

Chapter 6

Deviance and Social Control



Learning Objectives

After you have read this chapter, you should be able to:

- 6.1** Explain what deviance is, why it is relative, and why we need norms; also summarize the types of sanctions.
- 6.2** Contrast sociobiological, psychological, and sociological explanations of deviance.
- 6.3** Apply the symbolic interactionist perspective to deviance by explaining differential association, control, and labeling.
- 6.4** Apply the functionalist perspective to deviance by explaining how deviance can be functional for society, how mainstream values can produce deviance (strain theory), and how social class is related to crime (illegitimate opportunities).
- 6.5** Apply the conflict perspective to deviance by explaining how social class is related to the criminal justice system and how the criminal justice system is oppressive.
- 6.6** Be able to discuss street crime and imprisonment, the three-strikes laws, the decline in violent crime, recidivism, bias in the death penalty, the medicalization of deviance, and the need for a more humane approach.

In just a few moments I was to meet my first Yanomamö, my first primitive man. What would it be like?... I looked up [from my canoe] and gasped when I saw a dozen burly, naked, filthy, 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 noses. We arrived at the village while the men were blowing a hallucinogenic drug up their noses. One of the side effects of the drug is a runny nose. The mucus is always saturated with the green powder, and the Indians usually let it run freely from their nostrils.... I just sat there holding my notebook, helpless and pathetic....

The whole situation was depressing, and I wondered why I ever decided to switch from civil engineering to anthropology in the first place.... [Soon] I was covered with red pigment, the result of a dozen or so complete examinations.... These examinations capped an otherwise grim day. The Indians would blow their noses into their hands, flick as much of the mucus off that would separate in a snap of the wrist, wipe the residue into their hair, and then carefully examine my face, arms, legs, hair, and the contents of my pockets. I said [in their language], "Your hands are dirty"; my comments were met by the Indians in the following way: they would "clean" their hands by spitting a quantity of slimy tobacco juice into them, rub them together, and then proceed with the examination.

"They would 'clean' their hands by spitting slimy tobacco juice into them."

deviance

the violation of norms (or rules or expectations)

stigma

“blemishes” that discredit a person’s claim to a “normal” identity

I took this photo on the outskirts of Hyderabad, India. Is this man deviant? If this were a U.S. street, he would be. But here? No houses have running water in his neighborhood, and the men, women, and children bathe at the neighborhood water pump. This man, then, would not be deviant in this culture. And yet, he is actually mugging for my camera, making the three bystanders laugh. Does this additional factor make this a scene of deviance?



This is how Napoleon Chagnon (1977) describes the culture shock he felt when he met the Yanomamö tribe of the rain forests of Brazil. His following months of fieldwork continued to bring surprise after surprise, and often Chagnon could hardly believe his eyes—or his nose.

If you were to list the deviant behaviors of the Yanomamö, what would you include? The way they appear naked in public? Use of hallucinogenic drugs? Let mucus hang from their noses? Or the way they rub hands filled with mucus, spittle, and tobacco juice over a frightened stranger who doesn’t dare to protest? Perhaps. But it isn’t this simple. As we shall see, deviance is relative.

What Is Deviance?

6.1 Explain what deviance is, why it is relative, and why we need norms; also summarize the types of sanctions.

Before we turn to the relativity of deviance, let’s consider how sociologists use this term, which is quite different than how the general public uses it.

A Neutral Term

Sociologists use the term **deviance** to refer to any violation of norms, whether the infraction is as minor as driving over the speed limit, as serious as murder, or as humorous as Chagnon’s encounter with the Yanomamö. This deceptively simple definition takes us to the heart of the sociological perspective on deviance, which sociologist Howard S. Becker (1966) described this way: *It is not the act itself, but the reactions to the act, that make something deviant.*

Unlike the general public, when sociologists use the term *deviance*, they are not being judgmental. To sociologists, deviance is a neutral term that refers to any act to which people respond negatively. When they use this term, they are not saying that an act is bad, just that people judge it negatively. From this sociological perspective, then, *all* of us are deviants of one sort or another because we all violate norms from time to time.

STIGMA To be considered deviant, a person does not even have to *do* anything. Sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) used the term **stigma** to refer to characteristics that discredit people. These include violations of norms of appearance (a facial birthmark, a huge nose, ears that stick out) and norms of ability (blindness, deafness, mental handicaps). Also included are involuntary memberships, such as being the brother of a rapist. The stigma can be so severe that it becomes a person’s master status. Recall from Chapter 4 that a master status cuts across all other statuses that a person occupies.

Deviance is Relative

Chagnon’s abrupt introduction to the Yanomamö allows us to glimpse the *relativity of deviance*, a major point made by symbolic interactionists. What Chagnon saw disturbed him, but to the Yanomamö, those same behaviors represented normal, everyday life. What was deviant to Chagnon was *conformist* to the Yanomamö. From their viewpoint, you *should* check out strangers the way they did—and nakedness is good, as are hallucinogenic drugs. And it is natural to let mucus flow.

Because different groups have different norms, *what is deviant to some is not deviant to others*. This principle applies not

just to cultures but also to groups within the same society—as you can see from the previous photo and the coming one of snakes.

This principle also applies to norms of sexuality, the focus of the following *Cultural Diversity around the World*.

Cultural Diversity around the World

Human Sexuality in Cross-Cultural Perspectives

Human sexuality illustrates how a group's *definition* of an act, not the act itself, determines whether it will be considered deviant. Let's look at some examples reported by anthropologist Robert Edgerton (1976).

Norms of sexual behavior vary so widely around the world that what is considered normal in one society may be considered deviant in another. In Kenya, a group called the Pokot place high emphasis on sexual pleasure, and they expect that both a husband and wife will reach orgasm. If a husband does not satisfy his wife, he is in trouble—especially if she thinks that his failure is because of another woman. If she thinks so, she and her female friends will sneak up on her husband when he is asleep. The women will tie him up, shout obscenities at him, beat him, and then urinate on him. As a final gesture of their contempt, before releasing him they will slaughter and eat his favorite ox. The husband's hours of painful humiliation are intended to make him more dutiful concerning his wife's conjugal rights.

People can also become deviants for following their group's ideal norms instead of its real norms. As with many groups, the Zapotec Indians of Mexico profess that sexual relations should take place exclusively between husband and wife. However, the Zapotec also have a covert norm, an unspoken understanding, that married people will have affairs but that they will be discreet about them. In one Zapotec community, the *only* person who did not have an extramarital affair was condemned by everyone in the village. The reason was not that she did not have an affair but that she told the other wives who their husbands were sleeping with. It is an interesting case; if this virtuous



A Pokot woman in traditional dress.



woman had had an affair—and kept her mouth shut—she would not have become a deviant. Clearly, real norms can conflict with ideal norms—another illustration of the gap between ideal and real culture.

For Your Consideration

- How do the behaviors of the Pokot wives and husbands mentioned here look from the perspective of U.S. norms? What are those U.S. norms?
- What norms did the Zapotec woman break?
- How does cultural relativity apply to the Pokot and Zapotec? (We discussed this concept in Chapter 2.)

The relativity of deviance also applies to **crime**, the violation of rules that have been written into law. In the extreme, an act that is applauded by one group may be so despised by another group that it is punishable by death. Making a huge profit on business deals is one example. Americans who do this are admired. Like Donald Trump and Warren Buffet, they may even write books bragging about their exploits. In China, however, until recently, this same act was considered a crime called *profiteering*. Those found guilty were hanged in a public square as a lesson to all.

The Chinese example also lets us see how even within the same society, the meaning of an act can change over time. With China's switch to capitalism, making large profits has changed from a crime punishable by death to an act to be admired.

crime

the violation of norms written into law



Violating background assumptions is a common form of deviance. Although we have no explicit rule that says, “Do not put snakes through your nose,” we all know that it exists (perhaps as a subcategory of “Don’t do strange things in public”). Is this act also deviant for this man in Chennai, India?

social order

a group’s usual and customary social arrangements, on which its members depend and on which they base their lives

social control

a group’s formal and informal means of enforcing its norms

negative sanction

an expression of disapproval for breaking a norm, ranging from a mild, informal reaction such as a frown to a formal reaction such as a fine or a prison sentence

positive sanction

an expression of approval for following a norm, ranging from a smile or a good grade in a class to a material reward such as a prize

How Norms Make Social Life Possible

No human group can exist without norms: *Norms make social life possible by making behavior predictable.* What would life be like if you could not predict what others would do? Imagine for a moment that you have gone to a store to purchase milk:

Suppose the clerk says, “I won’t sell you any milk. We’re overstocked with soda, and I’m not going to sell anyone milk until our soda inventory is reduced.”

You don’t like it, but you decide to buy a case of soda. At the checkout, the clerk says, “I hope you don’t mind, but there’s a \$5 service charge on every fifteenth customer.” You, of course, are the fifteenth.

Just as you start to leave, another clerk stops you and says, “We’re not working anymore. We decided to have a party.” Suddenly a CD begins to blast, and everyone in the store starts to dance. “Oh, good, you’ve brought the soda,” says a different clerk, who takes your package and passes sodas all around.

Life is not like this, of course. You can depend on grocery clerks to sell you milk. You can also depend on paying the same price as everyone else and not being forced to attend a party in a store. Why can you depend on this? Because we live in a world of norms that govern the behavior of both store clerks and ourselves. We are socialized to follow norms, to play the basic roles that society assigns to us.

Without norms, we would have social chaos. Norms lay out the basic guidelines for how we should play our roles and interact with others. In short, norms bring about **social order**, a group’s customary social arrangements. Our lives are based on these arrangements, which is why deviance often is perceived as threatening: *Deviance undermines predictability, the foundation of social life.* Consequently, human groups developed a system of **social control**—formal and informal means of enforcing norms. At the center of social control are sanctions.

Sanctions

As we discussed in Chapter 2, people do not enforce folkways strictly, but they become upset when people break mores (pronounced MO-rays). Expressions of disapproval for deviance, called **negative sanctions**, range from frowns and gossip for breaking folkways to imprisonment and death for violating mores. In general, the more seriously the group takes a norm, the harsher the penalty for violating it. In contrast, **positive sanctions**—from smiles to formal awards—are used to reward people for conforming to norms. Getting a raise is a positive sanction; being fired is a negative sanction. Getting an A in Intro to Sociology is a positive sanction; getting an F is a negative one.

Most negative sanctions are informal. You might stare if you observe someone dressed in what you consider to be inappropriate clothing, or you might gossip if a married person you know spends the night with someone other than his or her spouse. Whether you consider the breaking of a norm an amusing matter that warrants no sanction or a serious infraction that does, however, depends on your perspective. Let’s suppose that a woman appears at your college graduation in a bikini. You might stare, laugh, and nudge the person next to you. If this is *your* mother, however, you are likely to feel that different sanctions are appropriate. Similarly, if it is *your* father who spends the night with an 18-year-old college freshman, you are likely to do more than gossip.

IN SUM In sociology, the term *deviance* refers to all violations of social rules, regardless of their seriousness. The term is neutral, not a judgment about the behavior. Deviance is so relative that what is deviant in one group may be conformist in another. Because of this, we must consider deviance from within a group’s own framework: It is their meanings that underlie their behavior.

Competing Explanations of Deviance: Sociobiology, Psychology, and Sociology

6.2 Contrast sociobiological, psychological, and sociological explanations of deviance.

If social life is to exist, norms are essential. So why do people violate them? To better understand the reasons, it is useful to know how sociological explanations differ from biological and psychological ones. Let's compare them.

Biosocial Explanations

Sociobiologists explain deviance by looking for answers *within* individuals. They assume that **genetic predispositions** lead people to such behaviors as juvenile delinquency and crime (Lombroso 1911; Wilson and Herrnstein 1985; Fox 2017). An early explanation was that men with an extra Y chromosome (the "XYY" theory) were more likely to become criminals. Another was that people with "squatish, muscular" bodies were more likely to commit **street crime**—acts such as mugging, rape, and burglary. These theories were abandoned when research did not support them.

With advances in the study of genetics, biosocial explanations are being proposed to explain differences in crime by sex, race, social class, and age (juvenile delinquency) (Stetler et al. 2014; Fox 2017). The basic explanation is that over the millennia, people with certain characteristics were more likely to survive than were people with different characteristics. As a result, different groups today inherit different propensities (tendencies) for empathy, self-control, and risk-taking.

A universal finding is that in all known societies, men commit more violent crimes than women do. There are no exceptions. Here is how sociobiologists explain this. It took only a few pelvic thrusts for men to pass on their genes. After that, they could leave if they wanted to. The women, in contrast, had to carry, birth, and nurture the children. Women who were more empathetic (inclined to nurture their children) engaged in less dangerous behavior. These women passed genes for more empathy, greater self-control, and less risk-taking to their female children. As a result, all over the world, men engage in more violent behavior, which comes from their lesser empathy, lower self-control, and greater tendency for taking risks.

But behavior, whether deviant or conforming, does not depend only on genes, add the biosocial theorists. Our inherited propensities (the *bio* part) are modified and stimulated by our environment (the *social* part). Biosocial research holds the potential of opening a new understanding of deviance.

Psychological Explanations

Psychologists focus on abnormalities *within* the individual. Instead of genes, they examine what are called **personality disorders**. Their supposition is that deviating individuals have deviating personalities (Liu 2014; Langevin et al. 2017) and that subconscious motives drive people to deviance.

Researchers have never found a specific childhood experience to be invariably linked with deviance. For example, some children who had "bad toilet training," "suffocating mothers," or "emotionally aloof fathers" become embezzling bookkeepers—but others become good accountants. Just as college students and police officers represent a variety of childhood experiences—both good and bad—so do deviants. Similarly, people with "suppressed anger" can become freeway snipers or military sharpshooters—or anything else. In short, there is no inevitable outcome of any childhood experience. Deviance is not associated with any particular personality.

genetic predisposition

inborn tendencies (for example, a tendency to commit deviant acts)

street crime

crimes such as mugging, rape, and burglary

personality disorders

the view that a personality disturbance of some sort causes an individual to violate social norms

Sociological Explanations

In contrast with both sociobiologists and psychologists, sociologists search for factors *outside* the individual. They look for social influences that “recruit” people to break norms. To account for why people commit crimes, for example, sociologists examine such external influences as socialization, membership in subcultures, and social class. *Social class*, a concept that we discuss in depth in Chapter 8, refers to people’s relative standing in terms of education, occupation, and especially income and wealth.

To explain deviance, sociologists apply the three sociological perspectives—symbolic interactionism, functionalism, and conflict theory. Let’s compare these three explanations.

The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

6.3 Apply the symbolic interactionist perspective to deviance by explaining differential association, control, and labeling.

As we examine symbolic interactionism, it will become more evident why sociologists are not satisfied with explanations that are rooted in sociobiology or psychology. *A basic principle of symbolic interactionism is that we are thinking beings who act according to how we interpret situations.* Let’s consider how our membership in groups influences how we view life and, from there, our behavior.

Differential Association Theory

Going directly against the idea that biology or personality is the source of deviance, sociologists stress people’s experiences in groups. Differential association theory, which was developed by Edwin Sutherland in the 1920s, is an excellent example of this emphasis.

THE THEORY Let’s start with an extreme example: boys and girls who join street gangs and boys and girls who join the Scouts. Immediately, you know that each learns different attitudes and behaviors concerning deviance and conformity. And this is just what the term **differential association** indicates—that from the *different* groups we *associate* with, we learn to deviate from or to conform to society’s norms (Sutherland 1924, 1947; Brooks 2016).

Sutherland’s theory is more complicated than this, but he basically said that the different groups with which we associate (our “*different(ial)* association”) give us messages about conformity and deviance. We may receive mixed messages, but we end up with more of one kind of message than the other (an “excess of definitions,” as Sutherland put it). The end result is an imbalance—attitudes that tilt us in one direction or another. Consequently, we learn to either conform or to deviate.

FAMILIES You know how important your family has been in forming your views toward life, so it probably is obvious to you that the family makes a big difference in whether people learn deviance or conformity. Researchers have confirmed this informal observation. Of the many studies, this one stands out: Of all prison inmates across the United States, about *half* have a father, mother, brother, sister, or spouse who has served time in prison (*Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics* 2003:Table 6.0011; Glaze and Maruschak 2008:Table 11). In short, families that are involved in crime tend to set their children on a lawbreaking path.

FRIENDS, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND SUBCULTURES Most people don’t know the term *differential association*, but they do know how it works. Most parents want to move out of “bad” neighborhoods because they know that if their kids have delinquent friends, they are likely to become delinquent, too. Sociological research also supports this common observation (Miller 1958; Rendon 2014).

differential association

Edwin Sutherland’s term to indicate that people who associate with some groups learn an “excess of definitions” of deviance, increasing the likelihood that they will become deviant

In some neighborhoods, violence is so woven into the subculture that even a wrong glance can mean your death (“Why ya lookin’ at me?”) (Gardiner and Fox 2010). If the neighbors feel that a victim deserved to be killed, they refuse to testify because “he got what was coming to him” (Kubrin and Weitzer 2003). Killing can even be viewed as honorable:

Sociologist Ruth Horowitz (1983, 2005), who did participant observation in a lower-class Chicano neighborhood in Chicago, discovered how the concept of “honor” propels young men to deviance. The formula is simple. “A real man has honor. An insult is a threat to one’s honor. Therefore, not to stand up to someone is to be less than a real man.”

Now suppose you are a young man growing up in this neighborhood. You likely would do a fair amount of fighting, since you would interpret many things as attacks on your honor. You might even carry a knife or a gun, because words and fists wouldn’t always be sufficient. Along with members of your group, you would define fighting, knifing, and shooting quite differently from the way most people do.

Sociologist Victor Rios (2011), who did participant–observation of young male African American and Latino gang members in Oakland, California, reports that these same ideas of masculinity continue. They also continue to produce high rates of violence, including homicide.

Members of the Mafia also intertwine ideas of manliness with killing. For them, *to kill is a measure of manhood*. If a Mafia member were to seduce the *capo*’s wife or girlfriend, for example, the seduction would slash at the *capo*’s manliness and honor. This would require swift, violent retaliation. The offender’s body would be found in the trunk of a car somewhere with his penis stuffed in his mouth. Not all killings bring the same respect, for “the more awesome and potent the victim, the more worthy and meritorious the killer” (Arlacchi 1980).

From this example, you can again see the relativity of deviance. Killing is deviant in mainstream society, but for members of the Mafia, *not* to kill after certain of their norms are broken would be the deviant act.

DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION IN THE CYBER AGE The computer has brought major changes to social interaction. I have seen people lying on the beach with friends, not interacting with those next to them, but each absorbed in communicating on a smartphone. I’m sure you have seen people walking on the sidewalk, engrossed in smartphones, barely aware of the presence of passersby. With whom are they associating?

Friends and family remain the focus of most of these communications. But the computer has also opened easy access to areas of life previously hidden and unavailable. Sociologists have begun to study how this can impact people’s orientations to conformity. An example is how terrorist groups use the social media to motivate people to do violence (Callimachi 2017). Differential association with the social media is new, and at this point everything about this intriguing topic is preliminary.

PRISON OR FREEDOM? As was mentioned in Chapter 3, an issue that comes up over and over again in sociology is whether we are prisoners of socialization. Symbolic interactionists stress that we are not mere pawns in the hands of others. We are not destined to think and act as our groups dictate. Rather, we *help to produce our own orientations to life*. By joining one group rather than another (differential association), for example, we help to shape the self. One college student may join a feminist group that is trying to change ideas about fraternities and rape, while another associates with women who shoplift on weekends. Their choices point them in different directions. The one who joins the feminist group may develop an even greater interest in producing social change, while the one who associates with shoplifters may become even more oriented toward criminal activities.



Do you understand how the definitions of deviance that Mafia members use underlie their behavior? Although their definitions are markedly different from ours, the process is the same. Shown here is John Gotti when he was the head of New York’s Gambino Mafia. Convicted for murder, Gotti died in prison.



The social control of deviance takes many forms. One of the most prominent is the actions of the police.

control theory

the idea that two control systems—inner controls and outer controls—work against our tendencies to deviate

degradation ceremony

a term coined by Harold Garfinkel to refer to a ritual whose goal is to remake someone's self by stripping away that individual's self-identity and stamping a new identity in its place

1969; Gottfredson 2011). Our *outer controls* consist of people—such as family, friends, and the police—who influence us not to deviate.

As sociologist Travis Hirschi (1969) pointed out, the stronger our bonds are with society, the more effective our inner controls are. These bonds are based on *attachments* (our affection and respect for people who conform to mainstream norms), *commitments* (having a stake in society that you don't want to risk, such as your place in your family, being a college student, or having a job), *involvements* (participating in approved activities), and *beliefs* (convictions that certain actions are wrong).

This theory is really about *self-control*, said Hirschi. Where do we learn self-control? As you know, this happens during childhood, especially in the family when our parents supervise us and punish our deviant acts (Gottfredson 2011). Sometimes they use shame to keep us in line. You probably had that finger shaken at you. I certainly recall it aimed at me. Do you think that more use of shaming, discussed in the following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*, could help strengthen people's internal controls?

Control Theory

Do you ever feel the urge to do something that you know you shouldn't, something that would get you in trouble? Most of us fight temptations to break society's norms. We find that we have to stifle things inside us—urges, hostilities, raunchy desires of various sorts. And most of the time, we manage to keep ourselves out of trouble. The basic question that control theory tries to answer is, With the desire to deviate so common, why don't we all just "bust loose"?

THE THEORY Sociologist Walter Reckless (1973), who developed control theory, stressed that we have two control systems that work against our motivations to deviate. Our *inner controls* include our internalized morality—conscience, religious principles, ideas of right and wrong. Inner controls also include fears of punishment and the desire to be a "good" person (Hirschi

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Shaming: Making a Comeback?

In The Scarlet Letter, a book published in 1850 by Nathaniel Hawthorne, town officials forced Hester Prynne to wear a scarlet "A" sewn on her dress. The "A" stood for Adulteress. Wherever she went, Prynne had to wear this badge of shame—every day for the rest of her life.

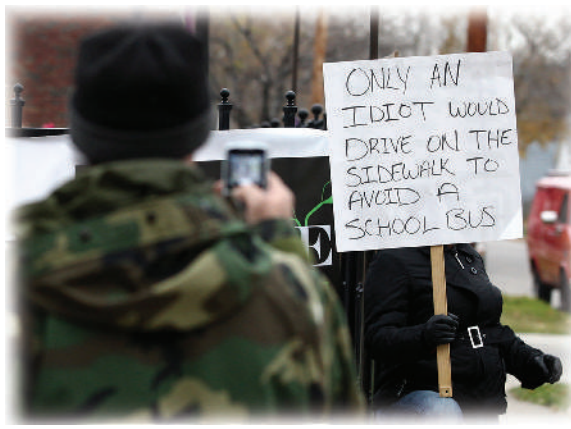
Shaming can be effective, especially when members of a primary group use it. In some communities, where the individual's reputation was at stake, shaming was the centerpiece of the enforcement of norms. As with Hester Prynne, violators were marked as deviant and held up for all the world to see.

As our society grew large and urban, the sense of community diminished, and shaming lost its effectiveness. Shaming is now starting to make a comeback.

- In Pennsylvania, two women took a gift card from a girl at Walmart. They had to stand in front of the courthouse, each holding a sign that read, "I stole from a 9-year-old on her birthday! Don't steal or this could happen to you." (Reutter 2015)
- Online shaming sites have also appeared. Captured on cell phone cameras are bad drivers, older men who leer at teenaged girls, and people who don't pick up their dog's poop.
- In Spain, where one's reputation with neighbors still matters, debt collectors dress in tuxedos and top hats and walk slowly to the debtor's front door. The sight shames debtors into paying (Catan 2008).
- And as shown in the next photo, a judge in Cleveland, Ohio, ordered a woman who drove on a sidewalk in order

to pass a school bus to hold a sign at the intersection reading, “Only an idiot would drive on the sidewalk to avoid a school bus” (Reutter 2015).

Sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1956) gave the name **degradation ceremony** to an extreme form of shaming. The individual is called to account before the group, witnesses denounce him or her, the offender is pronounced guilty, and the individual is stripped of his or her identity as a group member. In some courts martial, officers who are found guilty stand at attention before their peers while others rip the insignia of rank from their uniforms. This ceremony screams that the individual is no longer a member of the group. Although Hester Prynne was not banished from the group physically, she was banished morally; her degradation



For doing what the sign says, this woman must humiliate herself by holding the sign. She is using the sign to help shield her identity.

ceremony proclaimed her a *moral* outcast from the community. The scarlet “A” marked her as “not one of us.”

For Your Consideration

- How do you think law enforcement officials might use shaming to reduce law breaking?
- How do you think school officials could use shaming?
- Suppose that you were caught shoplifting at a store near where you live. Would you rather spend a week in jail with no one but your family knowing it or 6 hours a day for a week walking in front of the store you stole from wearing a placard that proclaims in bold red capital letters: “I AM A THIEF!” and in smaller letters: “I am sorry for stealing from this store and making you pay higher prices”? Why?

Your desire to avoid feeling shame is just one of your many internal controls. In the following *Applying Sociology to Your Life*, let’s see other ways that control theory might apply to your life.

Applying Sociology to Your Life

“How Does Social Control Theory Apply to You?”

Suppose that your friends invite you to go to a night-club. When you get there, you notice that everyone seems unusually happy—almost giddy. They seem to be euphoric in their animated conversations and dancing. Your friends tell you that almost everyone here has taken the drug Ecstasy, and they invite you to take some with them.

What do you do?

Let’s not explore the question of whether taking Ecstasy in this setting is a deviant or a conforming act, an interesting topic by itself. Instead, think about the pushes and pulls you would feel in this situation. There would be pushes toward taking the drug: your friends, the setting, and perhaps your curiosity or even sense of adventure. Then there are your inner controls.



How would social control theory apply to you in such a situation?

You are intimately familiar with these—those inner voices of conscience and those internal recordings from your parents and from others. Your inner controls also include your fears: of being arrested, of hurting your reputation, and of the dangers of taking illegal drugs. Outer controls would also be significant in your decision—perhaps the uniformed security guard looking in your direction.

For Your Consideration

- So, what *would* you decide? Which do you think would be stronger in this situation: the pushes and pulls toward taking the drug or your inner and outer controls? It is you who can best weigh these forces because they differ with each of us. This little example puts you at the center of what control theory is all about.

Labeling Theory

Suppose for one undesirable moment that people think of you as a “whore,” a “pervert,” or a “cheat.” (Pick one.) What power such a reputation would have—over both how others would see you and how you would see yourself. How about if you became known as “very intelligent,” “truthful in everything,” or “honest to the core”? (Choose one.) You can see how this type of reputation would give people different expectations of your character and behavior—and how the label would also shape the way you see yourself.

labeling theory

the view that the labels people are given affect both how they perceive themselves and how others perceive them, which channels their behavior toward either deviance or conformity

techniques of neutralization

ways of thinking or rationalizing that help people deflect (or neutralize) society's norms

This is what **labeling theory** focuses on: the significance of labels (or reputations), how they help set us on paths that propel us into deviance or divert us away from it.

REJECTING LABELS: HOW PEOPLE NEUTRALIZE DEVIANCE Not many of us want to be called “whore,” “pervert,” or “cheat.” We resist negative labels, even lesser ones than these that others might try to pin on us. Did you know that some people are so successful at rejecting labels that even though they beat people up and vandalize property, they consider themselves to be conforming members of society? How do they do it?

Sociologists Gresham Sykes and David Matza (1957/1988) studied boys like this. They found that the boys used five **techniques of neutralization** to deflect society's norms.

Denial of responsibility. *Some boys said, “I’m not responsible for what happened because ...” And they were quite creative about the “because.” Some said that what happened was an “accident.” Other boys saw themselves as “victims” of society. What else can you expect? “I’m like a billiard ball shot around the pool table of life.”*

Denial of injury. *A favorite explanation was “What I did wasn’t wrong because no one got hurt.” The boys would call vandalism “mischief,” gang fights a “private quarrel,” and stealing cars “borrowing.” They might acknowledge that what they did was illegal but claim that they were “just having a little fun.”*

Denial of a victim. *Some boys thought of themselves as avengers. Trashing a teacher’s car was revenge for an unfair grade, while shoplifting was a way to get even with “crooked” store owners. In short, even if the boys did accept responsibility and admit that someone had gotten hurt, they protected their self-concept by claiming that the people “deserved what they got.”*

Condemnation of the condemners. *Another technique the boys used was to deny that others had the right to judge them. They accused people who pointed fingers at them of being “hypocrites”: The police were “on the take,” teachers had “pets,” and parents cheated on their taxes. In short, they said, “Who are they to accuse me of something?”*

Appeal to higher loyalties. *A final technique the boys used to justify their actions was to consider loyalty to the gang more important than the norms of society. They might say, “I had to help my friends. That’s why I got in the fight.” Not incidentally, the boy may have shot two members of a rival group, as well as a bystander!*

In the following *Applying Sociology to Your Life*, let’s consider how *you* use these five techniques of neutralization to protect your self concept.

Applying Sociology to Your Life

How Do You Use Techniques of Neutralization to Protect Your Self Concept?

The five techniques of neutralization that Sykes and Matza uncovered have implications far beyond the group of boys that they studied. It is not only delinquents who try to neutralize the norms of mainstream society. Look again at

these techniques—don’t they sound familiar? Consider how you might be using these same techniques as part of your everyday life. Let’s take them one by one, with an example that you might have used at some time.

1. Denial of responsibility: "I was so mad that I couldn't help myself."
2. Denial of injury: "You can say what you want, but who really got hurt?"



How do you use techniques of neutralization to protect your self concept?

3. Denial of a victim: "Don't you think she deserved that, after what she did?"
4. Condemnation of the condemners: "Who are you to talk?"
5. Appeal of higher loyalties: "I had to help my friends—wouldn't you have done the same thing?"

All of us attempt to neutralize the moral demands of society. Neutralization helps us to sleep at night.

For Your Consideration

- What other statements have you made (to others or to yourself) to help deflect the norms of society?
- How do the techniques of neutralization that you use help protect your self concept?
- Can you think of any techniques of neutralization that people use other than these five?

EMBRACING LABELS: THE EXAMPLE OF OUTLAW BIKERS

Years ago, in a defensive statement, the American Motorcyclists' Association said that 99 percent of motorcyclists are law abiding citizens, that only 1 percent are thugs and criminals. The Outlaws, Hells Angels, and Warlocks then began to proudly display 1 percent on their uniforms (Stutzman 2014).

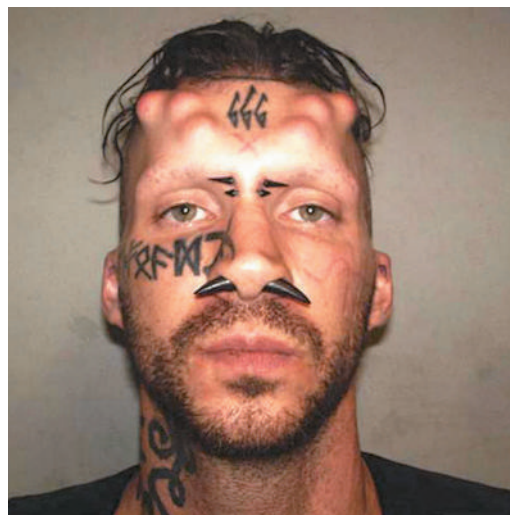
Sociologist Mark Watson (1980/2006) did participant–observation with outlaw bikers. He rebuilt Harleys with them, hung around their bars and homes, and went on “runs” (trips) with them. He concluded that outlaw bikers see the world as “hostile, weak, and effeminate.” Holding the conventional world in contempt, gang members pride themselves on breaking its norms and getting in trouble, laughing at death, and treating women as lesser beings whose primary value is to provide them with services—especially sex. They take pleasure in shocking people by their appearance and behavior. They pride themselves in looking “dirty, mean, and generally undesirable.” Outlaw bikers also regard themselves as losers, a view that is woven into their unusual embrace of deviance.

Although most of us resist attempts to label us as deviant, it is not only outlaw bikers who revel in a deviant identity. By their clothing, music, hairstyles, and body art, some teenagers make certain that no one misses their rejection of adult norms. Their status among fellow members of a subculture—within which they are almost obsessive conformists—is vastly more important than any status outside it.

LABELS CAN BE POWERFUL To label a teenager a delinquent can trigger a process that leads to greater involvement in deviance (Lieberman et al. 2014).

Because of this, judges sometimes use *diversion*: To avoid the label of delinquent, they *divert* youthful offenders away from the criminal justice system. Instead of sending them to reform school or jail, they assign them to social workers and counselors. In the following *Thinking Critically about Social Life*, let's consider how powerful labeling can be.

While most people resist labels of deviance, some embrace them. In what different ways do these photos illustrate the embracement of deviance?



Thinking Critically about Social Life

The Saints and the Roughnecks: Labeling in Everyday Life

As you recall from Chapter 4, the Saints and the Roughnecks were high school boys. Both groups were “constantly occupied with truancy, drinking, wild parties, petty theft, and vandalism.” Yet their teachers looked on the Saints as “headed for success” and the Roughnecks as “headed for failure.” By the time they finished high school, not one Saint had been arrested, while the Roughnecks had been in constant trouble with the police.

Why did the members of the community perceive these boys so differently? Chambliss concluded that *social class* created this split vision. As symbolic interactionists emphasize, social class is like a lens that focuses our perceptions. The Saints came from respectable, middle-class families, while the Roughnecks were from less respectable, working-class families. These backgrounds led teachers and the authorities to expect good things from the Saints but trouble from the Roughnecks. And, like the rest of us, teachers and police saw what they expected to see.

The boys’ social class also affected their visibility. The Saints had automobiles, and they did their drinking and vandalism out of town. Without cars, the Roughnecks hung around their own street corners. There, their drinking and boisterous behavior drew the attention of police, confirming the negative impressions that the community already had of them.

The boys’ social class also equipped them with distinct *styles of interaction*. When police or teachers questioned them, the Saints were apologetic. Their show of respect for authority elicited a positive reaction from teachers and police, allowing the Saints to escape school and legal problems. The Roughnecks, said Chambliss, were “almost the polar opposite.” When questioned, they were hostile. Even when these boys tried to assume a respectful attitude, everyone could see through it. As a result, the teachers and police let the Saints off with warnings, but they came down hard on the Roughnecks.

Certainly, what happens in life is not determined by labels alone, but the Saints and the Roughnecks did live



Stereotypes, both positive and negative, help to form the perception and reaction of authorities. What stereotypes come to mind when you look at this photo?

up to the labels that the community gave them. As you may recall, all but one of the Saints went on to college. One earned a Ph.D., one became a lawyer, one a doctor, and the others business managers. In contrast, only two of the Roughnecks went to college. They earned athletic scholarships and became coaches. The other Roughnecks did not fare so well. Two of them dropped out of high school, later became involved in separate killings, and were sent to prison. Of the final two, one became a local bookie, and no one knows the whereabouts of the other.

For Your Consideration

- Did you see anything like the reactions to the Saints and the Roughnecks in your high school? If so, how did it work?
- Besides labels, what else could have been involved in the life outcomes of these boys?
- In what areas of life do you see the power of labels?

HOW DO LABELS WORK? How labels work is complicated because they involve self-concepts and reactions that vary from one individual to another. To analyze this process would require a book. For our purposes, let’s just note that unlike its meaning in sociology, in everyday life the term *deviant* is emotionally charged with negative judgment. This label closes doors of opportunity. It can lock people out of conforming groups and push them into almost exclusive contact with people who have been similarly labeled.

IN SUM Symbolic interactionists examine how people’s definitions of the situation underlie their deviating from or conforming to social norms. They focus on group membership (differential association), how people balance pressures to conform and to deviate (control theory), and the significance of people’s reputations (labeling theory).

The Functionalist Perspective

6.4 Apply the functionalist perspective to deviance by explaining how deviance can be functional for society, how mainstream values can produce deviance (strain theory), and how social class is related to crime (illegitimate opportunities).

When you think of deviance, you are likely to think about its dysfunctions, how, for example, crime is harmful to society. Let's start this section with something you might find surprising—that deviance has functions.

Can Deviance Really Be Functional for Society?

Most of us are upset by deviance, especially crime, and assume that society would be better off without it. In contrast to this common assumption, the classic functionalist theorist Emile Durkheim (1893/1933, 1895/1964) came to a surprising conclusion. Deviance—including crime—contributes to the social order in these three ways:

1. *Deviance clarifies moral boundaries and affirms norms.* By *moral boundaries*, Durkheim referred to a group's ideas about how people should think and act. Deviance challenges those boundaries. To call a member into account is to say, in effect, "You broke an important rule, and we cannot tolerate that." Punishing deviants affirms the group's norms and clarifies what it means to be a member of the group.
2. *Deviance encourages social unity.* To affirm the group's moral boundaries by punishing deviants creates a "we" feeling among the group's members. By saying, "You can't get away with that," the group affirms the rightness of its ways.
3. *Deviance promotes social change.* Not everyone agrees on what to do with people who push beyond the accepted ways of doing things. Some group members may even approve of the rule-breaking behavior. Boundary violations that gain enough support become new, acceptable behaviors. Deviance, then, may force a group to rethink and redefine its moral boundaries, helping groups—and whole societies—to adapt to changing circumstances.

Strain Theory: How Mainstream Values Produce Deviance

It is easy to think of crime as some alien element in our midst, something that is strange and unnatural. In contrast to this common view, functionalists view crime as a *natural* outcome of the conditions that people experience (Agnew 2012). Even mainstream values can generate crime. Consider what sociologists Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960) identified as the crucial problem of the industrialized world: the need to locate and train talented people—whether they were born into wealth or into poverty—so that they can take over the key technical jobs of society. When children are born, no one knows which ones will have the ability to become dentists, nuclear physicists, or engineers. To get the most talented people to compete with one another, society tries to motivate *everyone* to strive for success.

We are quite successful in getting almost everyone to want **cultural goals**, success of some sort, such as wealth or prestige. But we are far from successful when it comes to providing everyone access to the **institutionalized means**, the legitimate ways to reach success. People who find their way to success blocked can come to see the cultural goals (such as working hard or pursuing higher education) as not applying to themselves. Sociologist Robert Merton (1956, 1949/1968) referred to this situation as *anomie*, a sense of normlessness. These people experience frustration, or what Merton called *strain*.

Table 6.1 presents a summary of Merton's **strain theory**. The most common reaction to means and goals is *conformity*. Most people find at least adequate access to the institutionalized means and use them to try to reach cultural goals. They try to get a quality education, good jobs, and so on. If well-paid jobs are unavailable, they take less desirable jobs. If they can't get into Harvard or Stanford, they go to a state university. Others take night classes and go to vocational schools. In short, most people take the socially acceptable path.

cultural goals

the objectives held out as legitimate or desirable for the members of a society to achieve

institutionalized means

approved ways of reaching cultural goals

strain theory

Robert Merton's term for the strain engendered when a society socializes large numbers of people to desire a cultural goal (such as success), but withholds from some the approved means of reaching that goal; one adaptation to the strain is crime, the choice of an innovative means (one outside the approved system) to attain the cultural goal

Table 6.1 How People Match Their Goals to Their Means

Do They Feel the Strain That Leads to Anomie?	Mode of Adaptation	Cultural Goals	Institutionalized Means
No	Conformity	Accept	Accept
Deviant Paths:			
Yes	1. Innovation	Accept	Reject
	2. Ritualism	Reject	Accept
	3. Retreatism	Reject	Reject
	4. Rebellion	Reject/Replace	Reject/Replace

SOURCE: Based on Merton 1968.

FOUR DEVIANT PATHS The next four responses in Table 6.1 represent deviant reactions to the gap that people find between the goals they want and their access to the institutionalized means to reach them. Let's look at each. *Innovators* are people who accept the goals of society but use illegitimate means to try to reach them. Embezzlers, for instance, accept the goal of achieving wealth, but they reject the legitimate avenues for doing so. Other examples are drug dealers, robbers, and con artists.

The second deviant path is taken by people who start out wanting the cultural goals but become discouraged and give up on achieving them. Yet they still cling to conventional rules of conduct. Merton called this response *ritualism*. Although ritualists have given up on getting ahead at work, they survive by rigorously following the rules of their job. Teachers whose idealism is shattered (who are said to suffer from “burnout”), for example, remain in the classroom, where they teach without enthusiasm. Their response is considered deviant because they cling to the job even though they have abandoned the goal, which may have been to stimulate young minds or to make the world a better place.

People who choose the third deviant path, *retreatism*, reject both the cultural goals and the institutionalized means of achieving them. Some people stop pursuing success and retreat into alcohol or drugs. Although their path to withdrawal is considerably different, women who enter a convent or men a monastery are also retreatists.

The final deviant response is *rebellion*. Convinced that their society is corrupt, rebels, like retreatists, reject both society's goals and its institutionalized means. Unlike retreatists, however, rebels seek to give society new goals, as well as new means for reaching them. Revolutionaries are the most committed type of rebels.

Merton either did not recognize *anarchy* as applying to his model or he did not think of it. In either case, the angry *anarchist* who wants to destroy society is not shown on Table 6.1. Like the retreatist and the rebel, anarchists have given up on both society's goals and its means. Unlike the rebel, however, they do not want to replace the goals and means with anything. And unlike the retreatist, they do not want to withdraw and let others live in peace. Instead, they want to annihilate what exists and whoever stands in their way.

IN SUM Strain theory underscores the sociological principle that deviants are the product of society. Mainstream social values (cultural goals and institutionalized means to reach those goals) can produce strain (frustration, dissatisfaction). People who feel this strain are more likely than others to take deviant (nonconforming) paths.

Illegitimate Opportunity Structures: Social Class and Crime

Over and over in this text, you have seen the impact of social class on people's lives—and you will continue to do so in coming chapters. Let's look at how the social classes produce different types of crime.

STREET CRIME In applying strain theory, functionalists point out that industrialized societies have no trouble socializing the poor into wanting to own things. Like others,

the poor are bombarded with messages urging them to buy everything from iPhones and iPads to designer jeans and new cars. Television and movies spew out images of middle-class people enjoying luxurious lives. The poor get the message—full-fledged Americans can afford society’s many goods and services.

Yet, the most common route to success, education, presents a bewildering world to the poor. Run by the middle class, schools are at odds with their background. In the schools, what the poor take for granted is unacceptable, questioned, even mocked. Their speech, for example, is built around nonstandard grammar. It is also often laced with what the middle class considers obscenities. Their ideas of punctuality and their poor preparation in reading and paper-and-pencil skills also make it difficult to fit in. Facing such barriers, the poor are more likely than their more privileged counterparts to drop out of school. Educational failure, of course, slams the door on many legitimate avenues to success.

Not all doors slam shut, though. Woven into the inner city is what Cloward and Ohlin (1960) called an **illegitimate opportunity structure**. This alternative door to financial gain includes burglary, robbery, drug dealing, gambling, prostitution, and pimping (Anderson 1978, 1990, 2000; Horning and Marcus 2017). To those growing up poor, pimps and drug dealers are often seen through the lens of a glamorous life—people who are in control and have plenty of “easy money.” For some, then, the “hustler” becomes a role model.

It should be easy to see why street crime attracts disproportionate numbers of the poor. In the following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*, let’s look at how gangs are part of the illegitimate opportunity structure that beckons disadvantaged youth.

illegitimate opportunity structure

opportunities for crimes that are woven into the texture of life

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Islands in the Street: Urban Gangs in the United States

Gangs are part of urban life, but why do people join gangs?

For more than ten years, sociologist Martín Sánchez-

Jankowski (1991) did participant-observation of *thirty-seven* ethnic gangs: African American, Chicano, Dominican, Irish, Jamaican, and Puerto Rican. The members of these gangs in Boston, Los Angeles, and New York City earned money through gambling, arson, mugging, and armed robbery. They also sold drugs, guns, moonshine, stolen car parts, and protection. Sánchez-Jankowski ate, slept, and fought with the gangs, but by mutual agreement he did not participate in drug dealing or other illegal activities. He was seriously injured twice during the study.

Contrary to stereotypes, Sánchez-Jankowski did not find that the motive for joining a gang was to escape a broken home (there were as many members from intact families as from broken homes) or to seek a substitute family (the same number of boys said they were close to their families as those who said they were not). Rather, the boys joined to gain access to money, sex, and drugs, to maintain anonymity in committing crimes, to get protection, and to help the community. This last reason may seem surprising,

but in some neighborhoods, gangs protect residents from outsiders and spearhead political change (Kontos et al.

2003). The boys also saw the gang as an alternative to the boring, dead-end jobs held by their parents.

Neighborhood residents are ambivalent about gangs. Although they fear the violence, the gang members are the children of people who live in the neighborhood, and many of the adults once belonged to gangs. In addition, some gangs provide better protection than the police.

Particular gangs will come and go, but gangs are likely to remain part of the city. Why? As functionalists point out, gangs fulfill needs of poor youth who live on the margins of society.



For Your Consideration

- What functions do gangs fulfill (what needs do they meet)?
- Suppose that you have been hired as an urban planner for the city of Chicago. How could you arrange to meet the needs that gangs fulfill in ways that minimize violence and encourage youth to follow mainstream norms?

white-collar crime

Edwin Sutherland's term for crimes committed by people of respectable and high social status in the course of their occupations; for example, bribery of public officials, securities violations, embezzlement, false advertising, and price fixing

corporate crime

crimes committed by executives in order to benefit their corporation

White collar crime can be deadly and yet the criminals go unpunished. Faulty ignition switches on GM cars, not fixed after the problem was known, killed over 124 people. This father is holding a photo of his daughter, Brandlee, who was one of these 124 people.



WHITE-COLLAR CRIME As with the poor, the *forms* of crime of the more privileged classes also match their life situation. And how different their illegitimate opportunities are! Physicians don't hold up cabbies, but they do cheat Medicare. Investment managers like Bernie Madoff don't rob gas stations, but they do run fraudulent schemes that cheat people around the world. Mugging, pimping, and burgling are not part of this more privileged world, but evading income tax, bribing public officials, and embezzling are. Sociologist Edwin Sutherland (1949) coined the term **white-collar crime** to refer to crimes that people of respectable and high social status commit in the course of their occupations.

A special form of white-collar crime is **corporate crime**, executives breaking the law in order to benefit their corporation. For example, to increase corporate profits, Sears executives defrauded \$100 million from victims so poor that they had filed for bankruptcy. To avoid a criminal trial, Sears pleaded guilty. This frightened the parent companies of Macy's and Bloomingdales, which were doing similar things, and they settled out of court (McCormick 1999). *Not one of the corporate thieves at Sears, Macy's, or Bloomingdales spent even a day in jail.*

Here are two more big-name criminals: Bank of America, which paid \$17 billion for its lawbreaking (Rexrode and Barrett 2014), and Wells Fargo, which paid \$185 million in fines for opening *two million accounts* without their clients' permission (Corkery 2016). Even more notorious is Citigroup, which was caught red-handed in 2004 stealing from the poor. For this crime, Citigroup paid \$70 million (O'Brien 2004). In 2008, caught this time stealing money from its customers' credit cards, Citigroup was fined \$18 million (Read 2008). Like other career criminals addicted to easy money, Citigroup continued its lawbreaking ways, and in 2014 Citigroup paid another \$7 billion for deceiving investors in subprime mortgages (Grossman and Rexrode 2014). *Not one of the corporate crime chiefs at Citigroup, Bank of America, or Wells Fargo spent even a single day in jail.*

Can you imagine what would have happened if these same executives had used guns to rob people on the street?

It is rare for white-collar crime to be taken seriously—even when those crimes result in death. In the 1930s, workers were hired to blast a tunnel through a mountain in West Virginia. The company knew the silica dust would kill the miners, and in just three months about six hundred died (Dunaway 2008). No owner went to jail. In the 1980s, Firestone executives recalled faulty tires in Saudi Arabia and Venezuela but allowed them to remain on U.S. vehicles. When those tires blew out, about two hundred Americans died (White et al. 2001). Not a single Firestone executive went to jail.

In 2001, General Motors found out that a jarring of the ignition key could shut down the car's engine and electrical system and disable the air bags. Did they fix the ignition? No. For a dozen years GM kept quiet. What did these decision makers care, as long as the profits—and their bonuses—kept rolling in? Their decision cost the lives of 124 people. Not one executive was even arrested. GM just paid a fine (Spector and Matthews 2015).

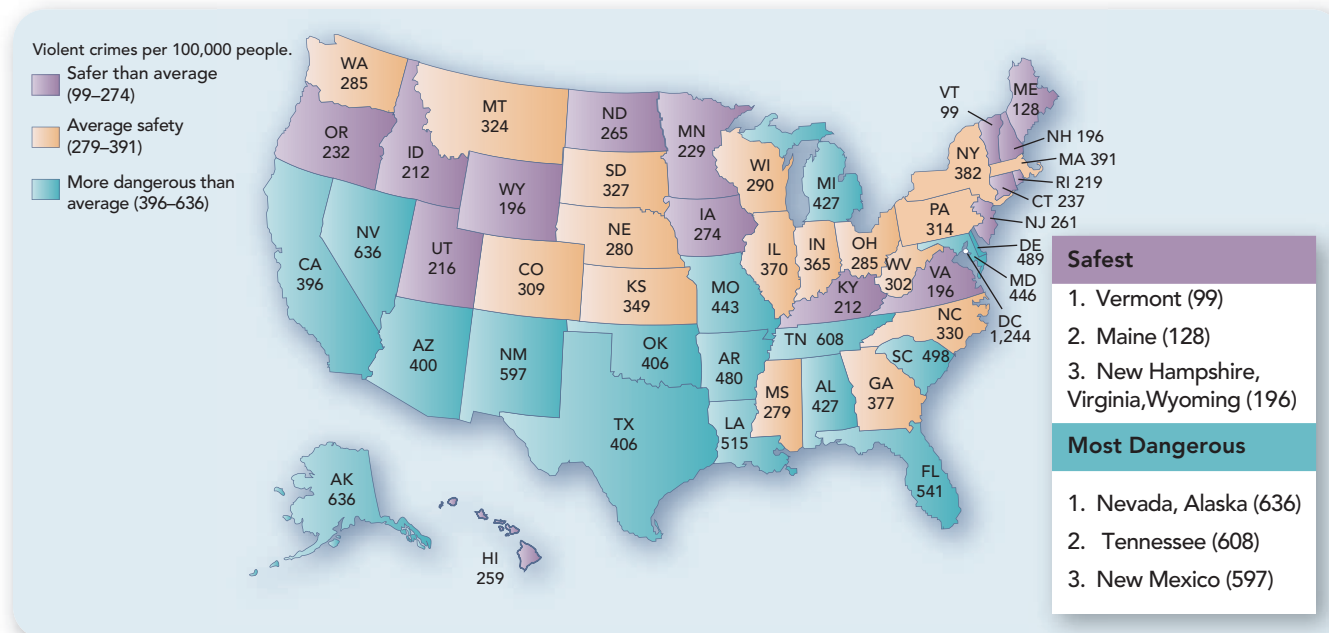
Consider this: Under federal law, causing the death of a worker by *willfully* violating safety rules is a misdemeanor punishable by up to six months in prison. Yet to harass a wild burro on federal lands is punishable by a year in prison (Barstow and Bergman 2003).

At \$500 billion a year, "crime in the suites" costs more than "crime in the streets" (Reiman and Leighton 2010). This refers only to dollar costs. The physical and emotional costs are another matter. For example, no one has figured out a way to compare the suffering of rape victims with the pain of elderly couples who lost their life savings to Madoff's white-collar fraud.

Fear, however, centers on street crime, especially the violent stranger who can change your life forever. As the Social Map shows, the chances of such an encounter depend

on where you live. You can see that entire regions are safer—or more dangerous—than others. In general, the northern states are safer, the southern states more dangerous.

Figure 6.1 How Safe is Your State? Violent Crime in the United States



NOTE: Violent crimes are murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. I estimated Minnesota's rate, based on earlier data and reduced rates since then. The chance of becoming a victim of a violent crime is five times higher in Tennessee, the most dangerous state, than in Maine, the safest state. Washington, D.C., not a state, is in a class by itself. Its rate of 1,244 is *twelve* times higher than Vermont's rate.

SOURCE: *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 334.

GENDER AND CRIME Gender is not just something we do. Gender is a feature of society that surrounds us from birth. Gender pushes us, as male or female, into different corners in life, offering and nurturing some behaviors while it withdraws others. The opportunity to commit crime is one of the many consequences of how society sets up a *gender order*. The social changes that opened business and the professions to women also brought new opportunities for women to commit crime. From stolen property to illegal weapons, Table 6.2 shows how women have taken advantage of this new opportunity.

Table 6.2 Women and Crime: What a Change

Of all those arrested, what percentage are women?			
Crime	1992	2014	Change
Burglary	9.2%	17.8%	+93%
Car theft	10.8%	20.3%	+88%
Drunken driving	13.8%	25.0%	+81%
Stolen property	12.5%	21.5%	+72%
Robbery	8.5%	14.0%	+65%
Aggravated assault	14.8%	23.0%	+55%
Arson	13.4%	18.9%	+41%
Larceny/theft	32.1%	43.2%	+35%
Illegal drugs	16.4%	21.9%	+34%
Illegal weapons	7.5%	8.8%	+17%
Forgery and counterfeiting	34.7%	36.5%	+5%
Fraud	42.1%	39.1%	–7%

SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 1994 and 2017:Table 357.

IN SUM Functionalists stress that just as the social classes differ in opportunities for income and education, so they differ in opportunities for crime. As a result, street crime is greater among the lower social classes and white-collar crime greater among the higher social classes. The growing crime rates of women illustrate how changing gender roles have given women more access to what sociologists call “illegitimate opportunities.”

The Conflict Perspective

6.5 Apply the conflict perspective to deviance by explaining how social class is related to the criminal justice system and how the criminal justice system is oppressive.

Conflict theorists view the criminal justice system as an instrument that protects the rich and powerful and oppresses the poor and weak. Let’s find out why they have this view.

Class, Crime, and the Criminal Justice System

TRW sold transistors to the federal government to use in its military satellites. The transistors failed, and the government had to shut down its satellite program. TRW said that the failure was a surprise to them, that it must be due to some unknown defect. U.S. officials then paid TRW millions of dollars to investigate the failure.

Then a whistle-blower appeared, informing the government that TRW knew the transistors would fail in satellites even before it sold them. The government sued Northrop Grumman Corporation, which had bought TRW, and the corporation was found guilty.

What was the punishment for a crime this serious? The failure of these satellites compromised the defense of the United States. When the executives of TRW were put on trial, how long were their prison sentences? Actually, these criminals weren’t even put on trial, and not one spent even a night in jail. In this case of white-collar crime, Grumman was fined \$325 million. Then—and this is hard to believe—on the same day, the government settled a lawsuit that Grumman had brought against it for \$325 million (Drew 2009). Certainly a rare coincidence.

Contrast this backdoor deal between influential people with what happens to the poor who break the law. A poor person who is caught stealing even a \$1,000 car can end up serving years in prison. How can a legal system that proudly boasts “justice for all” be so inconsistent? According to conflict theory, this question is central to the analysis of crime and the **criminal justice system**—the police, courts, and prisons that deal with people who are accused of having committed crimes. Let’s see what conflict theorists have to say about this.

The Criminal Justice System as an Instrument of Oppression

Conflict theorists regard power and social inequality as the main characteristics of society. The criminal justice system, they stress, is a tool designed by the powerful to maintain their power and privilege. For the poor, in contrast, the law is an instrument of oppression (Chambliss 2000; Davis and Sorensen 2013). The idea that the law operates impartially to bring justice to all, they say, is a cultural myth promoted by the capitalist class to secure the cooperation of the poor in their own oppression.

criminal justice system

the system of police, courts, and prisons set up to deal with people who are accused of having committed a crime

The working poor and those below them pose a special threat to the power elite. Receiving the least of society's material rewards, they hold the potential to rebel and overthrow the current social order. To prevent this, the law comes down hard on the poor and the underclass. They are the least rooted in society. They have only low-paying, part-time, or seasonal work—if they have jobs at all. Because their street crimes threaten the social order that keeps the elite in power, they are punished severely. From this class come *most* of the prison inmates in the United States.

The criminal justice system, then, does not focus on the executives of corporations and the harm they do through manufacturing unsafe products, creating pollution, and manipulating prices. Yet the violations of the capitalist class cannot be ignored totally; if they become too extreme, they might outrage the working class, encouraging them to rise up and revolt. To prevent this, a flagrant violation by a member of the capitalist class is occasionally prosecuted. The publicity given to the case provides evidence of the “fairness” of the criminal justice system, which helps to stabilize the social system—and keeps the powerful in their positions of privilege.

The powerful are usually able to bypass the courts altogether, appearing instead before an agency that has no power to imprison (such as the Federal Trade Commission). These agencies are directed by people from wealthy backgrounds who sympathize with the intricacies of the corporate world. It is they who oversee most cases of price manipulation, insider stock trading, violations of fiduciary duty, and so on. Is it surprising, then, that the typical sanction for corporate crime is a token fine?

IN SUM Conflict theorists stress that the power elite developed the legal system to stabilize the social order. They use it to control the poor, who pose a threat to the powerful. The poor hold the potential of rebelling as a group, which could dislodge the power elite from their place of privilege. To prevent this, the criminal justice system makes certain that heavy penalties come down on the poor.

Reactions to Deviance

6.6 Be able to discuss street crime and imprisonment, the three-strikes laws, the decline in violent crime, recidivism, bias in the death penalty, the medicalization of deviance, and the need for a more humane approach.

Whether it is cheating on a sociology quiz or holding up a liquor store, any violation of norms invites reaction. In the following *Thinking Critically about Social Life*, we will consider reactions to sexting, a controversial activity of many teenagers. After this we will turn to reactions to violent crimes.



“If you want justice, it’s two hundred dollars an hour. Obstruction of justice runs a bit more.”

The cartoonist’s hyperbole makes an excellent commentary on the social class disparity of our criminal justice system. Not only are the crimes of the wealthy not as likely to come to the attention of authorities as are the crimes of the poor, but when they do, the wealthy can afford legal expertise to wiggle around the law that the poor cannot.



In early capitalism, children worked alongside adults. At that time, just as today, most street criminals came from the marginal working class, as did these boys who worked in a glass works company in Indiana in 1908.

Thinking Critically about Social Life

Sexting: Getting on the Phone Isn't What It Used to Be

"How can we impress them?" wondered the eighth-grade girls at a sleepover. "They don't even know we're interested." The girls came up with an idea. They took off their clothes, covered themselves with whipped cream, and sent pictures to boys of themselves licking it off.

It seemed like a good idea at the time.

But not the next day. As the girls walked to class, the boys stood around leering, laughing, and holding up the girls' images on their cell phones.

The boys who received the images had forwarded them to their friends—who forwarded them to their friends, and so on.

And some photos were forwarded to the parents.

As they say, that's when all hell broke loose.



Sexting can be fun. It can also be dangerous. If a photo is of an underage person, or sent to one, an individual can be convicted of a sexual offense against a child. This man, Anthony Weiner, might have been mayor of New York City, but instead he is serving time in a federal prison for sexting a 15-year-old girl. He will also be required to register as a sex offender.

"You're getting excited about nothing," is a common attitude of adolescents. "What's the harm if we do this? Nude selfies don't get anyone pregnant, and they don't spread diseases. It's a kind of safe sex." (Sales 2016)

The law enforcers reply, "It's not only stupid to show pictures of your genitals, but it's also against the law."

The general consensus seems to be that the law needs to catch up with this social change, that child pornography laws don't really apply to minors who sext. A developing sentiment is that educational programs are more appropriate, maybe even community service.

Of course, we can't overlook the more severe penalty—banning an offender from using cell phones for an entire year.

Teenagers might be naïve, but they are far from stupid. Many skirt the legal problem by sexting via Snapchat. Poof! After

being viewed, the photos vanish without leaving a trace.

If two people over the age of 18 send sexually explicit photos to one another, their sexting is a matter between the two. In contrast, those under the age of 18 are legally minors, and the law classifies their sexual photos as child pornography.

The legal consequences can be severe. Both those who send the photos and those who pass them on to others have possessed child pornography. Anyone convicted of this offense will have to register as a sex offender—and this lasts for decades!

For Your Consideration

- Do you think that sexting by minors should be a private matter, as it is for adults? Why or why not?
- If you think there should be sanctions for sexting by minors, which ones?
- Should the same sanctions apply for sexters age 13 and age 17? For nudity and for the depiction of sexual intercourse?

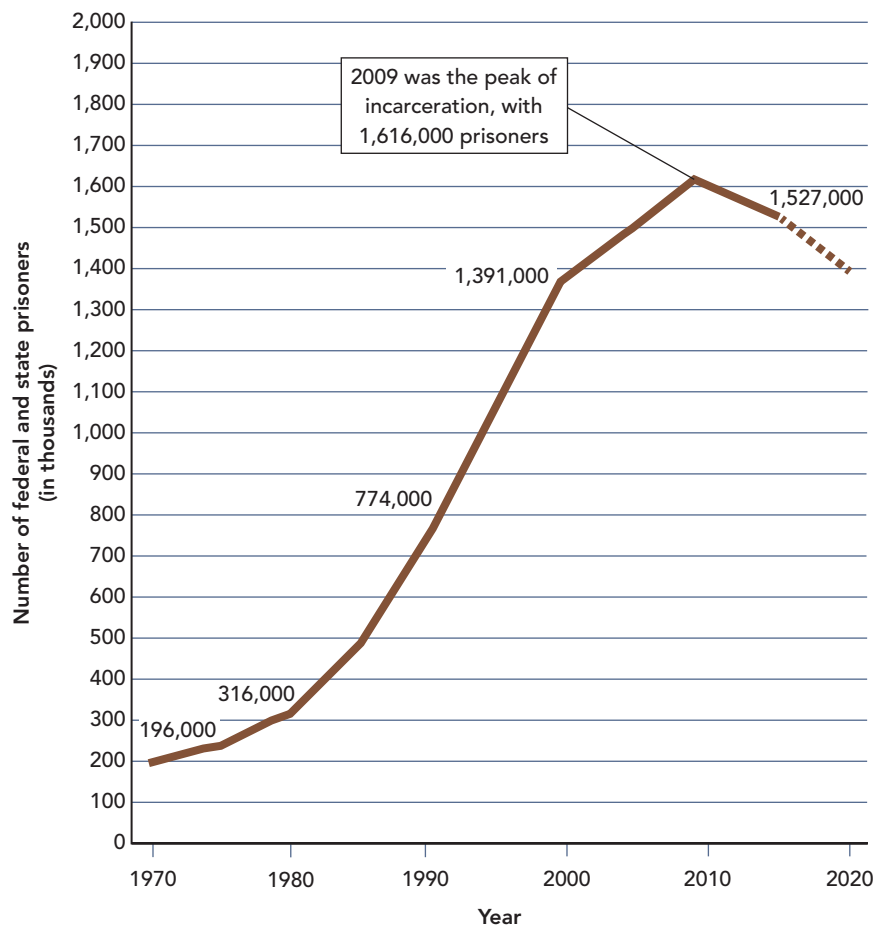
Street Crime and Prisons

Let's begin our overview of street crime and prisons with a stunning statistic: The United States has only 5 percent of the world's population but about 25 percent of the world's prisoners (Brayne 2013). One of 35 adults, 7 million Americans, is on probation or parole or in jail or prison (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Tables 10, 375, 376, 381). No other country comes close to these totals. There are so many prisoners that, running out of places to keep them, the state and federal governments pay private companies to operate "private prisons." About 126,000 Americans are locked up in these for-profit prisons (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2016).

To see how the number of prisoners has surged, look at Figure 6.2. As you can see, the number of prisoners peaked in 2009 and has dropped slightly since then. With the

decline in violent crime, which we will review shortly, this decrease is likely to be permanent. The broken line on this figure gives a rough indication of what the future might look like.

Figure 6.2 How Much Is Enough? The Explosion in the Number of U.S. Prisoners



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 1995:Table 349; 2014:Tables 2, 6, 363; 2017:Table 375; Carson and Anderson 2016. The broken line is the author's estimate.

Who are these prisoners? Let's compare them with the U.S. population. As you look at Table 6.3, several things may strike you. Forty-three percent of all prisoners are younger than 35, and almost all the prisoners are men. Then there is this remarkable statistic: Although African Americans make up just 12.7 percent of the U.S. population, there are more African American prisoners than white prisoners.

Finally, note how marriage and education—two of the major ways that society “anchors” people into mainstream behavior—keep people out of prison. About half of prisoners have never married. And look at the power of education, a major component of social class. As I mentioned earlier, social class funnels some people into the criminal justice system while it diverts others away from it. You can see how people who drop out of high school have a high chance of ending up in prison—and how unlikely it is for a college graduate to have this unwelcome destination in life.

Table 6.3 Comparing Prison Inmates with the U.S. Population

Characteristics	Percentage of Prisoners with These Characteristics	Percentage of U.S. Population Age 18 and Over with These Characteristics ^a
Age^b		
18–24	11.3%	12.6%
25–34	32.1%	17.8%
35–44	26.7%	16.4%
45–54	18.9%	17.4%
55 and older	10.6%	35.8%
Race-Ethnicity^b		
African American	35.4%	12.7%
White	33.8%	64.6%
Latino	21.6%	15.5%
Other ^c	9.1%	7.2%
Sex^b		
Male	92.7%	49.2%
Female	7.3%	50.8%
Marital Status^d		
Never married	54.7%	27.6%
Married	21.9%	56.0%
Divorced and Widowed	23.0%	16.4%
Education		
Less than high school	30.6%	12.4%
High school graduate	45.8%	30.4%
Some college	18.8%	26.3%
College graduate	4.8%	30.9%

^aBecause this column refers to Americans age 18 and over, the percentages will not agree with other totals in this book. For education, the percentages are based on Americans age 25 and over.

^bAge, race-ethnicity, and sex of prisoners are from Carson and Anderson while their marital status and education are from *Sourcebook*.

^cThe remainder after *Sourcebook* lists African American, white, and Hispanic; apparently includes Asian Americans, Native Americans, and people who claim two or more races.

^dThe marital status of prisoners applies only to inmates on death row. Data not available for other inmates.

SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 2013*: Tables 6.0001, 6.45, 6.81; Carson and Anderson 2016: Tables 1, 3, 8; *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2014*: Tables 59, 243, 366; 2017: Tables 6, 10.

For about the past twenty years or so, the United States has followed a “get tough” policy. One of the most significant changes was “three-strikes-and-you’re-out” laws, which have had unintended consequences, as you will see in the following *Thinking Critically about Social Life*.

Thinking Critically about Social Life

What Should We Do About Repeat Offenders? The “Three-Strikes” Laws

In 1993, Polly Klaas, a 12-year old in Petaluma, California, had a sleepover at her home. A man on parole from rape, slipped in, tied up the girls, put pillow cases over their heads, and took Polly. Two months later, her partially nude body was found in a wooded area (Callahan 2013).

Back in the 1980s and 1990s, alarm and fear grew as violent crime soared. Amid outrage that violent criminals were being paroled from prison only to commit more violent crimes, the public demanded that “something be done.”

Politicians, also outraged at the crimes of repeat offenders like the man who abducted, raped, and killed Polly Klaas, passed “three-strikes” laws: Anyone convicted of a third felony would receive a mandatory sentence. In California, the third felony meant twenty-five years to life. Delaware’s version requires a life sentence for anyone convicted of a third violent crime (Albright 2016).

As intended, these laws have kept many repeat offenders off the street, but they also have had some unanticipated results:

- In California, a 64-year-old man who stole a package of cigarettes was sentenced to twenty-five-years-to-life in prison (Phillips 2013).
- Another California man, who passed a bad check for \$94, was sentenced to twenty-five years to life (Jones 2008).
- In Florida, a man who stored cocaine in his girlfriend's attic was sentenced to fifteen years in prison, but his 27-year-old girlfriend, a mother of three, was sent to prison for life. The judge said the sentence was unjust, but since it was her third felony conviction he had no choice (Tierney 2012).
- In New York City, a man who was about to be sentenced for selling crack said to the judge, "I'm only 19. This is terrible." He then hurled himself out of a courtroom window, plunging to his death sixteen stories below (Cloud 1998).

A sort of Oops! moment followed. This isn't quite what was intended. The public had in mind someone who was convicted of *violent* crimes, such as a third brutal rape, being sent to prison for life. As in California, though, in some states the politicians neglected to limit the three-strikes to violent crimes.

Judges complained that the three-strikes laws bound their hands, limiting them from taking into consideration the circumstances that surround a crime. With the longer sentences taking many repeat offenders off the street, though, the public felt relieved, and there was little rush to change these laws. Eventually, the gap between justice and unfair sentencing became too great to ignore, and the states are now softening their three-strikes laws. Not incidentally, a political consideration in the face of budget crises is the huge costs of keeping offenders locked up.



Sequoia, 11, Floyd, 8, and Deonta, 6, hold photos of their father, Floyd Earl, who is in prison for 25 years to life for theft. California voters had approved the three-strikes law amid public furor over the 1993 kidnap, rape, and murder of 12-year-old Polly Klaas by Richard Allen Davis, a repeat offender on parole at the time.

For Your Consideration

Apply the symbolic interactionist, functionalist, and conflict perspectives to the passage of the three-strikes laws and to their revision.

- For *symbolic interactionism*, how does the meaning of these laws depend on social location, especially where someone is in the criminal justice system?
- For *functionalism*, what are some of the functions (benefits) of three-strikes laws? Their dysfunctions?
- For the *conflict perspective*, which groups are in conflict? What different interests are represented, and who has the power to enforce their will on others?

The Decline of Violent Crime

As you have seen, judges have put more and more people in prison, and legislators have passed the three-strikes laws. As these changes took place, the crime rate dropped sharply. Sociologists conclude that getting tough on criminals reduced crime, but they stress that this is only one of the reasons that violent crime dropped (Baumer and Wolff 2013). Other reasons include higher employment, a lower birth rate, an aging population, and even abortion. There are even those who say that the best explanation is the elimination of lead in gasoline (Drum 2013). We can rule out employment: When the unemployment rate shot up with the economic crisis, the lower crime rates continued (Oppel 2011).

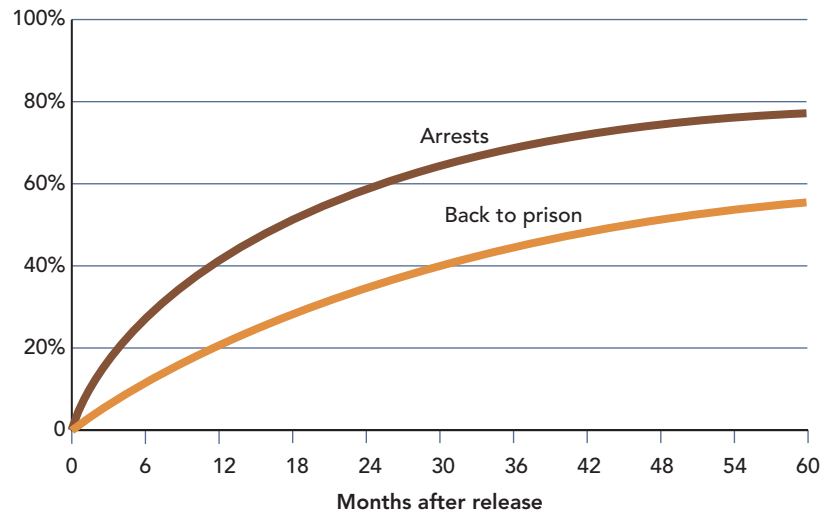
When the FBI (2016) reported a one-year increase in violent crime, politicians and reporters stoked fears of crime rising across the country. However, this increase could be just a blip in the statistics, or it could be the start of a longer-term increase. For this answer, we await future reports.

Recidivism

If a goal of prisons is to teach their clients to stay away from crime, they are colossal failures. We can measure their failure by the **recidivism rate**—the percentage of released prisoners who are rearrested. Within just three years of their release, *two out of*

recidivism rate
the percentage of released convicts who are rearrested

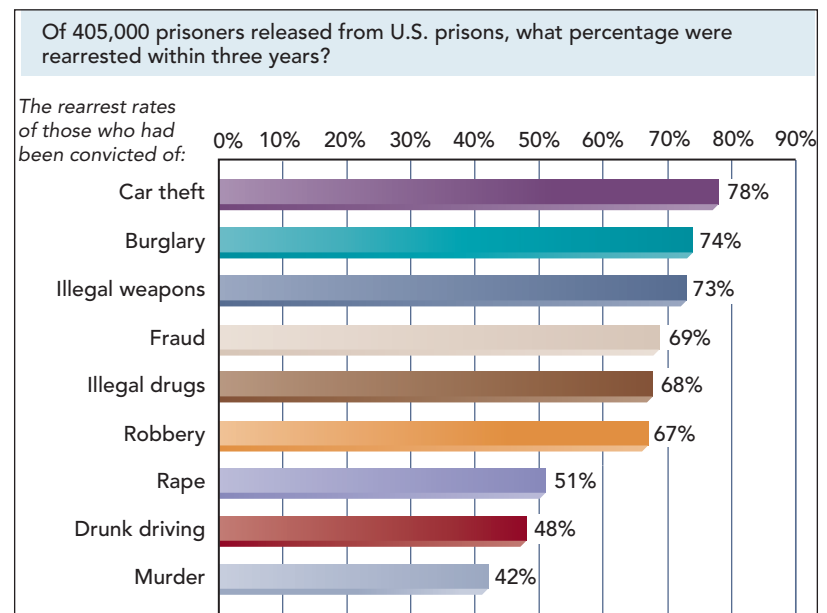
Figure 6.3 How Fast They Return: Recidivism of U.S. Prisoners



SOURCE: Modified by the author from Figure 1 of Durose et al. 2014.

three (68 percent) are rearrested, and half are back in prison (Durose et al. 2014). Looking at Figures 6.3 and 6.4, it is safe to conclude that prisons fail to teach people that crime doesn't pay.

Figure 6.4 Recidivism by Type of Crime



SOURCE: By the author. Based on Durose et al. 2014: Table 8.

The Death Penalty and Bias

capital punishment
the death penalty

As you know, **capital punishment**, the death penalty, is the most extreme measure the state takes. As you also know, the death penalty arouses both impassioned opposition and support. Advances in DNA testing have given opponents of the death penalty a strong argument: Innocent people have been sent to death row, and some have been executed. Others are just as passionate about retaining the death penalty. They point to such crimes as those of the serial killers discussed in the following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

The Killer Next Door: Serial Murderers in Our Midst

Here is my experience with serial killers. As I was watching television one night, I was stunned by the images coming from Houston, Texas. Television cameras showed the police digging up dozens of bodies from under a boat storage shed. A few days later, I drove from Illinois, where I was teaching, to Houston, where 33-year-old Dean Corll had befriended Elmer Wayne Henley and David Brooks, two teenagers from broken homes. Together, they had killed twenty-seven boys. Elmer and David would pick up young hitchhikers and deliver them to Corll to rape and kill. They even brought him their neighbors and high school classmates.

On a city map, I plotted the locations of the homes of the local murder victims. Many clustered around the homes of the teenage killers. I then talked to one of Elmer's neighbors, as he was painting his front porch. His 15-year-old son had gone to get a haircut one Saturday morning. That was the last time he saw his son alive. The police refused to investigate. They insisted that his son had run away.

I decided to spend my coming sabbatical writing a novel on this case. To get into the minds of the killers, I knew that I would have to "become" them day after day. Corll kept a piece of plywood in his apartment. In each of its corners, he had cut a hole. He and the boys would spread-eagle their handcuffed victims on this board and torture and rape them for hours. Sometimes, they would even pause to order pizza. I began to be concerned about immersing myself in torture and human degradation. Would I be the same person afterward? I decided not to write the book.

The three killers led double lives so successfully that their friends and family were unaware of their criminal activities. Henley's mother swore to me that her son couldn't possibly be guilty—he was a good boy. Some of Elmer's high school friends told me that his being involved in homosexual rape and murder was ridiculous—he was interested only in girls. I was interviewing them in Henley's bedroom, and for proof, they pointed to a pair of girls' panties that were draped across a lamp shade.



Ted Bundy is shown here on trial in Miami for killing two women, both college students. He often used charm and wit to win the confidence of his victims. Like most serial killers, he blended in with society. Bundy was executed for his murders.

Serial murder is killing three or more victims in separate events. The murders may occur over several days, weeks, or years. The elapsed time between murders distinguishes serial killers from *mass murderers*, those who do their killing all at once. Here are some infamous examples:

- During the 1960s and 1970s, Ted Bundy, shown here, raped and killed dozens of women in four states.
- Between 1974 and 1991, Dennis Rader killed ten people in Wichita, Kansas. Rader had written to the newspapers, proudly calling himself the BTK (Bind, Torture, and Kill) strangler.
- In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Aileen Wuornos hitchhiked along Florida's freeways. She killed seven men after having sex with them.
- In 2009, Anthony Sowell of Cleveland, Ohio, was discovered living with eleven decomposing bodies of women he had raped and strangled (Robbins 2009).
- The serial killer with the most victims appears to be Virginia de Souza, a physician in Brazil, who, between 2006 and 2014, is thought to have killed 320 patients to "free up the wards." She injected her victims with muscle relaxants and then cut off their air supply (Feldschreiber 2013).

Is serial murder more common now than it used to be? Not likely. In the past, police departments had

little communication with one another, and seldom did anyone connect killings in different jurisdictions. Today's more efficient communications and investigative techniques, coupled with DNA matching, make it easier for the police to know when a serial killer is operating in an area. Part of the perception that there are more serial killers today is also due to ignorance of our history: In our frontier past, for example, serial killers went from ranch to ranch.

For Your Consideration

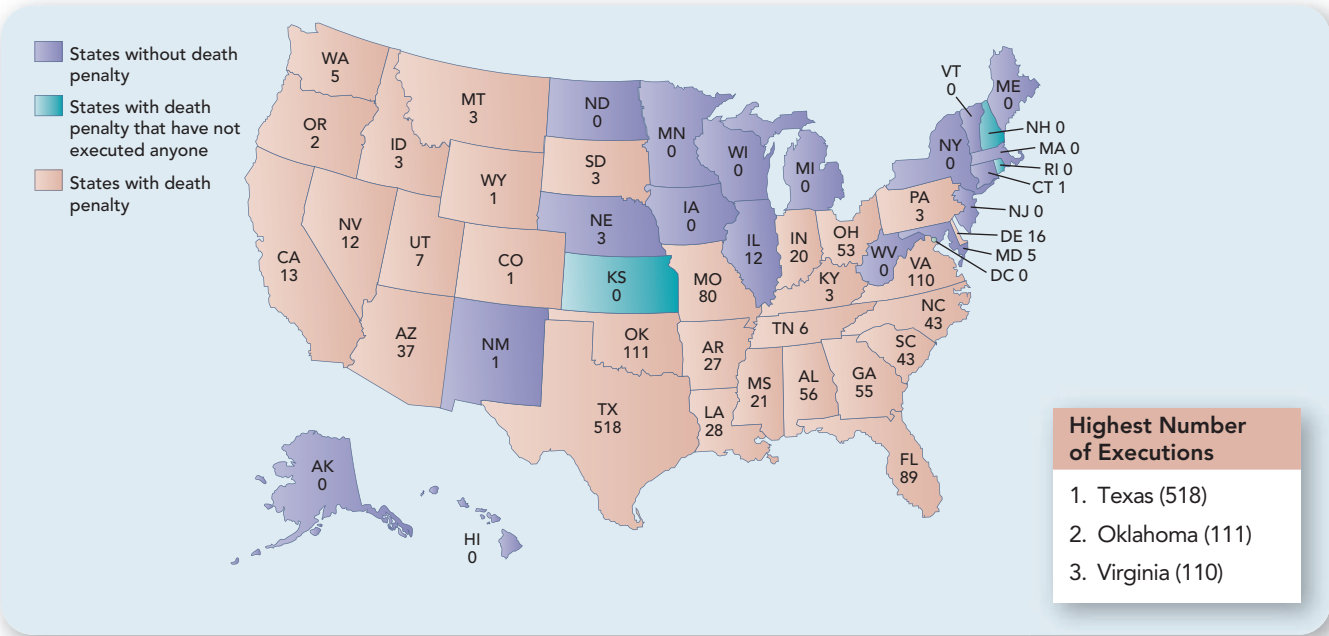
- Do you think that serial killers should be given the death penalty? Why or why not?
- How does your social location influence your opinion on the death penalty?

GEOGRAPHY It is clear that the death penalty is not administered evenly. Consider geography: You can see from the Social Map that where people commit murder greatly affects their chances of being put to death.

serial murder

the killing of several victims in three or more separate events

Figure 6.5 Executions in the United States



NOTE: Executions since 1977, when the death penalty was restored. The executions in states without the death penalty occurred before those states banned the death penalty.

SOURCE: By the author. Based on Bureau of Justice Statistics 2014b. *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 379.

Figure 6.6 Who Gets Executed? Gender Bias in Capital Punishment



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 379.

SOCIAL CLASS The death penalty also shows social class bias. As you know from news reports, it is rare for a rich person to be sentenced to death. Although the government does not collect statistics on social class and the death penalty, this common observation is borne out by the education of the prisoners on death row. Half of the prisoners on death row (48 percent) have not finished high school (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2014a).

GENDER There is also gender bias in the death penalty. Gender bias is so strong that it is almost unheard of for a woman to be sentenced to death, much less executed. Although women commit 9.6 percent of the murders, they make up only 2.0 percent of death row inmates (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2014a). Even on death row, the gender bias continues: Of those condemned to death, the state is much more likely to execute a man than a woman. As Figure 6.6 shows, of the 5,218 prisoners executed in the United States since 1930, only 46, a mere 0.9 percent, have been women. Rather than gender bias, perhaps the chances of being sentenced to death or being executed reflect the women’s previous offenses and the relative brutality of their murders. Not likely, but maybe. We need research to find out.

RACE-ETHNICITY At one point, racial-ethnic bias was so flagrant that the U.S. Supreme Court put a stop to the death penalty. Donald Partington (1965), a lawyer in Virginia, was shocked by the bias he saw in the courtroom, and he decided to document it. He found that 2,798 men had been convicted for rape and attempted rape in Virginia between 1908 and 1963—56 percent whites and 44 percent blacks. For rape, 41 men had been executed. For attempted rape, 13 had been executed. *All those executed were black.* Not one of the whites was executed.

After listening to evidence like this, in 1972 the Supreme Court ruled in *Furman v. Georgia* that the death penalty, as applied, was unconstitutional. The execution of prisoners stopped—but not for long. The states wrote new laws, and in 1977, they again began to execute prisoners. Since the death penalty was reinstituted, 57 percent of those put to death have been white, 34 percent African American, and 8 percent Latinos (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Table 379).

It is difficult to say precisely what role racial-ethnic bias plays in these totals, especially because they reflect the much higher murder rate of blacks. Yet, here are two indications of how real racial bias is in the criminal justice system: In general, white jurors are more likely to convict black defendants than white defendants (Anwar et al. 2012). In murder trials, if the victim is white and the accused is black, juries are more likely to impose the death penalty than if the accused is white and the victim is black (Baumgartner et al. 2015).

The official responses to deviance that we have discussed assume that the state (government) is functioning. What happens when the state breaks down? Let's consider this in the following *Thinking Critically about Social Life*.

Thinking Critically about Social Life

Vigilantes: When the State Breaks Down

Residents of a town outside Veracruz, Mexico, were surprised one morning when they awoke to see the bodies of nine men and two women. The bodies, nude or partially clothed and bound at the ankles, showed the scars of torture. On one of the bodies was this sign: "You want a war, you'll get a war." (Woody 2017)

And the war is on.

A national meeting of states attorneys was to be held in a ritzy convention center in the capital city of the state of Veracruz. Two days before the meeting, a convoy of gunmen dressed in black drove up to the convention center. There they abandoned two trucks. In the trucks were the bodies of 35 men and women (de Cordoba 2017).

Many of us chafe under the coercive nature of the state: the IRS, Homeland Security, the NSA, the many police agencies from the CIA and FBI to who knows how many other groups that go by three capital letters. Little cameras litter society, seemingly recording our every move.

We certainly have given up a lot of freedoms—and we are likely to give up many more in the name of security. We can chafe and complain all we want, but as stressed in the preceding chapter, this wave of surveillance has tremendous momentum and is seemingly unstoppable.

There is another side to what is happening. The guns that the many uniformed and plainclothes men and women are carrying can also be aimed at us. But for now, they bring security. They indicate that the state is operating; perhaps overreaching, but functioning quite well.

What happens when the state fails, when the men and women who are authorized to carry guns don't protect citizens from the bad guys who carry guns?

One reaction is vigilantism, people taking the law into their own hands. Remember what we call the Wild West? Citizens armed themselves, formed posses, chased the bad guys, and dispensed quick justice at the end of a rope. You've seen the movies.

And something like this is happening in Mexico.

From the local to the national, the Mexican government has failed. The drug lords have infiltrated the police and the politicians, and not just the lower levels. The most wanted drug lord in Mexico, "El Chapo" Guzman, who headed the feared Sinaloa cartel, used to drive openly into the state capital in an armored SUV. Guzman would even meet with the state governor (Johnson 2014).

It is difficult to overstate the extent of corruption in Mexico, but let's add a couple more shocking findings. The man who directed Mexico's national drug enforcement agency was on the drug lords' payroll. Army generals take money to protect drug deals. A secret *billion*-dollar bank account was traced to the brother of Mexico's president. (But why rush to judgment? Perhaps some taxi driver gave the president's brother a billion-dollar tip because he was a good passenger.) In Gomez Palacio, prison administrators let prisoners out so they could kill members of a rival drug gang. They even loaned the prisoners their guns and cars to do the killing. Afterward, the men dutifully returned to the prison, turned in the cars and guns, and went back to their cells. Incredible, I know. But true.

Not all of Mexico's officials are corrupt, and the drug war—between the state and the cartels, as well as between rival cartels—has grown in ferocity. The state uses Black Hawk helicopters to fire on houses, and the cartels have used high powered weapons to shoot one of them down (Woody 2017). Some surmise that in its frustration the Mexican government has become more interested in killing drug dealers than in arresting them. One thing is evident: Despite the arrest or killing of many top leaders, the cartels continue to thrive.

Shooting deaths by the police, the army, and the gangsters—with it sometimes difficult to distinguish which is which—run between 120,000 and 175,000 (de Cordoba 2017; Linthicum 2017). In Iguala, a town in the state of Guerrero, the mayor is accused of ordering his police to arrest forty-three college students and turn them over to the local drug cartel to be killed. The cartels have kidnapped so many young men and women that mothers of missing children have formed groups to search for hidden graves.

(continued)

In the state of Veracruz, these despairing women found a mass burial site that contained 249 bodies (de Cordoba 2017).

The Mexican people have begun to take the law into their own hands. In the state of Guerrero, country folk put on masks, grabbed their old hunting rifles, raided the homes of drug dealers, and put them in makeshift jails. Blockading the roads leading to their little towns, they won't let drug dealers, or any strangers, in. This includes the federal police, the state police, and the army, all of which they distrust. The official "enforcers of the law" are too corrupt, they say. They trust only the neighbors they grew up with.

With the state claiming the right to use violence only for itself, a conflict between the vigilantes and the state is inevitable. And it has begun. In the state of Michoacan, the people took up arms against the Knights Templar, the drug cartel that is terrorizing their area. As the citizen militias were gaining the upper hand, the military stepped in to stop them. This confused the people, who asked why the military was trying to disarm them and not the drug cartel. "First we must disarm you, so there won't be bloodshed," the military replied. "Then we can go after the drug dealers."

The vigilantes asked if they could accompany the police and military as they pursue the drug cartel. The reply, "No, that's our job. You go home."

This didn't make sense to the people, and they resisted. The military killed several of the citizens.

The people still don't understand. The state isn't doing its job, their lives are in danger, and the local citizens think they know how to take care of the problem.

The reaction of the local police, the honest ones? "Maybe the citizens can do something about the problem. We



"Enough is enough!" This physician (center) in Michoacan, Mexico, organized vigilantes to replace the corrupt police. The police arrested him for carrying illegal guns.

can't. If we try, the drug dealers will go to our homes and kill our families. They don't know who these masked men are."

Based on several sources, including Sheridan 1998; Malkin 2010; Casey 2013; de Cordoba and Montes 2014; Perez and de Cordoba 2014; Althaus and de Cordoba 2016; Woody 2017.

For Your Consideration

- We don't yet know the consequences of this incipient vigilante movement in Mexico. But what else can the citizens do?
- How much freedom are you willing to give up to have security?
- Where is a balance between personal freedom and state security?

police discretion

the practice of the police, in the normal course of their duties, to either arrest or ticket someone for an offense or to overlook the matter

The Trouble with Official Statistics

We must be cautious when it comes to official crime statistics. According to official statistics, working-class boys are more delinquent than middle-class boys. Yet, as we have seen, who actually gets arrested for what is influenced by social class, a point that has far-reaching implications. As symbolic interactionists point out, the police follow a symbolic system as they enforce the law. Ideas of "typical criminals" and "typical good citizens" permeate their work. The more a suspect matches their stereotypes of a lawbreaker (which they call "criminal profiles"), the more likely that person is to be arrested. **Police discretion**, the decision whether to arrest someone or even to ignore a matter, is a routine part of police work. Official crime statistics reflect these and many other biases.

Crime statistics do not have an objective, independent existence. They are not like oranges that you pick out in a grocery store. Rather, they are a human creation. If the police enforce laws strictly, crime statistics go up. Loosen the enforcement, and crime statistics go down. New York City provides a remarkable example. To keep their crime statistics low, the police keep some crime victims waiting in the police station for hours. Some victims give up and leave, and the crimes don't enter official records. In other cases, the police listen to crime victims but make no written record of the crime (Baker and Goldstein 2011). Various forms of underreporting probably occur in most police departments.

As a personal example, someone took my mailbox (rural, located on the street). When I called and reported the theft, a police officer arrived promptly. He was incredibly friendly. He looked around and spotted the mailbox in the ditch. He retrieved it and then personally restored it to its post. He even used his tools to screw it back on. He then said, "I'm chalking this one up to the wind." I didn't object. I knew what he was doing. No crime to report, no paperwork for him, and the area has one less incident to go into the crime statistics.

The Medicalization of Deviance: Mental Illness

When the woman drove her car into the river, drowning her two small children strapped to their little car seats, people said that she had "gone nuts," "went bonkers," and just plain "lost it."

NEITHER MENTAL NOR ILLNESS? When people cannot find a satisfying explanation for why someone does something weird or is "like that," they often say that a "sickness in the head" is causing the unacceptable behavior. To *medicalize* something is to make it a medical matter, to classify it as a form of illness that properly belongs in the care of physicians. For the past hundred years or so, especially since the time of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), the Viennese physician who founded psychoanalysis, there has been a growing tendency toward the **medicalization of deviance**. In this view, deviance, including crime, is a sign of mental sickness. Rape, murder, stealing, cheating, and so on are external symptoms of internal disorders, consequences of a confused or tortured mind, one that should be treated by mental health experts.

Thomas Szasz (1920–2012), a renegade in his profession of psychiatry, disagreed. He (1996, 1998, 2010) argued that what are called *mental illnesses are neither mental nor illnesses. They are simply problem behaviors*. Szasz broke these behaviors for which we don't have a ready explanation into two causes: physical illness and learned deviance.

Some behaviors that are called "mental illnesses" have physical causes. That is, something in an individual's brain leads to unusual perceptions or behavior. For example, a chemical imbalance in the brain can cause depression. The individual's behaviors—crying, long-term sadness, or lack of interest in family, work, school, or grooming—are symptoms of this physical problem, one that can be treated by drugs.

Another example is attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), a "mental illness" that seems to have come out of nowhere (Saul 2014). As Szasz said, "No one explains where this disease came from or why it didn't exist 50 years ago. No one is able to diagnose it with objective tests." A teacher or parent complains that a child is misbehaving, and a psychiatrist or doctor says the child is suffering from ADD. Misbehaving children have been a problem throughout history, but now, with doctors looking to expand their territory, this problem behavior has become a sign of "mental illness" that they can treat.

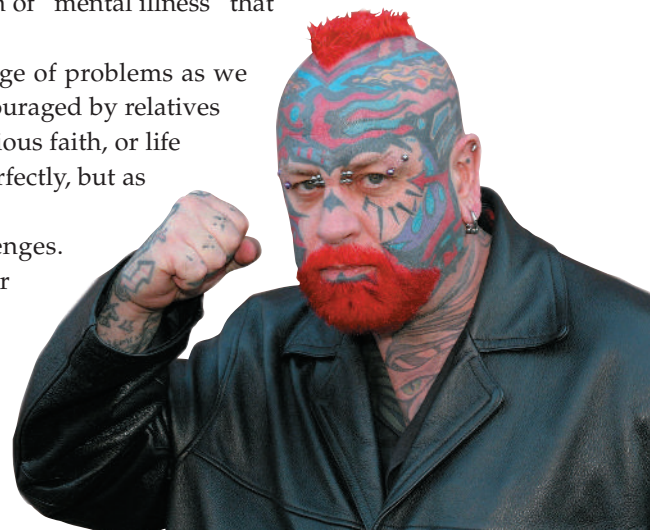
All of us have troubles. Some of us face a constant barrage of problems as we go through life. Most of us continue the struggle, perhaps encouraged by relatives and friends and motivated by job, family responsibilities, religious faith, or life goals. Even when the odds seem hopeless, we carry on, not perfectly, but as best we can.

Some people, however, fail to cope well with life's challenges. Overwhelmed, they become depressed, uncooperative, or hostile. Some strike out at others, while, in Merton's term, others become retreatists and withdraw into their homes, refusing to come out. These may be inappropriate ways of coping, stressed Szasz, but they are *behaviors, not mental illnesses*. Szasz concluded that "mental illness" is a myth foisted on a naive public. Our medical profession uses pseudoscientific jargon that people don't understand so

medicalization of deviance

to make deviance a medical matter, a symptom of some underlying illness that needs to be treated by physicians

People whose behaviors violate norms are sometimes called mentally ill. "Why else would they do such things?" is a common response to deviant behaviors that we don't understand. Mental illness is a label that contains the assumption that there is something wrong "within" people that "causes" their disapproved behavior. The surprise with this man, who changed his legal name to "Scary Guy," is that he speaks at schools across the country, where he promotes acceptance, awareness, love, and understanding.



it can expand its area of control and force nonconforming people to accept society's definitions of "normal."

Szasz's controversial claims force us to look anew at the forms of deviance that we usually refer to as mental illness. To explain behavior that people find bizarre, he directs our attention not to disorders deep within the "subconscious" but, instead, to how people learn those behaviors. To ask, "What is the origin of someone's inappropriate or bizarre behavior?" then becomes similar to asking "Why do some women steal?" "Why do some men rape?" "Why do some teenagers cuss their parents and stalk out of the room?" The answers depend on those people's particular experiences in life, not on an illness in their mind. Some sociologists find Szasz's renegade analysis refreshing because it points us away from illnesses of the mind to *social experiences*. Others, however, are uncomfortable with it, and some disagree wholeheartedly. Regardless of these disagreements, Szasz's analysis applies not just to mental illness but also to deviance in general.

THE HOMELESS MENTALLY ILL

Jamie was sitting on a low wall surrounding the landscaped courtyard of an exclusive restaurant. She appeared unaware of the stares elicited by her layers of mismatched clothing, her matted hair and dirty face, and the shopping cart that overflowed with her meager possessions.

After sitting next to Jamie for a few minutes, I saw her point to the street and concentrate, slowly moving her finger horizontally. I asked her what she was doing.

"I'm directing traffic," she replied. "I control where the cars go. Look, that one turned right there," she said, now withdrawing her finger.

"Really?" I said.

After a while she confided that her cart talked to her.

"Really?" I said again.

"Yes," she replied. "You can hear it, too." At that, she pushed the shopping cart a bit.

"Did you hear that?" she asked.

When I shook my head, she demonstrated again. Then it hit me. She was referring to the squeaking wheels!

I nodded.

When I left Jamie, she was pointing a finger toward the sky, for, as she told me, she also controlled the flight of airplanes.

To most of us, Jamie's behavior and thinking are bizarre. They simply do not match any reality we know. Could you or I become like Jamie?

Suppose for a bitter moment that you are homeless and have to live on the streets. You have no money, no place to sleep, no bathroom. You do not know *if* you are going to eat, much less where. You have no friends or anyone you can trust. You live in constant fear of being beaten and raped. Do you think this might be enough to drive you over the edge?

Consider just the problems of not having a place to bathe. (Shelters are often so dangerous that many homeless people prefer to sleep in public settings.) At first, you try to wash in the restrooms of gas stations, bars, the bus station, or a shopping center. But you are dirty, and people stare when you enter and call the management when they see you wash your feet in the sink. You are thrown out and told in no uncertain terms never to come back. So you get dirtier and dirtier. Eventually, you come to think of being dirty as a fact of life. Soon, maybe, you don't even care. The stares no longer bother you—at least not as much.

No one will talk to you, and you withdraw more and more into yourself. You begin to build a fantasy life. You talk openly to yourself. People stare, but so what? They stare anyway. Besides, they are no longer important to you.

Jamie might be mentally ill. Some organic problem, such as a chemical imbalance in her brain, might underlie her behavior. But perhaps not. How long would it take you to exhibit bizarre behaviors if you were homeless—and hopeless? The point is that *living on*

the streets can cause mental illness—or whatever we want to label socially inappropriate behaviors that we find difficult to classify. *Homelessness and mental illness are reciprocal*: Just as “mental illness” can cause homelessness, so the trials of being homeless, of living on cold, hostile streets, can lead to unusual thinking and behaviors.

The Need for a More Humane Approach

As Durkheim (1895/1964:68) pointed out, deviance is inevitable—even in a group of saints.

Imagine a society of saints, a perfect cloister of exemplary individuals. Crimes, properly so called, will there be unknown; but faults which appear invisible to the layman will create there the same scandal that the ordinary offense does in ordinary society.

With deviance inevitable, one measure of a society is how it treats its deviants. Our prisons certainly don’t say much good about U.S. society. Filled with the poor, uneducated, and unskilled, they are warehouses of the unwanted. White-collar criminals continue to get by with a slap on the wrist while street criminals are punished severely. Some deviants, who fail to meet current standards of admission to either prison or mental hospitals, take refuge in shelters, as well as in cardboard boxes tucked away in urban recesses. Although no one has *the* answer, it does not take much reflection to see that there are more humane approaches than these.

Because deviance is inevitable, the larger issues are to find ways to protect people from deviant behaviors that are harmful to themselves or others, to tolerate behaviors that are not harmful, and to develop systems of fairer treatment for deviants. In the absence of fundamental changes that would bring about an equitable society, most efforts are, unfortunately, like putting a Band-Aid on a gunshot wound. What we need is a more humane social system, one that would prevent the social inequalities that are the focus of the next four chapters.



Mental illness and drug/alcohol addiction are common among the homeless. This photo was taken in Miami, Florida, but it could have been taken in any large city in the United States.

Summary and Review

What Is Deviance?

- 6.1** Explain what deviance is, why it is relative, and why we need norms; also summarize the types of sanctions.

Deviance (the violation of norms) is relative. What people consider deviant varies from one culture to another and from group to group within the same society. As symbolic interactionists stress, it is not the act but the reactions to the act that make something deviant. All groups develop systems of **social control** to punish **deviants**—those who violate their norms.

Competing Explanations of Deviance: Sociobiology, Psychology, and Sociology

- 6.2** Contrast sociobiological, psychological, and sociological explanations of deviance.

How do sociological and individualistic explanations of deviance differ?

To explain why people deviate, sociobiologists and psychologists look for reasons *within* the individual, such as **genetic predispositions** or **personality disorders**. Sociologists, in contrast, look for explanations *outside* the individual, in social experiences.

The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

6.3 Apply the symbolic interactionist perspective to deviance by explaining differential association, control, and labeling.

How do symbolic interactionists explain deviance?

Symbolic interactionists have developed several theories to explain deviance such as **crime** (the violation of norms that are written into law). According to **differential association theory**, people learn to deviate by associating with others. According to **control theory**, each of us is propelled toward deviance, but most of us conform because of an effective system of inner and outer controls. People who have less effective controls deviate.

Labeling theory focuses on how labels (names, reputations) help to funnel people into or divert them away from deviance. People often use **techniques of neutralization** to deflect social norms.

The Functionalist Perspective

6.4 Apply the functionalist perspective to deviance by explaining how deviance can be functional for society, how mainstream values can produce deviance (strain theory), and how social class is related to crime (illegitimate opportunities).

How do functionalists explain deviance?

Functionalists point out that deviance, including criminal acts, is functional for society. Functions include affirming norms and promoting social unity and social change. According to **strain theory**, societies socialize their members into desiring **cultural goals**. Many people are unable to achieve these goals in socially acceptable ways—that is, by **institutionalized means**. *Deviants*, then, are people who either give up on the goals or use disapproved means to attain them. Merton identified five types of responses to cultural goals and institutionalized means: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion. Because of **illegitimate opportunity structures**, people have different access to illegal means of achieving goals.

The Conflict Perspective

6.5 Apply the conflict perspective to deviance by explaining how social class is related to the criminal justice system and how the criminal justice system is oppressive.

How do conflict theorists explain deviance?

Conflict theorists take the position that the group in power imposes its definitions of deviance on other groups. From this perspective, the law is an instrument of oppression used by the powerful to maintain their position of privilege. The ruling class, which developed the **criminal justice system**, uses it to punish the crimes of the poor while diverting its own criminal activities away from this punitive system.

Reactions to Deviance

6.6 Be able to discuss street crime and imprisonment, the three-strikes laws, the decline in violent crime, recidivism, bias in the death penalty, the medicalization of deviance, and the need for a more humane approach.

What are common reactions to deviance in the United States?

In following a “get-tough” policy, the United States has imprisoned millions of people. African Americans and Latinos make up a disproportionate percentage of U.S. prisoners. The death penalty shows biases by geography, social class, gender, and race–ethnicity.

Are official statistics on crime reliable?

The conclusions of both symbolic interactionists (that the police operate with a large measure of discretion) and conflict theorists (that a power elite controls the legal system) indicate that we must be cautious when using crime statistics.

What is the medicalization of deviance?

The medical profession has attempted to **medicalize** many forms of **deviance**, claiming that they represent mental illnesses. Thomas Szasz disagreed, asserting that these are problem behaviors, not mental illnesses. The situation of homeless people indicates that problems in living can lead to bizarre behavior and thinking.

What is a more humane approach?

Deviance is inevitable, so the larger issues are to find ways to protect people from deviance that harms themselves and others, to tolerate deviance that is not harmful, and to develop systems of fairer treatment for deviants.

Thinking Critically about Chapter 6

1. Select some deviance with which you are personally familiar. (It does not have to be your own—it can be something that someone you know did.) Choose one of the three theoretical perspectives to explain what happened.
2. As explained in the text, deviance can be mild. Recall some instance in which you broke a social rule in dress, etiquette, or speech. What was the reaction? Why do you think people reacted like that? What was your response to their reactions?
3. What do you think should be done about the U.S. crime problem? What sociological theories support your view?



The Venetians Taking Riva sul Garda from the Milanese in 1440, ca. 1570, Jacopo Robusti, (fresco)

Chapter 7

Global Stratification



Learning Objectives

After you have read this chapter, you should be able to:

- 7.1** Compare and contrast slavery (including bonded labor), caste, estate, and class systems of social stratification.
- 7.2** Contrast the views of Marx and Weber on what determines social class.
- 7.3** Contrast the functional and conflict views of why social stratification is universal.
- 7.4** Discuss the ways that elites keep themselves in power.
- 7.5** Contrast social stratification in Great Britain and the former Soviet Union.
- 7.6** Compare social stratification in the Most Industrialized Nations, the Industrializing Nations, and the Least Industrialized Nations.
- 7.7** Discuss how colonialism and world system theory explain how the world's nations became stratified.
- 7.8** Explain how neocolonialism, multinational corporations, and technology help to maintain global stratification.
- 7.9** Identify strains in today's system of global stratification.

Let's contrast two "average" families from around the world:

For Getu Mulleta, 33, and his wife, Zenebu, 28, of rural Ethiopia, life is a constant struggle to avoid starvation. They and their seven children live in a 320-square-foot manure-plastered hut with no electricity, gas, or running water. They have a radio, but the battery is dead. The family farms teff, a grain, and survives on \$130 a year.

The Mulletas' poverty is not due to a lack of hard work. Getu works about eighty hours a week, while Zenebu puts in even more hours. Housework for Zenebu includes fetching water, cleaning animal stables, and making fuel pellets out of cow dung for the open fire over which she cooks the family's food. Like other Ethiopian women, she eats after the men.

In Ethiopia, the average male can expect to live to age 48, the average female to 50.

The Mulletas' most valuable possession is their oxen. Their wishes for the future: more animals, better seed, and a second set of clothing.

Springfield, Illinois, is home to the Kellys—Rick, 36, Patti, 34, Julie, 10, and Michael, 7. The Kellys live in a four-bedroom, 2½-bath, 2,687-square-foot ranch-style house with a fireplace, central heating and air conditioning, a basement, and a two-car garage. Their home is equipped with a refrigerator, freezer, washing machine, clothes dryer, dishwasher, garbage disposal, vacuum cleaner, food processor, microwave, and a convection stovetop and oven.

They live in a 320-square-foot manure-plastered hut

They also own computers, cell phones, color televisions, several digital cameras, an iPod, an iPad, a printer-scanner-fax machine, blow dryers, a juicer, an espresso coffee maker, a pickup truck, and an SUV.

Rick works forty hours a week as a cable splicer for a telephone company. Patti teaches school part-time. Together they make \$66,632, plus benefits. The Kellys can choose from among dozens of superstocked supermarkets. They spend \$5,765 for food they eat at home, and another \$3,876 eating out, a total of 14 percent of their annual income.

In the United States, the average life expectancy is 77 for males, 82 for females.

On the Kellys' wish list are a solar car with Internet connection, a phablet, an Ultra High-Definition bendable TV, a virtual-reality simulator, an in-ground heated swimming pool, a boat, a motor home, an ATV, and a lakeside cabin. (Menzel 1994; Statistical Abstract 2017:Tables 112, 714, 723, 995).

Systems of Social Stratification

7.1 Compare and contrast slavery (including bonded labor), caste, estate, and class systems of social stratification.

Some of the world's nations are wealthy, others poor, and some in between. This division of nations, as well as the layering of groups of people within a nation, is called *social stratification*. Social stratification is one of the most significant topics we will discuss in this book. As you saw in the opening vignette, social stratification profoundly affects our life chances—from our access to material possessions to the age at which we die.

Social stratification also affects the way we think about life. Look at the photo of the Mulleta family in Ethiopia. If you were a parent of this family, you would expect hunger

The Mulleta family of Ethiopia, described in the opening vignette, displaying all of their possessions.



to be a part of life and would not expect all of your children to survive. You would also be illiterate and would assume that your children would be as well. In contrast, if you are an average U.S. parent, you expect your children not only to survive but also to be well fed, not only to be able to read but also to go to college. You can see that social stratification brings with it not just material things but also ideas of what we can expect out of life.

social stratification

the division of large numbers of people into layers according to their relative property, power, and prestige; applies to both nations and to people within a nation, society, or other group

Social stratification is a system in which groups of people are divided into layers according to their relative property, power, and prestige. It is important to emphasize that social stratification does not refer to individuals. It is a way of ranking large groups of people into a hierarchy according to their relative privileges.

It is also important to note that *every society stratifies its members*. Some societies have more inequality than others, but social stratification is universal. In addition, in every society of the world, *gender* is a basis for stratifying people. On the basis of their gender, people are either allowed or denied access to the good things offered by their society.

Let's consider four major systems of social stratification: slavery, caste, estate, and class.

slavery

a form of social stratification in which some people own other people

I have read a lot about slavery, but I did not know that slaves were ever offered as prizes in raffles. You might also note that top billing in this 1800s poster from Missouri goes to a horse.

Slavery

Slavery, whose essential characteristic is that *some individuals own other people*, has been common throughout history. The Old Testament even lays out rules for how owners should treat their slaves. So does the Quran. The Romans had slaves, as did the Africans and Greeks. In classical Greece and Rome, slaves did the work, freeing citizens to engage in politics and the arts. Slavery was most widespread in agricultural societies and least common among nomads, especially hunters and gatherers (Landtman 1938/1968; Rowthorn et al. 2011).

Let's examine the causes and conditions of slavery. You probably will be surprised to learn how slavery has varied around the world.

CAUSES OF SLAVERY Contrary to popular assumption, slavery was usually based not on racism but on one of three other factors. The first was *debt*. In some societies, creditors would enslave people who could not pay their debts. The second was *crime*. Instead of being killed, a murderer or thief might be enslaved by the victim's family as compensation for their loss. The third was *war*. When one group of people conquered another, they often enslaved some of the vanquished. Historian Gerda Lerner (1986) notes that women were the first people enslaved through warfare. When tribal men raided another group, they killed the men, raped the women, and then brought the women back as slaves. The women were valued for sexual purposes, for reproduction, and for their labor.

Roughly 2,500 years ago, when Greece was but a collection of city-states, slavery was common. A city that became powerful and conquered another city would enslave some of the vanquished. Both slaves and slaveholders were Greek. Similarly, when Rome became the supreme power of the Mediterranean area about two thousand years ago, following the custom of the time, the Romans enslaved some of the Greeks they had conquered. More educated than their conquerors, some of these slaves served as tutors in Roman homes. Slavery, then, was a sign of debt, of crime, or of defeat in battle. It was not a sign that the slave was viewed as inherently inferior.

RAFFLE

Mr. Joseph Jennings respectfully informs his friends and the public that, at the request of many acquaintances, he has been induced to purchase from Mr. Osborne, of Missouri, the celebrated

DARK BAY HORSE, "STAR,"

Aged five years, square trotter and warranted sound; with a new light Trotting Buggy and Harness also, the dark, stout

MULATTO GIRL, "SARAH,"

Aged about twenty years, general house servant, valued at nine hundred dollars, and guaranteed, and

Will be Raffled for

At 4 o'clock P. M., February first, at the selection hotel of the subscribers. The above is as represented and those persons who may wish to engage in the usual practice of raffling, will, I assure them, be perfectly satisfied with their destiny in this affair.

The whole is valued at its just worth, fifteen hundred dollars; fifteen hundred

CHANCES AT ONE DOLLAR EACH.

The Raffle will be conducted by gentlemen selected by the interested subscribers present. Five nights will be allowed to complete the Raffle. BOTH OF THE ABOVE DESCRIBED CAN BE SEEN AT MY STORE, No. 78 Common St., second door from Camp, at from 9 o'clock A. M. to 2 P. M. Highest throw to take the first choice; the lowest throw the remaining prize, and the fortunate winners will pay twenty dollars each for the refreshments furnished on the occasion.

N. B. No chances recognized unless paid for previous to the commencement.

JOSEPH JENNINGS.

CONDITIONS OF SLAVERY The conditions of slavery have varied widely around the world. *In some places, slavery was temporary.* Slaves of the Israelites were set free in the year of jubilee, which occurred every fifty years. Roman slaves ordinarily had the right to buy themselves out of slavery. They knew what their purchase price was, and some were able to meet this price by striking a bargain with their owners and selling their services to others. In most instances, however, slavery was a lifelong condition. Some criminals, for example, became slaves when they were given life sentences as oarsmen on Roman warships. There they served until death, which often came quickly to those in this exhausting service.

Slavery was not necessarily inheritable. In most places, the children of slaves were slaves themselves. But in some instances, the child of a slave who served a rich family might even be adopted by that family, becoming an heir who bore the family name along with the other sons or daughters of the household. In ancient Mexico, the children of slaves were always free (Landtman 1938/1968:271).

Slaves were not necessarily powerless and poor. In almost all instances, slaves owned no property and had no power. Among some groups, however, slaves could accumulate property and even rise to high positions in the community. Occasionally, a slave might even become wealthy, loan money to the master, and, while still a slave, own slaves himself or herself (Landtman 1938/1968). This, however, was rare.

BONDED LABOR IN THE NEW WORLD A gray area between slavery and contract labor is **bonded labor**, also called **indentured service**. People who wanted to start a new life in the American colonies but could not pay for their passage across the ocean would arrange for a ship captain to transport them on credit. When they arrived, wealthy colonists would pay the captain for the voyage, and these penniless people would become the colonists' servants for a set number of years. During this period, the servants were required by law to serve their masters. If they ran away, they became outlaws who were hunted down and forcibly returned. At the end of their period of indenture, they were free to work and to live where they chose (Main 1965; Handler and Reilly 2017).

SLAVERY IN THE NEW WORLD When there were not enough indentured servants to meet the growing need for labor in the American colonies, some colonists tried to enslave Native Americans. This attempt failed, in part because Indians who escaped knew how to survive in the wilderness and were able to make their way back to their tribes. The colonists then turned to Africans, who were being brought to North and South America by the Dutch, English, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Because slavery has a broad range of causes, some analysts conclude that racism didn't lead to slavery but, rather, that slavery led to racism. To defend slavery, U.S. slave owners developed an **ideology**, beliefs that justify social arrangements, making those arrangements seem necessary and fair. They developed the view that their slaves were inferior. Some even said that they were not fully human. In short, the colonists wove elaborate justifications for slavery, built on the presumed superiority of their own group.

To make slavery even more profitable, slave states passed laws that made slavery *inheritable*; that is, the babies born to slaves became the property of the slave owners (Stampp 1956). These children could be sold, bartered, or traded. To strengthen their control, slave states passed laws making it illegal for slaves to hold meetings or to be away from the master's premises without carrying a pass (Lerner 1972). Sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois (1935/1992:12) noted that "gradually the entire white South became an armed camp to keep Negroes in slavery and to kill the black rebel."

The Civil War did not end legal discrimination. For example, until 1954, many states operated separate school systems for blacks and whites. Until the 1950s, in order to keep the races from "mixing," it was

bonded labor (indentured service)

a contractual system in which someone sells his or her body (services) for a specified period of time in an arrangement very close to slavery, except that it is entered into voluntarily

ideology

beliefs about the way things ought to be that justify social arrangements



During my research in India, I interviewed this 8-year-old girl. Mahashury is a bonded laborer who was exchanged by her parents for a 2,000 rupee loan (about \$14). To repay the loan, Mahashury must do construction work for one year. She will receive one meal a day and one set of clothing for the year. Because this centuries-old practice is now illegal, the master bribes Indian officials, who inform him when they are going to inspect the construction site. He then hides his bonded laborers. I was able to interview and photograph Mahashury because her master was absent the day I visited the construction site.

illegal in Mississippi for a white and an African American to sit together on the same seat of a car! There was no outright ban on blacks and whites being in the same car, however, so whites could employ African American chauffeurs.

SLAVERY TODAY Slavery continues to rear its ugly head in several parts of the world (Crane 2012). The Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Niger, and Sudan have a long history of slavery, and not until the 1980s was slavery made illegal in Mauritania and Sudan (Ayittey 1998). It took until 2003 for slavery to be banned in Niger, where it still continues (Mwiti 2013). ISIS practices slavery. After killing the adult men, “infidels” to them, they sell the girls and women as sex slaves, a reward to their fighters (Callimachi 2016).

The enslavement of children for work and sex is a problem in Africa, Asia, and South America (*Trafficking in Persons Report* 2017). A unique form of child slavery in some Mid-east countries involved buying little boys around the ages of 4 or 6 to race camels. Their screams of terror were thought to make the camels run faster. In Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, which recently banned this practice, robots shaped like little boys have replaced the children (Hauser 2017).

Caste

caste system

a form of social stratification in which birth determines people's statuses, which are lifelong

endogamy

the practice of marrying within one's own group

The second system of social stratification is caste. In a **caste system**, birth determines status, which is lifelong. Someone who is born into a low-status group will always have low status, no matter how much that person may accomplish in life. In sociological terms, a caste system is built on ascribed status (discussed in Chapter 4). Achieved status cannot change an individual's place in this system.

Societies with this form of stratification try to make certain that the boundaries between castes remain firm. They practice **endogamy**, marriage within their own group, prohibiting the marriage of members of different castes. Rules about *ritual pollution* also keep contact between castes to a minimum. Touching someone from an inferior caste, for example, makes a member of the superior caste unclean.

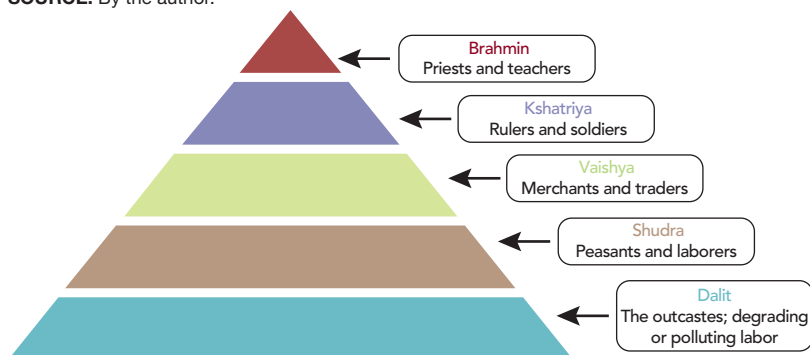
INDIA'S RELIGIOUS CASTES India provides the best example of a caste system. Based not on race but on religion, India's caste system has existed for almost three thousand years (Chandra 1993; Kapila 2017). Look at Figure 7.1, which shows India's four main castes. These castes are subdivided into about three thousand subcastes, or *jati*. Each *jati* specializes in a particular occupation. For example, one subcaste washes clothes, another sharpens knives, and yet another repairs shoes.

The lowest group listed in Figure 7.1, the Dalit, make up India's “outcastes,” meaning they are considered to be so low that they are outside the caste system. (They are not “cast out”; they are outside the caste system.) The Dalit used to be called the “untouchables.” If a Dalit touches someone other than a Dalit, that person becomes unclean (or contaminated). To restore purity, that person must follow *ablution*, or washing rituals.

An untouchable summed up his situation this way:

Figure 7.1 India's Caste System

SOURCE: By the author.



At the tea stalls, we have separate cups to drink from, chipped and caked with dirt. We have to walk for 15 minutes to carry water to our homes, because we're not allowed to use the taps in the village that the upper castes use. We're not allowed into temples. When I attended school, my friends and I were forced to sit outside the classroom. The upper caste children would not allow us even to touch the football they played with. We played with stones instead. (Guru and Sidhva 2001)

The Indian government formally abolished the caste system in 1949. However, these

centuries-old practices continue, and the caste system remains part of everyday life in India (Kapila 2017). The ceremonies people follow at births, marriages, and deaths are dictated by caste (Chandra 1993). Caste is so ingrained in the Indian mind that when couples visit a sperm bank, they insist on knowing the caste of the donor (Tewary 2012).

India's caste system is changing, but only gradually. The federal government began an affirmative action plan that has increased education and jobs for the lower castes. Slowly, the caste system is giving way, being replaced by a social class system based on material wealth (Sankaran 2013).

SOUTH AFRICA In South Africa, Europeans of Dutch descent, a numerical minority called Afrikaners, used to control the government, the police, and the military. They used these sources of power to enforce a system called **apartheid** (ah-PAR-tate), the separation of the races. Everyone was classified by law into one of four groups: Europeans (whites), Africans (blacks), Coloureds (mixed races), and Asians. These classifications determined where people could live, work, and go to school. It also established where they could swim or see movies; by law, whites and the others were not allowed to mix socially.

Listen to what an Anglican priest observed when he arrived in South Africa:

I went to the post office to send my mother a letter telling her that I had arrived safely. There were two entrances, one marked "Whites only" and the other, "Non-whites." ... Durban is a seaside city and so I went off to explore the beach. There I discovered that even the sea was divided by race. The most beautiful beaches were where white people could swim; there was another for people of Indian descent, still another for people of mixed race, and far, far away, one for Africans. (Lapsley 2012)

After years of trade sanctions and sports boycotts, in 1990 Afrikaners began to dismantle their caste system, and in 1994, Nelson Mandela, a black, was elected president. Black Africans no longer have to carry special passes, public facilities are integrated, and all racial-ethnic groups have the right to vote and to hold office. Although apartheid has

apartheid

the government-approved-and-enforced separation of racial-ethnic groups as was practiced in South Africa

In a caste system, status is determined by birth and is lifelong. At birth, these women received not only membership in a lower caste but also, because of their gender, a predetermined position in that caste. When I photographed these women, they were carrying sand to the second floor of a house being constructed in Andhra Pradesh, India.



been dismantled, its legacy haunts South Africa. Whites still dominate the country's social institutions, and most blacks remain uneducated and poor. Many new rights—such as the rights to higher education, to eat in restaurants, even to see a doctor—are of little use to people who can't afford them. Political violence has been replaced by old-fashioned crime. Even though the U.S. murder rate intimidates foreigners, South Africa's murder rate is six times higher (UNODC 2013). Apartheid's legacy of prejudice, bitterness, and hatred appears destined to fuel racial tensions for generations to come.

A U.S. RACIAL CASTE SYSTEM Before leaving the subject of caste, we should note that when slavery ended in the United States, it was replaced by a *racial caste system*. From the moment of birth, race marked everyone for life. *All* whites, even if they were poor and uneducated, considered themselves to have a higher status than *all* African Americans. As in India and South Africa, the upper caste, fearing pollution from the lower caste, made intermarriage illegal. There were also separate schools, hotels, restaurants, and even toilets and drinking fountains for blacks and whites. In the South, when any white met any African American on a sidewalk, the African American had to move aside. The untouchables of India still must do this when they meet someone of a higher caste (Deliege 2001).

To see more parallels between the caste systems of the United States and India, see the following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Rape: Blaming the Victim and Protecting the Caste System

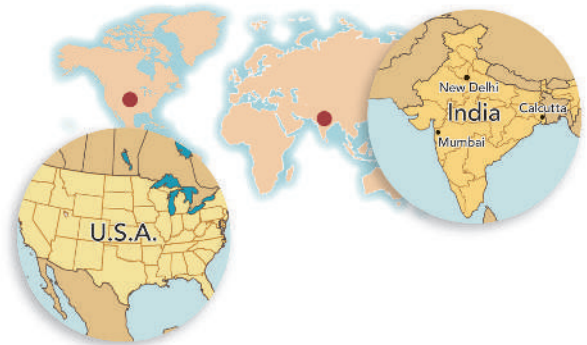
Shana, just 16 years old, was raped by four men in Mississippi. She was walking alongside the road leading to her house when a car stopped. The men got out, shoved her into the car, and drove away. For several hours, they took turns raping the terrified young woman. When the rape (and the other abuse that I won't describe) was over, they told Shana to keep her mouth shut. They would kill her if she told anyone.

Fearful of what her parents would say and how the neighbors would gossip, Shana told no one. She also knew that it would do no good to report the rape to the police, since they would do nothing. Shana carried the shame—and the anger—of her rape with her the rest of her life.

This is a composite story. Shana is a combined version of the many young black women who were raped by white men in the U.S. South years ago, at a time when rape brought shame to any woman, black or white, and the rape and the rapists were enshrouded in silence. For black women in the South at this time, it was useless to report a rape. The prosecutors, judges, and juries—all were white. And none was about to take a black woman's word over that of white men.

This event just took place in India.

Shana, just 16 years old, was walking home when she was grabbed by several men and forced into a small stone shelter at the edge of a field. There, for three hours, eight men of the Jat subcaste raped her. When



they were finished, they told Shana to keep her mouth shut. They would kill her if she told anyone. Shana told no one. The shame would bring severe dishonor to her family. Besides, what good would it do? Shana is a Dalit, formerly called an Untouchable. She is a poor member of a caste in poverty, one that is despised by the Jat subcaste that controls the society. (Yardley 2012)

I don't need to point out the parallels to you.

Then something unusual happened. One of the rapists from the Jat caste had used his cell phone to take trophy videos of the rape. As the video circulated, one man who saw it showed it to Shana's father. Dishonored by the rape of his daughter, he committed suicide.

His suicide and Shana's rape enraged the Dalits in the community. They marched to the police and demanded justice.

What did they get? One official said that the sexual drive of girls is causing rapes. He said that all girls should be married by the age of 16. Then there wouldn't be any rapes. Another said that they never used to have any rapes, that it must be the new fast food the young people are

eating. The fast food causes hormonal imbalance, creating sexual urges in young women.

I know that these reactions to Shana's rape sound incredible, but they happened.

When another Dalit woman reported her rape by an upper-caste man, the police officer asked how many



After centuries of silence, women of India are daring to protest rape publicly. This photo of students holding a candlelight march was taken in Allahabad, India.

children she had. When she said “Four,” he asked how old the eldest was. When she said 14 or 15 (birthdays are not kept the same as in the West), the officer said, “Who would rape such an old woman?” and walked away (Pokharel and Lahiri 2013).

I want to add a personal note. The daughter of a man I know in India was raped. After the rape, the rapists poured kerosene on the girl and set her afire. Her screams brought help, and the rapists fled. The young woman was taken to a hospital, where she died. The monsters have not been arrested, and likely never will be.

For Your Consideration

- How is the racial caste system that used to exist in the United States similar to the religious caste system that currently exists in India? How is it different?
- How does a caste system prevent people from receiving justice?
- In what ways other than rape does a caste system tolerate and perhaps encourage exploitation?
- Do you see how the ruling Jat subcaste “blamed the victim” instead of the rapists? How does this protect the caste system?

Estate

During the middle ages, Europe developed an **estate stratification system**. There were three groups, or estates. The *first estate* was made up of the nobility, the wealthy families who ruled the country. This group owned the land, which was the source of wealth at that time. The nobility did no farming themselves, or any “work,” for that matter. Work was considered beneath their dignity, something to be done by servants. The nobility’s responsibility was to administer their lands, to defend the king (and, in doing so, their own position), and to live “genteel” lives worthy of their high position.

The *second estate* consisted of the clergy. The Roman Catholic Church was a political power at this time. It also owned vast amounts of land and collected taxes from everyone who lived within the boundaries of a parish. The church’s power was so great that in order to be crowned, kings had to obtain the pope’s permission.

To prevent their vast land holdings from being carved into smaller chunks, members of the nobility practiced *primogeniture*, allowing only firstborn sons to inherit land. The other sons had to find some way to support themselves, and joining the clergy was a favorite way. (Other ways included becoming an officer in the military or practicing law.) The church was appealing because priests held lifetime positions and were guaranteed a comfortable living. At that time, the church sold offices, and, for example, a wealthy man could buy the position of bishop for his son, which guaranteed a high income.

The *third estate* consisted of the commoners. Known as *serfs*, they belonged to the land. If someone bought or inherited land, the serfs came with it. Serfs were born into the third estate, and they died within it, too. The rare person who made it out of the third estate was either a man who was knighted for extraordinary bravery in battle or someone “called” into a religious vocation.

WOMEN IN THE ESTATE SYSTEM Women belonged to the estate of their husbands. Women in the first estate had no occupation, because, as in the case of their husbands, physical work was considered beneath their dignity. Their responsibility was to administer the household, overseeing the children and servants. The women in the second estate, nuns,

estate stratification system the stratification system of medieval Europe, consisting of three groups or estates: the nobility, clergy, and commoners



In early industrialization, children worked alongside adults. They worked twelve hours a day Monday to Friday and fifteen hours on Saturday, often in dangerous, filthy conditions. This photo of a child coal miner was taken in West Virginia in 1908.

were the exception to the rule that women belonged to the estate of their husbands, as the Roman Catholic clergy did not marry. Women of the third estate shared the hard life of their husbands, including physical labor and food shortages. In addition, they faced the peril of rape by men of the first estate. A few commoners who caught the eye of men of the first estate did marry and join them in the first estate. This was rare.

Class

As we have seen, stratification systems based on slavery, caste, and estate are rigid. The lines drawn between people are firm, and there is little or no movement from one group to another. A **class system**, in contrast, is much more open, because it is based primarily on money or material possessions, which can be acquired. This system, too, is in place at birth, when children are ascribed the status of their parents. Unlike the other systems, however, individuals can change their social class by what they achieve (or fail to achieve) in life. In addition, no laws specify people's occupations on the basis of birth or prohibit marriage between the classes. A major characteristic of the class system, then, is its relatively fluid boundaries. A class system allows **social mobility**, movement up or down the class ladder. The potential for improving one's life—or for falling down the class ladder—is a major force that drives people to go far in school and to work hard. In the extreme, the family background that a child inherits at birth may present such obstacles that he or she has little chance of climbing very far—or it may provide such privileges that it is almost impossible to fall down the class ladder. Because social class is so significant for our own lives, we will focus on class in the next chapter.

class system

a form of social stratification based primarily on income, education, and prestige of occupation

social mobility

movement up or down the social class ladder

Global Stratification and the Status of Females

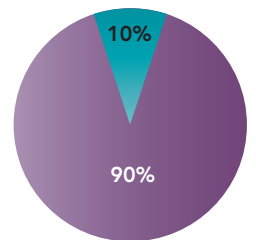
In *every* society of the world, gender is a basis for social stratification. In no society is gender the sole basis for stratifying people, but gender cuts across *all* systems of social stratification—whether slavery, caste, estate, or class (Huber 1990). In all these systems, on the basis of their gender, people are sorted into categories and given different access to the good things available in their society.

Apparently, these distinctions always favor males. It is remarkable, for example, that in *every* society of the world, men's earnings are higher than women's. Men's dominance is even more evident when we consider female circumcision. That most of the world's illiterate are females also drives home women's relative position. Of the several hundred million adults who cannot read, about two-thirds are women (UNESCO 2017). Because gender is such a significant factor in what happens to us in life, we shall focus on it more closely in Chapter 10.

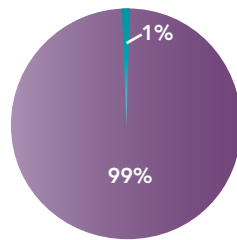
The Global Superclass

The growing interconnections among the world's wealthiest people have produced a *global superclass*, one in which wealth and power are more concentrated than ever before. There are only about 6,000 members of the global superclass. *The richest 1,000 of this superclass have more wealth than the 2½ billion poorest people on this planet* (Rothkopf 2008:37). Almost all are white, and, except as wives and daughters, few women are an active part of the global superclass. We will have more to say about the superclass in Chapter 11, but for now, let's just stress their incredible wealth. There is nothing in history to compare with what you see in Figure 7.2.

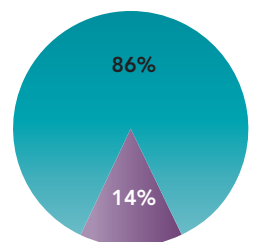
Figure 7.2 The Distribution of the Earth's Wealth



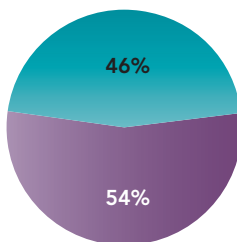
The wealthiest 10 percent of adults worldwide...



The wealthiest 1 percent of adults worldwide...



...own 86 percent of the Earth's wealth



...own 46 percent of the Earth's wealth

SOURCE: By the author. Based on Keating et al. 2013.

What Determines Social Class?

7.2 Contrast the views of Marx and Weber on what determines social class.

In the early days of sociology, a disagreement arose about the meaning of social class. Let's compare how Marx and Weber analyzed the issue.

Karl Marx: The Means of Production

As we discussed in Chapter 1, as agricultural society gave way to an industrial one, masses of peasants were displaced from their traditional lands and occupations. Fleeing to cities, they competed for the few available jobs. Paid only a pittance for their labor, they wore rags, went hungry, and slept under bridges and in shacks. In contrast, the factory owners built mansions, hired servants, and lived in the lap of luxury. Seeing this great disparity between owners and workers, Karl Marx (1818–1883) concluded that social class depends on a single factor: people's relationship to the **means of production**—the tools, factories, land, and investment capital used to produce wealth (Marx 1844/1964; Marx and Engels 1848/1967).

Marx argued that the distinctions people often make among themselves—such as their clothing, speech, education, and paycheck, or the neighborhood they live in and the car they drive—are superficial matters. These things camouflage the only dividing line that counts. There are just two classes of people, said Marx: the **bourgeoisie** (*capitalists*), those who own the means of production, and the **proletariat** (*workers*), those who work for the owners. In short, people's relationship to the means of production determines their social class.

Marx did recognize other groups: farmers and peasants; a *lumpenproletariat* (people living on the margin of society, such as beggars, vagrants, and criminals); and a middle group of self-employed professionals. Marx did not consider these groups social classes, however, because they lacked **class consciousness**—a shared identity based on their relationship to the means of production. In other words, they did not perceive themselves as exploited workers whose plight could be resolved by collective action. Marx thought of these groups as insignificant in the future he foresaw—a workers' revolution that would overthrow capitalism.

As the capitalists grow even wealthier, Marx said, hostilities will increase. When workers come to realize that capitalists are the source of their oppression, they will unite and throw off the chains of their oppressors. In a bloody revolution, they will seize the means of production and usher in a classless society—and no longer will the few grow rich at the expense of the many. What holds back the workers' unity and their revolution is **false class consciousness**, workers mistakenly thinking of themselves as capitalists. For example,

means of production

the tools, factories, land, and investment capital used to produce wealth

bourgeoisie

Karl Marx's term for capitalists, those who own the means of production

proletariat

Karl Marx's term for the exploited class, the mass of workers who do not own the means of production

class consciousness

Karl Marx's term for awareness of a common identity based on one's position in the means of production

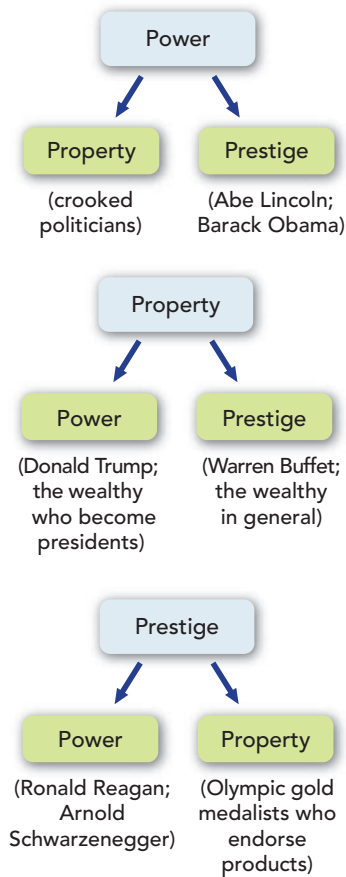
false class consciousness

Karl Marx's term to refer to workers identifying with the interests of capitalists



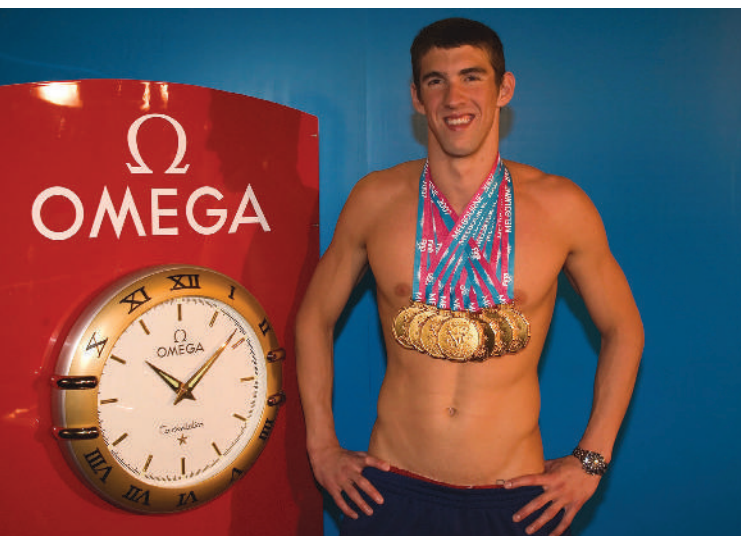
These photos illustrate the contrasting worlds of social classes produced by early capitalism. The photo on the left was taken in 1890. These homeless boys who spent their nights sleeping on the sidewalk did not go to school. They made their living by selling newspapers. The children on the right, Cornelius and Gladys Vanderbilt, are shown in front of their parents' estate. They went to school and did not work. You can see how the social locations illustrated in these photos would have produced different orientations to life and, therefore, politics, ideas about marriage, values, and so on—the stuff of which life is made.

Figure 7.3 Weber's Three Components of Social Class



Source: By the author.

As the winner of 23 gold medals, Michael Phelps is the most decorated Olympian ever. From this photo, you can see Phelps converting prestige into property.



workers with a few dollars in the bank may forget that they are workers and instead see themselves as investors, or as capitalists who are about to launch a successful business.

The only distinction worth mentioning, then, is whether a person is an owner or a worker. This decides everything else, Marx stressed, because property determines people's lifestyles, establishes their relationships with one another, and even shapes their ideas.

Max Weber: Property, Power, and Prestige

Max Weber (1864–1920) was an outspoken critic of Marx. Weber argued that property is only part of the picture. *Social class*, he said, has three components: property, power, and prestige (Gerth and Mills 1958; Weber 1922/1978). Some call these the three P's of social class. (Although Weber used the terms *class*, *power*, and *status*, some sociologists find *property*, *power*, and *prestige* to be clearer terms. To make them even clearer, you can substitute *wealth* for *property*.)

Property (or wealth), said Weber, is certainly significant in determining a person's standing in society. On this point he agreed with Marx. But, added Weber, ownership is not the only significant aspect of property. For example, some powerful people, such as managers of corporations, *control* the means of production even though they do not *own* them. If managers can control property for their own benefit—awarding themselves huge bonuses and magnificent perks—it makes no practical difference that they do not own the property that they use so generously for their own benefit.

Power, the second element of social class, is the ability to control others, even over their objections. Weber agreed with Marx that property is a major source of power, but he added that it is not the only source. For example, prestige can be turned into power. Two well-known examples are actors Arnold Schwarzenegger, who became governor of California, and Ronald Reagan, who was elected governor of California and president of the United States. Figure 7.3 shows how property, power, and prestige are interrelated.

Prestige, the third element in Weber's analysis, is often derived from property and power because people tend to admire the wealthy and powerful. Prestige, however, can be based on other factors. Olympic gold medalists, for example, might not own property or be powerful, yet they have high prestige. Some are even able to exchange their prestige for property—such as those who are paid a small fortune for endorsing a certain brand of sportswear or for claiming that they start their day with “the breakfast of champions.” In other words, property and prestige are not one-way streets: Although property can bring prestige, prestige can also bring property.

IN SUM For Marx, the only distinction that counted was property, more specifically people's relationship to the means of production. People are either owners or workers, which sets them on contrasting paths in life. Their path determines their lifestyle and shapes their orientations to life. Weber, in contrast, argued that social class has three components—a combination of property, power, and prestige.

Why Is Social Stratification Universal?

7.3 Contrast the functional and conflict views of why social stratification is universal.

What is it about social life that makes all societies stratified? We will first consider the explanation proposed by functionalists, which has aroused much controversy in sociology, and then explanations proposed by conflict theorists.

The Functionalist View: Motivating Qualified People

Functionalists take the position that the patterns of behavior that characterize a society exist because they are functional for that society. Because social inequality is universal, inequality must help societies survive. But how?

DAVIS AND MOORE'S EXPLANATION Two functionalists, Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (1945, 1953), wrestled with this question. They concluded that stratification of society is inevitable because:

1. For society to function, its positions must be filled.
2. Some positions are more important than others.
3. The more important positions must be filled by the more qualified people.
4. To motivate the more qualified people to fill these positions, they must offer greater rewards.

To flesh out this functionalist argument, consider college presidents and military generals. The position of college president is more important than that of student because the president's decisions affect a large number of people, including many students. College presidents are also accountable for their performance to boards of trustees. It is the same with generals. Their decisions affect many people and sometimes even determine life and death. Generals are accountable to superior generals and to the country's leader.

Why do people accept demanding, high-pressure positions? Why don't they just take easier jobs? The answer, said Davis and Moore, is that these positions offer greater rewards—more prestige, pay, and benefits. To get highly qualified people to compete with one another, some positions offer a salary of \$5 million a year, country club membership, a private jet and pilot, and a chauffeured limousine. For less demanding positions, a \$40,000 salary without fringe benefits is enough to get hundreds of people to compete. If a job requires rigorous training, it, too, must offer more salary and benefits. If you can get the same pay with a high school diploma, why suffer through the many tests and term papers that college requires?

TUMIN'S CRITIQUE OF DAVIS AND MOORE Davis and Moore did not attempt to justify social inequality. They were simply trying to explain *why* social stratification is universal. Nevertheless, their view makes many sociologists uncomfortable, because they see it as coming close to justifying the inequalities in society. Its bottom line seems to be: The people who contribute more to society are paid more, while those who contribute less are paid less.

Melvin Tumin (1953) was the first sociologist to point out what he saw as major flaws in the functionalist position. Here are three of his arguments.

First, how do we know that the positions that offer the higher rewards are more important? A heart surgeon, for example, saves lives and earns much more than a garbage collector, but this doesn't mean that garbage collectors are less important to society. By helping to prevent contagious diseases, garbage collectors save more lives than heart surgeons do. We need independent methods of measuring importance, and we don't have them.

Second, if stratification worked as Davis and Moore described it, society would be a **meritocracy**, that is, positions would be awarded on the basis of merit. But is this what we have? The best predictor of who goes to college, for example, is not ability but income: The more a family earns, the more likely their children are to go to college.

meritocracy

a form of social stratification in which all positions are awarded on the basis of merit

To determine the social class of athletes as highly successful as the Williams sisters presents a sociological puzzle. With their high prestige and growing wealth, what do you think their social class is? Why?



(See Chapter 13.) Not merit, then, but money—another form of the inequality that is built into society. In short, people’s positions in society are based on many factors other than merit.

Third, if social stratification is so functional, it ought to benefit almost everyone. Yet social stratification is *dysfunctional* for many. Think of the people who could have made valuable contributions to society had they not been born in slums, dropped out of school, and taken menial jobs to help support their families. Then there are the many who, born female, are assigned “women’s work,” thus ensuring that they do not maximize their mental abilities.

IN SUM Functionalists argue that some positions are more important to society than others. Offering higher rewards for these positions motivates more talented people to take them. For example, to get highly talented people to become surgeons—to undergo years of rigorous training and then cope with life-and-death situations, as well as malpractice suits—that position must provide a high payoff.

Next, let’s see how conflict theorists explain why social stratification is universal. Before we do, look at Table 7.1 which compares the functionalist and conflict views.

Table 7.1 Functionalist and Conflict Views of Stratification: The Distribution of Society’s Resources

	Who Receives the Most Resources?	Who Receives the Least Resources?
The Functionalist View	Those who perform the more important functions (the more capable and more industrious)	Those who perform the less important functions (the less capable and less industrious)
The Conflict View	Those who occupy the more powerful positions	Those who occupy the less powerful positions

SOURCE: By the author.

The Conflict Perspective: Class Conflict and Scarce Resources

Conflict theorists don’t just criticize details of the functionalist argument. Rather, they go for the throat and attack its basic premise. Conflict, not function, they stress, is the reason that we have social stratification. Let’s look at the major arguments.

MOSCA’S ARGUMENT Italian sociologist Gaetano Mosca argued that every society will be stratified by power. This is inevitable, he said in an 1896 book titled *The Ruling Class* (1896/1939), because:

1. No society can exist unless it is organized. This requires leadership to coordinate people’s actions.
2. Leadership requires inequalities of power. By definition, some people lead, while others follow.
3. Because human nature is self-centered, people in power will use their positions to seize greater rewards for themselves.

There is no way around these facts of life, added Mosca. Social stratification is inevitable, and every society will stratify itself along lines of power.

MARX'S ARGUMENT If he were alive to hear the functionalist argument, Marx would be enraged. From his point of view, the people in power are not there because of superior traits, as the functionalists would have us believe. This view is an ideology that members of the elite use to justify their being at the top—and to seduce the oppressed into believing that their welfare depends on keeping quiet and following authorities. What is human history, Marx asked, except the chronicle of class struggle? All of human history is an account of small groups of people in power using society's resources to benefit themselves and to oppress those beneath them—and of oppressed groups trying to overcome that domination.

Marx predicted that the workers will revolt. Capitalist ideology now blinds them, but one day, class consciousness will rip that blindfold off and expose the truth. When workers realize their common oppression, they will rebel. The struggle to control the means of production may be covert at first, taking such forms as work slowdowns and industrial sabotage. Ultimately, however, resistance will break out into the open. But the revolution will not be easy because the bourgeoisie control the police, the military, and even the educational system, where they implant false class consciousness in the minds of the workers' children.

CURRENT APPLICATIONS OF CONFLICT THEORY Just as Marx focused on overarching historical events—the accumulation of capital and power and the struggle between workers and capitalists—so do some of today's conflict sociologists. In analyzing global stratification and global capitalism, they look at power relations among nations, how national elites control workers, and how power shifts as capital is shuffled among nations (Burgmann 2016; Smith 2016).

Other conflict sociologists, in contrast, examine conflict wherever it is found, not just as it relates to capitalists and workers. They examine how groups *within the same class* compete with one another for a larger slice of the pie (Collins 1999; King et al. 2010). Even within the same industry, for example, union will fight against union for higher salaries, shorter hours, and more power. Another focus of conflict theorists is conflict between racial-ethnic groups as they compete for work, education, housing, and even prestige—whatever rewards society has to offer. They also study the relations between women and men, which conflict theorists say are best understood as a conflict over power—over who controls society's resources. Unlike functionalists, conflict theorists say that just beneath the surface of what may appear to be a tranquil society lies conflict that is barely held in check.

Lenski's Synthesis

As you can see, functionalist and conflict theorists disagree sharply. Is it possible to reconcile their views? Sociologist Gerhard Lenski (1966) thought so. He suggested that surplus is the key. He said that the functionalists are right when it comes to *groups that don't accumulate a surplus*, such as hunting and gathering societies. These societies give a greater share of their resources to those who take on important tasks, such as warriors who risk their lives in battle. It is a different story, said Lenski, with *societies that accumulate surpluses*. In them, groups fight over the surplus, and the group that wins becomes an elite. This dominant group rules from the top, controlling the groups below it. In the resulting system of social stratification, where you are born in that society, not personal merit, is what counts.

IN SUM Conflict theorists stress that in every society, groups struggle with one another to gain a larger share of their society's resources. Whenever a group gains power, it uses that power to extract what it can from the groups beneath it. This elite group also uses the social institutions to keep itself in power.

How Do Elites Maintain Stratification?

7.4 Discuss the ways that elites keep themselves in power.

Suppose that you are part of the ruling elite of your society. You want to make sure that you and your family and friends are going to be able to keep your privileged position for the next generation. How will you accomplish this?

You might think about passing laws and using the police and the military. After all, you are a member of the *ruling elite*, so you have this power. You could use force, but this can lead to resentment and rebellion. It is more effective to control people's ideas, information, and technology—which is just what the elite try to do. Let's look at some of their techniques.

Soft Control versus Force

Let's start with medieval Europe, where we find an excellent example of “soft” control. At that time, land was the primary source of wealth—and only the nobility and the church could own land. Almost everyone was a peasant (a serf) who worked for these powerful landowners. The peasants farmed the land, took care of the livestock, and built the roads and bridges. Each year, they had to turn over a designated portion of their crops to their feudal lord. Year after year, for centuries, they did so. Why?

CONTROLLING PEOPLE'S IDEAS Why didn't the peasants rebel and take over the land themselves? There were many reasons, not the least of which was that the nobility and church controlled the army. Coercion, however, goes only so far, because it breeds hostility and nourishes rebellion. How much more effective it is to get the masses to *want* to do what the ruling elite desires. This is where *ideology* (beliefs that justify the way things are) comes into play, and the nobility and clergy used it to great effect. They developed an ideology known as the **divine right of kings**—the idea that the king's authority comes directly from God. The king delegates authority to nobles, who, as God's representatives, must be obeyed. To disobey is to sin against God; to rebel is to merit physical punishment on earth and eternal suffering in hell.

Controlling people's ideas can be remarkably more effective than using brute force. Although this particular ideology governs few minds today, the elite in every society uses ideology to justify its position at the top. For example, around the world, schools teach that their country's form of government—*no matter what form of government it has*—is good. Religious leaders teach that we owe obedience to authority, that laws are to be obeyed. To the degree that their ideologies are accepted by the masses, the elite remains securely in power.

Ideology is so powerful that it even sets limits on the elite. Although leaders use ideas to control people, the people can also insist that their leaders conform to those

same ideas. Pakistan is an outstanding example. If Pakistani leaders depart from fundamentalist Islamic ideology, their position is in jeopardy. For example, regardless of their personal views, Pakistani leaders cannot support Western ideas of morality. If they were to allow women to wear short skirts in public, for example, not only would they lose their positions of leadership but perhaps also their lives. To protect their position within a system of stratification, leaders, regardless of their personal opinions, must also conform at least outwardly to the controlling ideas.

divine right of kings

the idea that the king's authority comes from God; in an interesting gender bender, also applies to queens

Louis IV as he is crowned the Holy Roman Emperor in 1328 in Rome.



CONTROLLING INFORMATION To maintain their power, elites try to control information. Chinese leaders have put tight controls on Internet cafes and search engines, and they block access to Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (Wang 2017). For watching a Jackie Chan movie, North Koreans can be sentenced to 6 months of backbreaking work in a labor camp (LaFraniere 2010). Lacking such power in democracies, the ruling elites rely on covert means. A favorite tactic of U.S. presidents is to withhold information “in the interest of national security,” a phrase that often translates as “in the interest of protecting me.”

STIFLING CRITICISM Like the rest of us, the power elite doesn’t like to be criticized. But unlike the rest of us, they have the power to do something about it. Fear is a favorite tactic. In Thailand, you can be put in prison for criticizing the king—or even his dog (Hale 2016). Poetry is dangerous, too. Judges in Qatar sentenced a poet to *life in prison* because one of his poems criticized “the ruling family” (Delmar-Morgan 2012). It can be worse. In Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, the penalty for telling a joke about Hussein was having your tongue cut out (Nordland 2003).

In a democracy, the control of critics takes a milder form. When the U.S. Defense Department found out that an author had criticized its handling of 9/11, it bought and destroyed 9,500 copies of his book (Thompson 2010).

BIG BROTHER TECHNOLOGY The ideal technology—“ideal” from the perspective of the elite—will allow citizens to be monitored without them knowing they are being watched. This dream of the elite is no longer part of the future. It is here now.

Drones patrol the skies, silent and unseen. Able to read molecules, the picosecond laser scanner can sense from 150 feet away if you have gunpowder residue on your body, as well as report your adrenaline level (Compton 2012). Software programs can read the entire contents of your computer in a second—and not leave a trace. Your image has been recorded countless times by security cameras, which some not so fondly call “Tiny Brothers.” The FBI’s face-recognition system can scan crowds and instantly match those faces with its files. Most of the faces in its digitized system are of regular (non-criminal) citizens (Waddell 2016). Face-recognition software can turn the police’s body cameras into surveillance machines, able to identify everyone an officer passes on the sidewalk (Kofman 2017).

Dictators have few checks on how they use this technology, but democracies do have some, such as requiring court orders for search and seizure. Such restraints on power frustrate officials, so they are delighted with our new Homeland Security laws that allow them to spy on citizens without their knowledge.

Just as with ideology, the new technology is a two-edged sword. It gives the elite powerful tools for monitoring citizens, but it also makes it difficult for the elite to control information. With international borders meaning nothing to the Internet, it takes but seconds for e-mail, tweets, and photos to fly around the globe. Encryption also frustrates governments and excites privacy advocates. *Silent Circle* shreds files into thousands of pieces as they are sent to the cloud. Only the recipient has the key, which is deleted automatically after a file is downloaded (Gallagher 2013). Governments have not been able to break *Silent Circle*, *PGP* (*Pretty Good Privacy*, a free code), or *Signal*, which scrambles messages until they reach the intended reader (Yadron 2015). The FBI is upset that Google and Apple have added an encryption option for their smartphones (Welch 2016). We will see how long these companies resist governmental pressure.

IN SUM To maintain stratification, the elite tries to dominate its society’s institutions. In a dictatorship, the elite makes the laws. In a democracy, the elite influences the laws. In both, the elite controls the police and military and can give orders to crush a rebellion—or to run the post office or air traffic control if workers strike. With force having its limits, especially the potential of provoking resistance, most power elites prefer to keep themselves in power by peaceful means, especially by influencing the thinking of their people.

Comparative Social Stratification

7.5 Contrast social stratification in Great Britain and the former Soviet Union.

Now that we have examined systems of social stratification, considered why stratification is universal, and looked at how elites keep themselves in power, let's compare social stratification in Great Britain and in the former Soviet Union. In the next chapter, we'll look at social stratification in the United States.

Social Stratification in Great Britain

Great Britain is often called England by Americans, but England is only one of the countries that make up the island of Great Britain. The others are Scotland and Wales. In addition, Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Like other industrialized countries, Great Britain has a class system that can be divided into lower, middle, and upper classes. Great Britain's population is about evenly divided between the middle class and the lower (or working) class. A tiny upper class—wealthy, powerful, and highly educated—makes up perhaps 1 percent of the population.

Compared with Americans, the British are very class conscious (Lyll 2013). Like Americans, they recognize class distinctions on the basis of the type of car a person drives or the stores someone patronizes. But the most striking characteristics of the British class system are language and education. Because these often show up in distinctive speech, accent has a powerful impact on British life (Cauldwell 2014). Accent almost always betrays class. As soon as someone speaks, the listener is aware of that person's social class—and treats him or her accordingly.

Education is the primary way by which the British perpetuate their class system from one generation to the next (Kynaston and Kynaston 2014). Almost all children go to neighborhood schools. Great Britain's richest 5 percent, however—who own *half* the nation's wealth—send their children to exclusive private boarding schools. There the children of the elite are trained in subjects that are considered “proper” for members of the ruling class. An astounding 50 percent of the students at Oxford and Cambridge, the country's most elite universities, come from this 5 percent of the population. So do half of the prime minister's cabinet (Neil 2011). To illustrate how powerful stratified education is, how it affects the national life of Great Britain, sociologist Ian Robertson (1987) said,

Eighteen former pupils of the most exclusive of [England's high schools], Eton, have become prime minister. Imagine the chances of a single American high school producing eighteen presidents!

Social Stratification in the Former Soviet Union

Heeding Marx's call for a classless society, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870–1924) and Leon Trotsky (1879–1940) led a revolution in Russia in 1917. They, and the nations that followed their banner, never claimed to have achieved the ideal of communism, in which all contribute their labor to the common good and receive according to their needs. Instead, they used the term *socialism* to describe the intermediate step between capitalism and communism, in which social classes are abolished but some inequality remains.

To tweak the nose of Uncle Sam, the socialist countries would trumpet their equality and point a finger at glaring inequalities in the United States. These countries, however, also were marked by huge disparities in privilege. Their major basis of stratification was membership in the Communist party. Party members decided who would gain admission to the better schools or obtain the more desirable jobs and housing. The equally qualified son or daughter of parents who were not members of the Communist Party would be turned down because such privileges came with demonstrated loyalty to the party.

The Communist party, too, was highly stratified. Most members occupied a low level, where they fulfilled such tasks as spying on fellow workers. For this, they might

get easier jobs in the factory or occasional access to special stores to purchase hard-to-find goods. The middle level consisted of bureaucrats who were given better than average access to resources and privileges. At the top level was a small elite: party members who enjoyed not only power but also limousines, imported delicacies, vacation homes, and even servants and hunting lodges. As with other stratification systems around the world, women held lower positions in the party. This was evident at each year's May Day, when the top members of the party reviewed the latest weapons paraded in Moscow's Red Square. Photos of these events show only men.

The leaders of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) became frustrated as they saw the West thrive. They struggled with a bloated bureaucracy, the inefficiencies of central planning, workers who did the minimum because they could not be fired, and a military so costly that it spent one of every eight of the nation's rubles (*Statistical Abstract* 1993:1432, table dropped in later editions). Socialist ideology did not call for their citizens to be deprived, and in an attempt to turn things around, the Soviet leadership allowed elections to be held in which more than one candidate ran for an office. (Before this, voters had a choice of only one candidate per office.) They also sold huge chunks of state-owned businesses to the public. Overnight, making investments to try to turn a profit changed from a crime into a respectable goal.

Russia's transition to capitalism took a bizarre twist. As authority broke down, powerful mafias emerged. These criminal groups are headed by gangsters, crooked businessmen, and corrupt government officials (including members of the Russian secret police, the FSB). They assassinate business leaders, reporters, and politicians who refuse to cooperate (Harding 2017). They launder money through banks they control and buy luxury properties in popular tourist areas in Europe and Asia. A favorite is Marbella, a watering and wintering spot on Spain's Costa del Sol.

As Moscow reestablished its authority, its criminal ties brought wealth to some members of the government (Dawisha 2014). This group of organized criminals is taking its place as part of Russia's new capitalist class.

Global Stratification: Three Worlds

7.6 Compare social stratification in the Most Industrialized Nations, the Industrializing Nations, and the Least Industrialized Nations.

Let's start this section a little differently. The *Down-to-Earth Sociology* that follows should get you thinking.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Inequality? What Inequality?

There is a lot of talk about social inequality. Like so many things, maybe it's overblown.

There are differences among us, of course. Some people do have newer cars than others. Some do have bigger houses, better clothing, and more expensive foods and drinks. We all know this.

So there are a few differences among us. But why the concern? Is this perhaps just a little rabble-raising by a few radical sociologists and some other troublemakers?

Well, let's see. To be logical, perhaps even a bit scientific, we probably should start out by determining if

there really is inequality. How can we do this? With all the statistical techniques available to us, things quickly could become mind-boggling. There must be a simpler way of doing this.

And there is. It turns out that *the 85 richest people in the world own as much of the world's wealth as the bottom half of the entire world's population* (Hardoon 2015).

Let's see. If eighty-five people have as much as three and a half billion people, then ...

Hmm. Maybe there is inequality.

(continued)

Ah, maybe not. Perhaps this is just the normal state of affairs of the world, just another fact like there are more cats than dogs in the world, or more mice than elephants.

Or perhaps this indicates that something is out of kilter in the world, an imbalance that doesn't seem quite right.

Hmm. Could be.

For Your Consideration

→ I don't mean to skew this box too much in one direction. Or maybe I just sort of can't help it. This is perhaps one of the most mind-boggling statistics you will ever come across in your life, and I feel compelled to tell you about it. Anyway, what do you think?

As was noted at the beginning of this chapter, just as the people within a nation are stratified by property, power, and prestige, so are the world's nations. To depict global stratification, a simple model was used: First, Second, and Third Worlds. *First World* referred to the industrialized capitalist nations, *Second World* to the communist (or socialist) countries, and *Third World* to any nation that did not fit into the first two categories. The breakup of the Soviet Union in 1989 made these terms outdated. In addition, although *first*, *second*, and *third* did not mean "best," "better," and "worst," they implied it. An alternative classification that some now use—developed, developing, and undeveloped nations—has the same drawback. By calling ourselves "developed," it sounds as though we are mature and the "undeveloped" nations are backward.

To resolve this problem, I use more neutral, descriptive terms: *Most Industrialized*, *Industrializing*, and *Least Industrialized* nations. We can measure industrialization with no judgment implied as to whether a nation's industrialization represents "development," ranks it "first," or is even desirable at all. The intention is to depict on a global level the three primary dimensions of social stratification: property, power, and prestige. The Most Industrialized Nations have much greater property (wealth), power (they usually get their way in international relations), and prestige (they are looked up to as world leaders).

As you read this analysis, don't forget the sociological significance of the stratification of nations, its far-reaching effects on people's lives, as illustrated by the two families sketched in our opening vignette.

The Most Industrialized Nations

The Most Industrialized Nations are the United States and Canada in North America; Great Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland, and the other industrialized countries of western Europe; Japan in Asia; and Australia and New Zealand in the area of the world known as Oceania. Although there are variations in their economic systems, these countries are capitalistic. As Table 7.2 shows, although these nations have only 16 percent of the world's people, they possess 31 percent of the Earth's land. Their wealth is so enormous that even their poor live better and longer lives than do the average citizens of the Least Industrialized Nations.

Table 7.2 Distribution of the World's Land and Population

	Land	Population
Most Industrialized Nations	31%	16%
Industrializing Nations	20%	16%
Least Industrialized Nations	49%	68%

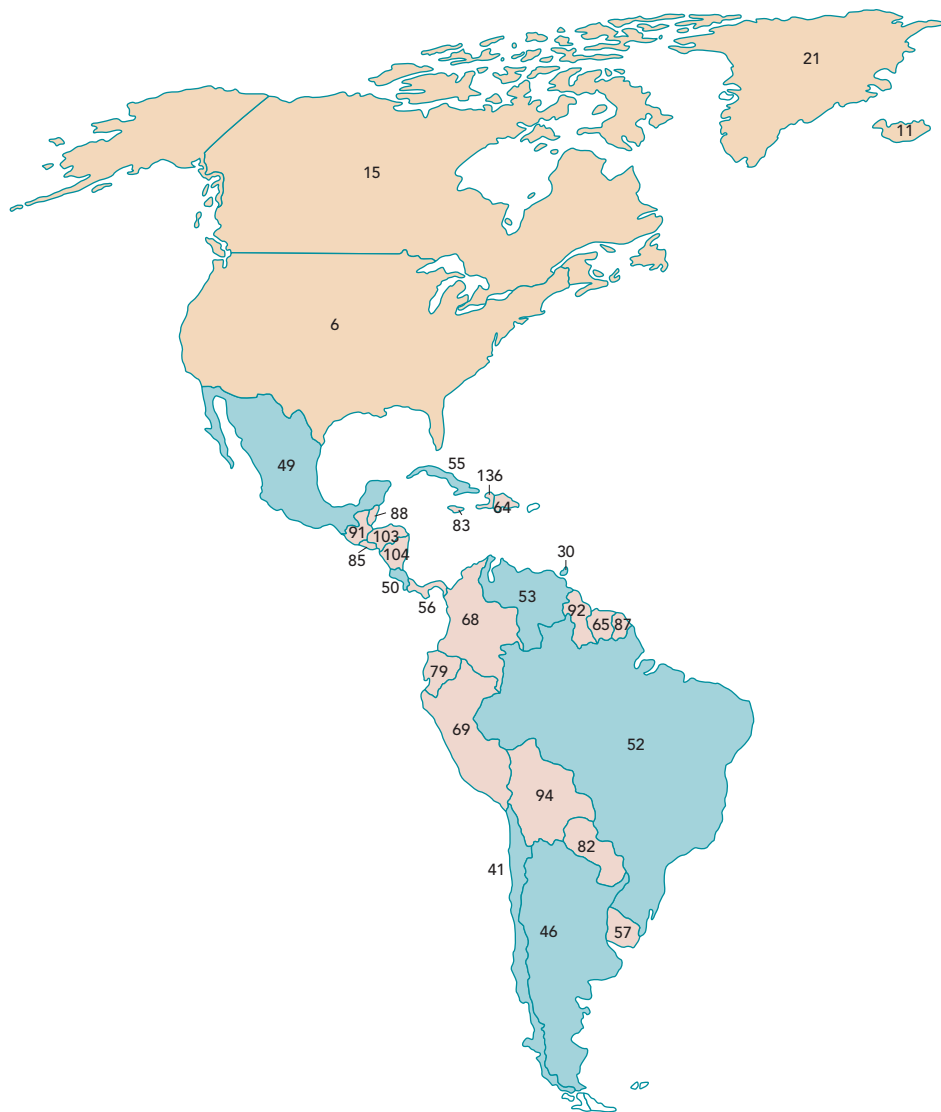
SOURCES: By the author. Computed from Kurian 1990, 1991, 1992.

In the following Social Map, you can see the tremendous disparities in wealth and poverty among the world's nations. People in one country have \$102,000 a year to live on, while people in another country must get by on just \$400. One of the world's poorest countries (see number 136) is just 700 miles from the United States.

Figure 7.4 Global Stratification: Income of the World's Nations

The Most Industrialized Nations		
Nation	Income per Person	
1 Luxembourg	\$102,000	
2 Singapore	\$87,100	
3 Norway	\$69,300	
4 Switzerland	\$59,400	
5 Hong Kong	\$58,100	
6 United States	\$57,300	
7 Netherlands	\$50,800	
8 Sweden	\$49,700	
9 Australia	\$48,800	
10 Germany	\$48,200	
11 Iceland	\$48,100	
12 Austria	\$47,900	
13 Taiwan	\$47,800	
14 Denmark	\$46,600	
15 Canada	\$46,200	
16 Belgium	\$44,900	
17 United Kingdom	\$42,500	
18 France	\$42,400	
19 Finland	\$41,800	
20 Japan	\$38,900	
21 Greenland	\$37,900	
22 Korea, South	\$37,900	
23 New Zealand	\$37,100	
24 Italy	\$36,300	
25 Israel	\$34,800	
26 Czech Republic	\$33,200	
27 Slovenia	\$32,000	

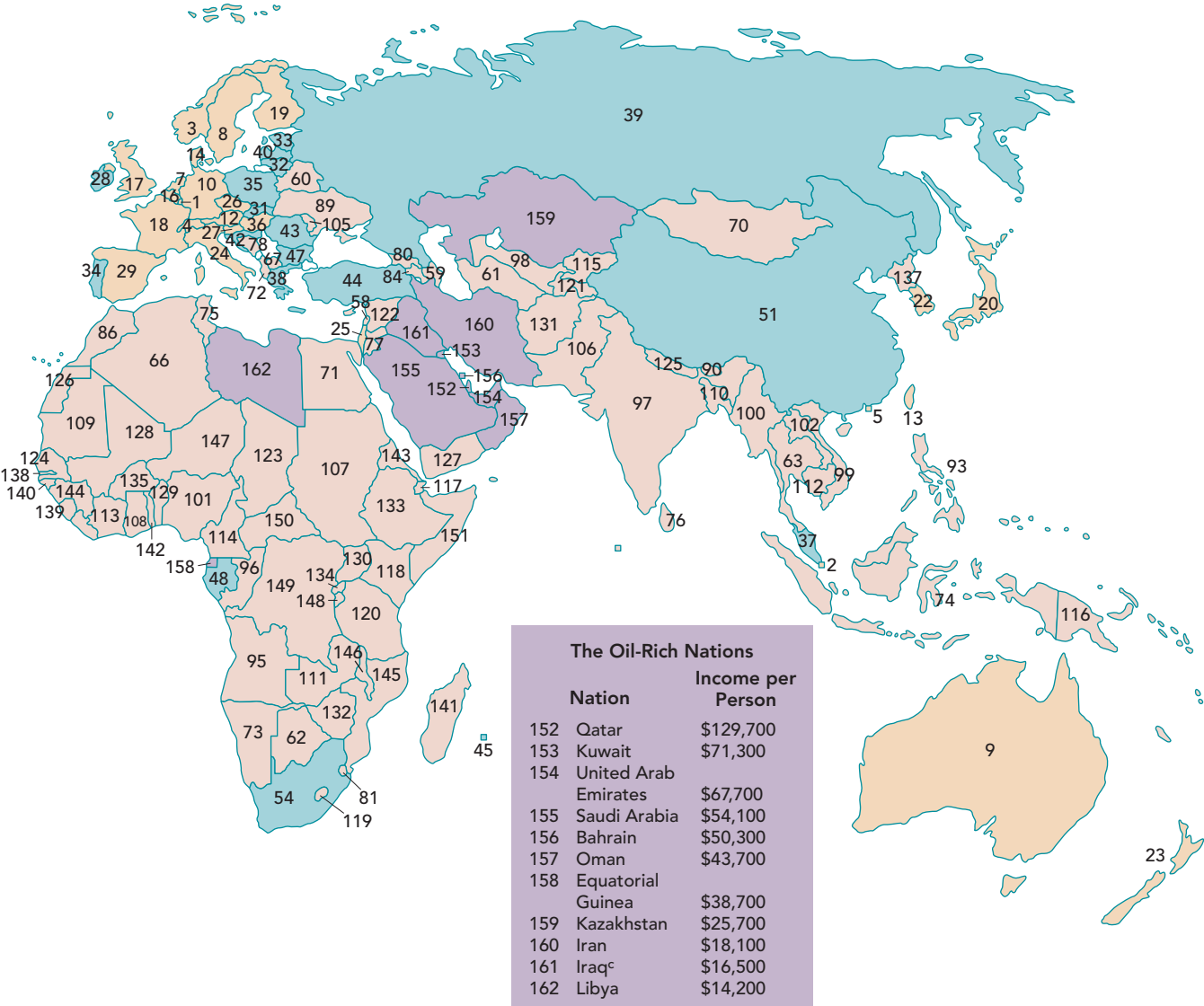
The Industrializing Nations		
Nation	Income per Person	
28 Ireland	\$69,400	
29 Spain	\$36,500	
30 Trinidad	\$31,900	
31 Slovakia	\$31,200	
32 Lithuania	\$29,900	
33 Estonia	\$29,500	
34 Portugal	\$28,500	
35 Poland	\$27,700	
36 Hungary	\$27,200	
37 Malaysia	\$27,200	
38 Greece	\$26,800	
39 Russia	\$26,100	
40 Latvia	\$25,700	
41 Chile	\$24,100	
42 Croatia	\$22,400	
43 Romania	\$22,300	
44 Turkey	\$21,100	
45 Mauritius	\$20,500	
46 Argentina	\$20,200	
47 Bulgaria	\$20,100	
48 Gabon	\$19,300	
49 Mexico	\$18,900	
50 Costa Rica	\$16,100	
51 China	\$15,400	
52 Brazil	\$15,200	
53 Venezuela	\$15,100	
54 South Africa	\$13,200	
55 Cuba	\$11,600	



The Least Industrialized Nations			
Nation	Income per Person	Nation	Income per Person
56 Panama	\$22,800	72 Albania	\$11,900
57 Uruguay	\$21,600	73 Namibia	\$11,800
58 Lebanon	\$18,500	74 Indonesia	\$11,700
59 Azerbaijan	\$17,700	75 Tunisia	\$11,700
60 Belarus	\$17,500	76 Sri Lanka	\$11,200
61 Turkmenistan	\$17,300	77 Jordan	\$11,100
62 Botswana ^b	\$16,900	78 Bosnia	\$11,000
63 Thailand	\$16,800	79 Ecuador	\$11,000
64 Dominican Rep.	\$15,900	80 Georgia	\$10,100
65 Suriname	\$15,200	81 Swaziland	\$9,800
66 Algeria	\$15,000	82 Paraguay	\$9,400
67 Macedonia	\$14,500	83 Jamaica	\$9,000
68 Colombia	\$14,200	84 Armenia	\$8,900
69 Peru	\$13,000	85 El Salvador	\$8,900
70 Mongolia	\$12,200	86 Morocco	\$8,400
71 Egypt	\$12,100	87 French Guiana	\$8,300
		88 Belize	\$8,200

SOURCE: By the author. Based on *CIA World Factbook* 2017.

Figure 7.4 (Continued)



The Least Industrialized Nations							
Income per		Income per		Income per		Income per	
Nation	Person	Nation	Person	Nation	Person	Nation	Person
89 Ukraine	\$8,200	106 Pakistan	\$5,100	122 Syria	\$2,900	138 Gambia	\$1,700
90 Bhutan	\$8,100	107 Sudan	\$4,500	123 Chad	\$2,600	139 Sierra Leone	\$1,700
91 Guatemala	\$7,900	108 Ghana	\$4,400	124 Senegal	\$2,600	140 Guinea-Bissau	\$1,600
92 Guyana	\$7,900	109 Mauritania	\$4,400	125 Nepal	\$2,500	141 Madagascar	\$1,500
93 Philippines	\$7,700	110 Bangladesh	\$3,900	126 Western Sahara	\$2,500	142 Togo	\$1,500
94 Bolivia	\$7,200	111 Zambia	\$3,900	127 Yemen	\$2,500	143 Eritrea	\$1,300
95 Angola	\$6,800	112 Cambodia	\$3,700	128 Mali	\$2,300	144 Guinea	\$1,300
96 Congo, Rep. of	\$6,800	113 Cote d'Ivoire	\$3,600	129 Benin	\$2,200	145 Mozambique	\$1,200
97 India	\$6,700	114 Cameroon	\$3,500	130 Uganda	\$2,100	146 Malawi	\$1,100
98 Uzbekistan	\$6,500	115 Kyrgyzstan	\$3,500	131 Afghanistan	\$2,000	147 Niger	\$1,100
99 Vietnam	\$6,400	116 Papua-New Guinea	\$3,500	132 Zimbabwe	\$2,000	148 Burundi	\$800
100 Burma (Myanmar)	\$6,000	117 Djibouti	\$3,400	133 Ethiopia	\$1,900	149 Congo, Dem. Rep.	\$800
101 Nigeria	\$5,900	118 Kenya	\$3,400	134 Rwanda	\$1,900	150 Central African Rep.	\$700
102 Laos	\$5,700	119 Lesotho	\$3,100	135 Burkina Faso	\$1,800	151 Somalia	\$400
103 Honduras	\$5,300	120 Tanzania	\$3,100	136 Haiti	\$1,800		
104 Nicaragua	\$5,300	121 Tajikistan	\$3,000	137 Korea, North	\$1,800		
105 Moldova	\$5,200						

The Industrializing Nations

The Industrializing Nations include most of the nations of the former Soviet Union and its former satellites in eastern Europe. As you saw in Table 7.2, these nations account for 20 percent of the Earth's land and 16 percent of its people.

The dividing points between the three “worlds” are soft, making it difficult to know how to classify some nations. This is especially the case with the Industrializing Nations. Exactly how much industrialization must a nation have to be in this category? Although soft, these categories do pinpoint essential differences among nations. Most people who live in the Industrializing Nations have much lower incomes and standards of living than do those who live in the Most Industrialized Nations. The majority, however, are better off than those who live in the Least Industrialized Nations. For example, on such measures as access to electricity, indoor plumbing, automobiles, telephones, and even food, most citizens of the Industrializing Nations rank lower than those in the Most Industrialized Nations but higher than those in the Least Industrialized Nations. As you saw in this chapter's opening vignette, stratification affects even life expectancy. The benefits of industrialization are uneven. Large numbers of people in the Industrializing Nations remain illiterate and desperately poor. Conditions can be gruesome, as we explore in the following *Thinking Critically about Social Life*.

Thinking Critically about Social Life

Open Season: Children as Prey

What is childhood like in the Industrializing Nations?

The answer depends on who your parents are. If you are the son or daughter of rich parents, childhood can be pleasant—a world filled with luxuries and servants. If you are born into poverty but live in a rural area where there is plenty to eat, life can still be good—although there may be no books, television, and little education. If you live in a slum, however, life can be horrible—worse even than in the slums of the Most Industrialized Nations (Lyons 2013). Let's take a glance at a notorious slum in Brazil.

Not enough food—this you can take for granted—along with wife abuse, broken homes, alcoholism, drug abuse, and a lot of crime: From your knowledge of slums in the Most Industrialized Nations, you would expect these things. What you may not expect, however, are the brutal conditions in which Brazilian slum (*favela*) children live.

Sociologist Martha Huggins (Huggins et al. 2002) reports that poverty is so deep that children and adults

swarm through garbage dumps to try to find enough decaying food to keep them alive. You might also be surprised to discover that the owners of some of these dumps hire armed guards to keep the poor out—so that they can sell the garbage for pig food. And you might be

shocked to learn that some shop owners hire hit men, auctioning designated victims to the *lowest* bidder!

Life is cheap in the poor nations—but death squads for children? To understand this, we must first note that Brazil has a long history of violence. Brazil also has a high rate of poverty, has only a tiny middle class, and is controlled by a small group of families who, under a veneer of democracy, make the country's major decisions. Hordes

of homeless children, with no schools or jobs, roam the streets. To survive, they wash windshields, shine shoes, beg, and steal (Rosenblatt 2012).

The “respectable” classes see these children as nothing but trouble. They hurt business: Customers feel intimidated when they see begging children—especially



A woman and her two daughters in a *favela* in Brasilia, Brazil.

(continued)

teenaged boys—clustered in front of stores. Some shoplift. Others break into stores. With no effective social institutions to care for these children, one solution is to kill them. As Huggins notes, murder sends a clear message—especially if it is accompanied by ritual torture: gouging out the eyes, ripping open the chest, cutting off the genitals, raping the girls, and burning the victim’s body.

Not all life is bad in the Industrializing Nations, but this is about as bad as it gets.

For Your Consideration

- Do you think there is anything the Most Industrialized Nations can do about this situation? Or is it, though unfortunate, just an “internal” affair that is up to Brazil to handle as it wishes?
- Directed by the police, death squads in Brazil also assassinate criminals, while in the Philippine slums they kill rapists and drug dealers (Mogato and Baldwin 2017). What do you think about this?

The Least Industrialized Nations

In the Least Industrialized Nations, most people live on small farms or in villages, have large families, and barely survive. These nations account for 68 percent of the world’s people but only 49 percent of the Earth’s land.

Poverty plagues these nations to such an extent that some families actually *live* in city dumps. This is hard to believe, but look at the following photos, which I took in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. Although wealthy nations have their pockets of poverty, *most* people in the Least Industrialized Nations are poor. *Most* of them have no running water, indoor plumbing, or access to trained teachers or doctors. As we will review in Chapter 14, most of the world’s population growth occurs in these nations, placing even greater burdens on their limited resources and causing them to fall farther behind each year.

Modifying the Model

To classify countries into Most Industrialized, Industrializing, and Least Industrialized is helpful in that it pinpoints significant similarities and differences among groups of nations. But then there are the oil-rich nations of the Middle East, those that provide much of the oil that fuels the machinery of the Most Industrialized Nations. Although these nations are not industrialized, some are immensely wealthy. To classify them simply as Least Industrialized would gloss over significant distinctions, such as their modern hospitals, extensive prenatal care, desalinization plants, abundant food and shelter, high literacy, and computerized banking. On the Social World Map, you saw that I classify these countries separately. Table 7.3 also reflects this distinction.

Table 7.3 An Alternative Model of Global Stratification

Four Worlds of Stratification
Most Industrialized Nations
Industrializing Nations
Least Industrialized Nations
Oil-rich, non-industrialized nations

SOURCE: By the author.

Kuwait is an outstanding example. The government employs 90 percent of its working citizens, subsidizing their electricity and gasoline and giving them free education and health care. Citizens are also given free housing when they marry, although with the lower cost of oil, the government has fallen behind in providing the housing (“Tighten Your Belts” 2014). Most of the grunt work that the nation requires is done by migrant workers from the poor nations, while skilled workers from the Most Industrialized Nations run the specialized systems that keep Kuwait’s economy going.



The Dump People: Working and Living and Playing in the City Dump of Phnom Penh, Cambodia

I went to Cambodia to inspect orphanages, to see how well the children are being cared for. While in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital, I was told about people who live in the city dump. Live there? I could hardly believe my ears. I knew that people made their living by picking scraps from the city dump, but I didn't know they actually lived among the garbage. This I had to see for myself.

I did. And there I found a highly developed social organization—an intricate support system. Because words are inadequate to depict the abject poverty of the Least Industrialized Nations, these photos can provide more insight into these people's lives than anything I could say.



The children who live in the dump also play there. These children are riding bicycles on a "road," a packed, leveled area of garbage that leads to their huts. The huge stacks in the background are piled trash. Note the ubiquitous Nike.



After the garbage arrives by truck, people stream around it, struggling to be the first to discover something of value. To sift through the trash, the workers use metal picks, like the one this child is holding. Note that children work alongside the adults.



This is a typical sight—family and friends working together. The trash, which is constantly burning, contains harmful chemicals. Why do people work under such conditions? Because they have few options. It is either this or starve.



One of my many surprises was to find food stands in the dump. Although this one primarily offers drinks and snacks, others serve more substantial food. One even has broken chairs salvaged from the dump for its customers.

The people live at the edge of the dump, in homemade huts (visible in the background). This woman, who was on her way home after a day's work, put down her sack of salvaged items to let me take her picture. She still has her pick in her hand.



CAMBODIA

★ Phnom Penh

I was surprised to learn that ice is delivered to the dump. This woman is using a hand grinder to crush ice for drinks for her customers. The customers, of course, are other people who also live in the dump.



At the day's end, the workers wash at the community pump. This hand pump serves all their water needs—drinking, washing, and cooking. There is no indoor plumbing. The weeds in the background serve that purpose. Can you imagine drinking water that comes from below this garbage dump?



Not too many visitors to Phnom Penh tell a cab driver to take them to the city dump. The cabbie looked a bit perplexed, but he did as I asked. Two cabs are shown here because my friends insisted on accompanying me.

I know my friends were curious themselves, but they had also discovered that the destinations I want to visit are usually not in the tourist guides, and they wanted to protect me.

Note the smoke from the smoldering garbage.

How Did the World's Nations Become Stratified?

7.7 Discuss how colonialism and world system theory explain how the world's nations became stratified.

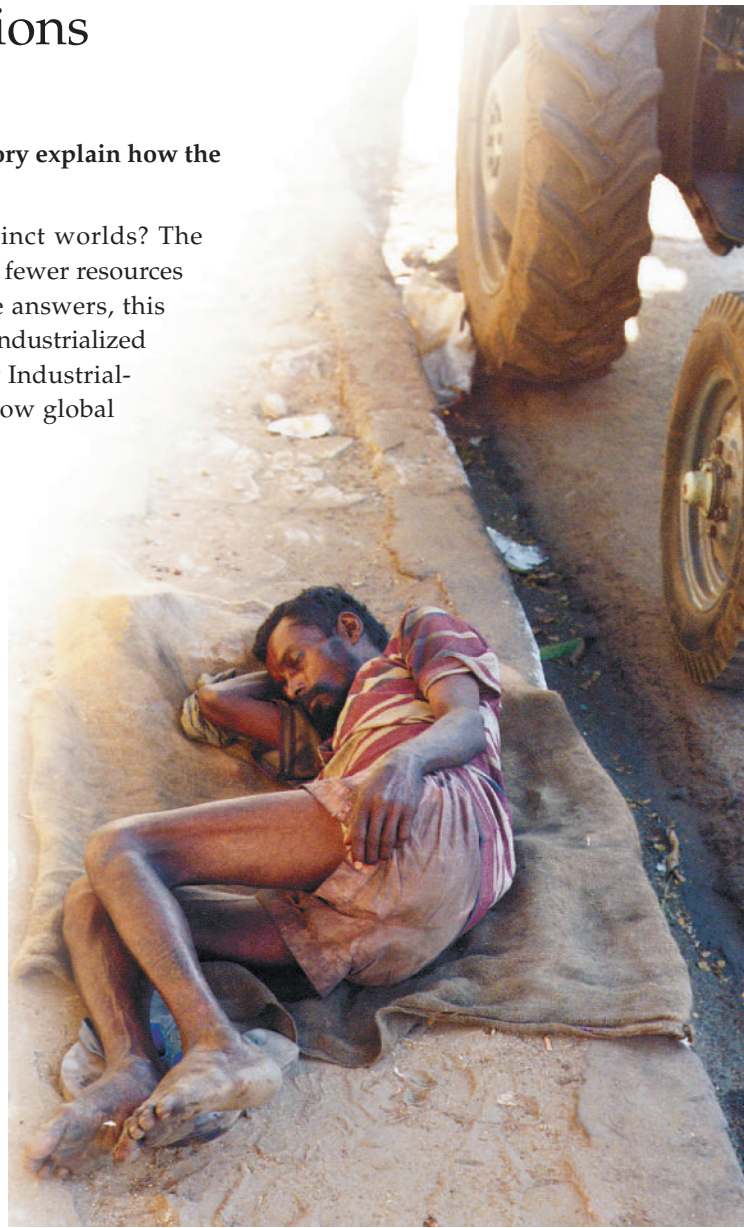
How did the globe become stratified into such distinct worlds? The common-sense answer is that the poorer nations have fewer resources than the richer nations. As with many commonsense answers, this one falls short. Many of the Industrializing and Least Industrialized Nations are rich in natural resources, while one Most Industrialized Nation, Japan, has few. Three theories explain how global stratification came about.

Colonialism

The first theory, **colonialism**, stresses that the countries that industrialized first got a jump on the rest of the world. Beginning in Great Britain about 1750, industrialization spread throughout western Europe. Plowing some of their profits into powerful armaments and fast ships, these countries invaded weaker nations, making colonies out of them (Harrison 1993; Michalopoulos and Papaioannou 2017). After subduing these weaker nations, the more powerful countries left behind a controlling force in order to exploit the nations' labor and natural resources. At one point, there was even a free-for-all among the industrialized European countries as they rushed to divide up an entire continent. As they sliced Africa into pieces, even tiny Belgium got into the act and acquired the Congo, which was *seventy-five* times larger than itself.

The purpose of colonialism was to establish *economic colonies*—to exploit the nation's people and resources for the benefit of the elites of the "mother" country. The more powerful European countries would plant their national flags in a colony and send their representatives to run the government, but the United States usually chose to plant corporate flags in a colony and let these corporations dominate the territory's government. Central and South America are prime examples. There were exceptions, such as the U.S. army's conquest of the Philippines, which President William McKinley said was motivated by the desire "to educate the Filipinos and uplift and civilize and Christianize them" (Krugman 2002).

Colonialism, then, shaped many of the Least Industrialized Nations. In some instances, the Most Industrialized Nations were so powerful that when dividing their spoils, they drew lines across a map, creating new states without regard for tribal or cultural considerations (Duiker and Spielvogel 2017). Britain and France did just this as they divided up North Africa and parts of the Middle East—which is why the national boundaries of Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other countries are so straight. This legacy of European conquests is a background factor in much of today's racial-ethnic and tribal violence: By the stroke of a pen, groups with no history of national identity were incorporated within the same political boundaries.



Homeless people sleeping on the streets is a common sight in India's cities. I took this photo in Chennai (formerly Madras).

colonialism

the process by which one nation takes over another nation, making a colony of it, usually for the purpose of exploiting its labor and natural resources

World System Theory

world system theory

a theory of how economic and political connections developed among nations, connections that now link the world's countries

globalization of capitalism

capitalism (investing to make profits within a rational system) becoming the globe's dominant economic system

The second explanation of how global stratification came about was proposed by Immanuel Wallerstein (1979, 1990, 2011). According to **world system theory**, industrialization led to four groups of nations. The first group consists of the *core nations*, the countries that industrialized first (Britain, France, Holland, and, later, Germany), which grew rich and powerful. The second group is the *semiperiphery*. The economies of these nations, located around the Mediterranean, stagnated because they grew dependent on trade with the core nations. The economies of the third group, the *periphery*, or fringe nations, developed even less. These are the eastern European countries, which sold cash crops to the core nations. The fourth group of nations includes most of Africa and Asia. Called the *external area*, these nations were left out of the development of capitalism altogether. The current expansion of capitalism has changed the relationships among these groups. Most notably, eastern Europe and Asia are no longer left out of capitalism.

The **globalization of capitalism**—the adoption of capitalism around the world—has created extensive ties among the world's nations. Production and trade are now so interconnected that events around the globe affect us all. Sometimes this is immediate, as happens when a civil war disrupts the flow of oil, or—perish the thought—as would be the case if terrorists managed to get their hands on nuclear or biological weapons. At other times, the effects are like a slow ripple, as when a government adopts some policy that gradually impedes its ability to compete in world markets. All of today's societies, then, no matter where they are located, are part of a world system.

The interconnections are most evident among nations that do extensive trading with one another. The following *Thinking Critically about Social Life* explores implications of Mexico's *maquiladoras*.

Thinking Critically about Social Life

When Globalization Comes Home: *Maquiladoras* South of the Border

Two hundred thousand Mexicans rush to Juarez each year, fleeing the hopelessness of the rural areas in pursuit of a better life. They have no running water or plumbing, but they didn't have any in the country either, and here they have the possibility of a job, a weekly check to buy food for the kids.

The pay is about \$100 for a 48-hour work week, about \$2 an hour (Chacon and Davis 2006). Some workers earn just \$39 for a week's work (Bacon 2015).

This may not sound like much, but it is more than twice the minimum daily wage in Mexico.

Assembly-for-export plants, known as *maquiladoras*, dot the Mexican border. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) allows U.S. companies to import materials to Mexico without paying tax and then to export the finished products into the United States, again without tax. It's a

sweet deal: few taxes and \$8 to \$16 a day for workers starved for jobs.

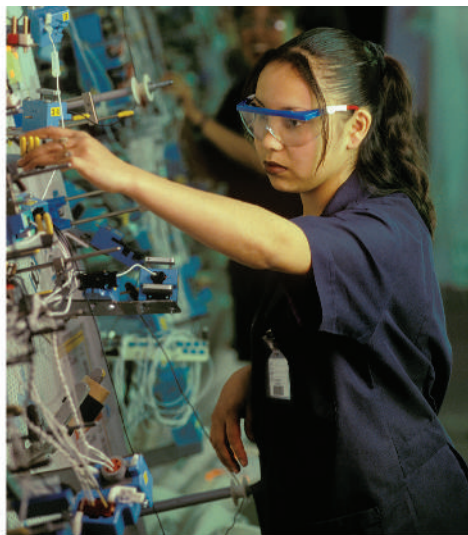
That these workers live in shacks, with no running

water or sewage disposal, is not the employers' concern.

Nor is the pollution. The stinking air doesn't stay on the Mexican side of the border. Neither does the garbage. Heavy rains wash torrents of untreated sewage and industrial wastes into the Rio Grande (Casey and Watkins 2014).

There is also the loss of jobs for U.S. workers. Six of the fifteen poorest cities in the United States are located along the sewage-infested Rio Grande. NAFTA didn't bring poverty to these cities. They were poor before this treaty, but residents resent the transfer of jobs across the border (Thompson 2001).

What if the *maquilas* (*maquiladora* workers) organize and demand better pay? Farther south, even cheaper



A *maquiladora* worker in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. She assembles dashboard harnesses for GM cars.

labor beckons. Workers in Guatemala and Honduras, even more desperate than those in Mexico, will gladly take these jobs. China, too, is competing for them. And Vietnam and Thailand are competing for China's jobs (Chu et al. 2016).

Many Mexican politicians would say that this presentation is one-sided. "Sure there are problems," they would say, "but this is how it always is when a country industrializes. Don't you realize that the *maquiladoras* bring jobs to people who have no



Inside the home of a *maquiladora* worker in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.

work? They also bring roads, telephone lines, and electricity to undeveloped areas." "In fact," said Vicente Fox, when he was the president of Mexico, "workers at the *maquiladoras* make more than the average salary in Mexico—and that's what we call fair wages" (Fraser 2001).

For Your Consideration

Let's apply our three theoretical perspectives.

- Some conflict theorists analyze how capitalists try to weaken the bargaining power of workers by exploiting divisions among them. In what is known as the *split labor market*, capitalists pit one group of workers against another to lower the cost of labor. How do you think *maquiladoras* fit this conflict perspective?
- When functionalists analyze a situation, they identify its functions and dysfunctions. What functions and dysfunctions of *maquiladoras* do you see?
- Symbolic interactionists analyze how people's experiences shape their views of the world. How would people's experiences in contrasting social locations lead to different answers to these questions: Do *maquiladoras* represent exploitation or opportunity? and What multiple realities do you see here?

Culture of Poverty

The third explanation of global stratification is quite unlike colonialism and world system theory. Economist John Kenneth Galbraith (1979) claimed that the cultures of the Least Industrialized Nations hold them back. Building on the ideas of anthropologist Oscar Lewis (1966a, 1966b), Galbraith argued that some nations are crippled by a **culture of poverty**, a way of life that perpetuates poverty from one generation to the next. He explained it this way: Most of the world's poor people are farmers who live on little plots of land. They barely produce enough food to survive. Living on the edge of starvation, they have little room for risk—so they stick to tried-and-true, traditional ways. To experiment with new farming techniques is to court disaster, since failure would lead to hunger and death.

Their religion also encourages them to accept their situation. It teaches fatalism, the belief that an individual's position in life is God's will. For example, in India, the Dalits are taught that they must have done very bad things in a previous life to suffer so. They are supposed to submit to their situation, which they deserve—and in the next life, maybe they'll come back in a more desirable state.

culture of poverty

the assumption that the values and behaviors of the poor make them fundamentally different from other people, that these factors are largely responsible for their poverty, and that parents perpetuate poverty across generations by passing these characteristics to their children

Evaluating the Theories

Most sociologists prefer colonialism and world system theory. To them, an explanation based on a culture of poverty places blame on the victim—the poor nations themselves. It points to characteristics of the poor nations, rather than to international political arrangements that benefit the Most Industrialized Nations at the expense of the poor nations. But even taken together, these theories yield only part of the picture. None of these theories, for example, would have led anyone to expect that after World War II Japan would become an economic powerhouse: Japan had a religion that stressed fatalism, two of its major cities had been destroyed by atomic bombs, and it had been stripped of its colonies.

Each theory, then, yields but a partial explanation, and the grand theorist who will put the many pieces of this puzzle together has yet to appear.

Maintaining Global Stratification

7.8 Explain how neocolonialism, multinational corporations, and technology help to maintain global stratification.

Regardless of how the world's nations became stratified, why do countries remain rich—or poor—year after year? Let's look at three explanations of how global stratification is maintained.

Neocolonialism

neocolonialism

the economic and political dominance of the Least Industrialized Nations by the Most Industrialized Nations

Sociologist Michael Harrington (1977) argued that when colonialism fell out of style, it was replaced by **neocolonialism**. When World War II changed public sentiment about sending soldiers to conquer weaker countries and colonists to exploit them, the Most Industrialized Nations turned to the international markets as a way of controlling the Least Industrialized Nations. By selling them goods on credit—especially weapons that the local elites desire so they can keep themselves in power—the Most Industrialized Nations entrap the poor nations within a circle of debt.

As many of us learn the hard way, owing a large debt puts us at the mercy of our creditors. So it is with neocolonialism. The *policy* of selling weapons and other manufactured goods to the Least Industrialized Nations on credit turns those countries into eternal debtors. The capital they need to develop their own industries goes instead as payments toward the debt, which becomes bloated with mounting interest. Keeping these nations in debt forces them to submit to trading terms dictated by the neocolonialists (Carrington 1993; Maloba 2017).

RELEVANCE TODAY Neocolonialism might seem remote from your life, but its heritage affects you directly. Consider the oil-rich Middle Eastern countries, our wars in the Persian Gulf, and the terrorism that emanates from this region. Although this is an area of ancient civilizations, the countries themselves are recent. Great Britain created Saudi Arabia, drawing its boundaries and even naming the country after the man (Ibn Saud) whom British officials picked to lead it. This created a debt for the Saudi family. For decades, this family repaid its debt by providing low-cost oil, which the Most Industrialized Nations need to maintain their way of life. When other nations pumped less oil—no matter the cause, whether revolution or an attempt to raise prices—the Saudis helped keep prices low by making up the shortfall. In return, the United States (and other nations) overlooked the human rights violations of the Saudi royal family, keeping them in power by selling them the latest weapons. This mutually sycophantic arrangement continues, but in light of U.S. support for Israel and 9/11 led by Saudi Arabians, it is fraying at the edges (Wong 2016).

Multinational Corporations

multinational corporations

companies that operate across national boundaries; also called *transnational corporations*

Multinational corporations, companies that operate across many national boundaries, also help to maintain the global dominance of the Most Industrialized Nations. In some cases, multinational corporations exploit the Least Industrialized Nations directly. A prime example is the United Fruit Company, a U.S. corporation that used to run Central American nations as its own fiefdoms. If a government became uncooperative, the CIA would plot and overthrow it (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA] 2003), while an occasional invasion by Marines would remind area politicians of the military power that backed U.S. corporations.

Most commonly, however, it is simply by doing business that multinational corporations help to maintain international stratification. A single multinational corporation may manage mining operations in several countries, manufacture goods in others, and market its products around the globe. No matter where the profits are made, or where they are reinvested, the primary beneficiaries are the Most Industrialized Nations, especially the one in which the multinational corporation has its world headquarters.

BUYING POLITICAL STABILITY In their pursuit of profits, the multinational corporations need cooperative power elites in the Least Industrialized Nations (Schwartz and Cameron 2017; Maloba 2017). In return for funneling money to the elites and selling them modern weapons, the corporations get a “favorable business climate”—that is, low taxes and cheap labor. The corporations politely call the money they pay to the elites “subsidies” and “offsets”—which ring prettier on the ear than “bribes.” These elites, able to siphon money from their country’s tax collections and government budgets, live a sophisticated upper-class life in the major cities of their home country. Although most of the citizens of these countries live a hard-scrabble life, the elites are able to send their children to prestigious Western universities, such as Oxford, the Sorbonne, and Harvard.

You can see how this cozy arrangement helps to maintain global stratification. The significance of these payoffs is not so much the genteel lifestyles that they allow the elites to maintain but the translation of the payoffs into power. They allow the elites to purchase high-tech weapons with which they preserve their positions of privilege, even though they must oppress their people to do so. The result is a political stability that keeps alive this diabolical partnership between the multinational corporations and the national elites.

UNANTICIPATED CONSEQUENCES This, however, is not the full story. An unintentional by-product of the multinationals’ global search for cheap resources and labor is to modify global stratification. When corporations move manufacturing from the Most Industrialized Nations to the Least Industrialized Nations, they not only exploit cheap labor, but they also bring jobs and money to these nations. Although workers in the Least Industrialized Nations are paid a pittance, it is more than they can earn elsewhere. With new factories come opportunities to develop skills, acquire technology, and accumulate a capital base from which local elites can launch their own factories.

The Pacific Rim nations provide a remarkable example. In return for providing the “favorable business climate” just mentioned, multinational corporations invested billions of dollars in the “Asian tigers” (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan). These nations have developed such a strong capital base that, along with China, they have begun to rival the older capitalist countries. This has also made them subject to capitalism’s “boom and bust” cycles. When capitalism suffers a downturn, workers and investors in these nations, including those in the *maquiladoras* that you just read about, have their dreams smashed.

Technology and Global Domination

The race between the Most and Least Industrialized Nations to develop and apply the new technologies might seem like a race between a marathon runner and someone with a broken leg. Can the outcome be in doubt? As the multinational corporations amass profits, they are able to invest huge sums in the latest technology while the Least Industrialized Nations are struggling to put scraps on the table.

So it would appear, but the race is not this simple. Although the Most Industrialized Nations have a seemingly insurmountable head start, some nations are shortening the distance between themselves and the front-runners. With cheap labor making their manufactured goods inexpensive, China and India are exporting goods on a massive scale. They are using the capital from these exports to buy high technology so they can modernize their infrastructure (transportation, communication, electrical, and banking systems). Although global domination remains in the hands of the West, it could be on the verge of a major shift from West to East.

Strains in the Global System: Uneasy Realignments

7.9 Identify strains in today's system of global stratification.

It is never easy to maintain global stratification. At the very least, a continuous stream of unanticipated events forces the elite to stay on their toes, and at times, huge currents of history threaten to sweep them aside. No matter how secure a stratification system may seem, it always contains unresolved matters. These contradictions can be covered up for a while, but inevitably the discontent multiplies and the demand for change grows louder. Some are just little dogs nipping at the heels of the world's elites, bringing issues that can be resolved with a drone or a few tanks or bombs—or, better, with a scowl and the threat to bomb an opponent. Other issues are of a broader nature, part of huge historical shifts. Baring their teeth, unresolved contradictions snarlingly demand change, even the rearrangement of global power.

Historical shifts bring cataclysmic disruptions. We are now living through such a time. The far-reaching economic–political changes in Russia and China have been accompanied by huge cracks in a creaking global banking system. In desperation, the global powers have pumped trillions of dollars into their economic–political systems. As curious as we are about the outcome and as much as our welfare is at stake, we don't know the end point of this current strain in the global system and the power elites' attempts to patch up the most glaring inconsistencies in their global domination. As this process of realignment continues, however, it is likely to sweep all of us into its unwelcome net.

Summary and Review

Systems of Social Stratification

7.1 Compare and contrast slavery (including bonded labor), caste, estate, and class systems of social stratification.

What is social stratification?

Social stratification refers to a hierarchy of privilege based on property, power, and prestige. Every society stratifies its members, and in every society, men-as-a-group dominate women-as-a-group.

What are four major systems of social stratification?

Four major stratification systems are slavery, caste, estate, and class. The essential characteristic of **slavery** is that some people own other people. Initially, slavery was based not on race but on debt, punishment for crime, or defeat in battle. Slavery could be temporary or permanent and was not necessarily passed on to the children. North American slavery was gradually buttressed by a racist **ideology**. In a **caste system**, people's status, which is lifelong, is determined by their caste's relation to other castes. The **estate system** of feudal Europe consisted of three estates: the nobility, clergy, and peasants (serfs). A **class system** is much more open than these other systems because it is based primarily on money or material possessions. Industrialization encourages the formation of class systems. Gender cuts across all forms of social stratification.

What Determines Social Class?

7.2 Contrast the views of Marx and Weber on what determines social class.

Karl Marx argued that a single factor determines social class: If you own the means of production, you belong to the **bourgeoisie**; if you do not, you are one of the **proletariat**. Max Weber argued that three elements determine social class: property, power, and prestige.

Why Is Social Stratification Universal?

7.3 Contrast the functional and conflict views of why social stratification is universal.

To explain why stratification is universal, functionalists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore argued that to attract the most capable people to fill its important positions, society must offer them greater rewards. Melvin Tumin said that if this view were correct, society would be a **meritocracy**, with positions awarded on the basis of merit. Gaetano Mosca argued that stratification is inevitable because every society must have leadership, which, by definition, means inequality. Conflict theorists argue that stratification is the outcome of an elite emerging as groups struggle for limited resources. Gerhard Lenski suggested a synthesis between the functionalist and conflict perspectives.

How Do Elites Maintain Stratification?

7.4 Discuss the ways that elites keep themselves in power.

To maintain social stratification within a nation, the ruling class adopts an ideology that justifies its current arrangements. It also controls information and uses technology. When all else fails, it turns to brute force.

Comparative Social Stratification

7.5 Contrast social stratification in Great Britain and the former Soviet Union.

What are key characteristics of stratification systems in other nations?

The most striking features of the British class system are speech and education. In Britain, accent reveals social class, and almost all of the elite attend private schools. In the former Soviet Union, communism was supposed to abolish class distinctions. Instead, it ushered in a different set of classes.

Global Stratification: Three Worlds

7.6 Compare social stratification in the Most Industrialized Nations, the Industrializing Nations, and the Least Industrialized Nations.

How are the world's nations stratified?

The model presented here divides the world's nations into three groups: the Most Industrialized, the Industrializing, and the Least Industrialized. This layering represents relative property, power, and prestige.

How Did the World's Nations Become Stratified?

7.7 Discuss how colonialism and world system theory explain how the world's nations became stratified.

The main theories that seek to account for global stratification are **colonialism**, **world system theory**, and the **culture of poverty**. The text explains each.

Maintaining Global Stratification

7.8 Explain how neocolonialism, multinational corporations, and technology help to maintain global stratification.

How do elites maintain global stratification?

There are two basic explanations for why the world's countries remain stratified. **Neocolonialism** is the ongoing dominance of the Least Industrialized Nations by the Most Industrialized Nations. The second explanation points to the influence of **multinational corporations**. The new technology gives further advantage to the Most Industrialized Nations.

Strains in the Global System

7.9 Identify strains in today's system of global stratification.

What strains are showing up in global stratification?

All stratification systems contain contradictions that threaten to erupt, forcing the system to change. Currently, capitalism is in crisis, and we seem to be experiencing a major shift in economic (and, ultimately, political and military) power and global influence from the West to the East.

Thinking Critically about Chapter 7

1. How do slavery, caste, estate, and class systems of social stratification differ?
2. Why is social stratification universal?
3. How do elites maintain stratification (keep themselves in power)?
4. What shifts in global stratification seem to be taking place? Why?



A Boating Party, 1889, John Singer Sargent (oil on canvas)

Chapter 8

Social Class in the United States



Learning Objectives

After you have read this chapter, you should be able to:

- 8.1** Explain the three components of social class—property, power, and prestige; distinguish between wealth and income; explain how property and income are distributed; and describe the democratic façade, the power elite, and status inconsistency.
- 8.2** Contrast Marx’s and Weber’s models of social class.
- 8.3** Summarize the consequences of social class for physical and mental health, family life, education, religion, politics, and the criminal justice system.
- 8.4** Contrast the three types of social mobility, review gender issues in research on social mobility, and explain why social mobility brings pain.
- 8.5** Explain the problems in drawing the poverty line and how poverty is related to geography, race–ethnicity, education, feminization, and age.
- 8.6** Contrast the dynamics of poverty with the culture of poverty, explain why people are poor and how deferred gratification is related to poverty, and comment on the Horatio Alger myth.
- 8.7** Discuss the possibility that we are developing a three-tier society.

Ah, New Orleans, that fabled city on the Mississippi Delta. Images from its rich past floated through my head—pirates, treasure, intrigue. Memories from a pleasant vacation stirred my thoughts—the exotic French Quarter with its enticing aroma of Creole food and sounds of earthy jazz drifting through the air.

The shelter for the homeless forced me back to an unwelcome reality. The shelter was like those I had visited in the North, West, and East—only dirtier. The dirt, in fact, was the worst that I had encountered during my research. On top of that, this was the only shelter to insist on payment in exchange for sleeping in one of its filthy beds.

The men here looked the same as the homeless anywhere in the country—disheveled and haggard, wearing that unmistakable expression of sorrow and despair. Except for the accent, you wouldn’t know what region you were in. Poverty wears the same tired face wherever you are, I realized. The accent may differ, but the look remains the same.

I had grown used to the sights and smells of abject poverty. Those no longer surprised me. But after my fitful sleep with the homeless that night, I saw something that did. Just a block or so from the shelter, I was startled by a sight so out of step with the misery and despair I had just experienced that I stopped and stared.

“My mind refused to stop juxtaposing these images of extravagance with the suffering I had just seen.”

social class

according to Weber, a large group of people who rank close to one another in property, power, and prestige; according to Marx, one of two groups: capitalists who own the means of production or workers who sell their labor

property

material possessions: includes animals, bank accounts, bonds, buildings, businesses, cars, cash, commodities, copyrights, furniture, jewelry, land, and stocks

wealth

the total value of everything someone owns, minus the debts

income

money received, usually from a job, business, or assets



A mere one-half percent of Americans owns over a quarter of the entire nation's wealth. Very few minorities are numbered among this 0.5 percent. An exception is Oprah Winfrey, who has had an ultra-successful career in entertainment and investing. Worth \$3.0 billion, she is the 239th richest person in the United States. Winfrey has given millions of dollars to help minority children.

I felt indignation swelling within me. Confronting me were life-sized, full-color photos mounted on the transparent Plexiglas shelter of a bus stop. Staring back at me were images of finely dressed men and women, proudly modeling elegant suits, dresses, diamonds, and furs.

A wave of disgust swept over me. "Something is cockeyed in this society," I thought, as my mind refused to stop juxtaposing these images of extravagance with the suffering I had just seen.

The disjunction—the mental distress—that I felt in New Orleans was triggered by the ads, but it was not the first time I had experienced this sensation. Whenever my research abruptly transported me from the world of the homeless to one of another social class, I experienced a sense of disjointed unreality. Each social class has its own ways of thinking and behaving, and because these fundamental orientations to the world contrast so sharply, the classes do not mix well.

What Is Social Class?

8.1 Explain the three components of social class—property, power, and prestige; distinguish between wealth and income; explain how property and income are distributed; and describe the democratic façade, the power elite, and status inconsistency.

If you ask most Americans about their country's social class system, you are likely to get a blank look. If you press the matter, you are likely to get an answer like this: "There are the poor and the rich—and then there's us, neither poor nor rich." This is just about as far as most Americans' consciousness of social class goes. Let's try to flesh out this idea.

Our task is made somewhat difficult because sociologists have no clear-cut, agreed-on definition of social class. As was noted in the last chapter, conflict sociologists (of the Marxist orientation) see only two social classes: those who own the means of production and those who do not. The problem with this view, say most sociologists, is that it lumps too many people together. Teenage "order takers" at McDonald's who work for \$15,000 a year are lumped together with that company's executives who make \$500,000 a year—because they both are workers at McDonald's, not owners.

Most sociologists agree with Max Weber that there is more to social class than just a person's relationship to the means of production. Consequently, most sociologists use the components Weber identified and define **social class** as a large group of people who rank closely to one another in property, power, and prestige. These three elements give people different chances in life, separate them into different lifestyles, and provide them with distinctive ways of looking at the self and the world.

Let's look at how sociologists measure these three components of social class.

Property

Property comes in many forms, such as buildings, land, animals, machinery, cars, stocks, bonds, businesses, furniture, jewelry, and bank accounts. When you add up the value of someone's property and subtract that person's debts, you have what sociologists call **wealth**. This term can be misleading, as some of us have little wealth—especially most college students. Nevertheless, if your net total comes to \$10, then that is your wealth. (Obviously, *wealth* as a sociological term does not mean wealthy.)

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN WEALTH AND INCOME Wealth and income are sometimes confused, but they are not the same. Where *wealth* is a person's net worth, **income** is a flow of money. Income has many sources: The most common is wages or a business, but other sources are rent, interest, and royalties. Even alimony, an allowance, and gambling winnings are part of income.

Wealth and income usually go together, but not always. Some people have much wealth and little income. For example, a farmer may own a lot of land (a form of wealth), but bad weather can cause the income to dry up.

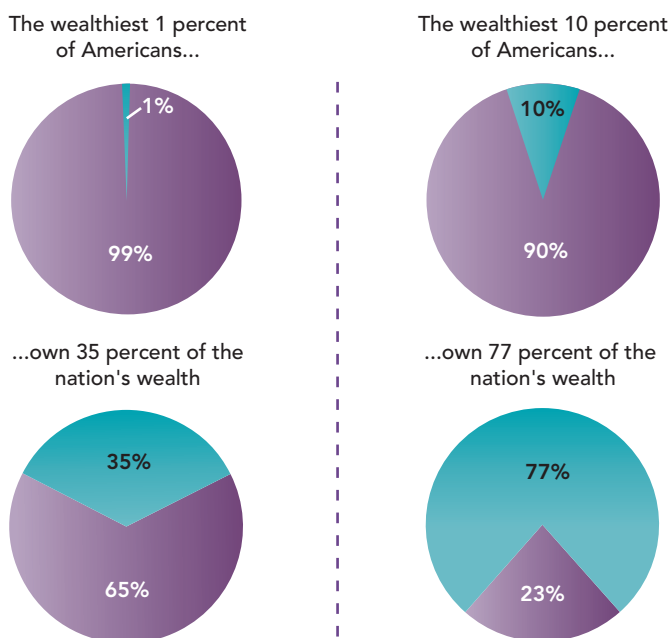
Then there are those who have a large income and no wealth. Here is a real-life example of someone who makes \$375,000 a year and is dead broke:

Gregory Owens is a New York City lawyer who makes \$375,000 a year. Yet he is broke. In his bankruptcy petition, Owens revealed that taxes, alimony, required retirement contributions, rent, food, and transportation eat up all his income. He spends \$52 more a month than he earns. (Stewart 2014)

DISTRIBUTION OF PROPERTY If we add up the value of the property in the United States—all the houses, apartments, cars and trucks, farms, businesses, and bank accounts—the total comes to about \$59 trillion (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Table 748). This certainly is a hefty sum. And who owns this vast property? One answer, of course, is “everyone,” as this \$59 trillion is the total of what all Americans own. What this statement overlooks, though, is how the nation’s property is divided among “everyone.”

You might be surprised at how concentrated U.S. wealth is. Look at Figure 8.1. *Just 1 percent of Americans owns more than one-third of all real estate, stocks, bonds, and business assets in the entire country.* As you can also see from this figure, *10 percent of Americans own 77 percent of the nation’s wealth.*

Figure 8.1 Distribution of the Wealth of Americans



SOURCE: By the author. Based on Wolff 2013.

DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME How is income distributed in the United States? Economist Paul Samuelson (Samuelson and Nordhaus 2005) put it this way: “If we made an income pyramid out of a child’s blocks, with each layer portraying \$500 of income, the peak would be far higher than Mount Everest, but most people would be within a few feet of the ground.”

To better grasp this layering, look at Figure 8.2. You can see that if each block were 1½ inches tall, the typical American would be just 12 feet off the ground. This portrays the average income in the United States of about \$48,000 per year. (This is per capita income, which includes every American, even children.) The typical family climbs a little higher, since most families have more than one worker. Together, they average about \$67,000 a year (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Tables 705, 723). Compared with the few families who are on the mountain’s peak, the average U.S. family would still find itself only 17 feet off the ground.

Figure 8.2 How the Income of Americans Is Distributed



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017: Tables 705, 723.

The fact that some Americans enjoy the peaks of Mount Everest while most—despite their efforts—make it only 12 to 17 feet up the slope presents a striking image of income inequality in the United States. Another picture emerges if we divide the U.S. population into five equal groups and rank them from highest to lowest income. As Figure 8.3 shows, the top 20 percent of the population receive *half* (51.1 percent) of all income in the United States. In contrast, the bottom 20 percent of Americans receive only 3.1 percent of the nation's income.

Two features of Figure 8.3 stand out. First, look at how income inequality decreased from 1935 to 1970. Then notice how inequality has increased since 1970. *Since 1970, the richest 20 percent of U.S. families have grown richer, while the poorest 20 percent have grown poorer.* Despite numerous government antipoverty programs, the poorest 20 percent of Americans receive *less* of the nation's income today than they did decades ago. The richest 20 percent, in contrast, are receiving more, as much as they did in 1935.

The chief executive officers (CEOs) of the nation's largest corporations are especially affluent. The *Wall Street Journal* surveyed the 300 largest U.S. companies to find out what they paid their CEOs. Their median compensation (including salaries, bonuses, and stock options) came to \$11,000,000 a year. (*Median* means that half received more than this amount, and half less.) On Table 8.1, you can see the pay of the five highest-paid CEOs.

Table 8.1 The Five Highest-Paid CEOs

Name	Company	Compensation
Marc Lore	Walmart	\$237 million
Tim Cook	Apple	\$150 million
John Weinberg	Evercore Partners	\$124 million
Sundar Pichai	Alphabet	\$107 million
Elon Musk	Tesla	\$100 million

SOURCE: Melin 2017.

The average income of these highest-paid CEOs is 3,000 times higher than the average pay of U.S. workers (*Statistical Abstract* 2017: Table 705). This does *not* include these CEOs' income from interest, dividends, or rents. Nor does it include the value of their company-paid limousines and chauffeurs, airplanes and pilots, and their private boxes at the symphony and sporting events. To really see the disparity, consider this:

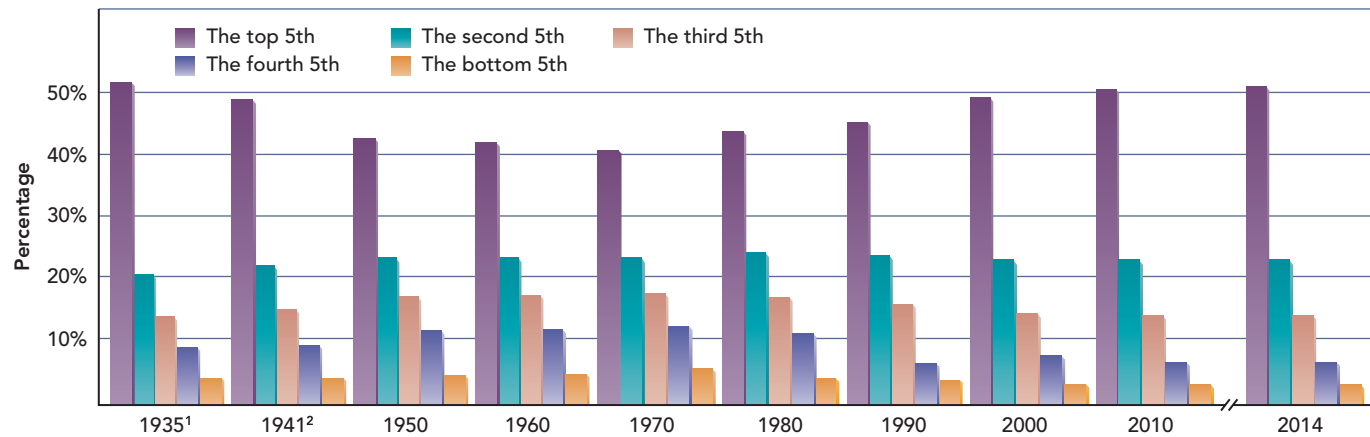
Let's suppose that you started working the year Jesus was born and that you worked full-time starting then. Let's also assume that each year you earned today's average per capita income of \$47,669. As of this year, you would still have to work 3,000 more years to earn what the highest-paid executive listed in Table 8.1 earned in just one year.

Imagine how you could live with an income like Marc Lore's. And this is precisely the point. Beyond these cold numbers lies a dynamic reality that profoundly affects people's lives. The difference in wealth between those at the top and those at the bottom of the U.S. class structure means that people experience vastly different lives. For example,

A colleague of mine who was teaching at an exclusive Eastern university piqued his students' curiosity when he lectured on poverty in Latin America. That weekend, one of the students borrowed his parents' corporate jet and pilot, and in class on Monday, he and his friends related their personal observations on poverty in Latin America.

Few of us could ever say, "Mom and Dad, I've got to do a report for my soc class, so I need to borrow the jet—and the pilot—to run down to South America for the weekend." What a lifestyle! Contrast this with Americans at the low end of the income ladder who lack the funds to travel even to a neighboring town for the weekend. For parents in

Figure 8.3 The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same: Dividing the Nation's Income



¹Earliest year available. ²No data for 1940.

SOURCE: By the author. Based on U.S. Census Bureau. Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2014. Historical Tables, Income, Households, Table H-2. 2016; *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 1960:Table 417; 1970:Table 489; 2017:Table 721.

poverty, choices may revolve around whether to spend the little they have at the laundromat or on milk for the baby. The elderly poor might have to choose between purchasing the medicines they need or buying food. In short, divisions of wealth represent not “empty” numbers but choices that make vital differences in people’s lives. Let’s explore this topic in the following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

How the Super-Rich Live

Larry Ellison, one of the richest men in the United States, loves basketball so much that he has his own basketball court on his yacht. When he misses the basket, a ball sometimes ends up in the ocean. Not to worry. Ellison has hired a man whose sole job is to drive a 44-foot powerboat behind the yacht to retrieve the errant balls.

And when Ellison gets bored with playing on his yacht’s basketball court? He climbs in his personal helicopter flown by his personal pilot. Flying above the yacht, he shoots hoops to his heart’s content. His personal basketball retriever faithfully trails the yacht, scooping up those errant balls. (Gay 2014)

As F. Scott Fitzgerald said in The Great Gatsby, “The rich are different than you and me.” And how!

Let’s take a glimpse at the lifestyle of another very rich man, John Castle (his real name). John has made more than \$100 million in banking and securities (Lublin 1999). But the super-rich yearn for more than just money. Displayed in the right way, vast wealth can bring distinction and create envy.

Wanting to be connected to someone famous, John bought President John F. Kennedy’s “Winter White House,” an oceanfront estate in Palm Beach, Florida. John spent \$11 million to remodel the 13,000-square-foot house so that it would be more to his liking. Among those changes: adding bathrooms numbers 14 and 15. He likes to show off John F. Kennedy’s bed and also the dresser that has the

drawer labeled “black underwear,” carefully hand-lettered by Rose Kennedy (Bloomfield 2012).

John has a yacht, too, a source of pleasure and pride. How much did his custom-built Hinckley yacht cost? John can’t tell you. As he says, “I don’t want to know what anything costs. When you’ve got enough money, price doesn’t make a difference. That’s part of the freedom of being rich.”

Right. And for John, being rich also means paying \$1,000,000 to charter a private jet to fly Spot, his Appaloosa horse, back and forth to the vet. John didn’t want Spot to have to endure a long trailer ride. Oh, and of course, there was the cost of Spot’s medical treatment, another \$500,000.

Other wealthy people besides Ellison and Castle spend extravagantly, too. If you are among them, you might spruce up your Saturday night with a \$35,000 bottle of champagne at the 1 Oak Lounge in New York City (Haughney and Konigsberg 2008). Or perhaps a \$10,000 cocktail at the Jardin in Las Vegas is more to your liking. But if you are looking for a bargain, you might consider the Jardin’s weekend Valentine package. For just \$100,000, you can have this cocktail included (Stern 2016).

Parties are fun, but what if you want privacy? You can buy that, too. Wayne Huizenga, who sold a half ownership in the Miami Dolphins for \$550 million (“Builder Stephen ...” 2008), bought a 2,000-acre country club, complete with an 18-hole golf course, a 55,000-square-foot-clubhouse, and

(continued)

68 slips for visiting vessels. The club is so exclusive that its only members are Wayne and his wife (Fabrikant 2005).

Withdrawing behind gated estates is one way to gain privacy, but Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen has found another way. On his 414-foot yacht, the *Octopus*, are two helicopters, a swimming pool, and a submarine (Freeland 2011).

While the length of Allen's yacht creates envy among the plutocracy that would make Freud break into a sweat, some might say that Charles Simonyi has even outdone this. He bought a \$25-million ticket for a rocket ride to the International Space Station. Simonyi liked the experience so

much that he bought a second ticket (Leo 2008). No frequent flyer miles included. But at the pace that prices are increasing, \$50 million isn't worth what it used to be anyway.



At 533 feet, the *Eclipse* is the world's second largest yacht. It is owned by Roman Abramovich of Russia, the world's 11th richest person.

For Your Consideration

- What effects has social class had on your life? (Go beyond possessions to values and how you view life.)
- How do you think you would see the world differently if you were Larry Ellison, John Castle, Paul Allen, Charles Simonyi, or Mrs. Wayne Huizenga?

Power

Let's look at the second component of social class: power.

THE DEMOCRATIC FACADE Like many people, you may have said to yourself, "The big decisions are always made despite what I think. Certainly *I* don't make the decision to send soldiers to Afghanistan or Iraq. *I* don't order drones to launch missiles. *I* don't decide to raise taxes, lower interest rates, or spend billions of dollars to bail out Wall Street fools and felons."

And then another part of you may say, "But I do participate in these decisions through my representatives in Congress and by voting for president." True enough—as far as it goes. The trouble is, it doesn't go far enough. Such views of being a participant in the nation's "big" decisions are a playback of the ideology we learn at an early age—an ideology that is promoted by the elites to legitimate and perpetuate their power. Some sociologists call this the "democratic facade" that conceals the real source of power in the United States.

Following this conflict perspective, let's try to get a picture of where that power is located.

THE POWER ELITE In Chapter 1, I mentioned that in the 1950s, sociologist C. Wright Mills pointed out that **power**—the ability to get your way despite resistance—was concentrated in the hands of a few. Mills met heavy criticism, because his analysis contradicted the dominant view that "the people" make the country's decisions. This ideology is still dominant, and Mills' analysis continues to ruffle feathers. Some still choke on the term **power elite**, which Mills coined to refer to those who make the big decisions in U.S. society.

Mills and others have stressed how wealth and power coalesce in a group of people who look at the world in the same way—and view themselves as a special elite. They belong to the same private clubs, vacation at the same exclusive resorts, and even hire the same bands for their daughters' debutante balls (Domhoff 2006, 2014). This elite wields extraordinary power in U.S. society, so much so that many U.S. presidents have been millionaire white men from families with "old money."

Continuing in the tradition of Mills, sociologist William Domhoff (2006, 2014) argues that the power elite is so powerful that the U.S. government makes no major decision without its approval. He analyzed how this group works behind the scenes with elected officials to determine both foreign and domestic policy—from setting Social Security taxes to imposing tariffs on imported goods. Although Domhoff's

power

the ability to carry out your will, even over the resistance of others

power elite

C. Wright Mills' term for the top people in U.S. corporations, military, and politics who make the nation's major decisions

conclusions are controversial—and alarming—they certainly follow logically from the principle that wealth brings power and extreme wealth brings extreme power.

Prestige

Let's look at the third component of social class, occupational prestige.

OCCUPATIONS AND PRESTIGE What are you thinking about doing after college? Chances are, you don't have the option of lying in a hammock under palm trees in some South Pacific paradise. Almost all of us have to choose an occupation and go to work. Look at Table 8.2 to see how the career you are considering stacks up in terms of **prestige** (the respect or regard people give it). Because we are moving toward a global society, this table also shows how the rankings given by Americans compare with those of the residents of sixty other countries.

Why do people give more prestige to some jobs than to others? Look again at Table 8.2. The jobs at the top share four features:

1. They pay more.
2. They require more education.
3. They involve more abstract thought.
4. They offer greater autonomy (independence or self-direction).

Now look at the bottom of the list. You can see that people give less prestige to jobs with the opposite characteristics: These jobs pay little, require less education, involve more physical labor, and are closely supervised. In short, the professions and the white-collar jobs are at the top of the list, the blue-collar jobs at the bottom.

One of the more interesting aspects of these rankings is how consistent they are across countries and over time. For example, people in every country rank college professors higher than nurses, nurses higher than social workers, and social workers higher than janitors. Similarly, the occupations that were ranked high twenty-five years ago still rank high today—and likely will rank high in the years to come.

DISPLAYING PRESTIGE People want others to acknowledge their prestige. In times past, in some countries, only the emperor and his family could wear purple—it was the royal color. In France, only the nobility could wear lace. In England, no one could sit while the king was on his throne. Some kings and

Table 8.2 Occupational Prestige: How the United States Compares with Sixty Countries

Occupation	United States	Average of Sixty Countries
Physician	86	78
Supreme Court judge	85	82
College president	81	86
Astronaut	80	80
Lawyer	75	73
College professor	74	78
Airline pilot	73	66
Architect	73	72
Biologist	73	69
Dentist	72	70
Civil engineer	69	70
Clergy	69	60
Psychologist	69	66
Pharmacist	68	64
High school teacher	66	64
Registered nurse	66	54
Professional athlete	65	48
Electrical engineer	64	65
Author	63	62
Banker	63	67
Veterinarian	62	61
Police officer	61	40
Sociologist	61	67
Journalist	60	55
Classical musician	59	56
Actor or actress	58	52
Chiropractor	57	62
Athletic coach	53	50
Social worker	52	56
Electrician	51	44
Undertaker	49	34
Jazz musician	48	38
Real estate agent	48	49
Mail carrier	47	33
Secretary	46	53
Plumber	45	34
Carpenter	43	37
Farmer	40	47
Barber	36	30
Store sales clerk	36	34
Truck driver	30	33
Cab driver	28	28
Garbage collector	28	13
Waiter or waitress	28	23
Bartender	25	23
Lives on public aid	25	16
Bill collector	24	27
Factory worker	24	29
Janitor	22	21
Shoe shiner	17	12
Street sweeper	11	13

NOTE: The rankings are based on 1 to 100, from lowest to highest. For five occupations not located in the 1994 source, the 1991 ratings were used: Supreme Court judge, astronaut, athletic coach, lives on public aid, and street sweeper.

SOURCES: Treiman 1977: Appendices A and D; Nakao and Treas 1990, 1994: Appendix D.

prestige

respect or regard

queens required that subjects walk backward as they left the room—so that they would not “turn their back” on the “royal presence.”

Concern with displaying prestige has not let up. Military manuals specify who must salute whom. The U.S. president enters a room only after everyone else attending the function is present (to show that the president isn’t waiting for others). Everyone must also be standing when the president enters. In the courtroom, bailiffs, some with a gun at the hip, make certain that everyone stands when the judge enters.

Status symbols vary with social class. People who are striving to be upwardly mobile flaunt labels on their clothing or carry shopping bags from prestigious stores to show that they have “arrived.” The wealthy regard the status symbols of the “common” classes as cheap and tawdry. They, too, flaunt status symbols, but theirs are things like \$100,000 Rolex watches and \$50,000 diamond earrings. Like the other classes, the wealthy also try to outdo one another. They casually mention the length of their yacht or that a helicopter flew them to their golf game (Fabrikant 2005). Or they offhandedly bring up the \$40,000-a-night penthouse suite at the Four Seasons in New York City, asking, “Have you tried it yet? It’s ‘rather nice’” (Clemence 2013). Some hold their child’s birthday at places that charge \$3,000, while others outdo them by buying their child an alligator backpack sold by Ashley and Mary-Kate Olsen: just \$39,000 (R. Smith 2014; Mose 2016). Then there is Shane Smith who treated a few guests to a \$300,000 dinner that included \$40,000 bottles of French Burgundy (Hagey 2016).

How about yourself? Nothing like this, I know, but how do you try to display prestige? Think about your clothing. How much more are you willing to pay for clothing that bears some hot “designer” label? Purses, shoes, jeans, and shirts—many of us pay more if they have some little symbol than if they don’t. As we wear them proudly, aren’t we actually proclaiming, “See, I had the money (and the in-vogue taste, of course) to buy this particular item!”? For many, prestige is a primary factor in deciding which college to attend. Everyone knows how the prestige of a generic sheepskin from Regional State College compares with a degree from Harvard, Princeton, Yale, or Stanford.

Status Inconsistency

Ordinarily, we have a similar rank on all three dimensions of social class—property, power, and prestige. The homeless men in the opening vignette are an example of these three dimensions lined up. Such people are **status consistent**. Some people, however, have a mixture of high and low ranks. This condition, called **status inconsistency**, leads to some interesting situations.

In classic research, sociologist Gerhard Lenski (1954, 1966) analyzed how people try to maximize their **status**, their position in a social group. Individuals who rank high on one dimension of social class but lower on others want people to judge them on the basis of their highest status. Others, however, are also trying to maximize their own status, so they may respond according to these people’s lowest rankings.

Another classic study of status inconsistency was done by sociologist Ray Gold (1952). After apartment-house janitors unionized in Chicago, they made more money than some of the tenants whose garbage they carried out. Residents became upset when they saw janitors driving more expensive cars than they did. Some attempted to “put the janitor in his place” by making “snotty” remarks to him. For their part, the janitors took delight in finding “dirty” secrets about the tenants in their garbage.

People who are status inconsistent, then, are likely to claim the higher status but be handed the lower one. This is so frustrating that the resulting tension can affect people’s health. Researchers who studied the health of thousands of Europeans over a decade found that men who were status inconsistent were twice as likely to have heart attacks as men who were status consistent. For reasons that no one knows, status inconsistent women do not have a higher risk of heart attacks (Braig et al. 2011).

status consistency

ranking high or low on all three dimensions of social class

status inconsistency

ranking high on some dimensions of social class and low on others; also called *status discrepancy*

status

the position that someone occupies in a social group (also called *social status*)

There are other consequences as well. Lenski (1954) found that people who are status inconsistent tend to be more politically radical. An example is college professors. Their prestige is very high, as you saw in Table 8.2, but their incomes are relatively low. Hardly anyone in U.S. society is more educated, and yet college professors don't even come close to the top of the income pyramid. In line with Lenski's prediction, the politics of most college professors are left of center. This hypothesis may also hold true among academic departments; that is, the higher a department's average pay, the more conservative are the members' politics. Teachers in departments of business and medicine, for example, are among the most highly paid in the university—and they also are the most politically conservative.

Instant wealth, the topic of the following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*, provides an interesting type of status inconsistency.



How do you set yourself apart in a country so rich that of its 4.6 million people 79,000 are millionaires? Saeed Khouri (on the right), at an auction in Abu Dhabi, paid \$14 million for the license plate "1." His cousin was not as fortunate. His \$5 million was enough to buy only "5."

Down-to-Earth Sociology

The Big Win: Life after the Lottery

"If I just win the lottery, life will be good. These problems I've got, they'll be gone. I can just see myself now."

So goes the dream. And many people shell out megabucks every week, with the glimmering hope that "Maybe this week, I'll hit it big." Most are lucky to get \$20 or maybe just another scratch-off ticket.

But some do hit it big. What happens to these winners? Are their lives all wine, roses, and chocolate afterward?

We don't have any systematic studies of the big winners, so I can't tell you what life is like for the average winner. But several themes are apparent from reporters' interviews.

The most common consequence of hitting it big is that life becomes topsy-turvy (Susman 2012; Evans 2013). All of us are rooted somewhere. We have connections with others that provide the basis for our orientations to life and how we feel about the world. Sudden wealth can rip these moorings apart, and the resulting *status inconsistency* can lead to a condition sociologists call **anomie** (an'-uh-me).

First comes the shock. As Mary Sanderson, a telephone operator in Dover, New Hampshire, who won \$66 million, said, "I was afraid to believe it was real and afraid to believe it wasn't." Mary says that she never slept worse than her first night as a multimillionaire. "I spent the whole time crying—and throwing up" (Tresniowski 1999).

Reporters and TV crews appear on your doorstep. "What are you going to do with all that money?" they demand. You haven't the slightest idea, but in a daze you mumble something.

Then come the calls. Some are welcome. Your Mom and Dad call to congratulate you. But long-forgotten friends and distant relatives suddenly remember how close they are to you—and strangely enough, they all have emergencies that your money can solve. You even get calls from strangers who have ailing mothers, terminally ill kids, sick dogs ...

You have to turn off your phone and change your number.

You might be flooded with marriage proposals. You certainly didn't become more attractive or sexy overnight—or did you? Maybe money makes people sexy.

You can no longer trust people. You don't know what their real motives are. Before, no one could be after your money because you didn't have any. You may even fear kidnappers. Before, this wasn't a problem—unless some kidnapper wanted a seven-year-old car as ransom.

The normal becomes abnormal. Even picking out a wedding gift becomes a problem. If you give the usual juicer, everyone will think you're stingy. But should you write a check for \$25,000? If you do, you'll be invited to every wedding in town—and everyone will expect the same.

(continued)

Here is what happened to some lottery winners:

Mack Metcalf, a forklift operator in Corbin, Kentucky, hit the jackpot for \$34 million. To fulfill a dream, he built and moved into a replica of George Washington's Mount Vernon home. Then his life fell apart—his former wife sued him, his current wife divorced him, and his new girlfriend got \$500,000 while he was drunk. Within three years of his “good” fortune, Metcalf had drunk himself to death. (Dao 2005).

When Abraham Shakespeare, a dead-broke truck driver's assistant, won \$31 million in the Florida lottery, he bought a million-dollar home in a gated community. He lent money to friends to start businesses, even paid for funerals (McShane 2010). This evidently wasn't enough. His body was found buried in the yard of a “friend,” who was convicted of his murder. (Allen 2012).

Callie Rogers was just 16 years old when she won \$3 million in the lottery. She proudly declared that she

wouldn't change, that she'd drive a regular car, and so on. Then came the drugs (\$380,000 on cocaine), the booze, the two boob jobs, and the four suicide attempts. Now broke, a mother, and married to a firefighter, she says, “I'm the happiest I've ever been in my life.” (Evans 2013).



Jesús Davila, winner of \$265 million in the Illinois lottery, who is retired, used to drive cars for a living. How do you think his lottery win will change his life?

Winners who avoid *anomie* seem to be people who don't make sudden changes in their lifestyle or their behavior. They hold onto their old friends and routines—the anchors in life that give them identity and a sense of belonging. Some even keep their old jobs—not for the money, of course, but because the job anchors them to an identity with which they are familiar and comfortable.

Sudden wealth, in other words, poses a threat that has to be guarded against.

And I can just hear you say, “I'll take the risk!”

For Your Consideration

→ How do you think your life would change if you won a lottery jackpot of \$10 million?

anomie

Durkheim's term for a condition of society in which people become detached from the usual norms that guide their behavior

Sociological Models of Social Class

8.2 Contrast Marx's and Weber's models of social class.

The question of how many social classes there are is a matter of debate. Sociologists have proposed several models, but no single one has gained universal support. There are two main models: One builds on Karl Marx, the other on Max Weber.

Updating Marx

As Figure 8.4 illustrates, Marx argued that there are just two classes—capitalists and workers—with membership based solely on a person's relationship to the means of production. Sociologists have criticized this view, saying that these categories are too broad. For example, because executives, managers, and supervisors don't own the means of production, they would be classified as workers. But what do these people have in common with assembly-line workers? The category of “capitalist” is also too broad. Some people, for example, employ a thousand workers, and their decisions directly affect a thousand families. Others, in contrast, have very small businesses.

Consider a man I know in Godfrey, Illinois, who used to fix cars in his backyard. As Frank gained a following, he quit his regular job, and, in a few years, he put up a building with five bays and an office. Frank is now a capitalist: He employs five or six mechanics and owns the tools and the building (the “means of production”).

But what does this man have in common with a factory owner who controls the lives of one thousand workers? Not only is Frank's work different, so are his lifestyle and the way he looks at the world.

To resolve this problem, sociologist Erik Wright (1985) suggests that some people are members of more than one class at the same time. They occupy what he calls

Figure 8.4 Marx's Model of the Social Classes

Capitalists
(*Bourgeoisie*, those who own the means of production)

Workers
(*Proletariat*, those who work for the capitalists)

Inconsequential Others
(beggars, etc.)

SOURCE: By the author.

contradictory class locations. By this, Wright means that a person’s position in the class structure can generate contradictory interests. For example, the automobile-mechanic-turned-business-owner may want his mechanics to have higher wages because he, too, has experienced their working conditions. At the same time, his current interests—making profits and remaining competitive with other repair shops—lead him to resist pressures to raise their wages.

Because of such contradictory class locations, Wright modified Marx’s model. As summarized in Figure 8.5, Wright identifies four classes: (1) *capitalists*, business owners who employ many workers; (2) *petty bourgeoisie*, small business owners; (3) *managers*, who sell their own labor but also exercise authority over other employees; and (4) *workers*, who simply sell their labor to others. As you can see, this model allows finer divisions than the one Marx proposed, yet it maintains the primary distinction between employer and employee.

Problems persist, however. For example, in which category would we place college professors? And as you know, there are huge differences in the power of managers. An executive at Toyota, for example, may manage a thousand workers, while a shift manager at McDonald’s may be responsible for only a handful. They, too, have little in common.

contradictory class locations
Erik Wright’s term for a position in the class structure that generates contradictory interests

Figure 8.5 Wright’s Modification of Marx’s Model of the Social Classes

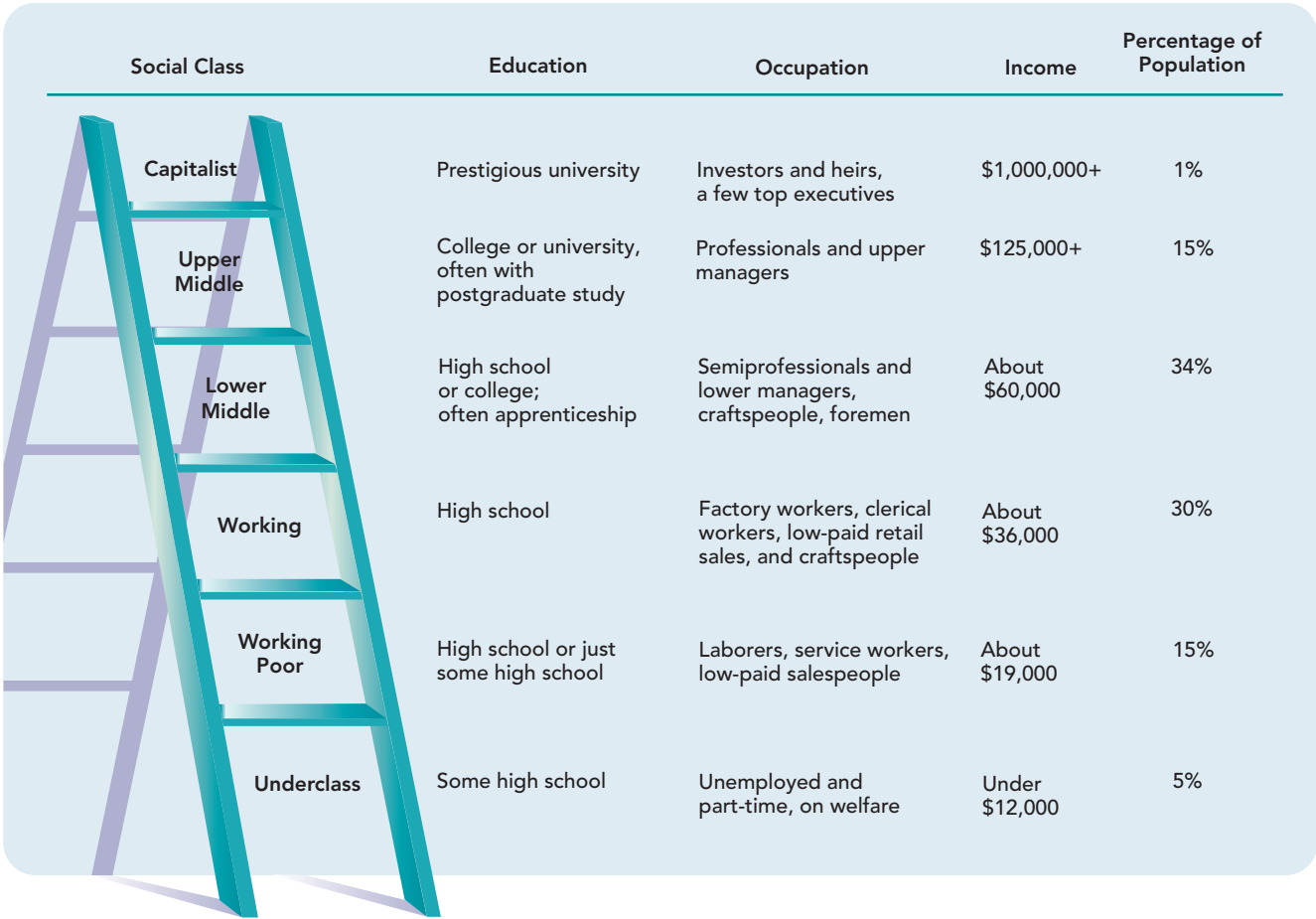
1. Capitalists
2. Petty bourgeoisie
3. Managers
4. Workers

SOURCE: By the author.

Updating Weber

Sociologists Joseph Kahl and Dennis Gilbert (Gilbert and Kahl 1998; Gilbert 2014) developed a six-tier model to portray the class structure of the United States and other capitalist countries. Think of this model, illustrated in Figure 8.6, as a ladder. Our discussion starts with the highest rung and moves downward. In line with Weber, on each lower rung, you find less property (wealth), less power, and less prestige. Note that in this model, education is also a primary measure of class.

Figure 8.6 The U.S. Social Class Ladder



SOURCE: By the author. Based on Gilbert and Kahl 1998 and Gilbert 2014; income estimates are inflation-adjusted and modified from Duff 1995.

THE CAPITALIST CLASS

The twenty richest Americans have more wealth than all the Americans (160 million) in the bottom half of the U.S. population (Collins and Hoxie 2015). One U.S. family, the Waltons of Wal-Mart Stores fame, has more money than the entire bottom 40 percent of all Americans, more than 125 million of their fellow citizens (Magdoff and Belamy 2014).

These two facts tell you more about the concentration of wealth in the United States than almost anything else I could say. But let's try anyway: *The sliver at the top of the capitalist class, a tiny one-tenth of 1 percent of the U.S. population, is worth more than the entire bottom 90 percent of the country* (Saez and Zuchman 2016).

Power and influence cling to this small elite on the top rung of the class ladder. With their vast wealth, its members have access to top politicians, and their decisions open or close job opportunities for millions of people. They even help to shape the consciousness of the nation: They own our major media and entertainment outlets—newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, and sports franchises. They also control the boards of directors of our most influential colleges and universities. The super-rich perpetuate themselves in privilege by passing on their assets and social networks to their children.

The capitalist class can be divided into “old” and “new” money. The longer that wealth has been in a family, the more it adds to the family's prestige. The children of “old” money seldom mingle with “common” folk. Instead, they attend exclusive private schools where they learn views of life that support their privileged position. They don't work for wages; instead, many study business or become lawyers so that they can manage the family fortune. These old-money capitalists (also called “blue bloods”) wield vast power as they use their extensive political connections to protect their economic empires (Domhoff 1990a, 2006, 2014; Lofgren 2016).

At the lower end of the capitalist class are the *nouveau riche*, those who have “new money.” Although they have made fortunes in business, the stock market, inventions, entertainment, or sports, they are outsiders to the upper class (Peretz 2013). They have not attended the “right” schools, and they don't share the social networks that come with old money. Not blue bloods, they aren't trusted to have the “right way” of thinking. Even their “taste” in clothing and status symbols is suspect (Fabrikant 2005). Donald Trump, whose money is “new,” is not listed in the *Social Register*, the “White Pages” of the blue bloods that lists the most prestigious and wealthy one-tenth of 1 percent of the U.S. population. Trump said he “doesn't care,” but he revealed his true feelings by adding that his heirs will be in it (Kaufman 1996). He is probably right, since the children of new money can ascend into the top part of the capitalist class—if they go to the right schools *and* marry old money.

Many in the capitalist class are philanthropic. They establish foundations and give huge sums to “causes.” Their motives vary. Some feel guilty because they have so much while others have so little. Others seek prestige, acclaim, or fame. Still others feel a responsibility—even a sense of fate or destiny—to use their money for doing good. Bill Gates, who has given more money to the poor and to medical research than anyone else in history, seems to fall into this latter category.

THE UPPER-MIDDLE CLASS Of all the classes, the upper-middle class is the one most shaped by education. Almost all members of this class have at least a bachelor's degree, and many have postgraduate degrees in business, management, law, or medicine. These people manage the corporations owned by the capitalist class, operate their own businesses, or pursue professional careers. As Gilbert and Kahl (1998) say,

[These positions] may not grant prestige equivalent to a title of nobility in the Germany of Max Weber, but they certainly represent the sign of having “made it” in contemporary America Their income is sufficient to purchase houses and cars and travel that become public symbols for all to see and for advertisers to portray with words and pictures that connote success, glamour, and high style.

Consequently, parents and teachers push children to prepare for upper-middle-class jobs. Around 15 percent of the population belong to this class.

The wealthiest person on the planet: Bill Gates, the cofounder of Microsoft, is worth \$86 billion. He has also given away \$30 billion, more than anyone in history.





Sociologists use income, education, and occupational prestige to measure social class. For most people, this works well, but not for everyone, especially entertainers. To what social class do these celebrities belong? Here is their net worth: Leonardo DiCaprio \$245 million, Taylor Swift \$380 million, Dwayne Johnson \$65 million, and Selena Gomez \$54 million.

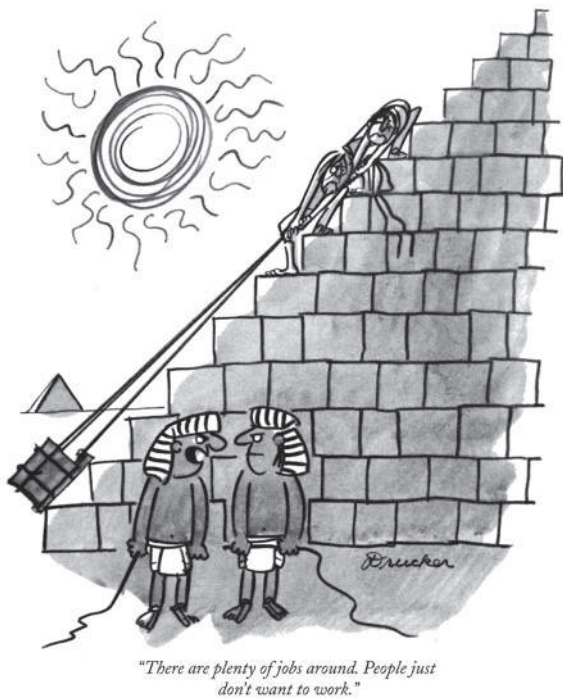
THE LOWER-MIDDLE CLASS About 34 percent of the U.S. population are in the lower-middle class. Their jobs require that they follow orders given by members of the upper-middle class. With their technical and lower-level management positions, they can afford a mainstream lifestyle, although they struggle to maintain it. Many anticipate being able to move up the social class ladder. Feelings of insecurity are common, however, with the threat of inflation, recession, and job insecurity bringing a nagging sense that they might fall down the class ladder.

The distinctions between the lower-middle class and the working class on the next rung below are more blurred than those between other classes. In general, however, members of the lower-middle class work at jobs that have slightly more prestige, and their incomes are generally higher.

THE WORKING CLASS About 30 percent of the U.S. population belong to this class of relatively unskilled blue-collar and white-collar workers. Compared with the lower-middle class, they have less education and lower incomes. Their jobs are also less secure, more routine, and more closely supervised. One of their greatest fears is that of being laid off during a recession. With only a high school diploma or a fleeting attempt at college, the average member of the working class has little hope of climbing up the class ladder. Job changes usually bring “more of the same,” so most concentrate on getting ahead by achieving seniority on the job rather than by changing their type of work. They tend to think of themselves as having “real jobs” and regard the “suits” above them as paper pushers who have no practical experience and don’t do “real work” (Morris and Grimes 2005).

THE WORKING POOR Members of this class, about 15 percent of the population, work at unskilled, low-paying, temporary and seasonal jobs, such as sharecropping, migrant farm work, housecleaning, and day labor. Most are high school dropouts. Many are functionally illiterate, finding it difficult to read even the want ads. Believing that their situation won’t change no matter what party is elected to office, they are less likely than other groups to vote (U.S. Census Bureau 2016b).

Although they work full time, millions of the working poor depend on food stamps (cards from the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) and local food banks to survive on their meager incomes (Bello 2011; Carlson et al. 2016). It is easy to see how you can work full time and still be poor. Suppose that you are married and have a baby 3 months old and another child 3 years old. Your spouse stays home to care for them, so earning the income is up to you. But as a high-school dropout, all



A primary sociological principle is that people's views are shaped by their social location. Many people from the middle and upper classes cannot understand how anyone can work and still be poor.

underclass

a group of people for whom poverty persists year after year and across generations

you can get is a minimum wage job. At \$7.25 an hour, you earn \$290 for 40 hours. In a year, this comes to \$15,080—before deductions. Your nagging fear—and recurring nightmare—is of ending up “on the streets.”

THE UNDERCLASS On the lowest rung, and with next to no chance of climbing anywhere, is the **underclass**. Concentrated in the inner city, this group has little or no connection with the job market. Those who are employed—and some are—do menial, low-paying, temporary work. Welfare, if it is available, along with food stamps and food pantries, is their main support. Most members of other classes consider these people the “ne’er-do-wells” of society. Life is the toughest in this class, and it is filled with despair. About 5 percent of the population fall into this class.

The homeless men described in the opening vignette of this chapter, and the women and children like them, are part of the underclass. These are the people whom most Americans wish would just go away. Their presence on our city streets bothers passersby from the more privileged social classes—which includes just about everyone. “What are those obnoxious, dirty, foul-smelling people doing here, cluttering up my city?” appears to be a common response. Some people react with sympathy and a desire to do something. But what? Almost all of us just shrug our shoulders and look the other way, despairing of a solution and somewhat intimidated, perhaps irritated, by their presence. If only they would disappear.

The homeless are the “fallout” of our postindustrial economy. In another era, they would have had plenty of work. They would have tended horses, worked on farms, dug ditches, shoveled coal, and run the factory looms. Some would have explored and settled the West. The prospect of gold would have lured others to California, Alaska, and Australia. Today, however, with no frontiers to settle, factory jobs scarce, and farms that are becoming technological marvels, we have little need for their unskilled labor.

Consequences of Social Class

8.3 Summarize the consequences of social class for physical and mental health, family life, education, religion, politics, and the criminal justice system.

The man was a C student in school. As a businessman, he ran an oil company (Arbusto) into the ground. A self-confessed alcoholic until age 40, he was arrested for drunk driving. With this background, how did he become president of the United States?

Accompanying these personal factors was the power of social class. George W. Bush was born the grandson of a wealthy senator and the son of a businessman who, after serving as a member of the House of Representatives and director of the CIA, was elected president of the United States. For high school, he went to an elite private prep school, Andover; for his bachelor's degree to Yale; and for his MBA to Harvard. He was given \$1 million to start his own business. When that business (Arbusto) failed, Bush fell softly, landing on the boards of several corporations. Taken care of even further, he was made the managing director of the Texas Rangers baseball team and allowed to buy a share of the team for \$600,000, which he sold for \$15 million.

When it was time for him to get into politics, Bush's connections financed his run for governor of Texas and then for the presidency.

Does social class matter? And how! Think of each social class as a broad subculture with distinct approaches to life, so significant that it affects your health, family life, education, religion, politics, and even your experiences with crime and the criminal justice system. Let's look at some of the ways that social class affects our lives.

Physical Health

If you want to get a sense of how social class affects health, take a ride on Washington's Metro system. Start in the blighted Southeast section of downtown D.C. For every mile you travel to where the wealthy live in Montgomery County in Maryland, life expectancy rises about a year and a half. By the time you get off, you will find a twenty-year gap in life expectancy between the poor blacks where you started your trip and the rich whites where you ended it. (Cohen 2004)

As you can see this from Figure 8.7, the principle is simple: As you go up the social-class ladder, health improves. As you go down the ladder, health worsens (Annan-dale 2016; Cooper and Campbell 2017). Age makes no difference. Infants born to the poor are more likely to die before their first birthday, and a larger percentage of poor people in their old age—whether 75 or 95—die each year than do the elderly who are wealthy.

How can social class have such dramatic effects? Although there are many reasons, here are three. First, social class opens and closes doors to medical care. People with good incomes or with good medical insurance are able to choose their doctors and pay for whatever treatment and medications are prescribed. The poor, in contrast, don't have the money or insurance to afford this type of medical care. How much difference the new health reform will make is yet to be seen.

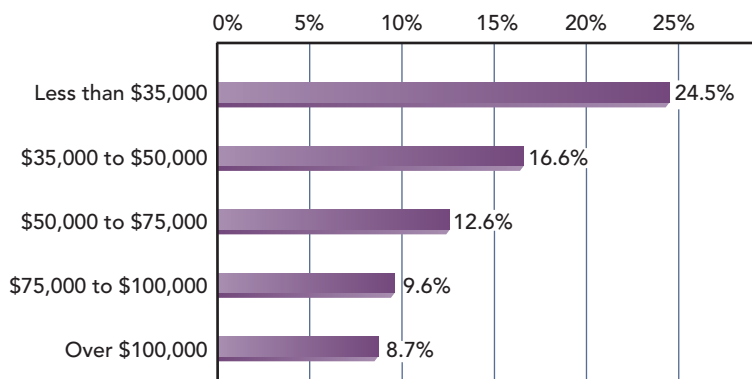
A second reason is lifestyle, which is shaped by social class. People in the lower classes are more likely to smoke, eat a lot of fats, be overweight, abuse drugs and alcohol, get little exercise, and practice unsafe sex (Woolf et al. 2015). This, to understate the matter, does not improve people's health.

There is a third reason, too. Life is hard on the poor. The persistent stresses they face weaken their immune systems, causing their bodies to wear out faster (John-Henderson et al. 2013; Magdoff and Foster 2014). For the rich, life is so much better. They have fewer problems and vastly more resources to deal with the ones they have. This gives them a sense of control over their lives, a source of both physical and mental health.



With tough economic times, a lot of people have lost their jobs—and their homes. If this happens, how can you survive? Maybe a smile and a sense of humor to tap the kindness of strangers. I took this photo outside Boston's Fenway Park.

Figure 8.7 Physical Health, by Income: People Who Have Difficulty with Everyday Physical Activities



NOTE: In a national health survey, these people said they had difficulty walking, climbing steps, stooping, reaching overhead, grasping small objects, and carrying over 10 pounds.

SOURCE: By the author. Based on Schiller et al. 2012:Table 19.

Figure 8.8 Mental Health, by Income: Feelings of Sadness, Hopelessness, or Worthlessness



NOTE: In a national health survey, these people answered “Always” or “Almost always” when they were asked how often they felt sad, hopeless, or worthless.

SOURCE: By the author. Based on Schiller et al. 2012:Table 14.

Among the customs of the rich, sometimes called the monied class, is ostentatious philanthropy. Shown here are women at the Frederick Law Olmsted lunch, a charity event in New York City. The women try to outdo one another with hats created for this event.



Mental Health

Back in the 1930s, sociologists found that the mental health of the lower classes was worse than that of the higher classes (Faris and Dunham 1939). From Figure 8.8, you can see that people with less income continue to have more problems of mental health. The symptoms in Figure 8.8 are indicators of depression.

Why is mental health worse in the lower social classes? The basic reason is the greater stress and sense of failure that comes with less income. Compared with middle- and upper-class Americans, the poor have less job security and lower wages. They are more likely to divorce, to be the victims of crime, and to have more physical illnesses. Couple these conditions with bill collectors and the threat of eviction and you can see how they deal severe blows to people’s emotional well-being.

Family Life

Social class also makes a significant difference in our choice of spouse, our chances of getting divorced, and how we rear our children.

CHOICE OF HUSBAND OR WIFE Members of the capitalist class place strong emphasis on family tradition. They stress the family’s history, even a sense of purpose or destiny in life (Baltzell 1979; Aldrich 1989). Children of this class learn that their choice of husband or wife affects not just them but the entire family, that it will have an impact on the “family line.” These background expectations shrink the field of “eligible” marriage partners, making it narrower than it is for the children of any other social class. As a result, parents in this class play a strong role in their children’s mate selection.

DIVORCE The more difficult life of the lower social classes, especially the many tensions that come from insecure jobs and inadequate incomes, leads to higher marital friction and a greater likelihood of divorce. Consequently, children of the poor are more likely to grow up in broken homes.

CHILD REARING Lower-class parents focus more on getting their children to follow rules and obey authority, while middle-class parents focus more on developing their children’s creative and leadership skills (Lareau 2011). Sociologists have traced this difference to the parents’ occupations (Kohn 1977; Stephens et al. 2014).

Lower-class parents are closely supervised at work, and they anticipate that their children will have similar jobs. Consequently, they try to teach their children to defer to authority. Middle-class parents, in contrast, enjoy greater independence at work. Anticipating similar jobs for their children, they encourage them to be more creative. Out of these contrasting orientations arise different ways of disciplining children: Lower-class parents are more likely to use physical punishment, while the middle classes rely more on verbal persuasion.

Education

In Figure 8.6, you saw how education increases as one goes up the social class ladder. It is not just the amount of education that changes but also the type of education. Children of the capitalist class bypass public schools. They attend exclusive private schools

where they are trained to take a commanding role in society. These schools teach upper-class values and prepare their students for prestigious universities (Stevens 2009; Khan 2011).

Keenly aware that private schools can be a key to upward social mobility, some upper-middle-class parents do their best to get their children into the prestigious preschools that feed into these exclusive prep schools. So popular are these schools that even those that charge \$37,000 a year have waiting lists (Anderson 2011). Figuring that waiting until birth to enroll a child is too late, some parents-to-be enroll their child as soon as the wife knows she is pregnant (Ensign 2012). Other parents hire tutors to train their 4-year-olds in test-taking skills so they can get into public kindergartens for gifted students. Experts teach these preschoolers to look adults in the eye while they are being interviewed for these limited positions (Banjo 2010). You can see how such parental involvement and resources make it more likely that children from the more privileged classes go to college—and graduate.

Religion

One area of social life that we might think would not be affected by social class is religion. (“People are just religious, or they are not. What does social class have to do with it?”) As we shall see in Chapter 13, however, the classes tend to cluster in different denominations. Episcopalians, for example, are more likely to attract the middle and upper classes, while Baptists draw heavily from the lower classes. Patterns of worship also follow class lines: The lower classes are attracted to more expressive worship services and louder music, while the middle and upper classes prefer more “subdued” worship.

Politics

As I have stressed throughout this text, people perceive events from their own corner in life. Political views are no exception to this symbolic interactionist principle, and the rich and the poor walk different political paths. The higher that people are on the social class ladder, the more likely they are to vote for Republicans (Gelman 2014). In contrast, most members of the working class believe that the government should intervene in the economy to provide jobs and to make citizens financially secure.



The disparities of social class in the United States are extreme. If you take the back roads in rural America, you will see thousands of trailers like this one in Davenport, Florida. In contrast is this swimming pool, part of a home of luxury in Sammamish, Washington.

They are more likely to vote for Democrats. Although the working class is more liberal on *economic* issues (policies that increase government spending), it is more conservative on *social* issues, such as opposing abortion (Houtman 1995; Seib and O'Connor 2016). People toward the bottom of the class structure are also less likely to be politically active—to campaign for candidates or even to vote (Gilbert 2014; U.S. Census Bureau 2016a).

Crime and Criminal Justice

If justice is supposed to be blind, it certainly is not when it comes to our chances of being arrested (Henslin 2018). In Chapter 6, we discussed how the social classes commit different types of crime. The white-collar crimes of the more privileged classes are more likely to be dealt with outside the criminal justice system, while the police and courts deal with the street crimes of the lower classes. One consequence of this class standard is that members of the lower classes are more likely to be in prison, on probation, or on parole. In addition, since those who commit street crimes tend to do so in or near their own neighborhoods, the lower classes are more likely to be robbed, burglarized, raped, or murdered.

Social Mobility

8.4 Contrast the three types of social mobility, review gender issues in research on social mobility, and explain why social mobility brings pain.

No aspect of life, then—from work and family life to politics—goes untouched by social class. Because life is so much more satisfying in the more privileged classes, people strive to climb the social class ladder. What affects their chances?

Three Types of Social Mobility

intergenerational mobility

the change that family members make in social class from one generation to the next

upward social mobility

movement up the social class ladder

downward social mobility

movement down the social class ladder

structural mobility

movement up or down the social class ladder that is due more to changes in the *structure* of society than to the actions of individuals

Janice's mom, a single mother, sold used cars at a Toyota dealership. Janice worked summers and part-time during the school year, earned her BA, and then her MBA. After graduate school, she worked at IBM, but she missed her home town. When her mom's boss retired, Janice grabbed the chance to put a down payment on the Toyota dealership. She has since paid the business off and has opened another at a second location.

When grown-up children like Janice end up on a different rung of the social class ladder from the one occupied by their parents, it is called **intergenerational mobility**. You can go up or down, of course. Janice experienced **upward social mobility**. If her mother had owned the dealership and Janice had dropped out of college and ended up selling cars, she would have experienced **downward social mobility**.

We like to think that individual efforts are the reason people move up the class ladder—and their faults the reason they move down. In this example, we can identify intelligence, hard work, and ambition. Although individual factors, such as these, do underlie social mobility, we must place Janice in the context of **structural mobility**. This second basic type of mobility refers to changes in society that allow large numbers of people to move up or down the class ladder.

Janice grew up during a boom time of easy credit and business expansion. Opportunities were abundant, and colleges were looking for women from working-class backgrounds. It is far different for people who grow up during an economic bust when opportunities are shrinking. As sociologists point out, in analyzing social mobility, we must always look at *structural mobility*, how changes in society (its *structure*) make opportunities plentiful or scarce.



The term structural mobility refers to changes in society that push large numbers of people either up or down the social class ladder. A remarkable example was the stock market crash of 1929 when thousands of people suddenly lost their wealth. People who once “had it made” found themselves standing on street corners selling apples or, as depicted here, selling their possessions at fire-sale prices. The crash of 2008 brought similar problems to untold numbers of people.

The third type of social mobility is **exchange mobility**. This occurs when large numbers of people move up and down the social class ladder, but, on balance, the proportions of the social classes remain about the same. Suppose that a million or so working-class people are trained in some new technology, and they move up the class ladder. Suppose also that because of a surge in imports, about a million skilled workers have to take lower-status jobs. Although millions of people change their social class, there is, in effect, an exchange among them. The net result more or less balances out, and the class system remains basically untouched.

How much social mobility is there? If you are aiming for success, trying to raise your social class, you should find the following *Applying Sociology to Your Life* to be quite encouraging.

exchange mobility

a large number of people moving up the social class ladder, while a large number move down; it is as though they have exchanged places, and despite much social mobility the social class system shows little change

Applying Sociology to Your Life

“The American Dream”: Social Mobility Today

What is “The American Dream”? For most people, this term means achieving a better life. The sociological definition of the American Dream is similar, but it is more specific: It refers to children being able to pass their parents as they climb the social class ladder. So how much upward mobility is there?

Vast Changes Contrary to the many dismal reports of social life today, the American Dream remains vibrant. Let’s look at national research that compares today’s adult

children with their parents. From Figure 8.9, you can see that whether children start life at the top of the nation’s income or at the bottom, about the same percentage move from their starting point. Of those who start life at the bottom, 43 percent are still there when they grow up, but *most*, 57 percent, have moved up. Four percent even make it to the top fifth of the nation’s income. Now look at those who start life at the top. When they grow up, 40 percent are still there, but *most*, 60 percent, have dropped down. Eight percent have dropped all the way to the bottom (Lopoo and DeLeire 2012).

(continued)

Incomes If we look at incomes, even though the income was not enough to move the adult child into a different quintile, we find something impressive: *84 percent of today's adults have family incomes higher than their parents had at the same age.* (The incomes of the parents and their adult child were adjusted for inflation, so the dollars have the same value.) One of the surprises is that the children most likely to surpass their parents were reared at the bottom of the nation's income ladder. Of the adult children who started life there, 93 percent have incomes higher than their parents did at the same age.

With incomes stagnating today, many fear that the “American Dream” has been shattered. Although poverty has increased, the Great Recession did not crush the dream, just deflated it (Chetty et al. 2014).

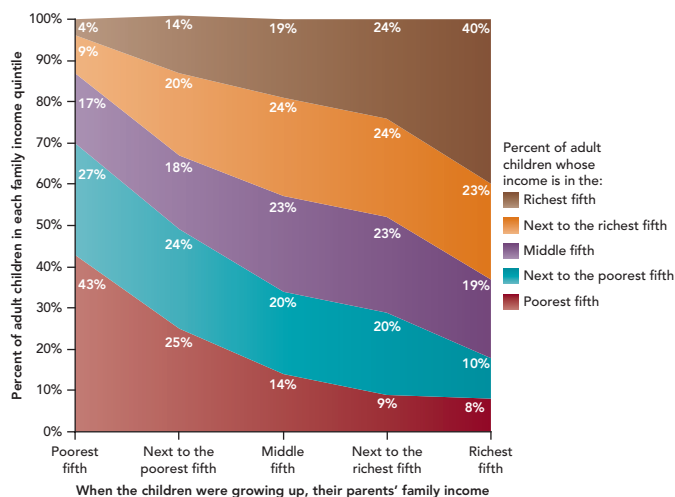
What Do These Findings Mean? People have a lot of things they want to prove, and they like to use statistics to make their point. These data allow you to go either way. You can stress that 43 percent of the very poorest kids never get out of the bottom—or you can point to the 57 percent who do. It is the same with the richest kids: You can stress the 40 percent who stay at the top of the nation's income or the 60 percent who drop down. No matter what your opinion, any way you look at it this is a lot of social mobility.



The main avenue to upward social mobility is education.

Figure 8.9 Income of Adult Children Compared with that of their Parents

Chances of moving up or down the family income ladder, by parents' income



SOURCE: Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations, p. 6. © July, 2013 the Pew Charitable Trusts.

You could get lost in the details, but don't lose sight of the broader principle: Children of high-income parents enjoy benefits that tend to keep them afloat, while children of low-income parents confront obstacles that tend to weigh them down. Yet, as you can see, the benefits don't keep most of the children up, nor do the obstacles keep most of the children down.

For Your Consideration

- How can you apply these findings to yourself?
- In ten years, do you think your social class will be higher, lower, or the same as that of your parents? Why?
- If you are in a higher class, what can you do to help make sure that you stay there—or even rise higher? If you are in a lower class, what can you do to help make sure that you achieve a higher class?

Women in Studies of Social Mobility

About half of sons pass their fathers on the social class ladder, about one-third stay at the same level, and about one-sixth fall down the ladder. (Blau and Duncan 1967; Featherman 1979)

“Only sons!” protested feminists in response to these classic studies on social mobility. “Do you think it is good science to ignore daughters? And why do you assign women the class of their husbands? Do you think that wives have no social class position of their own?” (Davis and Robinson 1988; Western et al. 2012). The male sociologists brushed off these objections, replying that there were too few women in the labor force to make a difference.

Obviously, the times have changed. Almost half of U.S. workers are now women, and sociologists include women in their research. However, sociologists sometimes still single out sons in their research (Lopoo and DeLeire 2012).

In recent decades, millions of white-collar jobs and the professions have opened up to women. Even with this vast *structural* change, there is a *gender gap in social mobility*: As adults, women are less likely than men to live in families with higher income than the one in which they grew up (Reeves and Venator 2013). Researchers have also found that behind upwardly mobile women are parents who encouraged their daughters to postpone marriage and get an education (Higginbotham and Weber 1992). For upwardly mobile African American women, strong mothers are especially significant (Robinson and Nelson 2010).

With research on the social class of women in its infancy, the social mobility of women is going to be a fruitful area of research in coming years.

The Pain of Social Mobility: Two Distinct Worlds

When you go from working-class to professional-class, almost everything about your old life becomes unfashionable at best or unhealthy at worst.

J. D. Vance 2016

You know it would be painful if you were knocked down the social class ladder. But are you aware that it also hurts to climb this ladder?

In the preceding quote, you can see that there is a starting point and a destination. The culture of the starting point does not match the culture of the destination. The old must be shed, to be replaced by new norms, a most uncomfortable process.

Individuals who make this transition find themselves caught between two worlds—their old working-class origin and their new middle-class life. Sociologist Steph Lawler (1999) studied British women who had moved from the working class to the middle class. Their mothers, still in the working class, didn't like their daughters' "uppity" new ways. They felt that their daughters thought they were better than they were. Tensions ran high, as the mothers criticized their daughters' preferences in furniture and food, their speech, even the way they reared their children. As you can expect, this didn't help the mother-daughter relationship.

When sociologists Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb (1972/1988) studied working-class parents in Boston, they found something similar. So their children could go to college, the fathers had worked two jobs and even postponed medical care. They expected their children to appreciate their sacrifice. But again, the result was two distinct worlds. The children's educated world was so unlike that of their parents that it became awkward for parents and children to even talk to one another. The parents felt betrayed and bitter: Their sacrifices had ripped their children from them.

Torn from their roots, some of those who make the jump from the working to the middle class never become comfortable with their new social class (Vance 2016). The following *Cultural Diversity in the United States* discusses other costs that come with the climb up the social class ladder.

Both downward and upward social mobility bring challenges that require life adjustments. An extreme instance is the case of Sly Stone, the front man of the 1970s funk band, Sly and the Family Stone. His saga includes going from wealth of millions to living in a van.



Cultural Diversity in the United States

Social Class and the Upward Social Mobility of African Americans

The overview of social class presented in this chapter doesn't apply equally to all the groups that make up U.S. society. Consider geography: What constitutes the upper class of a town of 5,000 people will differ from that of a city of a million. In small towns, which have fewer extremes of wealth and occupation, family background and local reputation are more significant.

So it is with racial-ethnic groups. All racial-ethnic groups are marked by social class, but what constitutes a particular social class can differ from one group to another—as well as from one historical period to another. Consider social class among African Americans (Landry and Marsh 2011).

The earliest class divisions can be traced to slavery—to slaves who worked in the fields and those who worked in the “big house.” Those who worked in the plantation home were exposed more to the customs, manners, and forms of speech of wealthy whites. Their more privileged position—which brought with it better food and clothing, as well as lighter work—was often based on skin color. Mulattos, lighter-skinned slaves, were often chosen for this more desirable work. One result was the development of a “mulatto elite,” a segment of the slave population that, proud of its distinctiveness, distanced itself from other slaves. At this time, there also were free blacks. Not only were they able to own property but some even owned black slaves.

After the War between the States (as the Civil War is known in the South), these two groups, the mulatto elite and the free blacks, formed an upper class that distanced itself from other blacks. By the 1870s, just ten or fifteen years after this war, some African Americans had become millionaires (Graham 1999). After World War II, the black middle class expanded as African Americans entered a wider range of occupations. Today, more than half of all African American adults work at white-collar jobs, about 29 percent at the professional or managerial level (Beeghley 2008; U.S. Census Bureau 2014d).

An unwelcome cost greets many African Americans who move up the social class ladder: an uncomfortable distancing from their roots, a separation from significant others—parents, siblings, and childhood



friends (Lacy 2007; Khare et al. 2014). The upwardly mobile enter a world unknown to those left behind, one that demands not only different appearance and speech, but also different values, aspirations, and ways of viewing the world. These are severe challenges to the self and often rupture relationships with those left behind.

An additional cost is a subtle racism that lurks beneath the surface of some work settings, poisoning what could be easy, mutually respectful interaction. To be aware that white co-workers perceive you as different—as a stranger, an intruder, or “the other”—engenders frustration, dissatisfaction, and cynicism (Carbado and Gulati 2014). To cope, many nourish their racial identity and stress the “high value of black culture and being black” (Lacy and Harris 2008). Some move to neighborhoods of upper-middle-class African Americans, where they can live among like-minded people who have similar experiences (Wiggins et al. 2011).



For Your Consideration

- In the Cultural Diversity box on upward social mobility in Chapter 3, we discussed how Latinos face a similar situation. Why do you think this is?
- What connections do you see among upward mobility, frustration, and racial-ethnic identity?
- How do you think that the costs of upward mobility of whites differ from those of Latinos and African Americans? Why?

Poverty

8.5 Explain the problems in drawing the poverty line and how poverty is related to geography, race–ethnicity, education, feminization, and age.

Many Americans find that the “limitless possibilities” of the American dream are quite elusive. As illustrated in Figure 8.6, the working poor and underclass together form about one-fifth of the U.S. population. This translates into a huge number: more than 60 million people. Who are these people?

Drawing the Poverty Line

To determine who is poor, the U.S. government draws a **poverty line**. This measure was set in the 1960s, when poor people were thought to spend about one-third of their incomes on food. On the basis of this assumption, each year, the government computes a low-cost food budget and multiplies it by 3. Families whose incomes are less than this amount are classified as poor; those whose incomes are higher—even by a dollar—are considered “not poor.”

poverty line

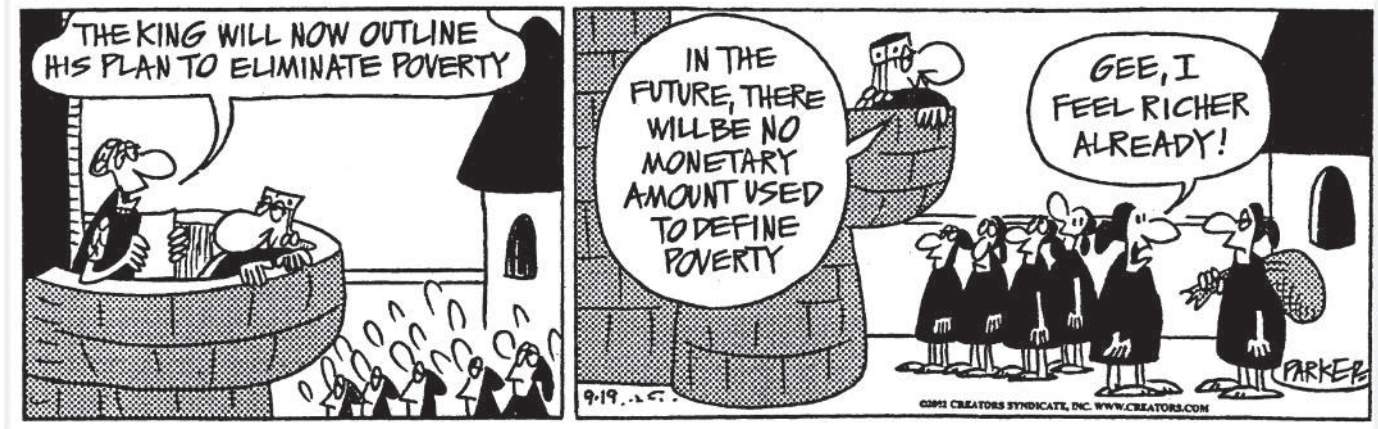
the official measure of poverty; calculated to include incomes that are less than three times a low-cost food budget

High rates of rural poverty have been a part of the United States from its origin to the present. This 1937 photo shows a 32-year-old woman who had seven children and no food. She was part of a huge migration of people from the Dust Bowl of Oklahoma in search of a new life in California.



This official measure of poverty is grossly inadequate. Poor people actually spend only about one-fifth of their income on food, so to determine a poverty line, we ought to multiply their food budget by 5 instead of 3 (Chandy and Smith 2014). Another problem is that mothers who work outside the home and have to pay for child care are treated the same as mothers who don't have this expense. The poverty line is also the same for everyone across the nation, even though the cost of living is much higher in New York than in Alabama. On the other hand, much of the income of the poor is not counted: food stamps, rent assistance, public housing, subsidized child care, and the earned income tax credit (Meyer and Mittag 2015). In the face of these criticisms, the Census Bureau has developed alternative ways to measure poverty. These show higher poverty, but the official measure has not changed.

WIZARD OF ID



That a change in the poverty line can instantly make millions of people poor—or take away their poverty—would be laughable, if it weren't so serious. Although this line is arbitrary, because it is the official measure of poverty, we'll use it to see who in the United States is poor. Before we do this, though, how do you think that your ideas of the poor match up with sociological findings? You can find out in the following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

What Do You Know about Poverty? A Reality Check

Check what you think you know with these answers.

- Poverty is unusual.** *False.* Over a three-year period, one-third of all Americans experience poverty for at least two months (DeNavas-Walt, et al. 2013).
- People with less education are more likely to be poor.** *True.* Most definitely. See Figure 8.12.
- Most poor people are poor because they do not want to work.** *False.* About 40 percent of the poor are under age 18 and another 10 percent are age 65 or older. Most of the rest work at jobs that are seasonal, un dependable, or pay poverty wages (O'Hare 1996a, 1996b; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016a).
- Most of the poor are trapped in a cycle of poverty.** *We have to go true and false on this one.* Most poverty lasts less than a year (DeNavas-Walt et al. 2013), but just over half of those who escape poverty will return to poverty within five years (Ratcliffe and McKernan 2010).
- The percentage of children who are poor is higher than the percentage of adults who are poor.** *True.* Look at Figure 8.15.
- Most children who are born in poverty are poor as adults.** *False.* See Figure 8.7.
- Most African Americans are poor.** *False.* This one was easy. We just reviewed some statistics in the box on upward mobility—plus you have Figure 8.14.
- Most of the poor are African Americans.** *False.* There are many more poor whites than any other group. Look at Figure 8.10.
- Most of the poor live in the inner city.** *False.* Most of the poor live in the suburbs (Kneebone 2016).
- Most of the poor are single mothers and their children.** *False.* About 38 percent of the poor match this stereotype, but 34 percent of the poor live in married-couple families, 22 percent live alone or with

nonrelatives, and 6 percent live in other settings (O'Hare 1996a, 1996b; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2016).

- 11. Most of the poor live on welfare.** *False.* Most of the incomes of people in poverty come from wages, pensions, and Social Security. Somewhere between 11 percent and 25 percent of their incomes come from welfare (O'Hare 1996a, 1996b; Lang 2012).

- 12. There is more poverty in urban than in rural areas.** *False.* We'll review this in the following section.

For Your Consideration

- What stereotypes of the poor do you (or people you know) hold?
- How would you test these stereotypes?

Who Are the Poor?

To better understand American society, it is important to understand poverty. Let's start by exploring a myth.

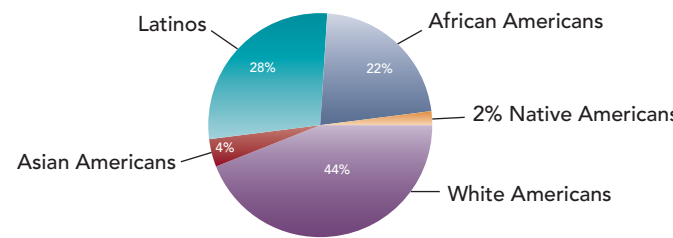
BREAKING A MYTH A common idea is that most of the poor in the United States are African Americans who crowd the welfare rolls. Look at Figure 8.10. You can see that there are more poor white Americans than poor Americans of any other racial-ethnic group. The reason is that there are so many more white Americans than those of any other racial-ethnic group. With this in mind, let's turn to the geography of poverty, how the poor are distributed in the country.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF POVERTY From the following Social Map, you can see how poverty varies by *region*. The striking clustering of poverty in the South has prevailed for more than 150 years.

A second pattern of geography, *rural poverty*, also goes back a couple of centuries. At 16 percent, rural poverty is higher than the national average of 15 percent. Helping to maintain this higher rate are the lower education of the rural poor and the scarcity of rural jobs. The

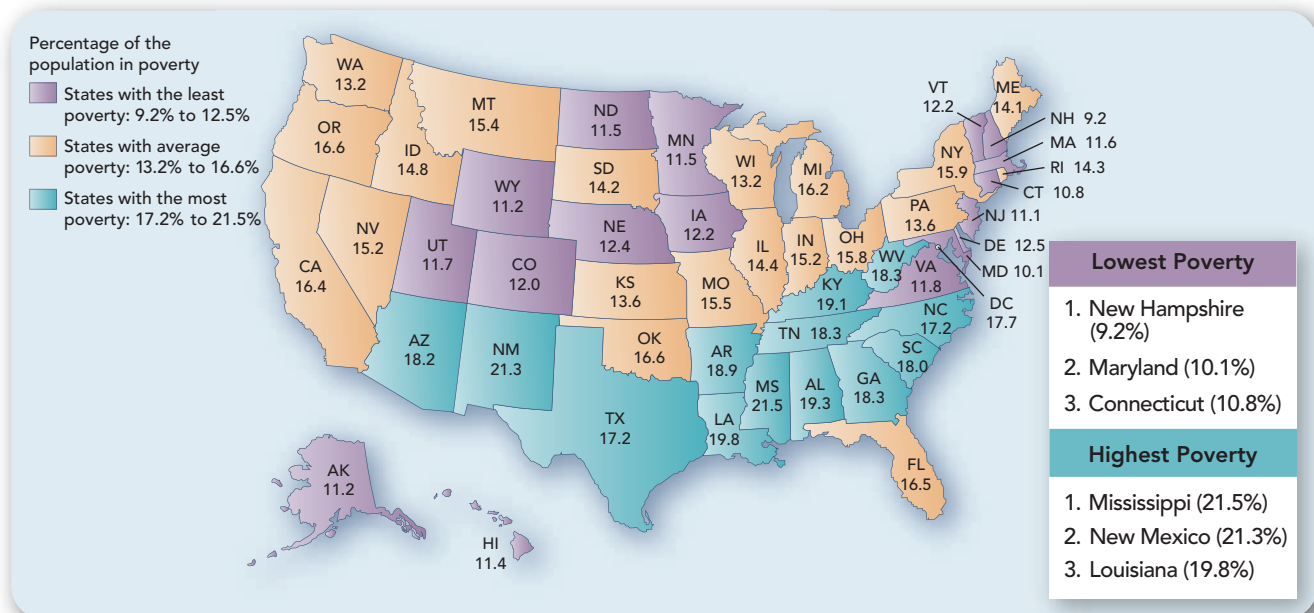
Figure 8.10 An Overview of Poverty in the United States

Of all the U.S. poor, what percentages are from these groups?



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 35.

Figure 8.11 Patterns of Poverty



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 734.



Poverty comes in many forms. Families who go into debt to buy possessions squeak by month after month until a crisis turns their lives upside down. I took this photo of a family in Georgia, parked alongside a highway selling their possessions to survive our economic downturn.

feminization of poverty

a condition of U.S. poverty in which most poor families are headed by women

third aspect of poverty and geography, the *suburbanization of poverty*, is new. With the extensive migration from cities to suburbs, *more* of the nation's poor now live in the suburbs than in the cities (Kneebone 2016). This major change is not likely to be temporary.

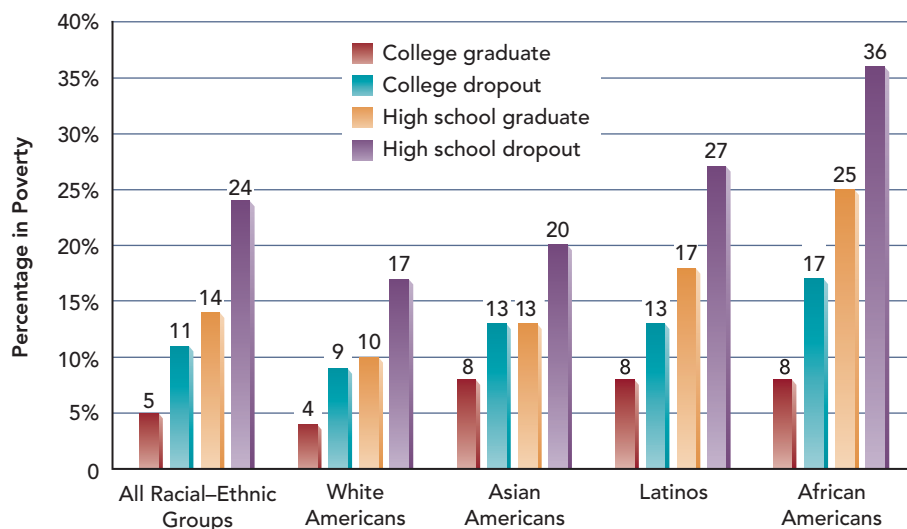
In addition to geography, U.S. poverty follows lines of education, family structure, race-ethnicity, and age. Let's turn to these major patterns.

EDUCATION You are already aware that education is a vital aspect of poverty, but you may not know just how powerful it is. Look at Figure 8.12. One of every 4 people who drop out of high school is poor, but only 5 of 100 people who finish college end up in poverty. As you can see, the chances that someone will be poor become less with each higher level of education. Although this principle applies regardless of race-ethnicity, you can also see how race-ethnicity makes an impact at every level of education.

FAMILY STRUCTURE: THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

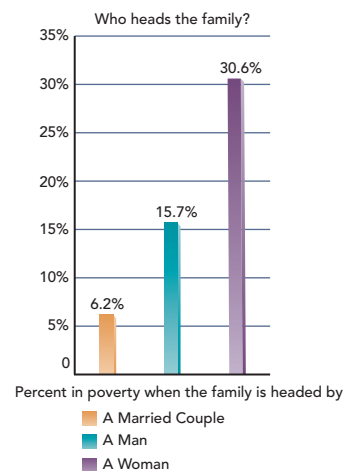
Family structure is one of the best indicators of whether or not a family is poor. From Figure 8.13, you can see that the families least likely to be poor are headed by both a mother and father, while those the most likely to be poor are headed by only a mother. The reason for this can be summed up in one statistic: Women average only 72 percent of what men earn. (We'll review this statistic in detail in chapter 10.) With our high rate of divorce combined with the large number of births to single women, mother-headed families have become more common. Sociologists call this association of poverty with women the **feminization of poverty**.

Figure 8.12 Who Ends Up Poor? Poverty by Education and Race-Ethnicity



SOURCE: By the author. Based on U.S. Census Bureau 2016b:Table POV29.

Figure 8.13 Poverty and Family Structure



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 741.

RACE-ETHNICITY One of the strongest factors in poverty is race-ethnicity, as you can see in Figure 8.14. Overall, 12 percent of Asian Americans are poor, followed closely by whites at 13 percent. From there, the poverty rate jumps, with 24 percent of Latinos and 26 percent of African Americans living in poverty.

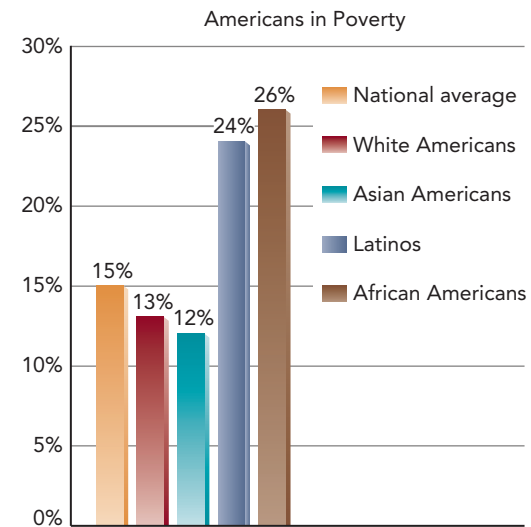
Because whites are, by far, the largest group in the United States, their lower rate of poverty translates into larger numbers. As a result, there are many more poor whites than poor people of any other racial-ethnic group. As you saw in Figure 8.10, 44 percent of all poor people are whites.

AGE AND POVERTY Figure 8.15 shows one of the most significant aspects of poverty in the United States. There are several things you should learn from this figure. First, note that the elderly are *less* likely than the general population to be poor. This is quite a change. It used to be that growing old increased people’s chances of being poor. Elderly poverty was so common that there was a lot of publicity—television programs and newspaper and magazine articles accompanied by photos of “pitiful, suffering old folks.” Then government policies to redistribute income—Social Security and subsidized housing, food stamps, and medical care—slashed the rate of poverty among the elderly.

Figure 8.15 also shows how the prevailing racial-ethnic patterns carry over into old age. You can see how much more likely elderly minorities are to be poor than elderly whites.

In the next section, we will focus on a third aspect of Figure 8.15, how common poverty is among children.

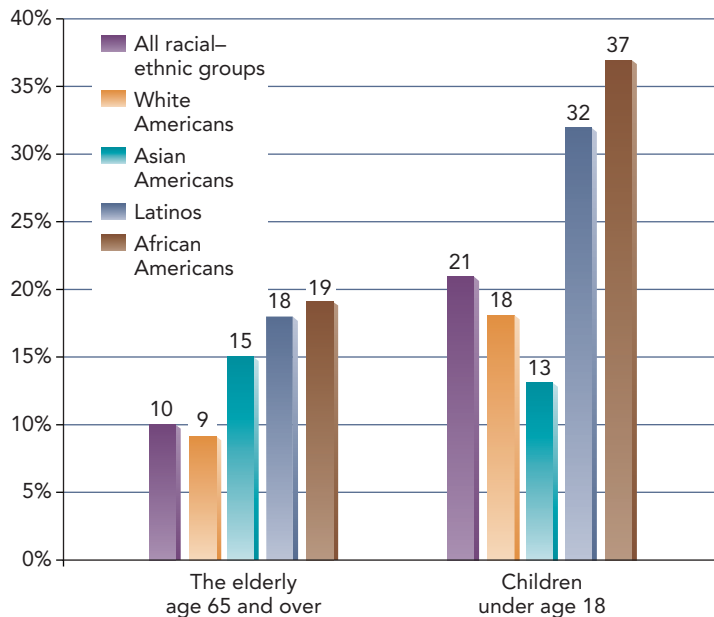
Figure 8.14 Poverty and Race-Ethnicity



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017: Table 738.

Figure 8.15 Poverty, Age, and Race-Ethnicity

What percentage of these groups is poor?



NOTE: Only these groups are listed in the source. The poverty line is \$24,230 for a family of four.

SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017: Tables 35, 735, 738.

Children of Poverty

In Figure 8.15, you can see the high poverty rate of U.S. children. High childhood poverty holds true regardless of race-ethnicity, but from this figure you can see how much greater poverty is among Latino and African American children. That

millions of U.S. children are reared in poverty is shocking when one considers the wealth of this country and our supposed concern for the well-being of children. This tragic aspect of poverty is the topic of the following *Thinking Critically about Social Life*.

Thinking Critically about Social Life

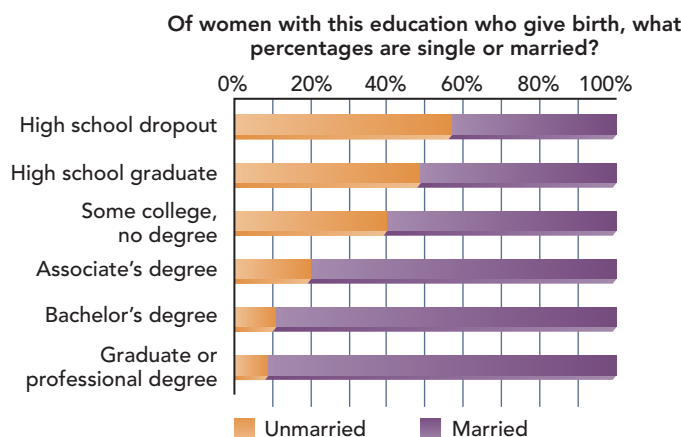
The Nation's Shame: Children in Poverty

One of the most startling statistics in sociology is shown in Figure 8.15. For Asian Americans, one of seven or eight children is poor; for whites, close to one of five; for Latinos, an astounding one of three; and for African Americans, an even higher total, with almost two of every five children living in poverty. These percentages translate into incredible numbers—approximately 16 million children.

Why do so many U.S. children live in poverty? A major reason is the large number of births to women who are not married, about 1.6 million a year. This number has increased sharply, going from *one of twenty* in 1960 to *eight of twenty* today. With the total jumping eight times, single women now account for 40 percent of all U.S. births (*Statistical Abstract 2017:Tables 92, 96*).

But do births to single women actually cause poverty? Consider the obvious: Children born to wealthy single women don't live in poverty. Then consider this: In some countries, such as Sweden, single women are more likely to give birth than are single women in the United States, *yet their rate of child poverty is lower than ours* (OECD 2016). The reason for this is because their governments provide extensive support for rearing these children—from providing day care to health checkups. Why, then, can't we point to the lack of government support for children as the cause of the poverty of children born to single women?

Figure 8.16 How Does Education Influence Births to Single Women



SOURCE: Shuttuck and Kreider 2013:Table 2.

Figure 8.17 How Does Income Influence Births to Single Women



SOURCE: Shuttuck and Kreider 2013:Table 2.

Now look at Figure 8.16. You can see that the less education that single women have, the more likely they are to bear children. From Figure 8.17, you can also see that the single women who can least afford children are those most likely to give birth. Their children face severe obstacles to building a satisfying life. They are more likely to go hungry, to be malnourished, to have health problems, even to die in infancy. They also are more likely to drop out of school, to become involved in crime, and to have children while still in their teens—perpetuating a cycle of poverty.

For Your Consideration

On Figures 8.16 and 8.17, you can see how births to single women drop as education and income increase. In answering these two questions, be specific and practical.

- What programs would you suggest to help women attain more education?
- What other ways would you suggest to reduce child poverty?

The Dynamics of Poverty versus the Culture of Poverty

8.6 Contrast the dynamics of poverty with the culture of poverty, explain why people are poor and how deferred gratification is related to poverty, and comment on the Horatio Alger myth.

Some have suggested that the poor get trapped in a **culture of poverty** (Lewis 1966a; Suh and Heise 2014). They assume that the values and behaviors of the poor “make them fundamentally different from other Americans and that these factors are largely responsible for their continued long-term poverty” (Ruggles 1989:7). Lurking behind this concept is the idea that the poor are lazy people who bring poverty on themselves. Certainly, some individuals and families do match this stereotype—many of us have known them. But is a self-perpetuating culture—one that poor people transmit across generations and that locks them in poverty—the basic reason for U.S. poverty?

Contrary to the stereotype of lazy people who contentedly sit back sucking welfare, poverty is dynamic. Many people live on the edge of poverty, managing, but barely, to keep their heads above poverty. But then comes some dramatic life change, such as a divorce, an accident, an illness, or the loss of a job. This *poverty trigger* propels them over the edge they were holding onto, and they find themselves in the poverty they fiercely had been trying to avoid (Western et al. 2012).

With people moving in and out of poverty, most poverty is short-lived, lasting less than a year. Yet from one year to the next, the number of poor people remains about the same. This means that the people who move out of poverty are replaced by people who move into poverty. Most of these newly poor will also move out of poverty within a year. Some people even bounce back and forth, never quite making it securely out of poverty (Rank and Hirschi 2015).

Few poor people enjoy poverty—and they do what they can to avoid being poor. In the end, though, poverty touches a lot more people than the annual totals indicate. Although 15 percent of Americans may be poor at any one time, before they turn 65, about 60 percent of the U.S. population will experience a year of poverty (Rank and Hirschi 2015).

Why Are People Poor?

Two explanations for poverty compete for our attention. The first, which sociologists prefer, focuses on *social structure*. Sociologists stress that *features of society* deny some people access to education or training in job skills. They emphasize racial-ethnic, age, and gender discrimination, as well as changes in the job market—fewer unskilled jobs, businesses closing, and manufacturing jobs moving overseas. In short, some people find their escape route from poverty blocked.

A competing explanation focuses on the *characteristics of individuals*. Sociologists reject explanations, such as laziness and lack of intelligence, viewing these as worthless stereotypes. Individualistic explanations that sociologists reluctantly acknowledge include dropping out of school and bearing children in the teen years. Most sociologists are reluctant to speak of such factors in this context because they appear to blame the victim, something that sociologists bend over backward not to do.

A third explanation is the *poverty triggers* that were just mentioned, the unexpected events in life that push people into poverty.

Deferred Gratification

Not all poverty is short, and about 12 percent of Americans are poor for ten years or longer (Rank and Hirschi 2015). One consequence of a life of deprivation punctuated by emergencies—and of viewing the future as promising more of the same—is a lack of **deferred**

culture of poverty

the assumption that the values and behaviors of the poor make them fundamentally different from other people, that these factors are largely responsible for their poverty, and that parents perpetuate poverty across generations by passing these characteristics to their children

deferred gratification

going without something in the present in the hope of achieving greater gains in the future

gratification, giving up things in the present for the sake of greater gains in the future. It is difficult to practice this middle-class virtue of deferring gratification if you do not have a middle-class surplus—or middle-class hope.

In a classic 1967 study of black street-corner men, sociologist Elliot Liebow noted that the men did not defer gratification. Their jobs were low-paying and insecure, their lives pitted with emergencies. With the future looking exactly like the present and any savings they did manage gobbled up by emergencies, it seemed pointless to save for the future. The only thing that made sense from their perspective was to enjoy what they could at the moment. Immediate gratification, then, was not the cause of their poverty but, rather, its consequence. Cause and consequence loop together, however: Their immediate gratification helped perpetuate their poverty. For another look at this “looping,” see the following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*, in which I share my personal experience with poverty.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Poverty: A Personal Journey

I was born in poverty. My parents, who could not afford to rent either a house or an apartment, rented the tiny office in their minister's house. This is where I was born.

My father, who had only a seventh-grade education, began to slowly climb the social class ladder. His fitful odyssey took him from laborer to truck driver to the owner of a series of small businesses (tire repair shop, bar, hotel), and from there to vacuum cleaner salesman, and back to bar owner. He converted a garage into a house. Although it had no indoor plumbing, it was a start. Later, he bought a house, and then he built a new home. After that we moved into a trailer, and then back to a house. Although he always had a low income, poverty eventually became a distant memory for him.

My social class took a leap—from working class to upper-middle class—when, after attending college and graduate school, I became a university professor. I entered a world that was unknown to my parents, one much more pampered and privileged. I had opportunities to do research, to publish, and to travel to exotic places. My reading centered on sociological research, and I read books in Spanish as well as in English. My father, in contrast, never read a book in his life, and my mother read only detective stories and romance paperbacks. One set of experiences isn't “better” than the other, just significantly different in determining what windows of perception it opens onto the world.

My interest in poverty, rooted in my own childhood experiences, stayed with me. I traveled to a dozen or so skid rows across the United States and Canada, talking to

homeless people and staying in their shelters. In my own town, I spent considerable time with people on welfare, observing how they lived. I constantly marveled at the connections between *structural* causes of poverty (low education, low skills, low pay, the irregularity of unskilled jobs, undependable transportation) and *personal* causes (the *culture of poverty*—alcohol and drug abuse, multiple out-of-wedlock births, frivolous spending, all-night partying, domestic violence, criminal involvement, and a seeming incapacity to keep appointments—except to pick up the welfare check).

Sociologists haven't unraveled this connection, and as much as we might *like* for only structural causes to apply, *both* are at work (Duneier 1999:122; Suh and Heise 2014). The situation can be illustrated by looking at the perennial health problems I observed among the poor—the constant colds, runny noses, backaches, and injuries. The health problems stem from the *social structure* (less access to medical care, less capable physicians, drafty houses, little knowledge about nutrition, and more dangerous jobs). At the same time, *personal* characteristics—hygiene, eating habits, drug and alcohol abuse—cause health problems. Which is the cause and which the effect? Both, of course: One loops into the other. The medical problems (which are based on both personal and structural causes) feed into the poverty these people experience, making them less able to perform their jobs successfully—or even to show up at work regularly.

What an intricate puzzle for sociologists!

If both structural and personal causes are at work, why do sociologists emphasize the structural explanation? Reverse the situation for a moment. Suppose that members of the middle class drove old cars that broke down, faced threats from the utility company to shut off the electricity and heat, and had to make a choice between paying the rent or buying medicine and food and diapers. How long would they practice deferred gratification? Their orientations to life would likely make a sharp U-turn.

Sociologists, then, do not view the behaviors of the poor as the cause of their poverty but, rather, as the result of their poverty. Poor people would welcome the middle-class opportunities that would allow them the chance to practice the middle-class virtue of deferred gratification. Without those opportunities, though, they just can't afford it.

Where Is Horatio Alger? The Social Functions of a Myth

In the late 1800s, Horatio Alger was one of the country's most popular authors. The rags-to-riches exploits of his fictional boy heroes and their amazing successes in overcoming severe odds motivated thousands of boys of that period. Although Alger's characters have disappeared from U.S. literature, they remain alive and well in the psyche of Americans. From real-life examples of people of humble origin who climbed the social class ladder, Americans know that anyone who really tries can get ahead. In fact, they believe that most Americans, including minorities and the working poor, have an average or better-than-average chance of getting ahead—obviously a statistical impossibility (Kluegel and Smith 1986).

The accuracy of the **Horatio Alger myth** is less important than the belief that surrounds it—that limitless possibilities exist for everyone. Functionalists would stress that this belief is functional for society. On the one hand, it encourages people to compete for higher positions, or, as the song says, “to reach for the highest star.” On the other hand, it places blame for failure squarely on the individual. If you don't make it—in the face of ample opportunities to get ahead—the fault must be your own. The Horatio Alger myth helps to stabilize society: Because the fault is viewed as the individual's, not society's, current social arrangements can be regarded as satisfactory. This reduces pressures to change the system.

Horatio Alger myth

the belief that due to limitless possibilities anyone can get ahead if he or she tries hard enough



A society's dominant ideologies are reinforced throughout the society, including its literature. Horatio Alger provided inspirational heroes for thousands of boys. The central theme of these many novels, immensely popular in their time, was rags to riches. Through rugged determination and self-sacrifice, a boy could overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles to reach the pinnacle of success. (Girls did not strive for financial success, but were dependent on fathers and husbands.)

As Marx and Weber pointed out, social class penetrates our consciousness, shaping our ideas of life and our “proper” place in society. When the rich look at the world around them, they sense superiority and anticipate control over their own destiny. When the poor look around them, they are more likely to sense defeat and to

anticipate that unpredictable forces will batter their lives. Both rich and poor know the dominant ideology: The reasons for success—or failure—lie solely with the self. Like fish that don't notice the water, people tend not to perceive the effects of social class on their own lives.

Peering into the Future: Will We Live in a Three-Tier Society?

8.7 Discuss the possibility that we are developing a three-tier society.

Now that we have looked at social class in the United States, you should be much more aware not only of how social class influences your life but also of how the social classes fit together to form the whole that we call American society.

Let's go beyond this and in the following *Thinking Critically about Social Life* try to peer into the future. We will consider the disturbing possibility that society is being restratified—and that the picture coming into focus is not pleasant. Unfortunately, this will give us a much darker ending to this chapter than I prefer. But let's go on.

Thinking Critically about Social Life

The Coming Three-Tier Society and the Militarization of the Police

A three-tier society seems to be looming over us. On the top tier will be the wealthy, who will live in luxury behind gated fortresses, protected from the prying eyes of the unwashed masses. On the middle tier will be the technically trained, an army of servants who will run the essential affairs of society. They will maintain the computers that control the financial system, the infrastructure of utilities, and the government surveillance. There will also be the teachers, the elite ones for the children of the elite and the regular ones whose task is to indoctrinate and control the children of the poor. These technical servants of society's controllers will be backed up by a police force that has come to look more like the military than the police.

And the third tier? This one will consist of the jobless poor. The need for unskilled work is drying up. We still need some fruit pickers and some house cleaners, and an occasional someone to hold up flags when a road is being constructed. But there is little of this kind of work. And most of what there is pays little. Enter one of today's new factories, and you will be struck by the absence of people. You will see untiring robots that never complain, don't take coffee breaks, and need neither vacations nor retirement pay. With each passing year, we need fewer human workers.

Widespread joblessness will trigger hopelessness and deep despair in some, resentment and hostility in others. To keep the lid on violence as long as possible, two solutions will be followed. The first will be to pacify the jobless through food stamps, subsidized housing, entertainment, and drugs. Videos and television will divert most of the "dangerous poor" from seeking political solutions. Drugs

will be tolerated because the poor who flee into them to escape their misery do not threaten the top tier by agitating for political change. Not all will be hopeless: Powerball—with its illusions—will remain.

The second solution, coexisting with the first, is the militarization of the police. That the police are beginning to look like the military is not coincidental. This is preparation for the armed force that will be necessary to control the impoverished masses of the third tier. The media have been willing handmaidens of the elite, preparing the public for the militarization of the police by stoking constant fears of "terrorists." This comes not without a plan from the controllers. The hostile elements of society—the masses left behind with little future, the resentful ones who do not choose to escape into drugs or television—pose a threat to the first tier. For most of the jobless poor, welfare food, televised sports, and the stream of "latest revelations" about vaunted celebrities provide escape adequate to keep them in line. But if what the Romans called food and circus fail to keep minds numb and wills weak, the militarized police with their powerful new weapons, armored vehicles, and trained snipers stand ready to take care of the rest.

For Your Consideration

This is not a pleasant picture of the future, but your author sees it as a looming possibility.

→ Do you think the three-tier society is our likely destiny? Why or why not?

→ What do you think we can do to produce a better future than the three-tier society?

Summary and Review

What Determines Social Class?

- 8.1** Explain the three components of social class—property, power, and prestige; distinguish between wealth and income; explain how property and income are distributed; and describe the democratic façade, the power elite, and status inconsistency.

What is meant by the term social class?

Most sociologists have adopted Weber's definition of **social class**: a large group of people who rank closely to one another in terms of property (wealth), power, and prestige. **Wealth**—consisting of the value of property and income—is concentrated in the upper classes. From the 1930s to the 1970s, the trend in the distribution of wealth in the United States was toward greater equality. Since 1970, the trend has been toward greater inequality. **Power** is the ability to get your way even though others resist. C. Wright Mills coined the term *power elite* to refer to the small group that holds the reins of power in business, government, and the military. **Prestige** is linked to occupational status.

How does occupational prestige differ around the world?

From country to country, people rank occupational prestige similarly. Globally, the occupations that bring greater prestige are those that pay more, require more education and abstract thought, and offer greater independence.

What is meant by the term status inconsistency?

Status is social position. Most people are **status consistent**; that is, they rank high or low on all three dimensions of social class. People who rank higher on some dimensions than on others are status inconsistent. The frustrations of **status inconsistency** tend to produce political radicalism.

Sociological Models of Social Class

- 8.2** Contrast Marx's and Weber's models of social class.

What models are used to portray the social classes?

Erik Wright developed a four-class model based on Marx: (1) capitalists (owners of large businesses), (2) petty bourgeoisie (small business owners), (3) managers, and (4) workers. Kahl and Gilbert developed a six-class model based on Weber. At the top is the capitalist class. In descending order are the upper-middle class, the lower-middle class, the working class, the working poor, and the **underclass**.

Consequences of Social Class

- 8.3** Summarize the consequences of social class for physical and mental health, family life, education, religion, politics, and the criminal justice system.

How does social class affect people's lives?

Social class leaves no aspect of life untouched. It affects our chances of dying early, becoming ill, receiving good health care, and getting divorced. Social class membership also affects child rearing, educational attainment, religious affiliation, political participation, the crimes people commit, and their contact with the criminal justice system.

Social Mobility

- 8.4** Contrast the three types of social mobility, review gender issues in research on social mobility, and explain why social mobility brings pain.

What are three types of social mobility?

The term *intergenerational mobility* refers to changes in social class from one generation to the next. **Structural mobility** refers to changes in society that lead large numbers of people to change their social class. **Exchange mobility** is the movement of large numbers of people from one social class to another, with the net result that the relative proportions of the population in the classes remain about the same.

Poverty

- 8.5** Explain the problems in drawing the poverty line and how poverty is related to geography, race-ethnicity, education, feminization, and age.

Who are the poor?

The poverty line, although it has serious consequences, is arbitrary. Poverty is unequally distributed in the United States. Racial-ethnic minorities (except Asian Americans), children, households headed by women, and rural Americans are more likely than others to be poor. The poverty rate of the elderly is less than that of the general population.

- 8.6** Contrast the dynamics of poverty with the culture of poverty, explain why people are poor and how deferred gratification is related to poverty, and comment on the Horatio Alger myth.

Why are people poor?

The dynamics of poverty (huge numbers moving into and out of poverty) indicate that the culture of poverty is not generally true. Rather than looking at the characteristics of *individuals* as the cause of poverty, sociologists stress the *structural* features of society, such as employment opportunities. There also are *poverty triggers*. Sociologists generally

conclude that life orientations are a consequence, not the cause, of people's position in the social class structure.

How is the Horatio Alger myth functional for society?

The **Horatio Alger myth**—the belief that anyone can get ahead if only he or she tries hard enough—encourages people to strive to get ahead. It also stabilizes society by deflecting blame for failure from society to the individual.

8.7 Discuss the possibility that we are developing a three-tier society.

What is meant by a three-tier society?

Trends indicate an alarming future. In the top tier of a three-tier society will live a wealthy ruling elite. In the middle tier will be well-compensated people who serve this elite. At the bottom tier will be a large underclass considered dangerous to society. It will be kept under control by welfare, entertainment, drugs, and a militarized police force.

Thinking Critically about Chapter 8

1. The belief that the United States is the land of opportunity draws millions of legal and illegal immigrants to the United States. How do the materials in this chapter support or undermine this belief?
2. In what three ways is social class having an ongoing impact on your life?
3. What social mobility has your own family experienced? In what ways has this affected your life?
4. What indications do you see that we are or are not developing a three-tier society?



Three North American Indians, ca. 1836, George Catlin (oil on canvas)

Chapter 9

Race and Ethnicity



Learning Objectives

After you have read this chapter, you should be able to:

- 9.1** Contrast the myth and reality of race; compare race and ethnicity and minority and dominant groups; discuss ethnic work.
- 9.2** Contrast prejudice and discrimination and individual and institutional discrimination; discuss learning prejudice, internalizing dominant norms, and institutional discrimination.
- 9.3** Contrast psychological and sociological theories of prejudice: include functionalism, conflict, and symbolic interactionism.
- 9.4** Explain genocide, population transfer, internal colonialism, segregation, assimilation, and multiculturalism.
- 9.5** Summarize the major patterns that characterize European Americans, Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans.
- 9.6** Discuss immigration, affirmative action, and a multicultural society.

Imagine that you are an African American man living in Macon County, Alabama, during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Your home is a little country shack with a dirt floor. You have no electricity or running water. You never finished grade school, and you make a living, such as it is, by doing odd jobs. You haven't been feeling too good lately, but you can't afford a doctor.

Then you hear incredible news. You rub your eyes in disbelief. It is just like winning the lottery! If you join Miss Rivers' Lodge (and it is free to join), you will get free physical examinations at Tuskegee University for life. You will even get free rides to and from the clinic, hot meals on examination days, and a lifetime of free treatment for minor ailments.

You eagerly join Miss Rivers' Lodge.

After your first physical examination, the doctor gives you the bad news. "You've got bad blood," he says. "That's why you've been feeling bad. Miss Rivers will give you some medicine and schedule you for your next exam. I've got to warn you, though. If you go to another doctor, there's no more free exams or medicine."

You can't afford another doctor anyway. You are thankful for your treatment, take your medicine, and look forward to the next trip to the university.

What has really happened? You have just become part of what is surely slated to go down in history as one of the most callous experiments of all time, outside of the infamous World War II Nazi and Japanese experiments. With heartless disregard for human life, the U.S. Public Health Service told 399 African American men that they had joined a social club and burial society called Miss Rivers' Lodge. What the men were not told was that they had syphilis, that there was no real Miss Rivers' Lodge, that the doctors were just using this term so they could study what happened when syphilis went untreated. For 40 years, even after penicillin was used to treat syphilis, the "U.S. Public Health Service" allowed these men to go without treatment—and kept testing them each year—to study the progress of the disease. The "U.S.

"You have just become part of one of the most callous experiments of all time."

public health” officials even had a control group of 201 men who were free of the disease (Jones 1993; Duff-Brown 2017).

By the way, the men did receive a benefit from “Miss Rivers’ Lodge,” a free autopsy to determine the ravages of syphilis on their bodies.

Laying the Sociological Foundation

9.1 Contrast the myth and reality of race; compare race and ethnicity and minority and dominant groups; discuss ethnic work.

As unlikely as it seems, this is a true story. Rarely do racial–ethnic relations degenerate to this point, but reports of troubled race relations surprise none of us. Today’s newspapers, TV, and Internet regularly report on racial problems. Sociology can contribute greatly to our understanding of this aspect of social life—and this chapter may be an eye-opener for you. For example, could race be a myth? Let’s find out.

Race: Reality and Myth

As humans spread throughout the world, their adaptations to diverse climates and other living conditions, combined with genetic mutations, added distinct characteristics to the peoples of the globe.

THE REALITY OF HUMAN VARIETY With its more than 7 billion people, the world offers a fascinating variety of human shapes and colors. Skin colors come in all shades between black and white, heightened by reddish and yellowish hues. Eyes come in shades of blue, brown, and green. Lips are thick and thin. Hair is straight, curly, kinky, black, blonde, red—and, of course, all shades of brown.

In this sense, the concept of **race**—a group of people with inherited physical characteristics that distinguish it from another group—is a reality. Humans do, indeed, come in a variety of colors and shapes.

THE MYTH OF PURE RACES Humans show such a mixture of physical characteristics that there are no “pure” races. Instead of falling into distinct types that are clearly separate from one another, human characteristics—skin color, hair texture, nose shape, head shape, eye color, and so on—flow endlessly together. The mapping of the human genome system shows that any two individuals in the world have 99.6 percent of their genetic material in common (Beauchamp et al. 2011). What are called racial groups differ from one another only once in a thousand subunits of the genome (Angler 2000; Frank 2007). As you can see from the example of Tiger Woods, discussed in the following *Cultural Diversity in the United States*, these minute gradations make any attempt to draw lines of pure race purely arbitrary.

race

a group whose inherited physical characteristics distinguish it from other groups



Humans show remarkable diversity. Shown here is just one example—He Pingping, from China, who at 2 feet 4 inches, was the world’s shortest man, and Svetlana Pankratova, from Russia, who, according to the Guinness Book of World Records, is the woman with the longest legs. Race–ethnicity shows similar diversity.

Cultural Diversity in the United States

Tiger Woods: Mapping the Changing Ethnic Terrain

Tiger Woods, perhaps the top golfer of all time, calls himself *Cablinasian*. Woods invented this term as a boy to try to explain to himself just who he was—a combination of Caucasian, Black, Indian, and Asian (Leland and Beals 1997; McKibbin 2014). Woods wanted to embrace all sides of his family.



Like many of us, Tiger Woods' heritage is difficult to specify. Analysts who like to quantify ethnic heritage put Woods at one-quarter Thai, one-quarter Chinese, one-quarter white, an eighth Native American, and an eighth African American. From this chapter, you know how ridiculous such computations are, but the sociological question is why many people consider Tiger Woods to be African American. The U.S. racial scene is indeed complex, but a good part of the reason is that Woods has dark skin, and this is the label the media placed on him. The attitude seems to be "Everyone has to fit somewhere." And for Tiger Woods, the media chose African American.

The United States once had a firm "color line"—barriers between racial-ethnic groups that you didn't dare cross, especially in dating or marriage. This barrier has broken down, and today such marriages are common (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Table 61). Children born in these marriages have a difficult time figuring out how to classify themselves (Saulny 2011). To help them make an adjustment in college, some colleges have interracial student organizations.

As we enter unfamiliar ethnic terrain, our classifications are bursting at the seams. Here is how Kwame Anthony Appiah, of Harvard's Philosophy and Afro-American Studies Departments, described his situation:

My mother is English; my father is Ghanaian. My sisters are married to a Nigerian and a Norwegian. I have nephews who range from blond-haired kids to very black kids. They are all first cousins. Now according to the American scheme of things, they're all black—even the guy with blond hair who skis in Oslo. (Wright 1994)

I marvel at what racial experts the U.S. census takers once were. When they took the national census, which is done every 10 years, they looked at people and assigned them a race. At various points, the census contained these categories: mulatto, quadroon, octoroon, Negro, black, Mexican, white, Indian, Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, and Hindu. Quadroon (one-fourth black and



Tiger Woods as he answers questions at a news conference.

three-fourths white) and octoroon (one-eighth black and seven-eighths white) proved too difficult to "measure," and these categories were used only in 1890. Mulatto appeared in the 1850 census and lasted until 1920. The Mexican government complained about Mexicans being treated as a race, and this category was used only in 1930. I don't know whose idea it was to make Hindu a race, but it lasted for three censuses, from 1920 to 1940 (Bean et al. 2004; Tafoya et al. 2005).

In the 2010 census, we were first asked to declare whether we were or were not "Spanish/Hispanic/Latino." After this, we were asked to check "one or more races" that we "consider ourselves to be." We could choose from White; Black, African American, or Negro; American Indian or Alaska Native; and Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, or Samoan. There were boxes for Other Asian and Other Pacific Islander, with examples that listed Hmong, Pakistani, and Fijian as races. If these didn't do it, we could check a box called "Some Other Race" and then write whatever we wanted.

Perhaps the census should list Cablinasian, after all. We could also have ANGEL for African-Norwegian-German-English-Latino Americans, DEVIL for those of Danish-English-Vietnamese-Italian-Lebanese descent, and STUDENT for Swedish-Turkish-Uruguayan-Danish-English-Norwegian-Thai Americans. As you read farther in this chapter, you will see why these terms make as much sense as the categories we currently use.

For Your Consideration

Perhaps you can use the materials in this chapter to answer these questions:

- Why do we count people by "race"?
- Why not eliminate race from the U.S. census? (Race became a factor in 1790 during the first census. To determine the number of representatives from each state, a slave was counted as three-fifths of a person!)
- Why is race so important to some people?

THE MYTH OF A FIXED NUMBER OF RACES Although large groupings of people can be classified by blood type and gene frequencies, even these classifications do not uncover "race." Rather, the term is so arbitrary that biologists and anthropologists cannot even agree on how many "races" there are (Glasgow 2013). Ashley Montagu (1964, 1999), a physical anthropologist, pointed out that some scientists have classified humans into only two "races," while others have found as many as two thousand. Montagu (1960) himself classified humans into forty "racial" groups.

"Race" is so fluid that even a plane ride can change someone's race. If you want to see how, read the following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Can a Plane Ride Change Your Race?

At the beginning of this text, I mentioned that common sense and sociology often differ. This is especially so when it comes to race. According to common sense, our racial classifications represent biological differences between people. Sociologists, in contrast, stress that what we call races are *social* classifications, not biological categories.

Sociologists point out that *our “race” depends more on the society in which we live than on our biology*. For example, the racial categories common in the United States are only one of *numerous* ways by which people around the world classify physical appearances (Mukhopadhyay et al. 2014). Although various groups use different categories, each group assumes that its categories are natural, merely a response to visible biology.

To better understand this essential sociological point—that race is more social than it is biological—consider this: In the United States, children born to the same parents are all of the same race. “What could be more natural?” Americans assume. But in Brazil, children born to the same parents may be of different races—if their appearances differ. “What could be more natural?” assume Brazilians.

Consider how Americans usually classify a child born to a “black” mother and a “white” father. Why do they usually say that the child is “black”? Wouldn’t it be equally as logical to classify the child as “white”? Similarly, if a child has one grandmother who is “black,” but all her other ancestors are “white,” the child is often considered “black.” Yet she has much more “white blood” than “black blood.” Why, then, is she considered “black”? Certainly not because of biology.

Such thinking is a legacy of slavery. In an attempt to preserve the “purity” of their “race” in the face of the many

children whose fathers were white slave masters and whose mothers were black slaves, whites classified anyone with even a “drop of black blood” as black. They actually called this the “one-drop” rule.

Even a plane trip can change a person’s race. In the city of Salvador in Brazil, people classify one another by color of skin and eyes, breadth of nose and lips, and color and curliness of hair. They use at least seven terms for what we call white and black. Consider again a U.S. child who has “white” and “black” parents. If she flies to Brazil, she is no longer “black”; she now belongs to one of their several “whiter” categories (Fish 1995).

If the girl makes such a flight, would her “race” actually change? Our common sense revolts at this, I know, but it actually would. We want to argue that because her biological characteristics remain unchanged, her race remains unchanged. This is because we think of race as biological, when *race is actually a label we use to describe perceived biological characteristics*. Simply put, the race we “are” depends on our social location—on who is doing the classifying.

“Racial” classifications are also fluid, not fixed. Even now, you can see change occurring in U.S. classifications. The category “multiracial,” for example, indicates changing thought and perception.

For Your Consideration

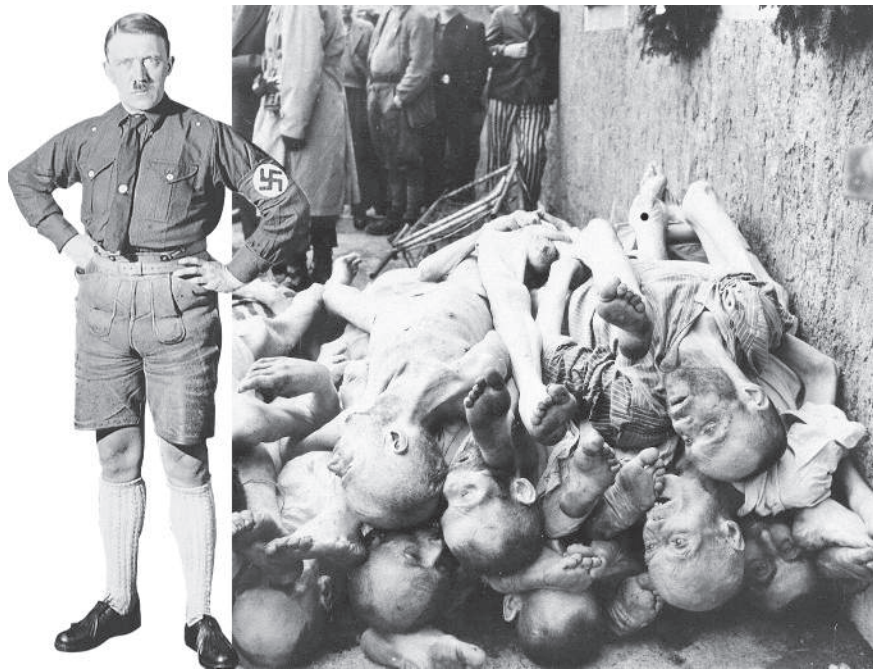
- How would you explain to someone that race is more a social classification than a biological one? Can you come up with any arguments to refute this statement?
- How do you think our racial-ethnic categories will change in the future?



What “race” are these two Brazilians? Is the child’s “race” different from her mother’s “race”? The text explains why “race” is such an unreliable concept that it changes even with geography.

THE MYTH OF RACIAL SUPERIORITY Regardless of what anthropologists, biologists, and sociologists say, however, people do divide one another into races, and we are stuck with this term. People also tend to see some races (mostly their own) as superior and others as inferior. As with language, however, no race is better than another. All races have their geniuses—and their idiots. Yet the myth of racial superiority abounds, a myth that is particularly dangerous. Adolf Hitler, for example, believed that the Aryans were a superior race, destined to establish an advanced culture and a new world order. This destiny required them to avoid the “racial contamination” that would come from breeding with inferior races. The Aryans, then, had a “cultural duty” to isolate or destroy races that threatened their racial purity and culture.

The reason I selected these photos is to illustrate how seriously we must take all preaching of hatred and of racial supremacy, even though it seems to come from harmless or even humorous sources. The strange looking person with his hands on his hips, who is wearing *lederhosen*, traditional clothing of Bavaria, Germany, is Adolf Hitler. His actions led to the concentration camps. This is just one small pile of bodies found when the U.S. Army liberated Buchenwald.



Hitler's views, put into practice, were appalling. The Nazis slaughtered those they deemed inferior: Jews, Slavs, gypsies, homosexuals, and people with mental and physical disabilities. Horrific images of gas ovens and emaciated bodies stacked like cordwood have haunted the world's nations. At Nuremberg, the Allies, flush with victory, put the top Nazis on trial, exposing their heinous deeds to a shocked world. Their public executions, everyone assumed, marked the end of such grisly acts.

Obviously, they didn't.

"Which one of your seven children are you going to throw into this grave?" the men asked the woman. "If you refuse to tell us, they'll all be buried alive." (Isaacs 2014)

Fifty years after the Nazis, a mother in Rwanda had to make this haunting choice. Over 100 days in 1994, Hutus slaughtered about 900,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus—mostly with machetes (Wiafe-Amoako 2017). That same decade, Serbian leaders in Bosnia massacred Muslims, giving the world the term *ethnic cleansing*. In North Korea today, prisoners deemed genetically inferior—defiling the "sacred Korean race"—are tortured, raped, and starved to death (Eberstadt 2014b). As these events sadly attest, **genocide**—the attempt to destroy a group of people because of their presumed race or ethnicity—remains alive and well. Although more recent killings are not accompanied by swastikas and gas ovens, the perpetrators' goal is the same.

genocide

the annihilation or attempted annihilation of a people because of their presumed race or ethnicity

THE MYTH CONTINUES The *idea* of race, of course, is far from a myth. Firmly embedded in our culture, it is a powerful force in our everyday lives. That no race is superior and that even biologists cannot decide how people should be classified into races is not what counts. "I know what I see, and you can't tell me any different" seems to be the common attitude. As was noted in Chapter 4, sociologists W. I. and D. S. Thomas (1928) observed, "If people define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." In other words, people act on perceptions and beliefs, not facts. As a result, we will always have people like Hitler and, as illustrated in our opening vignette, calloused bureaucrats like those in the U.S. Public Health Service who thought that it was fine to experiment with people whom they deemed inferior. Although few hold such extreme views, most people appear to be ethnocentric enough to believe that their own race is—at least just a little—superior to others.

Ethnic Groups

In contrast to *race*, which people use to refer to supposed biological characteristics that distinguish one group of people from another, **ethnicity** and **ethnic** refer to cultural characteristics. Derived from the word *ethnos* (a Greek word meaning “people” or “nation”), *ethnicity* and *ethnic* refer to people who identify with one another on the basis of common ancestry and cultural heritage. Their sense of belonging may center on their nation or region of origin, distinctive foods, clothing, language, music, religion, or family names and relationships.

People often confuse the terms *race* and *ethnic group*. For example, many people, including many Jews, consider Jews a race. Jews, however, are more properly considered an ethnic group because it is their cultural characteristics, especially their religion, that bind them together. Wherever Jews have lived in the world, they have intermarried. Consequently, Jews in China may have Chinese features, while some Swedish Jews are blue-eyed blonds. The confusion of race and ethnicity is illustrated in this photo.



Assumptions of race-ethnicity influence both perception and behavior. This photo is of Jews in Gondar, Ethiopia, awaiting their immigration to Israel. It took Israeli authorities several years to acknowledge that the Ethiopian Jews were “real Jews” and then allow them to immigrate.

Minority Groups and Dominant Groups

Sociologist Louis Wirth (1945) defined a **minority group** as *people who are singled out for unequal treatment and who regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination*. Worldwide, minorities share several conditions: Their physical or cultural traits are held in low esteem by the dominant group, which treats them unfairly, and they tend to marry within their own group (Wagley and Harris 1958). These conditions tend to create a sense of common identity among minorities (a feeling of “we-ness”). In some instances, even a sense of shared destiny emerges (Chandra 1993).

NOT SIZE, BUT DOMINANCE AND DISCRIMINATION Surprisingly, a minority group is not necessarily a *numerical* minority. For example, before India’s independence in 1947, a handful of British colonial rulers dominated tens of millions of Indians. Similarly, when South Africa practiced apartheid, a smaller group of Afrikaners, primarily Dutch, discriminated against a much larger number of blacks. And all over the world, as we discuss in Chapter 10, females are a minority group. Because of this, sociologists refer to those who do the discriminating not as the *majority* but, rather, as the **dominant group**. Regardless of its numbers, the dominant group has the greater power and privilege.

Possessing political power and unified by shared physical and cultural traits, the dominant group uses its position to discriminate against those with different—and supposedly inferior—traits. The dominant group considers its privileged position to be obvious proof of its own innate superiority.

EMERGENCE OF MINORITY GROUPS A group becomes a minority in one of two ways. The *first* is through the expansion of political boundaries. With the exception of females, tribal societies contain no minority groups. There everyone shares the same culture, including the same language, and belongs to the same group. When a group expands its political boundaries, however, it produces minority groups if it incorporates people with different customs, languages, religions, values, or physical characteristics into the same political entity and discriminates against them. For example, in 1848, after defeating Mexico in war, the United States took over the Southwest. The Mexicans living there, who had been the dominant group prior to the war, were transformed into a minority group, a master status that has influenced their lives ever since. Referring to his ancestors, one Latino said, “We didn’t move across the border—the border moved across us.”

Immigration is a *second* way in which a group becomes a minority. The immigration can be voluntary, as with the Mexicans and South Americans who have chosen to move

ethnicity (and ethnic)

having distinctive cultural characteristics

minority group

people who are singled out for unequal treatment and who regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination

dominant group

the group with the most power, greatest privileges, and highest social status

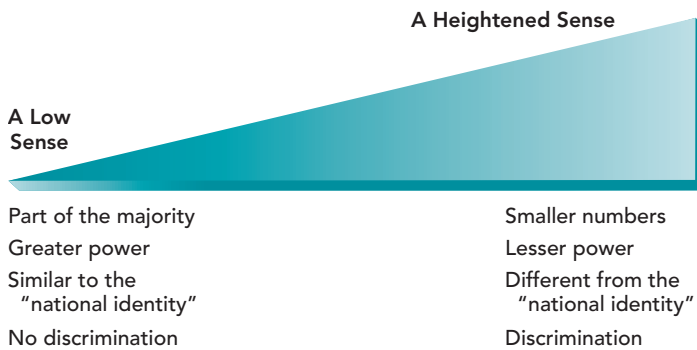
to the United States, or involuntary, as with the Africans who were brought in chains to the United States. (The way females became a minority group represents a third way, but, as discussed in Chapter 10, no one knows just how this occurred.)

Ethnic Work: Constructing Our Racial–Ethnic Identity

Some of us have a greater sense of ethnicity than others, and we feel firm boundaries between “us” and “them.” Others of us have assimilated so extensively into the mainstream culture that we are only vaguely aware of our ethnic origins. With interethnic marriage common, some do not even know the countries from which their families originated—nor do they care. If asked to identify themselves ethnically, they respond with something like “I’m Heinz 57—German and Irish, with a little Italian and French thrown in—and I think someone said something about being one-sixteenth Indian, too.”

Why do some people feel an intense sense of ethnic identity, while others feel hardly any? Figure 9.1 portrays four factors, identified by sociologist Ashley Doane, that heighten or reduce our sense of ethnic identity. From this figure, you can see that the keys are relative size, power, appearance, and discrimination. If your group is relatively small, has little power, looks different from most people in society, and is an object of discrimination, you will have a heightened sense of ethnic identity. In contrast, if you belong to the dominant group that holds most of the power, look like most people in the society, and feel no discrimination, you are likely to experience a sense of “belonging”—and to wonder why ethnic identity is such a big deal.

Figure 9.1 A Sense of Ethnicity



SOURCE: By the author. Based on Doane 1997.

ethnic work

activities designed to discover, enhance, maintain, or transmit an ethnic or racial identity

We can use the term **ethnic work** to refer to the ways we construct our ethnicity. For people who have a strong ethnic identity, this term refers to how they enhance and maintain their group’s distinctions—from clothing, food, and language to religious practices and holidays. For people whose ethnic identity is not as firm, ethnic work refers to attempts to recover their ethnic heritage, such as trying to trace family lines or visiting the country of their family’s origin. The prevailing view has been that the United States would be a *melting pot*, with most of its groups blending into a sort of ethnic stew. To a large extent, this has happened, but because so many Americans are fascinated with their “roots,” some analysts suggest that “tossed salad” is a more appropriate term than “melting pot.” From the following photo essay on ethnic work, you can see why this awkward term might be appropriate.

Prejudice and Discrimination

9.2 Contrast prejudice and discrimination and individual and institutional discrimination; discuss learning prejudice, internalizing dominant norms, and institutional discrimination.

With prejudice and discrimination so significant in social life, let’s consider the origin of prejudice and the extent of discrimination.

Learning Prejudice

Prejudice and discrimination are common throughout the world. In Mexico, Mexicans of Hispanic descent discriminate against Mexicans of Native American descent; in Israel, Ashkenazi Jews, primarily of European descent, discriminate against Sephardic Jews from the Middle East; in China, the Han discriminate against the Uighurs. In some places, the elderly discriminate against the young; in others, the young discriminate against the elderly. And all around the world, men discriminate against women.

Explorations in Cultural Identity

Ethnic work refers to the ways that people establish, maintain, and transmit their ethnic identity. As shown here, among the techniques people use to forge ties with their roots are dress, dance, and music.



As some groups do ethnic work, they produce a mythical long-lost heritage, as in this photo of “1500s Spanish” that I took in St. Augustine, Florida.



Many African Americans are trying to get in closer contact with their roots. Can you identify some of the ways this grandmother is helping her granddaughter appreciate her African heritage?



Many European Americans are involved in ethnic work, attempting to maintain an identity more precise than “from Europe.” These women of Czech ancestry are performing for a Czech community in a small town in Nebraska.



Many Native Americans have maintained continuous identity with their tribal roots. This member of the Sioux tribe wears traditional dancing dress as he performs at the American Indian Arts Festival in Westampton, New Jersey.

The Cinco de Mayo celebration is used to recall roots and renew ethnic identities. This one was held in Denver, Colorado.



discrimination

an act of unfair treatment directed against an individual or a group

racism

prejudice and discrimination on the basis of race

prejudice

an attitude or prejudging, usually in a negative way

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION **Discrimination** is an *action*—unfair treatment directed against someone. Discrimination can be based on many characteristics: age, sex, height, weight, skin color, clothing, speech, income, education, marital status, sexual orientation, disease, disability, religion, and politics. When the basis of discrimination is someone's perception of race, it is known as **racism**. Discrimination is often the result of an *attitude* called **prejudice**—a prejudging of some sort, usually in a negative way. There is also *positive prejudice*, which exaggerates the virtues of a group, as when people think that some group is superior to others. Most prejudice, however, is negative and involves prejudging a group as inferior.

LEARNING PREJUDICE FROM ASSOCIATING WITH OTHERS As with our other attitudes, we are not born with prejudice. Rather, we learn prejudice from the people around us. You probably know this, but here is a twist that sociologists have found. Michael Kimmel (2007), who interviewed neo-Nazi skinheads in Sweden, found that the young men were attracted mostly by the group's tough masculinity, not its hatred of immigrants. Kathleen Blee (2005, 2011), who interviewed female members of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and Aryan Nations in the United States, found something similar. They were attracted to the hate group because someone they liked belonged to it. They learned to be racists *after* they joined the group. Both Blee and Kimmel found that the members' racism was not the *cause* of their joining but, rather, joining was the cause of their racism.

Just as our associations can increase prejudice, so they can reduce prejudice, the topic of our following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

College Dorms and Contact Theory

From your own experience, you know that friends influence one another. Much of this influence comes from talking. As friends talk about their experiences and share their ideas, they help give shape to one another's views of life.

It is no different for friends who are from different racial-ethnic groups. As they interact with one another, their understandings change and their perspectives broaden. Over time, if they cannot see the world through each other's eyes, they at least get a glimpse of what that world looks like.

If one of the goals of college is to increase students' understanding of the world and change their attitudes while helping to integrate racial-ethnic groups—and this is a big if—then why do some colleges have separate dorms for African American students, Jewish students, and so on? And when there aren't separate dorms, why do some colleges assign roommates so blacks will room with blacks and whites with whites?

The goal of such room assignments, of course, is to

make minority students feel comfortable and help prevent them from feeling lost in a sea of white faces and suffering from *anomie*, feelings of not belonging.

These good intentions have an unanticipated result. As African American students interact in these "little corners" of the campus, their interracial friendships decrease. At the end of their freshman year in college, African American students have about 10 percent fewer interracial friends than when they began college. What

happens if colleges assign students of different racial-ethnic groups to be roommates? It is not surprising, but these students end up with more interracial friendships than those who have roommates of their own race-ethnicity.

Mixed racial-ethnic roommate arrangements, though, are more likely to fail. About 17 percent end during the school year, compared to 10 percent of white-white pairings and 9 percent of black-black pairings. The dissatisfactions cut both



Contact theory indicates that prejudice decreases and relations improve when individuals of different racial-ethnic backgrounds who are of equal status interact frequently.

ways, with blacks and whites requesting transfers at about the same rate.

But note that the vast majority of these interracial pairings last. They don't always blossom into friendships, of course, and like other roommate assignments, some roommates can barely tolerate one another. But contacts and cross-racial friendships do increase in most cases, changing understandings and perspectives. We need in-depth research to uncover who is changed in what ways.

In Sum

Mutual understandings increase, prejudice decreases, and relations improve when people of equal status who are from

different racial-ethnic backgrounds interact frequently and work toward mutual goals. The shorthand for these findings is **contact theory**.

SOURCES: Based on Riley 2009; King et al. 2013.

For Your Consideration

- Do you think colleges should eliminate dormitories themed by race-ethnicity?
- What is your opinion about colleges assigning students of different racial-ethnic groups to the same dorm rooms?

THE FAR-REACHING NATURE OF PREJUDICE It is amazing how much prejudice people can learn. In a classic article, psychologist Eugene Hartley (1946) asked people how they felt about several racial-ethnic groups. Besides Negroes, Jews, and so on, he included the Wallonians, Pireneans, and Danireans—names he had made up. Most people who expressed dislike for Jews and Negroes showed similar contempt for these three fictitious groups.

Hartley's study shows that prejudice does not depend on negative experiences with others. It also reveals that people who are prejudiced against one racial or ethnic group also tend to be prejudiced against other groups. People can be, and are, prejudiced against people they have never met—and even against groups that do not exist!

contact theory

the idea that prejudice and negative stereotypes decrease and racial-ethnic relations improve when people from different racial-ethnic backgrounds, who are of equal status, interact frequently



This photo, taken in Birmingham, Alabama, provides a glimpse into the determination and bravery of the civil rights demonstrators of the 1960s and the severe opposition they confronted.

The neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan base their existence on prejudice. These groups believe that race is real, that white is best, and that beneath society's surface is a murky river of mingling conspiracies (Ezekiel 1995). In the following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*, sociologist Raphael Ezekiel reveals some of the insights he gained during his remarkable study of these groups.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

The Racist Mind

First, you should know something about Rafael Ezekiel, a sociologist I admire for his daring research. Rafe told me that his interest in racial-ethnic relations was stimulated by the contradictions he experienced as a child: He grew up with liberal, northern, Jewish parents in a deeply racist East Texas town.

Rafe wanted to see the racist mind from the inside.

Participant observation, which you studied in Chapter 1, is the way to do this, but as a Jew, would participant observation be possible for him? To find out, Rafe told Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi leaders that he was a Jew and that he wanted to interview them and attend their meetings. Surprisingly, they agreed. Rafe published his path-breaking research in a book, *The Racist Mind* (1995).

I asked Rafe to share with you some of the insights he gained during his fascinating sociological adventure. This is what he wrote.



Raphael Ezekiel

Dear students,

Jim Henslin asked me to write about my fieldwork. I got stuck, so I decided to interview myself.

Interviewer: What did you do, Professor?

Rafe: I spent three years hanging out with a neo-Nazi group in Detroit. After that, I interviewed national leaders from neo-Nazi groups and from Klans. I also went to their national and regional meetings. My book, *The Racist Mind*, comes from that work.

Interviewer: Did they know you were a Jew?

Rafe: I made sure they knew I was a Jew and opposed to racism. Good interviewing is interplay between you and your respondent—kind of a dance. That requires trust; trust requires openness and honesty.

Interviewer: But, then, why did they talk with you?

Rafe: Because I told them the truth—that I believe every person creates a life that makes sense to him or her, and my professional work is to go onto the turf of people whose lives seem unusual to most folk and let these people tell me, in their own words, the sense their lives make to them. That made sense to them.

Interviewer: Did you find anything out?

Rafe: Yeah. The leaders and members are real different. The leaders are men—this is essentially a male movement—force, macho, blood, all that. The leaders are not motivated primarily by hate or by racism. They are motivated primarily by hunger for power: Power is the goal; racism is the tool. To move a crowd by what they say. To scare a community by saying that they're

coming. To fill the media with scare stories. A whole lot of this is theater—they provide the stimulus; we provide the fantasies.

There are always suckers whom you can recruit by talking racism. If you line up 100 white Americans, ranked by how much they fear and dislike African Americans, the big leaders wouldn't be at the head of the line—they'd be about 30 places back.

Interviewer: And the ordinary members?

Rafe: That's a whole different story. This is not a movement built on hate. It's a movement built on fear. When you talk with a member, talk honestly about his life—his, again—the emotion you sense under the surface is fear. The kids in the Detroit group felt, deep down, that their own lives might be snuffed out at any moment, like a candle in the wind.

Interviewer: Do you have any hints on how to do good fieldwork?

Rafe: Yeah. First, check yourself out—why are you doing this? What does it mean to you? Second, be real—with them, with yourself. Third, field notes. When you finish your interview and start home, roll the interview around in your mind. Don't analyze, just let it play in your mind. Like remembering a dream. Don't talk to anyone—no phoning—don't listen to the radio—just keep the interview rolling around. Go straight home and start writing. Write first pure emotion—primary process stuff—associations, feelings. What's going on inside you after this interview? What does it remind you of? Then write your secondary process stuff—what went on and what you think it means. Then, in terms of your project, where does this take you? Do you need more questions? Respondents? Finally, ask yourself: "So what?" What difference does it make to the world what you think you are understanding? As you write that, you will be writing much of your book.

For Your Consideration

- Would you have thought it possible for a Jew to openly attend meetings of the Klan and neo-Nazis? Ezekiel is dispassionate in his analysis, but in his book he reveals some of the fears he felt during his research. Could you ever do such research?
- Can you see why it can be exciting to be a sociologist?
- What does Ezekiel mean when he says that the neo-Nazis and Klans are not based on hate? How can this be?

INTERNALIZING DOMINANT NORMS People can even learn to be prejudiced against their own group. A national survey found that African American men think that lighter-skinned African American women are more attractive than those with darker skin (Hill 2002). Participant observation in the inner city also reveals a preference for lighter skin (Jones 2010). Sociologists call this *internalizing the norms of the dominant group*.

To study the internalization of dominant norms, psychologists Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald created the *Implicit Association Test*. In one version of this test, good and bad words are flashed on a screen along with photos of African Americans and whites (Blair et al. 2013). Most subjects are quicker to associate positive words (such as “love,” “peace,” and “baby”) with whites and negative words (such as “cancer,” “bomb,” and “devil”) with blacks. Here’s the clincher: This is true for *both* whites and blacks (Dasgupta et al. 2000; Greenwald and Krieger 2006). Apparently, we all learn the *ethnic maps* of our culture and, along with them, their route to biased perception.

Individual and Institutional Discrimination

Sociologists stress that we should move beyond thinking in terms of **individual discrimination**, the negative treatment of one person by another. Although such behavior creates problems, it is primarily an issue between individuals. With their focus on the broader picture, sociologists encourage us to examine **institutional discrimination**, that is, to see how discrimination is woven into the fabric of society. Let’s look at two examples.

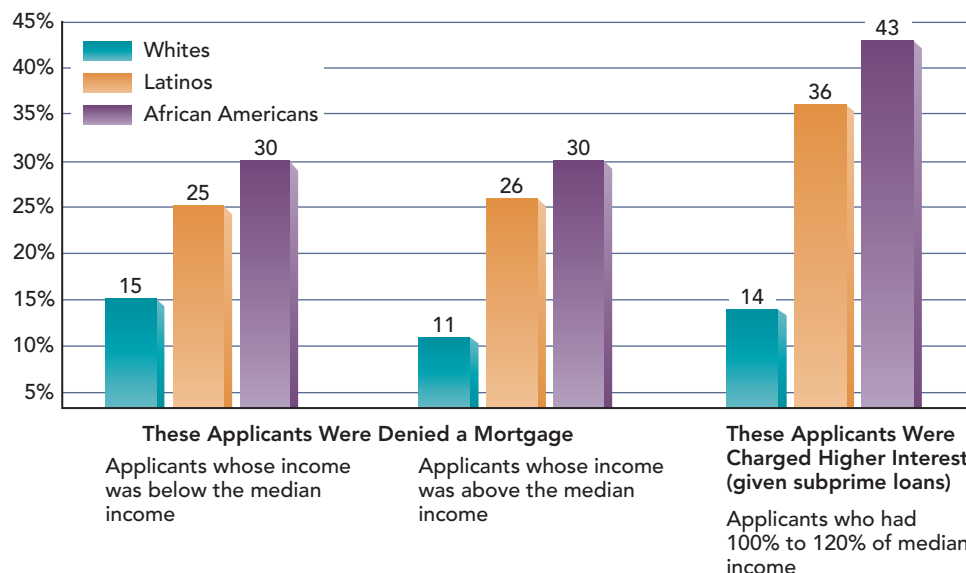
HOME MORTGAGES Bank lending provides an excellent illustration of institutional discrimination. Reviewing national samples of loan applications, researchers found that bankers often refuse to make loans to minorities (Thomas 1991, 1992). When confronted, the bankers said they didn’t have a discriminatory bone in their bodies—the whites simply had better credit history. The researchers retested their data. They found that even when applicants had identical credit, bankers were *60 percent* more likely to reject African Americans and Latinos. The problem continues. Look at Figure 9.2. You can see that *minorities are more likely to be turned down for a loan—and this is true whether their incomes are below or above the median income of their community*.

individual discrimination
person-to-person or face-to-face discrimination; the negative treatment of people by other individuals

institutional discrimination
negative treatment of a minority group that is built into a society’s institutions; also called *systemic discrimination*

Figure 9.2 Buying a House: Institutional Discrimination and Predatory Lending

This figure, based on a national sample, illustrates *institutional discrimination*. Rejecting the loan applications of minorities and gouging minorities with higher interest rates are a nationwide practice, not the acts of a rogue banker here or there. Because the discrimination is part of the banking system, it is also called *systemic discrimination*.



SOURCE: By the author. Based on Kochbar and Gonzalez-Barrera 2009.

In the Great Recession that we just suffered through, African Americans and Latinos were hit harder than whites. The last set of bars on Figure 9.2 shows one of the reasons for this: *Banks purposely charged minorities higher interest rates, a practice called predatory lending*. When the economic crisis hit, the results were devastating. Many African Americans and Latinos who could have continued to make their house payments if they had the lower interest rates lost their homes (Ropiequet et al. 2012).

Would nice bankers really do predatory lending? After checking data like these, the Justice Department accused Countrywide Financial, a major mortgage lender, of discriminating against 200,000 Latino and African American borrowers. Countrywide agreed to pay a fine of \$335 million, the largest fair-lending settlement in history (Savage 2011).

HEALTH CARE Losing your home is devastating. Losing your mother or baby is even worse. Look at Table 9.1. You can see that institutional discrimination can be a life-and-death matter. In childbirth, African American mothers are more than *three* times as likely to die as white mothers, while their babies are more than *twice* as likely to die during their first year of life. This is not a matter of biology, as though African American mothers and children are more fragile. It is a matter of *social* conditions, primarily nutrition and medical care.

Table 9.1 Health and Race–Ethnicity

	Infant	Maternal	Life Expectancy	
	Deaths ¹	Deaths	Male	Female
Whites	4.9	11.1	76.7	81.4
African Americans	11.0	36.5	72.5	78.4

¹The death rates given here are the number per 1,000. Infant deaths refer to the number of infants younger than 1 year who die in a year per 1,000 live births. The source does not provide data for other racial–ethnic groups.

SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Tables 113, 122.

Discrimination is not always deliberate. *Unintentional discrimination* can be so subtle that no one is aware of it—neither those being discriminated against nor those doing the discriminating (Hausmann et al. 2014). Researchers studied the race–ethnicity of people who receive knee replacements and coronary bypass surgery. They found that white patients are more likely than Latino or African American patients to receive these procedures (Skinner et al. 2003; Popescu et al. 2007). They found a similar pattern in treatment after a heart attack: Whites are more likely than blacks to be given cardiac catheterization, a test to detect blockage of blood vessels. This study of 40,000 patients held a surprise: Both black and white doctors are more likely to give this preventive care to whites (Stolberg 2001).

Researchers are trying to figure out how race–ethnicity becomes a factor in medical decisions (Penner et al. 2014). With both white and black doctors involved, we can be certain that physicians do not *intend* to discriminate. Apparently, the implicit bias that comes with the internalization of dominant norms becomes a subconscious motivation for giving or denying access to advanced medical procedures. Race seems to work like gender: In Chapter 10, you will see how women’s higher death rates in coronary bypass surgery can be traced to implicit attitudes about gender. In the same way, race–ethnicity is somehow a subconscious motivation in giving or denying access to advanced medical procedures (Blair et al. 2013).

Theories of Prejudice

9.3 Contrast psychological and sociological theories of prejudice: include functionalism, conflict, and symbolic interactionism.

Social scientists have developed several theories to explain prejudice. Let’s first look at psychological explanations, then at sociological ones.

Psychological Perspectives

Let's look at two main theories of prejudice in psychology.

FRUSTRATION AND SCAPEGOATS

"Why are we having a depression? The answer is simple. The Jews have taken over the banking system, and they want to suck every dollar out of us."

This was a common sentiment in Germany in the 1930s during the deep depression that helped propel Hitler to power. People often unfairly blame their troubles on a **scapegoat**—often a racial-ethnic or religious minority. Why do they do this? Psychologist John Dollard (Dollard et al. 1939) suggested that prejudice is the result of frustration. People who are unable to strike out at the real source of their frustration (such as unemployment) look for someone to blame. This person or group becomes a target on which they vent their frustrations. Gender and age are also the basis for scapegoating. Immigrants, too, often find that they are scapegoats.

How easily frustration can lead to prejudice was illustrated in a simple, yet fascinating experiment. A team of psychologists measured the prejudice of a group of students (Cowen 1959). They then gave the students two puzzles to solve, making sure the students did not have enough time to finish. After the students had worked furiously on the puzzles, the experimenters shook their heads in disgust and expressed disbelief that the students couldn't complete such a simple task. They then retested the students. The results? Their scores on prejudice increased. The students had directed their frustrations outward, transferring them to people who had nothing to do with the contempt they had experienced.

THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY

"I don't like the British. They never laugh. And I don't like the Italians. They're always talking with their hands. I don't like the Walloneans, either. They're always smiling at something. And I don't like librarians. And my job sucks. Hitler might have had his faults, but he put people to work during the Great Depression."

Have you ever wondered whether some people's personalities make them more inclined to be prejudiced and others more fair-minded? For psychologist Theodor Adorno, who had fled from the Nazis, this was no idle speculation. With the horrors he had observed still fresh in his mind, Adorno wondered whether there might be a certain type of person who is more likely to fall for the racist spewings of people like Hitler, Mussolini, and those in the Ku Klux Klan.

To find out, Adorno gave three tests to about two thousand people, ranging from college professors to prison inmates (Adorno et al. 1950). He measured their ethnocentrism, anti-Semitism (bias against Jews), and support for strong, authoritarian leaders. People who scored high on one test also scored high on the other two. For example, people who agreed with anti-Semitic statements also said that governments should be authoritarian and that foreign customs pose a threat to the "American way."

Adorno concluded that highly prejudiced people have deep respect for authority and are submissive to authority figures. He termed this the **authoritarian personality**. These people believe that things are either right or wrong. Ambiguity disturbs them, especially in matters of religion or sex. They become anxious when they confront norms and values that are different from their own. To view people who differ from themselves as inferior assures them that their own positions are right.

Adorno's research stimulated more than a thousand research studies. In general, the researchers found that people who are older, less educated, less intelligent, and from a lower social class are more likely to be authoritarian. Critics say that this doesn't indicate a particular personality, just that the less educated are more prejudiced—which we already knew (Yinger 1965; Ray 1991). Nevertheless, researchers continue to study this concept (Aichholzer and Zandonella 2016).

scapegoat

an individual or group unfairly blamed for someone else's troubles

authoritarian personality

Theodor Adorno's term for people who are prejudiced and rank high on scales of conformity, intolerance, insecurity, respect for authority, and submissiveness to superiors

Sociological Perspectives

Sociologists find psychological explanations inadequate. They stress that the key to understanding prejudice cannot be found by looking *inside* people but, rather, by examining conditions *outside* of them. For this reason, sociologists focus on how social environments influence prejudice. With this background, let's compare functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist perspectives on prejudice.

FUNCTIONALISM

In a television documentary, journalist Bill Moyers interviewed Fritz Hippler, a Nazi who was just 29 when he was put in charge of the entire German film industry. When Hitler came to power, Hippler said, the Germans were no more anti-Semitic than the French. Hippler was told to increase anti-Semitism in Germany. Obediently, he produced movies that contained vivid scenes comparing Jews to rats—with their breeding threatening to infest the population.

Why was Hippler told to create hatred? Prejudice and discrimination were functional for the Nazis. Defeated in World War I and devastated by fines levied by the victors, Germany was on its knees. Runaway inflation was destroying its middle class. To help unite this fractured Germany, the Nazis created a scapegoat to blame for their troubles. In addition, the Jews owned businesses, bank accounts, fine art, and other property that the Nazis could confiscate. Jews also held key positions (as university professors, reporters, judges, and so on), which the Nazis could give as prizes to their followers. In the end, hatred also showed its dysfunctional face, as the Nazi officials hanged at Nuremberg discovered.

Prejudice becomes practically irresistible when state machinery is used to advance the cause of hatred. To produce prejudice, the Nazis harnessed government agencies, the schools, police, courts, and mass media. The results were devastating. Do you recall Jack and Oskar featured in the *Down-to-Earth Sociology* on identical twins in Chapter 3? Jack and Oskar had been separated as babies. Jack was brought up as a Jew in Trinidad, while Oskar was reared as a Catholic in Czechoslovakia. Under the Nazi regime, Oskar learned to hate Jews, unaware that he himself was a Jew.

That prejudice is functional and shaped by the social environment was demonstrated in another classical experiment by psychologists Muzafer and Carolyn Sherif (1953). In a boys' summer camp, the Sherifs assigned friends to different cabins and then had the cabin groups compete in sports. In just a few days, strong in-groups had formed. Even lifelong friends began to taunt one another, calling each other "crybaby" and "sissy."

The Sherif study teaches us important lessons about social life. Note how it is possible to arrange the social environment to generate either positive or negative feelings about people, and how prejudice arises if we pit groups against one another in an "I win, you lose" situation. You can also see that prejudice is functional, how it creates in-group solidarity. And, of course, it is obvious how dysfunctional prejudice is, when you observe the way it destroys human relationships.

CONFLICT THEORY

"The Japanese have gone on strike? They're demanding a raise? And they even want a rest period? We'll show them who's boss. Hire those Koreans who have been begging for work."

This did happen. When Japanese workers in Hawaii struck, owners of plantations hired Koreans (Jeong and You 2008). The division of workers along racial-ethnic and gender lines is known as a **split labor market** (Du Bois 1935/1992; Piketty 2014). Although today's exploitation of these divisions is more subtle, whites are aware that

split labor market

workers split along racial-ethnic, gender, age, or any other lines; this split is exploited by owners to weaken the bargaining power of workers

other racial–ethnic groups are ready to take their jobs, African Americans often perceive Latinos as competitors (Glanton 2013), and men know that women are eager to get promoted. All of this helps to keep workers in line.

Conflict theorists, as you will recall, focus on how groups compete for scarce resources. Owners want to increase profits by holding costs down, while workers want better food, health care, housing, education, and leisure. Divided, workers are weak, but united, they gain strength. The *split labor market* is one way that owners divide workers so they can't take united action to demand higher wages and better working conditions.

Another tactic that owners use is the **reserve labor force**. This is simply another term for the unemployed. To expand production during economic booms, companies hire people who don't have jobs. When the economy contracts, they lay off unneeded workers. That there are desperate people looking for work is a lesson not lost on those who have jobs. They fear eviction and worry about having their cars and furniture repossessed. Many know they are just one or two paychecks away from ending up "on the streets."

Just like the boys in the Sherif experiment, African Americans, Latinos, whites, and others see themselves as able to make gains only at the expense of other groups. Sometimes this rivalry shows up along very fine racial–ethnic lines, such as that in Miami between Haitians and African Americans, who distrust each other as competitors. Divisions among workers deflect anger and hostility away from the power elite and direct these powerful emotions toward other racial–ethnic groups. Instead of recognizing their common class interests and working for their mutual welfare, workers learn to fear and distrust one another.

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

"I know her qualifications are good, but yikes! She's ugly. I don't want to have to look at her every day. Let's hire the pretty one with the nice curves."

While conflict theorists focus on the role of the owner (or capitalist) class in exploiting racial–ethnic divisions, symbolic interactionists examine how labels affect perception and create prejudice.

HOW LABELS CREATE PREJUDICE Symbolic interactionists stress that *the labels we learn affect the ways we perceive people*. Labels create **selective perception**; that is, they lead us to see certain things while they blind us to others. If we apply a label to a group, we tend to perceive its members as all alike. We shake off evidence that doesn't fit (Simpson and Yinger 1972; Drakulich 2012). Shorthand for emotionally charged stereotypes, some racial–ethnic labels are especially powerful. As you know, the term *nigger* is not neutral. Nor are *cracker*, *dago*, *guinea*, *honky*, *kike*, *kraut*, *limey*, *mick*, *spic*, or any of the other scornful words people use to belittle other groups. As in the statement above, *ugly* can work in a similar way. Such words overpower us with emotions, blocking out rational thought about the people to whom they refer (Allport 1954).

LABELS AND SELF-FULFILLING STEREOTYPES Some stereotypes not only justify prejudice and discrimination but also produce the behavior depicted in the stereotype. We examined this principle in Chapter 4 in the *Down-to-Earth Sociology* on beauty. Let's consider Group X. According to stereotypes, the members of this group are lazy, so they don't deserve good jobs. ("They are lazy and wouldn't do the job well.") Denied the better jobs, most members of Group X do "dirty work," the jobs few people want. ("That's the right kind of work for that kind of people.") Since much "dirty work" is sporadic, members of Group X are often seen "on the streets." The sight of their idleness reinforces the original stereotype of laziness. The discrimination that created the "laziness" in the first place passes unnoticed.

reserve labor force

the unemployed; unemployed workers are thought of as being "in reserve"—capitalists take them "out of reserve" (put them back to work) during times of high production and then put them "back in reserve" (lay them off) when they are no longer needed

selective perception

seeing certain features of an object or situation, but remaining blind to others

Down-to-Earth Sociology

The Man in the Zoo

The Bronx Zoo in New York City used to keep a 22-year-old pygmy in the Monkey House. The man—and the orangutan he lived with—became the most popular exhibit at the zoo. Thousands of visitors would arrive daily and head straight for the Monkey House. Eyewitnesses to what they were told was a lower form of human in the long chain of evolution, the visitors were fascinated by the pygmy, especially by his sharpened teeth.

To make the exhibit even more alluring, the zoo director scattered animal bones in front of the man.

I know it sounds as though I must have made this up, but this is a true story. The World's Fair was going to be held in St. Louis in 1904, and the U.S. Department of Anthropology wanted to show villages from different cultures. They asked Samuel Verner, an explorer, if he could bring some pygmies to St. Louis to serve as live exhibits. Verner agreed, and on his next trip to Africa, in the Belgian Congo he came across Ota Benga, a pygmy who had been enslaved by another tribe. Benga, then about age 20, said he was willing to go to St. Louis. After Verner bought Benga's freedom for some cloth and salt, Benga recruited several other pygmies to go with them.

After the World's Fair, Verner took the pygmies back to Africa. When Benga found out that a Belgian military had wiped out his village and killed his family, he asked Verner if he could return with him to the United States. Verner agreed.

When they returned to New York, Verner ran into financial trouble and wrote some bad checks. No longer able to care for Benga, Verner left him with the director of the American Museum of Natural History. Later, Benga was turned over to the Bronx Zoo, which put him on display in the Monkey House, with the same type of sign they used to identify animal specimens:

The African Pygmy, "Ota Benga." Age 23 years. Height 4 feet 11 inches. Weight 103 pounds. Brought from the Kasai River, Congo Free State, South Central Africa by Dr. Samuel P. Verner. Exhibited each afternoon during September.



Ota Benga, 1906, on exhibit in the Bronx Zoo.

Exhibited with an orangutan, Benga became a sensation. An article in *The New York Times* said it was fortunate that Benga couldn't think very deeply or else living with monkeys might bother him.

When the Colored Baptist Ministers' Conference protested that exhibiting Benga was degrading, zoo officials replied that they were "taking excellent care of the little fellow." They added that "he has one of the best rooms at the primate house." (I wonder what animal had *the* best room.)

Not surprisingly, this reply didn't satisfy the ministers. When they continued to protest, zoo officials decided to let Benga out of his cage. They put a white shirt on him and let him walk around the zoo. At night, Benga slept in the monkey house.

Benga's life became even more miserable. Zoo visitors would follow him, howling, jeering, laughing, and poking at him. One day, Benga found a knife in the feeding room of the Monkey House and flourished it at the visitors. Unhappy zoo officials took the knife away.

Benga then made a little bow and some arrows and began shooting at the obnoxious visitors. This ended the fun for the zoo officials. They decided that Benga had to leave.

After living in an orphanage for African American children, Benga went to work as a laborer in a tobacco factory in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Always treated as a freak, Benga was desperately lonely. In 1916, at about the age of 32, in despair that he had no home or family to return to in Africa, Benga ended his misery by shooting himself in the heart.

SOURCES: Based on Bradford and Blume 1992; Crossen 2006; Bergman 2014.

For Your Consideration

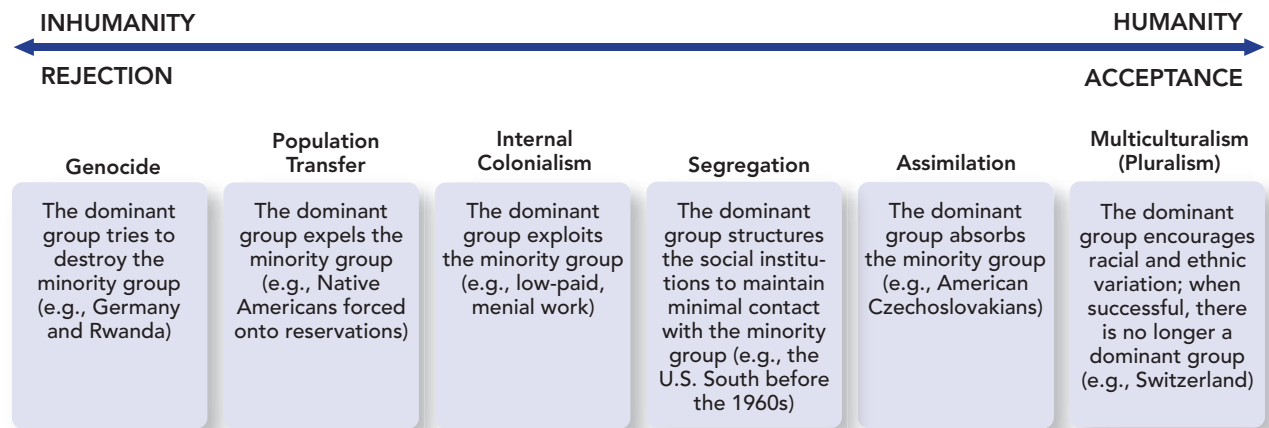
- See what different views emerge as you apply the three theoretical perspectives (functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory) to exhibiting Ota Benga at the Bronx Zoo.
- How does the concept of ethnocentrism apply to this event?
- Explain how the concepts of prejudice and discrimination apply to what happened to Benga.

Global Patterns of Intergroup Relations

9.4 Explain genocide, population transfer, internal colonialism, segregation, assimilation, and multiculturalism.

In their studies of racial–ethnic relations around the world, sociologists have found six basic ways that dominant groups treat minority groups. These patterns are shown in Figure 9.3. Let’s look at each.

Figure 9.3 Global Patterns of Intergroup Relations: A Continuum



SOURCE: By the author.

Genocide

When gold was discovered in northern California in 1849, the fabled “Forty-Niners” rushed in. In this region lived 150,000 Native Americans. To get rid of them, the white government put a bounty on their heads. It even reimbursed the whites for their bullets. The result was the slaughter of 120,000 Native American men, women, and children. (Schaefer 2004)

Could you ever participate in genocide? Don’t be too quick in answering. Gaining an understanding of how ordinary people take part in genocide will be our primary goal in this section. Those who did the killing in the California gold fields were regular people—people like you and me. The killing was promoted by calling the Native Americans “savages,” making them seem inferior, somehow less than human. Killing them, then, didn’t seem the same as killing whites in order to take their property.

Most Native Americans, though, died not from bullets but from the diseases the whites brought with them. Measles, smallpox, and the flu came from another continent, and the Native Americans had no immunity against them. But disease wasn’t enough. To accomplish the takeover of the Native Americans’ resources, the settlers and soldiers destroyed their food supply (crops and buffalo). From all causes, about 97 percent of Native Americans died (Schaefer 2015). Ordinary, “good” people were intent on destroying the “savages.”

Now consider last century’s two most notorious examples of genocide. In Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, Hitler and the Nazis attempted to destroy all Jews. In the 1990s, in Rwanda, the Hutus tried to destroy all Tutsis. One of the horrifying aspects of these two slaughters is that the killers did not crawl out from under a rock someplace. In some cases, even the victims’ neighbors, friends, and teachers did the killing. *The killing*

compartmentalize

to separate acts from feelings or attitudes

population transfer

the forced transfer of a minority group

ethnic cleansing

a policy of eliminating a population; includes forcible expulsion and genocide

internal colonialism

the policy of exploiting minority groups for economic gain

segregation

the policy of keeping racial-ethnic groups apart

Amid fears that Japanese Americans were “enemies within” who would sabotage industrial and military installations on the West Coast, in the early days of World War II Japanese Americans were transferred to “relocation camps.” To make sure they didn’t get lost, the children were tagged like luggage. This is one of two major examples of population transfer in the United States. The other is transferring Native Americans to reservations.

was facilitated by labels that marked the victims as enemies who deserved to die (Huttenbach 1991; Browning 1993; Wiafe-Amoako 2017).

IN SUM Labels are powerful; dehumanizing ones are even more so. They help people to **compartmentalize**—to separate their acts of cruelty from their sense of being good and decent people. To regard members of some group as inferior opens the door to treating them inhumanely. In some cases, these labels help people to kill—and to still retain a good self-concept (Bernard et al. 1971). In short, *labeling the targeted group as inferior or even less than fully human facilitates genocide.*

Population Transfer

There are two types of **population transfer**: indirect and direct. *Indirect transfer* is achieved by making life so miserable for members of a minority that they leave “voluntarily.” Under the bitter conditions of czarist Russia, for example, millions of Jews made this “choice.” *Direct transfer* occurs when a dominant group expels a minority. Examples include the U.S. government relocating Native Americans to reservations and putting Americans of Japanese descent in internment camps during World War II.

In the 1990s, a combination of genocide and population transfer occurred in Bosnia and Kosovo, parts of the former Yugoslavia. A hatred nurtured for centuries had been kept under wraps by Tito’s iron-fisted rule from 1944 to 1980. After Tito’s death, these suppressed, smoldering hostilities soared to the surface, and Yugoslavia split into warring factions. When the Serbs gained power, Muslims rebelled and began guerilla warfare. The Serbs vented their hatred by what they termed **ethnic cleansing**: They terrorized villages with killing and rape, forcing survivors to flee in fear. In Iraq in 2014, ISIS began doing the same thing with ethnic-religious minorities.

Internal Colonialism

In Chapter 7, the term *colonialism* was used to refer to one way that the Most Industrialized Nations exploit the Least Industrialized Nations. Conflict theorists use the term **internal colonialism** to describe how a country’s dominant group exploits minority groups for its economic advantage. The dominant group manipulates the social institutions to suppress minorities and deny them full access to their society’s benefits. Slavery, reviewed in Chapter 7, is an extreme example of internal colonialism, as was the South African system of *apartheid*.

Although the dominant Afrikaners despised the minority, they found its presence necessary. As Simpson and Yinger (1972) put it, who else would do the hard work?

Segregation

Internal colonialism is often accompanied by **segregation**—the separation of racial or ethnic groups. Segregation allows the dominant group to maintain social distance from the minority and yet to exploit their labor as cooks, cleaners, chauffeurs, nannies, farmworkers, and so on. Even today, in some villages of India, an ethnic group, the Dalits (untouchables), is forbidden to use the village pump. Dalit women must walk long distances to streams or pumps outside of the village to fetch their water (author’s notes).

Do you recall from Chapter 7 the account of *apartheid* in South



Africa, where the beaches were divided by racial groups? It was once like this in parts of the United States, too. In St. Augustine, Florida, Butler Beach was reserved for blacks, while the area's many other beaches were for whites (author's notes). Until the 1960s, in the U.S. South, by law, African Americans and whites had to stay in separate hotels, go to separate schools, and use separate bathrooms and even drinking fountains. In thirty-eight states, laws prohibited marriage between blacks and whites. The punishment for violating these marriage laws? Prison. The last law of this type was repealed in 1967 (Rothman 2015).

Assimilation

There are two types of **assimilation**, the process by which a minority group is absorbed into the mainstream culture. In *forced assimilation*, the dominant group refuses to allow the minority to practice its religion, to speak its language, or to follow its customs. Before the fall of the Soviet Union, for example, the dominant group, the Russians, required that Armenian children attend schools where they were taught in Russian. Armenians could celebrate only Russian holidays, not Armenian ones. *Permissible assimilation*, in contrast, allows the minority to adopt the dominant group's patterns in its own way and at its own speed.

assimilation

the process of being absorbed into the mainstream culture

Multiculturalism (Pluralism)

A policy of **multiculturalism**, also called **pluralism**, permits or even encourages racial-ethnic variation. The minority groups are able to maintain their separate identities, yet participate freely in the country's social institutions, from education to politics. Switzerland provides an outstanding example of multiculturalism. The Swiss population includes four ethnic groups: French, Italians, Germans, and Romansh. These groups have kept their own languages, and they live peacefully in political and economic unity. Multiculturalism has been so successful that none of these groups can properly be called a minority.

multiculturalism (or pluralism)

a policy that permits or encourages ethnic differences

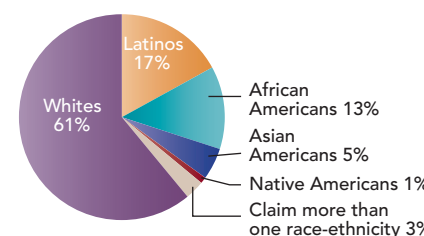
Racial-Ethnic Relations in the United States

9.5 Summarize the major patterns that characterize European Americans, Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans.

Writing about race-ethnicity is like stepping onto a minefield: One never knows where to expect the next explosion. Serbian students have written to me, saying that I have been unfair to their group. So have American whites. Even basic terms are controversial. Some people classified as *African Americans* reject this term because they identify themselves as blacks. Similarly, some Latinos prefer the term *Hispanic American*, but others reject it, saying that it ignores the Native American side of their heritage. Some would limit the term *Chicanos*—commonly used to refer to Americans from Mexico—to those who have a sense of ethnic oppression and unity; they say that it does not apply to those who have assimilated.

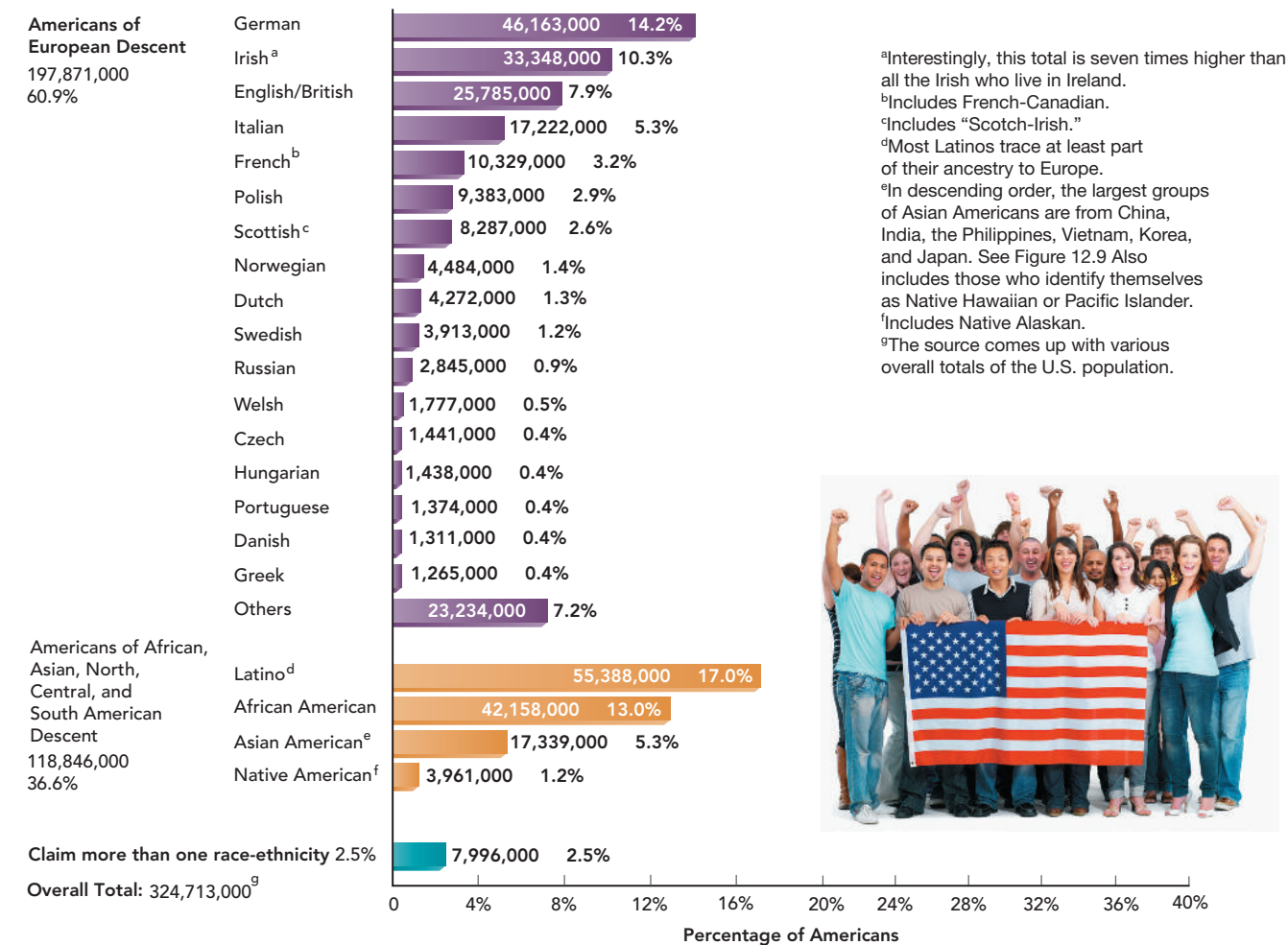
No term that I use here, then, will satisfy everyone. Racial-ethnic identity is fluid, constantly changing, and all terms carry a risk as they take on politically charged meanings. Nevertheless, as part of everyday life, we classify ourselves and one another as belonging to distinct racial-ethnic groups. As Figures 9.4 and 9.5 show, on the basis of self-identity, whites make up 61 percent of the U.S. population, minorities (African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans) 36 percent. About 3 percent claim membership in two or more racial-ethnic groups.

Figure 9.4 Race-Ethnicity of the U.S. Population



SOURCE: By the author. See Figure 9.5.

Figure 9.5 U.S. Racial–Ethnic Groups^a



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2016*:Tables 10, 52.

As you can see from the following Social Map, the distribution of dominant and minority groups among the states does not come close to the national average. This is because minority groups tend to be clustered in regions. The extreme distributions are found in Maine, where whites outnumber minorities 16 to 1, and Hawaii, where minorities outnumber whites 3 to 1. With this as background, let’s review the major groups in the United States, going from the largest to the smallest.

European Americans

Benjamin Franklin said, “Why should the Palatine boors (Germans) be suffered (allowed) to swarm into our settlements and by herding together establish their language and manners to the exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a colony of aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to germanize us instead of our anglicizing them?” (in Alba and Nee 2003:17)

WASP

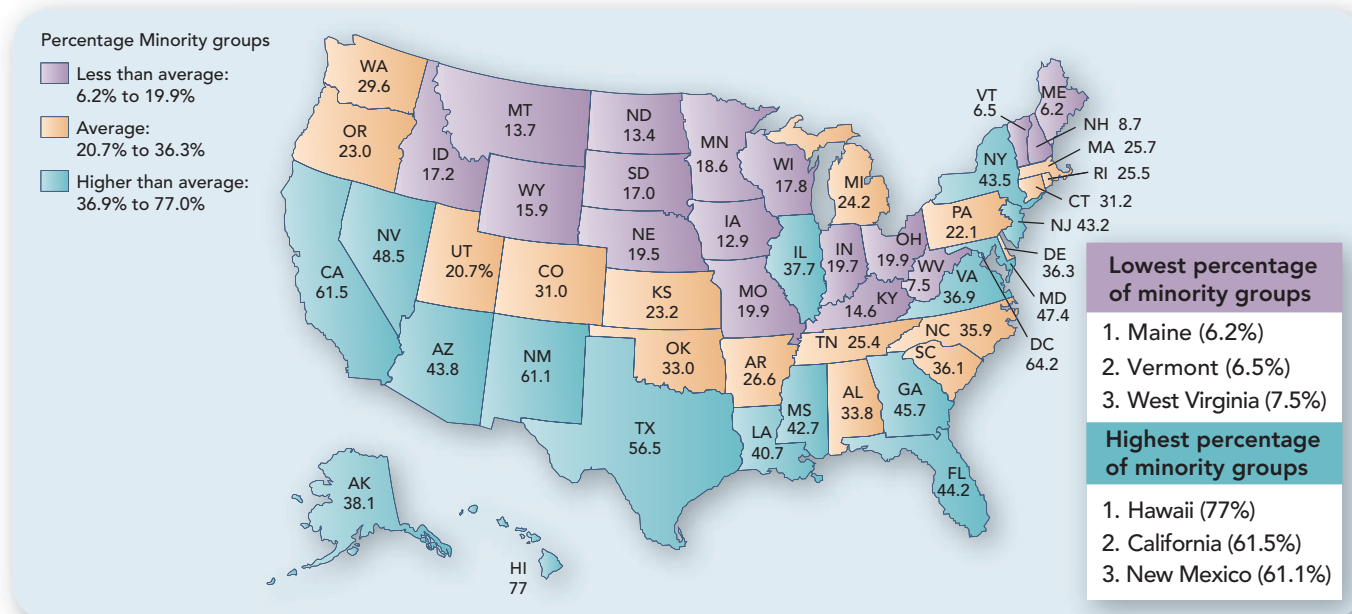
White Anglo-Saxon Protestant

white ethnics

white immigrants to the United States whose cultures differ from WASP culture

At the founding of the United States, White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (**WASPs**) held deep prejudices against other whites. There was practically no end to their disdainful stereotypes of **white ethnics**—immigrants from Europe whose language and other customs differed from theirs. The English despised the Irish, viewing them as dirty, lazy drunkards, but they also painted Poles, Jews, Italians, and others with similar

Figure 9.6 The Distribution of Dominant and Minority Groups



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2016:Table 19.

disparaging brushstrokes. From what Franklin said, you can see that they didn't like Germans either.

The political and cultural dominance of the WASPs placed intense pressure on immigrants to assimilate into the mainstream culture. The children of most immigrants embraced the new way of life and quickly came to think of themselves as Americans rather than as Germans, French, Hungarians, and so on. They dropped their distinctive customs, especially their clothing and languages, often viewing them as symbols of shame. This second generation of immigrants was sandwiched between two worlds: "the old country" of their parents and their new home. Their children, the third generation, had an easier adjustment because they had fewer customs to discard. As white ethnics assimilated into this Anglo-American culture, the meaning of WASP expanded to include them.

And for those who weren't white? Perhaps the event that best illustrates the racial view of the nation's founders occurred when Congress passed the Naturalization Act of 1790, declaring that only white immigrants could apply for citizenship. Relationships between the various racial-ethnic groups since the founding of the nation have been, at best, tense and rocky.

IN SUM Because Protestant English immigrants settled the colonies, they established the culture—from the dominant language to the dominant religion. Highly ethnocentric, they regarded the customs of other groups as inferior. Because white Europeans took power, they determined the national agenda to which other ethnic groups had to react and conform. Their institutional and cultural dominance still sets the stage for current racial-ethnic relations, a topic we explore in the following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*.

As immigrants assimilate into a new culture, they learn and adapt new customs. This photo was taken in New York City at the annual American Muslim Parade.



Down-to-Earth Sociology

Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack: Exploring Cultural Privilege

Overt racism in the United States has dropped sharply, but doors still open and close on the basis of the color of our skin. Whites have a difficult time grasping the idea that good things come their way because they are white. They usually fail to perceive how “whiteness” operates in their own lives.

Sociologist Peggy McIntosh, of Irish descent, began to wonder why she was so seldom aware of her race—ethnicity, while her African American friends were so conscious of theirs. She realized that people are not highly aware of things that they take for granted—and that “whiteness” is a “taken-for-granted” background assumption of U.S. society. (You might want to review Figure 9.1.) To explore this, she drew up a list of taken-for-granted privileges that come with her “whiteness,” what she calls her “invisible knapsack.” Because she is white, McIntosh (1988) says:

1. When I go shopping, store detectives don’t follow me.
2. If I don’t do well as a leader, I can be sure people won’t say that it is because of my race.
3. When I watch television or look at the front page of the paper, I see people of my race presented positively.



One of the cultural privileges of being white in the United States is less suspicion of wrongdoing.

4. When I study our national heritage, I see people of my color and am taught that they made our country great.
5. To protect my children, I do not have to teach them to be aware of racism.
6. I can talk with my mouth full and not have people put this down to my color.
7. I can speak at a public meeting without putting my race on trial.
8. I can achieve something and not be “a credit to my race.”
9. If a traffic cop pulls me over, I can be sure that it isn’t because I’m white.
10. I can be late to a meeting without people thinking I was late because “That’s how *they* are.”

For Your Consideration

- Can you think of other “background privileges” that come to whites because of their skin color? (McIntosh’s list contains forty-six items.)
- Why are whites seldom aware that they carry an “invisible knapsack”?

Latinos (Hispanics)

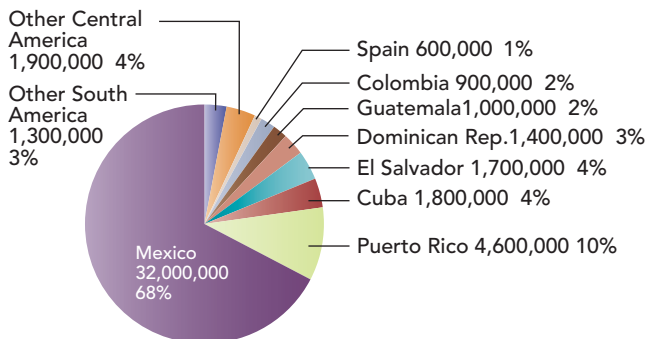
Let’s get an overview of the largest minority group in the United States.

UMBRELLA TERM *Latino* is an umbrella term that lumps people from many cultures into a single category. Taken together, people who trace their origins to the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America form the largest ethnic group in the United States.

Few people who are classified as Latino, however, consider themselves to be part of a single ethnic group. Instead, they think of themselves as Americans of Mexican origin (*Mexicanos*), Americans of Cuban origin (*Cubanos*), Americans from Puerto Rico (*Puertoricanos*), and so on. Nor do most identify with the umbrella term *Hispanic*, another artificial grouping of peoples. It is also important to stress that neither *Latino* nor *Hispanic* refers to race. Latinos may identify themselves as African American, white, or Native American. Some even refer to themselves as *Afro Latino*.

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN As you can see from Figure 9.7, roughly 32 million people trace their origin to Mexico, 8 million to Central and South America, 5 million to Puerto Rico, and 2 million to Cuba. Although most Latinos of Mexican origin live

Figure 9.7 Geographical Origins of U.S. Latinos



SOURCE: By the author. Based on the U.S. Census 2010.

in the Southwest, most Latinos from Puerto Rico live in New York City, and those from Cuba live primarily in Florida.

UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANTS

Although most Latinos are U.S. citizens, about 9 million have entered the country illegally (7 million from Mexico and 2 million from Central and South America) (*Statistical Abstract 2017*: Table 45). During the economic crisis, the number of unauthorized immigrants dropped but each year about 400,000 people are arrested at the border and returned to Mexico (U.S. Border Patrol 2017). Some come to the United States for temporary work and then return home. Most do not.

One reaction to this massive unauthorized entry into the United States has been welcoming. Twelve states, for example, offer drivers licenses (Sanchez 2016). Several major cities, including San Francisco, have become “sanctuary cities.” They will not cooperate in apprehending people illegally present in the United States.

Another reaction is to prevent illegal entry. Immigration officers check documents at entry points and patrol the borders. With this being ineffective, in 1994 Under President Bill Clinton, the United States began building a wall along its 2,000-mile border with Mexico. As the costs mounted, the building stopped. “The Wall” became a campaign issue in the presidential race of 2016, and under President Trump its building has resumed. Still another response has come from Arizona, where many of the illegal crossings take place. This state passed a law that gives its police the power to detain anyone suspected of being in the country illegally. When the U.S. Supreme Court reviewed the law, it upheld the state’s right to check the immigration status of anyone the police stop or arrest (Liptak 2012). Facing protest against racial profiling, Arizona agreed not to stop anyone because of suspicions that they are in the United States illegally (Schwartz 2016).

To gain insight into why this vast subterranean migration exists and will continue, see the following *Cultural Diversity in the United States*.



For millions of people, the United States represents a land of opportunity and freedom from oppression. Shown here are Cubans who reached the United States by transforming their 1950s truck into a boat.

Cultural Diversity in the United States

The Illegal Travel Guide

Manuel was a drinking buddy of José, a man I had met in Colima, Mexico. At 45, Manuel was friendly, outgoing, and enterprising.

Manuel, who had lived in the United States for 7 years, spoke fluent English. Preferring to live in his hometown in Colima, where he palled around with his childhood friends, Manuel always seemed to have money and free time.

When Manuel invited me to go on a business trip with him, I accepted. I never could figure out what he did for a living or how he could afford a car, a luxury that none of his friends had. As we traveled from one remote village to another, Manuel would sell used clothing that he had heaped in the back of his older-model Ford station wagon.



At one stop, Manuel took me into a dirt-floored, thatched-roof hut. While chickens ran in and out, Manuel whispered to a slender man who was about 23 years old. The

poverty was overwhelming. Juan, as his name turned out to be, had a partial grade school education. He also had a wife, four hungry children under the age of 5, and two pigs—his main food supply. Although eager to work, Juan had no job; there was simply no work available in this remote village.

As we were drinking a Coke, which seems to be the national beverage of Mexico's poor, Manuel explained to me that he was not only selling clothing—he was also lining up migrants to the United States. For a fee, he would take a man to the border and introduce him to a “wolf,” who would help him cross into the promised land.

When I saw the hope in Juan's face, I knew nothing would stop him. He was borrowing every cent he could from every friend and relative to scrape the money together. Although Juan would be facing dangers and risked losing everything if apprehended, he would make the trip: Beckoning to him was a future with opportunity, perhaps even with wealth. He knew people who had been to the United States and spoke glowingly of its opportunities. Manuel, of course, salesman as he was, stoked the fires of hope.

Looking up from the little children playing on the dirt floor with chickens pecking about them, I saw a man



A coyote leading a group into the United States at Nogales, Arizona.

who loved his family. In order to make the desperate bid for a better life, he would suffer an enforced absence, as well as the uncertainties of a foreign culture whose language he did not know.

Juan opened his billfold, took something out, and slowly handed it to me. I looked at it curiously. I felt tears as I saw the tenderness with which he handled this piece of paper. It was his passport to the land of opportunity: a Social Security card made out in his name, sent by a friend who had already made the trip and who was waiting for Juan on the other side of the border.

It was then that I realized that the thousands of Manuels scurrying about Mexico and the millions of Juans they are

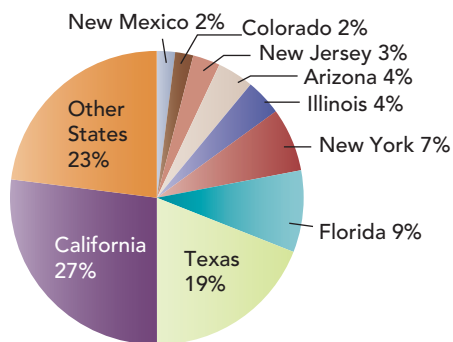
transporting can never be stopped, since only the United States can fulfill their dreams of a better life.

For Your Consideration

The vast stream of immigrants illegally crossing the Mexican–U.S. border has become a national issue.

- What do you think is the best way to deal with this issue? Why?
- How does your social location affect your view?

Figure 9.8 Where U.S. Latinos Live



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 19.

RESIDENCE As Figure 9.8 shows, seven of every ten Latinos live in just six states—California, Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, and Arizona. With its prominent Latino presence, Miami has been called “the capital of South America.”

SPANISH The factor that clearly distinguishes Latinos from other U.S. minorities is the Spanish language. Although not all Latinos speak Spanish, most do, with about 39 million speaking Spanish at home (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Table 54). Many Latinos cannot speak English or can do so only with difficulty. Being fluent only in Spanish in a society where English is spoken almost exclusively is an obstacle.

Schools should be a solution to producing English-proficient students, but California is a marvelous example of the confusion surrounding how to do so. From 1855 until 1968, California followed an “English immersion” policy and banned teaching in Spanish in its schools. Then after a 1974 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court (*Lau v. Nichols*), California used bilingual instruction for Spanish-speaking children (Vidal 1977). But in 1998, California voters decided that schools should return to a policy of “English immersion, no Spanish.” Then in 2016, California voters switched back to the bilingual Spanish and English policy (Ulloa 2016).

The use of Spanish has provoked an “English-only” movement. Although the constitutional amendment that was proposed never got off the ground, several states have passed laws that declare English their official language.

ECONOMIC WELL-BEING To see how Latinos are doing on major indicators of well-being, look at Table 9.2. Their family income averages 40 percent less than that of whites, and they are almost twice as likely as whites to be poor. On the positive side, as you can see from Table 9.3, one of every six Latino families has an income higher than \$100,000 a year.

Table 9.2 Indicators of Relative Economic Well-Being

	Family Income		Families In Poverty	
	Median Family Income	Compared to Whites	Percentage Below Poverty	Compared to Whites
Whites	\$74,700		12.7%	
Asian Americans	\$84,900	14% higher	12.0%	6% lower
Latinos	\$44,900	40% lower	23.6%	86% higher
African Americans	\$42,800	43% lower	26.2%	106% higher
Native Americans	\$43,400	42% lower	29.1%	129% higher

NOTE: These totals are for families, which have less poverty than “persons,” the unit of the tables in Chapter 8.

SOURCES: By the author. Based on Krogstad 2014; *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Tables 35, 736.

From Table 9.4, you can see that Latinos are the most likely to drop out of high school and that they are the least likely to graduate from college. In a postindustrial society that increasingly requires advanced skills, these totals indicate that huge numbers of Latinos are being left behind. However, in each edition that I do of this text, I see that the educational levels of Latinos are increasing.

Table 9.3 Race–Ethnicity and Income Extremes

	Less than \$15,000	More than \$100,000
Asian Americans	5.9%	42.7%
Whites	6.7%	32.9%
African Americans	16.2%	17.2%
Latinos	12.6%	16.1%

NOTE: These are family incomes. Only these groups are listed in the source.

SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 723.

Table 9.4 Race–Ethnicity and Education

Racial–Ethnic Group	Education Completed					Doctorates	
	Less Than High School	High School	Some College	Associate’s Degree	College (BA or Higher)	Percentage of all U.S. Doctorates ¹	Percentage of U.S. Population
Whites	8.0%	28.2%	21.5%	8.7%	33.6%	70.4%	61.0%
Latinos	34.7%	27.2%	17.7%	6.0%	14.4%	6.8%	17.3%
Country or Area of Origin							
Cuba	17.4%	NA ²	NA	NA	29.1%	NA	0.6%
Puerto Rico	22.5%	NA	NA	NA	19.7%	NA	1.4%
Central and South America	44.3%	NA	NA	NA	22.1%	NA	2.2%
Mexico	29.2%	NA	NA	NA	10.5%	NA	10.4%
African Americans	15.6%	31.6%	25.1%	8.0%	19.7%	8.1%	13.2%
Asian Americans	13.7%	15.5%	12.6%	6.7%	51.5%	12.3%	5.4%
Native Americans	20.7%	31.9%	25.2%	8.4%	13.9%	0.6%	1.2%

¹Percentage after the doctorates awarded to nonresidents and those claiming two or more races are deducted from the total.

²Not Available.

SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Tables 35, 36, 315, and Figure 9.5 of this chapter.

Catherine Cortez Masto, the first Latina U.S. senator. She is shown after her election in Nevada, where she had been the state's attorney general.



POLITICS Because of their huge numbers, we might expect sixteen or seventeen of the one hundred U.S. senators to be Latino. How many are there? *Two*. In addition, Latinos hold only 7 percent of the seats in the U.S. House of Representatives (*Statistical Abstract* 2014:Table 432). Yet, compared with the past, even these small totals represent substantial gains. On

the positive side, several Latinos have been elected as state governors. The first Latina to become a governor is Susana Martinez of New Mexico, who was elected in 2010. In 2016, Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada broke new ground, becoming the first Latina senator.

It is likely that Latinos soon will play a larger role in U.S. politics, perhaps one day even beyond their overall numbers. This is because the six states in which they are concentrated hold one-third of the country's 538 electoral votes: California (55), Texas (38), Florida (29), New York (29), Illinois (20), and Arizona (11). Latinos have received presidential appointments to major federal positions, such as Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of Transportation, and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

What holds back the political power of Latinos? It is primarily the divisions based on country of origin. As I mentioned, Latinos do not think of themselves as a single people, and national origin remains highly significant. People from Puerto Rico, for example, feel little sense of unity with people from Mexico. It is similar with those from Venezuela, Colombia, or El Salvador. It used to be the same with European immigrants. Those who came from Germany and Sweden or from England and France did not identify with one another. With time, the importance of the country of origin was lost, and the Europeans came to think of themselves as Americans. Perhaps this will happen to Latinos as well, but for now, these distinctions nourish disunity and create political disagreements.

African Americans

It was 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama. As specified by law, whites took the front seats of the bus and blacks went to the back. As the bus filled up, blacks had to give up their seats to whites.

When Rosa Parks, a 42-year-old African American woman and secretary of the Montgomery NAACP, was told that she would have to stand so white folks could sit, she refused (Bray 1995). She stubbornly sat there while the bus driver raged and whites felt insulted. Her arrest touched off mass demonstrations, led 50,000 blacks to boycott the city's buses for a year, and thrust an otherwise unknown preacher into a historic role.

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., who had majored in sociology at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, took control. He organized car pools and preached nonviolence. Incensed at this radical organizer and at the stirrings in the normally compliant black community, segregationists also put their beliefs into practice—by bombing the homes of blacks and dynamiting their churches.

After slavery was abolished, the Southern states passed legislation (*Jim Crow* laws) to segregate blacks and whites. In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that it was a reasonable use of state power to require “separate but equal” accommodations for blacks. Whites used this ruling to strip blacks of the political power they had gained after the Civil War. Declaring political primaries to be “white,” they prevented blacks from voting in them. Not until 1944 did the Supreme Court rule that political primaries were not “white” and were open to all voters. White politicians then passed laws that restricted voting only to people who could read—and they determined that most African Americans were illiterate. Not until 1954 did African Americans gain the legal right to attend the same public schools as whites, and, as recounted in the vignette you just read, even later to sit where they wanted on a bus.

RISING EXPECTATIONS AND CIVIL STRIFE The barriers came down, but they came down slowly. In 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, making it illegal to discriminate on the basis of race. African Americans were finally allowed in “white” restaurants, hotels, theaters, and other public places. Then in 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, banning the fraudulent literacy tests that the Southern states had used to keep African Americans from voting.

African Americans then experienced what sociologists call **rising expectations**. They expected that these sweeping legal changes would usher in better conditions in life. However, the lives of the poor among them changed little, if at all. Frustrations built up, exploding in Watts in 1965, when people living in that ghetto of central Los Angeles took to the streets in the first of what were termed the *urban revolts*. When a white supremacist assassinated King on April 4, 1968, inner cities across the nation erupted in fiery violence. Under threat of the destruction of U.S. cities, Congress passed the sweeping Civil Rights Act of 1968.

CONTINUED GAINS Since then, African Americans have made remarkable gains in politics, education, and jobs. At 10 percent, the number of African Americans in the U.S. House of Representatives is *two to three times* what it was a generation ago (*Statistical Abstract* 1989:Table 423; 2017:Table 454). As college enrollments increased, the middle class expanded, and today half of all African American families make more than \$40,000 a year. As you can see from Table 9.3, one in six has an income higher than \$100,000 a year.

African Americans have become prominent in politics. Jesse Jackson (another sociology major) competed for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984 and 1988. In 1989,

rising expectations

the sense that better conditions are soon to follow, which, if unfulfilled, increases frustration

Until the 1960s, the South’s public facilities were segregated. Some were reserved for whites, others for blacks. This apartheid was broken by blacks and whites who worked together and risked their lives to bring about a fairer society. Shown here is a 1963 sit-in at a Woolworth’s lunch counter in Jackson, Mississippi. Sugar, ketchup, and mustard are being poured over the heads of the demonstrators.





In 2008, Barack Obama was elected president of the United States, the first minority to achieve this office. In 2012, he was reelected. This photo was taken during his last months in office.

L. Douglas Wilder was elected governor of Virginia, and in 2006, Deval Patrick became governor of Massachusetts. These accomplishments, of course, pale in comparison to the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States in 2008 and his reelection in 2012.

CURRENT LOSSES Despite these remarkable gains, African Americans continue to lag behind in politics, economics, and education. According to their share of the population, we would expect about thirteen African American senators. How many are there? *Two*. There have been only eight in U.S. history. As Tables 9.2 and 9.3 show, African Americans average only 57 percent of white income, experience much more poverty, and are less likely to have a college education. That one of six African American families has an income higher than \$100,000 is only part of the

story. Table 9.3 also shows the other part—that one of every six African American families makes less than \$15,000 a year.

RACE OR SOCIAL CLASS? A SOCIOLOGICAL DEBATE Let's turn to an ongoing disagreement in sociology. Sociologist William Julius Wilson (1978, 2000, 2007) argues that social class is more important than race in determining the life chances of African Americans. Some sociologists disagree.

For background on why Wilson makes his argument, let's start with civil rights. Prior to the civil rights laws, African Americans were excluded from avenues of economic advancement: good schools and good jobs. When civil rights laws opened new opportunities, African Americans seized them, and millions entered the middle class. As the better-educated African Americans obtained white-collar jobs, they moved to better areas of the city and to the suburbs.

Left behind in the inner city were the less educated and less skilled, who depended on blue-collar jobs. At this time, a second transition was taking place: Manufacturing was moving from the city to the suburbs. This took away those blue-collar jobs. Without work, those in the inner city have the least hope, the most despair, and the violence that so often dominates the evening news.

This is the basis of Wilson's argument. The upward mobility of millions of African Americans into the middle class created two worlds of African American experience—one educated and affluent, the other uneducated and poor. Those who have moved up the social class ladder live in comfortable homes in secure neighborhoods. Their jobs provide decent incomes, and they send their children to good schools. The group that is stuck in the inner city has little opportunity for work, lives in depressing poverty, and attends poor schools. This group is filled with hopelessness and despair, combined with apathy or hostility.

Our experiences shape our views on life, our attitudes, our values, and our behavior. Look at how vastly different these two worlds of experiences are. Those who learn middle-class views, with its norms, aspirations, and values, have little in common with the orientations to life that arise from living in neighborhoods of deep poverty. Wilson, then, stresses that social class—not race—has become the more significant factor in the lives of African Americans.

Some sociologists reply that this analysis overlooks the discrimination that continues to underlie the African American experience. They note that African Americans who do the same work as whites average less pay and even receive fewer tips (Lynn et al. 2008; Brewster and Linn 2014). Others document how young black males experience daily indignities and are objects of suspicion and police brutality (Goonan 2016). These, they argue, point to racial discrimination, not to social class.

What is the answer to this debate? Wilson would reply that it is not an either-or question. My book is titled *The Declining Significance of Race*, he would say, not *The Absence of Race*. Certainly racism is still alive, he would add, but today, social class is more central to the African American experience than is racial discrimination.

RACISM AS AN EVERYDAY BURDEN

Researchers sent out 5,000 résumés in response to help wanted ads in the Boston and Chicago Sunday papers. The résumés were identical, except some applicants had white-sounding names, such as Emily and Brandon, while others had black-sounding names, such as Lakisha and Jamal. Although the qualifications of these supposed job applicants were identical, the white-sounding names elicited 50 percent more callbacks than the black-sounding names (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004).

Certainly racism continues as a regular feature of society, often something that whites, not subjected to it, are only vaguely aware of. But for those on the receiving end, racism can be an everyday burden. Here is how an African American professor describes his experiences:

[One problem with] being black in America is that you have to spend so much time thinking about stuff that most white people just don't even have to think about. I worry when I get pulled over by a cop.... I worry what some white cop is going to think when he walks over to our car, because he's holding on to a gun. And I'm very aware of how many black folks accidentally get shot by cops. I worry when I walk into a store, that someone's going to think I'm in there shoplifting.... And I get resentful that I have to think about things that a lot of people, even my very close white friends whose politics are similar to mine, simply don't have to worry about. (Feagin 1999:398)

Asian Americans

I have stressed in this chapter that our racial-ethnic categories are based more on social factors than on biological ones. Perhaps this point will become less foreign to your thinking when we examine the category Asian American. As Figure 9.9 shows, those who are called Asian Americans came to the United States from many nations. *With neither culture nor "race" unifying these people, why should they be clustered together and assigned a single label?* Think about it. What culture or race-ethnicity do Samoans and Vietnamese have in common? Or people from Japan and those from India? Yet all these groups—and more—are lumped together and called Asian Americans. Apparently, the U.S. government is not satisfied until it is able to pigeonhole everyone into some racial-ethnic category.

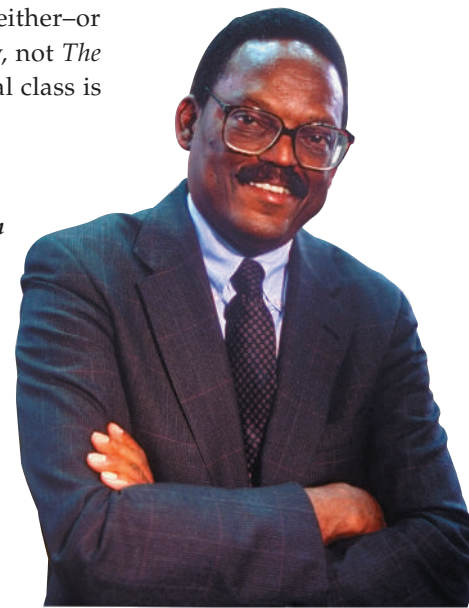
To make this point even clearer, consider how Jay Kang (2017), who is placed in this classification, put it: "Asian-American is a mostly meaningless term. Nobody grows up speaking Asian-American, nobody sits down to Asian-American food with your Asian-American parents, and nobody goes on pilgrimages back to the motherland of Asian America."

Because *Asian American* is a standard term, however, let's look at the characteristics of the 17 million people of diverse backgrounds who are lumped together and assigned this label.

A BACKGROUND OF DISCRIMINATION

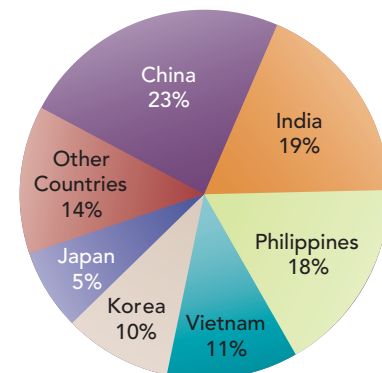
Lured by gold strikes in the West and an urgent need for unskilled workers to build the railroads, 200,000 Chinese immigrated between 1850 and 1880. When the famous golden spike was driven at Promontory, Utah, in 1869 to mark the completion of the railroad to the West Coast, white workers prevented Chinese workers from being in the photo—even though Chinese made up 90 percent of Central Pacific Railroad's labor force (Hsu 1971).

After the transcontinental railroad was complete, the Chinese competed with whites for other jobs. Anglos then formed vigilante groups to intimidate them. They also used the



Sociologists disagree about the relative significance of race and social class in determining social and economic conditions of African Americans. William Julius Wilson, shown here, is an avid proponent of the social class side of this debate.

Figure 9.9 Countries of Origin of Asian Americans



SOURCE: By the author. Based on U.S. Census Bureau 2010.

law. California's 1850 Foreign Miners Act required Chinese (and Latinos) to pay \$20 a month in order to work—when wages were a dollar a day. The California Supreme Court ruled that Chinese could not testify against whites (Carlson and Colburn 1972). In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, suspending all Chinese immigration for 10 years. Four years later, the Statue of Liberty was dedicated. The tired, the poor, and the huddled masses it was intended to welcome were obviously not Chinese.

When immigrants from Japan arrived, they encountered *spillover bigotry*, a stereotype that lumped Asians together, depicting them as sneaky, lazy, and untrustworthy. After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, conditions grew worse for the 110,000 Japanese Americans who called the United States their home. U.S. authorities feared that Japan would invade the United States and that the Japanese Americans would fight on Japan's side. They also feared that Japanese Americans would sabotage military installations on the West Coast. Although no Japanese American had been involved in even a single act of sabotage, on February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered that everyone who was *one-eighth Japanese or more* be confined in detention centers (called "internment camps"). These people were charged with no crime, and they were allowed no trials. Japanese ancestry was sufficient cause for being imprisoned.

DIVERSITY As you can see from Tables 9.2 and 9.3, the income of Asian Americans has outstripped that of all groups, including whites. More than two of every five families (43 percent) have incomes higher than \$100,000 a year. This has led to the stereotype that all Asian Americans are successful. Are they? Well, more than all other groups. Yet one of seventeen Asian American families—one million families—makes less than \$15,000 a year. As with Latinos, country of origin is significant: Poverty is lower for Chinese and Japanese Americans, but it clusters among Americans from Southeast Asia.

REASONS FOR FINANCIAL SUCCESS The remarkably high average incomes of Asian Americans can be traced to three major factors: family life, education, and assimilation into mainstream culture. Of all ethnic groups, including whites, Asian American children are the most likely to grow up with two parents and the least likely to be born to a single mother (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Tables 67, 98). Common in these families is a stress on self-discipline, thrift, and hard work (Suzuki 1985; Bell 1991). This early socialization provides strong impetus for the other two factors.

The second factor, an unprecedented success in education, traces back to the family, where the parents place tremendous pressure on their children to do well in school (Kim 2013). As Table 9.4 shows, more than 50 percent of Asian Americans complete college. To realize how stunning this is, compare their rate with those of the other groups shown on this table. Although only 1 of 19 Americans are of Asian background, they earn 1 of every 8 doctorates. Educational achievement, in turn, opens doors to economic success.

The most striking indication of the third factor, assimilation, is a high rate of intermarriage. About 45 percent of all new marriages of Asian Americans are with someone of a different racial-ethnic group (Frey 2014). The intermarriage of Japanese Americans is so extensive that two of every three of their children have one parent who is not of Japanese descent (Schaefer 2012).

POLITICS Asian Americans are becoming more prominent in politics. With about half of its citizens being Asian American, Hawaii has elected Asian American governors and sent several Asian American senators to Washington. Currently however, the Senate has no Asian American members. The first Asian American governor outside of Hawaii was Gary Locke, who served from 1997 to 2005 as governor of Washington, a state in which Asian Americans make up less than 6 percent of the population. In 2008, Bobby Jindal became the first Indian American governor when he was elected governor of Louisiana, a state in which Asian Americans make up less than 2 percent of the population.

Native Americans

"I don't go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of ten are—and I shouldn't inquire too closely into the case of the tenth."

—Teddy Roosevelt, 1886 (President of the United States 1901–1909)
(As cited in "Past Imperfect" 2012)

DIVERSITY OF GROUPS This quote from Teddy Roosevelt provides insight into the rampant racism of earlier generations. Yet, even today, thanks to countless grade-B Westerns, some Americans view the original inhabitants of what became the United States as uncivilized savages, a single group of people subdivided into separate tribes. The European immigrants to the colonies, however, encountered diverse groups of people who spoke over seven hundred languages. Their variety of cultures ranged from nomadic hunters and gatherers to farmers who lived in wooden houses (Schaefer 2004). Each group had its own norms and values—and the usual ethnocentric pride in its own culture. Consider what happened in 1744 when the colonists of Virginia offered college scholarships for "savage lads." The Iroquois replied:

"Several of our young people were formerly brought up at the colleges of Northern Provinces. They were instructed in all your sciences. But when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods, unable to bear either cold or hunger, knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy.... They were totally good for nothing."

They added, "If the English gentlemen would send a dozen or two of their children to Onondaga, the great Council would take care of their education, bring them up in really what was the best manner and make men of them." (Nash 1974; in McLemore 1994)

Native Americans, who numbered about 10 million, had no immunity to the diseases the Europeans brought with them. With deaths due to disease—and warfare, a much lesser cause—their population plummeted (Schaefer 2015). The low point came in 1890, when the census reported only 250,000 Native Americans. If the census and the estimate of the original population are accurate, Native Americans had been reduced to about *one-fortieth* their original size. The population has never recovered, but Native Americans now number close to 4 million (see Figure 9.5). Native Americans, who today speak 139 different languages, do not think of themselves as a single people who fit neatly within a single label (Schaefer 2015).

FROM TREATIES TO GENOCIDE AND POPULATION TRANSFER At first, the Native Americans tried to accommodate the strangers, since there was plenty of land for both the few newcomers and themselves. Soon, however, the settlers began to raid Indian villages and pillage their food supplies (Horn 2006). As wave after wave of settlers arrived, Pontiac, an Ottawa chief, saw the future—and didn't like it. He convinced several tribes to unite in an effort to push the Europeans into the sea. He almost succeeded, but failed when the English were reinforced by fresh troops (McLemore 1994).

This depiction breaks stereotypes, but is historically accurate. Shown here is an Iroquois fort. Can you guess who the attackers are?



A pattern of deception evolved. The U.S. government would make treaties to buy some of a tribe's land, with the promise to honor forever the tribe's right to what it had not sold. European immigrants, who continued to pour into the United States, would then disregard these boundaries. The tribes would resist, with death tolls on both sides. The U.S. government would then intervene—not to enforce the treaty it had made but to force the tribe off its lands. In its relentless drive westward, the U.S. government embarked on a policy of genocide. It assigned the U.S. cavalry the task of "pacification," which translated into slaughtering Native Americans who "stood in the way" of this territorial expansion.

The acts of cruelty perpetrated by the Europeans against Native Americans appear endless, but two are especially notable. The first is the Trail of Tears. The U.S. government adopted a policy of population transfer (see Figure 9.3), which it called *Indian Removal*. The goal was to confine Native Americans to specified areas called *reservations*. In the winter of 1838–1839, the U.S. Army rounded up 15,000 Cherokees and forced them to walk a thousand miles from the Carolinas and Georgia to Oklahoma. Conditions were so brutal that about 4,000 of those who were forced to make this midwinter march died along the way. The second notable act of cruelty also marked the symbolic end of Native American resistance to the European expansion. In 1890 at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, the U.S. cavalry gunned down three hundred Hunkpapa Sioux who were surrendering their weapons. Half of them were women and children. After the massacre, the soldiers threw the bodies into a mass grave (Thornton 1987; Warren 2017).

THE INVISIBLE MINORITY AND SELF-DETERMINATION Native Americans can truly be called the invisible minority. Because about half live in rural areas and one-third in just three states—Oklahoma, California, and Arizona—most other Americans are hardly aware of a Native American presence in the United States. The isolation of about one-third of Native Americans on reservations further reduces their visibility (Schaefer 2015).

The systematic attempts of European Americans to destroy the Native Americans' way of life and their forced resettlement onto reservations continue to have deleterious effects. The rate of suicide among Native Americans is high, and their life expectancy is lower than that of the nation as a whole (CDC 2015a; Indian Health Service 2016). Table 9.4 shows that their educational attainment also lags behind most groups: Only 13 percent graduate from college.

Native Americans are experiencing major changes. In the 1800s, U.S. courts ruled that Native Americans did not own the land on which they had been settled and had no right to develop its resources. They made Native Americans wards of the state, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs treated them like children (Mohawk 1991; Schaefer 2012). Then, in the 1960s, Native Americans won a series of legal victories that gave them control of reservation lands. With this legal change, many Native American tribes have opened businesses—ranging from fish canneries to industrial parks that serve metropolitan areas. The Skywalk, opened by the Hualapai, which offers breathtaking views of the Grand Canyon, gives an idea of the varieties of businesses to come (Audi 2012).

THE CASINOS It is the casinos operated by more than 250 tribes, though, that have attracted the most attention. These casinos, which employ 600,000 people, *bring in \$30 billion a year, more than all the casinos in Las Vegas combined* (Frosch and Trottman 2015; *Statistical Abstract* 2017:Table 1270). Some tribes located near large cities have made a killing. California's United Auburn tribe has only two hundred adult members; its casino nets \$30,000 *a month* for each member (Onishi 2012). To get part of the action, some tribes have bought land to build casinos. The land is not part of their reservation, but they have obtained "off reservation" permits to build casinos. The rich gambling revenues have led to intense envy among tribes. Those that operate casinos, the "haves," fight in court to keep the "have-nots" casinoless (Lovett 2014).

Another controversy is the *separatism* embraced by some Native Americans. Because Native Americans were independent peoples when the Europeans arrived and they never willingly joined the United States, many tribes maintain the right to remain separate

from the U.S. government. The chief of the Onondaga tribe in New York, a member of the Iroquois Federation, summarized the issue this way:

For the whole history of the Iroquois, we have maintained that we are a separate nation. We have never lost a war. Our government still operates. We have refused the U.S. government's reorganization plans for us. We have kept our language and our traditions, and when we fly to Geneva to UN meetings, we carry Hau de no sau nee passports. We made some treaties that lost some land, but that also confirmed our separate-nation status. That the U.S. denies all this doesn't make it any less the case. (Mander 1992)

DETERMINING IDENTITY AND GOALS Native Americans have formed national and regional organizations, and they even operate their own embassy in Washington, D.C. ("National Congress..." 2017). Their most common cooperative organization is intertribal councils. Although these organizations represent a diversity of cultures and contrasting ideas, through them runs this common sentiment: "It is we who must determine whether to establish a common identity and work together or to stress separatism and identify solely with individual tribes. It is up to us to assimilate into the dominant culture or to stand apart from it; to move to cities or to remain on reservations; or to operate casinos or to engage only in traditional activities. We are sovereign nations, separate governments guaranteed by treaties, and we will not take orders from the victors of past wars."

Looking toward the Future

9.6 Discuss immigration, affirmative action, and a multicultural society.

Back in 1903, sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois said, "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races." Incredibly, over a hundred years later, the color line remains one of the most volatile topics facing the United States. From time to time, the color line takes on a different complexion, as with the war on terrorism and the corresponding discrimination directed against people of Middle Eastern descent.

In another hundred years, will yet another sociologist lament that the color of people's skins still affects human relationships? Given our past, it seems that although racial-ethnic walls will diminish, some even crumbling, the color line is not likely to disappear. Let's close this chapter by looking at two issues we are currently grappling with, immigration and affirmative action.

The Immigration Controversy

Throughout its history, the United States has both welcomed immigration and feared its consequences. The gates opened wide (numerically, if not in attitude) for waves of immigrants in the 1800s and early 1900s. During the past 20 years, a new wave of immigration has brought close to a million new residents to the United States each year. Today, more immigrants (40 million) live in the United States than at any other time in the country's history (*Statistical Abstract* 2007:Table 5; 2017: Table 40).

In contrast to earlier waves, in which immigrants came almost exclusively from western Europe, the current wave of immigrants is changing the U.S. racial-ethnic mix. If current trends in immigration (and birth) persist, in about 50 years, the "average"



The success of Native American casinos has created intense envy. Some non-Native Americans resent the new wealth that the casinos have brought tribes that were in poverty, and some Native American tribes are suing other tribes to prevent them from opening rival casinos. Shown here is a member of the Crow tribe who works as a security guard at the Crow's casino in Montana.

American will trace his or her ancestry to Africa, Asia, South America, the Pacific Islands, the Middle East—almost anywhere but white Europe. This change is discussed in the following *Cultural Diversity in the United States*.

Cultural Diversity in the United States

Glimpsing the Future: The Shifting U.S. Racial–Ethnic Mix

During the next 25 years, the population of the United States is expected to grow by about 22 percent. To see what the U.S. population will look like at that time, can we simply add 22 percent to our current racial–ethnic mix? The answer is a resounding no. As you can see from Figure 9.10, some groups will grow much more than others, giving us a different-looking United States. Some of the changes in the U.S. racial–ethnic mix will be dramatic. By 2050, one of every twelve Americans is expected to have an Asian background, and, in the most dramatic change, one of four is expected to be of Latino ancestry.

The basic causes of this fundamental shift are the racial–ethnic groups' different rates of immigration and birth. Both will change the groups' proportions of the U.S. population, but immigration is by far the more important. From Figure 9.10, you can see that the proportion of non-Hispanic whites is expected to shrink, that of African Americans and Native Americans to remain about the same, and that of Asian Americans and Latinos to increase sharply.

For Your Consideration

This shifting racial–ethnic mix is one of the most significant events occurring in the United States. To better understand its implications, apply the three theoretical perspectives.

→ Use the *conflict perspective* to identify the groups that are likely to be threatened by this change. Over what

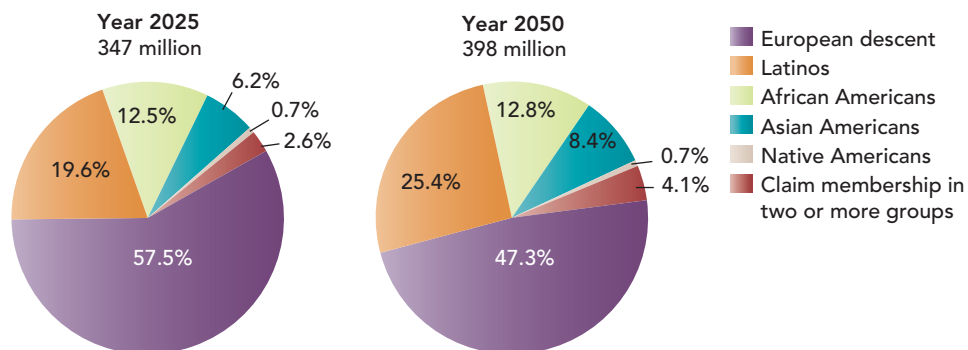


resources are struggles likely to develop? What impact do you think this changing mix might have on European Americans? On Latinos? On African Americans? On Asian Americans? On Native Americans? What changes in immigration laws (or their enforcement) can you anticipate?

→ To apply the *symbolic interactionist perspective*, consider how groups might perceive one another differently as their proportions of the population change. How do you think that these changed perceptions will affect people's behavior?

→ To apply the *functionalist perspective*, try to determine how each racial–ethnic group will benefit from this changing mix. How will other parts of society (such as businesses) benefit? What functions and dysfunctions can you anticipate for politics, economics, education, or religion?

Figure 9.10 Projections of the Racial–Ethnic Makeup of the U.S. Population



SOURCE: By the author. Based on U.S. Census Bureau 2009; *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 13.

In some states, the future is arriving much sooner than this. In California, racial–ethnic minorities have become the majority. California has 24 million minorities and 15 million whites (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Table 19). Californians who request new telephone service from Pacific Bell can speak to customer service representatives in Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Cantonese—or English.

As in the past, there is concern that “too many” immigrants will change the character of the United States. “Throughout the history of U.S. immigration,” write sociologists Alejandro Portés and Rubén Rumbaut (1990), “a consistent thread has been the fear that the ‘alien element’ would somehow undermine the institutions of the country and would lead it down the path of disintegration and decay.” A hundred years ago, the widespread fear was that the immigrants from southern Europe would bring communism with them. Today, some fear that Spanish-speaking immigrants threaten the primacy of the English language. In addition, the age-old fear that immigrants will take jobs away from native-born Americans remains strong. Finally, minority groups that struggled for political representation fear that newer groups will gain political power at their expense.

The Affirmative Action Controversy

For decades, affirmative action has been at the center of a national debate about racial-ethnic relations.

A BRIEF HISTORY In this policy, initiated by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, goals based on race and sex were used in hiring, promotion, and college admissions. As liberals, both white and minority, put it at the time: Affirmative action is the most direct way to level the playing field of economic opportunity. If whites are passed over, this is an unfortunate but necessary cost to make up for past discrimination. As conservatives, both white and minority, put it: Opportunity should be open to all, but to place race or sex ahead of an individual’s ability is reverse discrimination. It discriminates against qualified people who had nothing to do with past inequality.

SUPREME COURT RULINGS This national debate led to a series of U.S. Supreme Court rulings. One of the most significant was upholding the 1996 amendment to the California state constitution, called *Proposition 209*, which made it illegal to give preference to minorities and women in hiring, promotion, and college admissions. In 2003, the Court ruled that universities can consider race a “plus factor” in admissions, but they cannot use a point system to give minorities an edge. After this ruling, Michigan and several other states amended their constitutions to make it illegal for public institutions to consider race or sex in college admissions and in hiring and issuing contracts. After years of legal battles, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2014 that voters have the right to ban affirmative action (Bravin 2014).

THE BAMBOO CURTAIN Then came the case against Harvard, with Asian Americans claiming that they are discriminated against in college admissions because they are so highly prepared for college. As I write, this case is not yet settled. It has divided Asian Americans, who mostly prefer not to be involved in controversy but to remain quietly on the sidelines (Williams 2017).

THE POTENTIAL SOLUTION The solution to this meaty problem can be social class. One of the most significant cases decided by the Court was *Fisher v. University of Texas* in 2013. The Court ruled that diversity is an excellent goal of colleges, but they should find paths to reach this goal that don’t explicitly weigh race. Giving a hand to qualified applicants who come from low-income homes, regardless of their race-ethnicity, will provide college access and upward social mobility to those most in need. Apparently, it will also increase the number of minorities who are admitted to college (Kahlenberg 2014).

As leaders search for ways to overcome the effects of past discrimination and at the same time to offer fair means to do so, further Supreme Court rulings are inevitable, making it certain that affirmative action in our multicultural society will remain center stage for quite some time.

Less Racism

One of the more positive aspects of today's race-ethnic relations is the reduction of prejudice and discrimination. These problems continue to exist, as we have reviewed in this chapter, but their reduction is extraordinary. The quote by Teddy Roosevelt indicates how socially acceptable racism used to be. To get a broader picture, consider this:

In 1876, a white mob burned down a Chinese immigrant community in Antioch, California. An editorial in The San Francisco Chronicle, Northern California's main newspaper, said that this attack should "meet with the hearty approval of every man, woman, and child on the Pacific coast." (Stein 2014)

Compare this with today. When Donald Sterling, the owner of the Los Angeles Clippers, a professional basketball team, made a racist comment to his girlfriend, the National Basketball Association fined Sterling \$2.5 million and banned him from professional basketball for life.

From approval of burning down homes and businesses to severe sanctions for making a comment—what an extraordinary, fundamental change. We can expect even less racism in the future.



Toward a True Multicultural Society

The United States has the potential to become a society in which racial-ethnic groups not only coexist but also respect one another—and thrive—as they work together for mutually beneficial goals. In a true multicultural society, the minority groups that make up the United States would participate fully in the nation's social institutions while maintaining their cultural integrity. Reaching this goal will require that we understand that "the biological differences that divide one race from another add up to a drop in the genetic ocean." For a long time, we have given racial categories an importance they never merited. Now we need to figure out how to reduce them to the irrelevance they deserve. In short, we need to make real the abstraction called equality that we profess to believe (Cose 2000).

The United States is the most racially-ethnically diverse society in the world. This can be our central strength, with our many groups working together to build a harmonious society, a stellar example for the world. Or it can be our Achilles heel, with us breaking into feuding groups, a Balkanized society that marks an ill-fitting end to a grand social experiment. Our reality will probably fall somewhere between these extremes.

Summary and Review

Laying the Sociological Foundation

9.1 Contrast the myth and reality of race; compare race and ethnicity and minority and dominant groups; discuss ethnic work.

How is race both a reality and a myth?

In the sense that different groups inherit distinctive physical traits, race is a reality. There is no agreement regarding what

makes up a particular race, however, or even how many races there are. In the sense of one race being superior to another and of there being pure races, race is a myth. The *idea* of race is powerful, shaping relationships among people.

How do race and ethnicity differ?

Race refers to inherited biological characteristics, **ethnicity** to cultural ones. Members of ethnic groups identify with

one another on the basis of common ancestry and cultural heritage.

What are minority and dominant groups?

Minority groups are people who are singled out for unequal treatment by members of the **dominant group**, the group with more power and privilege. Minorities originate with migration or the expansion of political boundaries.

What heightens ethnic identity, and what is “ethnic work”?

A group’s ethnic identity is heightened or reduced by its relative size, power, and physical characteristics, as well as the amount of discrimination it faces. **Ethnic work** is the process of constructing and maintaining an ethnic identity. For people without a firm ethnic identity, ethnic work is an attempt to recover their ethnic heritage. For those with strong ties to their culture of origin, ethnic work involves enhancing group distinctions.

Prejudice and Discrimination

9.2 Contrast prejudice and discrimination and individual and institutional discrimination; discuss learning prejudice, internalizing dominant norms, and institutional discrimination.

Why are people prejudiced?

Prejudice is an attitude, and **discrimination** is an action. Like other attitudes, prejudice is learned in association with others. Prejudice is so extensive that people can show prejudice against groups that don’t even exist. Minorities also internalize the dominant norms, and some show prejudice against their own group.

How do individual and institutional discrimination differ?

Individual discrimination is the negative treatment of one person by another, while **institutional discrimination** is negative treatment that is built into social institutions. Institutional discrimination can occur without the awareness of either those who do the discriminating or those who are discriminated against. Discrimination in health care is one example.

Theories of Prejudice

9.3 Contrast psychological and sociological theories of prejudice: include functionalism, conflict, and symbolic interactionism.

How do psychologists explain prejudice?

Psychological theories of prejudice stress the **authoritarian personality** and frustration displaced toward **scapegoats**.

How do sociologists explain prejudice?

Sociological theories focus on how different social environments increase or decrease prejudice. *Functionalists* stress the benefits and costs that come from discrimination. *Conflict theorists* look at how the groups in power exploit racial–ethnic divisions in order to control workers and maintain power. *Symbolic interactionists* stress how labels create **selective perception** and self-fulfilling prophecies.

Global Patterns of Intergroup Relations

9.4 Explain genocide, population transfer, internal colonialism, segregation, assimilation, and multiculturalism.

What are the major patterns of minority and dominant group relations?

Beginning with the least humane, they are **genocide**, **population transfer**, **internal colonialism**, **segregation**, **assimilation**, and **multiculturalism** (pluralism).

Racial–Ethnic Relations in the United States

9.5 Summarize the major patterns that characterize European Americans, Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans.

What are the major racial–ethnic groups in the United States?

From largest to smallest, the major groups are European Americans, Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans.

What are some issues in racial–ethnic relations and characteristics of minority groups?

Latinos are divided by social class and country of origin. African Americans are increasingly divided into middle and lower classes, with two sharply contrasting worlds of experience. On many measures, Asian Americans are better off than white Americans, but their well-being varies with country of origin. For Native Americans, the primary issues are poverty, nationhood, and settling treaty obligations. The overarching issue for minorities is overcoming discrimination.

Looking toward the Future

9.6 Discuss immigration, affirmative action, and a multicultural society.

What main issues dominate U.S. racial–ethnic relations?

The main issues are immigration, affirmative action, and how to develop a true multicultural society. We can expect racism to decline.

Thinking Critically about Chapter 9

1. How many races do your friends or family think there are? Do they think that one race is superior to the others? What do you think their reaction would be to the sociological position that racial categories are primarily social?
2. A hundred years ago, sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois said, “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line—the relation of the darker to the lighter races.” Why do you think that the color line remains one of the most volatile topics facing the nation?
3. If you were appointed head of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, what policies would you propose to reduce racial–ethnic strife in the United States? Be ready to explain the sociological principles that might give your proposals a higher chance of success.



Monastic Produce, 1888, Eduard von Grutzner (oil on panel)

Chapter 10

Gender and Age



Learning Objectives

After you have read this chapter, you should be able to:

- 10.1** Distinguish between sex and gender; use research on Vietnam veterans and testosterone to explain why the door to biology is opening in sociology.
- 10.2** Discuss the origin of gender discrimination, and review global aspects of violence against women.
- 10.3** Review the rise of feminism, and summarize gender inequality in health care and education.
- 10.4** Explain reasons for the pay gap; discuss the glass ceiling and sexual harassment.
- 10.5** Summarize violence against women: rape, murder, and violence in the home.
- 10.6** Discuss changes in gender and politics.
- 10.7** Explain why the future looks hopeful.
- 10.8** Understand how attitudes toward the elderly vary around the world; explain how industrialization led to a graying globe.
- 10.9** Discuss changes in perceptions of the elderly.
- 10.10** Summarize theories of disengagement, activity, and continuity.
- 10.11** Explain the conflict perspective on Social Security, and discuss intergenerational competition and conflict.
- 10.12** Discuss developing views of aging and the impact of technology on how long people live.

The prostitutes sit behind lighted picture windows while customers stroll along the narrow canal-side streets and “window shop” from the outside.

In Tunis, the capital of Tunisia on Africa’s northern coast, I met some U.S. college students and spent a couple of days with them. They wanted to see the city’s red light district, but I wondered whether it would be worth the trip. I already had seen other red light districts, including the unusual one in Amsterdam where a bronze statue of a female prostitute lets you know you’ve entered the area; the state licenses the women and men, requiring that they have medical checkups (certificates must be posted); and the prostitutes add sales tax to the receipts they give customers. The prostitutes sit behind lighted picture windows while customers stroll along the narrow canal-side streets and “window shop” from the outside. Tucked among the brothels are day care centers, bakeries, and clothing stores. Amsterdam itself is an unusual place—in cafes, you can smoke marijuana but not tobacco.

I decided to go with the students. We ended up on a wharf that extended into the Mediterranean. Each side was lined with a row of one-room wooden shacks, one crowding against the next. In front of each open door stood a young woman. Peering from outside into the dark interiors, I could see that each door led to a tiny room with an old, well-worn bed.

The wharf was crowded with men who were eyeing the women and negotiating prices. Many of the men wore sailor uniforms from countries that I couldn't identify.

As I looked more closely, I could see that some of the women had runny sores on their legs. Incredibly, with such visible evidence of their disease, men still sought them out.

With a sick feeling in my stomach, I kept a good distance between the beckoning women and myself. One tour of the two-block area was more than sufficient.

Somewhere nearby, out of sight, I knew that there were men whose wealth derived from exploiting these women who were condemned to short lives punctuated by fear and misery.

In the previous chapter, we considered how race–ethnicity affects people's well-being and their position in society. In this chapter, we examine **gender stratification**—males' and females' unequal access to property, power, and prestige. We also explore the prejudice and discrimination directed to people because of their age.

Gender and age are especially significant because, like race–ethnicity, they are **master statuses**; that is, they cut across all aspects of social life. We all are labeled male or female and are assigned an age category. These labels are powerful. Not only do they convey images and expectations about how we should act, but they also serve as a basis for distributing property, power, and prestige.

gender stratification

the unequal access of men and women to property, power, and prestige

Inequalities of Gender

Let's begin by considering the distinctions between sex and gender.

Issues of Sex and Gender

10.1 Distinguish between sex and gender; use research on Vietnam veterans and testosterone to explain why the door to biology is opening in sociology.

When we consider how females and males differ, the first thing that usually comes to mind is **sex**, the *biological characteristics* that distinguish males and females. *Primary sex characteristics* consist of a vagina or a penis and other organs related to reproduction. *Secondary sex characteristics* are the physical distinctions between males and females that are not directly connected with reproduction. These characteristics become clearly evident at puberty when males develop larger muscles, lower voices, more body hair, and greater height, while females develop breasts and form more fatty tissue and broader hips.

sex

biological characteristics that distinguish females and males, consisting of primary and secondary sex characteristics

Gender, in contrast, is a *social*, not a biological characteristic. **Gender** consists of whatever behaviors and attitudes a group considers proper for its males and females. Sex refers to male or female, and *gender* refers to masculinity or femininity. In short, you inherit your sex, but you learn your gender as you learn the behaviors and attitudes your culture asserts are appropriate for your sex.

gender

the behaviors and attitudes that a society considers proper for its males and females; masculinity or femininity

As the following photo montage illustrates, the expectations associated with gender differ around the world. They vary so greatly that sociologists often replace the terms *masculinity* and *femininity* with *masculinities* and *femininities*.

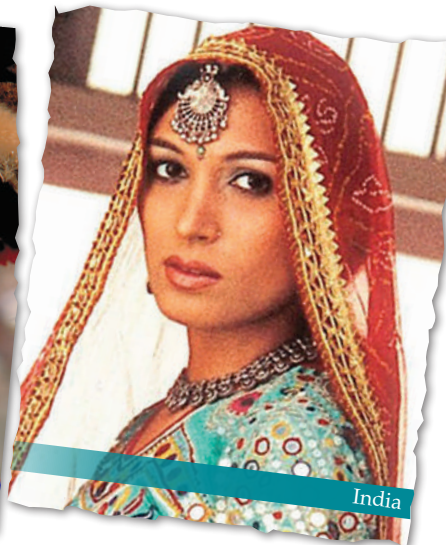
The Sociological Significance of Gender

The sociological significance of gender is this: Gender is a device by which society controls its members. Gender sorts us, on the basis of sex, into different life experiences. It opens and closes doors to property, power, and prestige. Like social class, gender is a structural feature of society.

Before examining inequalities of gender, let's consider why the behaviors of men and women differ.

Standards of Gender

Each human group determines its ideas of “maleness” and “femaleness.” As you can see from these photos of four women and four men, standards of gender are arbitrary and vary from one culture to another. Yet, in its ethnocentrism, each group thinks that its preferences reflect what gender “really” is. As indicated here, around the world men and women try to make themselves appealing by aspiring to their group’s standards of gender.



Gender Differences in Behavior: Biology or Culture?

Why are most males more aggressive than most females? Why do women enter “nurturing” occupations, such as teaching young children and nursing, in far greater numbers than men? To answer such questions, many people respond with some variation of “They’re born that way.”

Is this the correct answer? Certainly biology plays a significant role in our lives. Each of us begins as a fertilized egg. The egg, or ovum, is contributed by our mother, the sperm that fertilizes the egg by our father. At the very instant the egg is fertilized, our sex is determined. Each of us receives twenty-three chromosomes from the ovum and twenty-three from the sperm. The egg has an X chromosome. If the sperm that fertilizes the egg also has an X chromosome, the result is a girl (XX). If the sperm has a Y chromosome, the result is a boy (XY).



Differences in how we display gender often lie below our awareness. How males and females use social space is an example. In this unposed photo from Grand Central Station in New York City, you can see how males tend to sprawl out, females to enclose themselves. Why do you think this difference exists? Biology? Socialization? Both?

The Dominant Position in Sociology

That’s the biology. Now, the sociological question is, Does this biological difference control our behavior? Does it, for example, make females more nurturing and submissive and males more aggressive and domineering? Here is the quick sociological answer: The dominant sociological position is that *social* factors, not biology, are the reasons people do what they do.

Let’s apply this position to gender. If biology were the principal factor in human behavior, all around the world we would find women behaving in one way and men in another. Men and women would be just like male spiders and female spiders, whose genes tell them what to do. In fact, however, ideas of gender vary greatly from one culture to another—and, as a result, so do male–female behaviors.

Opening the Door to Biology

Despite this dominant position in sociology, the door to biology is opening just slightly. To see why, let’s consider a medical accident and a study of Vietnam veterans.

A MEDICAL ACCIDENT

In 1963, 7-month-old identical twin boys were taken to a doctor for a routine circumcision. The physician, not the most capable person in the world, was using a heated needle. He turned the electric current too high and accidentally burned off the penis of one of the boys.

You can imagine the parents’ disbelief—and then their horror—as the truth sank in. What could they do? After months of soul-searching and tearful consultations with experts, the parents decided that their son should have a sex-change operation (Money and Ehrhardt 1972). When he was 22 months old, surgeons castrated the boy, using the skin to construct a vagina. The parents then gave the child a new name, Brenda, dressed him in frilly clothing, let his hair grow long, and began to treat him as a girl. Later, physicians gave Brenda female steroids to promote female puberty (Colapinto 2001).

At first, the results were promising. When the twins were 4 years old, the mother said (remember that the children are biologically identical):

One thing that really amazes me is that she is so feminine. I’ve never seen a little girl so neat and tidy.... She likes for me to wipe her face. She doesn’t like to be dirty, and yet my son is quite different. I can’t wash his face for anything.... She is very proud of herself, when she puts on a new dress, or I set her hair.... She seems to be daintier. (Money and Ehrhardt 1972)



David Reimer, whose story is recounted here.

If the matter were this clear-cut, we could use this case to conclude that gender is determined entirely by nurture. Seldom are things in life so simple, however, and a twist occurs in this story.

Despite this promising start and her parents' coaching, Brenda did not adapt well to femininity. She preferred to mimic her father shaving, rather than her mother putting on makeup. She rejected dolls, favoring guns and her brother's toys. She liked rough-and-tumble games and insisted on urinating standing up. Classmates teased her and called her "cavewoman" because she walked like a boy. At age 14, she was expelled from school for beating up a girl who teased her. Despite estrogen treatment, she was not attracted to boys. At age 14, when despair over her inner turmoil brought her to the brink of suicide, her father, in tears, told Brenda about the accident and her sex change.

"All of a sudden everything clicked. For the first time, things made sense, and I understood who and what I was," the twin said of this revelation. David (his new name) was given testosterone shots and, later, had surgery to partially reconstruct a penis. At age 25, David married a woman and adopted her children (Diamond and Sigmundson 1997; Colapinto 2001). There is an unfortunate end to this story, however. In 2004, David committed suicide.

THE VIETNAM VETERANS STUDY Time after time, researchers have found that boys and men who have higher levels of testosterone tend to be more dominant and aggressive than boys and men with lower levels of testosterone (Turan et al. 2014). In one study, researchers compared the testosterone levels of college men in a "rowdy" fraternity with those of men in a fraternity that had a reputation for academic achievement. Men in the "rowdy" fraternity had higher levels of testosterone (Dabbs et al. 1996). In another study, researchers found that prisoners who had committed sex crimes and other crimes of violence had higher levels of testosterone than those who had committed property crimes (Dabbs et al. 1995). The samples were small, however, leaving the nagging uncertainty that these findings might be due to chance.

Then in 1985, the U.S. government began a health study of Vietnam veterans. To be certain that the study was representative, the researchers chose a random sample of 4,462 men. Among the data they collected was a measurement of testosterone. This sample supported the earlier research. When the veterans with higher testosterone levels were boys, they were more likely to get in trouble with parents and teachers and to become delinquents. As adults, they were more likely to use hard drugs, to get into fights, to end up in lower-status jobs, and to have more sexual partners. Those who married were more likely to have affairs, to hit their wives, and, it follows, to get divorced (Dabbs and Morris 1990; Mazur and Booth 2014).

This makes it sound like biology is the basis for behavior. Fortunately for us sociologists, there is another side to this research, and here is where *social class*, the topic of

Chapter 8, comes into play. The researchers compared high-testosterone men from higher and lower social classes. The men from lower social classes were more likely to get in trouble with the law, do poorly in school, and mistreat their wives (Dabbs and Morris 1990). You can see, then, that *social* factors such as socialization, subcultures, life goals, and self-definitions were significant in these men's behaviors.

MORE RESEARCH ON HUMANS Research on the effects of testosterone continues, and the results are intriguing. As found repeatedly, higher levels of testosterone lead to higher dominance, but a surprise finding is that dominance behavior, such as winning a game, also produces higher levels of testosterone. So does holding a real gun (Klinesmith et al. 2006). These effects also seem to apply to females. When researchers gave testosterone to men and women, dominance behavior in both increased. *Both* sought higher status and showed less concern for the feelings of others (Eisenegger et al. 2011).

Hue, South Vietnam, February 6, 1968. A U.S. Marine keeps firing while others pull a wounded soldier to safety.



But just as the effects of testosterone differ with social class, so its effects differ with the situation. When women were given testosterone in a competitive situation, they became suspicious and less trusting. But when they received testosterone in a situation where they were being trusted, they became more responsible and generous (Boksem et al. 2013).

IN SUM Sociologists acknowledge that biological factors are involved in some human behavior other than reproduction and childbearing (Horowitz et al. 2014; Pollock 2017). Years back, one of the first sociologists to open this issue was Alice Rossi, a feminist sociologist and former president of the American Sociological Association. Perhaps Rossi (1977, 1984) expressed it best when she said that the issue is not either biology or society. Instead, whatever biological predispositions nature provides are overlaid with culture. A task of sociologists, then, is to discover how social factors modify biology, especially, as sociologist Janet Chafetz (1990:30) said, to determine how “different” becomes translated into “unequal.”

The sociological perspective—that of social factors in human behavior—dominates this book, and in the following *Thinking Critically about Social Life*, we explore how gender is changing.

Thinking Critically about Social Life

New Masculinities and Femininities Are on the Way

Facebook has changed its classifications from male/female to, well, here is part of the list: agender, androgyne, gender fluid, gender queer, gender variant, intersex, neutrois, non-binary, and trans man. Facebook offers another forty categories of gender.

From the new *Facebook* classifications, you can see that even *gender*, what we consider masculine or feminine, is changing. This helps let us know that sexual identity is complicated: There are *many* ways of identifying with being male or female—and in some instances of not quite identifying with either.

Powerfully entrenched in our culture, the traditional models of the aggressive-dominant male and the compassionate-submissive female will not disappear. For most males, life will remain cast as a form of struggle, of adversaries pitted against one another. These males will try to live up to the expectations of strength and stamina, victory in competition, and achievement despite obstacles. They will continue to mask compassion and avoid even the appearance of weakness, fear, and vulnerability. For most women, the dominant model will also hold, and they will show—and probably feel—more emotions than men. They will express greater compassion and more fears and weaknesses.

As new models of gender take their place alongside the traditional ones, it is likely that a softer masculinity will become common. Men will feel freer to ask for help, to form emotional bonds with other men, even to tenderly touch both women and men—and still be masculine. Women will have more options to fight hard in the rough and tumble competitive world of business and the professions—and still be feminine.

As the developing masculinities incorporate behaviors previously considered inappropriate or even taboo, we



The emerging femininities and masculinities are taking many forms. One of them is shown here.

can expect a decrease of homophobia (dislike and fear of homosexuals). Homophobia seems to be based on a need to mark a sharp distance between the self and anyone who threatens the dominant model of masculinity or femininity. As cultural attitudes shift, fewer will feel an urgent need to maintain gender boundaries, to demonstrate to the self and others that “I’m not gay.”

For Your Consideration

- What have you experienced to indicate that the dominant forms of masculinity and femininity are changing?
- Do you think we are developing femininities and masculinities?
- Do you agree with the author, that homophobia will decrease?

To catch a glimpse of how remarkably gender expectations differ with culture, look at the following photo essay.



Work and Gender: Women at Work in India

Traveling through India was both a pleasant and an eye-opening experience. The country is incredibly diverse, the people friendly, and the land culturally rich. For this photo essay, wherever I went—whether city, village, or countryside—I took photos of women at work.

From these photos, you can see that Indian women work in a wide variety of occupations. Some of the jobs that

women in India do match traditional Western expectations, and some diverge sharply from our gender stereotypes. Although women in India remain subservient to men—with the women's movement hardly able to break the cultural surface—women's occupations are hardly limited to the home. I was surprised at some of the hard, heavy labor that Indian women do.



The villages of India have no indoor plumbing. Instead, each village has a well with a hand pump, and it is the women's job to fetch the water. This is backbreaking work, for, after pumping the water, the women wrestle the heavy buckets onto their heads and carry them home. This was one of the few kinds of work I saw that was limited to women.



Indian women are highly visible in public places. A storekeeper is as likely to be a woman as a man. This woman is selling glasses of water at a beach on the Bay of Bengal. The structure on which her glasses rest is built of sand.

I visited quarries in different parts of India, where I found men, women, and children hard at work in the tropical sun. This woman works 8 ½ hours a day, six days a week. She earns 40 rupees a day (about ninety cents). Men make 60 rupees a day (about \$1.35). Like many quarry workers, this woman is a bonded laborer. She must give half of her wages to her master.



Women also take care of livestock. It looks as though this woman dressed up and posed for her photo, but this is what she was wearing and doing when I saw her in the field and stopped to talk to her. While the sheep are feeding, her job is primarily to "be" there, to make certain the sheep don't wander off or that no one steals them.





Gender Inequality in Global Perspective

10.2 Discuss the origin of gender discrimination, and review global aspects of violence against women.

Around the world, gender is *the* primary division between people. Every society sorts men and women into separate groups and gives them different access to property, power, and prestige. These divisions *always* favor men-as-a-group. After reviewing the historical record, historian and feminist Gerda Lerner (1986) concluded that “there is not a single society known where women-as-a-group have decision-making power over men (as a group).” Consequently, sociologists classify females as a *minority group*. Because females outnumber males, you may find this strange. This term applies, however, because *minority group* refers to people who are discriminated against on the basis of physical or cultural characteristics, regardless of their numbers (Hacker 1951).

Men’s work? Women’s work?
Customs in other societies can blow away stereotypes. As is common throughout India, these women are working on road construction.

How Did Females Become a Minority Group?

Have females always been a minority group? Some analysts speculate that in hunting and gathering societies, women and men were social equals and that horticultural societies also had less gender discrimination than is common today (Wilson 2013). In these societies, women may have contributed about 60 percent of the group’s total food. Yet, around the world, gender is the basis for discrimination. How, then, did it happen that women became a minority group?

patriarchy
men-as-a-group dominating
women-as-a-group; authority is
vested in males

The main theory that has been proposed to explain the origin of patriarchy—men dominating society—centers on human reproduction (Baumeister 2013). In early human history, life was short. Because people died young, if the group were to survive, women had to give birth to many children. This brought severe consequences for women. To survive, an infant needed a nursing mother. If there were no woman to nurse the child, it died. With



a child at her breast or in her uterus or one carried on her hip or on her back, women were not able to stay away from camp for as long as the men could. They also had to move slower. Around the world, then, women assumed the tasks that were associated with the home and child care, while men hunted the large animals and did other tasks that required greater speed and longer absences from the base camp.

This led to men becoming dominant. When the men left the camp to hunt animals, they made contact with other groups. They traded with them, gaining new possessions, and they also quarreled and waged war with them. It was also the men who made and controlled the instruments of power and death, the weapons that were used for hunting and warfare. The men heaped prestige upon themselves as they returned triumphantly to the camp, leading captured prisoners and displaying their new possessions or the large animals they had killed to feed themselves and the women and children.

Contrast this with the women. Their activities were routine, dull, and taken for granted. The women kept the fire going, took care of the children, and did the cooking. There was nothing triumphant about what they did, and they were not perceived as risking their lives for the group. The women were “simply there,” awaiting the return of their men, ready to acclaim their accomplishments.

Men, then, took control of society. Their sources of power were their weapons, items of trade, and the knowledge they gained from their contact with other groups. Women did not have access to these sources of power, which the men enshrouded in secrecy. The women became second-class citizens, subject to whatever the men decided.

GLOBAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

When Zahra, a 16-year-old girl in Syria, was raped, she was put in prison. (A raped woman is thought to have somehow caused a man to rape her.) After Zahra was released from prison to marry a cousin, her brother visited her in her apartment. There, he hacked her to death. To celebrate, Zahra's family threw a party (Zoepf 2016).

If this seems confusing to you, it is because Zahra's murder comes from another thought world. In some societies, such as Afghanistan, India, Jordan, Pakistan, and Syria, a woman who has sex outside of marriage brings disgrace on her family. Removing the “stain” and restoring the family's honor in the community is the duty of a male relative. He does this by killing the girl or woman, even if the woman is his sister, wife, or mother. The usual reason for *honor killings* is consensual sex outside of marriage, but in some areas if a daughter refuses to marry the man her father has picked out, an honor killing is also thought appropriate (Nordland 2014). The police generally ignore honor killings, considering them to be private family matters.

Violence against women is a global human rights issue. Notorious historical examples include foot binding in China and witch burning in Europe. Until the 1800s, *suttee* was practiced in India: A widow was burned alive with the body of her dead husband. Today, we have rape, wife beating, female infanticide, and in China the kidnapping of women to be brides. We also have forced prostitution, which was probably the case in our opening vignette. Some tribal areas of Pakistan still practice *swara*: Unmarried girls, even children, are given as brides to settle a



It is the job of these women in Burundi to get the water for their families. They carry not only the water, but also their young children.

Swara, an ancient custom, includes both adult males marrying female children and marrying children to one another. To settle a debt, the father of this Pakistani girl offered her as a bride when she was just 5 years old.



Cultural Diversity around the World

Female Circumcision (Genital Cutting)

"Lie down there," the excisor suddenly said to me [when I was 12], pointing to a mat on the ground. No sooner had I laid down than I felt my frail, thin legs grasped by heavy hands and pulled wide apart.... Two women on each side of me pinned me to the ground.... I underwent the ablation of the labia minor and then of the clitoris. The operation seemed to go on forever. I was in the throes of agony, torn apart both physically and psychologically. It was the rule that girls of my age did not weep in this situation. I broke the rule. I cried and screamed with pain!

Afterwards they forced me, not only to walk back to join the other girls who had already been excised, but to dance with them. I was doing my best, but then I fainted.... It was a month before I was completely healed. When I was better, everyone mocked me, as I hadn't been brave, they said. (Walker and Parmar 1993:107–108)

Worldwide, about 200 million females have been circumcised in 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia (World Health Organization 2017). About 91 percent of the women in Egypt and Indonesia have been circumcised, but at 98 percent, the highest rate is in Somalia (Turkewitz 2014). In most cultures, the surgery takes place between the ages of 4 and 8, but in some, it is not performed until the girls reach adolescence. Because the surgery is usually done without anesthesia, the pain is excruciating, and adults hold the girls down. In urban areas, physicians sometimes perform the operation; in rural areas, a neighborhood woman usually does it, often with a razor blade.

In some cultures, only the girl's clitoris is cut off; in others, more is removed. In Sudan, the Nubians cut away most of the girl's genitalia, then sew together the outer edges. They bind the girl's legs from her ankles to her waist for several weeks while scar tissue closes up the vagina. They leave a small opening, the diameter of a pencil, for the passage of urine and menstrual fluids. When a woman marries, the opening is cut wider to permit sexual intercourse.



A 6-year old girl in Kenya screaming in pain as she is being circumcised. Her 18-year old sister is holding her so she cannot move. Later, she will comfort the girl.



Before she gives birth, the opening is enlarged further. After birth, the vagina is again sutured shut. This cycle of surgically closing and opening begins anew with each birth.

Why are girls circumcised? Some groups believe that it reduces sexual desire, making it more likely that a woman will be a virgin at marriage and, afterward, remain faithful to her husband. Others think that women can't bear children if they aren't circumcised (Kindzeka 2014).

In some societies, uncircumcised women are considered impure, and men do not want them as wives. Concerned that their daughters marry well, the mothers insist that this custom continue.

Feminists have campaigned against female circumcision, calling it a form of ritual torture to control female sexuality. They point out that men dominate the societies that practice it.

Change is on the way. A social movement to ban female circumcision has emerged. The World Health Organization has even declared that female circumcision is a human rights issue. Fifteen African countries have made the circumcision of females illegal. Without sanctions, though, these laws accomplish little.

Health workers have found a strategy that is bringing some success. They begin by teaching village women about germs and hygiene. Then they trace the women's current health problems, such as incontinence, to female circumcision. When enough support has been gained, an entire village will publicly abandon the practice. As other villages join in, the lack of circumcision no longer remains an obstacle to marriage.

The most powerful indicator of the future is

this: Compared to their mothers, fewer young women have been circumcised (Dugger 2013). Yet we must balance this statement with this one: In Bandung, Indonesia, hospitals offer package deals: a reduced price if you combine infant vaccinations, ear piercing, and genital cutting (Haworth 2012).

SOURCES: As cited, and Lightfoot-Klein 1989; Merwine 1993; Tuhus-Dubrow 2007; Lazaro 2011; Sacirbey 2012; WHO 2017.

For Your Consideration

→ Do you think that the members of one culture have the right to judge the customs of another culture as inferior

or wrong and to then try to get rid of them? If so, under what circumstances? What makes us right and them wrong?

→ Let's go further. Some are trying to ban the circumcision of boys. One court in Germany even ruled that the circumcision of boys "amounts to bodily harm even if the parents consent to the circumcision" (Kulish 2012). Why shouldn't the same principle apply to both female and male circumcision?

IN SUM Gender inequality is not some accidental, hit-or-miss affair. Rather, each society's institutions work together to maintain the group's particular forms of inequality. Customs, often venerated through history, both justify and maintain these arrangements. In some cases, the prejudice and discrimination directed at females are so extreme that they lead to enslavement and death.

Gender Inequality in the United States

10.3 Review the rise of feminism, and summarize gender inequality in health care and education.

As we review gender inequality in the United States, let's begin by going back in history a bit. This brief account provides excellent background for understanding gender relations today, but you might think you are reading about another country, and in effect you are.

Fighting Back: The Rise of Feminism

In the early history of the United States, the second-class status of women was taken for granted. A husband and wife were legally one person—him (Chafetz and Dworkin 1986). Women could not vote, buy property in their own names, make legal contracts, or serve on juries. How could relationships have changed so much in the last hundred years that these examples sound like fiction?

A central lesson of conflict theory is that power brings privilege. Like a magnet, power draws society's best resources to the elite. Because men tenaciously held onto their privileges and used social institutions to maintain their dominance, basic rights for women came only through prolonged and bitter struggle.

Feminism—the view that biology is not destiny, that stratification by gender is wrong and should be resisted, and that men and women should be equal—met with strong opposition, both by men who had privilege to lose and by women who accepted their status as morally correct. In 1894, for example, Jeannette Gilder said that women should not have the right to vote: "Politics is too public, too wearing, and too unfitted to the nature of women" (Crossen 2003).

Feminists, known at that time as suffragists, struggled against such views. In 1916, they founded the National Woman's Party, and in 1917, they began to picket the White House. After picketing for six months, the women were arrested. Hundreds were sent to prison, including Lucy Burns, a leader of the National Woman's Party. The extent to



Photo of Xiao Xiuxiang, taken in 2002. Tiny feet were a status symbol. Making it difficult for a woman to walk; small feet indicated that a woman's husband did not need his wife's labor. To make the feet even smaller, sometimes the baby's feet were broken and wrapped tightly. Some baby's toes were cut off. Foot binding was banned by the Chinese government in 1911, but continued to be practiced in some places for several decades

feminism

the philosophy that men and women should be politically, economically, and socially equal; organized activities on behalf of this principle

which these women had threatened male privilege is demonstrated by how they were treated in prison.

Two men brought in Dorothy Day [the editor of a periodical that promoted women's rights], twisting her arms above her head. Suddenly they lifted her and brought her body down twice over the back of an iron bench.... They had been there a few minutes when Mrs. Lewis, all doubled over like a sack of flour, was thrown in. Her head struck the iron bed and she fell to the floor senseless. As for Lucy Burns, they handcuffed her wrists and fastened the handcuffs over [her] head to the cell door. (Cowley 1969)

This *first wave* of the women's movement had a radical branch that wanted to reform all the institutions of society and a conservative branch whose goal was to win the vote for women (Freedman 2001). The conservative branch dominated, and after winning the right to vote in 1920, the movement basically dissolved.

Inequality continued, of course, and even social science was part of the problem. In what is historically humorous, male social scientists paraded themselves as experts on the essence of womanhood. Here is what a renowned psychologist wrote in the 1960s, the paternalism oozing out of his well-intentioned statement: "We must start with the realization that, as much as we want women to be good scientists or engineers, they want first and foremost to be womanly companions of men and to be mothers" (Bettelheim 1965:15).

This man knew what women wanted—and in the 1960s, almost everyone else made the same assumption. From infancy, women were immersed in the idea that their purpose in life was to be "womanly companions of men and mothers." Even children's books reinforced such thinking, as you can see from Figure 10.1.

Reared with this idea, most women thought of work as a temporary activity intended to fill the time between completing school—usually high school—and getting married (Chafetz 1990). Then, as more women took jobs, they began to regard them as careers. This fundamental shift in perspective ushered in huge discontent. Women compared

The "first wave" of the U.S. women's movement met enormous opposition. The women in this 1920 photo had just been released after serving two months in jail for picketing the White House. Lucy Burns, mentioned on this page, is the second woman on the left. Alice Paul, who was placed in solitary confinement and is a subject of this 1920 protest, is featured in the photo wheel of early female sociologists in Chapter 1.



Figure 10.1 Teaching Gender



The “Dick and Jane” readers were the top selling readers in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. In addition to reading, they taught “gender messages.” What gender message do you see here?



What gender lesson is being taught here?



Besides learning words like “pigs” (relevant at that historical period), boys and girls also learned that rough outside work was for men.



What does this page teach children other than how to read the word “Father”? (Look to the left to see what Jane and Mother are doing.)

SOURCE: From *Dick and Jane: Fun with Our Family*, Illustrations © copyright 1951, 1979, and *Dick and Jane: We Play Outside*, copyright © 1965, Pearson Education Inc., published by Scott, Foresman and Company. Used with permission.

their working conditions with those of men, and they didn’t like what they saw. The result was a *second wave* of protest against gender inequalities, roughly from the 1960s to the 1980s (Eagly et al. 2012). The goals of this second wave (which continue today) were broad, ranging from raising women’s pay to changing policies on violence against women and legalizing abortion.

About 1990, the second wave gradually merged into a *third wave* (Byers and Crocker 2012). This current wave has many divisions, but three main aspects are apparent. The first is a criticism of the values that dominate work and society. Some feminists argue that competition, toughness, and calloused emotions represent “male” qualities that need to be replaced with cooperation, connection, and openness (England 2000). The second is a greater focus on the problems of women in the Least Industrialized Nations (Lövheim 2013). Women there are struggling against conditions overcome long ago by women in the Most Industrialized Nations. A third aspect is an emphasis on women’s freedom to explore sexual pleasure (Nguyen 2013).

Sharp disagreements have arisen among feminists. One is a clash between white and minority feminists. Minority women avoided the second wave because they felt it represented “white” experiences, and their attempt to merge their life situations and perspectives in today’s third wave has led to tensions (Bates 2017). Another clash has come from “girlie feminists,” women who say we should declare the battle for equality won and move on to confidently enjoy the “pink things” of childhood (Nguyen 2013). They want women to focus on self-fulfillment and sexual pleasure, even to use their “erotic capital,” their sexual attractiveness and seductiveness, to get ahead at work. Those who struggled in the second wave are shocked by these younger feminists. Such attitudes, they say, are a denial of women’s ability to compete with men on equal terms, a betrayal of the equality that women have fought for (Hakim 2010).

Although U.S. women enjoy fundamental rights today, we are far from having reached the goal of gender inequality. Let’s first consider gender inequality in health care.

Gender Inequality in Health Care

Medical researchers were perplexed. Reports were coming in from all over the country: Women were twice as likely as men to die after coronary bypass surgery. Researchers at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles checked their own records. They found that of 2,300 coronary bypass patients, 4.6 percent of the women died as a result of the surgery, compared with 2.6 percent of the men.

The researchers faced a sociological puzzle. To solve it, they first turned to biology (Bishop 1990). In coronary bypass surgery, a blood vessel is taken from one part of the body and stitched to an artery on the surface of the heart. Perhaps the surgery was more difficult to do on women because of their smaller arteries. To find out, researchers measured the amount of time that surgeons kept patients on the heart–lung machine. They were surprised to learn that women spent *less* time on the machine than men. This indicated that the surgery was not more difficult to perform on women.

As the researchers probed further, a surprising answer unfolded: unintended sexual discrimination. When women complained of chest pains, their doctors took them only *one-tenth as seriously* as when men made the same complaints. How do we know this? Doctors were *ten* times more likely to give men exercise stress tests and radioactive heart scans. They also sent men to surgery on the basis of abnormal stress tests, but they waited until women showed clear-cut symptoms of heart disease before sending them to surgery. Patients with more advanced heart disease are more likely to die during and after heart surgery.

Although these findings have been publicized in medical circles, the problem continues (Gitsels et al. 2016). Perhaps as more women become physicians, the situation will change, because female doctors are more sensitive to women's health problems (Tabenkin et al. 2010). In addition, as more women join the faculties of medical schools, we can expect women's health problems to receive more attention in the training of physicians. Even this might not do it, however, as women, too, hold our cultural stereotypes of the sexes.

In contrast to unintentional sexism in heart surgery, let's look at a type of surgery that is a blatant form of discrimination against women. This is the focus of the following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Surgical Sexism: Cold-Hearted Surgeons and Their Women Victims

While doing participant observation in a hospital, sociologist Sue Fisher (1986) was surprised to hear surgeons recommend total hysterectomy (removal of both the uterus and the ovaries) *when no cancer was present*. When she asked why, the male doctors explained that the uterus and ovaries are “potentially disease producing.” They also said that these organs are unnecessary after the childbearing years, so why not remove them? Doctors who reviewed hysterectomies confirmed this gender-biased practice. *Ninety percent* of hysterectomies are avoidable. Only ten percent involve cancer (Costa 2011).

Greed is a powerful motivator in many areas of social life, and it rears its ugly head in surgical sexism (Domingo and Pellicer 2009). Surgeons make money when they do hysterectomies. The more hysterectomies they do, the



more money they make. Since women, to understate the matter, are reluctant to part with these organs, surgeons have to “sell” this operation. Here is how one resident explained the “hard sell” to sociologist Diana Scully (1994):

You have to look for your surgical procedures; you have to go after patients. Because no one is crazy enough to come and say, “Hey, here I am. I want you to operate on me.”

You have to sometimes convince the patient that she is really sick—if she is, of course [laughs], and that she is better off with a surgical procedure.

Used-car salespeople would love to have the powerful sales weapon that surgeons have at their disposal: To “convince” a woman to have this surgery, the doctor puts on a serious face and tells her that the examination has

turned up *fibroids* in her uterus—and these lumps might turn into *cancer*. This statement is often sufficient to get the woman to buy the surgery. She starts to picture herself lying at death's door, her sorrowful family gathered at her death bed. Then the used car salesperson—I mean, the surgeon—moves in to clinch the sale. Keeping a serious face and displaying an “I-know-how-you-feel” look, the surgeon starts to make arrangements for the surgery. What the surgeon withholds is the rest of the truth—that uterine fibroids are common, that they usually do *not* turn into cancer, and that the patient has several alternatives to surgery.

In case it is difficult to see how this is sexist, let's change the context just a little. Let's suppose that the

income of some female surgeon depends on selling a specialized operation. To sell it, she systematically suggests to older men the benefits of castration—because “those organs are no longer necessary and might cause disease.”

For Your Consideration

Hysterectomies have become so common that by age 60, *one of three* U.S. women has had her uterus surgically removed (NWHN 2017).

→ Why do you think that surgeons are so quick to operate?

→ How can women find alternatives to surgery?

Gender Inequality in Education

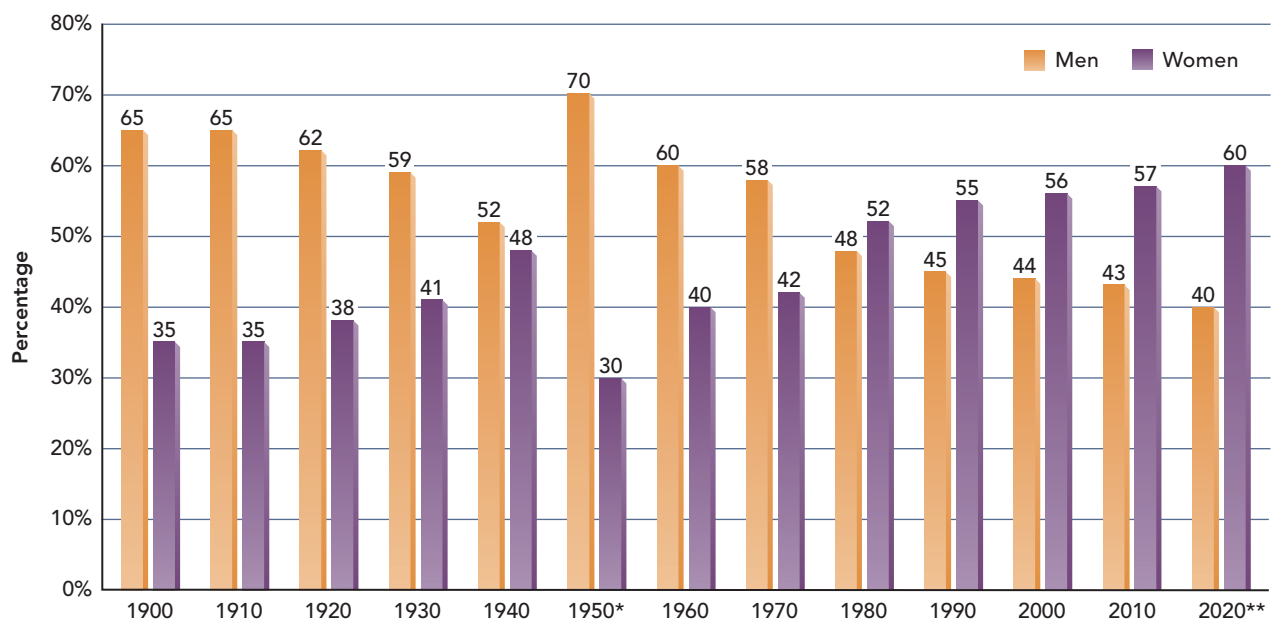
To better understand gender inequality in education, let's take a glimpse of the past. It holds some surprises.

THE PAST

Until 1832, women were not allowed to attend college with men. When women were admitted to colleges attended by men—first at Oberlin College in Ohio—they had to wash the male students' clothing, clean their rooms, and serve them their meals (Flexner 1971/1999).

How times have changed—so much so that this quote sounds like a joke. But there is more. The men who controlled education considered women's minds (and bodies) to be much weaker than those of men, and they encouraged women to study less--and during menstruation not to study at all (Andersen 1988). Like out-of-fashion clothing, such ideas were discarded. As Figure 10.2 shows, by 1900 one-third of college students were women.

Figure 10.2 Changes in College Enrollment, by Sex



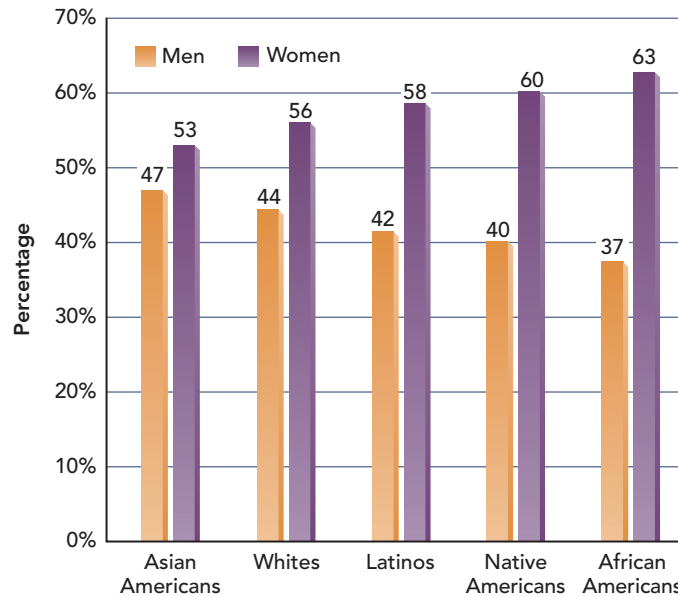
*This sharp drop in women's enrollment occurred when large numbers of male soldiers returned from World War II and attended college under the new GI Bill of Rights.

**Author's estimate.

SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 1938:Table 114; 1959:Table 158; 1991:Table 261; 2011:Table 273; 2017:Table 290.

A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE The change since then has been fundamental, extensive, and ongoing. Today, far more women than men attend college, but this overall average hides many distinctions. Look at Figure 10.3 to see major differences by racial–ethnic groups. You can see that African Americans have the most women relative to men, and Asian Americans the least.

Figure 10.3 College Students, by Sex and Race–Ethnicity



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 291.

Overall, women now earn an astounding 57 percent of all bachelor’s degrees and 60 percent of all master’s degrees (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Table 314). With this imbalance in college degrees, do you think it might be time for affirmative action for men? Let’s consider this in the following *Down-to-Earth Sociology*.

Down-to-Earth Sociology

Affirmative Action for Men?

When psychologist Judith Kleinfeld (2002a) suggested the need of affirmative action *for men* in college, she was met by laughter. After all, men dominate societies around the world, as they have done for millennia. To think that men would need affirmative action seemed humorous at best.

But let’s pause, step back, and try to see whether the idea has merit. Look again at Figures 10.2 and 10.3. Look at how women have passed men in enrollment and how this is true of all racial–ethnic groups. This is not something

temporary, like lead cars changing place at the Indy 500. The trend is strong. For decades, women have been

adding to their share of college enrollment and the degrees they earn.

With colleges open to both women and men, why don’t enrollment and degrees match the proportions of women and men in the population (51 percent and 49 percent)? Although no one yet knows the reasons—and many suggestions are being thrown around—some colleges consider this imbalance a problem searching for a solution. To get more men, some colleges are rejecting



With fewer men than women in college, is it time to consider affirmative action for men?

more highly qualified women (Kingsbury 2007; Lam 2013). Another problem is the classroom, where on average men are underperforming women. To improve the men's performance, some colleges have begun to offer study groups, support groups, and mentoring programs for men. An example is The Male Initiative Program at York College in New York, whose stated purpose is "to improve the enrollment and graduation rates of underrepresented populations, particularly male students" (York College 2017). A related problem that has made its appearance is men's emotional state. Apparently, being a minority on campus is leading some men to feel like

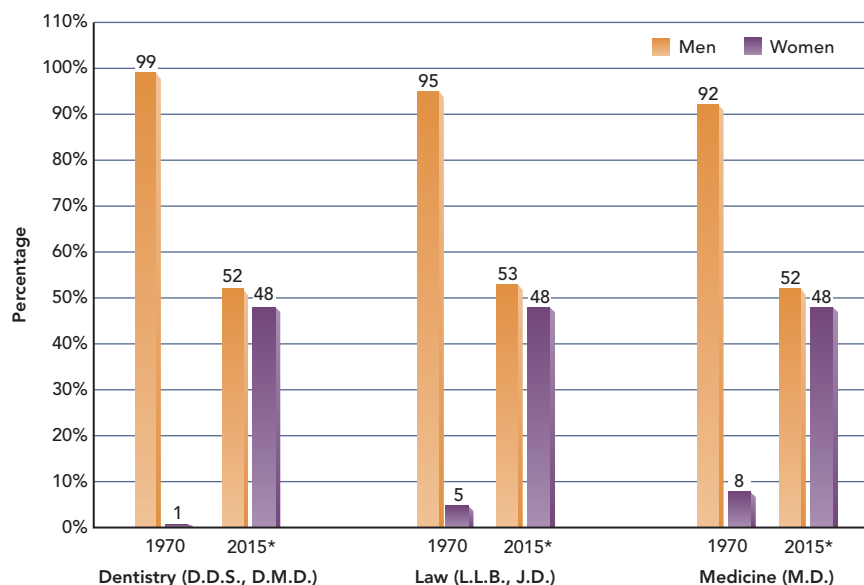
outsiders, even that they are being discriminated against. To combat these feelings, some colleges are offering counseling geared to men's needs (Vendituoli 2013; Petersen 2015).

For Your Consideration

- Why do you think that men have fallen behind?
- What implications could this have for the future of society?
- Do you think that special programs for men are desirable? Why or why not?

Figure 10.4 illustrates another major change—how women have increased their share of professional degrees. The greatest change is in dentistry: In 1970, across the entire United States, only 34 women earned degrees in dentistry. Today, that total has jumped to 2,600 a year. As you can also see, almost as many women as men now become dentists, lawyers, and physicians. It is likely that women will soon outnumber men in earning these professional degrees.

Figure 10.4 Gender Changes in Professional Degrees*



*Latest year available.

SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Digest of Education Statistics* 2007:Table 269; 2017:Table 319.

GENDER TRACKING With such extensive change, it would seem that gender equality has been achieved, or at least almost so. In some instances—as with the changed sex ratio in college—we even have a new form of gender inequality. If we look closer, however, we can see *gender tracking*. That is, college degrees tend to follow gender, which reinforces male–female distinctions. Here are two extremes: Men earn 95 percent of the associate's degrees in the "masculine" field of construction trades, while women are awarded 96 percent of the associate's degrees in the "feminine" field of "family and consumer sciences" (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Table 317). Because gender socialization gives men and women different orientations to life, they enter college with gender-linked aspirations. Socialization—not some presumed innate characteristic—channels men and women into different educational paths.

Gender Inequality in the Workplace

10.4 Explain reasons for the pay gap; discuss the glass ceiling and sexual harassment.

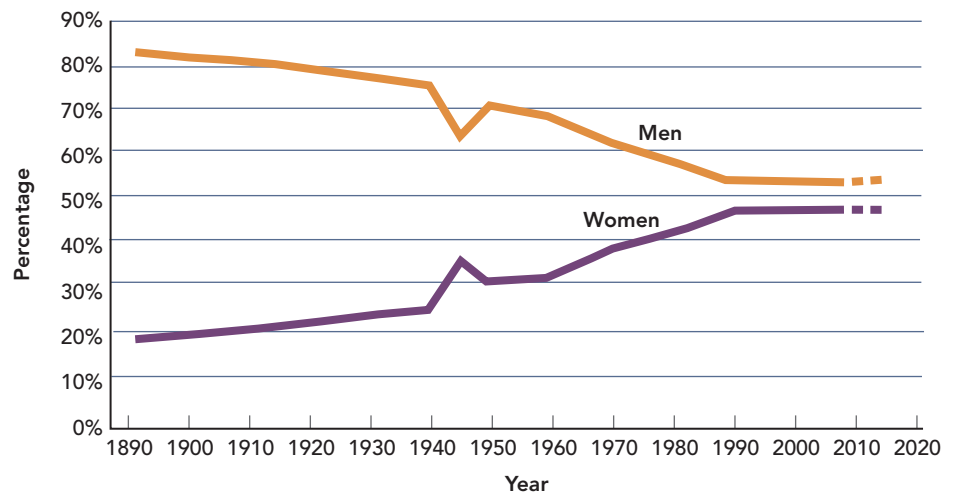
To examine the work setting is to make visible basic relations between men and women. Let's begin with one of the most remarkable areas of gender inequality at work, the pay gap.

The Pay Gap

After college, you might like to take a few years off, travel around Europe, sail the oceans, or maybe sit on a beach in some South American paradise and drink piña coladas. But chances are, you are going to go to work instead. Since you have to work, how would you like to make an extra \$715,000 on your job? If this sounds appealing, read on. I'm going to reveal how you can average an extra \$1,490 a month between the ages of 25 and 65. Are you ready?

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND First, let's get a broad background to help us understand today's situation. One of the chief characteristics of the U.S. workforce is the steady increase in the numbers of women who work for wages outside the home. Figure 10.5 shows that in 1890, about one of every five paid workers was a woman. By 1940, this ratio had grown to one of four; by 1960 to one of three; and today, it is almost one of two. As you can see from this figure, 53 percent of U.S. workers are men and 47 percent are women. During the next few years, we can expect little change in this ratio.

Figure 10.5 Proportion of Men and Women in the U.S. Labor Force

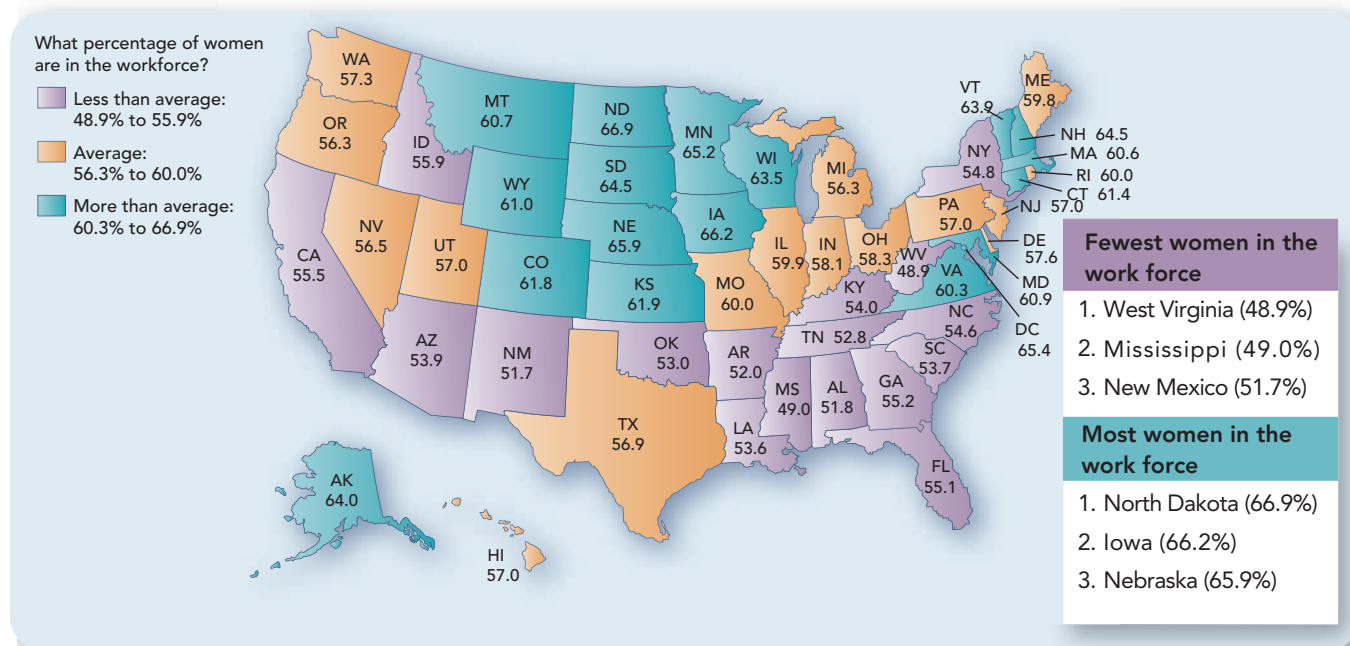


SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Women's Bureau of the United States* 1969:10; *Manpower Report to the President*, 1971:203, 205; *Mills and Palumbo* 1980:6, 45; *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 611.

GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS Women who work for wages are not distributed evenly throughout the United States. From the Social Map, you can see that where a woman lives makes a difference in how likely she is to work outside the home. Why is there such a clustering among the states? The geographical patterns that you see on this map reflect regional subcultural differences about which we currently have little understanding.

THE "TESTOSTERONE BONUS" Now, back to how you can make an extra \$715,000 at work—maybe even more. You might be wondering if this is hard to do. Actually, it is simple for some and impossible for others. Look at Figure 10.7. All you have to do is be born a male. If we compare full-time workers, based on current differences in earnings, this is how much more the *average man* can expect to earn over the course of his career. Now, if you want to boost this difference to \$26,680 a year for a whopping career total

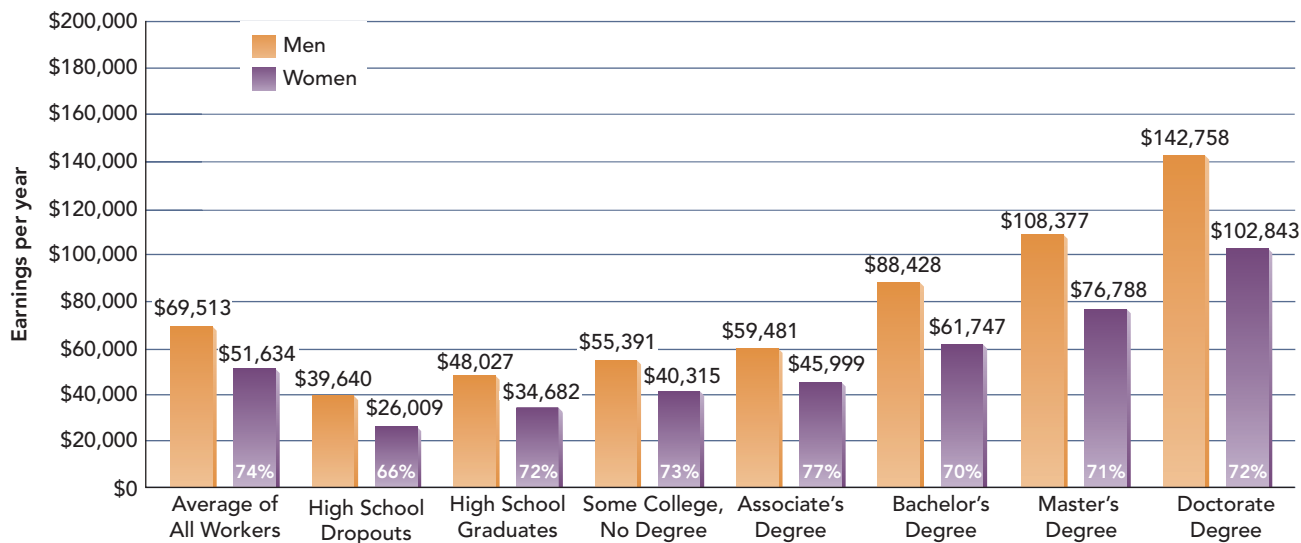
Figure 10.6 Women in the Workforce



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 618.

of \$1,067,000 extra, be both a male and a college graduate. Hardly any single factor pinpoints gender discrimination better than these totals. As you can see from Figure 10.7, the pay gap shows up at *all* levels of education.

Figure 10.7 The Gender Pay Gap, by Education¹



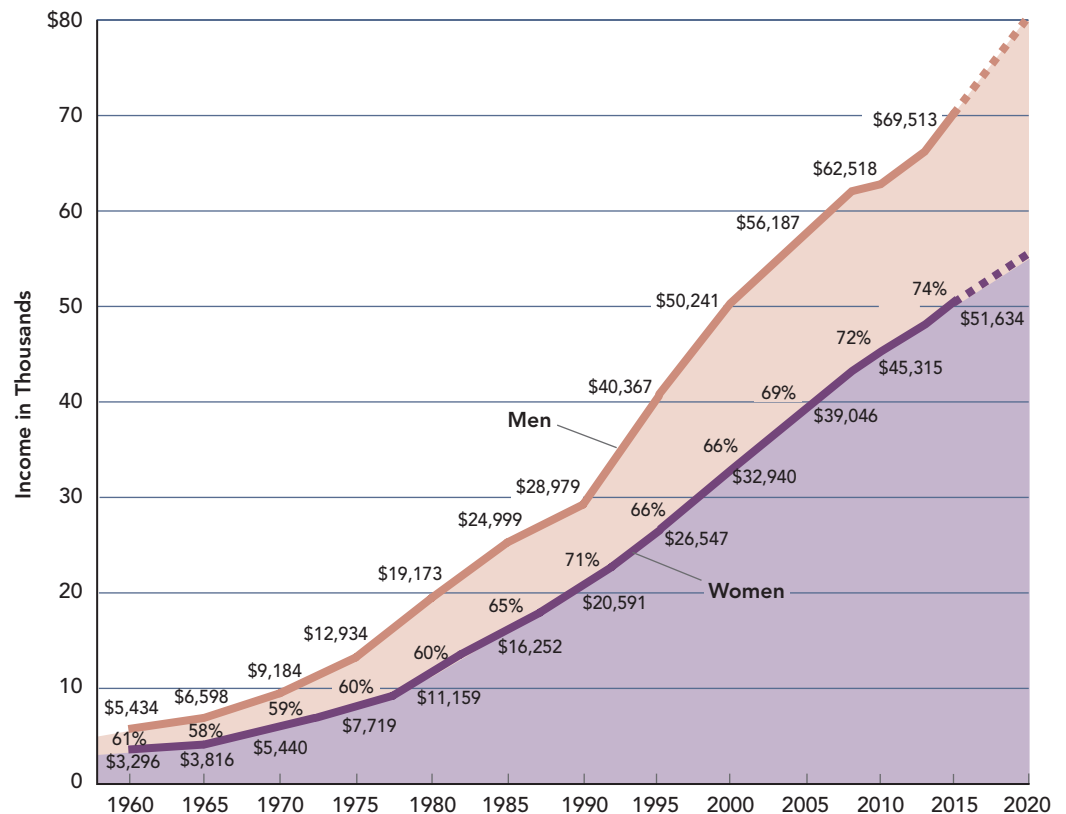
¹Mean earnings of full-time year-around workers. The percentage at the bottom of each purple bar indicates the women's percentage of the men's income. Categories in the government table that are not here are those with less than 9th grade education and those who have professional degrees.

SOURCE: By the author. Based on U.S. Census Bureau 2016c.

For college students, the gender gap in pay begins with the first job after graduation. You might know of a particular woman who was offered a higher salary than most men in her class, but she would be an exception. On average, employers start men out at higher salaries than women, and women never catch up with the men's starting "testosterone bonus" (Weinberger 2011; R. Smith 2012). Depending on your sex, then, you will either benefit from the pay gap or be victimized by it.

The pay gap is so great that U.S. women who work full time average *only 74 percent* of what men are paid. As you can see from Figure 10.8, this low percentage is actually the *smallest* gender pay gap the United States has ever had. And it isn't only the United States. A gender gap in pay occurs in *all* industrialized nations.

Figure 10.8 The Gender Gap over Time: What Percentage of Men's Income Do Women Earn?



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 1995:Table 739; 2017:Table 730, and earlier years; and Figure 11.7 of this chapter. Broken lines indicate the author's estimate.

REASONS FOR THE GENDER PAY GAP What logic can underlie the gender pay gap? As we just saw, college degrees are gender linked, so perhaps this gap is due to career choices. Maybe women are more likely to choose lower-paying jobs, such as teaching grade school, while men are more likely to go into better-paying fields, such as business and engineering. Actually, this is true, and it accounts for some of the pay gap. Another major reason is the “child penalty.” Women are more likely than men to take time off, or even to quit jobs, in order to take care of a child (Brown and Patten 2017). Missing out on work experience and opportunities is a blow to careers. Another major reason is the gender discrimination that begins with the first salary.

Let's look at still another reason in the following *Applying Sociology to Your Life*.

Applying Sociology to Your Life

How to Get a Higher Salary

It will take years of united effort to overcome the powerful structural factors that hold down women's pay at work. But to increase your own pay, you don't have to wait for this to happen.

Let's apply sociology to see what steps you can take. As you just read, when college students take their

first jobs, most women start at lower salaries than men do. Apart from the structural reasons, such as men being perceived as more valuable workers, another factor is that women aren't as good as men at negotiating salaries. Women are more likely to accept the first offer or to negotiate a little and be happy with the small

increase that comes with a second offer (Bennett 2012; Lipman 2014).

Why be satisfied with less? If you are a woman, remember that the first offer is usually negotiable. The hiring agent will be happy if you accept the offer, but usually is willing to add considerably to it if you negotiate strongly. Negotiating is like riding a bike. It is simply a skill that you can learn. So learn it. Read books on how to negotiate. Also, practice with a partner. Role-play until you are good at it.

Then, during your career, continue to promote yourself. You might think that the system will automatically reward hard work. Perhaps it should, but things don't work this way in real life. Don't be afraid to bring your accomplishments to the attention of your supervisors. You need to show them that you deserve higher raises. If you don't, you run the risk of your accomplishments getting lost in the shuffle of the accomplishments of the workers around you.

Be selective. Keep in mind that you can't do everything. Don't get lost in the minutiae, the many little things that are going on. Certainly you have to do your share of little things—and with a good attitude—but evaluate the opportunities you face. Choose the activities and projects you think will be most helpful for your career. Ask yourself, “Will being involved in this project or activity bring my accomplishments to key supervisors, or will my involvement go unnoticed?”

Be a bigger person than the little events surrounding you at work. Avoid little battles. Save your energies for what is significant for your career. Don't get sucked into petty office politics. This will sidetrack you, as well as create ene-



To start at a higher salary, learn to negotiate. And don't accept the first offer.

mies over nothing important. Whenever you face choices of action, ask yourself, “Will this hurt me or help me?”

On top of all this, be bold and ask for large raises. When women ask for raises, they ask for 30 percent less than what men ask for (Lipman 2014). If asking large makes you uncomfortable, then overcome that discomfort. Again, read books on how to negotiate, and practice your negotiating skills with others. (You might want to copy this page and put it into practice.)

Does this application of sociology apply only to women? Of course not. Even though men on average are less reluctant to bring their accomplishments to the attention

of supervisors and to ask for and negotiate higher salaries, many men also hesitate to do so. They can use these same techniques to overcome their reluctance. All workers, male and female, can hone up on their negotiating skills. It's worth the time you put into improving this skill. It can pay off in your weekly paycheck.

Sociology isn't something to lock up in an ivory tower. Sociology is about life. As you can see, you can even apply its insights into

achieving success at work and increasing your standard of living.

For Your Consideration

- How do you think you can improve your negotiating skills?
- For practice, what partner do you think you should choose?
- How can you evaluate what you are learning about negotiating skills, selecting activities, and promoting yourself?
- What other insights of sociology do you think you can apply to your career?

THE CEO POWER GAP—AND THE NEW FEMALE PREMIUM As is obvious to all, men have more power than women in the corporate world. To lay bare this gender gap in power, consider this. Women head only twenty-nine of the nation's largest five hundred corporations (“Women CEOs...” 2017). But among this small elite, a reverse gender pay gap has emerged. These women are being paid more on average than their male peers. And the difference is not small: On average, these women are paid \$23 million a year, while the men earn \$15 million (Zarya 2016). Apparently, the pressures for gender diversity have created what researchers call a female premium (Leslie et al. 2017).

I examined the names of the CEOs of the 350 largest U.S. corporations, and I found that your best chance to reach the top is to be named (in this order) John, Robert, James, William, or Charles. Edward, Lawrence, and Richard are also advantageous names. Amber, Katherine, Leticia, and Maria apparently draw a severe penalty. Naming your baby girl John or Robert might seem a little severe, but it could help her reach the top. (I say this only slightly tongue in cheek. One of the few women to head a *Fortune* 500



As the glass ceiling slowly cracks, women are gaining entry into the top positions of U.S. corporations. Shown here is Mary Barra, the CEO of General Motors.

glass ceiling

the mostly invisible barrier that keeps women from advancing to the top levels at work

company—before she was fired and given \$21 million severance pay—had a man’s first name: Carleton Fiorina of Hewlett-Packard. Carleton’s first name is actually Cara, but knowing what she was facing in the highly competitive business world, she dropped this feminine name to go by her masculine middle name.)

Is the Glass Ceiling Cracking?

What keeps most women from breaking through the **glass ceiling**, the invisible barrier that prevents women from reaching the executive suite? Other than outright discrimination, part of the reason is stereotypes (Isaac 2012). You might recall from Chapter 4 how powerful stereotypes are and how they operate beyond our awareness to influence our behavior. Men, who dominate leadership, often assume that women are good at “support” but less capable than men of aggressive leadership. They steer women into human resources or public relations—because “women are good at that.” This keeps many women away from the “pipelines” that lead to the top of a company—marketing, sales, and production—positions that produce profits for the company and bonuses for the managers (Hymowitz 2004; DeCrow 2005).

Another reason that the glass ceiling is so strong is that women lack mentors—successful executives who take an interest in them and teach them the ropes (Murrell and Blake-Beard 2017). Lack of a mentor is no trivial matter, because mentors can provide opportunities to develop leadership skills that open the door to the executive suite.

Even without mentors, some women do manage to break through the glass ceiling. What can we learn from them? Read the following *Applying Sociology to Your Life*.

Applying Sociology to Your Life

Breaking through the Glass Ceiling

The best way to find out how to break through the glass ceiling is to talk to women who have broken through. Hannah Bowles (2012) interviewed fifty women who had reached top positions in their companies. What follows is a distillation of her findings and how you can apply them to break through the glass ceiling yourself. These women

1. *Are Confident:* To become more confident, surround yourself with people who build your confidence. Avoid people who tear you down or make you doubt your abilities.
2. *Set Goals:* Write your goals down. Put the list where you can see it. Evaluate your progress regularly.
3. *Promote Themselves:* In the preceding *Applying Sociology to Your Life*, we focused on the importance of promoting yourself.
4. *Identified Gatekeepers:* Find out who holds the keys to advancement in your company.

Work with these people as much as possible.

5. *Identified Needs and Met Them:* Management is looking to accomplish certain specific goals. Figure out how you can make yourself useful in meeting their needs. Make their goals your goals.

As you can tell, these women are highly motivated individuals with fierce competitive spirits. Only you are going to be able to answer this question: Like them, are you willing to give up sleep, recreation, and family responsibilities for the sake of advancing your career (Sellers 2012)? Or you might ask “Is it even worth doing so?”

If you are a man, don’t get discouraged from this application of sociology. The emphasis is on women, as it is they who are held back by the glass ceiling, but everything mentioned here also applies to men. You can use these same principles to get ahead at work.

sexual harassment

the abuse of one’s position of authority to force unwanted sexual demands on someone

Sexual Harassment—and Worse

Sexual harassment—unwelcome sexual attention at work or at school, which may affect job or school performance or create a hostile environment—was not recognized as a problem until the 1970s. Before this, a woman considered unwanted sexual comments, touches, looks, and pressure to have sex as a personal matter, something between her and some “turned on” man—or an obnoxious one.

"Of course it isn't a case of sexual discrimination. We just don't think you're the right man for the job."

Although crassly put by the cartoonist, behind the glass ceiling lies this background assumption.

Gender and Violence

One of the consistent characteristics of violence in the United States—and the world—is gender inequality. Globally, females are more likely to be the victims of males, not the other way around. Let's briefly review this almost one-way street in gender violence as it applies to the United States.

We have already examined violence against women in other cultures. Previously in this chapter, we reviewed a form of surgical violence in the United States; and in Chapter 12, we will review violence in the home. Here we briefly review some primary features of gender violence.

Although any woman can be a victim of sexual assault—and victims include babies and elderly women—the typical victim is 15 to 24 years old. As you can see from Table 10.1, sexual assault peaks at those ages and then declines.

For boys and men who are victims of rape, their attack is every bit as devastating for them as it is for female victims (Dao 2013). The rape of men in the military and in jails and prisons is a special problem. An astounding finding is that about a third of the prisoners who are raped are victims of the prison staff (Beck et al. 2013).

Table 10.1 Rape Victims

Age	Rate per 1,000 Females
12–14	1.4
15–17	1.7
18–20	2.6
21–24	1.8
25–34	1.3
35–49	0.9
50–64	0.5
65 and Older	0.1

NOTE: In 2012, the age categories were changed, creating some distortions, especially for ages 18–20.

SOURCES: By the author. A ten-year average based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2008:Table 313; 2009:Table 305; 2010:Table 305; 2011:Table 313; 2012:Table 317; 2013:Table 322; 2014:Table 328; 2015:Table 329; 2016:Table 338; 2017:Table 341.

Table 10.2 Relationship of Victims and Rapists

Relationship	Percentage
Known to the Victim	53%
Well Known or Casual Acquaintance	33%
Intimate Partner	12%
Relative	8%
Stranger	39%
Not Reported	8%

SOURCE: By the author. A ten-year average as reported in *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 342.

DATE (ACQUAINTANCE) RAPE

At the peer workshop on sexual assault at the University of California at Berkeley, the student leader was talking to fraternity members. When she explained that sex with someone who has blacked out from drinking is rape, “jaws dropped.” “They didn’t even know this was illegal or wrong,” she said. (Phillips 2014)

Date rape (also known as *acquaintance rape*) is common. Based on a nationally representative sample of women college students, 4.4 percent were the victims of rape or attempted rape during the past three years. With 11,400,000 female college students, this comes to a huge amount. It means that in the past three years about a half million were victims of sexual assault (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Table 340).

You can assume, then, that tens of thousands of men were arrested. Not really, though. Most of these women told friends what happened, but they did not report their rapes to the police. In one study, only 5 percent reported the crime (Fisher et al.

2003). In another study, 11.5 percent reported their rape (Wolitzky-Taylor et al. 2011). Most did not consider the event “serious enough” to report. Many were uncertain that a crime had been committed. Others were embarrassed and wanted to keep it from their families. Some felt helpless, that “It would be my word against his.”

Some victims even feel responsible for their own rape: They were drinking with the man, went to his place, or invited him to her place. As a physician who treats victims of sexual assault said, “Would you feel responsible if someone hit you over the head with a shovel—just because you knew the person?” (Carpenito 1999).

MURDER Who is more likely to kill, men or women? You already know the answer to this, of course, but do you know how extreme the difference is? Look at Figure 10.9. You can see that of all murders in the United States 9 of 10 are committed by men. Yet when it comes to being a murder victim, the picture changes drastically: Twenty-eight percent of murder victims are women. In short, a woman is much more likely to be killed by a man than a man is likely to be killed by a woman. It is basically like this all over the world.

The most common drug used to facilitate date rape is alcohol, not GHB.



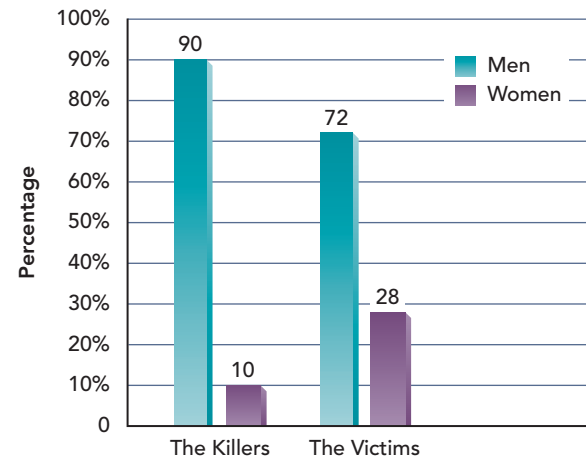
VIOLENCE IN THE HOME In the family, too, women are the typical victims. Spouse battering, marital rape, and incest are discussed in Chapter 12. Two forms of violence against women—honor killings and female circumcision—were earlier topics of this chapter.

FEMINISM AND GENDERED VIOLENCE Feminist sociologists have been especially effective in bringing violence against women to the public's attention. Some use symbolic interactionism, pointing out that to associate strength and virility with violence—as is done in many cultures—is to promote violence. Others employ conflict theory. They argue that men are losing power and that some men turn violently against women as a way to reassert their declining power and status (Xie et al. 2011; Kotsadam et al. 2017).

SOLUTIONS There is no magic bullet for the problem of gendered violence, but to be effective, any solution must break the connection between violence and masculinity. This would require an educational program that encompasses schools, churches, homes, and the media. Given the gun-slinging heroes of the Wild West and other American icons, as well as the violent messages that are so prevalent in the mass media, including video games, it is difficult to be optimistic that a change will come any time soon.

Our next topic, women in politics, however, gives us much more reason for optimism.

Figure 10.9 Killers and Their Victims



SOURCE: FBI 2016:Table 6, Expanded Homicide Data.

The Changing Face of Politics

10.6 Discuss changes in gender and politics.

Women could take over the United States! Think about it. There are eight million more women than men of voting age. But look at Table 10.3. Although women voters greatly outnumber men voters, men greatly outnumber women in political office. The remarkable gains women have made in recent elections can take our eye off the broader picture. Since 1789, about two thousand men have served in the U.S. Senate. And how many women? Only forty-five, including the twenty-one current senators. It took until 1992 for the first African American woman (Carol Brown) to be elected to the U.S. Senate. Not until 2013 did the first Asian American woman (Mazie Hirono) become a senator, and it took until 2017 for the first Latina (Catherine Cortez Masto) to join this elite group.

Table 10.3 U.S. Women in Political Office

	Offices Held by Women (Percentage)	Offices Held by Women (Number)
National Office		
U.S. Senate	21%	21
U.S. House of Representatives	20%	84
State Office		
Governors	12%	6
Lt. Governors	24%	12
Attorneys General	14%	7
Secretaries of State	26%	13
Treasurers	16%	8
State Auditors	20%	10
State Legislators	25%	1,840

SOURCE: By the author. Based on Center for American Women and Politics 2017.



Angela Merkel, the world's most powerful woman, broke through the German glass ceiling in politics. Serving her third 4-year term as chancellor of Germany, she is shown here on a visit to New Zealand, greeting a Maori leader in their traditional manner of rubbing noses.

Glimpsing the Future—with Hope

10.7 Explain why the future looks hopeful.

Women's fuller participation in the decision-making processes of our social institutions has shattered stereotypes that tended to limit females to "feminine" activities and push males into "masculine" ones. As structural barriers continue to fall and more activities are degendered, both males and females will have greater freedom to pursue activities that are more compatible with their abilities and desires as individuals.

As females and males develop a new consciousness both of their capacities and of their potential, relationships will change. Distinctions between the sexes will not disappear, but there is no reason for biological differences to be translated into social inequalities. The potential, as sociologist Alison Jaggar observed back in 1990, is for gender equality to become less a goal than a background condition for living in society.

Inequalities of Aging

In 1928, Charles Hart, who was working on his Ph.D. in anthropology, did fieldwork with the Tiwi, a people who live on an island off the northern coast of Australia. Because every Tiwi belongs to a clan, they assigned Hart to the bird (Jabijabui) clan and told him that a particular woman was his mother. Hart described the woman as "toothless, almost blind, withered." He added that she was "physically quite revolting and mentally rather senile." He then recounted this remarkable event:

Toward the end of my time on the islands an incident occurred that surprised me because it suggested that some of them had been taking my presence in the kinship system much more seriously than I had thought. I was approached by a group of about eight or nine senior men.... They were the senior members of the Jabijabui clan and they had decided among themselves that the time had come to get rid of the decrepit old woman who had first called me son and whom I now called mother.... As I knew, they said, it was Tiwi custom, when an old woman became too feeble to look after herself, to "cover her up." This could only be done by her sons and brothers and all of them had to agree beforehand, since once it was done, they did not want any dissension among the brothers or clansmen, as that might lead to a feud. My "mother" was now completely blind, she was constantly falling over logs or into fires, and they, her senior clansmen, were in agreement that she would be better out of the way. Did I agree?

I already knew about "covering up." The Tiwi, like many other hunting and gathering peoples, sometimes got rid of their ancient and decrepit females. The method was to dig a hole in the ground in some lonely place, put the old woman in the hole and fill it in with earth until only her head was showing. Everybody went away for a day or two and then went back to the hole to discover to their great surprise, that the old woman was dead, having been too feeble to raise her arms from the earth. Nobody had "killed" her; her death in Tiwi eyes was a natural one. She had been alive when her relatives last saw her. I had never seen it done, though I knew it was the custom, so I asked my brothers if it was necessary for me to attend the "covering up."

They said no and that they would do it, but only after they had my agreement. Of course I agreed, and a week or two later we heard in our camp that my "mother" was dead, and we all wailed and put on the trimmings of mourning. (C. W. M. Hart in Hart and Pilling 1979:125–126)

Aging in Global Perspective

10.8 Understand how attitudes toward the elderly vary around the world; explain how industrialization led to a graying globe.

We won't deal with the question of whether it was moral or ethical for Hart to agree that the old woman should be "covered up." What is of interest for our purposes is how the Tiwi treated their frail elderly—or, more specifically, their frail *female* elderly. You probably noticed that the Tiwi "covered up" only old women. As this incident makes evident, gender discrimination can even bring death.

But let's focus on the elderly. Every society must deal with the problem of people growing old and of some becoming frail. Although few societies choose to bury old people alive, all societies must decide how to allocate limited resources among their citizens. With more people around the world making it to old age, these decisions are producing tensions between the generations on a global level.

Extremes of Attitudes and Practices

The way the Tiwi treated frail elderly women reflects one extreme of how societies cope with aging. Another extreme, one that reflects a sharply different attitude, is illustrated by the Abkhazians, an agricultural people who live in Georgia, a republic of the former Soviet Union. The Abkhazians pay their elderly high respect and look to them for guidance (Gurian 2013). They would no more dispense with their elderly by "covering them up" than we would "cover up" a sick child in our culture.

The Abkhazians may be the longest-lived people on Earth. Many claim to live past 100—some beyond 120 and even 130 (Benet 1971; Robbins 2006). Although researchers have concluded that the extreme claims are bogus (Young et al. 2010), government records indicate that many Abkhazians do live to a very old age.

Three main factors appear to account for their long lives. The first is their diet, which consists of little meat and much fresh fruit, vegetables, garlic, goat cheese, cornmeal, buttermilk, and wine. The second is their lifelong physical activity. They do slow down after age 80, but even after the age of 100, they still work about 4 hours a day. The third factor—a highly developed sense of community—lies at the very heart of the Abkhasian culture. From childhood, each individual is integrated into a primary group and remains so throughout life. There is no such thing as a nursing home, nor do the elderly live alone. Because they continue to work and contribute to the group's welfare, the elderly aren't a burden to anyone. They don't vegetate, nor do they feel the need to "fill time" with bingo and shuffleboard. In short, the elderly feel no sudden rupture between what they "were" and what they "are."

IN SUM Contrasting the Tiwi and the Abkhazians reveals an important sociological principle: Like gender, aging is *socially constructed*. That is, nothing in the nature of aging summons forth any particular viewpoint. Rather, attitudes toward the aged are rooted in society. They differ with groups around the world.



Among some groups, the elderly don't retire. They continue their traditional tasks, but they do slow down. This man on the Li River in Yangshuo, Guangxi, China, continues to fish with his cormorant, just as he has done from his youth.

Except for interaction within families, age groups in Western culture are usually kept fairly separate. The idea of having a day care center in the same building as a nursing home breaks this tradition. This photo was taken in Seattle, Washington.

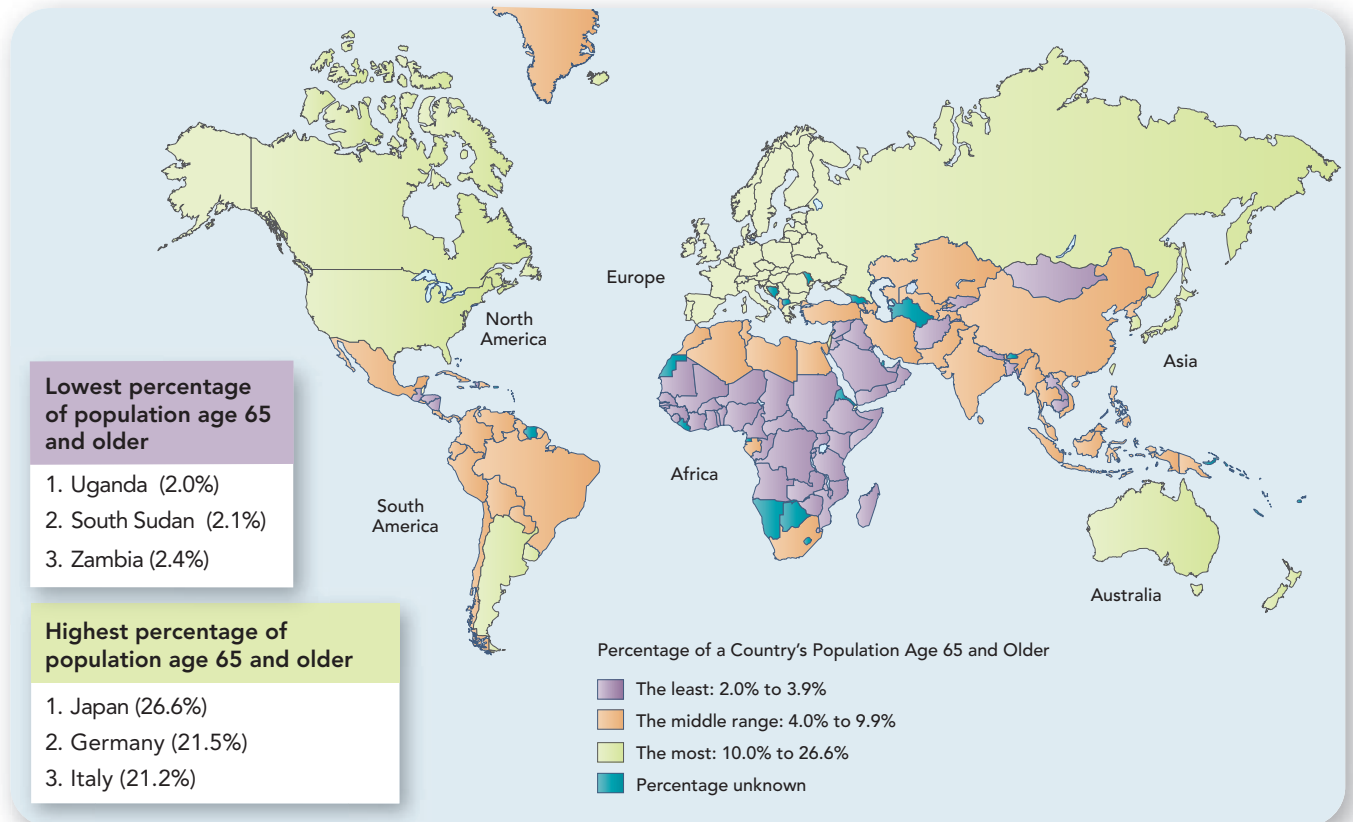


Industrialization and the Graying of the Globe

In 1900, the average person in the world was dead by the age of 30! Today the average person lives to 70! (Eberstadt 2014a)

What happened to bring about such a remarkable change? The one-word answer is industrialization. Industrialization brings not only more material goods but also a higher standard of living: more food, a purer water supply, better housing, and more effective ways of fighting the diseases that kill children. As a result, when a country industrializes, its people live longer. The following Social Map provides a good illustration. As you can see, the industrialized countries have the highest percentage of elderly.

Figure 10.10 The Graying of the Globe



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 1348.

Because industrialization is uneven around the world, the percentage of elderly differs sharply among the world's nations. As you can see from the Social Map, in non-industrialized Uganda just 1 of 50 citizens is age 65 or older, but in postindustrial Japan more than 1 of every 4 persons is. The graying of the globe is so new that *two-thirds of all people who have ever passed age 50 in the history of the world are alive today* (Zaslow 2003).

As the number of elderly continues to grow, analysts have become alarmed about future liabilities for their care. This issue is especially troubling in western Europe and Japan, which have the largest percentage of citizens age 65 and older. The basic issue is, How can large numbers of elderly be given high-quality care without burdening future generations with impossible taxes? The many nations confronting this issue have not yet found a solution.

life span

the maximum length of life of a species; for humans, the longest that a human has lived

THE LIFE SPAN Although more people are living to old age, the maximum length of life possible, the **life span**, has not increased. No one knows, however, just what that maximum is. We do know that it is at least 122: This is the well-documented age of Jeanne Louise Calment of France at her death in 1997. And the death of Tuti Yusupova of Uzbekistan

in 2015 might indicate that the human life span extends to at least 134. Her passport shows her birth year as 1880, but there is some uncertainty if the passport is accurate. Advances in genetics may extend the human life span, perhaps by 100 years or more.

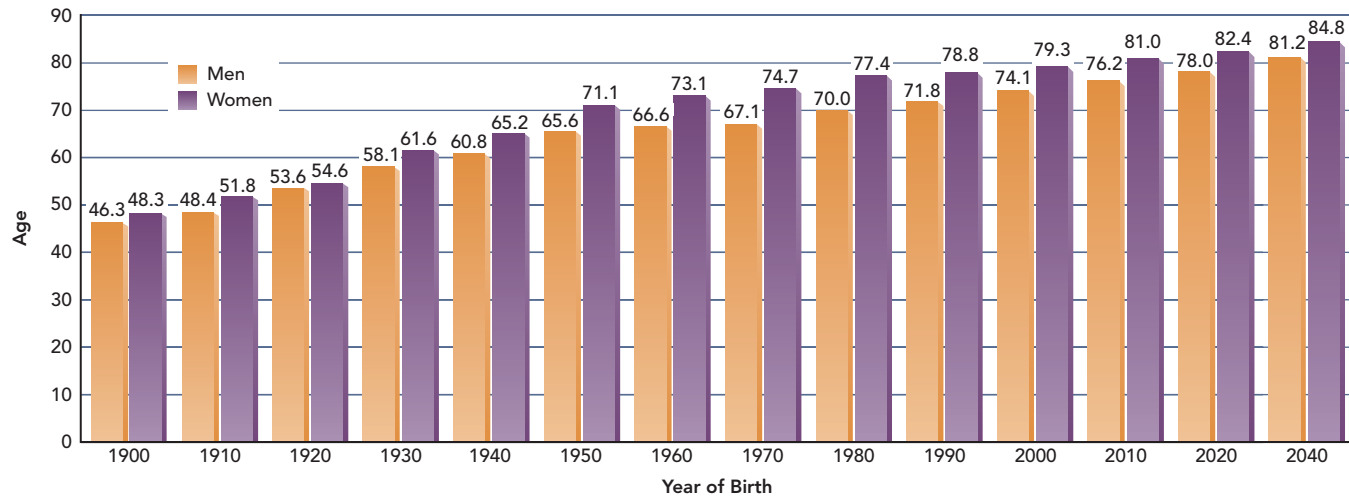
The Graying of America

From Figure 10.11, you can see how the United States is part of this global trend. This figure shows how U.S. **life expectancy**, the number of years people can expect to live, has increased since 1900. To me, and perhaps to you, it is startling to realize that about 120 years ago, the average U.S. woman and man didn't live long enough to celebrate their 50th birthday. Since then, we've added about 30 years to our life expectancy, and Americans born today can expect to live into their 70s or 80s.

life expectancy

the number of years that an average person at any age, including newborns, can expect to live

Figure 10.11 U.S. Life Expectancy by Year of Birth



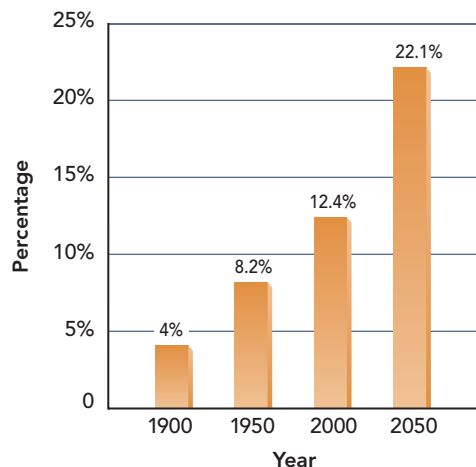
SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, Bicentennial Edition, Part I, Series B, 107–115*; *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2017: Table 112*.

The term **graying of America** refers to this growing percentage of older people in the U.S. population. Look at Figure 10.12. In 1900, only 4 percent of Americans were age 65 and older. Today, 15 percent are. U.S. society has become so “gray” that, as Figure 10.13 shows, the median age has almost *doubled* since 1850. Today, there are 18 million *more*

graying of America

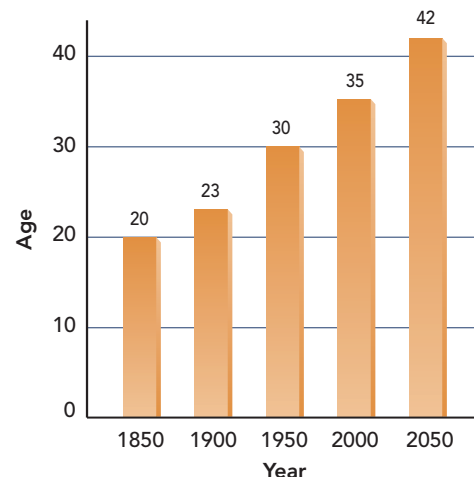
the growing percentage of older people in the U.S. population

Figure 10.12 The Graying of America: Americans Age 65 and Older



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2017: Table 8*, and earlier years.

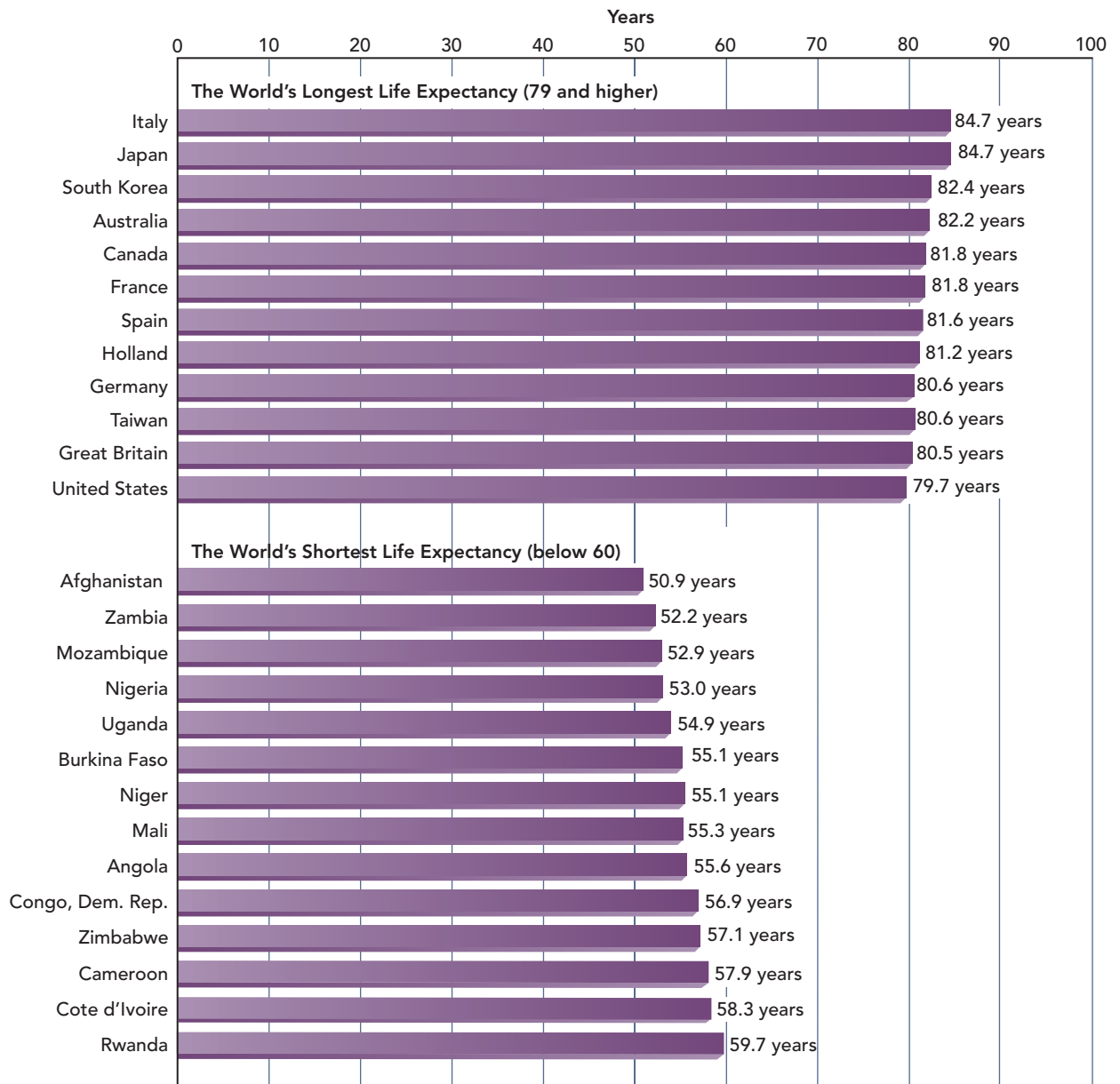
Figure 10.13 The Median Age of the U.S. Population



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2017: Table 8*, and earlier years.

elderly Americans than there are teenagers (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Tables 10, 111). As you can see from Figure 10.14, despite this vast change, on a global level the United States ranks just twelfth in life expectancy. Also note that the nations where life expectancy is the highest are industrialized, while the nations where life expectancy is the shortest are not.

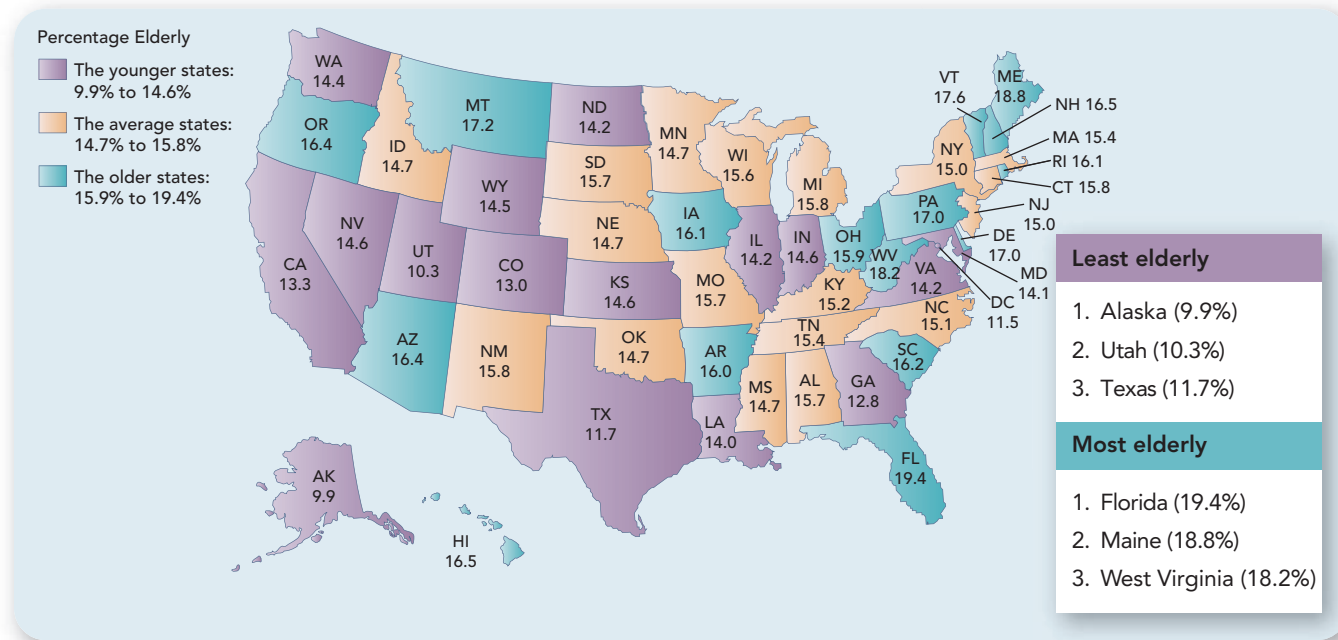
Figure 10.14 Life Expectancy in Global Perspective



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 1349.

As anyone who has ever visited Florida knows, the elderly population is not distributed evenly around the country. (As Jerry Seinfeld sardonically noted, “There’s a law that when you get old, you’ve got to move to Florida.”) The following Social Map shows how uneven this distribution is.

Figure 10.15 As Florida Goes, So Goes the Nation



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 2017:Table 17.

Let's see the different pictures of aging that emerge when we apply the three theoretical perspectives.

The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

10.9 Discuss changes in perceptions of the elderly.

Ageism refers to prejudice and discrimination directed against people because of their age. Let's see how ageism developed in the United States.

Shifting Meanings of Growing Old

As we have seen, there is nothing inherent in old age to produce any particular attitude, negative or not. Some historians point out that in early U.S. society, old age was regarded positively (Greenstein and Holland 2015). In colonial times, growing old was seen as an accomplishment because so few people made it to old age. With no pensions, the elderly continued to work. Their jobs changed little over time, and they were viewed as storehouses of knowledge about work skills and sources of wisdom about how to live a long life.

The coming of industrialization eroded these bases of respect. With better sanitation and medical care, more people reached old age, and being elderly lost its uniqueness and the honor it had brought. Industrialization's new forms of mass production also made young workers as productive as the elderly. Coupled with mass education, this stripped away the elderly's superior knowledge (Cowgill 1974; Cruikshank 2013).

A basic principle of symbolic interactionism is that we perceive both ourselves and others according to the symbols of our culture. When the meaning of old age changed from an asset to a liability, not only did younger people come to view the elderly differently but so did the elderly. They, too, began to perceive themselves in a new light. This shift in meaning is demonstrated in the way people lie about their age: They used to say that they were older than they were but now claim to be younger than their true ages (Clair et al. 1993).



When does old age begin? And what activities are appropriate for the elderly? From this photo that I took of Munimala, a 65-year-old bonded laborer in Chennai, India, you can see how culturally related these questions are. No one in Chennai thinks it is extraordinary that this woman makes her living by carrying heavy rocks all day in the burning, tropical sun. Working next to her in the quarry is her 18-year-old son, who breaks the rocks into the size that his mother carries.

ageism

prejudice and discrimination directed against people because of their age; can be directed against any age group, including youth

Today, the meaning of old age is shifting once again. More positive images of the elderly are developing, largely because most of today's U.S. elderly enjoy good health and can take care of themselves financially. If this symbolic shift continues, the next step—now in process—will be to view old age not as a period that precedes death but, rather, as a new stage of growth. We will return to this topic.

The Influence of the Mass Media

In Chapter 3, we noted that the mass media help to shape our ideas about both gender and relationships between men and women. As a powerful source of symbols, the media also influence our ideas of the elderly, the topic of the following *Thinking Critically about Social Life*.

IN SUM Symbolic interactionists stress that old age has no inherent meaning. There is nothing about old age to automatically summon forth responses of honor and respect, as

Thinking Critically about Social Life

The Cultural Lens: Shaping Our Perceptions of the Elderly

The mass media profoundly influence our perception of people (Levy et al. 2013). What we hear and see on television and in the movies, the songs we listen to, the books and magazines we read—all become part of the cultural lens through which we view the world. The media shape our images of minorities and dominant groups; men, women, and children; people with disabilities; those from other cultures—and the elderly.

The shaping of our images and perception of the elderly is subtle, so much so that it usually occurs without our awareness. The elderly, for example, are underrepresented on television and in most popular magazines (Barrett et al. 2014). This leaves a covert message—that the elderly are of little consequence and can be safely ignored.

The media also reflect and reinforce stereotypes of *gender age*. Older male news anchors are likely to be retained, while female anchors who turn the same age are more likely to be transferred to less visible positions. Similarly, in movies, older men are more likely to play romantic leads—and to play them opposite much younger rising stars.

The message might be subtle, but it is not lost. The more television that people watch, the more they perceive the elderly in negative terms. The elderly, too, internalize these negative images, which, in turn, influences the ways they view themselves. These images are so powerful that



When does "old" begin? Until recently, Halle Berry, age 51, would have been considered elderly. No longer. This change illustrates the social nature of age and aging.

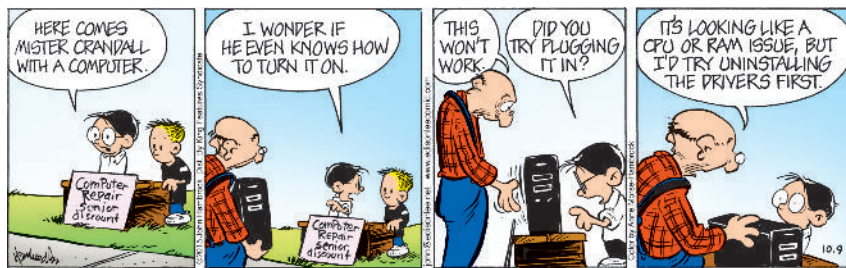
they affect the health of elderly people, even the way they walk (Donlon et al. 2005).

We become fearful of growing old, and we go to great lengths to deny that we are losing our youth. Fear and denial play into the hands of advertisers, of course, who exploit our concerns. They help us deny this biological reality by selling us hair dyes, skin creams, and other products that are designed to conceal even the appearance of old age. For these same reasons, plastic surgeons do a thriving business as they remove telltale signs of aging.

The growing number and affluence of the elderly translate into economic clout and political power. One consequence is more positive images of the elderly in the mass media (Oro-Piqueras and Marques 2017). An indication of this change is shown in this photo.

For Your Consideration

- What other examples of fear and denial of growing old are you familiar with?
- What examples of older men playing romantic leads with younger women can you give? Of older women and younger men?
- Why do you think we have gender age stereotypes?
- How do you think stereotypes of the elderly are changing?



What stereotypes of the elderly do you see here? What stereotypes do you have? How did your stereotypes develop?

with the Abkhasians or any other response. Our culture shapes how we perceive the elderly, including the ways we view our own aging. In short, the social modifies the biological.

The Functionalist Perspective

10.10 Summarize theories of disengagement, activity, and continuity.

Functionalists analyze how the parts of society work together. Among the components of society are **age cohorts**—people who were born at roughly the same time and who pass through the life course together. This term might strike you as something divorced from your life, but age cohorts actually affect your life deeply. For example, when you finish college, if the age cohort that is retiring is large (a “baby boom” generation), jobs will be plentiful. In contrast, if the age cohort is small (a “baby bust” generation), your opportunities for good jobs will shrink.

Let’s consider theories that focus on retirement.

Disengagement Theory

Think how disruptive it would be if the elderly left their jobs only when they died or became incompetent. How does society get the elderly to leave their positions so younger people can take them? According to **disengagement theory**, developed by Elaine Cumming and William Henry (1961), this is the function of pensions. Pensions get the elderly to *disengage* from their positions and hand them over to younger people. Retirement, then, benefits two major parts of society, both the elderly and younger workers.

EVALUATION OF THE THEORY Certainly pensions do entice the elderly to leave their jobs, and members of a younger generation do step in. I think we all know this, so it isn’t much of a theory. Critics have also pointed out that the elderly don’t really “disengage.” Not many people who quit their jobs sit in rocking chairs and watch the world go by. Instead of disengaging, the retired *exchange* one set of roles for another (Tadic et al. 2012). They find these new ways of conducting their lives, which often center on friendship, no less satisfying than their earlier roles.

To make disengagement theory relevant, it must take into account how the meaning of retirement has changed. Less and less does retirement mean an end to work. Many people stay at their jobs, but they slow down, putting in fewer hours. Some use the Internet to explore new areas of work. Others switch careers, even in their 60s, some even in their 70s. And finding their pensions inadequate, many are forced to take part-time jobs. Not many aspired in their youth to become “greeters” at Walmart.

Activity Theory

Are retired people more satisfied with life? (All that extra free time and not having to kowtow to a boss must be nice.) Are intimate activities more satisfying than formal ones? Such questions are the focus of **activity theory**.

age cohort

people born at roughly the same time who pass through the life course together

disengagement theory

the view that society is stabilized by having the elderly retire (disengage from) their positions of responsibility so the younger generation can step into their shoes

activity theory

the view that satisfaction during old age is related to a person’s amount and quality of activity



This 73-year-old man teaches yoga in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China. I wonder how many 20-year-olds, even teenagers, could keep up with him.

continuity theory

a theory focusing on how people adjust to retirement by continuing aspects of their earlier lives

Page 1988). It is the same for spending time with adult children. "Often enough" for some parents is "not enough" or even "too much" for others. In short, researchers have discovered the obvious: What makes life satisfying for one person doesn't work for another. (This, of course, can be a source of intense frustration for couples, retired or not.)

Continuity Theory

As its name implies, a theory of aging called **continuity theory** focuses on how the elderly adjust to changes in their lives by continuing ties with their past (Goth and Smaland 2014). One way they do this is to take on roles similar to the ones they have given up. For example, a former CEO might serve as a consultant, a retired electrician might do small electrical repairs, or a pensioned banker might take over the finances of her church. Researchers have found that people who are active in multiple roles (wife, author, mother, intimate friend, church member, etc.) are better equipped to handle the changes that come with growing old. Social class is also significant: With their greater resources, people from higher social classes adjust better to the challenges of aging.

EVALUATION OF THE THEORY The basic criticism of continuity theory is that it is too broad (Hatch 2000). We all have anchor points based on our particular experiences in life, and we all rely on them to make adjustments to what we confront in life. This applies to people of all ages beyond infancy. Continuity theory is a collection of loosely connected ideas, with no specific application to the elderly.

IN SUM: THE FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE The *broader* perspective of the functionalists is how society's parts work together to keep society running smoothly. If younger workers had to fight to take over the jobs of the elderly, it would be disruptive to society. To make the transition smooth, the elderly are offered pensions, which entice them to leave their positions. Functionalists also use a *narrower* perspective, focusing on how individuals adjust to retirement. The basic finding that runs through the research is this: Regardless of the form it takes, activity that provides meaning helps the aged reconstruct their identities, promotes satisfaction and happiness, and leads to more successful retirement (Newman et al. 2013).

EVALUATION OF THE THEORY When it comes to retired people, it is the same as with young people: No one size fits all. Some people are happier when they are more active, but others prefer less involvement (Keith 1982; Levy et al. 2013). Similarly, many people find informal, intimate activities, such as spending time with friends, to be more satisfying than formal activities. But not everyone does. In one study, two thousand retired U.S. men reported formal activities to be just as satisfying as informal ones. Even solitary tasks, such as doing home repairs, had about the same impact as intimate activities on these men's life satisfaction (Beck and

The Conflict Perspective

10.11 Explain the conflict perspective on Social Security, and discuss intergenerational competition and conflict.

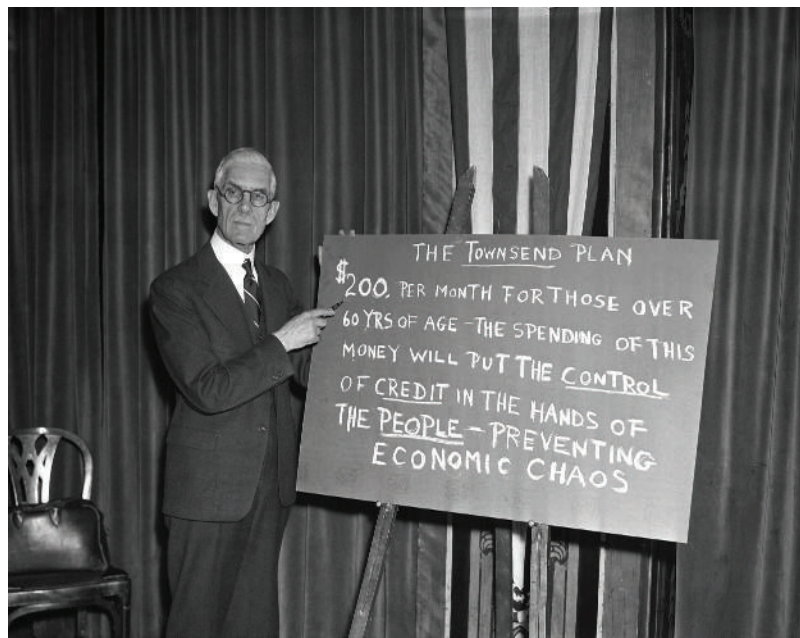
As you know, the conflict perspective's guiding principle is how social groups compete with one another to control power and resources. How does this apply to society's age groups? As conflict theorists stress, regardless of whether the young and old recognize it, they are opponents in a struggle that threatens to throw society into turmoil. Let's look at how Social Security fits the conflict view.

Fighting for Resources: Social Security Legislation

In the 1920s, there was no Social Security to provide an income for the aged. At that time, *two-thirds* of all citizens age 65 and older had no savings and could not support themselves (Holtzman 1963; Crossen 2004a). Then the Great Depression engulfed the nation, making things even worse. In 1930 Francis Townsend, a physician, started a movement to rally older citizens. He soon had one-third of all Americans age 65 and older enrolled in his Townsend Clubs. They demanded a national sales tax of 2 percent, with the money given to the elderly. Every person 65 and older would receive \$200 a month (\$2,100 a month in today's money). In 1934, the Townsend Plan went before Congress.

Alarmed at the plan's high payments, and fearing that this would destroy people's incentive to save for the future, Congress looked for a way to reject the plan without appearing to oppose the elderly. When President Roosevelt announced his own, more modest Social Security plan, Congress embraced it (Schottland 1963; Amenta 2006).

To provide jobs for younger people, the new Social Security law required that workers retire at age 65. It did not matter how well people did their work or how much they needed the pay. For decades, the elderly protested. Finally, in 1986, Congress eliminated mandatory retirement. Although workers can no longer be forced out of their jobs simply because of age, almost 90 percent of Americans retire by age 65.



The U.S. elderly are a potent political force today. They were not considered so until Dr. Francis Everett Townsend (pictured here) organized them as a political force in the 1930s. Townsend proposed a radical \$200 per month pension plan for the elderly in the midst of the Great Depression. His plan and campaign frightened Congress.

“Old People Are Sucking Us Dry”: Intergenerational Competition and Conflict

“Old people are tax burdens who should hurry up and die.”

Taro Aso, the Finance Minister of Japan

The Japanese buy more adult diapers than baby diapers (Herships 2016).

Could conflict between the elderly and the young be in your future? As conflict theorists stress, equilibrium between competing groups is only a temporary balancing of oppositional forces. Since the balance can be upset at any time, let's consider this possibility.

Actually, the first shots have already been fired. Some are saying that the elderly are guilty of *generational theft*, that they are running up a national debt that coming generations will have to pay (Freeman 2013). One article is even titled *Old People Are Sucking Us Dry* (Altman 2014).

Smoldering behind these charges are the gigantic costs of Social Security and Medicare. As incredible as it may seem, *these two programs cost 94 percent of the nation's total income tax*. Of the nation's *total revenue* from all sources, these two programs take almost one of every two

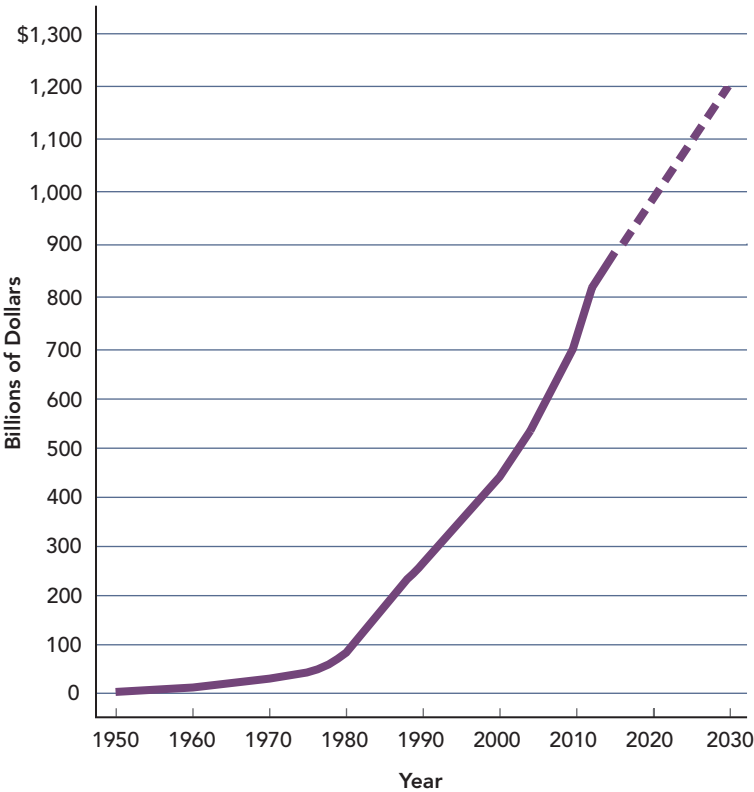


In old age, as in all other stages of the life course, people find life more pleasant if they have friends and enough money to meet their needs. How do you think the elderly woman to the left finds life? How about the elderly woman in the photo to the right? While neither welcomes old age, what a difference social factors make in how people experience this time of life. Research indicates that one of these women is likely to be in better health and to live longer. Which one? Why?

dollars (46 percent) (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Tables 494, 498). From Figure 10.16, you can see that Social Security payments are now more than 1,000 times higher than they were in 1950.

To see the nation’s huge medical bill to care for the elderly, look at Figure 10.17. Like gasoline poured on a fire, these soaring costs may fuel intergenerational conflict.

Figure 10.16 Social Security Payments to Beneficiaries



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* 1997:Table 518; 2017:Table 567. Broken line indicates the author’s projections.

Figure 10.18 can be a source of indignation. As you can see, the condition of the elderly has improved while that of the nation’s children has deteriorated. As the government transferred resources to the elderly, their poverty rate dropped by *two-thirds*. What a contrast for childhood poverty, as it is *higher* now than it was in 1967—and in all the years in between.

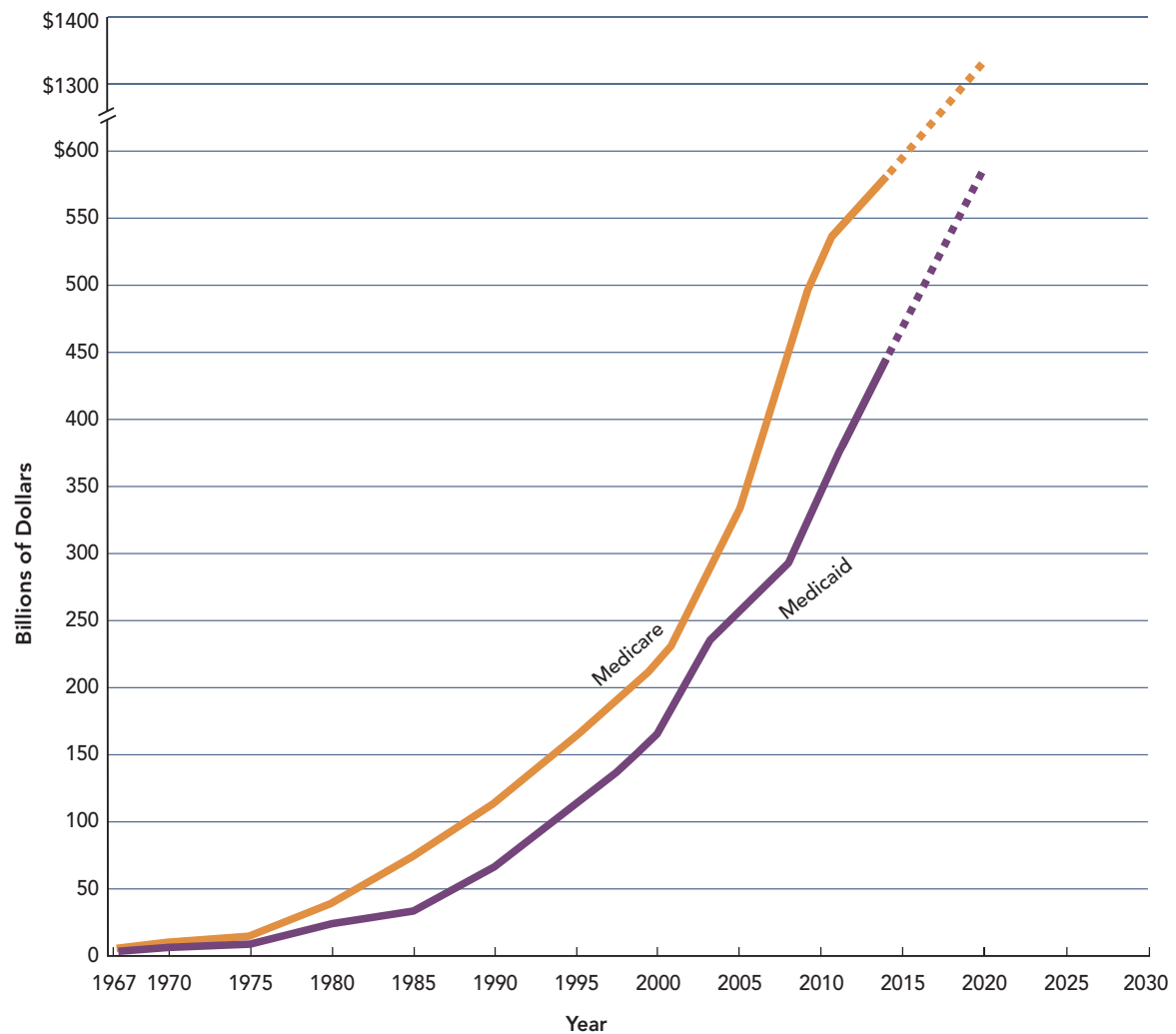
Some think that the drop in the poverty of the elderly came at the expense of the nation’s children, but did it? Ask yourself: Could Congress have funded the welfare of children just as it did that of the elderly? Of course. But it chose not to. Why? *The elderly, not the children, threatened to vote politicians out of office.* To back up their threat, their lobbyists put a lot of grease in the political reelection machine. And the children? They are safe to ignore. The children don’t offer any payoffs to the politicians, and they can’t vote anyone out of office.

Let’s suppose that the country gets serious about reducing childhood poverty. Watch out for politicians who say that to improve the children’s welfare, we must take money from the elderly. What a choice: either pathetic children or suffering old folks. If you ever hear this, you will know it is a false choice. It will simply be politicians trying to manipulate your emotions.

Look again at the first quote that opened this section. Intergenerational conflict has begun to heat up in Japan, where one of every four persons is elderly. Could it happen here? What do you think?

IN SUM: THE CONFLICT PERSPECTIVE People of similar ages (cohorts) are one of the many interest groups that are competing for society’s resources. As more demands are put on these resources, the opposing interests of these groups will become more apparent.

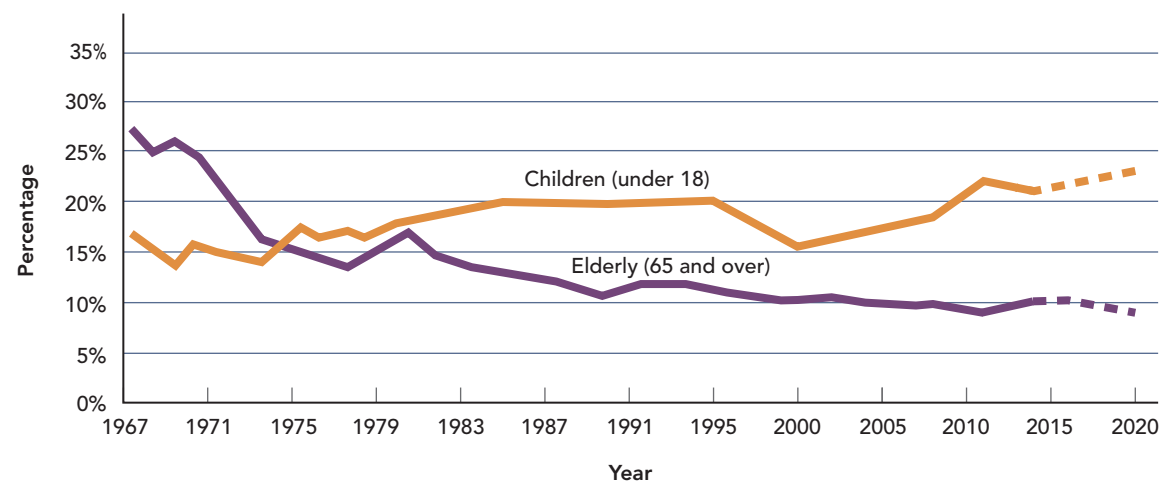
Figure 10.17 Health Care Costs for the Elderly and Disabled



NOTE: Medicare is intended for the elderly and disabled, Medicaid for the poor. About 18 percent of Medicaid payments (\$53 billion) go for medical care for the elderly (*Statistical Abstract* 2017:Table 161).

SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States* various years, and 2017:Table 148. Broken lines indicate the author's projections.

Figure 10.18 Age and Trends in Poverty



SOURCE: By the author. Based on *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, various years, and 2017:Table 738. Broken lines indicate the author's projections.

Looking toward the Future

10.12 Discuss developing views of aging and the impact of technology on how long people live.

Let's not lose sight of one of the major changes stressed in this chapter—that for the first time in human history, huge numbers of people are becoming elderly. It is inevitable that such a fundamental change will have a powerful impact on societies around the world, so much so that it might even transform them. We don't have space to explore such potential transformations, which are only speculative at the moment, so let's try to catch a glimpse of what is happening with the elderly themselves.

New Views: Creative Aging

As huge numbers of Americans move into old age, the elderly have begun not only to challenge the demeaning stereotypes of the aged but also to develop new models of aging. These new perspectives build on the idea that old age should not be viewed as “a-time-close-to-death” but, rather, as a new period of life, one with its specific challenges, to be sure, but also one to be enjoyed, even celebrated. From this has emerged *creative aging*, an emphasis that this new time of life provides unique opportunities to pursue interests, to develop creativity, and to enhance the appreciation of life's beauty and one's place in it.

With longer lives, better health, and more resources, the elderly years are becoming a stage of life in which people explore and develop new dimensions of their selves. Shown here is an 86-year old woman executing a scissors split at the Palm Springs Follies in Palm Springs, California.



This changing perspective is new, so we don't yet know the directions it will take. But if this emphasis continues, it will change how younger people view the elderly—as well as how the elderly view themselves. Stereotypes of despondent, disengaged old folks are already giving way to stereotypes of affluent, thriving, engaged older adults who are enjoying a life of leisure and the time to pursue personal interests. No stereotype will encompass the reality of the elderly years, of course, as the aged differ among themselves as much as younger people do.

There is also the matter of social class. Creative aging and the other more positive views apply mainly to the middle and upper classes. Those trapped in poverty often find old age to be a time of ill health and despair. This leaves us with a serious issue as a society: How can we increase health and the opportunity to enjoy life for all the elderly, no matter their social class?

Summary and Review

Issues of Sex and Gender

10.1 Distinguish between sex and gender; use research on Vietnam veterans and testosterone to explain why the door to biology is opening in sociology.

What is gender stratification?

The term *gender stratification* refers to unequal access to property, power, and prestige on the basis of sex. Each society establishes a structure that, on the basis of sex and gender, opens and closes doors to its privileges.

How do sex and gender differ?

Sex refers to biological distinctions between males and females. It consists of both primary and secondary sex characteristics. **Gender**, in contrast, is what a society considers proper behaviors and attitudes for its male and female members. Sex physically distinguishes males from females; gender refers to what people call “masculine” and “feminine.”

Why do the behaviors of males and females differ?

The “nature versus nurture” debate refers to whether differences in the behaviors of males and females are caused by inherited (biological) or learned (cultural) characteristics. Almost all sociologists take the side of nurture. In recent years, however, sociologists have begun to cautiously open the door to biology.

Gender Inequality in Global Perspective

10.2 Discuss the origin of gender discrimination, and review global aspects of violence against women.

How did females become a minority group?

The origin of discrimination against females is lost in history, but the primary theory of how females became a minority group in their own societies focuses on the physical limitations imposed by childbirth.

What are some forms of global violence against females?

The major forms discussed are honor killing and female circumcision.

Gender Inequality in the United States

10.3 Review the rise of feminism, and summarize gender inequality in health care and education.

Is the feminist movement new?

In what is called the “first wave,” feminists made political demands for change in the early 1900s—and were met with hostility, even violence. The “second wave” began in the 1960s and continues today. An overlapping “third wave” is in process.

What forms do gender inequality in health care and education take?

Physicians don’t take women’s health complaints as seriously as those of men, and they exploit women’s fears, performing unnecessary hysterectomies. More women than men attend college, and there is a tendency to select fields that are categorized as “feminine” or “masculine.”

Gender Inequality in the Workplace

10.4 Explain reasons for the pay gap; discuss the glass ceiling and sexual harassment.

How does gender inequality show up in the workplace?

All occupations show a gender gap in pay. For college graduates, the lifetime pay gap runs more than a million dollars in favor of men. **Sexual harassment** also continues to be a reality of the workplace.

Gender and Violence

10.5 Summarize violence against women: rape, murder, and violence in the home.

What is the relationship between gender and violence?

Overwhelmingly, the victims of rape and murder are females. Female circumcision and honor killing are special cases of violence against females. Conflict theorists point out that men use violence to maintain their power and privilege.

The Changing Face of Politics

10.6 Discuss changes in gender and politics.

What is the trend in gender inequality in politics?

Women continue to be underrepresented in politics, but the trend toward greater political equality is firmly in place.

Glimpsing the Future—with Hope

10.7 Explain why the future looks hopeful.

Why does the future of gender relations look positive?

With structural barriers falling and activities being degendered, the trend is solidly toward gender equality.

Aging in Global Perspective

10.8 Understand how attitudes toward the elderly vary around the world; explain how industrialization led to a graying globe.

How are the elderly treated around the world, and why are there more elderly?

There is no single set of attitudes, beliefs, or policies regarding the aged. Rather, they vary around the world, ranging from exclusion and killing to integration and honor. Industrialization, bringing more resources that promote health, has created a global trend for more people to live longer.

The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective

10.9 Discuss changes in perceptions of the elderly.

What does the social construction of aging mean?

Nothing in the nature of aging produces any particular set of attitudes. Rather, attitudes toward the elderly are rooted in culture and differ from one social group to another.

The Functionalist Perspective

10.10 Summarize theories of disengagement, activity, and continuity.

How is retirement functional for society?

Functionalists focus on how the withdrawal of the elderly from positions of responsibility benefits society. Disengagement theory examines retirement as a device for ensuring that a society's positions of responsibility are passed smoothly from one generation to the next. The focus of activity theory is how people's activities after retirement help them adjust to their new life stage. Continuity theory focuses on how people adjust to growing old by continuing their roles and coping techniques.

The Conflict Perspective

10.11 Explain the conflict perspective on Social Security, and discuss intergenerational competition and conflict.

How do the younger and the elderly compete for scarce resources?

Social Security legislation is an example of one generation making demands on another generation for limited resources. As the number of retired people grows, there are relatively fewer workers to support them.

Looking Toward the Future

10.12 Discuss developing views of aging and the impact of technology on how long people live.

What trends indicate the future for gender and aging?

The trends are positive: Increasing equality and political participation for women and, for the elderly, longer lives, less poverty, and the development of creative aging.

Thinking Critically about Chapter 10

1. What is your position on the "nature versus nurture" (biology or culture) debate? What materials in this chapter support your position?
2. Why do you think that the gender gap in pay exists all over the world?
3. How does culture influence our ideas about the elderly?
4. How can we solve the problem of caring for the elderly and not burdening future generations?