions.
- gender plays a part in shaping almost all our everyday experiences.

Because our society defines men as having more value than women, the sex roles that define how women and men should behave place men in control of social situations; women play a more deferential role.

Social-conflict theory suggests that

- gender is an important dimension of social inequality and social conflict.
- gender inequality benefits men and disadvantages women.

Friedrich Engels tied gender stratification to the rise of private property and a class hierarchy. Marriage and the family are strategies by which men control their property through control of the sexuality of women. Capitalism exploits everyone by paying men low wages and assigning women the task of maintaining the home.

Intersection theory suggests that

- particular dimensions of difference in women's lives combine in a multi-layered system, creating unique disadvantage for various categories of women.
- women of color encounter greater social disadvantages than white women and earn much less than white men.

intersection theory analysis of the interplay of race, class, and gender, which often results in multiple dimensions of disadvantage

Feminism

13.5 Contrast liberal, radical, and socialist feminism. (pages 366–69)

Feminism

- endorses the social equality of women and men and opposes patriarchy and sexism.
- seeks to eliminate violence against women.
- advocates giving women control over their reproduction.

There are three types of feminism:

- Liberal feminism seeks equal opportunity for both sexes within the existing society.
- Socialist feminism claims that gender equality will come about by replacing capitalism with socialism.
- Radical feminism seeks to eliminate the concept of gender itself and to create an egalitarian and gender-free society.

Multicultural feminism expands the focus on gender stratification to take into account the intersection of gender with race and ethnicity; global feminism points out that gender inequality also involves the varying positions of women around the world in the system of global stratification.

Today, support for social equality for women and men is widespread. Just 18% of U.S. adults say that women should return to their traditional roles in society. Support for liberal feminism is widespread, with greater opposition directed toward socialist and radical feminism.

feminism support of social equality for women and men, in opposition to patriarchy and sexism

Chapter 14

Race and Ethnicity



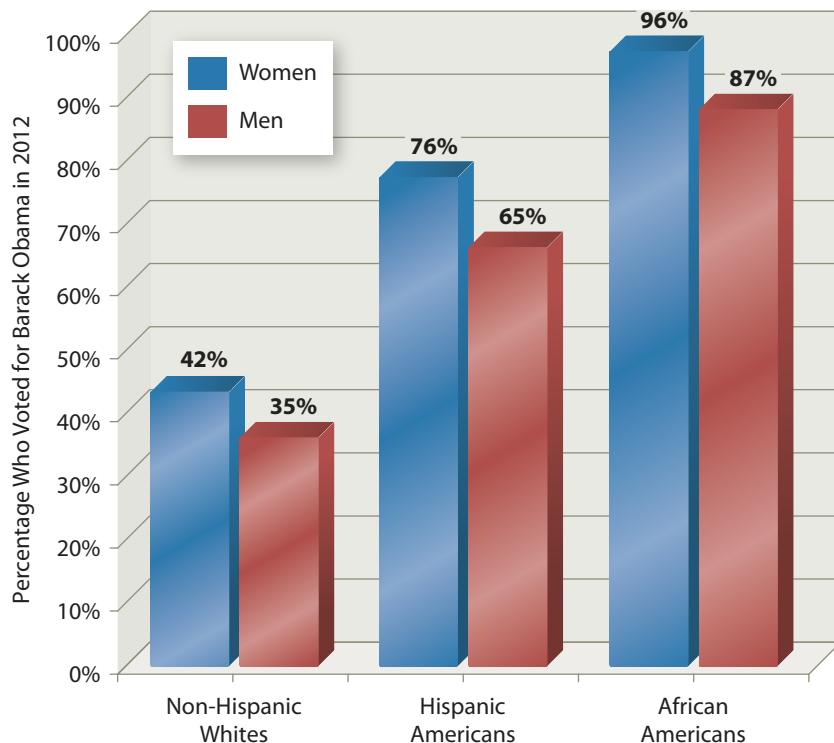
Learning Objectives

- 14.1** Explain the social construction of race and ethnicity.
- 14.2** Describe the extent and causes of prejudice.
- 14.3** Distinguish discrimination from prejudice.
- 14.4** Identify examples of pluralism, assimilation, segregation, and genocide.
- 14.5** Assess the social standing of racial and ethnic categories of U.S. society.



The Power of Society

to shape political attitudes



SOURCE: Center for American Women and Politics (2012).

Is our choice to cast a vote for a particular candidate a purely “personal” decision? In the 2012 presidential election, just 42 percent of non-Hispanic white women and 35 percent of non-Hispanic white men voted for Barack Obama. But Hispanic Americans and especially African Americans supported him overwhelmingly, ensuring his victory. The political choices people make when they vote in elections are not simply personal but also reflect race, ethnicity, and other societal factors.

Chapter Overview

This chapter explains how race and ethnicity are created by society. The United States is a nation as racially and ethnically diverse as any in the world. Here and elsewhere, both race and ethnicity are not only matters of difference but also dimensions of social inequality.

On a cool November morning in New York City, the instructor of a sociology class at Bronx Community College is leading a small-group discussion of race and ethnicity. He explains that the meaning of both concepts is far less clear than most people think. Then his eyes light up as he looks at the people sitting around him and asks, “How do you describe yourself?”

Eva Rodriguez leans forward in her chair and is quick to respond. “Who am I? Or should I say *what* am I? This is hard for me to answer. Most people think of race as black and white. But it’s not. I have both black and white ancestry in me, but you know what? I don’t think of myself in that way. I don’t think of myself in terms of race at all. It would be better to call me Puerto Rican or Hispanic. Personally, I prefer the term ‘Latina.’ Calling myself Latina says I have a mixed racial heritage, and that’s what I am. I wish more people understood that race is not clear-cut.” ■



This chapter examines the meaning of race and ethnicity. There are now millions of people in the United States who, like Eva Rodriguez, do not think of themselves in terms of a single category but as having a mix of ancestry.

The Social Meaning of Race and Ethnicity

14.1 Explain the social construction of race and ethnicity.

As the opening to this chapter suggests, people often confuse race and ethnicity. For this reason, we begin with some basic definitions.

Race

A **race** is a *socially constructed category of people who share biologically transmitted traits that members of a society consider important*. People may classify one another racially based on physical characteristics such as skin color, facial features, hair texture, and body shape.

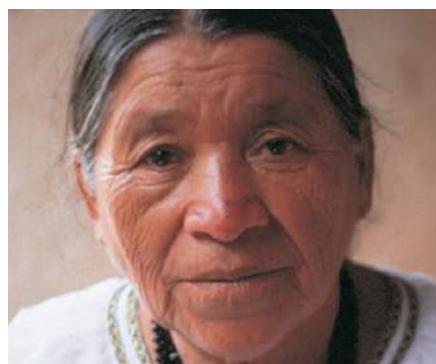
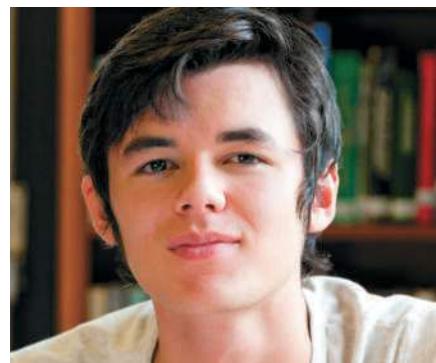
Racial diversity appeared among our human ancestors as the result of living in different geographic regions of the world. In regions of intense heat, for example, humans developed darker skin (from the natural pigment melanin) as protection from the sun; in regions with moderate climates, people have lighter skin. Such differences are literally only skin deep because human beings the world over are members of a single biological species.

The striking variety of physical traits found today is also the product of migration; genetic characteristics once common to a single place (such as light skin or curly hair) are now found in many lands. Especially pronounced is the racial mix in the Middle East (that is, western Asia), historically a crossroads of migration. Greater physical uniformity characterizes more isolated people, such as the island-dwelling Japanese. But every population has some genetic mixture, and increasing contact among the world’s people ensures even more blending of physical characteristics in the future.

Although we think of race in terms of biological elements, race is a socially constructed concept. It is true that human beings differ in any number of ways involving physical traits, but a “race” comes into being only when the members of a society decide that some physical trait (such as skin color or eye shape) actually *matters*.

Because race involves social definitions, it is a highly variable concept. For example, the members of U.S. society consider racial differences more important than people of many other countries. We also tend to “see” three racial categories—typically, black, white, and Asian—while people in other societies identify many more categories. People in Brazil, for example, distinguish between *branca* (white), *parda* (brown), *morena* (brunette), *mulata* (mulatto), *preta* (black), and *amarela* (yellow) (Inciardi, Surratt, & Telles, 2000).

Osagie Obasogie (2013) interviewed people who have been blind since birth. He concluded that they have the same attitudes about race as sighted people. This finding suggests that, rather than “seeing” race with our eyes, we learn what to think about race from our surrounding society.



The range of biological variation in human beings is far greater than any system of racial classification allows. This fact is made obvious by trying to place all of the people pictured here into simple racial categories.

In addition, race may be defined somewhat differently by various categories of people within a society's population. In the United States, for example, research shows that white people "see" black people as having darker skin than black people do (Hill, 2002).

The meanings and importance of race not only differ from place to place but also change over time. Back in 1900, for example, it was common in the United States to consider people of Irish, Italian, or Jewish ancestry as "nonwhite." By 1950, however, this was no longer the case, and such people today are considered part of the "white" category (Loveman, 1999; Brodkin, 2007).

Today, the Census Bureau allows people to describe themselves using more than one racial category (offering six single-race options and fifty-seven multiracial options). Our society officially recognizes a wide range of multiracial people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

RACIAL TYPES Scientists invented the concept of race more than a century ago as they tried to organize the world's physical diversity into three racial types. They called people with lighter skin and fine hair *Caucasoid*, people with darker skin and coarse hair *Negroid*, and people with yellow or brown skin and distinctive folds on the eyelids *Mongoloid*.

Sociologists consider such terms misleading at best and harmful at worst. For one thing, no society contains biologically "pure" people. The skin color of people we might call "Caucasoid" (or "Indo-European," "Caucasian," or more

commonly "white") ranges from very light (typical in Scandinavia) to very dark (in southern India). The same variation exists among so-called "Negroids" ("Africans" or more commonly "black" people) and "Mongoloids" ("Asians"). In fact, many "white" people (say, in southern India) actually have darker skin than many "black" people (the Aborigines of Australia). Overall, the three racial categories differ in just 6 percent of their genes, and there is actually more genetic variation *within* each category than *between* categories. This means that two people in the European nation of Sweden, randomly selected, are likely to have at least as much genetic difference as a Swede and a person in the African nation of Senegal (Harris & Sim, 2002; American Sociological Association, 2003; California Newsreel, 2003).

So how important is race? From a biological point of view, the only significance of knowing people's racial category is assessing the risk factors for a few diseases. Why, then, do societies make so much of race? Such categories allow societies to rank people in a hierarchy, giving some people more money, power, and prestige than others and allowing some people to feel that they are inherently "better" than others. Because race may matter so much, societies may construct racial categories in extreme ways. Throughout much of the twentieth century, for example, many southern states labeled as "colored" anyone with as little as one thirty-second African ancestry (that is, one African American great-great-great-grandparent). Today, the law allows parents to declare the race of a child (or not) as

they wish. Even so, most members of U.S. society are still very sensitive to people's racial backgrounds.

A TREND TOWARD MIXTURE Over many generations and throughout the Americas, the genetic traits from around the world have become mixed. Many "black" people have a significant Caucasoid ancestry, just as many

"white" people have some Negroid genes. Whatever people may think, race is not a black-and-white issue.

Today, people are more willing to define themselves as multiracial. On the most recent U.S. Census survey for 2013, 9.4 million people described themselves by checking two or more racial categories. In 2013, 6 percent of children under the age of five were multiracial compared to less than 1 percent of people age sixty-five and older.

Table 14–1 Racial and Ethnic Categories in the United States, 2013

Racial or Ethnic Classification*	Approximate U.S. Population	Share of Total Population
Hispanic descent	54,071,370	17.1%
Mexican	34,586,088	10.9%
Puerto Rican	5,138,109	1.6%
Cuban	2,013,155	0.6%
Other Hispanic	12,334,018	3.9%
African descent	41,623,897	13.2%
Nigerian	299,310	0.1%
Ethiopian	250,427	0.1%
Somalian	118,619	<
Other African	40,955,541	13.0%
Native American descent	2,521,131	0.8%
American Indian	2,057,857	0.7%
Alaska Native Tribes	119,452	<
Other Native American	343,822	0.1%
Asian or Pacific Island descent	16,632,553	5.3%
Chinese	3,781,673	1.2%
Asian Indian	3,189,485	1.0%
Filipino	2,664,606	0.8%
Vietnamese	1,692,760	0.5%
Korean	1,446,592	0.5%
Japanese	794,441	0.3%
Cambodian	271,193	0.1%
Other Asian or Pacific Islander	2,791,803	0.9%
West Indian descent	2,879,140	0.9%
Arab descent	1,866,851	0.6%
Non-Hispanic European descent	197,836,231	62.6%
German	46,173,091	14.7%
Irish	36,325,099	11.6%
English	24,483,837	7.8%
Italian	17,235,854	5.5%
Polish	9,383,376	3.0%
French	8,228,623	2.6%
Scottish	5,310,285	1.7%
Dutch	4,484,167	1.4%
Norwegian	4,272,488	1.4%
Other non-Hispanic European	41,939,411	13.4%
Two or more races	9,369,541	3.0%

*People of Hispanic descent may be of any race. Many people also identify with more than one ethnic category. Therefore, figures total more than 100 percent.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a *shared cultural heritage*. People define themselves—or others—as members of an *ethnic category* based on common ancestry, language, or religion that gives them a distinctive social identity. The United States is a multiethnic society. Even though we favor the English language, more than 61 million people (21 percent of the U.S. population) speak Spanish, Italian, German, French, Chinese, or some other language in their homes. In California, about 44 percent of the population does so (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

With regard to religion, the United States is a predominantly Protestant nation, but most people of Spanish, Italian, and Polish descent are Roman Catholic, and many of Greek, Ukrainian, and Russian descent belong to the Eastern Orthodox Church. More than 5.1 million Jewish Americans have ancestral ties to various nations around the world. The population of Muslim men and women is generally estimated at between 2 and 3 million and is rapidly increasing due to both immigration and a high birth-rate (ARDA, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2012).

Like race, the concept of "ethnicity" is socially constructed, becoming important only because society defines it that way. For example, U.S. society defines people of Spanish descent as "Latin," even though Italy has a more "Latin" culture than Spain. People of Italian descent are not viewed as Latin but as "European" and therefore less different from the point of view of the European majority (Camara, 2000; Brodkin, 2007). Like racial differences, the importance of ethnic differences can change over time. A century ago, Catholics and Jews were considered "different" in the mostly Protestant United States. This is much less true today.

Keep in mind that race is constructed from *biological* traits and ethnicity is constructed from *cultural* traits. However, the two often go hand in hand. For example, Japanese Americans have distinctive physical traits and, for those who hold to a traditional way of life, a distinctive culture as well. Table 14–1 presents the most recent data on the racial and ethnic diversity of the United States.

race a socially constructed category of people who share biologically transmitted traits that members of a society consider important

ethnicity a shared cultural heritage

On an individual level, people play up or play down cultural traits, depending on whether they want to fit in or stand apart from the surrounding society. Immigrants may drop their cultural traditions or, like many people of Native American descent in recent years, try to revive their heritage. For most people, ethnicity is more complex than race because they identify with several ethnic backgrounds. Rock-and-roll legend Jimi Hendrix was African American, white, and Cherokee; news anchor Soledad O'Brian considers herself both white and black, both Australian and Irish, and both Anglo and Hispanic.

Minorities

March 3, Dallas, Texas. The lobby of just about any hotel in a major U.S. city presents a lesson in contrasts: The majority of the guests checking in are white; the majority of hotel employees who carry luggage, serve food, and clean the rooms are racial or ethnic minorities.

As defined in Chapter 13 ("Gender Stratification"), a **minority** is *any category of people distinguished by physical or cultural difference that a society sets apart and subordinates*. Minority standing can be based on race, ethnicity, or both. As shown in Table 14–1, non-Hispanic white people (62.6 percent of the total) are still a majority of the U.S. population. But that share is declining and the share of minorities is increasing. Today, minorities are a majority in four states (California, New Mexico, Texas, and Hawaii) and also in sixty-two of the country's 100 largest cities.

By 2011, a majority of the births in the United States as a whole were racial and ethnic minorities. This fact—coupled to the effects of immigration—means that the minority share of the population will steadily increase. By 2044, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), minorities are likely to form a majority of the entire U.S. population. Figure 14–1 shows how this trend is projected to unfold over time. National Map 14–1 on page 380 shows where a minority majority already exists.

Minorities have two important characteristics. First, they share a *distinctive identity*, which may be based on physical or cultural traits. Second, minorities experience *subordination*. As the rest of this chapter shows, U.S. minorities typically have lower income, lower occupational prestige, and limited schooling. These facts

mean that class, race, and ethnicity, as well as gender, are overlapping and reinforcing dimensions of social stratification. The Thinking About Diversity box on page 381 profiles the struggles of recent Latin American immigrants.

Of course, not all members of any minority category are disadvantaged. Some Latinos are quite wealthy, certain Chinese Americans are celebrated business leaders, and African Americans are among our nation's political leaders. But even job success rarely allows individuals to escape their minority standing. As described in Chapter 6 ("Social Interaction in Everyday Life"), race or ethnicity often serves as a *master status* that overshadows personal accomplishments.

Minorities usually make up a small proportion of a society's population, but this is not always the case. Black South Africans are disadvantaged even though they are a numerical majority in their country. In the

Diversity Snapshot

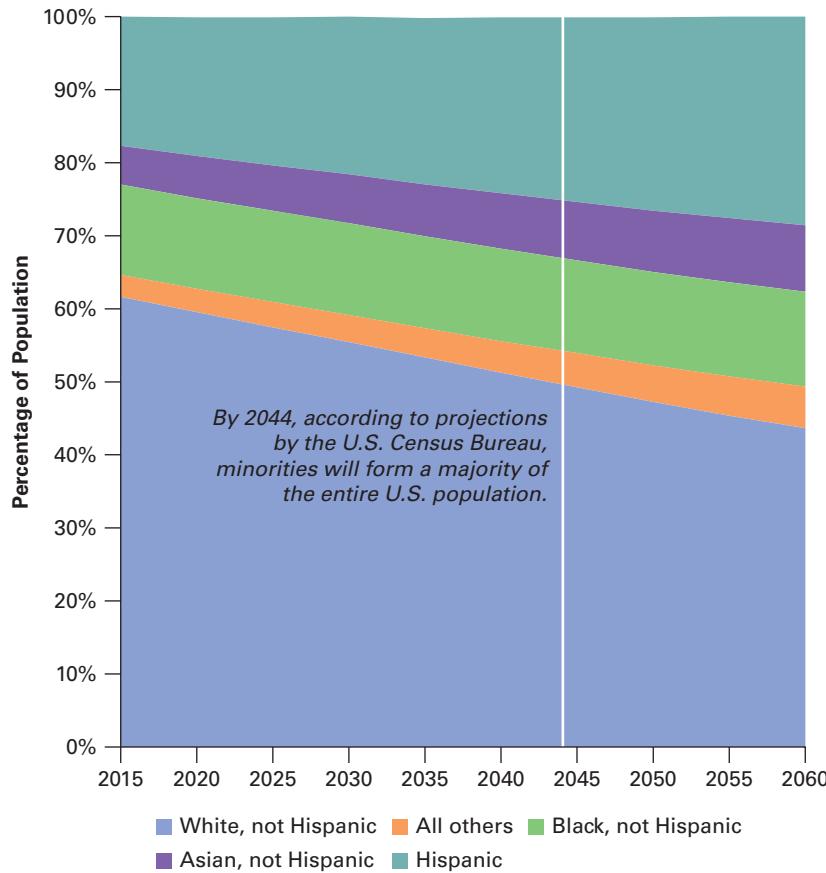


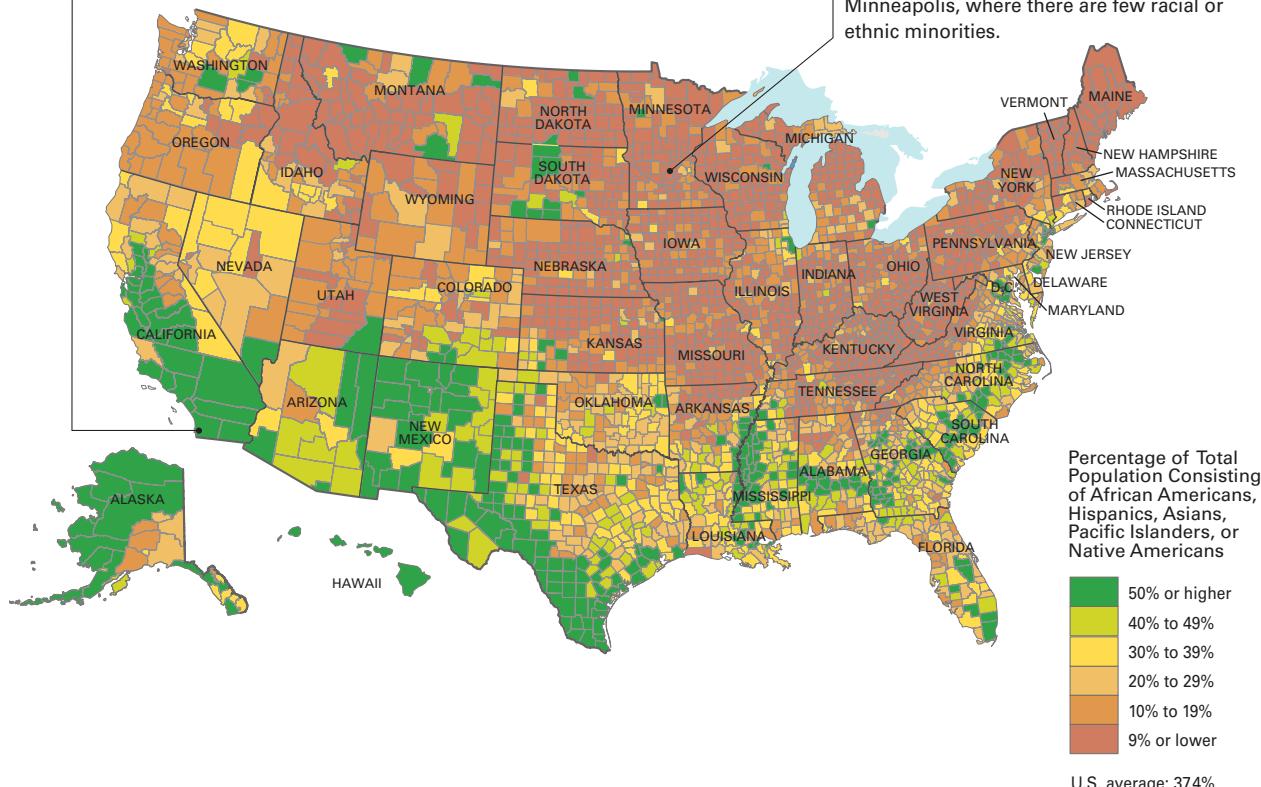
Figure 14–1 The Coming Minority Majority

According to projections from the Census Bureau, the United States will have a minority majority in the year 2044, less than thirty years from now. By that time, as the figure shows, the white, non-Hispanic population will actually decline, as the number of Asian Americans, African Americans, and especially Hispanic Americans increases. What changes do you expect this trend will bring to the United States?

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

Seeing Ourselves

- Marcos Chapa attends college in San Diego and lives in a community where most people are in some minority category.



National Map 14–1 Where the Minority Majority Already Exists

Racial and ethnic minorities are now a majority of the population in four states—Hawaii, California, New Mexico, and Texas—as well as in the District of Columbia. At the other extreme, Vermont and Maine have the smallest share (about 6 percent) of minorities. Why do you think states with high minority populations are located in the South and Southwest?

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

United States, women represent slightly more than half the population but are still struggling for all the opportunities and privileges enjoyed by men.

they don't take it." He shakes his head at the Ethiopians and drives on.

Prejudice and Stereotypes

14.2 Describe the extent and causes of prejudice.

November 19, Jerusalem, Israel. We are driving along the outskirts of this historical city—a holy place to Jews, Christians, and Muslims—when Razi, our taxi driver, spots a small group of Falasha—Ethiopian Jews—on a street corner. "Those people over there," he points as he speaks, "they are different. They don't drive cars. They don't want to improve themselves. Even when our country offers them schooling,

they don't take it." He shakes his head at the Ethiopians and drives on.

Prejudice is a rigid and unfair generalization about an entire category of people. Prejudice is unfair because all people in some category are described as the same, based on little or no direct evidence. Prejudice may target people of a particular social class, sex, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, physical disability, race, or ethnicity.

prejudice a rigid and unfair generalization about an entire category of people

stereotype a simplified description applied to every person in some category

Thinking About Diversity: Race, Class, and Gender

Hard Work: The Immigrant Life in the United States

Early in the morning, it is already hot on the streets of Houston as a line of pickup trucks snakes slowly into a dusty yard, where 200 laborers have been gathering since dawn, each hoping for a day's work. The driver of the first truck opens his window and tells the foreman that he is looking for a crew to spread boiling tar on a roof. Abdonel Cespedes, the foreman, turns to the crowd, and after a few minutes, three workers step forward and climb into the back of the truck. The next driver is looking for two experienced housepainters. The scene is repeated over and over as men and a few women leave to dig ditches, spread cement, hang drywall, open clogged septic tanks, or crawl under houses to poison rats.

As each driver pulls into the yard, the foreman asks, "How much?" Most offer \$5 an hour. Cespedes automatically responds, "\$7.25; the going rate is \$7.25 for an hour's hard work." Sometimes he convinces them to pay that much, but usually not. The workers, who come from Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala, know that dozens of them will end up with



These immigrants gather on a New York City street corner every morning hoping to be hired for construction work that pays about \$60 a day with no benefits.

Prejudices are *prejudgments* that can be either positive or negative. Our positive prejudices tend to exaggerate the virtues of people like ourselves, and our negative prejudices condemn those who differ from us. Negative prejudice can be expressed as anything from mild dislike to outright hostility. Because such attitudes are rooted in culture, everyone has at least some prejudice.

no work at all this day. Most accept \$5 or \$6 an hour because they know that when the day is over, \$50 is better than nothing.

Labor markets like this one are common in large cities, especially across the southwestern United States. The surge in immigration in recent years has brought millions of people to this country in search of work, and most have little schooling and speak little English.

Manuel Barrera has taken a day's work moving the entire contents of a store to a storage site. He arrives at the boarded-up building and gazes at the mountains of heavy furniture that he must carry out to a moving van, drive across town, and then carry again. He sighs when he thinks about how hot it is outside and realizes that it is even hotter inside the building. He will have no break for lunch. No one says anything about toilets. Barrera shakes his head: "I will do this kind of work because it puts food on the table. But I did not foresee it would turn out like this."

The hard truth is that immigrants to the United States do the jobs that no one else wants. At the bottom level of the national economy, they perform low-skill jobs in restaurants and hotels and on construction crews, and they work in private homes cooking, cleaning, and caring for children. Across the United States, about half of all housekeepers, household cooks, tailors, and restaurant waiters are men or women born abroad. Few immigrants make much more than the official minimum wage (\$7.25 in 2015), and rarely do immigrant workers receive any health or pension benefits. Many well-off families take the labor of immigrants as much for granted as their air-conditioned cars and comfortable homes.

What Do You Think?

1. In what ways do you or members of your family depend on the low-paid labor of immigrants?
2. Do you favor allowing the 11.7 million people who entered this country illegally to earn citizenship? What should be done?
3. Should the U.S. government act to reduce the number of immigrants entering this country in the future? Why or why not?

SOURCES: Booth (1998), Tumulty (2006), U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2014), and U.S. Department of Labor (2014).

Prejudice often takes the form of a **stereotype** (*stereo* is derived from a Greek word meaning "solid"), a simplified description applied to every person in some category. Many white people hold stereotypical views of minorities. Stereotyping is especially harmful to minorities in the workplace. If company officials see workers only in terms of a stereotype, they will make assumptions

Student Snapshot

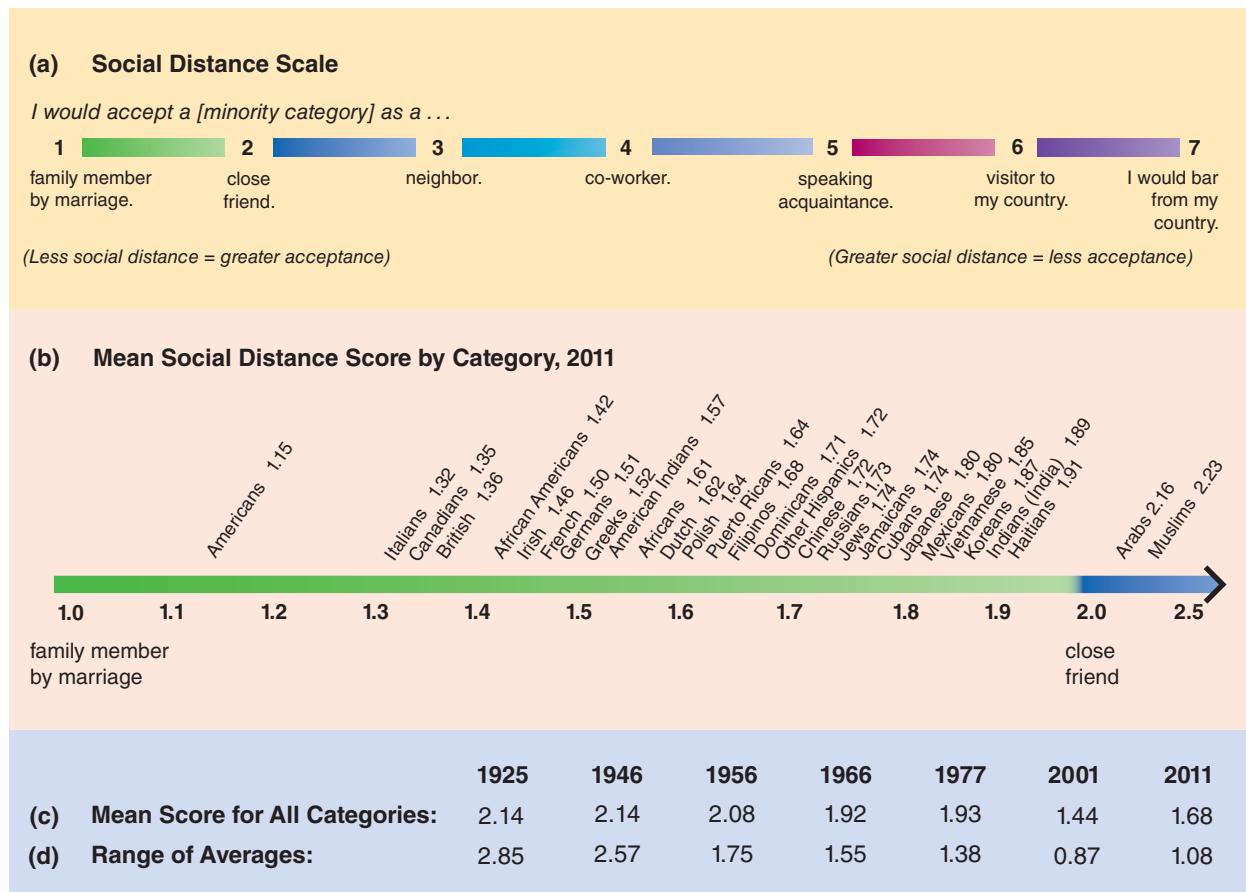


Figure 14–2 Bogardus Social Distance Research

The social distance scale is a good way to measure prejudice. Part (a) illustrates the complete social distance scale, from least social distance at the far left to greatest social distance at the far right. Part (b) shows the mean (average) social distance score received by each category of people in 2011. Part (c) presents the overall mean score in specific years (the average of the scores received by all racial and ethnic categories). Between 1925, when the study was first carried out, and 2001, the average social distance response dropped from 2.14 to 1.44, showing increasing tolerance of diversity. When this research was repeated in 2011, the average response showed a modest increase to 1.68, suggesting a slight decline in tolerance. Part (d) shows the range of averages, the difference between the highest and lowest scores in given years (in 2011, for instance, it was 1.08, the difference between the high score of 2.23 for Muslims and the low score of 1.15 for Americans). This figure also became smaller in studies carried out after 1925, with a small increase between 2001 and 2011. In short, compared to students in past generations, today's students tend to see fewer differences between various categories of people.

SOURCE: Parrillo and Donoghue (2013).

about their abilities, steering them toward certain jobs and limiting their access to better opportunities (Kaufman, 2002).

Minorities, too, stereotype whites and other minorities (T. W. Smith, 1996; Cummings & Lambert, 1997). Surveys show, for example, that African Americans are more likely than whites to express the belief that Asians engage in unfair business practices and Asians are more likely than whites to criticize Hispanics for having too many children (Perlmuter, 2002).

Measuring Prejudice: The Social Distance Scale

One measure of prejudice is *social distance*, how closely people are willing to interact with members of some category. In the 1920s, Emory Bogardus developed the *social distance scale* shown in Figure 14–2. Bogardus (1925) asked students at U.S. colleges and universities to look at this scale and indicate how closely they were willing to interact with people in thirty racial and ethnic

categories. People express the greatest social distance (most negative prejudice) by declaring that a particular category of people should be barred from the country entirely (point 7); at the other extreme, people express the least social distance (most social acceptance) by saying they would accept members of a particular category into their family through marriage (point 1).

Bogardus (1925, 1967; Owen, Elsner, & McFaul, 1977) found that people felt much more social distance from some categories than from others. In general, students in his surveys expressed the most social distance from Hispanics, African Americans, Asians, and Turks, indicating that they would be willing to tolerate such people as co-workers but not as neighbors, friends, or family members. Students expressed the least social distance from those from northern and western Europe, including English and Scottish people, and also Canadians, indicating that they were willing to include them in their families by marriage.

What patterns of social distance do we find among college students today? A recent study using the same social distance scale reported three major findings (Parrillo & Donoghue, 2013):¹

- 1. The long-term trend is that students are more accepting of all minorities.** Today's students express less social distance from all minorities than students did several decades ago. Figure 14–2 shows that the mean (average) score on the social distance scale declined from 2.14 in 1925 and 1946, dropping to 2.08 in 1956, 1.92 in 1966, 1.93 in 1977, and 1.44 in 2001. In 2011, the average response was 1.68, indicating a decline in tolerance. Even so, notice that in the 2011 research, students (81 percent of whom identified themselves as white) expressed far greater acceptance of minorities than did students in earlier studies. Regarding African Americans, for example, students in 2011 assigned a score of 1.42, suggesting greater acceptance than students felt toward the Irish or French.
- 2. Today's students see less difference between various minorities.** In the earliest studies, students were very accepting of some categories of people (giving scores between 1 and 2) and they were not accepting of other categories of people (giving scores between 4 and 5). In the 2011 research, no category of the population received a score greater than 2.23.

¹In 2001, Parrillo and Donoghue dropped seven of the categories used by Bogardus (Armenians, Czechs, Finns, Norwegians, Scots, Swedes, and Turks) because they are no longer visible minorities and added nine new categories (Africans, Arabs, Cubans, Dominicans, Haitians, Jamaicans, Muslims, Puerto Ricans, and Vietnamese). This change probably encouraged higher social distance scores, making the trend toward decreasing social distance all the more significant.

- 3. The climate of concern over terrorism in the world probably has increased prejudice toward Arabs and Muslims.** The current generation of students has grown up in a country concerned about terrorism. The fact that the 9/11 attacks in 2001 were carried out by nineteen attackers who were Arabs and Muslims probably explains the pattern by which students express the greatest social distance toward people in these two categories.

Racism

A powerful and harmful form of prejudice, **racism** is the belief that one racial category is innately superior or inferior to another. Racism has existed throughout world history. Despite their many achievements, the ancient Greeks, the peoples of India, and the Chinese all regarded people unlike themselves as inferior.

Racism has also been widespread throughout the history of the United States, where ideas about racial inferiority supported slavery. Today, overt racism in this country has decreased because more people believe in evaluating others, as Martin Luther King Jr. envisioned, according to their personal character rather than the color of their skin.

Even so, racism remains a serious social problem, as some people think that certain racial and ethnic categories are smarter than others. As studies have shown, however, racial differences in mental abilities result from environment rather than biology (Sowell, 1994, 1995).

Theories of Prejudice

Where does prejudice come from? Social scientists provide several answers to this question, focusing on frustration, personality, culture, and social conflict.

SCAPEGOAT THEORY *Scapegoat theory* holds that prejudice springs from frustration among people who are themselves disadvantaged (Dollard et al., 1939). For instance, take the case of a white woman who is frustrated by the low pay she receives from her assembly-line job in a textile factory. Directing hostility at the powerful factory owners carries the obvious risk of being fired; therefore, she may blame her low pay on the presence of minority co-workers. Her prejudice does not improve her situation, but it is a relatively safe way to express anger, and it may give her the comforting feeling that at least she is superior to someone.

A **scapegoat**, then, is a person or category of people, typically with little power, whom people unfairly blame for their own troubles. Because they have little power and thus are usually "safe targets," minorities often are used as scapegoats.



In 2014, eighteen-year-old Michael Brown was shot and killed by twenty-eight-year-old Darren Wilson, a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. There was widespread outrage at the killing of Brown, who was unarmed but acting in a threatening manner. Wilson was not charged with a crime, and he has since left law enforcement. The high level of national concern and the widespread protests and rioting over this event—especially within the African American community—suggest that many believe race continues to shape the operation of the U.S. criminal justice system.

AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY THEORY Theodor Adorno and colleagues (1950) considered extreme prejudice a personality trait of certain individuals. This conclusion is supported by research showing that people who show strong prejudice toward one minority are usually intolerant of all minorities. These *authoritarian personalities* rigidly conform to conventional cultural values and see moral issues as clear-cut matters of right and wrong. People with authoritarian personalities also view society as naturally competitive and hierarchical, with “better” people (like themselves) inevitably dominating those who are weaker (all minorities).

Adorno and his colleagues also found the opposite pattern to be true: People who express tolerance toward one minority are likely to be accepting of all. They tend to be more flexible in their moral judgments and treat all people as equals.

Adorno thought that people with little schooling and those raised by cold and demanding parents tend to develop authoritarian personalities. Filled with anger and anxiety as children, they grow into hostile, aggressive adults who seek out scapegoats.

CULTURE THEORY A third theory claims that although extreme prejudice may be found in some people, some prejudice is found in everyone. Why? Because prejudice

is part of the culture in which we all live and learn. The Bogardus social distance studies help prove the point. Bogardus found that students across the country had much the same attitudes toward specific racial and ethnic categories, feeling closer to some and more distant from others.

More evidence that prejudice is rooted in culture is the fact that minorities express the same attitudes as white people toward categories other than their own. Such patterns suggest that individuals hold prejudices because we live in a “culture of prejudice” that has taught us all to view certain categories of people as “better” or “worse” than others.

CONFLICT THEORY A fourth explanation proposes that prejudice is used as a tool by powerful people to oppress others. Anglos who look down on Latino immigrants in the Southwest, for example, can get away with paying

the immigrants low wages for long hours of hard work. Similarly, all elites benefit when prejudice divides the labor force along racial and ethnic lines and discourages them from working together to advance their common interests (Geschwender, 1978; Olzak, 1989; Rothenberg, 2008).

According to another conflict-based argument, made by Shelby Steele (1990), minorities themselves encourage *race consciousness* to win greater power and privileges. Because of their historical disadvantage, minorities claim that they are victims entitled to special consideration based on their race. This strategy may bring short-term gains, but Steele cautions that such thinking often sparks a backlash from whites or others who oppose “special treatment” on the basis of race or ethnicity.

Discrimination

14.3 Distinguish discrimination from prejudice.

Closely related to prejudice is **discrimination**, *unequal treatment of various categories of people*. Prejudice refers to *attitudes*, but discrimination is a matter of action. Like

discrimination unequal treatment of various categories of people

institutional prejudice and discrimination bias built into the operation of society's institutions

prejudice, discrimination can be either positive (providing special advantages) or negative (creating obstacles) and ranges from subtle to extreme.

Institutional Prejudice and Discrimination

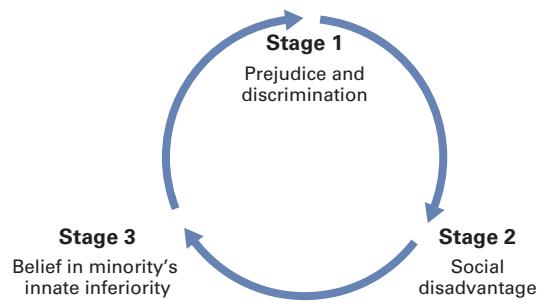
We typically think of prejudice and discrimination as the hateful ideas or actions of specific people. But Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton (1967) pointed out that far greater harm results from **institutional prejudice and discrimination**, bias built into the operation of society's institutions, including schools, hospitals, the police, and the workplace. For example, researchers have found that banks reject home mortgage applications from minorities at a higher rate than those from white people, even when income and quality of neighborhood are held constant (Gotham, 1998; Blanton, 2007).

Recent concern about institutional prejudice and discrimination centers on police directing the use of deadly violence toward African American men. Survey research shows that African Americans are more likely than whites to point to this type of institutional bias. In the 2014 case of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, about one-third of whites and two-thirds of African Americans said race played some part in the deadly shooting (Pew Research Center, 2014).

According to Carmichael and Hamilton, people are slow to condemn or even recognize institutional prejudice and discrimination because it often involves respected public officials and long-established traditions. A case in point is *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the 1954 Supreme Court decision that ended the legal segregation of schools. The principle of "separate but equal" schooling had been the law of the land, supporting racial inequality by allowing school segregation. Despite this change in the law, half a century later, most U.S. students still attend schools in which one race overwhelmingly predominates (KewalRamani et al., 2007). In 1991, the courts pointed out that neighborhood schools will never provide equal education as long as our population is segregated, with most African Americans living in central cities and most white people and Asian Americans living in suburbs.

Prejudice and Discrimination: The Vicious Circle

Prejudice and discrimination reinforce each other. The Thomas theorem, discussed in Chapter 6 ("Social Interaction in Everyday Life"), offers a simple explanation of this fact:



Stage 1: Prejudice and discrimination begin, often as an expression of ethnocentrism or an attempt to justify economic exploitation.

Stage 2: As a result of prejudice and discrimination, a minority is socially disadvantaged, occupying a low position in the system of social stratification.

Stage 3: This social disadvantage is then interpreted not as the result of earlier prejudice and discrimination but as evidence that the minority is innately inferior, unleashing renewed prejudice and discrimination by which the cycle repeats itself.

Figure 14–3 Prejudice and Discrimination: The Vicious Circle

Prejudice and discrimination can form a vicious circle, thereby perpetuating themselves.

Situations that are defined as real become real in their consequences (Thomas & Thomas, 1928; Thomas, 1966:301, orig. 1931).

Applying the Thomas theorem, we understand how stereotypes can become real to people who believe them and sometimes even to those who are victimized by them. Prejudice on the part of white people toward people of color does not produce *innate* inferiority, but it can produce *social* inferiority, pushing minorities into low-paying jobs, inferior schools, and racially segregated housing. Then, as white people interpret that social disadvantage as evidence that minorities do not measure up, they unleash a new round of prejudice and discrimination, giving rise to a vicious circle in which each perpetuates the other, as shown in Figure 14–3.

Majority and Minority: Patterns of Interaction

14.4 Identify examples of pluralism, assimilation, segregation, and genocide.

Sociologists describe patterns of interaction among racial and ethnic categories in a society in terms of four models: pluralism, assimilation, segregation, and genocide.

Pluralism

Pluralism is a state in which people of all races and ethnicities are distinct but have equal social standing. In other



Should we expect people who come to the United States to change their language and other cultural patterns in order to "fit in," or should we expect them to hold onto their own traditions? Why?

words, people who differ in appearance or social heritage all share resources roughly equally.

The United States is pluralistic to the extent that all people have equal standing under the law. Also, many large cities contain "ethnic villages," where people proudly display the traditions of their immigrant ancestors. These include New York's Spanish Harlem, Little Italy, and Chinatown; Philadelphia's Italian "South Philly"; Chicago's Little Saigon; and Latino East Los Angeles. New York City alone has more than 300 magazines, newspapers, and radio stations that publish in more than ninety languages (Logan, Alba, & Zhang, 2002; Center for Community and Ethnic Media, CUNY, 2013).

But the United States is not truly pluralistic, for three reasons. First, although most people value their cultural heritage, few want to live exclusively with others exactly like themselves (Smith et al., 2013:671–73). Second, our tolerance of social diversity goes only so far. One reaction to the rising number of U.S. minorities

is a social movement to make English the nation's official language. Third, as you will see later in this chapter, people of various colors and cultures do *not* have equal social standing.

Assimilation

Many people think of the United States as a "melting pot" in which different nationalities blend together. But rather than everyone "melting" into some new cultural pattern, most minorities have adopted the dominant culture established by our earliest settlers. Why? Because doing so is both the path to upward social mobility and a way to escape the prejudice and discrimination directed at more visible foreigners. Sociologists use the term **assimilation** to describe *the process by which minorities gradually adopt patterns of the dominant culture*. Assimilation can involve changing modes of dress, values, religion, language, and friends.

The amount of assimilation varies by category. For example, Canadians have "melted" more than Cubans, the Dutch more than Dominicans, Germans more than the Japanese. Multiculturalists oppose making assimilation a goal because it suggests that minorities are a problem and the ones who need to do all the changing.

Note that assimilation involves changes in ethnicity but not in race. For example, many descendants of Japanese immigrants discard their ethnic traditions but retain their racial identity. For racial traits to diminish over generations, **miscegenation**, or *biological reproduction by partners of different racial categories*, must occur. Although interracial marriage is becoming more common, it still amounts to only 8.4 percent of all U.S. marriages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Segregation

Segregation is *the physical and social separation of categories of people*. Some minorities, especially religious orders like the Amish, voluntarily segregate themselves. However, majorities usually segregate minorities by

Patterns of Majority and Minority Interaction

pluralism a state in which people of all races and ethnicities are distinct but have equal social standing

assimilation the process by which minorities gradually adopt patterns of the dominant culture

segregation the physical and social separation of categories of people

genocide the systematic killing of one category of people by another

excluding them. Residential neighborhoods, schools, occupations, hospitals, and even cemeteries may be segregated. Pluralism encourages distinctiveness without disadvantage, but segregation enforces separation that harms a minority.

Racial segregation has a long history in the United States, beginning with slavery and evolving into racially separated housing, schools, buses, and trains. Court decisions such as the 1954 *Brown* case have reduced *de jure* (Latin, “by law”) discrimination in this country. However, *de facto* (“in actual fact”) segregation continues in the form of countless neighborhoods that are home to people of a single race.

Research suggests that racial segregation is lower in large U.S. cities today than in the past. The trend reflects both greater racial tolerance and increasing availability of housing loans to minorities (Glaeser & Vigdor, 2012). Despite this decline, however, segregation persists in the United States. For example, Livonia, Michigan, is 88 percent white, and neighboring Detroit is 80 percent African American. Kurt Metzger (2001) explains, “Livonia was pretty much created by white flight [from Detroit].” Further, research shows that across the country, many whites (especially those with young children) avoid neighborhoods where African Americans live (Emerson, Yancey, & Chai, 2001; Krysan, 2002). At the extreme, Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1989) document the *hypersegregation* of poor African Americans in some inner cities. Hypersegregation means having little contact of any kind with people outside the local community. Hypersegregation is the daily experience of about 20 percent of poor African Americans and is a pattern found in about twenty-five large U.S. cities (Wilkes & Iceland, 2004; Iceland et al., 2010).

Genocide

Genocide is the systematic killing of one category of people by another. This deadly form of racism and ethnocentrism violates nearly every recognized moral standard, yet it has occurred time and again in human history.

Genocide was common in the history of contact between Europeans and the original inhabitants of the Americas. From the sixteenth century on, the Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, and Dutch forcibly colonized vast empires. Although most native people died from diseases brought by Europeans, against which they had no natural defenses, many who opposed the colonizers were killed deliberately (Matthiessen, 1984; Sale, 1990).

Genocide also occurred during the twentieth century. During World War I, at least 1 million Armenians in Eastern Europe perished under the rule of the

Ottoman Empire. Soon after that, European Jews experienced a reign of terror known as the Holocaust during Adolf Hitler’s rule in Germany. From about 1935 to 1945, the Nazis murdered more than 6 million Jewish men, women, and children, and another 5 million people including gay people, Gypsies, and people with handicaps. During the same period, the Soviet dictator Josef Stalin murdered on an even greater scale, killing perhaps 30 million real and imagined enemies during decades of violent rule. Between 1975 and 1980, Pol Pot’s Communist regime in Cambodia butchered all “capitalists,” a category that included anyone able to speak a Western language. In all, some 2 million people (one-fourth of the population) perished in the Cambodian “killing fields.”

Tragically, genocide continues in the modern world. Recent examples include Hutus killing Tutsis in the African nation of Rwanda, Serbs killing Bosnians in the Balkans of Eastern Europe, and the killing of hundreds of thousands of people in the Darfur region of Sudan in Africa. In 2015, the United Nations claimed that the Islamic State (ISIS) had engaged in genocide against the Yazidi minority population in Iraq (Cumming-Bruce, 2015).

These four patterns of minority-majority interaction have all been played out in the United States. Although many people proudly point to patterns of pluralism and assimilation, it is also important to recognize the degree to which U.S. society has been built on segregation (of African Americans) and genocide (of Native Americans). The remainder of this chapter examines how these four patterns have shaped the history and present social standing of major racial and ethnic categories in the United States.

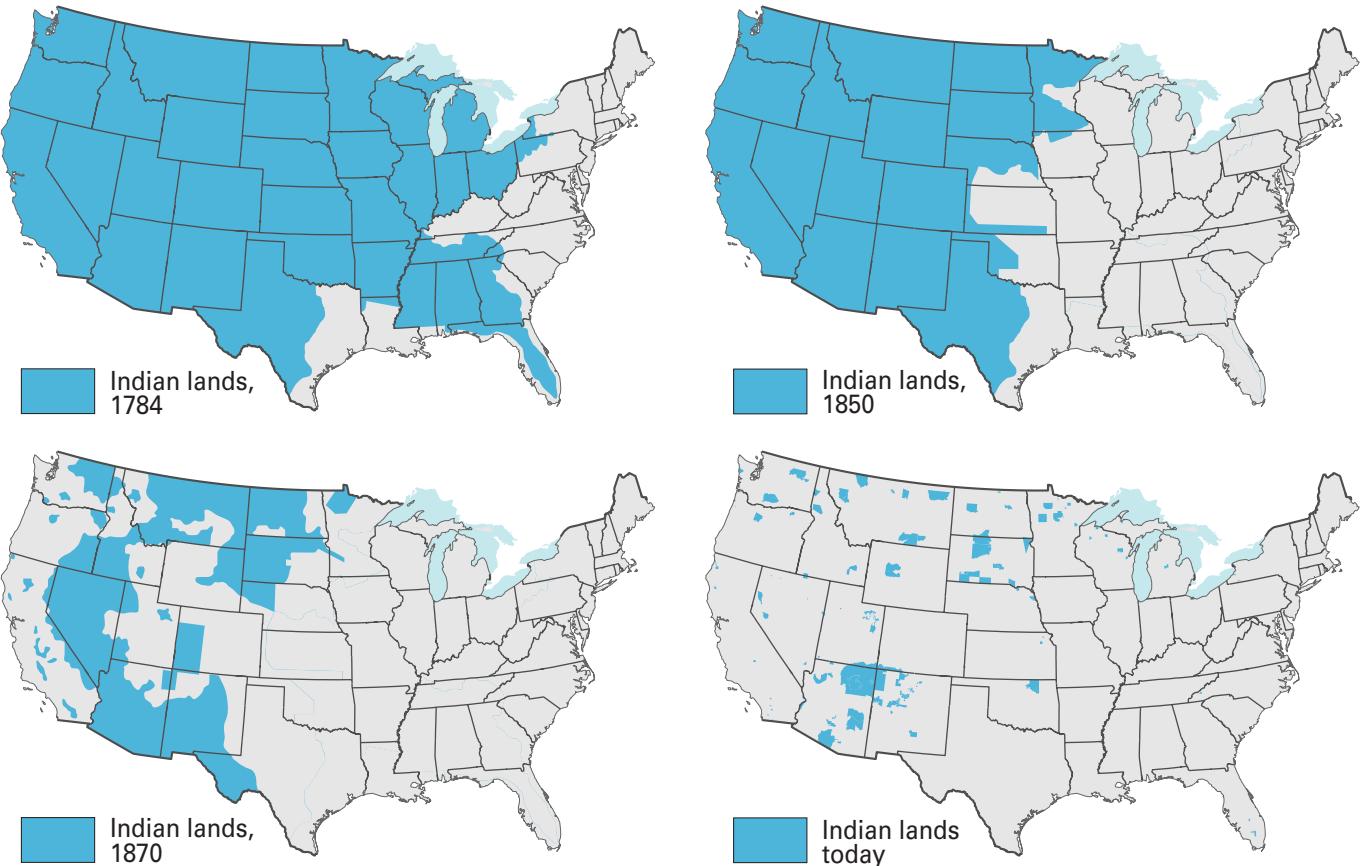
Race and Ethnicity in the United States

14.5 Assess the social standing of racial and ethnic categories of U.S. society.

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me:
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

These words by Emma Lazarus, inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, express cultural ideals of human dignity, personal freedom, and economic opportunity. The United States has provided more of the “good life” to more immigrants than any other nation. About 1.25 million immigrants come to this country every year, and their

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National Map 14–2 Land Controlled by Native Americans, 1784 to Today

In 1784, Native Americans controlled three-fourths of the land (blue-shaded areas) that eventually became the United States. Today, Native Americans control 436 reservations, scattered across the United States, that account for just 5.3 percent of the country's land area. How would you characterize these locations?

SOURCES: Waldman (2000) and U.S. Census Bureau (2011).

many ways of life create a social mosaic that is especially evident in large cities with many distinctive racial and ethnic neighborhoods.

However, as a survey of this country's racial and ethnic minorities will show, our country's golden door has opened more widely for some than for others. We turn next to the history and current social standing of the major categories of the U.S. population.

Native Americans

The term "Native Americans" refers to the hundreds of societies—including the Aztec, Inca, Aleuts, Cherokee, Zuni, Sioux, and Mohawk—that first settled the Western Hemisphere. Some 15,000 years before Christopher Columbus landed in the Americas in 1492, migrating peoples crossed a land bridge from Asia to North America where the Bering Strait (off the coast of

Alaska) lies today. Gradually, they spread throughout North and South America.

When the first Europeans arrived late in the fifteenth century, Native Americans numbered in the millions. But by 1900, after centuries of conflict and even acts of genocide, the "vanishing Americans" numbered just 250,000 (Dobyns, 1966; Tyler, 1973). The land they controlled also shrank dramatically, as National Map 14–2 shows.

Columbus first referred to Native Americans that he encountered as "Indians" because he mistakenly thought he had reached the coast of India. Columbus found the native people passive and peaceful, in stark contrast to the materialistic and competitive Europeans. Yet Europeans justified the seizure of Native American land by calling their victims thieves and murderers (Josephy, 1982; Matthiessen, 1984; Sale, 1990).

After the Revolutionary War, the new U.S. government took a pluralistic approach to Native American

societies, seeking to gain more land through treaties. Payment for the land was far from fair, however, and when Native Americans resisted the surrender of their homelands, the U.S. government simply used its superior military power to evict them. By the early 1800s, few Native Americans remained east of the Mississippi River.

In 1871, the United States declared Native Americans wards of the government and adopted a strategy of forced assimilation. Relocated to specific territories designated as "reservations," Native Americans continued to lose their land and were well on their way to losing their culture as well. Reservation life encouraged dependency, replacing ancestral languages with English and traditional religion with Christianity. Officials of the Bureau of Indian Affairs took children from their parents and put them in boarding schools, where they were re-socialized as "Americans." Authorities gave local control of reservation life to the few Native Americans who supported government policies, and they distributed reservation land, traditionally held collectively, as private property to individual families (Tyler, 1973).

Not until 1924 were Native Americans entitled to U.S. citizenship. After that, many migrated from reservations, adopting mainstream cultural patterns and marrying non-Native Americans. Today, more than half of Native Americans consider themselves biracial or multiracial (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), and many large cities now contain sizable Native American populations. However, as Table 14-2 shows, Native American income is far below the U.S. average, and relatively few Native Americans earn a college degree.²

From in-depth interviews with Native Americans in a western city, Joan Albon (1971) linked low Native American social standing to a range of cultural factors, including a noncompetitive view of life and a reluctance to pursue higher education. In addition, she noted, many



In an effort to force assimilation, the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs took American Indian children from their families and placed them in boarding schools like this one, the U.S. Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. There they were taught to speak English by non-Indian teachers with the goal of making them into "Americans."

Native Americans have dark skin, which makes them targets of prejudice and discrimination.

The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) recognizes forty-one American Indian nations and six Alaskan Native nations, which are made up of more than 600 smaller tribal groups. Today, many Native Americans are displaying ethnic pride as they reclaim their cultural heritage. Traditional cultural organizations report a surge in new membership applications, and many children can speak native languages better than their parents. The legal right of Native Americans to govern their reservations has enabled some tribes to build profitable gaming casinos. But the wealth produced from gambling has enriched relatively few Native peoples, and most profits go to non-Indian investors (Bartlett & Steele, 2002). While some prosper, most Native Americans remain severely disadvantaged and share a profound sense of the injustice they have suffered at the hands of white people.

Table 14-2 The Social Standing of Native Americans, 2013

Native Americans	Entire U.S. Population
Median family income	\$42,421
Percentage in poverty	28.9%
Completion of four or more years of college (age 25 and over)	13.9% 32.0%

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

²In making comparisons of education and especially income, keep in mind that various categories of the U.S. population have different median ages. In 2013, the median age for all U.S. people was 37.6 years; for Native Americans, the figure was 32.1 years. Because people's schooling and income increase over time, this age difference accounts for some of the disparities seen in Table 14-2.



The efforts of these four women greatly advanced the social standing of African Americans in the United States. *Pictured from left to right: Sojourner Truth (1797–1883), born a slave, became an influential preacher and outspoken abolitionist who was honored by President Lincoln at the White House. Harriet Tubman (1820–1913), after escaping from slavery herself, masterminded the flight from bondage of hundreds of African American men and women via the “Underground Railroad.” Ida Wells-Barnett (1862–1931), born to slave parents, became a partner in a Memphis newspaper and served as a tireless crusader against the terror of lynching. Marian Anderson (1902–1993), an exceptional singer whose early career was restrained by racial prejudice, broke symbolic “color lines” by singing in the White House in 1936 and on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to a crowd of almost 100,000 people in 1939.*

White Anglo-Saxon Protestants

White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) were not the first people to inhabit the United States, but they soon dominated after European settlement began. Most WASPs are of English ancestry, but the category also includes people from Scotland and Wales. With some 31.5 million people claiming English, Scottish, or Welsh ancestry, 9.9 percent of our society has some WASP background, and WASPs are found at all class levels (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Many people associate WASPs with elite communities along the East and West Coasts. But the highest concentrations of WASPs are in Utah (because of migrations of Mormons with English ancestry), Appalachia, and northern New England (also due to historical patterns of immigration).

Looking back in time, WASP immigrants were highly skilled and motivated to achieve by what we now call the Protestant work ethic. Because of their high social standing, WASPs were not subject to the prejudice and discrimination experienced by other categories of immigrants. In fact, the historical dominance of WASPs has led others to want to become more like them (Jones, 2001).

WASPs were never one single group; especially in colonial times, considerable hostility separated English Anglicans and Scottish Presbyterians (Parrillo, 1994). But in the nineteenth century, most WASPs joined together to oppose the arrival of “undesirables” such as Germans in the 1840s and Italians in the 1880s. Those who could afford it sheltered themselves in exclusive

suburbs and restrictive clubs. Thus the 1880s—the decade when the Statue of Liberty first welcomed immigrants to the United States—also saw the founding of the first country club with exclusively WASP members (Baltzell, 1964).

By about 1950, however, WASP wealth and power had peaked, as indicated by the 1960 election of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the first Irish Catholic president. Yet the WASP cultural legacy remains. English is this country’s dominant language and Protestantism its majority religion. Our legal system also reflects our English origins. But the historical dominance of WASPs is most evident in the widespread assumption that the terms “race” and “ethnicity” apply to everyone but them.

African Americans

Africans accompanied European explorers to the New World in the fifteenth century. But most accounts date the beginning of black history in the United States to 1619, when a Dutch trading ship brought twenty Africans to Jamestown, Virginia. Many more ships filled with African laborers followed. Whether these people arrived as slaves or as indentured servants (who paid for their passage by agreeing to work for a period of time), being of African descent on these shores soon became virtually synonymous with being a slave. In 1661, Virginia enacted the first law in the new colonies recognizing slavery (Sowell, 1981).

Slavery was the foundation of the southern colonies’ plantation system. White people ran plantations using

slave labor, and until 1808, some were also slave traders. Traders—Europeans, Africans, and North Americans—forcibly transported some 10 million Africans to various countries in the Americas, including 400,000 to the United States. On small sailing ships, hundreds of slaves were chained together for the several weeks it took to cross the Atlantic Ocean. Filth and disease killed many and drove others to suicide. Overall, perhaps half died en route (Franklin, 1967; Sowell, 1981).

The reward for surviving the miserable journey was a lifetime of servitude. Although some slaves worked in cities at various trades, most labored in the fields, often from daybreak until sunset and even longer during the harvest. The law allowed owners to use whatever disciplinary measures they deemed necessary to ensure that slaves were obedient and hardworking. Even killing a slave rarely prompted legal action. Owners also divided slave families at public auctions, where human beings were bought and sold as property. Unschooled and dependent on their owners for all their basic needs, slaves had little control over their lives (Franklin, 1967; Sowell, 1981).

Some free persons of color lived in both the North and the South, laboring as small-scale farmers, skilled workers, and small business owners. But the lives of most African Americans stood in glaring contradiction to the principles of equality and freedom on which the United States was founded. The Declaration of Independence states:

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

However, most white people did not apply these ideals to black people, and certainly not to slaves. In the *Dred Scott* case of 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court addressed the question “Are slaves citizens?” by writing, “We think they are not, and that they are not included, and were not intended to be included, under the word ‘citizens’ in the Constitution, and can therefore claim none of the rights and privileges which that instrument provides for and secures for citizens of the United States” (quoted in Blaustein & Zangrando, 1968:160). Thus arose what the Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal (1944) called the “American dilemma”: a democratic society’s denial of basic rights and freedoms to one category of people. People would speak of equality, in other words, but do little to make all categories of people equal. Many white people resolved this dilemma by defining black people as naturally inferior and undeserving of equality (Leach, 2002).

Table 14–3 The Social Standing of African Americans, 2013

African Americans	Entire U.S. Population
Median family income	\$41,588
Percentage in poverty	27.2%
Completion of four or more years of college (age 25 and over)	22.2% 32.0%

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

In 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution outlawed slavery. Three years later, the Fourteenth Amendment reversed the *Dred Scott* ruling, giving citizenship to all people born in the United States. The Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, stated that neither race nor previous condition of servitude could deprive anyone of the right to vote. However, so-called *Jim Crow laws*—classic cases of institutional discrimination—segregated U.S. society into two racial castes. Especially in the South, white people beat and lynched black people (and some white people) who challenged the racial hierarchy.

The twentieth century brought dramatic changes for African Americans. After World War I, tens of thousands of men, women, and children left the rural South for jobs in northern factories. Although most did find economic opportunities, few escaped racial prejudice and discrimination, which placed them lower in the social hierarchy than white immigrants arriving from Europe.

In the 1950s and 1960s, a national civil rights movement led to landmark judicial decisions outlawing segregated schools and overt discrimination in employment and public accommodations. The Black Power movement gave African Americans a renewed sense of pride and purpose.

Despite these gains, people of African descent continue to occupy a lower social position in the United States, as shown in Table 14–3. The median income of African American families in 2013 (\$41,588) was only 57 percent of non-Hispanic white family income (\$72,624), a ratio that has changed little in thirty years.³ Black families remain almost three times as likely as white families to be poor.

The number of African Americans securely in the middle class rose by more than half between 1980 and

³Here again, a median age difference (non-Hispanic whites, 42.8; blacks, 33.1) accounts for some of the income and educational disparities. More important is a higher proportion of one-parent families among blacks than whites. If we compare only married-couple families, African Americans (median income \$65,129 in 2013) earned 80 percent as much as non-Hispanic whites (\$81,334).



The Congressional Black Caucus represents the increasing political power of African Americans in the United States. Even so, in 2015, African Americans accounted for just forty-four members of the House of Representatives, two members of the U.S. Senate, and no state governors.

2014; 41 percent earn \$50,520 or more. This means that the African American community is now economically diverse. Even so, a majority of African Americans are still working class or poor. In recent years, many have seen earnings slip as urban factory jobs, vital to residents of central cities, have been lost to other countries where labor costs are lower. This is one reason that black unemployment (11.3 percent in 2014) is twice as high as white unemployment (5.3 percent); among African American teenagers, the figure exceeds 33 percent (R. A. Smith, 2002; Pattillo, 2007; U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

Since 1980, African Americans have made remarkable educational progress. The share of adults completing high school rose from half to 86 percent in 2013, nearly closing the gap between whites and blacks. Between 1980 and 2013, the share of African American adults with at least a college degree rose from 8 to 22 percent. But as Table 14–3 shows, African Americans are still well below the national standard when it comes to completing four years of college.

The political clout of African Americans has also increased. As a result of black migration to the cities and white flight to the suburbs, African Americans have gained greater political power in urban places, and many of this country's largest cities have elected African American mayors. At the national level, the election of Barack Obama as this country's forty-fourth president—the first African American to hold this office—is a historic and hugely important event. It demonstrates that our society has moved beyond the assumption that race is a barrier to

the highest office in the land (West, 2008). Yet in 2012, African Americans accounted for just forty-four members of the House of Representatives (10 percent of 435), two members of the Senate (out of 100), and none of fifty state governors (National Governors Association, 2015).

In sum, for nearly 400 years, people of African ancestry in the United States have struggled for social equality. As a nation, we have come far in this pursuit. Overt discrimination is now illegal, and research documents a long-term decline in prejudice against African Americans (Firebaugh & Davis, 1988; Wilson, 1992).

Fifty years after the abolition of slavery, W. E. B. Du Bois (1913) pointed to the extent of black achievement but cautioned that racial caste remained strong in the United States. Almost a century later, this racial hierarchy persists.

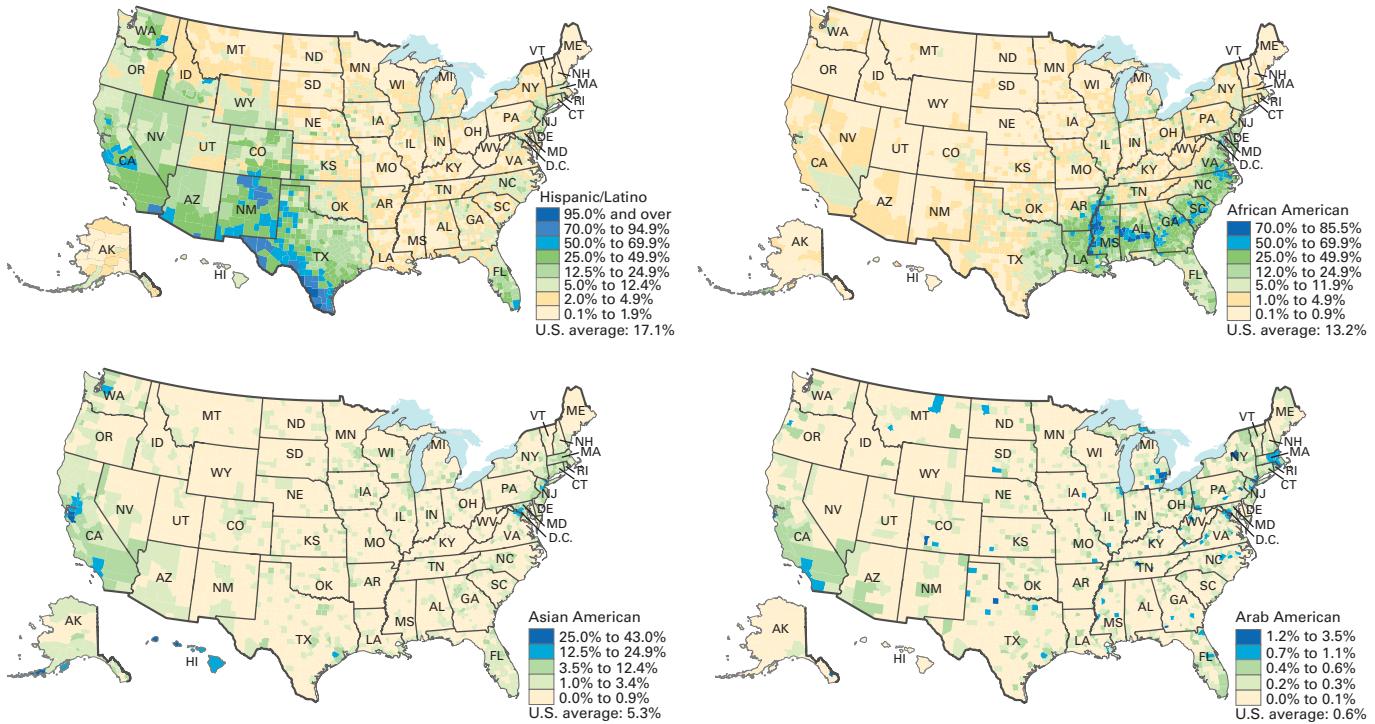
Asian Americans

Although Asian Americans share some racial traits, enormous cultural diversity characterizes this category of people with ancestors from dozens of nations. In 2013, the total number of Asian Americans exceeded 16 million, or about 5.3 percent of the U.S. population. Asian Americans represent the largest number and share of immigrants to the United States (401,000 immigrants in 2013 or 40 percent of the total), even compared to Hispanics (303,000 immigrants or 31 percent) (Department of Homeland Security, 2014). National Map 14–3 shows the distribution of the Asian American, as well as the Hispanic American, African American, and Arab American populations across the United States.

The largest category of Asian Americans is people of Chinese ancestry (3.8 million), followed by those of Asian Indian (3.2 million), Filipino (2.7 million), Vietnamese (1.7 million), Korean (1.5 million), and Japanese (794,000) descent. Almost one-third of Asian Americans live in California.

Young Asian Americans command attention and respect as high achievers and are disproportionately represented at our country's best colleges and universities. Many of their elders, too, have made economic and

Seeing Ourselves



National Map 14–3 The Concentration of Hispanics or Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Arab Americans, by County

In 2013, Asian Americans represented 5.3 percent of the U.S. population, compared with 17.1 percent Hispanic Americans, 13.2 percent African Americans, and 0.6 percent Arab Americans. These maps show the geographic distribution of these categories of the U.S. population. Comparing them we see that the southern half of the United States is home to far more minorities than the northern half. But do all minorities concentrate in the same areas of the country? What patterns do the maps reveal?

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2011, 2012, 2015).

social gains; most Asian Americans now live in middle-class suburbs, and an increasing number of Asian Americans live in some of the highest-income neighborhoods in the country. Yet despite (and sometimes because of) this achievement, Asian Americans often find that others treat them with aloofness or even outright hostility (O'Hare, Frey, & Fost, 1994; Chua-Eoan, 2000; Lee & Marlay, 2007).

The achievement of some Asian Americans has given rise to a “model minority” stereotype that is misleading because it hides the sharp differences in class standing found among their ranks. We will focus first on the history and current standing of Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans—the longest-established Asian American minorities—and conclude with a brief look at the more recent arrivals.

CHINESE AMERICANS Chinese immigration to the United States began in 1849 as a result of the economic boom of California’s Gold Rush. New towns and businesses sprang up overnight, and the demand for cheap labor attracted some 100,000 Chinese immigrants. Most

Chinese workers were young men who were willing to take difficult, low-status jobs that whites did not want. But the economy soured in the 1870s, and desperate whites began to compete with the Chinese for whatever work could be found. Suddenly, the hardworking Chinese were seen as a threat. Economic hard times led to prejudice and discrimination (Ling, 1971; Boswell, 1986). Soon laws were passed barring Chinese people from many occupations, and public opinion turned strongly against the “Yellow Peril.”

In 1882, the U.S. government passed the first of several laws limiting Chinese immigration. This action caused domestic hardship in the United States, because Chinese men in effect were then living in a “bachelor society” where they outnumbered Chinese women by twenty to one. This sex imbalance drove the Chinese population down to only 60,000 by 1920. Because Chinese women already in the United States were in high demand, they soon lost much of their traditional submissiveness to men (Hsu, 1971; Lai, 1980; Sowell, 1981).

Responding to racial hostility, some Chinese moved east; many more sought the relative safety of urban



On average, Asian Americans have income above the national median. At the same time, however, the poverty rate in many Asian American communities—including San Francisco's Chinatown—is well above average.

Chinatowns. There Chinese traditions flourished, and kinship networks, called *clans*, provided financial assistance to individuals and represented the interests of all. At the same time, however, living in an all-Chinese community discouraged residents from learning English, which limited their job opportunities (Wong, 1971).

A renewed need for labor during World War II prompted President Franklin Roosevelt to end the ban on Chinese immigration in 1943 and to extend the rights of citizenship to Chinese Americans born abroad. Many responded by moving out of Chinatowns and pursuing cultural assimilation. In Honolulu in 1900, for example, 70 percent of Chinese people lived in Chinatown; today, the figure is below 20 percent.

By 1950, many Chinese Americans had experienced upward social mobility. Today, people of Chinese ancestry are no longer limited to self-employment in laundries and restaurants; many hold high-prestige positions, especially in fields related to science and technology.

As shown in Table 14–4, the median family income of Chinese Americans in 2013 was \$84,112, which is above the national average of \$63,815. However, the higher income of all Asian Americans reflects a larger number of

family members in the labor force.⁴ Chinese Americans also have a record of educational achievement, with the share of college graduates (53.4 percent) well above the national average (32.0 percent).

Despite their successes, many Chinese Americans still deal with subtle (and sometimes blatant) prejudice and discrimination. Such hostility is one reason that poverty remains a problem for many Chinese Americans. The problem of poverty is most common among people who remain in the socially isolated Chinatowns working in restaurants or other low-paying jobs, which raises the question of whether racial and ethnic enclaves help their residents or exploit them (Portes & Jensen, 1989; Kinkead, 1992; Gilbertson & Gurak, 1993).

JAPANESE AMERICANS Japanese immigration to the United States began slowly in the 1860s, reaching only 3,000 by 1890. Most were men who came to the Hawaiian Islands (annexed by the United States in 1898 and made a state in 1959) as a source of cheap labor. After 1900, however, as the number of Japanese immigrants to California rose (reaching 140,000 by 1915), white hostility increased (Takaki, 1998). In 1907, the United States signed an agreement with Japan curbing the entry of men—the chief economic threat—while allowing women to enter this country to ease the Japanese sex ratio imbalance. In the 1920s, state laws in California and elsewhere segregated the Japanese and banned interracial marriage, just about ending further Japanese immigration. Not until 1952 did the United States extend citizenship to foreign-born Japanese.

Immigrants from Japan and China differed in three important ways. First, there were fewer Japanese immigrants, so they escaped some of the hostility directed toward the more numerous Chinese. Second, the Japanese knew more about the United States than the Chinese did, which helped them assimilate (Sowell, 1981). Third, Japanese immigrants preferred rural farming to clustering in cities, which made them less visible. But many white people objected to Japanese ownership of farmland, so in 1913, California barred further purchases. Many foreign-born Japanese (called *Issei*) responded by placing farmland in the names of their U.S.-born children (*Nisei*), who were constitutionally entitled to citizenship.

Japanese Americans faced their greatest crisis after Japan bombed the U.S. naval fleet at Hawaii's Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Rage was directed at the Japanese living in the United States. Some people feared that Japanese Americans would spy for Japan or commit acts

⁴Median age for all Asian Americans in 2013 was 36.3 years, slightly below the national median of 37.6 and the non-Hispanic white median of 42.8. But specific categories vary widely in median age: Japanese, 49.5; Filipino, 40.3; Chinese, 38.4; Korean, 38.5; Asian Indian, 33.1; Cambodian, 31.8; Hmong, 22.6 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Table 14–4 The Social Standing of Asian Americans, 2013

	All Asian Americans	Chinese Americans	Japanese Americans	Asian Indian Americans	Filipino Americans	Korean Americans	Entire U.S. Population
Median family income	\$76,402	\$84,112	\$90,970	\$110,484	\$88,387	\$70,020	\$63,815
Percentage in poverty	10.5%	15.9%	7.9%	7.7%	7.3%	14.1%	14.5%
Completion of four or more years of college (age 25 and over)	52.3%	53.4%	48.8%	72.9%	47.8%	53.9%	32.0%

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

of sabotage. Within a year, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, an unprecedented action designed to ensure national security by detaining people of Japanese ancestry in military camps. Authorities soon relocated 120,000 people of Japanese descent (90 percent of all U.S. Japanese) to remote inland reservations (Sun, 1998; Ewers, 2008).

Concern about national security always rises in times of war, but Japanese internment was sharply criticized. First, it targeted an entire category of people, not a single one of whom was known to have committed a disloyal act. Second, most of those imprisoned were *Nisei*, U.S. citizens by birth. Third, the United States was also at war with Germany and Italy, but no comparable action was taken against people of German or Italian ancestry.

Relocation meant selling homes, furnishings, and businesses on short notice for pennies on the dollar. As a result, almost the entire Japanese American population was economically devastated. In military prisons—surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by armed soldiers—families crowded into single rooms, often in buildings that had previously sheltered livestock. The internment ended in 1944 when the U.S. Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional, although the last camp did not close until 1946 (after the war had ended). In 1988, Congress awarded \$20,000 to each of the victims as token compensation for the hardships they endured.

After World War II, Japanese Americans staged a dramatic recovery. Having lost their traditional businesses, many entered new occupations; driven by cultural values stressing the importance of education and hard work, Japanese Americans have enjoyed remarkable success. In 2013, the median income of Japanese American families was more than 42 percent higher than the national average, and the rate of poverty among Japanese Americans (7.9 percent) was well below the national figure (14.5 percent).

Upward social mobility has encouraged cultural assimilation and intermarriage. Younger generations of Japanese Americans rarely live in residential enclaves, as many Chinese Americans do, and most marry non-Japanese partners. In the process, some have abandoned their traditions, including the Japanese language. A high

proportion of Japanese Americans, however, belong to ethnic associations as a way of maintaining their ethnic identity. Still, some appear to be caught between two worlds: no longer culturally Japanese yet, because of racial differences, not completely accepted in the larger society.

RECENT ASIAN IMMIGRANTS More recent immigrants from Asia include Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalese, Filipinos, Koreans, Vietnamese, Burmese, Guamanians, and Samoans. The Asian American population more than doubled between 1990 and 2013 and currently accounts for more than 40 percent of all immigration to the United States (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2014).

The entrepreneurial spirit is strong among Asian immigrants. In part this reflects cultural patterns that stress achievement and self-reliance, but having one's own small business is also a strategy for dealing with societal prejudice and discrimination. Small business success is one reason that Asian American family income is above the national average, but it is also true that in many of these businesses family members work long hours.

Another factor that raises the family income of Asian Americans is a high level of schooling. As shown in Table 14–4, for all categories of Asian Americans, the share of adults with a four-year college degree is well above the national average. Among Asian Indian Americans, who have the highest educational achievement of all Asian Americans, more than 70 percent of all men and women over the age of twenty-five have completed college, a proportion that is more than twice the national average. This remarkable educational achievement is one reason that Asian Indian Americans had a median family income of \$110,484 in 2013, about 73 percent higher than the national average.

In sum, a survey of Asian Americans presents a complex picture. The Japanese come closest to having achieved social acceptance. But some surveys reveal greater prejudice against Asian Americans than against African Americans (Parrillo & Donoghue, 2013). Median income data suggest that many Asian Americans have prospered. But these numbers reflect the fact that many Asian Americans live in Hawaii, California, or New York, where

Table 14–5 The Social Standing of Hispanic Americans, 2013

	All Hispanics	Mexican Americans	Puerto Ricans	Cuban Americans	Entire U.S. Population
Median family income	\$42,269	\$41,355	\$45,131	\$48,318	\$63,815
Percentage in poverty	23.5%	26.2%	26.2%	20.0%	14.5%
Completion of four or more years of college (age 25 and over)	15.2%	10.1%	17.6%	25.1%	32.0%

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

incomes are high but so are living costs. Then, too, many Asian Americans remain poor. One thing is clear—their high immigration rate and their increasing political clout mean that people of Asian ancestry will play a central role in U.S. society in the decades to come (Takaki, 1998; Barbassa, 2009).

Hispanic Americans/Latinos

In 2013, the number of people of Hispanic descent in the United States topped 54 million (17.1 percent of the population), surpassing the number of Asian Americans (16.6 million, or 5.3 percent of the U.S. population) and even African Americans (41.6 million, or 13.2 percent) and making Hispanics the largest racial or ethnic minority.

However, keep in mind that most people who fall into this category do not describe themselves primarily as “Hispanic” or “Latino.” Like Asian Americans, Hispanics are really a cluster of distinct populations, each of which identifies with a particular ancestral nation. In one recent survey, 69 percent of U.S. Hispanics said that Latinos have many cultures and just 24 percent claimed

to identify with one “Hispanic community” (Marín & Marín, 1991; Jiménez, 2007; Taylor et al., 2012). About two out of three Hispanics (some 34.6 million) are Mexican Americans, or “Chicanos.” Puerto Ricans are next in population size (5.1 million), followed by Cuban Americans (2.0 million), Dominicans (1.8 million), and Guatemalans (1.3 million). Many other nations of Latin America are represented by smaller numbers.

Although the Hispanic population is increasing all over the country, most Hispanic Americans still live in the Southwest. Almost 40 percent of Californians are Latino (and in Los Angeles, Latinos represent half the people).

Median family income for all Hispanics—\$42,269 in 2013, as shown in Table 14–5—is well below the national average.⁵ As the following sections explain, however, some categories of Hispanics have fared better than others.

MEXICAN AMERICANS Some Mexican Americans are descendants of people who lived in a part of Mexico annexed by the United States after the Mexican American War (1846–48).

Most, however, are more recent immigrants. Currently, more immigrants come to the United States from Mexico (13.6 percent of the total) than from any other country.

Like many other immigrants, many Mexican Americans have worked as low-wage laborers on farms and in factories. As shown in Table 14–5, the 2013 median family income for Mexican Americans was \$41,355, which is two-thirds of the national average. More than one-fourth of Chicano families are poor—a rate that is above the national average. Finally, despite gains



Hispanic Americans, the largest racial or ethnic minority in the United States, commonly form multigenerational homes. As the country moves toward a minority majority, housing construction is likely to shift in response to the attitudes and desires of the evolving population. What other changes in everyday life might you expect to see as the share of Hispanics and other minorities continues to rise?

⁵The 2013 median age of the U.S. Hispanic population was 28.0 years, far below the non-Hispanic white median of 42.8 years. This difference accounts for some of the disparity in income and education.

since 1980, Mexican Americans still have a high dropout rate and receive much less schooling, on average, than the U.S. population as a whole.

PUERTO RICANS The island of Puerto Rico, like the Philippines, became a U.S. possession when the Spanish-American War ended in 1898. In 1917, Congress passed the Jones Act, which made Puerto Ricans (but not Filipinos) U.S. citizens and made Puerto Rico a territory of the United States. In a 2012 referendum, 61 percent of Puerto Rican voters expressed the wish that Puerto Rico become the fifty-first state, although there is no indication that this might happen any time soon (Patterson, 2012).

New York City is home to more than 720,000 Puerto Ricans. However, about one-third of this community is severely disadvantaged, with 36 percent of families with children living below the poverty line. Adjusting to cultural patterns on the mainland—including, for many, learning English—is one major challenge; also, Puerto Ricans with dark skin encounter prejudice and discrimination. As a result, more people return to Puerto Rico each year than arrive. Between 1990 and 2013, the Puerto Rican population of New York actually fell by about 175,000 (Navarro, 2000; Marzán, Torres, & Luecke, 2008; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

This “revolving door” pattern limits assimilation. Sixty-two percent of Puerto Rican families in the United States speak Spanish at home. Speaking Spanish keeps ethnic identity strong but limits economic opportunity. Puerto Ricans also have a higher share of female-headed family households (25 percent) than most other Hispanics (20 percent) and a share that is almost double the national average (13 percent), a pattern that puts families at greater risk of poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

As Table 14–5 shows, the 2011 median family income for Puerto Ricans was \$45,131, or about 70 percent of the national average. Although long-term mainland residents have made economic gains, more recent immigrants from Puerto Rico continue to struggle to find work. Overall, Puerto Ricans remain a socially disadvantaged Hispanic minority.

CUBAN AMERICANS Within a decade after the 1959 Marxist revolution led by Fidel Castro, 400,000 Cubans had fled to the United States. Most settled with other Cuban Americans in Miami, Florida. Many were highly educated business and professional people who wasted little time becoming as successful in the United States as they had been in their homeland.

As Table 14–5 shows, the 2013 median family income for Cuban Americans was \$48,318, above that of other Hispanics but still well below the national average of \$63,815. The 2.0 million Cuban Americans living in the United States today have managed a delicate

balancing act, achieving in the larger society while holding on to much of their traditional culture. Of all Hispanics, Cubans are the most likely to speak Spanish in their homes: Eight out of ten Cuban families do so. However, cultural distinctiveness and highly visible communities, such as Miami’s Little Havana, provoke hostility from some people.

Arab Americans

Arab Americans are another U.S. minority that is increasing in size. Like Hispanic Americans, these are people whose ancestors lived in a variety of countries. What is sometimes called “the Arab world” includes twenty-two nations and stretches across northern Africa, from Mauritania and Morocco on Africa’s west coast to Egypt and Sudan on Africa’s east coast, and extends into the Middle East (western Asia), including Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Not all the people who live in these nations are Arabs, however; for example, the Berber people in Morocco and the Kurds of Iraq are not Arabs.

Arab cultures differ from society to society, but they share widespread use of the Arabic alphabet and language and have Islam as their dominant religion. But keep in mind that “Arab” (an ethnic category) is not the same as



Arab American communities can be found in many large cities on the East and West Coasts of the United States, but the heaviest concentrations are found across the upper Midwest. This mosque rises above the cornfields in a rural area near Toledo, Ohio.

"Muslim" (a follower of Islam). A majority of the people living in most Arab countries are Muslims, but some Arabs are Christians or followers of other religions. In addition, most of the world's Muslims do not live in Africa or the Middle East and are not Arabs.

Because many of the world's nations have large Arab populations, immigration to the United States has created a culturally diverse population of Arab Americans. Some Arab Americans are Muslims, and some are not; some speak Arabic, and some do not; some maintain the traditions of their homeland, and some do not. As is the case with Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans, some are recent immigrants, and some have lived in this country for decades or even for generations.

As noted in Table 14–1, the government gives the official number of Arab Americans as 1.9 million, but because people may not wish to declare their ethnic background, the actual number may be twice as high.⁶ The largest populations of Arab Americans have ancestral ties to Lebanon (26 percent of all Arab Americans), Egypt (13 percent), and Syria (8 percent). Most Arab Americans (68 percent) report ancestral ties to one nation, but 32 percent report both Arab and non-Arab ancestry (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). A look at National Map 14–3 shows the Arab American population is distributed throughout the United States.

Included in the Arab American population are people of all social classes. Some are highly educated professionals who work as physicians, engineers, and professors; others are working-class people who perform various skilled jobs in factories or on construction sites; still others do service work in restaurants, hospitals, or other settings or work in small family businesses. As shown in Table 14–6, median family income for Arab Americans is about the same as the national average (\$61,548 compared to the national median of \$63,815 in 2013), but Arab Americans have a much higher than average poverty rate (24.7 percent versus 14.5 percent for the population as a whole) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Table 14–6 The Social Standing of Arab Americans, 2013

Arab Americans	Entire U.S. Population
Median family income	\$61,548
Percentage in poverty	24.7%
Completion of four or more years of college (age 25 and over)	46.9%
Completion of four or more years of college (age 25 and over)	32.0%

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

⁶The 2013 median age for Arab Americans was 29.9 years, below the national median of 37.6 years.

There are large, visible Arab American communities in a number of U.S. cities, including New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, and Dearborn (Michigan). Even so, Arab Americans may choose to downplay their ethnicity as a way to avoid prejudice and discrimination. The fact that many terrorist attacks against the United States and other nations have been carried out by Arabs has fueled a stereotype that links being Arab (or Muslim) with being a terrorist. This stereotype is unfair because it blames an entire category of people for actions by a few individuals. But it is probably the reason that the social distance research discussed earlier in this chapter shows students expressing more negative attitudes toward Arabs than toward any other racial or ethnic category. It also helps explain why Arab Americans have been targets of an increasing number of hate crimes and why many Arab Americans feel that they are subject to "ethnic profiling" that threatens their privacy and freedom (Ali & Juarez, 2003; Ali, Lipper, & Mack, 2004; Hagopian, 2004).

White Ethnic Americans

The term "white ethnics" recognizes the ethnic heritage and social disadvantages of many white people. White ethnics are non-WASPs whose ancestors lived in Ireland, Poland, Germany, Italy, or other European countries. More than half (53 percent in 2013) of the U.S. population falls into one or more white ethnic categories.

High rates of emigration from Europe during the nineteenth century first brought Germans and Irish and then Italians and Jews to our shores. Despite cultural differences, all shared the hope that the United States would offer greater political freedom and economic opportunity than their homelands. Most did live better in this country, but the belief that "the streets of America were paved with gold" turned out to be a far cry from reality. Most immigrants found only hard labor for low wages.

White ethnics also endured their share of prejudice and discrimination. Many employers shut their doors to immigrants, posting signs that warned, "None need apply but Americans" (Handlin, 1941:67). In 1921, Congress enacted a quota system that greatly limited immigration, especially by southern and eastern Europeans, who were likely to have darker skin and different cultural backgrounds than the dominant WASPs. This quota system continued until 1968.

In response to prejudice and discrimination, many white ethnics formed supportive residential enclaves. Some also established footholds in certain businesses and trades: Italian Americans entered the construction industry; the Irish worked in construction and in civil service jobs; Jews predominated in the garment industry; many

Greeks (like the Chinese) worked in the retail food business (Newman, 1973).

Many working-class people still live in traditional neighborhoods, although those who prospered have gradually assimilated. Most descendants of immigrants who labored in sweatshops and lived in crowded tenements now lead more comfortable lives. As a result, their ethnic heritage has become a source of pride.

Race and Ethnicity: Looking Ahead

The United States has been and will remain a land of immigrants. Immigration has brought striking cultural diversity and tales of hope, struggle, and success told in hundreds of languages.

Millions of immigrants arrived in a great wave that peaked about 1910. The next two generations saw gradual economic gains and at least some assimilation into the larger society. The government also extended citizenship to Native Americans (1924), foreign-born Filipinos (1942), Chinese Americans (1943), and Japanese Americans (1952).

Another wave of immigration began after World War II and swelled as the government relaxed immigration laws in the 1960s. Today, about 1.25 million people come to the United States each year—about 1.0 million legally and another 250,000 illegally. Today's immigrants come not from Europe but from Latin America and Asia, with Mexicans, Chinese, Indians, and Filipinos arriving in the largest numbers.

As the Power of Society figure that opened this chapter suggests, the growing minority population of the United States will bring changes to this country. In 2012, the political support of African Americans and Hispanics was key to President Obama's reelection. The eyes of both major political parties are now on the country's Hispanic population. Not only is the Hispanic community now the largest minority category, but the size of the Hispanic electorate is projected to double by 2030 as well (Taylor et al., 2012b).

Many of the immigrants who will arrive in the decades to come will face the same type of prejudice and discrimination experienced by those who came before them.



White ethnic communities persist in many U.S. cities, especially in the Northeast region of the country. These communities are primarily home to working-class men and women whose ancestors came here as immigrants. To many more people, areas such as Philadelphia's Italian Market are a source of attractive cultural diversity.

In fact, recent years have witnessed rising hostility toward foreigners (an expression of *xenophobia*, from Greek roots meaning "fear of what is strange"). In 1994, California voters passed Proposition 187, which stated that illegal immigrants should be denied health care, social services, and public education; it was later overturned in federal court. More recently, voters there mandated that all children learn English in school. Some landowners in the Southwest have taken up arms to discourage the large number of illegal immigrants crossing the border from Mexico, and our nation is increasing border security as we also wonder how to best deal with the 11.7 million illegal immigrants already here.

Even minorities who have been in the United States for generations feel the sting of prejudice and discrimination. Affirmative action, a policy meant to provide opportunities for members of racial and ethnic minorities, continues to be hotly debated in this country. The Controversy & Debate box describes this issue in greater detail.

Like other minorities, today's immigrants hope to gain acceptance and to blend into U.S. society without completely giving up their traditional culture. Some still build racial and ethnic enclaves so that in many cities across the country, the Little Havanas and Koreatowns of today stand alongside the Little Italys and Chinatowns of the past. In addition, new arrivals still carry the traditional hope that their racial and ethnic identities can be a source of pride rather than a badge of inferiority.

Controversy & Debate

Affirmative Action: Solution or Problem?

Gina: Gruttner got a raw deal. She should've gotten in.

Ed: Maybe. But diversity is important. I believe in affirmative action.

Ethan: I guess some people do get into college more easily. But that includes guys like me whose father went here.

Barbara Gruttner, who is white, charged that the University of Michigan Law School had unfairly rejected her while admitting many less qualified African American applicants. She claimed that Michigan, a state university, accepted just 9 percent of white students with her grade point average and law school aptitude test scores but admitted 100 percent of African American applicants with comparable scores.

In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against Gruttner, stating that the University of Michigan Law School could use a policy of affirmative action that takes account of the race of applicants in the interest of creating a socially diverse student body. The Court, however, struck down the university's undergraduate admissions policy, which awarded points for grades, for college board scores, and also for being a member of a minority. A point system, the Court ruled, is too close to the rigid quota systems rejected by the Court in the past.

With this ruling, the Supreme Court affirmed the importance of racial diversity on campus. Thus colleges and universities can take account of race in order to increase the number of traditionally underrepresented students as long as race is treated as just one variable in a process that evaluates each applicant as an individual (Stout, 2003).

How did the controversial policy of affirmative action begin? At the end of World War II, the U.S. government's GI Bill funded higher education for veterans of all races. By 1960, government funding helped 350,000 black men and women attend college. However, these individuals were not finding the kinds of jobs for which they were qualified. So the Kennedy administration devised "affirmative action." Employers were required to monitor hiring, promotion, and



admissions policies to eliminate discrimination against minorities, even if unintended.

Defenders of affirmative action see it, first, as a sensible response to our nation's racial and ethnic history. African Americans suffered through two centuries of slavery and a century of segregation under Jim Crow laws. Throughout our history, being white gave people a big advantage. They see minority preference today as a step toward fair compensation for unfair majority preference in the past.

Second, many analysts doubt that we will ever become a color-blind society. Because prejudice and discrimination are rooted deep in U.S. culture, simply saying that we are color-blind does not mean that everyone will be treated fairly.

Third, supporters ask, where would minorities be if the government had not enacted this policy in the 1960s? Major employers, such as fire and police departments in large cities, began hiring minorities, including women, only because of affirmative action. This program expanded the black middle class and increased racial diversity in the workplace.

Only about 15 percent of white people, and 43 percent of African Americans, say they support racial preferences for African Americans (Smith et al., 2013). Critics point out, first of all, that affirmative action began as a temporary remedy to ensure fair competition but soon became a system of "group preferences" and quotas—in short, a form of "reverse discrimination," favoring people not because of performance but because of race, ethnicity, or sex.

Second, critics say, if racial preferences were wrong in the past, they are wrong now. Why should whites today, many of whom are far from privileged, be penalized for past discrimination that was in no way their fault? Giving entire categories of people special treatment compromises standards of excellence.

A third counter-argument is that any policy that lowers standards for a category of people may set them up for disappointment later on. Researchers have found that students who benefit from "group preferences" (whether based on race or having alumni parents) are more likely to struggle academically.

A final argument against affirmative action is that it benefits people who are already relatively privileged. Affirmative action does little for the African American underclass.

There are good arguments for and against affirmative action, and people who want our society to have more racial and ethnic equality fall on both sides of the debate. The disagreement is not whether people of all colors should have equal opportunity but whether the current policy of affirmative action is part of the solution or part of the problem.

What Do You Think?

1. What are the benefits of affirmative action?
2. What drawbacks or problems do you see?
3. Do you support this policy? Why or why not?

SOURCES: Bowen and Bok (1999), Kantrowitz and Wingert (2003), Flynn (2008), Sander and Taylor, Jr. (2012), and Smith et al. (2013).

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 14 Race and Ethnicity

Does race still matter in people's social standing?

This chapter explores the importance of race and ethnicity to social standing in the United States. You already know, for example, that the rate of poverty is almost three times higher for African Americans than for whites, and you have also learned that the typical black family earns just 57 percent as much as the typical (non-Hispanic)

white family. But rich people—here, we'll define "rich" as a family earning more than \$75,000 a year—come in all colors. Here's a chance to test your sociological thinking by answering several questions about how race affects being rich. Look at each of the statements below: Does the statement reflect reality or is it a myth?

1. In the United States, all rich people are white. *Reality or myth?*
2. Rich white families are actually richer than rich African American families. *Reality or myth?*
3. People in rich black families don't work as hard as members of rich white families. *Reality or myth?*
4. When you are rich, color doesn't matter. *Reality or myth?*



1. *Of course, this is a myth.* But when it comes to being rich, race does matter: About 25 percent of African American families are affluent (for Hispanic families, 23 percent), compared to about 46 percent of non-Hispanic white families.
2. *Reality.* Rich white, non-Hispanic families have a mean (average) income more than \$224,000 per year. Rich African American families average about \$151,000 per year.
3. *Myth.* On average, rich black families are more likely to rely on multiple incomes (that is, they have more people working) than their white counterparts. In addition, rich white families receive more unearned income—income from investments—than rich African American families.
4. *Myth.* Rich African Americans still face social barriers based on their race, just as rich whites benefit from the privileges linked to their color.



Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

1. People choose to play up or play down their social status. Take a look at your own neighborhood—under what social and political circumstances do people in it make their choices?
2. What are the common patterns of social assimilation in your country? Do you think that the social structure in your country supports assimilation?
3. Make a list of stereotypes that you ascribe to people from different societies. Now divide these stereotypes into positive and negative expressions. What do you observe?
4. Read up on the social and economic status of minorities in your country. Has their share of the population, leadership, and wealth increased or decreased since the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities in 1992?
5. Go to www.sociologyinfocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 14 Race and Ethnicity

The Social Meaning of Race and Ethnicity

14.1 Explain the social construction of race and ethnicity. (pages 376–80)

Race refers to socially constructed categories based on biological traits a society defines as important.

- The meaning and importance of race vary from place to place and over time.
- Societies use racial categories to rank people in a hierarchy, giving some people more money, power, and prestige than others.
- In the past, scientists created three broad categories—Caucasoids, Mongoloids, and Negroids—but there are no biologically pure races.

Ethnicity refers to socially constructed categories based on cultural traits a society defines as important.

- Ethnicity reflects common ancestors, language, and religion.
- The importance of ethnicity varies from place to place and over time.
- People choose to play up or play down their ethnicity.
- Societies may or may not set categories of people apart based on differences in ethnicity.

race a socially constructed category of people who share biologically transmitted traits that members of a society consider important

ethnicity a shared cultural heritage

minority any category of people distinguished by physical or cultural difference that a society sets apart and subordinates

- **Authoritarian personality theory** (Adorno) claims that prejudice is a personality trait of certain individuals, especially those with little education and those raised by cold and demanding parents.
- **Culture theory** (Bogardus) claims that prejudice is rooted in culture; we learn to feel greater social distance from some categories of people.
- **Conflict theory** claims that prejudice is a tool used by powerful people to divide and control the population.

prejudice a rigid and unfair generalization about an entire category of people

stereotype a simplified description applied to every person in some category

racism the belief that one racial category is innately superior or inferior to another

scapegoat a person or category of people, typically with little power, whom people unfairly blame for their own troubles

Discrimination

14.3 Distinguish discrimination from prejudice. (pages 384–85)

Discrimination refers to actions by which a person treats various categories of people unequally.

- Prejudice refers to *attitudes*; discrimination involves *actions*.
- **Institutional prejudice and discrimination** are biases built into the operation of society's institutions, including schools, hospitals, the police, and the workplace.
- Prejudice and discrimination perpetuate themselves in a vicious circle, resulting in social disadvantage that fuels additional prejudice and discrimination.

discrimination unequal treatment of various categories of people

institutional prejudice and discrimination bias built into the

operation of society's institutions

Prejudice and Stereotypes

14.2 Describe the extent and causes of prejudice. (pages 380–84)

Prejudice is a rigid and unfair generalization about a category of people.

- The social distance scale is one measure of prejudice.
- One type of prejudice is the **stereotype**, an exaggerated description applied to every person in some category.
- **Racism**, a very destructive type of prejudice, asserts that one race is innately superior or inferior to another.

There are four **theories of prejudice**:

- **Scapegoat theory** claims that prejudice results from frustration among people who are disadvantaged.

Majority and Minority: Patterns of Interaction

14.4 Identify examples of pluralism, assimilation, segregation, and genocide. (pages 385–87)

Pluralism means that racial and ethnic categories, although distinct, have roughly equal social standing.

- U.S. society is pluralistic in that all people in the United States, regardless of race or ethnicity, have equal standing under the law.

- U.S. society is not pluralistic in that all racial and ethnic categories do not have equal social standing.

Assimilation is a process by which minorities gradually adopt the patterns of the dominant culture.

- Assimilation involves changes in dress, language, religion, values, and friends.
- Assimilation is a strategy to escape prejudice and discrimination and to achieve upward social mobility.
- Some categories of people have assimilated more than others.

Segregation is the physical and social separation of categories of people.

- Although some segregation is voluntary (as by the Amish), majorities usually segregate minorities by excluding them from neighborhoods, schools, and occupations.
- *De jure* segregation is segregation by law; *de facto* segregation describes settings that contain only people of one category.
- Hypersegregation means having little social contact with people beyond the local community.

Genocide is the systematic killing of one category of people by another.

- Historical examples of genocide include the extermination of Jews by the Nazis and the killing of Western-leaning people in Cambodia by Pol Pot.
- Recent examples of genocide include Hutus killing Tutsis in the African nation of Rwanda, Serbs killing Bosnians in the Balkans of Eastern Europe, and systematic killing in the Darfur region of Sudan.

pluralism a state in which people of all races and ethnicities are distinct but have equal social standing

assimilation the process by which minorities gradually adopt patterns of the dominant culture

miscegenation biological reproduction by partners of different racial categories

segregation the physical and social separation of categories of people

genocide the systematic killing of one category of people by another

Race and Ethnicity in the United States

14.5 Assess the social standing of racial and ethnic categories of U.S. society. (pages 387–400)

Native Americans, the earliest human inhabitants of the Americas, have endured genocide, segregation, and forced assimilation. Today, the social standing of Native Americans is well below the national average.

White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) were most of the original European settlers of the United States, and many continue to enjoy high social position today.

African Americans experienced more than two centuries of slavery. Emancipation in 1865 gave way to segregation by law (the so-called Jim Crow laws). In the 1950s and 1960s, a national civil rights movement resulted in legislation that outlawed segregated schools and overt discrimination in employment and public accommodations. Today, despite legal equality, African Americans are still disadvantaged.

Asian Americans have suffered both racial and ethnic hostility. Although some prejudice and discrimination continue, both Chinese and Japanese Americans now have above-average income and schooling. Asian immigrants—especially Koreans, Indians, and Filipinos—now account for 40% of all immigration to the United States.

Hispanic Americans/Latinos, the largest U.S. minority, include many ethnicities sharing a Spanish heritage. Mexican Americans, the largest Hispanic minority, are concentrated in the southwestern region of the country and are the poorest Hispanic category. Cubans, concentrated in Miami, are the most affluent Hispanic category.

Arab Americans are a growing U.S. minority. Because they come to the United States from so many different nations, Arab Americans are a culturally diverse population, and they are represented in all social classes. They have been a target of prejudice and hate crimes in recent years as a result of a stereotype that links all Arab Americans with terrorism.

White ethnic Americans are non-WASPs whose ancestors emigrated from Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In response to prejudice and discrimination, many white ethnics formed supportive residential enclaves.

Chapter 15

Aging and the Elderly



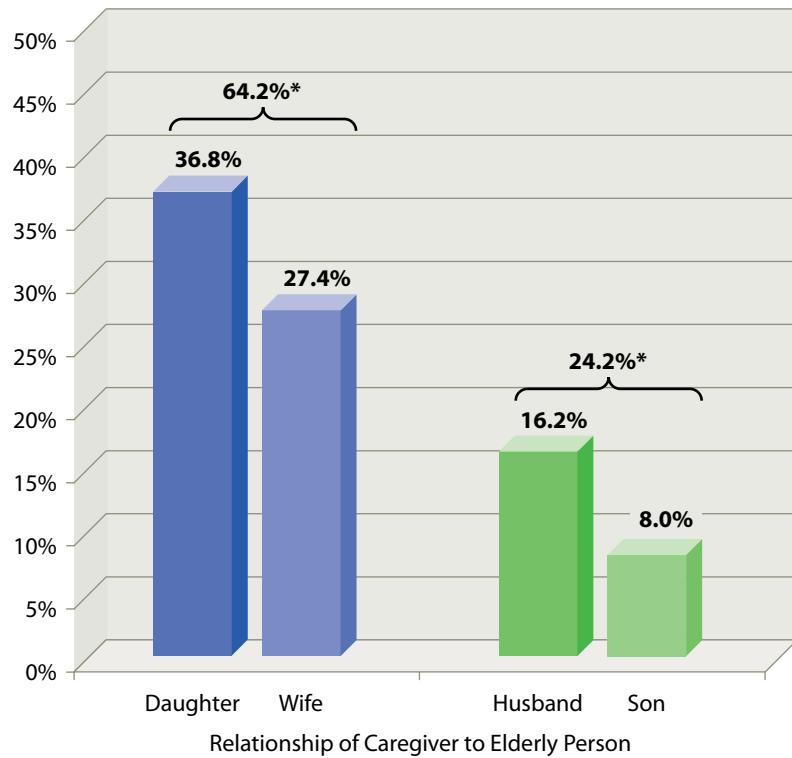
Learning Objectives

- 15.1** Explain the increasing share of elderly people in modern societies.
- 15.2** Describe age stratification in global context.
- 15.3** Discuss problems related to aging.
- 15.4** Apply sociology's major theories to the topic of aging.
- 15.5** Analyze changing attitudes about the end of life.



The Power of Society

to shape caregiving for older people



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2014).

What is the likelihood that each of us will serve as a caregiver to an elderly parent or spouse? The answer is “pretty high” because people (including parents) are living longer than ever before and advancing age carries greater odds of needing assistance with some of life’s tasks and responsibilities. In the United States, most caregiving comes from members of the aging person’s family. But some family members are far more likely to assist than others. Men (husbands and sons) provide only about 25 percent of caregiving, while women (daughters and wives) provide more than twice as much. This pattern shows the power of society to define caregiving as a feminine task.

Chapter Overview

For all of us, life is a process of growing older. This chapter explores the consequences of growing old and explains why aging is a dimension of social stratification. The importance of understanding aging is increasing along with the elderly share of our population.

Ralph Bruce smiles at a young couple as they approach the casino entrance. “How are you folks, today?” The pair presents their ID cards, which Mr. Bruce scans with an electronic reader to be sure both people are over the age of twenty-one. The computer flashes its approval and he waves them through with a cheerful, “Good luck to you!”

It is a normal Friday afternoon at the *Lucky Lady*, a popular gambling casino located in Caruthersville, Missouri, a town on the Mississippi River. Ralph Bruce is working the “swing shift” from 3 P.M. until 11 P.M. For eight hours, he and two dozen other “security greeters” will stand at the casino entrance, welcoming gamblers as they watch for underage people and try to identify those who may have had too much to drink.

What makes Ralph Bruce unusual is that he is pushing eighty. He is glad to be in good health and he claims to enjoy his job. But he admits that he never expected to be working full time more than a decade beyond what most people in our society consider to be “retirement age.” But for him, the “golden years” have fallen short of their promise—at least in terms of financial security. For much of Mr. Bruce’s working life, he received only small contributions to a pension program so that now, even with Social Security, he barely has the money he needs to pay the bills. He smiles and says simply, “I guess I’ll work until I can’t work” (Carrns, 2012).



Several decades ago, most people in the United States, and also in other high-income nations, defined reaching the mid-sixties as “getting old.” At that age, people were expected to retire. In the United States, “mandatory retirement” regulations forced many people out of their jobs.

But times are changing. For one thing, people are living longer than ever before. Men and women who reach the age of sixty-five can look forward to several decades more of life. Research shows that almost half of U.S. adults have no retirement savings (Grinstein-Weiss, 2015). And with the uncertain economy, many people share the concerns of Ralph Bruce that leaving the workforce may well mean running out of money before they run out of time.

As we age, our lives change, and not simply in ways that reflect our biology. Society, too, is at work. In fact, society organizes our lives in patterned ways that we call the *stages of life*: childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. As this chapter explains, growing old brings with it distinctive experiences and also significant disadvantages, including lower income and sometimes the experience of prejudice and discrimination, both in and beyond the workplace. For this reason, like class, gender, and race, growing old is a dimension of social stratification. The

importance of learning about old age is increasing all the time because the number of older people in the U.S. population is greater than ever and rising rapidly.

The Graying of the United States

15.1 Explain the increasing share of elderly people in modern societies.

A quiet but powerful revolution is reshaping the United States. As shown in Figure 15–1 on page 408, in 1900, the United States was a nation of young people, with half the population under age twenty-three; just 4 percent had reached sixty-five. But the number of elderly people—women and men aged sixty-five or older—increased ten-fold during the last century. By 2013, the number of seniors exceeded 44 million and half the population was over thirty-seven. Seniors now easily outnumber teenagers, and they account for 14 percent of the entire population. By 2060, the number of seniors will double again to more than 98 million, and half the country’s people will be over forty-three (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

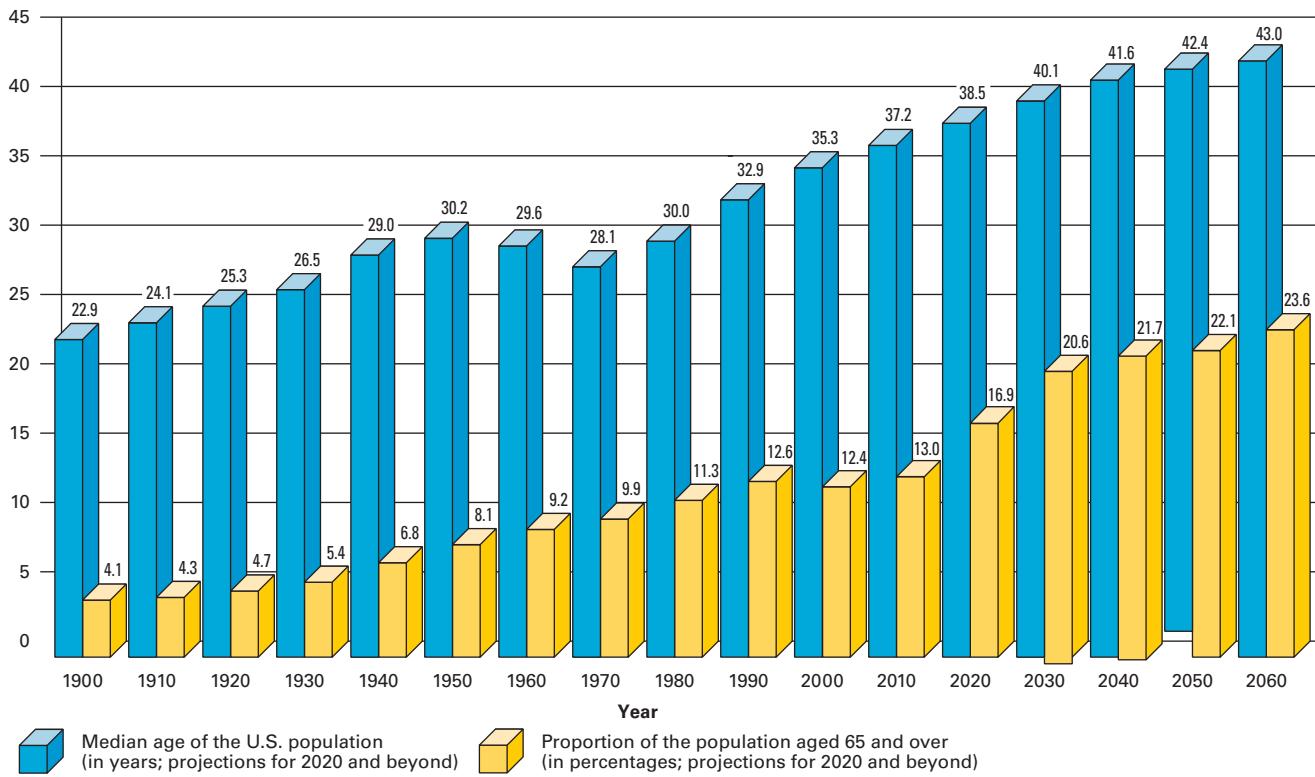


Figure 15–1 The Graying of U.S. Society

The proportion of the U.S. population over the age of sixty-five tripled during the last century. The median age of the U.S. population has now passed thirty-seven years and will continue to rise.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

In nearly all high-income nations, the share of elderly people is increasing rapidly. There are two reasons for this increase: low birth rates (people are having fewer children) and increasing longevity (people are living longer).

In the United States, the ranks of the elderly will swell even more rapidly, as the first of the baby boomers—some 71 million strong—reached age sixty-five in 2011. By 2029, all the baby boomers will have reached the age of sixty-five. There are now serious questions about the ability of the current Social Security system to meet the needs of so many older people.

Birth Rate: Going Down

The U.S. birth rate has been falling for more than a century. This is the usual trend as societies industrialize. Why? Because in industrial societies, children are more likely to survive into adulthood, and so couples have fewer children. In addition, although to farming families children are an economic asset, to families in industrial societies children are an economic liability. In other words, children no longer add to their family's financial income but instead are a major expense.

Finally, as more and more women work outside the home, they choose to have fewer children. This trend

reflects both the rising standing of women and advances in birth control technology over the past century.

Life Expectancy: Going Up

Life expectancy in the United States is going up. In 1900, a typical female born here could expect to live just 48 years, and a male, 46 years. By contrast, females born in 2013 can look forward to living 81.2 years, and males can expect to live 76.4 years (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014).

This longer life span is one result of the Industrial Revolution. Greater material wealth and advances in medicine have raised living standards so that people benefit from better housing and more nutrition. In addition, medical advances have almost eliminated many infectious diseases—such as smallpox, diphtheria, and measles—that killed many infants and children a century ago. Other medical advances help us fend off cancer and heart disease, which claim most of the U.S. population but now later in life.

As life becomes longer, the oldest segment of the U.S. population—people eighty-five and older—is increasing rapidly and is already forty times greater than in 1900. These men and women now number 6 million (almost 2 percent of the total population). Their numbers will

increase to about 20 million (about 4.7 percent of the total) by the year 2060 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

The increasing size of the elderly population will change our society in many ways. As the number of older people retiring from the labor force goes up, the proportion of nonworking adults—already about ten times greater than in 1900—will demand ever more health care and other resources. The ratio of working-age adults to nonworking elderly people, called the *old-age dependency ratio*, will fall from the current level of four to one to about 2.5 to one by the year 2050 (U.S. Social Security Administration, 2015). With fewer and fewer workers to support tomorrow's swelling elderly population, what security can today's young people expect in their old age?

An Aging Society: Cultural Change

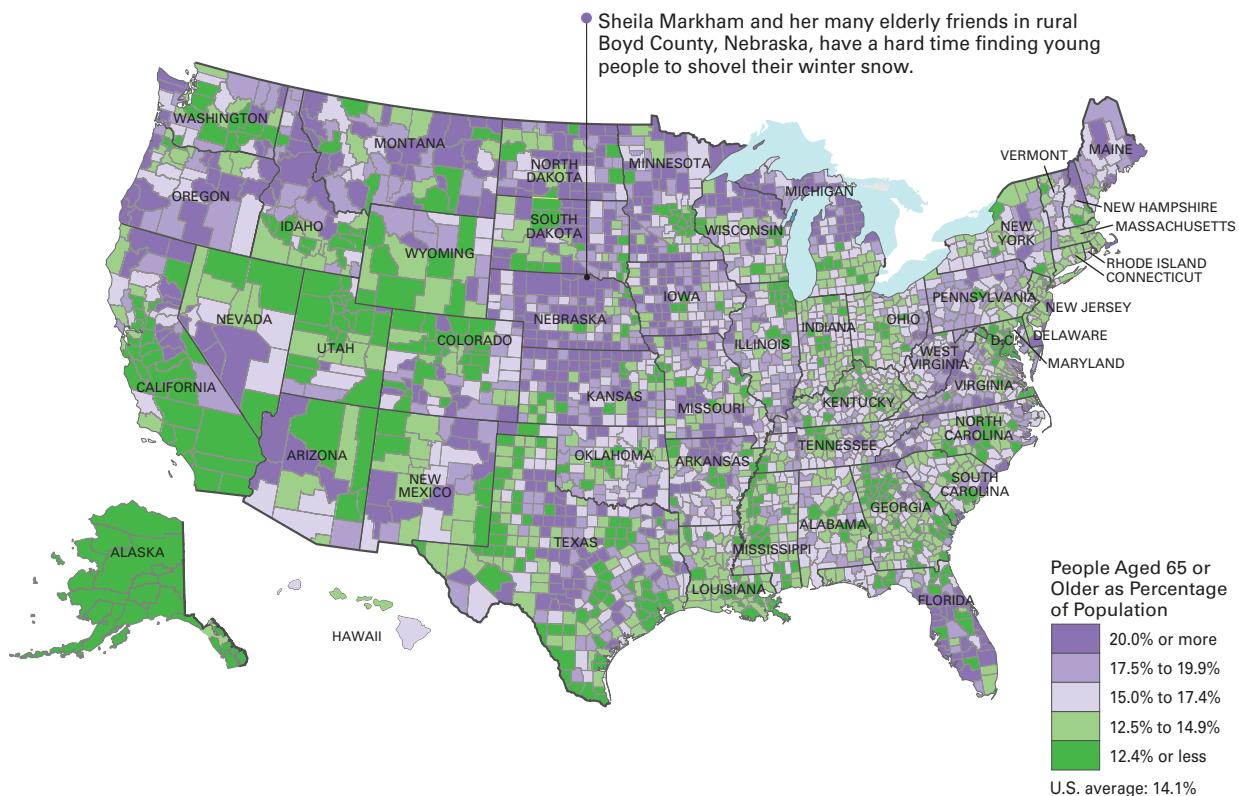
As the average age of the population rises and the share over age sixty-five climbs ever higher, cultural patterns are likely to change. Through much of the twentieth century, the young rarely mixed with the old, so most people

learned little about old age. But as this country's elderly population steadily increases, age segregation will decline. Younger people will see more seniors on the highways, at shopping malls, and at sporting events. In addition, the design of buildings—including homes, stores, stadiums, and college classrooms—is likely to change in order to ease access for older shoppers, sports fans, and students.

Colleges are also opening their doors to more older people, and seniors are becoming a familiar sight on many campuses. As baby boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964) enter old age, many are deciding to put off retirement and complete degrees or train for new careers. Community colleges, which offer extensive programs that prepare people for new types of work, are now offering a wide range of "second career" programs that attract older people (Olson, 2006).

Of course, the extent of contact with older people depends a great deal on where in the country you live. The elderly represent a far larger share of the population in some regions, especially in the midsection, from North Dakota and Minnesota down to Texas, as shown in National Map 15–1.

Seeing Ourselves



National Map 15–1 The Elderly Population across the United States

Common sense suggests that elderly people live in the Sunbelt, enjoying the warmer climate of the South and Southwest. Although it is true that Florida has a disproportionate share of people over age sixty-five, it turns out that most counties with high percentages of older people are in the Midwest. What do you think accounts for this pattern? Hint: Which regions of the United States do younger people leave in search of jobs?

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

When thinking about how an aging population will change our ways of life, keep in mind that seniors are socially diverse. Being “elderly” is a category open to everyone, if we are lucky enough to live that long. Elders in the United States are women and men of all classes, races, and ethnic backgrounds.

The “Young Old” and the “Old Old”

Analysts sometimes distinguish two cohorts of the elderly, roughly equal in size. The younger elderly, who are between sixty-five and seventy-five, typically live independently with good health and financial security; they are likely to be living as couples. The older elderly, those past age seventy-five, are more likely to have health and money problems and to be dependent on others. Because of their greater longevity, women outnumber men in the elderly population, an imbalance that grows greater with advancing age. Among the “oldest old,” those over age eighty-five, 66 percent are women.

Growing Old: Biology and Culture

15.2 Describe age stratification in global context.

Studying the graying of a society’s population is the focus of **gerontology** (derived from the Greek word *geron*, meaning “old person”), *the study of aging and the elderly*. Gerontologists—who work in many disciplines, including medicine, psychology, and sociology—investigate not only how people change as they grow old but also the different ways in which societies around the world define old age.

Biological Changes

Aging consists of gradual, ongoing changes in the body. But how we experience life’s transitions—whether we welcome our maturity or complain about physical decline—depends largely on how our cultural system defines the various stages of life. In general, U.S. culture takes a positive view of biological changes that occur early in life. Through childhood and adolescence, people look forward to expanding opportunities and responsibilities.

But today’s youth-oriented culture takes a dimmer view of the biological changes that happen later on. Few people receive congratulations for getting old, at least not until they reach eighty-five or ninety. Rather, we offer sympathy to friends as they turn forty, fifty, and sixty and make jokes to avoid facing up to the fact that advancing age will put us all on a slippery slope of physical and mental decline. In short, we assume that by age fifty or sixty, people stop growing *up* and begin growing *down*.

Growing old brings on predictable changes: gray hair, wrinkles, height and weight loss, and declining strength and vitality. After age fifty, bones become more brittle, and the older people get, the longer it takes for injuries to heal. In addition, advancing age means that the odds of developing a chronic illness (such as arthritis or diabetes) or a life-threatening condition (like heart disease or cancer) rise. The senses—taste, sight, touch, smell, and especially hearing—become less sharp with advancing age (Treas, 1995; Metz & Miner, 1998).

Though health becomes more fragile as people get older, most elderly men and women are not disabled by their physical condition. In 2013, only 16 percent of seniors reported they could not walk a quarter-mile by themselves, and fewer than one in twenty resided in a nursing home. About 13 percent needed help with shopping, chores, or other daily activities. Overall, only 24 percent of people age sixty-five or older characterized their health as “fair” or “poor”; 76 percent consider their overall condition “good” or “excellent.” In fact, the share of seniors reporting good or excellent health is going up (Schiller et al., 2012; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

Of course, some elders have better health than others. Health problems become more common after people reach the age of seventy-five. In addition, because women typically live longer than men, they suffer more from chronic disabilities like arthritis. Well-to-do people also fare better because they live and work in safer and more healthful environments and can afford better medical care. Eighty-two percent of elderly people who are not poor assess their own health as “excellent” or “good,” but that figure drops to 55 percent for people living below the poverty level. Lower income and stress linked to prejudice and discrimination also explain why only 63 percent of older African Americans assess their health in positive terms, compared to 79 percent of elderly white people (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

Psychological Changes

Just as we tend to overstate the physical problems of old age, we sometimes exaggerate the psychological changes that accompany growing old. The common view about intelligence over the life course can be summed up as “What goes up must come down.”

If we measure skills such as sensorimotor coordination—the ability to arrange objects to match a drawing—we do find a steady decline after midlife. The ability to learn new material and to think quickly also declines, although not until around age seventy. Even then, only about 7 percent of adults over age seventy suffer symptoms ranging from mild memory loss to more serious



The reality of growing old is as much a matter of culture as it is of biology. In the United States, being elderly often means being inactive; yet in many other countries of the world elders often continue many familiar and productive routines.

mental conditions. For most, the ability to apply familiar ideas holds steady with advancing age, and the capacity for thoughtful reflection and spiritual growth actually increases (Baltes & Schaie, 1974; Metz & Miner, 1998; Cortez, 2008; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015).

We all wonder if we will think or feel differently as we get older. Gerontologists report that for better or worse, the answer is usually no. The most common personality changes with advancing age are becoming less materialistic, more mellow in attitudes, and more thoughtful. Generally, two elderly people who had been childhood friends would recognize in each other the same personality traits that brought them together as youngsters (Neugarten, 1977; Wolfe, 1994).

Aging and Culture

November 1, Kandy, Sri Lanka. Our little van struggles up the steep mountain incline. Breaks in the lush vegetation offer spectacular views that interrupt our conversation about growing old. "Then there are no old-age homes in your country?" I ask. "In Colombo and other cities, I am sure," our driver responds, "but not many. We are not like you Americans." "And how is that?" I counter, stiffening a bit. His eyes remain fixed on the road: "We would not leave our fathers and mothers to live alone."

When do people grow old? How do younger people regard society's oldest members? How do elderly people view themselves? The answers people give to these questions vary from society to society, showing that although aging is a biological process, it is also a matter of culture.

How long and how well people live depend, first, on a society's technology and standard of living. Through most of human history, as the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) famously put it, people's lives were "nasty, brutish, and short" (although Hobbes himself made it to the ripe old age of ninety-one). In his day, most people married and had children as teenagers, became middle-aged in their twenties, and died from various illnesses in their thirties and forties. Many of history's great men and women never reached what we would call old age at all: The English poet John Keats died at age twenty-six; Wolfgang Mozart, the Austrian composer, at thirty-five. Among famous writers, none of the three Brontë sisters lived to the end of her thirties; Edgar Allan Poe died at forty, Henry David Thoreau at forty-five, Oscar Wilde at forty-six, and William Shakespeare at fifty-two.

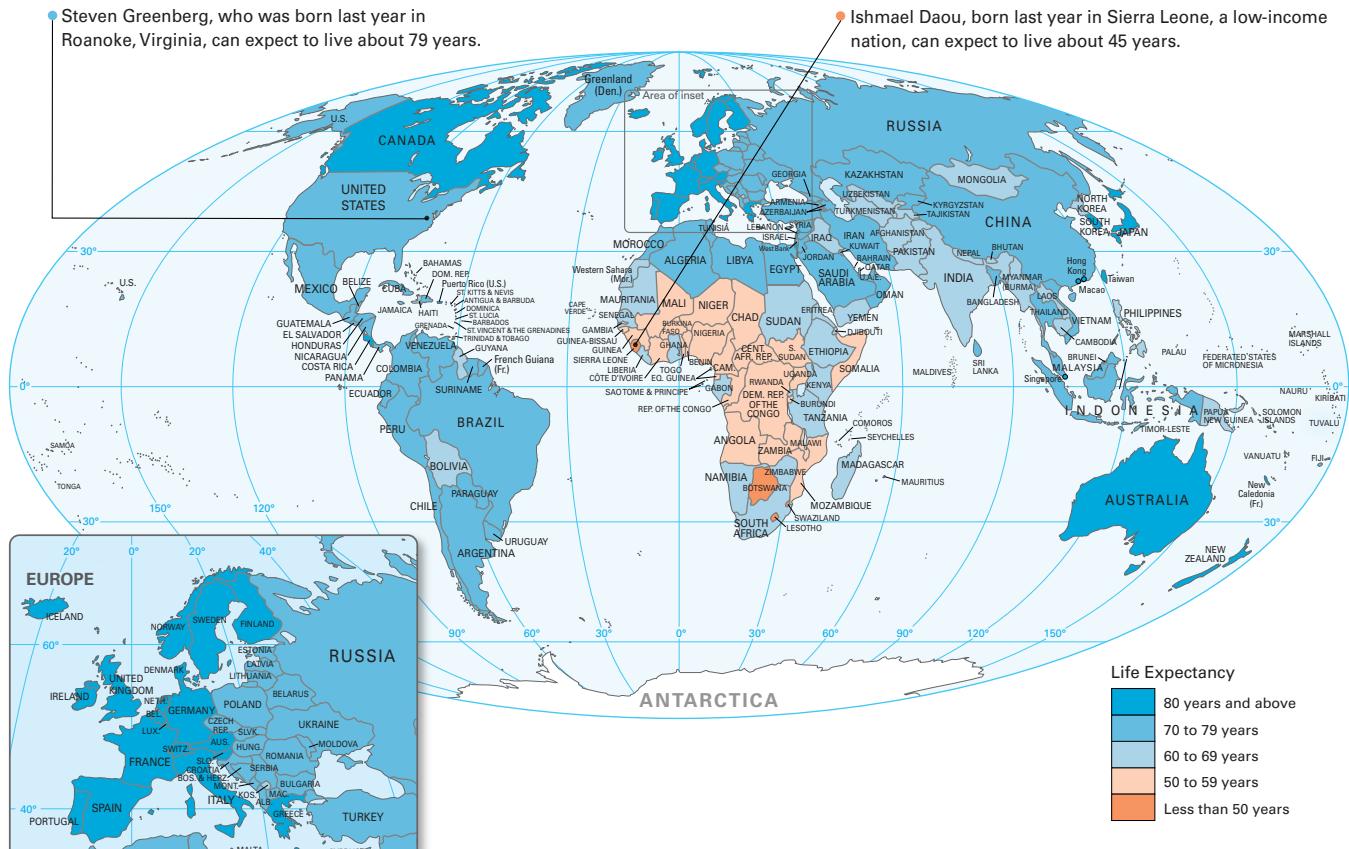
By about 1900, however, rising living standards and advancing medical technology in the United States and Western Europe combined to extend longevity to about age fifty. As Global Map 15–1 on page 412 shows, this is still the figure in some low-income countries today. In high-income nations, however, increasing affluence has increased the average life span by about thirty years.

Just as important as longevity is the value societies attach to their senior members. As Chapter 10 ("Social Stratification") explains, all societies distribute basic resources unequally. We now turn to the importance of age in this process.

Age Stratification: A Global Survey

Like race, ethnicity, and gender, age is a basis for social ranking. **Age stratification** is the unequal distribution of

Window on the World



Global Map 15-1 Life Expectancy in Global Perspective

Life expectancy shot up during the twentieth century in high-income countries, including Canada, the United States, Western Europe, Japan, and Australia. A newborn in the United States can now expect to live about seventy-nine years, and our life expectancy would be greater still were it not for the high risk of death among infants born into poverty. Because poverty is the rule in much of the world, lives are correspondingly shorter, especially in parts of Africa, where life expectancy may be less than fifty years.

SOURCE: Population Reference Bureau (2014).

wealth, power, and privilege among people at different stages of the life course. Age stratification varies according to a society's level of technological development.

HUNTING AND GATHERING SOCIETIES As Chapter 4 ("Society") explains, without the technology to produce a surplus of food, hunters and gatherers must be nomadic. This means that survival depends on physical strength and stamina. As members of these societies grow old (in this case, about age thirty), they become less active and may

even be considered an economic burden and, when food is in short supply, abandoned (Sheehan, 1976).

PASTORAL, HORTICULTURAL, AND AGRARIAN SOCIETIES Once societies develop the technology to raise their own crops and animals, they produce a surplus. In such societies, some individuals build up considerable wealth over a lifetime. Of all age categories, the most privileged are typically the elderly, a pattern called **gerontocracy**, *a form of social organization in which the elderly have the most wealth, power, and prestige*. Old people, particularly men, are honored and sometimes feared by their families, and they remain active leaders of society until they die. This respect for the elderly also explains the widespread practice of ancestor worship in agrarian societies.

INDUSTRIAL AND POSTINDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES Industrialization pushes living standards upward and advances medical technology, both of which increase human

age stratification the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and privilege among people at different stages of the life course

gerontocracy a form of social organization in which the elderly have the most wealth, power, and prestige

life expectancy. But although industrialization adds to the *quantity* of life, it can harm the *quality* of life for older people. Contrary to the practice in traditional societies, industrial societies give little power and prestige to the elderly. The reason is that with industrialization, the prime source of wealth shifts from land (typically controlled by the oldest members of society) to businesses and other goods (usually owned and managed by younger people). For all low-income nations, 37 percent of men and 14 percent of women over the age of sixty-five remain in the labor force. Across high-income countries, even with greater life expectancy, these percentages are far smaller: 15 percent of men and 8 percent of women over the age of sixty-five are still working for income. The fact that many older people move out of the paid labor force in the United States is one reason that average income declines after the age of seventy (International Labour Organization, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

In high-income countries, younger people move away from their parents to pursue careers, depending less on their parents and more on their own earning power. In addition, because industrial, urban societies change rapidly, the skills, traditions, and life experiences that served the old may seem unimportant to the young. Finally, the tremendous productivity of industrial nations means that not all members of a society need to work, so most of the very old and the very young play nonproductive roles.

The long-term effect of all these factors transforms *elders* (a word with positive connotations) into *the elderly* (a term that carries far less prestige). In postindustrial societies such as the United States and Canada, economic and political leaders are usually people between the ages of forty and sixty who combine experience with up-to-date skills. Even as the U.S. population, on average, is getting older, the country's corporate executives are getting younger, declining from an average age of fifty-nine in 1980 to fifty-three today (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015).

In rapidly changing sectors of the economy, especially the high-tech fields, many key executives are younger still, sometimes barely out of college. Industrial societies often give older people only marginal participation in the economy because they lack the knowledge and training demanded in a fast-changing marketplace.

Some occupations are dominated by older people. The average farmer is fifty-eight, well above the age of the typical U.S. worker, which is only forty-two. One-third of today's farmers are over the age of sixty-five. Older people also predominate in other traditional occupations, working as barbers, tailors, and shop clerks, and in jobs that involve minimal physical activity, such as night security guards (Yudelman & Kealy, 2000; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2014; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015).

JAPAN: AN EXCEPTIONAL CASE Throughout the last century, Japan stood out as an exception to the rule that industrialization lowers the social standing of older people. Not only is the share of seniors in Japan increasing as fast as anywhere in the world, but Japan's more traditional culture gives older people great importance as well. Most elders in Japan live with an adult daughter or son, and they play a significant role in family life. Elderly men in Japan are also more likely than their U.S. counterparts to stay in the labor force, and in many Japanese corporations, the oldest employees enjoy the greatest respect. But Japan is becoming more like other industrial nations, where growing old means giving up some measure of social importance. In addition, a long economic downturn has left Japanese families less able to care for their older members, which may further weaken the traditional importance of elders (Ogawa & Retherford, 1997; Onishi, 2006; Lah, 2008).

Transitions and Challenges of Aging

15.3 Discuss problems related to aging.

We confront change at each stage of life. Old age has its rewards, but of all stages of the life course, it presents the greatest challenges.

Physical decline in old age is less serious than most younger people think. But even so, older people endure pain, limit their activities, increase their dependency on others, lose dear friends and relatives, and face up to their own mortality. Because our culture places such a high value on youthfulness, aging in the United States often means added fear and self-doubt. As one retired psychologist quipped about old age, "Don't let the current hype about the joys of retirement fool you. They are not the best of times. It's just that the alternative is even worse" (Rubenstein, 1991).

Finding Meaning

Chapter 5 ("Socialization") presented Erik Erikson's theory that elderly people must resolve a tension of "integrity versus despair." No matter how much they still may be learning and achieving, older people recognize that their lives are nearing an end. Thus elderly people spend more time reflecting on their past, remembering disappointments as well as accomplishments. Integrity, to Erikson (1963, orig. 1950), means assessing your life realistically. Without such honesty, this stage of life may turn into a time of despair—a dead end with little positive meaning.

In a classic study of people in their seventies, Bernice Neugarten (1971) found that some people cope with growing older better than others. Worst off are those who fail to



Although finding meaning can be challenging for people at all stages of the life course, this process can be especially difficult for older people nearing or in old age, who tend to see their lives in terms of what they have lost or what they can no longer do. The television show *Hot in Cleveland* follows the lives of three past-their-prime actresses who leave southern California for a less youth-obsessed culture in Cleveland, Ohio, where they share a home and contend with an older caretaker (Betty White), who shows them that older people can still have plenty of attitude.

come to terms with aging; they develop *disintegrated and disorganized personalities* marked by despair. Many of these people end up as passive residents of hospitals or nursing homes.

Slightly better off are people with *passive-dependent personalities*. They have little confidence in their abilities to cope with daily events, sometimes seeking help even if they do not really need it. Always in danger of social withdrawal, their life satisfaction level is relatively low.

A third category develops *defended personalities*, living independently but fearful of aging. They try to shield themselves from the reality of old age by fighting to stay youthful and physically fit. Although it is good to be concerned about health, setting unrealistic standards breeds stress and disappointment.

Most of Neugarten's subjects, however, displayed what she termed *integrated personalities*, coping well with the challenges of growing old. As Neugarten sees it, the key to successful aging lies in keeping personal dignity and self-confidence while accepting growing old.

Social Isolation

Being alone can cause anxiety at any age, but isolation is most common among elderly people. Retirement closes off one source of social interaction, physical problems may limit mobility, and negative stereotypes of the elderly as "over the hill" may discourage younger people from close social contact with them.

But the greatest cause of social isolation is the death of significant others, especially the death of a spouse. One study found that almost three-fourths of widows and widowers cited loneliness as their most serious problem (Lund, 1989).

But loneliness is not the same as being alone. On the contrary, one recent study found that more than half of the older people who said they felt lonely were married. The problem of loneliness can result from being alone, but it also results from physical or emotional issues that isolate people from those around them. In other cases, social isolation results from living in fear. An older person who is afraid of falling, for example, is much more likely to avoid social activities that require walking, resulting in social isolation. Whatever its cause, the more social isolation people experience, the greater the chances they

will experience dementia or other types of mental and physical decline (Cornwell & Waite, 2009; Holwerda et al., 2012).

Gender plays a part in patterns of social isolation. The problem of social isolation falls more heavily on women because they typically outlive their husbands. Table 15–1 shows that 72 percent of men aged sixty-five and over live with spouses, but only 46 percent of elderly women do. In addition, 35 percent of older women (especially the "older elderly") live alone, compared to 19 percent of older men (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

For most older people, family members are the major source of social support. Almost half of all elderly men and women have at least one adult child who lives no more than twenty minutes away. Research shows that the typical caregiver is a woman (most commonly a daughter or daughter-in-law of the elderly person) who is fifty years of age, married, and works for income. This means that, in addition to paid work and housework, she cares for an aging parent typically for about twenty hours per week (AARP Public Policy Institute, 2009; Fox, Duggan, & Purcell, 2013).

Retirement

Beyond earnings, work provides us with an important part of our personal identity. Therefore, retirement means not only a reduction in income but also less social prestige and perhaps some loss of purpose in life.

Some organizations help ease this transition. Colleges and universities, for example, confer the title “professor emeritus” (*emeritus* in Latin means “fully earned”) on retired faculty members, many of whom are permitted to keep library privileges, a parking space, and an email account. These highly experienced faculty members can be a valuable resource not only to students but to younger professors as well (Parini, 2001).

Because seniors are socially diverse, there is no single formula for successful retirement. Part-time work occupies many people entering old age and provides some extra cash as well. Grandparenting is an enormous source of pleasure for many older people. Volunteer work is another path to rewarding activity, especially for those who have saved enough so that they do not have to work—one reason that volunteerism is increasing more among seniors than in any other age category (Gardyn, 2000; Savishinsky, 2000; Shapiro, 2001).

Although retirement is a familiar idea, the concept developed only within the past century or so in high-income countries. High-income societies are so productive that not everyone needs to work; in addition, advanced technology places a premium on up-to-date skills. Therefore, retirement emerged in these societies as a strategy to permit younger workers—presumably those with the most current knowledge and training—to have a larger presence in the labor force. Fifty years ago, most companies in the United States even had a mandatory retirement age, typically between sixty-five and seventy, although in the 1970s, Congress enacted laws phasing out such policies so that they apply to only a few occupations today. For example, air traffic controllers hired after 1972 must retire at age fifty-six, commercial airline pilots must retire at age sixty, and most police officers and firefighters must retire between fifty-five and sixty (Gokhale, 2004). In most high-income societies, then, retirement is a personal choice made possible by private and government pension programs. In low-income nations, most people do not have the opportunity to retire from paid work.

Even in high-income nations, of course, people can choose to retire only if they can afford to do so. Generally speaking, when economic times are good, people save more and retire earlier in life. This was generally the case in the United States during the second half of the twentieth century. By 2005, the median net worth of senior households had swelled to about \$180,000. Greater wealth permitted more people to retire earlier, and so the median retirement age fell from sixty-eight in 1950 to sixty-three by 2005.

However, for a large share of seniors, the economic downturn that began in 2007 has had the opposite effect. The recession has forced many older people to confront the harsh reality that their retirement “nest egg” has been cracked by the sinking stock market, disappearing pensions, and declining home values. With so much wealth suddenly gone, many had little choice but to continue

Table 15–1 Living Arrangements of the Elderly, 2014

	Men	Women
Living alone	19%	35%
Living with spouse	72	46
Living with other relatives or nonrelatives	9	19

Note: In 2012, some 4.3 percent of elderly people lived in nursing homes. This number includes people from all of these categories.

SOURCES: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (2014) and U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

working. In 1998, for example, 11.9 percent of people age sixty-five and older were still in the labor force. By 2013, this share had increased to 17.2 percent. Many other high-income nations, faced with rapidly rising costs of pension programs, are considering legislation to encourage or even mandate later retirement (Toossi, 2009; Brandon, 2010; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

A recent policy to deal with hard times is “staged retirement,” in which people continue working well past the age of sixty-five, reducing their hours at work in stages as they build greater financial security (Kadlec, 2002; McCartney, 2005; Koskela, 2008; Trumbull, 2011).

Some retired people, including many whose investments have declined in value or who now face expenses that they cannot afford, are being forced to go back to paid work. Some are taking courses at community colleges to gain the skills they need to find a good job (Leland, 2009). But, even with schooling and the determination to succeed, the road back to a paycheck is not always easy.

Aging and Poverty

By the time they reach sixty-five, most people have paid off their home mortgages and their children’s college expenses. But the costs of medical care, household help, and home utilities (like heat) typically go up. At the same time, retirement often means a significant decline in income. The good news is that over recent decades, seniors have built up more wealth than ever before with a median net worth of about \$171,000 in 2011. However, most of this wealth is tied up in the value of their homes, so it is not readily available to help pay expenses. The economic downturn has also hurt many seniors, as employers have cut back retirement pensions and benefits at the same time that investment income has declined. Today’s reality, then, is that for about 60 percent of people over the age of sixty-five, the largest source of income is from the government in the form of Social Security. Even so, the poverty rate of 9.5 percent for people over the age of sixty-five (and even the 11.2 percent rate for people over the age of seventy-five) is well below the national average of 14.5 percent, as shown in Figure 15–2 on page 416.

Looking back in time, we see a dramatic change: The poverty rate among the elderly fell from about 35 percent

Diversity Snapshot

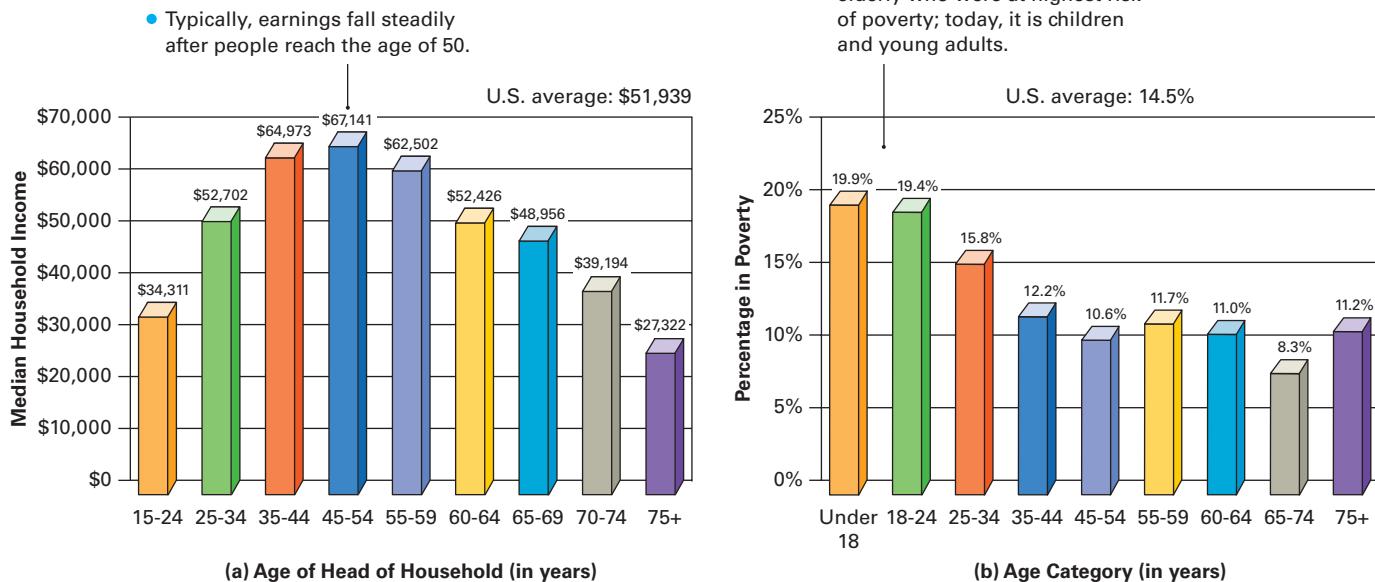


Figure 15–2 U.S. Poverty Rates, by Age, 2013

In a dramatic shift from several generations ago, the highest poverty rate in the United States is not for the elderly but for young people under the age of twenty-five. Although millions of seniors are poor, the poverty rate for older people is well below the national average.

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau (2014).

in 1960 to 9.5 percent in 2013, which is below the poverty rate of 14.5 percent for the entire U.S. population. The long-term trend since 1980 shows that seniors have posted a 51 percent increase in average income (in constant dollars). This increase is vastly larger than the 1 percent increase in income among people between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-four (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Several factors have boosted the financial strength of seniors. Better health now allows people who wish to work to stay in the labor force, and more of today's older couples earn two incomes. Government policy, too, has helped older people, because programs that benefit the elderly—including Social Security—now amount to almost half of all government spending, even as spending on children has remained flat. Of course, the recent economic downturn has canceled out some of these advantages as people have lost a share of the pension income they were counting on; as more companies reduce or cancel retirement benefits, workers and retirees are receiving less to fund their future. As a result, about 40 percent of adults in the United States say they are not sure that they will have enough money in retirement—a share that is higher than it was when the recession hit hard in 2009 (Morin & Fry, 2012).

As we have seen in earlier chapters, some categories of people face particular challenges. Disadvantages

that are linked to race and ethnicity throughout the life course persist in old age. In 2013, the poverty rate among elderly Hispanics (19.8 percent) and African Americans (17.6 percent) was more than twice as high as the poverty rate for elderly non-Hispanic whites (7.4 percent) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Gender also shapes the lives of people as they age. Among full-time workers, women over sixty-five had median earnings of \$39,856 in 2013, compared to \$52,155 for men over sixty-five. A quick calculation shows that these older full-time working women earned 76 percent as much as comparable men. Recall from Chapter 13 ("Gender Stratification") that all working women earn 78 percent as much as *all* working men. Thus the income gap linked to gender among people of all ages is slightly greater among people in old age.

But because most elderly people have retired from the labor force, a more realistic financial picture must take account of all seniors. When we include both those who are working and those who are not, median individual income is far lower: \$22,094 for women, which is 66 percent of the \$33,618 earned by men (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). In light of these low averages, it is easy to see why seniors—and especially women, who are less likely to have pensions or income other than Social Security—are concerned about rising expenses such as the costs of health

care and prescription drugs (Fetto, 2003a; Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2007; AARP Public Policy Institute, 2012).

In the United States, today as in decades past, growing old (especially for women and other minorities) increases the risk of poverty. One government study found that elderly households typically spend about 80 percent of their income on housing, food, health care, and other basic necessities. This fact points to the conclusion that most seniors are just getting by (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

Finally, poverty among the elderly is often hidden from view. Because of personal pride and a desire to remain independent, many elderly people hide financial problems, even from their own families. People who have supported their children for years find it difficult to admit that they can no longer provide for themselves.

Caregiving

In an aging society, the need for caregiving is bound to increase. **Caregiving** refers to *informal and unpaid care provided to a dependent person by family members, other relatives, or friends*. Although parents provide caregiving to children, the term is more often applied to the needs of elderly men and women. Indeed, today's middle-aged adults are called the "sandwich generation" because many will spend as much time caring for their aging parents as for their own children.¹

WHO ARE THE CAREGIVERS? Surveys show that more than 80 percent of caregiving to elders is provided by family members, in most cases by one person, and without financial compensation. Most caregivers live close to the older person; many live in the same house. In addition, as shown in the Power of Society figure at the beginning of the chapter, about 71 percent of all caregiving is provided by women, most often daughters or wives.

About three-quarters of caregivers are married, and almost one-third are also responsible for young children. When we add the fact that one in three caregivers has a part- or full-time job, it is clear that caregiving is a responsibility over and above what most people already consider a full day's work. Seventy-six percent of all primary caregivers spend more than twenty hours per week providing elder care (U.S. Administration on Aging, 2014).

ELDER ABUSE Abuse of older people takes many forms, from passive neglect to active torment, including verbal, emotional, financial, and physical harm. Experts estimate



In the United States, it is common for businesses to offer a "senior discount" to people over sixty-five (sometimes even fifty-five). What is the reason for this practice? Would you prefer a policy of offering discounts to single parents with children, a category of people at much higher risk of poverty?

that at least 2 million people over the age of sixty-five (about 5 percent of all elders) suffer some abuse each year, and about one-third of these cases are life-threatening. About 10 percent of all elders suffer abuse at some point in their lives. Like other forms of family violence, abuse of the elderly often goes unreported because the victims are reluctant to talk about their plight (National Center on Elder Abuse, 2005, 2010; Acierno et al., 2010).

Many caregivers experience fatigue, emotional distress, and guilt over not being able to do more. Abuse is most likely to occur if the caregiver (1) works full time, (2) cares for young children, (3) is poor, (4) feels little affection for the older person, (5) finds the elderly person very difficult, and (6) gets no support or help from others.

But the relatively small share of cases involving abuse should not overshadow the positive side of caregiving. Helping another person is a selfless act of human kindness that affirms the best in us and provides a source of personal enrichment and satisfaction (Lund, 1993).

Ageism

Earlier chapters explained how ideology—including racism and sexism—serves to justify the social disadvantages of minorities. In the same way, sociologists use the term **ageism** for *prejudice and discrimination against older people*. Elderly people are the primary targets of ageism, although

¹This discussion of caregiving reflects Lund (1993) and personal communication from Dale Lund.

middle-aged people can suffer as well. Examples of ageism include passing over qualified older job applicants in favor of younger workers or firing older workers first.

Like racism and sexism, ageism can be blatant (as when a company decides not to hire a sixty-year-old applicant because of her age) or subtle (as when a nurse speaks to elderly patients in a condescending tone, as if they were children). Also like racism and sexism, ageism builds physical traits into stereotypes. In the case of the elderly, some people consider gray hair, wrinkled skin, and stooped posture signs of personal incompetence. Negative stereotypes portray the aged as helpless, confused, unable to deal with change, and generally unhappy. Even “positive” images of sweet little old ladies and eccentric old gentlemen are stereotypes that gloss over individuality and ignore years of experience and accomplishment (Butler, 1975; Cohen, 2001).

Sometimes ageism reflects a bit of truth. Statistically speaking, older people are more likely than younger people to be mentally and physically impaired. But we slip into ageism when we make unfair generalizations about an entire category of people.

Betty Friedan (1993), a pioneer of the modern feminist movement, believes that ageism is deeply rooted in our culture. She points out that few elderly people appear in the mass media; only a small percentage of television shows, for example, feature main characters over age sixty. More generally, when most of us think about older people, it is often in negative terms: This older man *lacks* a job, that older woman has *lost* her vitality, and seniors *look back* to their youth. In short, says Friedan, we often treat being old as if it were a disease, marked by decline and deterioration, for which there is no cure.

Even so, Friedan believes that older women and men in the United States are discovering that they have more to contribute than others give them credit for. Advising small business owners, designing housing for the poor, teaching children to read—there are countless ways in which older people can help others and at the same time enhance their own lives.

The Elderly: A Minority?

Elderly people in the United States face social disadvantages. Does that mean that the elderly are a minority in the same way as, say, African Americans or women?

The elderly appear to meet the definition of a minority because they have a clear social identity based on their age and they are subject to prejudice and discrimination. But Gordon Streib (1968) counters that we should not think of elderly people as a minority. First, minority status is usually both permanent and exclusive. That is, a person is an African American or a woman *for life* and cannot become part of the dominant category of whites or men. But being

elderly is an *open* status because people are elderly for only part of their lives, and everyone who has the good fortune to live long enough grows old.

Second, the seniors at highest risk of being poor or otherwise disadvantaged fall into categories of people—women, African Americans, Hispanics—who are at highest risk of being poor throughout the life course. As Streib sees it, it is not so much that the old grow poor as that the poor grow old.

If so, old people are not a minority in the same sense as other categories. It might be better to say that the elderly are a part of our population that faces special challenges as they age.

Theories of Aging

15.4 Apply sociology’s major theories to the topic of aging.

Let us now apply sociology’s theoretical approaches to gain insight into how society shapes the lives of the elderly. We will consider the structural-functional, symbolic-interaction, and social-conflict approaches in turn.

Structural-Functional Theory: Aging and Disengagement

Drawing on the ideas of Talcott Parsons—an architect of the structural-functional approach—Elaine Cumming and William Henry (1961) explain that the physical decline and death that accompany aging can disrupt society. In response, society *disengages* the elderly, gradually transferring statuses and roles from the old to the young so that tasks are performed with minimal interruption. **Disengagement theory** is the idea that society functions in an orderly way by removing people from positions of responsibility as they reach old age.

Disengagement ensures the orderly operation of society by removing aging people from productive roles before they are no longer able to perform them. Another benefit of disengagement in a rapidly changing society is that it makes room for young workers, who typically have the most up-to-date skills and training. Disengagement provides benefits to aging people as well. Although most sixty-year-olds in the United States wish to keep working, most begin to think about retirement and perhaps cut back

disengagement theory the idea that society functions in an orderly way by removing people from positions of responsibility as they reach old age

activity theory the idea that a high level of activity increases personal satisfaction in old age

a bit on their workload. Exactly when people begin to disengage from their careers, of course, depends on their health, enjoyment of the job, and financial situation.

Retiring does not mean being inactive. Some people start a new career and others pursue hobbies or engage in volunteer work. In general, people in their sixties start to think less about what they *have been doing* and begin to think more about what they *want to do* with the rest of their lives (Palmore, 1979; Schultz & Heckhausen, 1996).

EVALUATE

Disengagement theory explains why rapidly changing high-income societies tend to define their oldest members as socially marginal. But there are several limitations to this approach.

First, especially in recent years, many workers have found that they cannot disengage from paid work because they need the income. Second, some elderly people, rich or poor, do not want to disengage from work they enjoy. Disengagement may also mean losing friends and social prestige. Third, it is not clear that the societal benefits of disengagement outweigh its social costs, which include the loss of human resources and the need to take care of people who might otherwise be able to support themselves. As the number of elderly people swells, finding ways to help seniors remain independent is a high priority. Fourth, any rigid system of disengagement does not take account of the widely differing abilities of the elderly. This concern leads us to the symbolic-interaction approach.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING State clearly the basic idea behind disengagement theory. How does disengagement benefit the aging individual? How does it benefit society?

Symbolic-Interaction Theory: Aging and Activity

Drawing on the symbolic-interaction approach, **activity theory** is the idea that a high level of activity increases personal satisfaction in old age. Because everyone bases social identity on many roles, disengagement is bound to reduce satisfaction and meaning in the lives of older people. What seniors need is not to be pushed out of roles but to have many productive or recreational options. The importance of having choices is especially great for today's sixty-five-year-old, who can look forward to about twenty more years of life (Smart, 2001; Walsh, 2001).

Activity theory does not reject the idea of job disengagement; it simply says that people need to find new roles to replace those they leave behind. Research confirms that elderly people who maintain a high activity level find the most satisfaction in their lives.



Disengagement theory suggests that society gradually removes responsibilities from people as they grow old. Activity theory counters that, like people at any stage of life, elders find life worthwhile to the extent that they stay active. As a result, many older men and women seek out new jobs, hobbies, and social activities.

Activity theory also recognizes that the elderly are diverse with a variety of interests, needs, and physical abilities. For this reason, the activities that people choose and the pace at which they pursue them are always an individual matter (Neugarten, 1977; Moen, Dempster-McClain, & Williams, 1992).

EVALUATE

Activity theory shifts the focus of analysis from the needs of society (as stated in disengagement theory) to the needs of the elderly themselves. It emphasizes the social diversity of elderly people and highlights the importance of choice in any government policy.

A limitation of this approach is that it assumes that elders are both healthy and competent, which may or may not be the case. Another problem with this approach is that it ignores the fact that many of the problems older people face—such as poverty—have more to do with society than with themselves. We turn now to that point of view: social-conflict theory.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING Explain what activity theory says about aging. How does this approach challenge disengagement theory?

Social-Conflict and Feminist Theories: Aging and Inequality

A social-conflict analysis of aging is based on the idea that opportunities and social resources are unequally distributed among people in different age categories. For this reason, age is a dimension of social stratification. Feminist

APPLYING THEORY

Aging and the Elderly

	Structural-Functional Theory	Symbolic-Interaction Theory	Social-Conflict and Feminist Theories
What is the level of analysis?	Macro-level	Micro-level	Macro-level
How do we understand growing old?	The fact that people grow old and eventually die can disrupt the operation of society. Therefore, societies disengage the elderly from important tasks and other responsibilities as they reach old age.	For elders, like everyone else, being active encourages both health and happiness. Therefore, elders strive to maintain a high activity level, replacing roles they leave with new roles.	Aging is one dimension of social stratification. Generally, middle-aged people have the most wealth and power. Poor people, women, and other minorities face the greatest disadvantages as they grow old.

theory adds to our understanding by pointing out that gender operates along with age to create multidimensional social inequality.

In the United States, middle-aged people enjoy the greatest power and the most opportunities and privileges, and the elderly and people under the age of twenty-five have a higher risk of poverty. Employers who replace senior workers with younger men and women in order to keep wages low may not intend to discriminate against older people. However, according to recent court rulings, if such policies have the effect of causing special harm to older people, they amount to discrimination.

The social-conflict approach claims that our industrial-capitalist economy creates an age-based hierarchy. In line with Marxist thought, Steven Spitzer (1980) points out that a profit-oriented society devalues any category of people that is less economically productive. To the extent that older people do not work for income, a capitalist society labels them as mildly deviant.

Social-conflict analysis also draws attention to additional dimensions of social inequality within the elderly population. Differences of class, gender, and race and ethnicity divide older people as they do everyone else. More affluent people entering old age are generally well-prepared financially for the rising costs of health care; these people have enjoyed decades of good salaries and favorable investment outcomes. At the same time, many working-class people entering old age have experienced decades of falling wages and economic cutbacks. Their financial prospects in old age are far less favorable (Brooks & Collins, 2012). Keep in mind, too, that women—an increasing majority of the population as people age—suffer the social and economic disadvantages of both sexism and ageism; the income gap between older working women and older working men is even greater than it is between the sexes in the younger working population. Finally, elderly white people typically enjoy advantages and opportunities denied to older people of color and those in other minority categories.

In general, then, growing old is a process shaped by the complex forces of social inequality that affect people at every stage of the life course. In old age, some seniors have far greater economic security, access to better medical care, and more options for personal satisfaction than others.

EVALUATE

The social-conflict approach adds to our understanding of the aging process by highlighting age-based inequality and pointing out that capitalism devalues elderly people who are less productive. But critics claim that the real culprit is *industrialization*. As evidence they point to the fact that the elderly are not better off under a socialist system, as Marxist theory implies. Furthermore, the idea that either industrialization or capitalism necessarily causes the elderly to suffer is challenged by the long-term rise in income and well-being experienced by seniors in the United States. Even though, as feminist theory points out, older women are relatively disadvantaged in relation to older men, the U.S. population over the age of sixty is doing pretty well, as reflected in their much lower rate of poverty. The Applying Theory table summarizes what we learn from each of the theoretical approaches.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING What does Marxist theory teach us about aging in a capitalist society? What insights does feminist theory offer?

Death and Dying

15.5 Analyze changing attitudes about the end of life.

To every thing there is a season,
And a time for every matter under heaven:
A time to be born and a time to die . . .

These lines from the biblical book of Ecclesiastes state two basic truths about human existence: the fact of birth and the inevitability of death. Just as life varies throughout history and around the world, death has many faces. We conclude this chapter with a brief look at the changing character of death, the final stage in the process of growing old.

Historical Patterns of Death

In the past, death was a familiar part of life. Many children died soon after birth, a fact that led many parents to delay formally naming children until they were one or two years old. For those who were fortunate enough to survive infancy, illness, accidents, and natural catastrophes made life uncertain at best.

Sometimes food shortages forced societies to protect the majority by sacrificing the least productive members. *Infanticide* is the killing of newborn infants, and *geronticide* is the killing of the elderly.

Because death was commonplace, it was readily accepted. Medieval Christianity assured believers that death fit into the divine plan for human existence. Here is how the historian Philippe Ariès describes Sir Lancelot, one of King Arthur's knights of the Round Table, preparing for death when he thinks he is mortally wounded:

His gestures were fixed by old customs, ritual gestures which must be carried out when one is about to die. He removed his weapons and lay quietly upon the ground.... He spread his arms out, his body forming a cross... in such a way that his head faced east toward Jerusalem. (1974:7–8)

As societies gradually learned more about health and medicine, death became less of an everyday experience. Fewer children died at birth, and accidents and disease took a smaller toll among adults. As a result, most people living in high-income societies today view dying as extraordinary, something that happens to the very old or to younger people in rare and tragic cases. Back in 1900, about one-third of all deaths in the United States occurred before the age of five and fully two-thirds before the age of fifty-five. Today, by contrast, 92 percent of people in the United States die *after* reaching the age of fifty-five (Arias, 2014). Death and old age have become closely linked in our culture.

The Modern Separation of Life and Death

Now removed from everyday experience, death seems somehow unnatural. Social conditions prepared our ancestors to accept death, but modern society's youth culture and aggressive medical technology foster a desire for eternal youth and immortality. Death has become separated from life.

Death is also *physically* removed from everyday activities. The clearest evidence of this is that many of us have never seen a person actually die. Our ancestors typically died at home in the presence of family and friends, but most deaths today occur in impersonal settings such as hospitals and nursing homes. Even in hospitals, dying patients occupy a special part of the building, and

hospital morgues are located well out of sight of patients and visitors alike (Ariès, 1974; Lee, 2002).

Ethical Issues: Confronting Death

In a society in which technology gives us the power to prolong life, moral questions about when and how people should die are more pressing than ever. For example, the national debate in 2005 surrounding the death of Terri Schiavo, who was kept alive by mechanical means for fifteen years, was not just about the fate of one woman; many people feel we need a better understanding of what the "right to die" rules should be.

WHEN DOES DEATH OCCUR? Perhaps the most basic question is the most difficult: Exactly how do we define death? Common sense suggests that life ceases when breathing and heartbeat stop. But the ability of medical personnel to resuscitate someone after a heart attack and artificially sustain breathing makes such definitions of death obsolete. Medical and legal experts in the United States continue to debate the meaning of death, but many now consider death an *irreversible* state involving no response to stimulation, no movement or breathing, no reflexes, and no indication of brain activity (Wall, 1980; Jones, 1998).

THE RIGHT-TO-DIE DEBATE Terri Schiavo remained alive without evidence of being conscious or responsive to her surroundings for fifteen years following a heart attack that cut off blood to her brain. Debate surrounding this case, which ended with her death after her feeding tube was removed, shows that many people are less afraid of death than of the prospect of being kept alive at all costs. In other words, medical technology that can sustain life also threatens personal freedom by letting doctors or others rather than the dying person decide when life is to end. In response, people who support a "right to die" seek control over their own deaths just as they seek control over their lives (Ogden, 2001).

After thoughtful discussion, patients, families, and physicians may decide not to take "heroic measures" to keep a person alive. *Living wills*—documents stating which medical procedures an individual wants and does not want under specific conditions—are now widely used. An increasing number of states also have enacted laws creating Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST), which is a document created to ensure that a patient's wishes about treatment are clear and followed by hospital staff and other medical personnel. Ideally, when completing such a form, a physician, physician assistant, or a nurse practitioner meets with the patient, family members, and those with legal authorization to speak for a patient to determine whether a person with an advanced illness wishes to have aggressive life-sustaining treatment, more

limited medical intervention, or simply palliative care that will make the end-of-life as comfortable as possible.

Cases in which a patient does not wish aggressive treatment may lead to physicians and family members agreeing to issue a “do not resuscitate” order. This medical directive will allow a patient who stops breathing to die. A more difficult issue involves **euthanasia** (also known as “mercy killing”)—*assisting in the death of a person suffering from an incurable disease*. Euthanasia (from the Greek, meaning “a good death”) poses an ethical dilemma because it involves not just refusing medical treatment but also actively taking steps to end a life. Some people see euthanasia as an act of kindness, while others consider it a form of murder.

People with incurable diseases can choose not to have treatment that might prolong their lives. But whether such people can ask a doctor to help bring about death is a matter of debate. Should there be a right to die? In 1997, voters in Oregon passed a right-to-die initiative (the Death with Dignity Act). Although this law has been challenged repeatedly ever since, Oregon physicians can legally assist in ending the lives of patients; since 1997, Oregon physicians have legally assisted in the deaths of about 859 patients (Oregon Public Health Division, 2015). However, in 1997, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Vacco v. Quill*, declared that the U.S. Constitution recognizes no right to die. This decision discouraged other states from considering laws similar to the one in Oregon; only in neighboring Washington in 2008 did voters pass a ballot initiative permitting physician-assisted suicide. In a third state, Montana, a Supreme Court decision concluded that Montana law did not prohibit assisted suicide, although the legislature has yet to enact law to regulate this practice. And in 2013, Vermont became the first state to enact legislation permitting physician-assisted suicide.

Supporters of the right-to-die movement hold up as a model the Netherlands, which has the most permissive euthanasia law in the world. How does the Dutch system operate? The Thinking Globally box takes a closer look.

Should the United States hold the line on euthanasia or follow the lead of the Dutch? Right-to-die advocates maintain that a person facing extreme suffering should be able to choose to live or die. If death is the choice, they continue, medical assistance can help people toward a “good death.” Surveys show that two-thirds of U.S. adults support giving people the option of dying with a doctor’s help (Smith et al., 2013:427).

On the other side of the debate, opponents fear that laws allowing physician-assisted suicide invite abuse. Pointing to the Netherlands, critics cite surveys indicating that in most cases the five conditions for physician-assisted suicide are not met. In particular, most physicians do not consult with another doctor or even report the euthanasia to authorities. Of greater concern is the fact that

in about one-fifth of all physician-assisted suicides, the patient never explicitly asks to die. This is so even though half of these patients are conscious and capable of making decisions themselves (Gillon, 1999). This fact—and the steadily rising number of physician-assisted suicides in the Netherlands—leads opponents to argue that legalizing physician-assisted suicide puts a nation on a slippery slope toward more and more euthanasia. In 2012, in Belgium, two deaf brothers were euthanized by their doctor at their request after learning that they were losing their eyesight. The doctor claimed that ending their lives in this way avoided “suffering,” although neither man had any other disease (Goldman, 2013). In light of such cases, how can we be sure, critics ask, that ill people won’t be pushed into accepting death by doctors who consider suicide the right choice for the terminally ill or even the not terminally ill? What about pressure to undergo euthanasia from family members who are weary of providing care or want to avoid the expenses of medical treatment?

Evidence drawn from the United States does not confirm such fears. In Oregon, the number of annual cases of physician-assisted suicide has remained low—105 cases were reported for 2013. No matter how the right-to-die debate eventually turns out, we have entered a new era when it comes to dying. Today, individuals, family members, and medical personnel must face death not as a medical fact but as a negotiated outcome.

Bereavement

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969) found that most people confront their own death in stages (see Chapter 5, “Socialization”). Initially, individuals react with *denial*, followed by *anger*; then they try *negotiation*, hoping for divine intervention. Gradually, they fall into *resignation* and finally reach *acceptance*.

According to some researchers, bereavement follows the same pattern of stages. The people closest to a dying person may initially deny the reality of impending death and then gradually reach a point of acceptance. Other researchers, however, question any linear “stage theory,” arguing that bereavement is a very personal and unpredictable process and that the stages identified by Kübler-Ross often do not apply at all (Lund, Caserta, & Dimond, 1986; Lund, 1989; Cutcliffe, 1998; Konigsberg, 2011). What experts do agree on, however, is the fact that how family and friends view an impending death has an effect on the person who is dying. By accepting an approaching death, others can help the dying person do the same; denying the death isolates the dying person, who is not able to share feelings and experiences with others.

Many dying people find support in the *hospice movement*. Of all deaths that occurred in the United States in 2012, 44 percent involved hospice care. Unlike a hospital,

Thinking Globally

Death on Demand: Euthanasia in the Netherlands

Marcus Erich picked up the telephone and called his brother Arjen. In a quiet voice, thirty-two-year-old Marcus announced, "Friday at five o'clock." When the time came, Arjen was there, having driven to his brother's farmhouse south of Amsterdam. They said their final good-byes. Soon afterward, Marcus's physician arrived. Marcus and the doctor spoke for a few moments, and then the doctor prepared a "cocktail" of barbiturates and other drugs. As Marcus drank the mixture, he made a face, joking, "Can't you make this sweeter?"

As the minutes passed, Marcus lay back and his eyes closed. But after half an hour, he was still breathing. At that point, according to their earlier agreement, the physician administered a lethal injection. Minutes later, Marcus's life came to an end.

Events like this take us to the heart of the belief that people have a "right to die." Marcus Erich was dying of AIDS. For five years, his body had been wasting away, and he was suffering greatly with no hope of recovery. He wanted his doctor to end his life.



The Netherlands, a small nation in northwestern Europe, has gone further than any other in the world in allowing mercy killing, or euthanasia. A 1981 Dutch law allows a physician to assist in a suicide if the following five conditions are met:

1. The patient must make a voluntary, well-considered, and repeated request to a doctor for help in dying.
2. The patient's suffering must be unbearable and without hope of improvement.
3. The doctor and the patient must discuss alternatives.
4. The doctor must consult with at least one colleague who has access to the patient and the patient's medical records.
5. The assisted suicide must be performed in accordance with sound medical practice.

Official records indicate that doctors end about 2,000 lives a year in the Netherlands, and the number has been rising slowly but steadily. But because many cases are never reported, the actual number may be two or three times as high. Critics point to the fact that in recent years, Dutch doctors have brought about the death of people who, due to their illness, were not able to clearly state their desire to die. The Dutch policy of euthanasia enjoys widespread popular support in the Netherlands, and similar policies have been enacted in Belgium (2002), Switzerland (2005), and Luxembourg (2010). But this policy remains hotly debated in much of the world.

What Do You Think?

1. What advantages and benefits do you see in the Dutch law permitting physician-assisted suicide?
2. What are the disadvantages or dangers of such a law?
3. What about cases in which a person is very ill and cannot state the desire to die or not to die? Should euthanasia be permitted in such cases? If so, when and why?

SOURCES: Della Cava (1997), Mauro (1997), and Barr (2004).

which is designed to cure disease, a hospice helps people have a good death. Hospices try to minimize pain and suffering—either at a center or at home—and encourage family members to stay close by. Most hospices also provide social support for family members experiencing bereavement (Foliart & Clausen, 2001).

Under the best of circumstances, bereavement often involves profound grief. Research documents the fact that bereavement is less intense for someone who accepts the death of a loved one and has brought satisfactory closure to the relationship. Such closure also allows family and friends to comfort one another more effectively after a death occurs.

Reaching closure is not possible when a death is unexpected, and survivors' social disorientation may last for years. One study of middle-aged women who had recently experienced the death of their husbands found that many felt they had lost not only a spouse but also their reason for living. Therefore, dealing successfully with bereavement requires the time and social support necessary to form a new sense of self and recognize new life options (Atchley, 1983; Danforth & Glass, 2001). With the number of older people in the United States increasing at such a fast rate, understanding death and dying is taking on greater importance.



Unlike a hospital, which tries to save and extend life, the hospice movement tries to give dying people greater comfort, including the companionship and support of family members.

Aging: Looking Ahead

This chapter has explored the graying of the United States and other high-income nations. By 2035, the number of elderly people in this country will exceed the entire country's population in 1900. In addition, one in four of today's seniors are over the age of eighty. In decades to come, then, society's oldest members will gain a far greater voice in everyday life. Younger people will find that careers relating to gerontology—the study of the elderly—are sure to gain in importance.

With more elderly people living longer, will our society have the support services to sustain them? Remember that as the needs of the elderly increase, a smaller share of younger people will be there to respond and pay the bills with their taxes. What about the spiraling medical costs of an aging society? As the baby boomers enter old age, some analysts paint a doomsday picture of the United States, with desperate and dying elderly people everywhere (Longino, 1994). This is one reason that addressing the need for health care—for old and young alike—has been a major priority of the Obama administration, leading to Congress passing the Affordable Care for America Act in 2010. Even so, the country is a long way from solving the problem of how to pay for this care.

But there is also good news. For one thing, the health of tomorrow's elderly people—today's middle-aged adults—will be better than ever: Smoking is way down, and more people are eating more healthfully. Such trends suggest that the elderly may well become more vigorous and independent. Tomorrow's seniors will also enjoy the benefits of steadily advancing medical technology, although, as the Controversy & Debate box explains, how much of the country's medical resources older people can claim is already being hotly debated.

Another positive sign over the past several decades is the growing financial strength of the elderly. The

economic downturn after 2000, which intensified in 2008, has been stressful, and many elderly people have lost income, retirement benefits, and equity in their homes. But it is likely that the long-term trend will remain fairly bright for most seniors, and it may turn out that tomorrow's elderly—the baby boomers—will be more affluent than ever. Why? One important fact is that the baby boomers are the first generation of the U.S. population whose women have been in the labor force most of their lives. For this reason, the boomers are likely to have substantial savings and pension income.

At the same time, younger adults will face a mounting responsibility to care for aging parents in years to come. A falling birth rate coupled with a growing elderly population will demand that middle-aged people perform an increasing share of caregiving for the very old.

Most of us need to learn more about caring for aging parents, which includes far more than meeting their physical needs. More important lessons involve communicating with them, expressing love, and facing up to eventual death. In caring for our parents, we will also teach important lessons to our children, including the skills they will need, one day, to care for us.

Controversy & Debate

Setting Limits: Must We “Pull the Plug” on Old Age?

Simone: I'm almost sixty now. When I'm eighty-five, I want the best medical care I can find. Why shouldn't I get it?

Juan: I'll tell you why—because our society can't spend more and more money on extending the lives of old people when so many children are at risk.

Sergio: I guess the answer depends on whether you're young or old.

As the U.S. elderly population soars, as new technology gives us more power to prolong life, and as medical care gets increasingly expensive, many people now wonder just how much old age we can afford. Currently, about half the average person's lifetime spending for medical care occurs during the final years of life, and the share is rising. Against the spiraling costs of prolonging life, we well may ask if what is medically *possible* is morally *desirable*. In the decades to come, warns the gerontologist Daniel Callahan (1987), an elderly population ready and eager to extend their lives will eventually force us either to “pull the plug” on old age or to shortchange everyone else.

Just raising this issue, Callahan admits, seems cold and heartless. But consider that the bill for Medicare, the program that pays for the elderly's health care, topped \$582 billion in

2013—five times what it cost in 1990. This dramatic increase reflects the current policy of directing more and more medical resources to studying and treating the diseases and disabilities of old age.

So Callahan makes the case for limits. First, the more we spend on behalf of the elderly, the less we can provide for others. With poverty a growing problem among children, can we afford to spend more and more on the oldest members of our society?

Second, a *longer* life does not necessarily mean a *better* life. Cost aside, does heart surgery that prolongs the life of an eighty-four-year-old woman a year or two necessarily improve the quality of her life? Might such a procedure only end up prolonging her decline? Cost considered, would those resources yield more “quality of life” if used, say, to give a ten-year-old child a kidney transplant or to provide basic care and comfort to hundreds of low-income seniors?

Third, we need to reconsider our view of death as an enemy to be conquered at all costs. Rather, he suggests, a more realistic position for an aging society is to treat death as a natural end to the life course. If we cannot make peace with death for our own well-being, then in a society with limited resources, we must do it for the benefit of others.

Not everyone agrees. Shouldn't people who have worked all their lives and made our society what it is enjoy our generosity in their final years? Would it be right to deny medical care to aging people who are able and willing to pay for it?

Today, we face questions that few people would have imagined even fifty years ago: Is peak longevity good for everyone? Is it even *possible* for everyone?



The share of our population over the age of sixty-five is going up. In addition, older people are very likely to vote. What do these facts lead you to predict about government policy dealing with health care for the elderly?

What Do You Think?

1. Do you think that a goal of doctors and other medical personnel should be to extend life at all costs? Explain your view.
2. How should society balance the needs of high-income seniors with the needs of those with little or no money to pay for medical care as they age?
3. Do you think people should decide for themselves what care they need, consistent with their income? Or should government regulate how care is distributed to everyone? Why?

SOURCES: Callahan (1987, 2009) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (2014).

Seeing Sociology in Everyday Life

CHAPTER 15 Aging and the Elderly

How are older adults changing today's society?

A lot has been said about the baby boomers—the women and men born between 1945 and 1964—who were the driving force behind many of the changes that took place in the 1960s and 1970s. Civil rights, women's rights, and

gay rights reflect just some of the social movements they initiated or carried on. Now, as this cohort begins to enter old age, they are rewriting the rules once again, this time about what it means to be old.



Mick Jagger and Keith Richard launched the Rolling Stones almost fifty years ago and continue to perform as they both turned seventy in 2013. What do these stars of popular culture say about older men?

A much younger Paul McCartney wrote the lyrics to "When I'm Sixty-Four," probably never imagining that he would still be writing music and performing today—he reached age seventy-one in 2013. In what ways is he a role model for elders?



Judy Collins turned seventy-five in 2014 and continues to perform to adoring fans and to work as a political activist. As they enter old age, how have the baby boomers reshaped U.S. politics?

Joan Baez has also been a folk singer and political activist for more than half a century. Both she and Judy Collins have supported numerous social movements, ranging from opposition to the use of land mines to the antiwar movement. In what ways do you expect your generation to reshape U.S. society as you reach old age?

Hint The baby boomers have been a cohort responsible for major societal change, and as they have aged they have redefined every stage of life. As elders, they appear determined to maintain active lives well beyond the traditional time of retirement. The celebrities pictured here also suggest that older people can be sexy—and the generation that brought sex out into the open for young people is defining sex as a part of growing old. The social justice values that defined the boomers as young people seem to still drive them as seniors. Most of all, they appear determined that their political voice will be heard.

Seeing Sociology in Your Everyday Life

1. Look through an issue of a popular magazine, such as *Time* or *People*, and study the pictures of men and women in news stories and advertising. What share of the pictures show elderly people? In what types of advertising are they featured?
2. Based on what you have read in this chapter, how is old age (like all stages of the life course) linked to biological changes but mainly a creation of society?
3. Go to www.sociologyinfofocus.com to access the Sociology in Focus blog, where you can read the latest posts by a team of young sociologists who apply the sociological perspective to topics of popular culture.

Making the Grade

CHAPTER 15 Aging and the Elderly

The Graying of the United States

15.1 Explain the increasing share of elderly people in modern societies. (pages 407–10)

The “graying of the United States” means that the average age of the U.S. population is steadily going up.

- In 1900, the median age was 23, and elderly people were 4% of the population.
- By 2060, the median age will be more than 40, and elderly people will represent 24% of the U.S. population.

In high-income countries like the United States, the share of elderly people has been increasing for two reasons:

- Birth rates have been falling as families choose to have fewer children.
- Life expectancy has been rising as living standards improve and medical advances reduce deaths from infectious diseases.

Growing Old: Biology and Culture

15.2 Describe age stratification in global context. (pages 410–13)

Biological and psychological changes are associated with aging.

- Although people’s health becomes more fragile with advancing age, affluent elderly people experience fewer health problems than poor people, who cannot afford quality medical care.
- Psychological research confirms that growing old does not result in overall loss of intelligence or major changes in personality.

Although aging is a biological process, how elderly people are regarded by society is a matter of **culture**.

The age at which people are defined as old varies:

- Until several centuries ago, old age began as early as 30.
- In poor societies today, where life expectancy is low, people become old at 50 or even 40.

Age Stratification: A Global Survey

- In *hunting and gathering societies*, where survival depends on physical stamina, both the very young and the very old contribute less to society.
- In *agrarian societies*, elders are typically the most privileged and respected members of society, a pattern known as **gerontocracy**.

- In *industrial and postindustrial societies*, the social standing of the elderly is low because the fast pace of social change is dominated by the young.

gerontology the study of aging and the elderly

age stratification the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and privilege among people at different stages of the life course

gerontocracy a form of social organization in which the elderly have the most wealth, power, and prestige

Transitions and Challenges of Aging

15.3 Discuss problems related to aging. (pages 413–18)

Personal challenges that elderly people face include

- the realization that one’s life is nearing an end
- social isolation caused by the death of friends or a spouse, physical disability, or retirement from one’s job
- reduced social prestige and a loss of purpose in life due to retirement

A person’s risk of **poverty** rises after midlife, although since 1960, the poverty rate for the elderly has fallen and is now below the poverty rate for the population as a whole.

- The aged poor include categories of people—such as single women and people of color—who are at high risk of poverty at any age.
- Some retired people have had to return to work in order to make ends meet, a result of the recent economic downturn.

The need for **caregiving** is increasing in our aging society.

- Most caregiving for the elderly is performed by family members, typically women.
- An estimated 2 million elderly people in the United States are victims of **elder abuse** each year.

Ageism—prejudice and discrimination against older people—is used to justify age stratification.

- Like racism and sexism, ageism builds physical traits into stereotypes that make unfair generalizations about all elderly people.

caregiving informal and unpaid care provided to a dependent person by family members, other relatives, or friends

ageism prejudice and discrimination against older people

Theories of Aging

15.4 Apply sociology's major theories to the topic of aging. (pages 418–20)

Structural-functional theory points to the role that aging plays in the orderly operation of society.

- **Disengagement theory** suggests that society helps the elderly disengage from positions of social responsibility before the onset of disability or death.
- The process of disengagement provides for the orderly transfer of statuses and roles from the older to the younger generation.

Symbolic-interaction theory focuses on the meanings that people attach to growing old.

- **Activity theory** claims that a high level of activity increases people's personal satisfaction in old age.
- People must find new roles in old age to replace the ones they left behind.

Social-conflict theory and **feminist theory** highlight the inequalities in opportunities and social resources available to people in different age and gender categories.

- A capitalist society's emphasis on economic efficiency leads to the devaluation of those who are less productive, including the elderly.
- Some categories of elderly people—namely, women and other minorities—have less economic security, less access to quality medical care, and fewer options for personal satisfaction in old age than others.

disengagement theory the idea that society functions in an orderly way by removing people from positions of responsibility as they reach old age

activity theory the idea that a high level of activity increases personal satisfaction in old age

Death and Dying

15.5 Analyze changing attitudes about the end of life. (pages 420–25)

Historical Perspective

- In the past, death was a familiar part of everyday life and was accepted as a natural event that might occur at any age.
- Modern society has set death physically apart from everyday activities, and advances in medical technology have resulted in people's inability or unwillingness to accept death.
- This avoidance of death also reflects the fact that most people in high-income societies die in old age.

Ethical Issues: Confronting Death

- Our society's power to prolong life has sparked a debate as to the circumstances under which a dying person should be kept alive by medical means.
- People who support a person's right to die seek control over the process of their own dying.
- **Euthanasia** poses an ethical dilemma because it involves not just refusing treatment but also actively taking steps to end a person's life.

Bereavement

- Some researchers believe that the process of bereavement follows the same pattern of stages as a dying person coming to accept approaching death: denial, anger, negotiation, resignation, and acceptance.
- The **hospice movement** offers support to dying people and their families.

euthanasia assisting in the death of a person suffering from an incurable disease; also known as *mercy killing*